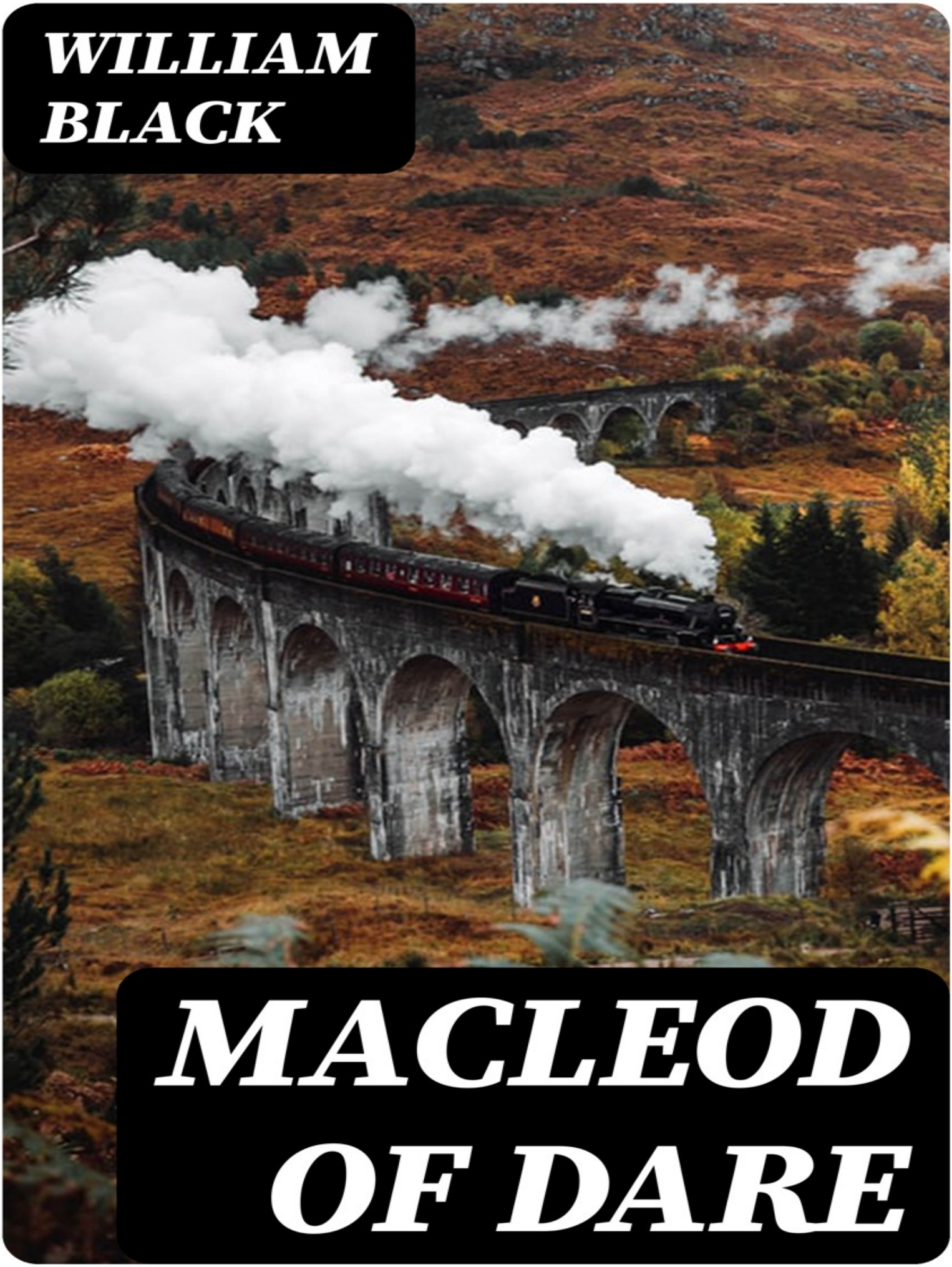
WILLIAM BLACK



MACLEOD OF DARE

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Macleod of Dare

EAN 8596547234432

DigiCat, 2022
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CHAPTER I.

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THE SIX BOYS OF DARE.

