

**THE SHADOW OF THE
SWORD. A ROMANS. IN
THREE VOLUMES, VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649703029

The Shadow of the Sword. A Romans. In Three Volumes, Vol. II by Robert Buchanan

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Cover @ 2017

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ROBERT BUCHANAN

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SWORD. A ROMANS. IN
THREE VOLUMES, VOL. II**

THE
SHADOW OF THE SWORD.

A Romance.

BY
ROBERT BUCHANAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—Vol. II.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1876.

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THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE STORMY NIGHT (*Continued*).

LOSE to the edge of the cliffs—held down by ropes attached to enormous stones—stood a huge cage of iron, in which burnt a fire of bog oak, bushes of furze, and dry sods of peat; and surrounding it, as the flame leaped and darted in the wild breath of the tempest, were seven or eight men and two or three old women. Some, running round and round the cage, momentarily shut out the light from the sea; others sat on the grass glaring

at the flame, their features horribly illuminated; and one *groach*, or old woman, like a very Witch of Endor, was leaning forward over the flame and chattering wildly as she warmed her skinny hands.

Within a few yards of this group stood a low menhir, partly sheltering them from the torrents of rain; and crawling up close in the shadow of this, Rohan listened and watched.

"Bad luck to Penruach this night!" said a voice. "It is too dark out there even to see our fire."

"That's as St. Lok wills," croaked the old woman. "If he means to send us luck, the luck will come."

Rohan shuddered. He knew his company now. The creatures on whom he gazed were fishers from Penruach, whose wrecking propensities even the severe laws passed after the Revolution had never been able to extinguish, and who regarded every passing ship as legitimate plunder. This St. Lok of theirs, by whom the old crone swore, had been a wrecker too; for, if tradition was to be believed, he was an

antique Christian who spent his time in luring to destruction the ships of infidel invaders, and who was presently canonized for his pains!

Outside the point of vantage where this group gathered, stretched for miles one black neck of fatal reefs, partially covered and partially submerged. Dark as the night was, Rohan could see the flashing of foam-white breakers far out at sea; and wherever the horrible light from the cage fell in one long stream across the water, it shone only on the whiteness of broken foam or on black edges of rock.

Rohan hesitated. He knew and loathed the horrible work the creatures were about, but he was also cognizant of his own danger and wished to act with caution. His resolution was soon taken, and he acted upon it at once.

"Lok! Lok! send us a ship!" cried another woman, using the first line of an old distich. "St. Lok is deaf, it seems!" she added bitterly.

"Don't cry so loud, mother," cried a man.

"'Tis enough to waken the dead. Come, drink! Luck to St. Lok, and luck to the men of Penruach!"

A bottle was passed across to the woman, and she raised it to her lips. As she did so a wild shriek, startling and shrill, broke upon the night. All, men and women alike, leaped panic-stricken to their feet.

"See!" shrieked a man. "*An æl du! an æl du!*"* and he pointed at the menhir.

On the very top of the stone stood a gigantic figure waving its arms, with an unearthly scream. Its form seemed misshapen and bloody, its face glared horribly. Elevated so high, it seemed unspeakably terrible, and the boldest man there was panic-stricken.

"It is St. Lok himself!" shrieked one, flying past into the night.

"*An æl du! an æl du!*" said the others, stumbling, shrieking, flying, scattering themselves like foam into the darkness.

In a minute the place was deserted, and Rohan, with a wild laugh, leaped down.

* Breton name for the devil.