E. W. Hornung

Raffles

The Amateur Cracksman and Other Stories

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

RAFFLES

THE AMATEUR CRACKSMAN AND OTHER STORIES

ERNEST WILLIAM HORNUNG ('Willie' to his family and friends), was born in Marton-in-Cleveland, outside Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, on 7 June 1866. His mother, Harriet, was the daughter of a wine merchant, and his father, John Peter Hornung, traded successfully in coal, iron, and timber. Willie's asthma meant that he spent periods attending a specialist in London, but he was passionate about cricket and other games, and enjoyed his time at Uppingham, a public school in Rutland. Hoping to improve his health, in 1884 his family sent him on an extended trip to Australia, where he toured the country and worked on a New South Wales sheep station for a period. On his return he found the family fortunes had collapsed, and he strived to earn money as a writer, drawing extensively on his Australian experience. The romantic comedy *A Bride from the Bush* (1890), and similar material, earned him enough to marry Constance Doyle in 1893. His brother-in-law, Arthur Conan Doyle had found fame with the master detective Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick Dr Watson, and Hornung decided to try his hand at a brilliant criminal and his assistant. The first stories featuring the gentleman burglars Raffles and Bunny appeared in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1898, and were subsequently published as *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899). Three more collections of stories and a Raffles novel, *Mr Justice Raffles* (1909) were to follow. His other work included his tales of the bushranger Stingaree, the school story *Fathers of Men* (1912), and the cosily Gothic *Witching Hill* (1913). After his son Oscar's death in the First World War he volunteered with the YMCA in France and later Germany, and wrote of his experiences. He died of influenza while visiting Saint-Jean-de-Luz, near Biarritz in the south of France in 1921, and is buried there, near the grave of his friend George Gissing.

NICHOLAS DALY is Professor of Modern English and American Literature at University College Dublin, and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. His publications include the monographs *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle* (1999), *Literature, Technology and Modernity* (2004), *Sensation and Modernity in the 1860s* (2009), *The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century City: Paris, London, New York* (2015), and *Ruritania: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2020). For Oxford World's Classics he has edited Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*, and Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics have brought readers closer to the world's great literature. Now with over 700 titles—from the 4,000-year-old myths of Mesopotamia to the twentieth century's greatest novels—the series makes available lesser-known as well as celebrated writing.

The pocket-sized hardbacks of the early years contained introductions by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other literary figures which enriched the experience of reading. Today the series is recognized for its fine scholarship and reliability in texts that span world literature, drama and poetry, religion, philosophy, and politics. Each edition includes perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

E. W. HORNUNG

Raffles

The Amateur Cracksman and Other Stories

With an Introduction and Notes by
NICHOLAS DALY

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023949186

ISBN 978–0–19–286634–9

Printed and bound in the UK by
Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Late Victorian Britain loved crime, at least fictional crime. One famous instance of this is the extraordinary success of Sherlock Holmes, the creation of E. W. Hornung's brother-in-law, Arthur Conan Doyle. In the pages of the *Strand Magazine*, the world's first 'consulting detective' solved case after case, with the help of his stolid companion, Dr John Watson, each story offering readers a winning blend of familiarity and novelty. A shoal of other fictional detectives soon appeared in Holmes's wake: Arthur Morrison's Martin Hewitt; Catherine Louisa Pirkis's Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective; and the Baroness Orczy's armchair sleuth, the 'Old Man in the Corner', to name just a few of those who boosted the circulation of rival Victorian and Edwardian magazines.

Hornung took a different tack: if there were consulting detectives, why not master criminals? Conan Doyle himself had come up with an underworld double for Holmes, Moriarty, a brilliant professor of mathematics with hereditary criminal tendencies. However, Moriarty is largely a sinister offstage presence who appears in only a handful of the Holmes stories, and is mentioned in a few more. Hornung by contrast created a leading role for his master criminal, not only placing him at the centre of the action, but also making him a sympathetic figure, even a hero. Charismatic and handsome, A. J. Raffles is a gifted amateur cricket-player by day and a fearless thief by night, assisted by his faithful friend Bunny, who like Doyle's Watson is also our narrator. The success of their fictional adventures in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1898 led to three collections of stories, a novel, and a 1903 stage play that was performed to full houses on both sides of the Atlantic. As with Holmes, there were imitations, most notably Maurice Leblanc's French gentleman thief Arsène Lupin, whose success rivalled that of Raffles himself. In the following decades there were film, radio, and television adaptations of the stories, and sundry other spin-offs, but readers kept returning to the originals, so much so that in 1945 George Orwell suggested that Hornung was among the producers par excellence of the 'good bad book', 'the kind of book that has no literary pretensions but which remains readable when more serious productions have perished'; his other examples from this period include the Sherlock Holmes stories, E. Nesbit's *The Treasure Seekers*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*,

and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*.[1] Indeed, Raffles is one of those rare literary characters who has flown free of fiction and entered the language. A Raffles, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is 'a man of good birth who engages in crime, esp. burglary'. When the burglar George Smithson wrote his 1930 memoir, *Raffles in Real Life: The Confessions of George Smithson, alias 'Gentleman George'*, people knew precisely what he meant.[2]

