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John Kendrick Bangs

R. Holmes & Co. / Being the Remarkable Adventures of Raffles Holmes, Esq., Detective and Amateur Cracksman by Birth

I INTRODUCING MR. RAFFLES HOLMES

It was a blistering night in August. All day long the mercury in the thermometer had been flirting with the figures at the top of the tube, and the promised shower at night which a mendacious Weather Bureau had been prophesying as a slight mitigation of our sufferings was conspicuous wholly by its absence. I had but one comfort in the sweltering hours of the day, afternoon and evening, and that was that my family were away in the mountains, and there was no law against my sitting around all day clad only in my pajamas, and otherwise concealed from possibly intruding eyes by the wreaths of smoke that I extracted from the nineteen or twenty cigars which, when there is no protesting eye to suggest otherwise, form my daily allowance. I had tried every method known to the resourceful flat-dweller of modern times to get cool and to stay so, but alas, it was impossible. Even the radiators, which all winter long had never once given forth a spark of heat, now hissed to the touch of my moistened finger. Enough cooling drinks to float an ocean greyhound had passed into my inner man, with no other result than to make me perspire more profusely than ever, and in so far as sensations went, to make me feel hotter than before. Finally, as a last resource, along about midnight, its gridiron floor having had a chance to lose some of its stored-up warmth, I climbed out upon the fire-escape at the rear of the Richmere, hitched my hammock from one of the railings thereof to the leader running from the roof to the area, and swung myself therein some eighty feet above the concealed pavement of our backyard—so called, perhaps, because of its dimensions which were just about that square. It was a little improvement, though nothing to brag of. What fitful zephyrs there might be, caused no doubt by the rapid passage to and fro on the roof above and fence-tops below of vagrant felines on Cupid's contentious battles bent, to the disturbance of the still air, sougled softly through the meshes of my hammock and gave some measure of relief, grateful enough for which I ceased the perfervid language I had been using practically since sunrise, and dozed off. And then there entered upon the scene that marvelous man, Raffles Holmes, of whose exploits it is the purpose of these papers to tell.

I had dozed perhaps for a full hour when the first strange sounds grated upon my ear. Somebody had opened a window in the kitchen of the first-floor apartment below, and with a dark lantern was inspecting the iron platform of the fire-escape without. A moment later this somebody crawled out of the window, and with movements that in themselves were a sufficient indication of the questionable character of his proceedings, made for the ladder leading to the floor above, upon which many a time and oft had I too climbed to home and safety when an inconsiderate janitor had locked me out. Every step that he took was stealthy—that much I could see by the dim starlight. His lantern he had turned dark again, evidently lest he should attract attention in the apartments below as he passed their windows in his upward flight.

"Ha! ha!" thought I to myself. "It's never too hot for Mr. Sneak to get in his fine work. I wonder whose stuff he is after?"

Turning over flat on my stomach so that I might the more readily observe the man's movements, and breathing pianissimo lest he in turn should observe mine, I watched him as he climbed. Up he came as silently as the midnight mouse upon a soft carpet—up past the Jorkins apartments on the second floor; up stealthily by the Tinkletons' abode on the third; up past the fire-escape Italian garden

of little Mrs. Persimmon on the fourth; up past the windows of the disagreeable Garraways' kitchen below mine, and then, with the easy grace of a feline, zip! he silently landed within reach of my hand on my own little iron veranda, and craning his neck to one side, peered in through the open window and listened intently for two full minutes.

"Humph!" whispered my inner consciousness to itself. "He is the coolest thing I've seen since last Christmas left town. I wonder what he is up to? There's nothing in my apartment worth stealing, now that my wife and children are away, unless it be my Jap valet, Nogi, who might make a very excellent cab driver if I could only find words to convey to his mind the idea that he is discharged."

