

THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 1905.

RAFFLES, the AMATEUR CRACKSMAN.

A COSTUME PIECE

Second Story in the Absorbing Raffles Series
BY E. W. HORNUNG

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London was just then talking of one whose name is already a name and nothing more. Reuben Rosenthal had made his millions on the diamond fields of South Africa, and had come home to enjoy them according to his lights; how he went to work will scarcely be forgotten by any reader of the half-penny evening papers, which revealed in endless anecdotes of the original indigence and present prodigality, varied with interesting particulars of the extraordinary establishment which the millionaire set up in St. John's Wood. Here he kept a retinue of Kafirs, who were literally his slaves; and hence he would ally, with enormous diamonds in his shirt and on his finger, in the company of a prize-fighter of famous name, who was not, however, by any means the worst element in the Rosenthal ménage. So said common gossip; but the fact was sufficiently established by the interference of the police on at least one occasion, followed by certain magisterial proceedings which were reported with justifiable gusto and headlines in the newspapers. And this was all one knew of Reuben Rosenthal up to the time when the Old Bohemian Club, having fallen on evil



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days, found it worth his while to organize a great dinner in honor of so wealthy an exponent of the Club's principles. I was not at the banquet myself, but a member took Raffles, who told me all about it that very night.

"Most extraordinary show I ever went to in my life," said he. "As for the man himself—well, I was prepared for something grotesque, but the fellow fairly took my breath away. To begin with, he's the most astounding brute to look at, well over six feet, with a chest like a barrel, and a great hook nose, and the reddest hair and whiskers you ever saw. Dank like a fire-engine, but only got drunk enough to make a speech that I wouldn't have missed for ten pounds. I'm only sorry you weren't there, too, Bunny, old chap."

I began to be sorry myself, for Raffles was anything but an excitable person, and never had I seen him so excited before. Had he been following Rosenthal's example. His coming to my rooms at midnight merely to tell me about his dinner was in itself enough to excite a suspicion which was certainly at variance with my knowledge of A. J. Raffles.

"What did he say?" I inquired mechanically, divining some subtler explanation of this visit and wondering what on earth it could be.

"Say?" cried Raffles. "What did he say? He boasted of his rise, he bragged of his riches, and he vaingloriously society for taking him up for his money and dropping him out of sheer pigmy and jealousy because he had so much. He mentioned names, too, with the most charming freedom, and even he was as good a man as the old country had to show—the Old Bohemians. To prove it he pointed to a great diamond in the middle of his shirt-front, a little finger leaded with another just like it. Which of our blasted princes could show a pair like that? As a matter of fact they seemed purple gleam to them that must mean a pot of money. But old Rosenthal swore he wouldn't take 50,000 pounds for the two, and wanted to know where the old man was who went about with 25,000 in his shirt-front and other 25,000 on his little finger. He didn't expect, if he did, he wouldn't have the pluck to wear them. But he had—he'd tell us why. And before you could say Jack Robinson he had whipped out a whining great revolver!"

"Not at the table?"

"At the table! In the middle of his speech! But it was nothing to what he wanted to do. He actually wanted us to let him write his name in bullets on the opposite wall to show us why he wasn't afraid to go about in plain at last. That brute Purvis, the prize-fighter, who he paid bully, had to bully his master before he could be persuaded out of it. There was quite a panic for the moment; one fellow was saying his prayers under the table, and the waiter bolted to a man."

"What a grotesque scene!"

"Grotesque enough, but I rather wish they had let him go the whole hog and blaze away. He was as keen as knives to show us how he took care of his purple diamonds; and, do you know, Bunny, I was as keen as knives to see."

And Raffles leaned toward me with a sly, slow smile that made the hidden meaning of his visit only too plain at last.

"So you think of having a try for his diamonds?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It is horribly obvious, I admit. But yes, I have set my heart upon them. To be quite frank, I have had them on my conscience for some time; one couldn't bear so much of the man, and his prize-fighter, and his diamonds, without feeling it a kind of duty to have a go for them; but when it comes to brandishing a revolver and practically challenging the world, the thing becomes inevitable. It is simply thrust upon one. I was fated to hear that challenge, Bunny, and I, for one,

must take it up. I was only sorry I didn't get on my hind legs and say so then and there."

"Well," I said, "I don't see the necessity as things are with us; but, of course, I'm your man."

My tone may have been half-hearted, but it did my best to make it otherwise. But it was barely a month since our Bond Street exploit, and we certainly could not afford to behave ourselves for some time to come. We have been getting along so nicely, by his advice I had scribbled a thing or two; inspired by Raffles, I had even done an article on our own jewel robbery; and for the moment I was quite satisfied with this sort of adventure. I thought we ought to know when we were well off, and could see no point in our running fresh risks before we were obliged. On the other hand, I was anxious to show the least disposition to break the pledge that I had given a month ago. But it was not on my manifest disinclination that Raffles fastened.

"Nonsense, my dear Bunny! Does the writer only write when the wolf is at the door? Does the painter paint for bread alone? Must you and I be driven to crime

because beside the rest of his normal garments he has a few more of the same kind?"

