


TRAIN FOR FLUSHING: curious story of the Flying Dutchman

MARCH

Weird Tales



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story of a weird vengeance
By **CLYDE IRVINE**

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slave trade in America, by **MANLY WADE WELLMAN**

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF THE MONTH



"This was the Place of Trials where monstrous creatures leered and gibbered at us."

The Horror in the Glen

By CLYDE IRVINE

*What dreadful doom was preparing for the infamous Clan MacGreggan?
—a story of "the little people"*

WHEN I came upon the *clachan** again, breasting the slope to gaze down upon the glen where I had seen and suffered so much, I breathed the cooler air of the mountainside with a

relish and a taste in my mouth that I thought I would never know again.

The purple heather on the hillsides and the pastel tones of far-away Dhuaran, ripping the clouds apart like the spine of

*Small Highland village.

some great saurian monster, did not seem commonplace but were like a soft hand stroking me, lulling me back to a sense of sweetness and beauty that I had forgot.

There are people in this glen who step out of my way when I am abroad. Bairns in the roads run when they see me. Women shriek when I dance o' nights on the mountains. Some say I cast no shadow and that I am evil. But indeed I am kindly and gentle. I would not kill a little bird or crush a little beast.

Some laugh at me. And, of course, I laugh back. For I know what they do not know. And if they knew what I know they would be as clever as I am and that would never do. It would not do for *you* to be as clever as me, for then I should have to ask Queen Boadellen to take you away, too!

For I am Malcolm Dhu Glas, who is known better just as plain Malcolm Douglas, and the name of me is the way it is said in the tongue we have, the Gaelic, and it means "Malcolm of the Black Water," for it was beside the dark waters of Loch Dhu itself that I was taken into the country of Boadellen, Queen of the Borderland and Ruler of the Underworld, and there held prisoner for seven years by the time of man, but only an hour by the sun-dial that is cut around the pillar in the Court of the Seven Circles.

First you must know that I was born in Benallerton. I had the "second sight," for I was the seventh son of a seventh son and the height of me was six feet and the half of it, and I weighed one-third the meat on a stallion's bones.

There is neither stone wall nor dike nor the space between the hills nor the stretch of a loch nor the day-long flight of the eagle that my eyes cannot pierce. I can see into the hearts of men and women and can call forth the seeing eye beyond the range of time.

I can command the elements to do my

will. And all this happens because I sat by Loch Dhu and met Queen Boadellen.

I sat there, looking at the gray hills around me and seeing the blood-red scars on the hillsides that would never dry again. For down these rocky slopes the blood of my father and mother and my six stalwart brothers, my uncle Iain and many more of my clan had poured. That was the night the MacGreggans came in the snow, wrapped up like ghosts, with daggers in their hands to kill my people.

On that night I had run from the shelter of our house, being young and small at the time, with the shrieks and screams of the dying in my ears, and driven to desperation and whipped by fear and trembling I had taken refuge in the hills.

Around me, in the pall of the night, I heard the chopping of Lochaber axes and the popping crunch of skulls and breast-bones, and there would be a shrieking yell that would rise in a keening wail, like a banshee.

Through this I ran, hearing the gurgling screams and curses and the deep-breathing of the silent butchers. Bodies were cast at my feet, so horribly torn and severed that I turned from them and retched with grief and horror.

Staggering amid this human wreckage I fell over the dead body of my uncle Iain, chief of the clan, his head split to the brisket by the downward stroke of a heavy broadsword.

"God help us!" I cried.

"The glen is full of devils," a voice said from nowhere. "The blood of the Douglas flows down the hills in a scarlet stream and runs into the Dhu as the red fingers of the MacGreggans run into the hearts of your people! Avenge them, Malcolm! Avenge them—or ye shall die for seven years—and live in death forever after!"

Then it was that a great light came into my eyes and I turned to the valley and saw through the walls of the houses and into

the darkness of the cabins. And what I saw there no man has ever seen before nor will any man see again, I fear.

I could see into the black hearts of the MacGreggans and witness the devils and hobgoblins leaping in demoniac glee as the strong hairy arms of the murderers wielded dirk and claymore, *skean dbu** and Lochaber ax on their helpless victims.

It is said that when those we love die and we are by them in the moment that their souls leave their bodies we can see them go—if we have the sight.

There are those among us who say that the soul has a color, a light around itself that may be blue or yellow or red or black, depending on whether 'tis a child with a golden halo around it or a man of dark deeds who throws out the blackness in him.

So I saw the souls of the Douglasses rise like tiny clouds of spun color, massing above the dead in the valley of the killing, forming a cloud of rainbow colors that shimmered briefly and rose as the bloody work went forward.

