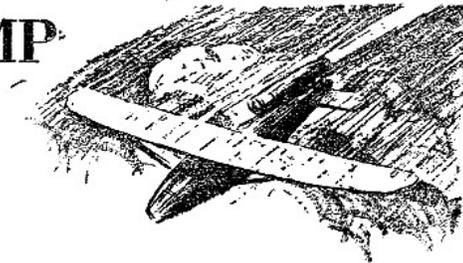


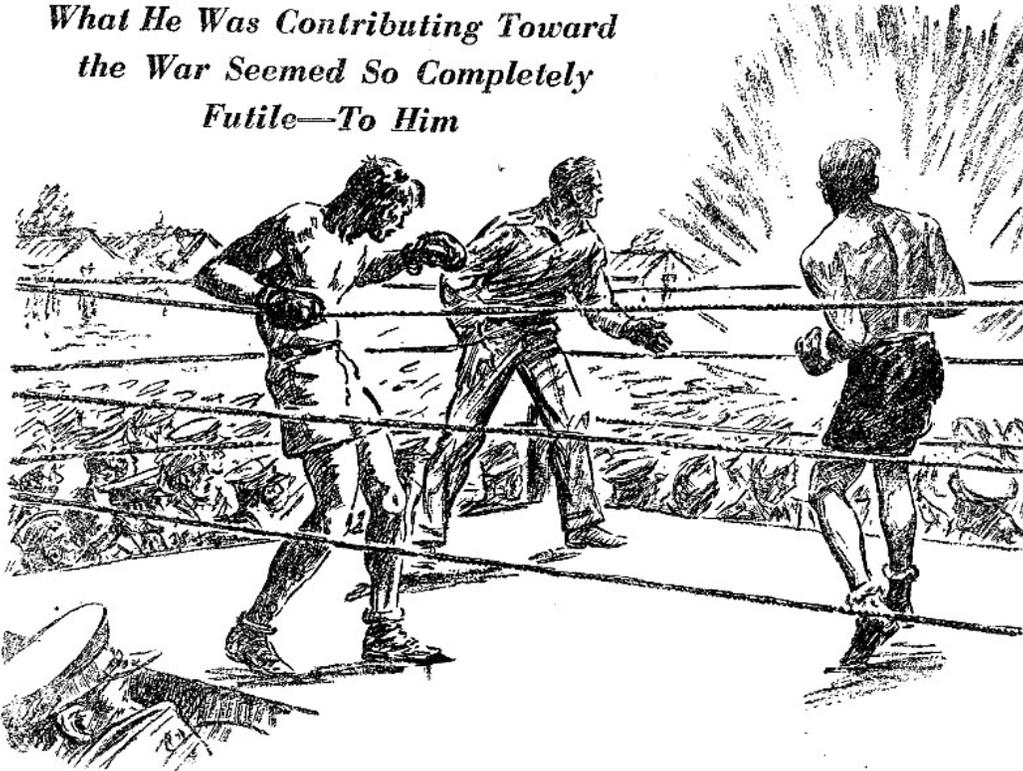
# BUZZ BOMB CHAMP

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*What He Was Contributing Toward  
the War Seemed So Completely  
Futile—To Him*



C.D.

IT WAS worse than Dinty Doyle had feared. Even from the comparative isolation of Sweeney's Gym in Brooklyn, where the idea had been conceived, Doyle had had premonitions on the matter, but now that the program was in progress, his former premonitions were mere gnat bites as opposed to the wasp stings of reality.

It wasn't the strangeness of the British Isles, the confusion of new customs nor the cool reserve of Englishmen which began to get Doyle down, it was a thing which grew within himself, and spread

through all his veins like fungus.

His manager, Juke Speegle, noticed it, of course, and worried audibly. Juke always worried audibly. In fact, his mental workings as a whole were usually shared with anyone who'd listen. He was equipped with an automatic record changer, which, undoubtedly, is why they called him Juke.

A man past middle age, he still bounced when he walked. He had been told too often he resembled the movie star James Gleason, and his faithful emulation of the Gleason walk, the tight-lipped,

hard-boiled mode of speech was more or less convincing.

As a manager of fighters he was tops. Dinty Doyle was not the first champ he had built, nor, probably, would he be the last. Juke's specialty was solving problems for his fighters, not only technical but mental. As yet, he hadn't given up on Doyle, but his resourcefulness was getting frayed. He showed it in the way he paced the room and worried his cigar.

