Mrs. Raffles

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Mrs. Raffles

Raffles was dead—killed as you may remember at the battle of Spion Kop—and I, his companion, who had never known want while his deft fingers were able to carry out the plans of that insinuating and marvellous mind of his, was now, in the vernacular of the American, up against it. I had come to the United States, not because I had any liking for that country or its people, who, to tell the truth, are too sharp for an ordinary burglar like myself, but because with the war at an end I had to go somewhere, and English soil was not safely to be trod by one who was required for professional reasons to evade the eagle eye of Scotland Yard until the Statute of Limitations began to have some bearing upon his case. That last affair of Raffles and mine, wherein we had successfully got away with the diamond stomacher of the duchess of Herringdale, was still a live matter in British detective circles, and

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the very audacity of the crime had definitely fastened the responsibility for it upon our shoulders. Hence it was America for me, where one could be as English as one pleased without being subject to the laws of his Majesty, King Edward VII., of Great Britain and Ireland and sundry other possessions upon which the sun rarely if ever sets. For two years I had led a precarious existence, not finding in the land of silk and money quite as many of those opportunities to add to the sum of my prosperity as the American War Correspondent I had met in the Transvaal led me to expect. Indeed, after six months of successful lecturing on the subject of the Boers before various lyceums in the country, I was reduced to a state of penury which actually drove me to thievery of the pettiest and most vulgar sort. There was little in the way of mean theft that I did not commit. During the

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coal famine, for instance, every day passing the coal-yards to and fro, I would appropriate a single piece of the precious anthracite until I had come into possession of a scuttleful, and this I would sell to the suffering poor at prices varying from three shillings to two dollars and a half—a precarious living indeed. The only respite I received for six months was in the rape of the hansom-cab, which I successfully carried through one bitter cold night in January. I hired the vehicle at Madison Square and drove to a small tavern on the Boston Post Road, where the icy cold of the day gave me an excuse for getting my cabby drunk in the guise of kindness. Him safely disposed of in a drunken stupor, I drove his jaded steed back to town, earned fifteen dollars with him before daybreak, and then, leaving the cab in the Central Park, sold the horse for eighteen dollars to a snow-removal contractor

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"THIS I WOULD SELL TO THE SUFFERING POOR"

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"THE WHOLE CONTENTS AND THE PLATTER AS WELL FELL AT MY FEET"

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"HER SLIGHT LITTLE FIGURE CONVULSED WITH GRIEF"

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"AND THEN THERE CAME A RIPPING SOUND"

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"I, OF COURSE, DID NOT TELL HENRIETTE OF EIGHT BEAUTIES I HAD KEPT OUT"

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"'AFTER WHICH HE WILL COME TO NEWPORT'"

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"MR. BOLIVAR WAS DULY IMPRESSED WITH THE EXTENT OF HENRIETTE'S FORTUNE"

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"IT WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO GET THE RIGHT LIGHT"

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"ALL WAS AS HENRIETTE HAD FORETOLD"

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"'IF YOU WANTED A LAKE, MR. HIGGINBOTHAM, I—'"

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"AS KEEN AND HIGH-HANDED A PERFORMANCE AS I EVER WITNESSED"