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The sun had sunk behind the lonely western seas; Ulva, and Lunga, and the Dutchman's Cap had grown dark on the darkening waters; and the smooth Atlantic swell was booming along the sombre caves; but up here in Castle Dare, on the high and rocky coast of Mull, the great hall was lit with such a blaze of candles as Castle Dare had but rarely seen. And yet there did not seem to be any grand festivities going forward; for there were only three people seated at one end of the long and narrow table; and the banquet that the faithful Hamish had provided for them was of the most frugal kind. At the head of the table sat an old lady with silvery-white hair and proud and fine features. It would have been a keen and haughty face but for the unutterable sadness of the eyes—blue-gray eyes under black eyelashes that must have been beautiful enough in her youth, but were now dimmed and worn, as if the weight of the world's sorrows had been too much for the proud, high spirit. On the right of Lady Macleod sat the last of her six sons, Keith by name, a tall, sparely built, sinewy young fellow, with a sun-tanned cheek and crisp and curling hair, and with a happy and careless look in his clear eyes and about his mouth that rather blinded one to the firm lines of his face. Glad youth shone there, and the health begotten of hard exposure to wind and weather. What was life to him but a laugh: so long

as there was a prow to cleave the plunging seas, and a glass to pick out the branching antlers far away amidst the mists of the corrie? To please his mother, on this the last night of his being at home, he wore the kilts; and he had hung his broad blue bonnet, with its sprig of juniper—the badge of the clan—on the top of one of many pikes and halberds that stood by the great fireplace. Opposite him, on the old lady's left hand, sat his cousin, or rather half-cousin, the plain-featured but large-hearted Janet, whom the poor people about that neighborhood regarded as being something more than any mere mortal woman. If there had been any young artist among that Celtic peasantry fired by religious enthusiasm to paint the face of a Madonna, it would have been the plain features of Janet Macleod he would have dreamed about and striven to transfer to his canvas. Her eyes were fine, it is true: they were honest and tender; they were not unlike the eyes of the grand old lady who sat at the head of the table; but, unlike hers, they were not weighted with the sorrow of years.

"It is a dark hour you have chosen to go away from your home," said the mother; and the lean hand, resting on the table before her, trembled somewhat.

"Why, mother," the young man said, lightly, "you know I am to have Captain ——'s cabin as far as Greenock; and there will be plenty of time for me to put the kilts away before I am seen by the people."

"Oh, Keith," his cousin cried—for she was trying to be very cheerful, too—"do you say that you are ashamed of the tartan?"

"Ashamed of the tartan!" he said, with a laugh. "Is there any one who has been brought up at Dare who is likely to be ashamed of the tartan! When I am ashamed of the tartan I will put a pigeon's feather in my cap, as the new *suaicheantas* of this branch of Clann Leoid. But then, my good Janet, I would as soon think of taking my rifle and the dogs through the streets of London as of wearing the kilts in the south."

The old lady paid no heed. Her hands were now clasped before her. There was sad thinking in her eyes.

"You are the last of my six boys," said she, "and you are going away from me too."

"Now, now, mother," said he, "you must not make so much of a holiday. You would not have me always at Dare? You know that no good comes of a stay-at-home."

She knew the proverb. Her other sons had not been stay-at-homes. What had come to them!

Of Sholto, the eldest, the traveller, the dare-devil, the grave is unknown; but the story of how he met his death, in far Arizona, came years after to England and to Castle Dare. He sold his life dearly, as became one of his race and name. When his cowardly attendants found a band of twenty Apaches riding down on them, they unhitched the mules and galloped off, leaving him to confront the savages by himself. One of these, more courageous than his fellows, advanced and drew his arrow to the barb; the next second he uttered a yell, and rolled from his saddle to the ground, shot through the heart. Macleod seized this instant, when the savages were terror-stricken by the precision of the white man's weapons, to retreat a few yards and get behind

a mesquit-tree. Here he was pretty well sheltered from the arrows that they sent in clouds about him, while he succeeded in killing other two of his enemies who had ventured to approach. At last they rode off: and it seemed as though he would be permitted to rejoin his dastardly comrades. But the Indians had only gone to windward to set the tall grass on fire; and presently he had to scramble, burned and blinded, up the tree, where he was an easy mark for their arrows. Fortunately, when he fell he was dead. This was the story told by some friendly Indians to a party of white men, and subsequently brought home to Castle Dare.

