

**Knives of diamonds, being tales of mine and veld. Illustrated by
E. F. Sherie and T. A. Ayton Symington.**

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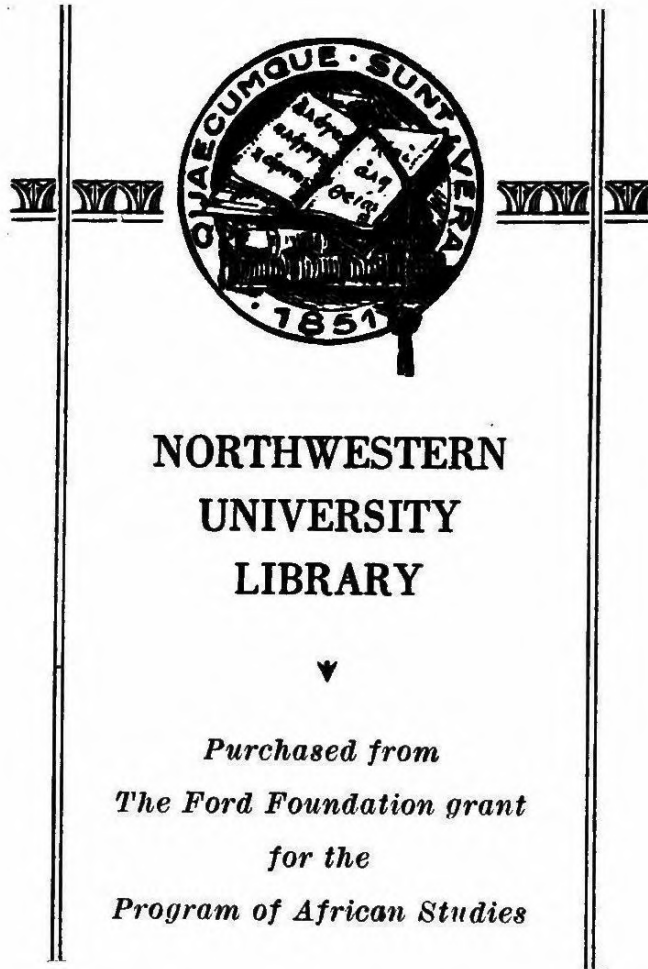
KNAVES OF DIAMONDS



GEORGE
GRIFFITHS

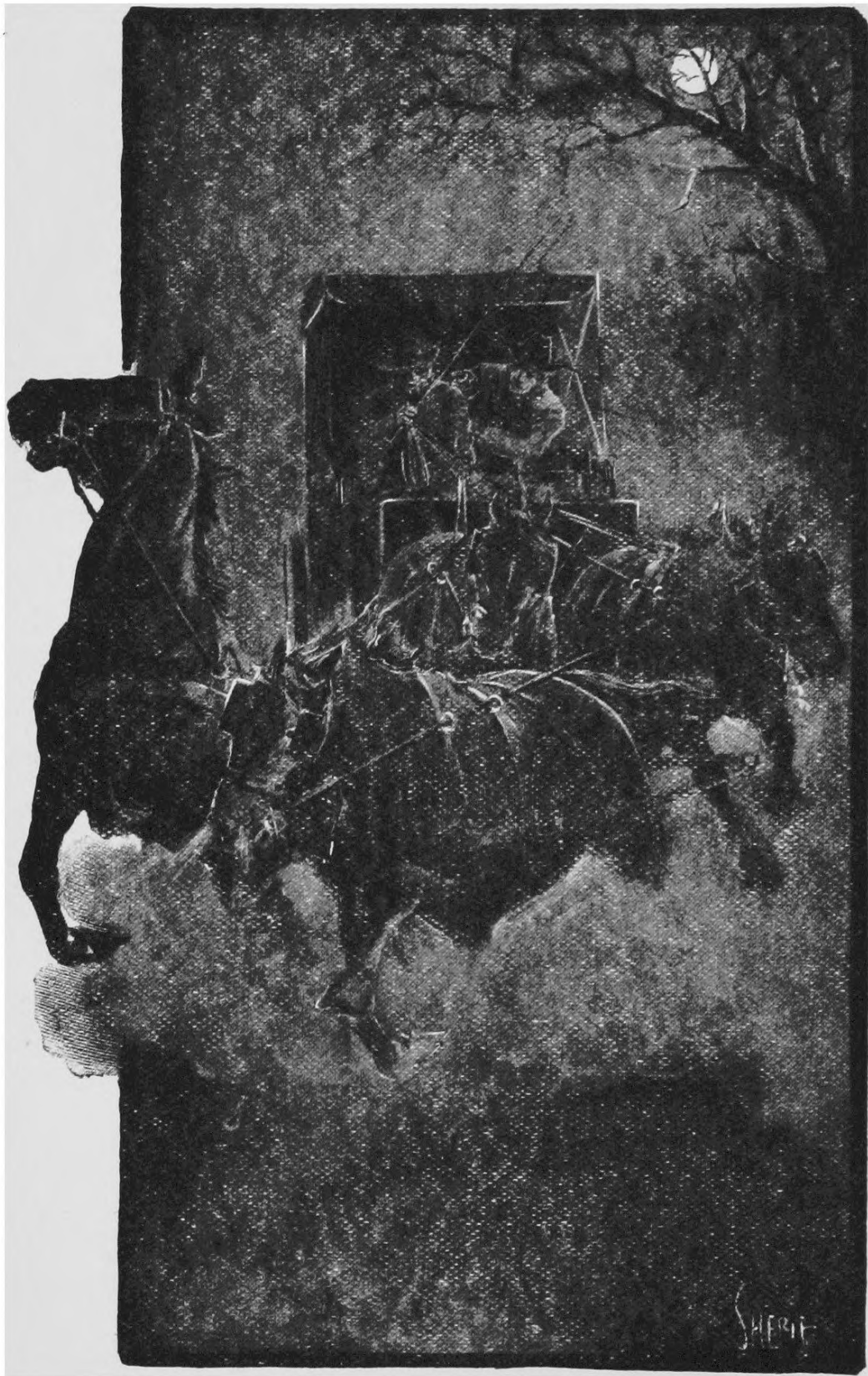
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KNAVES OF DIAMONDS

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The off leader reared up with a shrill neigh. [P. 45.]

Knaves of Diamonds

BEING

Tales of Mine and Meld

BY

GEORGE GRIFFITH

Author of

*"The Angel of the Revolution," "Britain or Boer?"
"Valdar," "The Virgin of the Sun," Etc., Etc.*

Illustrated by E. F. SHERIE and T. AYTON SYMINGTON

LONDON

C. ARTHUR PEARSON LIMITED

HENRIETTA STREET W.C.

1899

Preface.

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NEVER since men first began to risk health and life and honour for the sake of swift-won wealth have three characters of any alphabet been brought together which, in their combination, connoted, as the logicians say, so much as the three capitals "I. D. B." do, for in their internal meaning they include all the extremes and means of human fortune which may be imagined to lie between a life of luxury, and often of distinction, in which wealth makes wealth, till millions pile upon millions; and fifteen years' penal servitude on the

Breakwater at Cape Town, which is the Portland of South Africa, with its semi-starvation and heart-breaking monotonous toil under the pitiless sub-tropical sun.

But between these two extremes there are many means, many chances for and against, together with an infinity of tricks and dodges, swindling of co-swindlers, and betrayal of brothers and sisters in iniquity, which make up the most fascinating array of temptations that ever made the broad and easy way which—sometimes—leadeth to destruction inviting to look upon and beguiling to tread.

The true import of these mystic and momentous letters may be explained better here than elsewhere. They

have, in fact, two meanings — Illicit Diamond Buying, the crime specified in the various Diamond Acts, and the Illicit Diamond Buyer, one who buys “gonivahs” or stones which he knows to have been stolen or otherwise illicitly come by.

Now between him and the actual thief, the raw kaffir working in the mines, there may be as many as three or even four intermediaries, each of whom is guilty of the whole crime, and liable to the whole penalty thereof, for just that period during which the diamonds are in his or her possession and no longer, for, according to the Diamond Laws, the stones must be found on the person or in the possession of the suspect before a conviction can be obtained.

It is just here where the most exciting and fascinating part of the art and industry of I.D.B., when looked upon, as it usually was and is, as a gamble for very big stakes, comes in. There are, indeed, not a few who have found fortune in South Africa, and certain honours there and elsewhere, who can look back to anxious moments, big with fate, which made all the difference to them between the broadcloth of the millionaire magnate and the arrow-marked canvas of the convict I.D.B. Nay, more, as some of the stories which follow hereafter will truthfully tell, the doings of one fatal moment have more than once decided which of two men was to wear the broadcloth and which the canvas.

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KNAVES OF DIAMONDS.



I.

THE DIAMOND DOG.

YOU might go far afield before you found two more queerly associated knights of industry than the Jew of Whitechapel and the Celestial of Singapore, who were sitting together over a bottle of brandy in a little back room behind a tin coolie store in Old De Beers Road, Kimberley, late one night in the early eighties. Yet it was no very uncommon thing here, in this vortex of cosmopolitan villainy into which the magical glitter of the diamond, more fatal in its fascination

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even than the glint of gold, had gathered together men of all colours and creeds from the remotest ends of the earth.

Something was evidently exercising the mind of the Jew very considerably, for his prominent eyes kept wandering restlessly about the little room, his fleshy, pendant under lip trembled every now and then with the movement of his heavy jaw, and his fat, lavishly-jewelled fingers kept alternately drumming on the dirty table and wandering aimlessly through his black and rather greasy locks.

The Chinaman sat with his long-nailed fingers entwined on the lap of his ample blouse, and looked at him placidly out of his bright, inward-slanting little eyes. Neither had said anything for some little time. Each was pondering a very important problem in his own way.

A shaggy, long-haired, disreputable-look-

ing mongrel, which seemed to combine some half-dozen varying strains in his nondescript lineage, appeared to be doing the same thing as he lay on a frowzy sheepskin near the table, with his wickedly clever face between his paws, and every now and then he blinked up at his heathen master as though wondering whether he had found any solution to the problem yet.

“Itsh no good, Loo,” half-whispered the Jew, at length breaking the pause, and bringing his fingers down from his hair to the table for something like the twentieth time, “the old plants will all be played out now that this infernal new law ish passed. The gonivahs will be harder to get than ever, and look at the rishk—fifteen years on that blathted breakwater just for being found with a few little klips on you! The game ain’t going to be worth the candle any more, if we don’t find some new way of getting them

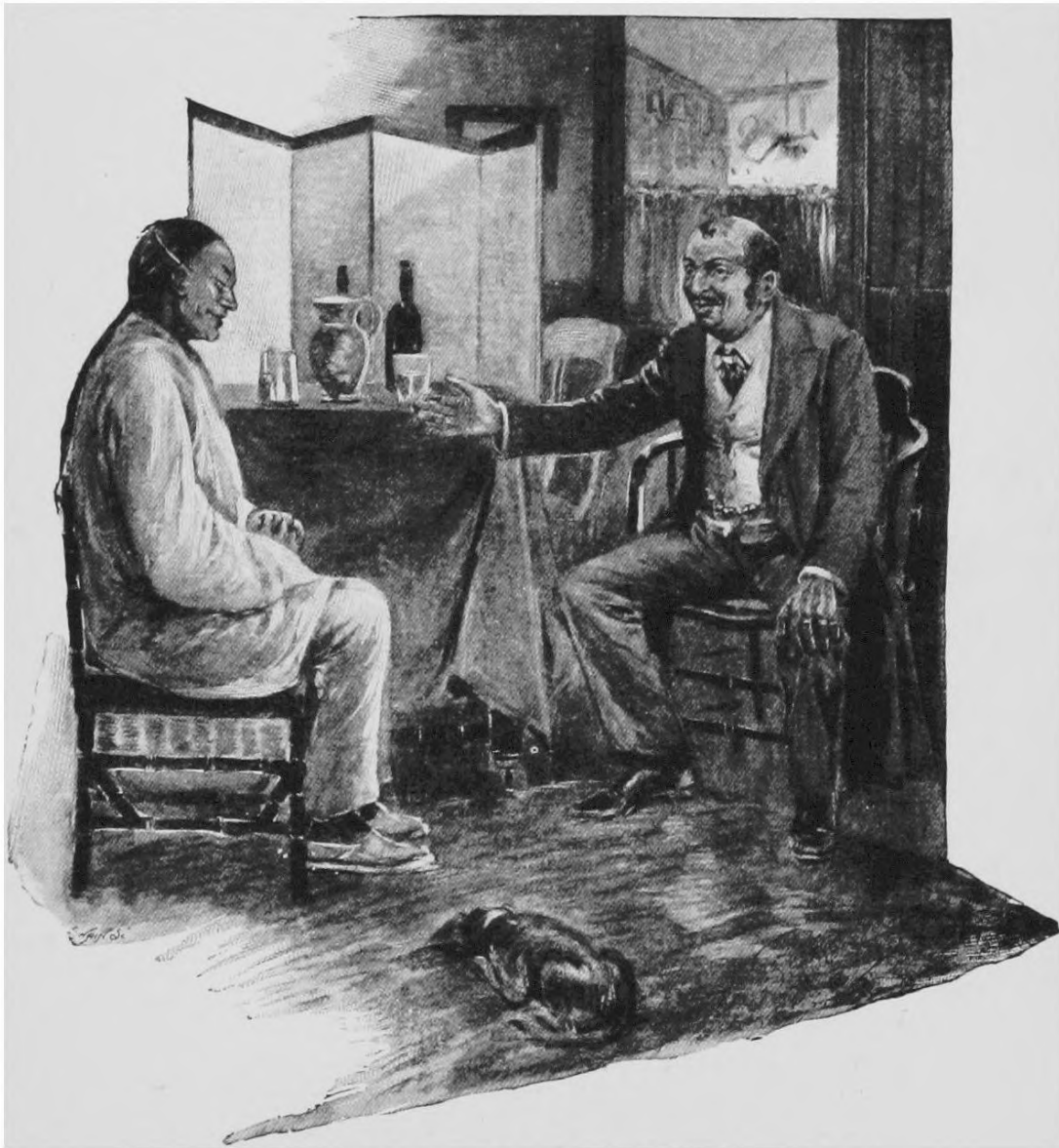
out that the tecs won't tumble to. It 'ud be worth a fortune to a man who could hit on a real bran' new fake just now, that it would, and if we can't get one, the industry's going to be ruined, and that's all there ish to it."

The Chinaman looked at him stolidly while he was speaking, and then, with a broad, wooden smile, which crinkled his eyes up into two little slits, he nodded his head after the fashion of one of his own idols, and said sententiously, and with the air of one who knows what he is talking about :

"All light, Missa Lonefelt, no need muchee scratch-head over dat. Kaffir boy plenty clever yet, allee same muchee searchee, no good. Plenty new fake, too. Dodgee tec-man easy all same's before. You hab no got go workee yet, Missa Lonefelt."

"If you've thought of a good, new fake—one that'll work, mind, and that the tecs

aren't likely to get on to for a bit, I'm the man to go shares with you on it, and I'll make it pay you well, Loo, I will, s'welp me.



“I’ve always treated you fair and square, haven’t I?”

You know me, Loo, and we've done business together before now, and I've always treated you fair and square, haven't I? If it's a likely lay, it's worth twenty, no, I'll make it fifty, there, fifty down to let me into it, and the usual terms afterwards. That's good enough, ain't it? I can't speak no fairer than that, can I, Loo, old pal?"

The Jew spoke eagerly, almost caressingly, to the yellow heathen whom he would have passed by without a wink in Main Street. There he was Augustus Löwenfeldt, licensed diamond broker, stock and share dealer, and all the rest of it, a man with a reputation to lose, as reputations went then in Kimberley, and with a future before him; but here in Loo Chai's back sitting-room he was just what the heathen was, neither better nor worse, an I.D.B., a "fence," as they would have called him in his native Whitechapel, and, like him, a potential felon, and so there

was no need for any overstrained etiquette between them.

Added to this he knew that his "boys" must by this time be getting a very nice little collection of stones together for him, and he felt a very natural anxiety about them now that this detestable new law had about doubled both the legal power of search and the penalties for being found out.

Loo Chai's almond eyes wandered slowly from the dog to the Jew, and his head began to wag again, but this time the other way, and after a little pause he said slowly and meditatively:

"Fifty pound, and tlen per cent. not good enough dlis time, Missa Lonefelt, not by big heap. I hab got thought here"—and he tapped his shaven skull gently with one of his long nails—"which make velly big chop—tlen, twelve, maybe twenty t'ousand pound allee same time, and no chance

catchee. Him worth pay for, eh, Missa Lonefelt?"

"Ten thousand at a go—maybe twenty," exclaimed the Jew, leaning forward with twitching lips, and eyes all a-glitter. "What's your price, Loo? Give it a name, and if I can meet you I will, s'welp me. You know I've always been fair and honourable with you."

"Me sell you one piecee doggie five hundled pounds."

As Loo Chai imparted this apparently irrelevant piece of information, he slowly waved one hand towards the mongrel on the sheepskin, and smiled blandly as he added: "And velly good chop, too, I tink."

"What! five hundred pounds for a bloomin' tyke, and a mighty ugly one at that. What's the good of pulling my leg like that when we're supposed to be talking strict business; what the blathes do *I* want with your dog?"

Mr. Löwenfeldt asked the question with an air of disgusted indignation, of which the placid heathen took not the slightest notice. He simply picked the cur up on to his lap and said, in a tone of calm and almost dignified reproof:

“Me no pullee leg by talkee bizness, Missa Lonefelt. Dis doggie no velly handsome, maybe, but he worth heap money aliee same. Him what you call patent I.D.B. doggie. Now you watchee.”

Mr. Augustus Löwenfeldt did watch, and that, too, with eyes which began to roll somewhat wildly to and fro before many moments had passed, for Loo Chai's deft fingers had by this time laid the thick, shaggy skin of the dog open from the base of the neck to the root of the tail. Then, putting one hand into the opening, and taking hold of the tail with the other, he gingerly drew out the hind quarters of one of those daintily-shaped hair-

less dogs which his countrymen mostly affect in the form of fricasee.

The covering of the head and shoulders was a fixture, a perfectly fitting and most ingeniously contrived mask, which it had cost Loo Chai some weeks of patient labour, and the animal a like period of not over-pleasant training to get and keep in position. But the hinder part was a miracle of that imitative ingenuity in which the Celestial excels all other workmen.

The delicate lacing along the back—where the hair of the original owner of the skin had been thickest, something after the fashion of an unkempt Skye terrier—was absolutely imperceptible when closed, and yet the inside of the skin was lined with marvellously contrived pockets, destined for small or large stones, accordingly as the inequalities of the animal's body or the length of the hair best afforded concealment. Loo Chai pointed

them all out to the wondering Jew with a calm, and, in its way, justifiable pride, and when he had done, Mr. Löwenfeldt, who so far had not uttered any articulate sound, looked first at the half-naked dog and then at his own blandly smiling face and said very softly :

“ Vell, I’m —!”

Loo Chai silently restored the dog to its original condition of disreputable curdom, kicked it on to the floor with a motion of his knee, and said quietly :

“ Well, Missa Loncfelt, you no tink dat velly first chop I.D.B. doggie, eh?”

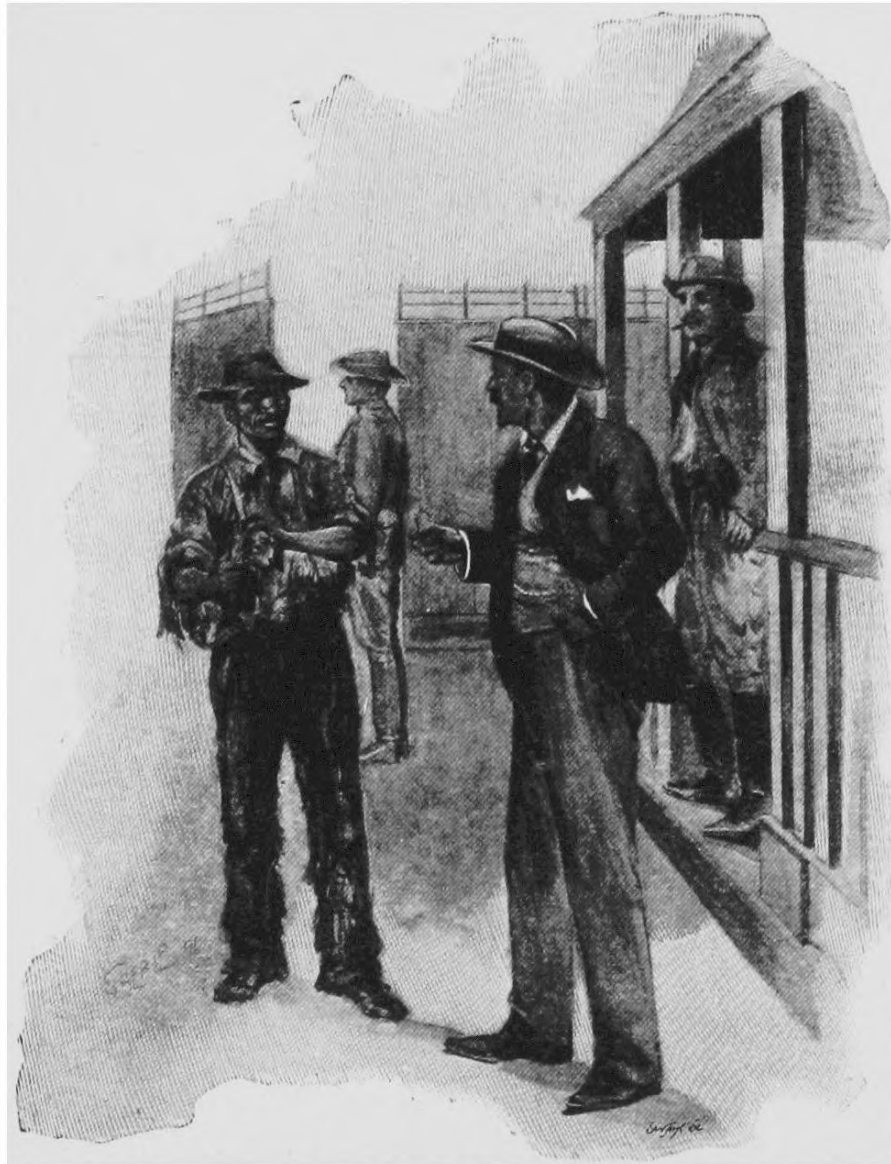
The immediate result of the somewhat animated conversation which followed Loo Chai’s pertinent and business-like question, was the payment to him there and then of £250 in notes and gold, and the drawing of a bill for £250 more at sixty-five days on the Standard Bank at Cape Town. It was a big

price to pay for a little dog, especially when considered in conjunction with a commission of ten per cent. on the possible future value of its skin, and the paying of it made all the heart that Mr. Löwenfeldt possessed ache for several days and nights with a pain which stimulated his normally keen wits to a really dangerous state of activity.

The Jew having thus paid his money, it was for the heathen to do the rest ; and, as a first consequence of what he did, a Pondo kaffir, whom he had long had under his eye for the working out of this particular scheme, presented himself at the gate of the New Compound of the De Beers mine for hire early on the following morning but one.

He had a very disreputable-looking mongrel under his arm, and this, with only partially intelligible eloquence, he strenuously declined to be parted from. The officials objected, but the kaffir stuck to his point and

his dog, and eventually carried both through, for the compound system was new and unpopular then, and native labour was very



He had a very disreputable-looking mongrel under his arm.

scarce, so at last, as he was turning away to offer his services elsewhere, he was called back and allowed to take his cur in, for he was a fine, athletic, likely-looking boy, and after all, if the dog gave any trouble, a fatal illness would not be a very difficult thing to arrange for.

The Pondo proved to be an excellent workman, and so little was seen or heard of the dog that its existence was forgotten long before the usual two months' engagement was up. "Bymebye," as the kaffir called himself in accordance with the common custom of taking more or less grotesque English names, found plenty of old acquaintances in the compound, as both Loo Chai and Mr. Löwenfeldt had foreseen that he would, and, by virtue of sundry, invisible transactions between him and them, his dog improved rapidly in value, although its presence became even more unobtrusive than ever.

About ten days before young Bymebye's time was up, one of his most intimate friends left the compound after passing blamelessly through the then usual formalities under the hands of the searching officials, and that night contrived to convey, through Loo Chai and one Ah Foo, his servant, the welcome news to Mr. Löwenfeldt that the Pondo's dog would come out with such a lining to its second skin as the experienced broker felt justified in estimating at from ten to twelve thousand pounds in value.

The kaffir received five sovereigns in return for his news, and with them and his own earnings he proceeded, after the manner of his kind, to blind himself to the light of heaven and the lamps of divers bar-rooms for three days and nights, after which he went back with a light pouch and a heavy head to do another two months' spell in the mine. This time he was the bearer of a message to

his Pondo chum to the effect that, if on his coming out he would take the dog to a certain place other than the house of Loo Chai, he would get £200 for it in place of the £100 that his master had promised him. To this the Pondo, being easy of morals and longing greatly for the possession of wives and cattle in his own land, incontinently consented.

The reason for this leading astray of the untutored savage may be quickly seen in the fact that ten per cent. on, say, £10,000 would be £1000, and this with the amount of the bill would make £1250—which, when Mr. Löwenfeldt came to think quietly over the matter, seemed to be a most outrageous price to pay to a yellow-skinned dog, and after due deliberation he decided not to pay it if he could find any means of evading payment.

The shortest and easiest way to do this

was to procure the arrest and conviction of Loo Chai as an I.D.B. before the Pondo got out, and to this end he succeeded in bribing Ah Foo with cash down and the promise of more to plant four "trap-stones," which he took from his own safe, in a convenient place in his master's store. But as there is more honour of a sort among heathens than among thieves, Ah Foo gave the plot away in the same hour, showed the trap-stones to Loo Chai, who had been expecting some friendly action of the sort, and, with his consent, took them away with him for greater safety and his own reward.

Very early the next morning the police, "acting on information received," raided the store of Loo Chai, turned it mostly into the street, and found nothing, its owner meanwhile looking on with a bland resignation that would have well become a martyr in a better cause. A good deal of language was

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used by the executors of the law of which no respectable printer's ink would convey any adequate impression, but it was nothing to the eloquent Yiddish in which Mr. Augustus Löwenfeldt relieved his feelings when he heard of the barren result of their labours.

The next morning a somewhat unwonted scene was enacted outside the main gate of the De Beers Compound. Some thirty or forty kaffirs, whose time was up, and who had gone through the final formalities preceding dismissal, were coming out laughing and singing, and chattering, and jingling their hard-earned money like so many children, and among them, as innocently festive as any, was young Bymebye the Pondo. He was not carrying his dog this time. He knew that the officials had almost, if not entirely, forgotten its existence, and he wisely thought that it would be more prudent to let it sneak quietly out among the legs of the crowd than

to recall it to the gatekeeper's memory by taking it in his arms.

The animal had become quite attached to him, and he made sure that he would be able to pick it up without any difficulty when he had got a safe distance from the gate. This he could have done quite easily if the dog had only been left to itself. But it wasn't.