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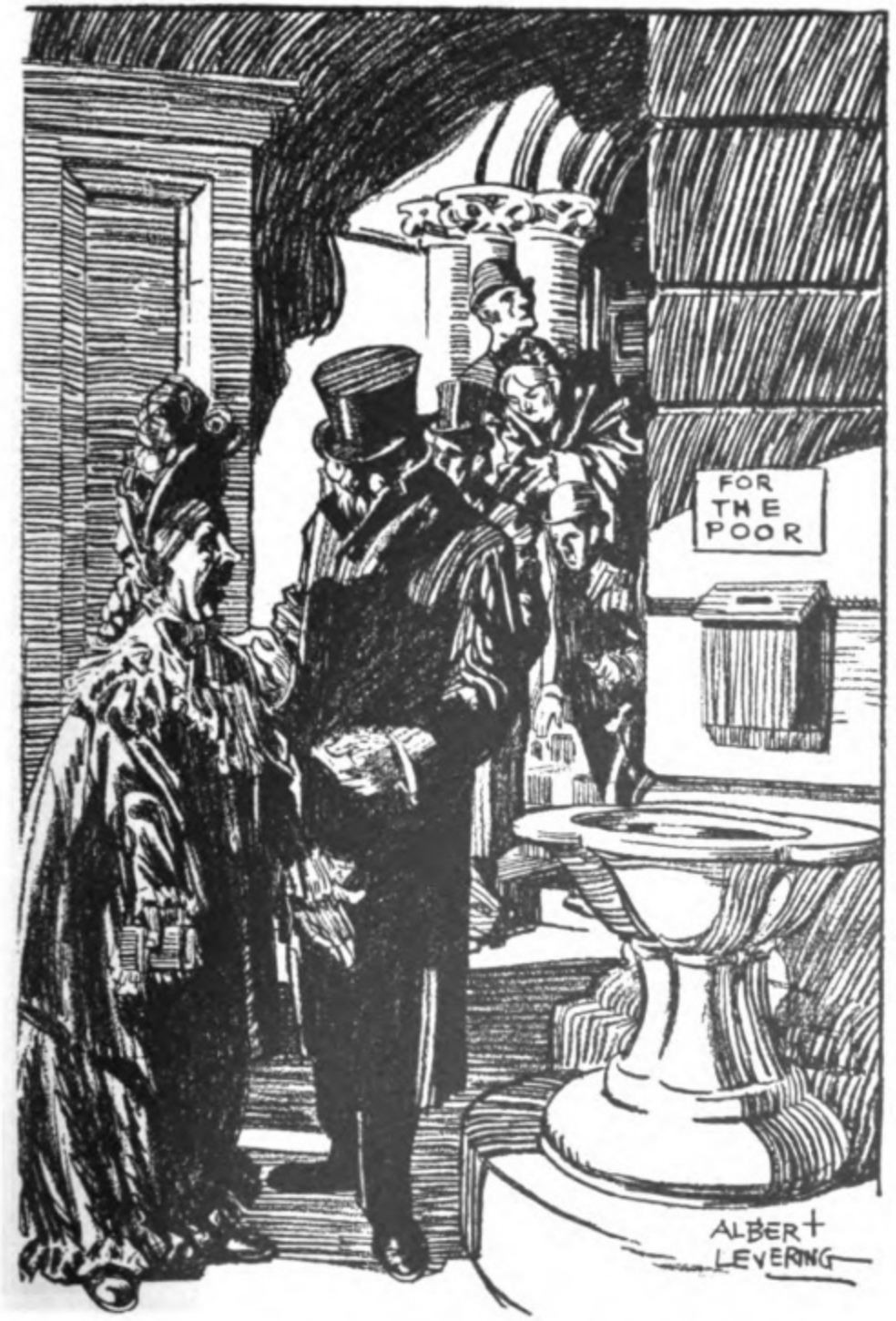

"ON HER WAY TO EARLY CHURCH I WAYLAID NORAH"

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"HENRIETTE WAS TESTING THE FIFTY-THOUSAND-DOLLAR PIANO"

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"MY MISERY IS DEEP BUT I AM BUOYED UP BY ONE GREAT HOPE"

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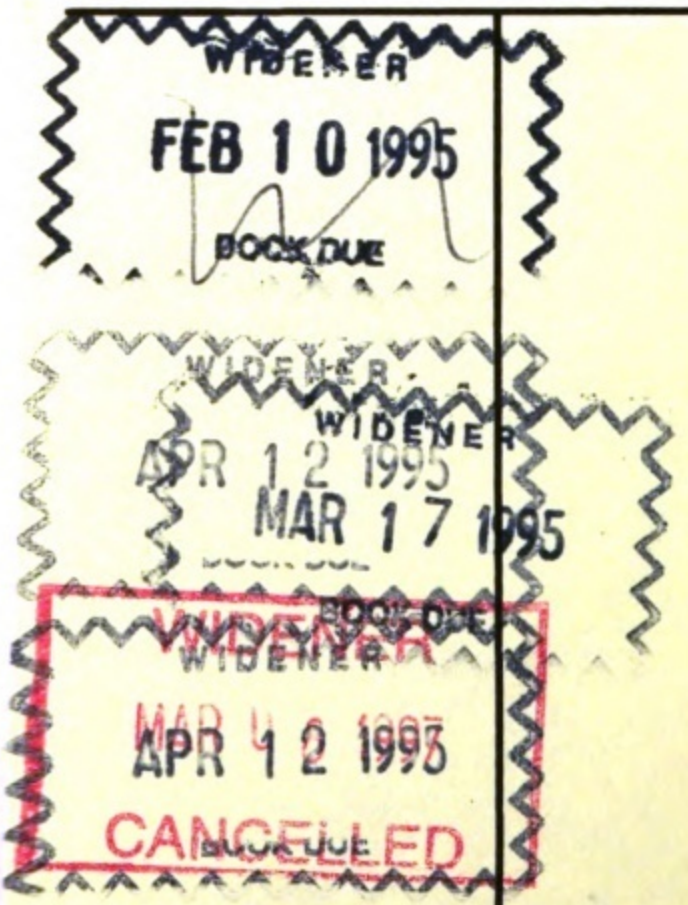

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