

MR. RIDGWAY'S OPPORTUNITY

WILL HE PROTECT OR PUNISH PRIZE FIGHTERS?

Slugger Corbett Declares He Will Fight Mitchell at Coney Island—The Kings County District Attorney Can Arrest All Those Concerned in the Match—If He Does Not Act Under the Law, Citizens May Ask for Warrants for the Arrest of the Sluggers and their Friends.

Citizens of Kings County are now asking each other whether District Attorney Ridgway is going to protect prize fighters from indictment, as he has protected Mayor Boody and other public officials.

The citizens have reason for asking the question, for "Pompadour Jim" Corbett, as the admiring plug-uglies of the country have christened the Californian who won the title of champion from John L. Sullivan, has come on from the West and announced, in that loud tone of voice which constitutes so important a part of his aggressiveness, that he is going to "fight" Charlie Mitchell, the pet slugger of England, at Coney Island.

Slugger Corbett does not say that he would like to fight Mitchell at Coney Island, or that he will fight him there if he can, but he says that he WILL fight the Englishman at Coney Island.

Furthermore, he states that he is going to fight Mitchell at Coney Island because he entered into an agreement to that effect with Judge Newton, the head of the Coney Island Athletic Club, an institution which exists for the purpose of arranging prize fights. Judge Newton is one of the judiciary of the town of Gravesend.

District Attorney Ridgway, who has shown such a remarkable knowledge of what wrongdoings he cannot punish under the law, must know that he can punish prize fighters. Section 458 of the Code of Criminal Procedure will tell him that prize fighting is a misdemeanor, punishable by a year's imprisonment. The punishment applies not only to the fighters, but to everybody concerned in arranging for the fight, and even to all who witness it.

And the law goes further than that, as District Attorney Ridgway will see if he will read Section 463 of the same good book. There he will learn that, if "to the best of his knowledge and belief" a prize fight is going to take place in the county where he is supposed to maintain law and order, he can apply to any magistrate of the county who has power to issue warrants for the arrest of all parties concerned and have them placed under heavy bonds.

Corbett says he WILL fight at Coney Island, and Judge Newton's club has offered a purse of \$40,000 for the fight between him and Mitchell. District Attorney Ridgway has not said he will not permit the fight to go on there, and the doubt that exists in the minds of the citizens of Kings County that he will interfere in any way is shown by the fact that among them there are individuals who have made known their willingness to apply for the warrants themselves.

Judge Moore of the Court of Sessions might grant the warrants, if any one took the trouble to ask him. Will Mr. Ridgway do so?

But whether Judge Moore has anything to do with enforcing the law or not, the citizens of Kings County are determined to find a Judge who will. They do not want to have any such gathering of the thieves, man killers, proudly exhibiting revolvers with notched butts, recording their murders; gamblers, and "pugs" as New-Orleans has witnessed at the fights which have been held there. The Corbett-Mitchell fight at Coney Island would, the citizens know, result in the dumping of the most dangerous and the most disreputable men in the country into the county, and they propose to prevent the invasion.

Corbett did not stay long in this city after his arrival from the West. Prize fighters do not like New-York. Superintendent of Police only Byrnes permits them to "fight" here when they have pillows on their hands and when the police are at the ringside to see that they do not hurt each other. A "fight" of this kind would undoubtedly be quite agreeable to Corbett and Mitchell, but unfortunately for them, such exhibitions bring only a forty-dollar purse, instead of one for \$40,000.

"Pompadour Jim" would not dare to say that he was going to fight Mitchell in New-York. He knows too well that he would immediately get a summons to visit Police Headquarters that he would not dare to disobey. He evidently has no fear of the administration of law in Kings County.

Why should he, indeed, when he knows that two of the great patrons of prize fighters have been elevated to the bench there?

With Justice Tighe figuring as referee or bottle holder at prize fights in Brooklyn, and Justice Newton as the President of the club under whose roof Corbett says he WILL fight at Coney Island, his confident assertion is not to be wondered at.

The stay of Corbett in this city, from which he went to his training quarters at Asbury Park, was quite long enough for him to talk. And when Corbett talks he talks hard. He is called "Windy Jim" by such of the plug-uglies as do not like him. One-half of the time and energy he has devoted to talking since he successfully swelled his own head by punching other people's would accomplish wonders if devoted to a good cause.

Corbett's talk was all about where he was going to fight. His every declaration was that he would fight at Coney Island and nowhere else, as he had agreed with Judge Newton to do.

"I am on the level," he said, "but still I am 'roasted' for wanting to fight. I am for Coney Island first, last, and all the time.

"I WILL fight Mitchell at Coney Island. Mitchell must fight me there. He must, and that is all there is to it. I do not care whether I fight, anyway. I have plenty of money and can live like a King for the rest of my life."

In saying that he did not care whether he fought, anyway, the reason of Corbett's insistence on fighting at Coney Island may be found.

Corbett says Mitchell agreed to fight him at Coney Island. Mitchell says Corbett agreed to fight him at Roby, Ind. Corbett says if Mitchell does not fight him at Coney Island he will claim the ten-thousand-dollar forfeit which was posted when the agreement to fight was signed. When asked if he did not think this action would be regarded as unsportsmanlike, he said he did not "care a —."

If Corbett is so anxious to fight Mitchell as he declares he is, it is rather queer that he insists on fighting before the Coney Island Club for a forty-thousand-dollar purse when the club at Roby offers \$45,000 for the fight. With Mitchell insisting on fighting at Roby, Ind., Corbett is perfectly safe from ever having to fight as long as he insists on fighting at Coney Island, and no doubt Corbett appreciates the fact. Besides, the situation gives him the grandest opportunity of his life to fight with his tongue.

Probably Corbett's prowess in this line will enable him to keep in the position of wanting to fight Mitchell without ever having to get into the ring with him. If the English fighter, who has not had much chance to distinguish himself since he walked the treadmill in a British prison, accedes to the terms Corbett now insists upon, Corbett can bring up some other question and gabble about it. So long as he can hold his position as a newspaper fighter—a position which has brought him into contempt even among the contemptible class in which he shines—probably Mr. Corbett will always be found wanting to fight at a place where the other man cannot meet him.