

THE LOYALTY OF WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

By CINTON ROSS.

Author of the Countess Batina; Etc.

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When William Douglas, the Dissenter, came to Lochven, in answer to his aunt, Lady Douglas's summons...

Yet for all that the Queen of the Scots had forfeited her sovereignty and was the instrument of Romanish intrigue against the peace of Scotland...

By the window where, at her command, Mistress Seton, standing in the French tunic...

Yet, after his second visit in the duty of page, he began to say to himself, "Surely she is a pleasant lady who has been much belied."

And in this wise did Master William Douglas come to know and think differently of this Princess, never seeing her alone, scarce noticed by her or her ladies...

Now about this time the Queen attempted to escape by donning the garments of the laundress who brought her linen from the castle terrace...

For, though, closely muffled, Mary Stuart's foot had been seen by her for all her disappointment at failure...

Finally he found their conduct, and particularly that of the Queen, almost unendurable, although it was natural enough...

Following out this wish to be near the keys, he sat talking one night until near 10 o'clock with this Irish-Scott keeper...

"But I could show this more clearly to you, Master Douglas, if I had my copy of Knox's sermons."

and bring the book that I may con the point."

"That you may, Master Douglas." So he followed him out of the guard-room to the door of his chamber...

"The wind, Master Ferguson, the win, I declare." Leaping forward, he grasped the pistol from the board above the fireplace...

"Are ye mad?" he gasped. "The keys, sirrah!" said Douglas. At this Ferguson muttered, "Tis Jezebel's arts."

He knew not how suddenly he was on his feet, how he had sprung on the man, bearing him to the floor, and cooking him. The fellow could not cry out; his eyes, staring Douglas in the face, seemed to start from their sockets...

to death? He did not pause to query, but, relaxing his grasp, loosed the bunch of keys. As they fell, rattling on the floor, Ferguson groaned, moving convulsively...

"The keys, old psalm-singer," said Douglas, "Don't stare at me or struggle. My plight is desperate; I must free the Queen, or die for it. Farewell, Master Ferguson."

Ferguson's eyes showed desperation. Douglas wondered for a moment how his frenzy had the sense to choke him. By no other way could he have kept him from outcry, or, indeed, mastered him...

"Not a soul, Master. You saw not a right." "I'm not blind." "A man may grow weary, master." "He may get a dozen lashes."

"Not a soul, Master?" said he, as if reassured. Lantern in hand, he went up the stairs to the door of the apartment, which the Queen's apartment. No one can pass you."

"I must see her."

"What mean you?" "God help us! Ask not my meaning, but waker!" "Master, what treachery is this? I'll not open."

"Forgive me, Master Douglas, I thought you but a silly boy. Seton, a clock." "I'll not leave you!" "You must, Your Grace. They cannot hurt me. If I stay I can prevent when they search that you are in the inner room."

"It's better so," said the other. For a moment the Queen bent her head on her companion's shoulder, and, suddenly raising her face, she kissed her lightly.

"Yes, Master. But it is not strange that Master Ferguson came not himself?" "Strange it is," said Douglas, fumbling at the lock. "This key will not turn. Will you try it, Jock? The jamb is rusted, I deem."

As he turned to the lock, Douglas put the lantern on the floor, and whipping out his knife from the scabbard, and with a strong blow, thrust him through the back. With a groan the

fellow fell over, while a stream of blood burst over Douglas's head. The man's distorted face came before him afterward of nights. But he had no other way, and it was the Queen's cause, and she stood there, the clock on her arm.

He knew the way. Had he not studied every turn during the weeks, when, seeking a means of aiding her? Every nook and cranny?" "But no blood, Douglas, even though they take us," she added as she made him take that dangerous walk back.

"I'm not blind." "A man may grow weary, master." "He may get a dozen lashes." "Ay, Master, but you'll not tell."

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"The keeper's keys, which held Loch Leven locked. But no time could be lost. They must go down to the bank to the skiff, which he saw was exactly where he had left it."

"Every key to every outer gate at Loch Leven was on that key-ring which had fascinated him. Dear Jock, you're locked in!" "Every key to every outer gate at Loch Leven was on that key-ring which had fascinated him."

"I was wishing for a word." "How strange it is, that you who have been brave should tremble. Come, my master, a little farther, and we will be at the Deerhound."

"A good Scot mile, master. Our friends are there, I had the word in the landress' linen."

"I have not considered failure yet. But I'll never have chance again, master. I wish to explain to you these charges. I cannot think you would believe them entirely. To you, Douglas, I would speak, although it is not the Queen's part to explain."

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"I must see her."

"I see you take the way across the moor because we there are less likely to meet any one."

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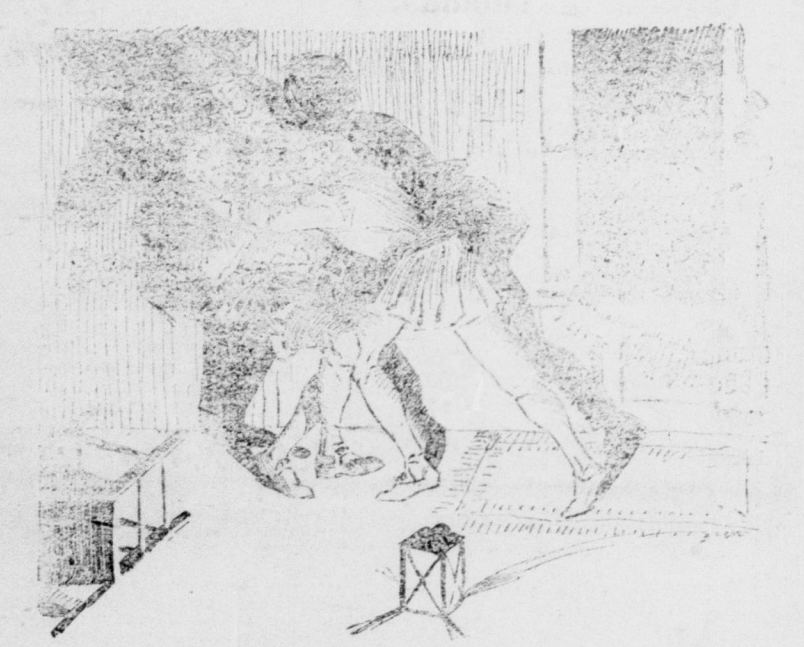
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