Dedicated to Doyle, the first collection of Raffles stories, *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899), was seen by the older writer as a spin-off of his own work. In his *Memories and Adventures* (1924), he describes the gentleman burglar as 'a kind of inversion of Sherlock Holmes'.[3] But there is rather more to Raffles than that. Hornung's anti-hero, who speaks casually of art for art's sake, sometimes recalls the poised aestheticism of Oscar Wilde more than the great detective, and as the series develops, Raffles and Bunny's adventures seem to resonate with events in the lives of Wilde and his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. Doyle may have missed the subtle hints of sexual transgression in Hornung's work, but he nonetheless felt that the stories were vaguely unsettling: conceding that they were finely crafted, he worried that with a criminal as their hero they were 'rather dangerous in their suggestion'.[4] This whiff of the forbidden, though, is very much the point of the gentleman burglar: where Doyle's stories are squarely on the side of law and order, Hornung explores the pleasures of being an outlaw. In this respect Raffles is closer to the outsider anti-heroes of the Romantic era than to the protagonists of Victorian fiction, though with a dash of 1890s decadence.

E. W. Hornung

There was nothing ostensibly romantic or decadent about Ernest William Hornung's origins.[5] Willie, as he was known to his family and

[1] George Orwell, 'Good Bad Books', originally published in *The Tribune* (2 November 1945), and available at www.orwell.foundation.com

[2] See e.g. Richard W. Ireland, 'Criminology, Class and Cricket: Raffles and Real Life', *Legal Studies* 33/1 (March 2013), 66–84; and Eloise Moss, '"How I Had Liked This Villain! How I Had Admired Him!": A. J. Raffles and the Burglar as British Icon, 1898–1939', *Journal of British Studies*, 53/1 (January 2014), 136–61.

[3] Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924), 252.

[4] *Memories and Adventures*, 252–53.

[5] The biographical summary that follows draws on, inter alia, Peter Rowland, *Raffles and His Creator: The Life of E. W. Hornung* (London: Nekta, 1999), and his expanded account of Hornung's early years in *E. W. Hornung: The Emergence of a Popular Author,*

friends, was born in Marton-in-Cleveland, a village outside Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, on 7 June 1866 to Harriet Hornung (née Armstrong), the daughter of a wine merchant, and her husband, John Peter Hornung, a successful businessman who exported coal and iron, and imported Scandinavian timber. There is nonetheless a mild strain of the exotic in the family history: John Peter was born Johan Petrus in Mediasch, Transylvania, and educated at the University of Vienna. But except for a visiting cousin, Willie never seems to have seen much of his eastern European relatives. Nor did he see as much of Middlesbrough as one might expect. His debilitating childhood asthma meant that he spent a good deal of time in London, visiting doctors and attending a private 'dame school' in St John's Wood. However, after a brief period at a small school in Scotland, St Ninian's, Willie was sent to Uppingham, a public school (as elite private schools are termed in Britain), where he seems to have thrived. He became active in the production of the school magazine and enjoyed sports, despite his asthma; as we shall see, the public-school ethos of sportsmanship and 'playing the game' casts a long shadow in his fiction. In 1884 he set sail for Australia, where it was hoped the dry climate would relieve his asthma. Although he had funds from home to support his travels around the colony, for a period he worked as a general hand and tutor to the owner's children on a New South Wales sheep station. This Australian sojourn was to be a watershed event in his life: the striking but also deeply alien terrain, with its plain-spoken and self-sufficient settlers (he was less interested in the embattled indigenous population), left a deep impression on the young visitor, and it would also provide the raw material for his early success as a writer.

In better health, Hornung returned home in 1886 to a catastrophic shift in the family fortunes. His father's business had been devastated: in short succession he had lost two cargo ships at sea, and had been defrauded by his partner. John Peter suffered a stroke, and his health never recovered. In later years Willie's brothers Theodore and Pitt restored the family fortunes, but in the meantime, their comfortable way of life had to change. The family home, Erdely, was sold, and

1866–1898 (Washington: Academica Press, 2019); Richard Lancelyn Green's Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman* (Harmondsworth, 2003); and Andrew Lycett's *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007).

eventually they settled in London at 49 Waldegrave Park Road, Twickenham. Not far from Strawberry Hill House, the extravaganza built by Gothic novelist Horace Walpole, Waldegrave Park would be Willie's base as he began to forge a career for himself as a professional writer; he had always written poems and sketches for amusement, and now he tried to turn this to account. He was in the right place, since London was the centre of Britain's publishing industry, and there was a panoply of popular magazines and newspapers that paid at least some of their contributors enough to make a living. Hornung began to send his work to the comic papers *Funny Folks* and the *Young Folks Paper*, the latter of which had a few years earlier published Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. One of his first articles, which appeared in *Every Boy's Magazine* in August 1887, was 'Christmastide in the Bush', drawing on his Australian trip. The precarious writing career of Harry Ringrose in Hornung's novel *Young Blood* (1898) offers a thinly disguised version of this period in his life.

With some help from an older literary hand, the popular Irish novelist Richard Dowling, Hornung began to write more adult fare. His first attempt at a novel, *At Large*, probably written in 1887–8, is a melodramatic tale with a plot that relies heavily on coincidences. It features a charismatic villain in the form of the bushranger Ned Ryan, alias Sundown, who does our hero, Dick Edmonstone, a good turn in Australia, but later shows up in England, disguised as a Mr Miles, and begins to court Dick's beloved, Alice. Sundown is no Raffles, though he has some of his magnetism and charm, and leads a double life. *At Large* failed to find a publisher, however, and was serialized in a minor journal only after Hornung became more established.

