

The Fourth of a Series of Five Stories Involving the Most Celebrated Criminal Character in Modern Fiction

6 UT who are they, Raffles, and where's their house?' There's no such club on the list in house?' There's no such club on the list in Whitaker."

"The criminologists, my dear Bunny, are too few for a local habitation, and too select to tell their name in Gath. They are merely so many solemn students of contemporary crime, who meet and dine periodically at each other's clubs or houses."

"But why in the world should they ask us to dine with them?"

And I brandished the invitation which had brought me hot foot to the Albany. It was from the Right Hon. the Earl of Thornaby, K. G., and members of the Criminologists' Club, and/it requested the honor of my company at dinner, in three weeks' time, at Thornaby House, Park lane. That in itself was a disturbing compliment. Judge then of my dismay on learning that Rames had been invited, too.

"They have got it into their heads," said he, "that "They have got it into their heads." said he, "that the gladiatorial element is the curse of most modern sport. They tremble especially for the professional gladiator. And they want to know whether my ex-perience tallies with their theory." "I don't believe them!" "They quote the case of a league player, sus per coll, and any number of suicides. It really is rather in my public line." "In yours, if you like, but not in mine," said I. "No, Raffles, they've got their eye on us both, and mean to put us under the microscope, or they never would have

put us under the microscope, or they never would have pitched on me."

Raffies smiled upon my perturbation. "I almost wish you were right, Bunny! It would be "I almost wish you were right, Bunny! It would be even better fun than I mean to make it as it is. But it may console you to hear that it was I who gave them your name. I told them you were a far keener crimi-nologist than myself. I am delighted to hear they have taken my birt and that we are to meet at their grewtaken my hint, and that we are to meet at their grewsome board.

some board." "If I accept," said I, with the austerity he deserved. "If you don't," rejoined Raffies, "you will miss some sport after both our hearts. Think of it, Bunny! These fellows meet to wallow in all the latest crimes. We wallow with them as though we knew no more about it than themselves. Perhaps we don't, for few criminolo-gists have a soul above murder, and I quite expect to have the privilege of lifting the discussion into our own higher walk. They shall give their morbid minds to the fine art of burgling for a change, and while we're about it, Bunny, we may as well extract their opinion of our oble selves. As authors, as collaborators, we will sit none serves. As authors, as considerators, we will she with the flower of our critics and find our own level in the expert eye. It will be a piquant experience, if not an invaluable one. If we are sailing too near the wind, we are sure to hear about it, and can trim our sails accordingly. Moreover, we shall get a very good dinner into the bargain, or our noble host will belie a European envitation." reputation.

reputation." "Do you know him?" I asked. "We have a pavilion acquaintance, when it suits my lord," replied Raffies, chuckling. "But I know all about him. He was president one year of the M. C. C., and we never had a better. He knows the game, though I be-lieve he never played cricket in his life. But then he knows most things, and has never done any of them. He has never even married, and never opened his lips in the house of lords. Yet they say there is no better brain in the august assembly, and he certainly made us a wonderful speech last time the Australians were over. He has read everything and (to his credit in these days) never written a line. All round he is a whale for theory and a sprat for practice, but he looks quite capable of and a sprat for practice, but he looks quite capable of both at crime."

I now longed to behold this remarkable peer in the I now longed to behold this remarkable peer in the flesh, and with the greater ardor, since another of the flesh, and with the greater ardor, since another of the photograph published for the benefit of the curious. I told Raffies that I would dine with him at Lord Thorna-by's, and he nodded as though I had not hesitated for a moment. I see now how deftly he had disposed of my reluctance. No doubt, he had thought it all out before. His little speeches look sufficiently premeditated as I set them down at the dictates of an excellent memory. Let it, however, be borne in mind that Raffles did not talk exactly like a Raffles book; he said the things, but he exactly like a Rames book; he said the things, but he did not say them in so many consecutive breaths. They were punctuated by puffs from his eternal cigarette, and the punctuation was often in the nature of a line of asterisks, while he took a slight turn up and down his room. Nor was he ever more deliberate than when he seemed most nonchalant and spontaneous. I came to see it in the and But these were early days in which see it in the end. But these were early days, in which he was more plausible to me than I can hope to make him appear to another human being. And I saw a good deal of Raffles just then. It was, in fact, the one period

