
EGAN, PIERCE. *Boxiana I. Etobicoke*. Ontario, Canada: Nicol Island Publishing, 1998. Pp. 443. Illustrations, appendix, glossary, index. \$50 U.S., hb.

The Nicol Island Publishers have done sport historians a great favor in reproducing Egan's classic, which has been out of print since 1828. Another publisher, now bankrupt, attempted incomplete editions in 1971, but the original has been largely unavailable with only four copies existent in North America (three in the United States, one in Canada). The task was accomplished by the tedious labor-intensive process of retyping the original in its entirety on a laptop computer. The reproduction remains true to the original, and *Boxiana I* is the first of a projected five-volume series.

Scott Noble provides a helpful introduction to the book, in which he clarifies issues of authorship and the ethnic and political reasons for the book's demise. Egan, a commoner of Irish descent and a popular writer, produced the *Lives of London*, which went through 50 editions; but *Boxiana*, his chronicle of the "fast life" during the regency period, fell out of favor in the more straight-laced Victorian era.

Egan opens his narrative with a defense of boxing, and proceeds with instructional techniques, Broughton's rules, and a history of the English sport throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Occasional footnotes provide humorous asides, but the bulk of the work covers a litany of the famous and not so famous pugilists in biographical sketches and career highlights, as well as Egan's commentary as "one of the fancy," closely associated with the principals. The account includes a women's challenge match and detailed points of honor and sportsmanship, which suggests that the latter nineteenth-century amateur code was not entirely wrought by gentlemen.

Numerous bouts are reported, many in round-by-round detail, complete with the changing betting odds. For those unfamiliar with the language and characters of the period, a useful glossary of slang words and references to contemporary figures is provided. An appendix includes the chants sung by supporters.

Overall, the work is a revealing social history that provides not only a glimpse into the common life and popular culture of England, but a lens for class, race, ethnic, and gender relations. Boxing matches provided clear implications for English masculinity and nationalism. The latter is clearly presented in the case of foreign competitors, and extensive coverage is given to the sojourns of African Americans Bill Richmond and Tom Molyneux. The book describes not only the fights, but the people, their modes of life, and the historical context in which they lived.

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