

The Complete Crockett

The Galloway Raiders

digital edition

Scottish works



MAD SIR UCHTRED
of the hills

S.R.CROCKETT

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

First published in serial form in 'St James' Magazine', 1894 and in book form by T.Fisher Unwin in 1894

This Galloway Raiders digital edition published in 2021 is part of a decade long project (2012-2022) to bring the works of Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914) together in one place. The Complete Crockett comprises 66 published works, re-edited and re-formatted by volunteer labour to the highest standard.

Apart from the introduction, this work is in the public domain so please feel free to share it around. If you wish to quote from any material written by Cally Phillips please acknowledge and/or send a courtesy email to gallowayraiders@unco.scot

Other formats may be available from Galloway Raiders. As of 2021 you can find out more via the following web addresses:

www.gallowayraiders.co.uk

www.srcrockett.weebly.com

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

INTRODUCTION

'Striking and original... This little story shows originality and imagination... it is a gruesome picture, vigorous and forcible.'

Mad Sir Uchtred is short but shocking. It is Gothic horror removed to Covenanting times. The story first appeared as a three part serial and it caused something of a bloodbath in literary circles. Crockett was developing a 'new' style of historical adventure romance, so it is perhaps not surprising that there was an old guard who couldn't accept that fictionalising history was not a crime, and who were uncomfortable with 'history' being used in popular fiction, designed for the mass market.

It is amazing, perhaps even incomprehensible to the modern reader, that such a slight story should cause so much fuss. After all it is, at least on the surface, a simple adaptation of a Biblical story. The basics revolve around Sir Uchtred, who has the curse of Nebuchadnezzar laid on him by Alexander Renfield, minister of Kirkchrist, as a consequence of his Jacobite leanings and his bloody deeds against the Covenanters.

However, there is much more to this story. It is riven through with symbolism: the popinjay, the wounded white mountain hare, and the very curse of Nebuchadnezzaar contain enough allow for a very deep reading. It is certainly possible to read the story as a vision of Scotland (both in Covenanting times, in Crockett's time and in our own contemporary Scotland.)

For me, the question of whether the minister has the right to curse is perhaps more of the issue than

whether he is capable of achieving such a miracle. Is Renfield really right in placing himself in the role of God with regard to Uchtred, even given the ‘crimes’ the latter has committed? Throughout, I cannot help but maintain some level of sympathy (perhaps empathy would be a step too far) with Sir Uchtred. After all, his brother is trying to steal his wife.

I suggest that through the characters, Crockett shows a microcosm of the ills of a country divided by religion. No side is without blame and it seems that revenge will not achieve anything but more bloodshed. Instead, the honesty of a true wife and the unconditional love of the innocent child are what will bring about reconciliation and lift ‘the curse.’

The story revels in a classic Scottish fictional conceit: that of duality, of the doppelganger. Here it is represented in the brother against brother theme. It is certain that none of the men in the story cover themselves in glory, to my mind not even the minister, Renfield.

A religious reading is certainly possible, a political one equally so, but even without this it is a striking and alarming read. Crockett said that the story came to him in a dream and certainly there is something chaotically and creatively familiar to Coleridge’s ‘dream’ poem *Kubla Kahn*. But Crockett’s story seems to be more of a nightmare than a dream.

While the story caused something of an outrage for its bloodthirstiness and lurid descriptions of degeneracy, it also raised charges of plagiarism. Crockett was accused of misappropriating a ‘real’ historic Covenanter in the person of McDowall of Garthland and of fostering historical ‘inaccuracy’ surrounding Covenanting ‘miracles.’ In the process

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

he fell foul of writer/historian Andrew Lang and writer/reviewer William Wallace. I contend that he was trying something experimental and challenging and critics failed to understand the significance of the work.

Given the distance of hindsight it is hard to tell how much the emergent dispute over the story was one of jealousy and personal enmity, how much generated by confusion and how much it was manufactured to sell copy. Either way, in some sense Crockett had arrived as a writer when he became subject to charges of plagiarism. As his friend and contemporary author J.M. Barrie pointed out: *'I never wrote a book yet but some one found out that I had taken the whole of it from somebody of whose existence I had never heard.'* Barrie is sanguine about the charges, but notes that while it is one thing for an established writer, such charges can ruin the reputation of an author just coming into the public notice, as Crockett was. Happily, despite on-going rumblings, Crockett kept writing, and his reputation at least in his own day, was not greatly dented.

In the 1894 T. Fisher Unwin edition Crockett adds an 'Advertisement' which in part answers some of the contemporary furore. In doing so he also offers us a tongue in cheek picture of himself as a writer.

Reading *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills* without seeing the humour carefully placed inside, is to miss part of the experience. Crockett uses one of his favourite ploys of embedding the narrator (and himself as narrator) into the story, offering a humorous level of reflection on the overblown

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

events. Once the reader notices this, they can perhaps understand the aims of the writer.

It is all too easy to overlook this as a slight story, playing to the excesses of the Gothic sensationalism which was prevalent in late nineteenth century. But by placing *Mad Sir Uchtred* in context of Crockett's other work, one can see in this early work, many of his trademark stylistic features; from that of the theme that constancy in love is the most important thing in life, to the exquisite natural description and the ironic, dry, couthy humour which works its way through both 'ordinary' characters, as well as the interaction of the narrator (disguising the author?) with the action. It also shows his version of muscular Christianity and his refusal to shy away from socio-political issues.

Quickly read but hard to forget *Mad Sir Uchtred* grips you from the beginning and hurls you along to the end. You can read it in a sitting which is just as well because you will most likely be unable to put it down once you've started. And that's surely the mark of a good story and a good storyteller.

Cally Phillips

‘ADVERTISEMENT’

He that tells the tale bears witness that the hereafter to be mentioned Sir Uchtred of Garthland is not that William Mac Dowall of Garthland in the parish of Stoney Kirk, who was a most constant and serious professor and defender of the Covenants National and Solemn League, and several times at mairket to the spoiling of his goods by David Graham, sometime Sheriff of Wigtown. The kindly reader will take carefully this advertisement, both for truth's sake, and still more, that the tale teller may dwell at peace in his own land, where men have long memories, and one may not speak hastily of another man's kin. So all shall be well.

CHAPTER ONE

NEBUCHADNEZZAR ON CLASHDAAN

Mad Sir Uchtred of Garthland sat in the place that is called the Hass of the Wolf's Slock. It lies on the hoary side of Clashdaan, whence all the Dungeon of Buchan is seen to swim beneath like a blue cauldron shot with the silver threads of still and sleeping waters.

They had hunted him with dogs that day. He was no longer Sir Uchtred of Garthland, but only the beast-man of the hills, accursed of God, outcast of man, and the quarry of the hunters.

Had you asked Wild Sir Uchtred himself who he was, and if in that moment he had not flown at your throat, he might have said, 'I am that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom God hath driven forth to be a beast of the field.'

But Uchtred the Wild Man spake not so. He only sat on the side of Clashdaan, and laughed, thrusting forward his shaggy head to look over the cliff, as an eagle cranes his neck to watch the strifes of kites and crows far below his eyrie. Uchtred the Wild Man smote his thigh and laughed, a strange cackle of elricht laughter which made the blood of men run cold when they listened to it unawares. It was not a good thing to hear the maniac thing laugh on the hillside all alone... Yet time had been when Sir Uchtred of Garthland was a belted knight and stood at the King's knee. Nay, in the day of little David Crookback, his father had risen against his King with fifty stout Dowalls of Garthland and MacCullochs of Myrtoun behind him.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

But in the day of Scotland's skaith Uchtred of Garthland forgot the blessed Covenants that his father had sworn. It was a common thing to forget them in those days. Kings set the example. But God so ordained it that none forgot them and prospered. Now Uchtred of Garthland was worse than any — except only crafty Lauderdale the Fox, who sat in the Chamber of Stars and hissed the hell-hounds on. So now the Man Beast sat in the Hass of the Wolf's Slock.

The Thing that laughed at the baffled hunters on the Clints of Clashdaan had wife and bonny bairns but three years ago; and my lady of Garthland sat in the tower by the waterside and wept for Uchtred, whom a just God had cast out of his regality. This was how the matter came to pass.

It was the time of shutting kirks and testing ministers, and Garthland, with the earl's coronet before him, abjured the Covenants as though he had never sworn them, and set himself with all his men to do the King's will. About Whitehall and Hampton Court the King was merry among his lemans, and in Scotland so also was Garthland among the Whiggamores of the west. To each man his work and his desire.

But God over all. And that is the way Sir Uchtred sat on Clashdaan.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WATERFLY

Fair place when in the morning the sun shines is the Italianate Terrace at Garthland. Sir Uchtred had newly planted it about with dwarfish foreign trees when he brought home from out of the French convent his young and gently bred wife, Philippa. Among the rude Dowalls nothing so strange and rare as Philippa Forrester had ever been seen. The simplest thing that she put on became her like the Queen's coronation robe, and she wore it with a difference. At every weapon-shawing she bore the palm. And the men waited on her, louting low at all the kirk doors, while Sir Uchtred scowled at them proudly and securely from beneath his bent brows.

For Uchtred had won her love, a thing which is none so common with young convent-bred brides. By many a long Scots mile he was the best man, as men in their war gear measure goodness, in all the sherrifdom of Wigtoun, and the eyes of Philippa his wife told him so. To each gentle Agnew, handsome Maxwell, hectoring Kennedy, and Stewart with the sprig in his cap, this convent-bred lass gave the back of her hand when they bent over her saddle leather.

But one only kept on wearying her with the slow persistence of his wooing, and he even the nearest of kin to her husband, Randolph Dowall, half brother of Sir Uchtred. Randolph, though half a dozen of years younger than his brother, had been in France with the King in the clays when his most Sacred Majesty spent much time writing promises to the

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

well affected, who would be likely to send him either money or gear. Then Randolph, being but a boy, had ruffled it with the best among the press at St. Germain, and worn the King's shoulder knot. But Sir Uchtred had dipped his sword red at a time when the King found small comfort in shoulder knots.

Yet Randolph, being brought up in the French manner, believed that he had but to swing his curled hat feather, and mince upon his toes as he walked, in order to win a lady's favour. But Philippa Dowall had begun to teach him better of it. They paced the terrace together, and twice in every turn they passed under the eyes of Sir Uchtred, where he sat gloomily apart in his own little chamber, at times busking his war gear, and by whiles reading in a new book by the Duke of Lauderdale, his chaplain, called 'The Spirit of Popery,' which pleased him much.

As well almost as though he had heard their words as they walked the terrace, Sir Uchtred knew what was being said. Yet he was not at all jealous of his wife, knowing that to him no least cause was given, for her heart was wholly his, and her honour all her own. As she went by she sometimes flouted him with a gay hand, and bade him come out and join them for a lazy drone.

