

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Luck at the Diamond Fields, by Dalrymple J. Belgrave

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Luck at the Diamond Fields

Author: Dalrymple J. Belgrave

Release date: October 4, 2011 [EBook #37619]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Nick Hodson of London, England

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LUCK AT THE DIAMOND FIELDS ***

Dalrymple J. Belgrave
"Luck at the Diamond Fields"

Story 1.

A Tale of the Kimberley Coach.

Chapter One.

The coach to the Diamond Fields was just starting from the Beaufort West railway-station, and the passengers who were destined to travel over hundreds of miles of burnt-up veldt together, to be jolted over water-courses, choked in dust-storms, and suffer the many discomforts and annoyances of South African travel in each other's society, were eyeing one another distrustfully.

The feeling uppermost in the minds of several of them was that they were very likely to become not a little tired of one another before they reached the iron town of Kimberley.

With one or two exceptions they were old residents on the Diamond Fields, returning after a trip home to Europe or to the Colony, and therefore they knew each other very well, at least by sight. Their acquaintanceship as a rule made them look forward with all the more distaste to the idea of spending some days in the same coach.

There were ten passengers, and Kate Gray, a soft, refined-looking English girl who was travelling by herself, and whose black dress suggested that she was equally alone in her journey through life, shrunk into the corner of the coach with a half shudder, and thought that her fellow-passengers were a singularly unprepossessing lot. She had tried to make light in anticipation of the annoyances in store for her; but now they were forced upon her, and she felt uncomfortable and out of heart. She had lived for two years in South Africa, and though she had had great sorrow, none of those rougher experiences of colonial life had come in her way which it now seemed likely enough that she was destined soon to meet with. She was the daughter of a retired army officer, who, believing much in his business capacity and power to make money, had put his all when he left the army into an ostrich farm in the Cape Colony, and had taken his daughter out with him. Their life had been a pleasant one enough for some time. The farm was a pretty place. They were not very far off Capetown, and they had pleasant neighbours within reach.

Unfortunately the farm was not suited to ostriches. The wretched birds refused to thrive and increase. They showed a wayward ingenuity in hunting poisonous plants and shrubs, on which they succeeded in committing suicide. Colonel Gray, when his birds died, borrowed money and bought more; then they died, and he bought sheep, which did the same. Then he died himself—more of sheep and ostriches than anything else; and after his death it was found out that he had lived long enough to ruin himself, and to leave his daughter without a penny. She at first thought of going home, but the long list of girls placed as she was, who advertised their willingness to teach, or act as companion only for a home, made her think that she was fortunate to be out of England. Then she heard of some Cape Dutch people up country near the Diamond Fields who wanted an English governess, and she took the place. She was plucky and capable, as well-bred English women are as a rule, and she had determined to think little about the discomfort of the journey, but as she noticed one of her fellow-passengers, a peculiarly aggressive specimen of the Diamond Field Jew, trying to stare her out of countenance, with an impudent leer of admiration in his coarse face, she realised that her position was an unpleasant one. This gentleman was a rather well-known character at Kimberley—a certain Mr Joe Aarons, who had bought many stolen diamonds during his sojourn on the Fields, and was represented to be very rich and prosperous. Unfortunately for his fellow-travellers, Mr Aarons, in the circle in which he moved, was considered a neat humourist, and already he had made one or two remarks which gave his audience a foretaste of the comfort he would likely be to them. Two meaner Jews, men of the Aaron type, but less distinguished characters, appeared to be highly delighted at Joe's wit; and so was the only other representative of the fair sex, a lady known on the Diamond Fields, where she kept a canteen, as Mother Hemp—the prefix being added to her name rather in a spirit of sarcasm than affection. Probably this good lady had realised that it was quite useless to expect the arts of her toilet to withstand the strain of a coach-journey of almost a week, so she had not even taken the trouble to start fair, and

already the coating of paint and powder was cracking and curling away from her yellow old cheeks, which looked curiously shrunk. Also, to be more comfortable on the journey, she had packed away her false teeth. The rest of the company, however, looked upon Mr Aarons with anything but favour. A big, important-looking man, Mr Bowker, the great Kimberley claim-owner, who was just returning from the Cape House of Assembly, felt somewhat disgusted at the idea of having to travel up to the Fields in the company of Mr Aarons. He had perhaps had in his time a little more to do with that person than he would like every one to know, and he was afraid that he might become too familiar on the journey. Then there was a young gentleman who was going to practise in the High Court of Kimberley, and who having had the advantage of three years of home education, was horribly disgusted with the land of his birth to which he had returned, and lost no opportunity of railing at all things connected with Africa. A colonial attorney, on his return from a trip home as he called it—though in England he was strangely abroad—made up the aristocratic element. The two other passengers were river-diggers, partners, and in a way great friends, though men of somewhat different character, and curiously unlike experience. One of them, Jim Brawnston by name, was as good a specimen as one might wish to meet with of the South African born Anglo-Saxon—a brawny giant, of about twenty-eight, with a bushy beard, a pleasant honest look in his light blue eyes, and a laugh like a lion's roar. In his time he had followed most of the callings which are open to a Cape colonist who has a disposition to rove about rather than to settle down anywhere. He had been a digger when the Diamond Fields first broke out, then had gone a trading trip up country, then had taken a turn at transport riding, and had for a time returned to his old business and become a digger on the banks of the Vaal.

Kate thought, as she caught a glance of the face of the other, a man some half dozen years older than his companion, that he was the most interesting of her fellow-travellers. Though his get-up was rough enough—he wore a flannel shirt, a pair of Bedford cord trousers, and an old shooting coat, which, though an expert would recognise it as having been the work of a good maker, was curiously faded and worn—Kate felt certain that he was an English gentleman. And there was an expression in his tanned face and sad-looking eyes—eyes which seemed to tell that he had had in his time a good deal of trouble—which made her feel that his presence in the coach would make the journey less distasteful to her. He was listening with an expression of grave amusement to the two limbs of the law as they swaggered about England, what they had done when they were at home, where they had been, and whom they had known.

His expression altered to one of anger and disgust when he caught some of Aarons' conversation, and noticed how horrified and frightened Kate looked. "Surely she can't be travelling with that old hag," he thought to himself, as he looked at Mrs Hemp.

"And are you going up to the Fields, my dear?" said that lady to Kate, with a sham smile on her evil old face. "We two ladies and all these gentlemen; well, we must look after each other, and keep them in their right place."

"I am in my right place sitting next to you, ain't I, miss?" said Aarons, with a look of insolent admiration, which made her feel extremely uncomfortable.

Jim Brawnston had always found that his partner George Darrell avoided woman's society, and seemed to have a deep-rooted dislike to the sex, but to his surprise on this occasion he interfered.

"I think you had better change places with me, you will be more comfortable," he said to Kate, with a look at Aarons which expressed a good deal. The latter seemed to be considerably surprised.

"Sit where you are, my dear," he said; "you're in very good company where you are, and I'll look after you." However, the young lady changed places without paying any attention to him, and as they settled themselves down, there was a crack of the whip and a yell from the driver, and the horses started off at a gallop.

Darrell took his seat next to Aarons, and after he had settled himself down, he turned round to his neighbour.

"You hound, if you open your lips to speak to that lady I will throw you out of the coach," he whispered to him.

The Jew replied, with a choice collection of bad language, that he would talk to whom he pleased.

"Who are you, with your damned side? I dare say you 'aven't got a couple of pound in the pocket of your ragged coat; who the—" Joe said, and then pulled up and stopped—there was something in the other's expression he didn't like. Darrell had no more to say to him, but leaned back in his seat and smoked his pipe.

He wondered whether or no he had not made a fool of himself in interfering. Well, it would have annoyed him all the journey to have seen her sitting near that greasy-looking brute of a Jew, he thought to himself; she seemed a good deal happier sitting next to Jim Brawnston, and talking to him brightly enough. The woman didn't live who would not be perfectly reassured by that kindly giant's honest face.

It was a pretty face enough, Darrell thought; it reminded him of days long past before he left all he cared for behind, and became the hopeless wanderer he was now. "She looks as if she has had a good deal of trouble; what can she be going up to the Diamond Fields by herself for? If she had people there they ought to look after her better than that," he thought. As he looked at her, another face rose up before his memory, which had once intoxicated him by its beauty till he threw his life away for it—the face of the woman in England who called herself by his name, and had a right to do so. He had seen no refined woman for years, and there was something in Kate's face which brought old memories back. Yes, he had made a mess of it and spoilt his life—that was the burthen of his thoughts as the coach made its way across the sandy veldt, and the sun got up and scorched them, and the dust-clouds gathered together and choked them, and the stones on the road threw them up and down till all their bones ached.

"Well, I do declare he ain't much company; seems mighty proud, and I dare say he ain't got a penny to spend. I knows his sort, and don't like 'em," said Mrs Hemp to Mr Aarons, after she had addressed several remarks to Darrell and got no answer.

Joe Aarons scowled at Darrell and made no reply. When his interests were not at stake he seldom felt very keenly about anything, but he did long to pay the other out for the treatment he had received from him, and for supposing that he, Mr Aarons, the well-known Kimberley diamond-buyer, who was worth his fifty thousand pounds, insulted a girl who was travelling up by herself and couldn't be of much account, by talking to her. He felt mad with anger as he looked at him. How he would like to pound in that face which had borne a look of such unaffected contempt for him, and hear that cold insolent voice cry out for mercy! Darrell paid little attention to him, and sat gloomily wrapt in his own thoughts.

Mrs Hemp addressed various remarks to him which he did not listen to. The English girl in the front seat talked to Jim Brawnston.

"Queer tastes that girl must have," Aarons thought to himself; "talks to that digger chap who's as rough as they make 'em, and looks at me when I say a word to her as if I were dirt," and he looked at the diamond rings on his coarse dirty hands, and wondered at that to him unknown specimen of humanity, the English gentlewoman.

Some hours after sunset the coach drew up at one of those squalid roadside canteens which in South Africa are dignified by the name of hotels. The days one spends in South African travel are bad enough, but the nights at the worst of all bad inns are far more wretched. A blanket in the open air under the marvellous star-lit Southern sky is something to look back to with pleasure, though the chill half hour before daybreak is not so very pleasant at the time. But those hotel bedrooms are things to shudder at, not to see; they open up to one's mind new possibilities of dirtiness. Then there is the evil-smelling dining-room, where the table has a historic cloth supposed once to have been white, which bears the grease and stains of long-forgotten meals, which generally consist of lumps of mutton and hard poached eggs served on the same plate. If the master of the house is a Dutchman, he will most likely be full of dull, brutish insolence; if he is an Englishman, he probably will be drunk. The waitress will be a filthy Hottentot woman; while as one eats in the inner rooms one will hear noisy natives getting drunk off Cape smoke just outside.

It was at such a place as this that the coach stopped for the night, and discharged its passengers for a few hours' enjoyment of the accommodation it afforded.

A meal had been served, and those passengers who were able to secure beds had retired for the night. Darrell was smoking and reading by the dim light of a flickering oil lamp in the living-room. Jim Brawnston was stretched upon the floor in a sleep from which he would not easily wake. The Jews were listlessly fingering a dirty pack of cards; nobody had cared to play with them, and they had not thought it worth while to play with one another; while the landlord, who was not very sober, was laughing hoarsely at some not over pleasant stories they were telling.

"Do you know there is a lady in the next room?" said Darrell, who had thrown his book down and walked up to where they sat.

"Lady? Do you mean Mother Hemp, or the other girl?" said Aarons, and his brutal nature found vent in a sentence of Houndsditch sarcasm. His words were coarse enough to have aroused a milder temper than Darrell's, whose face turned pale with anger as he heard them. Aarons' sentence was not quite completed, for before he finished it Darrell's long left arm had swung out from his shoulder, and his fist had come down with a crash on to the Jew's jaw. The others saw that if they joined in they would be four to one, so they made a rush at Darrell, the landlord swearing that he'd be damned if he'd see a gent who'd behaved like a gent in his place, ordering drinks and paying for them, hit like that. He looked at Jim Brawnston's sleeping form, and reassured by the sound of a deep snore, he joined in the fight, aiming a blow at Darrell's head with a bottle. The latter was not quite as cool as a man ought to be who is fighting four men at once. Instead of keeping on the defensive, he only thought of inflicting as much punishment as possible upon Aarons, and pressed on to strike him again as he staggered back from the first blow. This gave the landlord a chance of getting at him from behind, and he succeeded in pinning his arms, and preventing him from hitting out. A savage gleam came into the Jew's eyes; he saw that his enemy was in his power as he forced back Darrell's face with his left hand so as to get a good blow at it with his right.

"Now, my broken-down swell, you're going to learn not to give your betters any of your damned cheek," he was saying with a tone of triumph in his voice. The whole group had been too busy to notice a bedroom door which led into the living-room open, and a figure dressed in white glide up to where Brawnston lay sleeping. Kate, as she tried in vain to get some sleep, had heard the row from the beginning. It was not a pleasant scene for a young lady to take part in, but she had heard enough to tell her that the man who had been foolish enough to begin the fight on her account was likely to suffer more than he deserved. She had not understood Aarons' brutal remark, and would have been better pleased if Darrell had not answered it so forcibly, but she knew the blow she had heard through the door had been given on her account. As she opened the door she saw Brawnston's sleeping figure close to it; near him on a table there was a jug of water; she dashed it over his face as the quickest way of waking him. The experiment had succeeded admirably. He had woke up with a start, saw the fight which was going on, and in a second was in it. It did not take him long to knock two of the Jews out of time, while the landlord, seeing how things were going, took up the position of a non-combatant.

"Leave him to me," Darrell cried out as he tried to close with Aarons. There was a look in his partner's white face which made Brawnston know that he meant mischief. A few seconds' struggling and then Darrell's long, lithe fingers were round the Jew's throat, and as he tightened them there was an ominous twitch round the corners of his mouth.

"Stop it, man, or you'll kill me," the Jew gasped out as he felt himself choking. If he had been a good judge of expression, and had been in a position to take stock of Darrell, he would not have been much reassured at the effect his suggestion had. Brawnston didn't interfere; he was contemplating in a dreamy way the two other men whom he had knocked down. It looked as if a crisis had come in Joe Aarons' history, but just then a cool hand clasped Darrell's wrist, and on looking round he for the first time saw that there was a woman present at the not very pretty scene that was taking place.

"Stay, leave him alone, you'll kill him!" she said, rescuing Darrell from himself and his savageness as she had rescued him just before from his enemies. He will never be likely to forget the little figure with her glorious brown hair sweeping over her shoulders, and the half-frightened, half-disgusted look on her face. He felt rather more ashamed of himself than he had been for some time, so he let go his grip on Aarons' throat, who fell back a limp mass upon the ground.

"I am sorry that you should have been disturbed by this sort of thing; extremely sorry," he said to her as she disappeared through the door again.

"What a brute she must think me, as bad as that cur," he said half to himself, half to Brawnston, glancing at Aarons. "By Jove!" he added, "he looks rather queer."

"He's all right; it will be a rope that will break his neck," said Brawnston, as the man on the ground began to move. The other two men began to pull themselves together, and after a good deal of bad language from the defeated party, the incident came to an end, and every one turned off to sleep; Darrell thinking to himself that his endeavour to prevent the lady passenger's sleep from being disturbed had been singularly unsuccessful.

The next morning when the coach started, several black eyes and damaged faces bore witness to the disturbance of the night before. Aarons was badly marked, and seemed by no means to have recovered the rough handling he had received; for he was much less cheerful than he had been, and his conversation for some time was confined to a few muttered vows of vengeance against Darrell. Jim Brawnston, too, had the satisfaction of being able to admire the colour he had put on to the faces of Aarons' two friends. The treatment seemed to have been very beneficial in taking the insolence and noise out of the patients who had been subjected to it, and in consequence the journey became much pleasanter; and after all it was not so bad as it had promised to be. Brawnston had plenty of stories to tell of South African adventure. After Darrell expressed his remorse at having been to a certain extent the cause of the unseemly broil of the night before, and had been forgiven by Kate, as he was soon enough, a sympathy that became stronger every day grew up between them.

It was on the fourth day of their journey that the coach had outspanned at a farm-house by the roadside, and Kate and Darrell were sitting under some trees in the garden of the farm-house, by the edge of a cool shaded pool of water. There is a certain charm about those South African farms which most travellers in the country must have experienced. One seems to have never before enjoyed seeing trees and the soft green of vegetation until one has travelled for miles in the desert. The few bright flowers and the patch of waving maize are more grateful than in a country of fields and trees the most carefully tended garden could be. One of the team of mules which had been inspanned at the last station had turned sick, and the guard of the coach, careless of the remonstrance of the other passengers, who were in a hurry to get to their journey's end, had prolonged their outspan for some hours to give the sick beast time to get round. Neither Darrell nor Kate were indignant at the delay or were in a hurry to start. They had only known each other for a few days, but already they felt as if they were old friends. Those long days of travelling across the stretches of desert veldt can be pleasant enough. There is something in the atmosphere and surroundings of the country that makes one forget the past, and feel careless of the future; it has the same effect upon one's mind as the sea has. One gets the feeling of rest and distance, and begins to fancy that one has little to do with oneself, as one was once in other lands that seem so far away. There is nothing to be met with that reminds one of the rest of the world. The strings of laden waggons slowly wending their way over the veldt to the distant Diamond Fields, give an idea of carelessness about time, and worry, and the world in general. The sleepy looking farm-houses, where there is none of the thriving bustle of other lands—and everything suggests progression only at ox-waggon pace—help to carry out the idea.

In those days Darrell had learnt almost all that there was to learn about this companion's history, but had in return told her very little about himself, though she had gathered from what he said that he had seen a good deal of life, had lived most of his life in good society, was a gentleman, but for some reason or other, so she fancied, the memory of his past life was painful to him, though she was sure that his story had not been discreditable. As they sat in the shade looking at the group of passengers collected round the sick mule, and listening lazily to the voice of the member of the Legislative Assembly, who was denouncing the guard for not inspanning at once, the same thought was in both their minds—their journey would soon be at an end, and very likely they would never see each other again; for the farm she was going to was sixty miles from Kimberley, while he was going to the Vaal River diggings. One thought had been for some time in his mind. Why should his whole life be wrecked because of that act of folly in his youth? Did not the thousands of miles that separated him from England break the shameful tie he loathed? Who need ever know that George Darrell, digger, of Red Shirt Rush, Vaal River, was the same man as Darrell of the Lancers, who like a fool made his good old name shameful by giving it to the woman he had married. He cursed his folly as he remembered himself little more than a boy marrying a woman years older than himself, who, wild as he was then, was as much his inferior morally as she was socially. It was the life he had been leading which had left him weak enough to become drunk with that woman's coarse beauty, he told himself, as he cursed the folly of that one sin, for which fate never forgives a man, which he had committed. She did not want anything more from him. He had settled all he had on her before he left England for ever; she had got all she married him for, and would not bother him any more. Why should he not forget all about her and his old life?

"Yes," he said, partly answering something she had said and partly continuing his own thoughts, "there is something in this country that gets rid of old memories, hopes, and ambitions. Four or five generations of it have turned the descendants of knightly French Huguenots into the dull brutish Dutch Boers one meets here, who have not two ideas in their heads beyond eating and sleeping, and are far less civilised than the Kaffirs. Yes, it's a good country to forget in."

"I hope not," she answered; "I don't want to forget my past; I have plenty of happy memories." As she spoke a sad look came into her eyes.

"You have a past you can look back on with pleasure; I can only curse my folly when I look back," he said bitterly.

For a second or two he was silent, struggling with himself. Why should he suppose that she would take any interest in hearing the shameful secret of his life?—but something told him that he had better tell it. Then without leading up to it, he told her the story of his marriage, and about the woman in England who was his wife.

Very clumsily he told it, but he felt all the better when he had got it out. At first when she heard his story she realised how much she had begun to care for this man whom she had known only a few days; then she felt angry with herself for feeling so much interested in his history, and determined that he should never know that she had not listened to it with perfect indifference.

“What a fool I was to think that she would care; I might have saved myself the trouble of telling her my private affairs,” Darrell said to himself, when, having listened to him with ostentatious unconcern, she made some excuse to leave him and go to the coach.

When he came up some ten minutes after he found that she had left the party. The people to whose farm she was going had been to Kimberley, and on their way back they had come round to meet the coach. She was to go with them, and had got into their waggon. The horses were inspanned to the coach; he had only time to say good-bye when they started off. Would they ever meet again, he thought, as he looked back over the flat at the waggon, until it became a white speck on the horizon.

Chapter Two.

A year had passed since Kate said good-bye to George Darrell. Her life seemed to her to be divided into three volumes—her early life, the journey up to the Diamond Fields, and her present life at Jagger’s Drift. The last volume seemed likely to be dull enough. Day after day passed without any strange face coming or any incident happening. The family consisted of Mr Van Beers, a good-natured old Dutchman, who slept a good deal, and had very little to say for himself when he was awake; his wife, who had never time to attend to anything but the children, of whom there were about a dozen, the eldest a boy of fourteen, the youngest an infant in arms. Taking it altogether, Kate’s life was a fairly happy one, for though it was dull, there was very little to trouble her, and it was free from many of the little vexations which would be her lot at home. One drawback of it was, that she had too much time for thinking, and her thoughts curiously often went back to the incidents of the journey up, and she often in her mind’s eye saw the face of George Darrell as it looked when he blurted out the secret of his life. From that day she had never heard of him; little news ever came to Jagger’s Drift, and none would be likely to come of such an obscure person as George Darrell, digger, of Red Shirt Rush, Vaal River. That digging she had heard was up the river some sixty miles off. Many a time she had looked up stream and wondered how he was faring, and whether he still ever thought of her. The Homestead at Jagger’s Drift was a large, one-storied house, with a garden running down to the river. On the other side the house fronted a long flat, stretching far away to a range of low hills in the distance. A dozen or so of wood waggons would pass every day on their way to the Diamond Fields, but there was little other traffic. Across the river was Gordon, a place which some speculative people fondly believe is destined to be an important centre in the future. It had for reasons known to the authorities at Capetown, and to no one else, been chosen as the seat of the magistracy for a large district, and there was a magistrate’s house, a jail, and some police tents; while a court-house was being built. There were also two canteens, in one or the other of which in turn the spare population collected and listened to the proprietor of the establishment as he cursed his rival.

The new Government buildings were to be on a grand scale, quite up to what Gordon was destined to become in the future, according to the estimate of the most sanguine believers in it. “They mock us with their damned buildings,” was the opinion often expressed by Jack Johnstone, the Civil Commissioner’s clerk, as he looked at the new erections with a malevolent eye, for he had applied persistently and in vain for an increase of his salary, and he looked upon all other expenditure of Government money as a personal insult.

“Blessed if they haven’t brought a lot of white convicts over here to muddle away at that cursed place,” he said to McFlucker the canteen-keeper one afternoon, as, with a pipe in his mouth, he stood outside the latter’s store, and looked towards the hated erection, where some Kaffirs and white men were working listlessly as convicts do work. “That’s not a lag’s face, I’d have bet; if I had seen it anywhere else I’d have sworn that fellow was a gentleman and an honest man; he looks it, though he has got a broad arrow stamped on his shirt,” he said, as he noticed one convict, a tall man, who looked very unlike his companions. “But I dare say he is the biggest scoundrel of the lot,” he added.

Just then Kate Gray, who had come across the river with some of the young Van Beers, walked past the building. Johnstone, as he watched her with a good deal of admiration, noticed that she was also looking in the direction of the tall convict who had attracted his attention. To his surprise he felt almost certain that he saw their eyes meet with a glance of recognition. She seemed to start and almost pause for a second. The convict pushed his hat over his eyes, and stooped over his work as if he did not wish to be recognised.

“By Jove, I’d have bet those two know each other, or have seen each other before, but it must be only a fancy though—it isn’t likely,” Johnstone thought to himself, as he took off his hat and shook hands with Miss Gray. After they had talked for some time about the few subjects for conversation that their life at Gordon afforded—the health of McFlucker the storekeeper’s wife, the date of the return of the magistrate at Gordon, who was away on leave, and the fact that the river was rising—Miss Gray turned the conversation to the subject that had interested them both.

“Who are those men working at the court-house,—the white men I mean?” she asked, as Johnstone thought, with considerable interest.

“They are gentlemen who are working for her gracious Majesty without pay, and receiving their board and lodging gratis.”

"You mean they are convicts. What sort of offences do you suppose they have committed, and where do they come from?"

"They have come from Kimberley, and they may have committed any offence, but it's long odds that they have bought diamonds—that's their special weakness on the fields."

"Bought diamonds!—why I should have thought that was just what diamond-diggers wanted people to do."

"Bought diamonds that the Kaffirs have stolen from their masters' claims, I mean; those men, however, have probably made a mistake, and been caught by the police. When the police see that the wily illicit diamond-buyer is well on the feed they throw one of their flies, and send him a Kaffir with a diamond to sell. If the fish rises to the fly and buys, they strike, find the diamond, and haul the I.D.B. up before the court, when he gets five years. It's a pretty sport is trapping I.D.B.'s, and these are most likely some of the many fish who have been caught."

"What a wretched mean business it seems to be, but I'm sure he could not have been trapped."

"Hallo, so you talk about him as 'he,' do you?" thought Johnstone. "You mean the tall convict; I was looking at him just now, and wondering what his history was. Well, if he has a long sentence, if I were he, I'd make a bolt for it. The convict-guards are always more or less asleep, and I'd chance their shooting straight. I suppose it would not be much good though, one could never get away across the veldt without a horse."

"If he had a horse do you think he would get off? Where could he get to?"

"Sixty miles north he'd be out of the reach of the police, in Stellaland, where there is a lot of rough work going on, and any one who had plenty of pluck would find men who would welcome him as a comrade, and care very little whether he had a broad arrow stamped on his shirt or not."

"Ah, well, perhaps he is used to being a convict, and does not care to escape," Kate said, for she felt that perhaps she was unwise in showing so much interest in the convict's fate.

"Perhaps he is; don't know that it matters whether one is a convict or not, if one has to live in this country. Certainly, being in their infernal civil service is next door to it," Johnstone answered, as he walked to the river-side with them. As he returned after seeing them cross, he wondered where Kate could have seen the convict before. That they had met he somehow felt certain. He was right; Kate had recognised George Darrell, her fellow-traveller in the coach, in the convict. He had had a run of bad luck since they had parted. First of all his old partner, Jim Brawnston, had been obliged to leave him, as one of his brothers had died, and he had been wanted on his father's farm in Natal. Then for a long time he had found no diamonds.

