



Then King Rory McCollm stands, white-faced, grasping his bleeding hand. "I AM STILL YOUR KING!" He shouts defiantly. Prince Valiant stands ready, puzzled that such a warrior as Rory would quit a fight for so small a wound.



Then he becomes aware that angry voices are raised against him! Even the many enemies of Rory object to a lone foreigner naming an Irish king!



Once again death comes very close to Val. Above the roar a voice, clear and commanding, is heard, and Patrick walks forward. "Rory McCollm is king only by his own proclamation. The fess of Cashel is called to confirm him king or elect one more worthy than this godless man."



"According to the laws of your forefathers, an Irish king must be just, brave and without any blemish..... and Rory McCollm is named!" For the first time and probably the last the saintly Patrick interferes in an affair of state.



"This Christian knight spoke truly. Irish raiders have fairly earned the enmity of our neighbors. Ireland stands helpless should they seek vengeance!"



There is silence in the great hall, save for the vibrant voice of Patrick as he makes his plea for a united land. He put an end to raiding and united them in one faith. But never could he heal the age-long enmity of one clan against another.



Val slips away to find horses for himself and his two squires. They must escape, and quickly, for not even Patrick can stay the vengeance of Rory McCollm and his followers!

NEXT WEEK: Escape.



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