The ADVENTURES of MR. PETER RUFF - PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

IX.---WONDERFUL JOHN DORY

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Mr. John Dory, who had arrived at Clenarvon Court from the nearest railway station, was ushered by the butler to the door of one of the rooms on the ground floor, overlooking the Park. A policeman was there on guard—a policeman by his attitude and salute, although he was in plain clothes. John Dory nodded, and turned to the butler.

"You see, the man knows me," he said. "Here is my card. I am John Dory from Scotland Yard. I want to have a few words with the sergeant."

The butler turned toward an elderly gentleman in a pink coat and riding-breeches, who had just descended into the hall.

"His lordship is here," he said. "There is a gentleman from Scotland Yard, your lordship, who wishes to enter the morning-room to speak with the sergeant."

"Inspector John Dory, at your lordship's service," John Dory said, saluting.

Lord Clenarvon smiled.

"I should have thought that, under the circumstances," he said, "two of you would have been enough. Still, pray go in and speak to the sergeant. Rather dull week for him, I'm afraid, and quite unnecessary."

"I am not so sure, your lordship," John Dory answered. "The Clenarvon diamonds are known all over the world, and I suppose there isn't a thieves' den in Europe that does not know that they will remain here exposed with your daughter's other wedding presents."

John Dory was accordingly admitted into the room which was so jealously guarded. The windows had every one of them been boarded up, and the electric lights, consequently, fully turned on. A long table stood in the middle of the apartment, serving as support for a long glass show-case, open at the top. Within this, from end to end, stretched the presents which a large circle of acquaintances were presenting to one of the most popular young women in society, on the occasion of her approaching marriage to the Duke of Rochester. In the middle, the wonderful Clenarvon diamonds, set in the form of a tiara, flashed strange lights into the sombrely lit apartment. At the end of the table a police sergeant was sitting.

"Good morning, Saunders," John Dory said. "I see you've got it pretty snug in here."

Pretty well, thank you, sir," Saunders answered. "Is there anything stirring "

"Not exactly that, Saunders," he said. "To tell you the truth, I came down here because of that list of guests you sent me up."

Saunders smiled.

"I think I can guess the name you singled out, sir," he said.

"It was Peter Ruff, of course," John Dory said. "What is he doing here in the house, under his own name, and as a guest?"

"I have asked no questions, sir," Saunders answered. "I underlined the name in case it might seem worth your while to make inquiries."

John Dory went round the boarded windows, examining the work carefully until he reached the door.

"I am going to see if I can have a word with his lordship," he said.

He caught Lord Clenarvon in the act of mounting his horse in the great courtyard.

"There is one name, your lordship, among your list of guests, concerning whom I wish to have a word with you," the detective said—"the name of Mr. Peter Ruff."

"Don't know anything about him." Lord Clenarvon answered, cheerfully. "You must see my daughter, Lady Mary. It was she who sent him his invitation. Seems a decent sort fellow, and rides as well as the best."

John Dory returned into the house to make inquiries respecting Lady Mary. In a few minutes he was shown into her presence.

"Another detective!" she exclaimed. "I am sure I ought to feel quite safe now. What can I do for you, Mr. Dory?"

"I have had a list of the guests sent to me," John Dory answered, "in which I notice the name of Mr. Peter Ruff."

"Do you want to know all about Mr. Ruff?" Lady Mary asked smiling.

"If your ladyship will pardon my saying so," John Dory answered, "I think that neither you nor anyone else could tell me that. What I wished to say was that I understood that we at Scotland Yard were placed in charge of your jewels until after the wedding. Mr. Peter Ruff is, as you may be aware, a private detective himself."

"I understand perfectly," Lady Mary said. "I can assure you, Mr. Dory, that Mr. Ruff is here entirely as a personal and very valued friend of my own. On two occasions he has rendered very signal service to my family—services which I am quite unable to requite."

John Dory bowed.

"In that case, your ladyship," he said, "there is nothing more to be said. I conceive it, however, to be my duty to tell you that in the opinion of Scotland Yard there are things about the career of Mr. Peter Ruff which need explanation."