And then the visitor, apparently having correctly assured himself that there was no one within, stepped across the window sill and vanished into the darkness of my kitchen. A moment later I too entered the window in pursuit, not so close a one, however, as to acquaint him with my proximity. I wanted to see what the chap was up to; and also being totally unarmed and ignorant as to whether or not he carried dangerous weapons, I determined to go slow for a little while. Moreover, the situation was not wholly devoid of novelty, and it seemed to me that here at last was abundant opportunity for a new sensation. As he had entered, so did he walk cautiously along the narrow bowling alley that serves for a hallway connecting my drawing-room and library with the dining-room, until he came to the library, into which he disappeared. This was not reassuring to me, because, to tell the truth, I value my books more than I do my plate, and if I were to be robbed I should much have preferred his taking my plated plate from the dining-room than any one of my editions-deluxe sets of the works of Marie Corelli, Hall Caine, and other standard authors from the library shelves. Once in the library, he quietly drew the shades at the windows thereof to bar possible intruding eyes from without, turned on the electric lights, and proceeded to go through my papers as calmly and coolly as though they were his own. In a short time, apparently, he found what he wanted in the shape of a royalty statement recently received by me from my publishers, and, lighting one of my cigars from a bundle of brevas in front of him, took off his coat and sat down to peruse the statement of my returns. Simple though it was, this act aroused the first feeling of resentment in my breast, for the relations between the author and his publishers are among the most sacred confidences of life, and the peeping Tom who peers through a keyhole at the courtship of a young man engaged in wooing his fiancée is no worse an intruder than he who would tear aside the veil of secrecy which screens the official returns of a "best seller" from the public eye. Feeling, therefore, that I had permitted matters to proceed as far as they might with propriety, I instantly entered the room and confronted my uninvited guest, bracing myself, of course, for the defensive onslaught which I naturally expected to sustain. But nothing of the sort occurred, for the intruder, with a composure that was nothing short of marvelous under the circumstances, instead of rising hurriedly like one caught in some disreputable act, merely leaned farther back in the chair, took the cigar from his mouth, and greeted me with:

"Howdy do, sir. What can I do for you this beastly hot night?"

The cold rim of a revolver-barrel placed at my temple could not more effectually have put me out of business than this nonchalant reception. Consequently I gasped out something about its being the sultriest 47th of August in eighteen years, and plumped back into a chair opposite him. "I wouldn't mind a Remsen cooler myself," he went on, "but the fact is your butler is off for to-night, and I'm hanged if I can find a lemon in the house. Maybe you'll join me in a smoke?" he added, shoving my own bundle of brevas across the table. "Help yourself."

"I guess I know where the lemons are," said I. "But how did you know my butler was out?"

"I telephoned him to go to Philadelphia this afternoon to see his brother Yoku, who is ill there," said my visitor. "You see, I didn't want him around to-night when I called. I knew I could manage you alone in case you turned up, as you see you have, but two of you, and one a Jap, I was afraid might involve us all in ugly complications. Between you and me, Jenkins, these Orientals are pretty lively fighters, and your man Nogi particularly has got jiu-jitsu down to a pretty fine point, so I had to do something to get rid of him. Our arrangement is a matter for two, not three, anyhow."

"So," said I, coldly. "You and I have an arrangement, have we? I wasn't aware of it."

"Not yet," he answered. "But there's a chance that we may have. If I can only satisfy myself that you are the man I'm looking for, there is no earthly reason that I can see why we should not come to terms. Go on out and get the lemons and the gin and soda, and let's talk this thing over man to man like a couple of good fellows at the club. I mean you no harm, and you certainly don't wish to do any kind of injury to a chap who, even though appearances are against him, really means to do you a good turn."

"Appearances certainly are against you, sir," said I, a trifle warmly, for the man's composure was irritating. "A disappearance would be more likely to do you credit at this moment."

"Tush, Jenkins!" he answered. "Why waste breath saying self-evident things? Here you are on the verge of a big transaction, and you delay proceedings by making statements of fact, mixed in with a cheap wit which, I must confess, I find surprising, and so obvious as to be visible even to the blind. You don't talk like an author whose stuff is worth ten cents a word—more like a penny-a-liner, in fact, with whom words are of such small value that no one's the loser if he throws away a whole dictionary. Go out and mix a couple of your best Remsen coolers, and by the time you get back I'll have got to the gist of this royalty statement of yours, which is all I've come for. Your silver and books and love letters and manuscripts are safe from me. I wouldn't have 'em as a gift."

"What concern have you with my royalties?" I demanded.

"A vital one," said he. "Mix the coolers, and when you get back I'll tell you. Go on. There's a good chap. It'll be daylight before long, and I want to close up this job if I can before sunrise."

What there was in the man's manner to persuade me to compliance with his wishes, I am sure I cannot say definitely. There was a cold, steely glitter in his eye, for one thing. With it, however, was a strengthfulness of purpose, a certain pleasant masterfulness, that made me feel that I could trust him, and it was to this aspect of his nature that I yielded. There was something frankly appealing in his long, thin, ascetic looking face, and I found it irresistible.

"All right," said I with a smile and a frown to express the conflicting quality of my emotions. "So be it. I'll get the coolers, but you must remember, my friend, that there are coolers and coolers, just as there are jugs and jugs. The kind of jug that remains for you will depend upon the story you have to tell when I get back, so you'd better see that it's a good one."

"I am not afraid, Jenkins, old chap," he said with a hearty laugh as I rose. "If this royalty statement can prove to me that you are the literary partner I need in my business, I can prove to you that I'm a good man to tie up to—so go along with you."