After a bit, however, his luck seemed to have changed, and diamonds began to turn up on his sorting-table. The queer thing about those diamonds was, that they were unlike river stones, and much more of the appearance of the stones found in the mines. The diamond-buyers to whom he sold seemed, he thought, to look at them and him rather queerly when he brought them out to sell. He did not, however, trouble himself much about this. While he was working at his claim, not over rejoiced at the slight turn of luck he was experiencing, as he had hardly any ambition to make money, one day a conversation took place in the office of the head of the police in Kimberley, which would have opened his eyes if he had heard it. There had been a good deal of what is called illicit buying down the river for some time. Persons who had bought stolen diamonds, and wished to dispose of the diamonds advantageously, had taken to get men who pretended to be river-diggers, to profess to have found them in their claims, and sell them advantageously. Stolen diamonds are rather awkward property to dispose of, as dealers have to keep registers by which diamonds can be traced back to the diggers who first found them; so it was an advantage to give a diamond that had been stolen a fictitious history.

The head of the police had determined to put a stop to this practice, and had sent a man down the river to see what was going on. The information he had received had surprised him a good deal, and at first he hardly believed it. "What, Darrell of Red Shirt Rush in this? Why, I should have thought he was straight," he was saying to one of the detectives, who had come in to see him with another man.

"It ain't the first time, sir, you've thought that about a party we have found to be pretty deeply in the trade; now this man here sold Darrell as many as half-a-dozen diamonds which we can swear to, and which we can prove he has sold again; is not that so, Seers?" the detective said, turning to the ill-looking, undersized man who had come in with him.

"Yes, sir, he has bought 'em off me; he has been buying for this last twelve months to my knowledge, and working off illicit stuff from his claims," the man answered, his eyes as he spoke wandering about furtively, looking anywhere except into the face of the person he spoke to.

"Well, I suppose there is no doubt about it. It's high time some one was made an example of down the river; you and Sergeant Black had better go down and trap Darrell, with this man Seers," the head of the police said after he had talked for some time. "Look here," he added, calling the detective on one side, "that fellow is an infernal scoundrel, and are you sure he is not humbugging us?"

"Well, sir, white traps mostly are infernal scoundrels, but what he says is right enough about Darrell. What object should he have in telling us what was wrong?—besides, I don't think he would try and fool me," the detective said with a grin, which expressed considerable satisfaction with his own astuteness.

Two evenings after this conversation, the man Seers came into Darrell's tent, pretending that a mate of his was ill, and he wanted to be given some brandy. Darrell knew the man by sight, having seen him lately hanging about the diggings, and had not been much prepossessed by his appearance. He was civil enough to him, however, telling him he had got no brandy, and listening to his description of his mate's illness.

The man talked away for a few minutes, and then went to the opening of the tent, gave a shout, and then in a second, to Darrell's astonishment, two men, one of whom he knew by sight as a Kimberley detective, made their appearance. In a twinkling they had handcuffed him, searched him and the tent, and found a diamond in a pannikin near his bed. Darrell's protestations of his innocence went for very little, and in the course of another twenty-four hours he found himself a prisoner in Kimberley jail, awaiting a trial for buying a diamond illicitly.

On his trial it was proved that Seers had been searched before he went into the tent, and had no money upon him; when he came out he had ten sovereigns in his possession. The detectives were able to swear to the diamond found in Darrell's possession as the one they had given Seers before he went into the tent. The case seemed to be exactly like the ordinary cases of trapping that come before the courts at Kimberley almost every week. The judge who tried it expressed his opinion that it was one about which he had not the slightest doubt as to the prisoner's guilt, and sentenced him to hard labour for five years.

The crime of buying stolen diamonds is considered on the Fields one of the most heinous of offences, those who are convicted of it being seldom allowed to escape without a severe punishment.

After Darrell had done some of his sentence in the Kimberley jail, he had been sent with some other convicts to work at Gordon, so that was how it came to pass that Kate recognised her travelling companion in the tall convict.

When she got back to the Homestead she found that a young Van Beers, a son of the old farmer, had arrived from Kimberley. Jappie Van Beers was not a very pleasant type of the young Boer, but by no means an uncommon one. He was a noisy braggart, who might be heard wherever he went, shouting out in his broken English about himself and his belongings, and bragging about his shooting and riding, his horses, dogs, and guns. He sometimes would express violent anti-English sentiments, but for all that he imitated the people he professed to hate, and it was not at all difficult to see that he was half ashamed of being a Dutchman. He owned some very good claims in the Kimberley mines, and had made a good deal of money on the Fields. When he was at the Homestead he gave himself great airs, for he did not think it necessary for him to show much deference to the old people, since he was so much richer than they were, while their homely Dutch ways of life afforded him opportunities for the expression of considerable contempt. What made him more odious to Kate was, that he had taken it into his head to pay her an amount of attention that was very embarrassing to her. The truth was, that Jappie Van Beers had fallen head over ears in love with the pretty governess at his father's house. He had contrasted her very favourably with the heavy, shapeless-looking Dutch young women whom his cousins and brothers chose for their wives, and had determined that she should be Mrs Jappie. On the occasion of his last visit to the Homestead she had snubbed him most unmercifully, and she hoped that in future he would keep at a distance. There was something in his manner as he shook hands with her that told her he had got over any discomfiture he might have been made to suffer before.

"Ah, Miss Gray, you're looking very well and pretty, though you seem to be just as proud as ever. Well, I have a little bit of news for you. I have met an old friend of yours on the Fields; a friend of mine who knows you. He came up in the coach with you; he told me all about your goings on when you came up in the coach," he said to her after they had shaken hands. Kate looked extremely uncomfortable; the last subject she wanted to talk about was that journey and its incidents. Jappie Van Beers appeared to derive a considerable amount of satisfaction from her embarrassment.

"Yes, Miss, my friend Aarons told me about you," he continued; a malicious grin coming across his stupid heavy face.

"Is that person a friend of yours?" Kate asked; her expression showing that she did not think any the better of Jappie for his choice of friend. The other looked a little put out. The truth was, that when he was in Kimberley he associated with a good many of the worst characters in the place, not because he was one of them, but because it suited their purpose to flatter him, and allow him to be as insolent and boorish as he pleased.

"Well, I know him to speak to, and he told me about you, and he gave me a message for you. 'Tell her,' he said, 'that she is likely to see her old sweetheart again, if she looks amongst the men working on the roads at Gordon.' Then he told me how you went on when you travelled with this Darrell, the thief whom they trapped at Red Shirt Rush. Aarons gave me a paper and said that perhaps you would like to read about the trial, and see what he had done." Jappie was surprised to see how little attention she paid to his chaff; but she took the paper from him very eagerly and turned over the pages until she came to the report of the trial. The report was short. Kate felt sure that Darrell was the innocent victim of a conspiracy, and the idea came at once into her mind that somehow that conspiracy had been carried out by the man who took care that she should learn how successful it had been.

"Yes, this seems to be the same man I came up with in the coach, but I don't know why your friend should take so much trouble to let me know about it," she said, making an effort to speak as if she had read the report with little interest.

Jappie, feeling that his chaff had fallen rather flat, became silent, and contented himself with staring stupidly at her.

She read and re-read the report. Five years of that degrading slavery—five years working with Kaffirs and white men who were more degraded than Kaffirs!—it seemed to her that he never would be able to survive his term of punishment.

"Well, Miss Gray, you're angry with me because I just chaffed you," said Jappie, flicking his whip against his boots and looking half ashamed of himself; "I will tell you something that will make you forgive me. I have brought my little white horse, which you may ride. I know you like riding; and you can ride down to the river in the mornings with me and see the lines pulled up as you used to. I brought the little white horse because I knew you liked to ride him, and I will take out Kedult; he is the best horse in the Colony. I won a race with him the other day at Cradock, and beat all the imported horses."

A morning ride with Jappie did not hold out a very pleasant prospect, but as he spoke there flashed vividly upon

Kate's memory a sight that she had noticed day after day the year before, when she used to go out in the morning with the children to see the lines pulled up. It was the sight of a party of convicts and convict-guards on the other side of the river; the former working, filling water-barrels, the latter listlessly watching them. This recollection made her determined to go out for those rides, however unpleasant they might be, and instead of refusing Jappie's offer, she accepted it with an enthusiasm that flattered and delighted him. The next afternoon Darrell was at his task at the court-house, with two or three ill-looking white men and a gang of Kaffirs, who appeared not to take their punishment much to heart. Watching them were two white convict-guards armed with carbines, who lounged about listlessly, finding their duty very tedious, and some Zulu police armed with rifles and a collection of assagais, who looked as if they would deal out death and destruction, if not to the fugitive, certainly to some of the bystanders, should there be any attempt at an escape.

Every now and then Darrell looked across the flat towards the river, where he had seen Kate go the day before. She had recognised him, he knew. What did she think of his disgraceful position?—but what should she think? She had only known him for a few days, and in that time she had learned more to his disadvantage than otherwise, he thought to himself. For once the long weary afternoon's work had some interest;—should he see her again, he kept wondering? At last he saw her coming from the river-bank. He watched her, though he tried to look down so that their eyes should not meet. As she passed she took a hurried glance at the convict-guard, who were paying little attention to the prisoners. The white men were thinking of the hard luck that gave to them such a dreary dead-and-alive lot in life. The Zulus as they clutched their weapons were back again in their imagination at some scene of savage bloodshed, and were happy. Then she for a second managed to catch his eye, and as she did so she threw a crumpled-up piece of paper to him. He snatched it up, and half hiding behind part of the building he unfolded it, and read the few words written on it.

"You have a friend; look out for a signal to escape when you are at the river to-morrow. I know you are innocent." As he read this he felt a new man. He had even in his miserable position felt depressed to think that he had not a friend in the world. But here was some one who believed in him. Then he remembered that she would be likely to get into some trouble if she were mixed up in any plot to secure his freedom. But he had no means of warning her; he could only wait and wonder what the letter meant.

At seven o'clock next morning, Darrell was marched as usual to the river-bank to carry water up to the magistrate's house and the public works. Drearily and hopelessly he laboured at the wretched work of filling the water-carts. What did that note mean, he kept asking himself? How could that English girl in a strange country help him? Perhaps she was acting for others, he thought, and the only part she took was to give him notice. If so she might not run any great risk of getting into trouble. But this theory had to be put on one side. Who was there in the country, or for the matter of that in the world who would take the trouble to help him? He looked at the distant range of hills far away across the river; if he could only get there he would be free and safe, for not only was it native territory, but it was in a disturbed state, and there were bands of men collected together there, one or two of whom he happened to know who would welcome him as a comrade very heartily. The men worked at their tasks slowly enough; the convict-guards thought that they might just as well hang about the river-bank looking after convicts, as be anywhere else engaged in the same dreary work, so they did not hurry them. After he had worked for some minutes, Darrell saw two figures on horseback across the river; he recognised one of them as Kate, the other was a young Dutchman he had seen ride towards the farm a day or two before. He looked at their horses, and he coveted the one the Dutchman was on. It was a good horse anywhere, and looked as if it were just suited for the country. If he were on it and had a fair start, he would save the Colony the cost of his board and lodging, and show his enemies a clean pair of heels. Of course he remembered the letter, but he felt sure the young Boer would never be induced to help him. After they had ridden along the river to a place about a hundred yards down stream from where he stood, he saw the man dismount and leave his horse to be held by his companion. Darrell began to feel a thrill of excitement as he watched him go down to a boat, get into it, and drop some way down stream. He watched how the stream of the river ran, and he guessed how it would carry any one who jumped in from where he was, across to the point where Kate was with the horses. The Dutchman had almost crossed the river, and was pulling up a fish on a line he had rowed up to. Darrell took in the situation, and his heart beat, and he felt a longing for liberty as he first looked at the good horse on which he could secure it, and then at the convict-guard near him who was yawning sleepily, as he sat with his carbine in his hand. Just then he saw Kate hold her handkerchief above her head and wave it. It was the signal, and he knew how good a chance he would have if he obeyed it. There was no time for delay, and in a second he had taken a header from the bank and was swimming for life and liberty. For a minute or so there was some wild shooting, as the guard aroused by the splash took a hurried shot at him, and the Zulus let off their guns recklessly.

The sound of the shots startled Jappie, who had been intent on pulling up his fish. For a second he stared stolidly, and then as the convict came to the other side, hitting just upon the spot where the horses were, he saw what his object was.

"Allah Macter, but he is going to take my horse. Hi! Miss Gray, gallop the horse away; keep away from him, he's going to take the horse." The guards on the other side had ceased firing, as they were afraid of hitting Kate and the horses. Kate did not make any attempt to get away from the convict; in fact Jappie felt certain that she was doing her best to help the fugitive. Jappie yelled and gesticulated, but it was no use. To his disgust he saw the convict come up the river-bank, jump into the saddle, and give a shout of triumph, and then go off across the veldt. Above all things, Jappie valued and swaggered about his horse. He had won one or two races with him already, and hoped to win more, and he was never tired of boasting and bragging about what he hoped to do with him.

"O the skellum!—O the scoundrel!—there is not a horse in the province that can catch him, and there is no one ready to follow him," he shouted out to no one in particular as he splashed clumsily across the river against the stream. For once he thought of Kedult's pace and staying powers without much satisfaction. When he had got to the other side he stood shouting and yelling to the convict-guards, and watching Darrell growing smaller in the distance. It was something of a relief to him when he saw two troopers of the border police cross the drift. They had saddled up when they heard the alarm of the escape, and were starting in pursuit. Jappie ran after them, and shouted out some directions to which they paid very little heed.

"Ah, they will never catch him on Kedult; he will ride the horse to death first," he despondently said as he watched the troopers ride across the flat. Kate began to realise that she had probably got herself into a good deal of trouble, for the part she had taken in the escape was pretty evident. She did not know what offences she might not have committed, still she felt that she would gladly do it again, and chance whatever punishment she might have to suffer, rather than have to see Darrell suffering his degrading punishment. Certainly he would be a fugitive and an outlaw, but that would not be so bad for him, and he would have a better chance of proving his innocence than if he were a prisoner; so she hoped.

"Well, Miss Gray, so you have played me a nice little trick, letting that skellum steal my horse. That was your doing. You think yourself very slim to be able to fool me into leaving you with my horse, so that you could let your sweetheart have it to get away on; but you have made a mistake—I am going to go to the magistrate, and he shall know what you have done. You will find yourself in prison very soon for stealing my horse and helping a prisoner to escape," said the young Boer to Kate, when he met her at the door of the farm-house as she rode back. He was half crying about the loss of his horse, and desperately angry; and yet, as he looked into the pretty English girl's face, a very different idea to that of revenge suggested itself to him. There was something he cared for even more than his horse.

"Look here, miss, you have lost me the best horse in the country, but I forgive you, because you're such a pretty girl. No Dutch girl would do what you have done; they would be ashamed to; but I like girls who have plenty of pluck. Be my sweetheart instead of that skellum's, whom you will never see again, and I will say no more about what I saw. Look, I am rich; I have some of the best claims in the mine, and have ten good farms. I think there is no girl in the Colony who would not marry me, and I offer to make you my wife—a poor little English girl, whom I could send to prison if I thought right. Come, I have lost my horse and won a frow, for you must marry me or go to prison—which will you do?"

To emphasise his declaration he threw one of his clumsy arms round her neck and tried to kiss her. Her answer came in a way that surprised him. She dodged away from his grasp, and as he came forward again she slashed him twice across his face with her whip, and then ran away into the house, leaving him standing in the yard listening to the laugh of a Kaffir servant who had witnessed the scene.

"All the worse for you, missy," he cried, almost blubbering from the pain and from his anger. "You shall suffer for this, and for stealing my horse." Then catching sight of the Kaffir's grinning face he relieved his feelings by cutting that unfortunate son of Ham across the back with his ox-hide whip till he yelled with pain. Somewhat calmed by this he walked down to the boat and went over to Gordon, determined to let the law of the land revenge his wrongs.

It turned out that his threat was not an idle one. Already the inhabitants of Gordon were discussing the part she had taken in the escape of the convict. One of the guards noticed her give the signal, and his evidence was confirmed by Jappie.

Johnstone, who had been acting as magistrate, cursed his fate which obliged him to commit Kate to take her trial at Kimberley. But the affair was a serious one, and became more serious when the next day the border police came back without having found their man.

"It's a beastly duty to have to discharge, particularly for such a pitiful screw as one gets from this cursed Colonial Government. But I had to do it on the evidence," he said to her when the inquiry was ended, and she was duly committed to take her trial, and circumstances allowed him to resume his non-official way of looking at things. "You need not be nervous, however; jury won't bring themselves to convict you," he added, to reassure her.

The case created immense excitement at Kimberley. From the first public feeling was with the prisoner. Jappie was considered to show great vindictiveness, and the story of his having been an unsuccessful suitor to the prisoner somehow got abroad. He had got his horse back too, it having been sent to him from Stellaland, and this, in the opinion of the public, made the animus he showed all the more vindictive. When the day of the trial came on, and the prisoner was seen in the dock, public opinion expressed itself most unanimously in her favour.

The Crown prosecutor's arguments were very cogent, and the judge's summing up dead against the prisoner; but the jury gave their verdict without ever turning round in the box. It was *not guilty*.

"There ain't such a crowd of pretty girls in this camp that we can afford to shut 'em up in prison," was the opinion expressed by the foreman as he partook of champagne at the expense of a sympathiser with beauty in distress.

In the mean time George Darrell found himself secure in Stellaland. After riding all day he had pulled up with his horse dead beat, at a house which had once been used as a store some miles on the other side of the river which marked the border of Griqualand West. The house was inhabited by some white men, who constituted themselves into a body which somewhat resembled the free companies some centuries back—nominally fighting for the Kaffir chief, but really pretty much for their own hand.

"Hullo, who the devil is this?" exclaimed one of these warriors, who was sitting on the bench outside the house as Darrell came up.

"Hullo, he has got 'em on—he has got 'em all on," said another of the company—a gentleman who in the course of his varied career had been a singer in a London East End music-hall, and now sang the songs of Houndsditch in a strange land—as he saw the fashion of Darrell's garb.

"Look here, it won't do; it will bring the peelers on us."

"He's a good fellow; I know him—worth a dozen of you," said a black-haired, handsome, devil-may-care-looking

young fellow, known as Black Jamie, who acted as the leader of the company. "It's Darrell, who used to be working down the river. I heard he was 'run in' some time ago,"—and getting up, he came forward and shook the new arrival heartily by the hand.

It was lucky for Jappie that Black Jamie had a high opinion of Darrell; for it was on that account he was induced to give in to the other's wish that the horse should be sent back by a Kaffir to his owner—a proceeding which was thoroughly repugnant to the feelings of himself and the honourable company he commanded. He let Darrell have his way, however, and then sent him on with some Kaffirs to their huts, where the police, even if they crossed the border, would not care to follow him. A day or two afterwards, when danger of pursuit was over, Darrell was enlisted as one of Black Jamie's troop in the service of Mankoran, the chief of the Bechuanas.

Chapter Three.

"So it seems that the Cape Colony was very nearly saving us the trouble of looking after poor Tom Gray's girl," said the Rector of Morden, Warwickshire, to his wife, who sat opposite to him at the breakfast-table, as he put down the newspaper he had in his hand. The Warners of Morden Rectory were distant cousins of Kate, and the Rector had been her father's greatest friend at college. When they had heard of his death they had written out offering Kate a home, for they were kindly people, and as they only had two boys of their own, they thought she would not be in the way.

"Poor girl, it was very foolish of her to make herself so notorious; however, I like the way she writes. I should not say there was anything sly about her," answered Mrs Warner.

Kate Gray had, in answer to their invitation, written to them, telling of the trouble she had got into, and confessing that though the jury had acquitted her, she really had helped the convict, whom she believed to be innocent, to escape.

"It is sensible of her to send the newspaper report of the trial. After all it's just the sort of thing her father would have done at her age," answered the Rector; and his thoughts went back to his old friend, with whom he had got into many scrapes in their old Christ-Church days.

Mrs Warner was inclined to take rather a more serious view of the affair, but for all that she agreed with her husband that it would be best to have their cousin home to stay with them; and so she was advised to come home as soon as she could, and forget all about her adventure at the Cape, in the pretty Warwickshire village. She was glad enough to accept their offer, for though she had become a heroine at the Cape, she found that heroines were rather at a discount as governesses, and that it was difficult to see what she could do with herself there. So two years from the day of her trial found Kate quite at home at the Rectory, and happy enough in her new life.

"The Watsons are going to bring a friend with them to tennis, I forget his name," said Mr Warner to his wife one day at luncheon. "He seems rather a pleasant sort of man. I met him at Coventry the other day; he comes from the Diamond Fields, where he made some money. I wonder whether you ever met him out there, Kate?"

Kate looked troubled. It occurred to her that more people were likely to know a young lady who had stood in the dock in a criminal court than she knew; and in consequence she did not feel over comfortable at the idea of meeting any one who came from the Diamond Fields.

The others understood her embarrassment, though they tried to persuade her that there was no reason for her fears. "People who have known one another at the ends of the earth would never tell tales. I should say that rule would be kept for mutual convenience," said Mr Warner, who, like many an untravelled Englishman, believed that the goings on of those living in distant lands were, as a rule, such as they would wish to keep dark at home. However, Kate showed so much apprehension of a meeting with a man who might remember the trial, that they did not dissuade her from keeping away and avoiding it. So it happened that in the afternoon she was sitting in a school-room by herself, waiting securely there until the visitors had gone away again. She had heard them arrive, and heard a voice in the hall which she knew must belong to the Watsons' friend from the Cape, and it had seemed somehow to be familiar to her ear. She sat with a book before her, reading very little, and thinking a good deal of the events of two years before, which now seemed so far off—of the long journey across the veldt, of the scene at Jagger's Drift, and then of her trial at Kimberley. What had become of the man for whom for some motive she could hardly fathom she had risked so much? Likely enough he was buried under the South African sand, or perhaps he was taken again, and was working out his sentence. Again his figure came back to her mind, dressed as he was when she last saw him, in coarse canvas shirt and trousers decorated with numerous broad arrows and other Government marks.

Just then she heard her aunt's voice from the garden, shouting out to some one in the hall.

"Second door to the right, as you go in, you will find the rackets; no, left I mean." Whoever was being spoken to did not hear the last words, for instead of going into the room where the rackets were kept, he opened the door of the room she was sitting in. It seemed to her as if her thoughts had taken bodily shape, for there stood the man she was thinking about. He seemed to her to be dressed as he had been when she had seen him last, for his flannel and soft hat had much the effect of his convict garb.

"At last I have found you, and I have been trying to find out where you were for the last year," he said.

"I thought you were still looking for the rackets, and came to show you where they were kept. I need not introduce my cousin to you, as you seem to have made each other's acquaintance," said Mrs Warner, as she came into the room some ten minutes afterwards.

"Yes; we were old friends in South Africa," answered Darrell.

"I hope you will persuade her to come and play tennis. Do you know you were the cause of her staying away? She was afraid of meeting you because of that foolish business of hers about a convict's escape, which I suppose you must know all about," said Mrs Warner.

"Yes; I know a good deal about it, for I happen to be the convict. Don't be alarmed, though—I am quite a respectable person now, for thanks to Miss Gray, I have proved my innocence and got a pardon."

Mrs Warner looked somewhat dubiously at her guest. The hero of Kate's adventure was the last person she had ever expected to entertain in her house. Ex-convicts, even when they have not escaped, but have duly served their sentences, are not thought desirable acquaintances; on the other hand, her guest was perfectly well accredited and she liked his looks. Altogether she was inclined to think Kate less foolish than she used to do; and she did not attempt to prevent her from being persuaded to join the rest of the party in the garden.

Darrell did not play tennis that afternoon. Sitting on a low garden-chair he told Kate his history since the moment she had seen him lose himself in the distance as he rode for his liberty. His life in Stellaland had been full enough of adventure, but nothing had happened that had any particular effect on his history, until one day when he was sitting with some of his companions at the house he had first seen them at. He was feeling rather sick of his life, although he liked the excitement and adventure of it, and he was willing enough to fight for Mankoran, who was being left in the lurch by the English, to whom he had always been loyal, and attacked without any cause by Boer freebooters who wanted his land. He was getting rather tired of the lawlessness of his companions, who cared more for what they could make than for the justice of their cause, and were not too particular about whom they took plunder from, so long as they could get hold of it.

As he sat smoking his pipe, and wondering what would be the end of his life, a man drove up to the door in a cart, and giving the reins to a Kaffir who was with him, got out and walked into the store.

Darrell recognised the man at once. He was the man Seers who had trapped him. At last he had a chance of finding out something about the plot of which he had been made a victim.

Seers walked into the house, and then started back in no little terror, for he found himself in a nest of hornets. There were two other men besides Darrell whom he had helped to get into trouble when he was acting for the police. They were both inside, and as soon as he saw them Seers ran back and jumped into his cart before Darrell could stop him. The man Seers had recognised was an American, who they called Colorado Joe—one of the most reckless ruffians of their band. As he caught sight of his enemy he made a rush for him, but was too late. Then he ran back to the house for his carbine, and followed by the other man, who was also armed, began to fire at the cart. Three shots were fired, and one of the horses fell down dead. Colorado Joe with a yell ran up to the cart, which had come to a stop.

Things looked like going pretty hard with Mr Seers. He had been hit pretty badly, but his condition did not commend him to the pity of his enemies.

"Guess we'll hang him at once, before the others turn up. It's more our affair than theirs; eh, Pat?" the American said to his friend.

The other took pretty much the same view, and they were both somewhat entertained by the ghastly terror of Seers. Just then Darrell came up. When Seers saw another of his victims appear on the scene he felt his position hopeless.

Darrell, however, was by no means inclined to allow the mouth of the man who had given false evidence to be closed for ever. He stuck to the point that Seers' life should be spared, and after the matter had nearly ended in a fight, he was allowed to have his way.

"Well, that carrion ain't worth fighting about. If you want him you can have him, but he won't be much use to you long," the American said, as he turned away, followed by his mate.

Darrell picked up the wounded man, took him to the house and looked after him.

The wound, however, which he had received, turned out to be a fatal one, and when Seers became satisfied that he was not going to recover, he made a clean breast of it.

"You have a nasty bitter enemy in Kimberley, I don't know whether you know it—that fellow Joe Aarons. He has a down on you, has Joe. He knew my game—that I was working for the detectives—and he came and offered me a hundred if I'd trap you. I had been sent down the river to look after what was going on down there, and it didn't seem a very hard job, so I went in for it. You found a little just about the time you were run in. Well, that was—thanks to me. I put those diamonds amongst the gravel you were washing. They were police stuff, and the police knew you sold 'em. When it actually came to trapping you, it wer'n't so easy. But, lord, those police, when you have done a bit in their way, get to believe in you wonderful. I worked it; bless you, I hid the coin that I swore you give me near the tent, and after I had slipped the diamond down, I got out the money and then I hollered out for the police. The clearest case he had ever seen, the blessed beak said. Well, it were clear like the three-card-trick is clear. It wer'n't fair, and I am sorry for it, only that Joe Aarons shouldn't have come down with his hundred. I always had a weakness for a lump sum. It was the only time I ever went wrong while I was working for them. But bless yer, as soon as I began to do a bit of buying again on my own account, they are down on me, and I, like a fool, cleared for this country. I'd have done better to have stopped in Kimberley and done my sentence. I see that as soon as I come across that devil Colorado," the man said in a husky, quavering voice.

