

The Treasure of the Bucoleon

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SYNOPSIS

New York, Hugh Chesby, English World War veteran, relates a story of a treasure in Constantinople in the existence of which his uncle, Lord Chesby, firmly believes. A telegram notifies Hugh of his uncle's sailing for New York. At the dock Hugh and his chum, Jack Nash, learn from Watkins, Lord Chesby's valet, that the old gentleman has left with a stranger, purporting to be a friend of Hugh. A mysterious telephone message notifies Hugh that his uncle is in a hospital, dying, victim of an assassin. Before his death he has hidden the treasure, and tells them he was stabbed by "Toutou." With Lord Chesby's body, Hugh and Jack sail for England. In London Hugh and Jack meet their war buddy, Nikka Zerkos, famous gypsy violinist, and pore over some old documents, seemingly having a bearing on the treasure and its location. A hidden room, referred to as the "Prior's Vault," is frequently mentioned. Monty Hilber, man of shady reputation, but owner of a neighboring estate, calls on Hugh with a party of friends, mostly foreigners. Conversation turns on the "Prior's Vault." That night Jack awakens to find three men in the library. A fight ensues, in which one man is killed. Jack is certain one of the men is "Toutou." Jack and his friends find the hidden room, and in documents telling that the treasure is located in the palace of the Bucoleon in Constantinople. Jack Nash's cousin, Betty King, with her uncle, is in Constantinople, and Hugh, Nikka, Jack, and Watkins set out for the Turkish capital on the way Toutou and a female accomplice kidnap Jack in an effort to learn from him where the treasure is concealed. They fail.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

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"You go to the Pera Palace hotel. Meet Miss King and her father, but don't let anybody suspect that you expected to meet them. Remember, you will be watched all the time. You must have Miss King hide the copy of the instructions you sent her. Not in her trunk—ah, I have it! Let her place it in the envelope, addressed to herself, Poste restante. She can go to the post office and collect it whenever we need it. You and Watkins will not be in any danger. Toutou's people will be too busy trying to find Jack and me."

"But how are we going to get in touch with you?" asked Hugh.

"Leave that to us," replied Nikka, with his quiet grin. "Make it a custom to lounge in front of the Pera palace every morning after breakfast for half an hour; and keep a watch out for gypsies. Some morning two especially disreputable fellows will come by, and one of them will contrive to get a word with you. Follow them."

"That's a corking plan," Hugh approved warmly.

If we were followed in Marseilles, we didn't know it. We only left the railroad station to get breakfast and dispatch a telegram from Nikka to his uncle—or, rather, to an address in Seres which acted as a clearing house for the operations of this particular gypsy band.

At Pireaus we had a choice of several steamers sailing for Constantinople. Nikka pitched upon a French boat that lay across the wharf from a Greek liner plying to Salonika and the Greek islands of the Aegean. The Frenchman was sailing at dawn the next morning; the Salonika boat was due to cast off several hours later.

We booked two cabins on the Frenchman, and hired a clerk at the British consulate to reserve passage for two on the Salonika boat. This arrangement made, we mustered our scanty baggage, and boarded the Frenchman just before dinner time. We dined together ostentatiously in the saloon, and after dinner, with many yawns and protestations of weariness, we betook ourselves to bed.

Our cabins were next to each other, and as a matter of fact, we played poker until long past midnight. Then Nikka and I said good-by to Hugh and Watty, and sneaked out into the companionway. Several sleepy stewards eyed us, but there were no messengers about. The quartermaster on guard at the gangway we handed a Napoleon, telling him we were obliged to land in order to dispose of some forgotten business. The watchman on the pier was conciliated in the same way. And finally, the deck-guard of the Greek liner, once his fingers were greased, and our tickets shown to

him, offered no objection to escorting us to our cabin.

At dawn we were awakened by the whistling of the Frenchman as he backed out from the pier, and from a porthole we watched him disappear in the mist of the harbor. At noon the Epaminondas likewise cast off, and Nikka and I thankfully abandoned our battles with the cockroaches that fought with us for possession of the bunks. We ascended to the deck.

At Salonika we entered a Europe which was new to me. If an old story to Nikka, a Europe which was blessed with the life and color and form of the Orient. At the railroad station we fought for places in a first-class compartment, which had room for six and must accommodate eight. The second and third-class cars were jammed to the doors. Women wept, children



The Watchman on the Pier Was Conciliated in the Same Way.

howled and men swore and struck each other and their women indiscriminately.