It was Lord Thornaby himself who fired the first shot, over the very sherry. He had Raffles on his right hand and the Wild West novelist on his left. Raffles was hemmed in by the law on his right, while I sat between Parrington and Ernest, who took the foot of the table, and seemed a sort of feudatory cadet of the noble house. But it was the motley lot of us that my lord addressed, as he sat back blinking his baggy eyes.

"Mr. Raffies." said he, "has been telling me about that poor fellow who suffered the extreme penalty last March. A great end, gentlemen, a great end! It is true that he had been ungallant enough to cut a lady's throat, but his own end should take its place among the most glorious traditions of the gallows. You tell them, Mr. Raffles; it will be as new to my friends as it is to me." "I tell the tale as I heard it last time I played at

Trent Bridge; it was never in the papers, I believe," said Raffies gravely. "You may remember the tremen-dous excitement over the Test Matches out in Australia at the time; it seems that the result of the crucial game was expected on the condemned man's last day, and he couldn't rest until he knew it. We pulled it off, if you recollect, and he said it would make him swing happy

Tell 'em what else he said!" cried Lord Thornaby, rubbing his podgy hands. "The chapiain remonstrated with him on his excite-

"The chaptain remonstrated with him on his exercise ment over a game at such a time, and the convict is said to have replied, "Why, it's the first thing they'll ask me at the other end of the drop!" The story was new even to me, but I had no time to

appreciate its points. My concern was to watch its effect upon the other members of the party. Ernest, on my left, doubled up with faughter, and tittered and on my left, doubled up with Aaughter, and tittered and shook for several minutes; my other neighbor, more impressionable by temperament, winced first and then worked himself into a state of enthusiasm which culminated in an assault upon his shirt cuff with a joiner's pencil. Kingsmill, Q.C., beaming tranquilly on Raffles, seemed the one least impressed until he spoke. "I am glad to hear that," he remarked in a high bland voice. "I thought that man would die game." "Did you know anything about him, then?" inquired Lord Thornaby.

Lord Thornaby. "I appeared for the Treasury," replied the barrister with a twinkle. "You might almost say that I meas-ured the poor man's neck."

The point must have been quite unpremeditated; it was not the less effective for that. Lord Thornaby looked askance at the callous slik. It was some mo-ments before Ernest tittered, and Parrington felt for his pencil, and in the interim I had made short work of my hock, though it was Johannisberger. As for Raffles, one had but to see his horror to feel how com-pletely be was off his sward

pletely he was off his guard. "In itself, I have heard, it was not a sympathetic case?" was the remark with which he broke the general silence 'Not a bit.

"That must have been a comfort to you," said Raffles dryly. "It would have been to me." vowed our author, while must have been a comfort to you," said

the barrister merely smiled. "I should have been very sorry to have had a hand in hanging Peckham and Solomons the other day." "Why Peckham and Solomons?" inquired my lord. "They never meant to kill that old lady." "But they strangled her in her bed with her own pillow-case!"

pillow-case! "I don't care," said the uncouth scribe. "They didn't

"It's the only kind I should care about," said the novelist, eating jelly with a spoon.

"I quite agree with you," our host chimed in. "And of all the criminals one might be called upon to defend, give me the enterprising burglar."

"It must, indeed, be the breezlest branch of the business," remarked Raffles while I held my breath. But his tone was as light as gossamer, and his art-

less manner a triumph of even his incomparable art. Raffles was alive to the danger at last. I saw him refuse more champagne, even as I drained my glass again. But it was not the same dangar to us both. Raffles had no reason to feel surprise or alarm at such a turn in a conversation frankly devoted to criminology; it must seem as inevitable to him as it was sinister to me, with my fortuitous knowledge of the suspicions that were entertained. And there was little to put him on his guard in the touch of his adversaries, which was only less light than his own.

