

He had mounted the bank, whether the one from which he had fallen or the other he could not tell, nor whether he was retracing his steps or no. Gaining what seemed the top he stood motionless, in part to steady himself from the climb, in part from old habit of weighing and pondering. Here was nothing to debate, for if he turned to the right hand or the left, fared towards the roads and haunts of men, or into the black bogs and rock fastnesses of the moor, all was alike stark chance. The wind had sunk, and the clouds lay massed along the western horizon waiting for the sunset to strike their ramparts into fire. In the blue upper heaven the sun rode conquering. That unsheathed light smote the moor to burnished bronze, to fretted gold, where the far slopes swept out to the clear sky line, to silver and steel where the streams gashed their way. Nearer at hand the glow of the heather and the gold of the gorse blended in a regal tapestry, and the bracken brightened from russet to amber. The moor throbbed colour beneath the mounting sun, and Hugh Griffith facing it stared into the darkness. A furze clump brushed its burning bloom against him as he stood and he drew aside, for the thorns were sharp on his bruised and wounded hands.

While he waited thus, a shepherd, returning alone across the moorland, saw from a distant slope the erect figure standing on the ridge. He paused to look for a moment; strangers were scant in these parts, and this might be a wayfarer in need of guidance. But if the man were a soldier—soldiers were apt to pay in oaths as much as coin. The sun kindled on Griffith's long bright hair, on the crimson scarf he wore—he had never played the Puritan in his attire—and struck a sudden gleam from his gorget. The shepherd made a leisurely move forward; the gentleman might reward him, belike. But the figure on the ridge took a slow step or two, and faced half about. The shepherd grunted disapproval—the matter was not worth his while, for the stranger was plainly not in haste, and, moreover, from where he now stood, must see—ay, he was looking thither—the film of smoke which marked the nearest upland hamlet