Lady Mary laughed frankly.

"My dear Mr. Dory," she said, "this is one of the cases, then, in which I can assure you that I know more than Scotland Yard. There is no person in the world in whom I have more confidence, and with more reason, than Mr. Peter Ruff."

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As a matter of fact, this, in some respects the most remarkable of the adventures which had ever befallen Mr. Peter Ruff, came to him by accident. Lady Mary had insisted upon his coming with his wife to the party which was assembling in Clenarvon Court in honor of her own approaching wedding. Peter Ruff for several days had thoroughly enjoyed himself. He had, however, a very distinct and disagreeable shock when, on the night of John Dory's appearance, he recognized among a few newly-arrived guests the Marquis de Sogrange. He took the opportunity, as soon as possible, of withdrawing his wife from a little circle among whom they had been talking, to a more retired corner of the room.

"Violet," he said, "don't look behind now—"

"I recognized him at once," she interrupted. "It is the Marquis de Sogrange."

"It will be best for you," he said, "not to notice him. Of course, his presence here may be accidental. At the same time, I am uneasy."

She understood in a moment.

"The Clenarvon diamonds!" she whispered.

"It is just the sort of affair which would appeal to the' Double-Four, " he said. "Violet, if I were not sure that he had seen me, I should leave the house this minute."

"Why?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Don't you understand that I myself am still what they call a corresponding member of the 'Double-Four,' and they have a right to appeal to me for help in this country, as I have a right to appeal to them for help or information in France? We have both made use of one another, to some extent. No doubt, if the Marquis has any scheme in his mind, he would look upon me as a valuable ally."

She turned slowly pale.

"Peter," she said, "you wouldn't dream to be so foolish?"

He shook his head firmly.

"What would happen if you refused to help?" she asked, tremulously.

"I do not know," Peter Ruff answered. "The conditions are a little severe. But, after all, there are no hard and fast rules. It rests with the Marquis himself to shrug his shoulders and appreciate my position. Perhaps he may not even exchange a word with me. Here is Lord Sotherst coming to talk to you. Remember, don't recognize Sogrange."

Dinner that night was an unusually cheerful meal. Peter Ruff, who was an excellent raconteur, told many stories. The Marquis de Sogrange was perhaps the next successful in his efforts to entertain his neighbors. Violet found him upon her left hand, and although he showed not the slightest signs of having ever seen her before, they were very soon excellent friends. After dinner, Sogrange and Peter Ruff drifted together on their way to the billiard-room. Sogrange continued to talk courteously of trifles until, having decided to watch the first game, they found themselves alone on the leather divan surrounding the room.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, my friend," Sogrange said. "Professional?"

"Not in the least," Peter Ruff answered. "I have had the good fortune to render Lady Mary and Lord Southerst, her brother, at different times, services which they are pleased to value highly. We are here as ordinary guests—my wife and I."

The Marquis sighed.

"Mr. Ruff," he said, "what do you suppose the income from my estate amounts to?"

Peter Ruff shook his head.

"Somewhere about seven millions of francs," Sogrange declared. "There are few men in Paris more extravagant than I, but I cannot spend my income. Do you think that it is for the sake of gain that I have come across the Channel to add the Clenarvon diamonds to our coffers?"

Peter Ruff sat very still.

"You mean that?" he said.

"Of course!" Sogrange answered. "Didn't you realize it directly you saw me? Don't you understand that it is the gambler's instinct—the restless desire to be playing pitch-and-toss with fate, with honor, with life and death, if you will—that brings such as myself into the ranks of the 'Double-Fours?'"

"DRIVER, PLEASE RETURN TO THE COURT AT ONCE."

"Marquis," Peter Ruff answered, "the confidence with which you have honored me, inspires me to make you one request. I am here, indeed, as a friend of the family. You will not ask me to help in any designs you may have against the Clenarvon jewels?"

Sogrange leaned back in his chair and laughed softly.

"Oh, Peter Ruff," he said, "we will see. I make no promises. All that I insist upon, for the present, is that you do not leave this house-party without advising me. Come, I must play bridge with the Countess."

