

**MACLEOD OF  
DARE: A NOVEL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649641291

Macleod of Dare: A Novel by William Black

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**WILLIAM BLACK**

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DARE: A NOVEL**





# MACLEOD OF DARE

A Novel

By WILLIAM BLACK

AUTHOR OF

"A PRINCESS OF THULE" "THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A PHAETON"  
"A DAUGHTER OF HETH" "IN SILK ATTIRE" &c.

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NEW YORK  
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS  
FRANKLIN SQUARE

1879

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01-15-37 Jm

# MACLEOD OF DARE.

## CHAPTER I. THE SIX BOYS OF DARE.

THE sun had sunk behind the lonely western seas; Ulva, and Lunga, and the Dutchman's Cap had grown dark on the darkening waters; and the smooth Atlantic swell was booming along the sombre caves; but up here in Castle Dare, on the high and rocky coast of Mull, the great hall was lit with such a blaze of candles as Castle Dare had but rarely seen. And yet there did not seem to be any grand festivities going forward; for there were only three people seated at one end of the long and narrow table; and the banquet that the faithful Hamish had provided for them was of the most frugal kind. At the head of the table sat an old lady with silvery-white hair and proud and fine features. It would have been a keen and haughty face but for the unutterable sadness of the eyes—blue-gray eyes under black eyelashes that must have been beautiful enough in her youth, but were now dimmed and worn, as if the weight of the world's sorrow had been too much for the proud, high spirit. On the right of Lady Macleod sat the last of her six sons, Keith by name, a tall, sparely built, sinewy young fellow, with a sun-tanned cheek and crisp and curling hair, and with a happy and careless look in his clear eyes and about his mouth that rather blinded one to the firm lines of his face. Glad youth shone there, and the health begotten of hard exposure to wind and weather. What was life to him but a laugh: so long as there was a prow to cleave the plunging seas, and a glass to pick out the branching antlers far away amid the mists of the corrie? To please his mother, on this the last night of his being at home, he wore the kilts; and he had hung his broad blue bonnet, with its sprig of juniper—the badge of the clan—on the top of one of the many pikes and halberds that stood by the great fire-place. Opposite him, on the old lady's left hand, sat his cousin, or rather half-cousin, the plain-featured but large-hearted Janet, whom the poor people about that neighborhood regarded as being something more

than any mere mortal woman. If there had been any young artist among that Celtic peasantry fired by religious enthusiasm to paint the face of a Madonna, it would have been the plain features of Janet Macleod he would have dreamed about and striven to transfer to his canvas. Her eyes were fine, it is true: they were honest and tender; they were not unlike the eyes of the grand old lady who sat at the head of the table; but, unlike hers, they were not weighted with the sorrow of years.

"It is a dark hour you have chosen to go away from your home," said the mother; and the lean hand, resting on the table before her, trembled somewhat.

"Why, mother," the young man said, lightly, "you know I am to have Captain ——'s cabin as far as Greenock; and there will be plenty of time for me to put the kilts away before I am seen by the people."

"Oh, Keith," his cousin cried—for she was trying to be very cheerful, too, "do you say that you are ashamed of the tartan?"

"Ashamed of the tartan!" he said, with a laugh. "Is there any one who has been brought up at Dare who is likely to be ashamed of the tartan? When I am ashamed of the tartan I will put a pigeon's feather in my cap, as the new *snaicheantas* of this branch of Clann Leoid. But then, my good Janet, I would as soon think of taking my rifle and the dogs through the streets of London as of wearing the kilts in the south."

The old lady said no heed. Her hands were now clasped before her. There was sad thinking in her eyes.

"You are the last of my six boys," said she, "and you are going away from me too."

"Now, now, mother," said he, "you must not make so much of a holiday. You would not have me always at Dare? You know that no good comes of a stay-at-home."

She knew the proverb. Her other sons had not been stay-at-homes. What had come to them?

Of Sholto, the eldest, the traveller, the dare-devil, the grave is unknown; but the story of how he met his death, in far Ari-



zona, came years after to England and to Castle Dare. He sold his life dearly, as became one of his race and name. When his cowardly attendants found a band of twenty Apaches riding down on them, they unhitched the mules and galloped off, leaving him to confront the savages by himself. One of these, more courageous than his fellows, advanced and drew his arrow to the barb; the next second he uttered a yell, and rolled from his saddle to the ground, shot through the heart. Macleod seized this instant, when the savages were terror-stricken by the precision of the white man's weapons, to retreat a few yards and get behind a mesquit-tree. Here he was pretty well sheltered from the arrows that they sent in clouds about him, while he succeeded in killing other two of his enemies who had ventured to approach. At last they rode off; and it seemed as though he would be permitted to rejoin his dastardly comrades. But the Indians had only gone to windward to set the tall grass on fire; and presently he had to scramble, burned and blinded, up the tree, where he was an easy mark for their arrows. Fortunately, when he fell he was dead. This was the story told by some friendly Indians to a party of white men, and subsequently brought home to Castle Dare.

