

Now when Acour saw that embrace his jealous fury prevailed against his fears. With a curse upon his lips he leapt at Hugh and smote, thinking to take him unawares. But Hugh was watching, and sprang back, and then the fray began, if fray it can be called.

A wild joy shining in his eyes, Hugh grasped his long sword with both hands and struck. So great was that blow that it bit through Acour's armour, beneath his right arm, deep into the flesh and sent him staggering back. Again he struck and wounded him in the shoulder; a third time and clove his helm so that the blood poured down into his eyes and blinded him.

Back reeled Acour, back to the very edge of the grave, and stood there swaying to and fro. At the sight of his helplessness Hugh's fury seemed to leave him. His lifted sword sank downward.

"Let God deal with you, knave," he said, "for I cannot."

For a while there was silence. There they stood and stared at the smitten man waiting the end, whatever it might be. They all stared save Murgh, who fixed his stony eyes upon the sky.

Presently it came. The sword, falling from Acour's hand into the grave, rested there point upwards. With a last effort he drew his dagger. Dashing the blood from his eyes, he hurled it with all his dying strength, not at Hugh, but at Red Eve. Past her ear it hissed, severing a little tress of her long hair, which floated down on to the snow.

Then Acour threw his arms wide and fell backward—fell backward and vanished in the grave.

Dick ran to look. There he lay dead, pierced through back and bosom by the point of his own sword.

For one brief flash of time a black dove-shaped bird was seen hovering round the head of Murgh.

"Finished!" said Dick, straightening himself. "Well, I had hoped to see a better fight, but cowards die as cowards live."

Leaning on Red Eve's shoulder Sir Andrew limped