

Diamonds of Malopo

by
VICTOR ROUSSEAU

(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 man and a fool for luck, assures Winton that he is practically a millionaire, as he has invested all but \$10,000 in rubber plantations in either the East or West Indies and in a controlling interest in the Big Malopo diamond mine, somewhere in South Africa, sold him as a special favor by a Dutch promoter named De Witt.

CHAPTER II.—Winton, en route to his mine, finds the town of Taungas wildly excited over a big strike at Malopo, including the six-carat "De Witt diamond." Two coach passengers are a disreputable old prospector, Daddy Seaton, and his daughter, Sheila. On the journey a passenger, who turns out to be De Witt himself, insults Sheila. Winton fights De Witt and knocks him out. Sheila tells him to turn back. She says that her father is a broken English army officer, who has killed a man and is therefore in De Witt's power, that De Witt is all-powerful, being backed by Judge Davis, president of the diamond syndicate, and also the resident magistrate and judge of the native protectorate.

CHAPTER III.—Winton finds Malopo in a turmoil, both over the strike and the theft of the De Witt diamond. Winton foolishly discloses his identity to Sam Simpson, a Jamaican negro, editor of the local newspaper. He more wisely confides in Ned Burns, watchman at the Big Malopo, who tells him that the syndicate has planned to take control of the mine the next morning.

CHAPTER IV.—Winton finds that Sheila is cashier at the restaurant. He offers his friendship. She tells him Van Vorst, a notorious diamond thief, one of De Witt's men, slips the stolen De Witt diamond into Winton's pocket and two policemen club Winton and arrest him. He escapes them and when at his last gasp, begs them to take her house, bathes his wounds and saves him from his pursuers.

CHAPTER V.—The next morning Sheila offers Winton help in escaping from Malopo. He convinces her with difficulty that he did not steal the De Witt diamond and that he is president of the Big Malopo company. Bruised and blood-stained, he runs across town, breaks by force into the company meeting, and aided by a popular demonstration proves his identity, blocks the organization and takes control. He asks Sheila to marry him. She laughs hysterically and refuses him.

CHAPTER VI.—Winton hires Seaton as compound manager and develops Big Malopo. Judge Davis, a philosophical old hypocrite of unknown past, offers him the syndicate's cooperation. Otherwise, he says, "we'll smash you, you d-d young fool."

"When you speak of a lady, my friend, I presume you refer to the young woman in question," he said coolly; and the spectators snickered. Winton felt some hidden meaning in their mirth. He wrinkled under it.

"What does this mean, Mr. Hanson?" Judge Davis continued.

"It's part of the personal news, Judge," answered the editor.

"Quite so," answered Davis. "It is unfortunate, Mr. Garrett, if you are the gentleman referred to. But the passage has my approval." His voice began to quaver. "It's our policy," he went on, "to promote temperance, purity, and fraternity by publicity. Woe to those who harbor designs against the well-being of the people of Malopo! Woe to you, young man, if you are a wolf in sheep's clothing! The people of Malopo will tolerate nothing that cannot bear the full light of day."

"Go it, Judge! Give him h—l, Judge!" yelled the citizen who had spoken before.

Judge Davis looked about him unctuously and smacked his lips. He knew well how to take advantage of the admiration which his gallery play aroused.

"The Chronicle will not be intimidated in its policy of public justice," he pursued. "Do you wish to lay a charge of assault and battery against Mr. Garrett?" he inquired of Sam.

"I want him arrested!" yelled Sam. "He cut my lip. I'm a British subject and I demand justice."

"And you shall have it," answered the judge. "White or colored, every man is entitled to the full protection of the law. Go home, young man, and reflect on that," he said to Winton.

"I made a mistake," said Winton hoarsely.

"That's better, my friend."

the room. The entrance of Winton, glaring about him and showing all the evidences of his agitation, attracted universal attention.

The manager recognized him as one of his disappointments. Winton's removal to the European had angered him, and he had a sneering remark at the tip of his tongue which died away as he saw the look on Winton's face.

"Where's Miss Seaton?" demanded Winton.

"She ain't here today," answered the man. "This ain't no drawing room. If you want dinner, sit down. If you don't, get out!"

The girls were watching the argument, which had every aspect of developing into an altercation. The diners, who knew all about the paragraph, were smiling broadly.

"I asked you where she was," said Winton doggedly.

Winton's former waitress took pity on him. She had liked Winton, and admired him as different from the crowd who flocked into the place. "She's gone to the races," she whispered.

Winton left the hotel. He knew that he had made a fool of himself for the second time. The story of his infatuation would be all over Malopo.