But, all the same, a slow fire burned in his heart against his brother, who thus flaunted it in silken bravery by his lady's side. Yet he it was who so liberally supplied Randolph with money to send to Paris for the gawdy attire of silk and lace which so well set off his fair head and slim body. Sir Uchtred was willing that his brother should break his fool's heart against his wife's will; but, deep within him,

he hated his brother, and meant one day to take his life. In the meantime, however, he sat within and read the precious doctrine of Doctor George Hickee, and laughed as he read, for they were words that pleased him well.

Without on the terrace the talk went merrily, for, being convent-bred, Philippa had skill in her words, and also much delight in them.

She mocked gaily at Randolph and his fervent protestations, shaking the while a little spray of May blossom in her hand, from which the small milky petals, a little over-ripe, shed themselves fragrantly as she walked. Randolph Dowall bethought him that he had never seen anything so fair, and sighed as he passed his hand through his scented love-locks, wondering if ever in the way of love he should win to touch her hand.

And Sir Uchtred watched him keenly, and because he was his brother, he knew all that was in his mind. Then he reached back his hand to where, swinging at the belt of his buff riding coat, his great basket-hilted sword hung. His hand gripped the sheath six inches from the point.

That, thought Sir Uchtred, grimly, were enough.

This is how they talked upon the Italianate Terrace without.

‘Go hence and scent thy ringlets, waterfly!’ scorned Philippa, flicking the branch of May blossom at the winking dandelions in the grass, ‘I have no need for the service of men-maids. But at Castle Stewart the lady complained to me on Sunday, after Mess John made an end of service, concerning the rudeness of her maidens. She hath need of the like of thee. Thou art not rude, waterfly!’

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

And as she spoke she laughed tinklingly in her throat, like water that runs over loose pebbles in a shallow place, mightily pretty to hear.

'Wherefore does it please you to be cruel, lady of my love?' said Randolph, trying to anger her with his words.

But she only laughed again merrily, till one heard the water of the beck laugh also in the sunshine for company. And in his study Sir Uchtred laughed, but otherwise, for his mirth made no sound.

"Lady of thy love," scoffed Philippa, 'hath a popinjay a love? Can a waterfly be amorous? I saw one only this morning, caressing his own silly crown, and smoothing down his shining wings. Is not that rather the way of the waterfly? No, Randolph, do not thou meddle with love-making, I pray thee. After all, that is a man's matter.'

'It pleases you to be witty, my lady,' replied Randolph, 'but know that hearts break under silken doublets as mine is breaking for you, for even a glinting waterfly may love — aye, and die of it too!'

CHAPTER THREE

A POPINJAY IN RED AND GREEN

At that Philippa Dowall's laughter pealed merrily, rising gaily-over the roof-trees of Garthland New Place.

'Uchtred,' she cried, 'old sobersides, come out, here is something better than books. Do you hear what says this brother of thine. He is a wit — a perfect pastrycook of dainty devices. His cakes be much to my taste.'

Sir Uchtred came to the window of his study, which stood open.

'What says my good brother? He has, indeed, a very pretty wit, albeit he wears it not often on me.'

'He says,' cried Philippa, making a pretty wilful mouth, 'that the waterflies in the meadow oft break their hearts all for the love of a lady. Then they fall into the river and the trout get them. So even I have seen them do. It is wonderfully observed. I had not known the reason heretofore, though in the convent I read of Dame Berners and her Angle.'

But Randolph kept his sulky silence, and twisted the lace of his sleeve between his fingers. The daintily mocking Philippa trilled upon her merry way, drolling with the idea, while Sir Uchtred stood with his finger between the slim vellum covers of Doctor Hikes and gloomed — well pleased with his wife, but hating his brother no whit less than if he had won all her heart from him.

'And a popinjay, methinks you said,' went on Philippa, 'a popinjay is a very love-sick fowl. Providence is wise, and made nothing in vain. So he

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

made the popinjay to be lovesick, for who can eat a popinjay? Or who desires twice to hear a popinjay sing? Or can a popinjay pull a string and fire a cannon like those golden birds of Fortune which the Italian with curled locks showed me at Holyrood?’

‘Nay,’ muttered Sir Uchtred, ‘nor yet can a popinjay, like the silly cuckoo, lay his egg in another bird's nest.’

‘I will buy you a popinjay, my lady Philippa, since you love them so,’ said Randolph, plucking up heart of grace, ‘a sailor at the Garlics hath one green and red.’

‘I pray you do not so,’ cried the lady Philippa, in gaily affected terror. ‘We cannot have two in the house, and already we have one in blue and yellow! A popinjay in green and red were too much mercy. We should lose distinction in our joys.’

Yet Randolph, since he could think on nothing better, went down to the Garlies, riding upon his well caparisoned horse, with the little silver rings clinking and jingling on his bridle reins. There by the tiny port he found the sailor, and of him he bought the popinjay, which stood in the sunlight upon a perch and screamed at the tattered bairns of the place, who called it ‘papish crow’ and other names of approbium.

For a piece of gold and a paper of the black Virginian herb which is beloved of sailors, Randolph acquired the bird and bore it screaming and chattering to Garthland on the brae.

‘And who would buy a popinjay To win a lady's love?’ chaunted Philippa of Garthland, as she saw Randolph come. And she called her husband out to admire.

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

Then when Uchtred had gone again within, his brother came to Philippa to offer the popinjay.

'I brought it for your bower,' said he. 'So gay a bird did but ill become the cabin of a tarry sailor.'

'Even as so gay a bird as the civer doth but ill beseem the New Place of Garthland. Why do not you go to the court where you might flaunt it to your liking? There be dames a many there who would give thee love for thy popinjays, good brother!' said Philippa, more seriously, speaking most like a tender elder sister.

'My court is where my Queen is!' replied Randolph, who was indeed a very pretty courtier.

'And I pray thee which Queen?' queried Philippa, softly, yet with a dangerous light in her fringed eyes.

'There is but one Queen for me in Garthland or elsewhere,' said Randolph Dowall, twirling his scented locks in the Italian manner, and letting his blue eyes court for him.

I woo her in the erlie's hall, I woo her in the byre;
In silks or simple cleading, She's the queen of
heart's desire!

This is the verse that the Lady of Garthland lilted gaily with the light of saucy scorn in her eyes. Yet was she not so safe as she thought — for it is ever dangerous, even in a good cause, to sit in the scorner's chair.

'Kate!' she called, raising her voice to reach her chamber lattice.

A waiting maid appeared — no limp handmaid of the courts of Whitehall, but a blowsed daughter of the moors. Yet was she not uncomely, save that her hands were coarsened with toil, but her teeth and her eyes glistened as she, the gypsy, smiled a smile even saucier than that of her mistress.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

'Kate,' cried the Lady of Garthland, 'do you love popinjays? Here is one for you with the love of the giver!'

'An' wha's the gi'er, an' wha's the braw wooer?' cried Kate Kennedy, in the broad speech of the place, and the clacking accent of the moors.

'Why, even Randolph of Garthland. He gives you his love and service, Kate. He has to spare of these. He finds queens on every berry bush!'

'Juist let him try it, I daur him to come near me!' cried Kate, stamping her foot, 'I'se e'en gie him what I gied him i' the byre yestreen.'

'And what was that?' queried her mistress, as one who knows beforehand.

'E'en a pair o' weel daudit lugs!' said Kate, with fire sparkling in her eyes.

'But he has brought you a gay popinjay, Kate. What say you to that?' laughed Philippa of Garthland, drolling with her eyes on Randolph, till the courtier blushed and swore softly under his breath. More he dared not, lest she should call forth Uchtred his brother, who sat at his window and read of Whig killings.

'See the popinjay your lover has brought you, Kate?' and she plucked lightly and roguishly at its gaudy tail, till the bird screamed with anger.

'Deil tak' him an' his bird baith,' cried Kate, 'I canna bide skraichin' parrots. They are the deil's birds.'

'An' what bird do you like, Kate?' queried her mistress.

'Deed,' replied Kate, with some fervour, 'I am partial maist o' a' to a guid clockin' hen.'

'But that is not a fine lover's gift like a popinjay,' said Philippa.

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

'Na, they hae'na that muckle sense,' quoth Kate Kennedy. 'They are but feckless folk — a silly clan, gowks run wud!'

Kate was a woman of experience in lovers.

'You hear, Master Randolph!' said Philippa, as Kate returned to her own domains in the kitchen wing of Garthland.

'Why are you so cruel?' asked Randolph, as they paced the terrace.

'Cruel! thou silly boy,' she answered, though she was younger far than he, 'I am not cruel to love when it is honest love. Love a maid, Randolph, and marry her as did your brother.'

'My brother,' Randolph scoffed, with a fleer of his hand — which, however, he had better have let alone, for from his window in the house of Garthland Uchtred saw and hated his brother with a still and deadly hatred — the hate that can let pass ninety-nine opportunities and kill at the hundredth.

'Aye, your brother,' said the loyal lady, 'think not that I am as the ladies of the court. I put not on a new love with each year's spring attiring. An such liketh you, there be plenty of them at Whitehall, who honestly love dishonestly. It is their boast. His sacred Majesty (whom may God save according to his need) hath heard of such. For me I like it better to bide in Garthland and teach the bairns their prayers.'

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CURSE OF ALEXANDER RENFIELD

It was a fine summer day in high June, when the orchards at Garthland were all a-flush with the blossom that brings the goodly fruit, and the leaves were very green. Sir Uchtred, who now stood for his King against all religions — he that had borne the silver cups when the tables were set white and fair in the house of the Lord — took horse and rode. Sixteen bold troopers of the King were at his back to do his will, ready to kill man and kiss maid in the King's name, as was rare sport in the country of the Whigs. But Randolph, his brother, abode at home and played with Pierce, son of Philippa and Uchtred, upon the Italianate Terrace. He taught the child to sit his horse like a man while his brother did the sterner work of his lord the King.

For they rode that day to turn out of his kirk and manse Alexander Renfield, the minister of Kirkchrist, whom the people loved. An hour afterwards, clattering in iron and bravery, Uchtred of Garthland turned his bridle and rode up the kirk loaning. As he came under the wall of the manse the lilac blossom hung overhead; and Uchtred, having sword in hand, in wantonness cut a branch of the scented blossom and caught it as it fell.

There was a great silence in the kirk as the men rode forward. A bronze-faced congregation sat listening to one who preached to them from an old black pulpit over which hung a sounding-board. Every man heard the trampling of the horses, yet none so much as turned his head about. The minister who preached was a little fair man, slender

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

and delicate. It seemed as though a breath of wind might blow him away. Yet he swayed the folks' hearts as the breath of God that blows upon the trees of the forest.

'Christ hath a folk in Scotland that shall not fail Him, though the horse and his rider trample them under foot, yet shall they that love the Lord not be utterly cast down.' So ran the sermon, and the people listened.