He made a significant career advance with a story about a varsity cricketer who turns to genteel blackmail, 'Nettleship's Score', which appeared in the prestigious *Cornhill Magazine* in January 1890, giving him an entrée to a new circle of writers. In this competitive world his Australian experiences provided one of his richest seams of original material, and over the next few years he produced a series of novels that put them to work. Hornung was by no means the first author to use Australian settings and characters to entertain metropolitan consumers. The deportation of British convicts to the Antipodes and the romantic figure of the bushranger were a source of fascination as early as 1821, when theatre audiences enjoyed John H. Amherst's *Michael Howe, The Terror! of Van Diemen's Land*, and bushrangers were given a fresh lease

of life in the 1880s by 'Rolf Boldrewood', whose serial for the *Sydney Mail*, *Robbery Under Arms*, was a great success in Britain when it appeared as a book in 1888. Plots involving returned Australian convicts and criminals, all owing something to Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860–1), also enjoyed a vogue on page and stage in the late nineteenth century.[6] At the annual Booksellers' Dinner in 1893 Doyle even suggested that 'Boldrewood, Hornung, and others were forming an Australian school of writers', a sentiment that was probably more pleasing to Hornung than to Boldrewood (pseudonym of Thomas Alexander Browne), who had spent most of his life in Australia.[7]

With the market for bushrangers somewhat saturated, Hornung's next Australian novel, *A Bride from the Bush*, turned away from crime. In this fish-out-of-water romantic comedy, Gladys, the daughter of a successful Australian squatter (a large-scale grazier), has married Alfred Bligh, the son of a distinguished London judge, but the lively, open-hearted Australian finds herself immediately at odds with her in-laws, who find her accent, manners, and even her name hopelessly uncouth. This novel's success, and his growing income from short fiction, enabled Hornung to court Constance ('Connie') Doyle, sister of Arthur Conan Doyle. The latter was then enjoying the runaway success of his Sherlock Holmes stories in the *Strand Magazine*, and he may have suggested that Hornung sign with his own literary agent, A. P. Watt. The two writers had other interests in common, including cricket, and with fellow writer Jerome K. Jerome they visited Scotland Yard's Crime Museum ('The Black Museum') in December 1892. Willie and Connie were married the following year at St Edward's church in London (a Roman Catholic church, as Connie was a Catholic), and honeymooned in Paris; their only child, Arthur Oscar, was born in 1895. Living at 14 Rossetti Garden Mansions in Chelsea, Hornung kept the stream of magazine fiction and short novels flowing, continuing to exploit the England v. Australia theme. The still highly readable *My Lord Duke* (1897), for instance, is another comic fish-out-of-water tale, this time blended with a lost heir plot. The simple Australian sheep farmer, 'Happy Jack', is

[6] Examples include Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* (1874), John Boyle O'Reilly's *Moondyne* (1878), and C. Haddon Chambers's hit play *Captain Swift* (Haymarket, 20 June 1888).

[7] Doyle, 'Literature at the Bookseller's Dinner', *Freeman's Journal* (19 April 1893), 4.

brought back to England as heir apparent to the dukedom of St Osmund's, but he and his menagerie of cats do not take easily to the new life. If the inheritance plot is not very original, Hornung shows his light touch in the sideswipes at London society, including its minor poets, and the unassuming Jack is a likeable and original central character.

Hornung was still trying variants on the crime novel. The previous year he had tried his hand at a historical novel, *The Rogue's March*, which contains more than a dash of Charles Reade's 1856 hit, *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* and Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*. With its convict hero it is tempting to recognize it as another forerunner of the Raffles stories, and certainly we can see that at this stage Hornung was beginning to circle around the gentleman-criminal idea. December 1895 saw the publication of 'Irralie's Bushranger' as a supplement to the Christmas issue of *Cassell's Family Magazine*. In this engaging yarn the new owner of the New South Wales station is mistaken for the bushranger of the title, while the actual villain, Stingaree, an Oxford man who has taken to crime, takes advantage of the error. The following month *Chambers's Journal* published his 'After the Fact', which expands on the idea of a gentleman gone to the bad. Our narrator, Mr Bower, whose school nickname was 'the Beetle', describes how he once met Deedes, his old school hero, the former 'captain of footer' (sc. rugby), while visiting Geelong in Victoria; Deedes, he recalls, had been expelled from school for certain unnamed 'gallantries'.[8] When the Intercolonial Bank is robbed and Bower discovers that Deedes is responsible, he initially tries to shield him; as in *At Large*, the younger man is drawn to the engaging villain, though not enough to choose the side of crime in the end.

The ultimate gentleman villain, Raffles himself, was conjured up during an extended trip to Italy in 1897–9, during which Hornung and Connie visited Connie's sister, Ida Foley, and her husband Nelson, at their villa on Isola di Gaiola, near Posillipo in Naples.[9] They also spent time in Rome on this trip, where Hornung enjoyed

[8] Hornung's Uppingham schoolfellow Harry Samuel Collier was known as 'the Bug'. See Mark Holloway, *Norman Douglas: A Biography* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1976), 40.

