



CHAPTER X—Continued
—13—

But Dewdrop had no comfort to offer.

That the three were waiting for Pharaoh seemed pretty clear. But where was Pharaoh now? And what had Pharaoh been doing since seven o'clock? He had not seen Rush or Bugle, nor had he learned their news. More. While his men had the use of the Rolls, Pharaoh was using his feet. And that was not like Pharaoh.

Somewhere in the pile of the castle a new light leaped into life—a definite eye of radiance, unshaded and unconfined. For a moment it stabbed the darkness, a steady pinprick of light. Then it broke into a series of flashes—a silent luminous stutter that no one could ever mistake.

And so my eyes were opened. Before his fellows could tell me, I knew the truth.

Pharaoh was on the ramparts, and Pharaoh was going to "talk." Pharaoh had been in the castle the live-long day. He had never left with Dewdrop. And now he was going to quench the lights of the castle; and when he had put them out, he would let his accomplices in.

Dewdrop deciphered the message, word by word.

"Clothe-up-to-bridge—thand-by-to-enter-by-lath-night—pothtern-directly-lighth-fall."

The lamp flashed once more and went out.

Before I had gathered my wits, the three were afoot.

To this day I cannot decide what I should have done. Had I left them and dashed for the castle to give the alarm, before I had found the warden the lights would have faded. Had I attacked, whatever the result of my effort. I think it is clear that I must myself have gone down, but Pharaoh would still have been rampant. The brain, the will and the drive prompting this reign of terror belong to Pharaoh alone. And only the destruction of Pharaoh could end this sinister rule. First Pharaoh, and then his fellows; but Pharaoh first.

I say "that is how I saw it," but that is more than the truth, for I saw it very darkly, and as I stole after my quarry towards the bridge, I was myself the prey of a horrid uncertainty for which I was not to blame. I had staked and won; and now I was taking my winnings as gamblers do. But this was no gambling-table; this was the instant business of life and death.

Wild to exploit the advantage I clearly held, in fear of wasting this by striking too soon, in fear of losing it by holding my hand, I moved 10 paces in rear of the shambling thieves, with one hand on Sabre's collar and the other on Geoffrey's knife.

So far as I had gathered, they knew no more than I did what Pharaoh was going to do. He was going to cut off the light—disarm the main switchboard, without a doubt. Then they were to use the postern.

The vision brought me up with a jerk.

How could they use the postern? The postern was fast. Pharaoh must have opened it somehow. Unknown to the warden, he must have obtained the key.

A sudden apprehension lifted its ugly head. In Pharaoh's presence Helena had handed the warden a master key. That was the key with which Pharaoh had opened the postern; though no alarm had been raised, because nothing was known, Pharaoh had killed the warden and had taken the master key.

That this was so, I instantly made up my mind. "Talk about panic. . . ." Blindness, havoc and panic would rule the night. The sheep would have no shepherd—and Geoffrey and Barley were gone. How Pharaoh would find the treasure, I could not think. My way at least was clear. The thieves would bring me to Pharaoh and everything was to be gained by my holding my hand.

And here, as though by magic, the lights of Yorick went out. There was now less need of silence and more of speed, for the three rogues ran for the drawbridge as hard as they could. Sabre and I ran behind them, as though we belonged to the crew.

Ahead I saw something white by the castle wall. The three turned aside to avoid it, and I did the same. As I went by, I saw that it was a sheet. At that moment Sabre left me—he seemed to stop. But I had no time to wrangle. . . .

The postern-door was open. The three stumbled in and stood waiting. And I stood waiting without,

and with a foot on the step and my head close against the wall.

Then came Pharaoh's voice.

"Bugle."

"Ere," said Bugle at once.

"Don't talk. Whisper. Here. Take these goods. . . . Here you forgotten them?"

"I've got a shoe," breathed Bugle. "Wat's this?"

"A wiper," said Pharaoh. "To which side of the drive are the cars?"

"They're to the right from here."

"Drop the wiper on the drawbridge, and sling the shoe into the fields to the left of the drive. If you want to live, make it snappy. They're going to open those gates before you get back."

As Bugle went by me, I saw that there was a chance which would never return. Pharaoh had used no torch. If Bugle's reminiscence was true, the probability was that he would not use one tonight. I was tall and thick-set, very much about Bugle's build—a suit I had left at Plumage was fitting him very well; and Bugle had been told to whisper. . . .

In a flash I was running for the drawbridge in Bugle's wake.