That was a dreadful journey, not long as regards distance, but tediously protracted in time. But the engine toiled on, and in the full tide of hours we crawled over a mountain-ridge and saw the sun rising in the east beyond the close-packed roofs of Seres.

Nikka commandeered a fiacre in the station-square.

"Do you know the house of Kostabidjian the money-lender?" he asked the driver in Greek that sounded more than passable to me. "Very well, then, drive me there."

"Who is Kostabidjian?" I inquired as the driver whipped up his horses.

A dour, secretive look had settled on Nikka's face in the last two days. His eyes narrowed, and their gaze was fixed upon the far horizon when they were not shrewdly surveying the appearances of the people around him.

"He is the agent of the tribe," he replied shortly. "It was through him I sent word to my uncle."

I held my peace after that. At last we stopped at a gateway overhung by olive trees, and the driver got down to pull the bell-wire which protruded from an opening by the gate. The solemn clangor echoed faintly, and was succeeded by shuffling footsteps. A wicket opened, and a dark, bewhiskered face was revealed. Nikka ejaculated a single sentence in the gypsy dialect that Toutou's gang sometimes used, and the gate swung ajar. I gave the driver of the fiacre a couple of drachmas, and followed Nikka inside.

The individual with the whiskers, a dried-up, elderly man, quickly fastened the gate again, with a sidewise look at Nikka, half respect, half fear. At the door, he stood aside and ushered us into a parlor furnished in the French style. A stout, smooth-faced, elderly man rose from a desk as we entered. He started to salaam, thought better of it, and offered his hand. Then he commenced to speak in the Tzigane dialect, and Nikka cut him off.

"Speak French," said Nikka curtly. "I have no secrets from my friend, Mr. Nash." And to me: "This is Monsieur Kostabidjian."

Kostabidjian—he was an Armenian of uncertain parentage, I afterward discovered, with the ingrained servility pounded into that unfortunate race by centuries of oppression—drew up chairs for us.

"Your telegram was forwarded at

once to the Chief," he said to Nikka. "But Wasso Mikail sent back word yesterday that he would be delayed in waiting upon you in consequence of a caravan of cartridges which the band are running into Albania. It is an affair which has attracted his attention for the past month, and he dares not trust the work to another."

"When will he be here?"

"He spake of tomorrow—"

"Then serve us food, and lead us to a room where we may rest."

The Armenian clapped his hands, and the old man with the whiskers—who was dumb in consequence of having had his tongue cut out in one of the Turkish massacres of the red past—returned and carried word in his own fashion of our wants to the kitchen. Presently we sat down in the dining room to a hot meal of pilaf, with chicken, dough cakes and coffee, which Kostabidjian pressed upon us officiously.

Nikka sat through the meal with a black frown on his face. I was secretly amazed by the constantly growing change in his manner, for he was normally of a uniformly pleasant disposition. But it was not until we had been shown to a bedroom on the upper floor that he unmasked his feelings. I began to undress, but he paced the floor restlessly from wall to wall. Suddenly he turned on me:

"Jack, I hope I haven't insulted you in the past twenty-four hours."

"I'm not aware of it, if you have," I returned cheerfully.

"I'm having a h— of a time," he growled. "The two souls in me are wrenching at my soul. There's Nikka, the gypsy freebooter, who has been dead for years, and against him fights Nikka, the artist and the man of the town. Neither of them owns me. Until the other day—except now and then when the old self reared its head temporarily—I had thought I had thrust the gypsy behind me. But I was a fool to think so, Jack. God, what a fool! Why, the music in me always was gypsy!"

"My people are not like Toutou's gang. They are gypsies. They live by their own hands, and every man's hand is against them. They make their own laws, and abide by their own customs. They take what they need, and consider it their due. I tell you this because I don't want to fly false colors with you. I lived that life when I was a boy. But I should like to make you understand that in some way, by some esoteric, involved, well-nigh impenetrable process of psychology, it is not stealing in the sense that Toutou steals. My people have been outcasts for centuries; they have been bred up in this way of life. It isn't wrong in their eyes. Put it that way. And I—I can see it both ways, Jack. I can see how wrong it is, and I can see how right it seems to them."

