THE RESERVE TANKERS THE THE PARTY AND

PAGE SEVEN



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ARMOUR CLAD:

Amateur Cracksman.

our

ame

vay,

DWn

W E. W. Hornung, Author of "Shadow

of the Rope," "Rogue's March," Etc. latermined that this night should end b black disaster? As I asked myself hese questions his match flared in the hall; in another moment the stairs sere creaking under his feet, even as her had creaked under those of the nurderer; and the humane instinct hat inspired him in defiance of his risk was borne in also upon my slower sassbilities. Could we let the murm the creaking stairs and to overaul Raffles on the landing. But three doors presented themsives: the first opened into a bedmom with the bed turned down but mdisturbed; the second room was

Raffles lit the landing gas. "He's in there," said he, cocking his from it. morer. "Do you remember how we med to break into the studies at school? Here goes!"

His flat foot crashed over the keyhile the lock gave, the door flew men, and in the sudden draught the inding gas heeled over like a cobble hasquall; as the flame righted itself law a fixed bath, two bath towels hotted together—an open window—a owering figure—and Raffles struck

"Jack-Rutter?" The words came thick and slow with brer, and in horror I heard myself gure by the bathroom window rose gradually erect.

"It's you!" he whispered, in amazement no less than our own; "it's you wo! What's it mean, Raffles I saw you get over the gate; a bell rang, the place is full of them. Then you moke in. What's it all mean?" "We may tell you that when you tell

-you've seen-but I'll tell you if you Its. I've killed a robber; that's all. l'e killed a robber, a usurer, a jackal, a blackmailer, the cleverest and the quellest villain unhung. I'm ready to lang for him. I'd kill him again!" And he looked us fiercely in the face, ine defiance in his dissipated eyes;

"shall I tell you how it happened?" went passionately on. "He's made by life a hell these weeks and months Mast. You may know that. A perh Bond street. Do you remember wenty yards behind you; he was on jour tracks, Raffles; he saw me nod o you, and stopped me an asked me 120 you were. He seemed as keen s mives to know. I couldn't think T, and didn't care either, for I saw W chance. I said I'd tell him all wont you if he'd give me a private aterview. He said he wouldn't. I aid he should, and held him by the tat; by the time I let him go you ere out of sight, and I waited where was till he came back in despair. I ad the whip hand of him then. I could dictate where the interview houd be, and I made him take me lone with him, still swearing to tell all about you when we'd had our Well, when we got here I made the him off and off; and about 10 clock I heard the gate shut. I waited

and then asked him if he lived Not at all,' says he; 'did you not the servant? I said I'd seen her, but I thought d heard her go; if I was mistaken doubt she would come when she as called; and I yelled three times aight last week, and he interviewme himself through the gate, but "ouidn't open it. Well, when I had York. vee yelling, and not a soul had come us, he was as white as that cell-Then I told him we could have that at last; and I picked the out of the fender, and told him he'd robbed me, but by God he wouldn't rob me any more. I gave him

Farness

out over his own carpet. He thought a minute, and then went to his desk for pen and paper. In two seconds he was round like lightning with a re-

ed. He fired two or three times and missed; you can find the holes if you like; but I hit him every time-my God! I was like a savage till the thing was done. And then I didn't care. I went through his desk looking for my own bills, and was coming away when you turned up. I said I didn't care, nor do I; but I was going to give myself up to-night, and shall still; so you see I shan't give you fellows much

"That's all rot," said Raffles, speaking after a pause; "we shan't let you

"You shan't stop me! What would terer go? My answer was to bound be the good? The woman saw me; it would only be a question of time; and I can't face waiting to be taken. Think of it; waiting for them to touch you on the shoulder! No, no, no. I'll give myself up and get it over."