"I am not very-fond of Mr. Sikes," announced the barrister, like a man who had got his cue.

"But he is prehistoric," rejoined my lord. "A lot of blood has flowed under the razor since the days of sweet William."

"True, you have had Charlie Peace!" cried Parrington, and launched out into such glowing details of that criminal's last moments that I began to hope the diversion might prove permanent. But Lord Thornaby was not to be denied.

"William and Charles are both dead monarchs." said he. "The reigning king in their department is the fellow who gutted poor Danby's place in Bond street."

There was a guilty silence on the part of the three conspirators-for I had long since persuaded myself that Ernest was not in their secret-and then my blood

"I know him well," said Raffles, looking up. Lord Thornaby stared at him in consternation. The smile on the Napoleonic countenance of the barrister looked forced and frozen for the first time during the g. The wild man of letters, who was nibbling from a knife, left a drop of blood upon his The futile Ernest alone met the occasion with evening beard. a hearty titter.

a hearty titter. "What!" cried my lord. "You know the thief?" "I wish I did," rejoined Raffles, chuckling. "No. Lord Thornaby, I only meant the jeweler, Danby. I go to him when I want a wedding present." I heard three deep breaths drawn as one. Then I

"Rather a coincidence," observed our host dryly, "Rather a coincidence," observed our host dryly, "for I believe you also know the Minchester people, where Lady Meirose had her necklace stolen a few months afterward."

was staying there at the time," said Raffies

eagerly. No snob was ever quicker to boast of basking in the smile of the great. "We believe it to be the same man," said Lord

Thornaby, speaking apparently for the Criminologists' Club, and with much less severity of voice.

"I only wish I could come across him," continued Raffles heartily; "he's a criminal much more to my mind than your murderers who swear on the drop or talk cricket in the condemned cell."

"He might be in the house now," said Lord Thor-, looking Raffles in the face. But his manner was aby. that of an actor in an unconvincing part and a mood to play it gamely to the bitter end, and he seemed embittered, as even a rich man may be in the moment of losing a bet.

What a joke if he were!" cried our man of letters.

"Absit omen!" murmured Raffles, in better taste. "Still, I think you'll find it's a favorite time." argued Kingsmill, Q.C. "And it would be quite in keeping with the character of this man, so far as it is known, to pay a little visit to the President of the Criminologists' Club, and to choose the evening on which he happens to be entertaining the other mem-

which he happens to not the sally than in that bers." There was more conviction in this sally than in that of our noble host, but this I attributed to the trained and skilled dissimulation of the bar. Lord Thornaby, however, was not to be amused by the elaboration of his own idea, and it was with some asperity that he his own idea, and it was with some asperity that he called upon the butler, now solemnly superintending the

called upon the butler, now solemnly superintending the removal of the cloth: "Leggett! Just send upstairs to see if all the doors are open and the rooms in proper order. That's an awful idea of yours, Kingsmill, or of mine!" added my lord, recovering the courtesy of his order by an effort that I could follow. "We should look fools! I don't know which of us it was, by the way, who seduced the rest from the main stream of blood into this burglarious backwater. Are you familiar with De Quincey's mas-terplece on Murder as a Fine Art, Mr. Raffles?" "I believe I once read it." replied Raffles doubtfully. "Once!" echoed the literary man. "You must read it again." pursued the peer. "It is the last word on a great subject; all we can hope to add is some baleful illustration or some bloodstained