Darrell managed to get a border magistrate to come up and take the deposition before Seers died. With this evidence he easily got his sentence quashed. After that he had gone back to the river, where he did fairly well, and putting what he made at the river into some claims in one of the mines, just before a sudden rise in their value, he managed to make a fairly good thing of it.

"I have to thank you for everything. I should still be wearing convict's clothes if it had not been for you. I have felt ashamed of myself when I have thought how I rode off and left you to get out of the trouble you might have got into how you could. I never could hear what happened to you after the trial. I have been longing to thank you," he said, when he had come to the end of his story.

"My trouble was not very great," she said; and she began to think that it would have been better if she had never met him again. She remembered their last conversation.

"I have wanted to tell you something. You remember when we last talked to one another on the road up to the Fields. That story I told you of is all over; the person I told you about then is dead."

Their minds both went back to that conversation on the veldt, and they took up their story as it had been left off then. Before it was time for Darrell to say good-bye, they had settled how it was to end.

Story 2.

Kitty of "The Frozen Bar."

Some years ago there was at Kimberley a very popular house of entertainment, called 'The Frozen Bar,' which had been in existence since the early days of diamond-digging, and had become one of the institutions of the Fields. From a mere bar it had grown into a hotel—bedrooms having been put up in the compound behind it, and a dining-room opened for the use of its boarders. Still the old name—which had been a happy thought in the old days when ice was unknown and yearned for on the Fields—was retained. So far as it was possible for an iron house under a blazing South African sun to be kept cool, it justified its name. Ice, when the ice-machines had not broken down or the ice-manufacturers gone on the spree, was very plentiful there. Hot brandies and sodas were never served out. And it was always refreshing to see its proprietress, pretty little Kitty Clay, who was always cheery and bright, however trying the times or the weather might be, and would look fresh, clean, and cool even in the misery of a Diamond Field dust-storm.

'The Frozen Bar' was used by men who as a rule did not care to frequent common canteens and rub shoulders with the people who were to be met with in such places. Bad characters fought rather shy of it. For instance, Jim Paliter, the gambler and sharper, who was always lurking about to look for some unwary one who would first shake the dice for drinks, and afterwards to while away the time throw for sovereigns, never made it his hunting-ground. His self-assurance was proof against a good deal, but Kitty's quiet way of letting him know that his room was preferred to his company was too much for him. I.D.B.'s, as that section of the Kimberley public who live by buying stolen diamonds are called, did not care to use it, unless they were prosperous and in the higher walks of their trade. It was situated near the Kimberley mine and the diamond market, and all day long it did a roaring trade. The crowd who thronged its doors was representative of Kimberley, for it contained men of many different races and types. Men came there dressed in every description of costume, from moleskins, flannel shirts, and slouch hats, to suits of London-made clothes sent out from home by West End tailors. You would see the rugged, weather-worn faces of men who had been diggers all over the world wherever the earth had yielded gold or precious stones, and the dark, hungry-eyed, bird-of-prey-like faces of Jews who are drawn to the spot where men find precious stones as vultures are drawn to a corpse. It was in the afternoon, just after luncheon, that the place would be most crowded. Then Kitty would be in her element, taking money, though more often 'good-fors,' answering questions, chaffing, and laughing over the news of the day—the latest scandal or the best joke against some one—and making comments upon it, very often more humorous than polite. Poor, cheery, big-hearted little Kitty, the best woman in the world—so many a man said, and with some reason. Maybe she used to laugh merrily enough at stories she ought not to have listened to, and the remarks she made were perhaps not over womanly, still no one could deny that she had a tender woman's heart. In the early days of the Fields, when hardships were greater, and the ups and downs of life were more marked, there were many who had good reason to be grateful to her. She had been a friend in need to many a man who from illness or accident had been pushed down and was likely to be trampled upon in the fierce struggle for existence in the first days of the rush to the new diggings. There were generally boarding at the 'Frozen Bar' one or two men for whose custom the other licensed victuallers did not yearn—men whom Kitty had known in their brighter days, and whom she would not go back upon because they were down on their luck and out of a billet.

She was nearer thirty than twenty, and her life had been rather a hard one, though it had left very few traces on her bright little face, and her troubles had not made her laugh less cheery or her smile less kind, though perhaps they had caused that dash of cynicism which sometimes showed itself in her talk. She had begun life as a ballet-girl in a London theatre, had travelled half over the world with a theatrical company, and at Cape Town had married a Diamond field man who had taken her up to Kimberley.

Her husband, whom she had never cared for much, turned out anything but a satisfactory one. But her married life did not last very long. Less than a year after her marriage, a middle-aged female arrived on the Diamond Fields and laid claim to her husband, and as she was a person of great determination, and was able to prove that she had married him some years before in London, she carried him off in triumph, leaving Kitty to find out whether or no a bad husband was better than none at all. Kitty would probably have answered this in the negative, for she was very well able to take care of herself. She started 'The Frozen Bar' and prospered there, and if she had only been good at saving money would have become quite a rich woman.

One evening there were several men lounging in the bar listening to Kitty's chaff and stories, when some one started a subject which made her look a good deal graver than usual. "So your friend Jack is back again in the camp," one of her customers had said.

"Jack—which Jack? there are a good many Jacks on the Fields, you know," Kitty answered; but with a note of trouble

in her voice which suggested that the other's words had conveyed some news to her that she was sorry to hear.

"Jack Douglas, I mean. He has let his prospecting job down the river slide, and he is back in the camp again, and he has been back for a week, and been on the spree all the time."

"How that chap has gone to the bad! I remember him when he was quite a decent fellow, and to-day I saw him with some of the biggest thieves in the camp—Jim Paliter, Ike Sloeman, and all that gang."

"Mark my words, we shall see Jack Douglas run in for I.D.B. some of these fine days; he is going that way pretty quick," another man said; and there was something in his tone and expression as he spoke which irritated Kitty into showing a good deal of feeling.

"Why do you talk about my friend Jack? I don't have friends, only customers, and when they have spent their money and gone to grief there is an end of them so far as I am concerned. But he used to be your friend Jack once upon a time; why don't some of you fellows try and give him a help instead of pointing at him, and saying he has gone to the bad?" she said.

"Oh, he is no good; he has gone too far to be helped,"—"It's all his own fault,"—"He will never do any good here, he ought to clear out," were the answers to Kitty's suggestion. The men, though they talked slightly enough of Jack, looked, one or two of them, half ashamed, for Jack had been a popular man on the Fields in the old days when he owned claims and was not badly off, and the men who discussed his fate so coolly had once been glad enough to be his friends.

"Clear out indeed! Where to? To the devil for all you care. That is so like you men; that is how you stick to a friend."

"Listen to Kitty; why, she seems to be quite sweet on Jack Douglas. Look out, Kitty, he would not be a good partner in the business; why, he'd precious soon drink up the profits," said a little Jew who had been listening to the conversation though no one had been speaking to him.

An angry flush came across Kitty's face. For once, she could not think of a neat retort, and she answered, showing that she was hurt. "Look here, Mr Moses or Abrams, or whatever your name is, suppose you keep your advice till it's asked for. I never spoke to you when I talked about people helping Jack; no one expects one of your sort to help a man, and Jack would not care to take any help from you."

"Don't know about not wanting my help; he is glad enough to be helped by some very queer people," said the little Jew as he walked out of the place, grumbling out something about never coming in again.

"Douglas may be a fool, and he may have gone to the bad, but I hate to hear a little cad like that sneering at him," said Kitty; and then feeling that she had perhaps made rather a fool of herself she changed the conversation, and in a minute was laughing at some rather pointless story, chaffing another man about some joke there was against him, and seeming to be in the wildest spirits.

"What good fun that woman is; such a lot of 'go' in her," said one of the men who had left the place to another as they walked home together. "I don't like to hear her," said the other, a man whose ideals were somewhat higher, though his habits of life were even more irregular than those of most men on the Diamond Fields. "She is such a good little woman—a deal too good to talk as she does."

These men would have been surprised if they had seen the woman they were talking about whom they had left in such high spirits. The place was empty, she was leaning with her elbows on the bar and her shapely hands covering her face, sobbing as if her heart would break. Yes, she thought, she was a fool to have cared anything for him or any other man. Were they not all either hard, selfish, and heartless, or reckless, prodigal, and hopeless?

With all her knowledge of the world she lived in, she had made what her experience told her was the most hopeless of mistakes a woman can commit, for she had let herself care a great deal too much for Jack, the ne'er-do-well and loafer, whose fate his old friends had been discussing. What they had said was probably true, she thought; it was no use doing anything for him. She had tried to help him. She had found some money to send him on a prospecting trip down the Vaal—not because she believed in the new mine he was prospecting, but because she thought it would be a good thing for him to get away from Kimberley—but here he was, having left his work to look after itself, back again in the camp at Kimberley, enjoying its pleasures such as they were. Yes, they were right, there was not much chance for him: his associates were about the worst lot in the camp. He seemed to be going the road which has taken so many a Kimberley man to the prison, yet she couldn't leave him to travel it. Ah, what a fool she was, she thought. She had forgotten to call her boy to shut the place up though it was late, and she hears a step at the door. At once she wipes her eyes and looks herself again.

He was a man of about five-and-twenty. Once he must have been very good-looking, and even then his face had some of its old grace about it. Now, however, it told a very ugly story plainly enough. It was haggard and worn with drink and dissipation, and he had a reckless, defiant expression as if he refused to show a shame he felt. Even for the Diamond Fields his dress was rather careless. One of his eyes was discoloured, while on his cheek he had marks of a more recent cut. Any one who knew colonial life could sum him up. An Englishman well-born, who has gone to the bad; a type of man to be met with all over the colonies, the man who has been sent abroad so that he should not disgrace his people at home. There are openings for such men abroad, so their kind friends at home say, and so there are;—canteen-doors, the gates of divers colonial jails, and then one six feet by two, not made too deep, the job being badly paid for.

Staggering up to the bar he asked Kitty how she was, and called for a drink. There was rather a sharper tone than usual in her voice as she told him that it was too late and that she was going to close. "You had better go back to the 'Corner Bar,' that is more in your line than this place, isn't it?" she added.

"All right," he said, "I will clear out. I suppose I am not good enough for this shanty. So good night."

"Stop," she said, changing her mind as he turned to go away; "you needn't be in such a hurry; I want to ask you something. What are you doing—where are you staying now?"

"Staying? Oh, anywhere. I slept on the veldt last night; I am going to sleep at old Sloeman's place to-night. He is a good sort, is old Sloeman—don't turn his back on a man because he is down on his luck. I am going to work with him."

Mr Sloeman was the owner of some claims in one of the mines which nobody else had ever made pay, but in which, without doing much work, he professed to have found a great many diamonds. He also was the proprietor of a canteen of more than shady reputation, and had an interest in one or two Kaffir stores. Some people were unkind enough to suggest that the diamonds he professed to find in his claims were bought at his canteen, or at his stores, from Kaffirs who had stolen them from their masters' claims. Mr Sloeman was notorious for the kindly interest he took in likely young men who were out of work. He gave them a billet in one of his stores, or in his canteen, or as an overseer to work in those wonderful claims. Curiously enough a large proportion of those young men had attracted the attention of the detective police, and had found their way to the prison charged with buying stolen diamonds; but Mr Sloeman himself prospered.

"Stop, Jack, you are not going up there to-night. One of my rooms is empty, you can have that. I wouldn't go up there to-night," said Kitty.

Jack said he would go—he was expected there.

"Stop, Jack, you're not so bad that you can't talk sense. You know what old Sloeman means, and what his game is. You have always been straight, whatever they can say of you. Don't have anything to do with that old thief!"

"Yes, and a lot of good being straight has done me. Old Sloeman is a good deal better than the lot who turn their backs on me, and, thief or not, I am going to work with him?" Jack said as he turned to leave the place.

Kitty gave a look at him as he lurched to the door, and then determined that she would have her way.

"Well, Jack, have a drink before you go. I am sorry for what I said just now. We will have a drink together," said Kitty, as she took down a bottle of whiskey and some soda-water. Jack did not refuse—he seldom did refuse such an offer.

"Well, that will about finish him. It seems a shame, but he shan't go up there to-night, and that will settle it," she thought to herself as she more than half filled a tumbler with whiskey.

"That is rather a stiffish drink," he said as he finished it. Then he had another, and forgot all about going up to Sloeman's, and Kitty called her Kaffir boy to shut up the place and put Jack to bed in the spare room.

The next morning, when she was at her breakfast, her Kaffir servant came running and showing his white teeth. "The *baas* I put to bed last night, him plenty bad this morning, Missis."

"Take him this, he will get all right," said Kitty, giving him some brandy in a glass and a bottle of soda-water. "That won't hurt him, though he will have to knock it off and pull himself together, for this child is going to look after him," she added to herself.

Very soon the Kaffir came back. "The *baas* he drink the brandy and throw de soda at me. I think him going mad," he said, rubbing his head.

Kitty was not much alarmed; she had seen a good deal of that sort of thing. She wondered whether it would be any good, if it were possible to persuade Jack to become a Good Templar. She felt afraid that it would not be very easy, and that he would shun the rejoicing there would be over him. He wanted some one to keep him straight, she thought, and woman-like, she began to believe that one of her sex could do it. After some time Jack came out of his room. He had a blank stare on his face and said nothing, but walked into the street without his hat on. He was evidently queer, very queer, Kitty thought, as she led him back to his room and then sent her boy for the doctor.

"He is in for a bad go of fever; rather a nasty case—typhoid symptoms; knocked his constitution to bits with drink," said the doctor. "He will want a lot of looking after. He had better go to the hospital—the free ward—the paying wards are full; not that they would be much in his line if they were not," he added.

"I think he had better stay here, doctor," answered Kitty. "I will see after nursing him; you know, doctor, nursing is rather my forte."

"No one can see after him better than you, my dear," said the doctor, who knew Kitty well. "I fancy, however, he won't be a very profitable boarder for you; but that's your look out."

"Oh, that is all right," said Kitty. "Come and see him again soon, doctor; remember I sent for you."

The doctor said he would come round again soon, and drove off—thinking what a good little woman Kitty was, and wondering whether there was anything more than pity in her feeling for that ne'er-do-weel Jack Douglas.

"I trust she don't care for him, for I am afraid there would be only trouble in it for her, however it turned out," he thought to himself.

The doctor was right; it turned out a very nasty case of fever, and for weeks it looked very black. For a time 'The Frozen Bar' lost its popularity. Kitty was always afraid that her customers were making too much noise, and in fact

she showed that she would be more pleased if they had kept away from her establishment altogether. She was very seldom to be seen behind the bar, and when she was, there was none of her old brightness and fun about her. The old merry, almost reckless, look had left her, and there was a more tender and soft expression in her face. She spent most of her time in a room behind the house—the coolest and best bedroom she had. Its late tenant, one of her most solvent boarders, had been somewhat disturbed and a good deal affronted at being moved out of it, but Kitty was determined to have it for the sick man, who for weeks was tossing on the bed in delirium. For a long time he did not recognise her or know where he was; he was a boy at school or a cadet at Sandhurst again. Then the delirium left him and he knew her, though he hardly seemed to ask himself where he was or how she came to be looking after him. Perhaps the hours that poor little Kitty spent nursing him as he got better were some of the happiest in her life. Then he was never happy when she was away from him, and he used to watch her as a sick dog watches its master. He seemed so different, so much more like what he had been once, and so unlike what he had become on the Diamond Fields. When he grew stronger and able to talk about how he became ill, tears came into his eyes when he thanked her for her kindness. “If it had not been for you I should have gone up to old Sloeman’s place at the West End, and if I had not died there should have become one of his lot,” he said. “How good you have been to me!”

As he grew stronger she began to think that he knew her secret, and there was something in his face which seemed to tell her that he felt something more than gratitude for her. Then she hardly ever came near him. He did not want any more nursing, she thought. It was the first day he had got out of bed; she had been talking to him about himself in her old cheery manner, telling him that if he choose to pull himself together there was no reason why he should not succeed and do as well as any one else, when what she had been half expecting for some time came.

“Hers was the only influence,” he said, “which could keep him straight. He knew she cared for him. If she would marry him he would be able to keep away from drink.”

Then she told him the truth. Yes, she did care for him, and would marry if he wished it. But first of all he must show her that he could reform; he must swear off drink, and what was more to the point, keep off it too. She wasn’t any great shakes, she knew, but she wasn’t going to marry a man who was always on the drink. She knew too much to do that, she said.

He promised that he would reform, and it was agreed that they were to wait for a year and then they were to be married and leave the Diamond Fields, and go to some other colony. He was no great prize, this shattered invalid, who was far more likely than not to return to his old ways. But Kitty, for all that, had a hard struggle with herself not to take him as he was, instead of waiting and perhaps losing him altogether. “No, she would not marry him there, it wouldn’t be fair to him,” she said; “she would wait till he was the man he was before he ever took to drink, and then if he cared to marry her she would be the proudest woman in the world.”

Then she talked over a plan she had for him. She had bought some claims in the Dutoitspan mine, and he must work them for her. She said she was sure the ground would turn out well, and they would make lots of money.

He promised that he would turn over a new leaf, and he said and thought too that she was the kindest-hearted and dearest little woman in the world; and he felt eager to begin work, and show her what a splendid specimen of the reformed character he was going to become.

That is how Jack Douglas, who had utterly gone to the bad in the opinion of most men who knew him, got a start again.

Of course their claims ought to have turned out well, and they ought to have found a big diamond which would have made their fortune all at once. But Kitty’s belief in the claims proved to be rather unfounded: some weeks they paid expenses, some they did not. Jack Douglas ought at once to have become a reformed character, but he did not. More than once work was at a standstill in their claims for days, and he had to come to Kitty, shamefaced and haggard, with a sad story of transgression to tell. But she persuaded him to try again, and did her best to keep him straight, and at last he became stronger and better. Men began to think that he had some chance, he had been steady for a long time. Kitty was going to succeed in making something of him. He began to take some pride in himself, and at the end of twelve months he was a better man than he had been for years.

At that time there was an outbreak of Kaffirs and Griquas on the border of the province, and troops were raised on the Diamond Fields. There was plenty of military enthusiasm. Times were bad, and the Diamond Fields answered to the call for men to serve their country at five shillings a day. Store-keepers who could supply uniforms, and transport-riders who had waggons and oxen, came forward to help their country in its hour of need at a considerable profit to themselves. For Douglas, the chance was just what he longed for.

Kitty did not try to prevent him from going out, for she thought it was the best thing he could do. She knew all his history now. How he had got into some trouble at Sandhurst, and had been sent abroad by his stern old uncle, who had determined not to leave the family acres to one who, he thought, was certain only to bring disgrace upon his family. She thought it only natural that he should wish to volunteer and take the chance of showing that there was something in him. When the Diamond Field Horse left the camp she went out to see them off, and felt proud of her lover, as she saw him ride away in his troop. “He won’t come back a trooper,” she said to herself, “if there is much fighting to be done.”

She was right about his not coming back a trooper. When there was any work to be done, he was in the thick of it, and he had some opportunities of showing that soldiering was a trade he was fit for. Promotion, such as it is, comes quickly in a colonial corps, and when he came back he had a commission. He came back a new man, proud of and confident in himself. For years his life had been all down the hill, and until Kitty had stretched out her kind little hand to help him, every one had been content to speculate as to how long it would take him to get to the bottom. Perhaps he would have hardly cared to think how much she had done for him. She was so fond of him and proud of him, it was only natural, he thought, but still it was gratifying. He was very pleased to see her again, and her bright little

face and cheery manner were very charming to him.

He, of course, was conscious that he was going to marry beneath him. Still he had a notion that he would get on better with Kitty than any one else he had ever met. Though he was a gentleman of very excellent family, he was not a very refined person, and Kitty's peculiarities of manner were not drawbacks in his opinion.

The day for the wedding had been almost settled when the troubles in Zululand began. Jack must needs go to it. It was too good a chance to miss, and Kitty had to make up her mind to wait. So she said good-bye to him, and he went off to join a corps of Irregular Colonial Horse as a Captain. She stopped at Kimberley and looked after the 'Frozen Bar.' She was terribly anxious when the first bad news came from Zululand, and until she heard that he was all right. But she tried to be brave and be thankful that he was having a chance of distinguishing himself.

She prospered fairly well, though she began to encourage a class of custom which was not very remunerative. The warriors who had served with Jack in the Diamond Field Horse took to frequenting the bar. They found that if they only talked enough about Jack, and told stories that redounded to his credit, Kitty would take the cards they signed for drinks in lieu of ready money without murmuring, and she would listen to these stories, somewhat to the neglect of gentlemen of the diamond market who, if their lives were less romantic, paid with greater regularity for what they had to drink.

There was a good deal to do in Zululand for the Irregular Horse, and when there was anything to be done, Jack was in his right place. He was on the Zlobani Hill on that fatal day on which so many of the Light Horse were killed. There were a good many brave deeds done that day, comrade risking life to save comrade in that wild rush from the Kaffirs who had again out-manoeuvred their white foes. Jack was cool and collected on that day, as he usually was in danger. As he rode down the hill for his life he heard a shout behind him. A young Guardsman, who had come out on special service, had come to grief; his horse had been killed and the Kaffirs were almost upon him. How Jack got through the Kaffirs and managed to get away with the man he took up he hardly knows, but he did, and he brought him back to safety.

It happened that the youngster whom Jack saved was the son of a great English statesman, and heir to half a county; and this was all the better for him, for nothing now-a-days gets much of a price unless it is well advertised: and the brave deeds of soldiers (as some men have learnt to their profit) are no exceptions to this rule.

As it was, Jack's deed was much written about by special correspondents, and when the news came home, much talked about in London drawing-rooms; and in time the news came out to South Africa, that Jack was to be made a V.C.

When the news came to Kimberley, some one lent Kitty a packet of English papers so that she could read what they were saying about Jack at home. She had taken them and one of Jack's letters and had gone up the Garden, as a desolate bit of land was called where some trees had been planted, and some feeble attempt at gardening had been made; she wanted to be by herself to think it all over.

She read all about Jack in the papers, and learnt that he was the nephew of the General Douglas, who was a distinguished officer in the Crimea. The report said he had been at Harrow, but was silent about his career at Sandhurst.

The papers were full of him, and every one at home seemed to be proud of the brave young colonial soldier, who at the peril of his life had saved the high-born boy, about whom everybody was glad to have an excuse for talking and writing. His picture was in two of the illustrated papers. There was a leader about him in one of the dailies. Of course Kitty thought the latter a very beautiful piece of writing, and wondered what all the classical quotations meant, and who the long-named persons to whom Jack was compared were. And this was the man who loved her—this hero, this brave soldier. How she wished she was different from what she was!—a lady who would be fit for him, not a poor half-taught woman, who had lived a hard life amongst rough, coarse people, and had got the little education she had from the bits of plays she had learnt and the novels she had read, and the queer side of society which she had seen. Well, if she was the finest lady in the world, she thought, she would not be worthy of him. Cynical little Kitty, who was so well able to sum any one up at their right value, and whose estimates were seldom too favourable, had at last set up an idol which she bowed down before and worshipped none the less reverently because her experience ought to have taught her that it was made of rather poor clay. She had been sitting some time thinking over her past, and wondering what her future would be, torturing herself by doubting whether he really did care for her, or could care for her, and reading over his letter again and again, when she heard Jack Douglas's name spoken by some one. She was sitting on a bench by a cactus hedge; there were two men on the other side who were talking about him, as a good many people in Kimberley were. "I know all about him," one man said; "he comes from the same part of the country that I do. He would have had his uncle, General Douglas's property, only he got into some row at Sandhurst, and his uncle said he had disgraced himself, and turned him adrift. My people tell me that the General intends to have him back again and forgive him, he is so pleased at his getting the V.C. So he'd be all right, only he has been fool enough to have got engaged to some woman out here. What's her name? That woman who keeps 'The Frozen Bar.'

"By George, what a fool! Not that she isn't a jolly little woman in her way, but one wouldn't care to introduce her to one's people at home as one's wife," said the other.

"Yes; I spoke to him about it when he was here last, but he didn't take what I said over well. I fancy he knew he was making a fool of himself and was sick of it, though it didn't matter then, as there wasn't much chance of his uncle ever making it up with him," the other man said, and then they began talking about something else, little knowing who had overheard, and what a nasty wound their words had made.

Kitty sat still where she was, listening to the two men's voices. For some minutes she felt numb and stupid, knowing

that she was wounded terribly, without knowing how or why. Then she began to realise what the scrap of conversation she had overheard meant. "He was making a fool of himself, he could not get out of it," that is what his friends were saying about him, she thought to herself, and it was true enough too, at least the first proposition was, she told herself. He had talked of his early life to her once or twice, but always as something that was past and gone, and which had nothing to do with him as he was then. Now, however, she knew that he could go back to it if it were not for her. He had got to choose between giving up his chance of returning to it and giving her up; that was all. She could remember something in his manner when she last saw him which she did not quite understand then; now she knew what it meant—he knew he was making a fool of himself.

Now, when he had distinguished himself he would feel this all the more. She alone was keeping him from the life he was born for. Now when he knew what he was giving up, what would he do? Would he come back to her out of pity or duty or a sense of honour, or would he desert her? No, he never should do that; she would never give him the chance. If he married her how often he would repent it!—how often he would think of what he had given up for her! "Yes," she thought to herself, as she walked back to her house with all the gaiety and happiness taken out of her life, "she saw her way."

Some weeks after Ulundi had been fought and the war was over, Jack Douglas was sitting in an arm-chair at the Crown Hotel at Maritzburg, reading a letter from England. It was from his uncle, the General, and was to the point, as the old gentleman's letters usually were. He had heard of Jack's gallant conduct, and was very pleased. He was content to let bygones be bygones and receive him again. He was to come back and live at the Hall, and he would have the place eventually. The General went on to say that he had met with some one who knew of Jack at Kimberley, and had heard an absurd story of his intending to make a disgraceful marriage with a barmaid. If he intended to do that he need not answer the letter; otherwise he had better come home as soon as the war was over. Jack read the letter over and over again with a troubled expression on his face. He did not like to give Kitty up. He was bound not to. He remembered, and it was not a very pleasant memory, all she had done for him, and what he probably would have been if she had not again and again helped him up after he had slipped down. If it had not been for her a broad arrow would as likely as not have been the decoration which he would have gained. Then what a jolly, cheery, bright little woman she was, and how devoted she was to him! He wouldn't give her up, be hanged if he would; he had plenty of money in his pocket, was thoroughly pleased with himself, and every one thought him a very fine fellow, so he would do what he liked. He would write the General a fine, manly letter, full of generous feeling, telling him that he would not give up the woman who had done so much for him.

