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Ninth Raffles Story---Ninth Raffles Story---Ninth Raffles Story

ness, but even through that impenetrable veil I knew it was a sham. I had laid hold of the hand rail. It shook violently in my hand; he was also holding it where he stood. And these suppressed tremors, or rather their detection in this way, struck a strange chill to my heart, just as I was beginning to pluck it up.

"It is lucky for Stefano," said I grim as death.

"Ah, but you must not be too 'ard on im," remonstrated the Count. "You have stole this girl; he speak with me about it, and I wish to speak with you. It is very audacious, Arturo, very audacious. Perhaps you are even going to meet her now, eh?"

"I told him straight that I was

"Then there is no 'urry, for she is not there."

"You didn't see her in the cave?" I cried, too delighted at the thought to keep it to myself.

"I had no such fortune," the old devil said.

"She is there, all the same."

"I only wish I 'ad known."

"And I've kept her long enough."

"In fact, I threw this over my shoulder as I turned and went running down."

"I 'ope you will find her!" his malicious voice came croaking after me. "I 'ope you will--I 'ope so."

"And find her I did."

Raffles had been on his feet for some time, unable to sit still or to stand, moving excitedly about the room. But now he stood still enough, his elbows on the cast-iron mantelpiece, his head between his hands.

"Dead!" I whispered.

And he nodded to the wall.

"There was not a sound in the cave. There was no answer to my voice. Then I went in, and my foot touched hers, and it was colder than the rock."

"They had stabbed her to the heart. She had fought them, and they had stabbed her to heart!"

"You say 'they'?" I said gently, as he stood in heavy silence, his back still turned.

"I thought Stefano had been left behind!"

Raffles was round in a flash, his face white-hot, his eyes dancing death.

"He was in the cave!" he shouted. "I saw him--spotted him--it was broad daylight after those stairs--and I went for him with my bare hands. Not that, Bunny; not that for a thing like that; I meant getting my fingers into his vile little heart and tearing it out by the roots. I was stark mad. But he had the revolver--hers. He bled it at arm's length and missed. That steadied me. I had smashed his funny bone against the rock before he could bludge again; the revolver fell with a rattle, but without going off; in an instant I had it tight, and the little swine at my mercy at last."

"You didn't show him any?"

"Mercy? With Faustina dead at my feet? I should have deserved none in the next world if I had shown him any in this! No, I just stood over him, with the revolver in both hands, feeling the chambers with my thumbs, and as I stood he stabbed at me; but I stepped back to that one and brought him down with a bullet in his guts."

"And I can spare you two or three more," I said, for my poor girl could not have fired a shot. "Take that one to hell with you--and that--and that!"

"Then I started coughing and wheezing like the Count himself, for the place was full of smoke. When it cleared my man

was very dead, and I tipped him into the sea to defile that rather than Faustina's cave. And then--and then--we were alone for a last time, she and I, in our own pet haunt; and I could scarcely see her, yet I would not strike a match; for I knew she would not have me see her as she was. I could say good-bye to her without that. I said it; and left her like a man, and up the first open-air steps with my head in the air and the stars all sharp in the sky; then suddenly they swam, and back I went like a lunatic, to see if she was really dead, to bring her back to life. * * * Bunny, I can't tell you any more."

"Not even of the count?" I murmured at last.

"Not even of the Count," said Raffles, turning round with a sigh. "I left him pretty sore for himself; but what was the good of that? I had taken blood for blood, and it was not Corbucci who had killed Faustina. No, the plan was his, but that was not a part of the plan. They had found out about our meetings in the cave; nothing simpler than to leave me kept hands at it overhead and to carry off Faustina by

brute force in the boat. It was their only chance, for she had said more to Stefano than she had admitted to me, and more than I am going to repeat about myself. No persuasion would have induced her to listen to him again; so they tried force; and she drew Corbucci's revolver on them, but they had taken her by surprise, and Stefano stabbed her before she could fire."

"But how do you know all that?" I asked Raffles, for his tale was going to pieces in the telling, and the tragic end of poor Faustina was no ending for me.

"Oh," said he, "I had it from Corbucci at his own revolver's point. He was waiting at his window, and I could have potted him at my ease where he stood against the light, listening hard enough but not seeing a thing. So he asked whether it was Stefano, and I whispered, 'Si, Signor,' and then whether he had finished Arturo, and I brought the same shot off again. He had let me in before he knew who was finished and who was not."

