

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Villiam, sixth earl of Douglas, falls in e with the niece of Marshal de Retz, sito Mackim, son of the Douglas norer, distinguishes himself in archery is made captain of the castle guard tlater he is knighted for brave conduct the tournament. Through the plots of enemies and the help of Lady Sybilia liam is lured to Castle Crichton. Sybilia ents of her agreement and urges the ingent to return home with all ed. Marshal de Retz takes Sybilia to hurgh and William accepts the invitator of the young king of Scotland to visit court. At a banquet a huge boar's dis brought in—a sign of treachery, earl and his brother are arrested and risoned. The brothers are sentenced be executed at once. Sybilia deeps her love before the court and two Douglases go forth to their Synopsis of Preceding Chapters. to be executed at once. Sybilia declares her love before the court and the two Douglases go forth to their death. Sholto stirs up the countrymen and in three days every man of the Southland is on his way to Edinburgh to avenge the young earl's death. At the gate of Castle Thrieve the three MacKims meet, tell the Lady Douglas of the loss of her sons and learn in turn from her that Maud Lindesay and little Margaret Douglas have been kidnapped by De Retz. The Lady Douglas gives Sholto a priceless suit of armor, blesses him as her son and starts him out to search for the two girls. Sholto, with his father and brother and Lord James Douglas, follow Marshal de Retz to Paris and then to Brittany. Laurence Meckim enters into service with De Retz. The search party battles with the wolves. Laurence is discovered by De Retz to be an impostor, is shown the two girls and told that if he tries to escape or help comes, the maid of Galway and Maud Lindesay will be murdered.

CHAPTER LIL.

The Taunting of La Meffraye.

It was in the White tower of Mache coul that the Scottish maidens were held at the mercy of the cruel lord of Retz. At their first arrival in the country they had been taken to the quiet chateau of Pouznuges, the birthplace of Poitou, the marshal's most cruel and remorseless confidant. Here, as the marshal truly informed the Lady Sybilla, they had been under the care of, or rather fellow prisoners with the neglected wife of Gilles de Retz, and had spent some days of comparative peace and se curity in the society of her daughter.

But at the first breath of the coming of the three strangers to the district they had been seized and secretly conveyed to Machecoul itself, there to be interned behind the vast walls and triple bastions of that fortress prison.

"I wonder, Maudie," said Margaret Douglas, as they sat on the flat roof of the White tower of Machecoul and looked over the battlements upon the green pine glades and wide seaward landes, "I wonder whether ever we shall see the water of the Dee and our mother-and Sholto MacKim?" It is to be feared that the last part of

the problem exceeded in interest all others in the eyes of Maud Lindesay. "It seemed as if we never could again behold any one we loved or wished to see here in this horrible place," sighed Maud Lindesay. "If ever I get back to the dear

land and see Solway side I will be a differ-"But, Maud," said the little maid reproachfully, "you were always good and hand. It is not well done of you to speak to Maud Lindesay. against yourself in that fashion."

Maud Lindesay shook her pretty mournfully. But the eyes of the little maid of Galloway were now fixed upon something in the

green courtyard below. "Maud-Maud, come hither quickly!" she whispered; "if yonder be not Laurence Mac-Kim talking to the singing lads and dressed like them-why then, I do not know Laur-

ence MacKim!" Maud came quickly enough now. Her face and neck blushed suddenly crimson with the springing of hope in her heart.

She looked down and there far below them, but yet distinct enough, they saw Laurence daring Blaise Renouf to single combat and vaunting his Irish prowess, as we have already seen him do. Maud Lindesay caught her companion's hand as she looked.

"They have found us," she whispered, "at least, they are seeking for us. If Laurence is here I warrant Sholto cannot be very far away. O, Margaret, am I looking very ill? Will he think I am as-(she paused for a word)-as comely as he thought me before in Scotland. Or have I grown old and ugly with being shut up?"

But the maid of Galloway heard her not She was pendering on the meaning of Laurence's presence in the castle of Mache-

"Perhaps William hath sent Laurence to duchy with an army. He is a far greater man than the marshal and will make him give us up as soon as he finds where we are. Shall I call down to Laurie to let him know that we are here?"