[9] Hornung told the *Roman Herald* (12 April 1913) that he invented Raffles at Posillipo, though it was during his subsequent five-month stay at 38 via Gregoriana in Rome that he began to write the first stories.

his first meeting with H. G. Wells and George Gissing, and surprisingly perhaps, given their different temperaments and aesthetics, Gissing became a friend.[10] But Posillipo itself was also quite the literary neighbourhood: author Norman Douglas, another Uppingham old boy, lived nearby at the Villa Bechi, and Oscar Wilde, recently released from prison, was staying at the Villa Giudice, via Posillipo; Hornung and Douglas socialized, but we do not know if he met Wilde. At any rate his new surroundings seem to have inspired a sustained period of creative activity.

According to Hornung's own later account, it was Doyle who had suggested to him a series with a public-school villain, saying it was a pity he had killed off Deedes, anti-hero of the Australian crime story 'After the Fact'.[11] But Hornung had been thinking along similar lines for some years, and the final step was to take a romanticized colonial outlaw like the bushranger, give him the poise of a gentleman, and place him against an English backdrop. This urban bushranger would be outlaw by night, gentleman by day. The name Raffles, more resonant than Deedes, may have been suggested by the protagonist of his brother-in-law's novel of 1892, *The Doings of Raffles Haw* (1892), or by John Raffles, the businessman-turned-blackmailer of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–2), though he may also have had in mind Sir Stamford Raffles (1781–1826), the British colonialist. Hornung produced the stories fairly quickly. As he completed each one he sent it to Cassell's in London, and copies were sent on to the Irish-American publisher S. S. McClure, who had bought the rights for American magazine publication at £10 per story. The Raffles stories first appeared in *Cassell's Magazine* from June to November 1898, as 'In the Chains of Crime: Being the Confessions of a late Prisoner of the Crown, and sometime accomplice of the more notorious A. J. Raffles, Cricketer and Criminal, whose fate is unknown'. This somewhat melodramatic title is accompanied by a macabre illustration of a gentleman in evening dress but with a heavy chain around his neck, which is being pulled by a hooded skeleton; in the background is a stylized image of London, showing Westminster Bridge and Big Ben. In the United States, McClure placed them with

[10] See Rowland, *Raffles and His Creator*, 102, 105. Conan Doyle was also in Rome, and Andrew Lycett reprints a photograph of the four writers in his *Conan Doyle* (between pp. 272 and 273).

[11] 'Raffles and the "Rabbit" ', *Tit-Bits* 55, 2 January 1909.

Collier's Weekly, where they were serialized as 'The Adventures of A. J. Raffles'. He had been promised one in which 'Raffles all but elopes with a young lady of title and wealth', and a final story featuring 'an unscrupulous statesman, a celebrated aeronaut, a steeplechase in balloons, the final disappearance of Raffles, and the escape of "Bunny" '.[12] We can recognize a few elements of 'The Gift of the Emperor' here, but happily, perhaps, the balloon steeplechase never materialized.

As literary historian Sue Thomas points out, Cassell's in this period had an enterprising editor, Max Pemberton, but a conservative board, who did not always recognize a good thing when they saw it.[13] They passed on the opportunity to publish the stories in book form, and when *The Amateur Cracksman* appeared as a 6-shilling volume in March 1899, it was under the Methuen imprint. Hornung pitched the American book rights to Charles Scribner in a letter of 17 August 1898: 'Subject—light-hearted Crime! It is not very shocking, and seems a popular serial in London. But I do not pretend it is my best work—though on the mere execution I have spared no pains.'[14] Its critical and commercial success encouraged Hornung to create more in the same vein. While Raffles disappears overboard at the end of the first collection, the door was left open for his return in *The Black Mask*, just as Doyle brought back Holmes from the Reichenbach Falls in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.[15] Many of this second batch of stories were written on another visit to Posillipo in 1900, and Hornung uses it as the setting for the third story, 'The Fate of Faustina, a tale of love and death'. In the closing story, 'The Knees of the Gods', Raffles is killed while fighting for his country in the Boer War; the gentleman thief turns out to be a patriot and a hero. Thus the final collection, *A Thief in the Night* (1905), provides us with more of Raffles and Bunny's adventures by taking us back to their earlier days.

[12] Quoted in Lancelyn Green's Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman*, p. xxxi.

[13] Sue Thomas, '*Cassell's Family Magazine*, later *Cassell's Magazine* (1874–1910)', *Victorian Fiction Research Guides*, no. 12, at https://victorianfictionresearchguides.org.

[14] Quoted in Lancelyn Green, Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman*, p. xxxiii.

[15] *The Black Mask* was published by Grant Richards in 1901, after the stories had been serialized in *Scribner's Magazine* in the same year; the collection's American title was *Raffles, Further Adventures of the Amateur Cracksman* (Scribner's, 1901).