"And did you finish him?"

"No; that was too good for Corbucci. But I bound and gagged him about as tight as

man was ever gagged or bound and I left him in his room with the shutters shut and the house locked up. The shutters of that old place were six inches thick and the walls nearly six feet; that was on the Saturday night, and the Count wasn't expected at the vineyard before the following Saturday. Meanwhile he was supposed to be in Rome. But the dead would doubtless be discovered next day, and I am afraid this would lead to his own discovery with the life still in him. I believe he figured on that himself, for he sat threatening me gamely till the last. You never saw such a sight as he was, with his head split in two by a ruler fied at the back of it and his great mustache pushed up into his bulging eyes. But I locked him up in the dark with a quail and I wished and still wish him every torment of the damned."

"And then?"

"The night was still young, and within five miles there was the best of ports in a storm, and hundreds of hold for the humble stowaway to choose from. But I didn't want to go further than Genoa, for by this

time my Italian would wash, so I chose the old Norddeutscher Lloyd, and had an excellent voyage in one of the boats slung aboard over the bridge. That's better than any hold, Bunny; and I did splendidly on oranges brought from the vineyard."

"And at Genoa?"

"At Genoa I took to my wits once more, and have been living on nothing else ever since. But there I had to begin all over again, and at the very bottom of the ladder. I slept in the streets. I begged, I did all manner of terrible things, rather hoping for a bad end, but never coming to one. Then one day I saw a white-headed old chap looking at me through a shop window--a window I had designs upon--and when I stared at him he stared at me, and we wore the same rags. So I had come to that! But one reflection makes many, I had not recognized myself; who on earth would recognize me? London called me--and here I am. Italy had broken my heart--and there it stays."

"Pipant as a schoolboy one moment, playful even in the bitterness of the next, and now no longer giving way to the feeling

which had spoiled the climax of his tale, Raffles needed knowing as I alone knew him for a right appreciation of those last words. That they were no more words I know full well. That but for the tragedy of his Italian life that life would have sufficed him for years if not forever I did and still do believe. But I alone see him as I saw him then, the lines upon his face and the pain behind the lines. How they came to disappear and what removed them you will never guess. It was the one thing you would have expected to have the opposite effect, the thing indeed that had forced his confidence, the organ and the voice once more beneath our very windows."

Margarita de Pareto, era a sarta d' o' signore; se pigruva sempre e ddote se tenesse a Salvatore! Mar-gu-ri, e p'puro e Salvatore! Mar-gu-ri, Ma l'ommo e cacciatore! Mar-gu-ri, Nun cu' saje corpa tu! Chello ch' e fatto, e fatto, un re parlammo

I simply stared at Raffles. Instead of

deepening, his lines had vanished. He looked years younger, mischievous and merry and alert as I remembered him of old in the breathless crisis of some madcap escapade. He was holding up his finger; he was stealing to the window; he was peeping through the blind as though our side street were Scotland Yard itself; he was stealing back again, all recovery, excitement and suspense.

"I half thought they were after me before," said he, "that was why I made you look. I daren't take a proper look myself, but what a jest if they were! What a jest!"

"Do you mean the police?" said I.

"The police! Bunny, do you know them and me so little that you can look me in the face and ask such questions? My boy, I'm dead to them--off their books--a good deal deader than being off the books! Why, if I went to Scotland Yard this minute to give myself up they'd chuck me out for a harmless lunatic. No, I fear an enemy nowadays, and I'm in error of the sometime friend, but I have the utmost confidence in the dear police."

"Then whom do you mean?"

"The Camorra!"

I repeated the word with a different intonation. "Not that I had never heard of that most powerful and sinister of secret societies, but I failed to see on what grounds Raffles should jump to the conclusion that these every-day organ grinders belonged to it."

"It was one of Corbucci's threats," said he. "If I killed him the Camorra would certainly kill me. He kept on telling me so. It was like his cunning not to say that he would put them on my tracks whether or no."

"He is probably a member himself!"

"Obviously, from what he said."

"But why on earth should you think that these fellows are?" demanded as that brazen voice came rasping through a second verse.

"I don't think it was only an idea. That thing is so thoroughly Neapolitan, and I never heard it on a London organ before. Then, again, what should bring them back here?"