They were quartered in a musty pub some miles northwest of London. The room was small and colorless. A fine rain beat against the window, and the air inside was heavy with Juke's smoke. Doyle stood before the window, looking out, his hands jammed in the pockets of his pants. His build was stocky for a welterweight, at least, it looked that way. It had fooled a lot of people, chiefly his opponents in the ring.

Juke Speegle rasped, "You ain't the same guy I brought over here. You remind me of stale beer. Let's get this business straightened out. Now, what the hell is wrong with you?"

Dinty Doyle turned slowly from the window. His face was square, unhandsome. It showed old marks of battle, but they sat upon it well with no suggestion of disfigurement. His eyes were blue, well-spaced and clear. They focused with sharp accuracy on anything they touched. He said to Juke:

"I'm not quite sure what's wrong with me."

Juke snarled, "Aw, nuts! You know what's wrong, and so do I."

"Okay, okay," agreed Doyle mildly. "So I know."

"Okay, you know. Then why deny that you ain't got the right sort of guts to finish what you started? It was your idea to come over here, not mine."

"You didn't have to come."

"Who *says* so?"

"Skip it." Doyle pushed square fingers through his sandy hair. He said, "About those guts you mentioned. Maybe you're wrong. Maybe I just got sense enough to know I'm wastin' my time here."

**J**UKE expelled an angry grunt. He chewed on his cigar, controlled himself, and said with masterful restraint:

"Look, kid, we've been over this before. You stopped too many left hooks with your ear. Your draft board turns you down. You ain't got a prayer to pack a gun. Then you get yourself all lathered up with patriotism. You gotta do your part. You figure the G. I.s over here would like to see the welter champ in action. Okay, you was right. They're nuts about you. Has any dog-face ever made the crack that you was yella?"

"Well—no," admitted Doyle. "They've treated me okay."

"Then what's the beef?"

Doyle gave the matter thought, then said, "Well, damn it, Juke, it just don't *seem* I'm doin' anything a movie dame with nifty gams couldn't do a whole lot better. Maybe I'm a dope, but I like to get results I can *see*. Now look, if I was to go home and get a job in a defense plant, I could *see* I was doin' something useful. I could touch it and—"

"Yep," Juke cut him short. "You are a dope. Take my word—I've seen a lot of 'em. You're doin' good here, kid, damn good. You'll feel a lot better after meetin' Lefty Flynn tomorrow—if he doesn't cool ya."

"Huh?"

"You heard me. If he doesn't hang a kayo on your kisser. And he'll do it, kid, unless you snap but of your daze. Some of this damned English fog has sneaked into your brain."

"I'll take 'im."

“Yeah? I wonder.”

Doyle forced a grin, and said, “I get it. The old needle.” He whizzed a left past Speegle’s nose, just missing the cigar. “Relax, pal. Just the thought of that mug puts me back in shape.”

DOYLE believed this to be true, and the conviction did not start to dim until fight time pulled around next day. It was then that Dinty Doyle knew something had gone wrong. His nerves were not behaving as they should. They should be singing like telegraph wires in a high wind. That’s the way he wanted them before a fight. Today, however, they were toneless.

As he changed to ring togs in a Nissen hut, he tried to lift himself up to his customary pre-fight tension, the sort of tension necessary for the brand of fight he faced today. Lefty Flynn was no palooka. Far from it. He was one of the logical contenders for the crown. He had waged a loud-mouthed, vituperative campaign to gain a match with Doyle back home, but after the papers had been signed young Flynn had had no chance to meet the champ. The Army grabbed Flynn for a different sort of fight.

It was a perfect spot for Flynn, or probably his manager, to tell the world just what they *would* have done to Dinty Doyle. They had laid it on so thick that Doyle had hoped with simmering fury that the war would send Flynn back to him.

The fight today was a thing of sheer coincidence. Doyle’s tour of the camps had been arranged on careful schedule. It happened that Flynn was training in a camp on Doyle’s itinerary, a fact which made the fight no less a natural.

Excitement was running high, and Doyle knew he should share in that excitement. He was about to get a certain man inside the ropes, a man his fists had

itched to maul. Yet his fists weren’t itching now. He wondered why—a subterfuge to gain time with his thoughts, because he knew the answer. Not even a match with Lefty Flynn was able to subdue the gnawing belief that Dinty Doyle was fighting the war the easy way. He was doing what he wanted to do most—box.

He pulled on his bathrobe and headed for the outdoor ring. The weather had cleared, and the sun was finding its way occasionally through patches of high clouds. Juke Speegle maintained a steady line of gab.

