

*The Prayer of Hugh MacEagan*

IVOR MACCREGAN, '07.

HERE was a sore wind blowing in the land, and the trees swayed and trembled as in pain. A gray pall of fog hung low over the rain-drenched fields, where the earth still showed raw and brown on the grave of the hundred dead. The starveling herds shivered as they drew together, though there was no cold, while close at hand the Rath stood gaunt and silent in its own shadow.

Hugh MacEagan sat in the hall of his fathers and the fear of death was in his heart. And it was not for him to know fear, for he was son of Conor, a Breton of Ireland, yet the soul of him was troubled, and he could not hide it.

There were none near him, and the fire threw its changeful shadow on his face. From the tapestry of the Arras, Cuculainn, the hero, looked down and the eyes of him had no rest in them, but were as though they sought for something and found it not. And Hugh knew that the eyes of Cuculainn were upon him. And in the shadows around him he saw the faces of Cormac MacArt's son who died for a high word spoken in jest, and of Dairmid and all who died through hate since Concotac Mac Nessa ruled in Ireland. And their wounds were as it had been yesterday. And the beating rain was the voice of them, though it was muffled as with grave clothes. And it whispered strangely of the sorrow and the terror and the pain of all the world. And as he listened Hugh saw in his own face the face of his father as he had lain silent, with his mother wailing at his knees.

A dog scratched whimpering at the door, and he knew it was Halag, the wolf-hound, and the fear drove him. And Hugh shuddered as he listened, yet he moved not, for his limbs were heavy and the terror lay cold upon his heart. Only the firelight flickered on the book that was in his hand. There was a cry in the wind, and the faces of the dead grew glad as with a new joy. But Hugh could not catch the words of it, for his ears were dull and his eyes were on the dead. It came again, and it was as though a ripple of stifled laughter had swept through the room, yet the faces of the dead changed not, only they touched