He sat down and wrote away, and then read his letter over. There was a little too much tall talk in it; it was the sort of thing that would make his uncle very angry. Jack tore it up. Then as he began to write another letter he seemed to see the other side of the question. How much he was giving up—a fine old place, as good a position as a man could want, and instead of that he was to end his days in South Africa or in some other colony. His V.C. would not be much good to him unless he stuck to colonial soldiering, which was a poor life. No; he would put off writing the letter. Then he remembered that he had not heard from Kitty for some time. She used to send him every week a funny, ill-spelt letter, in which all the gossip and news of Kimberley which found its way to 'The Frozen Bar'—and there was very little that did not—was told very humorously. He would walk to the Post Office. On his way he met several men he knew who were in high spirits because they were going home. "Wasn't Jack going home too?" they asked. "What, going to stop in that forsaken country! By Jove it seemed a pity too, after he had scored so." However, they were too full of their own affairs and the good time they intended to have, to trouble themselves much about him. Jack, as he parted with them, felt he wished he was going with them. It was useless to try not to regret it. He was giving up a great deal for Kitty. He was a fine fellow, and as an honourable man there was no other course for him to take, but it was a thousand pities things did not arrange themselves better. There was a letter from Kitty: but curiously enough it was dated from Capetown. At first, as he read it, he hardly could understand it.

"Dear Jack,—

"It is all a mistake there being anything between you and me. We don't suit. Your people would have nothing to do with me, and you had better go home to them, now that every one must be proud of you. You would break down as a returned prodigal if you had to answer for me as well as yourself. Don't answer this letter, for I am sick of the country, and before you get this shall have cleared. Kitty."

It would be difficult to describe Jack's feelings as he read this letter again and again. At first he felt mortified to think that Kitty could have persuaded herself to give him up. Then through the matter-of-fact wording of the letter he saw the real state of the case, and knew that she was giving him up, as she thought, for his good. He would follow her, and tell her that he refused to be released from their engagement, and tell her that after all she had done he cared more for her than he did for England, or position, or anything else. Yes, that would be the right thing to do, he told himself, only he remembered that he did not know where she was, so he could not answer her letter or go to her. Well, it was not his fault; if she would give him up he could not help it. After all, the strongest feeling he experienced was one of relief. He had got out of it. He would answer his uncle's letter and say nothing about Kitty. What a lucky thing it was that he had put off writing!

He did not, however, write by that mail. He went home by it himself, instead. When he got home he was welcomed most cordially. His uncle considered that he had atoned for the disgrace he had got into, and felt that he could once more take a pride in his nephew, and think with pleasure of his representing their family, and owning the old place when he was gone.

Every one in the county agreed with the old General, and Jack was made much of and looked upon as a hero. His uncle gave him some horses, and he had plenty of hunting and shooting, and generally had a good time of it. Of

course he sometimes thought about Kitty, but when he did he half confessed to himself that not for her or any one else would he give up the life he was enjoying so much, and go back to South Africa. Besides, he did not know where she was. He might have found out, however, for she was at Kimberley, and was still the proprietress of 'The Frozen Bar.' She had never gone farther than Capetown; something told her that she would not have much difficulty in defeating any attempt Jack might make to find out where she had gone to. A list of passengers of a steamer bound for home told her that she need not take any more trouble on that score. He had taken her at her word, and had wasted very little time in making up his mind to do so. Then she went back to 'The Frozen Bar,' for the treaty she was making for its sale was not concluded—and she is there still. She has made a good deal of money, and lost the greater part of it speculating in shares. And it is to her bad luck that some people on the Diamond Fields attribute her being a little more hard and bitter than she was. Still, she is good-natured and kind-hearted, and ready to help people who are in trouble, though she is not likely to have a more tender feeling than pity for any one. The other day she saw Jack's wedding in an English paper. He married a lady of good family and some property, who was fascinated by his good looks and his reputation as a hero. He is prosperous and respected, and he has almost forgotten all about the days when he seemed to be such a hopeless ne'er-do-well.

Story 3.

Diamond Cut Diamond.

It was a delightfully cool evening, after a hot dusty day on the Diamond Fields, and Mr Moses Moss, attorney-at-law of Kimberley, South Africa, was sitting under the verandah of his house, smoking a cigar, and sipping a cool drink as it was his custom to do before turning in for the night. As he smoked his thoughts turned to his prospects and his position, and on the whole they were of a somewhat cheerful and self-satisfied character. It was only a few years since he had hurried away from England a broken man. He had found the temptations to overstep the boundary which separates sharp from malpractice too much for him, and his conduct had attracted the meddlesome attentions of the Incorporated Law Society, who had made itself very disagreeable indeed to him. The time he had spent on the Diamond Fields, however, had done wonders. He was worth a nice little sum of money; and as an attorney and money-lender he had got together a very lucrative connection.

On the Diamond Fields he had remembered his English experiences. They had taught him the good old maxim, that honesty was the best policy, and this had been the golden rule of his life, which he had always acted upon so far as compatible with the practice of an attorney whose clients happen, as a matter of fact, to be men of somewhat shady characters.

However, he kept always on the windy side of the law, although the temptations to go just a little crooked were very strong. There were at that time many diamonds to be bought, for very reasonable prices, by persons who were content to buy under circumstances which the law punished with great severity. Mr Moss had come to the conclusion, however, that dealing in stolen diamonds was too risky a business to follow. He used to make it his boast that he hardly knew a rough diamond when he saw one, and he said that he never wished to have any dealings in them. Indirectly, of course, he—like every one else on the Diamond Fields—lived by diamonds. His clients as a rule were in what was called the illicit. But he could not help that, he said. Of course he was happy enough to defend any one who had got into trouble for buying stolen diamonds. Then if any one came to him to borrow money it was not his business to ask questions as to what the money was wanted for. The money was generally wanted at once, and gold rather than notes or cheques was in request. But those circumstances did not suggest anything to Mr Moss, or if they did, he kept his thoughts to himself. He was too busy in considering the large percentage he could charge and the security he could get to bother himself about matters that did not concern him. He did not wish to be told anything about what his clients thought of doing with the money they came to him hurriedly to borrow. When on one occasion a man who wanted a hundred pounds in gold at once was indiscreet enough to blurt out something about having a chance to get hold of a 'big un' for that sum which was worth ten times the money, Mr Moss was very much hurt at being asked to share any such guilty knowledge. He certainly did not go so far as to refuse to entertain the loan, but he took care to ease his conscience by charging an extra twenty per cent.

Some people said that Mr Moss in a way avenged the claimholders who suffered from the depredations of the illicit diamond-buyers, and that he preyed upon them as they preyed on the mining interest, and there is no doubt a good share of the price of many a stolen diamond got into his clutches. It was characteristic of the sources from which he acquired his money, that the very house in which he lived should have once belonged to one Ike Hart, who in his day had been a very notorious buyer of stolen diamonds, and had flourished wonderfully until he bought one diamond too many, which happened to have been sent him by the police. He had had the advantage of Mr Moss's professional assistance at his trial and advice about his private affairs. Mr Hart had been convicted, and had been sent to do a sentence of hard labour on the Capetown Breakwater, and Mr Moss had become possessed of his house. Ike Hart was said to have sworn that he would be even with Moss, and to have declared that he had been robbed. However, Mr Moss felt satisfied, as he reviewed his career, that he had never done anything that the law could take hold of. If in one or two cases he had grabbed somewhat greedily at his clients' property, those clients were out of the way of harming him, and there was not the slightest chance of his being made to disgorge any of the plunder he had got together.

Mr Moss's house stood back from the road in a good-sized garden—if you could call a place a garden in which nothing grew but a few cacti and a mass of straggling tobacco-trees—which was separated from the road by a high, corrugated-iron fence.

As Mr Moss smoked in his verandah, he began to think that amongst the bushes at the end of the garden he could distinguish a form of a man stooping over the ground. At first he felt nervous; then he became curious, as he made the figure out more clearly. It certainly was the figure of a man, and he seemed to be digging for something. "What was he after? What could he hope to find?" Mr Moss asked himself.

He would find out that for himself, he determined. So he got up, and slinking along very quietly in the shade of the fence, he crept up close to the man who, for reasons best known to himself, had visited his compound at night. The man went on working without noticing him. He was digging into the ground with a broken bit of spade, and seemed to be very intent upon what he was about.

Close to where the man was digging there was a water-barrel, and Mr Moss got behind it, and watched his visitor with considerable interest. When Mr Moss called to mind who the former owner of the premises was, he began to have a suspicion of what his visitor was looking for. He remembered that there had been some talk of Ike Hart's having several big diamonds hidden away when he was arrested. The man dug for some time, then scratched about with his hands in the hole, then measured from the wall with a tape-measure, and then set to work again. All of a sudden he threw down the spade and picked something up.

Mr Moss's heart gave a jump when he saw this. The man had picked up a bundle of rag in which something seemed to be wrapped. The stranger unfolded it, and as he did so Mr Moss sprang from behind the water-barrel, and placed his hand on his shoulder.

"Who are you? and what's that you have found in my garden? Come, drop it, or I will call the police," Mr Moss said, for the other was an undersized, slight man, and he did not feel very much afraid of him.

"Leave me alone! keep your hands off, or I will make a hole in yer!" the man answered. As he spoke the attorney saw that he had something in his hand which glistened rather nastily in the moonlight.

"Put up that knife, or I will shout out; there is a policeman at the corner of the road, most likely, and they can hear me at the house across the road," he said.

"Leave me alone, then, and I will clear out. I don't want to have nothing to do with you," the man said; and he gave a wriggle away.

"Give me what you have just taken from my garden, then," said Mr Moss; "it belongs to me—I saw you pick up the—"

"Hush! you fool!" the man said, interrupting him. "Maybe there is a peeler outside in the road, and they would hear that word if they were within half a mile of us."

"Look here, my man, you don't think I'm going to let you take away what you have just found—you haven't got a prospecting licence to look for diamonds in my garden, so just give it up, and I will say nothing about what I caught you at."

"You bet you won't, but it happens the diamond is mine. The party who planted it there left it me; that party was poor Ike Hart, who died the other day in Capetown jail, that's where I've just come from. When poor old Ike saw he weren't going to live to get out, he manages to tell me about this. He was a pal of mine, was Ike, and he thought he'd do me a good turn. I've tramped up here from Capetown to get this big 'un."

"See here, my man," said Mr Moss, "I don't want to be hard on you. You say you have a right to the diamond because Ike Hart gave it you—I say it's mine because it's in my garden. Suppose we compromise the matter; come into my house, and we will talk it quietly over."

"I don't mind going into your house, gov'ner, but keep your hands off me, or you'll have more than you like," the little man said, emphasising his remarks with a gesture with the knife, which made the attorney feel uncomfortable.

"Now, gov'ner, what's yer game? If you won't speak first, I will. Come, you've got into this by seeing what you have seen, and I don't mind speaking out fair. What do you say to halves?" the man said, after he had sat down in a chair in Mr Moss's sitting-room. "There's enough for us both, seems to me. Ike Hart told me he could easily have got eight thou, for it, and he intended to have taken it home if he hadn't been run in."

"Eight thousand! You're talking nonsense. Hart was not such a fool as to think that; but let's have a look at it," Mr Moss said, as he got a glance at the stone which the other held in his hand.

"No, you don't, gov'ner," the man said, as Mr Moss stretched out his hand for the diamond.

The attorney thought for a minute or two. For a second the idea flashed across his mind that it might be a police trap. He had never bought a diamond illegally before, and the laws against having rough diamonds in your possession unless you could account for them, and were either a licensed dealer or buyer, were very strict. If he kept the diamond in his possession, instead of giving it up to the Crown, he would be committing a criminal offence, for which he would be liable to a severe punishment. He did not believe that the police would try to trap him. Besides, he was impressed with his visitor's manner, and thought that he seemed to be anxious to keep the diamond. Moss looked at the diamond, and thought that it was the biggest stone he had ever seen, and he began to long to get it into his possession. He did not, as he said, know much about diamonds, but no one could have lived a few months on the Diamond Fields without knowing that such a stone as the one he saw was worth a great deal of money. Ike Hart was probably right; it was likely enough that he could have got eight thousand for it, and that it was really worth much more. As Mr Moss looked at it, a reckless greed came over him, and he determined that he would have it.

"Well, I suppose we needn't quarrel; your offer is a fair one, we will go halves; and as you know me and I don't know you, I will have the diamond and will give you your share when I sell it; I dare say I can dispose of it more advantageously than you can," he said, smiling blandly at his visitor.

"Dare say you can, gov'ner; but I sticks to it till I get the pieces for it," was the answer. And nothing that the attorney could urge would shake his determination.

Mr Moss generally had in a safe in his house a large sum of money in notes and gold. The people who came to borrow from him often preferred money to cheques on bankers, and they would often pay well for change. At that time it happened that he had a thousand sovereigns tied up in canvas bags in his safe, which he had procured for a customer whom he had reason to believe would come to him the next day. So after he had in vain tried to persuade the other to trust him with the diamond, he determined that he would then and there buy him out; and he hoped that the sight of the gold would be more than the other could stand, and that he would be induced to sell very cheap.

Mr Moss opened the safe, eyeing his visitor somewhat mistrustfully as he did so.

“Well, it happens I can buy the stone from you at once. I happen to have a hundred pounds—it’s a good bit of money to pay for one’s own property, for that diamond is my property; but there, it’s your luck. Now hand it over, and let’s have a look,” Moss said, as he held out his hand for the stone.

The little man put the stone down on a piece of white paper on the table. “Hands off, gov’ner,” he said, emphasising his words with a motion with the knife; “put down the pieces alongside, and we will say if it’s a deal.”

Moss got out a bag containing a hundred sovereigns, and opening it he put it down on the table.

“It ain’t a deal, gov’ner, it wants a lot more than that lot to buy my diamond. Bless yer, Ike Hart told me what it was worth. It’s worth twenty times that to me, and a lot more to a gent like you,” the little man said, but Moss noticed that his eyes glistened at the sight of the gold, and he looked at it hungrily. However, when Moss declared he had no more money, the man put the diamond back in his pocket and made as if he intended to go away. Moss determined that he would get hold of the diamond. What did a hundred pounds more or less matter? that stone was worth a fortune. He determined he would not miss it. If he could only summon up courage to snatch up a revolver that was on the top of his safe, he might get hold of the diamond without paying for it.

The little man’s eyes followed his. “Look ’ere, gov’ner, don’t yer try that game on. If yer was to reach, I shall have to stick this into yer, and may be we would be both sorry when it was too late,” he said.

Moss knew that he daren’t carry out the little idea that had come into his mind. If he got the diamond he would have to pay for it, so he took down another bag; then he shut up the safe to show that no more money was forthcoming. But it was no good.

“Four thousand sovereigns Ike said any of the big illicit buyers would give me for it,” the little man said.

Moss began to think that they probably would, and he began to feel afraid that the prize was going to slip away from him. Then he took down another bag, and after that another, and another, until he had offered all the money he had. Then at last the man seemed to be unable to stand the sight of so much money.

“Well, it’s cruel to let a stone like this go for that lot; but there, if you’ve no more pieces, and ’olds to your claim to the diamond, anythink for a quiet life. It’s a bargain—lend me something to put the stuff in.” There was a black travelling-bag in the room, and into this the contents of the canvas bags were poured. The cheerful clinking of the sovereigns was anything but grateful music to Mr Moss; it seemed like giving away the money, for if he had only chanced to find the diamond first it would have been his for nothing. His visitor, however, listened as if the sound was a pleasing novelty to him. For all that, as he slouched out with the bag in his hand, he grumbled out something about having thrown away a fortune, and it was enough to make Ike Hart turn in his grave for him to have let the stone go so cheap.

When he was left alone Mr Moss thought that under the circumstances he might indulge in the luxury of another cigar, and another glass of Hollands. As he smoked he thought of the wonderful diamond he had bought, and what he could do with it. It was a wonderful stone indeed, he had never seen a bigger, and the colour seemed good enough. A thousand pounds was a good lot of money to venture in a business a man knew so little about as Moss did about diamonds; still he felt very confident that there was a good deal more to be made out of it. The worst of it was that the law would prove a terrible stumbling-block to him. He began to feel quite nervous when he thought that if the police only knew of his having the diamond in his possession, they could seize it, and haul him off to the jail. For the first time he had gone wrong about a diamond, and laid himself open to the very stringent penalties which are imposed upon the unlawful possession of diamonds. He knew that by the ordinance he would be bound to give up to the police the diamond that had been found in his garden. However, he thought he knew a trick worth two of that. After he had smoked for some time a plan came into his head, which, as he thought over it, seemed to be excellent. He invented a history for the diamond that had come into his possession, which would enable him to deal with it boldly and openly. It should make him famous as the man who found the great Moss Diamond. The newspapers should all write about him, and he would show his wonderful gem at Windsor Castle.

Then the money that he would sell it for—that was the pleasantest thought of all, and Mr Moss wove all sorts of blissful visions of the future as he looked into the smoke of his cigar.

Jobling’s Sell is a not over prosperous digging on the banks of the Vaal River. Who Jobling was, and what his Sell might have been, are now rather matters of legend than history, so long ago do the days seem when the place was first rushed, though, as a matter of fact, it is considerably less than twenty years ago. The story goes that Jobling was a wily speculator in strong drinks, and other necessaries, who, having laid in a stock of brandy and groceries, repaired to the spot afterwards named after him, and managed to promote a rush to it by spreading false news of many diamonds having been found there. It is said that Jobling got into rather hot water for this, and was sentenced by a jury of diggers to be dragged through the river as a punishment for having created a bogus rush. But just at the critical moment when the sentence was going to be executed some one found a diamond. Then several other good diamonds were found, and it turned out that Jobling, whatever his intentions might have been, really had been a great benefactor. It is certainly a matter of history that Jobling’s Sell was a wonderfully paying place in its palmy day, before it was more or less worked out. Old Hawkins, who had wandered all over the world as a gold-digger, but had

for some reason or other taken root at Jobling's, was the only digger who remained on there from the old days.

The rest of its population were men who went there for a spell, after having tried other digging on the river, and soon gave it up. Hawkins liked to talk of the big diamonds he had seen found there. Or he would walk along the banks and point out where the big hotel used to be, and where the gambling saloons stood in the days when Jobling's Sell boasted of all the properties of a prosperous mining camp. Those days were over, and the thirty or so diggers who formed the camp only made enough to live on. One Saturday afternoon a knot of them were collected at the solitary canteen which supplied the wants of Jobling's Sell. They were not drinking more than was good for them, for money was scarce, and the host, though he swaggered to strangers much about the future in store for 'Jobling's,' did not back up his faith by showing any willingness to score up drinks to its present population.

"Say, boys, have you heard about old Mick Hawkins's luck?" said a big man with a black beard, Jack Austin by name, who was lounging at the bar.

"No,—what? Has he found anything big?" asked another man.

"Well, he has found a man who is flat enough to give him a ten-pound note for his claim. It is a Kimberley Jew who has made that investment," answered Austin.

"Never met with that sort of Jew, and I have seen a good bit of them in one country or another," said another man, who was believed to have had a very varied experience of life, before he found himself digging on the banks of the Vaal River.

"Well, it's a solid fact; Hawkins showed me the ten-pound note, and he would be here now spending it, only the new proprietor of that claim of his has promised him five pounds a week to work for him."

"Things are looking up at last, boys," said the proprietor of the canteen. "I told you they would soon recognise the splendid openings for investment there are down the river. What will you take, boys? Have a drink with me just for luck."

No one refused the offer, though the enthusiasm the landlord expressed was not shared by the others.

After they had emptied their glasses, some one suggested that they should go round to Hawkins's claim, and with that intention they lounged out of the canteen, and strolled along the bank in that direction.

"Stop, boys, and watch 'em; why it makes quite a picture. Did you ever see such a fool?" said Austin, holding up his hand and pointing to an opening in the thorn trees and underwood, through which they could get a view of the Hawkins's claim.

The claim was one which had been almost worked out in the days when the place was first rushed. Hawkins, a grizzled old fellow, was seated with a pipe in his mouth, watching two Kaffirs picking away at the side of the claim, filling buckets with the gravel, which another Kaffir was carrying across to the sorting-table, at which the new proprietor of the claim was seated. That person was no other than our old friend, Mr Moses Moss. He was got up as a digger, wearing a red flannel shirt, and a very broad-brimmed hat, and he had put on, though there was no particular use for them, a pair of long boots.

"Looks as though he was going to find a diamond every minute; he will tire a bit of the game before long," Jack Austin said, as he watched the new arrival on the river. "The doctor ordered him an open-air life, so he gave up his practice. He was a lawyer in Kimberley, and down he comes here to dig. Did any one ever hear of such a thing?"

"Hullo, by God, what's his game now? What's he up to? Blessed if I don't believe he has found!" another digger said, as to their surprise Moss suddenly threw his hat into the air with a tremendous shout of triumph.

"Hullo, mate, what are you up to now? what do yer think you have got hold of?" growled out old Hawkins, as he came up with his pipe in his mouth.

"A diamond!—a wopping big diamond! Oh, hurrah! hurrah!" Mr Moss cried, executing a dance of triumph.

The other men crowded round Moss, eager to see what he had found.

Hawkins looked rather mortified. It was somewhat annoying that a diamond should have been found in his claim the day after he sold it. His expression, however, changed a good deal when the other handed him the diamond.

"Say, did you find this just now; it's a mighty rum thing to find in a claim; why—" Hawkins was grumbling out, when Austin gave him a kick, and motioned to him to keep quiet.

"Magnificent diamond, sir; the finest stone that ever has been found. Did ever man see such luck? Here you come down just for a lark, and find a fortune; but there, luck is one of the queerest things out!" Jack Austin said.

"Well, I *am* lucky, I don't mind owning it; but there, boys, come and have a drink, every blessed one of you, to celebrate the biggest diamond that ever has been found down the river, which you just saw me find," Mr Moss said, and the diggers seemed to fall in with his humour willingly enough, following him without any more pressing to the canteen.

Jack Austin might have been noticed to wink slightly at the proprietor of the canteen, before the diamond was shown to the latter. His enthusiasm when he saw it was unbounded.

"Knocks the Komnoor into a cocked hat. I always said we would show 'em all the way, some day. What's it to be, sir,

champagne—I've got a case in stock?" he said, and in a few second she was opening a case, and getting out some bottles.

The wine was some which the canteen-keeper had bought at a sale in Kimberley. It was a remnant which had failed to please the not over critical taste of the Fields. He had bought it very cheap, and had kept it by him, knowing that on any extraordinary occasion, when a demand arose for it on the river, its want of quality would not matter. As the wine was being got out, Jack Austin touched the lucky digger on the shoulder.

"Beg pardon, sir, but about old Hawkins; what are you going to do for him? It's a bit hard on him, seeing a stone like this found after he has just sold his claim."

"Hard! bless me no—a bargain is a bargain. I bought the claim for good or bad."

"Well, that's true enough; but he might make himself a bit nasty about it. You see it's rather a rum start your finding a stone like that in the ground you were working, and Hawkins might get talking, and people are apt to be a bit uncharitable."

Mr Moss looked a little uncomfortable. The man was right. Hawkins ought to be put into a good temper, and after some little talk he took out a cheque-book and wrote out a cheque for fifty pounds, for Austin had suggested that it would be as well to give it to Hawkins at once, before he began to talk.

Hawkins took the cheque, looking very stolid. Soon after he got it he hurried away, and might have been seen tramping across the veldt towards Kimberley, where he changed it.

When the glasses were filled, Jack Austin called to the company to drink to the health of Mr Moss, the lucky digger, who had just found the big diamond.

"He has just given our friend Hawkins another fifty, on account of the claim in which it was found. So you see he is a generous man, besides being an honest digger, and a jolly good chap," Jack said.

Mr Moss was much struck with the thirstiness of the river-diggers. The news of the find had very quickly travelled down the banks of the Vaal, and men from various other camps looked into the canteen. When they finished the champagne they set to work at the brandy, and then at the square gin, and the Cape smoke. Nothing seemed to come amiss to them. There was one peculiarity in their manners, which somewhat amazed Mr Moss. They had a curious way of bursting into laughter about nothing at all, as far as he could see. They did not show any envy, but to a man were full of a generous wish to drink with the fortunate finder. Their estimate of the value of the diamond was somewhat vague. One said fifty thou, another laughed at the idea of fifty thousand buying it, and seemed to have quite a contempt for such a paltry sum of money; though he would have had to have searched a long time in the pockets of his trousers before he could find sixpence. "A hundred thou, more like, that's what it's worth," he said, pretty confidently.

"Nice chap he is, to talk about a hundred thou. I think I have spent about enough money on that lot," Moss thought to himself. He hated spending money, but still he thought that the more delighted he appeared to be about his find, the more genuine the find would seem to be. When the stock-in-trade of the canteen was just giving out, a man from Kimberley, whom Moss knew, came into the canteen. He was a diamond-buyer, of the name of Jacobs, and Moss rejoiced to think that at last he would be able to get a good opinion as to the value of his find.

"Well, Moss, what's this I hear about your having turned digger, and found all at once? You have wonderful luck; show us the stone," the new-comer said.

"Well, you can have a look at it, though I don't suppose it is much in your way," Moss said, as he gave it him.

"My eye, it's a big 'un!" said the diamond-buyer, and then his expression changed. "What on earth is your game?" he asked. "Who are you trying to get at?"

"What's my game? why I want to know how much that is worth. You won't buy it yourself, I know, because you're only a small man; but what do you put its price down as?"

"Well, about half-a-crown, may be more, may be less; it's a pretty clever sell too," was to the astonishment of Moss the answer he received. "Why, Moss, you don't mean to say any one has been fooling you with this."

"Fooling me! What do you mean? Don't play any tricks with me, for I can't stand it. Do you mean to tell me that ain't a diamond?"

"Diamond, of course it ain't a diamond!—not a real one, that's to say, it's a sham 'un. I have never seen one before, but I have heard of 'em before. Joe Aavons, who you know of, got them made for him at home somewhere, and he has sold one or two of 'em at night to illicit diamond-buyers."

The man's face told Moss that he was in earnest, and a roar of laughter from the diggers confirmed him.

"Well, mate, how about the big diamond; is it fifty or a hundred thou, that it's worth?" Jack Austin said, and the others gave vent to the suppressed merriment of the last few hours in a yell of laughter. It was too bad, Moss thought, to treat him like that, after they had got him to pay for their liquor. It was terrible for him to think of the money he had lost, if his purchase turned out to be worthless.

"Yes, that is one of Joe Aavons' diamonds. I'll bet little Dick Starks has been working 'em off for Joe, and they say they have made a lot of money out of them."

"Look here, what is Dick Stark like?" Moss asked, rather eagerly.

"He is a little chap, with a cast in one eye, and red hair. He is a pretty sharp customer, is Dick."

Moss recognised the description only too well as that of the man whom he had seen find the diamond. Without saying another word he left the canteen. The next day old Hawkins took possession again of his claim; for Mr Moss was never seen more at Jobling's Sell.

