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The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER I.

"Wait a moment! I don't want to sport. I'll have a bout with you!" and he took off his coat in a hasty way.

The girl had stood looking from one to the other, almost indifferently, observant of all that was going on; but at this point an instantaneous change came over her face, and almost unconsciously her hand clasped the young man's arm.

He looked down at the hand as it lay, brown as a Hindoo's, but small and shapely, on the white shirt-sleeve, and then at her face.

"Halloo!" he said, banteringly, and with some surprise, for the face was full of fear and anxiety. For the first time he noted its beauty. "Well," he teased, "what's the matter?"

Her lips quivered, and all unconscious of the admiration in his eyes, she said in a low voice:

"Don't go. He is strong, and—and cruel when he's like this. Don't go!"

"It's all right," he replied. "Don't you be afraid; he won't hurt me."

She said no more, but took her hand away swiftly and drew back; but only a few yards.

Having finished his peeling leisurely, the crowd made a lane for him, and he sprang upon the platform. As the two men faced each other, a murmur of admiration and satisfaction rose from the crowd.

They were two splendid specimens of humanity—one huge, muscular as a bull, the other slim, supple as a tiger, and yet with the firm, wiry muscles of the trained athlete. Beside the tremendous bulk of the professional, the young man looked rather spare and slight; and Long Bill eyed him up and down with what was meant for a supercilious stare.

As they stood regarding each other, Uncle Jake limped up to the girl, whose large eyes, dilated, were fixed on the two.

"Who's that?" he asked, sharply. "It's a gentleman, ain't it? Who is he, eh?"

The girl, without removing her gaze, shook her head and drew away from him.

The eyes of the two men suddenly grew sharp and intent; they approached each other, shook hands, stood chest to chest, then got hold, and the struggle began. The crowd, increasing every moment, pressed close to the platform and watched with intense interest. In less than a minute it was seen that the young man who had dared the champion of the district knew the rules of the game, and that Long Bill had not got a "soft thing." They gripped each other, awayed, pressed and tugged, the muscles standing out on their arms like strained steel. One moment it seemed as if the younger man's back must yield or be broken; the next he had recovered himself and was bending his antagonist almost double. Then suddenly, while the victory hung on the balance, the young man was seen to raise his shoulder and move his

leg, and the huge form of Long Bill went down upon the platform with a force that shook every plank.

A roar of astonishment and applause rose from the crowd. Long Bill got up and looked round with an air of surprise which provoked a loud burst of laughter from the spectators. It seemed to madden him, and he made a kind of rush at his opponent, but the young man stepped aside and caught his arm.

"Hold on!" he said, good-humoredly. "Get your breath, man. You've been at it before, and I'm fresh. Here"—he turned to the crowd—"give him a glass of beer." Two or three stone bottles were swiftly held up; he took one and tossed it to the giant.

"Take a good drink," he said.

Long Bill seemed for a moment as if he were going to refuse; then he took a draught, flung the empty bottle to one side, and stepped into position.

"Ready?" said the young man, cheerfully.

Long Bill set his teeth, and gave an ugly smile.

"It's my turn now," he said, between his teeth.

"All right," responded the young fellow, pleasantly; and they gripped hard again.

Long Bill went to work, more carefully this time, and it looked as if he meant to crush the life out of his foe and throw him afterward. But the young man kept his ground, though his face grew pale and he breathed hard. Once his foot slipped, and a kind of gasp rose from the crowd, breathless with excitement; but he recovered himself instantly and stood as before, firm as a rock.

"Bill's got him now," said a voice.

The young girl heard it, and a shudder ran through her, and she looked aside; but, as if fascinated, her eyes returned to the combatants, and she watched with heaving bosom and tightly clinched hands.

It looked as if the day must be with the giant—as if it were impossible that the young man could hold out much longer; but presently the more knowing ones of the spectators saw that he was saving himself, and waiting for the critical moment in which to exert his reserve force.

If came, as all such movements come, and with a sudden gathering together of his muscles, a swift movement of his whole body, as it seemed, he flung the giant, using his own knee as the lever—and literally flung him to the ground.

A yell of delight rewarded the exploit, and cries of "Bravo, sir!" "Hurrah, young 'un!" came from all sides.

Long Bill lay still. The young man waited for a second, then went and bent over the gigantic form stretched out as motionless as a stone figure cast from its pedestal.

"Hast killed 'un, lad?" croaked out an old man at the edge of the platform.

The young man shook his head.

"No, no; he has only fainted. Give me some water."

He was all gentleness now, as he bathed the forehead of his fallen foe and poured some brandy through the swollen lips.

"He's all right. Stand back and

give him some air!" he said; and he swept away the curious crowd with a wave of his hand.

Long Bill rose to his feet, dazed and staggering; then, when he could see distinctly enough to recognize his opponent, he lurched forward with a savage oath.

The young man caught his arm.

"No, no," he said. "Though it is as good as a feat. Don't be greedy. Some other day. Keep your temper, man! Here, shake hands!" and he held out a strong but well-turned hand.