With that Sir Uchtred of Garthland set the hilt of his sword to the door and drave it open, both leaves of it clashing back against the wall. Then bowing his head, but not for meekness, upon his horse's neck, he rode in, armed as he was — into the quiet and solemn house of prayer. The spray of cut lilac bloom from the manse wall was in his hand, and the babe in the arms of the minister's wife crowed to pluck at it as the war-horse clattered up the aisle. Then in the narrow seats the men stood up, grim and silent, while the women sat and trembled, some crying out to God to help them in their trouble.

But the little fair man in the pulpit, that had feared the face of God all his days, feared not the face of man. Perhaps no man who truly does the one can do the other. He put out his hand with a gesture of command to the people and to the intruder, as a general who halts a squadron.

'Uchtred Dowall of Garthland, perjured and man sworn, in the name of the Lord I arrest thee from coming further.'

And Sir Uchtred, though a proud man, stayed. But for all that, he cried the King's commission for the taking of Alexander Renfield, because of nonconformity and resisting the King's authority for the shutting up of the kirk, and the warrant for the

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

pointing of his goods and chattels which were escheat to the Crown.

So the little fair man came down. But even as he was on the stairway he turned him about and laid his hand on the pulpit door, saying, 'Alexander Renfield hath steeked thee in the name of Most High God. See and bide thou shut till the Lord send a man to open thee in his own good time.'

Then he lifted his hand and got him down. Which thing came to pass to the admiration of the people of Kirkchrist; for the curate of Langloan essaying a year after that to open the door, was hindered by a spirit that withstood him, and perhaps also by the memory of the curse of Alexander Renfield, for all the people of Kirkchrist held him to be a prophet. And, when out of liquor, all the curates were very superstitious.

So they shut to the door of the kirk, and the minister stood quiet and silent between two troopers while they turned the slender gear that was in the manse out upon the green. And the minister's wife stood by the little grey sundial and saw all the plenishing that she had brought from her home made into a heap — the goodly cloths she had spun with hope in her heart, and the little lovable things that were of no value to any, but dear to her as her life. She stood with her bairns in her hand, like a hen that gathers her chickens, as near to her husband as they would let her. But when they set the children's cradle on high a-top of all, and Uchtred of Garthland cried to a soldier to set his match to the rubbish-heap, suddenly she wailed aloud. It was only for the cradle that her foot would rock no more. She had seen so many flaxen heads in it, and some of them were now within the veil. So

when the cradle was set on the heap to be burned, she cried aloud as she had not done when God took her bairns themselves out of her arms.

Then Alexander Renfield lifted up his voice from where he stood between two soldiers with his hands tied before him. He pointed with his bound wrists to the knight, who reined his horse and looked on silently, doing the King's work and Lauderdale's. 'The Lord judge between thee, Uchtred Dowall of Garthland, and me that am but his minister in Kirkchrist. The Lord do so to thee and more also. Thou hast made desolate the sweetest roof-tree that reeked in Galloway this day. See that thou come near thine own in peace this night. A greater than thou art ate grass like an ox. Thou hast built Garthland where it shines fair on the brae. But in his time King Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon, that was of marble and greater than many Garthlands. Yet the Lord laid him full low. Even so shall he do with thee, thou bloody and deceitful man, for the cry of the mother of my children this day.'

Sir Uchtred of Garthland pointed with his sword at the minister where he stood, but his tongue gave forth no word of command. For even then the Lord's hand smote him. In a moment he fell from pride, and that in sight of all the people who had seen him ride to the kirk door.

As a strained fiddle-string that snaps, so a chord twanged in his head. He tossed the lilac branch to the roof of the kirk, and so fell to the ground grovelling. His soldiers ran to him to help him, but he struck at them, gnashing his teeth and foaming. His serving-man that was more wicked than himself lifted up his masters head; but Uchtred of Garthland bit him in the palm till the blood ran from the tips of

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

his fingers. After a little they mastered him and set him on the horse which they had brought to carry the minister. And a fear fell on them all, so that they let Alexander Renfield go, and the cavalcade that had ridden up so bravely moved slowly away from the kirkyard of Christ's kirk. Then all the people rushed forward to put out the fire upon the green. And Millicent Renfield stood with her children's cradle in her arms and watched the troopers go. Then the people sang, Alexander Renfield leading them:

'For His mercies aye endure. Ever faithful, ever sure.'

But even when they saw as they went the roofs of the New Place of Garthland, which Sir Uchtred had built with the fines and exactions of the Whigs, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Alexander Renfield, whom men called a prophet, fell like a fire-flaught when the thunder gathers on steep Clashdaan. Sir Uchtred, having the power of one possessed with a devil, caught suddenly at the two men that held him on his horse and with the strength of ten he rent them. Then, being filled with an evil spirit, he ran with surprising swiftness across the fields, taking burns and deep linns in his stride, and over leaping rocks and fences as a deer leaps, so that the horsemen were left far behind and could not by any means lay hands upon him.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VISIONS OF SIR UCHTRED ON
CLASHDAAN

Hot foot he fled until over-passing Cree Water, he felt under his feet the rugged heather of the easterly hills. The burns roared in his ears. Upon steep Clashdaan he heard the tramp of armed men, which feared him so greatly that he fled, casting his garments abroad in the way as he ran.

From top to top among the uttermost hills Sir Uchtred fled, listening ever for the yell of viewless hounds and the cry of questing demons. So it was all the day. The sun of that Sabbath of judgment rose to its meridian, paused, and sank. It beat upon the throbbing, restless head of the madman who had so lately been Sir Uchtred of Garthland. Again he rose and fled, leaping from rock to rock like the wild goat on the hill.

But God is merciful even in the midst of His just judgments upon the persecutor, for as he came to the burn of Culsharg, which comes down over broad slats of granite and barren screes of rock, roaring white the while, He caused him to stumble and fall. The madman lay with his head in the cold wash of the water, which cooled his brain yet covered not his mouth.

Then the night came. A serene and austere coolness settled down on the hills. The world was very full of sweet air to breathe. The bog myrtle, which men name 'gall of the hills,' gave forth a rare smell, and Sir Uchtred awoke out of his dream.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

He sat on the heights of Ben Yellaray, and saw the stillness of an older world towards Enoch. He was mother naked as when God made him, for all his gay war gear was scattered upon the way to Kirkchrist. Yet he was not a-cold. His madman's blood ran too hotly. But he grew so sane that he questioned of himself how he came thither. In a moment more he had asked himself why he sat there naked as when he was born, and perhaps in the asking the madness had departed from him.

But out of the stillness he heard, as it were, the cry of a young child, and sometimes it seemed like the voice of his boy, Pierce, when he drove his wooden hobby-horses at his play, and sometimes like a bairn of the hill-folk yearning and crying for a father who had never come home — mad Uchtred knew why. Then for the first time was Uchtred the persecutor afraid, and fled, hiding his face in his hands; but when the child's wailing pursued him, he became angry and longed to leap upon it to throttle it. For the sound troubled him.

So he turned, and like an adder among the heather he glided towards the spot whence he heard the crying. It was in a bush of heather with great grey stones all about. Sir Uchtred made sure of the spot, for he noted the heather stir as with the racking sobs of the young bairn. Now Sir Uchtred lay very still till the pity of the babe's sorrow caught him by the midriff, and dry sobs rose and rent him in the throat. Then he sprang upon the clump of heather where he knew the child lay concealed, his fingers tense and jerking for the grip of strangling. But he only caught the heather and the dry brown bent. Yet, looking up, before him in the midst of a kind of misty light he was aware of a young child,

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

exceeding fair, with a crown of sunlight upon its head, and about its neck a thin, wet, scarlet cord. And a young voice shrilled in his ear, even the voice which he had heard wail in the darkness, and it said:

'I am the Babe of Bethlehem whom ye slew!'

And the voice pierced to the dividing of his marrow, so that great fear fell upon the man who was accursed of God.

Yet he could not flee, but sat staring crouched in the heather bush into the which he had sprung; and slowly with the tinkling of cymbals and the noise of sweet singing the portent melted away.

This is the true story of the first vision that Sir Uchtred saw upon Clashdaan.

Again the same night the madness came on Sir Uchtred and he fled along the shaggy tops of the lonely hills, till on the bare scalp of the Merrick, close under the lift with all the other mountains crouched and dwarfed beneath him, he had a vision. He saw himself like Lucifer, Star of the Morning, flash out of the blackness between the tingling points of light, for a moment curve in trailing fire across the firmament, and plunge into the lake of eternal fire in which burn for ever all the sins and despairs of the universe.

Sir Uchtred sprang to his feet, and there, pinnaced on Merrick, he raised his hands to heaven and cried out in a terrible voice which only God heard:

'A fallen star! a fallen star!'

And this was the second vision of Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills.

Again Sir Uchtred saw another vision, and it was of a table set with holy bread, and the clean silver

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

cups held the wine of communion. And above the bread was written in letters of blood, 'Whoso eatth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.'

And Sir Uchtred cried with a great and bitter cry, for surely he had eaten and drunken in the house of God — yea, and borne too the silver cup of the wine as the elders paced slow and solemn to the tables on which the fair linen cloths were laid.

And the last vision that Sir Uchtred had was this. It was the Last Day, and he saw the heavens run together as a fiery scroll, and the earth crumpled up and wrapped in the fire as a child's ball is wrapped in a kerchief. And a voice, very great and mighty, like all the oceans of the world falling into the pit of burning pain, cried to him:

'Thou hast refused Christ and persecuted Him. Now shall all the sins of the world be laid on thee and thou shalt bear them all.'

So before his eyes he saw this great red ball which glowed like molten metal. It waxed in greatness before his eyes till it swallowed up all things. Then it still grew nearer and nearer to him till he felt that it was but waitinf to engulf him. And these words were written across it:

'THE WRATH AND CURSE OF GOD.'

And Sir Uchtred swooned away for the terror of the vision.

When he awoke the morning was breaking in the east. The red bars of cloud glowed like a furnace grate. The crest of the Dungeon bristled black against the fire. There was no sound, save a burn sougning somewhere in the hollows of the hills. But

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

above the birds cried in the dewy chill of the sunrising. Sir Uchtred came to himself, and looked about him. It was his hour.

It may be that, had he thought on his sweet wife Philippa or his little son Pierce, the evil spirit from the Lord might have departed from him; but it happened (though not by chance, as unlearned men say) that his first thoughts fell on that Alexander Renfield, who had angered him and defied him.

'I shall call my men out quickly and harry the rebel. The loons bide long abed. But an they haste not, I shall rattle their bones for them.'

So he arose and set his matted and dishevelled hair jauntily, as it had been a cavalier's hat. He tightened the cord at his waist, as though it were a belt and a great basket-hilted brand had swung there. He thrust ghostly pistols within it, and cried the word of command on the lonesome mountain-side as to a troop of horse.

Yet all the while he knew not that he was naked, and that his feet were cut by the stones of sharp granite.

