

BOXING.

BRAVE FRENCH BOXER. SLAUGHTERING GERMANS.

The following article on the famous French boxer Ercole de Balzac, recently written by Hurdman Lucas, a Parisian scribe, will be read with interest:—

"Those who have studied French literature know how the great novelist, Honore de Balzac, strived and starved, and that it was only in the last few years of his life that he reaped the fruits of his hard work. That, by the way, is the fortune of most penmen, with the further proviso that some may write themselves to a standstill and die in the gutter. That might have been Balzac's fate had not a good, kind Providence sent him a wealthy wife.

"It is not of this master of phrases that I would write, however, but of one who, related to him, chose a career equally fruitful in 'hard knocks.' Although a great-grandson of Honore, Ercole Balzac's literary tastes are limited to letter-writing, and even that bores him pink, for he prefers gloves to the pen. Although great thinkers have told us that the latter weapon is mightier than the sword, Ercole believes that—on his hands—gloves are mightier than all the pens he has ever beheld. Furthermore, he sees less chances of finishing his days in a workhouse glove-pushing than would be the case pen-dittoing.

BALZAC GETS THE PUSH.

"True, his illustrious ancestor's literary struggles do not commend themselves too highly to the modern youth, so let us assume that the Balzac of to-day was wise in selecting the more remunerative profession of puglist. One person was, however, distinctly opposed to this choice, and he no other than Balzac pere. How could a son, bearing such an honorable name, so smirch it with 'fistic infamy?' And for a time things hummed at home. Unhappily, Balzac, sen., was the source whence flowed pocket money, so, with paternal threats of damming the golden stream, things looked pretty rotten for Bal-

zac cadet. He found himself between the devil and the deep blue sea.

"The spirit of wallops had, however, cast its spell so thoroughly over Ercole that the lad stole away from fatherly influence and entered the sacred arena of Fisticus. The usual ceremony of banishment was held in the Balzac homestead one fine day, and a youth, with his soul full of pugilistic hopes, set foot on the long, long lash that leads to Championship-square.

HIS LITTLE GAME.

"There is a short cut to fame, we are told, and Balzac found it via the French amateur championships. Having secured the middleweight trophy, Ercole saw the sun shining along the professional path; and making one big dash for it, managed to land safely on his feet.

"With the greatest of goodwill, nobody could accuse Balzac of being a pretty boxer. He himself discards any such imputation. 'Fighting is my game,' says this hot-blooded Frenchman, and he has carried this maxim into the German trenches.

"For some reason or another best known to ever incomprehensible War Office authorities, Ercole was drafted to an ambulance corps when the present European slam commenced. That is perhaps in keeping with the modus operandi which sends good horsemen to the infantry, and keeps those who have never seen a gee—unless it be in 'a'ports—for cavalry regiments. However, Balzac found himself prowling around battlefields for knocked-out compatriots, and grumbled no little in the process.

WHY BALZAC WAS NOT FIGHTING.

"Time after time the lad asked to be sent to the firing line, for his fighting instincts rebelled at comparative inaction.

"There existed unsuspected reasons, however, why this should not be, for in his leisure moments Ercole had taken a keen delight in imparting some of the mysteries of the noble art to his captain and other officers of the company. To lose such an able mentor was more than his pupils could afford, so all Balzac's appeals

for more active service were silently vetoed.

"Then came a private trouble, from the old fountain known since the Garden of Eden days as Cherches la femme. 'I really must hie me to spill German blood!' quoth Ercole in his wrath; and, seeing much sympathetic force in the argument, the youth's superiors allowed him to proceed to the 'ranks of death,' that he might do a bit of 'minstrel boying.'

KNOCKED 'EM OUT WHOLESALE.

"Well, when Balzac did espy the Teutonic hordes, he just rattled lead into them at the rate of 200 shots per minute. For, you see, he was in charge of a mitrailleuse (machine-gun), and handled the death-dealer so dexterously that he was promoted sergeant. 'I shall never knock out so many men in the whole course of my life,' says Ercole, 'as I did in a few seconds with my coffee-grinder.' It is, furthermore, Balzac's firm opinion that, given the same weapon, he could lick Jess Willard and every other world's champion who ever lived, all in a bunch.

"Oh, no, he did not have things his own way all the time, for a lump of German shell, developing an affectionate tendency for Balzac, became altogether too amorous and laid him out.

WHEN HE FELT THE STING.

"'Lor' bless you, Mr. Lucas, I didn't feel the blow not half so much as a punch on the nose, and yet it compelled me to take the count.' That, by the way, is the point that rankles in Ercole's breast, and he is wondering whether the cooling system at present adapted to the modern quick-firing gun will prove effectual when next he handles one of these hell-fodder implements. It is generally admitted, I trow, that no German is fit for heaven. They must, therefore, miss Balzac's assistance below during his temporary inactivity. He is off to the front again in three weeks, however, so there will soon be a rise in Devil stock—and coal.

"It will be remembered that Balzac created some sensation in Australia with his ultra-rugged style of boxing. When Ercole is in a ring something is about to happen. Either he is going up like a rocket, or his opponent will be made to follow the same trajectory.

VALUE FOR MONEY.

"One can always depend upon a compressed St. Bartholomew massacre when planking down one's dibs at the pay-box to see Balzac perform. There are no half-measures with this heated fighter. 'Kill or cure' is the lad's motto, and he has shown us that, whether in a ring or facing the Huns, he has acted up to its very letter. His murderous methods are such that an extra strong contingent of Sydney police was always at the ringside, ready to intervene when Balzac 'warmed up to his work.' Without exception, this descendant of a pacific literary genius is undoubtedly the most heated pugilistic proposition extant when within the magic circle. Outside of it he is just one charming fellow, who would not harm a fly.

"Balzac will not be really happy, he tells me, until he has secured the world's middleweight crown. Here's luck!"

SCHOOLING UNRULY HORSES.

ROUGH-RIDER'S SPECIMEN DAY.

"Faith, sorr, it's the devil that's in him, and it's us, sorr, that will exercise him." The speaker is an Irish rough-rider with a "devil"-may-care expression on his clearly Irish face. He is one of the select little staff of the Military Remount Training Stables, Melton Mowbray, and the "him" of his speech is one of his charges, a wild horse sent there to be "converted." Horses that come to this spot are to be either cured, reformed, or converted, and this is done by means of the Irishman's "exercise."

The stables are quite romantic in their own equine way. In charge is Colonel Jones, a former Indian officer, who has ridden horses, trained horses, bred horses, and written horses, almost all his years. With him is Captain S. G. Saunders, former riding master of the 4th Dragoon Guards, who loves to take the very worst cases that come into the school for treatment. There are also four sergeants, all excellent horsemen, and a little group of seven civil rough-riders, whose ambition seems to be to get across the wildest thing on four legs and stick there. A sense of the real danger of their work seems to be missing. When the Irish rider already mentioned soared, spread-eagled, through the air his only comment was, "Shure, it's an angel I've been for a little while."

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