

The Black Douglas

By S. R. Crockett.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

William, sixth earl of Douglas, falls in love with the Lady Sybilla, the niece of the French ambassador...

"His, Sir Sholto MacKinn, while you stand about in the rain and shiver under your cloak, I am off to find out the mystery..."

Laurence and Gilles de Sille rode out of Paris by the Versailles road, and the latter insisted on silence till they were past the forest of St. Cyr...

James of Avondale thought with some truth within himself that the others had greater interests in the quest than he had...

CHAPTER XLV.

The head of Gilles de Sille was still swathed in bandages when, with an additional swaddling hand across his eyes, he and Laurence...

The fugitives found the Hotel de Pomie practically deserted. They approached it cautiously from the back lest they should run into the arms of any of the numerous enemies of the terrible lord...

"What—gone my master gone?" cried Gilles striking his hand on his thigh with an astounded air, "Impossible!"

"He said that he went to Tiffauges. Whether that be true, you have better means of knowing than I."

"How much money have you, Master O'Halloran? I have spent all mine and the city winks at me for not lending me a single sou for my expenses..."

"I have ten golden angels, which the prior of my convent gave me at my departure," said Laurence, with some pride.

"That will see us through—that is, with care. Give them here to me," he added, after a moment's thought...

"Wait till there is necessity," he replied caustically, "and then they are lacking. Till then they are quite safe with me. I have them in a secret place in to be gotten at hastily..."

Gilles de Sille turned away with some movement of impatience, yet without saying another word upon the subject.

"To the stables!" he said, turning to the concierge. "I suppose we can have horses to ride after my lord?"

"So far as I am concerned," growled Labor, "you can have all the horses you want—and break my neck if you wish of them if you will..."

And this saying, he turned and went out with more care than being of the country through which he pass."

But Laurence, though headlong and reckless, had not been born a Scot for naught. "Wait till there is necessity," he replied caustically...



CAESAR MARTIN TELLS OF HIS WIFE, THE WEIR-WOLFE.

himself. I warrant the rascals who ran away would smart right soundly for leaving me behind. For Gilles de Sille is no simpleton. He knows more than a written canon in the catechism of holy church. None can touch my favor with my lord, no matter what they testify against me...

As the three Scots looked into the stockaded entrance of the village they could see the children playing on the long, irregular street, and the elder folk sitting about their doors in the evening light.

But as soon as the clatter of the horses' hoofs were heard, borne from far down the aisles of the forest, there arose a sudden clamor and a crying. From each door rushed forth a woman who snatched a boy here and there and drove a little herd of children before her indoors, glancing around and behind her as she did so with the anxious look of a motherly barndoor fowl when the hawk hangs poised in the windless sky.

By the time the three men had entered the gate and ridden up the village street all was silent and dark. The windows were shut. The doors were barred and the village had become a street of living tombs.

"What means this?" said the Lord James, "the people are surely afraid of us."

"'Tis doubtless that their wonted welcome to their lord, the Sieur de Retz. He seems to be popular wherever he goes," said Malle, grimly, "but let us dismount and see if we can get stabling for our beasts. Did they not tell us there was not another house for miles betwixt here and Macheocul?"

"So, without waiting for dissent or counter opinion, the master armorer went directly up to the door of the best appearing house in the village, one which stood a little back from the road, and was surrounded by a wall. Here he dismounted and knocked loudly with his sword hilt upon the outer gate. The noise reverberated up and down the street and was tossed back in undiminished volume from the green wall of pines which stood up about the village."

But there was no answer, and Malle grew rapidly weary and impatient.

Nor had he long to wait. For just as the sun was setting they rode all three abreast into the little hamlet of St. Philbert and saw the sullen waters of the Riang de Grande Lulle spread marshy and brackish, as far as the eye could reach, edged by black peat bogs and scrubby, perilously by gloomy pines nodding over pools blacker than scorpion's ink.

As the three Scots looked into the stockaded entrance of the village they could see the children playing on the long, irregular street, and the elder folk sitting about their doors in the evening light.

But as soon as the clatter of the horses' hoofs were heard, borne from far down the aisles of the forest, there arose a sudden clamor and a crying. From each door rushed forth a woman who snatched a boy here and there and drove a little herd of children before her indoors, glancing around and behind her as she did so with the anxious look of a motherly barndoor fowl when the hawk hangs poised in the windless sky.

