George Bernard Shaw

The Admirable Bashville

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE

OR, CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

BEING THE NOVEL OF CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION DONE INTO A STAGE PLAY IN THREE ACTS, AND IN BLANK VERSE, WITH A NOTE ON MODERN PRIZE FIGHTING

By

BERNARD SHAW

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"Over Bashville the footman I howled with derision and delight. I dote on Bashville: I could read of him for ever: *de Bashville je suis le fervent*: there is only one Bashville; and I am his devoted slave: Bashville est magnifique; mais il n'est guere possible."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

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MCMXIII

PREFACE

The Admirable Bashville is a product of the British law of copyright. As that law stands at present, the first person who patches up a stage version of a novel, however worthless and absurd that version may be, and has it read by himself and a few confederates to another confederate who has paid for admission in a hall licensed for theatrical performances, secures the stage rights of that novel, even as against the author himself; and the author must buy him out before he can touch his own work for the purposes of the stage.

A famous case in point is the drama of East Lynne, adapted from the late Mrs. Henry Wood's novel of that name. It

was enormously popular, and is still the surest refuge of touring companies in distress. Many authors feel that Mrs. Henry Wood was hardly used in not getting any of the money which was plentifully made in this way through her story. To my mind, since her literary copyright probably brought her a fair wage for the work of writing the book, her real grievance was, first, that her name and credit were attached to a play with which she had nothing to do, and which may quite possibly have been to her a detestable travesty and profanation of her story; and second, that the authors of that play had the legal power to prevent her from having any version of her own performed, if she had wished to make one.

There is only one way in which the author can protect himself; and that is by making a version of his own and going through the same legal farce with it. But the legal farce involves the hire of a hall and the payment of a fee of two guineas to the King's Reader of Plays. When I wrote Cashel Byron's Profession I had no guineas to spare, a common disability of young authors. What is equally common, I did not know the law. A reasonable man may guess a reasonable law, but no man can guess a foolish anomaly. Fortunately, by the time my book so suddenly revived in America I was aware of the danger, and in a position to protect myself by writing and performing The Admirable Bashville. The prudence of doing so was soon demonstrated; for rumors soon reached me of several American stage versions; and one of these has actually been played in New York, with the boxing scenes under the management (so it is stated) of the eminent pugilist Mr. James J. Corbett. The New York press, in a somewhat derisive vein, conveyed the impression that in this version Cashel Byron sought to interest the public rather as the last of the noble race of the Byrons of Dorsetshire than as his unromantic self; but in justice to a play which I never read, and an actor whom I never saw, and who honorably offered to treat me as if I had legal rights in the matter, I must not accept the newspaper evidence as conclusive.

As I write these words, I am promised by the King in his speech to Parliament a new Copyright Bill. I believe it embodies, in our British fashion, the recommendations of the book publishers as to the concerns of the authors, and the notions of the musical publishers as to the concerns of the playwrights. As author and playwright I am duly obliged to the Commission for saving me the trouble of speaking for myself, and to the witnesses for speaking for me. But unless Parliament takes the opportunity of giving the authors of all printed works of fiction, whether dramatic or narrative, both playwright and copyright (as in America), such to be independent of any insertions or omissions of formulas about "all rights reserved" or the like, I am afraid the new Copyright Bill will leave me with exactly the opinion both of the copyright law and the wisdom of Parliament I at present entertain. As a good Socialist I do not at all object to the limitation of my right of property in my own works to a comparatively brief period, followed by complete Communism: in fact, I cannot see why the same salutary limitation should not be applied to all property rights whatsoever; but a system which enables any alert sharper to acquire property rights in my stories as against myself and the rest of the community would, it seems to me, justify a rebellion if authors were numerous and warlike enough to make one.

It may be asked why I have written The Admirable Bashville in blank verse. My answer is that I had but a week to write it in. Blank verse is so childishly easy and expeditious (hence, by the way, Shakespear's copious output), that by adopting it I was enabled to do within the week what would have cost me a month in prose.

Besides, I am fond of blank verse. Not nineteenth century blank verse, of course, nor indeed, with a very few exceptions, any post-Shakespearean blank verse. Nay, not Shakespearean blank verse itself later than the histories. When an author can write the prose dialogue of the first scene in As You Like It, or Hamlet's colloquies with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, there is really no excuse for The Seven Ages and "To be or not to be," except the excuse of a haste that made great facility indispensable. I am quite sure that any one who is to recover the charm of blank verse must frankly go back to its beginnings and start a literary pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. I like the melodious sing-song, the clear simple one-line and two-line sayings, and the occasional rhymed tags, like the half closes in an eighteenth century symphony, in Peele, Kyd, Greene, and the histories of Shakespear. How any one with music in him can turn from Henry VI., John, and the two Richards to such a mess of verse half developed into rhetorical prose as Cymbeline, is to me explicable only by the uncivil hypothesis that the artistic qualities in the Elizabethan drama do not exist for most of its critics; so that they hang on to its purely prosaic content, and hypnotize themselves into absurd exaggerations of the value of that content. Even poets fall under the spell. Ben Jonson described Marlowe's line as "mighty"! As well put Michael Angelo's epitaph on the tombstone of Paolo Uccello. No wonder Jonson's blank verse is the most horribly disagreeable product in literature, and indicates his most prosaic mood as surely as his shorter rhymed measures indicate his poetic mood. Marlowe never wrote a mighty line in his life: Cowper's single phrase, "Toll for the brave," drowns all his mightinesses as Great Tom drowns a military band. But Marlowe took that very pleasant-sounding rigmarole of Peele and Greene, and added to its sunny daylight the insane splendors of night, and the cheap tragedy of crime. Because he had only a common sort of brain, he was hopelessly beaten by Shakespear; but he had a fine ear and a soaring spirit: in short, one does not forget "wanton Arethusa's azure arms" and the like. But the pleasant-sounding rigmarole was the basis of the whole thing; and as long as that rigmarole was practised frankly for

the sake of its pleasantness, it was readable and speakable. It lasted until Shakespear did to it what Raphael did to Italian painting; that is, overcharged and burst it by making it the vehicle of a new order of thought, involving a mass of intellectual ferment and psychological research. The rigmarole could not stand the strain; and Shakespear's style ended in a chaos of half-shattered old forms, half-emancipated new ones, with occasional bursts of prose eloquence on the one hand, occasional delicious echoes of the rigmarole, mostly from Calibans and masque personages, on the other, with, alas! a great deal of filling up with formulary blank verse which had no purpose except to save the author's time and thought.

When a great man destroys an art form in this way, its ruins make palaces for the clever would-be great. After Michael Angelo and Raphael, Giulio Romano and the Carracci. After Marlowe and Shakespear, Chapman and the Police News poet Webster. Webster's specialty was blood: Chapman's, balderdash. Many of us by this time find it difficult to believe that pre-Ruskinite art criticism used to prostrate itself before the works of Domenichino and Guido, and to patronize the modest little beginnings of those who came between Cimabue and Masaccio. But we have only to look at our own current criticism of Elizabethan drama to satisfy ourselves that in an art which has not yet found its Ruskin or its pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the same folly is still academically propagated. It is possible, and even usual, for men professing to have ears and a sense of poetry to snub Peele and Greene and grovel before Fletcher and Webster--Fletcher! a facile blank verse penny-a-liner: Webster! a turgid paper cut-throat. The subject is one which I really cannot pursue without intemperance of language. The man who thinks The Duchess of Malfi better than David and Bethsabe is outside the pale, not merely of literature, but almost of humanity.

Yet some of the worst of these post-Shakespearean duffers, from Jonson to Heywood, suddenly became poets when they turned from the big drum of pseudo-Shakespearean drama to the pipe and tabor of the masque, exactly as Shakespear himself recovered the old charm of the rigmarole when he turned from Prospero to Ariel and Caliban. Cyril Tourneur and Heywood could certainly have produced very pretty rigmarole plays if they had begun where Shakespear began, instead of trying to begin where he left off. Jonson and Beaumont would very likely have done themselves credit on the same terms: Marston would have had at least a chance. Massinger was in his right place, such as it was; and one would not disturb the gentle Ford, who was never born to storm the footlights. Webster could have done no good anyhow or anywhere: the man was a fool. And Chapman would always have been a blathering unreadable pedant, like Landor, in spite of his classical amateurship and respectable strenuosity of character. But with these exceptions it may plausibly be held that if Marlowe and Shakespear could have been kept out of their way, the rest would have done well enough on the lines of Peele and Greene. However, they thought otherwise; and now that their freethinking paganism, so dazzling to the pupils of Paley and the converts of Wesley, offers itself in vain to the disciples of Darwin and Nietzsche, there is an end of them. And a good riddance, too.

Accordingly, I have poetasted The Admirable Bashville in the rigmarole style. And lest the Webster worshippers should declare that there is not a single correct line in all my three acts, I have stolen or paraphrased a few from Marlowe and Shakespear (not to mention Henry Carey); so that if any man dares quote me derisively, he shall do so in peril of inadvertently lighting on a purple patch from Hamlet or Faustus.

I have also endeavored in this little play to prove that I am not the heartless creature some of my critics take me for. I have strictly observed the established laws of stage popularity and probability. I have simplified the character of the heroine, and summed up her sweetness in the one sacred word: Love. I have given consistency to the heroism of Cashel. I have paid to Morality, in the final scene, the tribute of poetic justice. I have restored to Patriotism its usual place on the stage, and gracefully acknowledged The Throne as the fountain of social honor. I have paid particular attention to the construction of the play, which will be found equal in this respect to the best contemporary models.

And I trust the result will be found satisfactory.

The Admirable Bashville; or, Constancy Unrewarded

ACT I

A glade in Wiltstoken Park

Enter LYDIA

LYDIA. Ye leafy breasts and warm protecting wings
Of mother trees that hatch our tender souls,
And from the well of Nature in our hearts
Thaw the intolerable inch of ice
That bears the weight of all the stamping world.
Hear ye me sing to solitude that I,
Lydia Carew, the owner of these lands,
Albeit most rich, most learned, and most wise,
Am yet most lonely. What are riches worth
When wisdom with them comes to show the purse bearer
That life remains unpurchasable? Learning
Learns but one lesson: doubt! To excel all
Is, to be lonely. Oh, ye busy birds,
Engrossed with real needs, ye shameless trees
With arms outspread in welcome of the sun,
Your minds, bent singly to enlarge your lives,
Have given you wings and raised your delicate heads
High heavens above us crawlers.

