



Diamonds of Malopo

by
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(Continued from last week.)

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Winton Garrett, twenty-five and just out of college, calls by appointment on Archie Garrett, his New York cousin and executor, to receive his inheritance of \$100,000. Archie, honest, an easy mark and a fool for luck, assures Winton that he is practically a millionaire, as he has invested all but \$10,000 in a rubber plantation, in either the East or West Indies and in a controlling interest in the Big Malopo diamond mine, somewhere or other in South Africa, sold him as a special favor by a Dutch promoter named De Witt.

It swayed and creaked upon its way, the baggage thumping in the boot, the mules dancing over the sand, the passengers good-humoredly jostling one another at every movement. It began to pass the travelers of the morning—men riding thirsty Basuto ponies, carts with thin donkeys, crawling at a snail's pace between heaven and sand; daring and resolute pedestrians walking beside donkeys, their only friends, laden with baggage and water-bags.

Winton turned his attention to his fellow passengers. Besides the old man and the girl there were a number of prospectors and mining men, evidently old residents of the country, to judge from their tanned faces and the brick-red arms disclosed under the up-rolled shirt sleeves. There were two or three clerks or storekeepers, and one man seated in a corner, with his hat over his eyes, whose insolent demeanor and flashy clothes arrested Winton's attention.

Winton sat rather uncomfortably against the strap that ran across the width of the coach in the center, dividing it into two portions, and furnishing an inconvenient, swinging support for two rows of passengers, back to back. There was another row at either end of the coach; thus there were four lines of seats, the occupants of the first and second, and those of the third and fourth facing each other.

Opposite Winton sat the girl and her father. The old man, who had taken several pulls at a flask in his pocket, was lying back half asleep. As Winton watched him, he saw his eyes open, travel from face to face, and suddenly fix themselves upon some occupant of the farthest row with a look of terror and abasement.

Involuntarily Winton turned, to perceive that the man with his hat over his eyes had pushed it up and was watching the older one with a smile of amusement. Winton thought his face was one of the most sinister that he had ever seen. He was about forty years of age, and not ill-looking; but the smile on his countenance was a wolfish snarl. There was greed there, and cruelty, and utter heartlessness.

Yawning, the man rose, and, without a word of apology, strode over the strap, pushing between the seated passengers. He went over to the girl. Beside her was an inoffensive little clerk. He jerked him by the arm.

"I'll change places with you," he said peremptorily.

The little clerk rose obediently and made his way across the strap, the other passengers, who had not dared to resent the first disturbance, remonstrating vehemently as they dislodged themselves to allow him passage.

"Well, Sheila, my dear," said the newcomer, grinning into the girl's face, "glad to see you. I'd been wondering how you could stay away from your old friend De Witt so long."

He was referring evidently to himself. Winton started at the name. He had an introduction to De Witt in his pocket, but now he hardly felt like presenting it.

De Witt sat down beside the girl. There was nothing in the man's words that need be especially offensive in a free-and-easy community, but the familiarity of the coarse tones, which made the girl wince, stung Winton to fury.

"Well, who'd have thought to see you here, Daddy Seaton?" the man continued. "Come to try your luck on the fields? It's never too late to strike it rich. You and I have been old friends, daddy, since those days down at Sand River."

The old man, who had been watching the other like a fascinated rabbit, put out one hand with an involuntary gesture which seemed to be warding off a blow.

"I—didn't know you were here, Mr. De Witt," he gulped.

"Or you would have given Malopo a wide berth, eh?" laughed the other. "Well, never mind, daddy. Friends like you and me stand together through thick and thin—eh, Sheila?"

Winton saw the appealing look in the girl's eyes. But he restrained himself. There was nothing he could do; he had no knowledge as to the relationship, if any, existing between the girl and De Witt. And while he was trying to keep his anger under control, the coach stopped at the first post.

The passengers were glad to stretch their legs after the ten-mile drive. The mules, unharnessed, rolled in the dust

delightedly, while their ten successors came dancing through the corral. They were inspanned, the driver cracked his whip, and once more the coach was off and away, and the post only a fleck upon the bosom of the sand.

