

# BOXIANA, Sketches of pugilism by Pierce Egan 1812



**T**he strength of man, it appears, chiefly consists of the power of his muscles, and that power is greatly to be increased by art. The muscles are as springs and levers, which execute the different motions of our body; but by art a man may give an additional force to them.

The nearer a man brings his

body to the centre of gravity, the truer line of direction will his muscle act in, and consequently with more resisting force. If a man designs to strike a hard blow, let him shut his fist as firm as possible; the power of his arm will then be considerably greater, than if but slightly closed, and the velocity of his blow greatly augmented by it. The

muscles which give this additional force to the arm, in shutting the fist, are the flexors of the fingers, and the extensors are the opposite muscles, as they open or expand the same; yet in striking, or using any violent efforts with your hands, these different orders of the muscles contribute to the same action. Thus it will appear that when you

close the fist of your left arm, and clap your right hand upon that arm, you will plainly feel all the muscles of it to have a reciprocal swelling. From hence it follows, that muscles, by nature designed for different office, mutually depend upon each other in great efforts. This consideration will be of much advantage in that artificial force in fighting, which beats much superior strength, where art is wanting.

The position of the body is of the greatest consequence in fighting. The centre of gravity ought to be well considered, for by that the weight of the body being justly suspended, and the true equilibrium preserved, the body stands much the firmer against opposing force. This depends upon the proper distance between the legs, which is the first regard a Boxer ought to have, or all his manly attempts will prove abortive. In order to form the true position, the left leg must be presented some reasonable distance before the right, which brings the left side towards the adversary; this the right handed man ought to do, that, after having stopped the blow with his left arm, which is a kind of buckler to him, he may have the same readiness and greater power of stepping in with his right hand's returning blow. In this posture he ought to reserve an easy flexion in the left

knee, that his advances and retreats may be the quicker.

By this proper flexion, his body is brought so far forward as to have a just inclination over the left thigh, inso-much that his face makes a perpendicular or strait line with the left knee ; whilst the right leg and thigh in a slanting line, strongly prop up the whole body, as does a large beam an old wall. The body by this means is supported against all violent efforts, and the additional strength acquired by this equilibrium, is greatly to the purpose. How much greater weight must not your adversary stand in need of, to beat you back from this forward inclining of the body, than the so much less resisting reclination of it. By this disposed attitude, you find the whole body gently inclining forward with a slanting direction, so that you shall find from the outside of the right angle all the way to the shoulder, a straight line of direction, somewhat inclining, or slanting upward, which inclination is the strongest position a man can contrive; and it is such as we generally use in forcing doors, resisting strength, or pushing forward any weight with violence, for the muscles of the left side, which bend the body gently forward, bring over the left thigh the gravitating part, which by this contrivance, augments the force; whereas, if it was

held erect or upright, an indifferent blow on the head, or breast, would overset it. The body, by this position, has the muscles of the right side partly relaxed, and partly contracted, whilst those of the left are altogether in a state of contraction; but the reserve made in the muscles of the right side, is as springs and levers to let fall the body at discretion.

By delivering up the power to the muscles of the left side, which, in a very strong contraction, brings the body forward, the motion which is communicated, is then so strong, that, if the hand at that time be firmly shut, and the blow at that instant pushed forward, with the contracting muscles, in a straight line with the moving body, the shock given from the stroke will be able to overcome a force, not thus artfully contrived, twenty times as great. From this it is evident, how it is in our power to give additional force and strength to our bodies, whereby we may make ourselves far superior to men of more strength, not seconded by art.

**Sound advice from 200years ago, that if followed will increase your punching power.**

**Will Thompson**