[*A rook sets up a great cawing; and the other birds chatter loudly as a gust of wind sets the branches swaying. She makes as though she would shew them her sleeves.*

Lo, the leaves
That hide my drooping boughs! Mock me--poor maid!--
Deride with joyous comfortable chatter
These stolen feathers. Laugh at me, the clothed one.
Laugh at the mind fed on foul air and books.
Books! Art! And Culture! Oh, I shall go mad.
Give me a mate that never heard of these,
A sylvan god, tree born in heart and sap;
Or else, eternal maidhood be my hap.

[*Another gust of wind and bird-chatter. She sits on the mossy root of an oak and buries her face in her hands.* CASHEL BYRON, *in a white singlet and breeches, comes through the trees.*

CASHEL. What's this? Whom have we here? A woman!

LYDIA [*looking up*]. Yes.

CASHEL. You have no business here. I have. Away!
Women distract me. Hence!

LYDIA. Bid you me hence?
I am upon mine own ground. Who are you?
I take you for a god, a sylvan god.
This place is mine: I share it with the birds,
The trees, the sylvan gods, the lovely company
Of haunted solitudes.

CASHEL. A sylvan god!
A goat-eared image! Do your statues speak?
Walk? heave the chest with breath? or like a feather
Lift you--like this? [*He sets her on her feet.*

LYDIA [*panting*]. You take away my breath!

You're strong. Your hands off, please. Thank you. Farewell.

CASHEL. Before you go: when shall we meet again?

LYDIA. Why should we meet again?

CASHEL. Who knows? We *shall*.
That much I know by instinct. What's your name?

LYDIA. Lydia Carew.

CASHEL. Lydia's a pretty name.
Where do you live?

LYDIA. I' the castle.

CASHEL [*thunderstruck*]. Do not say
You are the lady of this great domain.

LYDIA. I am.

CASHEL. Accursed luck! I took you for
The daughter of some farmer. Well, your pardon.
I came too close: I looked too deep. Farewell.

LYDIA. I pardon that. Now tell me who you are.

CASHEL. Ask me not whence I come, nor what I am.
You are the lady of the castle. I
Have but this hard and blackened hand to live by.

LYDIA. I have felt its strength and envied you. Your name?
I have told you mine.

CASHEL. My name is Cashel Byron.

LYDIA. I never heard the name; and yet you utter it
As men announce a celebrated name.
Forgive my ignorance.

CASHEL. I bless it, Lydia.
I have forgot your other name.

LYDIA. Carew.
Cashel's a pretty name, too.

MELLISH [*calling through the wood*]. Coo-ee! Byron!

CASHEL. A thousand curses! Oh, I beg you, go.
This is a man you must not meet.

MELLISH [*further off*]. Coo-ee!

LYDIA. He's losing us. What does he in my woods?

CASHEL. He is a part of what I am. What that is
You must not know. It would end all between us.
And yet there's no dishonor in't: your lawyer,
Who let your lodge to me, will vouch me honest.

I am ashamed to tell you what I am--
At least, as yet. Some day, perhaps.

MELLISH [*nearer*]. Coo-ee!

LYDIA. His voice is nearer. Fare you well, my tenant.
When next your rent falls due, come to the castle.
Pay me in person. Sir: your most obedient. [*She curtsies and goes.*

CASHEL. Lives in this castle! Owns this park! A lady
Marry a prizefighter! Impossible.
And yet the prizefighter must marry her.

Enter MELLISH

Ensanguined swine, whelped by a doggish dam,
Is this thy park, that thou, with voice obscene,
Fillst it with yodeled yells, and screamst my name
For all the world to know that Cashel Byron
Is training here for combat.

MELLISH. Swine you me?
I've caught you, have I? You have found a woman.
Let her shew here again, I'll set the dog on her.
I will. I say it. And my name's Bob Mellish.

CASHEL. Change thy initial and be truly hight
Hellish. As for thy dog, why dost thou keep one
And bark thyself? Begone.

MELLISH. I'll not begone.
You shall come back with me and do your duty--
Your duty to your backers, do you hear?
You have not punched the bag this blessed day.

CASHEL. The putrid bag engirdled by thy belt
Invites my fist.

MELLISH [*weeping*]. Ingrate! O wretched lot!
Who would a trainer be? O Mellish, Mellish,
Trainer of heroes, builder-up of brawn,
Vicarious victor, thou createst champions
That quickly turn thy tyrants. But beware:
Without me thou art nothing. Disobey me,
And all thy boasted strength shall fall from thee.
With flaccid muscles and with failing breath
Facing the fist of thy more faithful foe,
I'll see thee on the grass cursing the day
Thou didst forswear thy training.

CASHEL. Noisome quack
That canst not from thine own abhorrent visage
Take one carbuncle, thou contaminat'st
Even with thy presence my untainted blood
Preach abstinence to rascals like thyself
Rotten with surfeiting. Leave me in peace.
This grove is sacred: thou profanest it.
Hence! I have business that concerns thee not.

MELLISH. Ay, with your woman. You will lose your fight.
Have you forgot your duty to your backers?
Oh, what a sacred thing your duty is!
What makes a man but duty? Where were we
Without our duty? Think of Nelson's words:
England expects that every man----

CASHEL. Shall twaddle
About his duty. Mellish: at no hour
Can I regard thee wholly without loathing;
But when thou play'st the moralist, by Heaven,
My soul flies to my fist, my fist to thee;
And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall
On Mars's armor--but enough of that.
It does remind me of my mother.

MELLISH. Ah,
Byron, let it remind thee. Once I heard
An old song: it ran thus. [*He clears his throat.*] Ahem, Ahem!

[*Sings*]--They say there is no other
Can take the place of mother--

I am out o' voice: forgive me; but remember:
Thy mother--were that sainted woman here--
Would say, Obey thy trainer.

CASHEL. Now, by Heaven,
Some fate is pushing thee upon thy doom.
Canst thou not hear thy sands as they run out?
They thunder like an avalanche. Old man:
Two things I hate, my duty and my mother.
Why dost thou urge them both upon me now?
Presume not on thine age and on thy nastiness.
Vanish, and promptly.

MELLISH. Can I leave thee here
Thus thinly clad, exposed to vernal dews?
Come back with me, my son, unto our lodge.

CASHEL. Within this breast a fire is newly lit
Whose glow shall sun the dew away, whose radiance
Shall make the orb of night hang in the heavens
Unnoticed, like a glow-worm at high noon.

MELLISH. Ah me, ah me, where wilt thou spend the night?

CASHEL. Wiltstoken's windows wandering beneath,
Wiltstoken's holy bell hearkening,
Wiltstoken's lady loving breathlessly.

MELLISH. The lady of the castle! Thou art mad.

CASHEL. 'Tis thou art mad to trifle in my path.
Thwart me no more. Begone.

MELLISH. My boy, my son,
I'd give my heart's blood for thy happiness.
Thwart thee, my son! Ah, no. I'll go with thee.

I'll brave the dews. I'll sacrifice my sleep.
I am old--no matter: ne'er shall it be said
Mellish deserted thee.

CASHEL. You resolute gods
That will not spare this man, upon your knees
Take the disparity twixt his age and mine.
Now from the ring to the high judgment seat
I step at your behest. Bear you me witness
This is not Victory, but Execution.

[*He solemnly projects his fist with colossal force against the waistcoat of* MELLISH *who doubles up like a folded towel, and lies without sense or motion.*

And now the night is beautiful again.

[*The castle clock strikes the hour in the distance.*

Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark!
It strikes in poetry. 'Tis ten o'clock.
Lydia: to thee!

[*He steals off towards the castle.* MELLISH *stirs and groans.*

ACT II

SCENE I

London. A room in Lydia's house

Enter LYDIA *and* LUCIAN

LYDIA. Welcome, dear cousin, to my London house.
Of late you have been chary of your visits.

LUCIAN. I have been greatly occupied of late.
The minister to whom I act as scribe
In Downing Street was born in Birmingham,
And, like a thoroughbred commercial statesman,
Splits his infinities, which I, poor slave,
Must reunite, though all the time my heart
Yearns for my gentle coz's company.

LYDIA. Lucian: there is some other reason. Think!
Since England was a nation every mood
Her scribes have prepositionally split;
But thine avoidance dates from yestermonth.

LUCIAN. There is a man I like not haunts this house.

LYDIA. Thou speak'st of Cashel Byron?

LUCIAN. Aye, of him.
Hast thou forgotten that eventful night
When as we gathered were at Hoskyn House
To hear a lecture by Herr Abendgasse,
He placed a single finger on my chest,
And I, ensorceled, would have sunk supine
Had not a chair received my falling form.

LYDIA. Pooh! That was but by way of illustration.

LUCIAN. What right had he to illustrate his point
Upon my person? Was I his assistant
That he should try experiments on me
As Simpson did on his with chloroform?
Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo
He hath unmanned me: all my nerve is gone.
This very morning my official chief,
Tapping with friendly forefinger this button,
Levelled me like a thunderstricken elm
Flat upon the Colonial Office floor.

LYDIA. Fancies, coz.

LUCIAN. Fancies! Fits! the chief said fits!
Delirium tremens! the chlorotic dance
Of Vitus! What could any one have thought?
Your ruffian friend hath ruined me. By Heaven,
I tremble at a thumbnail. Give me drink.

LYDIA. What ho, without there! Bashville.

BASHVILLE [*without*]. Coming, madam.

Enter BASHVILLE

LYDIA. My cousin ails, Bashville. Procure some wet. [*Exit* BASHVILLE.

LUCIAN. Some wet!!! Where learnt *you* that atrocious word?
This is the language of a flower-girl.

LYDIA. True. It is horrible. Said I "Some wet"?
I meant, some drink. Why did I say "Some wet"?
Am I ensorceled too? "Some wet"! Fie! fie!
I feel as though some hateful thing had stained me.
Oh, Lucian, how could I have said "Some wet"?

LUCIAN. The horrid conversation of this man
Hath numbed thy once unfailing sense of fitness.

LYDIA. Nay, he speaks very well: he's literate:
Shakespear he quotes unconsciously.

LUCIAN. And yet
Anon he talks pure pothouse.

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE. Sir: your potion.

LUCIAN. Thanks. [*He drinks.*] I am better.

A NEWSBOY [*calling without*]. Extra special *Star*!
Result of the great fight! Name of the winner!