His speech was changed; he falterempty in every sense; the third door _ed, floundered. It was as though a clearer perception of his position had come with the bare idea of escape

"But listen to me," urged Raffies; "we're here at our peril ourselves. We broke in like thieves to enforce redress for a grievance very like your own. But don't you see? We took out a pane-did the thing like regular burglars. Regular burglars will get the credit of all the rest!" "You mean that I shan't be sus-"I do."

"But I don't want to get off scott free," cried Rutter hysterically. "Tve killed him. I know that. But it was in self-defense; it wasn't murder. repeating them, while the cowering I must own up and take the conse quences. I shall go mad if I don't." His hands twitched; his lips quiv ered; the tears were in his eyes. Raf-

fles took him roughly by the shoulder. "Look here, you fool! If the three of us were caught here now, do you know what those consequences would be? We should swing in a row at Newgate in six weeks' time! You talk what in God's name you've done, as though we were sitting in a club; don't you know it's 1 o'clock in the "Done? What have I done?" The morning, and the lights on, and a dead misppy wretch came out into the man down below? For God's sake pull with bloodshot, blinking eyes, yourself together, and do what I tell ad a bloody shirt front. "You know you, or you're a dead man yourself." "I wish I was one," Rutter sobbed. "I wish I had his revolver to blow my

own brains out. It's lying under him.

O my God, O my God!" His knees knocked together; the frenzy of reaction was at its height. We had to take him downstairs between us, and so through the front is breast heaving, his jaw like a door out into the open air. All was still outside-all but the smothered weeping of the unstrung wretch upon our hands. Raffles returned for a moment to the house; then all was dark as well. The gate opened from within; we closed it carethen I met you fellows? He wasn't fully behind us; and so left the starlight shining on broken glass and

> found them. We escaped; no need to dwell on our escape. Our murderer seemed set upon the scaffold-drunk with his deed, he was more trouble than six men drunk with wine. Again and again we threatened to leave him to his fate, to wash our hands of him.

polished spikes one and all as we had

But incredible and unmerited luck was with the three of us. Not a soul did we meet between that and Willesden; and of those who saw us later, did one think of the two young men with in a seemingly unmistakable condition, when the evening papers apprised the town of a terrible tragedy at Ken-

We walked to Maida Vale, and thence drove openly to my rooms. But alone went upstairs; the other two proceeded to the Albany, and I saw no more of Raffles for forty-eight hours. He was not at his rooms when I called in the morning; he had the top of my voice. Of course left no word. When he reappeared I the papers were full of the murder; that, because I came to see him and the man who had committed it was on the wide Atlantic, a steerage passenger from Liverpool to New

"There was no arguing with him," so Raffies told me; "either he must make a clean breast of it or flee the country. So I rigged him up at the studio, and we took the first train to Liverpool. Nothing would induce him to sit tight and enjoy the situation as I should have endeavored to What you all his iniquitous claims | do in his place; and it's just as well!

st me, or have his brains beaten | I went to his diggins to destroy some | to appeal to the er-adventurous napers, and what do you think I found? | classes." For over sixty years doctors have en-

warrant out against him already! The idiots think that window wasn't genube my fault if it's ever served!" Nor after all these years can I think

No. 5 of the Series.

(Copyright 1899 by Chas. Scribner's Sons.) "Well," said Raffies, "what do you I read the advertisement once more before replying. It was in the last column of The Daily Telegraph, and it

TWO THOUSAND POUNDS RE-WARD.—The above sum may be earned by any one qualified to undertake delicate mission and prepared to run certain risk. Apply by telegram, Se-

"I think," said I, "it's the most extraordinary advertisement that ever got into print!" Raffles smiled.

"Not quite all that, Bunny; still, extraordinary enough, I grant you." "Look at the figure!" "It is certainly large."

"And the mission—and the risk!" "Yes; the combination is trank, to original point is requiring applications by telegram to a telegraphic address! There's something in the fellow who though of that, and something in his game: with one word he chokes off bob; but then I prepaid another."

"Rather," said Rames. "I want two thousand pounds as much as any man." "Put your own name?"