In the meantime Raffles was generating more revenue for his creator through the successful four-act stage adaptation that Hornung wrote with Eugene W. Presbrey, which pleased audiences in the United States (1903), England (1906), and Paris (1907); it toured the provinces for years afterwards. By 1909 the figure of Raffles was well enough known to the general public for newspapers to run promotions based around catching 'Raffles', an actor whose photograph they printed: 'He has baffled the best detectives in the world, and it remains to be seen how long he will baffle Cardiff.'[16] Greater financial security allowed the author to devote more time to the cricket that he loved, and he played for a number of amateur teams: the writer J. M. Barrie's 'Allahakbarries' and Doyle's Undershaw XI, named after the latter's Surrey home. (Although Hornung had a falling-out with his famous brother-in-law in 1900 when he walked in on him and Jean Leckie in an embrace—Doyle's wife was still alive—they seemed to rub along together much as before.) He travelled to Italy, Egypt, and Switzerland; he bought a house at 7 Hornton Street in Kensington, then as now an expensive address, and in 1904 he purchased a car, still a very costly novelty. Crime really did pay. Cheaper editions of the stories also kept Raffles before the public: publishers Eveleigh Nash, for instance, combined the first two collections as *Raffles, The Amateur Cracksman* in 1906, and in that form the stories were republished several times. Hornung continued to write steadily, but despite the urging of American editor Trumbull White, Hornung and Doyle were never persuaded to collaborate on a piece that would set the great detective against the great burglar, and the last Raffles story, the novel *Mr Justice Raffles*, appeared in September 1909, after serialization in the *Grand Magazine* in Britain and *Gunter's Magazine* in the United States; it failed to recapture the spirit of the earlier stories, and is marred by its anti-Semitism.[17] He continued to produce non-Raffles material, including the popular Stingaree stories, which featured the Oxford-educated criminal who had appeared many years before in 'Irralie's Bushranger' (1895). However, a stage version of *Stingaree, The Bushranger* (Queen's Theatre, 1 February 1908), failed to find favour, and neither did novels such as the rather

[16] See 'Raffles Arrives Tomorrow', *Western Mail* (20 October 1909), 7, and 'How Mr Raffles Was Caught', *Western Mail* (10 November 1909), 7.

[17] See Tom Ue, 'Holmes and Raffles in Arms: Death, Endings, and Narration', *Victoriographies*, 5/3 (2015), 219–33.

macabre *The Camera Fiend* (1911), the school story *Fathers of Men* (1912), and *The Crime Doctor* (1914). Hornung did try to update his fiction to please changing tastes: the last of these novels returns us to the world of crime, although our hero is not a gentleman thief but Doctor John Dollar, a psychiatrist who treats criminals, while nursing his own passion for a beautiful suffragette with blood on her hands, Lady Vera Moyle. Of the later work, perhaps the novel most likely to appeal to readers now is the cosily Gothic *Witching Hill* (1913), set on a new housing estate that has been built on an old demesne in the London suburbs. It centres on the adventures of a young estate agent, Mr Gillon, and his friend Uvo Delavoye, who believes the development is haunted by his debauched ancestor, Lord Mulcaster. The book itself is haunted by another restless spirit, Oscar Wilde, whose 'Ballad of Reading Gaol' is quoted at length without being named in chapter 3, as a 'peculiar poem' cut out of a review.

The war, and the death of his only child, Oscar, at Ypres in July 1915, marked a new phase. It was to be the first of many such losses in Hornung's circle: Oscar's friend, Rudyard Kipling's son, John, was killed at Loos later that year; the following year two of Willie's nephews were also killed in action, the sons of his brothers Charles and Pitt. Another nephew, Kingsley Conan Doyle, survived the war only to die months later during the influenza epidemic. The three authors responded to their grief in different ways. Hornung wrote a privately published memoir of Oscar, and a body of war poetry, the most well known of which is 'Wooden Crosses', which appeared in *The Times* on 20 July 1917. He also began to take a more active part in the war effort: hoping to be closer to the men who had known his son, he volunteered to work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) at the front, and in France and later Germany he operated a lending library and reading room for the troops.[18] In his diary he kept track of their love of everything from Charles Dickens and George Eliot, to Anthony Hope and Arthur Conan Doyle, to the romance novels of Charles Garvice; he also recorded some of his conversations with them about his own work. He confessed that 'it was delightful to discover how popular my old villains still are', though one hard-reading soldier chided him for having killed off Raffles

[18] See Edmund G. C. King, 'E. W. Hornung's Unpublished "Diary," the YMCA, and the Reading Soldier in the First World War', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 57/3 (2014), 361–87.

during the Boer War. Hornung admitted to him that he would like to have been able to write a new Raffles adventure in which he was a spy disguised as a YMCA worker.[19]

After the war he published an edited version of his diary as *Notes of a Camp-Follower on the Western Front* (1919), and a volume of poems, *The Young Guard* (1919). In March 1921 he became seriously ill while visiting Saint-Jean-de-Luz in the south of France. Doyle, who was in Paris, hurried to his bedside, but he was too late. Hornung died on 22 March, and he now rests at the *cimetière* Aïcé Errota in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, not far from the grave of his old friend George Gissing, who had long predeceased him. *The Times* obituary recalled Hornung as a writer who had moved from using his Australian experience to displaying his 'talent for mystery and surprise' in the Raffles stories. With the war still fresh in people's memories, the piece also touched on the loss of his son, Oscar, at Ypres, on his memoir, and on his poems.[20]

Raffles and Bunny

This volume brings together all the stories from the first collection, *The Amateur Cracksman*, and includes the first two adventures from *The Black Mask*, in which the amateurs have turned professional. When we first meet him, Raffles (we do not discover that his first name is Arthur until 'An Old Flame' in the second collection) lives in some style in the prestigious Albany, Piccadilly, in London's West End, an apartment building which had at various times been home to Lord Byron, Lord Macaulay, and William Ewart Gladstone. We later learn that he also keeps a studio in the King's Road in Chelsea, which he uses as a bolt-hole, and as a place to don disguises. Like Nettleship, he is presented as part athlete, part aesthete. In the first story, 'The Ides of March', we are told that his Albany flat is furnished with reproductions of Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist paintings, like the home of 'a minor poet instead of an athlete of the first water', but then 'there had always been a fine streak of aestheticism in his complex composition' (p. 8). In keeping with his complex life, Raffles is a Holmesian master of disguise, as he shows in 'A Costume Piece',

[19] King, 'E. W. Hornung's Unpublished "Diary" ', 380. See also *Notes of a Camp-Follower on the Western Front* (London: Constable, 1919), 175.