With this he lighted a fresh cigar and turned to a perusal of my statement, which, I am glad to say, was a good one, owing to the great success of my book, *Wild Animals I Have Never Met*—the seventh-best seller at Rochester, Watertown, and Miami in June and July, 1905—while I went out into the dining-room and mixed the coolers. As you may imagine, I was not long at it, for my curiosity over my visitor lent wings to my corkscrew, and in five minutes I was back with the tempting beverages in the tall glasses, the lemon curl giving it the vertebrate appearance that all stiff drinks should have, and the ice tinkling refreshingly upon the sultry air.

"There," said I, placing his glass before him. "Drink hearty, and then to business. Who are you?"

"There is my card," he replied, swallowing a goodly half of the cooler and smacking his lips appreciatively, and tossing a visiting card across to me on the other side of the table. I picked up the card and read as follows: "Mr. Raffles Holmes, London and New York."

"Raffles Holmes?" I cried in amazement.

"The same, Mr. Jenkins," said he. "I am the son of Sherlock Holmes, the famous detective, and grandson of A. J. Raffles, the distinguished—er—ah—cricketer, sir."

I gazed at him, dumb with astonishment.

"You've heard of my father, Sherlock Holmes?" asked my visitor.

I confessed that the name of the gentleman was not unfamiliar to me.

"And Mr. Raffles, my grandfather?" he persisted.

"If there ever was a story of that fascinating man that I have not read, Mr. Holmes," said I, "I beg you will let me have it."

"Well, then," said he with that quick, nervous manner which proved him a true son of Sherlock Holmes, "did it never occur to you as an extraordinary happening, as you read of my father's wonderful powers as a detective, and of Raffles' equally wonderful prowess as a—er—well, let us not mince words—as a thief, Mr. Jenkins, the two men operating in England at the same time, that no story ever appeared in which Sherlock Holmes's genius was pitted against the subtly planned misdeeds of Mr. Raffles? Is it not surprising that with two such men as they were, working out their destinies in almost identical grooves of daily action, they should never have crossed each other's paths as far as the public is the wiser, and in the very nature of the conflicting interests of their respective lines of action as foemen, the one pursuing, the other pursued, they should to the public's knowledge never have clashed?"

"Now that you speak of it," said I, "it was rather extraordinary that nothing of the sort happened. One would think that the sufferers from the depredations of Raffles would immediately have gone to Holmes for assistance in bringing the other to justice. Truly, as you intimate, it was strange that they never did."

"Pardon me, Jenkins," put in my visitor. "I never intimated anything of the sort. What I intimated was that no story of any such conflict ever came to light. As a matter of fact, Sherlock Holmes was put upon a Raffles case in 1883, and while success attended upon every step of it, and my grandfather was run to earth by him as easily as was ever any other criminal in Holmes's grip, a little naked god called Cupid stepped in, saved Raffles from jail, and wrote the word failure across Holmes's docket of the case. *I, sir, am the only tangible result of Lord Dorrington's retainers to Sherlock Holmes.*"

"You speak enigmatically, after the occasional fashion of your illustrious father," said I. "The Dorrington case is unfamiliar to me."

"Naturally so," said my vis-à-vis. "Because, save to my father, my grandfather, and myself, the details are unknown to anybody. Not even my mother knew of the incident, and as for Dr. Watson and Bunny, the scribes through whose industry the adventures of those two great men were respectively narrated to an absorbed world, they didn't even know there had ever been a Dorrington case, because Sherlock Holmes never told Watson and Raffles never told Bunny. But they both told me, and now that I am satisfied that there is a demand for your books, I am willing to tell it to you with the understanding that we share and share alike in the profits if perchance you think well enough of it to write it up."

"Go on!" I said. "I'll whack up with you square and honest."

"Which is more than either Watson or Bunny ever did with my father or my grandfather, else I should not be in the business which now occupies my time and attention," said Raffles Holmes with a cold snap to his eyes which I took as an admonition to hew strictly to the line of honor, or to subject myself to terrible consequences. "With that understanding, Jenkins, I'll tell you the story of the Dorrington Ruby Seal, in which some crime, a good deal of romance, and my ancestry are involved."

II THE ADVENTURE OF THE DORRINGTON RUBY SEAL

"Lord Dorrington, as you may have heard," said Raffles Holmes, leaning back in my easy-chair and gazing reflectively up at the ceiling, "was chiefly famous in England as a sporting peer. His vast estates, in five counties, were always open to any sportsman of renown, or otherwise, as long as he was a true sportsman. So open, indeed, was the house that he kept that, whether he was there or not, little week-end parties of members of the sporting fraternity used to be got up at a moment's notice to run down to Dorrington Castle, Devonshire; to Dorrington Lodge on the Isle of Wight; to Dorrington Hall, near Dublin, or to any other country place for over Sunday.