He had not known that there was any racing that day. He had noticed nothing, absorbed as he was with his one thought. But now he saw that a procession of carts and wagons, horsemen and pedestrians, with here and there a smart dog-cart, was making its way toward the south side of the town.

Winton tramped along in their wake, until Malopo was left behind, and he saw the race course in front of him, crowded with spectators.

Vehicles of every kind were drawn up about it, and as he approached he saw the spectators clearing from the track. Then he perceived the horses galloping round the ellipse.

He worked his way through the mob to the grandstand, a roughly-constructed hodgepodge of crude uprights and seats, paid his admission fee, and began to search it systematically for Sheila. She was not there; he assured himself of that after a few minutes of careful scrutiny. There must have been a thousand persons present, and the general disorder upon the course made his investigation difficult; but he was resolved to find her.

He began to make his way round the barriers, scrutinizing the occupants of the vehicles. If Sheila was at the races, some man had taken her, probably in a carriage. But Winton's jealousy was smothered by his concern. Nearly all Malopo had turned out. Everybody was drinking and shouting and yelling as the horses came galloping home toward the flag-decked box of the judges. Bookmakers, standing on chairs, shouted the odds, and everybody held a racing card in his hands. A dozen men caught at Winton, offering odds:

"Shylock, three to two! Back the favorite, gents! Little Boy, nine to four! Here y'are, mister!"

He shook himself free, growing more and more somber and resolute as the behavior of the mob became more unrestrained, and the sickness in his heart grew as he thought of Sheila there.

How could the girl find pleasure in such a place? And who was her companion?

He looked at the faces of the women seated in the carriages, and for the first time he was conscious of a terrible fear. He knew next to nothing of Sheila. Suppose he had been mistaken and had read in her what was not there—and denied to himself the existence of qualities that were evident to any less infatuated than himself! He recalled the veiled warnings of Van Beer and Ned.

monplace way as averts so many tragedies. De Witt recognized him and nodded with surly amicability. Sheila smiled anxiously.

"That was a good run," called De Witt. "Miss Sheila and I have hooked in fifty pounds on Little Boy."

Winton did not answer him, but fixed his eyes on Sheila's face. He knew now that his dreams had been a delusion, that the girl was not to blame; that she was a worthless woman who had become nothing to him.

He met her look gravely, and then, through the smiling mask, he seemed to penetrate to the girl's tortured soul. He read the hopelessness, the shame beneath her smile.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

De Witt, who was half drunk, turned to him in maudlin remonstrance.

"I tell you why she's here," he hiccuped. "Because she likes me. See? Likes me and don't care about you—eh, Sheila?"

He placed his arm about her, and the girl, shrinking in his grasp, yet did not seem to resent the familiarity.

"Sheila," said Winton, "if you came here out of affection for that man, Heaven knows it's no business of mine. I'll go away. But if you came here because he threatened you by means of the power he has over your father, Heaven help him!"

De Witt leaned forward and clutched the whip. "You go to the devil!" he roared.

"Sheila, I asked you why you are here," said Winton with patient obstinacy.

The girl smiled mirthlessly. "I am here with a gentleman, Mr. Garrett," she answered. "Surely that is answer enough. Do I look as if I had been dragged here against my will?"

Her lips quivered, but she was composed enough. "No," answered Winton. "And there was nothing more to say. A few of those about the carriage were beginning to look at the trio curiously. Then the start of a race drew away their attention, and the course was a pandemonium of yelling spectators as the horses ran by."

Winton turned and began to make his way homeward. He had been on the point of making a fool of himself for the third time that day; but his tragedy had turned into a sordid drama. He felt that he did not want to see Sheila again.

He took a circuitous road back to Malopo. It was nearly sunset when he arrived. He meant to go to the claim, but somehow an impulse made him linger in the town long after the stream of vehicles with their shouting occupants had returned from the race-track.

He watched the scene bitterly, the riotous groups that pervaded the market square, gathered about the stoops of the hotels and filling every saloon. He hated Malopo more bitterly than he could have thought possible. Somehow it seemed like a concrete enemy, a soulless monster that ground men, body and soul, as it had ground Sheila.

And in spite of himself the memory of the girl came back to him, and with it a great terror. A sense of danger to her set his feet along the mean street that led to the sordid brick houses.

Sheila, alone in Malopo, and De Witt, hot after his prey! Sheila, helpless! It was growing dark as suddenly as darkness falls in the low latitudes. Winton hastened until he saw the squallid court before him, and the pump in the center. There was a light in the girl's room, and the dog-cart was drawn up at her door—no, not the dog-cart, but a Cape cart, with a pair of horses, such as is used for traveling. And in it sat De Witt, amid a pile of small pieces of baggage.

