

## CHAPTER IX

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Cashel's pupils frequently requested him to hit them hard--not to play with them--to accustom them to regular, right down, severe hitting, and no nonsense. He only pretended to comply; for he knew that a black eye or loosened tooth would be immoderately boasted of if received in combat with a famous pugilist, and that the sufferer's friends would make private notes to avoid so rough a professor. But when Miss Carew's note reached him he made an exception to his practice in this respect. A young guardsman, whose lesson began shortly after the post arrived, remarked that Cashel was unusually distraught. He therefore exhorted his instructor to wake up and pitch into him in earnest. Immediately he received a blow in the epigastrium that stretched him almost insensible on the floor. Rising with his complexion considerably whitened, he recollected an appointment which would prevent him from finishing his lesson, and withdrew, declaring in a somewhat shaky voice that that was the sort of bout he really enjoyed.

Cashel did not at first make any profitable use of the leisure thus earned. He walked to and fro, cursing, and occasionally stopping to read the letter. His restlessness only increased his agitation. The arrival of a Frenchman whom he employed to give lessons in fencing made the place unendurable to him. He changed his attire, went out, called a cab, and bade the driver, with an oath, drive to Lydia's house as fast as the horse could go. The man made all the haste he could, and was presently told impatiently that there was no hurry. Accustomed to this sort of inconsistency, he was not surprised when, as they approached the house, he was told not to stop but to drive slowly past. Then, in obedience to further instructions, he turned and repassed the door. As he did so a lady appeared for an instant at a window. Immediately his fare, with a groan of mingled rage and fear, sprang from the moving vehicle, rushed up the steps of the mansion, and rang the bell violently. Bashville, faultlessly dressed and impassibly mannered, opened the door. In reply to Cashel's half-inarticulate inquiry, he said,

"Miss Carew is not at home."

"You lie," said Cashel, his eyes suddenly dilating. "I saw her."

Bashville reddened, but replied, coolly, "Miss Carew cannot see you to-day."

"Go and ask her," returned Cashel sternly, advancing.

Bashville, with compressed lips, seized the door to shut him out; but Cashel forced it back against him, sent him reeling some paces by its impact, went in, and shut the door behind him. He had to turn from Bashville for a moment to do this, and before he could face him again he was clutched, tripped, and flung down upon the tessellated pavement of the hall.

When Cashel gave him the lie, and pushed the door against him, the excitement he had been suppressing since his visit to Lucian exploded. He had thrown Cashel in Cornish fashion, and now desperately awaited the upshot.

Cashel got up so rapidly that he seemed to rebound from the flags. Bashville, involuntarily cowering before his onslaught, just escaped his right fist, and felt as though his heart had been drawn with it as it whizzed past his ear. He turned and fled frantically up-stairs, mistaking for the clatter of pursuit the noise with which Cashel, overbalanced by his ineffectual blow, stumbled against the banisters.

Lydia was in her boudoir with Alice when Bashville darted in and locked the door. Alice rose and screamed. Lydia, though startled, and that less by the unusual action than by the change in a familiar face which she had never seen influenced by emotion before, sat still and quietly asked what was the matter. Bashville checked himself for a moment. Then he spoke unintelligibly, and went to the window, which he opened. Lydia divined that he was about to call for help to the street.

"Bashville," she said, authoritatively: "be silent, and close the window. I will go down-stairs myself."

Bashville then ran to prevent her from unlocking the door; but she paid no attention to him. He did not dare to oppose her forcibly. He was beginning to recover from his panic, and to feel the first stings of shame for having yielded to it.

"Madam," he said: "Byron is below; and he insists on seeing you. He's dangerous; and he's too strong for me. I have done my best--on my honor I have. Let me call the police. Stop," he added, as she opened the door. "If either of us goes, it must be me."

"I will see him in the library," said Lydia, composedly. "Tell him so; and let him wait there for me--if you can approach him without running any risk."