It was insufferably hot. The whirling dust found its way through the crevices of the window-panes and coated the interior of the coach with white, plastering the sweat-stained faces of the travelers. Daddy Seaton still crouched in his corner, watching De Witt in fascinated terror. De Witt's mood appeared to have changed when he resumed his seat beside Sheila. With hardly a word to her he settled himself to sleep, as did the majority of the passengers. His body, swaying with the swaying coach, gravitated now toward her and now toward the man next to him, who was himself asleep, his head resting against the glass of the window; finally, however, De Witt's head fell sideways upon the girl's shoulder, and the man lay with his shoulders supported against her body.

Winton saw the same appealing look in her eyes. And this time he was about to intervene, when Sheila ventured to protest by a slight movement which sent De Witt's head back gently against the padded back of the coach. De Witt opened his eyes, looked round, grinned, and settled himself again deliberately. In the same position. Next moment Winton was standing in front of him, white with passion.

"Have the goodness to take your head off that lady's shoulder!" he demanded.

He was aware of a slight commotion among the other passengers, such as is described in published accounts of speeches by the parenthetical word "sensation." But the effect of his words upon De Witt was electrical. The man sat bolt-upright, stared at him, snorted, and then deliberately shot out his foot, the heavy boot striking Winton in the pit of the stomach and gauging him to double up with pain.

It was only for a moment. Winton leaped at him, tore him from his place, and sent him spinning backward against the window with a well-planted blow in the face.

Instantly the coach was in an uproar. Hands were outstretched to pull Winton away. But Winton, mad with rage and pain, was ignorant of them and of Daddy Seaton's high, quavering cry of alarm. As De Witt recovered himself, he followed his blow with another, which landed squarely on the man's lip. The blood spurted as from an artery, and De Witt reeled and fell backward as the door gave. In his fall he clutched at Winton and dragged him from the vehicle.

A few seconds later Winton found himself facing De Witt upon the sand. The coach had stopped some hundred yards distant, and its occupants were running back toward the pair.

In a flash Winton realized two things: first, that his enemy was not a coward, at least when infuriated; second, that he was a man of great muscular strength. De Witt ran at him, bellowing like a bull, while the blood from his cut lip streamed down over his chin.

Winton was no mean boxer, but the trained man is not always profited by his lore in a rough-and-tumble. There followed a confusion of short blows which never got home; then De Witt had him by the throat, but lost his hold. Winton grew calmer, and he meant to punish De Witt before they were separated. He watched for his opportunity, and as De Witt, flinching under a short and comparatively harmless jab at his face, opened a space between his body and his extended arms, Winton shot his right upward with the full force of his body behind it.

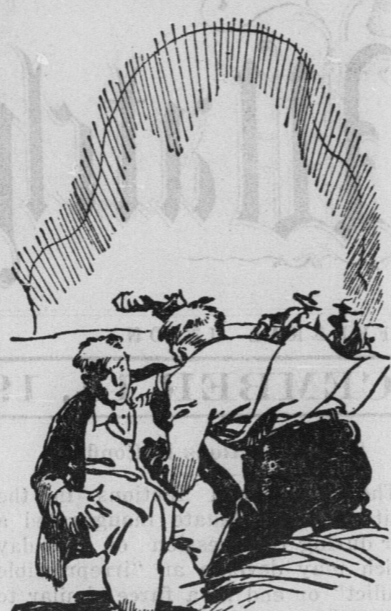
It was a deadly blow at close range, permitting the extension of the striker's arm to the full, with no possibility of an ounce of the driving-power being lost. It caught De Witt upon the point of the jaw, and the man dropped where he stood. A moment later Winton stood, quite collected, in the hands of the other passengers, who, seeing that the fight was over, turned their attention to the man on the ground.

De Witt was unconscious and breathing heavily. Somebody ran back for water. Another man produced a flask of brandy and got some of the contents between De Witt's teeth. Presently De Witt began to splutter. He sat up, saw and recognized Winton, and his eyes filled with deadly hatred.

"I'll get even with you for this," he mumbled.

