

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. He is a controlling interest in the Big Malopo diamond mine, somewhere or other in South Africa, and also the 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 35-carat "De Witt diamond." Two coach passengers are a disreputable old prospector, Daddy Seaton, and his daughter 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, sub-editor of the local newspaper. He 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 her friendship. She rebuffs 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 chase Winton and arrest him. He escapes them and when at his last gasp Sheila takes him into 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 reorganization and takes control of the mine. Sheila marries 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 co-operation. "Otherwise, he says, 'we'll smash you, you young fool!'"

CHAPTER VII.—Winton, infuriated by a scurrilous newspaper article about Sheila and himself, knocks down and publicly threatens Judge Davis. He finds Sheila about to elope with De Witt, to save her father. He horsewhips De Witt. Sheila again refuses to marry him and says she is going away, never to see him or her father again.

CHAPTER VIII.—Winton hires Sam as night watchman. Van Vorst's gang steals the De Witt diamond. Winton pursues Van Vorst, who escapes with the big stone.

CHAPTER IX.—Winton is rescued by Sheila, on her way to a native village. There she kisses an old woman, only partly white, and says, "This is my mother." He again asks her to marry him. She refuses him, because of the race bar. Heart sick, he sets out for Malopo with a native guide.

CHAPTER X.—Winton succumbs. His guide robs and deserts him. Sam rescues him. Burns' brain is affected; he cannot tell what happened. The workers in the mine return no stones. Winton is forced to borrow money from the syndicate, agreeing to pay in a month or lose the mine.

He opened a drawer of his desk and pulled out a faded photograph of a comely young woman. He flung it down before Winton.

"A young man married and a young man marred," he said with a concentrated bitterness that astonished Winton again, and touched his heart as well.

The judge's chest heaved, and he pushed his throat convulsively out of his high collar. As he did so Winton saw a round scar, like a bullet wound, in the side of his neck, of a flaming red.

"She left me for another man," said the judge. "If I had found him I should have killed him."

He took up the photograph and replaced it in the drawer. Winton had not spoken.

"I don't know why I told you this, young man," he said. "Perhaps it is because I find you interesting. You have so little common sense, and yet you are not a fool. The money will be repaid one month from today, or the shares pass to the syndicate. I cannot, unfortunately, charge you brokerage, because I have not a broker's license."

He wrote out the check, and handed it to Winton, who pocketed it and held out his hand. "Good day, judge," he said.

"Good day, my dear young friend," said the judge, resuming his quaver. "Wait a minute! I can't charge you brokerage, but there's a sixpenny stamp on the transfer. I'll sell you one. Thank you!"

CHAPTER XI
Sam's Dance.

The month passed, and the find of stones was negligible. This did not necessarily augur ill for the future of the claim. Only the surface of the blue ground had been investigated, and it required an exposure of the blue

rock to sun and air for weeks in order to permit of proper disintegration. The crushing of the excavated material had been a makeshift, inspired by urgency. But stones should have been found, and only a few small pebbles had come to light.

Three days before the month expired Winton received a letter from Judge Davis, in his capacity as a shareholder, requesting him to call a meeting in order to discuss certain subjects of importance. Winton advertised the meeting in the Chronicle, set his teeth, and prepared for the inevitable.

The day arrived. He found himself at the table with Davis, De Witt, Hanson, and the four small shareholders. The transfer had been made irrevocable. He held forty-seven shares, and the syndicate with Hanson, the same number. The local men, with their six shares, thus controlled the situation, and their decision was not in doubt.

Winton went to the meeting in the full expectation of being ousted and of seeing De Witt reinstated as pursuer. He had steeled himself to bear the humiliation, but the severance of his relations with the claim, the end of the enterprise so far as he was concerned, was difficult to face. And there would be Ned out of employment—Ned, still in the hospital, though physically well, in the hope that something could be done for him; Ned, greeting Winton with his mysterious nods and smiles and Bible passages, and believing that his references were understood.

The hostile atmosphere of the meeting, De Witt's expression of triumph, and Hanson's vindictive glances convinced Winton that this move was about to be made. But Davis never did the obvious thing, and he had other ends in view.

"Mr. Purser," he said, "the proposition to be placed before this meeting is as follows: that we go into voluntary liquidation for the purpose of an immediate reorganization, in order to raise fresh capital to develop our water supply."

"You have made frequent complaints that the flow of the company's water is not adequate to the working of the claim. I can bear you out in this, for I have investigated the matter, and, being interested both in the claim and in the water company, I have naturally done all that was possible to increase the flow."