“Swell day, nice and cool. Just what the doctor ordered for ya, kid. Cripes, look at that mob!” He groaned. “And not a paid admission in the lot. We could retire, Dinty, on a gate like that. Oh well, there’s a war on. Look, we’ve got our own private M. P.s to take us to the ring. Important, what?”

A group of grinning M. P.s closed about them to escort them through the excited crowd of G. I.s. Doyle heard his name yelled from all sides. He waved a taped hand automatically. The M. P.s cleared a path, and soon Doyle was seated on his stool in the elevated ring.

Flynn had not showed up yet. Normally Doyle did not mind waiting, but of late he had found it an ordeal. It gave him time to wonder what the soldiers were really thinking, despite the honest sound of their ovation.

How could they *help* but resent the fact that a healthy guy like Doyle was not in uniform? His unfitness for active service had been well publicized, it’s true. Juke Speegle had seen to it. Nevertheless, Doyle felt ashamed and bitterly resentful. The thing he was contributing toward the war seemed so completely futile, so barren of results.

He felt the pressure of Juke’s hand

upon his shoulder. Juke said, "Come out of your fog, kid. You ain't got much time left. This ain't no game of patty-cake we're waitin' for. It's a championship fight, kid, and Flynn knows it if you don't. He'll claim the title if he licks ya. It'll raise hell with our tour, kid. It might even wash you up with the G. I.s. Snap out of it."

"I'll take 'im," Dinty Doyle said tonelessly.

"Okay, chump," snarled Juke. "But you've only got six rounds to wake up from your nap."

Lefty Flynn climbed through the ropes about that time, and Doyle felt it belated flicker of interest travel through his nerves. Flynn was a smooth, streamlined looking number. He was handsome in a tough, hard-featured way. He liked himself. It showed in the carriage of his head, and in the scarcely concealed arrogance of his gestures. He looked across the ring at Doyle, and let his lips twist slightly at the corners. It was not a smile of welcome.

Flynn got a big hand from the crowd, almost as big as the one Doyle had received. Doyle read the significance in this. It meant the G. I.s figured Lefty Flynn to be red hot, with a chance, perhaps to jolt the champ loose from his crown—unofficially, at least.

Doyle recognized the spark of warning, but couldn't fan it to the proper flame. His lethargy was not dispelled while Juke was lacing on his gloves, eight-ounce mitts, too bulky to suit Doyle.

Flynn was patronizing as they met for introduction in the center of the ring. Cockiness stuck out all over him, together with an undertone of wicked satisfaction that at last his chance had come to meet the champ.

They went back to their corners, shed their bathrobes and waited for the bell.

Doyle faced the ring, and noted Lefty Flynn's superb condition. The man was trained down to the last ounce. He was symmetrical in build, wedge-shaped. Built for speed, in sharp contrast to Doyle's stockiness. The bell clanged, and he danced into the ring. Doyle shuffled out to meet him.

Flynn didn't kid around. He whipped a swift right jab. It smacked high on Doyle's face. Doyle shook it off and tried to hook his right to Flynn's body. Flynn moved clear of it, and grinned derisively. Then he stepped in fast and let his own right go. Doyle barely managed to block it with his elbow, but he could feel the solid force of it. The guy could hit.

Doyle moved away, realizing, with annoyance, that he couldn't force the fight just yet. He had to mark time for awhile in order to get a working knowledge of Flynn's style. Doyle didn't like to give ground, but he had to.

Flynn had the advantage of him at the moment. Dinty Doyle had tackled numerous southpaws in his day, but, in preparation for the fights, he had provided himself with southpaw sparring partners. It made a difference, a big difference. Doyle hadn't met a lefthander since his arrival in the British Isles, and his technique was badly rusted. He dug into his memory doggedly to unearth the things he'd learned. He was pressed for time. Six rounds was a short fight.

**L**EFTY FLYNN knew what was going on, and he made the most of it. He stuck to Doyle like a barnacle, making him look bad. At first he peppered Doyle from long range, then gaining confidence, moved in and landed a few stingers. Flynn's backers in the crowd began to yell.

Doyle kept his head, and studied Flynn. Slow panic tried to force itself on

Doyle when he began to realize that his brain was slow in picking up the things he sought. His thoughts were behaving sluggishly as if some outer force were slowing down their normal speed.

He refused to let the panic gain a foothold: As an antidote, he went on the offensive, realizing such tactics, at this time, weren't sound, but realizing, even more, the need to caulk the chink in his morale.

He took more of a plastering than he handed out, which was not usually the case in most of his important fights. Doyle's greatest asset was his amazing durability, but he combined with this a deceptive skill and speed. He looked like a slugger, but possessed a subtle timing which often baffled his opponents.

