

him and looked out to the East. His eyes—they were of the intense yet changeful blue of burnished steel—were fixed on the drift of dawn-hued cloud and on the flying cloud wrack of his own thought.

Women had loved Hugh Griffith for his beauty, and men had feared him for his power, and he had used both as his weapons. Was it all to end here, in this ring of ignoble peasant steel? He laughed at the irony, and wondered what horror it was that strangled his laughter to a choking gasp. Yet it was not all defeat. He had vaunted—to himself, for he was not of those who flaw their armour by boast or betrayal to another—that he had never swerved from a purpose or relinquished a hatred. Nor would he fail now. He would save the man who had saved him, and be free again to hate, to avenge. What was that stab which struck at his heart before its meaning had reached his brain? To revenge—in the powerless darkness. He shut his eyes against the thought, and a craven fear clutched him with the familiar action. As he looked out again he saw that the sun had pushed a shining rim above the bar of cloud. At his feet the knotted shadow of a furze bush had withdrawn the breadth of a sword edge; bell after bell of the heather kindled crimson in the advancing brightness. If only the shadows had been reaching towards him, he thought he could have fronted better that other shadow which lurked behind the waiting tongue of flame.

What was it these clubmen demanded, when all was said? That he should avenge himself on his dearest foe. His mind went back to old days, and he saw in fitful flashes the long companionship, the gathering enmity between himself and Robert Strang—the enmity of two, who standing close together, yet fought with differing weapons and for other ends. He had secretly scorned the man who dissembled no antagonism and sought no friend, and he had read in Strang's frank eyes an answering but an open contempt for his own subtle game with life. And yet when war was declared and swords flashed out for the king, Strang had risen the higher.