No sooner had it passed the Rubicon almost unnoticed, and shown itself in the road, than a peculiar cry, something like a high tenor "coo-e-ee," rose shrilly into the still air from nowhere in particular. The heathen dog pricked up its false ears at the familiar but long unheard sound, and the next instant between ten and twelve thousand pounds worth of dog and diamonds was scampering down the road as fast as four wiry legs could carry it.

Bye-bye let out a high-pitched howl of rage and horror, and started off with great,

leaping strides in pursuit of the much longed-for wives and cattle and guns that were literally running away with the dog. The rest joined in the hue and cry, some for good reasons of their own, and some for the mere fun of the thing; but, unfortunately, just as they were beginning to gain on the flying treasure, a squad of mounted police, coming back from their night's duty on the Free State Border, turned a corner out of the Du Toits Pan Road at a trot, and barred their way.

The dog dodged in among the horses' legs and got clear away to the eager arms of Ah Foo, who was waiting for it in a half-ruined tin shanty about a hundred yards farther down the road. The police, always suspicious of anything like a kaffir *émeute*, ordered Bymebye and his companions to stop, but the Pondo and one or two of the others who knew the worth of the quarry, made a desper-

ate effort to get through and continue the chase, with the result that they were speedily run down, collared, and marched off to the trunk—where, being able to give no satisfactory reasons for their anxiety to catch the dog, they were summarily fined five shillings each, and kicked out.

Almost at the same moment that they regained their liberty, an occurrence which the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* described the next morning as “a shocking tragedy” took place just outside the bar of the Central Hotel.

Mr. Augustus Löwenfeldt had been taking a few whiskies and sodas with some friends, and was just bidding them good-bye to go and see about some important business, when he happened to look across the street, and saw a well-dressed Chinaman walking up the opposite side with a hairless Chinese terrier at his heels.

Now there was, apparently, nothing in this

to upset the equanimity of a respectable and substantial citizen of Diamondopolis, and yet his friends saw his hands spasmodically go up to his collar. His fat cheeks and low forehead suddenly became a deep bluish purple, and his eyes, bloodshot and staring, started half out of their sockets. Fumbling feebly with his fast tightening collar, he half gasped, half gurgled :

“Dog—ten thou’—done, by ——” and then he reeled back and pitched sideways into the road, and before they could get him back into the bar, he was dead.

“Never knew poor Gussy to have ’em before,” one of his friends sympathisingly remarked to another when they had seen the remains safely on to the ambulance. “D’you think there really *was* a dog there? Blethd if I did—the thing looked to me more like a rat. Come on, let’s go and ’ave another, it’s given me quite a turn.”

II.

A RUN TO FREETOWN.

IN the nature of the case it was quite out of the question that the story of the Diamond Dog should remain a secret for very long. To the I.D.B.'s, every detail of it, as it gradually leaked out, was as a sweet morsel under the tongue, and to many more honest enemies of the new compound system, mostly tradesmen and canteen-keepers, it was far too acceptable a tale either to be kept dark or to be allowed to lose anything in the re-telling.

Added to this, the tragedy in which it had culminated had lent a piquancy to its flavour which sufficiently stimulated the palate of Kimberley society to set it longing for more,

and so, little by little, it filtered through the barriers of official reticence, until at last a fitting finish was given to the story by the confession of Chief Detective-Inspector Lipinzki, one night in the smoking-room of the Club, that that day's mail had brought him a brief note, written by one Loo Chai, presumably a former resident of the Camp, from Delagoa Bay, requesting that an inclosed acceptance for £250, drawn in his favour by the late Mr. Augustus Löwenfeldt, might be cashed by that gentleman's executors, and the amount, less ten per cent. commission for his, the inspector's, trouble, forwarded at his convenience to No. 9 Malay Street, Singapore. The note concluded by stating that the £250 was a balance due from Mr. Löwenfeldt on the purchase of a certain dog of the estimated value of £11,000.

Despite the fact that not a few of those who heard the note read out, and looked at

the acceptance as it was handed round, had lost some proportion of that £11,000, the irony of the note and the delicate humour of the address given—Malay Street, Singapore, having a reputation that is redolent throughout the whole East—provoked a laugh as general as it was hearty, and the next morning all Kimberley was enjoying the heathen's parting joke.

That night a lady variety vocalist at the Theatre Royal sent her audience into prolonged and vociferous raptures by singing the then famous patter-song, "Keyser, don't you want to puy a tog?" with appropriate local allusions, and then Kimberley proceeded to improve the occasion in its own way.

"No dogs admitted!" was found painted in large black letters across the principal entrance to the De Beers Compound. The corpse of a large Newfoundland dog sewn up in the skin of a small donkey, and carefully

packed in a neat case, was sent by coach from Vryburg to the Chief Inspector "to be



A lady variety vocalist at the Theatre Royal.

paid for on delivery." Printed notices were stuck up in conspicuous parts of the town to the effect that in future all dogs entering or leaving Kimberley would have to be skinned alive "by authority"—and so on until the very sight of a dog in the street afflicted the worthy inspector and his subordinates with something like a new sort of rabies.

All this was humorous enough in its way, as humour went then in camp, but for all that it was destined to lead up, indirectly, to a much darker tragedy than that which had closed the hitherto prosperous career of Mr. Augustus Löwenfeldt.

There was at that time in Kimberley a Yankee adventurer named Seth Salter, who was known to the Detective Department as an even more skilful I.D.B. than the late lamented Löwenfeldt. His ostensible means of livelihood were stock and share speculations, billiards, and three-card monte, varied

by the occasional keeping of a faro bank ; but though he did well at all these comparatively honest vocations, he did not do well enough to satisfactorily account for a style of living and luxuriance of dissipation which could not be adequately supported on less than £5000 a year at the most modest computation. There were only two possible alternative hypotheses, debt or I.D.B., and he had no debts.

Now, Seth Salter was one of the most conspicuous of the humorists who, as he put it, made the Department see dogs instead of snakes when the officials thereof had "got a bit too full," and before very long, Inspector Lipincki publicly stated in the bar of the Queen's Hotel that the next time Mr. Salter tried, either in person or by proxy, to run a parcel of illicit stones over the border to Freetown, he would so arrange matters that, by the time the circus was over, the said Mr.

Salter would have good reason to wish that he had been born a dog, instead of a dirty, stock-rigging, card-swindling, diamond thief.

As it chanced, just as the inspector was emphasising the above statement, garnished with certain verbal frillings which need not be produced here, by slapping his four fingers on the bar counter, Mr. Seth himself lounged into the room. The instant turning of the eyes of the company on to him told him, as plainly as any words could have done, that he was the subject of the inspector's eloquence. The crowd saw at a glance that he had taken in the situation, and everyone expected a royal row, for Salter was known to have a temper as quick as his eye and his hand, and Lipinzki, though only about half the Yankee's size, was grit all through.

Nothing less than immediate manslaughter was looked for, and the crowd began to scatter instinctively. But, somewhat to the

disappointment of the more festive spirits, Salter strolled quietly up to the bar, took his place about three feet from the inspector, and said, with the most perfect good humour :

“ Evenin’, boss ! Don’t seem to be feelin’ quite good to-night. Hope no one’s been tryin’ to sell the Deeparment another pup ? Take a drink ? ”

Of course the crowd laughed. The double-pointed jibe was irresistible, and the laugh did not improve the inspector’s inward feelings. But he was far too well skilled in his business to show the slightest trace of irritation, so he replied with an easy smile and the most perfect politeness of tone :

“ Ah, good-evening, Mr. Salter, I was just talking about you. No, thanks ; the Department is not buying any dog-flesh just now, not even skins. As to your kind invitation, well, as I say, I was talking about you just now when you came in, and perhaps — ”

If ever man uttered fighting words coolly, and as if he meant them, Inspector Lipinzki did just then. Seth Salter had never been known to take anything like that from any man without prompt and usually fatal reprisals. The crowd waited breathlessly, and silently scattered a little more. But no, the Yankee's hand did not even move towards his pistol pocket. There was just a little crinkling of the outer corners of his eyes, noticed only by the inspector and one or two others, but it vanished immediately, and there was no trace of anger in his voice—in fact, it seemed even more good-humoured than usual—as he replied:

“Don't take the trouble to say it again, boss. I've known your opinion of me for a long time, and now I've heard it. If you'd backed down you might have heard something drop, but as you didn't, I'm free to say that I've too much respect for your honour-

able Deeparment to think of removing its respected chief to another, and, may be, less congenial sphere on account of an honestly expressed opinion—not me, sir! So now, N.G. and name the poison. Will you join us, gentlemen ? ”

The crowd joined as one man, and, under the circumstances, the inspector could do nothing less than come in with them. But for all that he felt a trifle puzzled, though he took care not to show it.

After that the conversation became general and perfectly amicable, albeit dwelling mainly on the somewhat ticklish subject which possessed the chief interest for everyone present. But as drinks multiplied and lies got more complicated, the inspector began to grow taciturn. Liquor has that effect on some natures, and his was possibly one of them.

At last the Yankee rallied him, quite good-humouredly, on his lack of festivity, but

rather unfortunately, as it seemed to the company, dragged in something about shortage on the mine returns. That was too much for the inspector, and his long bottled-up wrath suddenly flared out.

“Shortage, damn it, sir! You’re a nice one to talk about shortage, Mr. Salter. You know as well as I do that there’s about fifteen thousand short of a month’s average on De Beers and Kimberley returns, and you know a big sight better than I do where the stones have gone to. But we’ll have you yet. You’re wide and you’re deep, but you’re not quite the cleverest man on earth, and when we do get you—”

“Well, why’n thunder don’t you, boss?” the Yankee laughed, with still undisturbed good humour. “Say now, I’ll give you a pointer, as them sneaks of yours don’t seem to have got on to it yet. I’m going across to Freetown sometime between now and Sunday

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on a little private business of my own. S'pose, now, I was taking that bit of shortage with me—what'll you lay against me getting it through?"

"Ten years on the Breakwater!" snapped the inspector, as he emptied his glass, and set it down with a bang on the counter.

"No, you don't," laughed Salter; "that's for me to lay. Now, look here, I'll lay you ten years on the Breakwater to a thousand pounds—that's only a hundred a year, and I think my time's a darned sight more valuable than that, so I'm giving you big odds—that I'll take that little lot through for all you can do to stop me."

As he spoke, he suddenly pulled his left hand out of his trousers pocket, and held it out to the inspector with the palm full of rough diamonds.

Lipinzki fairly gaped at the heap of glittering stones, but he lost neither his presence of

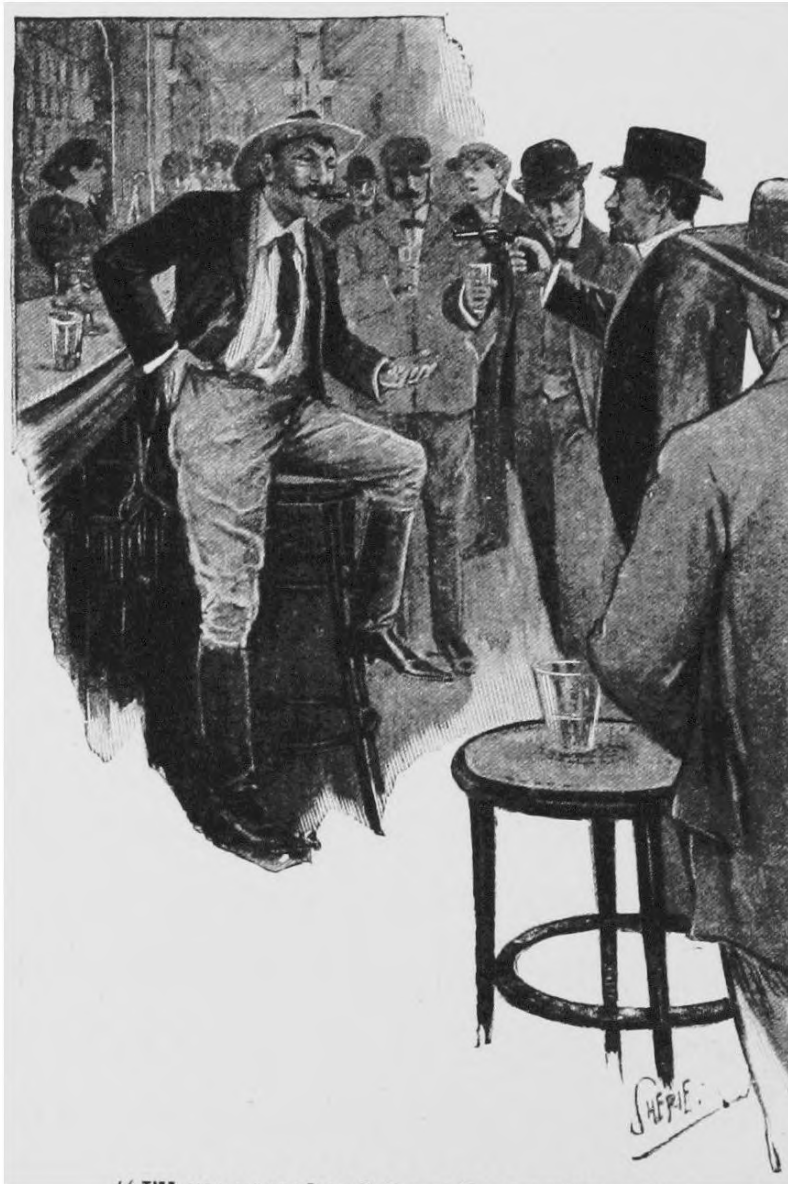
mind nor his professional promptitude. Like lightning, a revolver jumped out of his coat pocket, and as he covered the Yankee's heart with the muzzle, he said sharply:

“That bluff won't work, Mr. Salter. I'll see your hand for a thousand now. If you don't want a sudden death in your family, come along to the office, and account for the possession of those diamonds.”

To the added amazement of everyone in the room, Seth Salter burst into a loud laugh, and said, without moving out of the line of fire:

“Waal, boss, I did think you had a better eye for klips than that. D'you fancy I'd be such an almighty sucker as to—good Lord, man, can't you see they're all schlenters? There's no law agin carrying *them* round, I reckon. Here, take 'em, and see for yourself. There's plenty of good judges in the room to help you.”

A very brief examination satisfied the disgusted inspector that the astute Yankee had once more turned the laugh against him.



"I'll see your hand for a thousand now."

The things were “schlenters,” or “snyde diamonds”—imitations made of glass treated with fluoric acid to give them the peculiar frosted appearance of the real rough stones—which were used chiefly for the purpose of swindling the new chums and greenhorns who were making their first essays in I.D.B.

Lipinzki saw that he had “done him a shot in the eye,” as the camp vernacular had it, and put up his revolver with what grace he could. The Yankee took his little triumph very quietly, and asked the young lady behind the bar to oblige him with a sheet of note-paper and an envelope. Then he wrapped up the false stones, put them into the envelope, stuck it down, and asked the inspector to write his name across the flap, which he did, with a peculiar smile on his well-shaped lips.

“Waal, now, that’s a bet, eh?” said Salter, as he put the packet in his pocket. “Now

let's take another drink on it and then go home. It's gettin' late and I've got to pack. There's no knowin' how soon I might have to start."

The glasses were filled again, and the Yankee clinked his against the inspector's with as much cordiality as though they had been the best of friends, instead of, as they were now, hunter and quarry in a chase to the death.

The next day Seth Salter openly hired a Cape cart and team of four horses to take him to Bloemfontein, which is about eighty miles by road from Kimberley, and when the bargain was struck, he privately informed the driver, an off-coloured Cape boy who had made more than one run of the kind, that if he would start at midnight instead of mid-day, and go *via* Freetown instead of Boshoff, he should have £100 for that part of the journey alone, which was not a bad fare for a

drive of less than an hour. The boy jumped at the offer, and within a couple of hours had accepted one of twice the amount, with half cash down, from Inspector Lipinzki, to pull up at a certain spot about 400 yards from the Free State border.

That afternoon Salter and Lipinzki met, as if by chance, in the private bar of the Central, had a whisky and soda together, and talked over the journey with apparently perfect friendliness and freedom. The inspector affected to treat the whole thing as a joke, a bit of spoof that he was far too wary a bird to be taken in by.

It wasn't likely that such an old hand as Salter would try to run anything but the schlenters, after giving himself away as completely as he had done, at least, not that time. Some other time, perhaps, and then he'd see. At the same time, it *might* after all be a clever and daring game of bluff, and so

it would be as well to take precautions.

Altogether it was an interesting situation, especially for the inspector. If he caught Salter with nothing but the schlenters on him, he would be the laughing-stock of the camp, and if he let him go through with something like a £15,000 packet of diamonds—which he felt perfectly certain he had planted somewhere—his reputation would be ruined and his dismissal certain. It was a desperate game, and Inspector Lipinzki was prepared to take desperate measures to win.

A little before noon, Salter changed his plans, and said he would go the next day, and a few minutes before midnight he got into his cart just outside Beaconsfield. The boy whipped up his team, and the cart rattled and jolted away at a quick trot towards the border. The night was too fine, in fact, and as they spun along mile after mile without let

or hindrance, Salter began to think that, after all, Lipinzki had funkcd the trap that he had laid for him, and decided to risk letting the diamonds through rather than make a fool of himself by the capture of a lot of worthless schlenters.

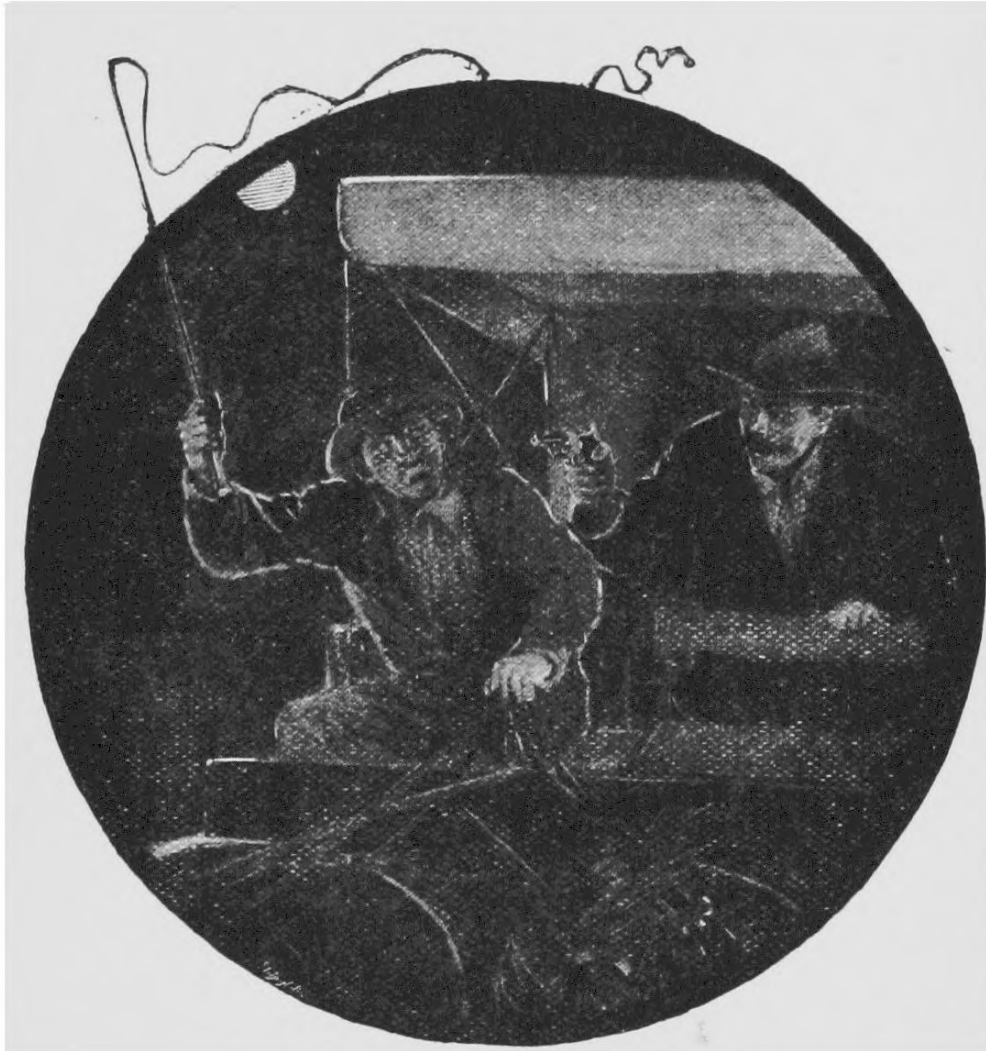
The lights of Freetown were already glimmering in the distance across the veld. Ten minutes more would see him safe over the border with the most valuable packet of diamonds that had ever been run out of camp, and then—suddenly his strained ears caught the sound of a voice in the distance, followed by the clinking of horses' bits and the ominous "click-click" of rifle locks.

He was sitting, as usual, on the seat behind the driver, and just as the boy turned round and whispered in a frightened way: "P'lice, baas, better pull up, eh? might get shot," he pointed his revolver at him, and said in a low but very business-like tone:

“You yellow swine, you’ve sold me! Now you whip them horses up, and make ’em go for all they’re worth. By thunder, you shall drive to Freetown or Glory to-night, for if I see you pull those reins, I’ll blow the top of your ugly head off, just so sure as you’ll never see the other side of Jordan. Whip up now! You’ve got to get through or go home, I tell you.”

The road just here ran for some distance through a lot of broken ground and surface workings, so there was no chance of making a detour to avoid the mounted police, whose moving forms Salter could now see dimly in the distance. The terrified Cape boy, feeling the cold revolver-muzzle in the nape of his neck, lashed his horses into a gallop. The shapes on ahead grew more and more distinct, and presently there rang out the short sharp order :

“Halt, or we’ll shoot!”



“You yellow swine, you’ve sold me!”

“Halt, and I’ll shoot!” Salter hissed into the driver’s ear, and the cart sped on at a gallop.

Now mounted forms seemed to rush out of the darkness and close round. Meanwhile the lights of Freetown were getting tantalisingly near. A few minutes more and—crack, crack, crack, went the rifles to right and left and in front. The off leader reared up with a shrill neigh and then pitched on to his head with the others and the cart on top of him.

“Waal, gentlemen, may I ask what is the meaning of this outrage on an unoffending traveller?” said Salter, in a cool but angry voice as the police rode up.

“That’ll do, Mr. Salter,” said Inspector Lipincki’s voice out of the darkness; “the bluff’s played out. Pass up with the klips and come along quietly. Don’t shoot, for that’s murder, and you’re covered three times over.”

The Yankee climbed down out of the cart with an audible chuckle, walked quietly to Lipinzki's stirrup, and held up his hand, saying :

“ Ah, it's you, inspector, is it? Sorry I've brought you a booby hunt like this, and given the Deeparment a horse to pay for. Klips? Waal, I did hear of some going across last night inside a kaffir's dog, but you've struck the wrong she-bang for stones to-night, true's death you have. But you can search and see if you like.”

The inspector took no notice either of the Yankee's extended hand or his speech. He just covered Salter with a revolver, and ordered his men to light their lanterns, and search everything thoroughly. They obeyed, and after a twenty minutes' investigation, during which they employed every device that their ingenuity and experience could suggest, on the cart, clothing, and person of

Salter (who submitted like a lamb), and even on the horses, they were forced to confess that they had drawn blank.

“Waal, boss, are you satisfied that I ain’t sellin’ you a pup *this* time?” said Salter, as he finished re-making his toilet—for he had stripped to the buff with the true hardihood of a man who is playing for a big stake and means to win.

Not so much as a schlenter had been found, and Mr. Inspector Lipinzki felt that he had got himself into a very nasty place. He had stopped a seemingly honest traveller, shot one of his horses, and submitted him to the indignity of a personal search. Visions of his lost bet, of a civil action for damages before a jury that might probably be I.D.B.’s to a man, of heavy damages, and of the storm of ridicule that would overwhelm him at the end, flashed in quick succession past his mental gaze, and, being only human after all, he decided to temporise.

“I’m out, Mr. Salter!” he said, with the best assumption of cordiality that he could muster. “I’m dead out, and it’s for you to call the game. I’m not satisfied, but I know when I’m licked, and I am this time. What’s it to be?”

“Waal,” drawled the Yankee, “seein’s how you’ve pulled me up here, shot a horse, cut up the fit-out, and made me undress in this almighty cold, I think the least you and your fellows can do is to come across to Mike Maguire’s shanty yonder and take a drink. You bet I want one pretty bad. What do you say?”

Under the peculiar circumstances there appeared to be only one thing to say, and that was “Yes.” In fact, Inspector Lipincki thought it a remarkably good get out. Besides, a miracle might happen even yet, so he agreed, and followed it up with a really handsome apology.

The result was that within a very few minutes the dead horse was unharnessed and pulled out of the road, the other leader hitched on to the end of the pole, and the whole party trotted across the border towards Mike Maguire's store and shanty. On the way, Salter roasted the Cape boy unmercifully, and then not only consoled him, but mystified him considerably, by telling that he should have his money after all.

In spite of the wrong that had been done him, Salter insisted on standing the first round of drinks when the party at length stood up against Maguire's bar. The drinks were duly raised and lowered, and while Lipincki was ordering the next round, he said very quietly :

“By the way, boss, about those stones. P'raps, as you've come all this way, you might like to see them. Here they are!”

While he was speaking, he had pulled the
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Cape boy towards him and thrust his hand into his trousers' pocket. He pulled out the identical envelope which he had asked for in the bar of the Queen's Hotel, with the inspector's signature still written across the flap. He handed it over to the bar-keeper and said :

“When the chief of the Deeparment in Kimberley *does* do it, he does it to rights. Just you open that, Mike, and tell me if you ever saw a prettier lot.”

Mr. Maguire looked at the signature, glanced curiously at the astounded inspector, then opened the envelope, unfolded the bulky packet that was in it, and disclosed about fifty rough diamonds, the sight of which made even his experienced eyes water. Orange and blue, green, rose, and pure white, they glittered most tantalisingly in the light of the paraffin lamp which hung above the bar counter.

“Mother av Moses, what a lot! Shure, they’re the pick av the mines, and worth a king’s ransom any day!” said Mr. Maguire, in a somewhat awe-stricken tone, as he gingerly turned the priceless stones over and over with the end of his thick forefinger. “Here, take them back, mister, before I’m tempted beyond the endurance av human flesh and blood by the sight av the darlin’s. God bless their pretty sparkles!”

So saying, honest Mike, knowing that his own reward was to come, handed them back to Salter, who pocketed them in a handful as he turned to the almost paralysed inspector and his men, and said :

“No, boss, they’re not schlenters this time—a little steam and a little skill, you know. Waal, here’s to you, and now I’ll just take your Good-for¹ for that thousand pounds, Mr. Lipinzki, and then we’ll say good-night. I’m

¹ The South African form of I.O.U.

not coming back to Kimberley till I've done my business down in Port Elizabeth. Chin chin !”