"Oh, pray let him call the police," urged Alice. "Don't attempt to go to that man."

"Nonsense!" said Lydia, good-humoredly. "I am not in the least afraid. We must not fail in courage when we have a prize-fighter to deal with."

Bashville, white, and preventing with difficulty his knees from knocking together, went down-stairs and found Cashel leaning upon the balustrade, panting, and looking perplexedly about him as he wiped his dabbled brow. Bashville approached him with the firmness of a martyr, halted on the third stair, and said,

"Miss Carew will see you in the library. Come this way, please."

Cashel's lips moved, but no sound came from them; he followed Bashville in silence. When they entered the library Lydia was already there. Bashville withdrew without a word. Then Cashel sat down, and, to her consternation, bent his head on his hand and yielded to an hysterical convulsion. Before she could resolve how to act he looked up at her with his face distorted and discolored, and tried to speak.

"Pray be calm," said Lydia. "I am told that you wish to speak to me."

"I don't wish to speak to you ever again," said Cashel, hoarsely. "You told your servant to throw me down the steps. That's enough for me."

Lydia caught from him the tendency to sob which he was struggling with; but she repressed it, and answered, firmly, "If my servant has been guilty of the least incivility to you, Mr. Cashel Byron, he has exceeded his orders."

"It doesn't matter," said Cashel. "He may thank his luck that he has his head on. If I had planted on him that time--but HE doesn't matter. Hold on a bit--I can't talk--I shall get my second wind presently, and then--" Cashel stopped a moment to pant, and then asked, "Why are you going to give me up?"

Lydia ranged her wits in battle array, and replied,

"Do you remember our conversation at Mrs. Hoskyn's?"

"Yes."

"You admitted then that if the nature of your occupation became known to me our acquaintance should cease. That has now come to pass."

"That was all very fine talk to excuse my not telling you. But I find, like many another man when put to the

proof, that I didn't mean it. Who told you I was a fighting man?"

"I had rather not tell you that."

"Aha!" said Cashel, with a triumph that was half choked by the remnant of his hysteria. "Who is trying to make a secret now, I should like to know?"

"I do so in this instance because I am afraid to expose a friend to your resentment."

"And why? He's a man, of course; else you wouldn't be afraid. You think that I'd go straight off and murder him. Perhaps he told you that it would come quite natural to a man like me--a ruffian like me--to smash him up. That comes of being a coward. People run my profession down; not because there is a bad one or two in it--there's plenty of bad bishops, if you come to that--but because they're afraid of us. You may make yourself easy about your friend. I am accustomed to get well paid for the beatings I give; and your own common-sense ought to tell you that any one who is used to being paid for a job is just the last person in the world to do it for nothing."

"I find the contrary to be the case with first-rate artists," said Lydia.

"Thank you," retorted Cashel, sarcastically. "I ought to make you a bow for that. I'm glad you acknowledge that it IS an art."

"But," said Lydia seriously, "it seems to me that it is an art wholly anti-social and retrograde. And I fear that you have forced this interview on me to no purpose."