"Looking for the works of art?" continued Raffles, lighting a cigarette and beginning to divest himself of his rags. "In any way you find any, but there's the canvas I'm always going to make a start upon. I tell them I'm looking high and low for my ideal model. I have reason on principle twice a week, and look in and leave a newspaper and a smell of Sullivan—how good they are after shag! Meanwhile I pay my rent and am a good fellow every way; and it's a very useful little pied-a-terre—there's no saying how useful it might be at a pinch. As it is, the billhook comes in and the topped goes in and nobody takes the slightest notice of either; at this time of night the chances are that there's not a soul in the building except ourselves."

"You never mean you went in for disguise?" said I, watching him as he cleaned the grime from his face and hands.

"No, Bunny, I've treated you very shabbily all around. This was really no reason why I shouldn't have shown you this place a month ago, and yet there was no point in my doing so, and circumstances are just conceivable in which it would have suited us both for you to be in genuine ignorance of my whereabouts. I have something to sleep on, as you perceive, in case of need, and, in the King's Road. So you will see that one might bolt further and fare worse."

"Meanwhile you use the place as a dressing room?"

"It's my private pavilion," said Raffles. "Disguises? In some cases they're half the battle, and it's always pleasant to take you straight into action then and there. There's no need necessarily to be convicted under your own name. Then they're indispensable in dealing with the fence. I've been in the King's Road, and I don't think I'd be there if I didn't think it's the very devil to pay in blackmail. Now, this cupboard's full of all sorts of room that it's for my models when I find 'em. By the way, I only hope I've got something that'll fit you, for you'll want a rig for tomorrow night."

"Tomorrow night?" I exclaimed. "Why, what do you mean to do?"

"The trick," said Raffles. "I intended writing to you about it. I got back to my rooms, to ask you to look me up tomorrow afternoon; then I was going to unfold my plan of campaign and take you straight into action then and there. There's no need necessarily to be convicted under your own name. Then they're indispensable in dealing with the fence. I've been in the King's Road, and I don't think I'd be there if I didn't think it's the very devil to pay in blackmail. Now, this cupboard's full of all sorts of room that it's for my models when I find 'em. By the way, I only hope I've got something that'll fit you, for you'll want a rig for tomorrow night."

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about outside, cursing the Kafirs and nagging at each other.

"Over that wall, I tell you!"

"I tell you it was this one. Can't you whistle for the police?"

"Police be damned! I've had enough of the blessed police."

"Then we'd better get back and make sure of the other rotter."

"Oh, make sure o' yer skin. That's what you'd better do. Jala, you black hog, if I catch you skulkin'!"

I never heard the threat. I was creeping from the drawing-room on my hands and knees, my own revolver swinging by its steel ring from my teeth.

For an instant I thought that the hall above was deserted. I was wrong, and I crept upon a Kafir on all fours. Poor devil, I could not bring myself to deal not with a blow; but I threatened him most hideously with my revolver, and let the white teeth chattering in his black head as I took the stairs three at a time. Why I went upstairs in that decisive fashion, as though it were my only course, I cannot explain. But garden and ground floor seemed alive with men, and I might have done worse.

I turned into the first room I came to. It was a bedroom—empty, though lit up, and never shall I forget how I started as I entered, on encountering the awful villain that was myself at full length in a pier-glass! Masked, armed and ragged, I was indeed fit carion for a bullet or the handgun! and to one of the other I made a special message to good old Mackenzie. The whole detective department will be at Rosenthal's in about half an hour. Of course I speculated on our gentleman's hatred of the police—another huge slice of luck. If you'd got away, well and good; if not, I felt he was the man to play with his moon as long as possible. Yes, Bunny, it's been more a costume piece than I had dreamed of. And we've come out of it with a good deal less credit. But, by Jove, we're jolly lucky to have come out of it at all!"

Richbuckto News.

Richbuckto, May 29.—Empire Day was observed in the different departments of the grammar school. Lessons were taught and essays read relative to the growth and expansion of the British Empire.

On Tuesday last a very pleasant dance was given in the temperance hall by the ladies of the town. The hall was tastefully decorated with flags and Chinese lanterns. A programme of twenty-six dances was successfully carried out. A large number of ladies and gentlemen were present from Raxton. Towards midnight refreshments were served. Much of the success and enjoyment of the evening was due to the untiring efforts of Miss Fannie Franklin and Miss Stevenson.

The tennis enthusiasts are busily practising every evening for the coming tournament which takes place every summer between Raxton and Richbuckto. It is



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remained that the government intend plowing up the land and field and if such is the from another location will have to be sought out.

A report that several cases of smallpox had developed over the river fortunately proved to be false, much to the relief of citizens of the town.

W. E. Forbes has been selected as a member of the New Brunswick team which will compete in the inter-provincial rifle match at Charlottetown on June 8.

There—like that!"

He freckled paw shot up over Purvis's shoulder, more lightning came from his ring, a red flash from his revolver, and shrieks from the women as the reverberations died away. Some splinters lodged in my hair.

Next instant the prize-fighter dashed him; and I was safe from the devil, but finally doomed to the deep-sea. A policeman was in our midst. He had entered through the drawing-room window; he was an officer of few words and creditable promptitude. In a twinkling he had the handcuffs on my wrists, while the pugilist explained the situation, and the patron reviled the force and its representative.

Worn thin? No! Washed him! That's so when a mirror soap is used.

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