As Winton drew near he saw Sheila standing in the doorway. She wore her hat and a traveling cloak. De Witt bent down and spoke to her; he gave her his hand, and, hesitatingly, the girl went forward.

"No more, if you have any pity!" she pleaded.



again, and then brought the stock down on De Witt's head. But the man was gamier than in the coach; perhaps he saw that defeat meant the end of his hopes of winning Sheila, who stood by, wringing her hands frantically, and pleading piteously, now with one man and now with the other.

At last De Witt went down to stay. Winton dropped the whip at his feet.

"You can consider that on Miss Seaton's account," he said. "Our reckoning will come later. You can go."

De Witt, disheveled and bleeding, staggered up. "I've got something to tell you," he whispered hoarsely, and the eagerness of his purpose seemed for the moment to thrust away his rage.

"I won't hear you," shouted Winton, taking up the whip again. "One word and I'll thrash you like the hound you are. And if ever you dare come to this house again, or to Miss Seaton—"

De Witt shrank back. "You think there's no law in Malopo, maybe!" he muttered. "You'll pay for this—in jail, you swine!"

But as Winton stepped toward him he made off along the road. And Winton let the whip fall from his hand. It was his second assault that day—and it had brought him no nearer Sheila. But he had saved her.

She had sunk, fainting, upon the ground. Winton bent over her and raised her. "Sheila!" he cried, and, yielding to his overpowering impulse, he kissed her on the lips.

She opened her eyes and shuddered, and looked at him in piteous appeal. "Let me go! Why did you ever come into my life?" she moaned.

"Sheila, I love you. You were going to sacrifice yourself for your father. It was wrong. You do not love that man."

She smiled wanly. "If he had told you the rest—" she whispered.

"I don't care what more that liar had to say. I love you, Sheila, and I believe in you, in your goodness. I am going to make you my wife."

"If you knew, you would turn from me in loathing."

"Sheila, you are as good and true as any girl in the world."

"Oh, if he knew! If you could guess!"

in the... men in a single day over a man who had refused him.

He was standing in the compound about noon, watching the natives at work, when Ned came up to him and announced that a man wished to see him. Turning, he was surprised to see Sam's black face smiling at him under the white hat. One of Sam's lips was swollen to more than its customary thickness by the blow that Winton had placed there on the preceding day.

Sam raised his hat without the least embarrassment.

"I'm thinking of making a change, Mr. Garrett," he said.

"In what respect?" asked Winton, mystified.

"In status, sir."

"You are looking for a position and have come to me?"

"Exactly, Mr. Garrett. I can no longer reconcile it with my self-respect to remain a theoretical newsboy, while being de facto editor of the Chronicle. Mr. Hanson is an illiterate man, sir, and unable to spell, much less construct the English clause. The violence to which you subjected me yesterday has caused me to ponder, Mr. Garrett, and I have come to the conclusion that your objections, though forcibly expressed, were not unethical. And, to mention my chief motive, I wish to perform social service among the Bantu population of your compound, turning their minds toward civilization and uplift. Finally Mr. De Witt assailed me in the office this morning on my refusal to indite a scurrilous paragraph concerning yourself."

"So that's De Witt's game," mused Winton. "He must be at the end of his tether if he can't fly higher than that," he reflected. Then aloud, "What did he do to you, Sam?"

"He—well, kicked me, Mr. Garrett. And consequently I was unable to convince the judge that two pounds a week is incommensurate with the dignity of a position in which physical assault is a frequent and arbitrary element of the diurnal occurrences."

"Sam, I believe Mr. Burns wants a night watchman," said Winton. "I'll take you to him."

Ned Burns was strongly opposed to Sam's employment. "You don't know what dirty work Judge Davis has sent him here for," he objected.

"I don't know," said Winton. "I rather fancy Sam is honest. You can't altogether blame him for having edited the Chronicle. It's pretty difficult to find work in Malopo."

"Well, we'll see what the Book has to say," grumbled Ned, taking out his Bible. He read:

"Two Kings, four, thirty-eight: 'And Elisha came again to Gilgal, and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.'"

He closed the Book. "Well, I suppose it's all right then, Mr. Garrett," he said. "But if the Book hadn't said so I'd never have trusted him."

"Sam's all right," answered Winton. "But I'd be interested to know how you infer it from that passage."