The following night, being the last but one before the wedding itself, a large dinner party had been arranged for. The meal was about half-way through when those who were not too entirely engrossed in conversation were startled by hearing a dull, rumbling sound. Peter Ruff and the Marquis de Sogrange were among the first to spring to their feet.

"It's an explosion somewhere," the latter cried. "Sounds close at hand too."

They made their way out into the hall. Exactly opposite was the room in which the wedding presents had been placed, and where days nothing had been seen but a closed door and a man in duty outside. The door now stood wide open, and in place of the single electric light which was left burning through the evening, the place seemed almost aflame.

Ruff, Sogrange and Lord Southerst were the first three to cross the threshold. They were met by a rush of cold wind. Opposite to them, two of the windows, with their boardings, had been blown away. Sergeant Saunders was still sitting in his usual place at the end of the table, his head bent upon his folded arms. The man who had been on duty outside was standing over him, white with horror. Far away in the distance, down the park, one could faintly hear the throbbing of an engine. The room itself—the whole glittering array of presents—seemed untouched. Only the great centrepiece—the Clenarvon diamonds—had gone. Even as they stood there, the rest of the guests crowding into the open door, John Dory tore through. Peter Ruff's calm voice penetrated the din of tongues.

"Lord Sotherst," he said, "you have telephones to the keepers lodges. There is a motor car being driven southwards at full speed. Telephone down, and have your gates secured. Dory, I should keep every one out of the room. Some one must telephone for a doctor. I suppose your man has been hurt."

Unwillingly, the people were led away. A doctor, who had been among the guests, was examining Saunders.

"The poor fellow has been shot in the back of the head with some peculiar implement," he said. "The bullet is very long—almost like a needle—and it seems to have penetrated very nearly to the base of the brain. An inch higher up and he must have died at once. I want some of the men servants to help me carry him to a bedroom."

John Dory turned to the man whom they had found standing over him.

"Tell us exactly what happened."

"I was standing outside the door," the man answered. "I heard no sound inside—there was nothing to excite suspicion in any way. Suddenly there was this explosion. It took me, perhaps, thirty or forty seconds to get the key out of my pocket and unlock the door. When I entered, the side of the room was blown in like that, the diamonds were gone, Saunders was leaning forward just in the position he is in now, and there wasn't another soul in sight. Then you and the others came."

John Dory rushed from the room; they had brought him word that the car was waiting.

A few seconds later the pursuit was started. Saunders was carried out of the room, followed by the doctor. There remained only Peter Ruff and the man who had been on duty outside. Peter Ruff seated himself where Saunders had been sitting, and seemed to be closely examining the table all round for some moments. Once he took up something from between the pages of the book, which the Sergeant had apparently been reading, and put it carefully into his own pocketbook. Then he leaned back in the chair, with his hands clasped behind his head and his eyes fixed upon the ceiling.

"Hastings," he said to the policeman, "I wonder whether you'd step outside and see Mr. Richards, the butler. Ask him if he would be so good as to spare me a moment."

Peter Ruff was not left alone long. Mr. Richards came hurrying in.

"His lordship has excused me from superintending the service of the dinner," he said. "Anything that I can do for you I am to give my whole attention to."

"In the first place, then," Peter Ruff answered, "I want a plan of the house, with the names of the guests who occupy this wing."

"I can supply you with it very shortly, sir. It is to be hoped, sir," as he retreated, "that the gentleman from Scotland Yard will catch the thieves."

But, alas! no such fortune was in store for Mr. John Dory. At breakfast he returned in a borrowed trap.

"Our tires had been cut," he said, in reply to a storm of questions. "They began to go one after the other, as soon as we had any speed on. We traced the car to Salisbury, and there isn't a village within forty miles that isnt' looking out for it."

The daily life at Clenarvon Court proceeded exactly as usual. Breakfast was served early, as there was to be a big day's shoot. The Marquis de Sogrange and Peter Ruff smoked their cigarettes together afterwards in the great hall. Then it was that Peter Ruff took the plunge.