Now so marvellous are the ways of the Lord, that even at that moment the herd that is in the shieling of the Laggan and Robina his wife declare that on the steep side of Clashdaan they saw a troop of horsemen exercising, and in the midst they clearly noted a naked man upon a coal-black horse. The troop passed thwartwise over the mountain steep, where not a dog could stand, thrice turned at the word of command, and so rode back with bits clicking and stirrup irons jingling. Upon the summit, ere they passed from sight, their strange leader halted them; with a great roar they shot off their muskets, and so vanished, the smoke of the powder

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

lingering long in the clear air. Thereafter, waiting the space of several minutes, the herd and his wife, thinking it rained, saw their hands and the stones about the onstead spotted as with blood, which began softly to fall in broad drops and splashes. The herd set his hand to his lips, and found it sweet to the palate. Therefore he knew that it was the blood of the martyrs. So he and his wife went immediately into their closet, shutting the door, and there fell to their exercises, knowing that they had indeed seen a great marvel.

[This is in the original account of these transactions compiled by order of the United Societies, attested by Alexander Paton, herd in Laggan Cothouse, and Robina his wife. These two are certified to be respectable and God-fearing people by the minister and session of the Societies' meeting-house at Cree Brig.]

CHAPTER SIX

GIBBIE THE HUNTER CASTS HIS BREEKS

Sir Uchtred wanting wit, set off in the morning light, all alone over the heather. It was the clear light of the morning, and the man was a fearsome sight with falling upon the slippery rocks and shining screes of the hillside. Yet he carried himself as though he were riding his troop down the High Street of Edinburgh town to be guard to his Majesty at Holyrood House.

The wide empty spaces rang with his words of command. He shouted blasphemies if the ghostly squadron did not wheel and halt to his mind. He pointed to this and that Whig's dwelling who should receive a domiciliary visit some fine day, and have his goods routed out and the choice of the Test in his throat or a bullet in his gullet.

At last he came where there dwelt a tenant of his own, Gibbie Macallister, a rough-riding, swearing blade, and the best shot with a musket in all the countryside.

'Bide where ye are!' cried Sir Uchtred, reining up in front of his troop of phantasy. 'I will rout out Gibbie to ride forth with us and keep us merry. We are all as doleful as psalmsingers this brave morning.'

So he went to the rude, low door and knocked with his knuckles cavalierly, thinking them the great iron hilt of his sword.

'Whereaway, Gibbie, you drunken dog! Rise and ride, or we shall break the door and dowse thee with thy own watercan.'

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

There was a stirring within, but no word of opening.

'Undo the door, Gibbie, thou sot! Thou hast been drunk yestreen, without a doubt, and thy greybeard is empty. Though your head be like a red gaud of iron, to ride a-Whig-hunting will do thee good. Open, man! 'Tis I, Uchtred of Garthland.'

But the man within opened not, nor did Mad Sir Uchtred hear any sound; so he went round the house, and would have thrust his hand and arm inside the narrow and deep-set window, but from within suddenly a musket cracked, and Sir Uchtred sprang into the air. He clapped his hand to his shoulder, and the red blood sprang between his fingers, though the shot had done no more than touch him, having come as near to missing him as bullet could come and yet take effect.

Sir Uchtred fled back to the braeface and threw himself on the turf by the burnside, moaning like a beast when it is hurt. First he bit at the place whence the blood ran; then, coming a little to himself, he bathed the wound in the burn water that ran through the hollow, and bound it about with withes and soft curled moss.

In a moment the madman knew that his visionary troop was gone from him, and that he was wounded and alone. Yet was he but the more dangerous; for he lay in the hollow where he could be seen from the narrow window of Gibbie Macallister's cothouse.

He dragged himself out of the water as one sore hurt. He bent himself double with simulated agony. He threw himself hither and thither as though in grips with death, jerked his hands once or twice, and then lay back, relaxed and still. Yet it was but the cunning of the-man-wanting-wit. The wound

itself was no more to him than a leech letting an ounce of blood.

It was not long before Gibbie of the Langbarns undid the hasp of his door and stole out. He lived alone and did his necessities for himself, without let or help from womankind. Gibbie held his musket pointing with the wide mouth towards the madman, who lay motionless by the well, all fallen together in a heap. Gibbie's mouth was open and his eyes wide with terror as he came near. But Uchtred lay as one dead, Gibbie watched him long, but at the last, moved by curiosity, he leaned to turn him over. One of the madman's hands rose stiffly like the sail of a windmill, but as it came round to fall it caught at the man's gun. In a moment the madman had sprung to his feet and snatched the musket clear of the man's horrified hand. Gibbie turned to flee, but swifter than he was Sir Uchtred, who had that morning run fleetfoot like a deer over the Glints of Glashdaan.

Yet Gibbie fled, inarticulate noises wheezing in his parched throat as he went. But round him circled Uchtred of Garthland as a gull round a herring-boat, holding his musket in hand, and heading him off from his house and up to the hill.

Each time the pitiable fugitive turned like a hunted hare he found the madman facing him, and the black eye of the musket, which he himself had loaded, looking into his. And he remembered with terror that he had wadded it with three leaves of the Bible.

At last Gibbie could go no further. The rough rider, who had ridden so hardly over the muir folk, came himself to know what it was to be hunted to

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

the death. He sank down on his knees and held out his hands in pitiful petition.

'Base covenanting dog!' cried Uchtred of Garthland. 'Set the bandage over thine eyes, for thou shalt die!'

'I am no Covenanter, noble Sir Uchtred, as thou well knowest. I will swear it with great oaths,' cried Gibbie the wretched one.

'I ken the Whigs can swear. Did they not swear the Covenant, and was I myself not there? It is the praying that I can tell them by. So e'en fall to the praying, sirrah, for your time is short to live.'

Poor Gibbie was in a perilous case. Even his enemies had been sorry for him. Pray he could not, yet to die he was mightily unwilling; and also, as one might avouch without uncharity, exceeding ill-prepared.

He lifted up his hands in appeal.

'O Garthland,' he cried, 'do ye no mind Gibbie, puir Gibbie, that used to sweer siccan ill words at the dogs that ye lickit him wi' his ain whap for blasphemy? Ye mind, he aye rade in your front file an' sang braw sculdudery ballants till ye. Gibbie was nae Covenanter — na, God forbid, never nane. He never prayed ony. The Lord preserve me! Na, nae siccan ploys for Gibbie. Let him aff this time, wise Sir Uchtred, and he'll never again let blaff wi' Broon Bess at ye a' the days o' him.'

A gleam of irony so grim that it could not be named humour shone in the madman's eye.

'Gibbie,' he said, 'strip, an' ye shall get a bowshot's law; then, gin I grip ye, Gibbie, ye can say, 'Guid e'en' to this braw world that has used you an' me sae weel!'

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

Sir Uchtred sat nursing the musket on his knee, while Gibbie stripped his long blue coat from off him and stood ready for the race.

'Noo, Gibbie, ye see yon scroggie thorn?' said his master, quite sanely. 'I'll gie ye to there. Then frae that to your ain door cheek your heels keep your head, for gin I catch ye, ye are no better than a dead mankin.'

'I ken that,' said Gibbie, bracing himself bravely for the attempt. Flinging his bonnet on the turf, he set off leisurely at a walking pace towards the little scrunted thorn.

'Faster!' cried the madman, half rising in his place with the musket in his hand.

'Na, na; I ken better than the breathe mysel' ower sune for the race,' returned Gibbie. 'I hae the safe conduct o' the honour o' Sir Uchtred Dowall of Garthland.'

'You shall have to the scroggie thorn,' he said; 'but do not try the honour ower sair.'

Slowly Gibbie made his way to the tree. Within three yards of it he stopped and calmly disencumbered himself of his knee-breeks.

'Bare shanks baith o' us is fair hornie,' he cried, and set off running at the top of his speed.

But when the madman rose, something in Gibbie's words, or mayhap something in the sight which he presented skimming over the moor with his bare shanks twinkling under his flying upper garment, caused Sir Uchtred to break into a great fit of laughter, which lasted till Gibbie was safely barricaded in his little cothouse of Langbarns, with all his domestic furniture piled at the back of the door, and his porridge-pot set legs outward in the

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

narrow window and buttressed within with a great weaver's beam.

Sir Uchtred set the flintlock upon the ground, and with his heel stamped the musket in two, snapping it like a rotten branch at the breech. Then, as the crying of men came to him upon the wind, he turned and ran like wind in the direction of Clashdaan.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WISE HELEN, BABE ISBEL, AND BOY PIERCE

At the place of Garthland in the first days of the falling of the curse there was confusion and deray. To Philippa Forrester, whom Sir Uchtred had made a Dowall of Garthland, it seemed that God had taken away her prop and place in life. He had brought her from the convent, and made her a sheltered home on the leeside of life. She loved him as a woman loves a man who has been her all, and who to her shows himself other and better than he does to the world.

At first Philippa could do little but go out on the sandy braes behind the New Place of Garthland and sit in a dell among the rabbits that sported among the young grass. With her there went one day her children, Helen, Isbel, and little Pierce.

'Mother,' said Helen, who was a girl, slender, like a shooting willow, of the age of seven years — 'mother, why does father not come back to us?'

'He will surely come, child,' said the Lady of Garthland.

'But why — why does he stay away so long? He does not love us, or he would come home and not let our mother weep,' persisted the child.

'Helen, you do not understand,' said her mother. 'God has kept your father with Him for a little, but He will surely send him back to Helen and Isbel and to little Pierce, who rides on horseback like a man.'

'I can ride better than Gibbie Macallister, mother!' said Pierce.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

‘And to you, mother?’ said Helen, ‘for you need him more than we, though you are grown up, for we do not weep.’

‘Do not weep, little mother,’ said Pierce. ‘I will take care of you, for I am a man. Helen and Isbel are only girls; but I will fight for you, little mother, for I am Pierce Dowall of Garthland, and I ride like a trooper already — Uncle Randolph says so! And when I fall off I do not cry!’

‘What does Randolph know of how a man rides?’ flashed Philippa, fiercely. ‘Why does he not ride forth to bring Uchtred home to me?’

Then Isbel, who was the youngest and lisped in the accents of a babe, took up the parable against her mother, for the tender and innocent mercies of children are often cruder than those of the wicked.

‘God must love our father very much,’ said little Isbel Dowall. And she patted her mother's hand between her two that were soft and winsomely dimpled.

‘A' course He loves our father,’ said Pierce, indignantly. ‘Our father is Sir Uchtred of Garthland. A' course God loves him.’

Isbel looked at her mother. She herself did not mind much what Pierce said. He was always saying something not very wise. It was true he could ride a horse. But, after all, overly much might be made of that, thought both Helen and Isbel.

Helen also looked at her mother. ‘Tell us,’ she said, ‘does God love our father very much that He keeps him so long from us?’