There, as the moon dived into the darkness, and the velvet night came down on the stained and trampled snow of Glen Benallerton, I stood by the side of the awful thing that had been my uncle Iain and vowed to avenge the slaughtered Clan Dhu Glas.

Then, worn out by the terror of the night, I dropped beside him and was taken on the black wings of sleep.

THE morrow dawned fair and bright as the steely sun came over the stark hill like a cold caress, but I awoke again to the wild fear that was on me. I recoiled from my uncle's body, casting my eyes on the dark-brown streaks that had eaten into the earth. The waters of Loch Dhu were stained at the edges, like an old blood-stained plaid discarded in battle.

*Small dagger worn in stocking.

The deadly stillness of the eery glen, the sense of awful doom in the silence between the hills, made me shudder. In the deep snow the steps of the murderers were scarlet, as if fresh blood dropped from every foot.

Broken swords and shattered daggers, thrown carelessly away, marked the trail of those who had obeyed their orders and had come behind the mask of night to wipe Clan Dhu Glas from the face of the living earth.

Slowly I crept down the hillside, turning my eyes away from what I had to see, and in fearful trembling made my way from house to house in the *clachan*. Even today, and I have seen some strange things in this and other worlds, I cannot dwell upon the sights that met my childish eyes that day. In less than twenty-four hours I changed from a wide-eyed innocent child to a walking sword, its edges keen and razor-sharp, my senses like a hunted thing of the forest and my eyes wild with the knowledge of unknown sights and sounds.

They said I was fey, that I was a mad manchild, when they saw me stagger over the pass that cuts between Ben Mhor and Ben Cruidach and come stumbling down the glen of the giants with my brogans cut to ribbons and my feet like strips of bloody hide. My small body was racked with pain and terror and my eyes were dark in the face of me, with my teeth showing like fangs and the breath bursting from me in great sobs.

There was little of my kilt left, a few tattered tartan ribbons, and my legs were cut and torn by the clutching thorns and the sharp granite rocks over which I had stumbled and staggered. Great weals were on my arms, and my chest was scarified and ripped and the hair on my head was a flaming wild torch, red as fire above the deadly pallor of my face.

I was the sole survivor of the Clan Dhu Glas!

AS THE years passed I grew to manhood in the glen where I had survived such a massacre. But now there was none but the thieving wild MacDhronas, a coarse and barbaric clan, living there by killing and stealing. Among them I was a stranger.

I have told you that I was gifted with a great light the night of the killing. It must have been the gift of the fairies. For now I could foretell the future and in a vision I saw myself bound to the Underworld for seven years—as if I were dead—and, *unless I fulfilled my oath of vengeance*—sentenced to a living death thereafter!

But I was weak. The MacGreggans were numbered as the sands of the seashore. Their claymores and shields hung in their *clachan* like the jeweled lights of the granite hills themselves.

So I drew into myself and fled to the hills, living as a beast will live in a hole in the ground far up on Dhuaran itself, near the roof of the world where the mists shroud the peak.

It was cold up there; so I wore the skins of deer and wildcats and had eagle's feathers in my hair and a kilt of my own clan that a weaver made for me, secretly.

Often I sat, wrapped in my furry garments, thinking of the fate of my clan, so many of them hurtled into Purgatory unshriven. I would flex my arm with a broadsword swinging from it—and then I'd sit down and weep at the weakness of my body. So many MacGreggans—one against a clan!

I felt the task I had set myself was greater than I could ever accomplish—like sweeping out Loch Dhu itself with a heather broom.

The weaver must have talked, for I saw men with drawn dirks out searching on the hills, but after a time they ceased. And now I saw that there were no clansmen abroad in the valley at all.

Thus many years must have passed. I

had no way of counting. I became friendly with the animals and birds, and in time I had the fierce proud eagles standing round me like tame pigeons, soft and gentle. I talked to them as I'd talk to a man and they'd answer with harsh screams, the way they do.

They'd bring me small soft lambs which were good to eat. Their skins made my bed of thongs a pleasant place. I knew how to make fire and lived warm and comfortable when the valleys were high with snow-drifts and the corries* were buried deep.

Such was my despair at ever keeping my oath against the MacGreggans that it began to fade from my mind. There was no one to speak to me, and my own voice sounded strange in my ears. I'd shout against the gales that tore the snow-caps from the hills and yell poetry of my own making to the clouds, to keep my voice alive.

One day, looking down into the fateful glen I saw that all was still and quiet there; no smoke came from the cabins; there were no prowling dogs, no chickens pecking in the yards. Nothing.

It is a saying that when the men of a clan die dishonorably in battle or their blood is unavenged, nothing grows where they lie. So it was with the Glen Benaller-ton. Nothing lived in it. It was bleak and bare. From where I peered upon it the earth looked blasted, burned black in some great furnace.