The story, however, very soon followed him back to Kimberley, and the circumstances under which he was persuaded to pay a thousand pounds for the diamond became well-known; for Messrs Aavons and Stark, who were much elated at their success, told their particular friends, who repeated the story. Mr Moss never quite got over it; and though he never had any more transactions in diamonds he ceased to boast about his honesty, or even make any allusion to his knowledge of precious stones.

Story 4.

The Farm Boschfontein.

Chapter One.

"If we could get hold of one of these mines between us, we would show them how to work it, I guess. We wouldn't fool around the camp trying to float a company and let a lot of local men into the thing. We'd go straight home and give the British public a turn. Couldn't you fancy yourself as the South African millionaire chairman of the Great Diamond Mining Company, with a house in Belgrave Square, a country house with a blessed big park round it, the favourite for the Derby in training at Newmarket, and the best of everything that money could buy, eh, Timson?"

"Don't, Hardman, don't! I can't bear to think of it. The chances some of 'em here have had and the way they have thrown 'em away! If I had only been in their place I'd have done something for myself, but I came here too late."

"Too late be blowed! there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out, and there are as rich mines lying unworked and undisturbed as any that have been found, that's my opinion. How do we know that there is not another mine as rich as Kimberley on which the grass and bush are growing, and the spring bucks are playing? We may be sitting on just such a mine now, for all you know."

"By Jove! it's enough to make a fellow wild when he thinks of the fortune that may be waiting for him to be picked up; but what's the good of thinking of it? No one has found a diamond mine that would pay to work since Kimberley was opened."

"What of that? They have found a dozen places such as we have seen to-day, where there are diamonds in small quantities. Mark my words: sooner or later they will drop on to a place which will make the Kimberley mine pretty sick, and if we could only get hold of such a mine, you with your knowledge of business and the City of London, and me—well, I know my way about—what couldn't we do with it?"

As he spoke, Mr Bill Hardman glanced at his companion, and an ominous smile played across his swarthy face. His words had evidently told with a good deal of effect.

The two men were on their way home from an expedition from Kimberley, to a mining camp in the Orange Free State. So it was not surprising that as they smoked their pipes under the shade of their Cape cart, after an excellent luncheon, their conversation should turn to the topic which in Griqualand West exercised men's minds most, diamonds and diamond mining. Bill Hardman was about forty-five, and there was something about him which suggested that he had knocked about the world a good deal. He was not a bad-looking man, but every now and then an expression came into his face which gave one an unpleasant impression, and suggested that he might be rather dangerous, either as a friend or an enemy. For years he had been a well-known character on the Diamond Fields, and there were many stories told about him which bore witness rather to his astuteness, than to his integrity. He called himself a digger, but no one could remember his owning a claim or doing any work. The calling to which he devoted himself in the early days of the Fields was that of an exponent of faro, roulette, poker, and other games, more or less of chance. Afterwards, when what was called the company mania broke out, rotten scrip and a rigged share market gave him more scope for speculation, and he became a comparatively respectable member of society. But notwithstanding his respectability, many of those who knew most about him would have considered that Mr Timson was not very prudent in choosing him for a companion.

The latter was a young man of about twenty-five; his get-up, sleek, fresh-complexioned face and plump figure had a very English look, and he seemed as if he would be far more at home eating at a luncheon bar in the City, than picnicking on the South African veldt. Though he had not been very long in South Africa and knew little of the country, he believed very much in himself and in his business knowledge, and had a very great contempt for the people he found himself amongst. He had brought out a few thousand pounds with him and had done very well in his speculations, doubling his capital again and again, which was not difficult in those days of wild speculation, when every investment was going up. About that time people on the Diamond Fields had gone mad on the subject of new mines, even old hands who had seen place after place reported to be very rich turn out a failure, were again taking the fever for prospecting, while men who had just come out from home were simply delirious with it. To a new hand there is a singular charm in the idea of a new mine, and Mr Timson found the fascination of this form of speculation simply irresistible. Mr Hardman also had turned his attention to prospecting, and on this common interest the two men had struck up a very intimate acquaintanceship.

"Yes," said Hardman, after they had smoked in silence for some time, "the place we saw to-day may be payable, but

there ain't much to be done with it. What one wants is to get on to a mine on private property, with no reservation of minerals to the Crown, so that one could get the whole mine into one's hands."

"Fancy that, now, buying a farm for a few hundreds on which there might be a mine worth millions and millions. But we have got to find it, and without the owner or any one else knowing anything about it!" said Mr Timson, as much to himself as to his companion.

"Right you are, Smarty! we have got to do that. It's well enough to talk as one smokes one's pipe; but it's a hundred to one, one never gets such a chance. For all that, mind you, the chance may come; that's what living in a mining country means. There is always the hope of a big fortune for the man who knows how to make the most of his luck."

Mr Timson listened to the other, and began to indulge in a delicious day-dream of what he would do, and how he would live if he were the owner of a diamond mine, with hundreds of pounds a day to spend. If it were only possible, he thought—possible! it was possible, he declared to himself, as he thought how fortunate he had been already. He was half asleep and half awake when he was woke up by hearing a strange voice inquiring the way to Pneil, a digging on the Vaal River some twenty-five miles off. The new-comer, who was on foot, was a tall man with a long beard; he was dressed in tattered clothes, and had on an old hat which had seen many years' service. He looked travel-worn and tired; as Timson looked at him, he noticed a peculiar scar on his face and a curious droop in one eyelid.

Hardman told him the distance. "It's a long stretch and a sandy road; you had better sit down and take a drink," he added, pouring some beer out into a glass as he spoke.

"It's a long time since I had a glass of beer," the stranger said as he emptied the glass.

"How's that? been sworn off?" asked Hardman.

"No, nor much need to. I've been living where you don't get many chances of taking too much to drink; a hundred miles beyond the Tati Gold-Fields. I've tramped it down and had a pretty hard time of it."

"Well, you'd better take a rest and have something to eat," said Hardman, as he pushed a plate and some cold meat towards the stranger, who, without any more pressing, accepted the other's hospitality, and after he had made a good meal, filled his pipe and smoked for some time without joining in the conversation, the other two going on talking about diamonds and new mines.

At last he broke in: "Have they worked out the New Rush, the Colesberg Kopje, as they called it?"

"Colesberg Kopje, did you say? Why, that's the Kimberley mine. No, it's not worked out and won't be in our time," answered Hardman.

"You mean they have abandoned it 'cause they have found a richer place?"

"Abandoned it! Not they; there is no place one third as rich as Kimberley mine!"

"Ain't there though, mate; you mean they haven't found one yet," said the stranger. "Well, I'd have thought some one would have tumbled on to it by this time!" he added, more to himself than to the others, though Mr Timson heard him and pricked up his ears.

"I suppose they don't go prospecting much now-a-days?" the stranger asked after a second or two.

"There is a bit of it being done just now," replied Hardman; "but they haven't come across a second Kimberley yet."

"So they go out prospecting still. Well, I suppose men will always keep on at that game. I have done a good lot of it in my time. I'd have been a happy man with a home of my own instead of the miserable devil I am now if I had only let it alone."

"So you broke yourself and lost your money prospecting! Well, others have done pretty much the same," said Hardman.

"Lost my money! No, I found as rich a place as you want to come across and got plenty of diamonds, but they cost me dear."

"You found as rich a place as one wants to come across, did you?" said Mr Timson, who was all attention. "Whereabouts was that, now?"

The stranger did not answer his question, and for some time sat wrapped in his thoughts, which seemed to be gloomy enough. Then, with the air of one who could only get relief by telling his story, he spoke: "I say that prospecting trip cost me dear, and so you will say when you have heard my story. I must tell it, though it's not the sort of tale most men would pan out to two strangers; but I must speak out, for I have done nothing but think over this for eight years, and feel that I should be easier in my mind for making a clean breast of it to some one or the other before I die. Prospecting! well, I've done about as much of prospecting as any man. They called me the Demon Prospector in Australia and New Zealand, and well they might, for I have found three payable gold-fields in my time. I did more good to others than to myself, though, for I could never stop in one place long, and would often turn my back upon a certainty to wander away after that wonderfully rich gold field I was always dreaming of. Still I did not do so badly, and before I came over to this country I had made a little money. And I had what was better than money—a home of my own and a wife, not the sort of wife many a digger with his belt full of gold-dust picked up in those days, but an English girl who had not been long out from home. She had come out with her father, who had collected the little money he had, and gone to try for a fortune in the land of gold. He lost his money, as a new chum will lose his money, and died leaving her alone. I don't believe she only married me for a home; once she really cared for me—but

you find this yarn a bit long, don't you?" he said, looking at Mr Timson, who was not in the slightest degree interested in his domestic history.

"About the place where you found all those diamonds, where was that?" said the latter.

"Let him *rip* and he will come round to it; don't pump him too much or you'll spoil a good thing," whispered Hardman. "Go on, mate," he added, "I like to hear you."

"Well, we were married in Sydney a few months after her father died, and we lived there for a bit, when I heard of the Diamond Fields breaking out in this country, and nothing would do for me but I must come over here. We got up here some months before the dry diggings were found, and I tried my luck at the river where all the diggers were then. I chose Pneil, where there were a good many men doing fairly well. I put up a stone shanty amongst the trees near the river, and we were fairly comfortable and happy enough. I found pretty well, and began to believe that my old restless spirit had left me, for I didn't seem to want to go prospecting, but was willing enough to stop on there. After a bit the dry diggings were found and many of the diggers left the river for them, but still I stayed on at Pneil. Then I heard of the New Rush being opened, and how men were finding sackfuls of diamonds. I went over and saw the new diggings, and after that I could not be contented at the river. I had noticed the lay of the ground of the dry diggings, and I felt sure that there must be lots of spots where diamonds were to be found in quantities. Then the old instinct came over me and I longed to go off prospecting. At last I felt I could stay where I was no longer. My wife didn't like my leaving her by herself, for the other women at Pneil were not much company for her, and she had very few friends. About the only person she seemed to care to speak to was a man who had come over with us from Australia, who was staying at the other side of the river helping to keep a canteen. He was an educated man, one of the broken-down gentleman kind, and could make himself agreeable enough, but I never liked him very much. He was no good and would never do any honest work. He had come to grief in the old country by gambling, and was just turning from a pigeon into a rook, but there was something about him that women found very fascinating. Well, to cut my story short, I went off prospecting. I would stay away a week or so at a time. Looking back now it seems to me that after the first time my wife didn't seem to mind my going so much. At last, after trying in one place and then another, I did find the sort of place I was looking for. It was out yonder," said the prospector, as he stretched out his brown hand and pointed in the direction of a ridge of hills in the far distance. Mr Timson's eyes glistened with excitement. He had never heard of any diamond mine being found in that direction.

"Yes, sir," continued the stranger, "if the New Rush is as rich as the place I found, it is a deal better than I ever heard it was. I was working out yonder myself, but I found diamonds every day. I kept putting off going back to get Kaffirs to work for me, for I didn't like the idea of the secret of the place being let out, and half thought I might keep it all to myself. After about a month I had over two hundred carats of smaller diamonds, besides a thirty, a fifty, and a sixty carat stone. Then I thought it was about time to go back and see the missis again and tell her my luck, sell my diamonds and get some Kaffirs to work for me. I cannot tell how I felt as I tramped back to the river. At last I had struck something really rich and made my fortune. How the boys would wake up when they heard, as they sooner or later would, I suppose, that I had found a place twice as rich as the famous New Rush. But diamonds would be down to nothing at all when my secret was known and people knew how plentiful they were if you only looked for them in the right place, so I determined to keep it quiet until I had made my fortune, which would not take me long, I thought. Then I would be able to take my missis home to England, and she would live the life she was fit for and be as fine a lady as any of 'em at home.

"As soon as I got to Klip Drift I sold my diamonds. I got about five thousand pounds for them. Then I went into a canteen to get a drink. There were one or two men there who knew me, and I thought that they stared at me rather oddly. 'Where's the Count?' I asked the man behind the bar, for that was the name they called the broken-down gentleman chap I told you of, and it was the bar he kept.

"'Don't you know about it then?' asked one man, and the others stared at me very queerly.

"'Know about it? about what?' I asked.

"'Oh nothing; only he has cleared,' the men answered.

"The men looked at me, I thought, as if they expected me to break my heart about the Count's having cleared, and I couldn't make out their manner at all. I said I was off across the river to see the missis, and left the place. A man I knew pretty well followed me and put his hand on my shoulder. 'It's no good going across, for you won't find the missis there,' he said. 'Where is she?' I asked. 'She has cleared, too; gone off with the Count,' was his answer. I turned round on him, half inclined to knock him down to show him I didn't like that kind of joke, but there was something in his face which told me that he wasn't joking; then he told me that it had been going on for a long time, and that every one had been talking about it, and about a week ago two or three saw them start off together, 'and a good job for me, he told me, was what most of them said.' At first I wouldn't believe it, but it was true, though: she was gone, and I began to see how I had fooled away my happiness by leaving my wife to go prospecting and letting that damned scoundrel steal her from me. It wasn't many hours after I heard the news that I was off on their track. They had gone up north to some gold-fields which broke out about then. It was some time before I came up with them, for they kept dodging about, first living in one place and then in another, and once or twice I was at fault and could hear nothing of them. At last I got to a new camp on the gold-fields where I heard the Count was; he had started in at his old trade, gambling, and was keeping a faro bank. I had not been many minutes at the hotel before I heard all the boys talking about him and the run of luck he had struck. Then they began to talk of the pretty woman he had with him; you can guess that made me feel wild. I don't know how I behaved that night, but I stopped in the bar of the hotel drinking and longing for the time to come when I had planned to have my revenge.

"I was the last to go to bed, and then I did not sleep, but waited till about three o'clock, when I knew the camp would be asleep. Then I stole out and walked along the creek to a canvas house which had been pointed out to me as the one they lived in. The place was quiet enough; I can remember now how a dog tied up to a waggon barked at me and

how savage I felt with it, and how I laughed to myself as I knocked it over with a stone I hurled at it. When I got to the house I looked through the window. I saw them, they were asleep. I had a bowie knife on me, and I cut the rope with which the door was tied. No—I can't tell you the rest."

"Well, you killed him; he's injured you, but it's rough killing a man when he's asleep," said Bill Hardman.

"Him! I killed them," said the prospector. "When she woke up and saw what I had done to him, she screamed and cursed at me; the devil came into me, and I stabbed her again and again. It would have been better for me if I had been caught red-handed, and strung up, as I should have been then and there; but I got away. Since then I have never got the sight I saw before I rushed out of their place into the open out of my head. I have hardly seen a white man to speak to since that day, for I wandered away up country and have lived amongst Kaffirs; but now I feel I must tell it to some one."

"Well, and now what are you going to do? Go back and work at the place you prospected?" asked Hardman.

"Work at the place! What good are diamonds and money to me? No, I have not come back for that. I have come back to see the place where we were happy together once before I got the prospecting fever and left her, and then—well, what should a man do who has no hope and is sick of life and not afraid of finishing it? There, I have told you my story, and now I will say good-day, and good luck to you. If it goes against your conscience not to tell the police that a man has confessed murder to you, for I suppose there are police on the fields now, tell on, and make a clean breast of it."

Having finished speaking he got up to walk away. "Stop, don't go yet, sit down and have a talk; tell us more about the place where you found those diamonds. Can you tell us exactly where it was?" said Timson, his voice quavering with excitement, for all the time the prospector had been telling the conclusion of his story he had been thinking of the wonderful diamond mine the other had spoken of.

"Where is the place you said you found so well at?" he added as the stranger sat down and lit his pipe again.

"What! you want to strike my luck, do you? I wouldn't put a pick in there again for all the diamonds there are in the coast of the earth."

"Well, if you don't like to work the place yourself, it seems a pity that no one else should," said Timson, who, though he had some other weaknesses, was not superstitious. "You see, I don't believe much in luck, except the luck of getting hold of a good thing when you know how to work it."

"Look here, mate, I am an old digger, and it goes agin' my ideas of right to try and worm out another digger's secret; but if you let us into this thing, we will work it with you fair and square," said Hardman.

"I don't want you to work it with me or for me, but I don't mind telling you where it is. See here," said the prospector, pointing in the direction of a distant range of mountains towards which he had been gazing for some time, "do you see that little hump-backed hill standing out by itself? Well, it's about four hundred yards to the north of it. You will see my old working still, I should say. Now, mates, I am off to Pneil, for I want to see the old place again, and then—"

"Stop, let us talk it over. You had better work the place with us," said Hardman; "we will forget all about what you have told us, or try to."

The stranger's only answer was to wish them good luck at their prospecting, and refusing to listen to Hardman's persuasions, he started off on his lonely walk.

"I don't like letting him go off in that state of mind; he means finishing himself, I saw it in his face, I have seen men look like that before," said Hardman as he watched the tall figure striding over the long flat into the distance.

"Certainly one pities him; but if what he has told us is true, life can't be much comfort to him, and it's just as well, if he is going to do it, that he should kill himself before he lets out to any one about that place. What do you think of that part of the story; do you believe it?" answered Mr Timson.

"Believe it! well, I don't know. It's a queer story, but I ain't one of those sharps who always disbelieve any story that's a bit out of the common. I believe it well enough to mean finding out whether or no it's true. What do you say?"

"Ah! that's just what I think. It may be true, and if it is true—"

"If it is true, or near true, we are in a pretty big thing, for the farms out there ain't on Crown land, and there is no reservation of minerals. Of course we must keep what we have heard quiet and try and learn a bit more. There's millions who wouldn't believe the yarn we have heard, but I ain't one of 'em. If you ask me what I think, well, I think it's true," said Hardman, and then he shouted to his Kaffir to outspan the horses so that they could continue their journey to Kimberley. All the way they talked of the strange story they had heard, and the more they talked of it the more hopeful Mr Timson began to grow, and the more splendid were the castles in the air which he built on the foundation of the wonderful diamond mine he was to acquire a part possession of.

Chapter Two.

A few days after their conversation with the prospector, Messrs Hardman and Timson were again on a prospecting expedition. This time they had sought the prospector's hump-backed hill, and they had come to it after a journey of about forty miles. Sure enough, about two hundred yards north of it, they found marks of old working and a hole which was almost filled up by sand. Mr Timson's excitement before he reached the spot had begun to cool a good

deal. Perhaps there was nothing in the tale he had heard. The man might have been mad, or have been hoaxing him, or exaggerating, he kept thinking to himself. Bill Hardman had not taken much trouble to reassure him. All he said was that it was good enough to look into, though it was long odds against its being as good as they hoped, and he professed to be quite prepared to find their trip turn out to be waste of time, though at the same time something seemed to tell him to try the place. They had come out in an ox waggon, professedly on a shooting trip, and had brought with them a small washing machine, picks, shovels and other tools for digging and prospecting; they had also taken out two or three Kaffirs who were accustomed to work in the mine.

The sight of the old workings had a considerable effect in raising the hopes of Mr Timson.

"That bears him out, anyhow!" said Hardman; "it seems to be the sort of hole a man working by himself could make in a month."

"How soon shall we know whether it is any good?" asked Timson.

"Working on the small scale as we shall, it may take us days before we find a diamond, however rich it may be. We will first get some twenty loads of ground out and then we will wash. There is no house near here, and we might work for six months without being disturbed, so we needn't fear that, though if the man who owns the farm found we were prospecting, he'd pretty quick get an interdict, as those cursed lawyers call it, from the High Court and clear us off," answered the other.

In a very short time work began, Bill Hardman opening a bottle of champagne to drink 'luck' to the venture, as the first pick was put into the ground. There is a strange excitement in working in new ground which is very fascinating to any one of a speculative turn. Mr Timson thought of the Scripture story of the man who knew of treasure hid in a field, and sold all he had to purchase that field. Let him but once satisfy himself that there was a diamond mine under his feet and he would show no want of enterprise in making the best use of his knowledge. Hardman said very little. When a few days' work would tell them what they wanted to know, it was no good prophesying. He professed to like the look of the ground, it reminded him of the top stuff in the Kimberley mine, and Mr Timson was a good deal impressed with his favourable opinion. But the hours passed very slowly, and Mr Timson kept fidgeting about, looking into the shaft the boys were digging, and sorting handfuls of the earth they had thrown out, as if he expected that diamonds ought to be found every minute, much to the amusement of his companion, who pointed out that, however rich the place might be, they were likely enough to find nothing before they washed the ground. Hour after hour the Kaffirs worked on stolidly, though lazily, and as the shaft that they were sinking deepened, Timson's spirits began to sink. He was breaking up a lump of ground when he heard a shout from Hardman—

"We've found here a diamond! look at it! It's true—that yarn we heard was true. It's a ten-carat stone! I saw it glisten as Tom picked down some ground. Tom would have jumped it if I had not been too quick. Wouldn't you, you black thief?"

"Nay, boss," said the Kaffir, grinning and showing his white teeth, "the boss is a good boss and I'd no jump his diamond."

Timson looked at the diamond, a white stone of about ten carats in weight, and he felt that his fortune was made. The Kaffirs talked to each other in their own language about the diamond. "They think it is a rich place and there will be lots of diamonds for them to steal," said Hardman.

The next day another diamond was found in the picking, and Mr Timson began to feel most hopeful as to what the result of washing the stuff would be.

"If what we know is found out, we shall never be able to buy at a reasonable price," he said, as they smoked their pipes after supper on the night before the day on which they intended to wash.

"Nobody does as yet, and even we don't know much," said Hardman; "wait till we have washed."

Their washing machine was a small one, only able to get through about thirty loads of ground a day. In the afternoon they began to take out of the machine the heavy deposit which had been left after the earth and lighter gravel had been washed away. Hardman filled a sieve with this stuff, and worked it up and down in a tub of water so that the action of the water should work the diamonds to the bottom of the sieve.

"Now, what luck?" he said, as he turned the sieve upside down on the sorting-table, at which Timson had taken his position. It was an exciting moment, for the stuff on the table was the result of a good many loads of ground, and if the place was any good, they might hope to find several diamonds in it. Mr Timson trembled with excitement. There was a second or two of suspense. Then he saw one diamond, then another, and another, and Hardman, who was looking over his shoulder, found two or three more. The next sieveful was equally good, and the result of the wash up was that the ground was proved to be marvellously rich. After that Timson suggested that they had better sink in some other place and find out how large the mine was, but Hardman did not agree to this. They had found out enough to know that whoever owned the farm owned a fortune, and they had better make the best use of their information and try to purchase the farm from its present owner before any one else found out what they knew. So the machinery and tools were packed up in their waggon, and the party started back again to Kimberley.

Hardman undertook to find out about the land where the mine was situated, and until he could obtain that information, Mr Timson was to take care not to breathe one word of their secret. It was an exciting time for the latter gentleman. He thought to himself that perhaps they had been watched by some one who would claim a share in their prize, or give information to others who might bid against them for the land, or perhaps the man who owned it might come across the traces of the fresh working and that might arouse his suspicions. Come what might, thought Mr Timson, he would become the part owner of that wonderful mine. So far as they could judge, it was of greater extent than the Kimberley mine, and the work they had done made it appear to be three times as rich. If he could purchase

the farm for a small sum, all the better, but he would not be afraid of risking all he had to get possession of it. Of the prospector, he could hear no more. He had probably wandered away into the veldt and destroyed himself. Mr Timson did not care much what might have happened to him so long as he did not tell his story, or rather, so much of it as related to the diamond mine, to any one else.

It took Hardman about two days to obtain the information he required. It was fairly satisfactory, and he came to his friend in very good spirits. "It's the Farm Boschfontein, there is no doubt about that, and it belongs to a Dutchman, by name Ziederman; and it's the worst farm in the province, I am told," he said, coming up to Timson, who was standing on the stoep of the hotel, and taking him on one side.

"Ziederman! where does he live, and what kind of a man is he?"

"Well, he is a pretty crude sort of a Dutchman, and his house is on the farm, about an hour's drive from the mine. If we go over and see him, and tell him that we think of keeping a store where the road runs past it, and want to stock the farm, he will think he has got hold of two fools, and be glad to sell," was the other's answer.

The next day Messrs Hardman and Timson started off to interview Mr Ziederman, the unconscious owner (they hoped) of the mine. The Boschfontein homestead where he lived was one of those low, whitewashed mud houses with which travellers in South Africa are so familiar. Mr Timson could see it miles away across the long flat over which they were driving. It was a poverty-stricken looking place, and as they neared the house there was no sign of any stock about.

"Looks as if Boschfontein had about broke him," said Hardman; "he'll be glad to sell, you bet!"

Mr Timson felt that in an hour or so he would know his fate, and as he gazed at the mean-looking Dutch farm-house, visions came before him of the house in London and the country place he would soon be the owner of. "Wonder how Hardman will do as a man of property? He's a smart chip, but not quite one of us," he thought to himself. As they came near to the house they saw Mr Ziederman sitting on a chair on the stoep of the house, staring after the manner of a Dutch boer into the far distance at nothing at all. When their cart drove up he turned round and stared at it, but no gleam of intelligence came into his face; he evidently was, so Mr Timson thought, a very crude specimen of the Dutchman. It would be very tedious to narrate all the conversation which took place after the two had got out of their cart, and had shaken the grimy, flabby hand which Mr Ziederman held out to them. Gradually, and with very much caution, Mr Hardman approached the subject of the purchase of the farm. Would Mr Ziederman care to sell it? they wished to set up a store and canteen, and would like to have the farm for keeping stock on, was the question which, after much fencing, he asked.

"Yes, I will sell the farm. Ten thousand pounds, and you may have Boschfontein, but for not one dollar less," answered Mr Ziederman, looking as stolid as ever.

"Ten thousand pounds, mein herr! you are joking. The farm is not worth one twentieth part of that," said Hardman.

Mr Timson tried to look as if he were more surprised than disappointed.

"Never mind, the farm is worth more than that. I know something that you perhaps know and perhaps don't know. There are diamonds on my farm."

Mr Timson began to feel that all his hopes were going to be dashed to the ground.

"Diamonds, mein herr! there are no diamonds out in this direction, and me and my partner don't want to have anything to do with diamonds, they ain't in our line; we want to keep a store and raise stock."

"Then you don't want to buy the Farm Boschfontein, because the Farm Boschfontein has diamonds," answered Ziederman. "See here, I will show you something," he added, as he went into his house and came out with something in his hand; "see what my herd boy found near the *kopje* yonder," he said as he pointed in the direction of the mine. It was a ten-carat white diamond he had in his hand, and one of the partners felt something out of heart when he saw it. It was useless to try and persuade Ziederman that the stone was not a diamond.

"Yes, I always knew there were some diamonds on my farm, but I would not say anything about them, for I knew diamonds bring English diggers on one's farm; but I said to myself, 'If I ever sell Boschfontein I will get plenty of money for it.' I want ten thousand pounds!" he said as he lit his pipe again, looking as if he did not care whether he sold the farm or no. "If you like to buy it for the money, well; if not, I will have it prospected, and then I will sell it for what it will bring."