The next four of the sons of Dare were soldiers, as most of the Macleods of that family had been. And if you ask about the graves of Roderick and Ronald, what is one to say? They are known, and yet unknown. The two lads were in one of the Highland regiments that served in the Crimea. They both lie buried on the bleak plains outside Sevastopol. And if the memorial stones put up to them and their brother officers are falling into ruin and decay—if the very graves have been rifled—how is England to help that? England is the poorest country in the world. There was a talk some two or three years ago of putting up a monument on Cathcart Hill to the Englishmen who died in the Crimea; and that at least would have been some token of remembrance, even if we could not collect the scattered remains of our slain sons, as the French have done, but then that monument would have cost £5000. How could England afford £5000? When a big American city takes fire, or when a district in France is inundated, she can put her hand into her pocket deeply

enough; but how can we expect so proud a mother to think twice about her children who perished in fighting for her? Happily the dead are independent of forgetfulness.

Duncan the Fair-haired—Donacha Ban, they called him, far and wide among the hills—lies buried in a jungle on the African coast. He was only twenty-three when he was killed: but he knew he had got the Victoria Cross. As he lay dying, he asked whether the people in England would send it to his mother, showing that his last fancies were still about Castle Dare.

And Hector? As you cross the river at Sadowa, and pass through a bit of forest, some cornfields begin to appear, and these stretch away up to the heights of Chlum. Along the ridge there, by the side of the wood, are many mounds of earth. Over the grave of Hector Macleod is no proud and pathetic inscription such as marks the last resting-place of a young lieutenant who perished at Gravelotte—*Er ruht saft in wiedererkampfter deutscher Erde*—but the young Highland officer was well beloved by his comrades, and when the dead were being pitched into the great holes dug for them, and when rude hands were preparing the simple record, painted on a wooden cross—-"*Hier liegen—tapfere Krieger*"—a separate memento was placed over the grave of Under-lieutenant Hector Macleod of the ——th Imperial and Royal Cavalry Regiment. He was one of the two sons who had not inherited the title. Was it not a proud boast for this white-haired lady in Mull that she had been the mother of four baronets? What other mother in all the land could say as much? And yet it was that that had dimmed and saddened the beautiful eyes.

And now her youngest—her Benjamin, her best-beloved—he was going away from her too. It was not enough that the big deer forest, the last of the possessions of the Macleods of Dare, had been kept intact for him, when the letting of it to a rich Englishman would greatly have helped the failing fortunes of the family; it was not enough that the poor people about, knowing Lady Macleod's wishes, had no thought of keeping a salmon spear hidden in the thatch of their cottages. Salmon and stag could no longer bind him to the place. The young blood stirred. And when he asked her what good things came of being a stay-at-home, what could she say?

Suddenly old Hamish threw wide the oaken doors at the end of the hall, and there was a low roar like the roaring of lions. And then a young lad, with the pipes proudly perched on his shoulder, marched in with a stately step, and joyous and shrill arose the Salute. Three times he marched round the long and narrow hall, finishing behind Keith Macleod's chair. The young man turned to him.

"It was well played, Donald," said he, in the Gaelic; "and I will tell you that the Skye College in the old times never turned out a better pupil. And will you take a glass of whiskey now, or a glass of claret? And it is a great pity your hair is red, or they would call you Donull Dubh, and people would say you were the born successor of the last of the MacCruimins."

At this praise—imagine telling a piper lad that he was a fit successor of the MacCruimins, the hereditary pipers of the Macleods—the young stripling blushed hot; but he did

not forget his professional dignity for all that. And he was so proud of his good English that he replied in that tongue.

"I will take a glass of the claret wine, Sir Keith," said he.

Young Macleod took up a horn tumbler, rimmed with silver, and having the triple-towered castle of the Macleods engraved on it, and filled it with wine. He handed it to the lad.

"I drink your health, Lady Macleod," said he, when he had removed his cap; "and I drink your health, Miss Macleod; and I drink your health, Sir Keith; and I would have a lighter heart this night if I was going with you away to England."

It was a bold demand.

"I cannot take you with me, Donald; the Macleods have got out of the way of taking their piper with them now. You must stay and look after the dogs."

"But you are taking Oscar with you, Sir Keith."

"Yes, I am. I must make sure of having one friend with me in the south."

"And I think I would be better than a collie," muttered the lad to himself, as he moved off in a proud and hurt way toward the door, his cap still in his hand.