Philippa thought of the picture which Randolph had brought to her of the beast-man who couched and ran on the steep side of Clashdaan — the man who for years had lain by her side. She trembled as

though a wind were blowing upon her, coming over the downs winged from the bitter east. But she must answer the children, for they were now all waiting and looking at her.

It was Pierce who helped her out.

'Tell them a-course God loves father, else why would He keep him to Himself when He might send him back to us? Tell them that — girls think of nothing but poppets and things to wear.'

Deep in Philippa's mind there was lying a word which she could not for a little grasp. She remembered it from the lessons in old convent days. Often her mind seemed on the verge of seizing it, and she knew that it would bring her comfort if only she could capture the sense. Yet the words eluded her time and again.

This time it was the wise Helen who came to her aid.

'If our father be with God, is the Lord Christ there also?'

Strang words these for the house of Garthland, in the courtyard of which but a little time ago thirty king's horses champed bit and clattered hoof, and thirty king's troopers swore the oaths of Flanders.

Like a flash of the Arc which shineth from the east unto the west the words of the text she sought ran athwart the mind of Philippa.

'His life is hid with Christ in God!' she said.

The children stood about her with their hands on her knee. They did not understand, but there was comfort in the pleasure which beamed in their mother's eyes.

'Say that again, mother,' said wise Helen, for the delight of seeing the light on her mother's face as she said it.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

'And you are sure he will come back?' lisped Babe Isbel.

'I told you before that he would come,' declared Pierce; 'and I shall ride to the hunting: with him and have a horse of my own, and a gun and a sword and steel cap, and fight for the king.'

'Pierce is a boy, and only thinks of riding,' said Helen.

'We think of you, mother,' said Babe Isbel, looking reproachfully at Pierce.

'And I think of mother as much as you — you — girls!'

Pierce searched for a word of contumely which he could use in his mother's presence, but, not finding one, he put all his scorn into the last word, which indeed contained a fact which neither Helen nor Isbel could gainsay.

But wise Helen took the breeze out of his sails with case and directness.

'Mother was a girl not so long ago,' she said.

'And father, he says that she is one still,' said Babe Isbel, softly.

And they both nodded their heads triumphantly at him.

Pierce was at the end of his tether in argument. But he had the weapon of a boy in reserve. He withdrew a step behind his mother, and put out his tongue at his sisters.

'Mmm...' he cried; 'that's what I think of you.'

'Pierce!' cried his mother, waking from a reverie at the sound.

But Pierce was already disappearing over the hill in the direction of the stables of Garthland.

Philippa sighed. Something in her heart spoke to her. She clung to the thought of her husband as she

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

had first known him, ere the evil ambition came upon him.

‘He will grow up into a man like his father,’ she said. ‘I wish he were a man now.’

For the thought came upon her that she was a widow, and yet not a widow — defenceless and forsaken, yet within a day's journey of her true husband.

And, even as she spoke, on the side of Clashdaan Mad Sir Uchtred laughed and cried aloud

Philippa!’ he said.

But she did not hear.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

Unwise and evil as had been Randolph Dowalls wooing of his brother's wife during the time that Uchtred was in hold with them, and sat glooming daily in his study over the gate, with his book in his hand and his eye upon the terrace — of a full certainty no fault could be found with his seemly behaviour when his brother had fled from them to dwell with the beasts of the field.

He did not even approach his sister, his brother's wife, save by asking her permission through the mouth of a messenger. He compassed her with delicatest observance, and his most familiar discourse was seasoned with the salt of deference and grace. His habit, too, was more sober, and there was now no need to call him 'waterfly.'

But outside he daily strove to take his brother's place in authority and upon the estates, yet without unduly seeming to put himself forward, till all marvelled how the stroke that had fallen on the house had changed light-wit Randolph Dowall of Garthland.

To Philippa he appeared in the guise of unobtrusive and reliable friend. He was invisible when he was not needed, and yet in an emergency she had only to send a messenger, and Randolph was waiting in the hall to do her a service.

There is no doubt that Randolph believed that he had found the surer way into his brother's regality. And there is a possibility that he was right. At least it is certain that Philippa grew gradually to trust him and depend upon him, having none other. So that

'Let us send for Randolph' became a household word.

'Dear Uncle Randolph,' said Helen and Isbel.

'Boys do not say 'dear' all day long — only to their mothers when no one is by — but Uncle Randolph is a very proper man!'

For this was boy Pierce's strongest affirmation of excellence. He had been wont to use it of his father.

So who shall say that Randolph was not become a wise and prudent man?

So the months slipped and the years came, and the Thing that was a beast and no man still skipped about Clashdaan and caught the white mountain-hare, living the while under a stone. And the dew of the night was thick and chill upon it. Yet, after all, this, and not Randolph, was the husband of Philippa, Lady of Garthland, and the father of little Pierce, who rode like a man.

On a night in November, in the third year of the madness of Sir Uchtred, Randolph, who had so often been called to serve the Lady of Garthland, sent a humble message that he would be greatly honoured if the Lady Philippa would deign to receive him for a moment in the hall.

There was a certain pleasure in Philippa's heart as she went down, for Randolph had been her friend, sole and faithful, through these years of trial and adversity, and had stood by her and her children with unflinching and unselfish loyalty. The foolish past was buried and atoned for. He had been but a boy, and so she had treated him.

In the great hall Randolph waited her. She came down holding her gown in one hand and a great belt clasp her waist, which, like Helen's, was slender, and swayed a little as a willow does in the wind. She

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

was tall, yet one understood at a glance why her children called her ever 'the little mother.' She wore a dress of dark silk, very soft and rich, but wholly without ornament, and upon it only the jewelled belt lay like a zone of golden sheen.

Randolph held his feathered hat in his hand so that the plume swept the floor. Upon them both a great fire, already well burnt, threw red and dancing lights. Three or four candles set high in iron sconces hardly added to or changed the illumination.

The Lady of Garthland put out her hand. Over it Randolph bowed low. 'Philippa,' he said, 'it was in my mind to speak with you — to ask your advice, and so I ventured to send a messenger. Am I forgiven?'

He spoke with a gentle accent, like one that fears a rebuff.

Philippa smiled and said, 'Are my owings to you so few that I should be offended when my true brother sends to speak with me?'

It seemed as if at the word 'brother' Randolph of Garthland winced a little, as though a thorn had galled him suddenly.

'My lady,' he said, looking away from her to the firelight and speaking slow and thoughtfully, 'I have been of late thinking many thoughts, and it seems that it were best for me to go away — to take service in foreign parts.'

'Best to go away,' stammered Philippa, seeing herself left without a friend and the care of the great place of Garthland upon her unaccustomed shoulders. 'Best to go away — best to leave Garthland and the children?'

'And you,' said Randolph, very softly, bending towards her in the firelight.

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

Philippa recovered herself from her surprise.

'Why do you say so?' she asked, looking straight at him as he stood, a waterfly no longer, but a comely bearded man at the opposite side of the great hall fireplace.

Randolph was a man experienced in such heart matters, and he had thought this thing fully out. He knew when to be bold and when to walk circumspectly. He knew that the time for boldness was come.

'Philippa,' he said, speaking out, 'there is one reason why I should not stay, and that is my love of you, and one reason why I should not go — my love for the children — Helen and Isbel and little Pierce.'

Now Philippa had no love for this man, but he had been a true and loyal friend, and to lose him so suddenly was hardly to be borne. She was willing enough that he should devote himself to her service; she had grown to look upon it as a right; and besides, it was only just that every one should devote himself to the service of the children. A thought struck her.

'Ah, do not go — for the sake of the children,' she said, 'for little Pierce that is growing beyond my control — do not go!'

Randolph sprang forward instantly. He took her by the hand.

'Philippa,' he said, earnestly, and his voice was clear, 'I cannot stay only because the children love me. But, if you will love me, I shall stay.'

He mistook her startled silence for consent, and his arm encircled the great golden belt.

'Tell me,' he said, still more earnestly, 'where in all the world is the reason why I should not stay?'

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

There was a moment's fateful silence between them, and Philippa swayed like a lily.

'HERE!' cried suddenly a terrible voice behind them.

With one startled instinct they turned, and lo! at the barred window there appeared, ghastly white even in the red firelight, the face of the madman, Uchtred of the Hills, the man-beast of Clashdaan.

'Wife and brother,' he cried, shaking the bars, 'I am the reason!'

Without a word Randolph Dowall snatched a pistol from his belt and fired at the window, shattering the wooden frame. But the fierce and terrible countenance was gone, and only the echoes of the noise reverberated through the halls and passages of Garthland.

The Lady Philippa walked calmly in the direction of the outer hall door. Randolph, with the smoking pistol still in his hand, caught her by the arm.

'Do not go, for your very life,' he hissed. 'His anger is that of a fiend. He will tear you to pieces.'

'Take away your hand,' she said, scornfully. 'You have done me enough wrong. He is my husband.'

And she opened the door wide and went out on the terrace, while Randolph ran up into the great tower and barred the door.

'Uchtred! Uchtred! my husband!' she cried aloud.

But only the night wind of late November wailed in her ear, and mysterious voices from the vague moorlands across which it had come made her heart beat with strange terror.

She went to the window where the face had been seen. Part of the framework hung outward, and she could see the fresh white splinter of the wood.

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

'Uchtred, my husband, come to me,' she cried again.

Yet was there no sound save the sougling wind all about the lonely house of Garthland. Philippa Dowall, stricken with sudden terror at the silence — she who in that access of sudden alarm had not feared the face of her husband, turned her and fled up the turret stair to the room whence she had watched Uchtred ride away that Sabbath morn. There she threw herself down between the children's cots. The chamber was filled with their sweet and equal breathings. She laid her head on the trundle bed of little Pierce. He moved in his sleep; he half opened his eyes, said, 'Dear little mother!' and so fell to his sleep again.

Then the Lady Philippa prayed, with her head on Pierce's pillow, as she had never prayed in the convent with the good sisters.

