

# PARSON DAVIES RECOUNTS THE INCIDENTS OF HIS SPORTING CAREER AS LIFE EBBS AWAY

## Famous Fight Promoter Who Managed Peter Jackson and Joe Choynski Get Start in Game by Promoting Walking Match.

1910

CHICAGO, Feb. 25.—Time is hanging heavily over the head of Parson Davies, for years a character of the sporting world. Broken in health and having practically lost the use of one leg, the promoter of athletic events and backer and manager of some of the most famous prize fighters of a few years ago is confined to his room, 3320 Flournoy street, where he has been for weeks.

Only the rumbling of the elevated trains past his windows relieves the monotony of the long days and sleepless nights. His little grandniece, Edith Wilson, aged 7, cheers up the dark moments now and then as she trips in quietly, says "Hello, Uncle Charlie!" and plants a kiss upon the wrinkled face of her granduncle.

"There's an angel if there ever was one," he said as the bright-eyed little girl patted his hand and slowly moved toward the door.

"Were you ever married," was asked. "No," he said, with emphasis. "That's one of the things in life I did escape. But I've raised a family of six children, which were left practically homeless when my brothers died."

"Yes, he's the only father I have ever known, and he's been a good one to me," said Mrs. Harry G. Wilson, with whom the "Parson" now makes his home.

"Well, if I am through with life I go with the satisfaction of knowing that I lived honestly and spent my money in a just cause and brought up from childhood six boys and girls, every one of whom I am today proud of," continued the veteran sporting man.

### BORN IN IRELAND.

"I was born in the city of Antrim in the north of Ireland, July 7, 1851. I lost my mother when I was 7 years of age. At the age of 12 my father and I came to New York and a year later he, too, died. I was left an orphan and the world looked large to me.

"I had gone to school little and my

chances in life were anything but encouraging. Well, I just straightened up finally and said, Charles Edward (for that is my name) you must go to work. I applied for work in the old Putnam and was employed. I waited on table and worked in the saloon for Lawrence Kerr. He had known my father and naturally took a little interest in me. I worked there a long time and finally Lawrence Kerr, Jr., took his father's place of business. I saved my money and for my education I read the newspapers as best I could, having been taught to read before father died. I never went to school. At that I am pretty well posted now.

"Do you know where I got most of my learning in later years? By associating with people who knew more than I did and listening to them. I finally left the Putnam and got work around the New York clubs. I had occasion to meet Richard Croker when I was 17. I was a gabby kid, like most boys, but I had a good set of brains. The big politician talked to me and said: 'I'll get something good for you, Charlie.' Finally he came to me one day and said he had a place for me.

"You are going to be a policeman," he said.

### DECLINED JOB AS COP.

"My heart dropped back into place. A policeman I was determined I never would be. I thanked Mr. Croker, but declined to take the position. He asked me what I wanted. I told him I would rather be a conductor on the Fourth avenue street car line. That was when a conductor was lucky to bring a car back the same day he took it out. I never saw Croker after that, and he never gave me the job.

"Well, I finally came to Chicago, where my brother George had a saloon at Pórola and Madison streets. So I went to work for him. Another brother, Harry, was working for the Pinkertons in New York. He left them to go to the Spanish war.

"I finally saved up a little money and got interested in sports. John Ennis made me think he could beat Dan O'Leary in a 100-mile walking match. It was held in the old Exposition building on the lake front. Ennis proved a joke. He quit after going fifteen miles, and \$500 I had saved and invested in the race was wiped away.

"It was necessary to go to work again, and I finally drifted back to New York and promoted a big walking match between O'Leary, Ennis, Charles Harriman, Charles Rowell and others. It was here I got my nickname of 'Parson,' and it was W. K. Vanderbilt who was responsible for it.

"During the big match I usually walked around dressed in a black frock coat and Mr. Vanderbilt would come in and sit for hours and watch the men walking. One day he called Frank Davidson, an old Times reporter, over and asked him who that minister was talking to O'Leary. When told that I was not a minister he said, 'he ought to have been a parson.' That story was printed broadcast, and ever since then I have been known the world over as Parson Davies.

"From that day on I became interested in the sporting game. I was standing in my brother's place, 93 Clark street, one afternoon when a big, tall colored man stepped up and handed me a letter. I read it. It was from Mose Guntz of San Francisco. It introduced the colored man as Peter Jackson. He wore a tall hat, and he looked at least seven feet high. The letter said Jackson was all right and was anxious to get on some fights in the East. 'You can make no mistake with this fellow,' read Guntz' letter.

"Just then someone asked Jackson to have a drink. In a manner which really won me because of his cleverness, Jackson refused, saying he did not drink. I did not like the idea of handling a darky, but I read the letter again and looked Jackson over. I finally said I would take him and handle him for half; Jackson accepted, and I became the manager of the greatest fighter the world has ever seen.

### NEAR MATCH WITH JOHN L.

"I want to tell something right here that has never been told before. That is that John L. Sullivan once signed an agreement to meet Peter Jackson, and had it not been for an accident in which a boxer was killed at the Golden Gate Athletic club in San Francisco, which killed boxing for a time, these two great men would have met.

"Major Frank McLaughlin came to me with a dispatch from President Fulda of the California Athletic club. It was after I had returned from Paris with Jackson and the big black had developed into the greatest fighter of the age, in my opinion. Fulda sent a telegram to John L. Sullivan, asking: 'Will you fight Peter Jackson for \$15,000 purse? Answer on back of telegram.'

"Sullivan wrote this answer: 'Yes; I'll fight the nigger, winner take all.'

"McLaughlin showed that message to Peter Jackson as the big colored fellow was lying sick in his bed. Jackson read it and said: 'If Mr. Davies wants me to fight Sullivan I'll meet him in eight weeks.' McLaughlin sent that telegram back to Mr. Fulda, and I understand he still holds Sullivan's signature to the query.

"The death of a young man in the Golden Gate Athletic club a day later, which stopped all further boxing on the coast, caused the Jackson-Sullivan match to fall through.

"With all respect to Sullivan as a great fighter, I believe Jackson would have defeated him, just as sure as the sun rises and sets, had they met.

"Jackson never lost a fight while I had him. He defeated Patsy Cardiff, George Godfrey, Bill Farnam, Joe McAuliffe, Shorty Kincaid, Sailor Brown, Mike Lynch, Daddy Brennan, Ginger McCormick, Jem Young, Jem Smith, Jack Ashton, Joe Goddard and a lot of others. He fought a draw with Jim Corbett at San Francisco in 1891. He lost a battle with Jeffries when he was a sick man. Jeffries whipped him in three rounds, and Jackson died eight months later.