By the time the three men had entered the gate and ridden up the village street all was silent and dark. The windows were shut. The doors were barred and the village had become a street of living tombs.

"What means this?" said the Lord James, "the people are surely afraid of us."

"'Tis doubtless that their wonted welcome to their lord, the Sieur de Retz. He seems to be popular wherever he goes," said Malle, grimly, "but let us dismount and see if we can get stabling for our beasts. Did they not tell us there was not another house for miles betwixt here and Macheocul?"

"So, without waiting for dissent or counter opinion, the master armorer went directly up to the door of the best appearing house in the village, one which stood a little back from the road, and was surrounded by a wall. Here he dismounted and knocked loudly with his sword hilt upon the outer gate. The noise reverberated up and down the street and was tossed back in undiminished volume from the green wall of pines which stood up about the village."

But there was no answer, and Malle grew rapidly weary and impatient.

He was in danger of shaking out the rush light, which flickered most dimly in his wooden lantern.

"I am a poor, poor man," he quavered, "I have naught in the world save some barley meal and a little water."

"That will do famously," said James Douglas, "We are hungry men, and will pay well for all you give us."

The countenance of the cripple instantly changed. He looked up at the speaker with an alert expression.

"Pay—did you not say you would pay? Why, I thought you were gentlemen. Now by that I know that you are none, but of the commonalty like myself."

James Douglas took a gold angel out of his belt and threw it to him. The cripple collapsed upon the top of the piece of money and groped vainly for it with eager outspread fingers in the dust of the yard.

"I cannot find it, good gentleman," he piped, shrill as an east wind. "Alas, what shall I do? Poor Casper cannot find it. It was not a piece of gold—do tell me that it was not a piece of gold—to lose a piece of gold, that were ruin indeed!"

Sholto picked up the lantern which had slipped from his trembling hand. The tall, raw-boned man, who as it lay on his side, and in a moment showed him the gold glittering on some farm yard rubbish. With a little shrill cry like a frightened bird the old man fell upon it, as it had been with his claws.

"Bite upon it and see if the gold be good!" said Sholto smiling.

"Alas!" cried the cripple, "I have but one tooth. But I know the coin. It is of the right mintage and greatness. O, lovely gold—beautiful gentlemen. Bide here you are and I will be back with you in a moment."

And the old man limped away with astonishing quickness to hide his acquisition, lest, perhaps, his guests should repent them and retract their liberality.

CHAPTER XLVII. Caesar Martin's Wife.

Presently he returned and conducted them to a decent stable where they saw their beasts housed and well provided with fodder and forage for the night. Then the old cripple, more than ever bent upon his sick, but nevertheless chuckling to himself all the way, preceded them into the house.

"Ah, she is clever," he muttered, "she thinks her demon tells her everything. She told me that she would not let me see her till she had hidden that beautiful gold!"

So he sniggered scintillatingly to himself before he went away, and he was not long to return. It was a low, wide room of strange aspect into which the old man conducted his guests. The floor was of hard beaten earth, but cleanly kept and firm to the feet. The fireplace, with a low hearth round it of built stone, was placed in the midst, and from the ceiling depended many chains and hooks. A wooden settle ran half round the hearthstone on the side farthest from the draught of the wind. The weary three sat down and stretched their limbs. The fire had burnt brightly, and the room was warm and cheerful. Good people, we are no robbers, but poor travelers and strangers. Be not afraid. All we want is the inn that we should tell us which house is the inn that we may receive refreshments for ourselves and our horses."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Then he called to his companions. "Come hither and speak to these cravens ere I burst their inner doors as well."

Tape Worms advertisement with image of a worm.

Cascarets advertisement with image of a person.

Munyon's Guarantee advertisement with image of a person.

Best and Cheapest Route advertisement for Lehigh Valley Railroad.

Always Use advertisement for Cocoa.

Strong Drink is Death advertisement with image of a person.

Ladies' Remedy advertisement with image of a person.

Patronize Home Industries advertisement with image of a person.

Flour Mills advertisement with image of a person.

Iron Works advertisement with image of a person.

Over a Million advertisement for Dr. Hilton's Specific.

Over a Million advertisement for Dr. Hilton's Specific.

Food Dyspepsia Cure advertisement with image of a person.