"Marquis," he said, "I should like to know exactly how I stand with you—the 'Double-Four,' that is to say—supposing I range myself for an hour or so on the side of the law?"

"You amuse yourself, Mr. Ruff," Sogrange remarked genially.

"Not in the least," Peter Ruff answered.

"My dear friend," Sogrange said, "I am no amateur at this game. When I choose to play it, I am not afraid of Scotland Yard. I am not afraid," he concluded, "even of you!"

"Do you ever bet, Marquis?" Peter Ruff asked.

"Twenty-five thousand francs," Sogrange said, smiling, "that your efforts to aid Mr. John Dory are unavailing."

"It is a bargain," Peter Ruff declared. "Our bet, I presume, carries immunity for me?"

"By all means," Sogrange answered, with a little bow.

The Marquis beckoned to Lord Sotherst, who was crossing the hall.

"My dear fellow," he said, "do tell me the name of your hatter in London. Delions failed me at the last moment, and I have not a hat fit for the ceremony tomorrow."

"I'll lend you half-a-dozen, if you can wear them," Lord Sotherst answered, smiling.

Sogrange touched his head with a smile.

"Alas!" he said. "My head is small, even for a Frenchman's. Imagine me walking to the church tomorrow in a hat which came to my ears!"

Lord Sotherst laughed.

"Scotts will do you all right," he said. "You can telephone."

"I shall send my man up," Sogrange determined. "He can bring me back a selection. Tell me, at what hour is the first drive this morning, and are the places drawn yet?"

"Come into the gun-room and we'll see," Lord Sotherst answered.

Peter Ruff made his way to the back quarters of the house. In a little sitting-room he found the man he sought, sitting alone. Peter Ruff closed the door behind him.

"John Dory," he said, "I have come to have a few words with you."

The detective rose to his feet.

"What do you want to say to me " he asked gruffly.

"I want, if I can," Peter Ruff said earnestly, "to do you a service."

John Dory took a quick step backwards.

"Ruff," he said, "I don't deserve this. I've had bad times lately, though. Everything has gone against me."

"Stop!" Peter Ruff insisted. "You have had some bad luck at headquarters. I know of it. I am going to help you to reinstate yourself brilliantly."

John Dory stared at his visitor.

"Do you mean this?" he asked.

"I do," Peter Ruff answered. "In an hour's time, you shall restore the Clenarvon diamonds to Lord Clenarvon. And I promise you that the manner in which you shall recover the jewels shall be such that you will be famous for a long time to come."

"You are a wonderful man!" John Dory said, hoarsely. "Do you mean, then, that the jewels were not with those men in the motor-car?"

"Of course not!" Peter Ruff answered.

At half-past ten that morning a motor-car turned out from the garage at Clenarvon Court, and made its way down the avenue. In it was a single passenger—the dark faced Parisian valet of the Marquis de Sogrange. As the car left the avenue and struck into the main road, it was hailed by Peter Ruff and John Dory, who were walking together along the lane.

"Say, my man," Peter Ruff said, addressing the chauffeur, "are you going to the station?"

"Yes, sir!" the man answered. "I am taking down the Marquis de Sogrange's servant to catch the eleven o'clock train to town."

"You don't mind giving us a lift?" Peter Ruff asked.

"Certainly not, sir."

Peter Ruff and John Dory stepped into the tonneau of the car. The man civilly lifted the hatbox from the seat, and made room for his enforced companions.

"There's plenty of room here for three," Peter Ruff said, cheerfully, as they sat on either side of him. "Now, Mr. Lemprise, we will trouble you to change places."

"What do you mean?" the man called out, suddenly pale as death.

He was held as though in a vice. Apart from that, the muzzle of a revolver was pressed to his forehead.

"On second thoughts," Peter Ruff said, "I think we will keep you like this. Driver," he called out, "please return to the Court at once."

The man hesitated.

"You recognize the gentleman who is with me?" Peter Ruff said. "He is the detective from Scotland Yard. Please do as I say."