I had been in the high fastnesses of the mountains so long that I was sore afraid to venture down the hillside. But after I'd crawled down the mountain and lain in a corrie for the time it takes the sun to cross over from one side of the world to the other, I plucked up my courage and went on.

And so, at last, I came to the glen of my departed people and saw that the hand of

*Corrie: level place on hillside.

decay had set in on the ground, and the walls were falling in. The thatched roofs hung down like taggy hair on a cateran's* face. The holes in the walls were as blank and sightless as the eyes of a corpse.

With slow and timid steps I walked about among the ruined skeletons of the houses, whose beams had rotted and fallen to the ground. The sagging walls leaned wearily toward their final dissolution. Great holes yawned, showing the white clouds across the sky.

My heart was cold and heavy as rain-swept granite as I bent my sorrowful gaze upon the lonely *clachan*. Almost I could swear that a ghostly army, blood-stained and awful, walked with me, silently, inexorably among the dwellings that had sheltered us all from the cold and the snow in winter and the heat in the valley at the height of summer.

Just this! Nothing was left of all that. The brave deeds were forgotten. The clansmen were no more. Soon—even our name would be but a shadowy memory.

SUDDENLY a scream pierced the air. Above me I saw Ehlor, king eagle of the mountains, wheeling in the vast bowl of the sky above the ruins. He was calling me to come home. But I could not go back to my hiding-place in the hills. This was my home! I was Malcolm Dhu Glas, and I was the only one of my clan alive! From this day on I was to bend my life to the thought of revenge.

But it was not to be. Little did I know that I was now well past the span of a boy's life, well past the age of a gallant of the clan, almost into middle age, now, and still I had done nothing to wipe out the wrong which Clan MacGreggan had done to us. I knew so little. I was like a wild animal myself and as fierce and as frightened as a wild thing will be. And I had forgotten so much.

I wandered down the valley, seeing that the heather was struck black with some mysterious blight, that the yellow gorse bushes were gnarled black fingers and without a bloom, that all the bluebells had gone and the grass was gray with the grayness of death. All life was dead. Nothing stirred. The valley was still, with a hand that seemed cold and white, gripping it in a vise-like hold. Ehlor screamed again, wheeling above my head, and then, as if thrown high by some invisible catapult stalled against the currents and was whirled aloft almost out of my sight. With a parting scream his tawny body lay over on the air and he swung like a scythe across the rim of the hills and was gone, never to come back again.

Wearily, feeling that indeed I had come back to the land of the living dead, I made my way to the dark black waters of Loch Dhu and sat down, in my suit of skins and furs, my crest of eagles' feathers and the dark-blue of my kilt, on a craggy rock at the water's edge. Suddenly I saw a face in the loch!

In my childhood I had never known a mirror. In the days of the clans there were no mirrors but the waters of glen burns or the stillness of the loch, and men and women took no vanity in themselves apart from dress and weapons. So that now, as I saw the face looking at me from the dark water, I leapt to my feet and drew my dirk to defend myself against this monster with the flaming mass of tangled red hair, and the deep piercing eyes that seemed to smoke in a face like saddle leather.

But as I leapt—*it* leapt! My dagger was matched by the Thing's dagger! Fiercely I scowled and it scowled back. Then—and it surprised me to hear it, for I had not heard the sound of it since before the night of the massacre—I laughed!

I lay on my belly on the crag and laughed and laughed like some screaming beast, and the more I laughed the more the

*Cateran: one of the common people.

Thing laughed! And, suddenly, I knew it was myself!

The face that looked back at me was as wild-looking as the whiskered fury of a Highland wildcat, for my eyes flashed like bright emeralds and my teeth were long and white and there was a great beard of flaming hair from my chin and streaks of flame-colored hair hung from my upper lip. The fuzzy fur and leather I wore and the great nails of my hands and feet made me more like a beast than a man, and in my laughter I had slavered, so that flecks of foam were on my lips which were red as blood.

Gazing at myself, as Narcissus is said to have gazed at himself, I felt no love for this face, but a great fear came upon me and I drew back, frightened. But as I did so I saw something come over my shoulder and with the lightning quickness of a trapped cat I twisted sideways, rolled over and came up, lunging with my dirk.

Something seized me and threw me on my face. A terrible force held me pinned to the dead earth. Struggle as I did, and I struggled with the ferocity and strength of a mountain lion, I was helpless in the mighty grip that clutched me. Yet, as I twisted my head to look above me—there was no one holding me!

Gradually the strangling grip relaxed and slowly I got to my feet, the dirk flying from my hand as if plucked out of my trembling fingers by a giant. I watched it in terror as it circled in the air and came back, pointing its razor edge at my throat—suspended by an invisible hand in the air!