"I don't know whether it's anti-social or not. But I think it hard that I should be put out of decent society when fellows that do far worse than I are let in. Who did I see here last Friday, the most honored of your guests? Why, that Frenchman with the gold spectacles. What do you think I was told when I asked what HIS little game was? Baking dogs in ovens to see how long a dog could live red hot! I'd like to catch him doing it to a dog of mine. Ay; and sticking a rat full of nails to see how much pain a rat could stand. Why, it's just sickening. Do you think I'd have shaken hands with that chap? If he hadn't been a guest of yours I'd have given him a notion of how much pain a Frenchman can stand without any nails in him. And HE'S to be received and made much of, while I am kicked out! Look at your relation, the general. What is he but a fighting man, I should like to know? Isn't it his pride and boast that as long as he is paid so much a day he'll ask no questions whether a war is fair or unfair, but just walk out and put thousands of men in the best way to kill and be killed?--keeping well behind them himself all the time, mind you. Last year he was up to his chin in the blood of a lot of poor blacks that were no more a match for his armed men than a feather-weight would be for me. Bad as I am, I wouldn't attack a feather-weight, or stand by and see another heavy man do it. Plenty of your friends go pigeon-shooting to Hurlingham. THERE'S a humane and manly way of spending a Saturday afternoon! Lord Worthington, that comes to see you when he likes, though he's too much of a man or too little of a shot to kill pigeons, thinks nothing of fox-hunting. Do you think foxes like to be hunted, or that the people that hunt them have such fine feelings that they can afford to call prize-fighters names? Look at the men that get killed or lamed every year at steeple-chasing, fox-hunting, cricket, and foot-ball! Dozens of them! Look at the thousands killed in battle! Did you ever hear of any one being killed in the ring? Why, from first to last, during the whole century that prize-fighting has been going on, there's not been six fatal accidents at really respectable fights. It's safer than dancing; many a woman has danced her skirt into the fire and been burned. I once fought a man who had spoiled his constitution with bad living; and he exhausted himself so by going on and on long after he was beaten that he died of it, and nearly finished me, too. If you'd heard the fuss that even the oldest fighting men made over it you'd have thought that a baby had died from falling out of its cradle. A good milling does a man more good than harm. And if all these--dog-bakers, and soldiers, and pigeon-shooters, and fox-hunters, and the rest of them--are made welcome here, why am I shut out like a brute beast?"

"Truly I do not know," said Lydia, puzzled; "unless it be that your colleagues have failed to recommend themselves to society by their extra-professional conduct as the others have."

"I grant you that fighting men ar'n't gentlemen, as a rule. No more were painters, or poets, once upon a time. But what I want to know is this: Supposing a fighting man has as good manners as your friends, and is as well born, why shouldn't he mix with them and be considered their equal?"

"The distinction seems arbitrary, I confess. But perhaps the true remedy would be to exclude the vivisectors and soldiers, instead of admitting the prize-fighters. Mr. Cashel Byron," added Lydia, changing her manner, "I cannot discuss this with you. Society has a prejudice against you. I share it; and I cannot overcome it. Can you find no nobler occupation than these fierce and horrible encounters by which you condescend to gain a living?"

"No," said Cashel, flatly. "I can't. That's just where it is."

Lydia looked grave, and said nothing.

"You don't see it?" said Cashel. "Well, I'll just tell you all about myself, and then leave you to judge. May I sit down while I talk?" He had risen in the course of his remarks on Lydia's scientific and military acquaintances.

She pointed to a chair near her. Something in the action brought color to his cheeks.

"I believe I was the most unfortunate devil of a boy that ever walked," he began, when he was seated. "My mother was--and is--an actress, and a tiptop crack in her profession. One of the first things I remember is sitting on the floor in the corner of a room where there was a big glass, and she flaring away before it, attitudinizing and spouting Shakespeare like mad. I was afraid of her, because she was very particular about my manners and appearance, and would never let me go near a theatre. I know very little about either my people or hers; for she boxed my ears one day for asking who my father was, and I took good care not to ask her again. She was quite young when I was a child; at first I thought her a sort of angel--I should have been fond of her, I think, if she had let me. But she didn't, somehow; and I had to keep my affection for the servants. I had plenty of variety in that way; for she gave her whole establishment the sack about once every two months, except a maid who used to bully her, and gave me nearly all the nursing I ever got. I believe it was my crying about some housemaid or other who went away that first set her abusing me for having low tastes--a sort of thing that used to cut me to the heart, and which she kept up till the very day I left her for good. We were a precious pair: I sulky and obstinate, she changeable and hot-tempered. She used to begin breakfast sometimes by knocking me to the other side of the room with a slap, and finish it by calling me her darling boy and promising me all manner of toys and things. I soon gave up trying to please her, or like her, and became as disagreeable a young imp as you'd ask to see. My only thought was to get all I could out of her when she was in a good-humor, and to be sullen and stubborn when she was in a tantrum. One day a boy in the street threw some mud at me, and I ran in crying and complained to her. She told me I was a little coward. I haven't forgiven her for that yet--perhaps because it was one of the few true things she ever said to me. I was in a state of perpetual aggravation; and I often wonder that I wasn't soured for life at that time. At last I got to be such a little fiend that when she hit me I used to guard off her blows, and look so wicked that I think she got afraid of me. Then she put me to school, telling me that I had no heart, and telling the master that I was an ungovernable young brute. So I, like a little fool, cried at leaving her; and she, like a big one, cried back again over me--just after telling the master what a bad one I was, mind you--and off she went, leaving her darling boy and blessed child howling at his good luck in getting rid of her.