I peeped through the blind in my turn, and, to be sure, there was the fellow with the blue chin and the white teeth watching our windows, and ours only, as he bawled.

"And why?" cried Raffles, his eyes dancing when I told him. "Why should they come sneaking back to us? Doesn't that look suspicious, Bunny; doesn't that promise a lark?"

"Not to me," I said, having the smile for once. "How many people, should you imagine, toss them \$5 shillings for as many minutes of their infernal row? You seem to forget that that's what you did an hour ago!"

Raffles had forgotten. His blank face confessed the fact. Then suddenly he burst out laughing at himself.

"Bunny," said he, "you're so imaginative, and I never knew I had so much! Of course you're right. I only wish you were not, for there's nothing I should enjoy more than taking on another Neapolitan or two. You see, I owe them something still. I didn't settle in full. I owe them more than ever I shall pay them on this side of the Styx!"

He had hardened even as he spoke; the lines and the years had come again and his eyes were still and steel, with an honest grief behind the glitter.

(End of Ninth Story.)

Some Tersely Told Tales Both Grim and Gay

Congratulatory Speech.
HAT speech," said Bird S. Coler, anent a political address, "was ungracious. It reminds me of a Scotch's speech to his wife."

"The Scotch had married for the second time. His new mate was sentimental and a little morbid. She could not resist asking her husband now and then if he loved her better than he had loved her predecessor."

"So he would say:

"Do I more than fill Jean's place in your heart, Jack?"

"Are ye sure ye're no' regrettin' Jean, laddie?"

"Jack, do ye love me better nor her?"

"The man bore several of these examinations patiently. Then he ended them once for all with a grunt:

"Talk 'na word for it, Betty, if Jean was livin' ye wadna be here!"--New York Tribune.

A Change of Mind.
James Dalrymple of Glasgow, the expert on municipal street car ownership, was comparing in Cleveland the public with the private operation of water supplies, gas works and kindred utilities.

"When private hands take hold of these things," said Mr. Dalrymple, "they run them beautifully at first. The people at first are highly pleased. But with time the popular pleasure wanes; it changes to vexation and to bitterness; and that," said Mr. Dalrymple, "reminds me of a recent happening in Glasgow."

"There was a Glasgow man to whom his wife said

"Donald, next Thursday is Helen's birthday. She will be 11 years old. Give me a little money, please, to get a birthday present for her."

"The man, as he took out his purse, said querulously:

"How the deuce are you able to remember so exactly the dates of all our children's birthdays?"

"Easily enough," the woman answered. "Our first child was born on January 11,

and on that day you gave me a necklace of diamonds and rubies. Our second was born on June 2, and on that day you gave me a necktie case worth sixpence. Our third child was born on October 27, and that date is firmly fixed in my mind through a terrific rumper that you made about a milliner's bill."--Buffalo Enquirer.

Willing to Pay for It.
The following anecdote is told of General Othman Marston, a once famous New Hampshire lawyer:

General Marston was attending court at Dover, when a young attorney made a motion that was denied by the court. The young man remonstrated against what he thought was the wrong ruling of the judge. So vehemently did he remonstrate that he was fined \$10 for contempt of court. An older attorney took the matter up and he was fined a similar sum. Still another, who thought he stood a little better with the judge, endeavored to straighten the matter out, but he, too, enriched the coffers of the state by paying a "ten spot" for contempt.

General Marston was then seen to rise in his seat and advance to the clerk's desk. Taking his long pocketbook from his pocket he took out two \$10 bills and laid them on the desk.

"What is that for?" said the court.

"I want you to distinctly understand," said the general, "what I have just twice as much contempt for this court as any man here, and I am paying for it."--Boston Herald.

He Got It.
On the day following the railroad wreck near Harrisburg recently, while a party of newspaper men were waiting in one of the company's offices awaiting news, word came that some of the railroad claim agents had already settled with and secured releases from some of the injured passengers.

"That called forth a story of the experience of a claim agent who had been sent

to settle with a passenger injured in a wreck on a southern railroad, in which a coach had rumbled down an embankment. The passenger had several ribs and a leg broken, a scalp wound and internal injuries, and the railroad man stood ready to have paid him \$500 for a release.