"You don't need to say all this to me," I told him. "Why, Nikka, it's—it's—"

"It's what? Hard to understand?" "Easy to understand," I corrected. "Hard to phrase. But I know you too well to worry about you. As for the wrench, I'm beginning to feel it myself."

Nikka resumed his restless pacing. "I don't mind anything so much as that oily Armenian downstairs," he insisted. "He—he is dishonest. And we make him dishonest. Not that I've used him so, Jack. Most of what I earn goes to my people, who need it, poor souls, especially since the war laid its blight on all southeastern Europe. Kostabidjian is one of the agents I employ to distribute my funds. I use him because of his connection with my uncle's tribe."

"Most of us have to use dishonest helpers occasionally," I said. But can we trust this man, Nikka? If he's all you indicate, isn't he likely to sell us out?"

"He'd sell us in a minute, if he dared," rejoined Nikka, with a tight-lipped smile. "But he knows that if he did he would get a knife in him. It would only be a question of time." "Nice company you've dragged me into," I grumbled. "Well, let's catch up on our sleep."

His outburst had eased Nikka's nervous tension, and he soon dozed off. For a while I watched the afternoon sunlight outside the windows, then the weariness of our travels overcame me, and I, too, slept. . . . I woke abruptly, feeling a light blazing in my eyes.

A man was standing in the doorway of the room, with a kerosene lamp in his hand, a tall man, with the proud face of an eagle. Wisps of silver-white hair escaped from the vari-

colored turban that wrapped his brows, but he held himself with the erect poise of youth. He was dressed in tight breeches of brown cloth, and a blue shirt and short red jacket. Around his waist was twisted a heavy sash, bristling with knives and pistols.

As I prodded Nikka awake, he closed the door behind him and set the lamp on a table. Nikka, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, took one look at the apparition and leaped from the bed.

"Wasso!" he cried.

The stranger raised fingers to lips and breast in a graceful salaam, and replied in the gypsy patois, a cadenced, musical speech when used by those whom it was a mother-tongue. Nikka grasped his hand, and exchanged a rapid-fire of question and answer, then called to me:

"This is my uncle. He arrived sooner than he expected. He guessed my need was great, and traveled without respite. Come and meet him."

The old gypsy sank to his haunches on the bare floor, with a sweeping gesture of invitation to both of us to join him.

"No, no," exclaimed Nikka as I started for a chair. "He has never sat on a chair in his life. Do not be doctored or he will think you are trying to demonstrate how different you are."

So I crouched cross-legged beside him—it seemed to be easy enough for Nikka to resume the ways of his boyhood—and concealed my discomfort as stoically as I could. It was close to midnight when we were awakened, and the talk with Wasso Mikail lasted for several hours. First, Nikka explained to him the circumstances of our trip to Constantinople, and the old man's eyes glistened at the mention of the treasure. He interrupted with a liquid flow of polysyllables.

"He says," Nikka interpreted, when he had finished, "that he has heard about it. It is just as I told you and Hugh, the tradition is known all through the Balkans. He says that the treasure is concealed in an ancient palace in Stamboul which has been inhabited longer than men can remember by a tribe of gypsies whose chief is one Beram Tokalji. He says there is a rumor amongst the tribes that he, Tokalji, is an ally of a group of Frank thieves. There is a tradition in Tokalji's tribe that their forefathers believed the treasure ultimately would go to them."

"Will he help us?" I asked eagerly. Nikka gave me an odd look.

"His tribe are mine. My wish is their wish. How can they refuse?"

CHAPTER VII

The Road to Stamboul

Wasso Mikail was a very wise man. He questioned Nikka closely concerning our situation, and this was his verdict:

"When you fight with thieves you must use thieves' tricks. You did right to come to me. Now I will secure fitting garments for you, my sister's son, and for your Americansky friend, Jack. For him also I will brew a dye that will make him as dark as our people, so that men will not turn and stare at him on the road."

"After that I think we had best go away from this place as soon as possible. You have traveled rapidly and shaken off your enemies' pursuit. It is well to take every advantage of an opportunity. We will collect some of my young men who can handle a knife, and go on to Stamboul. All men go to Stamboul, and who will notice a Tzigane band?"

"But it wasn't my thought that you should abandon the affairs of the tribe and come and fight with me," remonstrated Nikka.