Hardman touched Timson on the shoulder and they walked away from the house together. "See here," he said, when they were out of hearing of Ziederman, who sat smoking with a placid expression on his face, "what can we do? I can only raise two thousand pounds. I don't like to let the thing slip from me, though, and once let him have the farm prospected and find out how rich it is, what we know is worth nothing to us."

"Maybe he will take less," said Mr Timson.

Very little could be got out of the boer. Somehow or the other he seemed to have hit upon ten thousand pounds as the price the farm was worth, and he would take no less.

Then the two had another conversation. Curiously enough Timson could just raise eight thousand pounds, Mr Hardman had two. After all, thought Mr Timson to himself, he would have four-fifths of the mine instead of only one-half, so perhaps it would be all the better for him that Ziederman had stuck out for his price. At last, after much conversation, the bargain was struck and they drove home, it having been agreed that Ziederman should come into

Kimberley a few days afterwards, and having given transfer of the farm, receive the ten thousand pounds.

“Well, we are going our piles on it, eh, partner?” said Hardman as they drove back to Kimberley; “but I don’t mind owning that I feel pretty confident. Lord! I am sorry for the Kimberley people; it will just about bust up their mine when we open ours.”

Chapter Three.

Mr Ziederman arrived at Kimberley on the appointed day. Transfer was duly given, and the ten thousand pounds were paid over to him. Timson could not help feeling rather a twinge as he parted with his money. It did not leave him more than a few hundred pounds, still he was very pleased with his bargain; he had bought the farm, he hoped, for very much less than one hundredth of its value, and had got the best of Mr Hardman, who would only have a fifth share. The next day the news was all over the camp. It created a good deal of excitement, and at eleven in the forenoon, an hour when splits and other drinks, long and short, are in much request, quite a crowd of the leading citizens of Kimberley dropped into the bar of the Queen’s Hotel, where Mr Timson was to be found at that hour, reading the local morning paper and criticising the manners and customs of the place. On this occasion there was a look of unusual importance about him, and he was laying down the law more authoritatively than he generally did. He had just been discussing the value of claims in the Kimberley mine, and chuckling to himself as he thought how startled the claimholders would be when they heard of his discovery.

“Well, Mr Timson, so I hear you have been speculating in farms,” said a man who was standing at the bar.

“I don’t know why people should interest themselves in my affairs so much,” answered Timson; “but I don’t mind owning that I have bought a farm called Boschfontein.”

“You’re going to make your fortune farming?” said the first speaker, a digger who had dropped in on his way from the mine to get a drink and to interview Timson.

“I don’t know about farming, but I don’t think I shall do so badly with Boschfontein,” answered Timson, who, now that he owned the property, thought there was no reason why he should not have the pleasure of bragging about his wonderfully good bargain. He noticed that his listeners were not impressed, there was something like a smile on their faces.

“How much did you give Bill Hardman for Boschfontein?” asked the first speaker.

“Bill Hardman! I never bought from Bill Hardman, I bought with him, he has a small share in the speculation. So he has been telling you about it, has he? Well, I suppose he won’t make less than four or five hundred thousand pounds, though he only has one-fifth of it. Yes, you may laugh, but you won’t laugh when the place up there is shut up, as it will be when I work the diamond mine on Boschfontein.”

“Here, barman, drinks; open some champagne for Mr Timson; he has gone in for a spec with Bill Hardman, and they have got a diamond mine on Boschfontein which will shut the Kimberley mine,” cried the first speaker.

Mr Timson was no admirer of the prevailing custom, a survival from the early days of the diamond-digging, which demanded that good fortune of any sort should be celebrated by a reckless expenditure in champagne. Still he felt that the occasion was a special one, and after having in vain tried to catch the barman’s eye, and prevent him opening more than one bottle, he made no remonstrance. “Well, gentlemen, we will drink to the health of the Boschfontein mine,” he said, “though I am afraid it will prove rather a bad business for some of my friends here. Three carats of diamonds to a load is a pretty good average, and the mine is as big as Kimberley; it will revolutionise diamond mining, our mine will.”

“Bill Hardman found that mine, I’d bet,” said another man who had just come in and stood listening to Timson. “Why, Boschfontein’s looking up. It wasn’t as rich as that last time.”

“Look here,” said the digger, taking up a dice-box which lay on the bar, “we will throw for this wine, and Mr Timson shall stand out. No, it’s a shame letting him in, he has been let in enough. How much did you pay for Boschfontein?”

“What do you mean?” asked Timson, who began to feel nervous and uncomfortable. “Let in! some of you will only wish that you had been let in in the same way when we begin to work the new mine. Bill Hardman ain’t the sort of man to be taken in so easy.” Then he told them how he had learnt the secret about the mine and became possessed of the Farm Boschfontein.

The others listened to every word of his narrative, no one ordered drinks nor even lifted their glasses to their mouths while he spoke. When he had told them all, and described the finding of the diamonds and the subsequent purchase of the farm Boschfontein, there was a burst of noise, every one beginning to shout or laugh, expressing with much vigour of language their admiration for the smartness of Bill.

“Look here, what was the prospector like? wasn’t he a tall man with a long beard, and a scar across the left side of his face, and a droop in one eye?” asked the digger.

“Yes, that’s the man,” answered Timson.

“I’d have sworn it; it’s Tom Raven; he was in camp the other day. Now, look here, young man, you’d better try and find your friend, Bill Hardman, not that there’s much chance of your coming across him; now that they have got your money they’d be off. I dare say you never heard of Raven’s Rush, that was on Boschfontein. There isn’t a show of a mine there; but Tom Raven and Bill Hardman, who have always been more or less partners, won it at cards off a

Dutchman. It's about as bad a farm as there is in the country; but they meant working it off somehow, so they started a mine there, any one to have a claim for two pounds down. It took for a bit; but as no one could find diamonds there except Bill and Tom Raven, people cooled off it, and there was some talk of starting a prosecution for fraud, as some one split as to where they got the diamonds from they found there, and that's why Raven, against whom there was most of a case, cleared off. Ziederman is a long, stolid-looking Dutchman; he is not such a fool as he looks, is that Dutchman—'Slim Pete' they call him—he has always been more or less in with the firm of Hardman and Raven."

"Look here, you're trying to fool me, ain't you? You don't mean to tell me that the man who told me how his wife ran away and how he killed her wasn't genuine!" said Timson.

"Genuine! it was a pretty bit of play-acting, made up by the two of 'em. Tom was always clever at a yarn."

Mr Timson did not say another word. Something seemed to tell him that the suspicions of the others were well founded; anyhow he would interview his partner and do his best to get back some of his money.

However, Hardman was not so easily to be found. He was not at the hotel where he boarded, nor at the billiard-room he usually patronised, nor at any of his other haunts, and none of his associates had seen him. All day long Mr Timson was making fruitless inquiries; but though he could hear nothing about Hardman, every one could tell him a good deal about the Farm Boschfontein. Every one laughed when they heard his story, and with the exception of one or two men who had formed little plans for the disposal of his fortune, no one sympathised very much with him. There was no doubt about it that he had a case against Mr Hardman and the men who helped to swindle him; but he might just as well have had a case against the man in the moon. For some time Mr Timson cherished a faint hope that the mine might be a genuine one, so he spent a little more money in having it well tested. But the charm was gone when Mr Hardman had vanished. There was no appearance of diamond bearing ground on the Farm Boschfontein, so experts declared; and what was more to the point, there was no appearance of diamonds.

Mr Timson is still the owner of the property, and has not found it very remunerative. The only consolation he has is, that many of the men who laughed at him when he made his unfortunate purchase, invested their money in speculations which seemed at the time very hopeful, but resulted in their becoming the owners of nicely-engraved diamond-mining scrip which, though useful for papering a spare room with, is now even less marketable than that desirable property, the Farm Boschfontein.

Story 5.

Luck—An Episode in a Digger's Life.

There are few more hideous parts of the world than the country known as Griqualand West, celebrated, as the school books have it, for its diamonds. In that weary land the traveller may go on day by day outspanning at evening in just the same dreary waste of veldt in which he inspanned at morning, until he almost forgets that the world is not one endless series of rolling, burnt-up flats with ridges of table-topped hills in the distance, the last just like the one before it. Still there are spots on the banks of the Vaal River which runs through this territory that have a soft beauty of their own, all the more fascinating because of their contrast with the desert ugliness of the country—places where the traveller longs to settle down and live the rest of his days doing some slight work well paid by kind nature, forgetting the troublesome, distant world. Moonlight Rush is perhaps the fairest of these silent river nooks. There a wooded gully, gay with flowering bushes, and shadowed by wide-spreading trees, runs down to the waters of the Vaal River. One can rest under the shade of those trees and forget how cruelly the sun beats down on the veldt, and as one looks at the Vaal, which flows at one's feet in a noble reach, one no longer thinks of the arid discomfort of the plains. The place is quiet enough now, but once it had its day. The night it was rushed will be always remembered by those who came to seek their fortunes on the banks of the Vaal in the early days of diamond-digging. To this day men talk of how the news about the quantities of diamonds that had been found at a new place spread like wild-fire around the river camps, and how diggers, as soon as they heard it, snatched up their picks and shovels and rough provision for a meal or two, and left their camp fires, eager to get a claim in the new diggings, where they were at last to strike a fortune. Its history was like that of other river camps, only the diamonds found there at first were more plentiful, and are said to have been of better average quality; but they became fewer and fewer, and the diggers, party by party, either left for the new dry digging, which afterwards became the wonderful diamond mines of South Africa, or wandered away to other river camps. And at last the place was quite deserted, and the rock hares sported over the grass-grown claims, and the snakes, who had found the place too lively for them, sneaked back to make their homes in the ruined hovels put up by sanguine diggers who had believed in the future of Moonlight, and had shown their faith by plunging into building to the extent of houses built with boulders and thatched with rushes. Still, from time to time diggers, who had found well at Moonlight in its palmy days, or had heard of the wonderful stones which had been found there, came back to try their luck either in sorting the *débris* for the gems which the greedy diggers in those good flush times threw away in their haste, or in working the less promising ground which was left untouched. But since those old days no one had done much. Diggers had lingered on there, and persuaded themselves into believing in it because they liked the place; for the charm of nature has a strange influence over many a rough mind which knows little of culture or art jargon. But most of them, after working for months, had to tell the diggers' oft-told tale of "we are not making tucker, let alone wages," and had to drag their small stock-in-trade of tools off to some other digging, or had given up the river as a bad game, and had gone to work as overseers for wages in the mines.

One night, a year or two ago, there were only two tents there—almost hidden in the bushes by the river-bank. Though it was long past the time when men who have to work hard all day and to be up betimes are usually asleep, it was lit up. Its tenant was stretched across the tent on a mattress. By his side there were several tattered, well-read volumes—'Vanity Fair,' 'Elia,' some of Bret Harte's books; and Whyte Melville's 'Bones and I,' and in his hand he had a crumpled home letter. His name was Charlie Lumsden, and he was about thirty years old. For the last ten years,

more or less, he had belonged to the noble army of diggers who are recruited from all classes of society, and form a distinct class of their own. He was also an English gentleman of good birth and gentle breeding, as any one would guess from a first glance at him, and be sure of after a few minutes' conversation. He was not reading, though it was so late, but thinking, and had been thinking for some time, far more seriously than he often did. It was perhaps an orthodox occasion for a little self-retrospection, for it happened to be the last night of the old year. Charlie, by chance, for he had been living a solitary life in which men are apt to forget dates, had remembered this, and he was seeing the New Year in, as many a man may well do, thinking over the years of his life he had lived, and what he had managed to do with them. He has not much reason to be satisfied with the past, or to be over sanguine about the future. Where will he be this time next year, and what sort of a year will it be for him? he wonders. Well, pretty much the same as the last year or two. Last year he was at 'Bad Hope,' digging with his old chum, Jack Heathcote, who has just left him, and given up the off-chance of the river for the certainty of some pay in the Mounted Police. They were finding fairly well, but their finds melted away before the claim was worked out, at least most of them did, though there would have been something left if they had not been fools and had that spree at Kimberley Races. Last New Year's Day he was up-country hunting for gold near the Crocodile River. He found pretty well too, and would not have done so badly if his mates had not gone down with fever. Maybe he will have another turn at it. After all, it wouldn't much matter, he thinks, if next time he is tempted to trespass on Tom Tiddler's ground fever should catch him, and keep him as it caught his chums. Yes, now he sees what a mess he has made of his life. Ten years before he had just left school, and was going up to Cambridge, where it was hoped that he would do wonders in the way of taking honours and getting fellowships. Now he was a digger, just like old David Miller who worked near him, though he was not half as good with a pick and shovel as the old man who could hardly read and write.

Then he remembered the year he had spent at Cambridge. Well, he had a jolly time enough there; but what a young fool he was to have run up all those ticks, and to have got into those scrapes, which when he looks back to them seem so childish. What a mistake he had made in living with the fast, noisy lot instead of the steady-going set, who were just as good fellows after all. How well he remembers that supper party which was so fatal to him. It had been in a rich fellow-commoner's room, and a good many bottles had been emptied, and they were just ripe for mischief, when one of the party suggested the brilliant idea of having songs, and a camp fire on the college grass plot.

They had proceeded at once to carry out the suggestion; their host, who was placidly intoxicated, blandly approving, at the sacrifice of his household gods in defiance of college discipline, when it was proposed that his chairs should be used for firewood. The fire was lit, and the fun round it was fast and furious until the college tutor made his appearance, as he naturally did.

The dons were only too glad to make a clean sweep of the rowdy lot in the college, and about ten of them were sent down the next morning. Some of them got over their misfortune very easily. The man who suggested the bonfire is a popular preacher, and the giver of the supper party is a county member. Poor Charlie unfortunately was the earthen pot between the brazen ones, and that college row ended in his leaving England for South Africa, with his passage paid and fifty pounds in his pocket. Well, and he would have had a good chance on the fields if he had only been wise. What a lot of diamonds he used to get in that half-claim of his, in number five road. The other day it was sold for over ten thousand; but he had been sold up and had to let it go for a few hundreds after he struck a bad layer. He would have been able to have worked through the bad layer though if he had saved the money he made first, instead of throwing it away playing faro in those gambling saloons that were so fatal to many a digger's fortunes.

After he sold his claim in the mine he lived the roving hand-to-mouth life of a river-digger, with very little capital beyond his pick and shovel, and his reputation with the store-keepers of being a straight man, who would always pay when he found. Not a bad life either he would think at any other time, for the Bohemianism of a digger is ingrained in him. He liked the free and easy life, the absence from restraint or dependence on any one else. But he was out of spirits. He had not found for months; he missed his old partner, and he had no boys working for him. In fact he would find it very difficult to pay them any wages if he had, so he can get through but very little work. That night, memories of the old days and his old life came crowding into his mind, and he longed to be in England again, and to see well-remembered places and faces.

The crumpled letter by his side was from home—from his sister in England. She told him that she had been staying at the little village in Somersetshire, where he once went with a reading party, and that she had met the parson's daughter there, who had asked so much after him. How well he remembered that reading party. Does the message in his sister's letter mean that she still cares for him? She has not married yet then. That boy and girl engagement was perfectly absurd of course, but he knows that they were quite in earnest while it lasted, and after all if he had taken his degree instead of being sent down in disgrace, they probably would have been married. For a minute or two he pictures himself as a staid curate or vicar dressed in decent black garment, instead of in moleskin and a flannel shirt—with a vicarage house to live in, instead of a tent.

Probably she got over it as easily as he did. He was broken-hearted when he got her sad little letter, saying that it must all come to an end, and that her father would not hear of it. He got over it wonderfully soon though. With his sea-sickness his love-trouble left him in the bay. She probably had got over it too, and could laugh at it as he did. But as he smokes and thinks, he realises how much happier his life might have been. How wanting it is in real happiness; why how long is it since he has spoken to any woman more refined than the barmaid of the Vaal Hotel? Should he ever shake the dust of Africa off his boots and go home, or should he be buried there as many a chum of his had been. It is no good going home dead beat to loaf on his relations; no, it would be better to stay in the country for ever, or to land without a sixpence in some other colony. What bad luck he has always had. The men who make money may say what they like, but it is almost all luck after all, he thinks, as he contrasts his position with that of many another man, just as thoughtless and reckless as he, who has made a fortune and gone home with it. Maybe the very next shovel full of gravel he washes may turn his luck, and he thinks of all the big diamonds that have at one time or the other been found down the river. "Bosh, what's the use of thinking," he said to himself as the end of the candle, which has been growing shorter and shorter, fell down to the bottom of the bottle into which he had stuck it, and he was left in the dark to knock out the ashes of his pipe and to curl himself up in his blanket.

It was still enough at Moonlight Rush, and in a few minutes he was asleep and dreaming a queer medley of English and Diamond-Field scenes. As he slept and dreamt he heard a cry for help, repeated again and again. At first it seemed to fit in with what he was dreaming about. But he heard it again after he woke up, and then he formed a pretty notion as to what it meant. "It's poor old David come to grief," he said to himself, as he sprang up and ran out of his tent.

Old David Miller, who lived in the other tent at Moonlight Rush, was a taciturn old fellow, who always worked by himself and seemed to look upon the world in general with surly indifference. He had been digging all over the world since gold was first discovered in Australia, and had spent a good many years on the banks of the Vaal. He dug by himself without employing Kaffirs, but he got through a fair amount of work, as the high bank of boulders which he had broken up and dragged out of claim at Moonlight bore witness to.

So far as Charlie knew he had found little enough to recompense him for his toil. He was not, however, much given to talk about his own affairs, though for him he was very friendly with Charlie—often coming round to his claim and growling about South Africa and its inhabitants, and contrasting the country with others in which it had been his lot to live. He was owner of a rickety little tub of a boat, in which, on the rare occasions on which he yearned for more of society and civilisation than he could get at Moonlight, he would cross over to the other side. The object of these voyages was a canteen that was some miles down the river. Old David, a sober man enough as a rule, used at intervals to go on the drink somewhat seriously. He believed, as a good many men of his class do believe, that an occasional bout of drinking was good for the system, and brightened a man up for his work like a change of air. Besides, he probably liked it. So now and then he used to indulge in one of these bouts. At other times he took nothing but tea—looking upon strong drink as a medicine that was wasted if not taken in large quantities. Sometimes these bouts would last for days, sometimes for a much shorter time. When he had taken what he considered was enough, or as more often was the case spent all his money, he would start off from the canteen, stagger off to the river, and get into his little tub of a boat and navigate himself across in it. The voyage always seemed beset with considerable danger, as the little boat, which the old man had made himself, was a very crank craft, certainly not fit to carry old David after he himself had taken in such a large cargo of whiskey. Charlie knew that the old man had started on one of his expeditions that afternoon, for he had come to his claim and asked him to come with him, showing an amount of hospitality and a wish for society which was unlike him. It was likely enough that he had gone to grief and got swamped. The river was swollen with recent floods, and flowing rather strongly; so Charlie looked forward to rather a longish job, particularly as he remembered that the old man had told him he could not swim a stroke.

It was a dark night for South Africa. Again and again, as he ran along the bank peering into the river, he thought he saw something in the water, but the object turned out to be a snag, or a mass of weed. At last he made out a paddle floating down; then he came to an upturned boat, and then he saw, or thought he saw something rise and sink again. In a second he was in the water, and when he got about to the spot where he thought he saw the object sink he dived for it. As he dived he felt himself caught in a mass of Vaal river-weed, which clung round him like a net, and seemed to drag him down in its deadly grip. At first he struggled wildly to get free, and the more he struggled the more entangled he got. After a little time, however, and before it was too late, his presence of mind came back, and humouring the weed rather than struggling against it, he managed to get free. Then he reached the body he had dived for, and came up with it to the top of the water. He had hard work enough to get it to land, and he began to feel terribly done with his struggles to drag it along through the weeds, and to keep free from them himself. At last he got it up the bank, dragging a tangled mass of weeds out with it. Then he lay exhausted and out of breath for some seconds before he was sure what it was that he had fished out from the bottom of the river, and recognised old David Miller in the object covered with weed and slime by his side. He remembered that he had a bottle of Cape smoke in his tent, so he went and got it, and having taken a pull at it himself, he tried to force some down the old man's throat. A dozen conflicting directions for recovering half-drowned persons occurred to him, and without being sure of whether he was doing the right thing or not he did his best to bring back life to the body he had rescued. He felt fearfully alone, for he and the old man were the only inhabitants of Red Jacket, and even the nearest Kaffir huts were some miles off. The old man must have been for some time in the water before he got him out, and Charlie soon began to see that his help had come too late. The heart did not beat, and the life was not to come back, and when the sun rose its grey light lit up poor old David's dead body.

"Poor old chap! he has growled his last growl at South Africa, and seen his last year out in the country," Charlie said to himself, as he looked at him.

Then he carried the body into the tent, and lit a fire. He had always thought that poor old David would come to grief some day in that little boat of his. Well, the old fellow hadn't much to live for. Charlie thought that if any of the Kaffirs came down to the river in the morning he would get them to watch by the body, and that he would walk down to one of the larger river camps where there was a magistrate, and report the death. Before, however, he left the place he ought to see what property old David had when he died. There would be little enough most likely—a few tools, and some blankets and perhaps a diamond or two, as a result of all the work he had done. Maybe a few coins, but there were not likely to be many after his visit to the canteen.

Charlie did not find much in the tent. The body was clothed in a pair of cord trousers and a woollen shirt. Round his waist there was a digger's belt. Charlie took it off, and opened it. There was a purse in the belt, in which there were two small all-coloured diamonds, worth a pound or two, but no money. There was something else in the belt besides the purse—something tied up in a piece of a handkerchief. Charlie gave a start as he felt, and when he undid it and saw what it was, he stood holding it in his hand and staring at it in a dazed, stupid way. It was a diamond—such a diamond as diggers may dream of, but few have ever seen. It was about the finest stone he had ever seen, he thought.

"What luck—what queer luck," he said to himself, as he looked at the dead man and then at the diamond. "It was just like luck giving poor old David a turn like that. Poor old fellow! he has never wanted more than a few pounds, and has often enough been without them; and just before his death he had come across this splendid prize." No wonder the

old man had looked rather queer that afternoon before, when he had come round to Charlie's claims and asked him to come over the river to the canteen, and have a drink with him; Charlie had wondered at this unwonted hospitality, though he had refused it. The diamond explained it, however; there was plenty of occasion for it.

Then, as Charlie stood with the diamond in his hand, the thought came into his head, what would happen to the diamond now that the lucky digger who had found it had gone to where there is no more luck? He remembered that old David once told him that he had neither kith nor kin whom he knew of. Well, the stone would probably go to the Government, or to enrich lawyers who would reap the rich harvest of actions over it. Perhaps some peasant at home would be found, who would be proved to be old David's next-of-kin, though he would have as little to do with the old man as if he had lived in another world. He remembered that some days before they had talked about digging together. If they had only come to terms then, he would have had his share of this find. Why it would be absurd to let the diamond do no one any good. Had he not done his best to save the old man and risked his life, and nearly lost it amongst the weeds? Would it not be throwing away his good luck if he did not keep the treasure-trove which was his by natural right if not by law? How much that stone meant to him. It must be worth many thousand pounds, as much money as any diamond. With the money he could get for it he could go home, not as an unsuccessful prodigal, but as a prosperous man come back to live the pleasant life of an English gentleman.

The sight of the diamond, and the knowledge of the lot of money it was worth, seemed to make Charlie realise how sick he was of the hopeless, wandering life he was living, and how he longed for civilisation and refinement again. If he only had some money he could go home and have another chance. A few more years of the life he was leading and he would be fit for nothing else, and even if luck came to him it would be no use.

As he was thinking he looked up and saw some Kaffir women from the huts standing by the river. He shouted to them, and bargained with them to stop and watch by the body, for he did not like to leave it by itself, unprotected, and then he set out to walk across the veldt to the nearest camp. Before he started he put the purse with the two small diamonds into one pocket, and tying the big diamond up in his handkerchief he put it into the breast-pocket of his coat. He was bound for a place about six miles off, where he could report what had happened. On his way he had to pass the roadside canteen where old David had spent his last evening. The proprietor of it had just opened the place, so he went in and ordered some breakfast. As he ate it he told the landlord of the fate of his guest of the night before.

The landlord did not seem to waste much pity upon old David. "What, he got drowned, did he? I always told him he would some day, and I advised him not to cross last night, but he was a bit queer in his temper. He wanted me to stick up a drink, but I said it was against the rules. And then he talked a lot about being worth more than I was, and being able to buy up me and my canteen; but none paid much heed to him. I 'spect he ain't left a very big estate behind him?"

"No, he hasn't, poor old chap! Here are his finds—they are not worth much," Charlie said, as he showed the landlord the two small diamonds. Then he wondered whether he looked like a thief, as he thought of what he had stowed away in his breast-pocket.

He finished his breakfast and had something to drink afterwards, for he felt as if his nerves wanted settling. Just as he was going to start a man, dressed in the uniform of the Mounted Police, came into the bar, and came up to Charlie holding out his hand.

"A happy New Year to you, old boy! Where are you off to this morning?" he said.

The new arrival was Charlie's old friend and partner, Jack Heathcote. Jack was as good a fellow as ever lived, and as true a friend, but for the first time since he had known him Charlie did not feel best pleased to see him.

"What's the matter, Charlie?" Jack added, as he noticed a rather downcast look in his friend's face, "you seem a bit down on your luck."

"I have had rather a trying night of it," answered Charlie, and he told how poor old David Miller had upset and got drowned the night before, and what a near thing he had had of it amongst the weeds trying to save him. But there was one part of the story which he kept to himself. He did not say anything about the big diamond, though he produced the two little ones, and asked Jack as he was going into the camp to report the death, and give them up to the authorities.

"All right; I will tell 'em about it, and give these up to the magistrate. They ain't worth much; but poor old David hadn't much better luck than you and I," said Jack. "Come, cheer up, old fellow; after all the old man hadn't much to live for, and you did your level best to save him. Let's have a split, and drink good luck to the New Year. It is about time you and I had a turn of luck, but it never comes to honest men in this cursed country. Well, may we get out of it somehow or the other before the next New Year's Day; may you find a 'big un,' on which you can go home," he said, when their glasses were filled.

"Who can tell? luck is a queerish thing," Charlie said, as he emptied his glass.

"So it is—not that I know very much about it, for it has not troubled me much. Well, good-bye," said Jack Heathcote, as he left the canteen and jumped on his horse, which was tied up outside.

Charlie stood for a second or two watching his friend ride away.

"A happy New Year! Well, I shall have it if money can make one happy. That streak of luck you talk about has come in my way after all. I shall be able to clear out of the country as soon as I like. Honest men! Well, it don't do to be too honest," he said to himself.