"Sometimes there'd be a lot of turf people: sometimes a dozen or more devotees of the prize-ring; not infrequently a gathering of the best-known cricketers of the time, among whom, of course, my grandfather, A. J. Raffles, was conspicuous. For the most part, the cricketers never partook of Dorrington's hospitality save when his lordship was present, for your cricket-player is a bit more punctilious in such matters than your turfmen or ring-side habitués. It so happened one year, however, that his lordship was absent from England for the better part of eight months, and, when the time came for the annual cricket gathering at his Devonshire place, he cabled his London representative to see to it that everything was carried on just as if he were present, and that every one should be invited for the usual week's play and pleasure at Dorrington Castle. His instructions were carried out to the letter, and, save for the fact that the genial host was absent, the house-part went through to perfection. My grandfather, as usual, was the life of the occasion, and all went merry as a marriage-bell. Seven months later, Lord Dorrington returned, and a week after that, the loss of the Dorrington jewels from the Devonshire strong-boxes was a matter of common knowledge. When, or by whom, they had been taken was an absolute mystery. As far as anybody could find out, they might have been taken the night before his return, or the night after his departure. The only fact in sight was that they were gone—Lady Dorrington's diamonds, a half-dozen valuable jewelled rings belonging to his lordship, and, most irremediable of losses, the famous ruby seal which George IV had given to Dorrington's grandfather, Sir Arthur Deering, as a token of his personal esteem during the period of the Regency. This was a flawless ruby, valued at some six or seven thousand pounds sterling, in which had been cut the Deering arms surrounded by a garter upon which were engraved the words, 'Deering Ton,' which the family, upon Sir Arthur's elevation to the peerage in 1836, took as its title, or Dorrington. His lordship was almost prostrated by the loss. The diamonds and the rings, although valued at thirty thousand pounds, he could easily replace, but the personal associations of the seal were such that nothing, no amount of money, could duplicate the lost ruby."

"So that his first act," I broke in, breathlessly, "was to send for—"

"Sherlock Holmes, my father," said Raffles Holmes. "Yes, Mr. Jenkins, the first thing Lord Dorrington did was to telegraph to London for Sherlock Holmes, requesting him to come immediately to Dorrington Castle and assume charge of the case. Needless to say, Mr. Holmes dropped everything else and came. He inspected the gardens, measured the road from the railway station to the castle, questioned all the servants; was particularly insistent upon knowing where the parlor-maid was on the 13th of January; secured accurate information as to the personal habits of his lordship's dachshund Nicholas; subjected the chef to a cross-examination that covered every point of his life, from his remote ancestry to his receipt for baking apples; gathered up three suit-cases of sweeping from his lordship's private apartment, and two boxes containing three each of every variety of cigars that Lord Dorrington had laid down in his cellar. As you are aware, Sherlock Holmes, in his prime, was a great master of detail. He then departed for London, taking with him an impression in wax of the missing seal, which Lord Dorrington happened to have preserved in his escritoire.

"On his return to London, Holmes inspected the seal carefully under a magnifying-glass, and was instantly impressed with the fact that it was not unfamiliar to him. He had seen it somewhere before, but where? That was now the question upper-most in his mind. Prior to this, he had never had any communication with Lord Dorrington, so that, if it was in his correspondence that the seal had formerly come to him, most assuredly the person who had used it had come by it dishonestly. Fortunately, at that time, it was a habit of my father's never to destroy papers of any sort. Every letter that he ever received was classified and filed, envelope and all. The thing to do, then, was manifestly to run over the files and find the letter, if indeed it was in or on a letter that the seal had first come to his attention. It was a herculean job, but that never feazed Sherlock Holmes, and he went at it tooth and nail. Finally his effort was rewarded. Under 'Applications for Autograph' he found a daintily-scented little missive from a young girl living at Goring-Streatley on the Thames, the daughter, she said, of a retired missionary—the Reverend James Tattersby—asking him if he would not kindly write his autograph upon the enclosed slip for her collection. It was the regular stock application that truly distinguished men receive in every mail. The only thing to distinguish it from other applications was the beauty of the seal on the fly of the envelope, which attracted his passing notice and was then filed away with the other letters of similar import.

"Ho! ho!" quoth Holmes, as he compared the two impressions and discovered that they were identical. 'An innocent little maiden who collects autographs, and a retired missionary in possession of the Dorrington seal, eh? Well, that *is* interesting. I think I shall run down to Goring- Streatley over Sunday and meets Miss Marjorie Tattersby and her reverend father. I'd like to see to what style of people I have intrusted my autograph.'