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stairs, leaving the polica in possession of the theater of crime. Lord Thornaby linked arms with Raffles as he led the way. His step was lighter, his gayety no longer sardonic; his very looks had improved. And I divined the load that had been lifted from the hospitable

heart of our host. "I only wish," said he, "that this brought us any nearer to the identity of the gentleman we were dis-cussing at dinner; for, of course, we owe it to all our instincts to assume that it was he." "I wonder!" said old Raffles, with a foolhardy

glance at me. "But I'm sure of it, my dear sir!" cries my lord. "The audacity is his and his alone. I look no further than the fact of his honoring me on the one night of the year when I endeavor to entertain my brother criminologists. That's no coincidence, sir, but a delib-erate irony, which would have occurred to no other criminal mind in England." "You may be right." Raffles had the sense to say this time but I think it was my face that made him. "What is still more certain," resumed the other, "is that no other criminal in the world would have crowned so delicious a conception with so perfect an achieveglance at me.

delicious a conception with so perfect an achieve-ent. I feel sure the Inspector will agree with us." ment.

The head policeman, with the peaked cap, had



"Raffles was as excited as any of us now. He outstripped us all"

knocked and been admitted to the library as Lord Thornaby spoke. "I didn't hear what you said, my lord."

"Fight our way out and bolt!" he answered with a mouth that meant it, and a fine gay glitter of the eyes. I shot out of my chair. "You don't mean to tell me you had a hand in the

By E. W. Hornung

job?

Bunny, if you'll do what I ask you." "Ask, old chap, and the thing's

done.' "Switch off the electric lights," "All of them?"

"I think so." "There, then."

"Now go to the back window and up with the blind."

"I'm coming to you. Splendid! never had a look so late as this. It's the only window left alight in the house!

His cheek against the pair, he was pointing slightly downward and very much aslant through a long lane of mews to a little square light like a yellow tile at the end. But I had opened the window and leaned out before I saw if for myself. before I saw it for myself.

"You don't mean to say that's Thornaby House?" I was not familiar with the view

from my back windows. "Of course I do, you rabbit! Have a look through your own race-glass. It has been the most useful thing of

all." But before I had the glass in focus, more scale had fallen from my eyes, and now I knew why I had seen so much of Raffles these last few weeks and why he had always come between 7 and 8 o'clock in the evening, and waited at this very window, with these very glasses at his eyes. I saw through them sharp-ly now. The one lighted window pointed out by Raffles came tumbling into the dark circles of my vision into the dark circles of my vision. I could not see into the actual room. but the shadows of those within were quite distinct on the lowered blind, a even thought a black thread still dangled against the square of light. It was, it must be, the window to which the intrepid Parrington had

descended from the one above. "Exactly!" said Raffles in answer to my exclamation. "And that's the window I have been watching these last few weeks. By daylight you can see the whole lot above the ground floor on this side of the house, and, by good luck, one of them is the room in which the master of the house and which the master of the hous rayed himself in all his nightly glory. It was easily spotted by watching at the right time. I saw him shaved one morning before you were up. In the evening his valet stays behind to been the very mischief, and that has been the very mischief. In the end I had to find out something about the man, and wire to him from his girl to meet her outside at 8 o'clock. Of course, he pretends he was at his post at the time; that I foreway, and did the near fellow's work before more did the poor fellow's work before my own. I folded and puf away every garment before I permitted myself to rag the room."

"I wonder you had time!"

at which I can remember his coming round to see me at which I can remember his coming round to see me more frequently than I went round to him. Of course, he would come at his own odd hours, often just as one was dressing to turn out and dine, and I can even re-member finding him there when I returned, for I had long since given him a key of the flat. It was the inhos-pitable month of February, and I can recall more than one cozy evening when we discussed anything and everything but our own malpractices. Indeed, there were none to discuss just then. Raffles, on the contrary, was showing himself with some industry in the most respectable society, and by his advice I used the club more

"There is nothing like it at this time of year," said he. "In the summer I have my cricket to provide me with decent employment in the sight of men. Keep your-self before the public from morning to night, and they'll never think of you in the still small hours."

