The Treasure of the Bucoleon

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SYNOPSIS

Hugh Chesby, on the death of his uncle, becomes Lord Chesby, and shortly thereafter discovers the key to the Treasure of the Bucoleon, which was left by the first Lord Chesby, the Crusader. Hugh sets out in quest of the treasure, which is hidden in a house in Constantinople. With him are Watkins, his servant; Jack Nash, and Nikka Zaranko. They are set upon by a band of desperate criminals led by one Toutou, who hopes to steal the secret and purloin the treasure. Nikka and Jack gain access to the house where the treasure is hidden and which is occupied by Tokalji, an ally of Toutou's. In order to further their ends they consent to join Tokalji's band of cutthroat men. Kara, a beautiful Gypsy girl, is dancing for the young men when Tokalji arrives. Nash and Nikka are recognized, but escape. The next night they come back in the launch of Betty King, Jack's cousin, and enter from the sea wall. They are ambushed and Hugh, Jack and Nikka are captured. Toutou starts to torture Nikka by crushing his hand with his hands, but Kara knifes Toutou and rescues him from the room. Watkins discovers a secret passage and they escape. Next day Watkins brings word that Betty King has been kidnapped.

CHAPTER XXI.—(Cont'd.)

A woman screamed again, horribly, so that it rasped your heartstrings. It was Maude Hilyer. She stood, with hands clutching her cheeks, her gaze fixed on the centre of the room where Monteq staggered against a pillar, the blood from a punctured lung gurgling in his throat.

Hugh, relieved of the Englishman's attack, was taking pot-shots at Toutou and Hilmi. I saw Tokalji slip through the door into the rain, and as Vernon King ran up the stairs from the atrium Hilmi followed the Tzigane and Toutou jumped through a window, squalling like the big cat he was. Behind me Watkins was scientifically roping Sandra, hand and foot, regardless of the curses she spat in three languages. Vassilievich had fainted from the pain of his wound. Maude Hilyer sat on the dirty floor, under the single wobbling lantern that remained intact, and cradled the head of her dying husband.

As I relaxed my pistol, I felt a pressure on my back. I turned and I was nearly impaled myself on a long knife blade. A tense, willowy figure leaped back and tremble-haired, stood over me.

"You are Jakka," said Kara in the Tzigane dialect. I could now understand simple phrases. "Where is Nikka?"

Dumbfounded, I pointed to the courtyard.

With a single leap, she vaulted to the window. Toutou had escaped.

Nikka shrilled in the courtyard. It was Nikka's voice.

"They can't be waiting for us," said Hugh. "Betty keep an eye on Mrs. Hilyer and the Russian and his brother."

"Don't worry about me," announced Betty. "I can't take care of myself. Hurry!"

"Nikka!" shouted Hugh. "The portfolio! It's the key to the treasure! We must break it up. We've pinned him."

We raced around as we spoke, but we went clean past and almost drove on the Turkish party.

"Come on!" shouted Hugh. "We've got them!"

Nikka had run to his men and their lanterns showed them fighting with Toutou and Hilmi across the courtyard beyond the pool. There was a crackle of a few minutes before the stone was torn out of its place, and a knot of men came into view, distorted, in the wavering light.

Hilmi and Toutou had gone for Nikka. He was bleeding from a cut on his arm, and all his men were engaged in trying to go to Nikka's aid, but were being driven back from the single wobbling lantern that remained intact, and cradled the head of her dying husband.

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