His timing was not working now, however, to its full efficiency. Something was slightly out of gear, and Flynn took full advantage of it. He ripped in several wicked blows, and seemed puzzled by the casualness with which Doyle absorbed them.

Dinty Doyle got in a couple of his own. The best one came in time to boost his morale several pegs. Carrying the fight to his opponent, he forced Flynn to give ground. Flynn gave it smartly, though, and made Doyle pay for it. He jolted Doyle with hooks and jabs, until Doyle pinned Flynn back against the ropes.

Flynn should have clinched. Instead, he tried to slide into the clear, throwing a diverting jab at Doyle which he hoped might help him make his get-away.

Doyle ducked the jab, and slammed a right hook to Flynn's ribs. It landed with an explosive force which brought a racking grunt from Flynn. He clinched in a hurry after that, and hung on until the referee separated them. His knees were still a little wobbly when they broke away, but Dinty Doyle did not have time to

follow his advantage. The bell broke in.

Doyle went to his corner thoughtfully. The pounding he'd received, together with the solid blow he'd landed, had restored his balance somewhat. He was reasonably certain, now, he could weather almost anything Lefty Flynn dished out, providing he didn't let Flynn get a toe hold. He believed, too, that if he crowded the southpaw aggressively enough, he could ultimately floor Flynn for the count.

Doyle realized vaguely he should find a solid satisfaction from this knowledge, but the satisfaction, somehow, did not materialize. It didn't seem to matter. He had lost his zest for fighting of this type, and he didn't seem to give a damn.

Juke Speegle did, however. He talked till he was purple in the face, and that was something for the books. Talking, as a rule, was effortless for Juke.

Doyle listened, nodded doubtfully, but scarcely heard the things Juke said. He went back for the second round, and took up where he'd left off in the first.

Having once mapped out his strategy, Dinty Doyle stuck to it. He forced the fight, kept barging straight ahead, never letting Lefty Flynn get firmly set for a lethal punch, a fact which didn't seem to bother Flynn excessively.

He didn't have to worry about lethal punches. He was getting in plenty of the other sort which win a fight quite as effectively. Having sampled the devastating force behind Doyle's mitts, Flynn seemed content to let it go at that. He was not ashamed to move away, and to out-box Doyle as he did so. He landed five punches to Doyle's one, and when Doyle's landed they were not decisive. They always landed on a moving target.

Doyle kept on plugging, though. It was easier that way, easier than forcing his lethargic brain to the great task of figuring out Flynn's style. He'd soon get in the

paralyzing punch he needed. He was sure of it.

His dogged confidence lasted for five rounds, despite the pleas of Juke, who was beginning to show signs of apoplexy. There was little change in the pattern of the fight. Dinty Doyle kept boring in, and, as a consequence, absorbed a fine, artistic pasting. More graphically, the champ was getting licked, but plenty. The crowd was bellowing now for Lefty Flynn to make the kill.

In the final period between rounds, Juke Speegle seemed burnt out. His voice was dull, his motions automatic. He said: "You're licked, kid. You're washed up. You've done a fine, sleep-walkin' job. He'll stay away from you this round. You couldn't catch him in a jeep. I'm sorry, kid, damn sorry. It ain't the way I wanted it to happen."

"I'll get 'im," Doyle said doggedly.

"What with, a lasso?"

"What round is it?"

"The last one, kid. The wind-up."

Doyle stiffened on his stool. "Well, I'll be damned!" he said.

He hadn't known the fight was almost over. He'd lost all count of rounds. For the first time he realized he was in a serious mess, and the knowledge sliced through his abstraction like a scalpel.

"I'll get 'im," he repeated, and his voice was edged now with a sharp conviction.

**H**E MET Flynn for the token handshake in the center of the ring. They stepped apart, then Doyle went after him. His thoughts, for the first time, were clear, concise. Having wasted the first five rounds in slugging, he knew he'd have to keep it up. It was his only chance. There was no time, now, to figure out the finer points of Flynn's defense.

Doyle went about the business with a

savage singleness of purpose. His stamina was still with him, and he pulled the string on what was left. He tried to corner Flynn, but the southpaw was too smart for him.

Flynn had studied Doyle's style, even though Doyle had failed to study Flynn's. Flynn climbed upon his bicycle, contenting himself with long-range pecks, while Dinty Doyle cut great chunks from the English ozone.

It was clever fighting on Flynn's part, but the G. I.s didn't like it. They left the fact be known in loud and salty terms. Flynn saw the prospects of his certain victory being dimmed and fobbed of luster by this final round. Doyle, watching shrewdly, saw the thoughts revolving in Flynn's mind. Doyle wasn't caught entirely napping, then, when Flynn decided it was time to show the world he wasn't scared of Doyle.