Our behavior, in fine, had so long been irreproach-able that I arose without misgivings on the morning of Lord Thornaby's dinner to the other criminologists and guests. My chief anxiety was to arrive under the agis of my brilliant friend, and I had begged him to pick me up on his way; but at five minutes to the appointed hour there was no sign of Raffles or his cab. We were

hour there was no sign of rames of his cab. We were bidden at a quarter to 8 for 8 o'clock, so, after all, I had to hurry off alone. Fortunately, Thornaby House is almost at the end of. my street that was, and it seemed to me another for-tunate circumstance that the house stood back as it did, and does, in its own august courtyard; for, as I was about to knock, a hansom came twinking in behind me, and deew back boning it was Badfies at the last and I drew back, hoping it was Raffles at the last mo-ment. It was not, and I knew it in time to melt from the porch, and wait yet another minute in the shadows, since others were as late as I. And out jumped these thers, chattering in stage whispers as they paid their

cab. "Thornaby has a bet about it with Freddy Vereker, who can't come, I hear. Of course, it won't be lost or won tonight. But the dear man thinks he's been invited as a cricketer.

won tonight. But the dear man thinks he's been invited as a cricketer." "I don't believe he's the other thing," said a voice as brusque as the first was bland. "I believe it's all bunkum. I wish I didn't, but I do." "I think you'll find it's more than that," rejoined the other, as the doors opened and swallowed the pair. I leave my feelings to the popular imagination. I flung out limp hands and smote the air. Raffles bidden to what he had well called this "grewsome board." not as a cricketer, but as a suspected criminal! Raffles wrong all the time, and I right for once in my original apprehen-sion! And still no Raffles in sight-no Raffles to warn-no Raffles and the clock striking s! Well may I shirk the psychology of such a moment, for my belief is that the striking clocks struck down my power of thought and feeling, and that I played my poor part the better for that blessed surcease of in-tellectual sensation. On the other hand, I was never my power of thought and teeling, and that i played my poor part the better for that blessed surcease of in-tellectual sensation. On the other hand, I was never more allve to the purely objective impressions of any hour of my existence, and of them the memory is startling to this day. I hear my mad knock at the double doors; they fly open in the middle, and it is like some sumptuous and solemn rite. A long slice of sliken-legged lackey is seen on either hand; a very prelate of a butler bows a benediction from the sanc-tuary steps. I breathe more freely when I reach a book-lined library, where a mere handful of men do not overflow the Indian rug before the fire. One of them is Raffles; he is talking to a large man with the brow of a demi-god, and the eyes and chin of a degenerate buildog. And this is our noble host. Lord Thornaby stared at me with inscrutable stolid-ity as we shook hands, and at once handed me over to a tall, ungainly man whom he addressed as Ernest, but whose surname I never learned. Ernest in turn introduced me, with a shy and clumsy courtesy, to the

a tall, ungainly man whom he addressed as Ernest, but whose surname I never learned. Ernest in turn introduced me, with a shy and clumsy courtesy, to the two remaining guests. They were the pair who had driven up in the hansom; one turned out to be Kings-mill, Q. C.; the other I knew at a giance, from his photographs, as Parrington, the backwoodsman of let-ters. They were admirable foils to each other, the bar-rister being plump and dapper, with a Napoleonic cast of countenance, and the author one of the shaggiest men I have ever seen in evening clothes. Neither took much stock of me, but both had an eye on Raffles as I exchanged a few words with each in turn. Dinner, however, was immediately announced, and the six of us had soon taken our places round a brilliant little table stranded in a great dark room. I had not been prepared for so small a party, and at first I felt relieved. If the worst came to the worst, I was fool enough to say in my heart, they were but two to one. But I was soon sighing for that safety which the adage associates with numbers. We were far too few for the confidential duologue with one's neighbor in which I, at least, would have taken refuge from the perils of a general conversation. And the general con-versention genon results in my heart is not provide in the perils of a general conversation. And the general con-

few for the confidential duologue and the refuge from the which I at least, would have taken refuge from the perils of a ganaral conversation. And the general con-versation soon resolved itself into an attack, so subtly concerted and so artistically delivered that I could not conceive how Raffles should ever know it for an attack, and that against himself, or how to warn him of his peril. But to this day I am not convinced that I also was honored by the suspicions of the club; it may have been so, and they may have ignored me for the bigger game.

the last word on a great subject; all we can hope to add is some baleful illustration or some bloodstained footnote, not unworthy of De Quincey's text. Well, Leggett?"

