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SYNOPSIS.

Peter Clephane and Andrew Kilgour are cousins, students at Edinburgh 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 IX (Continued.)

"Then you lied when I took you on board," I said, sternly, interrupting him in the midst of his narrative. Even a sea-robber may have his code of honour, and for the present my foible was to hate lying.

"Could I guess your trade from that girlish face?" he asked, with an impudent grin. "You might be a missionary ship."

"I am no liar," I said, severely, while conscience whispered "Impositor."

"And I swear by the rover's flag: I will follow truth," said the rogue, with a broader grin than ever. "Are we not brothers, and should not our souls be as diads in the sunlight? Yes, and I love the brave Englishman. In Egypt and Africa have I not known him, and in the Persian gulf have I not seen with joy his skill in slashing off heads? He is the angel demon of the world. He will make good the black Ethiopian, and sell rum and take ships and make himself rich with what others have gathered. I love him as a brother."

Naturally I was gratified by this high and impartial testimony to the noble qualities of my countrymen. In his rummaging Abram ben Aden came upon my armoury.

"What a man of arms you are to be a boy in years!" he exclaimed, with some excitement. "Here are weapons for a whole ship's crew!" And selecting a sword he drew it from the scabbard and began to feel its edge.

"Not so fast," I said, stepping up to him. "These are dangerous. You talk of magic; let me warn you of the magic there is in these weapons."

"Yes, I believe in their magic," he answered, complacently, "but is it not the magic of the arm that yields them? I know a good blade when I see it. Choose ye one, and we will have some sport. May I perish if I am not forgetting the ring and the gleam of steel! See, see how it bends! 'Tis a well-tempered blade. Yea, and it is light in the hand." And he made a circle of sunbeams about his head. I stepped back, my hand instinctively seeking the hilt of my pistol, and said indifferently that it was not in the humour for sport. The truth was I was not in the humour to take any present risks not absolutely necessary. With a shade of disappointment and vexation, he thrust the sword back into its sheath and returned it to its place.

We had an early supper, and went early to bed, my guest getting a closed berth to himself. I lay awake until I heard his stertorous snore; then I crept softly upstairs, and gathering all the weapons together, carried them down and hid them in my cabin. It was better that Abram ben Aden should not be tempted to do mischief while I slept.

CHAPTER X.

ALONE ONCE MORE.

Whatever evil Abram ben Aden may have harbored in the secret chambers of his heart, his bearing toward me was the essence of courtliness and friendship. My own brother could not have been more solicitous for my happiness and welfare, nor the most loyal of benchmen readier to do me service. When, from some chance expressions of mine, he discovered that I was just recovering from a mortal illness, he broke into fresh assurances of my valour and fortitude, and insisted on taking on himself the duties of cook and general personal attendant.

"It is not meet that heroes should do the work of slaves," he said. "Leave it to me, who am but a common mortal. I am happy in serving so valiant a master, and so generous a benefactor, one whose deeds should have been the inspiring theme of the peerless Kaahel Azzar (a famous Arabian poet) himself."

A blunt man like myself at a grave disadvantage in dealing with a courtier. In spite of his fine words, I mistrusted my guest as much as ever. That he coveted my possessions I knew, and that he had designs on my throat I more than half suspected, yet I could not resist his advances nor deny his sallies of wit and humour the reward of a smile. He was insistently and infectiously like a gambler's game, in which success and failure should be accepted with equal equanimity. Evidently he had made up his mind not to be depressed.

He had other popular and charming qualities besides. To the aplomb of the man of action and the peculiar knowledge of the man of the world, he united the imagination of the poet and the happy audacity of the born romancer. His adventures had been many and marvellous, and no man was ever his own Homer to finer effect. He had seen more with his two bodily eyes than I had ever dreamed of, and he invested his tales with a glamour that professional story-tellers would have envied. I do not think his recitals were remarkable for a strict accuracy, but there could be no question of their fascination. His talk was like a sojourn in the land of enchantment and flowers, and fragrances

and fair women, and palaces and gold and precious stones, and heroic exploits, and all the raptures of the brightest realms of fancy. He made the Arabian Nights tame and Baron Munchausen a common falsifier.

To give variety to the entertainments, one day he proposed that he should teach me Arabic.

"Know that Abram ben Aden, though a rover, is likewise a master of literature," he said, with a superb flourish of his arms; "the poets are his especial delight. They are greater than the magicians; they are as a flame in the soul which illumines the universe. But how is the adventurer, the corsair, to carry the songs of the poets with him? Why, here," tapping his forehead. "Here is the chamber in which the poets have their abode, and here," producing a greasy volume from the folds of his dress, "is what the prophet gave to the faithful as a consolation till they are translated to enjoy forever the love of the hours."

"You are an infidel, but what of that? You know what joy is, you know what sorrow is. You have feelings, appetites, aspirations—you are a man. You hope to get to heaven. I will show you the way, and while I show you shall learn the Arab's tongue. Come, my merry infidel, you shall yet converse as a brother with the children of the desert. Yea, and eat El Shelebi dates and dip thy fingers in the dish that swims with the fat of sheep and goat. More, my gallant cut-throat—

And thou on honey drew shalt feed
And drink the milk of paradise.

'Tis the song of one of our poets which thou shalt learn, my brave one." And with an air of having the erudition of Alexandria at his fingers' ends, he forthwith began my instruction.

He proved a good teacher, and I was not an inattentive nor, I think, an inapt pupil. One rule my tutor made and adhered to rigidly, and that was that we should talk nothing but Arabic. It was a sore trial of patience at first, but I persevered, and in a week—such was my diligence—was able to converse with tolerable fluency. The second week I was deep in the Koran and able to follow my teacher in his recitations from the Arabian poets; the third week I was reciting myself. Abram ben Aden was delighted with his success.

"By the prophet's mantle," he said, "I will have you in paradise yet. Your speech already is as of one bred in the desert. You have the Arab's faith, and next will come the Arab's faith. And all thy brave deeds will be forgiven. Why should not the bold corsair have happiness at last?"

As a diversion to our studies, he lured me, rather against my judgment, into a daily bout with the sword. "It will keep your hand and eye true," he said, insinuatingly. "Let the master practise on his slave. Methinks you take joy in the flash and ring of the steel. All brave men do. By the sword of Sikandar el Rumi, there is the stuff of a fighter in you. This slip with all its plunder shows it. Yet you will not let your blade drink your servant's blood."

It was not likely I would, but there was no assurance that my servant would exercise a like restraint over his blade. Indeed, on second thoughts, his proposition seemed to me a ruse to try my mettle and wheedle me into an overweening conceit with myself that would give him his opportunity. Happily, I was not entirely ignorant in the use of the sword, for my graver studies had been interrupted, perhaps too often, by prolonged fencing bouts. But then I was far from thinking myself an expert. So that it was no light matter to stand up before a man of unknown skill and suspicious motive, whose greatest delight it might be to spit me at the very first go off. Nevertheless I had given my consent, and it would have been both folly and cowardice to go back. So I put on my stoutest front, though, to be candid, the naked, wicked flash of our weapons in the sun caused me a nasty sensation. It was but momentary, however, for the demand of every faculty of mind and body was too keen to leave me time to be afraid.

I soon discovered that Abram ben Aden was a skilful swordsman, with a sure and rapid eye, great length and suppleness of arm, and the confidence which comes of many triumphs. Yet I rung him blow for blow, and ended the first encounter in a glow of satisfaction. We were both nimble as goats, and I believe a spectator would have said the fencing was lively. For an hour each day we exercised thus, and my companion's good humour conquered unabated.

(To be Continued.)

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