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### SYNOPSIS.

Peter Clephane and Andrew Kilgour are cousins, students at Edinburg University, between whom is a bitter 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 India.

### CHAPTER XVI (Continued.)

With palpitating haste I answered it was named a bagpipe in my country, that it put the spirit of victory into warriors and the fleetness of fear into the heels of their enemies.

"I said it was the scream of demons," he remarked, with a chuckle. Then suddenly his expression became one of deep thought; he seemed to be trying to recollect something. "I have it; I have it," he cried, sitting up with a beam of intelligence. "In thy country are the men naked about the legs?"

"Partly, my lord," I answered, in astonishment.

"They have been to Egypt, have they not?" he said, eagerly. "To Cairo, Alexandria—they have looked on the desert and sniffed its sands. They have pulked down princes, established empires, uprooted ancient laws, and made new ones, said prayers in a strange tongue that no man could understand, and gone to battle with great cries. Have they not done all this?"

"My lord speaketh the truth," I said, more and more amazed.

"They are called"—He pressed his brow as a man will to aid his memory.

"Highlanders," I shouted, beside myself with excitement.

"Nay, nay, not that. That is not it. I will remember; yea, I have it. Dost thou not recall the tale of that Egyptian?" turning to his minister. "Naked Scottish devils—that was it. They leap like lions, and roar like bulls of Bashan; yea, they have the voice of the wild ass, and their tread is like an army of horsemen that maketh the earth to tremble."

"My lord is right again," I cried.

"Wert thou naked when Said Achmet took thee in?" he asked.

"No, my lord."

He seemed disappointed at this, but his face lighted up again as he said: "At any rate thou hast the screeching demons with thee. We have leisure this morning. Thou shalt give us some of the war music of thy land."

"If my lord will cause room to be made for me," I said, joyously.

"Cause room to be made for thee! Why, dost thou swell with playing?"

"Nay, my lord, but the piper must walk to and fro to play well."

"Thou callest thyself a piper. I have heard of the company of prophets with pipe and tabret. Perchance we shall have thee prophesying." Saying this, he waved his hand, with a laugh, as a signal to the soldiers to clear a space.

"Make room," he called. "Hearken to the music that putteth courage in the hearts of the naked Scottish devils."

The next instant the wondering people were being hustled back, and the pipes were squealing in the process of tuning up.

You may be sure that if ever piper played with all the zeal and skill that were in him it was then. The consciousness of the great prize at stake was diffused like an electric current through lips and lungs and fingers, through head and feet and all that lay

between, giving nery energy and ardour to both the soul and body of the performer.

Yet, in spite of this earnestness and the acute sense of momentous issue hanging in the balance, I could not help being tickled by the ludicrousness of the situation. Very absurd it was to me, an Arab in garb, a Highlander in feeling, to go sailing about in flowing skirts, bursting my cheeks for the favourable verdict of judges who had never seen or heard a beggine in their lives, who did not know one tune or note from another, and who would be quite likely to decide with overwhelming unanimity that all my merits were faults and all my faults merits, and who were prejudiced and incensed against me.

It was like putting Harlequin on a trial of skill before a man who had never seen a play, who detested the theatre and its traditions, and above all fervently hated the performer. Yet I gave them the music of my native



I gave them the music of my native hills with all my might.

hills with all my might—all the marches, strathspeys, reels, pibrochs, coronachs, all the solemn tunes and ranting airs, all the rousing battle pieces, and the melting funeral wails I had ever learned or heard, with many more that were improvised on the spot. I thought my playing would have charmed the soul of a Macrimmon.

In fine, to my own mind I was surpassing myself in all kinds of music, both grave and gay, and playing nobly enough to win the plaudits of the best judges in all Scotland. But Arabs are not Scotsmen in the matter of pipe playing. The glances I managed to cast with the tail of my eye showed me a listless and apathetic audience. If there was any particular expression in their faces, it was one of disgust. Rollicking airs and solemn psalm tunes, "Tullochgorum" and "Old Hundred," "Jenny's Bawbee" and "Martyrdom," "The Laird o' Cockpen" and "The Land o' the Leal," "Macgregor's Gathering" and "Roy's Wife" had precisely the same effect—a uniformly depressing one.

I played charges that would have made the "Black Watch" or the "Cameronians" howl for blood, and pibrochs that would have made a Highland balliff sit down and cry, and liltis that would have sent the young men and maidens of a whole village skipping over the green—I strode, I doubled, I danced without moving a single sign of enthusiasm. Yet I blew on—blew livelier or fiercer as the case might be, for the incentive to keep going was strong. I walked with my drones in the faces of the ranks that lined my path, a thing that was unwise; I pressed as near as possible to Abou Kuram and his ministers, a thing that was unwise still, for the pipes at close quarters are more than any foreigner can bear with equanimity.

I was in the midst of the parade, when, in advancing toward Abou Kuram, I noticed the leather-faced councillor at his right wriggling as if in dire pain. Paying no heed I came up, wheeled and marched back, but before I reached the other end there was a sudden cry, and with a rush the people closed in, almost knocking the pipes out of my hands.

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### A SURPRISING CHANGE OF FRONT

So all my rosy hopes were blown to the winds again. Fate had cut off the last chance of escape, and I could look for nothing but immediate death. For I had heard something of the portentous mysteries of statecraft that make such havoc of the conscience of rulers and understood that behind the personal will and inclination of Abou Kuram were reasons of such fearful cogency as no prince who valued his security could ignore. However friendly the Governor might be at heart, he was not a free agent, but merely the instrument of a tyrannous system which sentenced and slew with ruthless disregard of the sanctity of private thoughts.

This was driven in upon me with staggering emphasis when the leather-faced ingrate I had relieved of his pains, humbly venturing to commend the wisdom of his master's speech, enlarged on the absolute necessity of preserving the State from foreign intrigue at all hazards and at whatever cost of blood, and ending up with the proposition, "Let my lord decree death forthwith, and while he despatcheth weightier matters I will see this rogue executed."

(To be Continued.)

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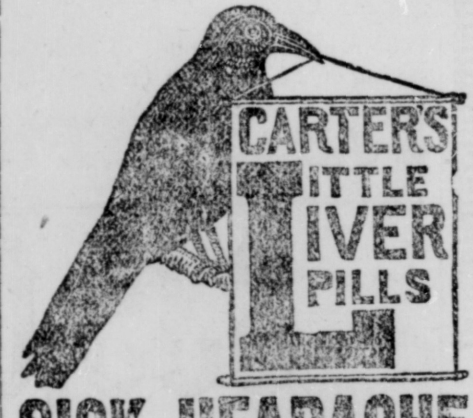
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