"To decide was to act with Sherlock Holmes, and the following Saturday, hiring a canoe at Windsor, he made his way up the river until he came to the pretty little hamlet, snuggling in the Thames Valley, if such it may be called, where the young lady and her good father were dwelling. Fortune favored him in that his prey was still there—both much respected by the whole community; the father a fine looking, really splendid specimen of a man whose presence alone carried a conviction of integrity and a lofty man; the daughter—well, to see her was to love her, and the moment the eyes of Sherlock fell upon her face that great heart of his, that had ever been adamant to beauty, a very Gibraltar against the wiles of the other sex, went down in the chaos of a first and overwhelming passion. So hard hit was he by Miss Tattersby's beauty that his chief thought now was to avert rather than to direct suspicion towards her. After all, she might have come into possession of the jewel honestly, though how the daughter of a retired missionary, considering its intrinsic value, could manage such a thing, was pretty hard to understand, and he fled back to London to think it over. Arrived there, he found an invitation to visit Dorrington Castle again incog. Lord Dorrington was to have a mixed week-end party over the following Sunday, and this, he thought, would give Holmes an opportunity to observe the characteristics of Dorrington's visitors and possibly gain therefore some clew as to the light-fingered person from whose depredations his lordship had suffered. The idea commended itself to Holmes, and in the disguise of a young American clergyman, whom Dorrington had met in the States, the following Friday found him at Dorrington Castle.

"Well, to make a long story short," said Raffles Holmes, "the young clergyman was introduced to many of the leading sportsmen of the hour, and, for the most part, they passed muster, but one of them did not, and that was the well-known cricketer A. J. Raffles, for the moment Raffles entered the room, jovially greeting everybody about him, and was presented to Lord Dorrington's new guest, Sherlock Holmes recognized in him no less a person than the Reverend James Tattersby, retired missionary of Goring-Streatley- on-Thames, and the father of the woman who had filled his soul with love and yearning of the truest sort. The problem was solved. Raffles was, to all intents and purposes, caught with the goods on. Holmes could have exposed him then and there had he chosen to do so, but every time it came to the point the lovely face of Marjorie Tattersby came between him and his purpose. How could he inflict the pain and shame which the exposure of her father's

misconduct would certainly entail upon that fair woman, whose beauty and fresh innocence had taken so strong a hold upon his heart? No— that was out of the question. The thing to do, clearly was to visit Miss Tattersby during her father's absence, and, if possible, ascertain from just how she had come into possession of the seal, before taking further steps in the matter. This he did. Making sure, to begin with, that Raffles was to remain at Dorrington Hall for the coming ten days, Holmes had himself telegraphed for and returned to London. There he wrote himself a letter of introduction to the Reverend James Tattersby, on the paper of the Anglo- American Missionary Society, a sheet of which he secured in the public writing-room of that institution, armed with which he returned to the beautiful little spot on the Thames where the Tattersbys abode. He spent the night at the inn, and, in conversation with the landlord and boatmen, learned much that was interesting concerning the Reverend James. Among other things, he discovered that this gentleman and his daughter had been respected residents of the place for three years; that Tattersby was rarely seen in the daytime about the place; that he was unusually fond of canoeing at night, which, he said, gave him the quiet and solitude necessary for that reflection which is so essential to the spiritual being of a minister of grace; that he frequently indulged in long absences, during which time it was supposed that he was engaged in the work of his calling. He appeared to be a man of some, but not lavish, means. The most notable and suggestive thing, however, that Holmes ascertained in his conversation with the boatmen was that, at the time of the famous Cliveden robbery, when several thousand pounds' worth of plate had been taken from the great hall, that later fell into the possession of a well-known American hotel-keeper, Tattersby, who happened to be on the river late that night, was, according to his own statement, the unconscious witness of the escape of the thieves on board a mysterious steam-launch, which the police were never able afterwards to locate. They had nearly upset his canoe with the wash of their rapidly moving craft as they sped past him after having stowed their loot safely on board. Tattersby had supposed them to be employés of the estate, and never gave the matter another thought until three days later, when the news of the robbery was published to the world. He had immediately communicated the news of what he had seen to the police, and had done all that lay in his power to aid them in locating the robbers, but all to no purpose. From that day to this the mystery of the Cliveden plot had never been solved.