CHAPTER NINE

THE BEAST-MAN

So that is the reason that Uchtred, the Beast-Man, sat on Clashdaan and laughed. He smote his thigh and laughed, throwing back his head till his great beard waggled against his bare breast. He sat with his feet bent down, and the nails set into the ground to give him foot-hold, even as a bird turns its claws inward as it sits on a branch. He was naked save where about the middle he had girt him with the fell of a deer; but his matted hair and beard clothed much of his body. His legs and arms were seamed and scarred — shrunk to sinew and shank-bone. The frost had opened cracks in them. The dews of night clogged his hair. The red earth of his den on the Wolf's Slock was caked hard upon him. For his food he chased the swift-foot mountain-hare and caught it. He ate his prey quick and quivering, and lay down on the rock to sleep, like the beast that he was—he that had been Sir Uchtred of Garthland and lived daintily, loving dalliance upon the cushions of Whitehall. Three years had Mad Sir Uchtred been on the mountains, and no man could take him. For when his tenantry came to seek him he ran along the edges of the precipices; and, thrusting forward his shaggy head, he mopped and mowed at them like an ape. And ever at his foot as he skipped along the perilous screes ran a grey beast which the common people reputed to be his familiar spirit. Yet it was but a wild cat he had found at a rock's foot with a broken limb, and thought to kill for the lust of killing that was in him; yet because it wailed like a child, and because he was lonely, he let it live. So

now it followed him like a dog, going but on three legs, trailing one useless at its side. It was, indeed, small wonder that Uchtred laughed. They had chased him two days, and they would chase him three; for his brother Randolph Dowall reigned in his stead at Garthland, and he wished to have assurance in his possessions. So Randolph sent to the hill to take his brother, and tomorrow he himself was to hunt Clashdaan for Wild Uchtred with the fell bloodhounds that hold the trail. Uchtred opened his arms and beat upon his breast with mirth. He drummed upon the rock on which he sat, kicking it with his heels for wantonness as a child does when the master goes forth from the schoolroom. The wild cat with the wounded leg leapt from its three feet into his lap and nestled there. Uchtred of Garthland caressed it.

‘They chase us, Belus,’ he yammered. ‘I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, whom the Jew God hath cursed — sweet Belus, my god.’ He looked down and spoke to the wild beast in his lap. It watched him with yellow baleful eyes.

‘For thou art my god,’ he went on. ‘The Jew God would have me worship Him, but I have profaned His temples and He has cast me out — to eat grass like an ox. So He said; but thou and I know what is better than grass, and that is blood — blood, the fresh sweet blood.’

And the hideous thing in his lap reached upward, fawning on him and rubbing its head against his face and mouth.

‘Sweet Belus, my god,’ he said, ‘they will chase us with dogs tomorrow, you and me — great dogs. It will be rare sport. Dost thou mind what we did with the last dogs that came? How I held them and

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

choked them whilst thou hadst thy will of their pain, for they are thy enemies also, Belus, my god! Tomorrow thou shalt hold them that howl at thee — the men that hound them on, for they are my enemies, and I, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, shall have my will of them.'

The indigo blue night, winking with stars, bent over Clashdaan. Uchtred, the Beast-Man, went back to his lair in the Hass of the Wolf's Slock, dancing along the fretted pinnacles of the granite as a withered leaf dances in the veering flaw of November. His familiar followed after, trailing a limb. To see them against the sky was to believe in devils; and that is sound and wholesome doctrine.

The cave on Clashdaan was but a fox-earth between two stones; but it was overgrown with matted heather, and being set on a promontory it was a watch-tower looking three ways over the blue cauldron of the Dungeon of Buchan.

Far away in the depths of it, where the winds that were silent above at Clashdaan were sighing, a fire was leaping and sinking. At the door of his earth Uchtred turned and pointed it out to the beast crouching at his feet.

'See, Belus, my god,' he said; 'that is the watch-fire of them that hunt us. If thou wilt, Belus, we shall visit it tomorrow, for tomorrow is the dark of the moon. And we shall hunt the hunters; and then, too, the hounds shall not cry, scenting us afar as they would do if we went tonight, for tomorrow they shall all be dead.'

So the Wild Man crept into his den, and the beast after him. The man turned him about in the smother of bracken and heather as a dog does when it couches. The lame wild cat leapt in between his

arms and his breast and curled there. And sleep — which is God's equal mystery, like the air and the sunshine, for wild and tame, just and unjust — fell upon them twain.

The great wild cat that slept in Mad Uchtred's bosom opened an eye when the front of the morning showed over the Range of Kells. It was a glorious promise of sunrise, but the wild beast in the madman's arms heeded it not. What the eye of the wild cat lighted upon was a spark of red in the stones — a spark that flitted and ever flitted, yet drew always nearer. It was a weasel among the stones, gazing fascinated at the naked and hairy throat of the wild man, who lay with his head thrown back among the leaves. The beasts saw one another; but the will of the weasel was to the man, and to the blood that leapt under the skin of his neck. It wormed its way among the stones, rearing a yellow, snaky head, with glittering eyes of ruby red, watching where in the sleeping man the live pulse beat.

The wild cat made no sign nor prepared to spring till the weasel had almost set its nose against the neck of Uchtred of Garthland. Then the cat sprang, gripping the slim, snaky back in the middle. The weasel bent like a whip to bite; but the wild cat snapped it like a rotten stick, and, letting it fall writhing, looked about quickly lest the sleeping man should have wakened.

The cat cast no further glance at the weasel, beating its life out like a trodden worm on the heather, but couched open-lidded at the head of Mad Uchtred of Garthland, watching with yellow-irised eyes the dreams chase themselves across the

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

clouded brain of that man whom God has driven out to eat with the beast of the field.

Uchtred of Garthland sat up when the first beam of the sun touched him, straight as a lance laid in rest, over the saddle of Clashdaan. He put his hands, which were wet with dew, to his lips, and licked the moisture. Then he held out his arms.

'Sweet Belus, my god!' he said.

And as the wild beast, trailing a limb, sprang into his arms, the weasel twisted in pain and bit in agony at its own body. Uchtred set his foot upon it, because he hated its kind. With a great gladness to bite once before death came, the small evil beast met its curved teeth in the man's ankle. He jerked his foot and sped it over the cliff to feed the ravens on the Clints of Clashdaan.

For evil sometimes slays evil, and Satan's kingdom is divided against itself.

CHAPTER TEN

THE WIFE'S QUEST ON CLASHDAAN

It was very silent on Clashdaan. Only the winds, the wild birds, and the thunder are ever noisy there. The silence of noonday is almost as solemn and awful as that of midnight. The Lady Philippa was on Clashdaan. She who had come from the convent garden to the wide spaces and flat horizons, the fleecy cloud banks and vast arched sky of Garthland and its pasture lands, wandered afoot over the mountains of the Dungeon of Buchan. To the foot of the hill country she had come riding with three of a company. Then, because there was none to say her nay, she had bidden them wait for her, and started alone into the heart of the hills to find her husband. They might have restrained her from the mad adventure. It was not quite the time when serving men said nay to the commands of so great a lady as the mistress of the New Place of Garthland, and the wife of Uchtred Dowall, its lord.

Till the late evening she was wandering among the flinty boulder-strewn desolations of the Dungeon. At first she had gone to every hill-top and cried 'Uchtred!' But of this speedily she waxed weary, for only the eagles swooped nearer, jealous of her intrusion on their ancient quiet. Or from behind a stone a hoarse-voiced mountain-sheep blared like a trumpet.

It was very silent on Clashdaan.

Yet Philippa wished herself not elsewhere. She had come to meet her husband. Mad or in his right mind, she feared him not. She wanted to tell him

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

that she had been true — the night before, when he looked upon her in the great hall of Garthland, and true every night and day since he left her bed for the side of the rugged mount and the caves of Clashdaan.

Save that she feared for the boy in that wild country, she had brought Pierce in her hand. She had adventured forth to seek him who would not return to her. Often in the night season she heard a voice which told her that the curse of God was now near the lifting, and that once more Uchtred would be her man and lie by her side. The evening sun slanted athwart the great valley of the five lochs, and the sharp peaks trailed long shadows, shooting them out like spears over the Dungeon. Philippa the delicately-bred thought neither of rest nor refreshment, seeking her husband till she should find him. But the hills were bare, the clouds washed down by the rain, and the distance seemed so near that one might touch it with the hand — so lucid was the air.

And through the silences and the gathering glooms of Clashdaan, Philippa continued to look for Sir Uchtred her husband, to tell him what he had never doubted till yestreen — that she was true wife as when first he took her from the nuns.

‘He sees me — he must see me,’ she said to herself, weeping, ‘but he thinks me a thing unworthy to be spoken to.’

Yet she had no fear, for her innocency and the thought of the first days when she was brought forth from the convent to marry Uchtred of Garthland — and when against all report she found him kind to her — sustained her. She only desired that these days should come again, and the voice of an angel,

or a child, in her heart told her that they would surely come. Besides, though he should slay her, yet she would love him with the love that is without reproach and therefore is without fear.

Nevertheless it was very silent on Clashdaan, and she feared the silence and the coming darkness.

For the night came on gradually that she could not see it darken. The hills that shut her in on the north glowed darkest amethyst, and the lakelets and tarns shone uncertainly in the hollows. But on all the hills there was not a sound save of a stone that clattered down a stone slide.

The stillness oppressed her.

It grew darker, till Philippa could see no more than the outlines of the hills dark against the skies. Through the oppression of the silence and the thick darkness there came to her ear a strange wailing cry. Fear sat quivering and palpable upon her heart. She cried aloud for her husband. It seemed that she heard viewless and hushed footsteps on the heather, as of one who walked in velvet, and now she looked fearfully for evil to come, now from one side and now from another. But ever when her terror was greatest, and when, straining her eyes through the darkness, she imagined that she saw fiery eyes glaring at her through the gloom, there came the strange throat call out of the darkness. Then the terror left her, and she sank down upon the heather.

In the access of her danger, when the terror that walketh in darkness — that hateful, unknown thing — prowled the nearest and seemed most like a fiend about to pounce upon her from behind, she cried out to her husband, 'O Uchtred, my man — come to me and save me!'

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

And then, as soon as she had said that, the creeping horror utterly vanished away. When again her fear came she was able to mock it; and, without even a beating womanly heart, she drew her shawl about her head and neck, where the fear had seemed to take her most, and lay down to sleep on the heather, so utterly awearry was she, being but a woman and alone.

The sun was rising behind the Range of Kells when she awoke. It was good to see him breast the Millyea and pour his beams, like a bursting Lammas flood, into the wide spaces of the Dungeon of Buchan. Sweeter still to see his first beam shine upon the fair head of Philippa Dowall, who lay breathing equably on the bent, like a morrow's bride in her beauty sleep.

From her neck the plaid had fallen away, and on the white of her skin where it is tenderest was impressed a deep red mark as of the claws of a beast. There was no spot or stain on her fair body other than this. And even this she knew not of when she awoke.

Philippa of Garthland sat up and looked about her. The Dungeon lay beneath, swept clean of living thing, and the blue sky shut her in above. She had been in the Lord's prison house, and He had cast the lap of His cloak about her. But near her, even at her feet, she saw a strange thing. She started up and knelt upon her knees beside it. There, on a rock, very plain to be seen in the young morning sun, lay a young white mountain-hare. Fair and spotless was its coat, save where at the neck a drop of blood distilled from the triple indentation of the claw of a beast of prey. It was the same mark of triple claw that was on the neck of Philippa of

Garthland. Beside the dead hare was a curved and hollow stone full of the clearest water. Many berries also of the moorland and the wood lay alongside in a heap. But upon the top of the rock there was something that glinted and sparkled and took Philippa's breath more than all the other stuff. She snatched it with a trembling and eager hand. It was her husband's signet ring and through it was drawn with great exactness and care a few heads of white heather, very lovely and pleasant to her heart to behold. Philippa of Garthland knelt on the brindled heath and gave thanks — for the preservation of the night in that wild place, and for the man, her husband, whom God had sent to watch over her. For she knew that it was he who had saved her, and she laid hold of the well-omened heather drawn through the ring as a promise that God was at the last clearing the dark and cloudy soul and winning it back to the light.