And now a great silence fell over these three; and Janet Macleod looked anxiously toward the old lady, who sat unmoved in the face of the ordeal through which she knew she must pass. It was an old custom that each night a pibroch should be played in Castle Dare in remembrance of her five slain sons; and yet on this one night her niece would fain have seen that custom abandoned. For was not the pibroch the famous and pathetic "Cumhadh na Cloinne," the Lament for the Children, that Patrick Mor, one of the

pipers of Macleod of Skye, had composed to the memory of his seven sons, who had all died within one year? And now the doors were opened, and the piper boy once more entered. The wild, sad wail arose: and slow and solemn was the step with which he walked up the hall. Lady Macleod sat calm and erect, her lips proud and firm, but her lean hands were working nervously together; and at last, when the doors were closed on the slow and stately and mournful Lament for the Children, she bent down the silvery head on those wrinkled hands and wept aloud. Patrick Mor's seven brave sons could have been no more to him than her six tall lads had been to her; and now the last of them was going away from her.

"Do you know," said Janet, quickly, to her cousin across the table, "that it is said no piper in the West Highlands can play 'Lord Lovat's Lament' like our Donald?"

"Oh yes, he plays it very well; and he has got a good step," Macleod said. "But you will tell him to play no more Laments to-night. Let him take to strathspeys if any of the lads come up after bringing back the boat. It will be time enough for him to make a Lament for me when I am dead. Come, mother, have you no message for Norman Ogilvie?"

The old lady had nerved herself again, though her hands were still trembling.

"I hope he will come back with you, Keith," she said.

"For the shooting? No, no, mother. He was not fit for the shooting about here: I have seen that long ago. Do you think he could lie for an hour in a wet bog? It was up at Fort William I saw him last year, and I said to him, 'Do you wear

gloves at Aldershot?' His hands were as white as the hands of a woman."

"It is no woman's hand you have, Keith," his cousin said; "it is a soldier's hand."

"Yes," said he, with his face flushing, "and if I had had Norman Ogilvie's chance—"

But he paused. Could he reproach this old dame, on the very night of his departure, with having disappointed all those dreams of military service and glory that are almost the natural inheritance of a Macleod of the Western Highlands? If he was a stay-at-home, at least his hands were not white. And yet, when young Ogilvie and he studied under the same tutor—the poor man had to travel eighteen miles between the two houses, many a time in hard weather—all the talk and aspirations of the boys were about a soldier's life; and Macleod could show his friend the various trophies, and curiosities sent home by his elder brothers from all parts of the world. And now the lily-fingered and gentle-natured Ogilvie was at Aldershot; while he—what else was he than a mere deer-stalker and salmon-killer?

"Ogilvie has been very kind to me, mother," he said, laughing. "He has sent me a list of places in London where I am to get my clothes, and boots, and a hat; and by the time I have done that, he will be up from Aldershot, and will lead me about—with a string round my neck, I suppose, lest I should bite somebody."

"You could not go better to London than in your own tartan," said the proud mother; "and it is not for an Ogilvie to say how a Macleod should be dressed. But it is no matter, one after the other has gone; the house is left empty at last.

And they all went away like you, with a laugh on their face. It was but a trip, a holiday, they said: they would soon be back to Dare. And where are they this night?"

Old Hamish came in.

"It will be time for the boat now, Sir Keith, and the men are down at the shore."

He rose, the handsome young fellow, and took his broad, blue bonnet with the badge of juniper.

"Good-by, cousin Janet," said he, lightly. "Good-by, mother. You are not going to send me away in this sad fashion? What am I to bring you back—a satin gown from Paris? or a young bride to cheer up the old house?"

She took no heed of the passing jest. He kissed her, and bade her good-by once more. The clear stars were shining over Castle Dare, and over the black shadows of the mountains, and the smoothly swelling waters of the Atlantic. There was a dull booming of the waves along the rocks.

He had thrown his plaid round him, and he was wondering to himself as he descended the steep path to the shore. He could not believe that the two women were really saddened by his going to the south for awhile; he was not given to forebodings. And he had nearly reached the shore, when he was overtaken by some one running, with a light step behind him. He turned quickly, and found his cousin before him, a shawl thrown round her head and shoulders.

