

CHAPTER IX.

Laurence sang a hymn. (Copyright, 1898, by S. R. Crockett.) Laurence turned and beheld his brother in another instant the two young men had

In a minute the brothers had become the center of a riotous laughing throng of various archers, bowmen, and squires, and

"What means this hubbub, I say? Quid you hold there and come with me. My lord of Angus shall settle this dispute!"

He had come up just when the young men were in the final crisis. Sholto, at last having gotten his bow in his hands, was

Meantime Sholto had recovered from his surprise, and the crowd of varlets was melting away, thinking the Angus marshal some one of consequence.

"Take him on the right, Sholto," cried Laurence, "and I will help him from this side." The red Angus drew his sword and

Laurence coolly disengaged his brother and began to thrash the Angus man with his own staff upon all exposed parts till the dry wattle broke.

Whereas one of the company who had been witness to their treatment of the Angus marshal and also of Laurence's encounter with the knight of the black armor, was seized incontinently with a fit of coughing

feared man, with mean and shifty eyes. He sat his horse awkwardly, perpetually touching his shoulders forward as if he feared to fall over his horse's head.

Then amid the shouting of the people there appeared on a milk-white palfrey, Margaret, the earl's only sister, already famous over all Scotland as "the fair maid of Galloway."

Behind came the whole array of the knights and barons who own allegiance to the Douglas-Herons and Maxwell, Ardwell Macduffs, Gordons from the Glen of Kells, with Agnews and MacDowalls from the shireside.

Some one immediately took the abbot by the elbow and slanted in his ear that this was the company he desired to see.

"What wants old Marrowbones with our Laurie?" he muttered. "Surely he cannot have gotten into mischief with the lazes clerk. But those who knew him best agreed that he had a far road to travel."

But the lady who rode on a white palfrey between these two took all men's regard, even in the presence of a marshal of France and a herald of the king of Scots.

It was the lady of the pavilion underneath the pine, the lady of the evening light and the midnight storm.

She was no longer clothed in simple white, but arrayed like a king's daughter. The knightly part of the great master had gone back to their tents and lodgings.

On her head was a high peaked coiffure, from which there flowed down a graceful curl of finest lace. This, even as the earl looked at her, she caught at with a bewitching gesture and brought over her shoulder

"What will the abbot and Maitis think of this?" he said, half aloud. And he turned him about in order to look upon the face of his master armorer.

CHAPTER X. The Ambassador of France. The earl had almost arrived at the pavilion erected at the southern end of the jousting meadow when a gust of cheering

Presently, however, and before David Douglas's return, shouts of "Avondale! Avondale!" from the men of Luarnakbire informed the young earl of the name of one of at least those who had arrived.

"I hope, at least," he said in a low voice to Maitis, who stood half a step behind him, "that my cousins Will and James have come with him. They are good men for a tourney and worth breaking a lance with."

By this time the banners of the visitors could be seen crossing the fords of Lochar, while high advanced above all private persons the standards could be seen the royal banner of Scotland, and close beside the rampant lion, the lilies of France.

Behind him came his eldest son William, of Scotland, courteous, quick, high and stern. Then followed James, whose little body and wondrous dexterity in arms was already winning him repute as one of the bravest knights in all Christendom