But there was no more fight in him. Solicitously attended by the little clerk whom he had ousted from his seat so unceremoniously, De Witt staggered toward the coach, resuming his old place in the corner, with his hat pulled over his discolored forehead.

He looked so abject and crestfallen, with his swollen lip and bruised jaw,



Winton shot his right upward with the full force of his body behind it.

that Winton almost felt pity for him. But it was certain that De Witt deserved no pity. The man was a bully and a cad and had got his deserts.

After the coach had started, Sheila Seaton bent forward and spoke to Winton.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said, with a catch of her breath. "Nobody else would have dared to do what you have done."

"I think most men would have done so," said Winton.

"You don't know who he is. He is Judge Davis' man. Nobody would dare to thwart Judge Davis. The judge stands behind Mr. De Witt in everything."

"Who is Judge Davis?"

"The president of the Diamond Fields Syndicate. And the landrover."

"What's that?" Winton asked.

"The resident magistrate and judge. You see, Malopo is really a native protectorate, and there isn't any legislature or law, so Judge Davis can do anything he pleases. You are a stranger, aren't you? But you don't speak like an Englishman."

"I'm an American, and I know nothing of this country," answered Winton. "I only landed a week ago. I came out to—checked himself—'to take up a claim in Malopo.'"

They were heading close toward each other. The creaking of the coach made their words inaudible to the others, who, having discussed the amazing incident to their satisfaction, had settled down to sleep through the glare and heat and dust. Winton cast a glance toward Daddy Seaton. The old man, having assuaged his thirst with plentiful gulps of whisky, was fast asleep in his corner.

"You have made a terrible blunder," said the girl earnestly. "You had better take the next coach back. Really, you had better, because nobody can fight the judge, and Mr. De Witt is his right-hand man."

"Well see," said Winton grimly. "In the mean time, won't you tell me why—why he thinks he can insult you?"

She smiled wearily. "In a frontier settlement women do not expect courtesies," she answered.

"On the contrary," answered Winton. "I don't believe these men"—he looked round the coach—"would not protect you in an emergency, unless—"

He hesitated. He was getting into deep water. The question was too personal.

And Winton was beginning to suspect that the same fate which had broken old Seaton had somehow changed the course of the girl's life, though she was not spiritless like her father. There was about her an indefinable air of aloofness, as if she had been driven in upon herself, as if some tragedy had robbed her of her right to happiness.

And she had submitted to De Witt's grossness as if it had been inevitable. The girl bent forward earnestly. "I see you don't understand," she said. "In our frontier towns there are only two classes of women, those that are ladies and those that are not. I am—not. These men could tell you—"

"If De Witt thinks he has any hold over your father—" Winton began.

The girl placed her hand on his sleeve. "My father's life is in his hands," she said solemnly. "He killed a man."

She looked at him in fear, and then, as if resolving to trust him, continued: "He comes of a good English family, and—you'll hardly believe it—he was once an officer in the army. He got into trouble and was dismissed. Then he settled down in the Colony. And then—this happened, and it broke him and ruined his life. When I can first remember him, we were wanderers all over the country. Father never stayed anywhere for more than six months. He had no friends of his own class. He became coarse in his speech like an uneducated man. And in time I discovered that he lived in terror of Mr. De Witt."

"Five years ago we were living in Johannesburg. Father is an expert native linguist, and he was command manager of a mine there. We had a little home, and we were happy, and I thought our troubles were at an end. Then Mr. De Witt met father and forced him to do some crooked work for him in connection with some of his mining interests. After that we started on our travels again."

"We went to Malopo with the first rush of prospectors and stayed there a year. Then Judge Davis was appointed landrover by the government, and went there to form the syndicate. He had known that Mr. De Witt was connected with him, and he appeared soon after. Father urged me to leave. But I was tired of wandering, I had a position in a hotel, and I thought father was safe after so long a time."

Father went away without telling me, and afterward I got a letter from him in Rhodesia. Then Mr. De Witt went to the United States, and I wrote to father to return.

"For a long time he would not, but at last he believed that Mr. De Witt was gone for good, and he arranged to come back to Malopo. Then, three weeks ago, Mr. De Witt returned. He knew me, and he—took a fancy to me. He promised me father should not be molested. I went to Taungs yesterday to meet father, and—you know the rest."