It happened near the center of the ring. Doyle had just missed with a roaring hook when Flynn decided that the time was ripe. He let go with a wicked left. It came in too fast for Doyle to block, but Doyle saw it start in time to bend his knees a trifle. As a result, the blow which would have smashed into his solar plexus landed instead upon the reinforced area of his chest. It rocked Doyle back, but didn't hurt him much.

When he saw Flynn brace himself to follow through with a right hook, Doyle stepped in fast and let his own right go.

In his eagerness to get inside Flynn's swing, Doyle overlooked the fact that a southpaw's feet are placed just opposite to those of a right hander. When Doyle stepped in, therefore, his left foot came down upon the toe of Flynn's extended right.

Having started his all-out swing, Doyle couldn't stop it. Flynn may have seen the wallop coming, but, with his right foot pinned to the canvas, he couldn't move

away from it. A swift befuddlement seemed to grab him, because he didn't even try to duck the hook, or to roll away from it. As a consequence, it smashed against his jaw with everything Doyle had behind it.

Flynn hit the mat, cold as a mint julep, but, even before he landed, a flash of horror stabbed through Dinty Doyle. He hadn't meant to step on Flynn's foot. He didn't want to win a fight that way. He didn't want to have a mark like that upon his conscience. He hated dirty fighting, and had always tried to keep his own style scrupulously clean.

When the referee stopped counting over Flynn, Doyle went up to him and said:

"When I threw that punch, I had Flynn's right foot pinned down with my left. It was an accident, but it may have been the reason I kayoed him."

The referee stared at him and said, "Well I'll be damned. It happened so fast I didn't see it, and apparently none of the boys out front saw it. Listen to 'em yell. You gave 'em the sort of action they expected of you. Better forget about it, Dinty."

Doyle shook his head. "I'd rather have you tell the boys what happened," he insisted doggedly.

"Okay," said the official.

He held up his hand for silence, then made the announcement while Doyle waited miserably, wondering how the G. I.s would accept it. He was prepared for almost anything except the thunderous ovation he received.

Grinning, the referee said, "There's your answer, Dinty. Those G. I. kids are tough, but it looks as if they like straight shooting. Hell, I'm proud of 'em."

Lefty Flynn had been carried to his stool. He was coming around now, looking about him groggily. Doyle went over to

him. Flynn's eyes cleared swiftly, heating with rage as they rested upon Doyle.

Doyle said, "I'm sorry, Flynn. Damn sorry. I didn't mean to pin you down."

Flynn snarled, "You lie, you phoney champ! I had you licked, and if I live through this war I'll prove it to you. That is, if you've got guts enough to climb in the ring with me again."

"Sure, Flynn," Doyle answered wearily. "We'll have another match."

Doyle went back to his corner. A sober Juke awaited him, Juke said:

"It worked out fine, kid, after all. And I'm proud to be your manager."

"Skip it," said Doyle gruffly. "Let's get out of here,"

**T**HE tour went on, up and down, back and forth across the surface of the British Isles. It continued, obviously, to be a big success—to everyone but Dinty Doyle.

Apparently, so far as the G. I.s were concerned, he was still the champ, despite the unpleasant incident of his fight with Flynn. If the incident had raised doubts in the minds of the G. I.s, they didn't show it. They jammed the exhibition bouts and yelled their heads off.

But Dinty Doyle remained morose. His condition, if anything, grew worse. Even his ring work took a sloppy turn. He boxed mechanically, and was fortunate in his opponents. A man of any caliber at all could probably have cooled him. As it was, he was lucky to be opposed by men who, at the best, were average amateurs.

Even Juke succumbed to moments of unaccustomed gloom. "You re actin' like a zombie," he lamented bitterly. "What's eatin' you?"

"Flynn said I was a phoney champ. The guy was right."

"Oh nuts!" rasped Juke. "You could lick 'im any time you wanted to if you

used your head.”

“I know I could.”

“Then what the hell? What’s phoney about you?”

“I ain’t doin’ any more to help the war than an educated chimpanzee could do. Maybe not as much. The only uniform they’ll let me wear is a pair of trunks, and I can’t stand much more of it.”

“You mean you’re goin’ to quit?”

“Call it quittin’ if you want to. I figure I could do more good runnin’ a lathe. Let the actors entertain the guys. That’s their business.”

“You’re mule-headed like a mule,” said Juke.