"The following day Holmes called at the Tattersby cottage, and was fortunate enough to find Miss Tattersby at home. His previous impression as to her marvellous beauty was more than confirmed, and each moment that he talked to her she revealed new graces of manner that completed the capture of his hitherto unsusceptible heart. Miss Tattersby regretted her father's absence. He had gone, she said, to attend a secret missionary conference at Pentwlycod in Wales, and was not expected back for a week, all of which quite suited Sherlock Holmes. Convinced that, after years of waiting, his affinity had at last crossed his path, he was in no hurry for the return of that parent, who would put an instant quietus upon this affair of the heart. Manifestly the thing for him to do was to win the daughter's hand, and then intercept the father, acquaint him with his aspirations, and compel acquiescence by the force of his knowledge of Raffles's misdeed. Hence, instead of taking his departure immediately, he remained at the Goring- Streatley Inn, taking care each day to encounter Miss Tattersby on one pretext or another, hoping that their acquaintance would ripen into friendship, and then into something warmer. Nor was the hope a vain one, for when the fair Marjorie learned that it was the visitor's intention to remain in the neighborhood until her father's return, she herself bade him to make use of the old gentleman's library, to regard himself always as a welcome daytime guest. She even suggested pleasant walks through the neighboring country, little canoe trips up and down the Thames, which they might take together, of all of which Holmes promptly availed himself, with the result that, at the end of six days, both realized that they were designed for each other, and a passionate declaration followed which opened new vistas of happiness for both. Hence it was that, when the Reverend James Tattersby arrived at Goring-Streatley the following Monday night, unexpectedly, he was astounded to find sitting together in the moonlight, in the charming little English garden at the

rear of his dwelling, two persons, one of whom was his daughter Marjorie and the other a young American curate to whom he had already been introduced as A. J. Raffles.

"We have met before, I think,' said Raffles, coldly, as his eye fell upon Holmes.

"I—er—do not recall the fact,' replied Holmes, meeting the steely stare of the home-comer with one of his own flinty glances.

"H'm!' ejaculated Raffles, non-plussed at the other's failure to recognize him. Then he shivered slightly. 'Suppose we go in-doors, it is a trifle chilly out here in the night air.'

'The whole thing, the greeting, the meeting, Holmes's demeanor and all, was so admirably handled that Marjorie Tattersby never guessed the truth, never even suspected the intense dramatic quality of the scene she had just gazed upon.

"Yes, let us go in-doors,' she acquiesced. 'Mr. Dutton has something to say to you, papa.'

"So I presumed,' said Raffles, dryly. 'And something that were better said to me alone, I fancy, eh?' he added.

"Quite so,' said Holmes, calmly. And in-doors they went. Marjorie immediately retired to the drawing-room, and Holmes and Raffles went at once to Tattersby's study.

"Well?' said Raffles, impatiently, when they were seated. 'I suppose you have come to get the Dorrington seal, Mr. Holmes.'

"Ah—you know me, then, Mr. Raffles?' said Holmes, with a pleasant smile.

"Perfectly,' said Raffles. 'I knew you at Dorrington Hall the moment I set eyes on you, and, if I hadn't, I should have known later, for the night after your departure Lord Dorrington took me into his confidence and revealed your identity to me.'

"I am glad,' said Holmes. 'It saves me a great deal of unnecessary explanation. If you admit that you have the seal—'

"But I don't,' said Raffles. 'I mentioned it a moment ago, because Dorrington told me that was what you were after. I haven't got it, Mr. Holmes.'

"I know that,' observed Holmes, quietly. 'It is in the possession of Miss Tattersby, your daughter, Mr. Raffles.'

"She showed it to you, eh?' demanded Raffles, paling.

"No. She sealed a note to me with it, however,' Holmes replied.

"A note to you?' cried Raffles.

"Yes. One asking for my autograph. I have it in my possession,' said Holmes.

"And how do you know that she is the person from whom that note really came?' Raffles asked.

"Because I have seen the autograph which was sent in response to that request in your daughter's collection, Mr. Raffles,' said Holmes.

"So that you conclude—?' Raffles put in, hoarsely.

"I do not conclude; I begin by surmising, sir, that the missing seal of Lord Dorrington was stolen by one of two persons—yourself or Miss Marjorie Tattersby,' said Holmes, calmly.

"Sir!' roared Raffles, springing to his feet menacingly.

"Sit down, please,' said Holmes. 'You did not let me finish. I was going to add, Dr. Tattersby, that a week's acquaintance with that lovely woman, a full knowledge of her peculiarly exalted character and guileless nature, makes the alternative of guilt that affects her integrity clearly preposterous, which, by a very simple process of elimination, fastens the guilt, beyond all peradventure, on your shoulders. At any rate, the presence of the seal in this house will involve you in difficult explanations. Why is it here? How did it come here? Why are you known as the Reverend

James Tattersby, the missionary, at Goring-Streatley, and as Mr. A. J. Raffles, the cricketer and man of the world, at Dorrington Hall, to say nothing of the Cliveden plate—'

"'Damnation!' roared the Reverend James Tattersby again, springing to his feet and glancing instinctively at the long low book-shelves behind him.