The car was backed and turned, the Frenchman struggling all the way like a wild cat. So they drove up to the front door of the Court, to be welcomed with cries of astonishment from the whole of the shooting party, who were just starting. Peter Ruff touched the hatbox with his foot.

"If we could trouble your Lordship," he said, "to open that hatbox, you will find something that will interest you. Mr. Dory has planned a little surprise for you, in which I have been permitted to help."

They all crowded round Lord Cleanarvon, who was cutting through the leather strap of the hatbox. Inside the silk hat which reposed there, were the Clenarvon diamonds. Monsieur le Marquis de Sogrange was one of the foremost to give vent to an exclamation of delight.

"Monsieur le Marquis," Peter Ruff said, "this should be a lesson to you, I hope, to have the characters of your servants more rigidly verified. Mr. Dory tells me that this man came into your employ at the last moment with a forged recommendation. He is, in effect, a dangerous thief."

"You amaze me!" Sogrange exclaimed.

"We are all interested in this affair," Peter Ruff said, "and my friend John Dory here is, perhaps, too modest to properly explain the matter. If you care to come with me, we can reconstruct, in a minute, the theft."

John Dory and Peter Ruff first of all handed over their captive to the two policemen who were still on duty in the Court. Afterwards, Peter Ruff led the way up one flight of stairs, and turned the handle of the door of an apartment exactly over the morning rooms. It was the bedroom of the Marquis de Sogrange.

"Mr. Dory's chase in the motor-car," he said, "was, as you have doubtless gathered now, merely a blind. It was obvious to his intelligence that the blowing away of the window was merely a ruse to cover the real method of the theft. If you will allow me, I will show you how it was done."

The floor was of hardwood, covered with rugs. One of these, near the fire-place, Peter Ruff brushed aside. The seventh square of hardwood from the mantelpiece had evidently been tampered with. With very little difficulty, he removed it.

"You see," he explained, "the ceiling of the room below is also of paneled wood. Having removed this, it is easy to lift the second one, especially as light screws have been driven in and string threaded about them. There is now a hole through which you can see into the room below. Has Dory returned Ah, here he is!"

The detective came hurrying into the room, bearing in his hand a peculiar-shaped weapon, a handful of little darts like those which had been found in the wounded man's head, and an ordinary fishing rod in a linen case.

"There is the weapon," Peter Ruff said, "which it was easy enough to fire from here upon the man who was leaning forward exactly below. Then here, you will see, is a somewhat peculiar instrument, which shows a great deal of ingenuity in its details.

He opened the linen case and drew out what was, to all appearance, an ordinary fishing rod, fitted at the end with something that looked like an iron hand. Peter Ruff dropped it through the hole until it reached the table, moved it backwards and forwards, and turned round with a smile.

"You see," he said, "the theft, after all, was very simple. Personally, I must admit that it took me a great deal by surprise but my friend Mr. Dory has been on the right track from the first."

Dory was a little overcome. Lady Mary shook him heartily by the hand, but as they trooped downstairs she stooped and whispered in Peter Ruff's ear.

"I wonder how much of this was John Dory," she said, smiling.

Peter Ruff said nothing. Sogrange sought Lord Clenarvon, and walked with him, arm-in-arm, down the stairs.

"I cannot tell you, Clenarvon," he said "how sorry I am that I should have been the means of introducing a person like this to the house. I had the most excellent references from the Prince of Strelitz. No doubt they were forged."

"My dear Sogrange," Lord Clenarvon said, "don't think of it. Come, I don't see why we should lose a day's sport because the diamonds have been recovered. You are keen, I know, Sogrange."

"Rather!" the Marquis answered. "But excuse me for one moment. There is Mrs. Peter Ruff looking charming there in the corner. I must have just a word with her."

He crossed the room and bowed before Violet.

"My dear lady," he said, "I have come to congratulate you. You have a clever husband—a little cleverer, even, than I thought. I have just had the misfortune to lose to him a bet of twenty-five thousand francs."

"Peter doesn't gamble as a rule," she remarked.

Sogrange sighed.