The next four of the sons of Dare were soldiers, as most of the Macleods of that family had been. And if you ask about the graves of Roderick and Ronald, what is one to say! They are known, and yet unknown. The two lads were in one of the Highland regiments that served in the Crimea. They both lie buried on the bleak plains outside Sevastopol. And if the memorial stones put up to them and their brother officers are falling into ruin and decay—if the very graves have been rifled—how is England to help that! England is the poorest country in the world. There was a talk some two or three years ago of putting up a monument on Cathcart Hill to the Englishmen who died in the Crimea; and that at least would have been some token of remembrance, even if we could not collect the scattered remains of our slain sons, as the French have done. But then that monument would have cost £5000. How could England afford £5000! When a big American city takes fire, or when a district in France is inundated, she can put her hand into her pocket deeply enough; but how can we expect so proud a mother to think twice about her children who perished in fighting for her! Happily the dead are independent of forgetfulness.

Duncan the Fair-haired—Donacha Ban, they called him, far and wide among the hills—lies buried in a jungle on the African coast. He was only twenty-three when he was killed; but he knew he had got the

Victoria Cross. As he lay dying, he asked whether the people in England would send it to his mother, showing that his last fancies were still about Castle Dare.

And Hector! As you cross the river at Sadowa, and pass through a bit of forest, some corn fields begin to appear, and these stretch away up to the heights of Chlum. Along the ridge there, by the side of the wood, are many mounds of earth. Over the grave of Hector Macleod is no proud and pathetic inscription such as marks the last resting-place of a young lieutenant who perished at Gravelotte—*Er ruht sanft in wiedererlöbender deutscher Erde*—but the young Highland officer was well beloved by his comrades, and when the dead were being pitched into the great holes dug for them, and when rude hands were preparing the simple record, painted on a wooden cross—*“Hier liegen—tapfere Krieger”*—a separate memento was placed over the grave of Under-Lieutenant Hector Macleod of the —th Imperial and Royal Cavalry Regiment. He was one of the two sons who had not inherited the title. Was it not a proud boast for this white-haired lady in Mull that she had been the mother of four baronets! What other mother in all the land could say as much! And yet it was that that had dimmed and saddened the beautiful eyes.

And now her youngest—her Benjamin, her best-beloved—he was going away from her too. It was not enough that the big deer forest, the last of the possessions of the Macleods of Dare, had been kept intact for him, when the letting of it to a rich Englishman would greatly have helped the failing fortunes of the family; it was not enough that the poor people about, knowing Lady Macleod's wishes, had no thought of keeping a salmon spear hidden in the thatch of their cottages. Salmon and stag could no longer bind him to the place. The young blood stirred. And when he asked her what good thing came of being a stay-at-home, what could she say!

Suddenly old Hamish threw wide the oak-wood doors at the end of the hall, and there was a low roar like the roaring of lions. And then a young lad, with the pipes proudly perched on his shoulder, marched in with a stately step, and joyous and shrill arose the Salute. Three times he marched round the long and narrow hall, finishing behind Keith Macleod's chair. The young man turned to him.

“It was well played, Donald,” said he, in the Gaelic; “and I will tell you that the Skye College in the old times never turned out a better pupil. And will you take a glass of whiskey now, or a glass of claret! And it is a great pity your hair is red, or they would call you Donull Dubh, and people would say you were the born successor of the last of the MacCruimins.”

At this praise—imagine telling a piper lad that he was a fit successor of the Mac-Crummins, the hereditary pipers of the Macleods—the young stripling blushed hot; but he did not forget his professional dignity for all that. And he was so proud of his good English that he replied in that tongue.

"I will take a glass of the claret wine, Sir Keith," said he.

Young Macleod took up a horn tumbler, rimmed with silver, and having the triple-towered castle of the Macleods engraved on it, and filled it with wine. He handed it to the lad.

"I drink your health, Lady Macleod," said he, when he had removed his cap; "and I drink your health, Miss Macleod; and I drink your health, Sir Keith; and I would have a lighter heart this night if I was going with you away to England."