"'To say nothing,' continued Holmes, calmly lighting a cigarette, 'of the Cliveden plate now lying concealed behind those dusty theological tomes of yours which you never allow to be touched by any other hand than your own.'

"'How did you know?' cried Raffles, hoarsely.

"'I didn't,' laughed Holmes. 'You have only this moment informed me of the fact!'

"'There was a long pause, during which Raffles paced the floor like a caged tiger.

"'I'm a dangerous man to trifle with, Mr. Holmes,' he said, finally. 'I can shoot you down in cold blood in a second.'

"'Very likely,' said Holmes. 'But you won't. It would add to the difficulties in which the Reverend James Tattersby is already deeply immersed. Your troubles are sufficient, as matters stand, without your having to explain to the world why you have killed a defenceless guest in your own study in cold blood.

"'Well—what do you propose to do?' demanded Raffles, after another pause.

"'Marry your daughter, Mr. Raffles, or Tattersby, whatever your permanent name is—I guess it's Tattersby in this case,' said Holmes. 'I love her and she loves me. Perhaps I should apologize for having wooed and won her without due notice to you, but you doubtless will forgive that. It's a little formality you sometimes overlook yourself when you happen to want something that belongs to somebody else.'

"'What Raffles would have answered no one knows. He had no chance to reply, for at that moment Marjorie herself put her radiantly lovely little head in at the door with a 'May I come in?' and a moment later she was gathered in Holmes's arms, and the happy lovers received the Reverend James Tattersby's blessing. They were married a week later, and, as far as the world is concerned, the mystery of the Dorrington seal and that of the Cliveden plate was never solved.

"'It is compounding a felony, Raffles,' said Holmes, after the wedding, 'but for a wife like that, hanged if I wouldn't compound the ten commandments!'

"'I hope,' I ventured to put in at that point, 'that the marriage ceremony was not performed by the Reverend James Tattersby.'

"'Not on your life!'" retorted Raffles Holmes. "My father was too fond of my mother to permit of any flaw in his title. A year later I was born, and— well, here I am—son of one, grandson of the other, with hereditary traits from both strongly developed and ready for business. I want a literary partner—a man who will write me up as Bunny did Raffles, and Watson did Holmes, so that I may get a percentage on that part of the swag. I offer you the job, Jenkins. Those royalty statements show me that you are the man, and your books prove to me that you need a few fresh ideas. Come, what do you say? Will you do it?"

"'My boy,'" said I, enthusiastically, "don't say another word. Will I? Well, just try me!"

And so it was that Raffles Holmes and I struck a bargain and became partners.

III THE ADVENTURE OF MRS. BURLINGAME'S DIAMOND STOMACHER

I had seen the marvellous creation very often at the opera, and in many ways resented it. Not that I was in the least degree a victim to envy, hatred, and malice towards those who are possessed of a superabundance of this world's good things—far from it. I rejoice in the great fortunes of earth because, with every dollar corralled by the superior energies of the multi-millionaires, the fewer there are for other men to seek, and until we stop seeking dollars and turn our minds to other, finer things, there will be no hope of peace and sweet content upon this little green ball we inhabit. My resentment of Mrs. Burlingame's diamond stomacher was not then based on envy of its possession, but merely upon the twofold nuisance which it created at the opera-house, as the lady who wore it sat and listened to the strains of Wagner, Bizet, or Gounod, mixed in with the small-talk of Reggie Stockson, Tommie de Coupon, and other lights of the social firmament. In the first place, it caused the people sitting about me in the high seats of the opera-house to chatter about it and discuss its probable worth every time the lady made her appearance in it, and I had fled from the standee part of the house to the top gallery just to escape the talkers, and, if possible, to get my music straight, without interruptions of any sort whatsoever on the side. In the second place, the confounded thing glittered so that, from where I sat, it was as dazzling as so many small mirrors flashing in the light of the sun. It seemed as if every electric light in the house found some kind of a refractor in the thousands of gems of which it was composed, and many of the brilliant light effects of the stage were dimmed in their lustre by the persistent intrusion of Mrs. Burlingame's glory upon my line of vision.

Hence it was that, when I picked up my morning paper and read in great flaring head-lines on the front page that Mrs. Burlingame's diamond stomacher had been stolen from her at her Onyx Cottage at Newport, I smiled broadly, and slapped the breakfast-table so hard in my satisfaction that even the shredded-wheat biscuits flew up into the air and caught in the chandelier.

"Thank Heaven for that!" I said. "Next season I shall be able to enjoy my opera undisturbed."

"I little thought, at that blissful moment, how closely indeed were my own fortunes to be connected with that wonderful specimen of the jeweler's handicraft, but an hour later I was made aware of the first link in the chain that, in a measure, bound me to it. Breakfast over, I went to my desk to put the finishing touches to a novel I had written the week before, when word came up on the telephone from below that a gentleman from *Busybody's Magazine* wished to see me on an important matter of business.