LYDIA. Who calls so loud?

BASHVILLE. The papers, madam.

LYDIA. Why?
Hath ought momentous happened?

BASHVILLE. Madam: yes. [*He produces a newspaper.*
All England for these thrilling paragraphs
A week has waited breathless.

LYDIA. Read them us.

BASHVILLE [*reading*]. "At noon to-day, unknown to the police,
Within a thousand miles of Wormwood Scrubbs,
Th' Australian Champion and his challenger,
The Flying Dutchman, formerly engaged
I' the mercantile marine, fought to a finish.
Lord Worthington, the well-known sporting peer
Acted as referee."

LYDIA. Lord Worthington!

BASHVILLE. "The bold Ned Skene revisited the ropes
To hold the bottle for his quondam novice;
Whilst in the seaman's corner were assembled
Professor Palmer and the Chelsea Snob.
Mellish, whose epigastrium has been hurt,
'Tis said, by accident at Wiltstoken,
Looked none the worse in the Australian's corner.
The Flying Dutchman wore the Union Jack:
His colors freely sold amid the crowd;
But Cashel's well-known spot of white on blue----"

LYDIA. *Whose*, did you say?

BASHVILLE. Cashel's, my lady.

LYDIA. Lucian:
Your hand--a chair--

BASHVILLE. Madam: you're ill.

LYDIA. Proceed.
What you have read I do not understand;
Yet I will hear it through. Proceed.

LUCIAN. Proceed.

BASHVILLE. "But Cashel's well-known spot of white on blue
Was fairly rushed for. Time was called at twelve,
When, with a smile of confidence upon
His ocean-beaten mug----"

LYDIA. His mug?

LUCIAN [*explaining*]. His face.

BASHVILLE [*continuing*]. "The Dutchman came undaunted to the scratch,
But found the champion there already. Both
Most heartily shook hands, amid the cheers
Of their encouraged backers. Two to one
Was offered on the Melbourne nonpareil;
And soon, so fit the Flying Dutchman seemed,
Found takers everywhere. No time was lost
In getting to the business of the day.
The Dutchman led at once, and seemed to land
On Byron's dicebox; but the seaman's reach,
Too short for execution at long shots,
Did not get fairly home upon the ivory;
And Byron had the best of the exchange."

LYDIA. I do not understand. What were they doing?

LUCIAN. Fighting with naked fists.

LYDIA. Oh, horrible!
I'll hear no more. Or stay: how did it end?
Was Cashel hurt?

LUCIAN [*to* BASHVILLE]. Skip to the final round.

BASHVILLE. "Round Three: the rumors that had gone about
Of a breakdown in Byron's recent training
Seemed quite confirmed. Upon the call of time
He rose, and, looking anything but cheerful,
Proclaimed with every breath Bellows to Mend.
At this point six to one was freely offered
Upon the Dutchman; and Lord Worthington
Plunged at this figure till he stood to lose
A fortune should the Dutchman, as seemed certain,
Take down the number of the Panley boy.
The Dutchman, glutton as we know he is,
Seemed this time likely to go hungry. Cashel
Was clearly groggy as he slipped the sailor,
Who, not to be denied, followed him up,
Forcing the fighting mid tremendous cheers."

LYDIA. Oh stop--no more--or tell the worst at once.
I'll be revenged. Bashville: call the police.
This brutal sailor shall be made to know
There's law in England.

LUCIAN. Do not interrupt him:
Mine ears are thirsting. Finish, man. What next?

BASHVILLE. "Forty to one, the Dutchman's friends exclaimed.
Done, said Lord Worthington, who shewed himself
A sportsman every inch. Barely the bet
Was booked, when, at the reeling champion's jaw
The sailor, bent on winning out of hand,
Sent in his right. The issue seemed a cert,

When Cashel, ducking smartly to his left,
Cross-countered like a hundredweight of brick----"

LUCIAN. Death and damnation!

LYDIA. Oh, what does it mean?

BASHVILLE. "The Dutchman went to grass, a beaten man."

LYDIA. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Oh, well done, Cashel!

BASHVILLE. "A scene of indescribable excitement
Ensued; for it was now quite evident
That Byron's grogginess had all along
Been feigned to make the market for his backers.
We trust this sample of colonial smartness
Will not find imitators on this side.
The losers settled up like gentlemen;
But many felt that Byron shewed bad taste
In taking old Ned Skene upon his back,
And, with Bob Mellish tucked beneath his oxter,
Sprinting a hundred yards to show the crowd
The perfect pink of his condition"--[*a knock*].

LYDIA [*turning pale*]. Bashville
Didst hear? A knock.

BASHVILLE. Madam: 'tis Byron's knock.
Shall I admit him?

LUCIAN. Reeking from the ring!
Oh, monstrous! Say you're out.

LYDIA. Send him away.
I will not see the wretch. How dare he keep
Secrets from ME? I'll punish him. Pray say
I'm not at home. [BASHVILLE *turns to go*.] Yet stay. I am afraid
He will not come again.

LUCIAN. A consummation
Devoutly to be wished by any lady.
Pray, do you *wish* this man to come again?

LYDIA. No, Lucian. He hath used me very ill.
He should have told me. I will ne'er forgive him.
Say, Not at home.

BASHVILLE. Yes, madam. [*Exit*.

LYDIA. Stay--

LUCIAN [*stopping her*]. No, Lydia:
You shall not countermand that proper order.
Oh, would you cast the treasure of your mind,
The thousands at your bank, and, above all,
Your unassailable social position
Before this soulless mass of beef and brawn?

LYDIA. Nay, coz: you're prejudiced.

CASHEL [*without*]. Liar and slave!

LYDIA. What words were those?

LUCIAN. The man is drunk with slaughter.

Enter BASHVILLE *running: he shuts the door and locks it.*

BASHVILLE. Save yourselves: at the staircase foot the champion
Sprawls on the mat, by trick of wrestler tripped;
But when he rises, woe betide us all!

LYDIA. Who bade you treat my visitor with violence?

BASHVILLE. He would not take my answer; thrust the door
Back in my face; gave me the lie i' the throat;
Averred he felt your presence in his bones.
I said he should feel mine there too, and felled him;
Then fled to bar your door.

LYDIA. O lover's instinct!
He felt my presence. Well, let him come in.
We must not fail in courage with a fighter.
Unlock the door.

LUCIAN. Stop. Like all women, Lydia,
You have the courage of immunity.
To strike *you* were against his code of honor;
But *me*, above the belt, he may perform on
T' th' height of his profession. Also Bashville.

BASHVILLE. Think not of me, sir. Let him do his worst.
Oh, if the valor of my heart could weigh
The fatal difference twixt his weight and mine,
A second battle should he do this day:
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my mistress
Give me the word: instant I'll take him on
Here--now--at catchweight. Better bite the carpet
A man, than fly, a coward.

LUCIAN. Bravely said:
I will assist you with the poker.

LYDIA. No:
I will not have him touched. Open the door.

BASHVILLE. Destruction knocks thereat. I smile, and open.

[BASHVILLE *opens the door. Dead silence.* CASHEL
enters, in tears. A solemn pause.

CASHEL. You know my secret?

LYDIA. Yes.

CASHEL. And thereupon
You bade your servant fling me from your door.

LYDIA. I bade my servant say I was not here.

CASHEL [*to* BASHVILLE]. Why didst thou better thy instruction, man?
Hadst thou but said, "She bade me tell thee this,"
Thoudst burst my heart. I thank thee for thy mercy.

LYDIA. Oh, Lucian, didst thou call him "drunk with slaughter"?
Canst thou refrain from weeping at his woe?

CASHEL [*to* LUCIAN]. The unwritten law that shields the amateur
Against professional resentment, saves thee.
O coward, to traduce behind their backs
Defenceless prizefighters!

LUCIAN. Thou dost avow
Thou art a prizefighter.

CASHEL. It was my glory.
I had hoped to offer to my lady there
My belts, my championships, my heaped-up stakes,
My undefeated record; but I knew
Behind their blaze a hateful secret lurked.

LYDIA. Another secret?

LUCIAN. Is there worse to come?

CASHEL. Know ye not then my mother is an actress?

LUCIAN. How horrible!

LYDIA. Nay, nay: how interesting!

CASHEL. A thousand victories cannot wipe out
That birthstain. Oh, my speech bewrayeth it:
My earliest lesson was the player's speech
In Hamlet; and to this day I express myself
More like a mobled queen than like a man
Of flesh and blood. Well may your cousin sneer!
What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?

LUCIAN. Injurious upstart: if by Hecuba
Thou pointest darkly at my lovely cousin,
Know that she is to me, and I to her,
What never canst thou be. I do defy thee;
And maugre all the odds thy skill doth give,
Outside I will await thee.

LYDIA. I forbid
Expressly any such duello. Bashville:
The door. Put Mr. Webber in a hansom,
And bid the driver hie to Downing Street.
No answer: 'tis my will. [*Exeunt* LUCIAN *and* BASHVILLE.
And now, farewell.
You must not come again, unless indeed
You can some day look in my eyes and say:
Lydia: my occupation's gone.

CASHEL. Ah, no:

It would remind you of my wretched mother.
O God, let me be natural a moment!
What other occupation can I try?
What would you have me be?

LYDIA. A gentleman.

CASHEL. A gentleman! I, Cashel Byron, stoop
To be the thing that bets on me! the fool
I flatter at so many coins a lesson!
The screaming creature who beside the ring
Gambles with basest wretches for my blood,
And pays with money that he never earned!
Let me die broken-hearted rather!

LYDIA. But
You need not be an idle gentleman.
I call you one of Nature's gentlemen.

CASHEL. That's the collection for the loser, Lydia.
I am not wont to need it. When your friends
Contest elections, and at foot o' th' poll
Rue their presumption, 'tis their wont to claim
A moral victory. In a sort they are
Nature's M. P.s. I am not yet so threadbare
As to accept these consolation stakes.

LYDIA. You are offended with me.

CASHEL. Yes, I am.
I can put up with much; but--"Nature's gentleman"!
I thank your ladyship of Lyons, but
Must beg to be excused.

LYDIA. But surely, surely,
To be a prizefighter, and maul poor mariners
With naked knuckles, is no work for you.