Mand put her hand hastlly over her companion's mouth. "Hush!" she said, "we must not appear to

know him, or they will surely kill himand perhaps the others, too. If Laurence is here I wot well that other help is not the stale scent of them comes down the wind far away. Let us be patient and abide. from afar. Ospreys fish in the waters of Come back from the wall and sit by me as if nothing had happened."

But all the same she kept her own place in a spot whence she could command the pleasaunce below, and looked to see Sholto follow his brother across the green sward.

"Sweet and fair is the air of the evening. purred behind them a low voice, that of the woman who was called La Meffraye. "It brings the color to the cheeks of the young. But I am old and wise, and I would advise that two maids so fair should not look down on the sports of the youths, lest they hear

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| and see more than is fitting for such innocent eyes!" The girls turned away without looking at their custodian, who stood leaning upon her been shut with a clang, and they could hear

her terrible soft smile.

"Ah," she said, "proud are you? 'Tis an "Ah," she said, "proud are you? Its all lift had been shaded up the bar where-ill place to bring pride to this castle of with the winding cogs of the gate were turned, and, having broken more than one man's head with it, he forced the massive day is not far distant when I shall have my pretty spitfire clinging about these old trembling knees and beseeching me, whom woods. So near capture had they been, howyou despise as a woman, either to save you ever, that they heard over and over again or kill you-you will not care which. As a the shouting of the search parties who woman—ha ha—how long is it since La scoured the woods in search of them.

Meffraye was a woman. Was she ever It was the worst feature of their situation rocked in a cradle?? Did she play about any that the Marshal de Retz certainly knew cottage door and fashion daisy chains, as you came to Machecoul or heard of the

crouches upon her prey?" She paused, and smiled still more bitterly and malevolently than before upon the two maidens.

she went on. "Aye, I know that you were awake. La Meffraye saw right carefully to that. And you heard the crying that rang out of yonder high window, from which the red light streamed all through the night. Wait-wait, my pretties, till it is your turn to be sent thither, when the shining knife is sharpened and the red fire kindled. You will not despise La Meffraye then. You will grovel and weep, and then will La Meffraye spurn you with her foot, till the noise of your crying be borne out over the forest, and for very gladness the wolves shall howl in the darkness."

The little maid of Galloway was moved to answer and her lips quivered. But Maud Lindesay sat pale and motionless, looking toward the north, from which she hoped for help to come.

"Our brother, the earl of Douglas, will bring an army from his dukedom of Touraine and sweep you and your castle from the fact of the earth if your master dares to lay so much as a finger upon us."

La Meffraye laughed a low chuckling laugh and in the act showed the four long eyeteeth which were the sole remaining dental equipment of her mouth. "O, great Barran," she chuckled, "listen

to the pretty fool! 'Our brother will do this,' 'our brother will do that. 'Our brother will lick the country of Retz clean as a dog licks a platter. Know you not, silly fool, that both your brothers are long since dead and under the sod in the castle of your city of Edinburgh. I tell you my master et his little finger upon them and crushed them like flies on a summer chamber wall! Maud Lindesay rose to her feet as La Meffraye spoke these words.

"It is not true," she cried; "you lie to us, as you have done from the first. The earl of Douglas is not dead!"

It was now little Margaret who showed the spirit of her race and put out her hand to clasp that of her elder comrade. "Do not let her even know she has power

to hurt us with her words," she whispered But a new voice broke in upon the railing

of the hideous woman-flend "Out, fool hag! Get to your own place!" it said, strong and commanding,

And the affrighted and heart-sick girls turned them about to see the Lady Sybills stand fair and pale at the head of the turret stair, which opened out upon the roof of the White tower.

At this interruption the eyes of La Meffraye seemed to burn with a fresher shines emerald stone held up to the sun. The hag shrank, however, from the outstretched finger of Sybilla de Thouars.

"Ah, fair lady," she whispered, "be not angry-and tell not my lord. I beseech you. I did but jest!"

