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The Treasure of the Bucoleon

By A. D. HOWDEN SMITH

CHAPTER I

The messenger lay clumped on the ground, and let himself into my uncle's house, never dreaming that I held the key to the treasure in my hand, or rather, in the pink calceolarius.

A moment later he had disappeared into the study, and my cousin Betty King had called me from the garden, which she sat between her father and Hugh.

"Here you are, at last," she cried. "Did I have to come to my good-bye to you? You're going to Constantinople, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," I replied.

"The day after tomorrow," she said.

"I'll see you off," Hugh said, stepping from the veranda. "Listen to this: Salada's London today the New York market. Must see you immediately. Have made important decisions. You and essential family business. Oh, dear! A set of family treasure. It's supposed to be located in Constantinople, and my uncle has spent most of the family's property there. That's why I have to go to New York in a hurry."

"Hugh, the old story of Lord James' uncle's treasure, a great deal of money, on his way to Palestine, via Andromeda's Commemorative, the Charter Chest, the treasure of the east."

And now, I was immensely wealthy. He revealed the hiding place of his treasure, which was in his palace, known as the Bucoleon, on Hugh's ancestral. Soon after that Andromeda was commissioned, and Lord James threw in his lot with Hugh, he had a reputation, captured Constantinople, and rescued his father.

"They returned to England and before James died he passed on to his son the secret of the treasure."

Lord James' descendants from time to time made futile efforts to discover the treasure, but from the time of Elizabeth until the present, the search was abandoned.

"But now, Uncle James is mortgaging his home to finance his recollections," Hugh concluded.

"Then have you no definite knowledge of the location of the treasure?" asked King. "No, sir."

There are documents in the Charter Chest," began Hugh.

"What's that?" demanded Betty.

"It's a terribly old oaken box, bound with copper and steel," explained Hugh. "We keep it in a safe deposit vault in the City—London, you know. These documents say that James' idea was to have the treasure used for the rehabilitation of Constantinople if any chance arose which would justify such a gift. Finding that the money was to go to his descendants."

"Well, I for one intend to believe in it," stated Betty. "and if your uncle wants any help in hunting for it, he can count on me."

Betty is slim, with brown hair and eyes and a face that you have to look at and when she gets her head back—Hugh jumped up, nervously crumpling the cable in his hand.

"There's no use!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't honestly encourage Uncle James in any more foolishness."

When we reached the Aquiliana's pier on the eighteenth, Hugh buttoned a passing steward.

"Lord Chesby, sir? Yes, sir? Yes, sir, he was one of the first ashore. There was a gentleman to meet him, I think, sir."

"That's queer," muttered Hugh. "Wait, though, there's Watkins, Uncle James' man."

"Hi, Watty!" Hugh greeted him.

"What's your uncle?"

"Mr. Hugh! I'm very glad to see you, sir. If I may say so, it's lucky you're here. Why, he went off with your messenger, sir."

"My messenger?" Hugh repeated blankly.

"Yes, sir, the dark eastern looking person. Your man, 'e said 'e was, sir."

"My man?"

Watkins became suddenly anxious. "There's nothing wrong, I 'ope, sir? The gentleman came aboard to find us, and told his lads how you'd been delayed, and 'e was to come along to your rooms, sir, whilst I saw the luggage through the Customs. Wasn't that right, sir?"

Hugh sat down on a trunk.

"It's right enough, Watty," he groaned, "except that I never sent such a message, and I haven't a man."

"Do you now, Jack, said Hugh seriously. "I am beginning to think that something sinister may have happened."

"And now I think of it, sir," amended Watkins, "we 'ave been shadowed ever since we went to Turkey. Your uncle 'ad the Charter Chest sent up from the safe deposit vaults—but that was before we went to Turkey, to be sure, sir."

Hugh jumped.

"By Jove, he has been after the treasure! The instructions in the original parchment on which Hugh the First inscribed his command to his son to go after the treasure—carefully leaving out, however, the directions for finding it."

Our cleaning woman was still in our apartment when Hugh returned, and she said nobody had called. I rang up hotels for two hours—without any result. At the end of my tether I hung up the receiver and joined Hugh in gloomy reflection on the couch.

It's his own fault—the old fool got it. And you can't tell his nephew we will feed him a dose of the same medicine if he doesn't come across."

"Ber-ri-ri-ri!"

"What! Wait!" I gasped into the mouthpiece. "Who?"

"Number, please," said a feminine voice.

"My God!" I cried. "Hugh, they've killed him! I think, and I reported the message."

"We must get a taxi. Hurry!"

In the taxi, Hugh spoke until we came to the hospital.

The nurse on duty led us into a long room lined with beds. A high screen had been placed around one of them, and Hugh's head and hands were fastened to a board by his wrists.

"Uncle James?"

His uncle was unconscious and a detective standing near told Hugh about the attack on him.

"He was pulled up corner of Thirteenth street and Avenue C," said the officer. "The plenty of Gypsy dumps in that neighborhood. A man and three women saw him dropped from a closed auto."

The dying man's eyes opened; a very faint tinge of color glowed in his ashen face.

"I'm afraid the end is near," the surgeon muttered. "Make the most of your opportunity."

Hugh pulled me to my knees beside him.