“Maybe,” said Doyle doggedly. “But that’s the way it is. I’ll finish the bouts you’ve got me booked for. If you sign up for any more, I’ll walk out on you.”

Juke’s face went tight. “It’s your funeral, guy,” he said.

Doyle didn’t change his mind. He finished his assigned bouts, forcing Speegle to announce the tour was ended. The announcement brought a colonel with an earnest plea for Doyle to continue his good work. Doyle stuck to his convictions with the bitterness of a stubborn, disillusioned man.

On the way to the port from which they’d sail for home, they spent the night in a small town southeast of London. Doyle tossed restlessly on his bed while Speegle sampled English beer down in the pub.

Juke carne back to the room before Doyle expected him. There was a subdued excitement about Juke, tempered with a beery slyness. He had something on his mind. He started a round about preamble, when Doyle cut him short.

“Let’s have it straight,” he said.

Juke looked hurt, then shrugged with resignation. “Lefty Flynn’s in a hospital just outside of town.”

Doyle sat suddenly up in bed. “Hurt bad?”

“Not hurt at all. In my day we called it shell shock. Now they call it battle fatigue. His nerves are shot. They say it’s a bad case. I was talkin’ to a hospital orderly. He says Flynn’s probably through for good.”

“That’s tough,” said Dinty soberly.

“Tougher on Flynn than on most guys,” said Juke. “A lot of folks in the fight game’ll be dirty enough to call ‘im yella. I’m sorry for him. Let’s go see ‘im.”

“What for?”

“They say he just sits and stares at the wall. Maybe we could snap him out of it.”

“Suit me,” Doyle agreed.

THEY called at the hospital next morning. A medical captain took them to Flynn’s room. As they entered, Flynn was sitting on the bed, staring into space. Suffering was stamped deeply on his face. His eyes were dead and lifeless. It was a shocking thing to see, and quick pity surged through Dinty Doyle.

Flynn’s head turned slowly, but his eyes were slow in focusing on his visitors. The lifelessness remained for several seconds, then gave way slowly to glint of recognition. The glint changed into a glare, and anger stamped itself upon Flynn’s face. His lips moved, noiselessly at first, then words came out:

“You dirty, stinkin’ heel,” he gritted hoarsely. “So you had to sneak around to see how a yella soldier looks. You’re here to laugh at me because I’m yella. Why damn your lousy hide, I ain’t so yella I can’t knock *you* kickin’.”

He came off the bed with a speed which took everybody by surprise, including Doyle. Flynn’s round-house wallop might have floored Doyle for the count, if Flynn hadn’t tossed it so haphazardly. It glanced from the side of Doyle’s skull and did no damage. The

husky captain moved in fast and grabbed Flynn's arms. The captain snapped:

"Beat it, Doyle!" then ordered, "Wait for me outside."

Doyle and Juke obeyed promptly, closing the door behind them. They were still trying to collect themselves when the doctor joined them. He was excited. He said:

"Battle fatigue is a funny business, but something's happened to Flynn which none of us thought possible. Almost literally, you've brought him back to life, and if you'll play ball with us, there's a chance to salvage a good soldier."

A slow confused excitement was finding its way into Doyle's nerves. Juke Speegle, though, was first to speak. He said:

"Sure, we'll play ball with you."

"Here's the angle," said the captain eagerly. "Flynn's brain has come suddenly to life, and the idea is to keep it that way. He wants another fight with you. He wants it bad, and fast. There's a good ring in a camp near here, and if you'll meet Flynn in a bout this afternoon—well, anything might happen—I mean, Flynn just *might* snap out of it. It's worth a chance."

"Fix it up," said Doyle. "I'll fight 'im."

Things moved so fast from that point on that Dinty Doyle had little chance to think the matter over clearly. He only knew his own lethargy had left him. For the first time since reaching England he could feel the clean, trimmed-down sensation which he liked before a fight. He believed, at first, it was caused by this unexpected chance to prove he *could* lick Flynn without stepping on Flynn's foot, but the theory didn't satisfy him. It was something deeper, having to do directly with the fact that this bout was infinitely more important than an exhibition bout.

The feeling of alert sharpness was still with him, as he climbed through the

strands and sat tautly on his stool. The fight, despite its impromptu nature, was well attended. The G. I.s were packed scores deep about the ring, and Doyle caught the feeling of tenseness which pervaded them. The word had spread, and they were accepting this as a return bout—a grudge fight.