It took all the inspector's self-control to enable him to rise to the occasion, but he did it. He took his licking like a man and a sportsman, and his subordinates and the Cape boy just grinned and drank their liquors, for, after all, I.D.B. is but a gamble, and the gods look sometimes this way and sometimes that. The game had been smartly played, and they looked upon the winner rather with admiration than with enmity.

That round of drinks was drunk, and then another and another, and then—alas for the weakness of the best-balanced human nature, Mr. Seth Salter, with a confidence born of the fulness of his triumph, left the bar-room with the diamonds in his pocket, and went out into the night to see his discomfited friends off on their homeward journey. Exactly

what happened during the next quarter of an hour was never known. Distant sounds of shouts and shots reached the waiting ears of Mr. Maguire, but he knew his business, and quietly locked the door, remarking to himself the while :

“Smart as he is, it’s meself that’s fearin’ he’s put his fut into ut this time. What a hairless juggins he was not to lave the sparklers where they were safe when he had them there. Well, well, life’s a gamble anyhow, and so’s death, too, sometimes. I hope they haven’t hurt him beyant recovery.”

Shortly before three o’clock that morning, Inspector Lipinzki and his merry men escorted the three-horse Cape cart into Kimberley. The horse that was lying dead on the veld was paid for to its full value, and the driver got his £200, coupled with a private intimation to the effect that, if he ever opened his mouth on the subject of that

night's doings, fifty lashes and five years as an illicit diamond runner would be the least that he could expect. Inspector Lipinzki slept the balance of the night out with a £15,000 parcel of diamonds under his pillow, and the next day there was no one in Kimberley who had anything to say to him on the subject of double-skinned dogs or the selling of pups.

Of course, there were many in camp who would have given a good deal to know what had become of Mr. Seth Salter—but that is a yarn with another twist in it.

III.

THE KING'S ROSE DIAMOND.

I.

DAY by day, stone by stone, the parcel had increased, and every one of the now splendid collection of gems represented not only so many pounds sterling in hard cash, when once successfully translated from the Kimberley Compound and sorting-houses to the outside world, but also many moments of desperate yet skilfully hidden anxiety, during which the fickle needle of Fate had swayed to and fro between two poles of fortune and ruin.

Some men in Frank Ridley's position—

and he was one of the most trusted sorters in camp—would have taken the stones out one by one, or employed kaffirs to take them from him after they had been searched, and pass them direct to one of the illicit dealers outside ; but that was not his way. He had no other confidant than his own conscience, not always an approving one, but at any rate one that would not give him away.

To have taken the stones out one by one would only have multiplied the risk of discovery and ruin by the number of them, for the possession of a single illicit diamond would have meant disgrace and penal servitude just as certainly as would the discovery on his person of the whole twenty or thirty thousand pounds worth of gems—the very pick of the Kimberley mine output for nearly six months past.

So one afternoon he made up his mind that he had tempted the Fates far enough,

and at six that evening he walked off to his lodgings with his heart in his mouth and a fortune in the lining of his somewhat shabby felt wideawake.

That night, albeit with some little fear and trembling, he permitted himself the luxury of a few minutes' examination of his plunder in bulk, and an estimate of its value—not to him, but to the more fortunate man who should succeed in getting the parcel through safely to London or Amsterdam. If he could only have done that himself he would never have needed to do another day's work in the world—but he was an *employé*, a sorter, and therefore a marked man, and the secret ramifications of the wonderful system which inclosed him and all like him as in a net were many and wide.

No, that risk was too great, considering that he could now make four or five thousand pounds in an hour or so, and at the same

time transfer all his risk and liability to someone else, and go back to his work with a light heart, and, in a certain sense, a clear conscience.

Yet there was one magnificent rose-diamond, which must have weighed somewhere between forty and fifty carats, which he would dearly have loved to see nicely cut and polished, and glittering on the neck or in the hair of a certain well-loved someone far away in old Carlisle; for he knew well enough that there was not another of its size and colour in the world. The nearest to it was in the De Beers collection, and the mere possession of it by anyone but a monarch or a millionaire would mean just what his own possession of it meant, so there was no use thinking about that.

With something very like a sigh for the unattainable possibilities of his so far successful theft, he tied up the gems in a bit of

dirty rag, and stuffed this into the toe of a rather dilapidated Wellington boot. Then he had a wash and a change, and went for a walk down town.

On his way along Stockdale Street, he chanced to meet a well-dressed, dapper-looking little man, who nodded to him as one might do to a casual acquaintance, and said in a quick, chirpy sort of tone :

“How do, Ridley? Going strong, eh?”

“Pretty well, Mr. Mosenstein,” he replied, with a quick look up and down the street. “Returns are looking up again. We’ve had some very pretty finds the last day or two.”

“Oh, glad to hear it, even from a man who wastes his opportunities as idiotically as you do. Anything particularly choice?”

“Well, yes. Are you doing anything in second-hand boots just now, Mr. Mosenstein?”

It may here be conveniently explained that the gentleman with whom young Ridley had thus fallen into conversation, was in those days known in camp as Mickey Mosenstein. The wider world knows him now as Michael Mosenstein, Esq., M.L.A., and director of many important financial undertakings. But in those days he was just an extremely clever man, a Jew of reputed Florentine ancestry, but more recent and authentic London extraction, who had made his *début* in Kimberley as a dealer in cheap jewellery and slop-made outfits—and in fact anything that found a ready sale in camp—and who was now looked upon as one of the smartest and most successful “operators” on the Diamond Fields.

Inspector Lipinzki and some of his more trusted subordinates cherished certain suspicions as to the scope of his operations, but till now his dealings had been blameless, at

least so far as tangible evidence was concerned, added to which he had recently married a very pretty and exceedingly clever wife—which meant much on the Fields in those days.

Mr. Mosenstein did not seem in the least annoyed by the apparent reference to his former comparatively humble means of livelihood. On the contrary, he looked up with a quick glance at Ridley, and said, with a smile of pleasant anticipation :

“Well, I haven’t done anything in the old clo’ line for some time now, but you know I’m always on for a trade. What’s the figure?”

“Ten thousand.”

“I’ll see you—I mean I’d like to see the goods first before I say anything to that. It’s a big price for a pair of second-hand boots, you know, Mr. Ridley. Still, I’m glad to see that you’re beginning to rise to a proper sense of your opportunities. When can I see the boots?”

“I was thinking of taking them down to Tooley’s to-morrow about this time to have them soled and heeled.”

“So you’re on to that lay, are you? Well, you’re not such a blighted idiot as I thought you were, Ridley; so I apologise. I shall be sending to Tooley’s myself—but, look here, if we mean business, what’s the good of wasting time like that? Go and get your boots now, and take them to Tooley’s. He isn’t shut, and he’s got a pair of mine to mend. I’ll be there in half an hour, and if I take your parcel away with me instead of my own, well, what’s that to anybody but you or me?”

It wasn’t altogether a new device, but it worked, and in the result Mr. Mosenstein’s valuation of the boots was so far satisfactory that about two hours later Frank Ridley went home with a cheque for £2,500 and an I.O.U. for a like amount in his pocket, and a

pair of another man's boots under his arm, neatly wrapped up in a copy of the *Diamond Fields Independent*. The cheque was on Lloyd's Bank, London, and was payable, not to Frank Ridley, but to Miss Alice Ransome. The I.O.U. was personal, but both went to England by the next mail.

There occurs here the unpleasant necessity of adding that the cheque was stopped by cable long before Miss Ransome had any chance of presenting it. The fate of the I.O.U. was to be determined later on. Meanwhile, Mr. Frank Ridley's thoughts turned homeward and mingled with loving memories and fond anticipations.

That same night between eleven and twelve, Mr. Mosenstein had a visit from a man of his own people, a youth of some twenty-one summers, whose life had so far been mostly winter. Not many of the seed of Abraham run to waste, at any rate in the financial

sense, but Joshua Mosenstein, known for short in camp as Jossey Mo, had somehow managed to do so.

He was distantly related to Mickey Mosenstein, and again and again that rising financier had, with the traditional generosity of his people to their kindred, metaphorically taken him out of the gutter and set him on his feet on the pavement. The subject of their interview that particular night was closely akin to this species of rescue work. No one else was present, and Mr. Mosenstein spoke plainly and to the point.

“It just comes to this, Jossey,” he said, towards the end of the discussion, “you’ll never be any good to yourself or any credit to your relations as long as you go sloshing around in this good-for-nothing sort of way of yours. Now, here’s a good solid chance for you. Do as I tell you, man. Own up and play the greeney. You won’t get more

than five years as a first offender, and if you behave yourself you'll get out with three. I know the ropes down yonder, don't you fear, and I'll pull 'em hard for you. Then when you come out there's five thousand for you in solid cash and a thousand a year for five years after that. Now, Jossey, what do you say to that?"

"What do you want me to be trapped at all for?" the tempted Joshua objected rather sulkily. "If you've got the gonivahs, why don't you plant 'em somewhere safe and run 'em down when you get a chance like the others do?"

"Because I don't do business like the others," replied Mickey, with an air of conscious pride; "and because I'm playing a deeper game, and for a bigger stake. It's this way, you see. Ridley and me were shadowed while we were talking in Stockdale Street. He didn't see it, but I did, and that's

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what made me think of this lay. We were shadowed again at Tooley's, and I was followed home here by one of the smouches.

“Now Lipinzki's no fool, and neither is Fox, nor Lowe, nor any of them. What do I want talking to Ridley for just after he's come out of the sorting-room? What do I want to meet him again the same night at a boot-store and bring a pair of his boots home by mistake for?”

“I tell you, Jossey, those chaps know as well as I do that I took a parcel of stones from Ridley to-night, and before long Lipinzki will be here with a search-warrant to look for them. Now, if he doesn't find any, he'll reckon that I've planted 'em, and am going to run 'em, as you say. That means that we shall be watched, and that everyone who goes out of camp, especially anyone belonging to me, will be stopped and searched, and so the missis 'll have about

as much chance of getting those stones down to Cape Town and on to the steamer as I would.

“Now see how my plan works out. They know I've got stones from Ridley, but they don't know *what* stones—see? They come here with their warrant, arrest us both, and search us, find this other little lot on you, and jump to the conclusion that they're the right ones, and that I've just given 'em to you. But there's no proof of that, and they can't get one, for you'll play the funk, own up, and swear you bought 'em from a kaffir, while I do the indignant virtuous lay.

“You needn't be afraid of Ridley. They don't want him yet. They'll wait for him, and nab him when convenient. It's me they want. De Beers would give a good bit just now to plant me on the Breakwater for a few years while they put this Amalgamation business through. That's where my game

comes in. This parcel should pan out at thirty thousand at the very least, and that's just why I want to fight these amalgamators on their own ground.

“If I got nabbed, the whole game would be up; but if you go for me, Jossey, I'll make my fortune, and yours, too, pippin. Mosenstein Consols 'll go flying up sky high, and it won't be a matter of thousands then, Jossey. It'll be millions, my boy—millions, and you shall have your share when you come out, never fear.

“You know if you were left to yourself, Jossey, you'd never make a thousand in a century of blue moons, let alone ten thousand in three years or so. Come, now, what do you say? You'll have to look sharp, for they may be here any minute— Ah, yes, I thought so; there's the official knock. Now don't act the goat, and fly in the face of good fortune. Here's the gonivahs. That's it, in

your waistcoat pocket. Now, button your coat. That'll do!

"Well, gentlemen, good-evening. What can I do for you this evening, if it isn't morning already?"

"You can hand over that parcel of diamonds you got from Frank Ridley to-night, Mr. Mosenstein, and then you can come with us," replied Inspector Lipinzki politely, but still a trifle stiffly. "I've a search-warrant here, but you'll save us a lot of trouble, and yourself and household a lot of inconvenience, by passing over the stones at once. We know they're in the house."

"Then you know a mighty lot more about my house than I do myself, Mr. Lipinzki," snapped the little man somewhat viciously. "There are no diamonds here but what are my own lawful property; and they're all cut stones, so I'm afraid I can't give you what you've come for. But of course if you've

got a warrant you can act on it—though it's a piece of most unwarrantable tyranny. And this a British colony, too. Why don't they call it a penal settlement and have done with it? Shall I ask my wife to get up and come down?"

"I hope there'll be no necessity for that," replied the inspector, with a pleasant smile. "But now, gentlemen, we must get to work, please. It isn't pleasant for any of us, I know; but it's our duty, and it must be done."

The formality resulted exactly as the astute Mickey had predicted it would. The diamonds—a parcel of stones worth about two hundred pounds at first cost—were promptly found in Jossey's pocket, and he played the tyro in I.D.B. with a perfection that was by no means all art.

Mickey, of course, did the virtuously indignant relative and disappointed benefactor

without a flaw, not only at the moment of discovery, but at the police-court the next morning. So well, indeed, did both play their parts, that, to Inspector Lipinzki's intense disgust, the magistrate refused to send the chief criminal to the Special Court for trial, and so, after providing generously for the defence of his erring relative, he left the court-house a triumphantly white-washed man.

At the next sitting of the Special Court Jossey got five years, and the same train which took him to Cape Town happened, also, to take Mrs. Michael Mosenstein, who, for reasons of health, had been advised to take a trip to Europe to avoid the worst of the hot season in Kimberley. Inspector Lipinzki still had his suspicions, but even they did not go so far as to put a value of about thirty thousand pounds on the high and hollow heels of the lady's dainty French-made boots.

II.

NEARLY five years later, Michael Mosenstein, Esq., was sitting at the writing-table in the library of his town residence in Lancaster Gate.

He was reading a letter, and swearing softly under his breath at every line of it. When he had read it through for the second time, he crushed it up in his hand, stuffed it into his trouser pocket, went and stood on the hearthrug, with his short, sturdy legs wide apart, and said to a life-sized portrait of himself which hung in the middle of the opposite wall :

“ No, bust *me* if I do ! I’ve been generous to both of them, and I can’t stick it any longer. I’ll give ’em just another thousand apiece for old times’ sake, and that’s the lot.



He stood on the hearthrug with his legs wide apart.

Half-a-million apiece—whew! Why don't they ask for the whole caboodle at once? I'll see them selling fried fish first!"

The explanation of this resolution may be briefly given as follows. Thanks to exemplary behaviour and a certain amount of judiciously applied influence, Mr. Mosenstein's scapegoat had got off with a little over three years. The day he came out he received the welcome but not unexpected intelligence that, through the death of a relative in London, he had come into about five thousand pounds ready cash, and property and securities yielding about another thousand a year.

The same evening he renewed the acquaintance of Frank Ridley, who had been discharged without any assigned reason a few weeks after the great *coup* which had proved so worthless to him. The bank had been advised by cable that a leaf had been stolen

out of Mr. Mosenstein's London cheque-book and cautioned not to cash any cheques without further notice. Hence the first £2,500 had not been paid. The I.O.U. Mr. Mosenstein had laughed at. The stones had cost him quite enough already, or would do before he had done with Jossey, and he didn't propose to pay any more.

It was a case of dog eating dog, but Ridley could do nothing without disclosing the whole transaction, and that would mean not less than ten years on the Breakwater for him, so he grinned and bore it, and waited till Jossey came out.

Meanwhile Mr. Mosenstein grew and flourished exceedingly. Everything he touched turned either to gold or diamonds—though he never touched anything illicit after the last big deal.

He was quite a great man now, but, as everyone knows him, there is no need to

repeat that, and there was not a cloud on his financial or social horizon save his connection with Jossey and the present impossibility of getting introductions to Court.

He had given Ridley a couple of thousands in cash on Jossey's strong representation, and fondly thought that would settle his unprovable claim for good ; but that was just where he had made the biggest mistake of his life. Jossey came out of penal servitude a very different person to the shiftless ne'er-do-weel that he was when he entered it. It had done him a lot of good. It had put backbone into him, and, besides, he had learnt many things that he wotted not of before.

After more than three years of penal toil and discipline, embittered by deprivation of all creature comforts, it was only in the course of nature that when he regained his freedom and found himself in command of

plenty of money, he should be strongly inclined to compensate himself for his vicarious sufferings on a somewhat liberal scale.

It was in this humour that Ridley had found him. He had made a little money, more or less honestly, since his discharge, and so there was no suggestion of sponging. But he was very sore still about the cheque and the I.O.U., and in Jossey he thought he saw the means of getting square with the millionaire who had done him such an unscrupulous "shot in the eye."

To this end he worked both skilfully and successfully on the ex-convict's feelings, until he came to look upon himself as a martyr and Michael Mosenstein as a monster of ingratitude. What were a few paltry thousands to the millions that he was literally rolling in—the millions which would never have been his if he, Joshua, had not borne

the penalty of his crime? He had the plainest right to a good substantial share of them, and so, too, for the matter of that, had the man from whom Mickey had so dishonestly obtained the stones on which his new fortunes had been founded.

As time went on these arguments were very strongly inforced by the fact that the aforesaid "paltry thousands" did not go very far when Mr. Joshua Mosenstein had once learnt the joys of spending money with the cheerful freedom that is born of a sure and certain hope that when it is done there will be plenty more forthcoming. The logical result was that the two worthies, now fast friends and allies in a common object, had made demand after demand on the apparently bottomless purse of the multi-millionaire, until at last a certain fact had come to their knowledge which, after due deliberation together, had inspired them to write the joint

letter that had so disturbed Michael Mosenstein's equanimity.

They travelled home by the same mail-boat which carried their letter, and on the morning following its delivery they paid a visit to the millionaire at his West End mansion. The interview was not exactly a friendly one. Mr. Mosenstein blustered, and his visitors quietly but firmly doubled their already exorbitant demands.

The man of millions threatened to have them put into the street, and broadly hinted at the advisability of giving them into custody as blackmailers. That brought matters to a head in a somewhat dramatic fashion. The ex-sorter took out his pocket-book and produced from it half a sheet of note-paper, on which was pasted a short newspaper cutting. He handed it to the millionaire and said :

“That's from the *Cape Times*, Mr. Mosenstein. Do you think you could throw any

light on the subject? I have an idea that you could, especially with our assistance. De Beers would give a good deal to know how that stone got away. I believe they would even accept me as Queen's evidence to get the mystery cleared up. What do *you* think?"

With slowly widening eyes and sinking heart, the man of many millions and more ambitions read the cutting. It ran thus :

“ The King of the Belgians has just indulged his well-known taste for gems by the addition to his already priceless collection of a magnificent rose - coloured diamond, weighing nearly thirty carats in its cut state. His Majesty is rumoured to have paid the enormous price of a thousand pounds a carat to the Amsterdam merchant of whom he bought it. In colour and water it is the exact counterpart of the famous rose-diamond

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in the De Beers collection, but it is much larger.

“Its origin is involved in some little mystery. The merchants from whom His Majesty purchased it affirm that the dealer from whom they bought it declared that it was an ancient Eastern gem re-cut in Amsterdam; but experts who have seen it state with equal positiveness that it is a Kimberley stone.

“A rumour reaches us from Diamondopolis that a certain kaffir, who has since disappeared, boasted one night in his cups, just after he had been discharged from the Kimberley Compound, that he had found the biggest *rooi-klippe* (red stone) that ever was found on the Fields. If this is true, the stone never reached the diamond room at De Beers. It is just possible that some of the I.D.B. fraternity could throw some light on the subsequent wanderings of the ‘mooi rooi-klippe’ of which the vanished kaffir boasted.”

Frank Ridley and Joshua Mosenstein watched the millionaire's changing face narrowly as he read. When they saw that he had finished, Ridley said quietly :

“I can find that kaffir if necessary, Mr. Mosenstein. Of course, the Diamond Law does not hold good in this country, but the laws as to conspiracy and dealing in stolen goods do. If De Beers prosecuted, they would find my evidence worth buying. Jossey here has done his time, and could make a clean breast of it without fear ; and so the only one who could be touched would be—”

“Oh, that'll do !” exclaimed the millionaire, in a last burst of despairing anger. “What do you want ?”

“I want half a million down, and another half in approved securities—preferably De Beers,” replied Ridley ; “and as a matter of principle, I must have that cheque in favour

of Miss Ransome duly honoured. A millionaire's wife should be above suspicion."

"And I want a million, too," chimed in Jossey, "same way as Frank wants his. And what's more, Mickey Mosenstein," he went on, shaking his finger in his face, "as you disgraced me by sending me to the Breakwater for your crime, you must restore my credit in the eyes of the society that I mean to go into now by making your wife let me marry that pretty little sister Rebecca of hers. I 'ave loved her all my life and she was always fond of me, and she'll have me when I'm a millionaire. I daresay you can spare her a decent marriage portion."

They were big terms, but Mr. Mosenstein did not yet despair of being introduced into London society, and so in the end he yielded. A few weeks later, two new-made South African millionaires, one English and one Hebrew, blossomed forth, each in his congenial

sphere of London society. A little later on there were two splendid weddings, and, until these lines appear in print, the mystery of the King's Rose Diamond will remain unsolved.



Jossey is made happy.

IV.

THE FINDING OF DIAMOND PAN.

“It’s no good, little girl ; I’ve seen it coming for weeks, and, now that it has come, we may as well look it in the face. It isn’t nice, but we’ve got to. I’m frozen clean out, and I’d better strike out a new line of some sort before I have to pay with my liberty when I can’t pay any longer with my purse.”

“But do you mean to tell me, Tom, that such a horrible injustice as that can be possible? That just because you haven’t got as much money, and can’t employ as many kaffirs as Macadam and that German Jew partner of his, Grünstein, you’ll not only have to lose your claim, but be fined like this to

your last sovereign! I don't wonder, upon my word, at men being driven from honest work into I.D.B., or anything else, when there are laws like that on the Fields. Why, it's worse than I.D.B. itself! Here they'll give a man fifteen years on the Break-water for just being found with diamonds he can't account for strictly enough to please the detectives, and yet they'll allow one man to ruin another, and perhaps spoil all his prospects in life, just because he is richer, and because he has got a grudge against him. It's shameful! that's what it is, and if I had my way, and I was a man, I'd—"

"No, you wouldn't, little girl; or if you did there'd only be another funeral very soon after. There is only one law here, and that is the law of money. Everyone's here to make it, and everyone, whether he's an honest man or a thief, is bound to uphold everything that protects it. If you have money you can

do as you please, but if you haven't you might as well try to hold up the next rock-slip on your back as try to work against it. If I was to take it out of either Macadam or Grünstein in the way you mean, there wouldn't be a man in camp to put his hand out to save me from being lynched the next minute, though there isn't a kaffir or a kopje-walloper on the Fields who doesn't see the swindle.

“ But what makes me maddest of all, Lucy, is that it isn't only Macadam's grudge against me for hanging on to that stone which fell with some of my blue into his claim. It's that greasy, hook-nosed son of a thief Grünstein being spoons on you, and wanting me out of the place, so that, as he thinks, he can have the running to himself. That's why he keeps Macadam up to it and goes in with him, and that's why I've hung on so long.

“ But it's no use any longer. I can't go on,

and I'd better stop before I'm ruined completely. In another week I shouldn't have even the claim to sell. Now I can get something for it, and with that I'll have to clear off the Fields and try my luck over the border. It's my only chance. It looks like chucking up the sponge, I know, and I don't like it, especially as it means leaving you, little girl, almost alone; but if I were to hang on, it would really be playing their game for them."

"Well, I suppose you're right, Tom, and if it can't be helped, it can't. But never mind, we're both of us young enough yet, and you've all Africa before you. I know you'll do your best—and, Tom, you can remember this, that however long you are doing it, when you come back you'll find me just the same as I am now. A bit older, of course, but not so very old, I hope, that you'll—"

The conversation came to an abrupt end just here, or perhaps it might be more correct

to say that it was continued in a language which is not translatable through the cold and unsympathetic medium of print.

The facts which had so far formed the basis of the conversation between Miss Lucy Carnegie, the daughter of a fairly well-to-do diamond broker, and Mr. Tom Burrows, a not particularly prosperous diamond miner, may be briefly summarised as follows :

In the days of the open mine-working at the De Beers and Kimberley mines, there existed a law which was the cause of much heart-burning and no little injustice among miners. A digger was compelled, under penalty of progressive fines, which either amounted to, or actually culminated in, confiscation of his claim, to keep pace in removing his "blue" with his next-door neighbour to such an extent as to preclude his ground falling into his neighbour's claim. Such a regulation was really a necessity, but, at the



It was continued in a language which is not translatable.

same time, it is obvious that it might be made an instrument of both tyranny and dishonesty by fortunate and wealthy diggers to freeze out their less prosperous neighbours by driving them either to abandon their claim, or to sell it at an absurdly low price.

This is what had happened to Tom Burrows. His next neighbours, Macadam and Grünstein, were both richer men than himself, and they owned claims on both sides of his. He had quarrelled with Macadam, and Grünstein disliked him, and wanted to get rid of him for the reasons which he stated to his sweetheart. Hence they put all the kaffir workmen they could hire into their claims, and got out their "blue" at a rate which Burrows, with his two kaffirs and one Bushman, could not possibly keep pace with.

The necessary result was that his ground kept falling into theirs far faster than he could get it removed. His neighbours laid

the usual informations against him, and time after time he was summoned and fined for failing to obey the law. The fines and the extra expense that he had been forced into for labour had now almost exhausted his resources, and, as he said, if it went on much longer he would lose his claim. This would have meant utter ruin and the deferring of his hopes for an indefinite time, and hence his resolve to throw up the sponge, as he put it, and end the unequal contest.

The next day he sold his claim to his victorious neighbours at about a third of its value, and that night went home to his little tin shanty in Currey Street in no very cheerful or amiable frame of mind, but still by no means despondent. He was young, hearty, and athletic. He possessed nearly two hundred pounds, and, as he believed, a sweetheart who would be as faithful as she was good and pretty. All Africa was open to him, and

there were even bigger prizes to be drawn in the fascinating lottery of diamond digging than there had been in the rosiest days of the Victorian and Californian gold-fields.

For all that, he didn't like the idea of being beaten, and still less did he like the idea of leaving Kimberley without taking his sweetheart with him, as he had hoped to do when they had plighted their troth some six months before. Yet, as he had said, there was no help for it. There were no other claims worth having within reach of his means, and he could only remain in camp by taking a berth as overseer or something of that sort, which, of course, would offer no prospect of that sudden rise to wealth which, in common with every other digger on the Fields, he had so confidently anticipated, and which alone could realise the hopes that he cherished on a certain subject which lay very near to his heart.

Now there is a well-known fact which writers of fiction have, very naturally, plagiarised to a considerable extent. It is—generally and more especially in such gambles with destiny as diamond-hunting and gold-digging—that a man's fortunes change for the better, if they are going to do so at all, just when he seems to have the best reasons for accusing the Fates of using loaded dice to his disadvantage. It is also true that under such circumstances the capricious Fates delight to bring about the change through some apparently inadequate and often disreputable agency.

It was just this way with Tom Burrows. Shortly after he had begun on his claim he had, to all intents and purposes, bought a Bushman from a white digger whom he one day found ill-using him a little worse than a Shoreditch savage is accustomed to use his wife. He had expostulated with the digger,

who told him in terms of almost sulphurous eloquence to mind his own business. For the next four minutes and a half by the clock the Bushman had a rest, and his master, when he had decided that he had really been in a fight and not an earthquake, was not in a position to go on with his licking.

