

Bell's life in London and Sporting  
Chronicle  
PORTRAIT OF FROSTY-FACED FOGO

7<sup>th</sup> January 1827

Many aspects of this descriptive portrait of Frosty-faced Fogo, at home in No. 8, Feather's Court, off the Strand, fit well the engraved heading to the column titled;

Poet's Corner.



which first appeared in November 1826, and which is shown above.

Despite living in this squalor, Frosty still managed to mix with all the movers and shakers in the world of pugilism of his day, and mingle in the exalted circles of the gentry - the Fancy.

He was a regular contributor to 'Bell's Life in London newspaper', a poet, entertainer, 'chaunter' and an acknowledged authority on boxing. But this was an age without safety nets - no old age pension, no welfare or sickness benefits. Men of ability could rise quickly, but if luck was against them, they could fall back into abject poverty and starvation just as fast.

Frosty-faced Fogo was a man who became a celebrity in his lifetime but demonstrated human weaknesses that eventually brought about his untimely and tragic end. Even though his death went unnoticed, his name was remembered for over a century to come. Despite the neglect of his children, two of his daughters went on to give rise to many generations of descendants, alive and growing in number today. Unfortunately, most are completely oblivious to the existence of this, perhaps the most interesting of their ancestors.

PORTRAIT OF FROSTY-FACED FOGO.

The Bard of the Prize-ring is seen as a bard should be—in the elevation of his attic regions, attuning the praises of heroes to the classic lyre. There is not, however, that glowing rapture about his eye which we should have expected in the Pindar of the modern "Olympic Games." He seems rather disconcerted and drooping. We might suppose the ecstasy of the poet was quenched by some vulgar anxiety about his tailor's or milk-woman's bill, if we did not see upon the walls some caricatures from a pencil as clever as that of Cruikshank's, which explain the mystery. One of these represents two pugilists stripped and prepared for combat; but a Jew approaches and places a sovereign on each of the eyes of one of them, and his *day-lights* are instantly closed. In another, a scene of expected battle is also exhibited, in which we see an experienced Christian amateur extending a long golden rod, with which he touches one of the candidates for heroic glory over the region of the heart, and he becomes instantly benumbed and stupified, like one who has been suddenly electrified by the touch of a torpedo-eel—his limbs are relaxed, and all his muscular energy departs from him—he drops completely paralyzed, while the crowd are scuffling around him about stakes and bets, which some claim and others dispute. What wonder is it, then, that when pugilism surrenders its manliness to a paltry bribe, the Pindar of the Ring should be sorrowful, and a blush deeper than the scarlet of a life-guard'sman's jacket cover the well-carved countenance of Frosty-faced Fogo? Near the disconsolate bard lie the works of "Peter Corcoran," "Boxiana," and other specimens of "Select Literature," among which we recognize the renowned history of "The Seven Champions of Christendom," a copy ragged and antique enough to delight the eyes of the most inveterate bibliomanist. On the floor, under his spider-legged table, which appears not in the most athletic condition, are the scattered fragments of an unfinished poem—*The Disjecti Membra Poetae*: it is headed "The Adventures of Philosopher Thwackum, or University Rows." We also observe, in the same dishevelled state, "The Muse of Moulsey," and a Rhyming Treatise on Fistology. There is also a "History of celebrated Female Boxers," written in pure *sapphics*, and the portrait of Lady Barrymore appears as the trout, &c. Not far from this appears a manuscript, entitled "A Plan to Replenish the Exchequer of the Fancy," and on it lies an old hat filled with pawnbrokers' duplicates. While the poet allows the fire of his imagination to kindle, there is no other fire in his room, yet we see, by the ice-cicles on the window, that the season is any thing but that of sunshine and flowers. A lank and hungry cat is making a sly and desperate attack upon two smoked herrings that are hung up in the chimney-corner; but the bard, absorbed in profound reverie, is unconscious of the clandestine demolition of his dinner. In an old cupboard, which stands open for want of a door, we observe some picturesque specimens of earthen-ware. The furniture of the room consists of a chair without a back, and another on three legs—a bellows, to which a nose would be a luxury—a candlestick made of a quart bottle—a large nail for a poker—a turn-up bed, which, like the one that Goldsmith has immortalized, serves also as a chest of drawers; and the door is secured, not by a lock, but a tough branch of oak through an iron hold-fast that would defy the sudden onset of any evil-minded bailiff. On looking closely at the poet's face, we observe that it is not without proof of his being a practical recommender of the profession which his muse celebrates, for he has got a very respectable black-eye, and the tip of his nose seems a little peeled. If we may judge by a scrap of paper that is placed before him, he has been penning a dedication of some "gymnastic poem" to Dr. Gilchrist. It is, indeed, impossible to look at the evidences of his multifarious labours, and not be struck with the contrast between his gigantic genius and the ghostly attenuation of his bodily frame. We have never seen individual character better expressed than in this picture. In that point of view it equals the best productions of Wilkie or Mulready, while in depth and clearness of colouring it can vie with any thing that we have ever seen from the felicitous pencils of Teniers or Ostade. The light which falls upon the poet from the skylight is remarkably pure and æthereal, by which we ascertain that he is an inhabitant of the attic regions, an elevation at which poets, in all ages, have been rather successful in reaching. The dress of the bard is in keeping with the whole arrangements of "his mansion," and equally agreeable to those eyes which admire the remnants of venerable antiquity. This picture with a companion, one of Peter Corcoran, ought to grace the walls of the apartment, or gymnasium, in which the members of the P. C. may hereafter hold their sittings. The fathers of epic and lyric poetry have had due honours paid to them, and why not those of the Fistic Muse, the youngest, but not least original of the Heliconian choir.