Then my fearful eyes saw something that I had often dreamed about but never met. On the tip of a shattered bush that once had been a cluster of golden gorse, there stood a tiny little figure, no bigger than my hand, an exquisite little creature of incredible loveliness and beauty, so fragile, like a bubble, pink and soft and glittering with bright jewels, her tiny breasts

outlined in mother-of-pearl breast-plates, her little head surmounted by a golden helmet with bright blue wings—a fairy—one of the "wee folk" from the land we never see!

From her tiny throat, so small that even a bird like a robin would seem grotesque and ugly before her matchless perfection, a voice like the piping of some insect came forth.

"Stand, Dhu Glas!" she said. "Stand up!"

I RAISED myself to my full height and lost sight of her as I did so. But soon I felt a breath, like the swish of a butterfly's wings, and she stood on my shoulder, smiling into my face. I had no will of my own. I was struck dumb by her manifest power to control me as if I were a feather and the sight of her matchless beauty and the fragile appearance she had, compared to my own wild and terrible look, and the strength of three men that surged in my great body, were too much for me.

"Malcolm," she said, "you have grown to be a man, yet you have not done a man's work. It was said that if you did not avenge the Clan Dhu Glas you would spend seven years among the dead—and that is where I am taking you! You must not speak all the time you are with me or you will never come back to this earth. And, when you do come back, you must live as one dead until you carry out your oath!"

But, I could not remain silent. I swore a great Celtic oath, and my voice must have rumbled like thunder in her tiny ears. But I told her I had had no chance against the hordes of MacGreggans. I told her how they had hunted me into the hills, how I had put the evil eye on them, and—

She laughed like the tinkling of a little silver bell and said, "Be done, Dhu Glas! I know of these things, too! But it was as it was said, and it must be done as it

will be done. You will come with me for seven years, and after that you will attend to the MacGreggans. Queen Boadellen commands you—*rest!*”

Before I could answer, a great weariness came on me and I sank down on the ground, and when I opened my eyes again I was lying in the Court of the Seven Circles in Queen Boadellen's kingdom. The circles overlapped one another like designs you will see on a Celtic wall or stone and they seemed to touch within a single circle as rings placed together will touch. Within the circle there was a stone, built like a Roman maypole, and I was pagan enough to know what it meant. This was the center of Life.

Though the Queen herself was exquisite, with a beauty that defies my poor powers of description, she was surrounded by fearful hosts of terrible aspect. Among these I was a giant, yet I was as helpless as a baby. For there were satyrs with great horns and devils of malignancy with sharp-pronged spears and barbed tails and little men with pig's faces and snakes that walked and looked like green women with naked breasts.

There was an army there, too! They were dressed in copper that glistened, and they would join hands to hold the lightning and send it out like shocks, or would play a game, like tag, riding the air and exploding shafts of lightning from their bodies.

The Borderland was greater than my own valley by a thousand times, and there were great retorts in it which blew flame and smoke to the skies; yet there was no sky but simply a great curve in the air filled with flying things and clouds of elves and gnomes.

I saw many strange things before Queen Boadellen called me to her castle which sat, like a vast bannock on the top of a huge hill that glittered brightly. Every-body, with the exception of the army and

smaller gnomes and elves, was naked, and for a moment or two I had it in me to speak about this; for even a wild beast has some modesty about its body, but I was taken, by some great force and speed, to her and she spoke to me as if I were dressed in my kilt and furred doublet as I had been when she met me, and soon I felt no more about it and listened to her silently. For I was forbidden to speak.

She ordered her army to take my hands, and as they did so I was shaken as if by palsy and stood with blazing sparks flying off my body like a torch in flames. And after this it stopped and I felt mighty and powerful and unafraid. And she sent me with the army.

We took a road that wound into darkness, lighted by green torches that threw a ghastly glow upon us, and soon we passed out of this into red flame, engulfing us, but we went on and stepped into a pool of blood. They told me it dripped from the battlefields.

This was the Place of Trials, where monstrous creatures leered and gibbered at us. I would have drawn back in fear, but the soldiers pushed me forward, laughing at my fears. Some of these creatures looked like ancient gods in the likeness of bulls, hawks and cats.

WE WENT on for what seemed a long time and began to climb high on rocks that glowed with flame but seemed to have little effect on my feet. Here, I imagined, must be the Purgatory that priests talk about, for I came upon those of my clan, unshriven as they had died, suffering terrible tortures.

Suspended in a cavernous gloom between Earth and the Underworld were my clansmen—turning like pigs on a spit over everlasting fire—Malcolm my father, and Deirdre my mother, and my six strong brothers, Iain, Ronald, Shamus, Eric, Stuart and Colum—all screaming at me—begging

me to avenge them quickly that they might be free from these invisible bonds.

They were as they had died. They had been awakened in the dead of night to find Death waiting for them and no one had been able to give them absolution for their sins.