The venerable butler stood wheezing at his elbow, I had not hitherto observed that the man was an asthmatic.

I beg your lordship's pardon, but I think your lordship must have dorgotten."

Iordship must have forgotten. The voice came in rude gasps, but words of reproach could scarcely have achieved a finer delicacy. "Forgotten, Leggett! Forgotten what, may I ask?"

"Forgotten, Leggett! Forgotten what, may I ask?" "Locking your lordship's dressing-room door behind your lordship, my lord," stuttered the unfortunate Leg-gett, in the short spurts of a winded man, a few ster-torous syllables at a time. "Been up myself, my lord, Outer door-Inner door-both locked inside!" But by this time the noble master was in a worse case than the man. His fine forehead was a tangle of livid cords; his baggy low! filled out like a balloon. In another second he had abandoned his place as our host and fied the room, and in yet another we had forgotten ours as his guests and rushed out headlong at his heels. Raffes was as excited as any of us now; he out-

Raffles was as excited as any of us now; he out-stripped us all; the cherubic little lawyer and I had a stripped us all; the cherupic little lawyer and I had a fine race for the last place but one, which I secured, though the butler and his painting satellites brought up a respectful rear. It was our unconventional author, however, who was the first to volunteer his assistance and advice.

No use pushing, my lord!" cried he. "If it's been wedge and gimlet, you may smash the door done with a but you'll never force it. Is there a ladder in the

There's a rope-ladder, somewhere, in case of fire, I believe," said my lord vaguely, as he rolled a critical eye over our faces. "Where is it kept, Leggett?" "William will fetch it, sir.".

And a pair of noble calves went flashing to the upper regions.

No need ifor him to bring it down," said Parrington, who had thrown back to the wilds in his excite-ment. 'Let him hang it out of the window above your lordship's, and let me climb down and in at the window! 'Il undertake to have one or other of the doors open in two

The fastened doors were at right angles on the land-The fastened doors were at right angles on the land-ing which we filled between us. Lord Thornaby smilled grimly on the rest of us, when he had nodded and dis-missed the author like a hound from the leash. "It's a good thing we know something about our friend Parrington," said my lord. "He takes more kindly to all this than I do, I can tell you." "It's grist to his mill," said Raffles charitably, "Exactly! We shall have the whole thing in his next book."

next book." "I hope to have it at the Old Bailey first," re-marked Kingsmill, Q.C. "Refreshing to find a man of letters such a man of action, too!" It was Raffles who spoke again, and the

seemed rather trite for him, but in the tone there was a something that just caught my private ear. And for once I understood: the officious attitude of Parrington, without being seriously suspicious in itself, was admiraby calculated to put a previously suspected person in a grateful shade. This literary adventurer had elbowed Raffies out of the limelight, and gratitude for the service was what I had detected in Raffle's voice. the service was what I had detected in Raffle's voice. No need to say how grateful I felt myself. But my gratitude was shot through with fiashes of unwonted insight Farrington was one of those who suspected Raffles, or at all events, one who was in the secret of those suspicions. What if he had traded on the sus-pect's presence in the house? What if he were a deep villain himself, and the villain of this particular piece? I had made up my mind about him, and that in the tithe off the time I take to make it up as a rule, when we heard my man in the dressing-room. He greeted us with an impudent shout; in a few moments the door was open, and there stood Parrington, flushed and dis-heveled, with a gimlet in one hand and a wedre in the heveled, with a gimlet in one hand and a wedge in the other.

