

Shaun and his Rapparees. The shades of evening gathered swiftly round, and pine torches were produced, their light shedding a weird halo around. Suddenly a shout rang through the air and at the sound the troop halted. Again it was repeated, and the next moment, unmindful of the hurried challenge of the men, no less a person than Cormac MacCormac, dashed into their midst. And such a woeful sight as he was. Covered with blood, his features distorted, his clothing in rags, and a pike blade in his hand, all showed that he had passed through some terrible struggle. Muttering something unintelligible he sank to the ground exhausted, and for many minutes could not answer the anxious queries of the men.

"Place him on a spare steed," commanded the chief in a husky voice, "then let him tell his tale when he recovers himself. We cannot wait. Already the moon has shown her fair face, and ere she disappears Clancrone castle must fall."

When his commands were complied with the troop sped on. I will relate the cause of Cormac's appearance and exhaustion at that time and place.

On the morning of the day as Cormac was about departing to his labor in the fields, he saw a body of Saxon soldiers approaching the village. Determined to see what they wanted, he hastily gathered all the men of the village together, and waited the arrival of the strangers. The troops dashed into the village and halted. The captain dismounted and announced that he had come to search for a rebel, no less a person than the noted Shaun, who was known to have been harbored in the village. In vain the men protested—they were not listened to, and the soldiers set about the work with a combination of alacrity, relish and cruelty horrible to witness. From house to house they went, and followed by the peasants with lowering brows and fury-flashing eyes. They found no rebel and as they were near the finish, angry at their want of success, they became more cruel and insolent. Articles of furniture were broken, children cursed, women insulted, and yet not a finger was moved against them. The last house was yet to search and in one of the

houses lay a paralytic old woman. She was rudely hidden by one of the soldiers to get up. Not obeying, and in spite of all remonstrance they actually dragged her from the bed and threw her on the floor. That was enough. The long pent-up anger of the peasantry burst forth and with fierce cries they threw themselves on the demons, only to be driven the next instant into the road at the mercy of a hundred troopers.

"Slay them all, women and children and give the rebel den to the flames," were the captain's orders. And well were they executed. The men of the village were all, after a fierce struggle, cut down; save Cormac alone. He was stunned by a blow in the first of the fight and lay for three hours in a swoon under the bodies of his neighbors. The women and children were all slaughtered unmercifully and the village given to the flames. Then they rode away, little knowing what was in store for them. When Cormac came to himself, he dragged his body from underneath the dead, and crawling to a brook—the village brook—on whose banks many a child had but the day before gambled and many a maiden had sung sweet lays—he assuaged his thirst and bathed his head and then started for the mountains; but, as we have seen, he came across the Rapparees in the wood. When they heard from Cormac's lips the dire tale, they turned with one accord to their chief, for his opinion. "Speed on, speed on," was all he said, "the fox is trapped at last." Ominous words!

Now, oh, Saxon lord! prepare thyself. Gird on thy sword and call thy bravest forth: the O'Duoyanna of the Hills, with the gathered, festering wrath of twenty years in his bosom, is coming swift and sure upon thee.

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Loud and joyous rings the laughter from the banqueting hall of Clancrone castle. Many men of merry minds were there, quaffing the rich wine and enjoying immensely each others occasional *bon mots*. Deeper they drank and louder they laughed, till up arose the host with courtly smile and filling up his glass, thus spoke: "Noble sirs and gentlemen, I give the first and best toast of this festive evening, 'Our Gracious Monarch, long may he reign, and may his enemies