

'THINKS HE'S A PERSON'

Raffles II, Talking Mynah Bird Puts on First Press Conference

By HARMAN W. NICHOLS

Washington, Nov. 3 (U.P.)—Raffles II behaved like a little man at his first press conference.

When a pretty girl reporter came into the room, he gave the wolf call and then said, "Hello, darling! Oh boy!"

Raffles is a bird, a rare and right smart one. He's an Indian Hill Mynah and is about to go on the radio from coast to coast.

He was brought here by the lovely little lady who owns him—Zetta (Mrs. Carveth) Wells, who authors, lectures, explores, produces movies and says things on the radio and television.

Zetta also owned Raffles I, which went around the world selling war bonds, posing as the "bird who thinks he is a person." He once appeared on Fred Allen's program and the comedian commented, "What a wonderful carrier pigeon he'd made for the army. He'd not only deliver the message—he'd read it."

I never met the late Raffles I—but the two-year-old Raffles II can't be far behind.

This bird is solid black and has yellow markings around the neck.

When we arrived for the press conference at the Wardman Park hotel, Mrs. Wells turned the boy loose. He at once took a fancy to the front of a photographer's camera. The other lensmen scooped their colleague.

Mrs. Wells had to guide the interview along.

She asked Raffles II if he had been in the service.

He hadn't, but he could whistle: "You're in the army now." Which he did.

Then she asked the smart feathered creature if he would like to be a communist. He was sitting on her index finger at the time and immediately fell over in her hand, playing like he'd "rather be dead." He perked up in a second and whistled the "Star Spangled Banner" from front chord to last.

We got to talking about birds and Mrs. Wells said this splitting tongue business to make a bird talk is a lot of legend. It all started, she said, when some German came upon a tongue-tied crow. He took a knife and un-tongue-tied the bird and taught him to talk. Somebody back in the long ago wrote a

scientific piece about it—and that's how the legend started.

Mrs. Wells can't talk about Raffles II, without remembering the late lamented Raffles I.

The bird which out-talked the talkative Fred Allen once received \$500 for singing with the San Francisco symphony—and paid his union dues to boot. (Mrs. Wells has the union card for proof.)

Well, anyhow Mrs. Wells had her famous No. 1 bird at a society party in New York one time. It was in the swankiest room in the Waldorf Astoria.

One of the lovely old ladies in sable walked up to the cage to admire the pretty black creature and then suddenly turned stiff upright in her mink.

She called for Mrs. Wells, who came running.

There, she said with her dignity up, was the column her son was writing for a New York newspaper—there on the bottom of a bird cage.

Mrs. Wells wasn't stopped for long.

"Raffles," said she, with equal dignity "is so smart he doesn't read anything but the best literature."

TASTY!

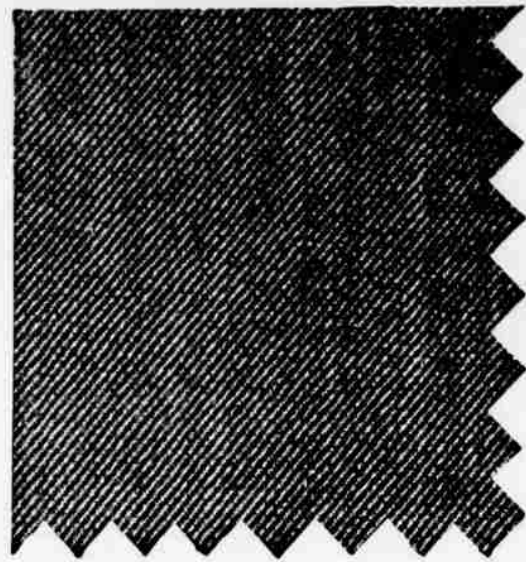
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