"Well-no, Bunny, I didn't. In point of fact I smell something interesting and illegal, and you know what a cautious chan I am. I signed myself Glasspool, care of Hickey, 38 Conduit street; that's my tailor, and after sending the wire I went round and told him what to expect. He promised to send the reply along the moment it came. I shouldn't be surprised if that's it!" And he was gone before a double

knock on the outer door had done ringing through the rooms, to return next minute with an open telegram and a face full of news. "What do you think?" said he. "Security's that fellow Addenbrooke, the police court lawyer, and he wants to

see me instanter! "Do you know him, then?" "Merely by repute. I only hope he doesn't know me. He's the chap who got six weeks for sailing too close to the wind in the Sutton-Wilmer case everybody wondered why he wasn't struck off the rolls. Instead of that he's got a first-rate practice on the seamy side, and every blackguard with half a case takes it straight to Bennett Addenbrooke. He's probably the one man who would have the cheek to put in an advertisement like that, and the one man who could do it without exciting suspicion. It's simply in his line, but you may be sure there's something shady at the bottom of it. The odd thing is that I have long made up my mind to go to Addenbrooke my-

self if accidents should happen." "And you're going to him now?" "This minute," said Raffles, brushing his hat; "and so are you."

"But I came in to drag you out "You shall lunch with me when we've seen this fellow. Come on, Bunny and we'll choose your name on the way. Mine's Glasspool, and don't you forget it."

Mr. Bennett Addenbrooke occupied substantial offices in Wellington street, Strand, and was out when we arrived, but he had only just gone over the way to the court;" and five minutes sufficed to produce a brisk, fresh-colored, resolute-looking man, with a very confident, rather festive air, and black eyes that opened wide at the sight of Raffles. "Mr.-Glasspool?" exclaimed the

"My name," said Raffles, with dry effrontery.

"Not up at Lord's, however!" said the other, slyly. "My dear sir, I have seen you take far too many wickets to make any mistake." For a single moment Raffles looked

venomous; then he shrugged and smiled, and the smile grew into a little cynical chuckle. "So you have bowled me out in my

turn?" said he. "Well, I don't think there's anything to explain. I am harder up than I wished to admit under my own name, that's all, and I want that thousand pounds reward." "Two thousand," said the solicitor. 'And the man who is not above an alias happens to be just the sort of mar I want; so don't let that worry you, my dear sir. The matter, however, is of a strictly private and confidential character." And he looked very hard at me.

"Quite so," said Raffles. "But there was something about a risk?" "A certain risk is involved." "Then surely three heads will be better than two. I said I wanted that thousand pounds; my friend here wants the other. We are both cursed-

ly hard up, and we go into this thing together or not at all. Must you have his name, too? I should give him my real one, Bunny. Mr. Addenbrooke raised his eyebrows over the card I found for him; then he drummed upon it with his

finger-nail, and his embarrassment expressed itself in a puzzled smile. "The fact is, I find myself in a difficulty," he confessed at last. "Yours is the first reply I have received; people who can afford to send long telegrams don't rush to the advertisements in the Daily Telegraph; but, on the other hand. I was not quite prepared to hear from men like yourselves. Candidly, and on consideration, I am not sure that you are the stamp of men for me-men who belong to good clubs! I rather intended

"We are adventurers," said Raffles

"But you respect the law?" The black eyes gleamed shrewdly. "We are not professional rogues, if that's what you mean," said Raffles, smiling, "But on our beam-ends we are; we would do a good deal for a thousand pounds apiece, eh, Bunny?" "Amurhing." I mpromuradi

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CURE SICK HEADACHE. "I'll tell you what I want you to do. the million who answer an advertise. You can but refuse. It's illegal, but ment every day-when they can raise | it's illegality in a good cause; that's the stamp. My answer cost me five | the risk, and my client is prepared to pay for it. He will pay for the at-"You don't mean to say that you've | tempt, in case of failure; the money is as good as yours once you consent to run the risk. My client is Sir Bernard Debenham, of Broom Hall,