"The Big Malopo promises to become the most profitable claim upon the fields. The prosperity of all Malopo is closely bound up with the water supply. By improving our water resources we shall not only promote fraternity and concord—here the judge's voice assumed its quavering intonation, which in turn gave way to the sharp business tone—but shall enter into a very profitable business enterprise."

"Our water supply is at present wholly dependent upon the underground storage accumulated during the preceding rainy season. A succession of two dry years would mean the total cessation of all labor for months. Obviously we cannot remain at the mercy of the elements when—he looked about him for the anticipated approbation—"it is possible to tap the Groot-spruit river and secure an unfailing supply throughout the year."

A storm of applause greeted him as he sat down. Winton sprang to his feet.

"The Groot-spruit is fifty miles away!" he cried. "What is your estimate of the cost of installing a plant and laying pipes across the desert?"

"I have submitted the question to two competent engineers, Mr. Garrett," answered the judge. "Their estimates are practically the same. They place the cost at, roughly, ninety thousand pounds. This will provide a sufficient flow for the entire mining field."

Winton sat down, stunned more at what lay behind the proposition than at the suggestion itself. If the syndicate was willing to invest as heavily as that, it meant that they were aware, in ways unknown to himself, that Big Malopo was not merely a promising claim, but one of the biggest outside the famous Kimberley fields.

For it was hardly likely that the syndicate was planning to cut the throat of its own water company, which could supply it with an ample quantity, in order to bring water for fifty miles across the desert. And the scheme meant, of course, that Winton would be frozen out completely, together with the little men, who had doubtless been let into the secret and had agreed to sell. He would own only an insignificant number of shares in the reorganized concern.

Even if the proposal failed, the syndicate could install a new pursuer and instruct him to call for an unlimited expenditure which Winton would be unable to meet. They had him both ways. Yet he put up a fight, urging the small shareholders to stand up against the syndicate, instead of let-

ting their interests be swamped. He attacked Davis without scruple. His words were bitter. One of the smaller men was wavering, but he controlled one vote only.

"Mr. Purser, will you put the motion?" inquired Judge Davis when he had ended.

And the waverer cast in his lot with the syndicate after all. The motion passed by fifty-three to forty-seven.

It was not until he found himself upon the street again that Winton realized he was still pursuer. He reasoned that the syndicate did not need to dispossess him until the reorganization had been effected in a few days' time. Then, of course, De Witt would step into his shoes.

When he got back to the claim everything looked different to him. The work, which had been in the nature of a duty, suddenly seemed an integral part of his life. It occurred to him for the first time that, without it, he would have no longer any reason for remaining in Malopo. And the thought was a staggering one.

Without home ties, he had unconsciously begun to assimilate to himself the atmosphere of the little desert town. A thousand daily scenes, insensibly built into his being, now seemed a part of him and claimed him. He did not know what he was going to do.

However, an unexpected program had been arranged for him. Sam, who, though degraded from his cherished and short-lived job, had never ceased to take an interest in the compound natives, was loitering near the door of the cottage, evidently with the design of intercepting him.

"Want me, Sam?" asked Winton.

"I was hoping, sir, that you might be willing to be a guest at our musicale tonight," answered Sam, grinning a little sheepishly.

"Explain," said Winton.

"Well, Mr. Garrett, you will recall that I have occasionally expressed the view that the Bantu does not differ in a psychological sense from the Caucasian. My theory, to which you have offered a tacit opposition, is that it is their environment alone which has kept these natives down. I have been endeavoring to disseminate certain social ideas among them."

"So that explains the ungody noise I've heard lately, Sam?"

For several weeks past the natives of the Big Malopo compound appeared to have been practicing on a variety of musical instruments ranging from the humble concertina up to the clarinet. The discords had been maddening, but Winton had hoped the craze would pass.

"I think, sir, that our ear has become attuned," said Sam with dignity.

"All right," said Winton. "When does the show begin?"

"At seven o'clock, sir," answered Sam.

"I'll be there," said Winton.

He was cooking supper in his room when Josephs tapped at the door. The little man wore an expression of considerable anxiety, mingled with disgust.

"Mr. Garrett," he began, "here's where I get out. You'd better look for another compound manager quick."

"What's the trouble?" Winton inquired.

"It's that nigger Sam, Mr. Garrett. He told me you'd given him leave to experiment with the boys in the interest of science, or something, and I've stood by and seen as good a lot of boys turning into shiftless loafers as I've ever seen. But I've reached my limit with musical evenings."

"Josephs, I kicked Sam out of the job because he was making himself a nuisance. I left the management of the compound exclusively to you."