When Lefty Flynn straddled through the ropes and took his seat, he was far removed from the dull, listless soldier Doyle had seen that morning. Incredibly, Flynn looked drawn to a fine edge, was being held that way through the simple medium of his hate for Doyle. Intuition told Doyle this. He also knew that the better fight he made of it, the more securely Flynn's hatred would stay rooted. It seemed an important factor at the moment.

Small doubts, inevitably, began to pester Doyle. He could not help but recall his clumsiness against Flynn's left-hand style the time before. Why should it be different this time? Doyle had had no practice in the interim with southpaws.

**T**HE starting gong clanged loudly, and the doubts persisted as Doyle started for the center of the ring. In sharp contrast, there were no doubts about Flynn's movements. He met Doyle better than halfway. He shot a right jab, then sent his whistling left right after it.

Doyle moved instinctively, not knowing exactly what he did. He slipped the jab, and moved in fast inside the left. It was a bit of high-speed timing which, by the standards of the previous fight, Flynn obviously did not expect.

Flynn's body was wide open, and Doyle's right was cocked. Doyle could have buried it to the wrist in Flynn's mid-section, he could have smashed it home with a savagery which might have decided the outcome of the fight right then.

But Doyle didn't send it home, not to the soft spot underneath the ribs. It was as if some unseen hand had tapped his elbow hard enough to send the punch against Flynn's breast bone. An outside warning told Doyle that the fight should not be ended yet. There were strange elements, tenuously balanced, which had to be considered first.

It surprised Doyle to be ruled thus, but he let it ride. He whammed the wallop home with sufficient force to prove that he hadn't pulled the punch.

Flynn was surprised, too. He rocked back upon his heels, sucked in his wind, and then moved away. Doyle followed steadily, and Flynn, still unconvinced, came in again. He feinted with his left and threw his right in a short hook. It was a trick he had employed with success before, but this time it didn't work. Doyle reached across the hook and landed a snappy left upon Flynn's face.

Flynn jockeyed about to consider what had happened. It suited Doyle, because Doyle had some considering of his own to do. He found, to his amazement, that he was no longer befuddled by Flynn's southpaw style.

Things were coming back to him, things which he had learned and memorized about left-handers. They returned and found a solid toe-hold in a mind which was clearer, more alert, than it had been for months. It was a miracle Doyle could not stop to analyze. He had other things to do, because Flynn showed a quick adaptability.

Flynn did not let the unexpected change in Doyle confuse him. He showed symptoms of ring greatness by his calm acceptance of the change, and by the prompt adjustment of his style to meet it. He recognized in Doyle a more formidable opponent than he'd met before, a fact which seemed to please Flynn rather than

discourage him. Doyle felt a reluctant admiration for the man.

Instead of trying to pile up long-range points while retreating from Doyle's dogged style of moving forward constantly, Flynn's broke his backward movements frequently by sudden savage forays. He would whip in at unexpected times with slashing fists. His raids were nicely timed, well screened, and Doyle could not escape their fierce effect.

Doyle took a pounding, but, this time, he handed out as much as he received. Flynn seemed willing to absorb more punishment than before, but he soaked it up in a casual way which showed him to possess more stamina than Doyle had believed.

The first three rounds were of the sort which raise fans to hysteria. The G. I.s were no exception. They knew they were seeing something of terrific import, the kind of battle that makes history. The roar was constant, but the men inside the ring seemed unaware of it. The sole concern of each was to pound the other to unconsciousness.

At least it looked that way. Doyle wasn't thinking of that angle, though, and he wondered at the curious deviation of his thoughts. It seemed incredible, but licking Flynn seemed unimportant in comparison to the greater issue of Flynn's state of mind. Doyle was getting more enjoyment from this fight than from any he had ever known, but his enjoyment came from Flynn's unquestionable return to normalcy. Doyle couldn't understand it—quite.

They came out for the fourth round. Both men were battered, but still full of fight. It was in the early minutes of that round that Doyle began to believe he was Flynn's master. He had solved Flynn's style, and believed he could kayo Flynn when he wanted to.

Such speculation, though, was turned aside with cataclysmic violence. The whole world seemed to leap into a thundering void. Time stood still. Doyle's mind went blank with shock.

**H**IS first confused impression was that he had stopped Flynn's Sunday punch, and that the fight was over. But he found himself still on his feet, and gradually he knew that the explosion hadn't happened in his head. It had happened some way off, a concussion of such violence that the air still trembled from it.

Doyle's mind cleared as impressions came in swift and accurately. A giant bomb had caused the thunderous explosion. It had not come from a Nazi plane, because no air-raid warning had been sounded. The deduction, then, was obvious—a buzz bomb—one of those frightful carriers of death, a German robot bomb. It had undoubtedly flown wide of its intended target, the London area, had exploded harmlessly in open country.