It was a bold demand.

"I can not take you with me, Donald; the Macleods have got out of the way of taking their piper with them now. You must stay and look after the dogs."

"But you are taking Oscar with you, Sir Keith."

"Yes, I am. I must make sure of having one friend with me in the south."

"And I think I would be better than a collie," muttered the lad to himself, as he moved off in a proud and hurt way toward the door, his cap still in his hand.

And now a great silence fell over these three; and Janet Macleod looked anxiously toward the old lady, who sat unmoved in the face of the ordeal through which she knew she must pass. It was an old custom that each night a pibroch should be played in Castle Dare in remembrance of her five slain sons; and yet on this one night her niece would fain have seen that custom abandoned. For was not the pibroch the famous and pathetic "Cumbadh na Cloinne," the Lament for the Children, that Patrick Mòr, one of the pipers of Macleod of Skye, had composed to the memory of his seven sons, who had all died within one year? And now the doors were opened, and the piper boy once more entered. The wild, sad wail arose; and slow and solemn was the step with which he walked up the hall. Lady Macleod sat calm and erect, her lips proud and firm, but her lean hands were working nervously together; and at last, when the doors were closed on the slow and stately and mournful Lament for the Children, she bent down the silvery head on those wrinkled hands and wept aloud. Patrick Mòr's seven brave sons could have been no more to him than her six tall lads had been to her; and now the last of them was going away from her.

"Do you know," said Janet, quickly, to her cousin across the table, "that it is said

no piper in the West Highlands can play 'Lord Lovat's Lament' like our Donald?"

"Oh yes, he plays it very well; and he has got a good step," Macleod said. "But you will tell him to play no more Laments to-night. Let him take to strathspeys if any of the lads come up after bringing back the boat. It will be time enough for him to make a Lament for me when I am dead. Come, mother, have you no message for Norman Ogilvie?"

The old lady had nerved herself again, though her hands were still trembling.

"I hope he will come back with you, Keith," she said.

"For the shooting? No, no, mother. He was not fit for the shooting about here: I have seen that long ago. Do you think he could lie for an hour in a wet bog? It was up at Fort William I saw him last year, and I said to him, 'Do you wear gloves at Aldershot?' His hands were as white as the hands of a woman."

"It is no woman's hand you have, Keith," his cousin said; "it is a soldier's hand."

"Yes," said he, with his face flushing, "and if I had had Norman Ogilvie's chance—"

But he paused. Could he reproach this old dame, on the very night of his departure, with having disappointed all those dreams of military service and glory that are almost the natural inheritance of a Macleod of the Western Highlands? If he was a stay-at-home, at least his hands were not white. And yet, when young Ogilvie and he studied under the same tutor—the poor man had to travel eighteen miles between the two houses, many a time in hard weather—all the talk and aspirations of the boys were about a soldier's life; and Macleod could show his friend the various trophies and curiosities sent home by his elder brothers from all parts of the world. And now the lily-fingered and gentle-natured Ogilvie was at Aldershot; while he—what else was he than a mere deer-stalker and salmon-killer?

"Ogilvie has been very kind to me, mother," he said, laughing. "He has sent me a list of places in London where I am to get my clothes, and boots, and a hat; and by the time I have done that, he will be up from Aldershot, and will lead me about—with a string round my neck, I suppose, lest I should bite somebody."

"You could not go better to London than in your own tartan," said the proud mother; "and it is not for an Ogilvie to say how a Macleod shall be dressed. But it is no matter. One after the other has gone; the house is left empty at last. And they all went away like you, with a laugh on their face. It was but a trip, a holiday, they said; they would soon be back to Dare. And where are they this night?"

Old Hamish came in.

"It will be time for the boat now, Sir Keith, and the men are down at the shore."

He rose—the handsome young fellow—and took his broad blue bonnet with the badge of juniper.

She took no heed of the passing jest. He kissed her, and bade her good-by once more. The clear stars were shining over Castle Dare, and over the black shadows of the mountains, and the smoothly swelling wa-



"GOOD-BY, MOTHER."

"Good-by, Cousin Janet," said he, lightly. "Good-by, mother. You are not going to send me away in this sad fashion? What am I to bring you back—a satin gown from Paris? or a young bride to cheer up the old house?"

ters of the Atlantic. There was a dull booming of the waves along the rocks.

He had thrown his plaid around him, and he was wondering to himself as he descended the steep path to the shore. He could not believe that the two women were really