

The Heritage of Macian.

IAN MACIAN was not a fighting man. His home folk remembered him as a quiet, shy boy who preferred books above playmates, and, despite the carrot-coloured hair that earned for him the nickname "Reddy," could seldom be provoked to fighting pitch. As the boy had been in the eyrie of the Macians above the Pass of Brander in far-off Lorne, so was the man who lived alone on his half-section in the poplar-covered valley above Invermay.

It is a far cry from Lochawe to Northern Saskatchewan, but Macian, the homesteader, was in no essential different in his new environment from the lad of nineteen who had left his native land to seek beyond the seas the home that had ceased to be his on the death of his father.

The elder Macian, had been drowned by a mortgage which, increasing year by year as he pledged his patrimony for the necessities of life, had finally swamped his spirit, and made existence less desirable than a place in the family vault. He, too, like "Reddy," had been a book-lover. He had cared little for human companionship, and looked upon his only son with the eye of resentment rather than of paternal affection, remembering that in giving Ian life the lad's mother had crossed while but a girl to the land of shadows.

When the vault had closed upon his father, and the notice of foreclosure had been posted on the door of the keep of Strathian, the young laird gathered together his chief treasures, and took ship for the land of promise in the West. That, in a word, was why on a never-to-be-forgotten day of August, 1914, "Red" Ian Macian was cutting meadow hay down on the river edge, while in a rudely-fashioned shack on the nearby bluff a fine old bookcase, filled with calf-bound quartos that would have been a joy to any book-lover, occupied the whole of one wall. Over against it, standing out in bright relief upon the green burlap that covered the timbers, was a brightly-burnished claymore, and, tied to the basket handle, a faded sprig of white heather.

There was no woman in Macian's life, nor was the voice of ambition prompting him to seek fame and fortune. The great news of Europe ablaze and of liberty endangered had left him cold. He was more concerned in saving the meadow-hay for his stock than in saving the British Empire, which was in no danger, so he argued with himself as he plied his scythe. An unquiet conscience had been lulled to sleep, and seemed likely to give little trouble, when Macian returned to his shack. As he entered it the rays of the western sun struck full upon the blade of the claymore till it shone like the flaming sword of Holy Writ that stood

between the first transgressors and the Paradise they had lost.

Macian's conscience leapt to life. The honour of his house had been as untarnished as the weapon that was his heritage from the past. Men such as he were needed.

If he refused to answer the call, he could never again look unashamed upon the blade that seemed to threaten him with its fiery, compelling glance. His great-grandfather had inherited it from an ancestor who had borne it at Culloiden and on the heights of Abraham, and had himself wielded it to good purpose with Wellington in the Peninsular. His grandfather had helped to avenge Cawnpore with it, and had kept it bright with his own hands till the day of his death. From a stricken field in far Afghanistan, where his father's elder brother had fallen face to the foe, a faithful clansman had sent it back to Strathians.

And now, meadow-hay meant more to the last of the Macians than the honour of the house and its sole remaining heritage. His mind in a tumult, Macian turned his eyes from the accusing blade to the book that he had left open when he went haying. It was Aristotle's "Ethics," one of the delights of the scholar's soul. The passage that met his eye flamed before him almost as menacingly as the sword of his fathers. This is what he read:—

"By acting in the various relations in which we are thrown with our fellow men we come to be, some just, some unjust; and by acting in dangerous positions, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we come to be, some brave, some cowards."

"Some cowards!" It felt like a blow. That was what men would call him when they saw the heritage of the Macians on the wall, and learned that he did not intend to use it. "Some just, some unjust"; "some brave, some cowards." The wise old Greek had not left a loophole for either the conscientious objector or the man with meadow hay to cut.

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I think what has already been written furnishes ample explanation for the presence of a copy of Aristotle's "Ethics" in a certain mess, of a sprig of white heather on the wall of a billet on the Lens front, and of a claymore, somewhat longer than the regulation pattern, in the equipment of a red-haired young officer of a Western kilted battalion. I hope that his neighbours will see to it that nobody "jumps" the young laird's homestead, while he bears once more in battle the heritage of the Macians.

"LEO."