"This, alas, was no gamble!" he said. "He was betting upon certainties, but he won. Will you tell him from me, when you see him, that although I have not the money in my pocket at the moment, I shall pay my debts. Tell him that we are as careful to do that in France as we are to keep our word!"

THE GIRL WITH THE MOST PERFECT FIGURE

MARGARET EDWARDS.

San Francisco, Cal., June 12—"In a month she will command $1,000 a week." Thus spoke Miss Maud Allan some months ago of Miss Margaret Edwards, of Berkeley, who recently won a gold medal in an international contest as the most perfectly formed girl in the world.

Miss Allan had sought the consent of Miss Edwards' mother to tutor her for classical dances, but the mother refused, and later she also refused Miss Ruth St. Denis, who made a similar offer. But now Mrs. Edwards has changed her mind and she has consented to an artistic presentation of her daughter in public, and she will make her appearance in Oakland. Later she will go to New York and London.

REV. DR. CAMPBELL ACCEPTS MT. ALLISON PROFESSORSHIP

Will Take Chair of Homiletics and Practical Theology at Beginning of College Year—His Long Experience.

Methodists all over eastern Canada will be interested in the announcement that Rev. George M. Campbell, D. D., district secretary of the Canadian Bible Society, has accepted the offer of a professorship at the University of Mount Allison College and will take the chair of homiletics and practical theology at the beginning of the college year next autumn. At the annual meeting of the board of regents of the university, held May 31, Dr. Campbell was elected a professor and assigned to the chair mentioned. He has since had the call under consideration and on Monday reached a decision and notified the authorities of the college of his acceptance and his readiness to enter upon the duties as soon as an honorable discharge could be secured from the Canadian Bible Society, whose energetic and very efficient secretary he has been for six years.

Dr. Campbell is an old student and alumnus of the Mount Allison institutions and spent his active life in the ministry of the Methodist church from the close of his college course until he took up the duties of the Bible society secretary within the bounds of the New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island conference, serving the largest congregations and occupying the most influential pulpits of the denomination. He has also filled several offices in the church, such as chairman of district, president of conference and delegate to the general conference.

He is widely known and has taken a most active interest in the social life of the communities in which he has been stationed. He has occupied the position of chaplain of the Royal Kennebeccasis Yacht Club, ex-chaplain of St. Andrew's Society and has been identified with general movements of magnitude and public interest. He is very popular in St. John and his friends here, although regretting his removal from the city, realize that his decision means a gain for Mount Allison.

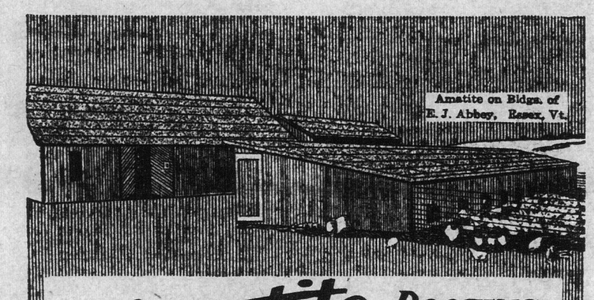
Dr. Campbell will also be associated with Rev. Dr. Borden, president of the university, in promoting the university endowment scheme launched at the recent meeting of board of regents in which an attempt is to be made to increase the endowment of the university by at least $200,000.

The chair of homiletics and practical theology to which he has been assigned is one of the most important in the university, and was left vacant by the death of Rev. Dr. Stewart last year.

His Long Experience.

Dr. Campbell has served at Sussex, Nashwaak, Fredericton, Newcastle, Woodstock, St. Stephen, Moncton, Charlottetown twice, Pownal and Exmouth street, Centenary and Queen square, this city. He was born at Wallace, Cumberland county (N. S.), and as he was educated in the maritime provinces he understands the conditions and needs of this part of the country and is eminently qualified for the responsible position to which he has been called. With the exception of eight years he has been constantly engaged in ministerial work in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island since 1871.

Mrs. Campbell is a daughter of the late Rev. H. McKeown and a sister of Mr. Justice McKeown, of the supreme court of New Brunswick.



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