Their stricken bodies cried aloud to me, the only one alive, to be strong—to be faithful to my vow—to avenge the massacre of Clan Dhu Glas.

Though I tried to shut out the 'sight, seeking to cover my eyes and close my ears against them, the soldiers forced my hands away and I had to endure it. I felt myself growing weak, and with the ebbing strength I still possessed I fought against the soldiers.

For what seemed ages in Time I watched them, and it burned into me as it had never done on Earth that indeed I had forgotten them and sentenced them to almost unendurable suffering. For it is a tale with us that spirits can suffer as badly as humans, and we believe that they hold anger and spite against those who do not free them from their torture, enlisting dark forces to impose nightmares and horrid visions on the living.

I was taken once more to the Court of the Seven Circles and my arms were bound on the symbol of Life in the center circle. Around me the most beautiful women I had ever seen danced lightly as deer, but I hung there, weary and broken-hearted though they swept close to me, their lips ruby red with a great desire, their bodies swaying as gently as reeds on the edge of a blue pool.

"You see," Queen Boadellen said. "This is beyond me. You alone can free your people. And for that task you must be strong, in body and in soul. But if you desire anything it shall be yours. I can give you all your heart desires—here in my kingdom—but if you succumb to these temptations your people will remain where

they are forever—and you also will remain—to see them!"

And so she tested me as she tests all those who would enlist the powers she possesses. I would pick a flower and it would turn to gold.

A tree on which I'd lean would be a soft woman with perfumed skin, and stones would become cushions, raindrops turned to diamonds.

The vast concourse of the Underworld tried me with every lure their ingenious brains could devise. I could have had the whole world for a plaything had I but weakened, had my will to vengeance strayed from the path which now appeared to me dark and tortuous.

After I had resisted these tests for some time I was called to the presence of Queen Boadellen again. In the pearly vastness her body was like a tiny jewel that outshone them all. Around her the living shield of her army glittered. Before her, a rug, made of human skins, stitched in the form of a seven-pointed star, was spread.

On this I knelt at her command.

"Malcolm Dhu Glas," she said, "survivor of your clan, for seven years you have been here, tested as few human beings are ever tested. Now you are gifted beyond any human. You have terrible powers—the power to control the elements, to transmute and impregnate solids with solids, to transmute dross to gold, to move earth and sea—these powers you have only through your allegiance to me!

"Return to Earth, Malcolm Dhu Glas. Seek your enemies. Keep ever in your mind's eye the fulfilment of your oath. Call on the powers of my kingdom when the moment of your triumph nears. I will be with you on the instant!"

And as she spoke I was walking up the hill to the pass that leads to the glen. Far below me I saw Loch Dhu again, dark and terrible beneath the lowering sky.

THE same air of deathliness pervaded the deep glen that twisted among the stark hills, and the ground was bare and lifeless as if a great pestilence had swept it clean and bare. No birds chirped in the valley and no flowers bloomed at all. The deadly grayness of everything that lives by nature was weirdly horrible, and I stood on the crest of the hill, fearful of the glen, as it sent up once more to me that indefinable feeling of gloom and dread.

But I went down into the glen and once more I stood on the site of my home, among the scattered stones and the dead memories of those I had loved, but now I had another memory, of those twisting pain-racked figures in the space between Earth and Borderland. I had the sound of their eternal screams in my ears and I was possessed of an awful power.

On past the glen I marched and now I was dressed in fine linen with a jabot at my throat and ruffled cuffs; a silken doublet was on my broad back and a plaid of a royal tartan swung from a great jewel-crested brooch on my left shoulder. On my belt the glinting head of a claymore, studded with gems, swung easily; my dirk was of fine Toledo steel, and a sharp *skean dhu* was stuck down my stocking. Buckled shoon and fine hose made my feet look like a noble's. In the water of Loch Dhu I saw a handsome face, the face of a god, with golden bright hair and shaven jowls. It was myself!

A fine carriage waited for me at the brow of the hill that leads down to the valley of the MacGreggans, the lovely Glen Dhronna, and by the side of the carriage stood a footman in livery and on the box was a driver dressed the same. The footman bent low as I came up the hill and opened the door. I entered and sat down. The footman jumped to the box, the driver snapped his whip and the six black horses leaped into the traces.

Down the hill the carriage rolled, and

far away the sentinels of Clan MacGreggan saw me approach. Clansmen rushed out, hiding dirks in their shirts. Their women dropped the cares of the cabins and with their bairns at their knees straddled out and put their hands on their sonsy hips, wishful to see the grand one who would be coming into the glen in this fashion.

Well I knew what they would be thinking. If I was not one of the English then I would be soft picking for them. For they had the air of kindly men at times and would sit and eat bread and salt with those whose wealth they coveted, and later, when the one would be asleep, they would creep in like rats and draw their dirks across his throat or stab him in the back, below the shoulders.

