

RAJAH'S DIAMOND

- R. L. Stevenson

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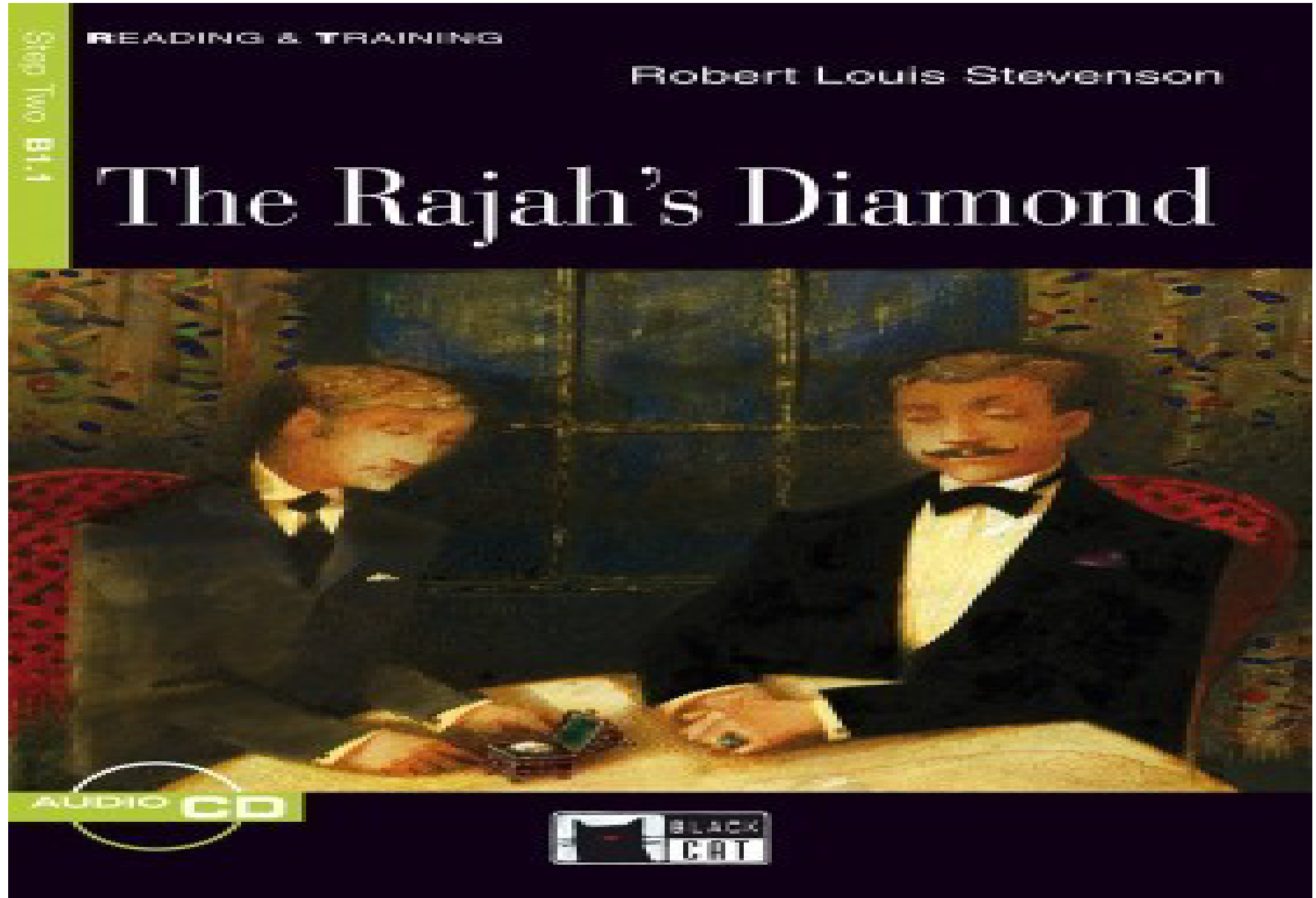
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Robert Louis Stevenson

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[Robert Louis Stevenson](#), born on 13th November, 1850 and died on 3rd December, 1894 was a Scottish novelist and travel writer of the Victorian Era. He is also known for short stories. His famous collection of short stories was first published in London in the year 1878 under the name of 'Later-day Arabian Nights'. Seven interconnected stories in two cycles: The Suicide Club (3 stories) and The Rajah's Diamond (4 stories) and then republished in the first volume of 'New Arabian Nights'.

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'The Rajah's Diamond' is a cycle of four short stories by Robert Louis Stevenson. The stories are:

- 'Story of the Bandbox'
- 'Story of the Young Man in Holy Orders'
- 'Story of the House with the Green Blinds'
- 'The Adventure of Prince Florizel and a Detective'

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We have in our course the fourth one that is 'The Adventure of Prince Florizel and a Detective'. The journey of an accursed diamond, the Rajah's diamond, the most precious stone in the world, seems to bring bad luck on everyone who comes into contact with it. Everybody falls in love with its great beauty and value and consequently ruins himself.