"Oh, Keith," said she, in a bright and matter-of-fact way, "I have a message for you—from myself—and I did not want aunt to hear, for she is very proud, you know, and I hope you won't be. You know we are all very poor, Keith; and yet you must not want money in London, if only for the sake of

the family; and you know I have a little, Keith, and I want you to take it. You won't mind my being frank with you. I have written a letter."

She had the envelope in her hand.

"And if I would take money from any one, it would be from you, Cousin Janet; but I am not so selfish as that. What would all the poor people do if I were to take your money to London and spend it?"

"I have kept a little," said she, "and it is not much that is needed. It is £2000 I would like you to take from me, Keith. I have written a letter."

"Why, bless me, Janet, that is nearly all the money you've got!"

"I know it."

"Well, I may not be able to earn any money for myself, but at least I would not think of squandering your little fortune. No, no; but I thank you all the same, Janet; and I know that it is with a free heart that you offer it."

"But this is a favor, Keith," said she. "I do not ask you, to spend the money. But you might be in trouble; and you would be too proud to ask any one—perhaps you would not even ask me; and here is a letter that you can keep till then, and if you should want the money, you can open the letter, and it will tell you how to get it."

"And it is a poor forecast you are making, Cousin Janet," said he, cheerfully. "I am to play the prodigal son, then. But I will take the letter. And good-bye again, Janet; and God bless you, for you are a kind-hearted woman."

She went swiftly up to Castle Dare again, and he walked on toward the shore. By-and-by he reached a small stone

pier that ran out among some rocks, and by the side of it lay a small sailing launch, with four men in her, and Donald the piper boy perched up at the bow. There was a lamp swinging at her mast, but she had no sail up, for there was scarcely any wind.

"Is it time to go out now?" said Macleod to Hamish who stood waiting on the pier, having carried down his master's portmanteau.

"Ay, it will be time now, even if you will wait a little," said Hamish. And then the old man added, "It is a dark night, Sir Keith, for your going away from Castle Dare."

"And it will be the brighter morning when I come back," answered the young man, for he could not mistake the intention of the words.

"Yes, indeed, Sir Keith; and now you will go into the boat, and you will take care of your footing, for the night is dark, and the rocks they are always slippery whatever."

But Keith Macleod's foot was as familiar with the soft sea-weed of the rocks as it was with the hard heather of the hills, and he found no difficulty in getting into the broad-beamed boat. The men put out their oars and pushed her off. And now, in the dark night, the skirl of the pipes rose again; and it was no stately and mournful lament that young Donald played up there at the bow as the four oars struck the sea and sent a flash of white fire down into the deeps.

"Donald," Hamish had said to him on the shore, "when you are going out to the steamer, it is the 'Seventy-ninth's Farewell to Chubralter' that you will play, and you will play no other thing than that."

And surely the Seventy-ninth were not sorry to leave Gibraltar when their piper composed for them so glad a farewell.

At the high windows of Castle Dare the mother stood, and her niece, and as they watched the yellow lamp move slowly out from the black shore, they heard this proud and joyous march that Donald was playing to herald the approach of his master. They listened to it as it grew fainter and fainter, and as the small yellow star trembling over the dark waters, became more and more remote. And then this other sound—this blowing of a steam whistle far away in the darkness?

"He will be in good time, aunt; she is a long way off yet," said Janet Macleod. But the mother did not speak.

Out there on the dark and moving waters the great steamer was slowly drawing near the open boat; and as she came up, the vast hull of her, seen against the starlit sky, seemed a mountain.

"Now, Donald," Macleod called out, "you will take the dog—here is the string; and you will see he does not spring into the water."

"Yes, I will take the dog," muttered the boy, half to himself. "Oh yes, I will take the dog; but it is better if I was going with you, Sir Keith, than any dog."

A rope was thrown out, the boat dragged up to the side of the steamer, the small gangway let down, and presently Macleod was on the deck of the large vessel. Then Oscar was hauled up too, and the rope flung loose, and the boat drifted away into the darkness. But the last good-bye had not been said, for over the black waters came the sound of

pipes once more, the melancholy wail of "Macintosh's Lament."

"Confound that obstinate brat!" Macleod said to himself. "Now he will go back to Castle Dare and make the women miserable."

"The captain is below at his supper, Sir Keith," said the mate. "Will you go down to him?"

"Yes, I will go down to him," said he; and he made his way along the deck of the steamer.