"Hence!" the finger was still outstretched and in obedience to the threatening gesture the hag shrank away. But as she passed through the portal down the steps of the turret she flung back certain words with a defiant leer.

"Ah, you are young, my lady, and for the present-for the present your power is greater than mine. But wait! Your beauty will wither and grow old. But La Meffraye can never grow older, and when once the secret is discovered and my lord is young again La Meffrave is the one who with him shall bloom with immortal youth, while you, spy us out and is even now coming from his proud lady, lie cold in the belly of the worm!"

CHAPTER LIII.

Sybilla's Vengeance. There stands a solitary rock in which

is a cave, on the seashore of La Vendee Behind stretch the marshes and the place is shut in and desolate. Birds cry there. The herons nest upon the pine trees near by ti.1 the shallow lakes behind and the scales of their prey flash in the sun of morning as they rise dripping from the dive.

In this place Sholto, Malise and the Lord James Douglas were presently abiding. It was but a tiny cell originally formed

by two portions of marly rock fallen together in some ancient convulsion or dropped upon each other from a floating iceberg. In some former age the cleft had been a lair of wild beasts or the couch of some hairy savage hammering flint arrowheads for the chase, and drawing with sharp point upon polished bone the yet hairier mammoth he hunted. But this solitary odging in the wilderness had been enlarged in more recent times until now the interior was about eight feet square and of the height of a man of stature when he

stands erect. The hearts of the three present cavedwellers were sick and sad, and of them all the bitterest was the heart of Sholto Mac Kim. It seemed to his eager lover's spirit as he climbed to the top of the sand dunes and gazed toward the massive towers of Machecoul rising above the green woodlands. that hitherto they had but wandered and done nothing. The sorcerer had encircled them with his evil. They had lost Laurence utterly, and for the rest they had not even touched the outer defenses of their arch

Thrice they had tried to enter the castle. The first time they had taken by force two wagons of fuel from the men who went toward Machecoul, leaving the woodmen behind in the forest, bound and helpless. But at the first gate of the outer hall the marshal's guard had stopped them and demanded that they should wait till the cars were unloaded and returned to them. So, having received the money, the Scots returned as they were to the men whom they

After this repulse they had gone round and round the vast walls of Machecoul, seeking a place vulnerable, but finding none. The ramparts rose as it had been to heaven, and the flanking towers were crowded night and day with men on the watch. Round the

walls for the space of a bowshot every way

view, but in reality full of pitfalls and secret | fashion. engines. From the battlements began the arrow hall, so soon as any attempted to approach the castle along any other way than by the thrice-defended road to the main

The wolves howled in the forests by night, and more than once came so near that one of the three men had to take it in turns to keep watch in the cave's mouth. But for a reason not clear to them at the time they were no

The third time they had tried to enter the castle in their pligrim's garb, and the outer picket courteously received them. But when they were come to the inner curtain one Robin Romulart, the officer of the guard, a stout fellow, suddenly called to his men to bind and gag them-in which enterprise, but for the great strength of Malise, they might have succeeded. For the outer gates had little hand crutch and smiling upon them the soldiers of the garrison hastening from all sides in answer to Robin's summons.

But Malise snatched up the bar wheredoors apart by main force, so that they were

of their presence in his territories, and that I have seen you do, my pretties, long ere he would easily be able to guess their errand and take measures to prevent its suc-Sieur de Retz. Hath La Meffraye ever lain ceeding.

in any man's bosom-save as the tigress Their last and most fatal failure had happened several days before, and the first eager burst of the search for them had passed. But the Scots knew that the enemy was thoroughly alarmed and that it behooved them to abide very closely within their hiding place. The Lord James took worst of all with the

uncertainty and confinement. Any restraint

there ran a green space fair and open to the I shall yet deceive him in more deadly country to rise in rebellion. Then they will Sholto could restrain himself no longer. "Enough." he said, roughly; "tell us whether the meidens are alive and if they and intrust me (as indeed you must) with are abiding in this castle of Machecoul?"

from the red west. "Thus far they are safe," said she, in the same calm monotone. "I have come from hath deserted." the white tower in which they are confined. But he whom I serve swears by an oath that more attacked by the wild beasts of the if you or other rescuers are heard of again in his country the will destroy them both."