There were deep pits in the Glen Dhronna where dead men lay and there were bright silver ornaments among the men and the women; hidden in the thatch of the house there was gold and silver; below the beds there were thin French swords and stilettoes from Toledo—belonging to the dead men in the deep holes.

So, knowing them, the hundreds of them that came streaming from the long deep glen to see me, I sat in my carriage, knowing well that none of them would take me for Malcolm Dhu Glas, nor yet the wild seer of Benallerton, nor again the animal who lived among the eagles by Dhuaran, the great hill!

Queen Boadellen had sent me to fulfill my oath, and I was going to wreak vengeance on these people until not a soul was left to take the name MacGreggan. The shame of the world on them for the injustice they had done me and mine! The wrath of the Underworld was ready, waiting my call, and my carriage was rolling down the hill to Glen Dhronna of MacGreggan.

Their evil eyes glinted as they saw the wealth of my equipage, and I saw the stealthy smiles they gave each other and

the manner in which they fingered at their hidden dirks. The men were hard of face but tried to smile, and it twisted their mouths to one side, as if they tasted vinegar and found it bitter on the tongue.

Fawning like slaves they bowed their heads as I passed and doffed their bonnets, their hands across their hearts as if they'd be bowing, but gripping the hafts of their dirks beneath the stuff of their shirts, so eager for my gold and my horses and the silk of my clothes that their hands trembled with the miserly greed of their black hearts.

My carriage drew up at the house of the Chieftain, and I saw him standing on the threshold, as they all do, his hands empty of weapons, and not even a *skean dbu* in his stocking. He was big and hard as the men around him, a man of great strength and cunning, whose pale eyes did not miss a single silver button, a jewel or a silken thread among my clothes, my servants or my equipage.

The clan was around me, thick and stifling, and my footman had to fight his way through the caterans and the women and children until he could open the door. I waited, knowing that the Chieftain was eager for my arrival, and in time the door opened and I stepped out.

They gasped as they saw the splendor of my clothes, the jewels that glittered in my jabot, on my weapons and the fingers of my hands. As one man they bowed, shooting me glances of hate and unruly greed, as I marched up to Gregor MacGreggan.

Instantly the great studded door behind was thrown open as he raised his hand, and he welcomed me in tones that were soft and gentlemanly, and his smiles were sunny on his face, though, like the rest of the men of his name, his mouth was twisted. I stepped into the great hall of his castle and stood by the fire and there, above the mantel, I saw the claymores of my father and my uncle, the two leaders of my clan.

They were stuck behind the battered targe that had shielded my father's heart in many a battle, battles fought clean with a man's enemy before his face; and now they hung in the hall of a treacherous snake, a man who could come to a *clachan* and eat bread and salt with his host, and rise in the night and kill him.

MY HEART blazed as I saw this, and my hands trembled as I held them out to the fire. He saw me and said, in an oily voice, "You must be from the South? Because it is the Southern men who feel the cold here. We are used to it, being men of the hills. And what might the name be at you?"

"My name is Lanarkton!" I answered him readily, knowing it was a Sassenach* name and it would throw him off the scent, and as he spoke to me in English, thinking I had no Gaelic, I allowed him to think so; for it would be better for my plans if he and his men thought I did not know the old tongue.

While I stood before the fire, warming myself, one of his villainous clansmen came in and took off his bonnet, saying in Gaelic, "May God bless this house!" and at the words I felt weak and ill; for the name is one that has a weakening on those who have lived on the Borderland as long as I did. But I felt strength come back to me as Gregor MacGreggan, with a smile, said in Gaelic to his servitor, "You need not be so civil, Donald! This is a Sassenach with no Gaelic at him; so never mind the blessing, for you know well I seldom use it!"

Then MacGreggan swung round on me and said, "Indeed, now, it is glad I am that you've come to the poor home of MacGreggan and honored us with your presence; for tonight we will be having a big meal of venison and plenty to go with it in the way of usqubaugh—which is our Highland drink called 'whisky'—and be-

*English.

fore the gloaming the young men of the clan will be at the games."

"That is something I would like to see," I answered, keeping my eyes on his servitor, who prowled about like a curious cat, watching everything I did and moving his head eagerly as my jewels flashed. So, calling to the servitor to bring some whisky, he sat down before the fire on a wide chair laced with thongs and leather, and I sat down opposite him and we talked on this and that and he was trying to find out where I came from and what family I had and if I was on a mission to the North.

Knowing it would whet his murderous greed, I told him I was alone in the world, that I had inherited great wealth from my father and was making a tour of the North for a manuscript I was going to make for the monks at Saint Goddard's in the South. When he heard that I could read and write he became fulsome, and as the whisky arrived and we drank horns of the fiery liquid he became rough and coarse and jested about women and maids in a most disgusting way.