"I was a nice boy to let loose in a school. I could speak as well as an actor, as far as pronunciation goes; but I could hardly read words of one syllable; and as to writing, I couldn't make pothooks and hangers respectably. To this day, I can no more spell than old Ned Skene can. What was a worse sort of ignorance was that I had no idea of fair play. I thought that all servants would be afraid of me, and that all grown-up people would

tyrannize over me. I was afraid of everybody; afraid that my cowardice would be found out; and as angry and cruel in my ill-temper as cowards always are. Now you'll hardly believe this; but what saved me from going to the bad altogether was my finding out that I was a good one to fight. The bigger boys were given to fighting, and used to have mills every Saturday afternoon, with seconds, bottle-holders, and everything complete, except the ropes and stakes. We little chaps used to imitate them among ourselves as best we could. At first, when they made me fight, I shut my eyes and cried; but for all that I managed to catch the other fellow tight round the waist and throw him. After that it became a regular joke to make me fight, for I always cried. But the end of it was that I learned to keep my eyes open and hit straight. I had no trouble about fighting then. Somehow, I could tell by instinct when the other fellow was going to hit me, and I always hit him first. It's the same with me now in the ring; I know what a man is going to do before he rightly knows himself. The power that this gave me, civilized me. It made me cock of the school; and I had to act accordingly. I had enough good-nature left to keep me from being a bully; and, as cock, I couldn't be mean or childish. There would be nothing like fighting for licking boys into shape if every one could be cock; but every one can't; so I suppose it does more harm than good.

