

his anguish became an unbearable fever. When the woods were black and night had seized upon the topmost hill, he crept out surreptitiously, leaning on his staff, and hirpling to the front looked down on the lights effusively welcoming another to his home, the home of his fathers for untold generations, the home taken from him by rapine and chicanery. And as he gazed, the set of the wind being towards him, there was borne to his ears the sound of cheering. They had come, the usurpers had come, and time-servers and lick-spittles were shouting in their honour. Janet, who had seen him go forth and lurked behind in the shadows, lest, as she explained to Ian, he might be tempted "to put a hand on himself" in that moment of agony, Janet watching stealthily while she held her breath in terror, averred she distinctly heard a groan. Possibly she was right; for the laird fancied himself alone, and was suffering mortally. But if so, the groaning mood must have passed instantly. For the next moment Janet's heart stopped as she saw him drop by the rocky parapet and turn his face to the sky.

"I thought that maybe he had found grace," she afterwards related; "that the waters of bitterness and the bread of affliction made him know his own weakness. But understanding of weakness was never the way of the MacLeans. He prayed, ay, he prayed; but his words, mercy on us that mouth of man should utter them! 'Oh, Lord,' he cried—and ye never heard such pleading from a minister in yer life, for it was burning hot from the heart of him—'Oh, Lord, as Thou art strong and lovest justice, help me to be avenged.' There was more," added Janet, "but I was too feared to listen, for he was uncanny, and I just boltit in by dreepin' with cold sweat."

Thus from his craggy retreat the dispossessed witnessed the triumphal arrival of the new master of Dunveagle.