

he tried to move, the giddy pain which throbbed through him bore down his head again. He had failed ; there was no more strength in him. Colonel Strang must ride to his fate, and what would that fate be ? Griffith groaned in his anger : he would receive his vengeance, soiled and shameful, from the brute hands of the clubmen. What instruments they might have been, had he been free to wield them ; but now—now—How would they use Robert Strang ? hold him as hostage to force the garrison to surrender, or let loose their rage on his body ? A horror seized Griffith and shook him. Did he in truth desire that anything in the shape of man should be brought low as himself ? And to be brought thus low to no purpose ! With a fierce effort he stumbled to his feet. As he did so the many-coloured sparks and zigzags of light which had tortured his eyes beat together into one white and searing sheet of flame. Then darkness, sudden and utter. It had come, the final night which in his pain he had almost desired, and he sank under it, mute and still, as though the blackness had been that of the grave sods above him. For a space he rested so, almost without thought, his fingers plucking idly at the herbage of the bank beside him. As he lay there, a small bird, perched hard by, began a twittering call. So free it seemed, so sure and glad of the light, the fallen man called harshly to frighten it thence, and then ached for the companionship in the prison of his loneliness. And there fell upon him a thought of other wings—almost he could hear their sullen beat ; wings of carrion birds which must settle on him when he had breathed his last, like a sheep dropped from the flock, and even more unregarded.

That fear did not move him, but the sense of his purpose struggled back to him and he rose panting. The meaning of his resolve had slipped from him in mortal weariness. But for all that there was time ; meanwhile he must press on, must save the man through whom, for whom, he endured this long anguish of shame. And then freedom to hate, to die hating in the blackness.