Then he wondered what his old partner Jack Heathcote would have said if he had heard about the big diamond. Of course he would have said that he was right to stick to it, and would have been a fool if he had thrown away such a chance. He didn't feel quite certain about it though. Jack was rather a queer fellow in his way, and though he did not go in for preaching, had some very decided notions about right and wrong. He had half a mind to tell his old friend, with whom he had lived as a partner for years, and from whom he had hardly had a secret since he had known him, of this good luck and ask him to share in it, but on second thoughts he knew that he had better not do that.

Jack Heathcote had reined in his horse, some hundred yards from the canteen, to light his pipe, and Charlie for a second or two watched him, unable to make up his mind.

"No, by Jove, I won't ask him to have a share, and I won't ask him what he'd do if he were in my place. I know. Hi, Jack Heathcote, Jack. Stop I say," he shouted at the top of his voice, as he ran up to his friend, waving his hat.

Jack saw him and waited for him to come up.

"Well, what's the matter?" he asked wondering, as he noticed a strangely excited look in his friend's face.

"There is something else you ought to have, Jack; it is this," Charlie said, and he took the big diamond from his pocket. "It's over three hundred carats, I should say, and about the best stone in the world. Old David must have found it yesterday, for he had it on him when I pulled him out of the river. Take it to the camp and give it up, and let me be rid of it, for it's safe with you; and, Jack, don't think too badly of me because I have so nearly been a thief."

"Charlie, there's about ninety-nine men in a hundred who would think you a fool," Jack said as he took the diamond, and then gave his old friend's hand a grip. "I wonder who this thing belongs to now?"

"Don't know, don't care; not to me, anyhow; it's a niceish stone, ain't it?" he answered, and then the two friends parted, the one to startle the Diamond Fields by the tale of old David Miller's luck, and, as a good many men thought, of Charlie Lumsden's egregious folly, and the other to work with very ordinary luck as a digger at Moonlight Rush.

Story 6.

A Dear Lesson.

Some years ago every one on the Diamond Fields had heard of Mr Smythe's parcel of diamonds. Buyers, brokers, and diggers were constantly talking of that wonderful collection of gems. No one had ever seen it, and some persons refused to believe in it. Smythe would not be such a fool, they said, as to keep a lot of money locked up in diamonds. But those who knew most about Smythe believed in his diamonds; in fact, some men knew of stones which he had added to his collection. In this case rumour had exaggerated wonderfully little; for, as a matter of fact, Mr Smythe's parcel existed, and was little less valuable than it was reported to be. For some years the price of diamonds had been low, and Smythe had determined to hold; but he did not keep ordinary stuff, only picked stones of extraordinary quality. Whenever he bought a parcel, he would select any perfect stone there might be in it, and ship the rest. It was his opinion that diamonds would go up, and that he would realise a great profit when he brought his wonderful parcel home. In the mean time he could afford to be out of his money; for he was a fairly prosperous man, as he had some claims in the mine that brought him in a good deal, and had done very well diamond buying and digging. Though Mr Smythe was a very good man of business, he was in his private life by no means free from little weaknesses, and they were not all of them amiable ones. It was harmless, if not commendable, for him to be very careful of his get-up and appearance, and to dress with as much care on the South African Diamond Fields as he would have done in Pall Mall. No one would have any right to blame him for dyeing his twisted moustache black, and making a very game struggle against the ravages of time; nor did he hurt any one by his habit of continually bragging and boasting of the position he held and the people he knew 'at home'—for this is a weakness common to many worthy and respectable dwellers in the distant parts of our empire. But he had one failing which was rather mischievous: although he was by no means a young man—for he was nearer fifty than forty—he was as vain as a girl, or rather as a vain man, and he was convinced that he was so attractive and fascinating that the other sex found him irresistible. He loved to pose in the character of a Don Juan, and though his past successes were his favourite topic of conversation, he took care to let it be known that, if he cared, he could continue these little histories up to the present time. In fact, he had gained the reputation of being a man very dangerous to the domestic peace of his neighbours, and he took no little pride and pleasure in having such a reputation, and was careful to maintain it, even sometimes by rather unjustly damaging the fair fame of some of the ladies who had the privilege of his friendship.

It was his custom every year to vary the monotony of Diamond-Field life by making a little visit to the coast; and, from the hints and suggestions he would give when he came back, it would seem that when on his travels he was always on the watch for an opportunity to get up the flirtations he delighted in carrying on. It was on one of those trips that he became acquainted with Captain and Mrs Hamilton. Captain Hamilton was supposed to have lately sold out of the army, and, from what he said, he seemed to be possessed of a nice little capital, which he hoped to double in some colonial venture. He didn't care what he went in for—farming, diamond-mining, gold-digging. He didn't care much what it was, so long as it paid. Soldiering, he said, was a bad game for a married man, and he intended to double his capital before he went home; for England was no country for a man to live in who had not some thousands a year. Mr Smythe did not at first take very kindly to the Captain, who seemed a dullish, heavy sort of man, and cared to talk about very little besides betting and sport. But Mrs Hamilton quite made up for any defects in her husband. She was an extremely pretty young woman, so young-looking that she might have been hardly out of her teens, with a half-mischievous, half-demure manner, which our friend found very fascinating; and it is needless to say that he came to the conclusion that she had fallen in love with him; for it was his idiosyncrasy to believe that he was irresistible with all women. Certainly she was a woman whom any man might fall in love with—a brown-haired, blue-eyed little thing, with a delightfully neat little figure, and always becomingly dressed. "Begad, she's a devilish nice

little woman! I must persuade them to come up to Kimberley. Hamilton would do well there, though he's a stupid oaf a fellow," said Mr Smythe to himself, as he gave his moustache a twist, looking at himself in the glass, and putting on a Mephistophelean grin on which he prided himself. Accordingly he suggested it to Hamilton that he had better make his home on the Diamond Fields, as it was the best place for a man of energy and capital. Captain Hamilton at once fell into the trap which this artful schemer had laid for him. "Dare say it was as good a place to go to as any other," said he. It seemed to him it was a beastly country; while Mrs Hamilton was so enthusiastic in persuading her husband, and so anxious to go to the Fields, that Mr Smythe put the most flattering inference on her support.

So it came about that Captain and Mrs Hamilton were Mr Smythe's fellow-passengers from Capetown to the Diamond Fields, and, more or less under his auspices, settled amongst the queer community who toil for wealth in that land of dust and diamonds. They took one of those little iron houses in one of the principal streets in Kimberley, in which at that time the most prosperous citizens sweltered in the summer and shivered in the winter. From their first arrival, we all took a good deal of interest in the Hamiltons. It was never Mr Smythe's habit to be over-careful not to compromise the ladies he admired; and there was from the first a little scandal about Mrs Hamilton, and a good many stories told about her. Captain Hamilton became a very interesting person, when the fact that he was possessed of some little capital which he wished to invest was well-known, and a good many plans were made for his safely investing it. There was little Mo Abrahams, who came up to him, and told him how a few thousands would turn the Victory Mine, lately known as Fools Rush, into one of the grandest mining properties in the world; and the Captain seemed to be much struck with the advantages of the speculation, and thanked Mo for giving him such a chance; but he did not settle to go in for it at once, though he freely admitted that, in Mo's words, nothing could be fairer between man and man than the terms suggested. "We must have another talk over it," he said; and Mo went off rejoicing. After Mo went away, Bill Bowker, that fine specimen of the rugged honest digger and pioneer of the Fields, came up to the Captain, and, with much bad language, which it was his rugged honest custom to use, asked him what that little Jew wanted. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "but he be going to let you in with that swindling mine of his. The place was salted before they washed up; and I know where they first got the diamonds they found there. I don't like to see a gentleman like you let in. Now, what you want to go in for is digging in a established mine, not for a wild-cat speculation;" and the rugged honest one went on to urge upon the Captain the advantage of investing his money in some claims that were in that portion of the Du Toits Pan Mine, which had somehow gained the name of the graveyard, on account of so many persons having buried their fortunes there. Captain Hamilton was very much obliged to his kind friend, though he said that he refused to believe that Mo was not *bonâ fide*; "over sanguine, perhaps, but means well," he said; "still, I think that what you mention would just suit me. We must have another talk about it." Thus the Captain for some time did not settle how he would embark his fortune, but treated with every one who came to him, almost always entertaining the highest opinion of the suggestions made to him. In the mean time, the owners of valuable mining properties were constant in paying him the greatest attention, and he was asked to share so many small bottles of champagne that the bar-keepers looked upon him as a perfect godsend, and dated the revival of prosperity on the Fields from his arrival. As the Captain had a good deal of spare time on his hands, he was able to indulge in some of the pastimes in which he excelled. After some little time he was recognised as a very fine billiard-player. At first there were one or two young men who thought they could beat him, and it was a costly mistake for them; but the Captain explained he was only just getting back his form, and so accounted for the great improvement which could be noticed in his play, after he had got a little money on. At cards he was very lucky: a fortunate whist-player, a good *écarté*-player, while he had wonderfully good luck, when several times he was persuaded, protesting that it was not at all in his line, to sit down to a game of poker. However, though his card and billiard playing did not lighten his purse, they compelled him to neglect his wife more than was wise, perhaps. Night after night, while Hamilton was at the club, the dangerous Mr Smythe would be sitting smoking cigarettes in Jenny Hamilton's little sitting-room.

Perhaps, though people did talk a good deal, there was not much harm in it; and Jenny Hamilton, though she did look so young, was, perhaps, pretty well able to take care of herself. Still, she became far more confidential with her friend Mr Smythe than it was wise for a young woman to be with such a very fascinating man. Certainly, when she told him all her grievances against her husband—how he neglected her, and was always at billiards or cards, leaving her all by herself, how he drank too much, and was generally rather a disappointment—she was taking a course which seemed rather indiscreet. But it was not only about her own affairs she would talk; she took the greatest interest in all he had to say about himself, and would listen to his stories of English society with never-failing interest. She would encourage him to read poetry to her, for, though his education had been rather commercial than classical, he fancied that he could read well. "Ah," she would say, "how nice it is to be fond of poetry and art! Now, Jack cares for nothing but billiards, cards, sport, and drink; not even for me, I am afraid." Then she would change the conversation, and talk about Smythe's affairs. "Was it true," she would ask, "that he had such a splendid collection of diamonds? She was so fond of seeing them. Couldn't he show them to her?" Smythe made rather a favour of this, for he said that no one had ever seen his diamonds! still, of course, he would show them to Mrs Hamilton, only she must come down to the office to see them. Mrs Hamilton didn't altogether like that; she would sooner he brought the diamonds up to the house. However, she said she was determined to see them, and she would constantly return to this subject. On one occasion, when Mr Smythe called, he found Hamilton at home instead of at the club, and so he did the next time after that; and, rather to his annoyance, he found the Captain had taken to stop at home. He used usually to sit in the verandah, smoking, paying very little heed to his wife or her friend. Still, Mr Smythe found him a good deal in the way, and began to look upon his presence in his own house as little less than an intrusion.

"Do you know that Jack is fearfully jealous of you?" said pretty Mrs Hamilton to him one evening. "Some one has said something to him, and since then he has never left me out of his sight."

"That's very stupid of him!" said Mr Smythe.

"Yes, it is very silly," she said; "but I'm afraid you're a dreadful man! Anyhow, Jack thinks you are, for he has taken to stop at home all day looking after me."

"When is he going to get something to do? If he had more work and less drink he wouldn't take fancies into his head."

"I don't know," she answered. "I'm afraid he will go away to some other place. Won't that be wretched?" she said.

"Wretched, my dear! of course it will," said Mr Smythe; and he would have said a good deal more, only the smoke of his cigarette made Jenny choke; and then her husband came into the room, scowled at his guest, helped himself to some whiskey, and left it again.

"By the by," said Jenny, when he had gone, "I've never seen those diamonds: now, you know, you promised I should."

"You must come to the office and see them," he said. "I don't like to bring them up here, unless he's out, for I don't like any one to see them but you."

"Yes, I know that it's a great privilege for me to see them, though I don't know what harm it can do for a poor little woman like me to see diamonds she can't hope ever to have; you must bring them up here, and show them to me when he's out of the room."

"No, I can't do that; he is always in and out. You must come to the office."

"You wretch," she said, "you want me to go to your office by myself, but I won't; it wouldn't do at all. Besides, do you know, he never lets me out of his sight for a minute; he hardly ever sleeps for long, and he gets so fearfully violent, I think it's the whiskey he takes. Do you know, the other day I thought he would strike me."

Mr Smythe was a good deal impressed with this information, and he looked with no little awe at the culprit, who fidgeted in and out of the room with no particular object. Though he despised the man, he felt a good deal afraid of him. "By Jove," he thought to himself, "suppose he took a fancy to go for me—the brute looks pretty strong!"

"If I was you," he said, "I'd give him a strong sleeping draught; he is a misery to himself and every one else, like this."

"I only wish I could," she said. "He gets more nervous and cross every evening; but he won't take anything."

"Well, I'd make him; I'd put a dose into his whiskey-and-water, which would send him off fast enough. I'd tell you what to give."

For one second Jenny seemed to be thinking the matter over. Then she answered,—

"Oh, I wish you would; I would—I'd do it to-morrow; and then you could bring up the diamonds to show me, and we should be alone. Now, write down the stuff I am to get."

Mr Smythe knew a little about doctoring, so he wrote out the quantities of a drug on a leaf of his note-book, and gave it her.

"Now promise to bring up the diamonds to-morrow, and we will look at them when we are alone and he is asleep."

"All right," he said; "but I don't think they will interest you, and I hardly like bringing them out; but I can't refuse you anything, my dear."

Just then Captain Hamilton came in again, and, as he seemed inclined to stay, Mr Smythe took leave of his host and hostess, the latter giving him a look which seemed to say "Don't forget."

"By gad, she is a plucky little woman, and dead gone on me! Why, I believe, if I told her to, she'd put a drop of prussic acid in his whiskey!" said Mr Smythe to himself, as he swaggered down to the club from Hamilton's house.

That evening he was in very great force, and his anecdotes and epigrams were unusually brilliant. Every one understood the point of what he said, and knew to whom his hints referred; and his toadies told him that he was a bad lot, a very bad lot, for they knew that this sort of reproach was the most grateful flattery to him. "What an insufferable cad that little brute is! hope he comes to grief soon," was the remark of one man who probably didn't like him.

The next evening Mr Smythe opened his safe, and took out his parcel of diamonds. After all there was no danger in taking them as far as the Hamiltons' house, though they were so valuable, for the Hamiltons lived in one of the principal streets in the town. It was rather a silly whim of the little woman, he thought, being so set on seeing the diamonds; but he knew enough of the sex to be aware that she was determined to have it granted. The diamonds were in a large snuff-box. There were about a hundred diamonds weighing from ten to fifty carats each, and they were worth about 20,000 pounds. Something seemed to prompt him to put the diamonds back into the safe; but on the Diamond Fields men get used to the idea of carrying about stones of great value; and then he thought of Jenny Hamilton's bewitching little face, so he put the diamonds in his pocket, and started off for her house. The house stood in what was called a garden, though very little grew there. On either side it was only a few yards from the house next door. As Smythe walked up to the door Jenny Hamilton came out to meet him.

"Hush!" she said, holding her hand up to her mouth; "he is asleep! I've given it him; I put it into the whiskey-bottle, and he took it all."

She beckoned him to follow, and they both went indoors into the sitting-room. From the next room they could hear the heavy breathing of the Captain.

"Now, have you brought them?" she said.

"Yes; I've done what you told me to do," he answered. "Let me show you them."

"Stop," she said first; "let me see if he is fast asleep." She went into the next room and came back again. "He's fast asleep, poor old boy," she said.

Smythe thought that he never had seen her look so pretty. She was dressed very prettily; had a very brilliant colour on her cheeks, which became her; and her eyes glittered with excitement. They sat down, and he poured the diamonds out of the box on to a sheet of white paper, which looked grey contrasted with some of them.

"And these diamonds are worth twenty thousand pounds! How good to bring them!"

Smythe thought that he never had seen such a pretty little face as hers was, as she looked at the diamonds with a longing glance; but he was rather surprised when she looked up into his face and said, "Give them to me." Of course he had no intention of doing any such thing; the idea was simply absurd, considering their value. And Smythe didn't half like this eccentricity of his pretty little friend; still she looked so pretty that Smythe could not feel angry with her. Her face was close to his—she was looking up at him; he stooped down and kissed her. Just then he heard a step behind him, and as he turned round, his head struck against something hard: it was the muzzle of a revolver, which Hamilton was holding. Hamilton was wide awake, and there was a very ugly grin of triumph in his face.

"Well, you're a nice young man, you are, to drop in friendly of an evening! Hush! don't speak out loud, or I'll blow your brains out at once," said the Captain.

Jenny Hamilton didn't seem to be one bit disconcerted. She had snatched up the diamonds, and she was turning them over, watching their sheen with evident pleasure. Mr Smythe, however, felt anything but at his ease. The situation was a very strange one, for if he shouted out "Murder!" he would be heard by his neighbours on both sides, who were only separated from him by a few feet of open space and a few inches of tin wall. One of them was a young diamond-buyer, with a taste for comic singing, who had just returned from a trip home, and was entertaining his friends with the cream of the melody of the London music-halls, and as he stood shivering with fear, with the revolver held up to his head, Smythe could hear the chorus of one of the songs of the day. He had never cared less about comic singing. But though help was so near he felt completely in the power of Hamilton, who looked very resolute and reckless, and seemed to be quite in earnest.

Personal courage never was Mr Smythe's strong point, and now for a minute he felt too startled to think; in fact, he only had sufficient sense left to make him restrain his inclination to shout out for help. After a second or two he began to feel more assured. It seemed so unlikely that he should be murdered in the middle of the town, within calling distance of several men; only the revolver was real enough. When a man is holding a revolver up to your head, you have the worst of the position. He mayn't care to shoot; but, on the other hand, he may; and, whatever the ultimate consequences may be to him, the immediate consequences to you are sure.

In a half-hearted way for one second Smythe thought of resisting, and he made a movement with his hand towards his pocket.

"Keep your hands up; you'd better," said the other.

Smythe obeyed him, and sat holding his hand above his head, looking very ridiculous.

"You'd better take that from him, Jen," said Hamilton; and Jenny Hamilton put her hand into her dear friend's pocket and deftly eased him of his revolver. A gleam of hope came into Mr Smythe's heart. After all, he thought, people don't commit homicide without reason; and he saw that he had not to deal with an outraged husband, but with a pair of sharpers. He certainly began to wish that his diamonds were in his safe at home; but he knew they were difficult property to deal with, and hoped to get off without making any great sacrifice.

"What the devil do you mean by this, Captain Hamilton?" he said, trying to put on an air of unconcern he didn't feel. "Surely it's a poor joke to steal into your own drawing-room, and hold a revolver up to the head of a man you find calling on your wife."

"I don't set up for being a good joker," said the Captain; "but my jokes are eminently practical, as you'd learn if the police of London, New York, and 'Frisco told you what they know of Jack Hamilton."

"Well, you'd better say what you hope to make out of this," said Mr Smythe.

"I intend," said the Captain, "to make a job for the crowner's inquest of you, and those diamonds for myself."

"Don't talk nonsense, man; you won't frighten me, I'm not so easily fooled. Why, if I don't turn up, a dozen men will know where to look for me; besides that, they will hear you shoot next door. Why, if you shoot, you'd be hung."

"You've no call to bother your head about me. I can play this hand without your advice," said the Captain. "See here: first I shoot you; then Jen puts the diamonds away; then I give myself up to the police; Jen confesses; I take my trial, like a man, and show that I shot you because I found you here alone with my wife, after you'd got her to drug my liquor. See here: the whiskey-bottle in the next room is drugged. Jen has got the paper you wrote out. The chemist she got the stuff from can be found, and you've taken care to let every one know what your game is. What do you think a jury would do to me? You'd have to look a long time before you'd get one who would find me guilty of murder. Hung! why, I shall be looked upon as the vindicator of the sanctity of domestic life. Guess they'd get up a testimonial for me."

Then Mr Smythe realised the awkward position in which he was placed. The man seemed to be in earnest, and there was a determined look in his cruel hard face which made Smythe believe that he dared do what he said; and if he

did, it was true that he would be in very little danger of being punished. Smythe could remember a somewhat similar case, in which a jury had endorsed the popular verdict of "Served him right," by finding a prisoner, who had killed the man who had wronged him, not guilty.

He could hear the words of the song which were being sung next door, and he knew that if he shouted out murder he could summon help, but he daren't shout out. Help was near, but the revolver was nearer.

"Stop," he said, catching at a last straw; "you don't know that some one can't prove I had the diamonds with me!"

"I'll chance that," said Hamilton. "You see, no one has ever seen the diamonds but us."

As Hamilton said this Jenny left the room with the diamonds in her hand, and then came back again without them. Smythe felt that he had seen the last of the stones, which were likely to cost him so dear.

"Spare me! for Heaven's sake, spare me! What have I done that you should kill me? Keep the diamonds, and let me go."

"That won't do, I am afraid," said Hamilton; "you might change your mind, and try and get the diamonds back. Of course I don't want to shoot you, but it's the way to play my game."

Then Mrs Hamilton, who had come back into the room, spoke for the first time.

"What's the good of all this talk, Jack? Make haste and get it all over."

Just then, in his extremity, an idea came into Smythe's mind, and again he began to hope.

"Stop," he said. "Why kill me? I have money in the bank. Spare me, and I will write a cheque for five hundred."

"It's risky for me," said Captain Hamilton. "Still, a little ready comes in handy. I will take a thou."

With a very shaky hand Smythe wrote out the cheque for the amount asked for, the Captain still holding the revolver up to his head. Smythe handed over the cheque.

"Now I can go, I suppose?" he said, making for the door.

"Not yet," said the other. "Get the paper, Jen. Now write out a note to me, enclosing the cheque for a card debt," he added, as his wife took down some paper and placed it before their guest. Smythe wrote the letter he required.

"That will do. Now write to Jen, sending her the diamonds."

"What am I to say?" said Smythe.

"What are you to say? Why, you don't want me to write a love-letter to my own wife—it's more in your line than mine; but make it pretty sweet, for I don't know but that the old plan isn't best after all."

Smythe had written love-letters to other men's wives before, but never under similar circumstances, with the husband witnessing the performance with a loaded revolver in his hand, nor had he ever made such a very expensive present. It was some time before he could pull himself together sufficiently to write, and one or two attempts were condemned by his severe critic, who said,—

"No, that sort of slush ain't good enough. Put a little more sugar in it. Why, damn it, man, I thought you were so good at it!"

At last the right sort of note was written. "That will do. Here, what do you think of it, Jen?" said the Captain, passing the note across to his partner.

"Why, I think it a dear little note; it's a beautiful note; the prettiest note I ever got. What a darling man you are to give me such a present, and yet what a wicked wretch you are to write like that to me!" and Mrs Hamilton looked at her correspondent, who was regarding her with no very loving glance, and then burst into a peal of silvery laughter.

The Captain seemed to take up the joke. "Why, hang it, man," he said, "but you're a generous big-hearted fellow. There are some men who wouldn't care about their wives taking presents from such a gay cuss as you, but I know you mean no harm, old fellow;" and the Captain gave him a slap on the back with his unoccupied hand, which made him start with terror. "No," he continued, as his visitor made as if he was going, "you sha'n't go yet. Stop and drink, stop and drink," he repeated, with a warning gesture with his revolver.

Mr Smythe sat down at this pressing invitation, and took one or two glasses of brandy-and-water. He felt that his nerve was altogether gone, and that he was obliged to obey the other. At last Hamilton let him go, and opening the door for him, took a noisy leave of him, that the neighbours must have heard; and then he lurched home in such a state of brandy and shock that he could hardly realise his loss before he tumbled into bed.

The next morning he did not wake up until it was late, past ten o'clock, and then he, by degrees, remembered the events of the night before. "Was it a dream?" he thought; and he went to his safe, and found out that it was no dream—the diamonds were not there! What could he do to get his diamonds back? was his first thought. He could think of nothing, for he remembered the letters he had written, and already it was too late to stop the cheque, for he knew it would have been presented as soon as the bank opened. Then he began to think that the best thing he could do would be to keep his sorrows to himself, for no one would believe his story; and the people who lived next door to the Hamiltons would have heard Captain Hamilton let him out of his house, and would never believe that anything of

the sort had happened to him that evening. So Mr Smythe did nothing, and he was not surprised that evening to hear that among the passengers by the coach to Capetown were his friends the Hamiltons.

He never saw them again, nor did he wish to. They were last seen, some time ago, in Paris. Hamilton was the same stolid, heavy-dragon looking man, and Jenny Hamilton was as young and charming-looking as ever; and they seemed to be very prosperous, so they probably did well with Smythe's diamonds.

Story 7.

A Vaal River Heiress.

Part One.

The General, as he had been called since diamond-digging first broke out on the banks of the Vaal River, inhabited a hut built of rough stones and thatched with reeds near the river-bank at Red Shirt Rush.

He was the owner of some claims, and he had worked at Red Shirt since he came up to the Vaal from the colony to try his luck as a diamond-digger; and when other diggers went hither and thither to new places on the river, or were attracted by the rich diggings which afterwards became famous as the South African diamond mines, the old General worked on at Red Shirt as if he were quite satisfied with the rewards that fortune thought fit to bestow upon his labours there, and would laugh at the men who were attracted elsewhere by glowing reports. He could hardly be said to be contented with Red Shirt—certainly if he were he expressed his content peculiarly, for he seldom talked of the place without an uncomplimentary epithet; but he probably was imbued with the gambler's belief in the doctrine of chances, and hoped his luck would change, while he was too discontented with the results of every move he had made in his life to care to make any more. He was generally supposed to be the unluckiest man down the river, and his bad luck was a very favourite subject for discussion and exaggeration at the canteens and places where diggers congregated.

His former history, and the reasons which led him to take to diamond-digging, were subjects which afforded scope for imaginations which found life down the river, when finds were few and far between, barren of topics of interest; and certainly his appearance and manners seemed to show that he was much out of place in the community he found himself in. He was an aristocratic, reserved man, from whom years of rough life had not taken the unmistakable stamp of the military officer.

It was generally believed down the river that the General's relations at home were very great people, and he was looked upon as a man with a history. Luney White, the Vaal River poet, whose contribution to the Diamond Field newspapers caused quite a furore down the river, many bets being made, and much fighting and drinking being occasioned, by the difficult question of what they were all about, and what he meant by them at all, retailed, on the pretence of having heard it from an army officer at Capetown, a story that the General had allowed the suspicion of a terrible murder to rest upon him so as to shield the really guilty person, a lady of exalted rank, and was, at present, a fugitive from justice in consequence of his noble conduct. Luney's story rather took for a day or two, until some one remembered having read just such a tale in a book the poet had borrowed from him—a circumstance which threw doubts, not only upon the veracity of the story, but on the originality of their poet's genius, which, up to then, they had believed in. The General's real name was hardly known, and he was never spoken of by it, though it was to be seen on a tombstone in the Barkly Cemetery, which was put up to the memory of Constance, wife of John Stanby, of Red Shirt Rush, Vaal River. He was the father of a golden-haired little girl of seventeen, who had grown up from a child on the banks of the Vaal. His story had not really been a romantic or remarkable one. Like many another man of good old family but no money he had gone into the army. After serving for some dozen years he had got into the clutches of the Jews by backing a bill for a brother officer. For some years he fought against his debts, but in the end he was obliged to surrender his commission to his enemies, and leave the service. Then, when his affairs were sufficiently hopeless, he fell in love with and married a girl who had not a penny, and, after having tried in vain to get something to do in England, went out to the Cape and was attracted up to Vaal River when diamonds were first found. Though he was under fifty, he had become a grizzled, old-looking man, broken in spirits by persistent misfortune; and yet he was a strange mixture, for at times he was as sanguine as when he first put a pick into the soil of South Africa.