The next proceeding was an adjournment to the nearest bar, where Tom stood the digger a drink, paid the value of the trifle which he had accused the Bushman of stealing, and so secured his consent to the immediate transfer of his services. That : the kind of man Tom was.

Now, this Bushman, who was known on the Fields as Shirty—from the fact that he was the only one of his kind who possessed a shirt, or even a fragment of one, worn in the fashion of the white man—was a dirty, drunken, disreputable little savage. Like the rest of his species, he had received but few advantages

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from Nature, and even these he had not turned to any account.



Shirty.

A dispassionate estimate would have placed

him considerably lower in the scale of respectability than a decently-brought-up dog, but in one respect at least he would not have suffered by comparison with a dog. Though he only dimly grasped what it meant, he had never forgotten the one kindness that had been done him during the course of his sordid and degraded existence, and so it happened that, in the weird arrangement of human things, he was able to repay it with magnificent interest.

Of course he knew of the sale of the claim. His new master had treated him firmly but still with no approach to brutality, and he had no taste to change his service for that of Macadam or Grünstein. The first thing he did on receiving his dismissal, and the last of his wages, was to go and have a drink of Cape Smoke, and it seemed as though some occult virtue in that commonly fatal fluid kindled somewhere within the recesses of his

half-developed little brain a ray of real independent intelligence.

He didn't take a second drink, and, more wonderful still, he seemed to know that if he had done so he would have gone on as long as his money lasted or he could see to get the stuff into his mouth. He went right away, as a dog who hears his master's whistle would have done, to Tom's shanty. Tom was there in the middle of a very brown study, and he greeted his late retainer somewhat gruffly. But Shirty did not mind this; he was accustomed to it.

Humbly but insistently he took him by the edge of his coat and drew him to the door and out into the open air. It was a clear, magnificently-starry night, and when they got out, Shirty began pointing at the stars and muttering in his queer, guttural voice, with many clicks and grunts, and in an almost hopeless mixture of English, Dutch,

and his own language, about some place where there were as many of the "sheeney klippies" which people found in the mines as there were stars in the sky. Moreover, those same stars would show him, Shirty, how to guide the good white Baas to the place where they were.

Tom did not get at the meaning of this all at once, but when he did, and he had satisfied himself, first, that Shirty was not drunk, and secondly, that he was very much in earnest, he took him back into the hut and put him through a stiff and lengthy cross-examination, the result of which was that Shirty—after coming to the end of his vocabulary—went down on his hands and knees on the mud floor, and with an old knife and certain bits of stick, drew lines and made dots, and stuck the bits of stick upright at equal distances from each other, until there were thirty of them in a line reaching half-way across the floor.

Tom got the key to the hieroglyphics by recognising that the dots were intended to show the positions of the bigger and brighter stars which Shirty had pointed out to him during his preliminary discourse outside ; and ultimately, after considerable study and much talk in mixed languages, he arrived at the definite conclusion that somewhere, thirty days' journey out to the north-west, over the arid wildernesses of the great and terrible Thirstland, there was a half-dried river whose bed was strewn with diamonds as thickly as some streams were with pebbles.

Then straightway arose the question as to how much confidence he might have in his guide. Was it worth while, on such evidence, to plunge into that awful wilderness whose only known history was one of hunger and thirst and sufferings unspeakable, which had been endured by the few who had come back out of the many who had essayed to cross

it, in the hope of finding better lands beyond?

If the question had faced him at any other time, he would probably have dismissed it with scant consideration. But just now he was in the same frame of mind as that in which a man, who is having a fight to a finish with bad luck, planks the remains of his dwindling pile on the turn-up of a single card or the chance of a single number. If Shirty's story of the river of diamonds was only a half, a quarter, or even a hundredth part true, and he could get there and come back, he would return not only a rich man, but a man of many millions.

He thought about it nearly all night. Then he went to bed and slept on it. When he woke, soon after daybreak, he heard himself half-unconsciously muttering:

“Millions! Millions!”

He accepted the omen, and decided to go.

That day he bought his outfit—a very light waggon, something after the American spider build, four good draught mules, a horse for himself, a tent, and the rest of a prospector's usual kit—and at dawn the next morning he started. He had told no one, not even his sweetheart, the real object of his journey. He saw no use in raising in her breast dazzling hopes which might, after all, end in the whitening of a few bones in some unknown spot far away out yonder over the wilderness, and to have confided in anyone else would have been madness.

Plenty of diggers went prospecting in those days, squeezed out by the constantly growing pressure of the new companies that were being formed to buy up and unite the richest claims; so all he said was that he was going to do as these did, and, without further explanation, turned his back on the camp, and his face towards the long straight line

which marked the seeming meeting-place of the endless veld and the endless sky.

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Forty days later, half-a-dozen heavy-winged *aas-vogels* were wheeling slowly to and fro in the dead, breathless air, looking down in hideous anticipation at two slowly moving figures which were dragging themselves, seemingly with the last efforts of their lives, over the frightful wilderness of sand and stone and dwarfed thorny shrubs, which stretched away in a ghastly monotony of unbroken level till the wearied eye could see no further. One was the figure of a man, the other that of a mule. Two biggish bundles were slung across the mule's saddle. They were neither very big nor very heavy, yet every now and then the mule stumbled feebly under them. The man had tied his left hand to the saddle, and in his right he had a whip-stock, which he was using

half as a walking-stick and half as a crutch.

His eyes were three-parts closed, and his head hung down till his chin touched his breast, and rolled slowly from side to side with the motion of his body. His mouth was half open, and the tip of his tongue protruded a little between his dry, black, cracked lips. It was as dry and black as they were, and if you could have put your ear close to his face you would have heard his teeth grating upon it.

Every now and then one or two of the vultures would swoop down a little lower to investigate, as though wondering when it would be safe to begin the promised banquet. It would probably have begun before this but for one fact which the vultures didn't see, or, if they did, didn't understand. The mule's tongue was hanging out of one side of her mouth, dry and black like the man's, but her



Every now and then one or two of the vultures would swoop down.

head was stretched out straight, her eyes, though half-glazed, were wide open, and her nostrils were distended and quivering.

She smelt water, and she was going towards it. It might be near or far, but as long as she could put one hoof before the other she would stagger on in that direction, swerving neither to right nor left till she reached the water, or dropped dead in her tracks.

Tom Burrows knew this, and that was why he had tied himself to the saddle. The mule was the better animal now, and her instinct had to take the place of the human reason that had failed. If she reached the water he would reach it, if not—well, it would do her no injury if he had to cut her throat to gain strength enough to struggle on a little farther.

This was, so far, the end of his expedition, and the outcome of his hopes. Poor little Shirty's body had, more than a week ago,

been assimilated into the system of a starving lion, his horse had died of the "big head" sickness before that, one of his mules had strayed, and by this time no doubt its bones were picked clean. Two others had taken the sickness, and had died the same night. The waggon stood abandoned five or six days' journey back, and here he was, with the strongest and wiriest of his animals, worn to a skeleton like himself, and half mad with thirst, within scent of water, it was true, but within sight of nothing but the bare, baked wildernesses around, and the blazing white-hot heavens above.

Hour after hour passed in dumb, hopeless struggling, and blind, half-conscious suffering, and still man and beast staggered on, and the wheeling vultures came lower and closer.

At last, about the middle of the afternoon, the mule stopped, and a sort of shudder ran through her body. Tom stumbled, and

would have fallen, if his hand had not been fast to the saddle. As if the stoppage had roused him out of his slumber, he pulled himself up ; his reason seemed to be awakening for a last struggle with delirium, and he raised his head and looked about him, and tried to remember where he was, and what had happened to him.

Had the mule given out at last? Her knees were shaking, and her head drooping. This was the end, then. He dropped his stick and fumbled for his knife to cut his left hand loose, so that— No, the mule didn't fall ; she raised her head again. A horrible sound, like a human death-rattle, seemed to come out of her dried throat, and then she started forward again. He staggered on beside her, feeling a vague sort of anger at the necessity for any more exertion. Presently the ground began to dip a little, then more and more, and the mule hobbled on quicker and

quicker, making the noise in its throat almost continuously.

Was she coming to water at last? Tom pulled himself together once more, rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand, and looked about him. He saw lakes and rivers and plashing cascades whose waters made no sound; but he had seen those every day—every hour almost—since the thirst-madness began, ever in the skies, not on the earth, and he was not quite mad enough yet not to know that.

But stop—if there was no water on earth there surely had been some here once. He rubbed his eyes harder, till he even brought a little moisture into them. That cleared his sight, and he saw that the mule had brought him to a little shallow valley, and that along the middle of it there ran a string of patches of sand, broken by worn boulders and lumps of dry-baked, grey-blue earth that had once been mud.

The mule tottered to one of the sand patches and thrust her nose into the sand with a hoarse, rattling grunt. At the same moment it flashed across Tom's half-clouded mind that water is often found beneath the dry beds of vanished African streams. He cut his hand loose, flung himself down on the sand, and began to dig with his knife feebly but desperately. The mule, meanwhile, began scraping with her fore-hoofs, and this encouraged him to go on. He broke the sand up with the knife-blade, and scooped it out with his hands. Presently the knife-blade began to rattle and clink against pebbles in the sand, and when the hole was about a foot deep there were more stones than sand.

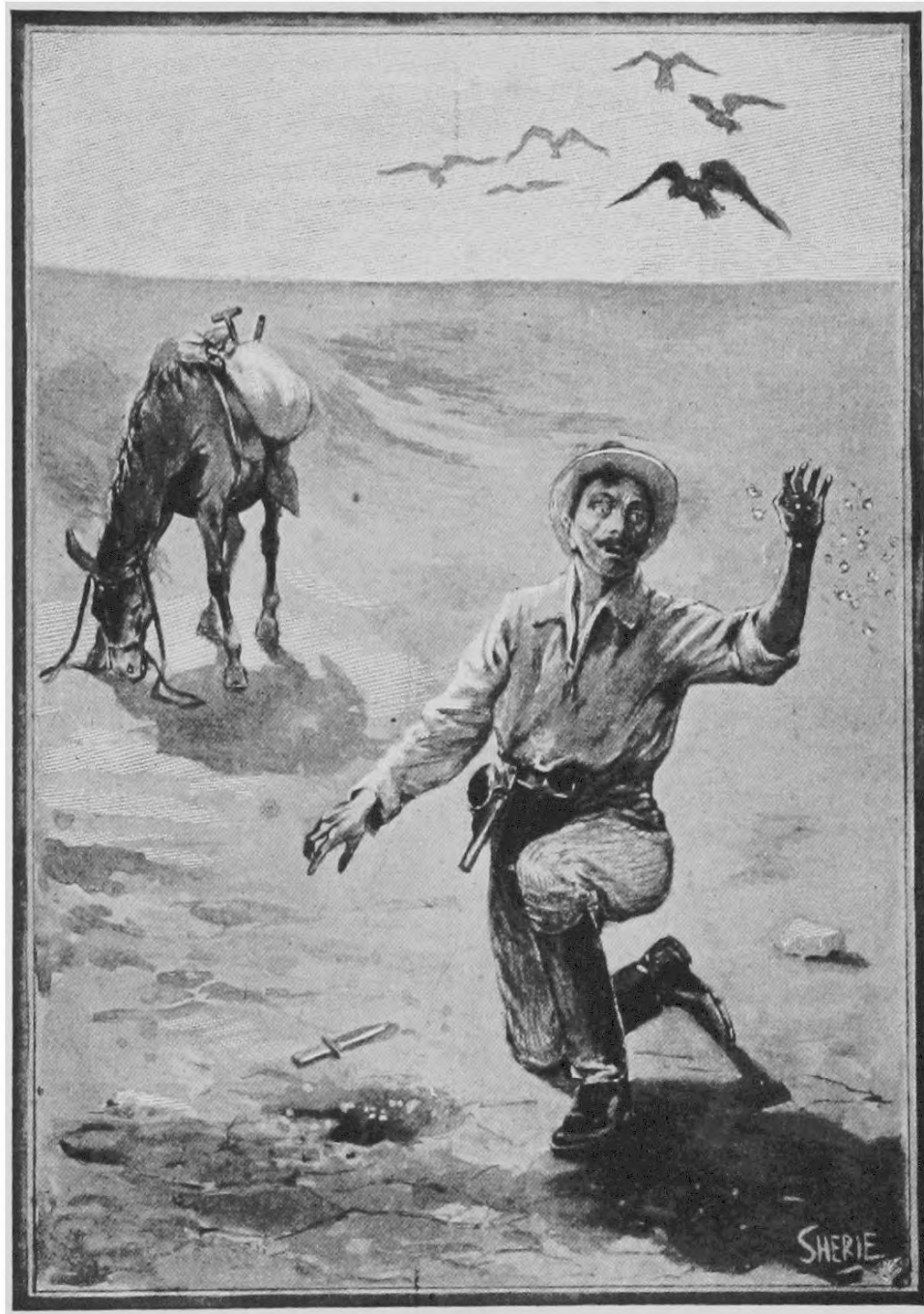
He thrust his hands down and brought up a double handful of them. He happened to look at them before he threw them away, and as he did so a sound something like what the mule was making came from his throat. The

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pebbles were diamonds of all sizes and colours, and in his two hands there he probably held a 'hundred thousand pounds' worth. He flung them away with a cry that it would not have done anyone much good to hear. What were all the diamonds in the world worth in comparison to half a pint of water?

He thrust his hands into the hole again. This time he uttered a very different cry, for now the stones at the bottom were wet. He grubbed them up and threw them out, now with frantic energy—thousands and thousands of pounds' worth of them. The mule put her nose among them, and seemed to draw the moisture off them with her breath. That was all the good they were just then.

After a few more minutes of hard work a little water—real liquid water!—collected at the bottom of the hole. He tried to thrust his head into it so that he could get his lips to the water, but it was too small, so he made



He fung them away with a cry.

a cup of his hands and put them against his mouth, and in that instant he passed from the torments of Hell to the joys of Paradise. His lips and tongue seemed to melt as the water touched them, and his thickening blood pulsed with new life already.

He was brought out of his ecstasy by the mule thrusting its nose down into the hole. He tried to drag it back; he might as well have tried to drag a tree up by its roots. For a few mad moments man and beast fought for the water. He kicked her, and even struck her with the knife, but she was too busy even to notice it. Then the delirium left him again. There was a light short spade and a little prospector's pick tied between the two bundles on the mule's back. He cut them adrift and went to another patch and began to dig, leaving his beast to enjoy what she had earned so well.

He soon got to the water this time. There

was plenty of it, apparently, under the whole river bed ; plenty, no doubt, to wash out the diamondiferous earth ; perhaps even enough with proper management to run a little crushing mill if ever they should come to hard "blue."

There is no miracle so great as the change that a drink of sweet, fresh water will make in a man who is dying with thirst. If the Elixir of Life had been discovered it could have made no greater change in a man at the point of death. Madness becomes sanity, agony becomes a delight of physical existence, and the desert that was a Hell before seems a Paradise in those first few minutes of new life.

In less than half-an-hour after he had staggered into the valley, Tom Burrows was sitting on a boulder with a tin pannikin of water in one hand and a strip of biltong in the other, enjoying himself thoroughly. The mule

had drunk her fill, and was now munching contentedly at some very indigestible-looking herbage that she had found under one of the banks of the underground river.

“Millions! Millions! Here they are at last, if I can only get them back!” exclaimed the man who, half-an-hour before, could not have articulated two words distinctly to save his life; and as he said this he turned over with his foot a couple of spadefuls of sand and pebbles and diamonds, which he had thrown up out of his water-hole close by the boulder.

“I wonder what the folks in camp would say to this—and how the deuce I’m going to get back? Sinbad’s Valley of Diamonds would be a fool to this, I reckon, if it was properly dug up. Poor little Shirty, he was right after all, though it was the mule that got me here. That mule may turn out worth a good many millions if I do get back—yes,

but that's the question. Well, I've found the place anyhow—fancy a river with diamonds for pebbles! That's what it comes to. I wonder where this river goes to?

“Why, what an ass I am!” he suddenly cried, jumping up to his feet. “Of course I shall get back. These rivers always come to the surface some time, or open into some other river, and I'll work along this one till it does. It may take a few months, but that doesn't matter now. I'm bound to get somewhere in time.”

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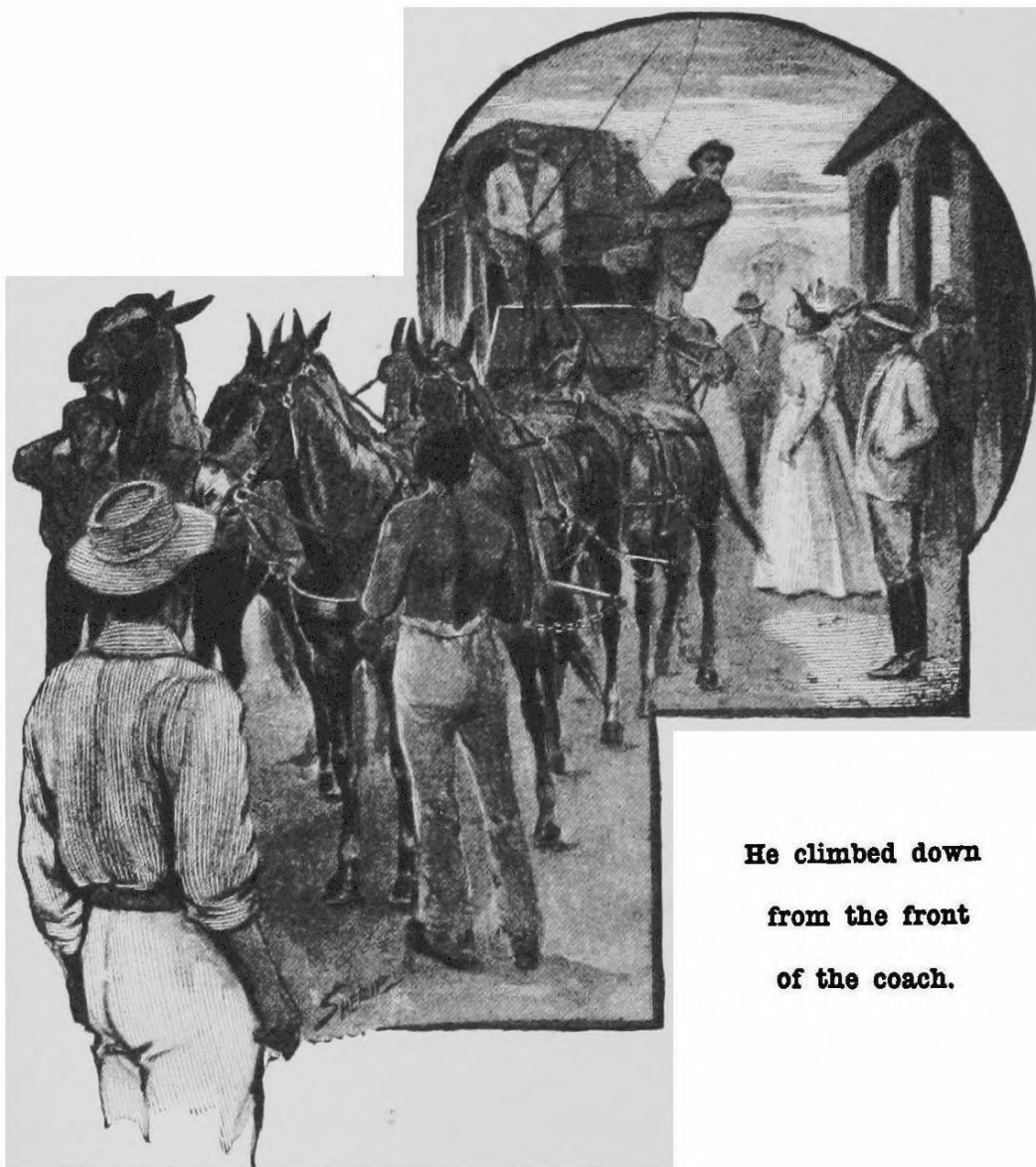
It took him nearly four months of incessant toil to do it, but the hope within him was now too strong for hunger or thirst, or weariness to conquer it, and so in the end he and the mule both reached the sea at Waalfisch Bay, and there he sold the mule that had unconsciously led him to the new Golconda which was hidden away in the wilderness from all

eyes but his, and then took ship to Port Elizabeth.

He would have stopped at Cape Town, but he knew that to try and sell any of the rough diamonds that he had brought with him there would at once land him in endless difficulties, for of course he could only account for the possession of them by telling the truth, which, probably, no one would believe, even if he had a mind to tell it, which he had not. But at Port Elizabeth there were plenty of respectable citizens who would buy a few thousand pounds' worth of gems from him without asking a question, provided that he let them have them cheap enough, and what did that matter to a man who knew how to go straight to a place where diamonds were as plentiful as the pebbles by the seashore?

He had been close on seven months away when he at length climbed down from the front of the coach at the Kimberley Post-

office. Miss Carnegie had, of course, already been advised of his arrival by telegram, and



**He climbed down
from the front
of the coach.**

equally of course she was there to meet him.

It also happened that an intimate friend and co-patriot of Mr. Grünstein had been a traveller by the same coach, and had brought with him certain vague, but by no means comforting, particulars as to the late exile's present means and future prospects.

Mr. Grünstein had watched Tom Burrows depart into the wilderness with undisguised, and indeed frankly expressed, satisfaction. He was himself getting to be a rich man now, and after Tom's departure he had succeeded in ingratiating himself with Miss Carnegie's father, even if he had not made much progress with the young lady herself. Still, granted that the more favoured suitor should vanish, a mere adventurer and a practically ruined man, into the wilderness never to return, there were no reasonable reasons why present wealth and respectability should not ultimately triumph over absent uncertainty, however romantic it might be.

But now absent romance had unexpectedly become a present reality, and from what Mr. Grünstein heard from his friend, it was pretty heavily gilded. Divested of imaginative trimmings, certain facts had leaked out, and so reached Mr. Grünstein's ears, either through Tom's own indiscretion or that of some of the gentlemen he had had dealings with in Port Elizabeth. He had come back from somewhere, evidently a very different locality from that for which he had started, with a large number of rough diamonds of extraordinary size, colour, and purity in his possession. Of these he had sold, at very easy prices, some four to five thousand pounds' worth at Port Elizabeth. That he had others still in hand seemed sufficiently clear from the fact that one of the Port Elizabeth merchants had vainly endeavoured to buy a magnificent orange-coloured stone of over a hundred carats.

Now from Mr. Grünstein's point of view it was sufficiently aggravating that the wanderer should return at all ; but that he should come back after some seven months' absence, certainly the possessor of thousands, and possibly the discoverer of some unknown diamond-field, and therefore the potential possessor of millions, was something a great deal worse. It meant the ruin of Mr. Grünstein's dearest hopes, and possibly it might mean retaliation for what had gone before—a retaliation which now, as then, the possession of superior wealth would make easy.

He saw the meeting between Miss Carnegie and the returned wanderer, and went away with his heart full of bitterness and dark thoughts to take counsel with his partner. Mr. Macadam was a man who made it his boast that he never forgave an injury, great or small, and he had not yet forgiven Tom Burrows, for it is notoriously a difficult thing

to forgive those whom we have injured without just cause.

It will be necessary here to explain that during Tom Burrows' absence from Kimberley the Amalgamation had taken place. The great De Beers Corporation now governed the Fields with irresistible sway, and the last and most drastic of the Diamond Laws had been passed. This was, of course, perfectly well known to Messrs. Grünstein and Macadam, if not to the discoverer of the New Golconda, and the result of about half-an-hour's interview between them, and of certain immediately subsequent information conveyed to Inspector Lipinzki, was an official visit to the house of Miss Carnegie's father, where Mr. Tom Burrows was discovered in the act of showing such a collection of rough diamonds to his sweetheart and her now smiling parents as had never been seen in Griqualand West before.

In the course of the exciting and somewhat painful scene which followed, the owner of the diamonds absolutely refused to give any satisfactory account of their possession, and strenuously insisted on his hosts keeping the pledge they had given, and holding their tongues—upon which the inspector and his men did their obvious duty under the circumstances, seized the diamonds, walked Master Tom off to prison, and warned the Carnegies—father, mother, and daughter—that they would have to appear the next morning at the police-court as witnesses, and that any attempt at flight would be both useless and disastrous.

When his case came on the next day, Tom was amazed, and Miss Lucy and her parents were not a little dismayed, at the formidable array of evidence that was given in support of the charge of illicit dealing and unlawful possession. The accused obstinately held

his tongue, and they had bound themselves by a solemn promise to do likewise. There was, therefore, no evidence for the defence beyond the bald and unsupported statement that the diamonds in question had not come out of any mine in Griqualand West or within the jurisdiction of the Cape Government.

But, on the other hand, Mr. Grünstein and his friend, Tom's fellow-traveller from Port Elizabeth, deliberately swore, the one that Thomas Burrows had had illicit dealing with certain kaffirs employed in the mines, and the other that he had taken a very valuable parcel of rough stones from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, and there disposed of some of them at the usual prices asked by illicit traffickers. This evidence was supported by that of three "converted" kaffirs, who could usually be bought on the Fields for such nefarious purposes, to the effect that they

had seen certain of these very stones purchased by a Polish Jew who had since fled the country.

The theory of the prosecution, therefore, was that the accused had all along been engaged in the illicit traffic, and that his departure into the wilderness, and his absence from the Fields, were merely parts of an elaborate scheme for obtaining credence to a cock-and-bull story that was only a flimsy covering for illicit dealings on a gigantic scale.

It was a pretty flimsy theory, certainly, but the prosecuting counsel made the most of it, and there was not a shred of evidence to contradict it, so the case was sent for trial to the Special Court, bail was refused, and Mr. Grünstein congratulated himself on having successfully annulled his rival's mysterious good-fortune, and earned for himself and his fellow-conspirators the ten per cent. reward on an exceedingly valuable capture.

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It was, however, noticed that the accused, so far from recognising the perilous position in which he stood, seemed to treat the whole affair as a joke, and, as a matter of fact, the magistrate had more than once to reprove him for unseemly hilarity during the giving of the evidence for the prosecution.

That afternoon the Secretary of De Beers Company received through Inspector Lipincki a letter from the prisoner requesting him, in the interests of the whole diamond trade of the world, to call upon him that evening, and bring with him the inspector and one of the Directors of De Beers, whom Tom had known intimately before his departure. They went, and, having pledged their honour to secrecy, they received from him a detailed and circumstantial account of his adventures, from which only one particular was omitted, and that was the locality and exact position of the New Golconda, which could only be

discovered by means of the map which its discoverer had made, and which would be as hard, if not harder, to find than Diamond Pan itself. There is no need to reproduce the interview in detail ; it will be sufficient to say that towards its close the prisoner said very quietly, but with all the air of a man who knows what he is talking about and means to stick to what he says :

“ Now, gentlemen, I have told you nearly all that I intend you to know for the present. You can believe me or do the other thing, just as you please. Granted that you don't, it is quite possible that I may be convicted and sent to the Breakwater, but now I will give you one more fact. If that happens, I shall not have served twelve months of my sentence before the markets of the world will be flooded with diamonds such as the mines of Kimberley never have produced and never will. They shall be so cheap that every

servant girl shall be able to blaze with them if she likes, and when they are as cheap as, or cheaper than, their imitations, I fancy you will find the monopoly of De Beers as unsaleable a commodity as the diamonds which it then won't pay to produce.