When these thoughts clicked, Doyle's eyes flashed back to Flynn, and suddenly Doyle's blood congealed in horror. Flynn was standing rigidly. There was hopeless, insane terror in his eyes. His lips were moving stiffly, but no sound came out. His mind was probably back upon the battlefields of France where he had first succumbed to sounds of battle which had ripped his nerves apart and left him filled with screaming fear. He was a pitiable sight.

Doyle never knew just why he did the thing he did just then. His action stemmed from inspiration, rather than from logic, yet he never had performed more logically in all his life.

A quick glance showed him that the G. I.s startled eyes were still turned in the direction of the explosion. The men in the

ring had been forgotten momentarily. It was probable no one had noticed Flynn's unconquerable terror.

Doyle moved in. He planted his left foot firmly on Flynn's right, then rocked Flynn with a mild hook to the head. Flynn's arms jerked up instinctively, but the glaze of fear stayed in his eyes.

Doyle hit him again, not hard, but hard enough. He hit him a third time, still keeping his foot firmly planted upon Flynn's. A fourth jolt did the business. Flynn suddenly realized what was going on. Fear left his face to be replaced by a look of violent outrage. And then hate leaped full-formed into his eyes, the hate of memory, hate strong enough to wipe away his fear.

He snarled, "You stinking rat!" and jerked his foot from under Doyle's.

He almost nailed Doyle then in the blazing fury of his attack. Doyle was hard put to defend himself. He was glad when the bell rang, but Flynn didn't hear it. The referee, back in the spirit of the fight again, grabbed Flynn and hauled him to his corner.

An officer climbed into the ring. He told the G. I.s, "That buzz bomb was probably accidental, but if you want to watch this fight, spread out. I want fifty feet at least between each man."

There was grumbling, but obedience. One G. I. toward the back yelled, "Hell, I need binoculars!"

Lefty Flynn seemed unaware of the interruption. He sat forward on his stool, glaring savagely at Doyle. Doyle prayed for the bell to start the fifth, hoping it would come before Flynn's anger had a chance to ebb.

It clanged in time. Flynn came out like a wounded tiger, but there was a cunning caution in him, too. He didn't let his rage intrude too much upon his style. His coordination was intact.

Doyle fought coolly, holding his own, and a little more. There was a nasty moment when another bomb exploded, probably a trifle closer than the other. Doyle expected Flynn to go to pieces. Flynn froze an instant.

Doyle stepped back. Flynn looked toward the explosion, and then he looked at Doyle.

**I**T WAS a taut and vital moment. Doyle stepped deliberately on Flynn's foot again, and Flynn responded with a curse and a wild haymaker. The roundhouse almost caught Doyle napping, but he ducked it just in time.

Flynn came at him, grinning now. A light of joy was leaping in Flynn's eyes, because he knew he'd found himself. The sound of the second bomb explosion hadn't paralyzed him. He'd shrugged it off. He'd found a new and solid foothold upon life. Clear sanity was in his eyes again. There wasn't even room for rage.

Flynn should, at least, have hung on to his hatred. Without it, he was no match for Dinty Doyle. Flynn fought now, as if he loved it. Well, Doyle loved it too, and it came upon him now that he was still the champ.

He fainted Flynn into a knockout effort with his lethal left. Flynn threw the left. Doyle let it slide across his shoulder, and came up with a crashing right. It exploded

like a buzz bomb on Flynn's jaw. It whirled Flynn half around, and dropped him to the canvas for the count. No doubt about it, Dinty Doyle *was* still the champ.

Flynn came to in his corner. Doyle went over to him. Flynn said:

"Thanks, Champ, for carrying me along."

Doyle said, "I didn't carry you."

"You're not *that* dumb," snapped Flynn. "You know damn well what I mean."

"Skip it," Doyle said. Then, as he turned away, "Good luck, Lefty."

Juke seemed bewildered by it all. Some of the angles had passed over him. He said cautiously:

"This fight has changed you, kid. Maybe we'll stay over here awhile yet. Huh?"

"Yeah. We'll stay."

Gaining confidence, Juke said, "That's great news, kid. I knew a clean knockout over Flynn would change your mind."

"Do you think *that's* why I'm staying?"

Juke thought it over, then admitted, "No, I guess I don't. You've put across a business no trained chimpanzee could have swung. You haven't saved a life, exactly, but I guess it's even better than just that. You've—"

"Skip it," said Doyle gruffly.

"Okay, kid," grinned Juke. "Okay."