CASHEL. Thou dost arraign the inattentive Fates
That weave my thread of life in ruder patterns
Than these that lie, antimacassarly,
Asprent thy drawingroom. As well demand
Why I at birth chose to begin my life
A speechless babe, hairless, incontinent,
Hobbling upon all fours, a nurse's nuisance?
Or why I do propose to lose my strength,
To blanch my hair, to let the gums recede
Far up my yellowing teeth, and finally
Lie down and moulder in a rotten grave?
Only one thing more foolish could have been,
And that was to be born, not man, but woman.
This was thy folly, why rebuk'st thou mine?

LYDIA. These are not things of choice.

CASHEL. And did I choose
My quick divining eye, my lightning hand,
My springing muscle and untiring heart?
Did I implant the instinct in the race

That found a use for these, and said to me,
Fight for us, and be fame and fortune thine?

LYDIA. But there are other callings in the world.

CASHEL. Go tell thy painters to turn stockbrokers,
Thy poet friends to stoop o'er merchants' desks
And pen prose records of the gains of greed.
Tell bishops that religion is outworn,
And that the Pampa to the horsebreaker
Opes new careers. Bid the professor quit
His fraudulent pedantries, and do i' the world
The thing he would teach others. Then return
To me and say: Cashel: they have obeyed;
And on that pyre of sacrifice I, too,
Will throw my championship.

LYDIA. But 'tis so cruel.

CASHEL. Is it so? I have hardly noticed that,
So cruel are all callings. Yet this hand,
That many a two days' bruise hath ruthless given,
Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty years,
Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport.
I am too squeamish for your dainty world,
That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,
The world that robs the poor, and with their spoil
Does what its tradesmen tell it. Oh, your ladies!
Sealskinned and egret-feathered; all defiance
To Nature; cowering if one say to them
"What will the servants think?" Your gentlemen!
Your tailor-tyrannized visitors of whom
Flutter of wing and singing in the wood
Make chickenbutchers. And your medicine men!
Groping for cures in the tormented entrails
Of friendly dogs. Pray have you asked all these
To change their occupations? Find you mine
So grimly crueller? I cannot breathe
An air so petty and so poisonous.

LYDIA. But find you not their manners very nice?

CASHEL. To me, perfection. Oh, they condescend
With a rare grace. Your duke, who condescends
Almost to the whole world, might for a Man
Pass in the eyes of those who never saw
The duke capped with a prince. See then, ye gods,
The duke turn footman, and his eager dame
Sink the great lady in the obsequious housemaid!
Oh, at such moments I could wish the Court
Had but one breadbasket, that with my fist
I could make all its windy vanity
Gasp itself out on the gravel. Fare you well.
I did not choose my calling; but at least
I can refrain from being a gentleman.

LYDIA. You say farewell to me without a pang.

CASHEL. My calling hath apprenticed me to pangs.

This is a rib-bender; but I can bear it.
It is a lonely thing to be a champion.

LYDIA. It is a lonelier thing to be a woman.

CASHEL. Be lonely then. Shall it be said of thee
That for his brawn thou misalliance mad'st
Wi' the Prince of Ruffians? Never. Go thy ways;
Or, if thou hast nostalgia of the mud,
Wed some bedogged wretch that on the slot
Of gilded snobbery, *ventre a terre*,
Will hunt through life with eager nose on earth
And hang thee thick with diamonds. I am rich;
But all my gold was fought for with my hands.

LYDIA. What dost thou mean by rich?

CASHEL. There is a man,
Hight Paradise, vaunted unconquerable,
Hath dared to say he will be glad to hear from me.
I have replied that none can hear from *me*
Until a thousand solid pounds be staked.
His friends have confidently found the money.
Ere fall of leaf that money shall be mine;
And then I shall possess ten thousand pounds.
I had hoped to tempt thee with that monstrous sum.

LYDIA. Thou silly Cashel, 'tis but a week's income.
I did propose to give thee three times that
For pocket money when we two were wed.

CASHEL. Give me my hat. I have been fooling here.
Now, by the Hebrew lawgiver, I thought
That only in America such revenues
Were decent deemed. Enough. My dream is dreamed.
Your gold weighs like a mountain on my chest.
Farewell.

LYDIA. The golden mountain shall be thine
The day thou quit'st thy horrible profession.

CASHEL. Tempt me not, woman. It is honor calls.
Slave to the Ring I rest until the face
Of Paradise be changed.

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE. Madam, your carriage,
Ordered by you at two. 'Tis now half-past.

CASHEL. Sdeath! is it half-past two? The king! the king!

LYDIA. The king! What mean you?

CASHEL. I must meet a monarch
This very afternoon at Islington.

LYDIA. At Islington! You must be mad.

CASHEL. A cab!
Go call a cab; and let a cab be called;
And let the man that calls it be thy footman.

LYDIA. You are not well. You shall not go alone.
My carriage waits. I must accompany you.
I go to find my hat. [*Exit.*

CASHEL. Like Paracelsus,
Who went to find his soul. [*To* BASHVILLE.] And now, young man,
How comes it that a fellow of your inches,
So deft a wrestler and so bold a spirit,
Can stoop to be a flunkey? Call on me
On your next evening out. I'll make a man of you.
Surely you are ambitious and aspire----

BASHVILLE. To be a butler and draw corks; wherefore,
By Heaven, I will draw yours.

[*He hits* CASHEL *on the nose, and runs out.*

CASHEL [*thoughtfully putting the side of his forefinger to his nose, and studying the blood on it*].

Too quick for *me*!
There's money in this youth.

Re-enter LYDIA, *hatted and gloved.*

LYDIA. O Heaven! you bleed.

CASHEL. Lend me a key or other frigid object,
That I may put it down my back, and staunch
The welling life stream.

LYDIA. [*giving him her keys*]. Oh, what *have* you done?

CASHEL. Flush on the boko napped your footman's left.

LYDIA. I do not understand.

CASHEL. True. Pardon me.
I have received a blow upon the nose
In sport from Bashville. Next, ablution; else
I shall be total gules. [*He hurries out.*

LYDIA. How well he speaks!
There is a silver trumpet in his lips
That stirs me to the finger ends. His nose
Dropt lovely color: 'tis a perfect blood.
I would 'twere mingled with mine own!

Enter BASHVILLE

What now?

BASHVILLE. Madam, the coachman can no longer wait:
The horses will take cold.

LYDIA. I do beseech him
A moment's grace. Oh, mockery of wealth!
The third class passenger unchidden rides
Whither and when he will: obsequious trams
Await him hourly: subterranean tubes
With tireless coursers whisk him through the town;
But we, the rich, are slaves to Houyhnhnms:
We wait upon their colds, and frowst all day
Indoors, if they but cough or spurn their hay.

BASHVILLE. Madam, an omnibus to Euston Road,
And thence t' th' Angel--

Enter CASHEL

LYDIA. Let us haste, my love:
The coachman is impatient.

CASHEL. Did he guess
He stays for Cashel Byron, he'd outwait
Pompei's sentinel. Let us away.
This day of deeds, as yet but half begun,
Must ended be in merrie Islington. [*Exeunt* LYDIA *and* CASHEL.

BASHVILLE. Gods! how she hangs on's arm! I am alone.
Now let me lift the cover from my soul.
O wasted humbleness! Deluded diffidence!
How often have I said, Lie down, poor footman:
She'll never stoop to thee, rear as thou wilt
Thy powder to the sky. And now, by Heaven,
She stoops below me; condescends upon
This hero of the pothouse, whose exploits,
Writ in my character from my last place,
Would damn me into ostlerdom. And yet
There's an eternal justice in it; for
By so much as the ne'er subdued Indian
Excels the servile negro, doth this ruffian
Precedence take of me. "*Ich dien*." Damnation!
I serve. My motto should have been, "I scalp."
And yet I do not bear the yoke for gold.
Because I love her I have blacked her boots;
Because I love her I have cleaned her knives,
Doing in this the office of a boy,
Whilst, like the celebrated maid that milks
And does the meanest chares, I've shared the passions
Of Cleopatra. It has been my pride
To give her place the greater altitude
By lowering mine, and of her dignity
To be so jealous that my cheek has flamed
Even at the thought of such a deep disgrace
As love for such a one as I would be
For such a one as she; and now! and now!
A prizefighter! O irony! O bathos!
To have made way for this! Oh, Bashville, Bashville:
Why hast thou thought so lowly of thyself,
So heavenly high of her? Let what will come,
My love must speak: 'twas my respect was dumb.

Scene II

The Agricultural Hall in Islington, crowded with spectators. In the arena a throne, with a boxing ring before it. A balcony above on the right, occupied by persons of fashion: among others, Lydia *and* Lord Worthington.

Flourish. Enter Lucian *and* Cetewayo, *with Chiefs in attendance.*

CETEWAYO. Is this the Hall of Husbandmen?

LUCIAN. It is.

CETEWAYO. Are these anaemic dogs the English people?

LUCIAN. Mislike us not for our complexions,
The pallid liveries of the pall of smoke
Belched by the mighty chimneys of our factories,
And by the million patent kitchen ranges
Of happy English homes.

CETEWAYO. When first I came
I deemed those chimneys the fuliginous altars
Of some infernal god. I now perceive
The English dare not look upon the sky.
They are moles and owls: they call upon the soot
To cover them.

LUCIAN. You cannot understand
The greatness of this people, Cetewayo.
You are a savage, reasoning like a child.
Each pallid English face conceals a brain
Whose powers are proven in the works of Newton
And in the plays of the immortal Shakespear.
There is not one of all the thousands here
But, if you placed him naked in the desert,
Would presently construct a steam engine,
And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes.

CETEWAYO. Have I been brought a million miles by sea
To learn how men can lie! Know, Father Webber,
Men become civilized through twin diseases,
Terror and Greed to wit: these two conjoined
Become the grisly parents of Invention.
Why does the trembling white with frantic toil
Of hand and brain produce the magic gun
That slays a mile off, whilst the manly Zulu
Dares look his foe i' the face; fights foot to foot;
Lives in the present; drains the Here and Now;
Makes life a long reality, and death
A moment only! whilst your Englishman
Glares on his burning candle's winding-sheets,
Counting the steps of his approaching doom.
And in the murky corners ever sees
Two horrid shadows, Death and Poverty:
In the which anguish an unnatural edge
Comes on his frighted brain, which straight devises
Strange frauds by which to filch unearned gold,

Mad crafts by which to slay unfaced foes,
Until at last his agonized desire
Makes possibility its slave. And then--
Horrible climax! All-undoing spite!--
Th' importunate clutching of the coward's hand
From wearied Nature Devastation's secrets
Doth wrest; when straight the brave black-livered man
Is blown explosively from off the globe;
And Death and Dread, with their white-livered slaves
O'er-run the earth, and through their chattering teeth
Stammer the words "Survival of the Fittest."
Enough of this: I came not here to talk.
Thou say'st thou hast two white-faced ones who dare
Fight without guns, and spearless, to the death.
Let them be brought.