“On the other hand, if the prosecution is withdrawn, as I suggest, and those who have conspired to ruin me are properly punished, I will conduct an expedition, half of which shall be selected by myself and half by you, to the place I have spoken of. If you find that I have lied to you, well, you may shoot me on the spot, and say that a lion got me for all I care, but if you find that what I say is correct, and that there really exists a whole valley paved with diamonds, such as you have seen to-day, to an unknown depth, then you will give me a share in the De Beers Consolidated Mines to the value of a million, and, in consideration of that, I will make an agreement

with you giving you a half share in my discovery, which will be very cheap at the price.

“Our interests will then be identical, and your control of the diamond market as intact as it is now. Later on we can, of course, take such steps as we think fit to astonish the world by the production of a limited quantity of such diamonds as it has never even dreamt of.”

These were weighty words, and the next morning a full meeting of the Directors of De Beers sat for five hours to consider them, and in the end, by the casting vote of the General Manager, it was decided to accept Mr. Burrows' terms.

The next day, on the advice of Inspector Lipinzki, who had never believed that the diamonds had come from the Griqualand mines, they were submitted to the inspection of a committee of experts, and they unanimously decided that no such stones ever had

been, or, in all probability, would be, found in Kimberley or its neighbourhood. On the strength of this, the prosecution was withdrawn, Tom Burrows was released, and Mr. Grünstein and his confederate made a prompt appearance in the dock on a charge of conspiracy and perjury and suborning of perjury.

The traveller from Port Elizabeth broke down before the examination had proceeded ten minutes, offered himself as Queen's evidence, and gave the whole thing away. On strong recommendations from the Detective Department, they were remanded for six weeks "pending the production of further evidence," and during that six weeks the discoverer of the New Golconda rediscovered it in company with a very select but lavishly-equipped expedition.

When they got back to Kimberley, Tom's innocence was conclusively established, and, in the event, it so happened that he and his

bride sailed from Cape Town on their wedding trip to England on the same day that Mr. Grünstein and his friend arrived in Cape Town for the purpose of doing five and three years respectively on the Breakwater.

Very shortly afterwards there was a large extension of British territory north and west of Griqualand, the reasons for which were not wholly political. Mr. Burrows, under his real name, is now a Director of De Beers and a millionaire several times over. Some day the Kimberley Mines may be exhausted. It may be a very long time before that happens, but should it come to pass in their life-times, it will be an event of absolute indifference to that gentleman and his colleagues.

V.

FIVE HUNDRED CARATS.

IT was several months after the brilliant if somewhat mysterious recovery of the £15,000 parcel from the notorious but now vanished Seth Salter that I had the pleasure, and I think I may fairly add the privilege, of making the acquaintance of Inspector Lipincki.

I can say without hesitation that in the course of wanderings which have led me over a considerable portion of the lands and seas of the world, I have never met a more interesting man than he was. I say "was," poor fellow, for he is now no longer anything but a memory of bitterness to the I.D.B. fraternity.

There is no need of further explanation of the all too brief intimacy which followed our introduction than the statement of the fact that the greatest South African detective of his day was after all a man as well as a detective, and hence not only justifiably proud of the many brilliant achievements which illustrated his career, but also by no means loth that some day the story of them should, with all due and proper precautions and reservations, be told to a wider and possibly less prejudiced audience than the motley and migratory population of the camp as it was in his day.

I had not been five minutes in the cosy, tastily-furnished sanctum of his low, broad-roofed bungalow in New De Beers Road before I saw it was a museum as well as a study. Specimens of all sorts of queer apparatus employed by the I.D.B.'s for

smuggling diamonds were scattered over the tables and mantelpiece.

There were massive, handsomely-carved briar and meerschaum pipes which seemed to hold wonderfully little tobacco for their size; rough sticks of firewood ingeniously hollowed out, which must have been worth a good round sum in their time; hollow handles of travelling trunks; ladies' boot heels of the fashion affected on a memorable occasion by Mrs. Michael Mosenstein; and novels, hymn-books, church-services, and Bibles, with cavities cut out of the centre of their leaves which had once held thousands of pounds' worth of illicit stones on their unsuspected passage through the book-post.

But none of these interested, or, indeed, puzzled me so much as did a couple of curiously-assorted articles which lay under a little glass case on a wall bracket. One was an ordinary piece of heavy lead tubing, about

three inches long and an inch in diameter, sealed by fusing at both ends, and having a little brass tap fused into one end. The other was a small ragged piece of dirty red sheet india-rubber, very thin—in fact almost transparent—and, roughly speaking, four or five inches square.

I was looking at these things, wondering what on earth could be the connection between them, and what manner of strange story might be connected with them, when the inspector came in.

“ Good-evening. Glad to see you,” he said, in his quiet and almost gentle voice, and without a trace of foreign accent, as we shook hands. “ Well, what do you think of my museum ? I daresay you’ve guessed already that if some of these things could speak, they could keep your readers entertained for some little time, eh ? ”

“ Well, there is no reason why their owner

shouldn't speak for them," I said, making the obvious reply, "provided always, of course,



“Good-evening. Glad to see you!” he said.

that it wouldn't be giving away too many secrets of state.”

“My dear sir,” he said, with a smile which curled up the ends of his little black, carefully-trimmed moustache ever so slightly, “I should not have made you the promise I did at the Club the other night if I had not been prepared to rely absolutely on your discretion—and my own. Now, there’s whisky-and-soda or brandy ; which do you prefer? You smoke, of course, and I think you’ll find these pretty good, and that chair I can recommend. I have unravelled many a knotty problem in it, I can tell you.”

“And now,” he went on, when we were at last comfortably settled, “may I ask which of my relics has most aroused your professional curiosity?”

It was already on the tip of my tongue to ask for the story of the gas-pipe and piece of india-rubber, but the inspector forestalled me by saying :

“But perhaps that is hardly a fair question,

as they will all probably seem pretty strange to you. Now, for instance, I saw you looking at two of my curios when I came in. You would hardly expect them to be associated, and very intimately too, with about the most daring and skilfully planned diamond robbery that ever took place on the Fields, or off them, for the matter of that, would you ? ”

“ Hardly,” I said. “ And yet I think I have learned enough of the devious ways of the I.D.B. to be prepared for a perfectly logical explanation of the fact.”

“ As logical as I think I may fairly say romantic,” replied the inspector, as he set his glass down. “ In one sense it was the most ticklish problem that I’ve ever had to tackle. Of course, you’ve heard some version or other of the disappearance of the Great De Beers’ Diamond ? ”

“ I should rather think I had ! ” I said, with a decided thrill of pleasurable anticipation,

for I felt sure that now, if ever, I was going to get to the bottom of the great mystery. "Everybody in camp seems to have a different version of it, and, of course, everyone seems to think that if he had only had the management of the case, the mystery would have been solved long ago."

"It is invariably the case," said the inspector, with another of his quiet, pleasant smiles, "that everyone can do work better than those whose reputation depends upon the doing of it. We are not altogether fools at the Department, and yet I have to confess that I myself was in ignorance as to just how that diamond disappeared or where it got to, until twelve hours ago.

"Now, I am going to tell you the facts exactly as they are, but under the condition that you will alter all the names except, if you choose, my own, and that you will not publish the story for at least twelve months

to come. There are personal and private reasons for this which you will probably understand without my stating them. Of course it will, in time, leak out into the papers, although there has been, and will be, no prosecution; but anything in the newspapers will of necessity be garbled and incorrect, and—well, I may as well confess that I am sufficiently vain to wish that my share in the transaction shall not be left altogether to the tender mercies of the imaginative penny-a-liner.”

I acknowledged the compliment with a bow as graceful as the easiness of the inspector's chair would allow me to make, but I said nothing, as I wanted to get to the story.

“I had better begin at the beginning,” the inspector went on, as he meditatively snipped the end of a fresh cigar. “As I suppose you already know, the largest and most valuable

diamond ever found on these Fields was a really magnificent stone, a perfect octahedron, pure white, without a flaw, and weighing close on 500 carats. There's a photograph of it there on the mantelpiece. I've got another one by me ; I'll give it you before you leave Kimberley.

“ Well, this stone was found about six months ago in one of the drives on the 800-foot level of the Kimberley Mine. It was taken by the overseer straight to the De Beers' offices and placed on the Secretary's desk—you know where he sits, on the right hand side as you go into the board room through the green baize doors. There were several of the Directors present at the time, and, as you may imagine, they were pretty well pleased at the find, for the stone, without any exaggeration, was worth a prince's ransom.

“ Of course, I needn't tell you that the

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value per carat of a diamond which is perfect and of a good colour increases in a sort of geometrical progression with the size. I daresay that stone was worth anywhere between one and two millions, according to the depth of the purchaser's purse. It was worthy to adorn the proudest crown in the world instead of—but there, you'll think me a very poor story-teller if I anticipate.

“Well, the diamond, after being duly admired, was taken upstairs to the Diamond Room by the Secretary himself, accompanied by two of the Directors. Of course, you have been through the new offices of De Beers, but still, perhaps I had better just run over the ground, as the locality is rather important.

“You know that when you get upstairs and turn to the right on the landing from the top of the staircase there is a door with a little grille in it. You knock, a trap-door is raised, and, if you are recognised and your

business warrants it, you are admitted. Then you go along a little passage, out of which a room opens on the left, and in front of you is another door leading into the Diamond Rooms themselves.

“You know, too, that in the main room fronting Stockdale Street and Jones Street the diamond tables run round the two sides, under the windows, and are railed off from the rest of the room by a single light wooden rail. There is a table in the middle of the room, and on your right hand as you go in there is a big safe standing against the wall. You will remember, too, that in the corner exactly facing the door stands the glass case containing the diamond scales. I want you particularly to recall the fact that these scales stand diagonally across the corner by the window. The secondary room, as you know, opens out on to the left, but that is not of much consequence.”

I signified my remembrance of these details, and the inspector went on :

“ The diamond was first put in the scale and weighed in the presence of the Secretary and the two Directors by one of the higher officials, a licensed diamond broker and a most trusted employé of De Beers, whom you may call Philip Marsden when you come to write the story. The weight, as I told you, in round figures was 500 carats. The stone was then photographed, partly for purposes of identification, and partly as a reminder of the biggest stone ever found in Kimberley in its rough state.

“ The gem was then handed over to Mr. Marsden’s care pending the departure of the Diamond Post to Vryburg on the following Monday—this was a Tuesday. The Secretary saw it locked up in the big safe by Mr. Marsden, who, as usual, was accompanied by another official, a younger man than himself,

whom you can call Henry Lomas, a connection of his, and also one of the most trusted members of the staff.

“Every day, and sometimes two or three times a day, either the Secretary or one or other of the Directors came up and had a look at the big stone, either for their own satisfaction or to show it to some of their more intimate friends. I ought, perhaps, to have told you before that the whole Diamond Room staff were practically sworn to secrecy on the subject, because, as you will readily understand, it was not considered desirable for such an exceedingly valuable find to be made public property in a place like this. When Saturday came it was decided not to send it down to Cape Town, for some reasons connected with the state of the market. When the safe was opened on Monday morning the stone was gone.

“I needn't attempt to describe the abso-

lute panic which followed. It had been seen two or three times in the safe on the Saturday, and the Secretary himself was positive that it was there at closing time, because he saw it just as the safe was being locked for the night. In fact he actually saw it put in, for it had been taken out to show to a friend of his a few minutes before.

“The safe had not been tampered with, nor could it have been unlocked, because when it is closed for the night it cannot be opened again unless either the Secretary or the Managing Director is present, as they have each a master-key without which the key used during the day is of no use.

“Of course I was sent for immediately, and I admit that I was fairly staggered. If the Secretary had not been so positive that the stone was locked up when he saw the safe closed on the Saturday, I should have worked upon the theory—the only possible one, as

it seemed—that the stone had been abstracted from the safe during the day, concealed in the room, and somehow or other smuggled out, although even that would have been almost impossible in consequence of the strictness of the searching system, and the almost certain discovery which must have followed an attempt to get it out of the town.

“Both the rooms were searched in every nook and cranny. The whole staff, naturally feeling that every one of them must be suspected, immediately volunteered to submit to any process of search that I might think satisfactory, and I can assure you the search was a very thorough one.

“Nothing was found, and when we had done there wasn't a scintilla of evidence to warrant us in suspecting anybody. It is true that the diamond was last actually seen by the Secretary in charge of Mr. Marsden and Mr. Lomas. Mr. Marsden opened the

safe, Mr. Lomas put the tray containing the big stone and several other fine ones into its usual compartment, and the safe door was locked. Therefore that fact went for nothing.

“You know, I suppose, that one of the Diamond Room staff always remains all night in the room; there is at least one night-watchman on every landing; and the frontages are patrolled all night by armed men of the special police. Lomas was on duty on the Saturday night. He was searched as usual when he came off duty on Sunday morning. Nothing was found, and I recognised that it was absolutely impossible that he could have brought the diamond out of the room or passed it to any confederate in the street without being discovered. Therefore, though at first sight suspicion might have pointed to him as being the one who was apparently last in the room

with the diamond, there was absolutely no reason to connect that fact with its disappearance."

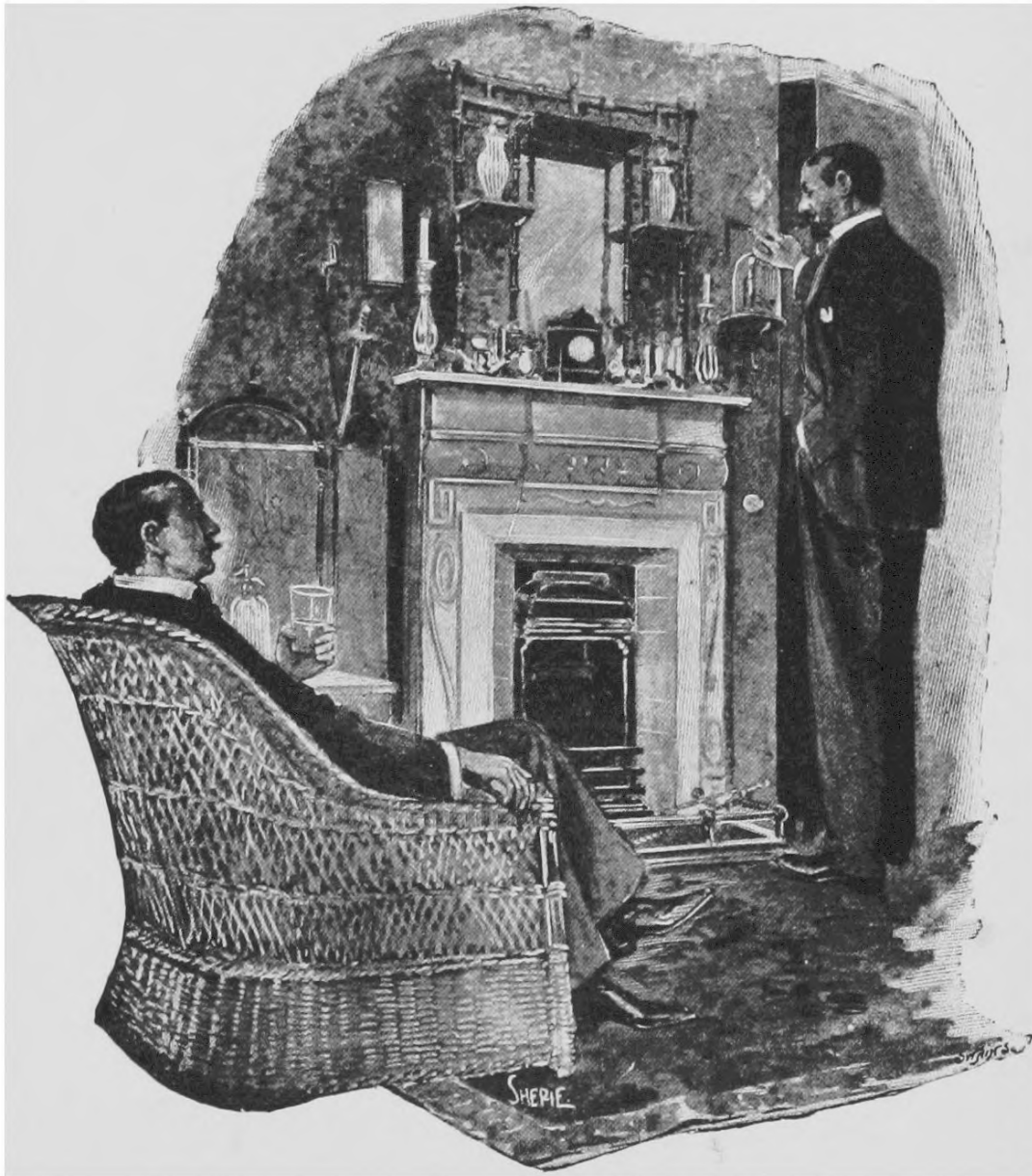
"I must say that that is a great deal plainer and more matter-of-fact than any of the other stories that I have heard of the mysterious disappearance," I said, as the inspector paused to re-fill his glass and ask me to do likewise.

"Yes," he said drily, "the truth *is* more commonplace up to a certain point than the sort of stories that a stranger will find floating about Kimberley; but still I daresay you have found in your own profession that it sometimes has a way of—to put it in sporting language—giving Fiction a seven-pound handicap and beating it in a canter."

"For my own part," I answered, with an affirmative nod, "my money would go on Fact every time. Therefore it would go on now if I were betting. At any rate, I may

say that none of the fiction that I have so far heard has offered even a reasonable explanation of the disappearance of that diamond, given the conditions which you have just stated, and, as far as I can see, I admit that I couldn't give the remotest guess at the solution of the mystery."

"That's exactly what I said to myself after I had been worrying day and night for more than a week over it," said the inspector. "And then," he went on, suddenly getting up from his seat and beginning to walk up and down the room with quick, irregular strides, "all of a sudden, in the middle of a very much smaller puzzle, just one of the common I.D.B. cases we have almost every week, the whole of the work that I was engaged upon vanished from my mind, leaving it for the moment a perfect blank. Then like a lightning flash out of a black cloud, there came a momentary ray of light which showed me



“These,” he said, stopping in front of the mantelpiece.

the clue to the mystery. That was the idea. These," he said, stopping in front of the mantelpiece and putting his finger on the glass case which covered the two relics that had started the story, "these were the materialisation of it."

"And yet, my dear inspector," I ventured to interrupt, "you will perhaps pardon me for saying that your ray of light leaves me just as much in the dark as ever."

"But your darkness shall be made day all in good course," he said, with a smile. I could see that he had an eye for dramatic effect, and so I thought it was better to let him tell the story uninterrupted and in his own way, so I simply assured him of my ever-increasing interest and waited for him to go on. He took a couple of turns up and down the room in silence, as though he were considering in what form he should spring

the solution of the mystery upon me, then he stopped and said abruptly :

“ I didn't tell you that the next morning—that is to say, Sunday—Mr. Marsden went out on horseback, shooting in the veld up towards that range of hills which lies over yonder to the north-westward between here and Barkly West. I can see by your face that you are already asking yourself what that has got to do with spiriting a million or so's worth of crystallised carbon out of the safe at De Beers'. Well, a little patience, and you shall see.

“ Early that same Sunday morning, I was walking down Stockdale Street, in front of the De Beers' offices, smoking a cigar, and, of course, worrying my brains about the diamond. I took a long draw at my weed, and quite involuntarily put my head back and blew it up into the air—there, just like that—and the cloud drifted diagonally across

the street dead in the direction of the hills on which Mr. Philip Marsden would just then be hunting buck. At the same instant the revelation which had scattered my thoughts about the other little case that I mentioned just now came back to me. I saw with my mind's eye, of course—well, now, what do you think I saw?"

"If it wouldn't spoil an incomparable detective," I said, somewhat irrelevantly, "I should say that you would make an excellent story-teller. Never mind what I think. I'm in the plastic condition just now. I am receiving impressions, not making them. Now, what did you see?"

"I saw the Great De Beers' Diamond—say from ten to fifteen hundred thousand pounds' worth of concentrated capital—floating from the upper storey of the De Beers' Consolidated Mines, rising over the housetops, and

drifting down the wind to Mr. Philip Marsden's hunting-ground."

To say that I stared in the silence of blank amazement at the inspector, who made this astounding assertion with a dramatic gesture and inflection which naturally cannot be reproduced in print, would be to utter the merest commonplace. He seemed to take my stare for one of incredulity rather than wonder, for he said almost sharply :

" Ah, I see you are beginning to think that I am talking fiction now ; but never mind, we will see about that later on. You have followed me, I have no doubt, closely enough to understand that, having exhausted all the resources of my experience and such native wit as the Fates have given me, and having made the most minute analysis of the circumstances of the case, I had come to the fixed conclusion that the great diamond had not been carried out of the room on the person of

a human being, nor had it been dropped or thrown from the windows to the street—yet it was equally undeniable that it had got out of the safe and out of the room.”

“And therefore it flew out, I suppose!” I could not help interrupting, nor, I am afraid, could I quite avoid a suggestion of incredulity in my tone.

“Yes, my dear sir!” replied the inspector, with an emphasis which he increased by slapping the four fingers of his right hand on the palm of his left. “Yes, it flew out. It flew some seventeen or eighteen miles before it returned to the earth in which it was born, if we may accept the theory of the terrestrial origin of diamonds. So far, as the event proved, I was absolutely correct, wild and all as you may naturally think my hypothesis to have been.

“But,” he continued, stopping in his walk and making an eloquent gesture of apology,

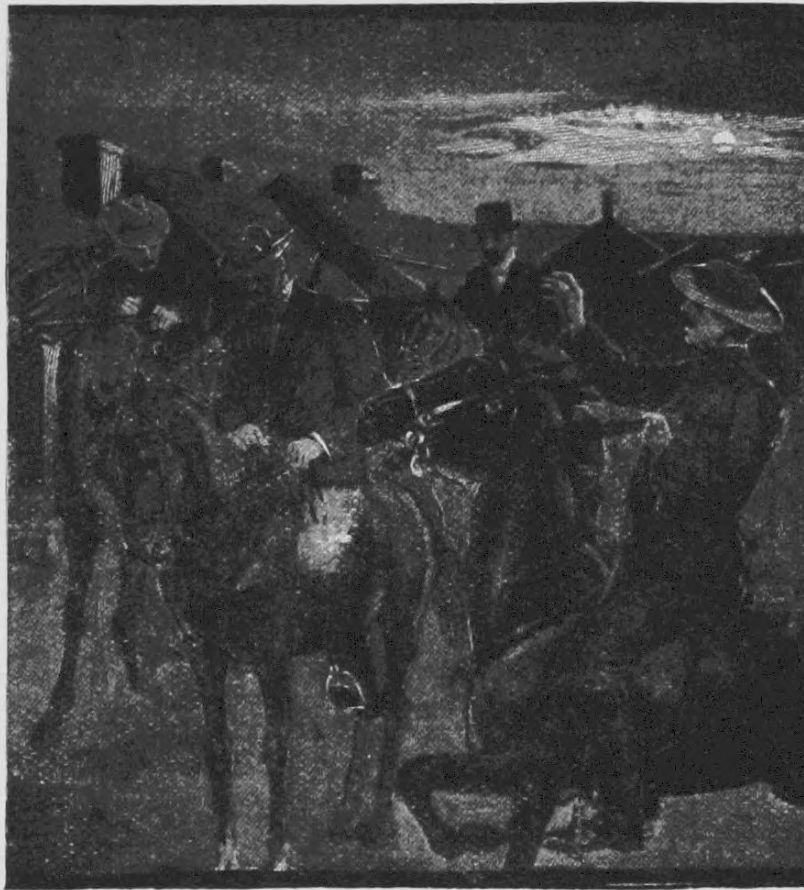
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“being only human, I almost instantly deviated from truth into error. In fact, I freely confess to you that there and then I made what I consider to be the greatest and most fatal mistake of my career.

“Absolutely certain as I was that the diamond had been conveyed through the air to the Barkly Hills, and that Mr. Philip Marsden’s shooting expedition had been undertaken with the object of recovering it, I had all the approaches to the town watched till he came back. He came in by the Old Transvaal Road about an hour after dark. I had him arrested, took him into the house of one of my men who happened to live out that way, searched him, as I might say, from the roots of his hair to the soles of his feet, and found—nothing.

“Of course he was indignant, and of course I looked a very considerable fool. In fact, nothing would pacify him but that I should

meet him the next morning in the Board Room at De Beers', and, in the presence of the Secretary and at least three Directors,



"I had him arrested."

apologise to him for my unfounded suspicions and the outrage that they had led me to make upon him. I was, of course, as you

might say, between the devil and the deep sea. I had to do it, and I did it; but my convictions and my suspicions remained exactly what they were before.

“Then there began a very strange, and, although you may think the term curious, a very pathetic, waiting game between us. He knew that in spite of his temporary victory I had really solved the mystery and was on the right track. I knew that the great diamond was out yonder somewhere among the hills or on the veld, and I knew, too, that he was only waiting for my vigilance to relax to go out and get it.

“Day after day, week after week, and month after month the game went on in silence. We met almost every day. His credit had been completely restored at De Beers'. Lomas, his connection and, as I firmly believed, his confederate, had been, through his influence, sent on a mission to

England, and when he went I confess to you that I thought the game was up—that Marsden had somehow managed to recover the diamond, and that Lomas had taken it beyond our reach.

“ Still I watched and waited, and as time went on I saw that my fears were groundless, and that the gem was still on the veld or in the hills. He kept up bravely for weeks, but at last the strain began to tell upon him. Picture to yourself the pitiable position of a man of good family in the Old Country, of expensive tastes and very considerable ambition, living here in Kimberley on a salary of some £12 a week, worth about £5 in England, and knowing that within a few miles of him, in a spot that he alone knew of, there lay a concrete fortune of, say, fifteen hundred thousand pounds, which was his for the picking up, if he only dared to go and take it, and yet he dared not do so.

“Yes, it is a pitiless trade this of ours, and professional thief-catchers can’t afford to have much to do with mercy, and yet I tell you that as I watched that man day after day, with the fever growing hotter in his blood and the unbearable anxiety tearing ever harder and harder at his nerves, I pitied him—yes, I pitied him so much that I even found myself growing impatient for the end to come. Fancy that, a detective, a thief-catcher getting impatient to see his victim out of his misery

“Well, I had to wait six months—that is to say, I had to wait until five o’clock this morning—for the end. Soon after four one of my men came and knocked me up; he brought a note into my bedroom and I read it in bed. It was from Philip Marsden asking me to go and see him at once and alone. I went, as you may be sure, with as little delay as possible. I found him in his

sitting-room. The lights were burning. He was fully dressed, and had evidently been up all night.