> revulsion of feeling. "Therefore be careful with a great care-Give up all thought of rescuing venge. fulness. them directly. Remember how little you have accomplished and that your slightest actions will bring upon those you love a fate of which you little dream."

"After what we remember of Crichton castle, how can we trust you, lady?" said Malise, sternly. "Do you speak the truth with your mouth?" "You have, indeed, small cause to think she answered, without offense; "yet

having no choice, you must e'en trust me."

strip of paper in her outstretched hand.

She turned sharply upon Sholto with a

"I think, young sir, that you have some reason to know from whom that comes." Sholto grasped at the writing with a new and wonderful hope in his heart. He knew instinctively before he touched it that none but Maud Lindesay could have written that script, small, clear and distinct as a motto

cut on a gem. "To our friends in France and Scotland," so it ran, "we are still safe this eve of the blessed St. Michael. Trust her who brings this letter. She is our savior and our only hope in a dark and evil place. She is sorry for that which by her hath been done. As you hope for forgiveness, forgive her. And for God's dear sake, do immediately the thing she bids you. This comes from Margaret de Douglas and Maud Lindesay. It is written by the hand of M. L."

The wax at the bottom was sealed in was unsuited to his jovial temper and open- double with the boar's head of Lindesay and hidden under the long, black cloak of air life. But for the present, at least, till the heart of Margaret of Douglas,

overturn all the castles of De Retz and the hidden things shall come to light. This do and for this time depart from Machecoul the honor and the lives of those you love The Lady Sybilla did not remove her eyes I will keep them with mine own until destruction pass upon him who is outcast from God and whom now his own fiend from hell

Then having sworn to do her bidding, the three Scots conducted the Lady Sybilia with honor and observance to her white palfrey and like a spirit she vanished into the sec She shuddered as she spoke with a strong mists which had sifted up from the west, going back to the drear castle of Machecoul bearing with her the burden of her re-

CHAPTER LIV.

The Cross Under the Apron. The face of Gilles de Laval, lord of Petz had shope all day with an unholy luster like that of iron in which the red heat yet struggles with the black. In the castle of Machecoul his familiars went about wearing ex pressions upon their countenances in which disgust and expectation were mingled with The usual signs of approaching high

saturnalia at Machecoul had not been want

Early in the morning La Meffraye had been seen hovering like an unclean bird of prey about the playing grounds of the village children at St. Benoit, on the edges of the forest. At 9 the frightened villagers heard the howl of a day-hunting wolf, and one Louis Verger, a woodman who was cutting bark for tanneries in the valley, saw a great gray wolf rush out and seize his little son, Jean, a boy of 5 years old, who came bringing his father's breakfast. With a great cry he hurried back to alarm the village, but when men gathered with scythes and rude weapons of the chase the beast's track was lost in the depth of the Little Jean Verger of St. Benoit was never

seen again, unless it were he who, half Le Meffraye, was brought at noon by the



THE DAY IS NOT FAR DISTANT, SPITFIRE, WHEN YOU'LL BE CLINGING AROUND LA MEFFRAYE CRYING FOR

remain in their seaside shelter.

Their latest plan was to abide in the cave ttil the marshal set out again upon one of his frequent journeys. Then it would be comparatively easy to ascertain by an ambush whether he was taking the captives with him, or if he had left them behind. If the maids were of his traveling company the three rescuers would be guided by circumstances and the strength of the escort as to whether or not they should venture to make an attack.

But if by an unhoped-for chance Margaret and Maud were left behind at Machecoul it would at least be a more feasible enterprise to attack the fortress during the absence of its mester and his men.

It chanced that for several minutes no sound was heard except those connected with their labor, the low whistle with which the Lord James accompanied his polishing. the wisp-wisp of Malise's arms as he sewed the double thread back and forth through a rent in his leathern tacket, and the rasp of Sholto's file as he carved out the finals of the bow, the notched grooves wherein the string was to lie so easily and yet so firmly.