The castle was alive with murmurs—sounds of disorder and distress; someone was out on the ramparts, raving (to me!) men were

trampling and shouting; I could hear blows falling upon woodwork and the shiver of breaking glass. But I heard these things as in a dream, for now I knew whose key had opened the postern, whose handkerchief would lie on the drawbridge, whose slipper fall in the fields. . . .

The knowledge set my heart pounding. Some fountain that had not been working burst suddenly into play. Its liquor was bitterness—and it made me drunken with rage. A girl had been mishandled. Not the Countess Helena of Yorick, for she was not of this life; but a slight, pathetic figure, whose head was bare. . . . that had stood very still in a valley.

What then took place, happened more swiftly than I can set it down. Bugle was on the drawbridge, and I was standing, ready and waiting to kill him, three paces away. I saw the man drop the handkerchief and I saw him draw back his arm to discharge the shoe. It was then that I noticed Sabre—nosing the scrap of line, white on the bridge. . . .

As the shoe left Bugle's hand, the Alsatian crouched, and as he turned to come back, the great dog sprang. The shock would have sent a giant flying, for Sabre weighed fully six stone.

As Bugle met the rail of the drawbridge, I heard a bone snap. And then the two went over, into the moat.

The splash they made must have been heard, but for the outcry within the castle itself.

As I ran for the postern, I heard a hubbub in the archway and Florian's voice calling to Hubert to open the gates.

As I stumbled into the passage—"This is the stuff," breathed Rush. "Up the stairs on yer left, I've got to lock this door."

It seemed best to do as he said. Pharaoh and Dewdrop were gone. I needed Rush to bring me where they were.

Without a word, I turned to the steps I knew. . . .

As I came to their head, I became aware of a radiance—a faint suggestion of light, enough to outline the doorway that gave to the

little hall. Another step, and I entered the drone of a voice.

I entered the hall a-tiptoe.

One of its doors was half-open—not that of the staircase which led to Helena's room. Beyond this a light was burning, the light of a torch—and an ice-cold voice was teaching a bitter sentence to cut like a whetted knife.

"So you see, there's not much left. Tomorrow morning, no doubt, order will be restored. Very likely the police will arrive. They won't arrive tonight, for the telephone isn't working. I'm afraid I'm to blame for that. The search, which is now proceeding in a somewhat haphazard way, will be organized; clues will be sifted; the abduction will be reconstructed. Your sheets are below the ramparts, so they'll know you were taken that way. Your handkerchief lies on the drawbridge; the slipper which you kicked off will be found in the fields."

"I expect they'll employ your Alsatian—I'm sure I should. But as I carried you here, I don't think that he will come off. One has to think of these things. Be that as it may, no stone will be left unturned to find the beautiful countess—you really are lovely, you know—the worshipful mistress of Yorick, that carted her drunken brother out of her way. And all the time you'll be here, sharing this somewhat unfriendly chamber with me and my friends. . . . You do see the point, don't you? They won't search the castle, because they'll know for certain we're none of us here. You didn't search it this morning—you knew I was gone. And if they did search the castle, I hardly think Florian would let them look in this room. It's cleverly done, that door. You've got to be curious to find it and an expert to find its lock. I'm both. I found them on Wednesday evening—with the help of your brother's key. I need hardly say that had I known that the key which you handed the warden was his and not yours, we should have adjourned to this chamber this morning instead of tonight. However, all's well that ends well. . . ."

A stealthy step behind me remembered Rush.

As I turned, he was locking the door at the head of the curling stair.

For a fraction of a second I hesitated. Rush was at my mercy. Was this the time to unmask? And then I decided to stake my winnings once more.

Rush straightened his back and turned to the half-open door. Then he hung on his heel for an instant, to breathe in my ear.

"Come on, you. I'll give you Pharaoh's a genius. He's got little Sheba cold."

Here, since it bears upon my story, I must describe how you entered that secret room.

This was the way of it.

In the massive door from the hall the keyhole was set to the right, and when you had turned the key, the iron-studded oak opened inwards and so to the left. At once you found yourself at the foot of a staircase-turret, the steps of which rose to the right and after three or four rises curled out of your view.

Now the door was very heavy and, not being truly hung, had to be held open; if it were not so held, it at once swung back to its frame and, since its lock was a spring-lock, shut itself fast. A catch was, therefore, provided, to prevent it from playing this trick—the sort of self-acting catch that is used for an entrance gate; and do bring this catch into action, you had but to open the door as wide as you could. But by so doing you were masking another door.