"I should have enjoyed school well enough if I had worked at my books. But I wouldn't study; and the masters were all down on me as an idler--though I shouldn't have been like that if they had known how to teach--I have learned since what teaching is. As to the holidays, they were the worst part of the year to me. When I was left at school I was savage at not being let go home; and when I went home my mother did nothing but find fault with my school-boy manners. I was getting too big to be cuddled as her darling boy, you understand. In fact, her treatment of me was just the old game with the affectionate part left out. It wasn't pleasant, after being cock of the school, to be made feel like a good-for-nothing little brat tied to her apron-strings. When she saw that I was learning nothing she sent me to another school at a place in the north called Panley. I stayed there until I was seventeen; and then she came one day, and we had a row, as usual. She said she wouldn't let me leave school until I was nineteen; and so I settled that question by running away the same night. I got to Liverpool, where I hid in a ship bound for Australia. When I was starved out they treated me better than I expected; and I worked hard enough to earn my passage and my victuals. But when I was left ashore in Melbourne I was in a pretty pickle. I knew nobody, and I had no money. Everything that a man could live by was owned by some one or other. I walked through the town looking for a place where they might want a boy to run errands or to clean windows. But somehow I hadn't the cheek to go into the shops and ask. Two or three times, when I was on the point of trying, I caught sight of some cad of a shopman, and made up my mind that I wouldn't be ordered about by HIM, and that since I had the whole town to choose from I might as well go on to the next place. At last, quite late in the afternoon, I saw an advertisement stuck up on a gymnasium, and, while I was reading it, I got talking to old Ned Skene, the owner, who was smoking at the door. He took a fancy to me, and offered to have me there as a sort of lad-of-all-work. I was only too glad to get the chance, and I closed with him at once. As time went on I became so clever with the gloves that Ned matched me against a light-weight named Ducket, and bet a lot of money that I would win. Well, I couldn't disappoint him after his being so kind to me--Mrs. Skene had made as much of me as if I was her own son. What could I do but take my bread as it came to me? I was fit for nothing else. Even if I had been able to write a good hand and keep accounts I couldn't have brought myself to think that quill-driving and counting other people's money was a fit employment for a man. It's not what a man would like to do that he must do in this world, it's what he CAN do; and the only mortal thing I could do properly was to fight. There was plenty of money and plenty of honor and glory among my acquaintances to be got by fighting. So I challenged Ducket, and knocked him all to pieces in about ten minutes. I half killed him because I didn't know my own strength and was afraid of him. I have been at the same work ever since. I was training for a fight when I was down at Wiltstoken; and Mellish was my trainer. It came off the day you saw me at Clapham; that was how I came to have a black eye. Wiltstoken did for me. With all my nerve and science, I'm no better than a baby at heart; and ever since I found out that my mother wasn't an angel I have always had a notion that a real angel would turn up some day. You see, I never cared much for women. Bad as my mother was as far as being what you might call a parent went, she had something in her looks and manners that gave me a better idea of what a nice woman was like than I had of most things; and the girls I met in Australia and America seemed very small potatoes to me in comparison with her. Besides, of course they were not ladies. I was fond of Mrs. Skene

because she was good to me; and I made myself agreeable, for her sake, to the girls that came to see her; but in reality I couldn't stand them. Mrs. Skene said that they were all setting their caps at me--women are death on a crack fighter--but the more they tried it on the less I liked them. It was no go; I could get on with the men well enough, no matter how common they were; but the snobbishness of my breed came out with regard to the women. When I saw you that day at Wiltstoken walk out of the trees and stand looking so quietly at me and Mellish, and then go back out of sight without a word, I'm blessed if I didn't think you were the angel come at last. Then I met you at the railway station and walked with you. You put the angel out of my head quick enough; for an angel, after all, is only a shadowy, childish notion--I believe it's all gammon about there being any in heaven--but you gave me a better idea than mamma of what a woman should be, and you came up to that idea and went beyond it. I have been in love with you ever since; and if I can't have you, I don't care what becomes of me. I know I am a bad lot, and have always been one; but when I saw you taking pleasure in the society of fellows just as bad as myself, I didn't see why I should keep away when I was dying to come. I am no worse than the dog-baker, any how. And hang it, Miss Lydia, I don't want to brag; but I never fought a cross or struck a foul blow in my life; and I have never been beaten, though I'm only a middle-weight, and have stood up with the best fourteen-stone men in the Colonies, the States, or in England."

Cashel ceased. As he sat eying her wistfully, Lydia, who had been perfectly still, said musingly,

"Strange! that I should be so much more prejudiced than I knew. What will you think of me when I tell you that your profession does not seem half so shocking now that I know you to be the son of an artist, and not a journeyman butcher or a laborer, as my cousin told me."

"What!" exclaimed Cashel. "That lantern-jawed fellow told you I was a butcher!"

"I did not mean to betray him; but, as I have already said, I am bad at keeping secrets. Mr. Lucian Webber is my cousin and friend, and has done me many services. May I rest assured that he has nothing to fear from you?"

"He has no right to tell lies about me. He is sweet on you, too: I twigged that at Wiltstoken. I have a good mind to let him know whether I am a butcher or not."

"He did not say so. What he told me of you, as far as it went, is exactly confirmed by what you have said yourself. But I happened to ask him to what class men of your calling usually belonged; and he said that they were laborers, butchers, and so forth. Do you resent that?"