But Long Bill had lost his temper beyond retrieval, and would have struck the hand aside if it had not been quickly withdrawn.

"Shame! shame!" shouted the crowd.

"Oh, never mind," said the young man. "He isn't quite himself yet, and he doesn't mean it," and with a laugh and pleasant nod, he leaped from the platform. He was surrounded instantly by an admiring throng eager to speak with him, if possible, touch the youngster who, though a gentleman, had managed to "down" the champion.

CHAPTER II.

And now I should like to be able to say that he made them a wise speech about temperance and plain living, and with a "Bless you, my worthy friends," went home. This is what the ordinary heroes of romance invariably do. But the young man, though as strong as a lion and light-hearted as a lark, was not, alas, prudent or wise. He allowed himself to be led—carried, rather—by the crowd to the nearest drink-booth, where he stood treat many times and oft, and drank as well as paid for drink.

An hour later, flushed and hot, he remembered the girl whose beautiful face had been upturned to his with such anxiety, and with a half-declined idea of finding her and assuring her that he was not hurt, got away from the crowd and went out to look for her.

The sun had nearly set by this time; a faint breeze, harbinger of the cool evening, stole through the heat and dust.

He wandered about, looking everywhere as he went; but though he saw several red-shawled faces, he could not find the one he sought.

Presently a clock—it was the one in the turret of Monk Towers—struck eight. He pulled up short and put his hand to his head—it was burning hot—as if he were trying to remember something; then he whistled, half remorsefully, half comically, and strode out of the fair, and on to the common, his face set in the direction of Monk Towers.

A lane led from the common, and stepping briskly along it, he came to a bridge over a brook. Here he took off his coat, waistcoat, and collar, bared his broad chest and the Antinous neck, and bathed his head in the clear, cool water. Springing to his feet with renewed freshness and strength, "That's better!" he said with a long breath. "What with Long Bill's hugs and the liquor, I felt stiff and seedy. All right now!"

He put on his things quickly—there were bruises on his arms and chest, great hands of red that would be black and blue in an hour or two—and went on his way.

The lane led to a hill, beneath which, in a slight hollow, were the great iron gates of the avenue to Monk Towers.

He passed through the gates and up the avenue, seeing no one; the lodge-keeper had stolen off to the fair. The elm-lined road wound round and round like a yellow serpent; but presently the long front of the great mansion loomed white before him.

His handsome face grew rather grave as he looked up at the house; but the seriousness did not last long, and he was humming again presently, as cheerful and careless as before.

A moist, dry now, surrounded the house. He crossed the time-worn bridge and ran up the broad stone steps to the hall door; but there he paused. Perhaps the view of the interior—the polished oak, the spotless floor of white and black marble, the plush hangings, the lines of pictures in their heavy gilt frames—awoke in him a sense of his dusty and disordered condition. He looked down at his clothes, at his boots—the water of the brook had turned the dust on them to mud—and shook his head; and as he heard the sound of a servant's footsteps coming from the back of the hall, he turned quickly and went down the steps again.

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What is said to be the world's most perfectly equipped aquarium was completed recently in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, at a cost of \$900,000.

Fifty-seven ponds and tanks are provided for an unusual variety and number of fishes. Thirty pools and aquaria will shelter other marine creatures. There are three outdoor pools for seals and a special pond for alligators, snakes, and turtles.

A complete heating plant and a complete refrigerating plant supplies water for tropical and arctic fish respectively.

An impressive biological library and a thoroughly equipped laboratory will afford students and research workers unusual opportunities. A large collection of stuffed fish and other marine animals will supplement these facilities.

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SAID TO ELIMINATE BOLTS. A two-piece tire rim, said to eliminate bolts, screws, binders, and rivets, is one of the latest contributions to the convenience of motorists.

The main rim has a recess extending halfway around the circumference, into which a tire-locking piece fits. The locking rim is slipped between the outer face of the main rim and the bead of the tire. Both heads of the tire rest on it.

Recesses are set in the outer edge of the main rim, and corresponding lugs are on the locking section. These lugs seat themselves in the pockets when the locking section is pushed into place, holding the tire securely.

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NO MONUMENT.

No monument to a Stephen Stale, no costly shaft of stone, where, in the churchyard in the vale, he lies alone. Poor Stephen sleeps through nights and days, the unmarked sod beneath, but now and then some pilgrim lays upon the sod a wreath. And every time we speak his name it is in friendly tones; we keep alive his little fame, and bless his resting bones. For while he lived he did his best to make his life worth while, he gave his "heart" with sprightly zest, he wore his patient smile, if there was trouble anywhere, if lives had gone askew, old Stephen had an hour to spare to see what he could do. If some one had a grievous task, for his poor strength too great, old Stephen would step up and ask to shoulder half the weight. He spent his time in doing good, in his calm, patient way; he sawed the widow's pile of wood, he moved the sick man's hay. When, to his low priced grave he went, to sleep a million years, "Old

Stephen needs no monument," he muttered, through their tears, a monument the sleeper needs, engraving by sculptor's art; the record of his goodly deeds is graven on men's hearts.

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