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As he was approaching the [postern door](#) in which he always entered when alone, a man [stepped forth](#) from the shadow and presented himself within:

'I have the honour of addressing Prince Florizel of Bohemia', he said.

'Such is my title', replied the Prince. 'What do you want with me'.

'I am', said the man, 'a detective, and I have to present your Highness with this [billet](#) from the Prefect of Police'.

The Prince took the letter and [glanced through](#) it by the light of the street lamp. It was highly apologetic, but requested him to follow the bearer to the [Prefecture](#) without delay.

'In short', said Florizel, 'I am arrested'.

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'You highness', replied the officer, 'nothing I am certain, could be further from the intention of the Prefect. You will observe that he has not granted a warrant. It is mere formality, or call it, if you prefer, an obligation that your Highness lays on the authorities'.

'At the same time', asked the Prince, 'if I were to refuse to follow you?'

'I will not conceal from your Highness that a considerable discretion has been granted me', replied the detective with a bow.

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'Upon my word,' cried Florizel, 'your effrontery astounds me! Yourself, as an agent, I must pardon; but your superiors shall dearly smart for their misconduct, What, have you any idea, is the cause of this impolite and unconstitutional act? You will observe that I have as yet neither refused nor consented, and much may depend on your prompt and ingenuous answer. Let me remind you, officer, that this is an affair of some gravity.

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'Your Highness', said the detective humbly, General Vandeleur and his brother have had the incredible presumption to accuse you of theft. The famous diamond, they declare, is in your hands. A word from you in denial will most amply satisfy the Prefect; may, I go farther: if your Highness would so far honour a [subaltern](#) as to declare his ignorance of the matter even to myself, I should ask permission to retire upon the spot.'

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Florizel, upon the last moment, had regarded his adventure in the light of a [trifle](#), only seen upon international considerations. At the name of Vandeleur the horrible truth broke upon him in a moment: he was not only arrested, but he was guilty. This was not only annoyingly indecent, but it was a suit to his honour. What was he to say? What was he to do? The Rajah's Diamond was indeed an [accursed](#) stone; and it seemed as if he were the last victim to its influence.

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One thing was certain. He could not give the required assurance to the detective.

His hesitation had not lasted a second.

'Be it so,' said he, 'let us walk together to the Prefecture.'

The man once more bowed, and preceded to follow Florizel at a respectful distance in the rear.

'Approach', said the Prince, 'I am in a humour to talk and, if I mistake not, now I look at you again, that is not the first time that we have met.'

'I count it an honour,' replied the officer, that Your Highness should recollect my face. It is eight years since I had the pleasure of an interview.'

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'To remember faces', returned Florizel, 'is as much a part of my profession as it is of yours. Indeed rightly looked upon, a prince and a detective serve in the same corps. We are both combatants against crime; only mine is the more lucrative and yours the more dangerous rank, and there is a sense in which both may be made equally honourable to a good man, I had rather, strange as you may think it, be detective of character and parts of a weak and ignoble sovereign.'

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The officer was overwhelmed.

'Your Highness returns good for evil', said he. 'In an act of presumption he replied by the most amiable condescension.'

'How do you know', replied Florizel, 'that I am not seeking to corrupt you?'

'Heaven preserve me from the temptation', cried the detective.

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'I applaud your answer', returned the Prince. 'It is that of a wise and honest man. The world is a great place, and stocked with wealth and beauty, and there is no limit to the reward that may be offered. Such as one who would refuse a million of money may sell his honor for an empire or the love of a woman; and I myself, who speak to you, have seen occasions so tempting, provocation so irresistible to the strength of human virtue, that I have been glad to tread in your steps and recommend myself to the grace of God. It is, this, thanks to that modest and becoming habit alone', he added, that you and I can walk this town together with untarnished hearts.'

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'I had always heard that you were brave,' replied the officer, 'but I was not aware that you were wise and pious. You speak the truth and you speak it with an accent that moves me to the heart. This world is only a place of trial.'

'We are now,' said Florizel, 'in the middle of a bridge. Lean your elbows on the parapet and look over. As the water rushing below, so the passion and complications of life carry away the honesty of man. Let me tell you a story.'

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'I receive Your Highness's commands,' replied the man.

And imitating the Prince, he leaned against the parapet, and disposed himself to listen. The city was already sunk in [slumber](#); had it not been for the infinity of lights and the outline of buildings on the starry sky, they might have been alone beside some country ruin.

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'An officer,' began Prince Florizel, 'a man of courage and conduct, who had already risen by merit to an eminent rank, and won not only admiration but, respect, visited in an unfortunate hour for his peace of mind, the collections of an Indian Prince. Here he beheld a diamond so extraordinary for size and beauty that from that instant he had only desire in life; honour, reputation, friendship, the love of country, he was ready to sacrifice all for this [lump of sparkling crystal](#).