"I see plainly enough that you won't let me resent it. I should like to know what else he said of me. But he was right enough about the butchers. There are all sorts of blackguards in the ring: there's no use in denying it. Since it's been made illegal, decent men won't go into it. But, all the same, it's not the fighting men, but the betting men, that bring discredit on it. I wish your cousin had held his confounded tongue."

"I wish you had forestalled him by telling me the truth,"

"I wish I had, now. But what's the use of wishing? I didn't dare run the chance of losing you. See how soon you forbade me the house when you did find out."

"It made little difference," said Lydia, gravely.

"You were always friendly to me," said Cashel, plaintively.

"More so than you were to me. You should not have deceived me. And now I think we had better part. I am glad to know your history; and I admit that when you embraced your profession you made perhaps the best choice that society offered you. I do not blame you."

"But you give me the sack. Is that it?"

"What do you propose, Mr. Cashel Byron? Is it to visit my house in the intervals of battering and maiming butchers and laborers?"

"No, it's not," retorted Cashel. "You're very aggravating. I won't stay much longer in the ring now, because my luck is too good to last. I shall have to retire soon, luck or no luck, because no one can match me. Even now there's nobody except Bill Paradise that pretends to be able for me; and I'll settle him in September if he really means business. After that, I'll retire. I expect to be worth ten thousand pounds then. Ten thousand pounds, I'm told, is the same as five hundred a year. Well, I suppose, judging from the style you keep here, that you're worth as much more, besides your place in the country; so, if you will marry me, we shall have a thousand a year between us. I don't know much of money matters; but at any rate we can live like fighting-cocks on that much. That's a straight and business-like proposal, isn't it?"

"And if I refuse?" said Lydia, with some sternness.

"Then you may have the ten thousand pounds to do what you like with," said Cashel, despairingly. "It won't matter what becomes of me. I won't go to the devil for you or any woman if I can help it; and I--but where's the good of saying IF you refuse. I know I don't express myself properly; I'm a bad hand at sentimentality; but if I had as much gab as a poet, I couldn't be any fonder of you, or think more highly of you."

"But you are mistaken as to the amount of my income."

"That doesn't matter a bit. If you have more, why, the more the merrier. If you have less, or if you have to give up all your property when you're married, I will soon make another ten thousand to supply the loss. Only give me one good word, and, by George, I'll fight the seven champions of Christendom, one down and t'other come on, for five thousand a side each. Hang the money!"

"I am richer than you suppose," said Lydia, unmoved. "I cannot tell you exactly how much I possess; but my income is about forty thousand pounds."

"Forty thousand pounds!" ejaculated Cashel.

"Holy Moses! I didn't think the queen had so much as that."

He paused a moment, and became very red. Then, in a voice broken by mortification, he said, "I see I have been making a fool of myself," and took his hat and turned to go.

"It does not follow that you should go at once without a word," said Lydia, betraying nervousness for the first time during the interview.

"Oh, that's all rot," said Cashel. "I may be a fool while my eyes are shut, but I'm sensible enough when they're open. I have no business here. I wish to the Lord I had stayed in Australia."

"Perhaps it would have been better," said Lydia, troubled. "But since we have met, it is useless to deplore it; and--Let me remind you of one thing. You have pointed out to me that I have made friends of men whose pursuits are no better than yours. I do not wholly admit that; but there is one respect in which they are on the same footing as you. They are all, as far as worldly gear is concerned, much poorer than I. Many of them, I fear, are much poorer than you are."

Cashel looked up quickly with returning hope; but it lasted only a moment. He shook his head dejectedly.

"I am at least grateful to you," she continued, "because you have sought me for my own sake, knowing nothing of my wealth."

"I should think not," groaned Cashel. "Your wealth may be a very fine thing for the other fellows; and I'm glad you have it, for your own sake. But it's a settler for me. It's knocked me out of time, so it has. I sha'n't come up again; and the sooner the sponge is chucked up in my corner, the better. So good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Lydia, almost as pale as he had now become, "since you will have it so."