> "I know his son," I remarked. Raffles knew him, too, but said nothing, and his eye drooped disapproval in my direction. Bennett Ad-

denbrooke turned to me. "Then," said he, "you have the privilege of knowing one of the most complete young blackguards about town, and the fons et origo of the whole trouble. As you know the son, you may know the father, too, at all events by reputation; and in that case I needn't tell you that he is a very peculiar man. He lives alone in a storehouse of treasures which no eyes but his ever behold. He is said to have the finest collection of pictures in the South of England, though nobody sees them to judge; pictures, fiddles and furniture are his hobby, and he is undoubtedly very eccentric. Nor can one deny that there has been considerable eccentricity in his treatment of his son. For years Sir Bernard paid his debts, and the other day, without the slightest warning, not only refused to do so any more, but absolutely stopped the lad's allowance. Well, I'll tell you what has happened; but first of all you must know, or you will remember, that I appeared for young Debenham in a little scrape he got into a year or two ago. I got him off all right, and Sir Bernard paid me handsomely on the nail. And no more did I hear or see of either of them until one day last week."

The lawyer drew his chair nearer ours and leaned forward, with a hand "On Tuesday of last week I had a telegram from Sir Bernard. I was to go to him at once. I found him waiting for me in the drive; without a word he led me to the picture gallery, which was locked and darkened, drew up a blind, and stood simply pointing to an empty picture frame. It was a long time before I could get a word out of him. Then at last he told me that that frame had contained one of the rarest and most valuable pictures in England-in the world-an original Velasquez. I have checked this," said the lawyer, "and it seems literally true; the picture was a portrait of the Infanta Maria Teresa, said to be one of the artist's greatest works, secand only to another portrait of one

of the Popes in Rome so they told me at the National Gallery, where they had its history by heart. They say there that the picture is practically priceless. And young Debenham has sold it for five thousand pounds!" "The deuce he has," said Raffles. I inquired who had bought it.

name of Craggs-the Hon. John Montagu Craggs, M.L.C., to give him his full title. Not that we knew anything ed himself in this way; he had threatened revenge, and this was it. Indeed, when I hunted him up in town on the Tuesday night he confessed as much in the most brazen manner imaginable. But he wouldn't tell me who was the purchaser, and finding out took the rest of the week; but I did find out, and a nice time I've had of it ever since! Backward and forward between Esher and the Metropole, where the Queenslander is staying, sometimes twice a day; threats, offers, prayers, entreaties, not one of them a bit of good!"

"But," said Raffles, "surely it's a clear case? The sale was illegal; you can pay him back his money and force him to give the picture up." "Exactly but not without an acti-

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PMOTTANTHWOO and a public scandal, and that my client declines to face. He would rather lose even his picture than have the whole thing get into the papers; he has disowned his son, but he will not disgrace him; yet his picture he must have by hook or crook, and there's the rub! I am to get it back by fair means the matter, and I verily believe would throw in a blank check if asked. He differed one to the Queenslander, but Craggs simply tore it in two; the one

"So you put that advertisement in the paper?" said Rames, in the dry tones he had adopted throughout the interview: Taskonad at grant orom in "As a last resort. ad I did."

It was magnificently said; the lawyer flushed from his hair to his collar. "I knew you were not the men!" he

groaned. "I never thought of men of your stamp! But it's not stealing," he exclaimed heatedly. "it's recovering stolen property. Besides, Sir Bernard will pay him his five thousand as soon as he has the picture; and, you'll see, old Craggs will be just as himself. No, no it's an enterprise, an adventure if you like-but not

"You yourself mentioned the law," murmured Raffies. "And the risk," I added.

"We pay for that," he said once "But not enough," said Raffles, shaking his head. "My good sir, consider what it means to us. You spoke of those clubs; we should not only get kicked out of them, but put in prison like common burglars! It's true we're hard up, but it simply isn't worth at the price. Double your stakes, and

Addenbrooke wavered. "Do you think you could bring it

"We could try." "But you have no"-"Experience? Well, hardly!"