When asked what he thought would be right, the injured passenger, an Arkansasian, said:

"Well, stranger, that was a pretty long fall. They tell me that that car must have rolled about sixty feet. I think I ought to get \$1 a foot, anyway."--Philadelphia Ledger.

Beecher Seized on Ingersoll.
The kindness and generosity of Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll won for him many friends who could not but deeply regret his opinions. Among them was Henry Ward Beecher.

In the study of the famous preacher was an elaborate celestial globe, which had been sent him with the compliments of some manufacturer. On the surface of the globe, workmanship, were raised figures of the constellations and of the stars which compose them.

The globe struck Ingersoll's fancy. He turned it round and round, examining it with admiration.

"This is just what I want," he said; "who made it?"

"Who made it, do you say, Colonel?" repeated Beecher. "Who made this globe? Why, nobody, of course; it just happened."--Philadelphia Record.

A Come Down.
Former Congressman H. St. George Tucker of Virginia tells a story of a Virginian who had been indulging too freely in the flowing bowl and who had become overconfident of his own greatness. Looking around at his companions, the Virginian boasted, "Gentlemen, I can lick any man in Richmond." Nobody took up the challenge, and the Virginian returned to the charge. "Gentlemen," he said, "I can lick any man in the whole state of Virginia." The words were hardly uttered,

the narrator said, before a tall, lean, sinewy man from the western part of the state gave the boaster a thrust that sent him sprawling on the floor. Like Owen Wister's nameless hero, this Virginian had a sense of humor, and as he picked himself up he turned to the group and drawled, "Gentlemen, I'm ready to acknowledge that I've learned too much territory."--Buffalo Commercial.

Not for the Record.
A fruit grower of California was giving testimony before the senate interstate commerce committee and mentioned a particular kind of orange.

"That is the best orange grown," remarked Senator Cullum.

"It is," responded the witness, "and, Senator, you will get a box of oranges for saying that."

"You will find in this little book," remarked Senator Clapp, when the laugh subsided, "the names and addresses of every member of the committee."

"Didn't let this go into the record," said Senator Keam, who was presiding, addressing the stenographer.--Washington Post.

Makes a Concession.
An Irishman, who was painting a house green, dropped a bucket of paint. A woman passed just after the paint bespattered the sidewalk and she inquired: "What does this mean?" A small boy who had seen the accident said:

"De blake up dere had a hemorrhage."

An Englishman to whom the old joke was told, exclaimed:

"Positively absurd! Any one ought to have sense enough to know that the blood of every man in red, even if he is Irish."--New York Times.

Horror of War.
The old gentleman in the smoking-car was declaring vehemently that, in his opinion, war was a disgrace to civilization.

"War," he exclaimed, "is an abomination, a blot on the universe! Upon which he rose and left the car."

"The old man seems to feel pretty

strongly on the subject," said one of the passengers. "Has he lost some near relative through war?"

"Yes," answered a friend, "his wife's first husband."--Harper's Weekly.

A Trifle Late.
A quack doctor whose treatment had evidently led to the death of his patient was examined sternly by the coroner.

"What did you give the poor fellow?" asked the coroner.

"Ipecacuanha, sir."

"You might just as well have given him the aurora borealis," said the coroner.

"Well, sir, that's just what I was going to give him when he died."--Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Altogether Too Shy.
J. M. Barrie is as shy as a school girl, says a writer. Let a pretty girl look steadfastly at Barrie for five minutes and if she can catch his eye he will exhibit about the same symptoms of distress as a man who has swallowed a fish bone. Constant activity and contact with the world seems to be poisonous to cure him of the shyness which is developed the moment he talks with a good looking woman. Only the other day a young actress who had been rehearsing in one of his plays and directly under his eye pleased him so much that he asked her to luncheon. She couldn't go that day, and the refusal embarrassed him, but he plucked up courage and asked her again the next day. Another engagement interfered, but on the third trial the girl accepted and was pleased to think that she was to have an hour of delightful intellectual entertainment. Barrie brought on the luncheon and as the dishes were ordered he looked up and looked into the girl's eyes. From that moment he was absolutely speechless. He did not utter one word during the meal and after it was over he was just able to gasp out: "Shall we return to the theater?" and offer his arm. Then, as a sort of relief, he hunted up the stage manager and talked to him at the rate of ninety words a minute for half hour.