"Why, Mr. Garrett, it's perfectly clear," answered Ned in surprise. "You're Elisha and I'm Gilgal, and you've come again to me. The dearth in the land is the problem about Sam. Sam's the great pot, and the pottage is the diamonds, and the sons of the prophets are the shareholders. Now the Book says the great pot is to be set on for the sons of the prophets."

the hands at his throat again, and was certain that it was not hallucination; he felt them between periods of unconsciousness that might have been years. Something damp was against his lips. Winton recognized the odor as that of chloroform; and by the faint light of the moon that came through the little window he perceived a man's face bent over his.

He tried to cry for help, but only a hoarse whisper came from his throat, and the saturated handkerchief was clapped over his nostrils.

Then followed absolute unconsciousness, broken by the distant sound of a revolver shot, and a faint cry of pain. Both sounds passed through Winton's mind as meaningless; but suddenly he felt a hand upon his shoulder, shaking him.

With a supreme effort he sat up in bed. The fumes were suffocating, but he managed to spring to his feet and stagger toward the window, which had been opened. Then he saw Sam's agitated black face before him.

The man was speaking and trying to make him understand. Winton could not gather the import of what he was saying. He shook himself free impatiently and leaned out of the window, breathing in the desert air. Gradually his situation dawned upon him.

"What is it, Sam?" he mumbled.

"Mr. Garrett, sir, come to the next room! They've stolen the diamond! I was watching, though my job doesn't begin till tomorrow. Come, sir!"

Winton stood up. The room had ceased to revolve about him, but still swung dizzily before his eyes. The moon was still low; it could not have been much past midnight. Eons seemed to have passed since Winton had gone to bed at nine.

He made his way toward the door, supported by Sam's arm. He passed through the open doorway.

The outer door was closed. Two men lay upon the floor against it. One was Kash, the Armenian, stone dead, with a bullet through his forehead. The other was Ned Burns, breathing noisily, but unconscious, and his head covered with blood from a blow of the butt of the revolver which lay beside him.

Sam caught at Winton's arm. "I heard the shot," he cried. "I was coming to watch the claim. I ran, and saw the two of them attacking Mr. Burns. He killed one; the other shot him and dragged his body inside and locked the door. I climbed through your window and found you unconscious from chloroform."

Winton began to take in the situation. Sam must have alarmed the robber, who had taken flight without waiting to finish Ned Burns. Evidently murder, a very dangerous game on British territory, had formed no part of their plans, otherwise he would have been killed in his sleep.

Sam was tugging at Winton's arm again. "Look!" he cried, pointing across the room.

Then Winton perceived that the safe had been blown open. But there was more than that: it had been displaced from the position which it occupied, and beside and half under it was a yawning hole in the ground.

"That's the way they came!" cried Sam.

Winton ran to the safe. The diamond was, of course, gone. He stooped and began hastily to search Ned's pockets for the keys. They were gone, too.

The chloroform stupor was fast leaving him. He ran toward the hole. He could just see the line of the tunnel below.

He swung himself into the hole and entered the tunnel, Sam following him. It was hardly wider than a man's body, and not three feet in height, so that it was necessary to scramble along it on his hands and knees. Once Winton fancied that he heard sounds ahead of him and stopped, but then he could hear nothing except the indefinite murmurs that are audible underground.

He went on like a mule, outdistancing the negro. Now and again he bumped into stakes that had been driven into the hard clay to hold up the roof. The robbers had laid their plans with care, and they must have been weeks about their execution.

At last a faint ray of moonlight appeared in the distance. It grew clearer, and the tunnel began to widen, ending suddenly in a circular pit, of the kind that marks the beginning of excavations along the diamond fields. Winton scrambled up the side and stood under the stars.

He then saw with bewilderment that he was standing in the compound of the adjacent claim, just where he had emerged on the prior occasion when he entered a branch of the tunnel beneath the Armenian's store.

It was clear that the diamond thieves had utilized for their work the Hotentot's predilection, learned from the Bushmen, for subterranean excavations. The plan had been a clever one, and it appeared to have succeeded.

(Continued next week.)

Tea of Evergreen Leaves.

In Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, the Brazilian states, and to a less extent in Chile, a peculiar kind of tea is largely used by the native population. It is obtained from the roasted and pulverized leaves of an evergreen forest tree, the *Ilex Paraguensis*. The outer branches of the tree are cut off and passed rapidly through the flames of a large fire, which wilts the leaves and tender stems, which are afterward dried and thoroughly smoked over a slow fire. Then they are ground to powder, and thus prepared for the making of tea. The beverage is said to be more gently stimulating than either coffee or ordinary tea, but it has a smoky flavor, disagreeable to the unaccustomed palate.—Detroit News.