Thus, drinking and making these coarse and repellent jests, we passed the hours until we were called forth for the games. I looked round for my servants, but they were nowhere to be seen, and when I asked for them I saw the men around me exchange glances that seemed evil and full of hate and guile. But I was not to be forsworn, and in time they came to me, looking weary and sick, and took me to a room, a great bare stone room with iron manacles on the walls that, at first, I thought was a prison.

My host apologized for the delay in procuring my servants and explained that they were being shown around the *clachan*; but I had my own ideas about that, and as soon as the door was closed behind him I waited and then walked over and pulled it open quickly, to find his evil-faced servitor apparently tying the throngs around my bro-

gans. I waited while he got up and went away.

Then I washed and had my men bring up my boxes and changed into another shirt with new jabot and ruffled cuffs and took a great handful of copper pennies with me and then walked out to see the games. The Chieftain was waiting for me, his brow as black as thunder, but he swept it from his face with a smile in which I was quick enough to detect his avarice and, from what my servants told me, that they had been held at the dirk-point and robbed of their money, I was ready for him.

"You have a very rough courtesy in these parts," I said without returning his smile. This took him aback, and the scowl came back to his face as I told him of the plight of my men. For an instant he could not face me, but then he turned around and began to curse the caterans in English, which, of course, they did not understand.

"May Hell damn you!" he screeched at them. "You have taken from this gentleman's servants the money they had with them and what valuables they carried! Bring them back instantly!" And then, in Gaelic, he cried, "The Sassenach fool has found out about the servants and what you did to them. You acted overhasty. Now bring the stuff back and give it to him, and soon, tonight or tomorrow night, you will have it back again with more!" And they trooped up and laid the stolen money and clothes at my feet. I called my men and gave it back to them, thanked the Chieftain and took my place beside him as the games started.

HE APOLOGIZED for his men, explaining that their manners were uncouth and that they never saw many like me or my servants and, like innocent children, just picked what they wanted. I smiled at him and pretended to swallow his transparent excuses as the members of the clan prepared to wrestle, toss the caber,

engage in the battle of broadswords and singlesticks and otherwise show their skill.

As each man won an event I tossed him a handful of coppers which instantly changed to gold, and the looks of envy, greed and malice that suffused their faces was reflected in the bared fangs of the less successful and the almost uncontrollable impulse of all there to kill me outright.

But the games went off without incident, although a bowman, with a yard-long arrow, almost pierced my throat as he let fly at the target; but my sojourn with Queen Boadellen had given me a foreknowledge of this and I bent down, ostensibly to pick up a coin I had dropped, and the evil servitor of MacGreggan, who stood at my back with his hand on his dirk, toppled to the earth with the arrow transfixing his heart. His face screwed up in devilish pain as his body was carried away, almost as if, even in death, he hated to lose sight of me.

Those were terrible days in Scotland and life was as cheap as a rabbit's fur; so I did not say anything when MacGreggan cursed loudly, drew a dirk from a nearby clansman and slew the archer. Nor did anyone else. Their faces were cold and stony.

Such things did not lessen my enjoyment of the games nor cause me sorrow in any way, for soon now I was going to do some killing myself and what had happened this afternoon would be but a pretty interlude.

I began to roll my revenge on this hellish crew around my heart, as a drinking man rolls a mouthful of wine around his tongue, and the feel of it was like fresh blood running through me and I felt myself surging inside with demoniac energy.

There are many people who will declare that it was not possible for me to do all this, but, as I shall show you, it was easy for one in league with the forces of the Underworld as I was; too easy, as a matter of fact! I could have struck every man

of this rotten crew dead on the instant, but that would not have satisfied me; for I still thought of all my family had been forced to suffer by their untimely deaths, and in the memory of their twisted bodies, alternately burning and renewing on the red-hot hill of the Borderland, I hardened my heart.

So I smiled when MacGreggan asked me indoors and I saw that the table was laid with horn drinking-glasses and silver plates for a big party. There were no knives, as all men in those days used their *skean dhu* daggers which they wore in the tie of their stockings, or skewered the meat on dirks and put it to their mouths if they did not just use their fingers.

Well I knew this sort of dinner. It is given by those who wish to kill their guests, for, by the custom, it is a dinner where claymores are not carried and only the dirk is used, and without a claymore a victim has no chance against a dozen dirks.

I noticed that even the servants carried dirks, and so, loosing my claymore, with its glittering jeweled handle, I gave it to my host and watched his piggy eyes gleam greedily. I had walked into his trap! But, again, he smiled and so did I.