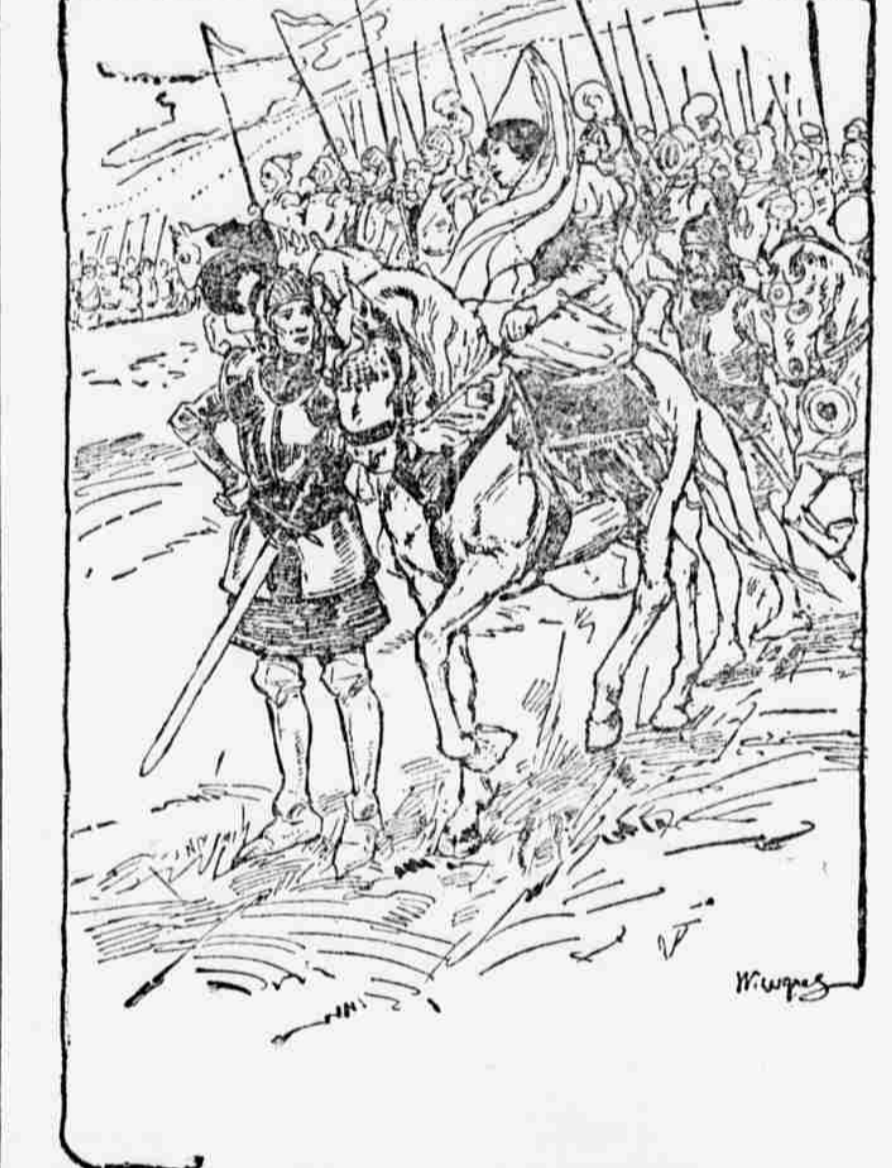
CHAPTER XI. Mistress Maud Lindsey. The sports of the first days of the great wappanash were over. The Lord James Douglas, second and third in rank of the tourney, by unhorsing all his opponents without even breaking a lance.

It was a strange and varied company which rode home to Thrieve to receive the hospitality of the young earl of Douglas, the duke of Touraine. The castle itself being no more than a military fortress, containing, in addition to the soldiers' quarters, only the apartments designed for the family (and scant enough of those), could not of course accommodate so great a company.

His mother, the countess of Douglas, who knew nothing of the occurrences of the night of the great storm, or guessed at the suspicion of wither and diablerie, which made a hell of the breast of Maitis, the master armorer, received her son's guests with distinguished courtesy.

Strangely enough, the first thought that came to the Earl Douglas after his first surprise was one in which triumph was blended with mingled awe.

"What will the abbot and Maitis think of this?" he said, half aloud. And he turned him about in order to look upon the face of his master armorer.



HE TOOK THE REINS OF HER PALFREY AND LED HER TO THE STAND.

der if the heart of the young man expanded within him. Presently, soon after the arrival of the cavalcade, the wappanash was set in array, and, company by company, the lord Douglas extended as far as the eye could reach from north to south along the side of the broad and sluggish moving river.

Sholto, who, in virtue of his courage and good marksmanship had been placed over the archer company which waited on the right of the ford, led in behind the cortege of the earl. He was first man of all to have his equipment examined and his weapons obtained, as they deserved the commendation of his lord, and the grim, unwelcome approval of Maitis, the master armorer, whose unerring eye could not detect so much as a speck on a shirt of mail or a grain of rust on the waist piece of shining steel.

