



The Black Douglas By S. R. Crockett.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

William, sixth earl of Douglas, in crossing his estates, chances upon a beautiful lady, one of the retainers of the French ambassador, who is on his way to Edinburgh.

who need most to end this matter—you, my lord of Avondale, will you deign to deliver your mind upon the matter?

CHAPTER XXV.

The Dogs and the Wolf Hold Council. It was a week or two after the date of the great Wappenshaw and tourney at the castle of Thrieve that in the midmost golden haze of a summer's afternoon four men sat talking together about a table in a room of the royal palace at Edinburgh.

"And for this will I deliver into your hands William Douglas."

The fourth was speaking, and his aspect, strange and oftentimes terrifying, is already familiar to us. He is the pallid, corpulent, like face, the blue-black beard, the wild beast look in the eyes of the Marshal de Retz, ambassador of the king of France, were now more than ever heightened in effect by the studied suavity of demeanor with which he was chiding the king.

"Yes, Sir Alexander, I see you have not forgot. The words, 'if dog eat dog, what should the lion care?' made us every cat's paw throughout broad Scotland."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Lion Tamer. On this summer afternoon the girl's beauty seemed more wondrous and magical than ever. Her eyes were purple black like the berries of the deadly nightshade seen in the twilight.

"To the most noble William, earl of Douglas and duke of Touraine, greeting! In the name of King James the Second, whom God preserve, and in order that the realm may have peace, Sir William Crichton, chancellor of Scotland, and Sir Alexander Livingston, governor of the king's person, do invite and humbly entreat the earl of Douglas to come to the city of Edinburgh, with such following as shall seem good to him, in order that he may be duly invested with the office of lieutenant general of the kingdom."

CHAPTER XXVII.

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"I have that at hand which hath already tamed the lion, and is able to lead him into the cage with cords of silk."

duke, into whose mouth hath hardly yet come the spirit of living. This is the tale I have heard a thousand times: There was in France, it skills not where, a vale quiet as a summer Sabbath day. The vines hung ripe clustered. The olives rustled gray on the slopes. The bell swung in the monastery tower, and the cottage in the dell was safe as the chateau on the hill. Then came the foreign leader of an army, and in a day, there were a hundred dead men in the valley, all honorable men, slain in defense of their own doors. The shock of flames broke through the roof in the daylight. There was heard the crying of women. And the man who wrought this was an earl of Douglas.

my Lord Maxwell will move no hand. There remains therefore only Galloway, and my son William will answer for that. I, myself, am old and fat and love not fighting, but this shall be my part, and assuredly not the least."

He far more than either her elder son or her little daughter, whom, indeed, she left entirely to the care of Maud Lindsey.



"SO I WILL DELIVER WILLIAM DOUGLAS INTO YOUR HANDS."

score to settle with William, earl of Douglas—as hath also my master, Louis the Dauphin.

"Come you from the town of Edinburgh," asked the earl quickly.

which he knew so well. Who might not be at hand to aid her to blow out her lamp when the guards were set of new in the corridors of Thrieve?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the Castle Roof. Maud Lindsey parted from Sholto upon the roof of the keep. She had gone up hither to watch the cavalcade ride off, where none could see her, and Sholto, noting the flutter of something white by the battlements, ran up a thither, pretending that he had forgotten something, though he was indeed fully armed and ready to mount and ride.

"Do as I bid you, sir captain," was the earl's short rejoinder, "you have my orders."

"I cannot put him out of my mind, even when I would."

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Young Man's Fate. The young man who had been with the earl of Douglas, and who was now in the hands of the French ambassador, was now being taken to the castle of Thrieve.

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proachfully, "you will forget us, whom you leave behind you here. Indeed, you care not, so that you are to be under the world and taste new pleasures. As to be a man indeed! Would that I had been born one!"