He was arrested by the sound of some one crying, and he looked down, and found a woman crouched under the bulwarks, with two small children asleep on her knee.

"My good woman, what is the matter with you?" said he.

"The night is cold," she said in the Gaelic, "and my children are cold; and it is a long way that we are going."

He answered her in her own tongue.

"You will be warmer if you go below; but here is a plaid for you, anyway;" and with that he took the plaid from round his shoulders and flung it across the children, and passed on.

That was the way of the Macleods of Dare. They had a royal manner with them. Perhaps that was the reason that their revenues were now far from royal.

And meanwhile the red light still burned in the high windows of Castle Dare, and two women were there looking out on the pale stars and the dark sea beneath. They waited until they heard the plashing of oars in the small bay below, and the message was brought them that Sir Keith had got safely on board the great steamer. Then they turned away

from the silent and empty night, and one of them was weeping bitterly.

"It is the last of my six sons that has gone from me," she said, coming back to the old refrain, and refusing to be comforted.

"And I have lost my brother," said Janet Macleod, in her simple way. "But he will came back to us, auntie; and then we shall have great doings at Castle Dare."

CHAPTER II.

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MENTOR.

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It was with a wholly indescribable surprise and delight that Macleod came upon the life and stir and gayety of London in the sweet June time, when the parks and gardens and squares would of themselves have been a sufficient wonder to him. The change from the sombre shores of lochs Na Keal, and Iua, and Scridain to this world of sunlit foliage—the golden yellow of the laburnum, the cream-white of the chestnuts, the rose-pink of the red hawthorn, and everywhere the keen, translucent green of the young lime-trees—was enough to fill the heart with joy and gladness, though he had been no diligent student of landscape and color. The few days he had to spend by himself—while getting properly dressed to satisfy the demands of his friend—passed quickly enough. He was not at all ashamed of his country-made clothes as he watched the whirl of carriages in Piccadilly, or lounged under the elms at Hyde Park, with his beautiful silver-white and lemon-colored collie attracting the admiration of every passer-by. Nor had he waited for the permission of Lieutenant Ogilvie to make his entrance into, at least, one little corner of society. He was recognized in St. James's Street one morning by a noble lady whom he had met once or twice at Inverness; and she, having stopped her carriage, was pleased to ask him to lunch with herself and her husband next day. To the great grief of Oscar, who had

to be shut up by himself, Macleod went up next day to Brook Street, and there met several people whose names he knew as representatives of old Highland families, but who were very English, as it seemed to him, in their speech and ways. He was rather petted, for he was a handsome lad, and he had high spirits and a proud air. And his hostess was so kind as to mention that the Caledonian Ball was coming off on the 25th, and of course he must come, in the Highland costume; and as she was one of the patronesses, should she give him a voucher? Macleod answered, laughingly, that he would be glad to have it, though he did not know what it was; whereupon she was pleased to say that no wonder he laughed at the notion of a voucher being wanted for any Macleod of Dare.

One morning a good-looking and slim young man knocked at the door of a small house in Bury Street, St. James's, and asked if Sir Keith Macleod was at home. The man said he was, and the young gentleman entered. He was a most correctly dressed person. His hat, and gloves, and cane, and long-tailed frock-coat were all beautiful; but it was, perhaps, the tightness of his nether garments, or, perhaps, the tightness of his brilliantly-polished boots (which were partially covered by white gaiters), that made him go up the narrow little stairs with some precision of caution. The door was opened and he was announced.

"My dear old boy," said he, "how do you do?" and Macleod gave him a grip of the hand that nearly burst one of his gloves.

But at this moment an awful accident occurred. From behind the door of the adjacent bedroom, Oscar, the collie,

sprang forward with an angry growl; then he seemed to recognize the situation of affairs, when he saw his master holding the stranger's hand; then he began to wag his tail; then he jumped up with his fore-paws to give a kindly welcome.

"Hang it all, Macleod!" young Ogilvie cried, with all the starch gone out of his manner; "your dog's all wet? What's the use of keeping a brute like that about the place?"

Alas! the beautiful, brilliant boots were all besmeared, and the white gaiters too, and the horsey-looking nether garments. Moreover, the Highland savage, so far from betraying compunction, burst into a roar of laughter.

"My dear fellow," he cried, "I put him in my bedroom to dry. I couldn't do more, could I? He has just been in the Serpentine."