She shivered at the remembrances that came crowding in upon her. Winton remained silent for a few moments. But an instinct made him turn his head, and, looking across the coach, he saw De Witt watching him and Sheila; and the hate and rage upon his face showed him that the fight of that day had been only the first round in their conflict.

"I thank you very much for your confidence," he said to Sheila. "I hope to be your friend in Malopo."

She shook her head in warning, and, leaning back, closed her eyes. And they traveled on through the heat and dust, stopping only at the coach-stables, and eating indifferent meals of canned foods at wayside stores. All day the coach rolled through the desert toward the distant hills that never seemed any nearer. Winton slept by snatches through a night that seemed unending, awakening at every bump and stopping, until they came into Malopo in the cold dawn.

CHAPTER III

Ned Burns—Watchman.

The coach deposited its half-frozen passengers in front of the office in the market square.

"Miss Seaton, I'm going to help you and your father with your baggage," said Winton. "And I hope to be of service in any way that is possible."

He handed her his card. Then he became aware that De Witt was standing close at his side and looking over his shoulder. He turned angrily, and the man moved away.

Had he read the name on it? It did not matter; but Winton would have preferred to maintain the advantage of being unknown, in view of the situation. He arranged to have his trunk held until he had found lodgings, and then, returning, found that Sheila and her father had quietly disappeared.

The busy day had begun. The slanting beams of the rising sun struck like shafts of gold upon the post office, across the square, in which the encamped transport riders were preparing breakfast at numerous fires built in the tiny spaces between the wagons with their spans of longhorns. Dust whirled were dancing everywhere, breaking against the buildings and enveloping those who happened to be passing. The stores were opened, carts were driving back from the market, hawkers and peddlers were afoot with their wares.

Malopo was about as large as Taungs, but, being a boom town, and not a railroad one, had a cleaner and more prosperous aspect, though the old-clothes shops were almost as plentiful. Many of the brick houses were of two stories, and here and there was a business building of three or even four. Beyond the market square Winton could see a little, new suburb of neat cottages, with the beginning of gardens, beside a rivulet, dry now, but converted into a torrent during the short rainy season. Large cisterns, holding and storing the single month's rainfall during the remainder of the year, squatted upon the roofs.

Beyond this suburb appeared a rising patch of desolate ground, rocky and scarred, out of which projected a succession of wooden superstructures, resembling the scaffolding of innumerable small houses that were destined never to be completed. This was the diamond ground. And Malopo ended as unconventionally as it began. It sat like an excrescence upon the desert, which came up to its doors.

On one side of the great square Winton perceived the sign "Continental Hotel" hanging from the upper story of a fairly substantial building. He resolved to make this place his headquarters for the time being, and, discovering that he could have a room and board for a pound a day, he ordered his trunk sent there.

He did not sign his name in the ink-stained register, and the clerk seemed indifferent whether he did or not. This was an act of common prudence, in his opinion, although he had nothing on which to base suspicions against any one, except the single fact that De Witt had given his own name to the diamond. But Winton had discovered, during his single week in South Africa, that human nature was pretty much the same as among the fotsam of American mushroom towns.

His room was one of a long row at the back of the hotel, the brick floor innocent of covering, and the bed of sheets. But it was a refuge, and after his trunk had arrived, Winton put some important papers in his pocket, got rid of the stains of his journey, and went out on the porch or stoop.

He found the place packed with men who were eagerly discussing what Winton soon gathered to be a diamond theft. Hearing De Witt's name mentioned, he unobtrusively joined the nearest of the groups.

"It's just some damned trick of the judge's," a man was saying. "Him and De Witt are thicker than thieves—which they are, God knows! The De Witt stone never was stolen."

"Where is it, then? It was on exhibit at the Syndicate bank, and it ain't there now."

"Locked away in the safe, Scotty."

"I tell you it's stolen. And they won't say nothing nor admit nothing at

the bank. Just let you draw your conclusions. Now, if it was a trick, why shouldn't the bank be spreading the story far and wide?"

