

obviously the weapon of the family." And he drew the rapier forth.

A favourite, a familiar arm, as the carriage of his head made clear at any time, he knew to use it with the instinct of the eyelash, but it seemed absurdly inadequate against the broad long weapon of his opponent, who had augmented his attack with a dirk drawn in the left hand, and sought lustily to bring death to his opponent by point as well as edge. A light dress rapier obviously must do its business quickly if it was not to suffer from the flailing blow of the claymore, and yet Count Victor did not wish to increase the evil impression of his first visit to this country by a second homicide, even in self-defence. He measured the paunched rascal with a rapid eye, and with a flick at the left wrist disarmed him of his poignard. Furiously the Gael thrashed with the sword, closing up too near on his opponent. Count Victor broke ground, beat an appeal that confused his adversary, lunged, and skewered him through the thick of the active arm.

The Highlander dropped his weapon and bawled lamentably as he tried to stanch the copious blood; and safe from his further interference, Count Victor took to his heels again.

Where the encounter with the obese and now discomfited Gael took place was within a hundred yards of the castle, whose basement and approach were concealed by a growth of stunted whin. Towards the castle Count Victor rushed, still hearing the shouts in the wood behind, and as he seemed, in spite of his burden, to be gaining ground upon his pursuers, he was elate at the prospect of escape. In his gladness he threw a taunting cry behind, a hunter's greenwood challenge.

And then he came upon the edge of the sea. The sea! *Peste!* That he should never have thought of that! There was the castle, truly, beetling against the breakers, very cold, very arrogant upon its barren promontory. He was not twenty