Within was a scene of eloquent disorder. Drawers had been pulled out, and now stood on end, their con had been pulled out, and now stood on end, their con-tents heaped upon the carpet. Wardrobe doors stood open; empty stud-cases strewed the floor; a clock, tied up in a towel, had been tossed into a chair at the last moment. But a long tin lid protruded from an open cupboard in one corner. And one had only to see Lord Thornaby's wry face behind the lid to guess that it was bent over a somewhat empty tin trunk. "What a rum lot to steal?" said he, with a twitch of humor at the corners of his could be with a twitch

"What a rum lot to steal" said he, with a twitch of humor at the corners of his canine mouth. "My peer's robes, with coronet complete!" We rallied round him in a seemly silence. I thought our scribe would put in his word. But even he either

our scribe would put in his word. But even he either feigned or felt a proper awe. "You may say it was a rum place to keep 'em," continued Lord Thornaby. "But where would you gen-tlemen stable your white elephants? And these were elephants as white as snow; by Jove, I'll job them for the future!"

And he made merrier over his loss than any of us could have imagined the minute before; but the reason dawned on me a little later, when we all trooped down-

in the

"I didn't hear what you said, my lord." "Merely that the perpetrator of this amusing out-rage can be no other than the swell mobsman who relieved Lady Melrose of her necklace and poor Danby of half his stock a year or two ago." "I believe your lordship has hit the mail on the head."

"The man who took the Thimblely diamonds and

returned them to Lord Thimblely, you know." "Not he! I don't mean to cry over my spilled milk. I only wish the fellow joy of all he had time to take.

Anything fresh upstairs, by the way?" "Yes, my lord; the robbery took place between a quarter past eight and the half-hour." "How on earth do you know?"

"The clock that was tied up in the towel had stopped twenty past." at twenty "Have you interviewed my man?"

"I have, my lord. He was in your lordship's rooms until close on the quarter, and all was as it should be

when he left it." "Then do you suppose the burglar was in hiding in the house?"

"It's impossible to say, my lord. He is not in the house now, for he could only be in your lordship's bed-room or dressing-room, and we have searched every inch of both." room or dres

inch of both." Lord Thornaby turned to us when the Inspector had retreated, caressing his peaked cap. "I told him to clear up those points first," he ex-claimed jerking his head toward the door. "I had reason to think my man had been neglecting his duties up there. I am glad to find I am mistaken." I ought to have been no less glad that I was mis-taken. My suspicions of our officious author were thus proved to have been as wild as himself, I owed the man no grudge, and yet in my human heart I felt vaguely disappointed. My theory had gained color from his behavior ever since he had admitted us to the dress-ing-room: it had changed all at once from the familiar to the morose, and only now was I just enough to remember that Lord Thornaby, having tolerated those familiarities as long as they were connected with useful

To the motose, and only now was 1 just choice to be involved to the motose, and only now was 1 just choice the service, had administered a relentless snub the moment that service had been well and truly performed. But, if Parrington was exonerated in my mind, so also was Raffles reinstated in the regard of those who had entertained a far more serious hypothesis. It was a miracle of good luck, a coincidence among coincidences which had whitewashed him in their sight, at the very moment when they were straining the expert eye to sift him through and through. But the miracle had been performed, and its effect was visible in every face and audible in every volce. I except Ernest, who had never been in the secret; moreover, that gay criminologist had been palpably shaken by his first little experience of crime. But the other three vied among themselves to do honor where they had done injustice. I heard Kingsmill, G. C., telling Raffles the best time to catch him at chambers, and promising a seat in court for any trial he might ever like to hear. Pairington is provided to the part they be beat they had hear they be a set in court for any trial he might ever like to hear. Pairington is provided to the pairing the part of the might ever they had hear they be beat they have been they have they have been they have they have been they have be to catch him at chambers, and promising a seat in tour for any trial he might ever like to hear. Parrington spoke of a presentation copy of his latest bushwhack-ing romance, and in paying, homage to Raffles made his peace with our host. As for Lord Thornaby, I did overhear the name of the Athenaeum Club, a reference to his friends on the Committee and a whisper (as I thought) of Rule II. But he and Raffles had their heads too close together for me to swear honestly to the Rule.