“I saw him standing in front of me, covering me with a brace of revolvers.”

“Even I, who have seen the despair that comes of crime in most of its worst forms, was shocked at the look of him. Still he

greeted me politely and with perfect composure. He affected not to see the hand that I held out to him, but asked me quite kindly to sit down and have a chat with him. I sat down, and when I looked up I saw him standing in front of me, covering me with a brace of revolvers. My life, of course, was absolutely at his mercy, and whatever I might have thought of myself or the situation, there was obviously nothing to do but to sit still and wait for developments.

“He began very quietly to tell me why he had sent for me. He said: ‘I wanted to see you, Mr. Lipincki, to clear up this matter about the big diamond. I have seen for a long time—in fact from that Sunday night—that you had worked out a pretty correct notion as to the way that diamond vanished. You are quite right; it did fly across the veld to the Barkly Hills. I am a bit of a chemist, you know, and when I had once

made up my mind to steal it—for there is no use in mincing words now—I saw that it would be perfectly absurd to attempt to smuggle such a stone out by any of the ordinary methods.

“I daresay you wonder what these revolvers are for. They are to keep you there in that chair till I’ve done, for one thing. If you attempt to get out of it or utter a sound I shall shoot you. If you hear me out you will not be injured, so you may as well sit still and keep your ears open.

“To have any chance of success I must have had a confederate, and I made young Lomas one. If you look on that little table beside your chair you will see a bit of closed lead piping with a tap in it and a piece of thin sheet india-rubber. That is the remains of the apparatus that I used. I make them a present to you; you may like to add them to your collection.

“‘Lomas, when he went on duty that Saturday night, took the bit of tube charged with compressed hydrogen and an empty toy balloon with him. You will remember that that night was very dark, and that the wind had been blowing very steadily all day towards the Barkly Hills. Well, when everything was quiet he filled the balloon with gas, tied the diamond—’

“‘But how did he get the diamond out of the safe? The Secretary saw it locked up that evening!’ I exclaimed, my curiosity getting the better of my prudence.

“‘It was not locked up in the safe at all that night,’ he answered, smiling with a sort of ghastly satisfaction. ‘Lomas and I, as you know, took the tray of diamonds to the safe, and, as far as the Secretary could see, put them in, but as he put the tray into its compartment he palmed the big diamond as I had taught him to do in a good many

lessons before. At the moment that I shut the safe and locked it, the diamond was in his pocket.

““The Secretary and his friends left the room, Lomas and I went back to the tables, and I told him to clean the scales as I wanted to test them. While he was doing so he slipped the diamond behind the box, and there it lay between the box and the corner of the wall until it was wanted.

““We all left the room as usual, and, as you know, we were searched. When Lomas went on night-duty there was the diamond ready for its balloon voyage. He filled the balloon just so that it lifted the diamond and no more. The lead pipe he just put where the diamond had been—the only place you never looked in. When the row was over on the Monday I locked it up in the safe. We were all searched that day; the next I brought it away and now you may have it.

“Two of the windows were open on account of the heat. He watched his opportunity, and sent it adrift about two hours before dawn. You know what a sudden fall there is in the temperature here an hour or so before daybreak. I calculated upon that to contract the volume of the gas sufficiently to destroy the balance and bring the balloon to the ground, and I knew that, if Lomas had obeyed my instructions, it would fall either on the veld or on this side of the hills.

“The balloon was a bright red, and, to make a long story short, I started out before daybreak that morning, as you know, to look for buck. When I got outside the camp I took compass bearings and rode straight down the wind towards the hills. By good luck or good calculation, or both, I must have followed the course of the balloon almost exactly, for in three hours after I left the camp I saw the little red speck

ahead of me up among the stones on the hillside.

“I dodged about for a bit as though I were really after buck, in case anybody was watching me. I worked round to the red spot, put my foot on the balloon, and burst it. I folded the india-rubber up, as I didn't like to leave it there, and put it in my pocket-book. You remember that when you searched me you didn't open my pocket-book, as, of course, it was perfectly flat, and the diamond couldn't possibly have been in it. That's how you missed your clue, though I don't suppose it would have been much use to you as you'd already guessed it. However, there it is at your service now.’

“‘ And the diamond?’

“As I said these three words his whole manner suddenly changed. So far he had spoken quietly and deliberately, and without even a trace of anger in his voice, but now

his white, sunken cheeks suddenly flushed a bright fever red, and his eyes literally blazed at me. His voice sank to a low, hissing tone that was really horrible to hear.

“‘The diamond!’ he said. ‘Yes, curse it, and curse you, Mr. Inspector Lipinzki—for it and you have been a curse to me! Day and night I have seen the spot where I buried it, and day and night you have kept your nets spread about my feet so that I could not move a step to go and take it. I can bear the suspense no longer. Between you—you and that infernal stone—you have wrecked my health and driven me mad. If I had all the wealth of De Beers’ now it wouldn’t be any use to me; and to-night a new fear came to me—that if this goes on much longer I shall go mad, really mad, and in my delirium rob myself of my revenge on you by letting out where I hid it.

“‘Now, listen. Lomas has gone. He is

beyond your reach. He has changed his name—his very identity. I have sent him, by different posts and to different names and addresses, two letters. One is a plan and the other is a key to it. With those two pieces of paper he can find the diamond. Without them you can hunt for a century and never go near it.

“‘ And now that you know that—that your incomparable stone, which should have been mine, is out yonder somewhere where you can never find it, you and the De Beers’ people will be able to guess at the tortures of Tantalus that you have made me endure. That is all you have got by your smartness. That is my legacy to you—curse you! If I had my way I would send you all out there to hunt for it without food or drink till you died of hunger and thirst of body, as you have made me die a living death of hunger and thirst of mind.’

“As he said this, he covered me with one revolver, and put the muzzle of the other into his mouth. With an ungovernable impulse I sprang to my feet. He pulled both triggers at once. One bullet passed between my arm and my body, ripping a piece out of my coat sleeve; the other—well, I can spare you the details. He dropped dead instantly.”

“And the diamond?” I said.

“The reward is £20,000, and it is at your service,” replied the inspector, in his suavest manner, “provided that you can find the stone—or Mr. Lomas and his plans.”

VI.

THE BORDER GANG.

“EH, mon, you’re no tellin’ me! It’s the domdest, barefacedest robbery! It’s dog eatin’ dog—just cannibalism in beesness, that’s what it is.”

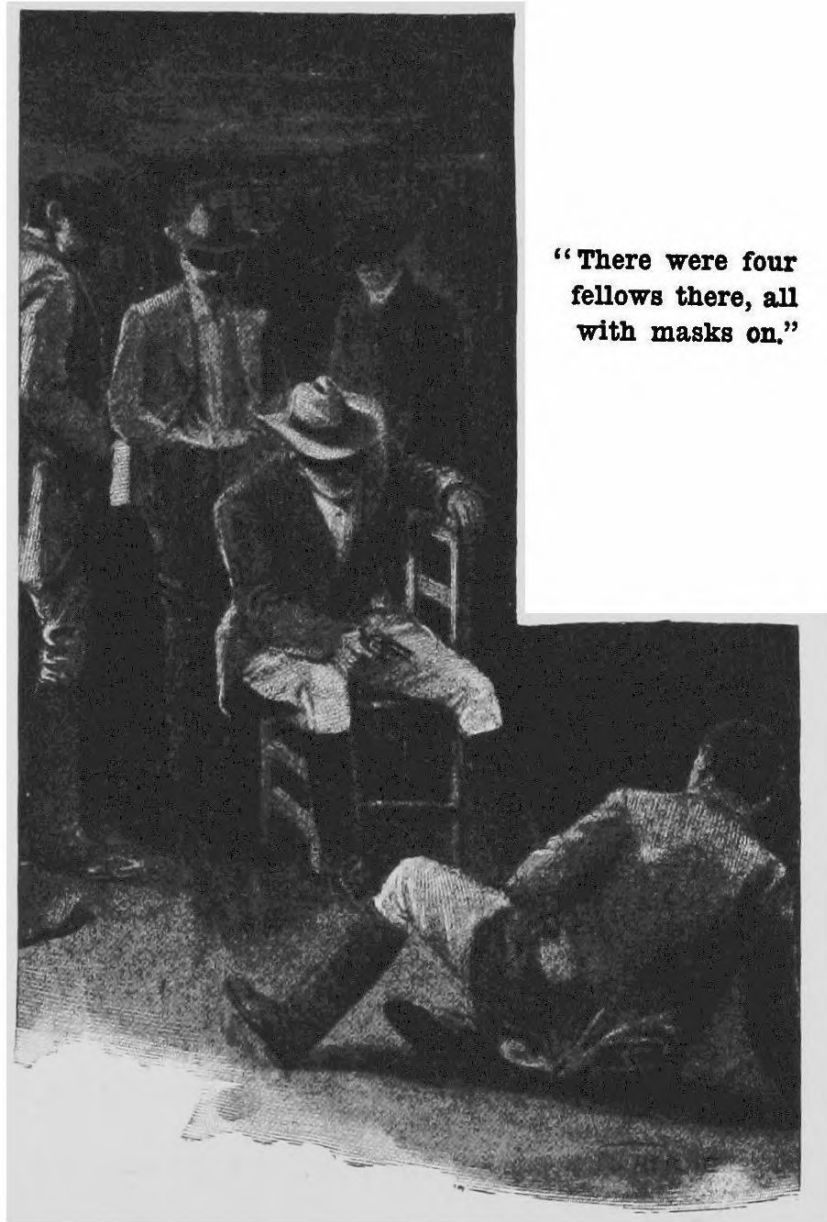
“It vas true, though, Sandy, s’welp me, may I never see the glint of a gonivah again if it isn’t. There vas three thousand pounds’ worth of the klips in poor little Tommy’s insides, as you know. The tecs pulls me up near the border. In the dark Tommy slips out of the cart as usual, and makes for the clump of gums on the other side of the drift without bein’ seen. The tecs find nothing, of course, and I drives on, thinking what sort

of a lawsuit we shall have this time against Lipinzki and his people, crosses the drift, and pulls up by the trees. I whistles, and Tommy, like a good obedient little tyke what knows his bizness, jumps in and—”

“ Oh, Lord, to think ye'd got such a beautiful lot so far only to—aweel, go on, Ike, and let's have the rest of it.”

“ As I says, the dog jumps in, and I drives off again. 'Bout a hundred yards farther on both my horses comes to the ground with a crash, and I goes after them on to my head. When I comes to myself and picks myself up, there was half-a-dozen fellows on horseback round the cart. One jumps down, and before I can so much as shout, he has a cloth over my head and ties me up so tight I can neither see nor speak. Then he knocks with his knuckles on my head, and tells me if I don't want a bullet in it I'll keep quiet and be good. Of course I vas as good as they make 'em.”

“But the dog, mon, why didn’t he mak’ a bolt for’t when he saw there was trouble?”



“There were four fellows there, all with masks on.”

He's been vera weel trained. I'd 'a thocht he might 'a got awa' in the scrimmage."

"He didn't have a chance. I hears him give a smothered-up yelp and squeal, and from that I knows that he is like my head—in a bag. That tells me that they had tumbled to the lay, or that there was someone there that knew it. Well, they bundles me and the dog into the cart, and drives away somewhere for about half-an-hour. Then they pulls up, hauls me out, hustles me into a house of some sort, and takes the bag off my head. When I looks about me I was in a bit of a small room, and there were four fellows there, all with masks on."

"Kidnappers an' midnight robbers—maybe murderers as weel!" groaned the Scotchman. "Ike, mon, I'm thinkin' ye had a narrow escape. That Free State's a dom'd sight too free if it's comin' to this. It's naethin' better nor a savage land wi'out law nor

order in't. What did they do till ye then ? ”

“They asked me how many klips I'd got, and where they were, and of course I says I have none, and they can search me if they like, and they does—a good bit worse than the tecs do, I can tell you. Of course they finds nothin', and then they laughs and says if I haven't got them the dog has. So they turns poor Tommy out of the sack and—s'welp me, old pal, I doesn't like to tell you what happened then. I'd educated that dog perfect, and I loved the little fellow, and, besides, he was worth a lot of money with all he knew !”

Sandy Fraser's little Hebrew accomplice quite broke down here for a moment or two, and Sandy himself gave a sympathetic sniff, for they had both lost, not only a lot of money, but also a guiltless accomplice whom it would be very hard to replace.

“They murdered him, Sandy, right before my eyes in a big tin footbath, and, of course, they found the klips. Then they offered to sell them back to me for two thousand, and told me they’d have made it five hundred more if they hadn’t had to kill the dog.”

“Eh, sakes, what a murderous price! Blank robbery! Why, they cost us three hundred straight from the kaffirs. An’ ye paid?”

“Well, they was worth three thousand trade price, and the thieves knew it; so I did. I gave them a draft on the bank here, and they kept me there till one of them got the cash and brought it back, and then they ties my head up again, puts me into the cart, and drives me away with the klips in my pocket. When they took the bag off it was night, and I was in a little kloof. They showed me the way to Freetown, and rode off. I got into Freetown by the morning, and found Sand-

heim there wondering if I was dead or gone to the Breakwater for change of air.

“ Well, I told him the story, and got three thousand three hundred out of him for the klips on the strength of it. Then I drives back, breaking my heart about poor little Tommy, and wondering where we shall get another dog like that. That Chinaman’s dog that he fooled Löwenfeldt so sweetly with wasn’t in it with poor Tommy.”

“ Nay, that he wasn’t, mon. Why, Tommy must ’a run close on twenty thousand worth for us, and might ’a run twenty thousand worth more wi’out a suspecion, wi’ that wonderfu’ stomach o’ his. But there, he’s dead and gone, the puir wee martyr, and we’ll just go and tak’ a drink till his future in the happy huntin’ grounds. But tell me, Ike, lad, did ye ha’e nae notion wha ony o’ they thievin’ murderers might ’a been? Some o’

them must 'a known ye, or they'd never 'a suspected the dog."

"They was always masked when I saw any of them ; but, Sandy, if I wasn't sure as death that Lipinzki and his chaps did for Seth Salter that night he ran the big parcel and they got it back, I could swear that the boss of 'em had just his Yankee twang, and his build wasn't unlike, neither," replied Ike, whose English was of the Oriental order, and whose tenses changed with the variations of his mental temperature. "Now, where was we going to? Let's go the Queen's—that's Lipinzki's place. Let's see if he's there, and if he's heard anything about this gang over the line."

When they entered the bar-room they found Mr. Inspector Lipinzki, very much at home, and apparently the central figure of the somewhat motley crowd that was wont to foregather there for their even-

ing limejuice, to use a conveniently generic term.

He was standing, as usual the most nattily dressed man in the place, with one elbow resting on the bar counter, and a glass half full of whisky and soda beside him. Opposite to him stood no less a personage than Mr. Michael Mosenstein—the events herein to be described happened some two months after Jossey Mo's vicarious conviction—and there seemed to be a discussion of some little heat going on between them. Just as they went in he slapped his glass down on the mahogany, and said in a loud, angry tone :

“Of course you fellows never take any responsibility, unless it's a case of searching private houses and annoying innocent people. But what I say is that this is just as much your affair as the Free State police's. Why don't you combine, instead of everlastingly bickering and letting criminals slip through

your fingers? If there's been a robbery on their side of the line to-night, there'll be one on your side to-morrow, or the night after. As for saying that the parcel was illicit, that's all rot, and neither here nor there. Max Sandheim is a perfectly respectable man. Why, I've done business with him myself scores of times."

"I've no doubt you have, Mr. Mosenstein. I wish I'd been there at the time," replied the inspector, with a snap of malice in his tone, which sent a chuckling laugh round the crowd, and brought out a red spot between Mickey's eyebrows. Before he had his retort ready, Ike pushed his way through the half-circle about them, and said, with ill-advised anxiety :

"Wha-at was that? What has happened to Max Sandheim, and when did it happen? Was he robbed?"

"Aw, the blighted eediot!" murmured his

partner ; but he didn't shout it like a stage aside, and so it wasn't heard. He went to the far end of the counter and ordered a drink, hoping that no one had seen him come in with Ike.

The inspector pulled himself up straight, and, as he could do on occasions, suddenly assumed an air of authority which kept even the angry Mickey quiet while he answered :

“ Ah, Mr. Cohen, good - evening ! So you've got back all safe, but you're a bit anxious about your friend Sandheim. Very natural, of course. Well, I'm sure you'll be sorry to hear that a few hours after you left him, say about ten o'clock last night, he was held up on the road between Freetown and Boshoff by four armed and masked men, and robbed of a parcel of stones which he valued at four thousand pounds. I daresay you'll know about how near that is to the truth. He rode into Boshoff and reported, and we

have just had the news here by telegraph. By the way, how's that dog of yours?"

The crowd noticed unanimously that this was the first time since the story of the Diamond Dog had become common property in camp that the inspector had mentioned one of its species publicly, and they closed up a little, thinking there was something coming. Mr. Mosenstein, for reasons of his own, paid an ostentatiously exclusive attention to his drink, while Sandy Fraser cursed all Jews and dogs in silence and kept his ears anxiously open.

Now Ikey Cohen, though not a strong man, nor yet one of conspicuous pluck, was one of those peculiarly constituted individuals who gain a sort of secondary courage through stress of circumstances, somewhat as runners get their second wind. From what the inspector had said, he saw that he knew a good deal more about his late adventure "on

the other side" than he thought he did. Suspicions are sometimes as good as knowledge. He stuck his hands deep down into his pockets, looked Lipinzki squarely in the face, and said :

"If you want me to sell you a pup, Mr. Lipinzki, I'll be happy to oblige you. I can't sell you that one, because it's dead. But I think I could tell you the name of the man who ordered it to be killed. Anyhow—I—guess—you'd—'a—recog-nised—his voice—as I calcerlate—I—did."

Ikey didn't do the Yankee drawl at all badly, and the shot went right home. For the first and the last time in his life, Inspector Lipinzki lost his self-command in public. But his start was only momentary, and the flush that came into his cheeks died out again in an instant.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" he asked, in a tone as calm as usual,

but with a distinctly threatening ring in it.

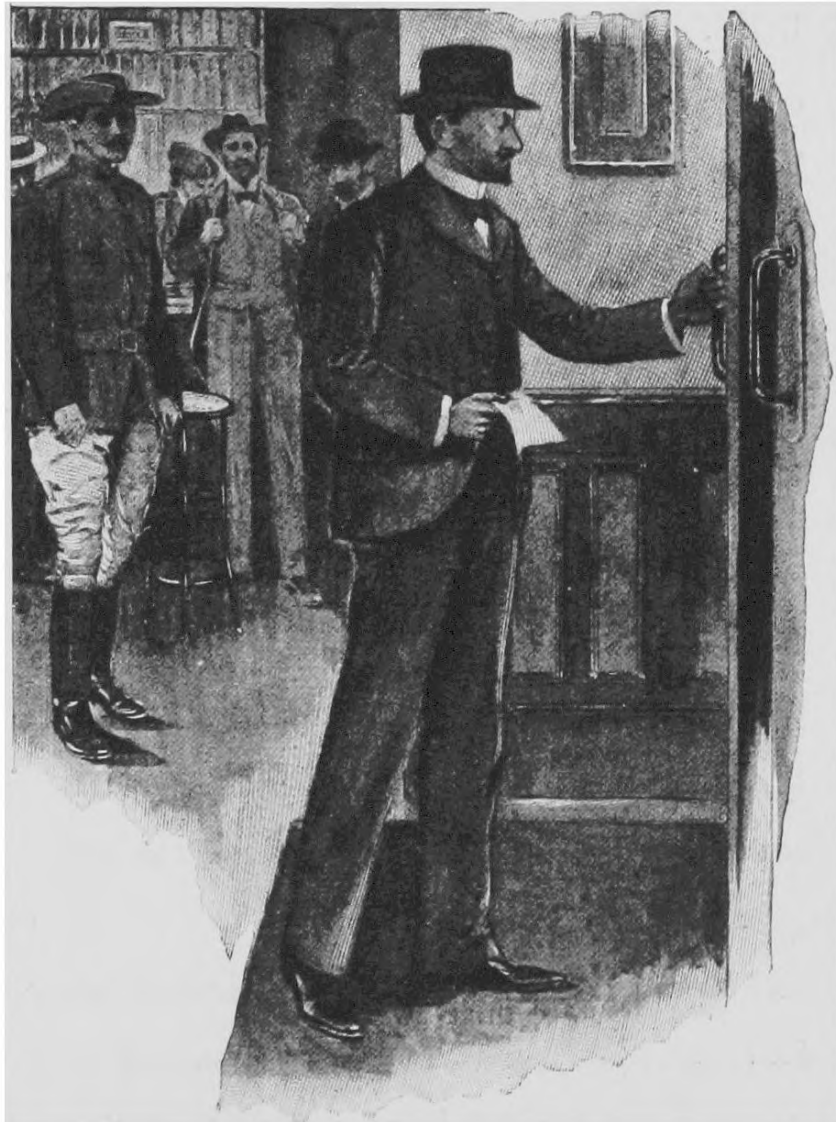
“Just about what he says, I reckon,” drawled Mickey Mosenstein, who was about as good a mimic as he was a juggler. “If you don’t recognise that twang, I do. That was well done, Ikey boy. What’ll you take? The next’s with me.”

What might have happened after this no one will ever know, for just at that moment one of the inspector’s men entered hurriedly and handed him a note. He opened it, glanced at it, folded it up in his hand, and said :

“Gentlemen, I’m sorry, but, so far as I’m concerned, this entertainment will have to be postponed. Another man wants to see me very urgently about a dog.”

With this he drank off the remains of his whisky and soda, and turned and walked to the door, followed by his official satellite,

not a little pleased at such an opportunely good "get out" from a situation which was bidding fair to become embarrassing.



He turned and walked to the door.

It pleased the Fates to draw out the tragedy which thus began with the inhuman butchery of poor little Tommy—one of many a like innocent martyr to the unholy cause of I.D.B. — into more scenes than could be reproduced here. The present narrative is, however, only concerned with the last of them, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the last but one, and that which brought the curtain down.

As week after week went by, the outrages committed by the mysterious Border Gang, as the unknown desperadoes, who had so suddenly invaded the hitherto comparatively peaceful frontiers of the Free State and Griqualand West, very soon came to be called, seemed to increase in number and daring.

It was quite a curious situation—such a one as the student of human crime had never had the chance of studying before, and may never have again. It was a sort of three-

cornered contest between underhand roguery, open violence, and the forces which worked for law and order. The old struggle between the police and the I.D.B. fraternity went on as before, but with an added terror for the evildoer, who, if he eluded the clutches of the law, might the next hour fall into the no more merciful grasp of the gang. The honest and lawful trader still hated the I.D.B. as his worst enemy, but the gang robbed both with an impartiality worthy of a more honourable calling.

The police naturally had anything but a happy time of it. If they devoted an adequate amount of time and force to hunting for the gang—which was never where it was expected or wanted—the occupation of the I.D.B.'s became comparatively pleasant and easy; while, if they did their proper work thoroughly, the gang promptly went on the war-path with renewed vigour and extended

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scope, and raked in the plunder with both hands from the honest and the dishonest alike.

It will be readily understood that no state of affairs could possibly be more distasteful to Mr. Inspector Lipinzki than this. Not only was his professional credit at stake, but men like Mickey Mosenstein, Ikey Cohen, Sandy Fraser, and Alexander Macadam, whom he absolutely knew either to be or to have been involved in extensive I.D.B. transactions, but who were now getting rich, and therefore men of influence in a town where the faculty of making money anyhow was the only one that "got a man on," were making sarcastic comparisons between Hounslow Heath a hundred years ago and the Diamond Fields of to-day, and were asking ugly questions about the efficiency—nay, even the incorruptibility—of the police force in general, and the Detective Department in particular,

It was this last suspicion that touched the puzzled and harassed inspector most keenly. As a practical man he had no belief in miraculous escapes or the possibility of people being in two different places at once, and gradually the conviction forced itself upon him that the immunity of the gang from capture, and its evasion of trap after trap that he had laid for it with all the skill and cunning at his command, could only be due to the connivance of some of his own men and the Free State police, which he knew to be anything but immaculate.

This conviction led him at last to the resolve to risk, not only reputation and position, but life itself on the attempt to personally break up the gang, or at least to penetrate the mystery which shrouded its doings and shielded it from justice. This resolve once made, it did not take a man of his character very long to translate it into action.

He caused certain information to leak out through some of the underground channels which were always at his service, to the effect that, in consequence of strong suspicions that the Diamond Mail to Vryburg was going to be held up by the Border Gang on a certain night, when it would be carrying an exceptionally valuable consignment of gems, the stones would be run the night before, as though they were an illicit parcel, over the border to Freetown, and thence conveyed in the usual way to Port Elizabeth instead of Cape Town. The Diamond Mail of the following day was to take no consignment at all, but was to be accompanied by a double guard.

On the appointed night the inspector had a score of his best and most trusted men, armed to the teeth, posted along the border within hail of the point where the road to Freetown crosses it. On the other side a detachment

of the Free State police were, by arrangement with the district chief, to be lying in wait ready to act in concert with them, and to catch the gang between the two forces at the moment of attack.

When Inspector Lipinzki set out that night to take his part in the working out of his scheme, he took an even more than usually affectionate leave of his daughter—a pretty, graceful girl of between sixteen and seventeen, who was the incarnation of the one romance in his life, the daughter of the only woman he had ever looked upon to love and long for, and the one rose that he had saved out of the paradise which he had once dwelt in.

He went to his office, and changed his usual attire for a suit of clothes that he had never been seen in, a sort of semi-sporting rig that he had had up specially from Cape Town, put his favourite Smith-Wesson in his right-hand coat pocket, and then started out

to walk to Beaconsfield. On the way he overtook his kaffir groom, leading his best horse. He mounted, saw that the pair of heavy colts in the holsters were ready for immediate use, and then cantered off towards the border, which he had timed himself to reach a little before one in the morning.

It had been arranged that two of his own men should hail him just before he got to it, and that then the game was to begin. News had reached him that the gang had got wind of the big parcel he was supposed to be carrying, and had vowed to have him and it at any price. If his men only did their duty, and the Free State police kept faith with him, the new terror of the border would be a thing of the past by morning.

Two mounted figures loomed out of the darkness ahead of him, and pulled up on either side of the road. A gruff hail came growling down the wind.

"Is that you, Davies, Mays? All right! I suppose the others are ready. Open a bit and let me through, then chase for all you're worth. You needn't be afraid of catching me."

As he said this, he touched his horse with the spur, and the easy canter broke into a gallop. The two men pulled their animals aside. As he came up, the moon broke through a rift in the clouds, and he saw that they were both masked. It was too late to stop. He ducked his head and dived for his Smith-Wesson, but the next instant a rein, or plaited rope of raw hide, stretched taut across the road, passed over his horse's head and took him under the chin. Then came a jerk that nearly broke his neck, a thump against the hard mud of the road, a mist of dancing stars before his eyes, and then darkness.