"Well, I'm out," answered Josephs, uncomplainingly. "Unless this sanitary science business comes to an end right now. Do you know that we're the laughing stock of the fields, Mr. Garrett? I ain't a difficult man to get along with, but I draw the line at musical swarries for wild niggers that was throwing spears at each other three months ago and stalking bush-buck on their bellies."

"You're right, Josephs. I gave Sam no permission to interfere with the boys in any way, and I'm satisfied to leave you in full charge."

"That's all right," grumbled Josephs, "but this is Saturday night, and they ain't been searched. For all we know, every one of them d--n niggers may have a pint of stones about him. Sam told me you hadn't begun searching them yet, and you was trying to put them on their honor, or some such Sunday school story, and I've been trying to ask you about it for days, and been put off."

"I've been pretty busy, Josephs. Of course the boys will have to be searched. But we haven't begun washing yet, to any extent."

"Mr. Garrett, there's been more digging and washing than you know. And I don't like the look of them tunnels on the syndicate claim. Now, sir, it comes to this: either I run the compound as it ought to be run, and Sam Simpson keeps outside, or you get another manager."

"I accept your terms," said Winton. "Do whatever you consider right. However, tonight Sam's got to have full swing, because I gave him my promise. And don't worry, Josephs, because you may have another pursuer more to your liking in a little while."

"I hope not, Mr. Garrett," answered the manager. "There ain't a man I'd rather work for than you. But you're too easy."

After a little more talk Winton succeeded in pacifying Josephs, and he persuaded him to come to the compound with him and see what Sam had been doing.

They went there at the appointed hour. The compound buildings consisted of a large structure in which the

boys ate and gathered after their work was over, and a second, divided into partitioned sections, in which the natives were housed according to their several tribes. From the former an awful din of musical instruments was making itself audible. The two men entered, and stopped on the threshold as if petrified.

The walls were decked with flags. A large lamp hung from the roof, throwing a bright light into the farthest corners. Thirty or forty savages were formed in a double line along the floor. Each one was attired in a full-dress suit, with starched bosom, white collar and tie. Each man wore a pair of patent-leather shoes and white socks. Half a dozen native women were present, one or two with graceful colored handkerchiefs over their frizzly locks, but the rest wearing discarded hats of various shapes. Their apparel was of rainbow hues. At the end of the hall was an orchestra, consisting of two fiddles, a cello, two clarinets, two flutes, a drum, three trombones, and a triangle.

At Winton's appearance the band struck up "God Bless the Prince of Wales," and, to cap the climax, every man produced a pair of bones and tapped out the tune.

Sam came up to Winton, his black face beaming over his expansive shirt-front. He wore the aspect of a magician who, having successfully produced a white rat, a pair of rabbits, and a plum pudding out of an opera hat, confronts his audience, for its verdict.

But Winton could find no words, and it was Josephs who spluttered:

"What the—what—the—"

"My sentiments," said Winton.

"You will see, Mr. Garrett, that my theory was correct," said Sam. "The Bantu and the Caucasian, though ethnologically distinct sub-species of the genus homo, are, psychologically, brothers."

"D--n your brothers!" shrieked the compound manager. "The boys are here to dig diamonds. Did you ever stop to think of that, you black fool?"

He swung on his heel and stalked furiously out of the compound. Then Winton found his tongue.

"What are these women doing here, Sam?" he demanded sharply.

Sam rubbed his hands together.

"The softening and refining influence of the feminine sex is not confined to the Caucasian," he answered.

Winton swore. The crowd had begun to dance. Sam had taught them the waltz, and the quick minds of the savages had grasped his instructions perfectly. But what interpretation did these blacks place upon it? Dancing and worship are synonymous among the lower races. For them it might mean some mystic ritual to tribal gods.

He watched the savages revolving on the mud floor of the hall, which was quickly dissolving into a fine yellow dust that began to choke Winton's throat and veil the outlines of the moving figures. Men were dancing with men, and women with women, and already they were beginning to grow excited. Arms went up with the assegaig-fling gesture. The shirtfronts, drenched with perspiration, had been wrenched open, showing the black bodies beneath. One or two cries were raised, and answered.

Winton hurried away. The permission, given, could hardly be withdrawn. But he had never dreamed that such a scene was being rehearsed. Josephs, following the rule of not interfering with the natives after hours, had been bluffed by the egregious Sam into supposing that he was acting with Winton's authority. Winton could never live down the story of the dance. It would be associated as long as he was in Malopo with his ignominious dismissal from the pursuer's post and loss of control.

