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By JOHN A. STEWART.
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SYNOPSIS.
Peter Clephane and Andrew Kilgour are cousins, students at Edinburgh University, between whom is a better feud. The former is the son of a rich city lawyer and his cousin is the heir of an estate in the Highlands that has almost passed into the hands of creditors. After a bitter fight with his cousin, Kilgour is on his way home when he falls in with company at the "Hound and Stag" inn at Perth. Arrived home his companion on the journey turns out to be his uncle, Peter Clephane's father. To retrieve his family's fortune Andrew is sent to I. dia.

CHAPTER XII (Continued.)
"What is the land?" I asked one of the corsairs, pointing shoreward.
"Thou shalt know soon enough," he snarled, and concluding that perhaps the fellow was right, I put no more questions.
Meanwhile the unloading of the brig went on apace. A score of small boats lay round her to receive the plunder, and some thirty or forty men swore on her decks and ravaged her hold. They quarrelled incessantly, shouting, pushing, kicking, brandishing knives and cutlasses and pouring out curdling maledictions and threats that to a less ferocious race could mean nothing short of an instant intention to revel in blood, but never staying the main operations to settle personal disputes.
Islam has a Koran which strictly forbids thieving, yet the Arab is by instinct and example a thief. A pattern of piety when there happens to be no chance of profitable roguery, saintly in his observances of prescribed ceremonials inside a mosque or when he has leisure for prayers outside, loud talker about the duty of obedience to God and the prophet, he is the very flower of brigandage and banditry when he can securely lay hands on another man's goods. Nor does he heed discipline more than religion, for whatever deference he may profess for authority pillage transforms him into a rebel.
No sooner had the band about me got to work than there was a howling, disorganized mob, regardless alike of leader, order, and unity of interest.
Civilization teaches the value of concerted action. The barbarian lacks the art to understand the use of combination in crime. The art and policy of a judicious division of spoils are beyond him. Consequently in that scene of unamorous contention each rogue simply seized and made off with what he could gather, defending his booty with tooth and claw after the manner of his fellow-savages, the wolf and tiger. Standing idly by I took a grim delight in noting how they thwarted and hindered themselves, and what time and energy they devoted to bootless scuffling.
As the cargo diminished the struggle grew hotter and the hubbub louder. Curses and recriminations rose shrill and fierce, faces were black and swollen with anger, eyes ablaze with rage, and I really thought the thing would end in a flood of gore.
"Wouldst thou have all, O son of a dog, and leave none to me?" "I will let thy life out ere parting with an ounce weight to thee." "May Azrael (the angel of death) seize thee and drag thee to perdition, thou foul thief." "Calmity make thy leg bare." "May scorpions eat thy heart out, thou unjust man." "Malec (the keeper of Hades) have thee eternally in his keeping." "May thy hands rot for their greediness, O most wicked of robbers." "Mayst thou see the fiery flood," such were some of the cries with which the pillagers carried on their scramble.
In the midst of the strife, when the tumult was at its height, and the company so intent on clutching and tearing from each other that they had no eyes for anything else, suddenly there rang out a startled cry that sent burdens rolling on the deck and hands gripping in girdles for pistol or blade.
"Enemy, enemy!" yelled a man who chanced to look out to sea, and sure enough there, less than a tenth of a league off, were two large boats full of men coming swiftly toward us under the combined impulsion of sail and oar. Perhaps a sixth of a league beyond these rode at anchor a vessel of strange rig and build, from which it was plain they had come.
The crew on board the Bird of Paradise acted with the valour of surprised thieves. Evidently of the mind that half a loaf is better than no bread, many of them leaped into the boats alongside and tried to make off with what booty they had managed to secure. But before they could get away the strangers were among them, and in a twinkling half the boats were floating keel up. It was surprising to see the rapidity with which boat after boat capsized and emptied its contents, human and inanimate, into the sea. A push, the touch of an oar, a jerk on bows or stern seemed to do it. But skill always gives an idea of ease, and it was plain the present performers were playing familiar parts.
The fellows in the water spluttered, bellowed, and threatened, but as the tongue was the only weapon they were able to use with any freedom, their opposition scarcely counted as a hindrance. The strangers laid about them with their oars with such vigour and dexterity, such lightninglike quickness and precision, that ere one could say the thing had well begun hardly a boat remained right side up.
Having worked confusion in the water, the conquerors came clambering over the sides of the brig, their ugly crooked swords in their teeth, and a light in their eyes that was uglier than the gleam of their steel. There was a pretence of resistance by the remainder of the first-comers, but before there was any chance of slaughter they were dodging about the deck and

couple of drenched dogs, they would probably close again to repeat the same diverting performance. Thus the sport went on with endless variety of incident, and no bloodshed that I could see to mar the enjoyment.
By degrees the combatants drew away from me, for besides the tendency of such a battle to spread the ebbing tide was carrying the wares out to sea, making it necessary to follow them. It was clear the last-comers were getting most of the spoil. A few of the others, dodging and watching their chance, managed to make off, carrying freight for ballast, but the frequent trips to and fro between the centre of war and the anchored ship told where most of the plunder was going.
There are no reapers with a title of the energy and speed of pirates. In spite of the time wasted in useless contention, in spite of races, captures, somersaults, and the thousand and one egregious hindrances, indulged in as might almost appear from a spirit of sheer frivolity, the harvest was quickly gathered, and very soon the only floating objects to be seen were the ship with her boats near at hand, and in the distance other boats running for life with the tide.
As the diversion declined my mind naturally reverted to my own miserable condition. What was to become of me? Was I to be left to my own devices with a stranded ship and no commons? And if so, what should I do? Should I make my way ashore and risk the savageness of man and beast or remain on the brig to await developments?

(To be Continued.)

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