Enter the turret and let the door shut behind you, and there in the wall which the door, when open, had hidden, was another smaller doorway which gave to the secret room. The door which is framed was also of oak and iron, but though it boasted a handle, there was no keyhole at all. It was in fact locked by the catch which held open the major door. Turn this catch to one side, and the minor door would swing open without a sound.

From within the room this door, when shut, could neither be opened nor seen, because it was backed with the woodwork which covered the walls.

All this, of course, I learned later. All that I knew at the moment was that the door to the room had been "cleverly done."

Rush whispered over his shoulder.

"Watch out for this door. It's wedged."

He sidled round the oak and I followed, with a hand on my pistol and Geoffrey's knife in my sleeve.

I shall never forget the scene.

Only one torch was alight, and this was so held by Dewdrop that its beam fell on Helena's face. To this the eye naturally turned, and in an instant the rest of the room was black.

She was sitting upright on a bench, with her back to the paneled wall. The neck of her dress was torn and had fallen from one of her shoulders. If anything, her air was listless; she did not seem to be breathing; she sat so still. Her eyes were lowered to avoid the glare of the torch, but her beautiful head was high, and for all the emotion she showed she might have been sitting in a church.

The slight of her captive and desolate hit me hard.

That Pharaoh had been able to seize her was all my fault; but for me, she would have had Sabre, her bodyguard. More. Had I returned to the castle, my cousin and Barley and I would all have been there, and the odds against Pharaoh's success would have been absurd: as it was, I had made them even—and Pharaoh had won.

The beam of the torch was blinding and I shut my eyes and sank my chin on my chest. I wanted to be able to see where Pharaoh was. Rush was beside me; he had lingered a moment to take up the wedge and to lock the major door, but now he was standing beside me—I could hear him licking his lips. And Dewdrop, a pace or two distant, was holding the torch. But I had not distinguished Pharaoh, and Pharaoh was first on my list. Then the man spoke again, and I knew that he was standing or sitting on the farther side of the room.

"As always, I'm perfectly frank. My hand is upon the treasure. It's simply a question of testing these walls and this floor. But I can't get it out of the castle—at least, not as much as I want. I don't like to use the drawbridge; I believe even your bucolics would find that strange. But I know there's another way out. You took it with Mr. Spencer five nights ago."

"There was a little silence. Then—"Go on," said Helena, quietly.

"You will tell me that way," said Pharaoh.

"And then?"

"We shall work till dawn, removing as much as we can."

"And then?"

"We shall clear up and go," said Pharaoh. "And you will be free. I hardly think you'll want anybody to find us—in possession of so much gold."

"Clear up and," said Helena.

"What do you mean by 'clear up?'"

"I mean what you think I mean. There's a nuisance I've got to abate."

"If you were honest, you'd say 'a score to settle.'"

"I prefer the term 'nuisance.' Still, that may have to wait a little. At dawn we shall leave the castle, and you will be free."

Helena took a deep breath.

"I see," she said. "And now I'll tell you something. You've got a long way, but a long way is never enough. You know that you're near the gold, but you don't know how to reach it. It's very well to talk of testing these walls and this floor, but that's a job for a mason, and you know it as well as I. But if the gold was here, as you admitted just now, you couldn't get it away. More. So long as you stay here, you're safe, for no one will open this room. But the longer you stay here, the slighter your chance of escape. You've only the Rolls and my men will very soon find that, looking for me. And tomorrow, as you surmise, order will be restored. Quite good order, I warn you: Mr. Bohun will see to that. If you wait till then, therefore, you will have to cut your way out. You'll have no gold to carry, so that should be easy enough; but once you are out, you'll have no sort of transport and the park will be full of my people, looking for me. Of course, as I say, if you stay here, you're perfectly safe. But you've neither food nor water, and nothing that you can think of will make me talk."

"What, nothing?" said Pharaoh.

"Nothing," said Helena, calmly. "You've no one here to torture, and I'm not afraid for myself. For the moment I'm up against it; but you are up against time."

It was clear that she meant what she said: her fearlessness was sublime.