LUCIAN. They fight not to the death,
But under strictest rules: as, for example,
Half of their persons shall not be attacked;
Nor shall they suffer blows when they fall down,
Nor stroke of foot at any time. And, further,
That frequent opportunities of rest
With succor and refreshment be secured them.

CETEWAYO. Ye gods, what cowards! Zululand, my Zululand:
Personified Pusillanimity
Hath ta'en thee from the bravest of the brave!

LUCIAN. Lo, the rude savage whose untutored mind
Cannot perceive self-evidence, and doubts
That Brave and English mean the self-same thing!

CETEWAYO. Well, well, produce these heroes. I surmise
They will be carried by their nurses, lest
Some barking dog or bumbling bee should scare them.

CETEWAYO *takes his state. Enter* PARADISE

LYDIA. What hateful wretch is this whose mighty thews
Presage destruction to his adversaries?

LORD WORTHINGTON. 'Tis Paradise.

LYDIA. He of whom Cashel spoke?
A dreadful thought ices my heart. Oh, why
Did Cashel leave us at the door?

Enter CASHEL

LORD WORTHINGTON. Behold!
The champion comes.

LYDIA. Oh, I could kiss him now,
Here, before all the world. His boxing things
Render him most attractive. But I fear
Yon villain's fists may maul him.

WORTHINGTON. Have no fear.
Hark! the king speaks.

CETEWAYO. Ye sons of the white queen:
Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to.

PARADISE. Your royal highness, you beholds a bloke
What gets his living honest by his fists.
I may not have the polish of some toffs
As I could mention on; but up to now
No man has took my number down. I scale
Close on twelve stun; my age is twenty-three;
And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub
Am to be heard of any day by such
As likes the job. I don't know, governor,
As ennythink remains for me to say.

CETEWAYO. Six wives and thirty oxen shalt thou have
If on the sand thou leave thy foeman dead.
Methinks he looks scornfully on thee.
[*To* CASHEL] Ha! dost thou not so?

CASHEL. Sir, I do beseech you
To name the bone, or limb, or special place
Where you would have me hit him with this fist.

CETEWAYO. Thou hast a noble brow; but much I fear
Thine adversary will disfigure it.

CASHEL. There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will. Give me the gloves.

THE MASTER OF THE REVELS. Paradise, a professor.
Cashel Byron,
Also professor. Time! [*They spar.*

LYDIA. Eternity
It seems to me until this fight be done.

CASHEL. Dread monarch: this is called the upper cut,
And this a hook-hit of mine own invention.
The hollow region where I plant this blow
Is called the mark. My left, you will observe,
I chiefly use for long shots: with my right
Aiming beside the angle of the jaw
And landing with a certain delicate screw
I without violence knock my foeman out.
Mark how he falls forward upon his face!
The rules allow ten seconds to get up;
And as the man is still quite silly, I
Might safely finish him; but my respect
For your most gracious majesty's desire
To see some further triumphs of the science
Of self-defence postpones awhile his doom.

PARADISE. How can a bloke do hisself proper justice
With pillows on his fists?

[*He tears off his gloves and attacks* CASHEL *with his bare knuckles.*

THE CROWD. Unfair! The rules!

CETEWAYO. The joy of battle surges boiling up
And bids me join the mellay. Isandhlana
And Victory! [*He falls on the bystanders.*

THE CHIEFS. Victory and Isandhlana!

[*They run amok. General panic and stampede. The ring is swept away.*

LUCIAN. Forbear these most irregular proceedings.
Police! Police!

[*He engages* CETEWAYO *his umbrella. The balcony comes down with a crash. Screams from its occupants. Indescribable confusion.*

CASHEL [*dragging* LYDIA *from the struggling heap*].
My love, my love, art hurt?

LYDIA. No, no; but save my sore o'ermatched cousin.

A POLICEMAN. Give us a lead, sir. Save the English flag.
Africa tramples on it.

CASHEL. Africa!
Not all the continents whose mighty shoulders
The dancing diamonds of the seas bedeck
Shall trample on the blue with spots of white.
Now, Lydia, mark thy lover. [*He charges the Zulus.*

LYDIA. Hercules
Cannot withstand him. See: the king is down;
The tallest chief is up, heels over head,
Tossed corklike o'er my Cashel's sinewy back;
And his lieutenant all deflated gasps
For breath upon the sand. The others fly
In vain: his fist o'er magic distances
Like a chameleon's tongue shoots to its mark;
And the last African upon his knees
Sues piteously for quarter. [*Rushing into* CASHEL'S *arms.*] Oh, my hero:
Thou'st saved us all this day.

CASHEL. 'Twas all for thee.

CETEWAYO. [*trying to rise*]. Have I been struck by lightning?

LUCIAN. Sir, your conduct
Can only be described as most ungentlemanly.

POLICEMAN. One of the prone is white.

CASHEL. 'Tis Paradise.

POLICEMAN. He's choking: he has something in his mouth.

LYDIA [*to* CASHEL]. Oh Heaven! there is blood upon your hip.
You're hurt.

CASHEL. The morsel in yon wretch's mouth

Was bitten out of me.

[*Sensation.* LYDIA *screams and swoons in* CASHEL'S *arms.*

ACT III

Wiltstoken. A room in the Warren Lodge

LYDIA *at her writing table*

LYDIA. O Past and Present, how ye do conflict
As here I sit writing my father's life!
The autumn woodland woos me from without
With whispering of leaves and dainty airs
To leave this fruitless haunting of the past.
My father was a very learned man.
I sometimes think I shall oldmaided be
Ere I unlearn the things he taught to me.

Enter POLICEMAN

POLICEMAN. Asking your ladyship to pardon me
For this intrusion, might I be so bold
As ask a question of your people here
Concerning the Queen's peace?

LYDIA. My people here
Are but a footman and a simple maid;
And both have craved a holiday to join
Some local festival. But, sir, your helmet
Proclaims the Metropolitan Police.

POLICEMAN. Madam, it does; and I may now inform you
That what you term a local festival
Is a most hideous outrage 'gainst the law,
Which we to quell from London have come down:
In short, a prizefight. My sole purpose here
Is to inquire whether your ladyship
Any bad characters this afternoon
Has noted in the neighborhood.

LYDIA. No, none, sir.
I had not let my maid go forth to-day
Thought I the roads unsafe.

POLICEMAN. Fear nothing, madam:
The force protects the fair. My mission here
Is to wreak ultion for the broken law.
I wish your ladyship good afternoon.

LYDIA. Good afternoon. [*Exit* POLICEMAN.
A prizefight! O my heart!

Cashel: hast thou deceived me? Can it be
Thou hast backslidden to the hateful calling
I asked thee to eschew?
O wretched maid,
Why didst thou flee from London to this place
To write thy father's life, whenas in town
Thou might'st have kept a guardian eye on him--
What's that? A flying footstep--

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL. Sanctuary!
The law is on my track. What! Lydia here!

LYDIA. Ay: Lydia here. Hast thou done murder, then,
That in so horrible a guise thou comest?

CASHEL. Murder! I would I had. Yon cannibal
Hath forty thousand lives; and I have ta'en
But thousands thirty-nine. I tell thee, Lydia,
On the impenetrable sarcolobe
That holds his seedling brain these fists have pounded
By Shrewsb'ry clock an hour. This bruised grass
And caked mud adhering to my form
I have acquired in rolling on the sod
Clinched in his grip. This scanty reefer coat
For decency snatched up as fast I fled
When the police arrived, belongs to Mellish.
'Tis all too short; hence my display of rib
And forearm mother-naked. Be not wroth
Because I seem to wink at you: by Heaven,
'Twas Paradise that plugged me in the eye
Which I perforce keep closing. Pity me,
My training wasted and my blows unpaid,
Sans stakes, sans victory, sans everything
I had hoped to win. Oh, I could sit me down
And weep for bitterness.

LYDIA. Thou wretch, begone.

CASHEL. Begone!

LYDIA. I say begone. Oh, tiger's heart
Wrapped in a young man's hide, canst thou not live
In love with Nature and at peace with Man?
Must thou, although thy hands were never made
To blacken others' eyes, still batter at
The image of Divinity? I loathe thee.
Hence from my house and never see me more.

CASHEL. I go. The meanest lad on thy estate
Would not betray me thus. But 'tis no matter. [*He opens the door.*
Ha! the police. I'm lost. [*He shuts the door again.*
Now shalt thou see
My last fight fought. Exhausted as I am,
To capture me will cost the coppers dear.
Come one, come all!

LYDIA. Oh, hide thee, I implore:

I cannot see thee hunted down like this.
There is my room. Conceal thyself therein.
Quick, I command. [*He goes into the room.*
With horror I foresee,
Lydia, that never lied, must lie for thee.

Enter POLICEMAN, *with* PARADISE *and* MELLISH *in custody*, BASHVILLE, *constables, and others*

POLICEMAN. Keep back your bruised prisoner lest he shock
This wellbred lady's nerves. Your pardon, ma'am;
But have you seen by chance the other one?
In this direction he was seen to run.

LYDIA. A man came here anon with bloody hands
And aspect that did turn my soul to snow.

POLICEMAN. 'Twas he. What said he?

LYDIA. Begged for sanctuary.
I bade the man begone.

POLICEMAN. Most properly.
Saw you which way he went?

LYDIA. I cannot tell.

PARADISE. He seen me coming; and he done a bunk.

POLICEMAN. Peace, there. Excuse his damaged features, lady:
He's Paradise; and this one's Byron's trainer,
Mellish.

MELLISH. Injurious copper, in thy teeth
I hurl the lie. I am no trainer, I.
My father, a respected missionary,
Apprenticed me at fourteen years of age
T' the poetry writing. To these woods I came
With Nature to commune. My revery
Was by a sound of blows rudely dispelled.
Mindful of what my sainted parent taught,
I rushed to play the peacemaker, when lo!
These minions of the law laid hands on me.

BASHVILLE. A lovely woman, with distracted cries,
In most resplendent fashionable frock,
Approaches like a wounded antelope.