He went into his cottage and sat down. From there he could hear the sounds as plainly as ever. They were growing louder. The music had resolved itself into a medley of notes that resembled nothing ever written. Each player was proceeding independently, and the yells were deafening.

Half an hour passed. Josephs came in in intense excitement, carrying a whip.

"I'm going to stop that, Mr. Garrett," he said furiously. "Do you know what it means? They'll break out of the compound in a few minutes and start plundering the stores. There'll be a massacre unless they're got under control."

"As they approached the compound building the din was at its height. One look inside disclosed the fact that civilization was at an end. A dozen tribal dances were being enacted. Men were dancing and swaying before the group of women, whooping and screaming as they went through their own immemorial ritual. The man with the drum had lost all self-control and was hammering it with all his might, sending out a deafening roll. The cellist had smashed his instrument on the head of one of the fiddlers, who was of a different tribe, and the man lay stunned, his skull half through the instrument, and the strings tangled about his neck. The trombones were blowing with all the power of their lungs, one of the fiddlers had seized the other fiddler's instrument and was clashing them together, and the man with the triangle was striking it softly in a corner by himself and humming a negro love song.

The place was a bedlam of tribal factions suddenly come to life. Clothes littered the ground; natives were discharging the second-hand dress-suits, bought from some old-clothes store, and gyrating in their loin cloths.

Winton saw Sam near the door, watching the scene in dumb terror.

"Do you see what you've done, you cursed fool!" he cried. "Run and telephone the police from my office. The

whole of the fields will be in a riot in five minutes' time."

Even Josephs hesitated to attack that yelling mob, in which a dozen fights had already started. But at that



moment salvation came. It came in the shape of an elderly man, with a white beard and a shock of white hair, who came running across the compound, carrying a whip and a shotgun; and Ned Burns had never been so glad to see Ned Burns before.

With him were two or three Hottentots, also carrying whips, men who, despising the native tribes, had stayed sulkily away from Sam's entertainment.

Ned, who had been let out of the hospital that afternoon, had made his way toward the shack, his only home. He had heard the uproar, and, not knowing the cause of it, had acted automatically, as he had been trained to do by years of experience with the natives.

Emitting a yell that pierced the din like a fog-horn, he discharged the shotgun into the legs immediately in front of him, followed with the other barrel, and then, accompanied by Josephs and the Hottentots, waded into the throng.

In half a minute the tribal passions, cooled under the stinging blows, gave place to order. The shrieking mob, penned up at one end of the room, howled for mercy, while Ned's whip rose and fell relentlessly, curling about the half-naked bodies and searching out each man with impartial dexterity.

When at last he ceased the cowering natives had been reduced to absolute submission.

He uttered a few crisp orders to his Hottentots, who began to herd the men into the compound, shouting at them in their various dialects. The frightened women had already fled through the gate.

Winton, feeling decidedly subordinate, suffered Ned to give his directions to his boys. Within a few minutes the natives, lined up in groups, were submitting to the most rigorous inspection devised. Mouths were pried open and tongues pulled up, clothing flipped open, heels broken off patent-leather dancing shoes. It was a weird scene in the light of the full African moon, and one that impressed itself on Winton's mind indelibly.

He began to understand Van Boer's viewpoint better, and he realized as never before the volcano of savagery that slumbered beneath the veneer of civilization in Africa.

When the search was at an end, and the natives had been driven into their sleeping quarters, Josephs and Ned came up to Winton, each holding out two handfuls of pebbles. Winton looked at them for some seconds before he realized that they were large diamonds.

He stared at them, and then at Ned; and suddenly he shook the old man by the shoulders.

"Ned, you've got your speech back!" he shouted. "Do you know that? Speak, man!"

Ned opened his mouth, and from his throat issued a succession of guttural clicks. It was Hottentot—Winton knew that, but no more.

"Speak English, man!" he shouted.

But Ned only looked at Winton mournfully. The blow upon the skull had shattered all but that corner of Broca's convolution in which the Hottentot speech-center had been created. Hottentot Ned could speak; but that would be his sole tongue for the remainder of his years.

He began talking rapidly to Josephs, who listened and translated.

"He says, Mr. Garrett," announced the compound manager, "that he warned you at the hospital, and thought you understood. He says that he had suspected Seaton of buying stones from the boys and selling them to De Witt through Van Vorst. He taxed him with it, and Seaton broke down and confessed. That was on the night of the robbery. Mr. Burns meant to tell you at once, but you had gone to bed early. Seaton must have got word to Van Vorst to finish the job that night, and next day it was too late."