[20] 'Death of Mr Hornung: The Creator of Raffles', *The Times* (24 March 1921), 13.

though it is in the second collection that his chameleon qualities become more prominent. Like Stingaree and Nettleship, our gentleman thief has had a good education, and has been to an unnamed public school. Indeed, except for Raffles's aesthetic thieving, his attitudes are those of the public schoolboy of the late Victorian period: in the game of life one should play fair, but imperialism, racism, and anti-Semitism are acceptable, and Britain's superiority can be taken for granted. Raffles's university career is more mystifying: we learn in 'A Costume Piece' that Raffles made a collection of policemen's helmets while at Oxford, but in a later story, 'The Field of Philippi' from *A Thief in the Night*, we discover that he was in the first eleven at Cambridge. Family ties play no real part in the stories, and Raffles's are as confusing as his college career: in 'Nine Points of the Law' it is suggested that Raffles has no near relatives, though in 'The Return Match' the cracksman claims to have 'the best of sisters married to a country parson in the eastern counties' (p. 97)—not unlike Hornung, whose sisters Hetty and Ida had married clergymen. (The continuity errors, if that is what they are, suggest that Hornung had no idea of just how popular and long-lived his gentleman hero was about to become.) In 'Le Premier Pas', set in Australia, Raffles briefly encounters a second cousin of his father, who happens to be a rural bank manager, but since he has just impersonated him and robbed the bank, it is not an opportune time for him to claim kinship.

One of the lessons Hornung took from his brother-in-law's success was the value of a sidekick-narrator. Sherlock Holmes has Watson; Raffles has Bunny. Bunny, like Watson, is something of an everyman, a bridge between the almost superhuman central character and the reader, but the two are very different. Doyle makes his narrator a trustworthy figure, a doctor who has also been wounded in the service of Queen and country; he and Holmes have no previous history, and are brought together by the need to share the steep costs of London accommodation. Bunny, on the other hand, is a scapegrace. He has squandered his inheritance from his deceased parents, and when we first meet him he has been playing baccarat for high stakes with Raffles and others, and has written a bad cheque to cover his debts—arguably a first foray into writing fiction. (An only child, he seems to have no other family to embarrass; in the first story in *The Black Mask* Bunny mentions a distinguished kinsman, a 'knighted specialist' (p. 132), but the two are clearly not on good

terms.) He and Raffles are no strangers to each other, as Bunny was Raffles's 'fag' at school, effectively his unpaid servant or dogsbody in the school hierarchy. Bunny is in fact a school nickname, presumably derived from 'rabbit', the cricket slang for an unskilled batsman, and in the stage version of Raffles and in the final Raffles story, 'The Last Word' (1905), he is presented as Harry Manders. Raffles, the captain of the cricket team, remembers the younger man as a 'literary little cuss' who edited the school magazine (p. 4), and he suggests that Bunny might now earn a living from his pen, before making the more daring proposal of a partnership in crime. But in their subsequent escapades Bunny remains very much the junior partner, like Watson. Even more than the latter, he is frequently kept in the dark as to the actual plans, sometimes with disastrous effect, as in 'Nine Points of the Law', when Bunny steals a painting only to find that it is a copy that Raffles has already substituted for the original. In *The Black Mask*, he even becomes Raffles's 'fag' or servant again, or at least poses as such, when his friend returns to England disguised as the invalid Mr Maturin.

Structurally, their adventures recall the 'cases' of Sherlock Holmes: each is a stand-alone episode that turns on a single crime, though of course our scofflaw protagonists are committing, not solving, crimes. Bunny presents events in an efficient fashion, and as the stories usually lack the puzzle element of Doyle's work, they turn more on suspense. Will Raffles succeed? Will he and Bunny evade capture? Bunny's being kept in the dark as to what is really happening adds to the tension. London is their world, though there are occasional expeditions further afield. 'The Gift of the Emperor' sees them heading for Naples and Capri aboard the Uhlan, and in 'Le Premier Pas' Raffles recounts a visit to Hornung's favourite literary territory, Australia; the two stories, it might be argued, acknowledge the different aspects of Raffles's origins. Although Raffles's flat at the Albany is a centre for their activities, it never occupies quite as prominent a role as 221B Baker Street does for Holmes. There is nonetheless the same strong sense of London as a place, and Hornung displays a detailed knowledge of the metropolis's streets, transport networks, and neighbourhoods, as we follow the duo's progress on foot around the West End, or by Atlas omnibus and District underground railway line for longer journeys. We begin with a burglary just around the corner from the Albany on Bond Street, and subsequent stories take us to the

leafy suburbs of St John's Wood, and to Willesden in north-west London. In the second collection, Raffles and Bunny live first under cover in Earls Court, before sequestering themselves in a cottage on Ham Common in Richmond, where they take up cycling to get about.