Enter ADELAIDE GISBORNE

ADELAIDE. Where is my Cashel? Hath he been arrested?

POLICEMAN. I would I had thy Cashel by the collar:
He hath escaped me.

ADELAIDE. Praises be for ever!

LYDIA. Why dost thou call the missing man *thy* Cashel?

ADELAIDE. He is mine only son.

ALL. Thy son!

ADELAIDE. My son.

LYDIA. I thought his mother hardly would have known him,
So crushed his countenance.

ADELAIDE. A ribald peer,
Lord Worthington by name, this morning came
With honeyed words beseeching me to mount
His four-in-hand, and to the country hie
To see some English sport. Being by nature
Frank as a child, I fell into the snare,
But took so long to dress that the design
Failed of its full effect; for not until
The final round we reached the horrid scene.
Be silent all; for now I do approach
My tragedy's catastrophe. Know, then,
That Heaven did bless me with an only son,
A boy devoted to his doting mother----

POLICEMAN. Hark! did you hear an oath from yonder room?

ADELAIDE. Respect a broken-hearted mother's grief,
And do not interrupt me in my scene.
Ten years ago my darling disappeared
(Ten dreary twelvemonths of continuous tears,
Tears that have left me prematurely aged;
For I am younger far than I appear).
Judge of my anguish when to-day I saw
Stripped to the waist, and fighting like a demon
With one who, whatsoe'er his humble virtues,
Was clearly not a gentleman, my son!

ALL. O strange event! O passing tearful tale!

ADELAIDE. I thank you from the bottom of my heart
For the reception you have given my woe;
And now I ask, where is my wretched son?
He must at once come home with me, and quit
A course of life that cannot be allowed.

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL. Policeman: I do yield me to the law.

LYDIA. Oh, no.

ADELAIDE. My son!

CASHEL. My mother! Do not kiss me.
My visage is too sore.

POLICEMAN. The lady hid him.
This is a regular plant. You cannot be
Up to that sex. [*To* CASHEL] You come along with me.

LYDIA. Fear not, my Cashel: I will bail thee out.

CASHEL. Never. I do embrace my doom with joy.
With Paradise in Pentonville or Portland
I shall feel safe: there are no mothers there.

ADELAIDE. Ungracious boy--

CASHEL. Constable: bear me hence.

MELLISH. Oh, let me sweetest reconcilement make
By calling to thy mind that moving song:--

[*Sings*] They say there is no other--

CASHEL. Forbear at once, or the next note of music
That falls upon thine ear shall clang in thunder
From the last trumpet.

ADELAIDE. A disgraceful threat
To level at this virtuous old man.

LYDIA. Oh, Cashel, if thou scorn'st thy mother thus,
How wilt thou treat thy wife?

CASHEL. There spake my fate:
I knew you would say that. Oh, mothers, mothers,
Would you but let your wretched sons alone
Life were worth living! Had I any choice
In this importunate relationship?
None. And until that high auspicious day
When the millennium on an orphaned world
Shall dawn, and man upon his fellow look,
Reckless of consanguinity, my mother
And I within the self-same hemisphere
Conjointly may not dwell.

ADELAIDE. Ungentlemanly!

CASHEL. I am no gentleman. I am a criminal,
Redhanded, baseborn--

ADELAIDE. Baseborn! Who dares say it?
Thou art the son and heir of Bingley Bumpkin
FitzAlgernon de Courcy Cashel Byron,
Sieur of Park Lane and Overlord of Dorset,
Who after three months' wedded happiness
Rashly fordid himself with prussic acid,
Leaving a tearstained note to testify
That having sweetly honeymooned with me,
He now could say, O Death, where is thy sting?

POLICEMAN. Sir: had I known your quality, this cop
I had averted; but it is too late.
The law's above us both.

Enter LUCIAN, *with an Order in Council*

LUCIAN. Not so, policeman

I bear a message from The Throne itself
Of fullest amnesty for Byron's past.
Nay, more: of Dorset deputy lieutenant
He is proclaimed. Further, it is decreed,
In memory of his glorious victory
Over our country's foes at Islington,
The flag of England shall for ever bear
On azure field twelve swanlike spots of white;
And by an exercise of feudal right
Too long disused in this anarchic age
Our sovereign doth confer on him the hand
Of Miss Carew, Wiltstoken's wealthy heiress. [*General acclamation.*

POLICEMAN. Was anything, sir, said about me?

LUCIAN. Thy faithful services are not forgot:
In future call thyself Inspector Smith. [*Renewed acclamation.*

POLICEMAN. I thank you, sir. I thank you, gentlemen.

LUCIAN. My former opposition, valiant champion,
Was based on the supposed discrepancy
Betwixt your rank and Lydia's. Here's my hand.

BASHVILLE. And I do here unselfishly renounce
All my pretensions to my lady's favor. [*Sensation.*

LYDIA. What, Bashville! didst thou love me?

BASHVILLE. Madam: yes.
'Tis said: now let me leave immediately.

LYDIA. In taking, Bashville, this most tasteful course
You are but acting as a gentleman
In the like case would act. I fully grant
Your perfect right to make a declaration
Which flatters me and honors your ambition.
Prior attachment bids me firmly say
That whilst my Cashel lives, and polyandry
Rests foreign to the British social scheme,
Your love is hopeless; still, your services,
Made zealous by disinterested passion,
Would greatly add to my domestic comfort;
And if----

CASHEL. Excuse me. I have other views.
I've noted in this man such aptitude
For art and exercise in his defence
That I prognosticate for him a future
More glorious than my past. Henceforth I dub him
The Admirable Bashville, Byron's Novice;
And to the utmost of my mended fortunes
Will back him 'gainst the world at ten stone six.

ALL. Hail, Byron's Novice, champion that shall be!

BASHVILLE. Must I renounce my lovely lady's service,
And mar the face of man?

CASHEL. 'Tis Fate's decree.
For know, rash youth, that in this star crost world
Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good
In what we *can*, and not in what we *would*.

POLICEMAN. A post-horn--hark!

CASHEL. What noise of wheels is this?

LORD WORTHINGTON *drives upon the scene in his four-in-hand, and descends*

ADELAIDE. Perfidious peer!

LORD WORTHINGTON. Sweet Adelaide----

ADELAIDE. Forbear,
Audacious one: my name is Mrs. Byron.

LORD WORTHINGTON. Oh, change that title for the sweeter one
Of Lady Worthington.

CASHEL. Unhappy man,
You know not what you do.

LYDIA. Nay, 'tis a match
Of most auspicious promise. Dear Lord Worthington,
You tear from us our mother-in-law--

CASHEL. Ha! true.

LYDIA.--but we will make the sacrifice. She blushes:
At least she very prettily produces
Blushing's effect.

ADELAIDE. My lord: I do accept you. [*They embrace. Rejoicings.*

CASHEL [*aside*]. It wrings my heart to see my noble backer
Lay waste his future thus. The world's a chessboard,
And we the merest pawns in fist of Fate.
[*Aloud.*] And now, my friends, gentle and simple both,
Our scene draws to a close. In lawful course
As Dorset's deputy lieutenant I
Do pardon all concerned this afternoon
In the late gross and brutal exhibition
Of miscalled sport.

LYDIA [*throwing herself into his arms*]. Your boats
are burnt at last.

CASHEL. This is the face that burnt a thousand boats,
And ravished Cashel Byron from the ring.
But to conclude. Let William Paradise
Devote himself to science, and acquire,
By studying the player's speech in Hamlet,
A more refined address. You, Robert Mellish,
To the Blue Anchor hostelry attend him;
Assuage his hurts, and bid Bill Richardson
Limit his access to the fatal tap.
Now mount we on my backer's four-in-hand,

And to St. George's Church, whose portico
Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit Street,
Repair we all. Strike up the wedding march;
And, Mellish, let thy melodies trill forth
Broad o'er the wold as fast we bowl along.
Give me the post-horn. Loose the flowing rein;
And up to London drive with might and main. [*Exeunt.*

NOTE ON MODERN PRIZEFIGHTING

In 1882, when this book was written, prizefighting seemed to be dying out. Sparring matches with boxing gloves, under the Queensberry rules, kept pugilism faintly alive; but it was not popular, because the public, which cares only for the excitement of a strenuous fight, believed then that the boxing glove made sparring as harmless a contest of pure skill as a fencing match with buttoned foils. This delusion was supported by the limitation of the sparring match to boxing. In the prize-ring under the old rules a combatant might trip, hold, or throw his antagonist; so that each round finished either with a knockdown blow, which, except when it is really a liedown blow, is much commoner in fiction than it was in the ring, or with a visible body-to-body struggle ending in a fall. In a sparring match all that happens is that a man with a watch in his hand cries out "Time!" whereupon the two champions prosaically stop sparring and sit down for a minute's rest and refreshment. The unaccustomed and inexpert spectator in those days did not appreciate the severity of the exertion or the risk of getting hurt: he underrated them as ignorantly as he would have overrated the more dramatically obvious terrors of a prizefight. Consequently the interest in the annual sparrings for the Queensberry Championships was confined to the few amateurs who had some critical knowledge of the game of boxing, and to the survivors of the generation for which the fight between Sayers and Heenan had been described in The Times as solemnly as the University Boat Race. In short, pugilism was out of fashion because the police had suppressed the only form of it which fascinated the public by its undissembled pugnacity.

All that was needed to rehabilitate it was the discovery that the glove fight is a more trying and dangerous form of contest than the old knuckle fight. Nobody knew that then: everybody knows it, or ought to know it, now. And, accordingly, pugilism is more prosperous to-day than it has ever been before.

How far this result was foreseen by the author of the Queensberry Rules, which superseded those of the old prize-ring, will probably never be known. There is no doubt that they served their immediate turn admirably. That turn was, the keeping alive of boxing in the teeth of the law against prizefighting. Magistrates believed, as the public believed, that when men's knuckles were muffled in padded gloves; when they were forbidden to wrestle or hold one another; when the duration of a round was fixed by the clock, and the number of rounds limited to what seems (to those who have never tried) to be easily within the limits of ordinary endurance; and when the traditional interval for rest between the rounds was doubled, that then indeed violence must be checkmated, so that the worst the boxers could do was to "spar for points" before three gentlemanly members of the Stock Exchange, who would carefully note the said points on an examination paper at the ring side, awarding marks only for skill and elegance, and sternly discountenancing the claims of brute force. It may be that both the author of the rules and the "judges" who administered them in the earlier days really believed all this; for, as far as I know, the limit of an amateur pugilist's romantic credulity has never yet been reached and probably never will. But if so, their good intentions were upset by the operation of a single new rule. Thus.