"Tell him I'm already a subscriber," I called down, supposing the visitor to be merely an agent. "I took the magazine, and a set of Chaucer in a revolving bookcase, from one of their agents last month and have paid my dollar."

In a moment another message came over the wire.

"The gentleman says he wants to see you about writing a couple of full-page sonnets for the Christmas number," the office man 'phoned up.

"Show him up," I replied, instantly.

Two minutes later a rather handsome man, with a fine eye and a long, flowing gray beard, was ushered into my apartment.

"I am Mr. Stikes, of *Busybody's*, Mr. Jenkins," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "We thought you might like to contribute to our Christmas issue. We want two sonnets, one on the old Christmas and the other on the new. We can't offer you more than a thousand dollars apiece for them, but—"

Something caught in my throat, but I managed to reply. "I might shade my terms a trifle since you want as many as two," I gurgled. "And I assume you will pay on acceptance?"

"Certainly," he said, gravely. "Could you let me have them, say—this afternoon?"

I turned away so that he would not see the expression of joy on my face, and then there came from behind me a deep chuckle and the observation in a familiar voice:

"You might throw in a couple of those Remsen coolers, too, while you're about it, Jenkins."

I whirled about as if struck, and there, in place of the gray-bearded editor, stood—Raffles Holmes.

"Bully disguise, eh!" he said, folding up his beard and putting it in his pocket.

"Ye-e-es," said I, ruefully, as I thought of the vanished two thousand. "I think I preferred you in disguise, though, old man," I added.

"You won't when you hear what I've come for," said he. "There's \$5000 apiece in this job for us."

"To what job do you refer?" I asked.

"The Burlingame case," he replied. "I suppose you read in the papers this morning how Mrs. Burlingame's diamond stomacher has turned up missing."

"Yes," said I, "and I'm glad of it."

"You ought to be," said Holmes, "since it will put \$5000 in your pocket. You haven't heard yet that there is a reward of \$10,000 offered for its recovery. The public announcement has not yet been made, but it will be in to-night's papers, and we are the chaps that are going to get the reward."

"But how?" I demanded.

"Leave that to me," said he. "By-the-way, I wish you'd let me leave this suit-case of mine in your room for about ten days. It holds some important papers, and my shop is turned topsy-turvy just now with the painters."

"Very well," said I. "I'll shove it under my bed."

"I took the suit-case as Holmes had requested, and hid it away in my bedroom, immediately returning to the library, where he sat smoking one of my cigars as cool as a cucumber. There was something in his eye, however, that aroused my suspicion as soon as I entered.

"See here, Holmes," said I. "I can't afford to be mixed up in any shady business like this, you know. Have you got that stomacher?"

"No, I haven't," said he. "Honor bright—I haven't."

I eyed him narrowly.

"I think I understand the evasion," I went on. "*You* haven't got it because I have got it—it's in that suit-case under my bed."

"Open it and see for yourself," said he. "It isn't there."

"But you know where it is?" I demanded.

"How else could I be sure of that \$10,000 reward?" he asked.

"Where is it?" I demanded.

"It—er—it isn't located yet—that is, not finally," said he. "And it won't be for ten days. Ten days from now Mrs. Burlingame will find it herself and we'll divvy on the reward, my boy, and not a trace of dishonesty in the whole business."

And with that Raffles Holmes filled his pockets with cigars from my stores, and bidding me be patient went his way.

The effect of his visit upon my nerves was such that any more work that day was impossible. The fear of possible complications to follow upset me wholly, and, despite his assurance that the suit-case was innocent of surreptitiously acquired stomachers, I could not rid my mind of the suspicion that he made of my apartment a fence for the concealment of his booty. The more I thought of it the more was I inclined to send for him and request him to remove the bag forthwith, and yet, if it should so happen that he had spoken the truth, I should by that act endanger our friendship and possibly break the pact, which bade fair to be profitable. Suddenly I remembered his injunction to me to look for myself and see if the stomacher really was concealed there, and I hastened to act upon it. It might have been pure bluff on his part, and I resolved not to be bluffed.

The case opened easily, and the moment I glanced into it my suspicions were allayed. It contained nothing but bundle after bundle of letters tied together with pink and blue ribbons, one or two old daguerreotypes, some locks of hair, and an ivory miniature of Raffles Holmes himself as an infant. Not a stomacher, diamond or otherwise, was hid in the case, nor any other suspicious object, and I closed it with a sheepish feeling of shame for having intruded upon the sacred correspondence and relics of the happy childhood days of my new friend.

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