Thus they continued to work, absorbed each of them in the sadness of his own thought, till suddenly a shadow seemed to strike between them and the red light of the sunset sky. They looked up, and before them, as it were ascending out of the very glow of the sunset, they saw a woman on a white palfrey approaching them by the way of the sea.

So suddenly did she appear that the Lord James gave a low cry of wonder and sprang to his feet, while Malise, the practical, reached for his sword. But Sholto had seen this vision twice already and knew their visitor for the Lady Sybilla.

"Hold there!" he said in an undertone. "Remember it is as I said. This woman though we have no cause to love her, is now our only hope. Her words brought us here. They were true words, and I believe she comes as our friend. I will stake my life

"Or, if she comes as an enemy, we are no worse off," grumbled skeptical Malise. We can at least encourage her and then hold her as an hostage."

The three Scots were standing to receive their guest when the Lady Sybilla rode up. Her face had lost none of the pale sadness which marked it when Sholto last saw her, and, though the look of utter agony had passed away, the despair of a soul in pain had only become more deeply printed upon it.

The girl, having acknowledged their salutations with a stately and well-accustomed motion of the head, reached a hand for Sholto to lift her from her palfrey.

Then, still without words, she silently shaped in the semblance of a chair, on which Malise had been sitting at his mending. The strange maiden looked long at the blue of the sea deepening in the notches of the sand dunes beneath them. The three men stood before her, waiting for her to speak. Each of them knew well that lives dearer and more precious than their own hung upon what she might have to say.

At last she spoke in a voice low as the wind when it blows its lightest among the

trees. "You have small cause to trust me or to task master, swearing to him that in the he knows how to stir the people and he is extra dry, get Cook's Imperial. Naturally witch crystal I have seen you depart. And will send with you trusty men to cause the farmound.

they could gain some further information as Sholto having read the missive silently. I private postern of the baron into the case to the whereabouts of the maidens, it was passed it to the Lord James that he might obvious that they could do no better than prove the seals, for it was his only learning to be skilled in heraldry.

> "It is true," he said, "I myself gave the little maid that ring. See-it hath a piece broken from the peak of the device! "My lady," said Sholto, "that which you bring is more than enough. We kiss your hand and we will sacredly do all your bid-

ding, were it unto the death or the trial by Then, as was the custom to do to ladies whom knights would honor, the Lord James

and Sholto kneeled down and kissed the hand of Sibylla de Thouars. But Malise, not being a knight, took it only and set it upon his great grizzled head, where it lay for a moment, lightly as upon some gray and ancient tower lies a flake of snow before it melts. "I thank you for your overmuch cour-

tesy," the girl said, casting her eyes on the ground with a new-born shyness most like that of a modest maid. "I thank you, indeed. You do me honor far above my desert. Still, after all, we work for one end. You have, it is true, the nobler morive—the lives of those you love. But I the deadlier, the death of one I hate! Harken!" She paused as if to gather strength for that which she had to reveal, and then reaching her hands out she motioned the three men to gather more closely about her,

as if the blue Atlantic waves or the red boles of the pine trees might carry the matter. "Listen," she said; "the end comes fast, faster than any know, save I, to whom for my sing the gift of second sight hath been riven. I who speak to you am of Brittany and of the house of De Thouars. To one of us in each generation descends this

abhorred gift of second sight. And I, because as a child, it was my lot to meet one wholly given over to evil, have seen more and clearer than all that have gone before me. But now I do foresee the end of the wickedest and most devilish soul every prisoned within the body of man." As she spoke the heads of the three Scots

bent lower and closed to catch every word. for the voice of the Lady Sybilla was more like the cooing of a mating turtle dove as it answers its comrade than that of a woman betrayed, denouncing vengeance and death upon him whom her soul hateth.

"Be of good heart then and depart as shall bid you. None can help nor hinder here at Machecoul, but I alone. Be sure that at the worst the unnameable shall not happen the maids. For in me there is the power to slay the evil-doer. But slay I will not unless it be to keep the lives of the maids. For I desire for Gilles de Retz a fate greater, more terrible, more befitting iniquity such as the world hath never heard spoken of since it arose from the abyss." "And this is it given to me to bring

upon him whom my soul hateth," she went on, "I have seen the hempen cord by which seated herself on a gray lichened rock rudely he shall hang. I have seen the fire through which his soul shall pass to its own place. Through me this fate shall come upon him suddenly in one night."