Since the reader must be kept on the side of the criminals, their victims are rarely presented in a sympathetic light, and they are always people who can afford a little burglary. Some, like Lady Melrose, whose diamonds Raffles steals in 'Gentlemen and Players', are members of the traditional titled elite, the circle of society that Raffles aspires to, though he is admitted to it only because of his cricket prowess. However, the stories are very much of their time, and two of Raffles's targets represent new money, the spoils of empire. The brash and pugnacious Reuben Rosenthall in 'A Costume Piece', a former boxer turned South African diamond mogul, is clearly modelled on Barney Barnato (b. Barnet Isaacs, 1851–97), a music-hall prizefighter in the East End who became a South African mining magnate; he died in somewhat mysterious circumstances the year before the story's magazine publication. In 'Nine Points of the Law', Raffles and Bunny are employed to steal a painting by Velázquez that has been wrongly sold to a crass land speculator and politician from Queensland. In neither case are we meant to feel any great sympathy with these figures. 'The Gift of the Emperor' displays a slightly different facet of empire, and another unsympathetic victim. The pearl of great price that Raffles attempts to obtain is being given to a Polynesian ruler by an unnamed European ruler, presumably the German Kaiser; it was originally taken from Polynesia by British forces, and its return is designed as a slight by Britain's imperial rival. Raffles's attempt to steal it can thus be seen in a patriotic as well as a mercenary light, of a piece with his gift to the Queen in 'A Jubilee Present', and his eventual death during the Boer War (1899–1902) at the end of *The Black Mask*.

Crime, then, is an upmarket affair in these stories, and its sordid aspects are avoided. It is not all jolly japes and capers, however, and one story in particular in the first collection suggests a darker side to Raffles and his aesthetics of crime. In 'Wilful Murder' Raffles discovers that his buyer for stolen goods, the moneylender Baird, has intuited that he is no ordinary burglar, and he decides to pay Baird a visit, possibly to kill him to protect his incognito. But Baird is already dead when they break in, and so the threat to their secret life

as criminals has been removed without their resorting to violence. We are never quite sure that Raffles would have gone as far as murder, but his earlier breezy chat with Bunny is quite chilling: ' "I've told you before that the biggest man alive is the man who's committed a murder, and not yet been found out . . . Just think of it! Think of coming here and talking to the men, very likely about the murder itself . . . Oh, it would be great, simply great!" ' (p. 70). There is a glimmer of madness in this passage, a hint of the Gothicized aestheticism that Oscar Wilde had shown in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), in which murder is just another interesting experience for Dorian. It is not surprising that Bunny describes 'Wilful Murder' as an adventure that he would rather forget. The story did not appear in magazine form before it appeared in *The Amateur Cracksman*, Robert McClure assuring his father that there would be something 'less gruesome' in its place for publication in *Collier's*.[21]

This seedy episode aside, the world of the stories is almost cosy. And even more than that of Holmes and Watson, it is a masculine one. Its denizens are 'old boys', former public-school boys, its interiors are frequently those of London's West End gentlemen's clubs, and the bachelors-only Albany. Women make cameo appearances only in this world, though their jewellery is significant within it. For his own purposes Raffles courts a young Australian woman, Miss Werner, in 'The Gift of the Emperor', but there is no equivalent here of Irene Adler, Sherlock Holmes's beautiful nemesis. In the later collections we do get occasional glimpses of Raffles's romantic past. 'The Fate of Faustina' tells of a doomed idyll with the young Italian beauty of the title, and in 'An Old Flame' the curiously named female artist Jacques Saillard appears. However, she soon threatens to disrupt Raffles's double life to the extent that he is driven to fake his own death in order to evade her, hardly a ringing endorsement for heterosexual romance. Bunny too has a romantic past, as we learn in *A Thief in the Night*'s 'Out of Paradise', and 'The Last Word', a story told largely from the point of view of Bunny's beloved, the unnamed niece of Lady Melrose, and of Lord Lochmaben. She, like Bunny, seems to have been charmed by Raffles, and writes of his 'personal magnetism' and 'glamour', to which she confesses she was not immune. In the late

[21] Quoted by Lancelyn Green, Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksman*, p. xxxii.

novel *Mr Justice Raffles*, another woman enters the picture: Camilla Belsize is engaged to Raffles's feckless protégé, the young Teddy Garland, but she is clearly drawn to Raffles. Raffles's own feelings remain, as usual, inscrutable.

The greatest intimacy in the Raffles world is there in plain sight: that between Raffles and Bunny. The hero worship of the former schoolboy fag for the captain of the cricket team returns as a different form of adoration, and Bunny admits to being jealous when Raffles seems to be courting Miss Werner ('that Colonial minx', p. 116) in 'The Gift of the Emperor'. In *The Black Mask* the young men move in together, first as invalid and male nurse, and then, in their cottage on Ham Common, as brothers, a subterfuge that many male couples must have adopted. As we will see, as the stories develop, Hornung increasingly used them to create a positive image of a same-sex couple, partly modelling the later adventures of the duo on the lives of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas.