"Why should De Witt want people to think his stone was stolen, if it ain't?"

"God knows! Some scheme of the old judge's."

"But the judge don't own the Big Malopo claim!"

"He will," said a pock-marked man with a quiet emphasis. "Ever know the syndicate to go after anything and not get it?"

"Who in thunder does own Big Malopo?"

"American firm, ain't it?"

"I heard De Witt unloaded his shares on some bunch of fools in New York before the big stone was found, and now he's kicking himself."

The advent of a negro man, carrying a sheaf of copies of the local paper, just from the press, checked the discussion. A staring head-line announced the robbery of the big diamond.

"Now, now, gentlemen, there are copies enough for all," remonstrated the negro; and Winton, reaching for a paper, took in his appearance with a glance of amusement.

He was a young negro man, apparently in his early twenties. He was dressed with a scrupulous attention that put the clothes of the hotel visitors to blush. A soft felt hat of dazzling whiteness sat upon his crisp locks. His wrists showed two expanses of snow-white cuffs that rivaled the brilliancy of his immaculate collar.

A black tail-coat and waistcoat, gray trousers, pressed to the compression-limit of the cloth, and patent-leather shoes completed his attire. But his accent puzzled Winton. The tones that emanated from the young man's throat were exactly those of the stiffest and most precise of gentlemen reared in the sacred atmosphere of an English university.

"Is this news straight, Sam?" inquired one of the cluster, who were busy reading the account of the robbery.

"The Chronicle is very strong on veracity, Mr. Efridge," replied the negro, hitching up his trousers at the knees before stooping in search of an elusive coin.

"I bet Van Vorst is at the bottom of this," remarked one of the group.

Winton scanned his copy hastily. It was a four-page edition, in which Reuter cable dispatches, telegraphed and local news jostled advertisements promiscuously. The front page, which was devoted entirely to the account of the robbery, stated that the De Witt diamond had disappeared from the safe of the Syndicate bank at some time during the preceding night. The robber, who had probably worked with a confederate, had somehow learned the combination of the lock, had opened the safe, taken the stone, and walked away with it. No suspicion rested upon any of the bank employees, in spite of the discovery of the combination, and the robber was undoubtedly one of the number of strangers in Malopo. Fortunately his discovery could be only a matter of a short time, since the police were carefully scrutinizing the outgoing coaches and wagons.

Winton folded up the sheet. "A story like that wouldn't pass muster anywhere else," he reflected. "I believe it is a trick, unless De Witt or one of the heads of the bank is responsible. And it's my diamond—four-fifths of it!"

The irony of the situation made him smile; and then he became aware of a smiling black face in close proximity to his own.

"I don't believe I received my ticky, sir," said Sam.

"Your what?" asked Winton.

"Three pence, sir."

Winton, remembering the colloquial name of the unit of currency in the up-country regions, produced a three-penny bit from his pocket and handed it to the "boy," who thanked him courteously.

"You are an American, sir?" he inquired.

"I am," said Winton. "And you, if I may inquire?"

"Barbados bred, sir. Where they speak the purest English, sir. We are an altogether superior class to your own colored population, sir."

"Well, I've known some pretty decent colored people in my own country," said Winton in amusement.

"Possibly, sir. But you must recognize that our ancestors obtained their emancipation a generation before yours, sir. We have rid ourselves of our primal instincts, sir."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Winton. "By the way, where is this Big Malopo claim?"

"Three miles out, sir. I shall be very pleased to show you the way if you plan to go there."

"I'll be obliged, Sam. You're not busy?"

"No, sir. My literary labors begin at three this afternoon. We are a morning newspaper. This was an extra, and I have completed my round."

They strolled across the market square toward the suburb. Winton, amused and interested in his companion, drew him out further.

"Your literary labors, I take it, Sam, consist in selling the copies of the Chronicle?" he asked.

"No, sir. I am a subeditor. Indeed, if I may say so without offense, the style, not to say spelling, of our paper would be considerably 'off,' as they say, without my services."