"Since the devil will have it so," said Cashel, ruefully. "It's no use wishing to have it any other way. The luck is against me. I hope, Miss Carew, that you'll excuse me for making such an ass of myself. It's all my blessed innocence; I never was taught any better."

"I have no quarrel with you except on the old score of hiding the truth from me; and that I forgive you--as far as the evil of it affects me. As for your declaration of attachment to me personally, I have received many similar ones that have flattered me less. But there are certain scruples between us. You will not court a woman a hundred-fold richer than yourself; and I will not entertain a prize-fighter. My wealth frightens every man who is not a knave; and your profession frightens every woman who is not a fury."

"Then you--Just tell me this," said Cashel, eagerly. "Suppose I were a rich swell, and were not a--"

"No," said Lydia, peremptorily interrupting him. "I will suppose nothing but what is."

Cashel relapsed into melancholy. "If you only hadn't been kind to me!" he said. "I think the reason I love you so much is that you're the only person that is not afraid of me. Other people are civil because they daren't be otherwise to the cock of the ring. It's a lonely thing to be a champion. You knew nothing about that; and you knew I was afraid of you; and yet you were as good as gold."

"It is also a lonely thing to be a very rich woman. People are afraid of my wealth, and of what they call my learning. We two have at least one experience in common. Now do me a great favor, by going. We have nothing further to say."

"I'll go in two seconds. But I don't believe much in YOUR being lonely. That's only fancy."

"Perhaps so. Most feelings of this kind are only fancies."

There was a pause. Then Cashel said,

"I don't feel half so downhearted as I did a minute ago. Are you sure that you're not angry with me?"

"Quite sure. Pray let me say good-bye."

"And may I never see you again? Never at all?--world without end, amen?"

"Never as the famous prize-fighter. But if a day should come when Mr. Cashel Byron will be something better worthy of his birth and nature, I will not forget an old friend. Are you satisfied now?"

Cashel's face began to glow, and the roots of his hair to tingle. "One thing more," he said. "If you meet me by chance in the street before that, will you give me a look? I don't ask for a regular bow, but just a look to keep me going?"

"I have no intention of cutting you," said Lydia, gravely. "But do not place yourself purposely in my way."



"Honor bright, I won't. I'll content myself with walking through that street in Soho occasionally. Now I'm off; I know you're in a hurry to be rid of me. So good-b--Stop a bit, though. Perhaps when that time you spoke of comes, you will be married."

"It is possible; but I am not likely to marry. How many more things have you to say that you have no right to say?"

"Not one," said Cashel, with a laugh that rang through the house. "I never was happier in my life, though I'm crying inside all the time. I'll have a try for you yet. Good-bye. No," he added, turning from her proffered hand; "I daren't touch it; I should eat you afterwards." And he ran out of the room.

In the hall was Bashville, pale and determined, waiting there to rush to the assistance of his mistress at her first summons. He had a poker concealed at hand. Having just heard a great laugh, and seeing Cashel come down-stairs in high spirits, he stood stock- still, and did not know what to think.

"Well, old chap," said Cashel, boisterously, slapping him on the shoulder, "so you're alive yet. Is there any one in the dining-room?"

"No," said Bashville.

"There's a thick carpet there to fall soft on," said Cashel, pulling Bashville into the room. "Come along. Now, show me that little trick of yours again. Come, don't be afraid. Down with me. Take care you don't knock my head against the fire-irons."

"But--"

"But be hanged. You were spry enough at it before. Come!"

Bashville, after a moment's hesitation, seized Cashel, who immediately became grave and attentive, and remained imperturbably so while Nashville expertly threw him. He sat for a moment thinking on the hearth-rug before he rose. "I see," he said, then, getting up. "Now, do it again."