"I wish he was there now, with a stone and a string round his neck!" observed Lieutenant Ogilvie, looking at his boots; but he repented him of this rash saying, for within a week he had offered Macleod £20 for the dog. He might have offered twenty dozen of £20, and thrown his polished boots and his gaiters too into the bargain, and he would have had the same answer.

Oscar was once more banished into the bedroom; and Mr. Ogilvie sat down, pretending to take no more notice of his boots. Macleod put some sherry on the table, and a handful of cigars; his friend asked whether he could not have a glass of seltzer-water and a cigarette.

"And how do you like the rooms I got for you?"

"There is not much fresh air about them, nor in this narrow street," Macleod said, frankly; "but that is no matter

for I have been out all day—all over London."

"I thought the price was as high as you would care to go," Ogilvie said; "but I forgot you had come fresh up, with your pocket full of money. If you would like something a trifle more princely, I'll put you up to it."

"And where have I got the money? There are no gold mines in the west of Mull. It is you who are Fortunatus."

"By Jove, if you knew how hard a fellow is run at Aldershot," Mr. Ogilvie remarked, confidentially, "you would scarcely believe it. Every new batch of fellows who come in have to be dined all round; and the mess bills are simply awful. It's getting worse and worse; and then these big drinks put one off one's work so."

"You are studying hard, I suppose," Macleod said, quite gravely.

"Pretty well," said he, stretching out his legs, and petting his pretty mustache with his beautiful white hand. Then he added, suddenly, surveying the brown-faced and stalwart young fellow before him, "By Jove, Macleod, I'm glad to see you in London. It's like a breath of mountain air. Don't I remember the awful mornings we've had together—the rain and the mist and the creeping through the bogs? I believe you did your best to kill me. If I hadn't had the constitution of a horse, I should have been killed."

"I should say your big drinks at Aldershot were more likely to kill you than going after the deer," said Macleod, "And will you come up with me this autumn, Ogilvie? The mother will be glad to see you, and Janet, too; though we haven't got any fine young ladies for you to make love to, unless you go up to Fort William, or Fort George, or

Inverness. And I was all over the moors before I came away; and if there is anything like good weather, we shall have plenty of birds this year, for I never saw before such a big average of eggs in the nests."

"I wonder you don't let part of that shooting," said young Ogilvie, who knew well of the straitened circumstances of the Macleods of Dare.

"The mother won't have it done," said Macleod, quite simply, "for she thinks it keeps me at home. But a young man cannot always stay at home. It is very good for you, Ogilvie, that you have brothers."

"Yes, if I had been the eldest of them," said Mr. Ogilvie. "It is a capital thing to have younger brothers; it isn't half so pleasant when you are the younger brother."

"And will you come up, then, and bury yourself alive at Dare?"

"It is awfully good of you to ask me, Macleod; and if I can manage it, I will; but I am afraid there isn't much chance this year. In the meantime, let me give you a hint. In London we talk of going *down* to the Highlands."

"Oh, do you? I did not think you were so stupid," Macleod remarked.

"Why, of course we do. You speak of going up to the capital of a country, and of going down to the provinces."

"Perhaps you are right—no doubt you are right; but it sounds stupid," the unconvinced Highlander observed again. "It sounds stupid to say going up to the south, and going down to the north. And how can you go down to the Highlands? You might go down to the Lowlands. But no doubt you are right; and I will be more particular. And will

you have another cigarette? And then we will go out for a walk, and Oscar will get drier in the street than indoors."

"Don't imagine I am going out to have that dog plunging about among my feet," said Ogilvie. "But I have something else for you to do. You know Colonel Ross of Duntorme."

"I have heard of him."

"His wife is an awfully nice woman, and would like to meet you, I fancy they think of buying some property—I am not sure it isn't an island—in your part of the country; and she has never been to the Highlands at all. I was to take you down with me to lunch with her at two, if you care to go. There is her card."

Macleod looked at the card.

"How far is Prince's Gate from here?" he asked.

"A mile and a half, I should say."

"And it is now twenty minutes to two," said he, rising. "It will be a nice smart walk."

"Thank you," said Mr. Ogilvie; "if it is all the same to you, we will perform the journey in a hansom. I am not in training just at present for your tramps to Ben-an-Sloich."

"Ah! Your boots are rather tight," said Macleod, with grave sympathy.