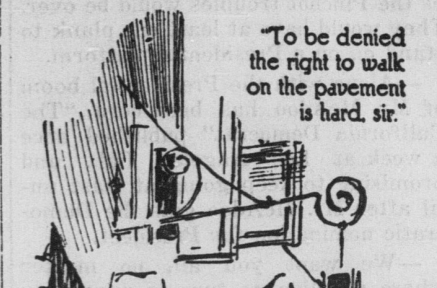
"And part of your duty consists in selling copies?"

"Outside the office, sir, I am simply a negro," said Sam, without any trace of bitterness. "I am a Stole, and I recognize conditions. And yet it is hard, I emigrated to this country, sir, with the idea of being of social

service among men of my race. I found myself a pariah. Perhaps you do not know, sir, that the chief justice of Trinidad was a colored man?"

"No," said Winton. "But I'm glad to hear it. What do they do to you, Sam?"

"They are unable to discriminate between the colored aboriginal population and the negro of culture," said Sam. "I realize that in this imperfect world certain prejudices as to color exist. I accept them. But for a British sub-



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ject from a civilized land to be denied the right to walk on the pavement is hard, sir."

"But there is no pavement," said Winton, bewildered.

"Not at present, sir. But if there were a pavement, I should still be subject to the disability imposed upon these raw savages. In the same way the sale of alcoholic liquors is forbidden to me, sir."

"Oh, cheer up," said Winton encouragingly. "Anybody can get a drink anywhere."

"I am a teetotaler, sir," responded Sam. "I was taking exception to the principle, not to its application. As a colored British subject, I should not be subjected to laws passed for the disciplining of savages."

"They ought to be more discriminating," admitted Winton.

"Thank you, sir," said Sam warmly. "I hold that, when a man has shed his primal instincts, that fact should be recognized."

"You have no primal instincts?"

"None, sir, that are peculiar to the Bantu race. I am a man like you, but not a savage."

"Not especially fond of chicken, Sam?" asked Winton; and then he regretted his speech, afraid that he had hurt his companion's feelings. But Sam took the words with his customary smile.

"I like chicken. I eat chicken," he acknowledged. "But I am certainly not what might be termed remarkably attached to chicken."

They passed between the rows of little cottages, crossed the dry river course, which was unspanned by any bridge, and saw the diamond fields in front of them. The appearance of the district was striking. Beneath the red sand, which had been piled up along long ridges, the bases propped up with boarding, were bright patches of yellowish clay, the diamond-bearing stratum, and under this, it was hoped, would be found the famous blue ground indicative of the volcanic funnels in which diamonds are formed of carbon under terrific pressure.

No blue ground had yet been struck; its existence was, however, almost a certainty, since the yellow clay is merely the blue ground decomposed. The yellow patches extended on either side as far as the eye could reach. All along this depression in the ridge buildings were under construction. Here and there, where more substantial progress had been made, pits yawned, bridged by plank roads, and endless windlasses, from which buckets were lowered to bring up the diamond-bearing soil, stood ranged in disorderly array. The ropes from these windlasses, extending into the pits in every direction, gave their sides the appearance of cliffs covered with huge spider webs.

(To be continued.)

An Indian Christmas.

Did you know that Indian children know about Christmas, and that many celebrate this great holiday? You see, at Carlisle, Pa. there is a large Indian school, and here the boys and girls learn all about the way we observe the week, and they are taught many little stories of interest about the "present-giving season."

The Indians who live out West go to the schools on the reservations, and in the evening they go back to their camp homes and tell their parents all they have learned about Christmas, and in a small way they imitate the white children in their mode of keeping alive the Christmas spirit.

Mistake Somewhere.

It was bed time for 4 year old Jack but the little fellow wanted to stay up later. His aunt, who tipped the scales at nearly two hundred pounds, said: "Why Jack, think of me, I am ever so much older than you and I go to bed with the chickens!"

Jack looked at her great size, and remarked succinctly, "Well, I don't see how you ever get up on the roost."—Judge.

A Good Worker.

A city man called upon another, and after a glance round the establishment inquired, "How's your new office boy getting along?"

"Fine!" was the reply. "He's got things so mixed up that I couldn't get along without him."