When he came to himself he was half

sitting, half lying in a hammock deck-chair in the same little hut in which Ikey Cohen had witnessed the murder of poor little Tommy. There was a burning taste of raw brandy in his mouth and throat, and his head was aching terribly. He looked up and saw a man, with a black cloth mask over the upper part of his face, sitting astride a wooden chair in front of him, with his arms across the back, looking at him through the eye-holes of his mask. Even in the first moments of returning consciousness he seemed to recognise something familiar in him, and the seeming soon became certainty.

“Evenin’, inspector. Comin’ round a bit? That’s right. Been waitin’ quite a time to have a bit of a chat with you. Feel up to it now? Have another nip?”

There was no mistaking the drawling tone, or the clip of the word-ends. The inspector’s rallying thoughts went back to that night at

Freetown, nearly eighteen months ago now, when, for the sake of personal pique and a threatened reputation, he had sanctioned—in fact, assisted in the doing of—a deed of treachery and violence, the one unlawful and unmanly act of his life, with which the worst of the offences laid to the charge of the gang would compare only too favourably.

Now he felt instinctively that he was in the presence and at the mercy of the chief of this band of outlaws, against which he had declared war to the death—a man who owed him a grudge that life would hardly pay. Still he had deliberately staked his life on this very venture, and he was not the man to take his stakes off the table when the game was going against him. He looked in silence at the masked man for a few moments to let his thoughts get into something like order. Then he said quietly :

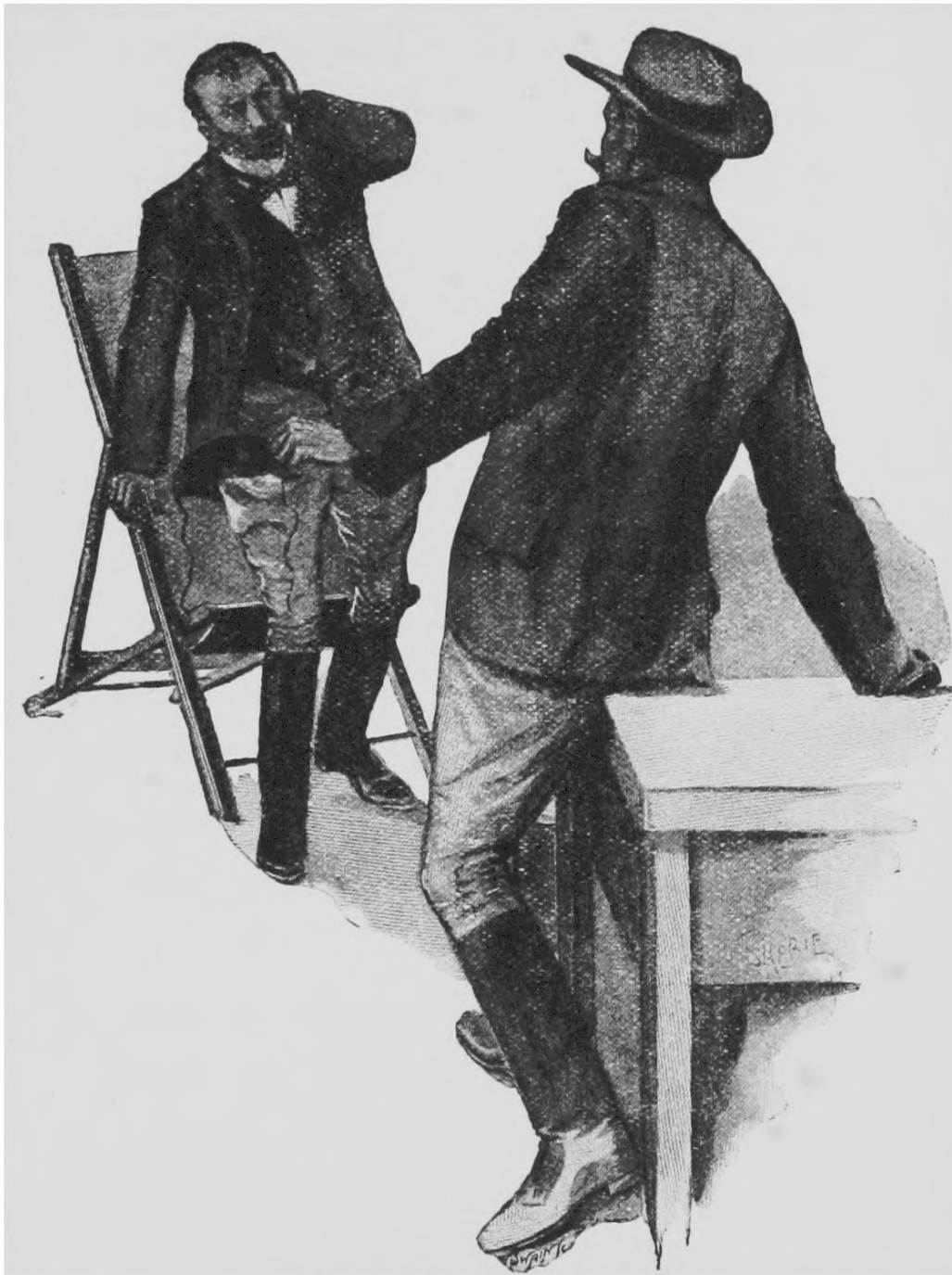
“ Well, Mr. Salter, I confess I never ex-

pected to see you in the flesh again ; but, since you have manifestly resurrected, I don't quite see the point of that mask of yours—at least, not in private life.”

“Resurrected ! By thunder, sonny, you've hit it in once. Say, did you ever see anything more like a last year's corpse than me ?”

He tore the mask from his face as he uttered the last word. The inspector staggered to his feet and dropped back into the chair with a gasp of amazement and a groan of horror mingled in the same breath. What had been Seth Salter's not uncomely face was now a one-eyed, noseless mass of pits and seams and scars too hideous to imagine.

“Ya-as, looks sorter pretty, don't it ? Don't seem to think much of it. Waal, p'raps not, 'tain't likely ; but if you an' your chaps didn't exactly do it, them as you was kind enough to leave me to out yonder in the kloof did. Yes, sir, that's vultures' work.



The inspector staggered to his feet.

I'd a bullet of yours through my right arm, one through the chest from one of your slouches, and a crack over the head with a carbine stock that'd 'a knocked the gruel outer some people's skulls; so, you see, I hadn't much chance agin the critturs. But I thought I'd fight to a finish, and I should hev done if a Cape lad hadn't come through the kloof before I was all gone and toted what was left of me to his hut, and fetched an old kaffir medicine man to patch me up.

“No, you needn't trouble to make any remarks; you're weak yet, and I'm on deck just now. It'll make things shorter and pleasanter if you just make yourself comfortable an' hear me out. I sha'n't worry you with what happened to me just after. I got better, and I'd one eye and a mouth left, as you see, and the eye had to look around for something to put in the mouth.

“Waal, after considerable ups and downs,

I met your Lootenant Mays way down in Natal. I told him who I was, or had been—for you can bet he didn't recognise me—and we put our heads together, and worked out this Border Gang scheme. I found the requisite hard cases for the actual work, and he got round your chaps, or kept 'em off the scent, as the case might be. The game worked like an angelic picnic. We robbed thieves, and the thieves dar'n't split. Then, as the organisation got better, we extended things, and by about three months ago we'd half your chaps and nearly all the slops on this side in our pay.

“Waal, we've made tons of money, and we're just thinking about retiring into respectable society; but, Mr. Lipinzki, there's just two things I want to do before I do that.”

“And those are—revenge on me, and—what else, may I ask?”

“Guess you’re nervy, little man, and you may ask. Ya-as, one of ’em’s to square up things with you, and the other is to clean out the mail when it takes that big consignment that you tried to fool us over to-night on board, which, I take it, ’ll be the day after to-morrow, or, I should say, to-day, for it’s morning now. We’ve got you safe, and all the guard but two are chippin’ in with us, so that’s as good as done.”

“And may I ask again what you intend to do in the way of squaring things up with me? Something with vultures in it, I suppose. I can’t growl under the circumstances, though, for the sake of my own conscience, I’d like to tell you that we honestly thought you were dead before we left you. I can’t think how you stood all we gave you. What a thousand pities you didn’t give the stones up quietly!”

“I guess it is—for you. Why didn’t you

let me keep 'em, after I'd played the game an' run 'em fair and honourable? But that's nowhere. If I didn't think you a white man, and grit all through, I wouldn't give yer a chance. I'd have your livin' bones, so to speak, picked clean by to-morrow night, as I mighty near had mine. But I believe you did think me dead, and so I'll give you a square show. But I'm goin' to give you half-an-hour's hell first, just to even things up for what I had when I was fighting them vultures."

"And that?"

"I'm goin' to make you play me Chicago, best seven games out of thirteen. If I win, I shall plug you fatally, and go and clean the mail out. If you win, I'll give you back your shooter, and back my one eye agin your two at shootin' on the drop. I'll set the alarum of that clock to go off two minutes after we've taken our places. Then when it

goes, we'll go—one or both of us. That's about as fair as I can afford to be. What do you think?"

"I don't see much hell in that, to tell you the truth."

"No, because you seem to have forgotten that Miss Radna's goin' down with the mail that day. You know I've admired her a lot. How d'you think she'd like to have some of the stones we shall get, if I had 'em cut for her as a weddin' present? I shouldn't take the dead gems and leave the livin' and the best of 'em all behind, *you* bet."

"That'll do, curse you; get out the dice."

"Waal, that's bizness, anyhow, if it ain't over grateful or polite. Take a drink first, just to steady your hand? No? Then I will. Here's the dice. We'll shake for first throw."

Now, for the instruction of the unsophisticated, the game of Chicago is played with

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dice in this wise: Five dice are thrown. Aces count a hundred, the first six thrown sixty, others six. From five down to two spots are counted. One bone must be left on the table after each throw, hence there are five throws, and the highest possible is five aces, counting five hundred.

The two played in silence. People usually do when the stakes are so big that if they lose they can never play again. The Fates must have been looking over their shoulders, and enjoying the deadly game, for they drew it out to its utmost length. After the tenth game Salter was two ahead, and the inspector won the eleventh by six, and the twelfth by seven.

“Six and seven’s thirteen, and we’ve the thirteenth game to play,” said Salter, shaping the first actual sentence that had been spoken since the play began. “Shouldn’t wonder if I lost now. That’s right, help yourself.

Whisky's good for shootin'. My throw, I reckon."

He shook the dice up, canted the box gently over, and the dice trickled out in a little white rattling stream. When they settled there were two aces, a six, a four, and a two.

"Two hundred and sixty's not a bad start, but I guess I'll give the aces another chance."

He shook up the three dice. They came out an ace and two sixes. His score was now three hundred and sixty, with two more throws, but he had the option of leaving the six, or including it in the next throw, on the chance of getting an ace instead of it. He left it, and threw the two. They came up six and four, making his total four hundred and twenty-four, with one more throw. He tossed the four into the box, and sent it rolling along the table. When it stopped it was a three.

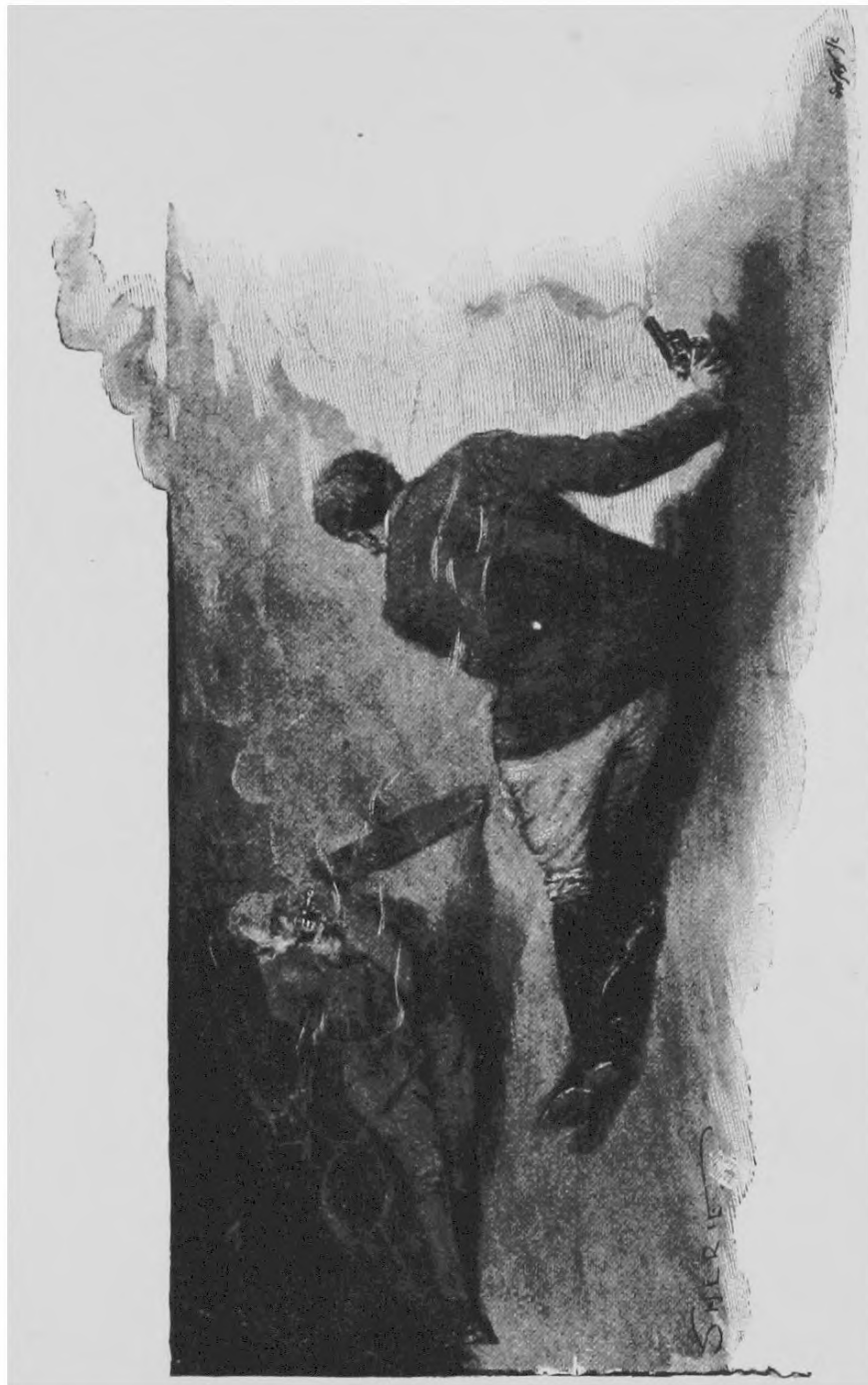
“I’ve seen better,” he said, as he gathered the dice into the box, and pushed it over to the inspector; “but anythin’ over four hundred takes figures to beat it.”

Lipinzki’s first throw was a poor one. Six, five, two threes, and a two! The second throw three aces came up together, making his score three hundred and sixty. The other was a four. He picked it up, threw, and made a three of it. He tried again, and made it a six. He was now four hundred and twenty—four behind.

“Tough luck, but I guess you’ve got to try again, pard.”

The hand of the man was firm, though the heart of the father was shaking as the inspector turned the box over for the last time.

“An ace! By thunder, I thought so! Waal, if that ain’t the luck of hell, tell me. There’s your gun!”



W-h-ir-rr—bang—bang—bang.

By every law save that of the unwritten code of gamblers' honour, Inspector Lipinzki would have been justified in covering Salter as he went to set the alarum, and he had another very strong motive for doing it, but he didn't. He knew the game, and he played it.

They took their places in opposite corners of the hut, about eight paces apart. The little Ansonia clock seemed to think itself a boiler factory for the time being, so loudly did it tick the fatal seconds away.

W-h-irrrr — bang — bang — bang — ting-a-ling-a-ling — bang — bang — ting — bang — surrr-up.

It was as strange a chorus as mortal ears ever heard, and the little clock seemed to think so, and did its best to keep its end up. When it was over, Inspector Lipinzki pulled himself up on to his hands, and, looking across the hut through a mist of blood and a

fog of smoke, saw Seth Salter's one eye glaring at him over the barrel of a revolver which was swaying to and fro about a foot or so from the floor.

Then he remembered that his Smith-Wesson had only five chambers. Salter's Colt probably had six. He saw the flame leap from the muzzle, and at the same instant Salter's head dropped with a thump on the floor. A red-hot knife seemed to pierce his shoulder, and then he dropped as well, just too soon to hear angry shouts and the stamping of horses' hoofs outside.

The Free State police didn't mind winking, for satisfactory considerations, at I.D.B., or even at a peaceable form of robbery under arms, but they had neither the stomach nor the heart for a share of blood-guiltiness, and so, when one of the inspector's traitors dropped a hint as to the real purpose for which he had been taken to the hut, their

righteously indignant commandant ordered an immediate raid on it.

He got there three minutes too late. Salter was unconscious, and bleeding to death with five bullet holes in him. The inspector was insensible too, but he revived and lived long enough to give the true story of what had happened. The Dutch policeman wisely concluded that a process of white-washing would be good for his soul, so he had the inspector's body conveyed with all honour across the border, and delivered it to the British authorities with such an account of the night's doings as fully insured their being the last of the exploits of the Border Gang.

“Yes,” said the gentleman who had given me the main points of the foregoing narrative as we sat under the verandah in the garden of the Central one night after dinner; “yes; Lipinzki was a good sort, a very good

sort, and so was Salter. I knew them both, and liked them both. It's a pity that two such men should have been started off plugging each other with lead just because they had different ideas about the diamond trade. And it all went for nothing, too. There were I.D.B.'s then, and there are I.D.B.'s now—only they work differently. These infernal stones are too tempting, and as long as diamonds are diamonds there'll be I.D.B.'s of some sort."

VII.

AT THE SIGN OF THE "GOLDEN STAR."

THE profession of illicit diamond buying is so intricate, and involves so many varied human relationships that, as may be expected, it often gave, and, indeed, still gives rise to some rather curious situations, of which the experiences of Mr. Ulrich Engstroem, sometime landlord of the "Golden Star" hotel in Kimberley, will, I think, be found to contain one or two of the most singular.

It all came about through Mr. Immanuel Herman, licensed diamond broker, not sticking to the legitimate branch of his fairly lucrative business. As had often befallen

others of his kind, he was one day tempted by the sight of a large parcel of very fine illicit diamonds, and, as the price asked was ridiculously small in comparison with their intrinsic value, he fell. He had kept the stones for several months in close hiding, not even divulging the fact of their existence to his own wife, until at length he felt safe in coming to the conclusion that, with proper precautions, he could get them out of the country without risk.

All this time he had failed to detect the slightest sign of any suspicion on the part of the authorities with regard to himself, although that fact of itself was no real proof that the vigilant eye of Inspector Lipincki, chief of the Detective Department, was one whit the less wide awake than usual, and, about six months after Mrs. Michael Mosenstein, a well-known leader of Semitic society in Kimberley, had gone down to

Cape Town *en route* for England with a pair of hollow heels worth about £30,000 on her French boots, he thought he couldn't do better than try the same game himself.

Consequently, he broached the ever-welcome topic of a trip to Europe to his good lady, and she very naturally fell in with it at once, and was all the more pleased when her husband, in the goodness of his heart, suggested that her sister, Miss Myra Schamyl, who was living with them, should go with her for company's sake. It was this piece of extra and quite unnecessary generosity that brought all the trouble about.

A few days before the time fixed for Mrs. Herman's departure, her husband was called away on quite legitimate business to the then recently opened Jägersfontein mine, in the Free State, and as this business would keep him until after she had gone, he confided the precious packet to her care, the last thing

before leaving, with many earnest injunctions to keep its possession an absolute secret until she placed it in the hands of its consignee in Hatton Garden.

Unhappily, however, Mrs. Herman saw no harm in sharing with her sister the feminine luxury of a good gloat over the delightful contents of the package. They had let their house in Currey Street, and were staying for a few days at the "Golden Star."

It was after dinner on the day of Mr. Herman's departure, and after most of the things had been cleared off the dining-table in their private room, that Mrs. Herman took the packet out of the breast of her dress, and opened it before the wondering and admiring eyes of Miss Myra Schamyl. Then, almost as though the evilly-disposed Fates had been lying in wait for this perfectly natural little act of feminine weakness, at that very instant Inspector Lipinzki, with his lieutenant, Tom

Ferguson, and a lady assistant, Miss Sarah Billing, entered the hotel armed with a warrant authorising them to search the apartments occupied by Mrs. Herman and her sister, Mr. Herman himself being already in custody at Beaconsfield.

Both Mr. Engstroem, the hotel-keeper, and Mistress Martha, his wife, knew perfectly well what this meant, but Mistress Martha grasped the situation a few moments earlier than her deep-thinking but somewhat slow-witted husband did, and, while the expostulations and explanations were going on, she skipped upstairs to warn her guests, not because she had any particular personal regard for them, but for the simple and sufficient reason that she didn't want any I.D.B.'s caught red-handed on her husband's premises.

Although she knocked at the door, she didn't wait for the usual "Come in." She

considered the circumstances sufficiently pressing to warrant her in going in at once. So she went in, and there, leaning over the little table, still covered with the white cloth and still littered with the crumbs and the odds and ends of the finished dinner, she saw Mrs. Herman and her sister toying with what looked like a lot of little pieces of frosted glass of all colours, from crystal white to dull brown, pushing them about with the ends of their fingers, and turning them over and exchanging whispered admirations of them.

“*Ach Gott!*” she cried, in a loud, intense whisper, as she closed the door softly behind her. “Vas dere ever anydings more unfortunate! Ladies, dere is dat little teufel Lipinzki, mit two of his traps, and one of dem is a woman, coming to search your rooms, on information receipt, as dey say. Hark, dere dey are on de stairs! Himmel!

there is no time to lose or it is de brison for five—seven years for bot of you. Stop, let me clear de crumbs away. Dat is de only chance."

The two women stared at her in a dumb paralysis of sudden terror, as she rapidly removed the one or two articles remaining on the table, and then whisked the cloth off with a swift, deft movement, tucked it in a baggy bundle under her arm, and walked towards the door, saying as she went :

"Go to your rooms quickly before dey come."

As they disappeared through the door leading to their bedrooms, Mrs. Engstroem opened the other door and walked calmly downstairs. She met the inspector and his companions half-way up, and stopped in front of them.

"Good afternoon, inspector! Who might you vant?" she said good-humouredly,

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planting herself in front of the little man so as to gain a few more moments for her guests. "I hope dis is not vat you would call a professional visit?"

"I'm afraid it is, Mrs. Engstroem," replied the inspector, as he made an attempt to edge past the portly form which almost filled the rather narrow staircase. "The fact is, we want to see Mrs. Herman and that charming sister of hers, and we've got to do it. Are they upstairs?"

"I believe so," she said. "I've just been clearing the table; but I dink dey vere in der rooms getting ready to go out. If you like I vill go ant see."

"Thank you!" said the inspector. "If you will, we'll follow you. I'm afraid I shall have to ask them to put their walk off for a little, but I won't have them put to any more inconvenience than is absolutely necessary."

"Oh, I'm sure you von't do dat, Mr.

Inspector," said the lady, as she turned back to lead the way upstairs. "You are always a gentleman, though you sometimes do put ladies into awkward positions like dis. Dis way, please."

Then she turned somewhat deliberately and went upstairs again. The bulging tablecloth stuck out in white billowy folds between her left arm and her side, and Mr. Lipincki's keen, professional nose was within six inches of between ten and twelve thousand pounds' worth of illicit diamonds, mixed up with crumbs and bits of bread and cheese, for the space of about three minutes. But not even his eyes could see through the thick, starched linen any more than those of his companions could, and so Mrs. Engstroem's little ruse succeeded as completely as its boldness and simplicity deserved to do.

Mrs. Engstroem knocked at the door, and, receiving no answer, went in, followed by the

inspector and his assistants. Then she asked them to sit down, and went and knocked at Mrs. Herman's bedroom door. She immediately came back and went downstairs. Shortly after Mrs. Herman and her sister came into the dining-room, naturally looking not a little disturbed, but for all that fairly well recovered from their first attack of terror.

“Well, Mr. Lipincki, may I ask what this means?” said Mrs. Herman, with a quite respectable assumption of outraged virtue. “I think I know this—er—person,” she went on, with a cold glare at Miss Billing; “so I suppose this is what you call a search visit.”

This was a somewhat injudicious speech, seeing that under the circumstances Miss Billing's turn was bound to come later on. She was a pleasant-faced young lady, with a broad brow and a strong chin, and she returned Mrs. Herman's stare with a smile

and a little bow, which plainly indicated that she knew it.

"I regret to say that it is so, Mrs. Herman," replied the inspector, with deprecatory politeness. "I may as well tell you at once that your husband was arrested this morning on the Border, and as nothing was found on him we have been driven to the conclusion that a large parcel of diamonds, which we have absolutely traced to his possession, must be either in your keeping or else in your rooms. Our duty, therefore, leaves us no alternative but search. If you wish to see the warrant—"

"No, thank you, inspector," replied Mrs. Herman stiffly. "You needn't trouble about that. If you'll kindly get what has to be done over as quickly as you can, we shall be obliged, as we want to go out."

"With pleasure," said the inspector, rising. "Allow me to introduce Miss Billing to you

—one of our lady officers. I am sure you will find that she will perform her not very agreeable task with as much consideration and dispatch as is consistent with her duties.”

Miss Billing got up and bowed too, and began to take her gloves off. Mrs. Herman and Miss Schamyl looked uncomfortable but defiant, and the inspector and his lieutenant bowed themselves discreetly out of the room.

Miss Billing seemed to do her work fairly thoroughly, for she took the better part of an hour and a half about it, and when at last she left the two ladies, flushed and indignant, but triumphant withal, she said to the inspector :

“It’s no use, sir. I’m afraid they’ve been too smart for us. I haven’t left a possible hole or corner unsearched, and there isn’t the trace of a stone about the place.”

Mr. Lipincki’s face darkened perceptibly as he heard this. It was rather a serious

matter to go to such an extreme as the arrest and search of a man and his wife and sister-in-law, to say nothing of searching his rooms and draw blank, but blank it was, and that was all there was to be said about it for the present. It was one of the risks that the Department had to take. It had enormous powers, and when it used them without tangible justification it simply had to pay. In this particular case the inspector's afternoon call cost very close on a couple of thousand pounds—which paid the expenses of the two offended ladies to Europe and left a good balance over.

As soon as the unwelcome visitors were safely off the premises, Mrs. Herman called to Mrs. Engstroem to come up, in order to thank her for the timely aid which had saved them from an enforced substitution of some years' penal servitude for the few months in Europe to which they were looking forward.

As she came into the room, Mrs. Herman went to meet her, holding out her hands, and said to her, with real emotion :

“ Oh, Mrs. Engstroem, how can we ever thank you enough for being so quick and clever ! They found nothing, and now my husband will have a good action for damages against the Department. You may depend upon it he won't forget you when he makes them pay up.”

Mrs. Engstroem didn't take her hands. She only stopped and stared at her with her eyes wide open and her mouth almost so.