The dinner proceeded, a wild boar's head and venison and grouse and a newly-slaughtered lamb following each other, and the grease-splashed faces of my fellow-diners looked weird in the light of the wall sconces as they wolfed the meat, tearing it apart with fanged mouths and slobbering the fatty pieces into their gaping jaws.

Soon, I knew, they would be sated with meat and the wild Scots whisky, and then their murderous bloodshot eyes would turn on me, their dirks would flash out from the scabbards and they would fall upon me and hack me to pieces. So I was ready!

THE signal was given almost before I could set myself, but I leaped away from the table and cried: "Queen Boadellen

—give me your powers!” before the first cateran had snatched his blade from his belt.

As by magic the room burst into crackling flame as the copper-armored army of the Borderland capered about, touching the men lightly, forming a chain of flashing power between me and the men who would murder me.

The murderous clansmen found themselves struggling in the grip of a force they could not see. Only to me were the hosts of the Underworld visible, laughter gleaming from their faces as they spun and flew among the MacGreggans. And every man they touched twisted in agony, their mouths flying open with pain and their eyeballs bursting in their heads, while their bodies seemed to discharge a horrid smell of burning flesh, and the steam that rose from them was a sickening smell in the air. I could see them burning to death before me, their dirks flashing sparks as they strove to throw them away.

In all this Gregor MacGreggan stood as if turned to stone!

Suddenly he began to scream as the sight of the dying men broke his spell of horror. “In the name of——” he began, but a sprite flew near him and his hand flew to his scorched lips, and I laughed madly at the sight of his fear-struck face.

“Now!” I yelled above the noise. “Now, MacGreggan—it is Malcolm Dhu Glas you are dealing with! It is the last of the clan—the clan you hoped had been lost forever! You—and all with you—prepare for your fate!”

There was a great roar outside, and the surge of hundreds of maddened clansmen beat open the great door. But at the sight and the smell that met them they recoiled, their eyes filled with terror, and turning about saw the glen begin to fill with shadowy shapes, while above them, where the hills meet, the air was filled with flame that leapt from peak to peak, thunder

rolled in the sky and the earth buckled beneath them.

“Send my father—send my uncle—send my brothers—O Queen Boadellen!” I cried, and there was a great scream of fear from the crowd at the awful sight of my dead family coming in great jumps down the hillside, their wounds gaping open, my uncle’s ghastly head erect with its single gleaming eye. . . .

With a leap I tore down the claymores and threw them to the dead. My father grasped his. My uncle gripped the metal basket-hilt of his own weapon. I recovered my jeweled sword and with fury and wildness, dead and living eyes gleaming in our faces, we fell upon MacGreggan and sliced him apart, his body falling in shivering pieces beneath the blades! On the points of the swords we carried him like food for dogs and threw him among his clansmen.

Now Hell opened up as Queen Boadellen’s hordes set in among the clansmen, sprites and gnomes tearing them with red-hot pincers, the army of copper soldiers spitting fire and flame, while great monsters set upon them with teeth and claws.

All over the glen there was a roaring and thundering such as no man had heard before and the earth shook and trembled. Smoke belched upward. Flames roared. Houses blew apart in a rain of hot stones. Thatches flared like torches and a great screaming and shrieking split the ear-drums as if all the banshees in Hell were loose.

In less time than it takes to tell, the Clan MacGreggan was no more. Not a living soul remained of that once flourishing family whose black deeds were a byword in the land. The hillsides were covered with them as our own glen had been covered with our dead clansmen.

And amid the ruins I danced in berserk glee!

Vanished were my servants and gone was my handsome carriage. Into whatever home they had earned by their release the spirits

of my kinsmen were sped. I was alone, a mad wild thing dancing on the grave of the MacGreggans as night cast its veil upon the awful scene.

AS I walked back to my own glen, the great claymore I clutched in my hand became the old scarred blade I had worn before I met Queen Boadellen. Once again I was clad in my old tattered kilt and furred doublet. The wild eagles' feathers were still in my hair and my feet were clad in lambskin brogans tied with rough leathern thongs.

At the brow of the hill, as I saw the glen before me, I felt it would be different.

And so it was. The village was back again as it had been in the days of my father. The flowers were blooming on the

mountainside and bluebells nodded in the forest. Dark are the waters of Loch Dhu, but now the sky was pearly blue and the waters smiled a welcome to me.

The hills were covered with green grass, and except for the deep scars on the hillside which would always be there to remind me of our vanished name, everything was as it had been before the Clan MacGreggan came over the pass in the snow, shrouded like ghosts, with claymores, dirks and Lochaber axes to murder my people.

Do not believe those who will say I am mad and that I dreamed all this; nor those who will tell you that a great volcanic eruption visited the Glen Dhronna and killed every living soul in it. I know what happened—for I was seven years with Queen Boadellen in the Borderland—and I have the power to move the world!