"Are you not the son of my sister?" rejoined the old gypsy. "If you had not elected to go to Buda with your violin would you not be chief of the band? Do I not stand in your place? Well, then, light of my eyes, we will do for you all that we may."

Nikka flung me a proud glance as he translated the pledge.

Mikail left us, and Nikka and I secured another hour's sleep. When he returned he was accompanied by a younger edition of himself, who carried two bundles which were disclosed as complete suits of Tzigane dress. He, himself, carried a pot of warm, brown liquid, and he proceeded to apply the stain to my white small-paint-brush. Hair, mustache, face and body were darkened to a mellow brown. The stuff dried quickly, and I was soon able to pull on the strange garments, which Nikka showed me how to adjust and fasten.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Wed to Get Clean Shirts

In the course of a trial in Brighton, England, a police court judge asked a man if he never loved his wife why he married her. The accused husband's answer was, "To get a clean shirt." The astounded magistrate sentenced him to do the household washing for one year, and told the aggrieved wife to report to him if the man didn't do a good job. The magistrate's parting remark was: "Now you will have clean shirts."

Insecticides in Safe Place Best

Never Keep Poison Where It May Be Mistaken for Harmless Article.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

A clerk's error in selling a sulphur-arsenic insecticide instead of sulphur resulted in the death of a number of hogs and caused the dangerous illness of two persons on a farm in New York, an investigation by an official of the food and drug administration, United States Department of Agriculture, has revealed.

The supposed sulphur was used in preparing a sulphur and molasses mixture as a home remedy for a cold. This resulted in the critical illness of one person. Then the drug was burned and the fumes were inhaled by another, also as an attempted treatment for a cold. This person became unconscious and for some days was severely ill.

Used to Cure Hogs.

Investigation by a federal food official revealed that this same sulphur had been used last fall in an attempt to cure hogs thought to be suffering from cholera. The preparation was mixed with the feed of 60 hogs, and a majority died. It was thought at the time that the deaths were due to cholera.

The sulphur used in the three cases was analyzed by the food and drug administration and was found to contain arsenic. Fearing that others would buy this same product and use it as sulphur, the food officials traced it to its source.

Investigation showed that the mixture supposed to be sulphur had been bought at an implement store. This store had a bag of sulphur and also a bag of sulphur-arsenic insecticide. Both were in a dark attic. A clerk had sold the poisonous mixture thinking it was sulphur.

Three Errors Made.

Officials of the food and drug administration point out three errors in the situation. A poison should never be kept where it may be mistaken for a nonpoisonous product. Sulphur is not recognized by the modern veterinary science as a cure for hog cholera. Modern medical science does not consider sulphur effective in the treatment of colds either as a mixture of sulphur and molasses or as sulphur fumes.

Plan to Keep Rodents

Away From Fruit Trees

Rabbits may be kept away from fruit trees by several devices. Perhaps the most satisfactory one is to put wire screens around the trees, says W. H. Alderman of university farm, St. Paul, Minn. Among the various treatments which are applied to the trunks of trees to prevent rabbit injury, one of the best is a whitewash made out of lime-sulphur solution.

Use the solution instead of water in moistening the lime. A little salt added to this will make it stick better. If this is applied in the fall it will generally protect the trees throughout the winter, although in the event of much freezing and thawing weather, the whitewash may chip away.

Rubbing the trunks and the main branches with a piece of fresh bloody meat will keep rabbits away for a short time.

Farm Fish Ponds Will

Be Found Profitable

It is estimated by Cornell university experts that with proper stocking and management an acre of farm pond will produce 200 pounds of fish per year without artificial feeding. This is in addition to its value for supplying water for live stock, for cutting ice, for irrigation under special conditions, and for skating, bathing, fishing, and so on. Pond storage of water is practicable under most soil conditions and since most of the cost is for labor, it would seem that more farmers should be interested in them. Information on farm ponds can be secured from the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and from your agricultural college.

Irregular Soy Stands

Not Considered Good

The best yields of soy beans cannot be obtained from stands that are very irregular as is common in most fields. Beans put in with a grain drill at the University of Illinois, and which produced what was considered a good stand, were found to vary all the way from one bean plant in a foot of drill row to fifteen plants. Such irregularity is largely due to variation in flow of seed through the drill as modified by the jarring or lack of jarring of drill. Irregular physical condition of the soil caused by clods and ridges and holes make for irregular distribution of the seed and consequent irregular stands and lower yield.