In the old prize-ring a round had no fixed duration. It was terminated by the fall of one of the combatants (in practice usually both of them), and was followed by an interval of half a minute for recuperation. The practical effect of this was that a combatant could always get a respite of half a minute whenever he wanted it by pretending to be knocked down: "finding the earth the safest place," as the old phrase went. For this the Marquess of Queensberry substituted a rule that a round with the gloves should last a specified time, usually three or four minutes, and that a combatant who did not stand up to his opponent continuously during that time (ten seconds being allowed for rising in the event of a knock-down) lost the battle. That unobtrusively slipped-in ten seconds limit has produced the modern glove fight. Its practical effect is that a man dazed by a blow or a fall for, say, twelve seconds, which would not have mattered in an old-fashioned fight with its thirty seconds interval,[*] has under the Queensberry rules either to lose or else stagger to his feet in a helpless condition and be eagerly battered into insensibility by his opponent before he can recover his powers of self-defence. The notion that such a battery cannot be inflicted with boxing gloves is only entertained by

people who have never used them or seen them used. I may say that I have myself received, in an accident, a blow in the face, involving two macadamized holes in it, more violent than the most formidable pugilist could have given me with his bare knuckles. This blow did not stun or disable me even momentarily. On the other hand, I have seen a man knocked quite silly by a tap from the most luxurious sort of boxing glove made, wielded by a quite unathletic literary man sparring for the first time in his life. The human jaw, like the human elbow, is provided, as every boxer knows, with a "funny bone"; and the pugilist who is lucky enough to jar that funny bone with a blow practically has his opponent at his mercy for at least ten seconds. Such a blow is called a "knock-out." The funny bone and the ten-seconds rule explain the development of Queensberry sparring into the modern knocking-out match or glove fight.

[*] In a treatise on boxing by Captain Edgeworth Johnstone, just published, I read, "In the days of the prize-ring, fights lasted for hours; and the knock-out blow was unknown." This statement is a little too sweeping. The blow was known well enough. A veteran prizefighter once described to me his first experience of its curious effect on the senses. Only, as he had thirty seconds to recover in instead of ten, it did not end the battle. The thirty seconds made the knock-out so unlikely that the old pugilists regarded it as a rare accident, not worth trying for. The glove fighter tries for nothing else. Nevertheless knock-outs, and very dramatic ones too (Mace by King, for example), did occur in the prize-ring from time to time. Captain Edgeworth Johnstone's treatise is noteworthy in comparison with the earlier Badminton handbook of sparring by Mr. E. B. Michell (one of the Queensberry champions) as throwing over the old teaching of prize-ring boxing with mufflers, and going in frankly for glove fighting, or, to put it classically, cestus boxing.

This development got its first impulse from the discovery by sparring competitors that the only way in which a boxer, however skilful, could make sure of a verdict in his favor, was by knocking his opponent out. This will be easily understood by any one who remembers the pugilistic Bench of those days. The "judges" at the competitions were invariably ex-champions: that is, men who had themselves won former competitions. Now the judicial faculty, if it is not altogether a legal fiction, is at all events pretty rare even among men whose ordinary pursuits tend to cultivate it, and to train them in dispassionateness. Among pugilists it is quite certainly very often non-existent. The average pugilist is a violent partisan, who seldom witnesses a hot encounter without getting much more excited than the combatants themselves. Further, he is usually filled with a local patriotism which makes him, if a Londoner, deem it a duty to disparage a provincial, and, if a provincial, to support a provincial at all hazards against a cockney. He has, besides, personal favorites on whose success he bets wildly. On great occasions like the annual competitions, he is less judicial and more convivial after dinner (when the finals are sparred) than before it. Being seldom a fine boxer, he often regards skill and style as a reflection on his own deficiencies, and applauds all verdicts given for "game" alone. When he is a technically good boxer, he is all the less likely to be a good critic, as Providence seldom lavishes two rare gifts on the same individual. Even if we take the sanguine and patriotic view that when you appoint such a man a judge, and thus stop his betting, you may depend on his sense of honor and responsibility to neutralize all the other disqualifications, they are sure to be exhibited most extremely by the audience before which he has to deliver his verdict. Now it takes a good deal of strength of mind to give an unpopular verdict; and this strength of mind is not necessarily associated with the bodily hardihood of the champion boxer. Consequently, when the strength of mind is not forthcoming, the audience becomes the judge, and the popular competitor gets the verdict. And the shortest way to the heart of a big audience is to stick to your man; stop his blows bravely with your nose and return them with interest; cover yourself and him with your own gore; and outlast him in a hearty punching match.

It was under these circumstances that the competitors for sparring championships concluded that they had better decide the bouts themselves by knocking their opponents out, and waste no time in cultivating a skill and style for which they got little credit, and which actually set some of the judges against them. The public instantly began to take an interest in the sport. And so, by a pretty rapid evolution, the dexterities which the boxing glove and the Queensberry rules were supposed to substitute for the old brutalities of Sayers and Heenan were really abolished by them.

Let me describe the process as I saw it myself. Twenty years ago a poet friend of mine, who, like all poets, delighted in combats, insisted on my sharing his interest in pugilism, and took me about to all the boxing competitions of the day. I was nothing loth; for, my own share of original sin apart, any one with a sense of comedy must find the arts of self-defence delightful (for a time) through their pedantry, their quackery, and their action and reaction between amateur romantic illusion and professional eye to business.

The fencing world, as Moliere well knew, is perhaps a more exquisite example of a fool's paradise than the boxing world; but it is too restricted and expensive to allow play for popular character in a non-duelling country, as the boxing world (formerly called quite appropriately "the Fancy") does. At all events, it was the boxing world that came under my notice; and as I was amused and sceptically observant, whilst the true amateurs about me were, for the most part, merely excited and duped, my evidence may have a certain value when the question comes up again for legislative consideration, as it assuredly will some day.

The first competitions I attended were at the beginning of the eighties, at Lillie Bridge, for the Queensberry championships. There were but few competitors, including a fair number of gentlemen; and the style of boxing aimed at was the "science" bequeathed from the old prize-ring by Ned Donnelly, a pupil of Nat Langham. Langham had once defeated Sayers, and thereby taught him the tactics by which he defeated Heenan. There was as yet no special technique of glove fighting: the traditions and influence of the old ring were unquestioned and supreme; and they distinctly made for brains, skill, quickness, and mobility, as against brute violence, not at all on moral grounds, but because experience had proved that giants did not succeed in the ring under the old rules, and that crafty middle-weights did.

This did not last long. The spectators did not want to see skill defeating violence: they wanted to see violence drawing blood and pounding its way to a savage and exciting victory in the shortest possible time (the old prizefight usually dragged on for hours, and was ended by exhaustion rather than by victory). So did most of the judges. And the public and the judges naturally had their wish; for the competitors, as I have already explained, soon discovered that the only way to make sure of a favorable verdict was to "knock out" their adversary. All pretence of sparring "for points": that is, for marks on an examination paper filled up by the judges, and representing nothing but impracticable academic pedantry in its last ditch, was dropped; and the competitions became frank fights, with abundance of blood drawn, and "knock-outs" always imminent. Needless to add, the glove fight soon began to pay. The select and thinly attended spars on the turf at Lillie Bridge gave way to crowded exhibitions on the hard boards of St. James's Hall. These were organized by the Boxing Association; and to them the provinces, notably Birmingham, sent up a new race of boxers whose sole aim was to knock their opponent insensible by a right-hand blow on the jaw, knowing well that no Birmingham man could depend on a verdict before a London audience for any less undeniable achievement.

The final step was taken by an American pugilist. He threw off the last shred of the old hypocrisy of the gloved hand by challenging the whole world to produce a man who could stand before him for a specified time without being knocked out. His brief but glorious career completely re-established pugilism by giving a world-wide advertisement to the fact that the boxing glove spares nothing but the public conscience, and that as much ferocity, bloodshed, pain, and risk of serious injury or death can be enjoyed at a glove fight as at an old-fashioned prizefight, whilst the strain on the combatants is much greater. It is true that these horrors are greatly exaggerated by the popular imagination, and that if boxing were really as dangerous as bicycling, a good many of its heroes would give it up from simple fright; but this only means that there is a maximum of damage to the spectator by demoralization, combined with the minimum of deterrent risk to the poor scrapper in the ring.

Poor scrapper, though, is hardly the word for a modern fashionable American pugilist. To him the exploits of Cashel Byron will seem ludicrously obscure and low-lived. The contests in which he engages are like Handel Festivals: they take place in huge halls before enormous audiences, with cinematographs hard at work recording the scene for reproduction in London and elsewhere. The combatants divide thousands of dollars of gate-money between them: indeed, if an impecunious English curate were to go to America and challenge the premier pugilist, the spectacle of a match between the Church and the Ring would attract a colossal crowd; and the loser's share of the gate would be a fortune to a curate--assuming that the curate would be the loser, which is by no means a foregone conclusion. At all events, it would be well worth a bruise or two. So my story of the Agricultural Hall, where William Paradise sparred for half a guinea, and Cashel Byron stood out for ten guineas, is no doubt read by the profession in America with amused contempt. In 1882 it was, like most of my conceptions, a daring anticipation of coming social developments, though to-day it seems as far out of date as Slender pulling Sackerson's chain.