Then the earl rode down the lines, and Sholto, remembering the encounter above the dunes of the roadway, breathed more freely when he saw his father's back.

CHAPTER XII. The Breach of Balmaghie. By 10 of the clock the braes of Balmaghie were a sight most glorious to look upon. Well nigh 12,000 men were gathered there, of whom 5,000 were well mounted knights and fully equipped men-at-arms, every man of them ready to thrust a lance or ride a charge.

The line of the tents which had been set up extended from wall to wall, opposite the bland castle of Thrieve to the kirk-hill of Balmaghie. Every knight's following was strictly kept within its own pale or fence of green wattle and basket wire, pointed and thrust into the earth like the trap spring of those who mowlawards. Many also were the quarrels and bickerings of the squires who had been sent forward to choose and arrange the several encampments. Nor were rough and tumble fights, such as we have seen the MacKims indulging in, thought derogatory to the dignity of any save belted knights.

ever eager to keep near to her fair "gouvernante," for the ambassador of the king of France had but one look upon her, so strange and searching that Margaret, though not naturally timid and easily moved, brought up her two royal embassiers from the king of France and the ambassador of the king of Scotland. I have the honor to present to you Marshal Gilles de Reiz, ambassador of the most Christian king, Charles VII, who will presently deliver his master's message to you.

The marshal, who till now had kept his visor down, slowly raised it, and revealed a face which, after being once seen, could never afterward be banished from the memory. It was a large gray-white countenance, with high cheek bones and colorless lips, which were continually working one upon the other. Black eyes were set close together under heavy, hairless brows, and a long, thin nose curved between them, like the beak of an unclean bird.

"I am Sir James Irving of Drum, and I stand here on behalf of Sir Alexander Livingstone, tutor and guardian of the king of Scots, to invite your friendship and aid. Lord Clifton, some time since banished from this realm, hath rebelled against the royal authority and fortified him in Edinburgh castle. So, both Sir Alexander Livingstone and the most noble lady, the queen mother, desire the assistance of the great power of the earl of Douglas to suppress this rebellion.

CHAPTER XIII. The long files of horsemen threaded their way down the hill and on to the tower toward the open space in front of Thrieve castle, the points of their spears shining high in the air and the shafts so thick that seen from a distance they made a network of slender lines reticulated against the sun.

The great island fortress of the Douglases was, as the earl of Douglas had supposed, as a fortress and dignity as a residence. Archibald, the Grim, who built the keep, could not have foreseen the wondrous beauty and strength to which Thrieve had attained under his successors. This night of the wappanash the lofty gray walls hung with gaily colored tapestries draped from the overhanging gallery of wood which ran round the top of the castle. From the four corners of the roof flew the banners of four provinces which owned the sway of the mighty house, Galloway, Annandale, Lanark and the Marches, while from the center, on a taller flagstaff than any, flew the standard royal, for so it might be called, the hearts and stars of the Douglases more than royal house.

The outer walls thus blazed with color, and the woods around gave back the constant reverberation of arms and of hand guns and artillery of weight the garrison greeted the return of the earl and his guests. The green castle island from end to end was thick with tents and gay with pavilions of many hues and various design, the walls covered with gaily colored tapestries of the colors of its owners, while on poles without dangled shields and harness of various kinds, ready for the younger squires to clean and oil for the use of their masters on the remaining days of the tournament.

Sholto waited at the bridge head, impatient with the press, and eager to be left alone with his own thoughts, that he might go over the words and looks of his heart's idol, and with a little private study could out of her hard-heartedness. Suddenly passed backward from lip to lip, according to the universal, and, indeed, obligatory, custom of the time, there reached him the "passing of the word." He heard his own name repeated over and over in fifty voices and tones, waxing louder as the "word" neared him.

"Sholto MacKim—Sholto MacKim, son of Maitis, the armorer, wanted to speak with the earl. Sholto MacKim—Sholto MacKim—A great noise of forty-five hiltian men with a mouth like a gash, shouted in his very ear." (To be Continued.)

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