I wondered if she believed what Pharaoh had said. "Removing as much as we can. . . . clear up and go. . . . and you will be free." Once Pharaoh had access to more than a million pounds, was Pharaoh the man to grab what he could and bolt? If she opened her mouth, Pharaoh would certainly go. It seemed likely that he would take with him a thousand pounds. Fifteen hundred, perhaps; Dewdrop and Bugle and Rush could each of them manage a bag. And something else he would take—against his return: and that was his master key. And she herself would be free, or she would be dead. Was it likely that Pharaoh, the ruthless, would spare her life? Spare her to cut off his access, if nothing else?

"It certainly looks," he said, "as though we shan't be able to finish tonight. Still, these things shouldn't be rushed. And you know I can't help feeling that twenty-four hours in this chamber will help you to change your mind. The quarters are close, aren't they?"

"So much," said Helena, calmly. "May happen in twenty-four hours."

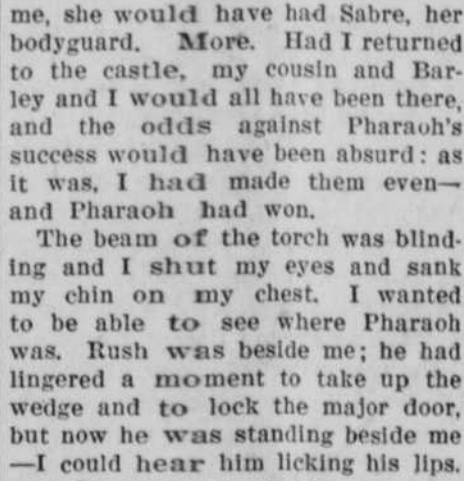
"As I was saying, here we are out of the world, and time will stand still. Outside—well, the warden will rage and your people imagine vain things: Mr. Bohun will grin like a dog and run about the—"

"Mr. Spencer's the rock you've split on from first to last."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Credit Heredity

Not one of us can really be a self-made man. Heredity has too much to do with that.

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NAUSEA	MOUTH ACIDITY
LOSS OF APPETITE	SOUR STOMACH
FREQUENT HEADACHES	

PHILLIPS' MILK OF MAGNESIA

Forward and Upward
Anywhere, if it be forward . . . and if I should never return, perhaps my life will be as profitably spent as a forerunner as in any other way.—David Livingstone.

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I'LL GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE, JACK, IF YOU LOSE YOUR TEMPER AGAIN, YOU'RE THROUGH!

WELL—IT'S A GOOD THING YOU'RE LETTING ME PLAY TONIGHT! MY FATHER CAME ALL THE WAY FROM WASHINGTON TO SEE THE GAME!

AW—THIS COACH DOESN'T KNOW ENOUGH TO TEACH A KINDERGARTEN CLASS TO PLAY TIDDLEDY-WINKS!

MR. COFFEE NERVES

TELL THIS DUMB REFEREE IF HE'S GOING TO PLAY ON THEIR SIDE HE'D BETTER PUT ON A BASKETBALL SUIT!

—THAT'S ENOUGH OF YOUR ROUGH STUFF, WALTON! I SAW YOU ELBOW THAT MAN IN THE FACE! GET OUT OF THE GAME!

BEING A DOCTOR, I RECOGNIZED JACK'S TROUBLE AS COFFEE-NERVES! BUT HE'S PROMISED TO QUIT COFFEE AND DRINK POSTUM INSTEAD!

FINE! YOU STICK TO THAT, JACK, AND YOU'LL GET BACK ON THE TEAM!

CURSES! SWITCHING TO POSTUM, IS HE? THEN I'M THROUGH!

30 DAYS LATER

WAIT WHILE I WIRE DAD. I WANT HIM TO KNOW I'VE BEEN ELECTED BASKETBALL CAPTAIN!

THINK I'LL WIRE HIM, TOO—AND TELL HIM WHAT A FINE DISPOSITION YOU'VE ACQUIRED SINCE YOU SWITCHED TO POSTUM!

TELEGRAMS AND CABLES

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Tuskegee Institute, an institution for the education of negroes, was established in 1881 by an act of the Alabama legislature under the name of Tuskegee State Normal school. It was opened July 4, 1881.

OF COURSE, you know that children should never drink coffee. But do you realize that the caffeine in coffee disagrees with many grown-ups, too? If you are bothered by headaches or indigestion, or find it difficult to sleep soundly . . . caffeine may be to blame. Isn't it worth while to try Postum for 30 days? Postum contains no caffeine. It is simply whole wheat and bran, roasted and slightly sweetened. It is easy to make, and costs less than one-half cent a cup. It's a delicious drink, too. . . . and may prove a real help. A product of General Foods.

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