Her face lighted up with an inner light and shone translucent in the darkening of she arrived?"" the day and the dusk of trees as if the fair veil wavered and changed about the vengeful soul within. "And now," she went on after a pause

las, depart to John, duke of Brittany, and having found him, to lay this paper before count me your friend," she said, "but we names of those who have died in the castles the touch of each other's flesh they both have that which binds closer than friend- of De Retz. It shows in what hidden places started and drew apart. Their eyes met ship, a common enemy and a common cause the bones of the slaughtered innocents may and were instantly withdrawn. Then havof hatred. It were better therefore that we be found. Clamor in his ear for justice in ing hung up the cleak, with pallid counshould understand one another. I have the name of the king of France, and If he tenances and lips white and drawn, they never lost sight of you since you came to will not hear, then in the name of the folk slowly followed the marshal within. this fatal land of Retz. I have been near of Brittany. And if because of his kinship he you when you knew it not. To accomplish will not listen, go to the bishop of Nantes. this I have deceived the man who is my who hates Gilles de Retz. Better than any

of Machecoul.

So the men of St. Benoit went not back to their work, but abode together all that day, sullen anger burning in their hearts. And one calling himself the servant of the bishop of Nantes went about among them and his words were as knives, sharp and bitter beyond belief. And ever as he spoke the men turned them about till they faced Machecoul. Their lips moved like those of a Moslemite who says his prayers towards Mecca. And the words they uttered were indeed prayers of the solemnest im-

Gilles de Retz, as he sat under the late blooming roses in the afternoon sunshine of the autumn of western France, appeared to the casual eye one of the most noble seigneurs and the most enlightened in the world. He affected a costume already semiecclesiastic as a token of his ultimate intention to seek holy orders. It seemed already as if the great soldier who had ridden into Orleans with Dunois and the maid had begun to lay aside his earthly glories and

seek the heavenly. There, upon a chair placed within the cloisters, in a place which the sunshine touched most lovingly and where it lingered longest, he sat, nodding his head to the sound of the sweet singing and bowing low at each mention of the name of Jesus (as the custom is), a still, meditative, almost saintly man. Upon the lap of his furred robe (for after all it was a sunshine with a certain shrewd wintriness in it) lay an illumined copy of the holy gosnels. And sometimes as he listened to the choir boys singing he glanced therein and read of the little children to whom belongs the kingdom. He lifted the book also and looked with pleasure at the pictured cherubs who cheered the way of the Master Jerusalemwards with strewn palm leaves and shouted hosannas.

And ever sweeter and sweeter fell the music upon his ear, till suddenly, like the silence after a thunderclap, the organ ceased to roll, the choir was silent and out of the quiet rose a single voice—that of Laurence the Scot, singing in a tenor of infinite sweetness the words of blessing: Suffer little children to come unto me,

And forbid them not, For such is the kingdom of heaven And as the boy's clear voice welled out, lear and thrilling as the song of an upward pulsing lark, the tears ran down the face of Gilles de Retz.

God knows why-perhaps it was some glint of his own innocent childhood, some half-dimmed memory of his happily dead mother. Perhaps-but enough. Gilles de Laval de Retz went up the turret stair to find Poitou and Gilles de Sille on guard on either side of the portal which closed his chamber.

"Is all ready?" he said, though the tears were scarcely dry on his cheeks. They bowed before him to the ground. "Al is ready, lord and master!" they said

as with one voice.

"All goes fortunately."

"And Prelati?" "He is in waiting!" "And La Meffraye-" he went on, "has "La Meffraye has arrived!" they said.

"Good!" said Gilles de Retz, and shedding his furred monkish cloak carelessly "I bid you, gentlemen of the house of Doug- from off his shoulders, he went within. Poitou and Gilles de Sille both reached to catch the mantle ere it fell. As they did It contains the number and the so their hands met and touched. And at

(To Be Continued.)

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