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For three years he served this potentate as Jacob served Laban; he falsified frontiers, he connived at murders; he unjustly condemned and executed a brother officer, who had the misfortune to displease the Rajah by some honest freedoms; lastly, at a time of great danger to his native land, he betrayed a body of his fellow soldiers and suffered them to be defeated and massacred by thousands. In the end, he had amassed a magnificent fortune, and brought home with him the coveted diamond.

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'Years passed,' continued the Prince, 'and at length the diamond is accidentally lost, it falls into the hands of a simple and laborious youth, a student, a minister of God, just entering on a career of selfness and even distinction. Upon him also the spell is cast; he deserts everything, his holy calling, his studies, and flees with the gem into a foreign country. The officer has a brother, an [astute](#), daring, unscrupulous man, who learns the clergyman's secret. What does he do? Tell his brother, inform the police?

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No, upon this man also the satanic charm has fallen; he must have the stone for himself. At the risk of murder he drugs the young priest and seizes the [prong](#). And now, by accident, which is not important to my moral the jewel passes out of his custody into that of a man who, terrified at what he sees, gives it into the keeping of another in high station and above reproach.

The officer's name is Thomas Vandeleur,' continued Florizel. 'The stone is called the Rajah's Diamond and you behold it here before your eyes.'

The officer started back with a cry.

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'We have spoken of corruption,' said the Prince, 'to me this nugget of bright crystal is as loathsome as though it were crawling with the worms of death; it is as shocking as though it were compacted of innocent blood. I have told you but a hundredth part of its story; what passed in former ages, to what crimes and treacheries it incited men of yore, the imagination trembles to conceive; for years and years it has faithfully served the powers of hell enough, I say, of blood, enough of disgrace, enough of broken lines and friendships; all things come to an end, evil like the good; pestilence as well as beautiful music and as for this diamond, God forgive me if I do wrong, but its empire ends tonight.'

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The Prince made a sudden movement with his hand and the jewel, describing an arc light, dived with a splash, into the flowing river.

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Exercises

Comprehension

1. Give the answer in one complete sentence each using your own language as far as possible

Que. 1 Why did the Prince have to pardon the detective?

Ans. 1 The Prince had to pardon the detective because he was only an agent and following only the order of his superior.

Que. 2 What was the truth that broke upon the Prince in a moment?

Ans. 2 The truth that broke upon the Prince in a moment was that he was not only arrested but also they accused him of theft of the diamond.

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Que. 3 What carries away the honesty of man according to the Prince?

Ans. 3 According to the Prince, money and love of woman can carry away the honesty of man.

Que. 4 What was the influence of the accursed diamond on the life of the Prince?

Ans. 4 In spite of being a pious and honest king, the Prince was accused of theft of diamond and arrested due to the influence of the accursed diamond.

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Que. 5 Who was the last person in the story to receive the diamond?

Ans. 5 The Prince was the last person in the story to receive the diamond.

Que. 6 What detail suggest that the Prince had a sharp memory?

Ans. 6 The Prince had a sharp memory because after a gap of eight years he could recognize the detective.

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Que. 7 Why did the detective consider the Prince wise and pious?

Ans. 7 After hearing the talks of the Prince about human temptations and also that the Prince faced many temptations in life but he could resist them by the grace of God, the detective considered him wise and pious.

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Que. 8 How can a detective and a Prince be compared?

Ans. 8 There is no difference between a Prince and a detective because both fight against crime though in a different manner.

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Q. (II) For whom/what the following expressions are used in the text:

1. Lump of sparkling crystal- For the Rajah's diamond.

2. Nugget of bright crystal – For the same Rajah's diamond

3. Semi barbarian – The Indian Prince

4. Another in high station and above reproach –
Thomas Vandeleur

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Q. (III) The accursed diamond over the years passed on from person to person. Given below is the list of all its possessors but it is not in the chronological order. Put the list in the correct order:

1. An Indian Prince
2. An officer of the Indian Prince
3. A young priest
4. Clergy man's brother
5. Vandeleur
6. Prince Florizel

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Q. (IV) Tick-Mark the best alternative to complete the sentence given below:

When the detective came to arrest the Prince, the
Prince

- (a) did not realize the gravity of the situation.
- (b) at once realized the gravity of the situation.
- (c) was rude to him.
- (d) denied the possession of the stone.

Ans. (a)

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Vocabulary

I. Match the words in list A with their antonyms in list B.

A B

tarnished untarnished

loathsome lovable

sparkling dull

trifle important

denial acceptance

arrest release

applaud criticise

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Vocabulary

II Make nouns of the given adjectives.

Adjectives

Nouns

wise wisdom

honest honesty

beautiful beauty

wealthy wealth

admirable admiration

honourable honour

criminal crime

dangerous danger

provocative provocation