



James J. Corbett: A Biography of the Heavyweight Boxing Champion and Popular Theater Headliner

Armond Fields

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When he died in 1933, James J. "Gentleman Jim" Corbett was honored by two distinguished groups of people: the professional boxing public, who celebrated him as America's greatest boxing champion, and the world of popular theater admirers, who revered him as one of Broadway's top vaudeville headliners. Corbett was uniquely instrumental in making boxing and popular theater both justifiable commercial enterprises, to be enjoyed by all classes of people. He became America's first national sports hero and went on to formulate the theater world's star system. This is the first definitive biography of the man who knocked out heavyweight champion John L. Sullivan, and who also knocked out audiences who flocked to see him in vaudeville and silent pictures. The focus herein is on the real man, the influences on his life, and the social and commercial environment within which he functioned. The author reveals that Corbett was a complex, driven, enigmatic man whose dedicated participation in popular entertainment changed American social values and mores, and at the same time reinvented the notion of a national hero.

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