She knew not that she had offered herself a sacrifice to the evil spirit that held possession of Uchtred's heart; and that in the dark, around her prostrate body, Uchtred had waged a war with the Accuser of the Brethren. Only Belus yet clave to him.

But Philippa was glad when she saw her husband's ring. She took that which he had brought her as a love token. She ate the berries slowly, lifting them one by one to her mouth so that any at a distance might see her, and after that she drank the water to the last drop ere she rose to go. The morning was clear and bright — a morning without clouds — and Clashdaan was not a silent place any more. For the lark sang in the lift, and in the heart also of Philippa a little silvery peal of joybells rang.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

So she went down the mountain, led by love and the Master of Love, till she found her people waiting her. Then she mounted and rode homeward to Garthland to await God's promise.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HUNTED WITH DOGS

The great day broke. In distant steadings there was a stirring of cheerful men. Uchtred sat on Clashdaan and saw the milkmaid call the cattle. He watched the blue peat-reek go upward when the pots were set a-boiling for the early break of fast. On the hillside opposite the red fox looked out of her den, and the Wild Man saw. He marked the white mountain-hare drop into her form, and knew the moment when his hand would tighten about her neck as surely as though he already heard her scream with terror like a babe.

It was the day when Randolph Dowall was to hunt his brother. With bloodhound and with swart hill-gypsy the Wild Man was to be run down, for only so could Randolph win to the heritage. Also he desired to wed his brother's wife. At the thought his heart became as water, so greatly did he yearn for her. Randolph knew that in the fair dwelling of Garthland was no security with Uchtred ranging at his wild will on Clashdaan. Dead on the mountain-side he desired to see him, or chained in the madman's cell, where there are ways and means for the accomplishment of desire. Either was well.

So the hunt was up, and from Clashdaan Mad Sir Uchtred saw them come. He marked them track the covert by the burnside and scatter at the first steep rise of the mountain land. The great bloodhounds were held in leash. The common sort scoured the hill, raising the hare in their track. A great company of lawless and godless men followed them — such as

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

had often followed himself when there was a Whig to harry.

In the midst, in a blue cloak banded with gold and girt with a sword, Uchtred saw his blood brother; and from his watch-tower he gnashed upon him with his teeth for mingled hate and joy. Overhead the ravens circled and croaked.

Uchtred pointed out the hunters to the wild cat in his arms.

‘Braw work!’ he cried.

‘Hearken to the corbies crying at the break of day. The hills were red with the sun in the morn. Red the heather shall be or the even. Quick death to the common cattle that are driven to the hunt, but to the brother that hunts the man that moved with him in one mother's side — a slow, slow death, Belus, my god. We shall wait and see the corbies pyke his een, and watch and watch till the hill-fox knaws his white banes. And hear and hear the cry of the brother that hunts his twin with the dogs of war.’ And the wild cat lipped him as though she understood.

‘We shall hear him cry, Belus, my god — cry for death, not for life — for the death that will not come.’

Uchtred crouched still in his lair on Clashdaan and the hunt circled about him. The dogs had crossed the tracks of the day before and were at a loss, scattering wide for a scent, for Uchtred whom they chased had not stirred from his lair in the Wolf's Slock that morning.

He waited till the hunters were scattered over Clashdaan with a great crying that set the whaups circling and the eagles yelling to the tune of the dogs.

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

But when his brother, habited in the blue-and-gold, came near to him, Uchtred sprang up and stood erect on a rock. The wild cat leapt to his shoulder and couched grinning.

Then Uchtred of Garthland laughed a rough laugh like the clackin' of dead men's bones. And the hunt stopped all over the hill.

'Welcome, brother,' cried the madman, pointing at the man in blue. Uchtred Wanting-wit yammered and spluttered in his rage, and his hate was not like the hate of a sane man, but far more terrible. Randolph Dowall blew upon his horn and gave the order to close upon the quarry. Hearing his voice, the madman laughed again and cried:

'Hast thou brought thy god with thee, Randolph? See, I have mine,' he cried, and from his shoulder the eyes of the wild beast shone fierce and yellow even in the sunshine.

'Take him, take him! alive or dead!' cried the brother; and with good will to gain the reward the huntsmen turned.

But swifter than the mountain-hare, circling and sweeping like a bird, fled the fleet-foot Wild Man. Now bent double on the steep garries, erect on the level stretches, or headlong down the precipices, the madman sped. He ran unscathed on the points of flinty rocks. He skimmed the green swelter of the bottomless shaking bogs. He returned upon his accusers, and mocked them, gibbering at them like the wild thing that sat immovable upon his shoulder.

Once he met a bloodhound face to face and sprang over it, speeding away ere the lumbering beast could turn. Thus he played with the hunters by the hour.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

They shot with their muskets bullets of lead and buttons of silver at him, and the marksmen said that they could see them hopping off him like hail from a roof of tiles.

So the day spent itself, while all about the hill was a great crying and the hunt was up. For the reward was doubled every hour and the men kept on. Randolph Dowall cried loud his orders, and overhead the corbies cried also.

Once more there came a shouting, and Randolph saw the group collect that told him that something at last was found. He hastened thither, and there among the heather was the best of his bloodhounds, with the head bent back loose and limp on his body. So one and another was found; but Randolph, playing his last cast for Garthland and the lady of it, hunted Clashdaan till he hunted it alone. The star of eve was looking out when on the side of the Black Garry, where perilously the grey stones are poised, his foot set a boulder rolling and he fell. Headlong he fell till he was caught in a cleft and the stone fell upon his leg. He heard the sharp grind of bones that snap, and the life within him seemed to crack like a matchlock at the back of his ear.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BROTHER AND BROTHER

When Randolph Dowall awoke there was a mighty stillness. The hills were grey dark, and he heard no sound except the rush of a waterfall very far away. Randolph Dowall wondered where he was. Then he remembered that he was on the side of Clashdaan with a broken leg. The stars were winking above, and his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light.

He was wet with the dew and he shivered.

He lay in a cleft between two deep walls of rock, and he looked up the chasm through which he had fallen. There was a spark of steady fire there. In a little he saw two. He could not take away his eyes. A grey shape grew slowly out of the darkness. Randolph Dowall saw the matted locks, the naked arms, the twisted limbs of his mad brother; and on his shoulder a black and horrible beast with glowing eyes. Randolph moved his body as though he would have fled from the horror. He prayed that God might take him quick to hell, and hide him far away from the face of the brother whom he had hunted with hounds and whose wife he had coveted and tempted. He tried to speak, but his tongue was a stick and clove to the roof of his mouth. He tried to pray; but the fiery eyes set steadily on him in the darkness of Clashdaan sucked his heart empty of prayer. That there was no pity for him in the universe, he knew. So the brothers watched one another the night through, silent, in the hate of each other, on Clashdaan where it is very silent. Only a

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

raven hopped about and whetted a great beak, sharp as a pick, upon the dark rocks.

Then at last Uchtred of Garthland crawled nearer and looked into his brother's soul; and it was to Randolph Dowall as though Death himself had lowered a bony face beside his own and looked him in the eyes.

'Uchtred,' he pleaded, winning to speech at last in his despair, 'do you remember that you and I ran about the braes together?'

But the madman only laughed, a laugh terrible and derisive, and below one of the dying bloodhounds lifted up his head and howled. This Randolph took for answer. He had hunted his brother with dogs.

Then the pain of his crushed leg was so great that Randolph had cried aloud, but that he was afraid of the raven with the beak of steel. 'Uchtred,' he said again, 'think of the wife who has lain in your bosom, and waits you now at Garthland. Have pity.'

And the Wild Man crept nearer to his brother till he was squatted, a hideous shape, at his very head. And then there came to Randolph a memory of how he had tried to win that brother's wife from her allegiance, following her in bower and hall, compassing her with observance, that he might win to his brother's seat and lie in his brother's bed.

And beneath them the wounded dog howled again for answer.

'The little children — the bairns at Garthland — Helen and Isbel, and Pierce that rides on a horse like a man, have you forgotten them, Uchtred, my brother?'

So hopelessly and pitifully he tried to rouse the madman to mercy. But the rather he angered him

instead. He reached out a cold and clammy hand to his brother's throat. Randolph shuddered as the wet and hairy hand clutched at him, plucking at his throat. It was like a beast's claw. For a moment his life wavered in the balance like an aspen leaf on an October gossamer, for the spirit of the wild beast on his shoulder had entered into Uchtred the madman.

But he withdrew his hand, for in the darkness far down he heard a bell ring. He lifted his head and listened. Yes, he heard it; he — Mad Uchtred of Garthland. It was a sweet church-bell. When had he heard it — surely long ago, in another life? It was the church-bell at Kirkchrist, and he heard his mother's voice calling him from his play, 'Come, Uchtred; come, Randolph! Be ready to go to the house of God in company.'

So wild Sir Uchtred withdrew himself from his brother a little way and sat on a knoll to think over the matter. It was not possible to hear the ringing of the Kirkchrist bell from the steeps of Clashclaan. The grey inconceivable night swarmed about him with voices. The hounds of hell gave tongue in his brain.

'Kill him!' they cried; 'he is in thy power. He hunted thee with dogs. He sought to take thy heritage and thy wife — to dispossess thy children.'

The beast on his shoulder licked him in a wild caress and put the yearning of her fierce blood into him.

But ever through the sweet stinging thoughts of his brother's life, ebbing under his hands, as that of the hounds had ebbed that day, there came hindering him the sweet bells of Christ's Kirk of Machermore; and the voice of a mother called her little lads from the playing-fields: 'Uchtred!

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

Randolph! come hither to me.' And for a moment in the madman's eyes something other than madness woke.

The wild cat leapt from his shoulder and prowled restlessly up and down, trailing a limb. Her head was low down to the ground. She went and snuffed at the wounded man's face.

'Belus,' cried Uchtred of Garthland, quickly, 'come hither!' But first the beast laid a broad foot like velvet on the neck of Randolph, and through the velvet like a circle of steel points he felt the unsheathed claws. The three-pointed scarlet mark stood out ever after on the paleness of his skin.

Apart on a knoll Mad Uchtred sat, and the universe worked turbidly about him and within. Sometimes he heard the thunder rattle, and anon it changed into the thinner noise of musketry. He was giving the order to fire. The hill folk were kneeling on the brown bent with the napkins about their eyes. Then he heard a loud silence, and through the thunder-cloud the face of very God looked through to see Uchtred Dowall's handiwork dabbled with something dark, lying on the heather where the martyrs had fallen. And Uchtred of Garthland for the first time understood some part of his punishment.