I for one am your man,

"And you would really run the risk for four thousand pounds?" Raffles looked at me. I nodded. "We would," said he, "and blow the odds!" I tod yd ygwa novin gaw o

"It's more than I can ask my client to pay," said Addenbrooke, growing "Then it's more than you can expect us to risk." andow lalegod odl

"You are in earnest?" "God wot!" as , sister ave omnoil "Say three thousand if you suo, ceed "inbuild bdJ stow add . doll.

"Four is our figure, Mr. Adden-"Then I think it should be nothing if you fail." aftered sail, blamesh

"Doubles or quits?" cried Raffles. "Well, that's sporting. Done!" Addenbrooke opened his lips, half rose, then sat back in his chair and looked long and shrewdly at Raffiesnever once at me.

"I know your bowling," said he reflectively. "I go up to Lord's whenever I want an hour's real rest, and I've seen you bowl again and againyes, and take the best wickets in England on a plump plich. I don't forget the last Gentleman and Players; I was there. You're up to every trick -every one. * * I'm inclined to think that if anybody could bowl out this old Australian . Damme, I believe you're my very man!" . . . The bargain was clinched at the Cafe Royal, where Bennett Addenbrooke insisted on playing host at an extravagant luncheon. I remember that he took his whack of champagne with the nervous freedom of a man at high pressure, and have no doubt I kept him in countenance by an equal indulgence; but Raffles, ever an exemplar in such matters, was more abstemious even than his wont, and very poor company to boot. I can see him now, his eyes in his plate-thinkingthinking. I can see the solicitor glancing from him to me in an apprehension of which I did my best to disabuse him by reassuring looks. At the close Raffles apologized for his preoccupa-

tion, called for an A. B. C. timetable, and anounced his intention of catch ing the 3.02 to Esher. "You must excuse me, Mr. Addenbrooke," said he, "but I have my own idea, and for the moment I should prefer to keep it to myself. It may end in a fizzle, so I would rather not speak about it to either of you just yet. But speak to Sir Bernard I must, so will you write me one line to him on your card? Of course, if you wish, "A Queensland legislator by the you must come down with me and hear what I say; but I really don't see

much point in it." And as usual Raffles had his way, about him on Tuesday last; we didn't | though Bennett Addenbrooke showed even know for certain that young some temper when he was gone, and Debenham had stolen the picture. But I myself shared his annoyance to no he had gone down for money on the small extent. I could only tell him Monday evening, had been refused, that it was in the nature of Raffles and it was plain enough he had help- to be self-willed and secretive, but that no man of my acquaintance had half his audacity and determination; that I, for my part, would trust him through and through, and let him gang his own gait every time. More I dared not say, even to remove those chill misgivings with which I knew that the lawyer went his way. That day I saw no more of Raffles but a telegram reached me when I was dressing for dinner:

> "Be in your rooms to-morrow from soon and keep rest of day clear, o nodgamaRAFFLES It had been sent off from Waterloo

So Raffies was back in town; at an earlier stage of our relations I should have hunted him up then and there, but now I knew better. His telegram meant that he had no desire for my society that night or the following forenoon; that when he wanted me should see him soon enough. And see him I did, toward I o'clock next day. I was watching for him from my window in Mount street, when he drove up furiously in a hansom, and jumped out without a word to the man. I met him next minute at the lift gates, and he fairly pushed me back into my rooms.

"Five minutes, Bunny!" he cried Not a moment more." ing himself into the usarest chair.

"I'm fairly on the rush," he panted; "having the very devil of a timel, Not a word till I tell you all I've done. I settled my plan of campaign yesterday at lunch. The first thing was to get in with this man Cragges; you can't break into a place like the Metropole, it's got to be done from the fiside. Problem one, how to get at the fellow. Only one sort of pretext would To be continued.

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