Too late! The words echoed through Winton's brain. It had been too late from the beginning; for if he could have understood what Ned had tried to convey to him in the hospital he could have kept control of the Big Malopo.

The double handful of stones would have brought him more than Davis had paid him; enough to have made the loan unnecessary. Now he was in the grasp of the syndicate, pursuer only through Davis's tolerance; and that was doubtless extended for the present with some ulterior object in view.

Winton stared at the dull baubles. If only he could lay his hands upon Seaton

ton the claim might still be his. But how could he support a charge of fraud on the single evidence of Ned Burns, given in Hottentot?

Suddenly Winton started back, starting through the shadows as if he had seen a ghost.

An old man was coming unsteadily through the gateway. It was Seaton himself. He groped his way across the compound, bleary of eye, unsteady of gait, went up to Winton, and laid a trembling hand upon his arm.

"I've come back," he mumbled drunkenly. "My gal's gone, and I've done with this life of a dog. I'll be De Witt's tool no longer. I've come back to take my medicine."

CHAPTER XII

The Trial.

It was the general opinion of the group upon the stoep of the Continental that Judge Davis was going to get what had been coming to him for a long time. Bets to that effect were freely offered, and there were very few takers, even at long odds.

The forthcoming trial was the sole topic of conversation in Malopo. Everything had combined to favor Winton against the syndicate.

On the very day following Seaton's return a long-expected proclamation had been made by the high commissioner, placing Malopo under the colony's jurisdiction, and delegating Judge Crawford, who was then holding sessions at Vryburg, to proceed thither for the purpose of organizing a civil government and hearing all criminal and civil cases.

The independent regime had come to an end, to the relief of the settlement, and Judge Davis was relegated to his position as magistrate, thereby being eliminated from the pending proceedings.

Public opinion in Malopo, linking up Seaton's return and arrest with the theft of the big stone, was decidedly hostile to the syndicate. There was no fear of a packed jury. The syndicate's influence seemed to have shrunk to nothing.

Winton's lawyer was a young Scotchman named Brown, who had recently arrived on the diamond fields; he threw himself into the case with ardor, knowing that success would be his making. Winton and he held constant conferences.

Winton had wished to use Seaton's evidence to prosecute De Witt, but Seaton's anxiety to have everything thrashed out was so great, and he cared so little what happened to himself, that it was decided to arrest the old man instead. This would enable him to tell his whole story, much of which might otherwise have been ruled out. It was the general opinion that, when he had finished, the syndicate would be in a bad way.

Seaton had wandered into the desert and attempted to find a domicile with one of the tribes. But he had been set upon and badly beaten.

This treatment seemed to have aroused his long-dormant manhood, as a culmination to the suffering that he had endured in the past at De Witt's hands it seemed to have effected a change in the old man's nature. A sort of moral strengthening had come over Seaton in jail. He had refused the prison doctor's prescription of liquor, and announced his intention of fighting De Witt to the bitter end.

As the days went by the rumor began to spread that Davis had quarreled with De Witt and refused to stand by him. Brown was of that opinion.

"De Witt has known all the syndicate's secrets for years, and done all its dirty work," he said. "But Davis is too shrewd to have compromised himself. I believe he will be glad of the opportunity to break with De Witt."

"Why?"

"When a rogue like Davis has used a lesser rogue for years, he's apt to get tired of him. Davis is an old man and wants to keep his name clean, even at a pecuniary loss."

Winton thought over that aspect of the situation, but it seemed to him more or less immaterial. If he could win his fight and hold his claim, he meant to realize on it and return to his own country. He felt that he could no longer exist in the land where Sheila lived, dishonored and an outcast.

He avoided visiting Seaton in jail, but Brown reported that the old man was holding firm in a surprising way. He had been approached by emissaries of the syndicate, and had refused to see them.

A few nights before the trial opened Winton received a visit from the last person whom he had expected to see. It was De Witt himself, who came to his cottage just as he was about to retire.

The man looked broken as he stood in the doorway, hat in hand. As Winton rose he came forward, flung it upon the table, and sat down in a chair, breathing heavily.

"You think you've got me?" he demanded.

"I hope so."

(Continued next week.)

Pretty Poor Nourishment.

An old negro from the back country, who was unused to modern methods in medicine, was sent to a hospital in Charleston. One of the nurses put a thermometer into his mouth to take his temperature. Presently when one of the doctors made his rounds he asked:

"Well, Nathan, how do you feel?"

"I feel right 'till, boss."

"Have you had any nourishment?"

"Yassir."

"What did you have?"

The patient grinned. "A lady done gimme a piece of g'ass to suck, boss."

—Everybody's Magazine.