Of these latter-day commercial developments of glove fighting I know nothing beyond what I gather from the newspapers. The banging matches of the eighties, in which not one competitor in twenty either exhibited artistic skill, or, in his efforts to knock out his adversary, succeeded in anything but tiring and disappointing himself, were for the most part tedious beyond human endurance. When, after wading through Boxiana and the files of Bell's Life at the British Museum, I had written Cashel Byron's Profession, I found I had exhausted the comedy of the subject; and as a game of patience or solitaire was decidedly superior to an average spar for a championship in point of excitement, I went no more to the competitions. Since then six or seven generations of boxers have passed into peaceful pursuits; and I have no doubt that my experience is in some respects out of date. The National Sporting Club has arisen; and though I have never attended its reunions, I take its record of three pugilists slain as proving and enormous multiplication of contests, since such accidents are very rare, and in fact do not happen to reasonably healthy men. I am prepared to admit also that the disappearance of the old prize-ring technique must by this time have been compensated by the importation from America of a new glove-fighting technique; for even in a knocking-out match, brains will try conclusions with brawn, and finally establish a standard of skill; but I notice that in the leading contests in America luck seems to be on the side of brawn, and brain frequently finishes in a state of concussion, a loser after performing miracles of "science." I use the word luck advisedly; for one of the fascinations of boxing to the gambler (who is the main pillar of the sporting world) is that it is a game of hardihood, pugnacity and skill, all at the mercy of

chance. The knock-out itself is a pure chance. I have seen two powerful laborers batter one another's jaws with all their might for several rounds apparently without giving one another as much as a toothache. And I have seen a winning pugilist collapse at a trifling knock landed by a fluke at the fatal angle. I once asked an ancient prizefighter what a knock-out was like when it did happen. He was a man of limited descriptive powers; so he simply pointed to the heavens and said, "Up in a balloon." An amateur pugilist, with greater command of language, told me that "all the milk in his head suddenly boiled over." I am aware that some modern glove fighters of the American school profess to have reduced the knock-out to a science. But the results of the leading American combats conclusively discredit the pretension. When a boxer so superior to his opponent in skill as to be able practically to hit him where he pleases not only fails to knock him out, but finally gets knocked out himself, it is clear that the phenomenon is as complete a mystery pugilistically as it is physiologically, though every pugilist and every doctor may pretend to understand it. It is only fair to add that it has not been proved that any permanent injury to the brain results from it. In any case the brain, as English society is at present constituted, can hardly be considered a vital organ.

This, to the best of my knowledge, is the technical history of the modern revival of pugilism. It is only one more example of the fact that legislators, like other people, must learn their business by their own mistakes, and that the first attempts to suppress an evil by law generally intensify it. Prizefighting, though often connived at, was never legal. Even in its palmiest days prizefights were banished from certain counties by hostile magistrates, just as they have been driven from the United States and England to Belgium on certain occasions in our own time. But as the exercise of sparring, conducted by a couple of gentlemen with boxing gloves on, was regarded as part of a manly physical education, a convention grew up by which it became practically legal to make a citizen's nose bleed by a punch from the gloved fist, and illegal to do the same thing with the naked knuckles. A code of glove-fighting rules was drawn up by a prominent patron of pugilism; and this code was practically legalized by the fact that even when a death resulted from a contest under these rules the accessaries were not punished. No question was raised as to whether the principals were paid to fight for the amusement of the spectators, or whether a prize for the winner was provided in stakes, share of the gate, or a belt with the title of champion. These, the true criteria of prizefighting, were ignored; and the sole issue raised was whether the famous dictum of Dr. Watts, "Your little hands were never made, etc.," had been duly considered by providing the said little hands with a larger hitting surface, a longer range, and four ounces extra weight.

In short, then, what has happened has been the virtual legalization of prizefighting under cover of the boxing glove. And this is exactly what public opinion desires. We do not like fighting; but we like looking on at fights: therefore we require a law which will punish the prizefighter if he hits us, and secure us the protection of the police whilst we sit in a comfortable hall and watch him hitting another prizefighter. And that is just the law we have got at present.

Thus Cashel Byron's plea for a share of the legal toleration accorded to the vivisector has been virtually granted since he made it. The legalization of cruelty to domestic animals under cover of the anesthetic is only the extreme instance of the same social phenomenon as the legalization of prizefighting under cover of the boxing glove. The same passion explains the fascination of both practices; and in both, the professors--pugilists and physiologists alike--have to persuade the Home Office that their pursuits are painless and beneficial. But there is also between them the remarkable difference that the pugilist, who has to suffer as much as he inflicts, wants his work to be as painless and harmless as possible whilst persuading the public that it is thrillingly dangerous and destructive, whilst the vivisector wants to enjoy a total exemption from humane restrictions in his laboratory whilst persuading the public that pain is unknown there. Consequently the vivisector is not only crueller than the prizefighter, but, through the pressure of public opinion, a much more resolute and uncompromising liar. For this no one but a Pharisee will single him out for special blame. All public men lie, as a matter of good taste, on subjects which are considered serious (in England a serious occasion means simply an occasion on which nobody tells the truth); and however illogical or capricious the point of honor may be in man, it is too absurd to assume that the doctors who, from among innumerable methods of research, select that of tormenting animals hideously, will hesitate to come on a platform and tell a soothing fib to prevent the public from punishing them. No criminal is expected to plead guilty, or to refrain from pleading not guilty with all the plausibility at his command. In prizefighting such mendacity is not necessary: on the contrary, if a famous pugilist were to assure the public that a blow delivered with a boxing glove could do no injury and cause no pain, and the public believed him, the sport would instantly lose its following. It is the prizefighter's interest to abolish the real cruelties of the ring and to exaggerate the imaginary cruelties of it. It is the vivisector's interest to refine upon the cruelties of the laboratory, whilst persuading the public that his victims pass into a delicious euthanasia and leave behind them a row of bottles containing infallible cures for all the diseases. Just so, too, does the trainer of performing animals assure us that his dogs and cats and elephants and lions are taught their senseless feats by pure kindness.

The public, as Julius Caesar remarked nearly 2000 years ago, believes on the whole, just what it wants to believe. The laboring masses do not believe the false excuses of the vivisector, because they know that the vivisector experiments on hospital patients; and the masses belong to the hospital patient class. The well-to-do people who do not go to

hospitals, and who think they benefit by the experiments made there, believe the vivisectors' excuses, and angrily abuse and denounce the anti-vivisectors. The people who "love animals," who keep pets, and stick pins through butterflies, support the performing dog people, and are sure that kindness will teach a horse to waltz. And the people who enjoy a fight will persuade themselves that boxing gloves do not hurt, and that sparring is an exercise which teaches self-control and exercises all the muscles in the body more efficiently than any other.

My own view of prizefighting may be gathered from Cashel Byron's Profession, and from the play written by me more than ten years later, entitled Mrs. Warren's Profession. As long as society is so organized that the destitute athlete and the destitute beauty are forced to choose between underpaid drudgery as industrial producers, and comparative self-respect, plenty, and popularity as prizefighters and mercenary brides, licit or illicit, it is idle to affect virtuous indignation at their expense. The word prostitute should either not be used at all, or else applied impartially to all persons who do things for money that they would not do if they had any other assured means of livelihood. The evil caused by the prostitution of the Press and the Pulpit is so gigantic that the prostitution of the prize-ring, which at least makes no serious moral pretensions, is comparatively negligible by comparison. Let us not forget, however, that the throwing of a hard word such as prostitution does not help the persons thus vituperated out of their difficulty. If the soldier and gladiator fight for money, if men and women marry for money, if the journalist and novelist write for money, and the parson preaches for money, it must be remembered that it is an exceedingly difficult and doubtful thing for an individual to set up his own scruples or fancies (he cannot himself be sure which they are) against the demand of the community when it says, Do thus and thus, or starve. It was easy for Ruskin to lay down the rule of dying rather than doing unjustly; but death is a plain thing: justice a very obscure thing. How is an ordinary man to draw the line between right and wrong otherwise than by accepting public opinion on the subject; and what more conclusive expression of sincere public opinion can there be than market demand? Even when we repudiate that and fall back on our private judgment, the matter gathers doubt instead of clearness. The popular notion of morality and piety is to simply beg all the most important questions in life for other people; but when these questions come home to ourselves, we suddenly discover that the devil's advocate has a stronger case than we thought: we remember that the way of righteousness or death was the way of the Inquisition; that hell is paved, not with bad intentions, but with good ones; that the deeper seers have suggested that the way to save your soul is perhaps to give it away, casting your spiritual bread on the waters, so to speak. No doubt, if you are a man of genius, a Ruskin or an Ibsen, you can divine your way and finally force your passage. If you have the conceit of fanaticism you can die a martyr like Charles I. If you are a criminal, or a gentleman of independent means, you can leave society out of the question and prey on it. But if you are an ordinary person you take your bread as it comes to you, doing whatever you can make most money by doing. And you are really shewing yourself a disciplined citizen and acting with perfect social propriety in so doing. Society may be, and generally is, grossly wrong in its offer to you; and you may be, and generally are, grossly wrong in supporting the existing political structure; but this only means, to the successful modern prizefighter, that he must reform society before he can reform himself. A conclusion which I recommend to the consideration of those foolish misers of personal righteousness who think they can dispose of social problems by bidding reformers of society reform themselves first.

Practically, then, the question raised is whether fighting with gloves shall be brought, like cockfighting, bear-baiting, and gloveless fist fighting, explicitly under the ban of the law. I do not propose to argue that question out here. But of two things I am certain. First, that glove fighting is quite as fierce a sport as fist fighting. Second, that if an application were made to the Borough Council of which I am a member, to hire the Town Hall for a boxing competition, I should vote against the applicants.

This second point being evidently the practical one, I had better give my reason. Exhibition pugilism is essentially a branch of Art: that is to say, it acts and attracts by propagating feeling. The feeling it propagates is pugnacity. Sense of danger, dread of danger, impulse to batter and destroy what threatens and opposes, triumphant delight in succeeding: this is pugnacity, the great adversary of the social impulse to live and let live; to establish our rights by shouldering our share of the social burden; to face and examine danger instead of striking at it; to understand everything to the point of pardoning (and righting) everything; to conclude an amnesty with Nature wide enough to include even those we know the worst of: namely, ourselves. If two men quarrelled, and asked the Borough Council to lend them a room to fight it out in with their fists, on the ground that a few minutes' hearty punching of one another's heads would work off their bad blood and leave them better friends, each desiring, not victory, but *satisfaction*, I am not sure that I should not vote for compliance. But if a syndicate of showmen came and said, Here we have two men who have no quarrel, but who will, if you pay them, fight before your constituency and thereby make a great propaganda of pugnacity in it, sharing the profits with us and with you, I should indignantly oppose the proposition. And if the majority were against me, I should try to persuade them to at least impose the condition that the fight should be with naked fists under the old rules, so that the combatants should, like Sayers and Langham, depend on bunging up each other's eyes rather than, like the modern knocker-out, giving one another concussion of the brain.

I may add, finally, that the present halting between the legal toleration and suppression of commercial pugilism is

much worse than the extreme of either, because it takes away the healthy publicity and sense of responsibility which legality and respectability give, without suppressing the blackguardism which finds its opportunity in shady pursuits. I use the term commercial advisedly. Put a stop to boxing for money; and pugilism will give society no further trouble.

London, 1901.