“ I don't quite know vat you mean, Mrs. Herman,” she said, in her slow, stolid voice. “ How have I saved you ? Vat have I done for you ? ”

“ Done ? Why the diamonds, of course ! ” gasped Miss Schamyl, stricken by the same sudden fear which had already deprived her sister of speech. “ The diamonds that you took away in the table-cloth ! ”

"Young lady," replied Mrs. Engstroem, more stolidly than ever, "I knows nodings about diamonds vich de police come to look for. I am not an I.D.B., and I have no friends dat are I.D.B.'s. I took no stones away in de table-cloth. Dere vas only crumbs."

"Oh, you wicked woman!" the two burst out together. "You know there were! You've stolen them! Bring them back at once, or—"

"Or you vill go and tell Mr. Lipinzki dat I took 'dem, eh?" interrupted Mrs. Engstroem, without a quaver in her low, thick voice, but with just a little higher colour on her fat cheeks. "So! First you call me an I.D.B. accomplice, and now you say I am a tief. It is goot. Goot! Go and tell de police. Haf me arrested if you like, but get out of my house dis day. I vant no I.D.B's here. You had better go and see if your

husband is still in gaol. Goot-bye, I will send you your bill in ten minutes."

With that Mrs. Engstroem, looking the picture of stolid respectability and mildly outraged virtue, turned round and walked heavily out of the room.

Mrs. Herman and her sister had already paid their passages and booked their berths when this exceedingly unpleasant *contretemps* happened, and it would have looked distinctly suspicious to try and get their money back, even if there had been any chance of doing so. They, therefore, went at the appointed time, followed by the remorseful reproaches, to put it very mildly, of Mr. Herman, who turned with what consolation he might to the prospects of the action for damages which he at once instituted against the Department.

This gentleman's state of mind with regard to Mr. Ulrich Engstroem and his wife would

be somewhat difficult to describe. He knew, of course, that they had his diamonds, and he was equally certain that sooner or later they would make an attempt to get them out of the country. He watched them somewhat as a dog watches another dog who has stolen a bone from him, but beyond watching he dare not go. To give the slightest hint to the police would be to confess to the guilty knowledge of which he was already more than suspected. It would also utterly ruin the prospects of his action.

It was almost agony to him to see them calmly revolving in their circle of ponderous respectability, but he could only suffer in silence. Their stolid cunning gave not the slightest opening through which he could even indirectly point the finger of suspicion at them, and when at length Mr. Ulrich Engstroem was about to start for Cape Town, *en route* for his native land, "where the death

of his father had lately made him heir to a flourishing business," he could only look on in silence, gritting his teeth and almost bursting with the information that it would have ruined him to give.

True, his wounded feelings were somewhat salved a week or two later by the verdict of the Civil Court—on the jury of which there were certainly five well-known I.D.B.'s—which awarded five hundred pounds each for himself, his wife, and his sister-in-law, and let the Department in for something like another five hundred pounds' worth of costs; but, after all, what was that in comparison with the ten or twelve thousand pounds which the perfidious Engstroem would get for the stolen stones in the London or Amsterdam market?

From Kimberley to London, and from thence to Amsterdam, Mr. Engstroem himself had the best of good luck. He got the

stones away without exciting the slightest suspicion, and if he had only followed the usual course, and sold them in the rough, all would have been well. But his wife had exacted a solemn promise from him that he would not do anything of the kind. They were her diamonds, she said, and hers they were to remain, with the exception of certain stones, very fine ones, which she graciously presented to him.

He was to have them cut in Amsterdam, and her share was to be made up in a necklace, three stars, and certain rings. With his own he could do as he liked. It was not a very wise stipulation perhaps, and her insisting on him bringing them back to her still less so, but she knew how enormously cutting and setting would enhance their value, and she trusted to the practical impossibility of identifying them after they were cut to avoid suspicion.

Mr. Engstroem had a very good time in Paris and Berlin, while the cutters and polishers of Amsterdam were making his diamonds ready to adorn the ample charms of his expectant spouse. Then, when they were ready, he went and fetched them and took them to Paris to be set. And so at length it came to pass that he found himself on the outward-bound steamer at Southampton, with between twenty and thirty thousand pounds' worth of really magnificent jewellery stowed away in the depths of his portmanteau.

Now it should be mentioned here that Herr Ulrich was a well-set-up and extremely personable man, who, like a good many other South Africans, conducted himself much more *en grand seigneur* when he was on a trip to Europe than he did as an hotel-keeper in Kimberley. He also considered himself, rightly or wrongly, not a little of a Lothario, and hence he didn't go about telling every-

one he met on his travels that he was a married man. Indeed, he was rather inclined to keep the fact pretty closely to himself than otherwise. In the present case, as it happened, it would have saved him a good deal of avoidable annoyance if he had not adhered so strictly to his usual rule, but that was only one of the contingencies that the most virtuous of married men may sometimes overlook.

As soon as the ship's company settled down, he did what every old traveller does—took stock of his fellow-voyagers, and looked about to see whether there were any acquaintances on board. He found none, as it happened, and this fact, although it was by no means displeasing to him at first, turned out in the end to be something of a misfortune in disguise.

When the troubles of the Bay were passed, and each day the sun rose higher over

smoother seas, and the ladies began to come up on deck in their tropical toilets, Herr Ulrich, according to his wont under such circumstances, began to look about him for the indispensable wherewithal to the carrying on of an innocent flirtation which would serve to while away the tedium of the lazy life on ship-board.

He found it, after a day or two's prospecting, sitting in a deck-chair which, just as he passed, took a run across the deck, propelled by a sudden roll of the vessel. Of course he took full advantage of the fact of being on the spot, helped the lady to her feet, put the chair back in a safer position, fetched the book which had fallen out of her hand, and then dropped into an unoccupied chair alongside which he had purposely placed that of the fair unknown.

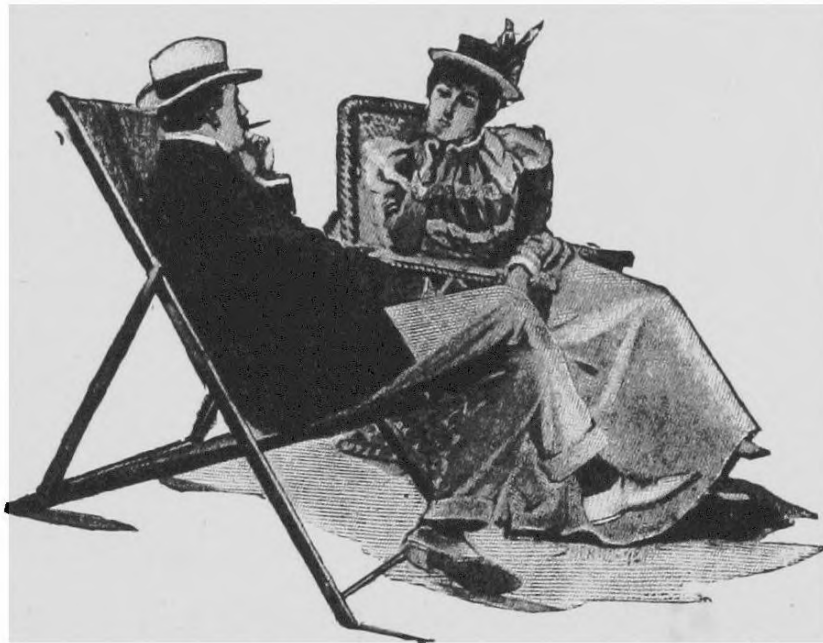
Conversation naturally followed, and, as there is no other place where men and



The chair took a run across the deck.

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women meet together which offers so fair a field for the development of acquaintance into something else as the deck of a passenger steamer, it was not very long before Mr. Ulrich Engstroem and Miss Frances Colegate found



She confided some of her plans to Herr Ulrich.

themselves upon terms of promising intimacy, which duly developed as the pleasant, idle days went on.

Miss Colegate was a young lady of excellent preservation but somewhat uncertain age

She might have been a girl of twenty-four with an indifferent complexion, or a woman of thirty-five with a good one for that age; but she was stylish, smart, well-informed, and of irreproachable manners. More than this the most exacting man could hardly expect for the purposes of a steamboat flirtation, and Herr Ulrich was amply satisfied. So, too, was the young lady, more so, in fact, than she would have been had she known of the existence of the hostess of the "Golden Star."

To tell the truth, she was one of a class of women not infrequently found on board colonial-bound mail-ships. She had made two or three attempts to get settled in life at home; but, for one reason or another, they had not come off, and so she had wisely decided to try her luck in a land where women were fewer and men less fastidious than they were in the Old Country, while the bloom was still more or less attached to the

peach. She confided some of her plans to Herr Ulrich under the guise of asking his advice about South Africa, and in the course of doing so she let fall the fact that she had some private means, and also a few friends scattered about the colony, one, if not more, of whom she expected to meet her at Cape Town.

In exchange for these little confidences, and, it must be admitted, encouraged by certain indefinite, feminine devices, of which Miss Colegate was quite a mistress, Herr Ulrich, if he did not actually commit himself, certainly carried the flirtation to such lengths that the young lady had quite reasonable grounds for supposing that their acquaintance would not end, as nineteen out of every twenty such intimacies do, with the arrival of the ship at her port of destination. Obviously, however, Herr Ulrich had no other intention than that of taking the mail train to Kim-

berley the night he got in, and cutting the connection short with the usual, "Well, good-bye for the present. I hope we shall meet again before you leave the colony."

But as the ship got nearer and nearer to Table Bay, a rather awkward problem began to press itself upon his attention. So far his expedition had been entirely successful, and very pleasant to boot, but, just as Table Mountain would soon be looming up before his physical gaze, so there began to loom bigger and bigger before his mental vision the awkward fact that, unless he could get his diamonds into the colony unsuspected, the Cape customs officials would inconsiderately insist on the payment of an *ad valorem* duty of 30 per cent. on them, and that would come to a sum which it would almost break his German Jewish heart to part with.

Many and varied were the schemes that he revolved in his mind towards the end of the

voyage, and at last, after a particularly confidential chat one lovely evening after dinner with Miss Colegate, he decided to unbosom himself to her, and ask her aid.

So this he did, and she, when he had found means to show her the treasure and delicately hinted at the possibility of her acceptance of one of the rings under circumstances which she entirely mistook, finally consented to run the risk for the sake of the reward—which she never for a moment doubted might very possibly include a joint ownership of the diamonds.

So it came to pass that when the ship steamed in to Table Bay, Miss Colegate was standing by her friend on the fore-part of the promenade deck, with a small fortune deftly concealed about her person, and gazing with eagerly admiring eyes on the varied splendours of one of the most beautiful seaports in the world. As the vessel neared the clock

tower quay at the entrance to the Albert Dock, and the handkerchiefs began to wave, Miss Colegate pulled out hers and said to Herr Ulrich :

“ Ah, I thought there would be someone to meet me ! There is my cousin, the lady with the green umbrella.”

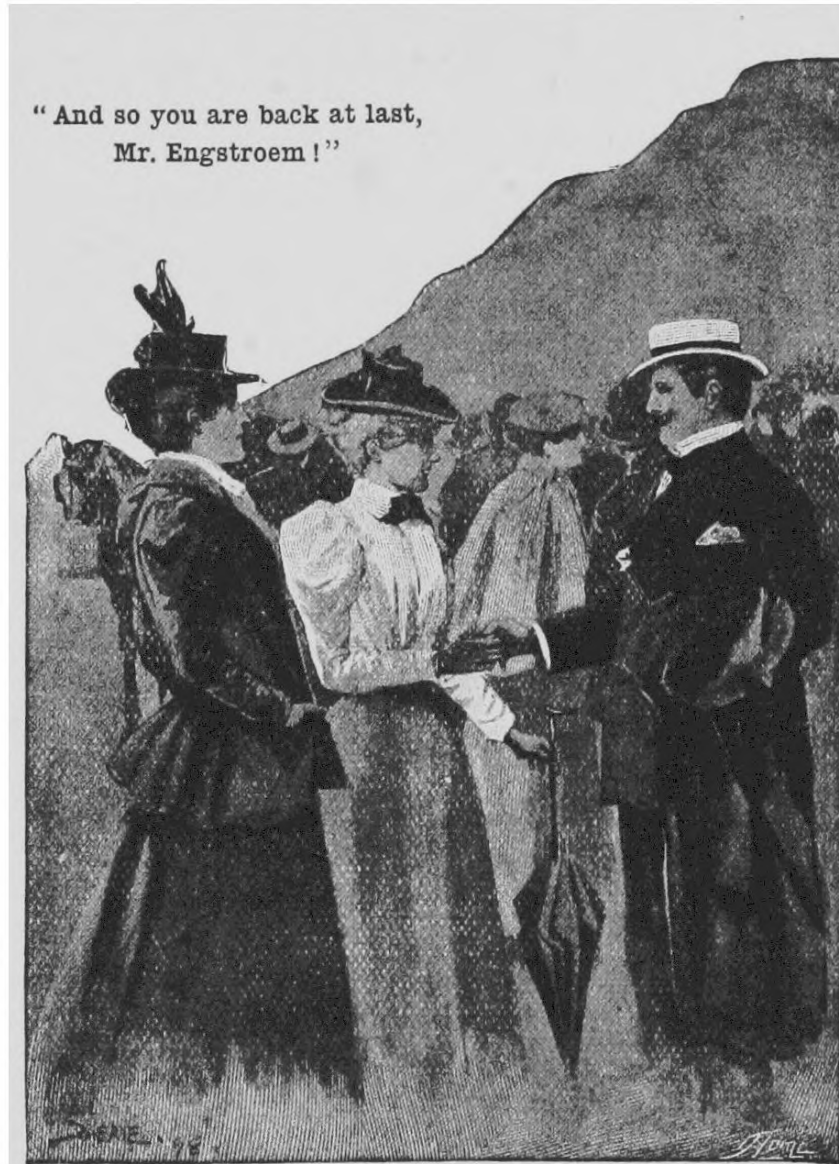
Just then the green umbrella went up, and, with a spasm similar to that which is sometimes produced by a douche of cold water down the back, the landlord of the “ Golden Star ” recognised Miss Sarah Billing.

His first idea was to go and hide, but that, of course, was absurd. He was bound to see his companion off the vessel. Besides, he could hardly let her walk away with those diamonds just when he had most reason to keep in touch with her, and so in due course the inevitable introduction came off.

Miss Billing looked at him very steadily, and with a not very pleasant smile on her

firm lips as she shook hands after embracing her cousin, but she said quite agreeably :

"And so you are back at last, Mr.



Engstroem! You've had quite a long trip. How delighted your good wife will be to have you back after such an absence."

Miss Colegate paled visibly for a moment, and favoured Mr. Engstroem with a quick stare, which made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable; but, with these exceptions, she controlled her feelings admirably, like the astute and experienced young lady that she was, while he covered his confusion by bustling about looking for a cab, cursing the while under his breath the deplorable trick of Fate which had brought this particular person out of all the thousands of women in South Africa to meet and welcome his fellow-voyager. He saw the two ladies into their conveyance, and took another himself, after having obtained permission to call the following day. There was the usual halt at the Customs' shed inside the gates, a search of a

sort was made, and Miss Colegate passed through scatheless.

That evening, in the privacy of their sitting-room in the boarding-house where Miss Billing was staying, Miss Colegate not only told her cousin exactly what she thought of Mr. Engstroem, but made a clean breast of it about the diamonds. Now Miss Billing had always had her own opinion as to the disappearance of the parcel of stones from Mrs. Herman's possession, and she had watched the Engstroems unobtrusively, but with perpetual vigilance, up to the time of Herr Ulrich's departure for Europe. She was absolutely certain, as, indeed, Mr. Lipincki had been, that the stones were within the four walls of the Golden Star Hotel when the visit was made, and therefore, when she saw the gems, and had made a mental comparison between them and the rough stones which had been actually traced

to Mr. Herman's possession, she had no shadow of doubt as to their true origin, although, of course, there was no legal proof that they were the same.

“What would you advise me to do, Sally?” asked Miss Colegate, when the examination was complete. “You know the wretch certainly led me to believe that he was a single man, and — well — more than that, and I should dearly like to punish him in some way.”

“Well, my dear,” replied Miss Billing, “I don't think there will be very much difficulty about that. You see the position is this: He has smuggled those diamonds into Cape Colony and you have aided and abetted him. The penalty is confiscation of the jewellery and a fine of £300, or six months' hard labour.”

“Good heavens! I had no idea the law was as strict as that,” replied Miss Colegate

with a little gasp. "What *should* I do if I was found out?"

"Well," said Miss Billing rather grimly, "you would lose the diamonds, and so would he; but if you confessed, I daresay you would get some part of your share of the penalty taken off. On the other hand—"

"Well?"

"There is no penalty for taking them *out* of the colony again, and, as I am not connected with the detective force any longer, it might be possible for me to manage—"

"Sally, if you will, you shall have half of whatever they fetch!" exclaimed Miss Colegate, with a little clutch at her companion's arm.

"Very well," said Miss Billing, "that will do. There's one of the Castle boats sailing to-morrow. We'll go."

While Mr. Engstroem was seated at breakfast in his hotel the following morning, a

waiter brought a small packet and laid it down beside his plate. He opened it with a carelessness which suddenly developed into intense interest when he found inside it the half-hoop diamond ring which he had promised to his fair accomplice. Inclosed with it was a note which ran :

“Miss Colegate presents her compliments to Mr. Engstroem, and begs to return the ring which, after the discovery she made on landing, she is unable to honourably accept. She requests that Mr. Engstroem will not give himself the trouble of calling this morning, as pressing business requires her immediate return to England, and she sails by the *Northumberland Castle* at ten o'clock.”

What Mr. Engstroem said could not be reproduced here, nor am I able to give any

reliable version of the explanatory scene which took place when he once more reached the shelter of the hospitable roof of the "Golden Star."

VIII.

BEAUTY IN CAMP.

WE were walking slowly up and down the promenade deck of a Union liner—I and a grizzled, world-worn “knock-about,” who was returning from the Diamond Fields with a very comfortable balance awaiting him at one of the London banks—and, as is not by any means infrequent among male wanderers on shipboard, our conversation had turned on the Superior Sex and its devious ways in relation to our own.

“Ah, women!” said my companion, blowing with pregnant emphasis a long blue stream of cigar smoke from his pursed-up lips; “they are, as you say, the most com-

plicated pieces of unaccountable cussedness that you can find from one end of creation to the other. Why, I remember how one of the prettiest little incarnations of innocence and all-round sweetness that ever swished a petticoat over a pavement scooped a whole mining camp for all it was worth, and did it single-handed; too, while all the boys were watching her, and dreaming of anything else than what happened."

"That sounds interesting," said I. "Would you mind telling me the story?"

"Not a bit; in fact, I like to tell it, for it does me good. It's a warning to me which I can never rub in hard enough. It happened at a rather out-of-the-way camp over the Free State Border that was worked by about four dozen of as hard cases as you ever saw outside a gaol.

"We called the camp Blue Mud Hole, and it was just about as homeless a spot as a bad-

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natured man would like to send his worst enemy to do penal servitude for life in. There were about a score of shanties chucked round the holes as if they'd been thrown down by accident, and there was one saloon and general store, kept by a sharp-nosed, red-headed, flinty-souled Scotchman, who was as mean a wretch as ever traded off bad liquor for good money, or filled his slate faster than his customers emptied their glasses.

“It was after we had knocked off work for the day, and were making hay of our earnings in this miserable whiskey-mill on drinks at a shilling a tot, half-crown nap, and similar luxuries, when Monkey Joe, a little chap with a twisted spine and arms like a gorilla, who had been on a three-weeks' burst in Kimberley, rode up to the door and began firing both his pistols at the tin roof to fetch us out.

“‘What cheer, boys? Glad to see me back, of course. You ain't? Well, you will be



"He began firing both his pistols at the tin roof to fetch us out."

when you've heard the news—the rosiest, daintiest bit of news that has ever set this camp hustling as you chaps'll be hustling before you're an hour older.'

“ ‘You'll never be an hour older, Monkey, ef you don't shet down sharp on that skyooting, and say why you've hawked this crowd out from its liquors,' said a long, leather-faced Yankee that we called Uncle Sam, because he happened to be the only American in the camp. As he spoke he reached round to the back of his belt, and Joe thought he'd better reel his news off right away, so he put on the most solemn face he could, and said, as though he was announcing the Day of Judgment :

“ ‘Boys, there's a woman coming to the camp, and she'll be here with the mail inside this blessed hour.'

“ If he had told us that the British Royal Family were coming to dig diamonds at Blue

Mud Hole, he couldn't have given us a bigger facer. With one mind and voice the crowd shouted :

“ ‘ Who is she? What's she like? ’ ”

“ ‘ About as young as a fairly old hoss, and as pretty as an English daisy, ’ said Joe, with gusto that left no room for doubt, and then he added briskly: ‘ Now, my nobles, I've had a scorching good time yonder, and, thanks to four queens against a full house last night, I've c me back better off than I went. We've just got time to set 'em up once and have a spell at fixing things a bit before she comes, so name your poisons, and we'll drink long life and a good husband to the Daisy of Blue Mud Hole. ’ ”

“ Joe owned that he'd made that little bit up as he came along, but it chimed in very well, and we drank the toast with a howl that made Sandy Sam's glasses ring again.

“ Inside the next half-hour there was one

of the funniest scenes going on in that camp that the oldest inhabitant could remember. Men who hadn't fixed their hair for three weeks were pulling it out in combfuls, and letting off language that would sink this ship if I could repeat it. The only two razors in the camp were hunted up and sharpened on boot-tops; and 'Ackney 'Arry, a cockney who had been a barber in Whitechapel, nearly got shot by three different men for doing his best with the tools.

“By the time the stage drove up to the door of the Koh-i-Noor Saloon, as Sandy Sam had the cheek to call his poison-factory, there was as queerly-dressed and sheepish-looking a crowd standing around to welcome the Daisy as you'd have found between Natal and the Congo.

“We'd agreed, after an uneasy sort of discussion, that Monkey Joe, as being the one to bring the news, should have the honour of

handing her out and bidding her welcome in the name of the camp. Joe, for all his queer shape, was, or had been, a bit of a gentleman, and we'd made him cook up and repeat five or six times to us as neat a little how-d'ye-do as a duchess could have expected. It missed fire when the time came, and, if there hadn't been a lady present, Joe would have had to fight the crowd before he'd have been forgiven, supposing he'd survived. But the way the Daisy took the few bits he did manage to get out warmed us up so that we forgot all about everything but the slim, straight, grey-clad figure that stood by the coach-wheel, and the sweet face that was looking at us out of a little cloud of brown, shiny hair under a wavy, broad-brimmed hat.

“ We waited like so many lackeys for her to speak, and, when she did, her voice seemed to us to come from away back out of the years we had mostly forgotten. It didn't seem

to belong to that brown, dry wilderness at all, but to somewhere much nearer what we used to call home. When she spoke she said something like this, as near as I can remember :

“ ‘ Thank you so much, gentlemen, for your kindness. Please don't trouble about my box ' (two of the boys were just getting out their knives over it), ' but I should be so much obliged if you would tell me where Mr. Draper—Frank Draper his name is—lives in the—the village. I'm his sister, and he wrote to Grahamstown a month ago to tell me to come and keep house for him. I was a governess there, and didn't like it, so I came.' ”

“ Now there had been no Frank Draper in the camp so far as any of us knew, but there had been a good-looking, dissipated, broken-up sort of half-gentleman, half-jockey, that we called Lord Jones, because of the airs he put on, and this chap had been run out of camp and told to keep away for the good of

his health a month before for holding five aces at poker when there wasn't a joker in the pack. This might have been her Frank, and it might not.

"Anyhow, we didn't like to risk hurting her feelings on the chance, so, after looking round awkwardly for a minute or so, we tipped the wink to Billy Ballarat, the best liar in the crowd, and he told her, without a twist in his voice, that her lamented brother had been eaten up body and boots by a lion during a hunting spell that he had taken a fortnight before.

"When we saw the Daisy's pretty brown eyes swim over with tears at the news, we felt like blowing holes in Billy; but it didn't seem right to shoot before a lady in trouble, so we passed it over, and started out to console her for all we were worth.

"As soon as she had got her first cry over, she told us in her sweet, pitiful voice that she



“We tossed up who should give up his hut to her.”

didn't know what to do, for she had spent nearly all her money in coming up country, expecting to find her brother all right, and hadn't anything like enough to take her back to Grahamstown. In two minutes she had enough offered her to have bought the coach and team, and didn't we feel good when she refused it all in the sweetest of ways, and said if we'd allow her she'd sooner stop in camp, and earn her passage back than accept charity, 'even from us,' as she put it.

"She said she could cook and sew and make things, and sing to us a bit of an evening, if we liked, and we could pay her what we thought right for her services, and she would trust to our honour as gentlemen to see her right through her difficulty. After that speech the man who dared to look at her except as he'd look at his own mother would have been buried in little pieces.

"Well, we tossed up who should give up

his hut to her, but we knew too much about tossing, and gave it up after four rounds. At last she offered to settle it by calling out a lot of Christian names, and taking the hut of the man whose name she hit off first. She came to mine first, and in half-an-hour the cabin was as fit for her to take up her quarters as hard work could make it, and then she shook hands with us all round, and retired for the night.

“ Inside an hour a new state of things had started on in the camp. A vigilance committee of three was formed to look after manners and language, and bye-laws were written down to regulate drinking and fights, so that she shouldn't see or hear anything unpleasant.

“ The way that girl queened it over us all was a perfect masterpiece. She never put on any airs or graces, or was anything but gentle and civil to everybody ; and yet every day that passed strengthened her hold over us.

She was a splendid worker, too, and we never had such meals in our lives as she made out of the rough tack that we were able to get for her. And then she fixed up our clothes and looked after our shirts, and tidied our shanties, and altogether made us feel so respectable that we thought of bringing a parson up country and building a church for him.

“At last we got to look upon her so much as the good angel of the camp that we decided to put the diamond safe in her hut, believing that neither man nor spirit would ever think of stealing it out of there.

“I was the one to propose this, and the boys deputed me to ask her to take charge of it for us. After a lot of pretty refusals she said ‘Yes,’ and we carted it in and delivered it over to her.

“Three nights later she vanished like a ghost into a fog, and when we at last broke the hut open, we found every bag empty but

mine, and tied on to that was a slip of paper with the words: 'With Mrs. Frank Draper's compliments to Sober Tim' (that's me), 'in return for his chivalrous but misplaced confidence and the use of his hut.'

"I'm not going to try and tell you what we thought or said about ourselves when we got down to the fact that it was real and not a nightmare. Anyhow, when the language did get loose, it brought along the only thunderstorm we'd had for seven months. And yet, somehow, no one cussed *her*—funny, wasn't it?

"We never got a stone back, though we hunted far and wide. I whacked up with the boys as far as they'd let me, and we went to work again, and swore off good angels in petticoats for ever—leastways, till we'd made our pile and were getting safe home," concluded Sober Tim, with a yearning glance towards a certain most daintily filled deck-chair a few yards away.

THE END.