"This is Jack Nash, Uncle James," he said. "He is my friend—your friend. He will be with me in what ever I have to do for you."

Lord Chesby's eyes examined me closely.

"Looks right," the syllables trickled almost soundlessly from his lips. "It's treasure-burned memento with triumph."

"Know where?"

"But you should wonder what would have happened to Hugh had he taken on of the treasure, instead of switching the subject."

"Touted," answered the dying man, with sudden sagacity. "Tiger—that chap—others—again—him."

"But why did he do it?"

"Wouldn't tell him—treasure—said—torture—broke—away—Gyp—sies—"

Exhaustion overtook him.

"But who are they, Uncle James?"

"Touted—worse—Beran—many—bad—lot."

"Where did they take you? Tell us and we shall have them arrested."

The gray eyes glowered.

"No—no—talk—alived—police—don't talk—treasures."

"Where is the treasure?" I interposed.

"Bull—Cedars—li—"

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ISSUE No. 19—'30

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CHAPTER II

The telephone suddenly jangled and I unhooked the receiver.

"Is this Mr. Chesby's apartment?"

A voice that burred in my ear was very thick with a guttural intonation. "Tell him they are taking what's left of his uncle to Bellevue hospital."

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TRUE LIFE

A man is simple, whose chief care is to be what he ought to be. He is honestly and naturally human. We may compare existence to raw material. What it is made of, as the value of a work of art lies in the flowering of a woman's skill. True life is possible in social conditions the most diverse and with natural gifts the most unequal. It is not fortune or personal advantage, but our training that is important, that commingles the value of life. Fame adds no more than a length of days; quality is the thing.

—Charles Wagner.

A LITTLE BIRD

A little bird with plumage brown, Beside my window flutters down, chirps its little strain, Then to my window pane, And chirps and hops along. To call my notice to its song: But I won't heed its lay, Till, in neglect, it flies away.

So birds of peace and hope and love bring earthward from above, on life's windowsills, Applause, a load of earthly bliss; But we, as fowls' rush and din, Too deep engaged to let them in, With dejected heart and sense plod on, Nor know our loss till they are gone.

—Paul Laurence Dunbar.

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"How did you find it, Uncle James?" asked Hugh softly.

That gay smile of triumph shone in his eyes for the last time.

"Used my brain—all laughed—me—in—Hugh—"

and the life flickered out of him as we watched.

Two weeks later, Hugh (now Lord Chesby) and I found in London an old friend, Nikka Zaranko. Nikka was of gypsy parentage and Hugh and I had both met him in the World War. He was now a famed musician, but upon hearing our plans readily threw in his lot with us. Hugh and I were delighted with this, as Nikka would prove a powerful ally with his knowledge of Constantinople.

We then went to call on Mr. Bellows, the Chesby solicitor. To him Nikka told a story that startled all of us.

"I have always heard of the Treasure of the Bucoleon," he said, "but I believe it is also sometimes referred to as the Treasure of Andronicus. It is well known in the Near East. I am a Gypsy. My father was Voivode Traibidji, or King, of the Balkan Gypsies. I have heard, for instance, a story that a certain tribe of Gypsies in Constantinople owned the supposed site of the treasure. But I do not vouch for the story.

"I do, however, vouch for the statement that Lord Chesby is confronting an organized international band of criminals with many Gypsy members; and I do not believe that such a band would waste time on any enterprise which they did not have good reason to believe would promise handsome profits.

"I have heard, too, of this Toutou, your uncle spoke of. He is usually called Toutou Lafitte, but he has many other names. He is said to be a combination of bloodthirsty monster and intensely clever strategist. The band here, and there are few countries they do not reach. I have no doubt, Hugh, they made arrangements in your uncle's case with some affiliated criminal organization in America."

"Mr. Bellows, I gather," from Watkins that my uncle discussed his discovery with you," said Hugh. "Did he indicate precisely what it was or where he had found it?"

"I saw uncle did discuss his—shaded discovery with me. Aside from the fact that he had made it whilst at Chesby—"

"At Chesby?" Hugh interrupted.

"No, I understood. He came in to me just before he started for Constantinople the last time. I should describe him as considerably excited."

"Yes, Mr. Bellows," he said, "do you know, I've found the missing part of the instructions?"

"He never showed it to me, and so far as I know he did not have it in his possession when he was here."

"Mr. Bellows had the Charter Chest brought in. In it we found several framed parchments, with glasses in front and back."

The first frame contained a sheet of parchment, covered with minute black letter script in a rather corrupt form of medieval Latin.

"That is Hugh's instructions," said the solicitor. "We had a very careful translation prepared and checked over by scholars at Oxford."

He drew out a typewritten sheet of fourteen, and Nikka and I read it over Hugh's shoulder.

After stating the methods used by Andronicus in amassing his fortune and his friendship for Lord James the parchment went on as follows:

"INSTRUCTIONS of Hugh, Lord Chesby, I, Hugh, write this for my son and it may be, those who come after him.

"Hansen, my son, and those of your seed who come after us. The Lords of Constantinople are rotten. Their Empire dwindles away. The treasure is not for such as they. Therefore I say it shall go to augment the fortunes of our house and recompense my father's sufferings."

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