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THIS WONDERFUL WORLD

ONE Saturday night not very long ago a wrestler won a bout in Auckland. It was described as "the most spectacular and exciting bout witnessed in Auckland for some time."

On the following Monday night the same wrestler took part in a bout in Wellington. This time the newspaper description was even more adjectival: "One of the wildest and most sensational all-in wrestling contests ever seen in Wellington."

Well, I wonder. . . .

I wonder how tough a man has to be to last through the most spectacular and exciting bout for some time, travel a long distance before he has time for adequate rest, and almost immediately wrestle in one of the wildest and most sensational contests ever seen.

I have wondered a lot about wrestling. I wonder how any human foot can

stand being twisted, seemingly with the full weight and strength of a sixteen-stone opponent behind the twist, and still remain fit for immediate duty as soon as it is freed.

I have even wondered how it can be freed at all. But perhaps that is silly of me.

I have wondered why the hard pointed bone of an elbow does not cut the skin of a man's face when he is jolted by it with what seems to be great force.

I have wondered why a wrestler in a position which for normal people would mean at least one compound fracture shows no other physical signs of injury than a grimacing face.

I have wondered why men who grow so large, travel so far, work so hard, take such great risks of permanent disability, and endure such pain—I have wondered why they accept such small payments.

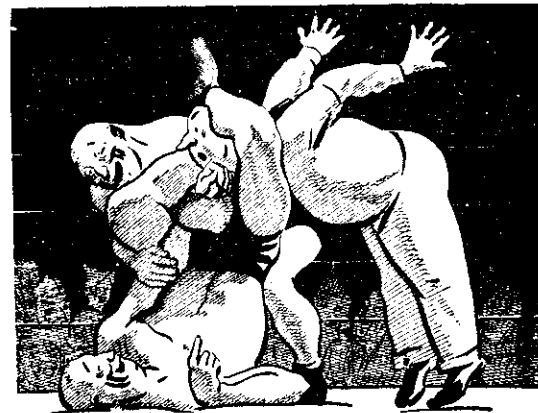
Once upon a time I used to wonder why more people were not hurt while wrestling when they were dumped and jumped upon. However, after a long period of investigation, and on the basis of information secured by paying for a seat and actually watching wrestling matches, I gradually came to the conclusion that when a wrestler is jumped upon he is not really jumped upon at all.

And then it occurred to me, after close observation of the famous technique of elbow-jolting, that an impartial observer had a choice between two verdicts in the matter. The first would be that a real elbow, properly jolted, and well aimed, would abrade the skin of a victim even more effectively than a bare fist used for a similar purpose. The second would be that any man who managed to get himself struck by an elbow jolt was so slow that he deserved to be hurt.

After that, it only remained to add a few therefore and consequentiallys and I had Q.E.D., which was not at all in favour of believing wrestlers ever gave elbow jolts meaning to hurt or disfigure.

I wondered also about the octopus clamp. Now, to clamp this on a man, it seems to me, you first must have him by the ankles or feet. You must then

Thoughts From A Ringside Seat At The Wrestling



persuade him to turn over and lie on his stomach. When he obliges, you sit on his upturned bottom, pull his feet towards you, and arch his back with the leverage thus obtained. This is very bad for his backbone indeed, if you weight sixteen stone and are not squeamish about sitting down really hard on the fulcrum of your system of levers.

Now, as this seemed to me to be a very complicated manoeuvre, and as I very seldom saw wrestlers voluntarily turning over on their stomachs, I often wondered how wrestlers who were not fast enough to avoid an awkwardly executed attack like an elbow jolt were yet fast and quick enough to make a man turn over when by all the rules of common sense he should be objecting strenuously. Apart from all that, I also wondered why any wrestler should be so foolish as to lie still long enough to permit his opponent to catch hold of both of his feet in the first place.

It seemed very strange indeed.

I have also wondered why a sport which presumably makes it necessary for its exponents to use a great deal of skill to avoid getting seriously injured, attracts many men who demonstrate the depth of their intelligence by raving, scowling, running round in circles, picking up chairs to use as weapons, abusing their opponents, abusing the audience, abusing and misusing the referee. This has sometimes seemed to me rather like a country's proving the virtues of its civilisation by pointing to the number of lunatic asylums it possesses. And yet, I think I must be wrong about this, because hundreds of people go to watch wrestling and listen to it described over the radio, and all these people surely can't be crazy?

Somehow, though, I still can't help wondering about wrestling.

That sport, of course, is not all I wonder about. I also wonder if there is any reason for many of the moving pictures I see, for many of the radio serials I hear, for cheap and dirty literature, smutty stories, bad gin, raw whisky, hot-water bottles, the statistics relating to notifiable diseases, and many of the cables in the newspapers.

And I wonder if standing on two legs instead of four really makes so much difference after all.

—S.B.

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