They got into a hansom, and went spinning along through the crowd of carriages on this brilliant morning. The busy streets, the handsome women, the fine buildings, the bright and beautiful foliage of the parks—all these were a perpetual wonder and delight to the new-comer, who was as eager in the enjoyment of this gay world of pleasure and activity as any girl come up for her first season. Perhaps this notion occurred to the astute and experienced Lieutenant

Ogilvie, who considered it his duty to warn his youthful and ingenuous friend.

"Mrs. Ross is a very handsome woman," he remarked.

"Indeed."

"And uncommonly fascinating, too, when she likes."

"Really."

"You had better look out, if she tries to fascinate you."

"She is a married woman," said Macleod.

"They are always the worst," said this wise person; "for they are jealous of the younger women."

"Oh, that is all nonsense," said Macleod, bluntly. "I am not such a greenhorn. I have read all that kind of talk in books and magazines: it is ridiculous. Do you think I will believe that married women have so little self-respect as to make themselves the laughing stock of men?"

"My dear fellow, they have cart-loads of self-respect. What I mean is, that Mrs. Ross is a bit of a lion-hunter, and she may take a fancy to make a lion of you—"

"That is better than to make an ass of me, as you suggested."

"—And naturally she will try to attach you to her set. I don't think you are quite *outre* enough for her; perhaps I made a mistake in putting you into decent clothes. You wouldn't have time to get into your kilts now? But you must be prepared to meet all sorts of queer folks at her house, especially if you stay on a bit and have some tea—mysterious poets that nobody ever heard of, and artists who won't exhibit, and awful swells from the German universities, and I don't know what besides—everybody who isn't the least like anybody else."

"And what is your claim, then, to go there?" Macleod asked.

"Oh," said the young lieutenant, laughing at the home-thrust, "I am only admitted on sufferance, as a friend of Colonel Ross. She never asked *me* to put my name in her autograph-book. But I have done a bit of the jackal for her once or twice, when I happened to be on leave; and she has sent me with people to her box at Covent Garden when she couldn't go herself."

"And how am I to propitiate her? What am I to do?"

"She will soon let you know how you strike her. Either she will pet you, or she will snuff you out like winking. I don't know a woman who has a blanker stare, when she likes."

This idle conversation was suddenly interrupted. At the same moment both young men experienced a sinking sensation, as if the earth had been cut away from beneath their feet; then there was a crash, and they were violently thrown against each other; then they vaguely knew that the cab, heeling over, was being jolted along the street by a runaway horse. Fortunately, the horse could not run very fast, for the axle-tree, deprived of its wheel, was tearing at the road; but, all the same, the occupants of the cab thought they might as well get out, and so they tried to force open the two small panels of the door in front of them. But the concussion had so jammed these together that, shove at them as they might, they would not yield. At this juncture, Macleod, who was not accustomed to hansom cabs, and did not at all like this first experience of them, determined to get out somehow; and so he raised himself a bit, so as to get his back firm against the back of the

vehicle; he pulled up his leg until his knee almost touched his mouth; he got the heel of his boot firmly fixed on the top edge of the door: and then with one forward drive he tore the panel right away from its hinges. The other was of course flung open at once. Then he grasped the brass rail outside, steadied himself for a moment, and jumped clear from the cab, lighting on the pavement. Strange to say, Ogilvie did not follow, though Macleod, as he rushed along to try to get hold of the horse, momentarily expected to see him jump out. His anxiety was of short duration. The axle-tree caught on the curb; there was a sudden lurch; and then, with a crash of glass, the cab went right over, throwing down the horse, and pitching the driver into the street. It was all the work of a few seconds; and another second seemed to suffice to collect a crowd, even in this quiet part of Kensington Gore. But, after all, very little damage was done, except to the horse, which had cut one of its hocks. When young Mr. Ogilvie scrambled out and got on to the pavement, instead of being grateful that his life had been spared, he was in a towering passion—with whom or what he knew not.

"Why didn't you jump out?" said Macleod to him, after seeing that the cabman was all right.

Ogilvie did not answer; he was looking at his besmeared hands and dishevelled clothes.

"Confound it!" said he; "what's to be done now? The house is just round the corner."

"Let us go in, and they will lend you a clothesbrush."

"As if I had been fighting a bargee? No, thank you. I will go along till I find some tavern, and get myself put to