heads too close together for me to swear honestly to the Rafe. The police were still in possession when we went our several ways, and it was all that I could do to drag Raffles up to my rooms, though, as I have said, they were just round the corner. He consented at last as a lesser evil than talking of the burglary in the street, and in my rooms I told him of his late danger and my own dilemma, of the few words I had overheard in the beginning, of the thin ice on which he had cut figures without a crack. It was all very well for him. He had never realized his peril. But let him think of me-listening, watching, yet unable to lift a finger, unable to say one warning word. Raffles heard me out, but a weary sigh followed the last symmetrical whiff of a Sullivan which he flung into my fire before he spoke. "No. I won't have another, thank you. I'm going to talk to you, Bunny. Do you really suppose I didn't see through these wiseacres from the first?" I faily refused to believe he had done so before that evening. Why had he never mentioned his idea to me? It had been quite the other way, as I indig-nantly reminded.Raffles. Did he mean me to believe he was the man to thrust his head into the lion's mouth for fun? And what point would there have been in dragging me there to see the fun? "I might have wanted you, Bunny. I very nearly

I might have wanted you, Bunny. I very nearly ald. "For my face?"

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"It has been my fortune before tonight, Bunny. It has also given me more confidence than you are likely to believe at this time of day. You stimulate me more

"Your gallery and your prompter's box in one?" "Your gallery and your prompter's box in one?" "Capital, Bunny! But it was no joking matter with me, either, my dear fellow; it was touch-and-go at the time. I might have called on you at any moment, and it was something to know I should not have called in valu!" "But what to do, Raffles?"

"It took me one more minute, and it put the clock on exactly fifteen. By the way, I did that literally, of course, in the case of the clock they found; it's an old dodge to stop a clock and alter the time, but you must admit that it looked as though one had wrapped it up all ready to cart away. There was thus any amount of prima facie evidence of the robbery having taken place when we were all at table; as a matter of fact. Lord Thornaby left his dressing-room one minute, his valet followed him the minute after, and I entered the minute after that."

the minute after that." "Through the window?" "To be sure. I was waiting below in the garden. You have to pay for your garden in town, in more ways than one. You know the wall, of course, and that jolly old postern? The lock was beneath contempt

But what about the window? It's on the first floor, isn't

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"There's a most considerate scheme of pipes' break in for that. They never thought of scragging her. The foolish old person would make a noise, and one of them tied too tight. I call it jolly bad luck on

one of them tiled too tight. I call it jolly had luck on them." "On quiet, harmless, well-behaved thieves," added Lord Thornaby, "in the unobtrusive exercise of their humble avocation!" And, as he turned to Raffles with his puffy smile. I felt that we had reached that part of the program which had undergone rehearsal; it had been perfectly timed to arrive with the champagne, and I was not afraid to signify my appreciation of that small mercy. But Raffles laughed so quickly at his lordship's humor, and yet with such a natural restraint, as to leave no doubt that he had taken kindly to my ewn old part, and was playing the innocent inimitably in his turn, by reason of his very innocence. It was a poetic judg-ment on old Raffles, and in my enjoyment of the novel situation I was able also to enjoy some of the good things that accrued from this rich man's table. The saddle of mutton more than justified its place in the menu. But it had not spolled me for my wing of phessant, and I was even looking forward to a sweet, when a further remark from the literary light recalled me from the table to its tak. "But I suppose," said Parrington to Kingsmill, "It's many a burgiar you've restored to his friends and his relations?"

"Let us say many a poor fellow who has been charged with burgiary," replied the cheery Q.C. "It's not quite the same thing, you know, nor is 'many' the most accurate word. I never touch criminal work in