"But it makes such a row," remonstrated Bashville.

"Only once more. There'll be no row this time."

"Well, you ARE an original sort of cove," said Bashville, complying. But instead of throwing his man, he found himself wedged into a collar formed by Cashel's arms, the least constriction of which would have strangled him. Cashel again roared with laughter as he released him.

"That's the way, ain't it?" he said. "You can't catch an old fox twice in the same trap. Do you know any more falls?"

"I do," said Bashville; "but I really can't show them to you here. I shall get into trouble on account of the noise."

"You can come down to me whenever you have an evening out," said Cashel, handing him a card, "to that address, and show me what you know, and I'll see what I can do with you. There's the making of a man in you."

"You're very kind," said Bashville, pocketing the card with a grin.

"And now let me give you a word of advice that will be of use to you as long as you live," said Cashel, impressively. "You did a very silly thing to-day. You threw a man down--a fighting-man--and then stood looking at him like a fool, waiting for him to get up and kill you. If ever you do that again, fall on him as heavily as you can the instant he's off his legs. Drop your shoulder well into him, and, if he pulls you over, make play with the back of your head. If he's altogether too big for you, put your knee on his throat as if by accident. But, on no account, stand and do nothing. It's flying in the face of Providence."

Cashel emphasized these counsels by taps of his forefinger on one of Bashville's buttons. In conclusion, he nodded, opened the house-door, and walked away in buoyant spirits.

Lydia, standing near the library window, saw him pass, and observed how his light, alert step and a certain gamesome assurance of manner marked him off from a genteelly promenading middle-aged gentleman, a trudging workman, and a vigorously striding youth who were also passing by. The iron railings through which she saw him reminded her of the admirable and dangerous creatures which were passing and repassing behind iron bars in the park yonder. But she exulted, in her quiet manner, in the thought that, dangerous as he was, she had no fear of him. When his cabman had found him and driven him off she went to her desk, opened a private drawer in it, took out her father's last letter, and sat for some time looking at it without unfolding it.

"It would be a strange thing, father," she said, as if he were actually there to hear her, "if your paragon should turn aside from her friends, the artists, philosophers, and statesmen, to give herself to an illiterate prize-fighter. I felt a pang of absolute despair when he replied to my forty thousand pounds a year with an unanswerable good-bye."

She locked up her father, as it were, in the drawer again, and rang the bell. Bashville appeared, somewhat perturbed.

"If Mr. Byron calls again, admit him if I am at home."

"Yes, madam."

"Thank you."

"Begging your pardon, madam, but may I ask has any complaint been made of me?"

"None." Bashville was reluctantly withdrawing when she added, "Mr. Byron gave me to understand that you tried to prevent his entrance by force. You exposed yourself to needless risk by doing so; and you may make a rule in future that when people are importunate, and will not go away when asked, they had better come in until you get special instructions from me. I am not finding fault; on the contrary, I approve of your determination to carry out your orders; but under exceptional circumstances you may use your own discretion."

"He shoved the door into my face, and I acted on the impulse of the moment, madam. I hope you will forgive the liberty I took in locking the door of the boudoir. He is older and heavier than I am, madam; and he has the advantage of being a professional. Else I should have stood my ground."

"I am quite satisfied," said Lydia, a little coldly, as she left the room.

"How long you have been!" cried Alice, almost in hysterics, as Lydia entered. "Is he gone? What were those dreadful noises? IS anything the matter?"

"Dancing and late hours are the matter," said Lydia, coolly. "The season is proving too much for you, Alice."

"It is not the season; it is the man," said Alice, with a sob.

"Indeed? I have been in conversation with the man for more than half an hour; and Bashville has been in actual combat with him; yet we are not in hysterics. You have been sitting here at your ease, have yon not?"

"I am not in hysterics," said Alice, indignantly.

"So much the better," said Lydia, gravely, placing her hand on the forehead of Alice, who subsided with a sniff.