Before him the lame beast prowled restlessly and trailed a limb. At his feet, a little way off, his brother moaned without hope. Yet in a moment the great thunder-cloud of his black life rolled itself up like a scroll, and passed away in burning fire. The clear spaces of the heavens brightened with a calmer radiance. He saw his brother's face nearer. It was grey and pallid like the face of a man upon his bier. It made him think of his father stretched out as he

had seen him with the corpse-lights burning about him. He had not thought Randolph like his father before, but the likeness came out plainly now.

The heavens spread a great clearness over his head. The stars withdrew themselves further from him. The day-break grew more conspicuous. The wild, maimed beast prowled further off. Again he heard the church-bells ring, and his mother's voice calling as from the sky, 'Uchtred! Randolph! come hither to me.' His brother lay beneath him in the clear morning — the brother that had hunted him; and, lo! he did not hate him any more. He looked about for Belus; but the wild thing: had left him and he was alone with his brother, and with such thoughts of his mother as he had not thought for years.

Wild Uchtred came nearer to his brother. There was a great stone crushing his leg as it had bruised it all night. Randolph lay back with his eyes closed — white as though already in the sleep of death. Uchtred set his strength to the stone and dislodged it easily as a child's ball. It went bounding down the gorge, and the echoes clashed upwards.

His brother's broad hat had fallen aside and lay on the heather. Uchtred took it and filled it at a spring among the rocks. Then he came again and gave his brother to drink. He took a hunting-knife and cut away his brother's foot-gear. The foot swung loose and soft, but swollen and discoloured. There came back to Sir Uchtred some of his ancient skill as a leech. He took his brother's foot in both his hands, moving it from side to side. Randolph Dowall moaned with the access of pain, and the face of him twitched.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

With a sudden access of determination, Uchtred set his knee to the rock and pulled. The joint shot back with the noise of a pistol snapping, and his brother gave a lamentable cry. But the madman had set the limb.

Thus the heart of the man whom they had counted a beast and hunted with dogs awoke to pity. He laid his brother's head higher, and wove strips of the torn clothing which he had cut from the limb for a bandage for the wound. Then he pillowed his brother's head upon a bundle of heather, that it might rest more easily. And ever in his head rang the bells of Machermore, and the voice of his mother cried to him, 'Uchtred! go thou and help thy brother to rise, for he is fallen.'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WHERE A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD

It was Sabbath morn, and he knew not where to go. Over the moor and the hill he sped him, till he found himself by the little church of Kirkchrist, near the side of the water of Cree — for in the three years that Uchtred had been a beast upon the mountains the curse of the Stuarts had passed away. There once was again a sound of sweet singing in the kirk, with no man to make the worshippers afraid. Uchtred came near, and sat with his face between his hands. He caught the words clearly. They said:

God is our refuge and our strength, In straits a present aid; Therefore although the earth remove, We will not be afraid.

They were the very words he had heard ere he had ridden into the kirk of Kirkchrist. Alexander Renfield was again in his own pulpit. He had opened that which he had closed, and which none had entered since the day on which he laid his arrestment upon the pulpit door and the curse of God fell. God had indeed been the refuge and the strength of his people; and though some had died with the bandages about their eyes, and some looking into the belching mouths of the muskets, yet they had not been afraid.

But they were far more afraid that day when they told Alexander Renfield that the mad persecutor was without, sitting with his head between his knees.

'The Lord hath bowed him,' said Alexander Renfield; 'perhaps He hath brought him here this

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

day that his devil may be cast out. All things are possible to God. Our God is a strong Lord.'

They told him that none dared to go near.

'Let us sing the songs of David,' he said. 'It may be that as the evil spirit left Saul at the sound of the harp of David, so he may flee away from the singing of the holy psalm.'

So they sang sweet songs of repentance and return, to old tunes which Uchtred of Garthland had sung when he was an innocent boy and went to the house of God with his mother. Then they sang the song which every child in Scotland learns first, and every Scottish ancient dies with upon his lips:

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want; He makes me down to lie In pastures green; he leadeth me The quiet waters by.

Then they told Alexander Renfield that they heard the madman weeping like a lost soul an hour after the Doom is sealed.

'God is loosening his chains,' said the preacher, 'and breaking his bands in sunder. Let us pray.'

And all the people stood and prayed with bowed heads. A tremor passed over them all when they saw Uchtred of Garthland, whom yesterday the hunters had hunted with dogs, fling up his hands above his head and fall prone on the earth.

'Bide ye here,' said the minister; 'I will go to him and speak with him.'

But they pled on him not to do the thing; for they said, 'Surely he will turn and rend thee.'

But Alexander Renfield put them aside, saying, 'God has bidden me. His servant, go to speak with the man whom He hath cursed.' So he went towards the madman; but when Uchtred saw him come he rose up and fled away with exceeding swiftness.

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

So the minister turned him about and came back. 'We have not prayed enough. Our faith is weak. Let us return to our solemn exercises,' he said.

Then it came to Alexander Renfield from the Lord that they should send for the Lady of Garthland. And so they brought her from the meeting-house where by stealth and hood-winking permission they still held prelatie services.

Philippa came leading babe Isbel in her hand, and wise Helen walked sedately by. But Pierce ran on before.

When she came and saw her husband, she laid her hand on her heart to still it, and said to the people, 'Sing again to him, and I will lead you in the psalm which I taught the children.'

So again there arose the sweet sound of singing in that wild place; and, as though drawn by the bands of a man, Uchtred of Garthland again drew near.

Then the Lady Philippa took Pierce by the hand to bid him go to his father and take him by the hand.

'Little Pierce,' she said, 'my son — go thou and take by the hand that man who sits naked on the brae, girt about with skins, and lead him hither. He is thy father!'

And the people cried on her bitterly, saying, 'He will assuredly kill the child and tear him to pieces.'

But the child's mother, though her heart yearned over her firstborn son, who was even yet but a babe, turned and rebuked them, saying, 'Let the child do his mother's will and God's. Who are ye to say the Almighty and Philippa Dowall nay!'

For her husband was to her only less than her God. Sometimes she prayed that he might indeed be less.

MAD SIR UCHTRED OF THE HILLS

So little Pierce Dowall, who was five years old and had never known fear, went to obey his mother. It was a little thing to bid a man rise up and come to his mother, while all stood afar off and waited to see what the end would be.

The boy went slowly, looking briskly up the while to see the man he was to bring Uchtred lifted his head and was staring at the lad through the matted locks upon his head and the wilderness of his beard. He half rose to flee. But little Pierce Dowall waved his hand and cried to him, 'Do not be afraid, poor man. I will give you my hand and not hurt you at all!'

So, though he was truly greatly afraid, Uchtred of Garthland waited. The little one came close up to him, and put out his hand. He took it and stood up his own man again, and God's, because his own little child had taken him by the hand.

'Now come with me!' Pierce said; and, like one who obeys without questioning, he followed. Then when he saw him come, the minister caught up his great cloak, which he had used to wrap about himself in the hill caves, and went forward to meet Uchtred. When Pierce came leading the man that had been mad and accursed, Alexander Renfield threw the great cloak about his shoulders. Then taking him by the other hand and coming near to the people he said, 'Let us pray;' and all the people stood up to pray. Only Pierce kneeled because he was but a little child, and with him in the midst kneeled Sir Uchtred of Garthland, and Philippa his wife sank on her knees beside him and set her wifely arm about his neck.

And when she arose the evil spirit from the Lord had gone out of him. His tongue was loosed, and

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

twelve strong men were sent to bring his brother home from off Clashdaan.

Then they all fell on his neck, kissing and weeping — all save his little son Pierce, who said, 'Now shall my father ride with me, and I shall be his companion.' Now Philippa lived long and happily with Uchtred, and he was a wise man and great in the land, though he never loved the Whigs or the Dutch. And his wife never thought that she had done any great thing. But God knew, and also Uchtred of Garthland, whom they had hunted with dogs in the wild places of Clashdaan.

Also available in Galloway Raiders digital format:

CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF THE COMPLETE CROCKETT

- 1893 The Stickit Minister and some common men
- 1894 Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills
- 1894 The Play Actress
- 1894 The Raiders
- 1894 The Lilac Sunbonnet
- 1895 Bog Myrtle and Peat
- 1895 A Galloway Herd
- 1895 Men of the Moss Hags
- 1896 Cleg Kelly
- 1896 The Grey Man
- 1896 Sweetheart Travellers
- 1897 Lads' Love
- 1897 Lochinvar
- 1897 Sir Toady Lion
- 1898 The Red Axe
- 1898 The Standard Bearer
- 1899 The Black Douglas
- 1899 Kit Kennedy
- 1899 Ione March
- 1900 Joan of the Sword Hand
- 1900 Stickit Minister's Wooing
- 1900 Little Anna Mark
- 1901 Cinderella
- 1901 The Firebrand
- 1901 Love Idylls
- 1901 The Silver Skull
- 1902 The Dark o' the Moon
- 1902 Flower o' the Corn
- 1903 The Adventurer in Spain
- 1903 The Banner of Blue

1904 Love of Miss Anne
1904 Strong Mac
1904 Raiderland
1904 Red Cap Tales
1905 Maid Margaret
1905 The Cherry Ribband
1905 Kid McGhie
1905 Sir Toady Crusoe
1906 White Plumes of Navarre
1907 Me and Myn
1907 Little Esson
1907 Vida
1908 Deep Moat Grange
1908 Princess Penniless
1908 Bloom o' the Heather
1908 Red Cap Adventures
1909 The Dew of Their Youth
1909 Men of the Mountain
1909 Seven Wise Men
1909 My Two Edinburghs
1909 Rose of the Wilderness
1910 Young Nick and Old Nick
1911 The Lady of a 100 Dresses
1911 Love in Pernicketty Town
1911 The Smugglers
1912 Anne of the Barricades
1912 Sweethearts at Home
1912 The Moss Troopers
1913 Sandy's Love
1913 A Tatter of Scarlet
1914 Silver Sand

POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATIONS

- 1915 Hal o' the Ironsides
- 1917 The Azure Hand
- 1920 The White Pope
- 1926 Rogues' Island
- 2016 Peter the Renegade

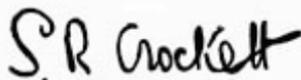
Find out more about Crockett's life literature and legacy at:

www.gallowayraiders.co.uk

www.srcrockett.weebly.com

and The Galloway Raiders YouTube channel at www.youtube.com

'Mayhap that is the best fortune of all – to be loved by a few greatly and constantly, rather than to be loudly applauded and immediately forgotten by the many.'

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S.R. Crockett". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the "S" and "R" being particularly prominent.