Situating Raffles

Reviewers liked *The Amateur Cracksman*, and soon advertisements for the collection touted *The Spectator*'s account of it as 'an audaciously entertaining volume', and the *Daily Mail*'s claim that 'we are fascinated by the individuality, the daring, and the wonderful coolness of Raffles'.[22] Several reviewers recognized the gentleman burglar as a revitalization of an existing model. The *Westminster Gazette* opined that the 'gentleman burglar is an old theme, but Mr Hornung contrives to give it fresh point and originality', admiring the ingenious episodes, the quality of the writing, and the 'touch of cynical humour, which gives his work a flavour very different from that of the ordinary police novel'.[23] The reviewer also pointed out that the end of the final story in the collection, 'The Gift of the Emperor', left the door open for future stories. The illustrious *Morning Post* found the stories to be 'capital', with 'all that crispness which characterizes Mr Hornung's work', and again felt that he had brought freshness to an old theme. Although the violence of 'Wilful Murder' struck a jarring note, Raffles and Bunny were 'an engaging pair of rascals', and the writer

[22] 'The Times Column of New Books and New Editions', *The Times* (28 April 1899), 12.
[23] 'Recent Novels', *Westminster Gazette* (21 March 1899), 3.

hoped that more stories were to follow.[24] *The Sketch* likewise thought them 'a capital series of stories', and noted that although the criminal, not the detective, was the hero, 'Scotland Yard shows up all right in the end'. While earlier variants of the gentleman burglar were either Robin Hood types with 'communistic ideas about property', or soulful types with broken hearts, the athlete-aesthete Raffles was motivated by a love of sport, as well as the need for money.[25] It was this playful absence of morality that pleased *Punch*, who noted that in the Raffles stories 'we live in an atmosphere as unmoral as any atmosphere can possibly be'.[26]

Raffles was not a wholly original type. His distant ancestry may have lain in the anti-heroes of the Romantic period, such as Karl Moor in Friedrich Schiller's play *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*, 1781), but the 1880s and 1890s provided more immediate sources of inspiration. Guy Boothby's mesmeric criminal genius Dr Nikola, in *A Bid for Fortune* (1895), is polished and charming when he is not scheming for revenge and power. Closer to Raffles, perhaps, Grant Allen's Colonel Clay in *An African Millionaire* (1897) is a master of disguise who cuts a more sympathetic figure than his victims.[27] The same year, Boothby produced another shape-shifting master criminal, the mysterious Simon Carne, the 'Prince of Swindlers', who arrives in London from India.[28] Passing himself off variously as a gentleman of means and the great detective Klimo, he preys upon high society before sailing off again laden with its gold and diamonds. The stage also offered models of the secret self in this era, and a number of reviews of *The Amateur Cracksman* noted that the stories echoed a hit play of the previous decade, Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman's *The Silver King* (Princess's Theatre, November 1882), in which Captain Herbert Skinner, alias 'The Spider', plays the gentleman by day, and burgles in the evenings. We can in fact identify something of a mushrooming of split identities in late nineteenth-century drama and fiction. A classic Gothic instance is Robert Louis Stevenson's novella of 1886, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, in which the ascetic

[24] 'The Amateur Cracksman', *Morning Post* (23 March 1899), 2.

[25] 'The Literary Lounger', *The Sketch* (19 April 1899), 558.

[26] *Punch*, cited in Rowland, *Raffles and His Creator*, 122.

[27] See e.g. Christopher Pittard's Introduction to Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2023), p. xi.

[28] The Simon Carne stories appeared in *Pearson's Magazine* from January to July 1897, before being published as *The Prince of Swindlers* (1900).

Dr Jekyll turns into a violent libertine with the aid of chemical concoction.[29] The pre-eminent comic version of the double life from this period is Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (St James's Theatre, February 1895), which turns on the dual identity of Jack Worthing/Ernest, and contains more than a few hints of Wilde's own complicated personal life. The following year the same theatre courted a more conservative audience with an adaptation of Anthony Hope's bestselling novel *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), in which Rudolf Rassendyll impersonates King Rudolf of Ruritania in order to save the tiny country from the king's scheming half-brother. Secret selves continued to fascinate the public in the 1900s, when the vogue of Raffles overlapped with that of another gentleman who was more than he seemed: the Baroness Orczy's foppish Sir Percy Blakeney, who is also the scourge of Revolutionary France, the swashbuckling Scarlet Pimpernel.[30]

Perhaps the success of so many other tales of twin identities might help to explain the appeal of Raffles as a gentleman burglar. Is Raffles's durable charm that he allows us to imagine that we might have more than one self? At roughly the same time, after all, Sigmund Freud was speculating about the complexity of the mind, and undermining the idea of self-possession. *The Amateur Cracksman* is scarcely psychological fiction, but it does allow us to imagine that while one facet of the individual follows the conventions of society, another might be free to pursue the pleasure principle, unconstrained by any morality of *meum et tuum*. After all, as reviewers noted, Raffles is not some kind of socialistic Robin Hood figure, who distributes the proceeds of his crimes to the poor; instead the spoils keep him and Bunny in their idle clubland milieu. Perhaps that is the point: criminality is something that the gentleman burglar can indulge in without it making him a criminal; he remains not only a gentleman, but also someone essentially likeable. In his 1944 essay, 'Raffles and Miss Blandish', George Orwell argues that what sets Hornung's tales apart from those of his contemporaries is that Raffles and Bunny 'have no real ethical code, merely certain rules of behaviour which they observe semi-instinctively':

[29] Cf. Stevenson and W. E. Henley's earlier *Deacon Brodie; or The Double Life* (Pullan's Theatre of Varieties, Bradford, December 1883), based on the life of the eighteenth-century cabinetmaker and councillor who had a secret life as a burglar.

[30] *The Scarlet Pimpernel* appeared onstage in January 1903 at the New Theatre, with the novel version following in 1905.