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SYNOPSIS.

Peter Clephane and Andrew Kilgour are cousins, students at Edinburg 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.)

While I was thus thinking and debating, a boat put off from the pirate ship and came toward me. Coming alongside its crew climbed on board the brig, and judging it best to be civil, I received them with a profound salaam and a cordial marhaba, (I welcome. I might have saved my pains. Instead of returning my salutation, the leader came forward with drawn sword, demanding to know whether there was any treasure on board, and intimating that if he caught me in a lie my throat would be cut on the spot. I assured him that I knew of no treasure, but invited them to search for themselves, since there might be secret recesses in the ship that I had not discovered.

"Thou shalt be guide," said the fellow, "and, as thou valuest thy life, a true one. Perhaps thou knowest the taste of steel."

I meekly complied, conducting them faithfully into every corner above and below, and the fear of death gives wondrous fidelity. They examined very deliberately as they went along, probing with their sword points into dark recesses and sounding with the hilts the boards for concealed chambers, sometimes even kicking furiously in their fits of chagrin as time passed and no discovery was made.

Their bad humour showed itself also in an ugly inclination to hold me responsible for their ill luck. They would spurt out angry questions about the former occupants of the brig, and before I could reply turn upon me with menaces that more than once fairly brought my heart to my mouth. One fellow, muttering that I was playing the innocent just a little too much, thrust at me ferociously with his sword, saying that if I did not wish to be cut in two I had better make a clean breast of it. Fortunately he was not close enough to do damage, and on my answering him, with a fervency that must have carried conviction to the heart of a stone, that I knew no more than he did, he passed on with a curse on my stupidity and blindness.

Feeling their way foot by foot and taking nothing for granted, they went over the whole interior of the ship—hold, fore-castle, cabin, officers' quarters, and all—questioning, contradicting, threatening, and every minute getting more and more frightful with looks of disappointment and rage. My poor belongings they scattered like chaff, appropriating what they considered worth carrying away and effectually disposing of the remainder by cutting and tearing it into shreds and then throwing the rags into the sea. Beside my clothes they took all my weapons (save a pistol I had hidden) and all the ammunition they could find, but by good chance I was able to save my mother's Bible and Duncan's pipes and Isabel's two bunches of white heather, treasures which, as you may suppose, were almost as my life to me. To this were added some powders and pills left by Mr. Watson. The rifling done, I was peremptorily ordered on deck, and I ascended aloft.

This arrangement puzzled me, but I was soon enlightened. In a few minutes a thin column of smoke curled up through the aft-hatch; then another rose farther forward, then another and another, till the several volumes spread and blended into a thick cloud.

I was sorry to see the brig's fate sealed in this way. We had been friends long, and she had saved me

when there was no hope. I could I do to save her?

When the fire had got a sufficient hold to insure its speedy victory, the incendiaries reappeared, and one of them, pointing with his sword to the boat alongside, growled that I might get in. In an instant I was down and crouching meekly in the bows, where I was likeliest to be out of the way. The others followed quickly, and we rowed away, leaving the Bird of Paradise in a sheet of flame. Almost in the same moment my company of rats sprang into the water and struck out gallantly for the shore. In spite of fear I could not help giving them a hearty "well done," for farewell.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE PIRATES.

Immediately on boarding the Arab vessel we hove up anchor, set sails, and flew away to sea, with a smart breeze on our port quarter. The ship was a queer one, but it was soon proved that, however odd in appearance, she was an uncommonly swift and graceful sailor. She carried three masts, lateen sails, and a jib. The fore and mainmasts were without tops or top-gallants, and of course without caps or cross-trees. The long, slender hull was jet black, and what was strangest of all, the upper deck was sharply convex, with level gratings running round the sides. The convexity, as I afterward discovered, was meant to make a ready way for water to the scuppers, or in times of stress for blood, while the gratings, by obviating the slant, made the footing firm, a matter of importance in storm or action. She carried no colours, nor did any inscription, such as ships usually bear, give a hint of her port or nationality. Finally, though light, she was well armed. (The vessel was the dreaded Xebec, the terror of the high seas when Algerine corsairs flourished, and still of evil repute on the coasts of Arabia.)

Every stitch of her ochreous canvas was crowded on, and beautifully she swept along, keeling and dipping under the bellying sails, the bright green water swishing from her gleaming sides and the snowdrift flying from her fore foot in a way that would have made pleasure-seekers dance for joy. Even I felt the gladness of the rushing, arrowy motion, though, on the whole, the speed was more ominous than inspiring, seeing what a doubtful dance might end the trip.

The strain of dark uncertainty was somewhat relieved by the diversion of studying the crew, who were a living epitome of the fashions, past and current, of pretty nearly all the nations of the earth. Probably no company of equal size ever displayed a like variety of costumes. Assuredly none could be on more distant terms with tailor and laundress. It was impossible to say which gave the greater distinction—the diversity, the dirt, or the tatters.

There were Arab shirts reaching to the ankle, Indian turbans, Syrian combazes, European jerkins, top boots, jerseys, hats, and frock coats, Persian gowns, breeches of all known cuts and countries in every degree of foulness, in every stage of decay and raggedness—all jumbled together as if some malicious artist had tried what effects of incongruity and grotesqueness, what outrages on taste and decency, he was capable of achieving. The captain, as the chief personage on board, was naturally the most conspicuous example of the ridiculous. He was elaborately arrayed in a steeple heaver, strongly suggestive of the defunct missionary in spite of its jaunty ostrich plume and tarnished silver band; a coarse woollen shirt, smeared like a hog in autumn; a leathern girdle, from which depended a sword, a brace of pistols and a crooked dagger full of significant purple stains; Turkish trousers that had originally been crimson, but were now of more hues than the maker of Joseph's coat ever dreamed of; a pair of red boots that must once have shed a lustre that would have dazzled the eyes of the grandees, and sashes enough of various colours to furnish a regiment of sheiks. The decorations were thickest in the rear. Indeed when the gallant captain turned his back it might seem he was clad in porous plasters patched with canvas steeped in pitch, so heavy were the incrustations of tar, grease, paint, and other adhesive substances. No sense of absurdity, however, disturbed his serene self-consequence. He paced the deck with as proud a step, as high and keen a look, as if he were an admiral of the fleet in faultless uniform and the evidence of a hundred victories blazing on his breast, seldom condescending to any familiarity with those about him, never with me, huddled in my corner.

We tore along at an incredible rate and were soon beyond sight of land, though for a good while the smoke of the burning brig showed our starting point. Whither we were bound I could not guess, and durst not ask. I was free to conjecture, if I pleased, that our course was for some happy haven not far off, though appearances rather suggested we were scouring the sea for prey. By and by we hauled our wind and began to fetch in a backward direction. But we had not gone a league when we bounded off on another tack, and for the next hour or two we tacked and changed so frequently, running close-hauled as if for our lives and dropping off as if in sheer perversity, that I completely lost my reckoning. It was wonderful how that strangely-built ship behaved, how sensitive she was to the gentlest pressure of the helm, how clean, quick and graceful were all her movements, and how she rushed on her course when she got her head. In spite of rather rough seamanship, only once did she make a mistake. Through a too hasty luff she happened to come dead into a second sea eye, and for the space of a second she hung in irons with loose sails. She seemed to shake herself with vexation, like a highly spirited horse thrown on its haunches without reason, turned quickly half round, caught the wind again, and then, with her yellow wings spread to their utmost, went skimming along like a sea bird.

(To be Continued.)

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