Those who said that he never found exaggerated his ill-success, though not perhaps his ill-luck; at long intervals a few ill-looking, off-coloured little diamonds had turned up on his sorting-table, which, if they were to be considered as a recompense for all his weary work, were Fortune's insults added to her injuries; but nevertheless kept up in him a curious sort of hope, which through all his bad luck he retained, notwithstanding his bitter grumbling against South Africa in particular, and all things in general. To himself constantly, and to others when he met any one he cared to speak to, he would inveigh bitterly against his luck. First of all he would wish that he had never gone into the army; then he would curse the fate which had made him choose the particular branch of the service he had gone into; then he would curse the day he had left the service; and then he would collect every malediction he had made use of and every other he knew, and fire one withering sulphurous volley at fate, which had made him a digger on the Vaal River. These explosions would seem to do him much good, for after one of them he would generally seem much relieved, and as likely as not in a few minutes would be talking about what he would do when he found, as he felt sure he would find when he had got the top stuff off his claim, or got into the lime layer which he would strike in another ten feet, or started into the new ground he was going to work in a month or two.

There were two diggers at Red Shirt with whom the General was on intimate terms—Charlie Langdale and Jim Heap. The former was a light-hearted, cheery youngster of about twenty-two, in many respects a typical river-digger. He was restless and unable to take kindly to any work which entailed obedience; had a rare gift for getting into any mischief that was going on, while he possessed very little reverence for his seniors and those who thought

themselves his betters; on the other hand, he was superior to many colonial youths in that he did not lie as a rule, nor boast overmuch, and could speak a few sentences without swearing hideously. The first time the General had seen him he was holding his own against a big Irish digger who was trying to bully him out of a claim he was working; and the nonchalant way in which he laughed at the Irishman's threats, and put the right value on them, impressed the General so much in his favour that he at once struck up an intimacy, and the two became great allies.

The other, Jim Heap, was an old Australian digger who had settled at Red Shirt, where he had become a fixture; for besides having some claims, he had become the proprietor of a store, which his wife looked after for him.

He was a favourite confidant of the General, who would explain to him his theories about diamonds, and show him why he felt certain he would soon find and be able to leave the country—theories which Jim Heap would listen to gravely enough, though he did not believe in them one bit; but, as he would say to Charlie, what was the good of putting a damper on the old man's hopes? His life was bad enough as it was, but would be unbearable if he did not go on hoping that he would soon make his pile, and be able to take his little girl home to England. Sometimes, however, he would offer him advice, which the old General—who, though he considered diamond-digging a hateful occupation into which he had been forced by a malignant fate, believed himself to be as good an authority as any one on the subject—would greatly resent. Charlie Langdale also would sometimes venture on the same subject, and one morning, as he sat after dinner smoking under the trees near the General's house, he had greatly aroused his old friend's anger by criticising his way of working.

"What! say my drive is dangerous!" the General had burst out, after he had listened to Charlie for some time, "and I shan't get anything in that ground I am driving into! I should like to know what you mean by talking to me about it. Why, if I don't know something about river digging, I'd like to know who does. I have been digging since they first found diamonds in this cursed country, and have stuck to the river all the time, and never left it for the New Rush when all the others did. A lot I have got for it so far. Well, it's a long lane that has got no turning; and there is Connie, perhaps she wouldn't be as well as she is if we had left the river and gone to Kimberley," he added.

"By Jove, yes, you're right, it's healthier here than at Kimberley, and she couldn't look better than she does, could she?" Charlie answered, with a flush of admiration coming across his bright young face, as he looked round and saw a golden-haired, blue-eyed girl, whose bright beauty was unharmed by the pitiless South African sun and climate, which often enough makes sad havoc of a woman's looks.

The sight of Connie, however, made Charlie go back to his subject, regardless of the General's wrath. "I don't like the look of that drive, don't like those boulders that are above you; why don't you leave it alone and go into fresh ground? I think it dangerous, so does Jim Heap; he told Connie that you ought not to work in it; and she is wretched about it every time you go to the claim."

"It seems to me that every one thinks they can interfere with me—you and Connie, and then Jim Heap, who thinks no one understands anything about digging but himself;" and the General drew in his breath to prepare for a burst of eloquence anent Jim Heap, when his daughter came up, and, feeling that he couldn't do justice to the subject in her presence, he went into the house choking with indignation.

"I wish some one could persuade him to give up that work. But it's no use, he thinks he is a greater authority about digging than any one else," Connie said, guessing from her father's suppressed indignation that Charlie had been broaching the question of the dangerous state of his claim.

"Yes, I wish he would go into fresh ground. I never believed in those claims of his, they're too near the river."

"You will never get him to do that. You know that years ago he saw a big diamond found in the claim next to where he is, which looked, he said, as if it were chipped off a much bigger one, and he is as sure in his own mind as he is of anything that the other bit is somewhere about near where he is working."

"Well, I dare say the claim is safe enough, and I hope he will come across the big 'un, which is going to make his fortune," said Charlie, who was always ready to look at the bright side of things. "It was only the other day he was saying that it was about time he found, as you were growing too old to be living at Red Shirt."

"Poor old dear, he is always troubling himself about me, and says I am growing up a perfect savage, without any accomplishments and very little education, and shall have terribly hard work to make up for lost time when I get home. Well, I'll back myself to cook, set a line for fish, nurse any one who's down with fever, and sort for diamonds, against any one on the river; these are accomplishments enough for Red Shirt, and that's where I shall be all my life, so far as I can see. He was talking the other day about sending me home, and staying out here himself; but that's absurd, isn't it?"

Charlie did not answer. The idea of Red Shirt Rush without Connie was miserable enough, for all his good sense told him that the General was right. Connie ought not to be growing up in a digger's camp, with little education that was not of a very practical character.

"Why don't you say that I couldn't be improved, Charlie? You're not half polite. I suspect you're comparing me with some of those fine ladies you have met at Kimberley. Come, I bet I know about as much out of books as they do, for I have read all the old man has, and they are a good mixed lot. Besides, if I want educating ever so much, how could I go home and leave him by himself? He is wretched enough as it is, and I couldn't bear to leave him—besides, I don't want to say good-bye to all my old friends."

Charlie's heart gave rather a jump—he wondered whether he were one of the friends she would most mind saying good-bye to. He didn't believe much in the General's sanguine expectations being realised, and thought that Connie was likely to stand in need some day of a stronger protector than her father; and her words gave him a feeling of hope, and he determined that he would speak out. Just then, however, the General's voice was heard calling for

Connie, and the interruption disconcerted Charlie, who turned off a sentence he was beginning and determined to put it off for another day. His heart failed him, and he thought that the old General would not like it, and that Connie might take it amiss; so knocking the ashes out of his pipe he said good-bye to Connie, and walked up the bank to where he was working, although he longed to stay and talk to her, and there was not the slightest reason why he should not have done so. On his way to his claim he passed the ground where the General was working. It was a claim which had been partly worked in the old days, before the New Rush, as the Kimberley mine was then called, was found, and had been deserted before it had been worked out.

After its former owners had abandoned it and had gone to try their luck at the new diggings, the General had worked it down to the bed rock, some thirty feet deep, and was driving into the side of the claim towards the ground where he had seen the diamond found. Charlie stood for a moment or two watching him at work.

The drive certainly did not look very safe; the old man was working near a mass of rock which jutted out over him. The ground into which he was driving was the only part of the adjoining claim that had not been worked out, its former owners having thrown their stones and rubbish there, and so had been unable to get at it easily when they had worked out the rest of the claim. The weight on the natural surface of the ground made the place where the General was driving into look all the more awkward.

"I say, that's rather a nasty-looking boulder you are working under, isn't it? It would flatten out any one in the drive pretty well if it were to slip," Charlie shouted out to the General, who had crawled out of his drive for a minute.

"Slip! Bosh! Suppose the moon were to slip. Nothing but dynamite would move that boulder! Perhaps you would like to teach me how to work the claim," the elder digger growled out in response; and then he crawled into the tunnel, and Charlie went on, knowing that it was useless to remonstrate any more, and hoping that it would be all right.

"Well, youngster, you've come back to work at last; you're a pretty sort of partner! Been down at the General's? You're always loafing down there—it makes me laugh to see how that little bit of a girl fools you," a big dissipated-looking man, who was lying on the ground smoking a pipe, said as Charlie came up to the claim.

This was his partner, Bill Jeffson, and as he heard his voice Charlie thought to himself that one of the first steps he would take towards turning over a new leaf would be to break with Mr Bill, so he answered him rather shortly, and told him that he had better mind his own business.

"That's it, quarrel with an old chum, I suppose. I ain't good enough for you now you've got to know the old General. I don't know what's come over you: you can't take a joke, you never go on the spree, and you put on no end of frills just because you know that poverty-stricken old dead-beat and his daughter," Jeffson growled out as he got up, stretched himself, and lounged into the claim, while Charlie settled down at the sorting-table.

Several hours had passed without anything happening to vary the dull monotony of the work, when Charlie suddenly sprang up with an exclamation of surprise.

"Hullo! what's up? Have you found one?" Jeffson called out.

"Found one! no. I heard some one cry out; there it is again. It's from the General's claim," said Charlie, as he started to run, leaving his partner, who was never over much interested in other people's affairs, to lounge after him.

After Charlie had gone a little way, he met Connie, who, with a white startled face, was running towards him, crying loudly for help.

"Go back and get picks and a crowbar. You have one. It's father; he has had an accident; the ground has come down. I will go and bring some other men," she gasped out; and then she ran past him towards the claims where Jim Heap and some other diggers were working.

The first glance Charlie got of the claim to which he ran, after he had shouted to his partner to bring the Kaffirs with their tools, told him what had happened.

Jim Heap's prophecy turned out to be true! The drive had fallen, and it was blocked up by a mass of boulders and earth. Of the poor old General nothing could be seen; but it was not hard to guess where he was, and Charlie began to dig madly with his hands into the fallen earth and throw some of the loose stones on one side, a cold sweat running down his face as he realised the terrible fate that had come to his old friend. He had not been at his work long before better help arrived.

Jeffson with the Kaffirs set to work with their shovels; and Jim Heap, who at once took in the situation, and, giving the others directions, set to work at the fallen ground, looking up as he did so at Connie, who, having followed him back, stood watching them.

"Don't take on, my dear. I have seen men come out all right from worse places than this, and be none the worse for it," he said to her; but his tone was not quite as hopeful as his words.

She did not answer him, but watched them, speechless and tearless, with an awful look of misery on her white set face. She had not long to wait in suspense. After the work had gone on for some time, she heard a murmur from the men, which told her there was little ground for hope. The boulder under which he had been working had shifted, and her father was lying with the life crushed out of him underneath it. They tried to get her away before they moved the boulder and dragged out the lifeless body, but she would not go, and stood watching them, and followed the men who carried it back into the house without saying a word or even shedding a tear.

"Poor girl! it's a terrible bad business for her. I'll send my missis to her; she will sit up with her and try and comfort

her—not that any one can do her much good, poor little lass,” the old digger said, with something like a tear running down his weather-beaten old face. And then he went to his tent to send his wife, a Devonshire-born woman, whose kindly nature had not been hardened by years of rough life on Australian and South African diggings, to share poor Connie’s sad watch.

On the following day the poor old General was buried at Barkly, and there was not much work done at Red Shirt Rush, for most of the diggers followed their old comrade, whom they liked and respected for all his crotchety temper and reserved manner, to his last resting-place. For years there had not been so many men from the river camps in that sleepy little township. It was remarked that the great majority of them left Barkly quite sober, and that there were not more than three fights and no general disturbance. This exemplary conduct was caused partly by a sense of the sadness of the poor old General’s death, and more by the memory of poor little Connie’s piteous face as she stood by the side of the grave. When the funeral was over, Connie, who, in the first shock of her sorrow, had thought nothing about herself, began to realise how friendless and homeless she was.

Jim Heap had borrowed a cart and a pair of horses, and driven her and his wife over to Barkly, and on the way back he somehow guessed what she was thinking about.

“Maybe, Miss Connie, there are some of your relations at home you ought to write to about this; but until you hear you must stay with us, if you don’t mind living with plain people in a rough place that ain’t fit for a lady like you. While we’ve a roof over our heads, you need not trouble about finding a home. You know, miss, how proud we should be to have you with us; the missis and me have talked that over already.”

“How kind you are to me! I don’t want to leave Red Shirt Rush; all my friends are there, and every one seems so kind to me; but I shall be a burden to you. I must try and get my own living somehow,” poor Connie answered.

“Burden to us? Don’t talk of that; why, you talk as if you haven’t got anything of your own; why, there’s those claims which are worth a good bit of money maybe, and there is a heap of stuff the General got out of it which hasn’t been sorted yet.”

Connie remembered how now and then in her father’s lifetime Jim Heap had expressed a very different opinion about the value of the ground which had cost her so much, but she did not say any more.

Another person who thought about Connie’s future was Charlie Langdale. There is no need to say how he would have planned it, and the day after the poor old General was buried—it was a Sunday morning—he was strolling along the river-bank thinking over his plans for the future. He would give up the river, he thought, and go to Kimberley and try and get a sub-managership or something of the sort from one of the companies which would give him a fixed income. Regular work and wages up to that time had had very little attraction to him. He liked working on his own account down the river with no one to order him about, and the gambling uncertainty of river-digging was just suited to his happy-go-lucky disposition; but he thought that he would not mind how irksome the work he got to do was, so long as it would give him a prospect of marrying Connie. If she would only give him just a glimpse of a hope he would ask for no more, till he had shown what sort of stuff he was made of, he declared to himself as he tried to weigh his chance, and went from the depths of despair to hopefulness and back, as he tried to recall the occasions on which he might possibly have shown her how much he cared for her. He had walked along the bank thinking over this question until he had come to the old General’s claims, and, looking at the trees by the little house, he thought of the last time he had stood under them talking to her, and had almost made up his mind to tell her. Well, he would have to wait a bit now. Poor girl, it would not do to talk to her till she had got over the first of her sorrow. Then he walked into the claim, and stood near where the accident had happened, and as he thought he scratched with a stick he had in his hand amongst the loose gravel which the party working to rescue the General had thrown out. By chance he looked down at his feet, and found himself hitting with his stick at something that looked very different from the other pebbles. He was too intent on his thoughts to pay much heed to it, though in an absent way he was looking at it. Suddenly he gave a start, and picked it up; it was a big white diamond!

Part Two.

The diamond was just such a stone as the poor old General used to describe when he talked of the one he expected to come across—such a stone as he argued that the one he saw in the next claim years before had been chipped. The old man’s theory was rubbish, Charlie had always believed, but there, sure enough, was a diamond that bore it out. It must have been dislodged from the ground that had fallen, and when he met his death the General was very near the prize he had somehow always expected to find. Charlie examined the diamond carefully; he had never seen so large a stone of the same quality before. He could not estimate its value, but it was worth a good many thousands, he believed, for it would probably be one of the finest stones in the world.

“Hullo! what have you got there? Show me. Put it in your pocket and hurry away from this place; remember we’re partners, old man; come, look slippy, we don’t want any one to see us mouching about here,” Charlie heard a voice say in his ear, and looking round, he saw his partner, Bill Jeffson, who was staring with big eyes at the diamond, and in his amazement at seeing it had dropped a bottle of ‘Cape smoke’ on the ground without even using one word of bad language.

“What do you mean? What’s our partnership got to do with this diamond? it’s not found in our claim.”

“That’s it, you darned fool! It’s got to be found in our claim; that’s the only place you can find a diamond in legally if one wants to stick to it.”

“Stick to it. Why, this belongs to the General, and I am going to give it up to Jim Heap.”

"Stop, you ain't going to give that diamond up to Jim Heap! You're mad! Stop! Man alive, how can the diamond belong to any one except the first man who finds it? These claims are abandoned."

Charlie paid no heed to the other, who was trembling with excitement and greed, but pushed past him and walked in the direction of Jim Heap's house.

Bill Jeffson stood for some seconds watching him, thinking what he could say or do to get some share in the diamond he had seen; then he ran after him, and caught hold of him by the arm.

"Look here, Charlie—now don't get riled with an old chum. Look here, now let me put it to you—ain't you making a mistake? Why don't you stick to the diamond? You say it belongs to the old General's girl. Well, you're sweet on her, and want to marry her, so it won't hurt her if you do stick to it; she'll get her share, and it will be all one to her; while if you give it up see where are you—why, you lose the diamond and her too. You don't suppose that she would marry you if she had a fortune of her own, and that diamond means a fortune, mind you. She is a lady by birth, mind, and has relations in England who are as fine people as any in the land, so I've heard; and though they won't put themselves out about her now—she would only be a trouble to 'em—it would be a different story if she were a bit of an heiress. Why, every one would cry shame, and say you were standing in the girl's light and preventing her taking her proper place. Now, look here, you say you found that diamond in our claim—you and I can settle about my share—and then you will have something to go on when you ask the girl to marry you. Now think it over, and don't act in a hurry;" and Mr Jeffson looked inquiringly into his partner's face to see if his persuasion was taking any effect upon him.

Mr Bill Jeffson, when he looked back to the incident, as he often did, with feelings of the most bitter disgust at his bad luck and Charlie's weakness of conduct, always consoled himself with the reflection that he showed the greatest diplomacy in the way he put it, and felt sure that Charlie was struck by the force of his argument. However, his ingenuity was wasted, for Charlie turned round and told him to clear off or it would be the worse for him, and, without saying a word more, went on towards Jim Heap's.

It was true enough, Charlie thought to himself as Bill Jeffson's words came back to him, that diamond, if it was worth as much as he thought it must be, would make a good deal of difference to Connie. It was one thing for him to ask her to marry him when she was without means or friends, but it would be different now she had plenty of money and the means of going home and living the life that was suitable for one of her birth. The old General, if he had lived and had found the diamond, would have principally valued his good luck because it would have given him the means of sending Connie home; and he would have been right to have done so. Red Shirt Rush was not a fit place for her, and its inhabitants, who lived dull sordid lives, and whose only ambition was to be successful in their grubbing for diamonds, were not fit society for her. Yet Charlie felt doubtful whether he was fit for any better life than he was leading, and if he persuaded her to marry him he would keep her down to something like it.

Should he leave it to her to decide? Was not he somewhat premature in settling whether or no it would be for her good to marry him when he had no reason to believe that she would accept him?

But Jeffson's words came back to his mind. People would say that it was a shame if he persuaded a girl—she was only a girl—into such a disadvantageous marriage; it would be taking advantage of her want of knowledge of the world. And as he saw that, as a matter of honour, he ought not to ask her to marry him, he began to feel more confident of his chances with her, and he felt it all the harder to give them up.

He had hardly come to any decision when he arrived at Jim Heap's house. Jim Heap was standing at the door, and he came out to meet him, and began to tell him about Connie, who was knocked up by the grief and shock of the last few days, and was in bed in a feverish state. Charlie listened to him, and then told the story of his find, and showed Jim Heap the diamond.

"Bless me! if this start don't beat anything I have ever seen, and I have been digging since gold was first found in Australia, and seen one or two queer freaks of fortune! Fancy, now, the old General was just getting on to the bit of luck he was always talking about, when he was killed! Seems something like fate in it all, don't it? Well, I suppose you are right; this diamond belongs to Connie right enough. I was telling her she was a bit of an heiress, as she had got that ground—not that I thought it was worth anything, but I wanted to cheer her up, and make her think that she wasn't under any obligation that she couldn't pay for in coming to me; but it turns out that she is an heiress after all."

"I suppose she will go home now, as that's what her father would have liked?" said Charlie.

"Go home? I never thought of that; but now you say so it's pretty clear to me that would be right. She has some relations at home, and now she has money they will be civil enough to her; and that stone means money. Nobody knows what a big stone like that is worth—it's 250 carats, I'd like to bet; and now things are a bit brisker, I guess some of these big dealers would give as much as twenty thousand pounds for it, and make fifty per cent, out of their money."

"Twenty thousand pounds? Yes, you bet it's worth all that," said Charlie; and as he looked at the diamond he thought how it was fated to blast all his hopes. Jim Heap, he saw, was at once of the opinion that it was best for her to go home, and every one else would think so too. She was lost to him unless he did an unfair thing.

"Poor girl! it won't take her grief away," said Jim; "and maybe she won't like leaving us all 'cause she has never known any better place; but, after a bit, she will know what a good turn you have done her in finding this big 'un for her. It's lucky that one or two men I know on this digging didn't find it instead of you, my boy, or Connie would have been none the richer for it. Will you come in and give it her yourself? She is asleep now, but I will tell my missis to wake her up; it's something worth being woke up for."

"No, don't wake her up—let her sleep, and you tell her about it when she is better. Maybe it will only excite her now;

you had better keep it," Charlie answered, and he walked back to his tent to sit by himself, and think over his future and Connie's, and how the wonderful find he had made that afternoon would alter it.

By the next day the news of the find was all over the camp, and spread up and down the river, and to Kimberley, where it excited much interest amongst buyers and dealers, who discussed the news of the find, and discounted it and speculated as to how much such a diamond would be worth, and who could afford to buy. Connie was one of the last to hear the news, for, as the day went on, she got worse, and the next morning Charlie met the Barkly doctor coming from Jim Heap's with rather a bad report to give of her. She had an attack of fever. There was a good deal of it about down the river that year, and her trouble and the shock she had sustained had made it worse, and it would be some time before she could be told of her good luck.

"It seems hard that her father shouldn't have lived to see his luck turned, poor old fellow!" the doctor said to Charlie; "but his daughter will be able to go home now and be educated; that's what he always talked about. I remember his saying that he felt troubled to think that she was growing up out here, and he had hoped to have made something out of his claims before."

"Yes, she will be able to go home, of course; that's what she ought to do," Charlie answered, with something of regret in his voice; "but the place will seem strange without her."

"Yes, the old General and pretty little Connie were quite features in the place, weren't they? They introduced an element you don't often see in a digging; but they were both out of place, if you come to think of it; and it's a good thing that, thanks to you, she can get out of it. It would have been a pity if she had married some river-digger, and lived all her life away from civilisation and out of society. It's bad enough for a man, but it's worse for a woman."

Charlie was inclined to think the doctor a conceited ass, who gave himself airs because he was a professional man, and had come out from home, and thought the country where he made his living not good enough for him. Still, he had said what every one else was saying, that Connie ought to go home. There was no doubt about it; he ought to give up all his hopes of winning her. That big diamond had made all the difference; she belonged properly to a different world from the one in which he would have to live his life, and it would be mean and treacherous to the memory of his old friend, her father, if he hindered her from going back to it. He cursed the chance, which had thrown all his plans out of gear, and wished that his partner, Bill Jefferson, had found that diamond, or fate had not placed it in the General's claim in order to mock him. He wondered whether Connie really did care for him; how sweet the idea of working for her and protecting her had been! Now she did not want his work or protection, and the best thing he could do would be to clear off. The idea of going away took hold of him; it seemed to him that flight was the bravest course he could take. There was some fairly good news from the Transvaal gold-fields just then, and he thought he would go up there.

That morning, as he was working at his claim, his partner, who had been across the river, turned up in a state of irritation which he appeared to think praiseworthy and just.

"You're a clever chap you are!" he snarled out, after he had looked with disgust for some time at Charlie working in the claim; "but you're too clever by half; they are all talking about you at the canteen over the river, and a precious fool they think you, though they say you acted very straight. When I told 'em that your game was to marry the girl, and get the diamond back that way, Higgins, the law agent, said that it wasn't likely, and that he believed the law would prevent it, 'cause she was a minor, and would be made a ward of the Court, and that it would be a shame if she were to marry the likes of you, and that of course she would go home; and every one agreed with him except Luney White. Why, Higgins, he said that he doubted whether you would get a farthing for having found the diamond, as the High Court, which will have to administer the estate, won't have any power to grant it. There won't be as much as a drink stood over that diamond—think of that now—the best stone ever found down the river; and not so much as a glass of square face or Cape smoke stood over it. Oh, it makes me sick!"

Charlie told him that if he ever said anything about his wanting to stop Connie going home he would give him the worst thrashing he ever had in his life, for it was a lie. Of course she ought to go away from Red Shirt, and he knew it, and he seemed so much in earnest that Bill Jefferson thought it prudent to lurch away, comforting himself with the reflection that his words had left a sting, and that Charlie would be punished for his foolishness about the diamond.

Ah, it was the same story all round; every one said she ought to go home; he must either stay there and see the last of Connie without telling her how much he loved her, or go away somewhere, and of the two alternatives the latter seemed to be the easier. He waited till he heard that Connie was better, and then early one morning he turned his back on Red Shirt, and set off to walk across the veldt to Kimberley.

Jim Heap, when he had heard of his intention to start off at once, could not understand it.

"There's nothing sticking out up there for a man without capital, and there is nothing to hurry off there for; I should have thought that you'd have waited till Miss Connie was well enough to see you; I don't think she will take it over well you're going off like this without saying good-bye; she'd like to say that, let alone saying thank you for finding it for her."

"There's no reason for her to thank me, it didn't give me any trouble to pick it up; and as for saying good-bye, you must say that for me. Tell her that I hope she will go home, as the old General always wished her, and that she'll be happy. I'd better clear off these Fields at once."

"You haven't been doing anything wrong—not been on the cross in any way? That Bill Jefferson hasn't been letting you in or getting you to go in for anything shady?" Jim Heap asked, for from experience a sudden necessity to leave a place was associated in his mind with a desire to get away from the jurisdiction of criminal courts.

"No, don't think that of me; I haven't been doing anything that's mean or dishonest, but I ain't sure I sha'n't if I stay

here," Charlie said, and, shaking Jim Heap's horny hand, he left him in a state of considerable bewilderment.

Jim Heap was right about Connie taking his sudden departure rather badly. When she was told the two pieces of news, she seemed far more surprised and hurt at Charlie's having left without saying good-bye to her than she was rejoiced to learn that she was the owner of one of the largest diamonds in the world, and seemed to think that the good luck had come too late now that her father was dead and could not rejoice over it. She did not say much about Charlie, but Jim Heap and his wife both thought that she was a good deal hurt about it. After she had first expressed her surprise at his having gone she rarely mentioned his name. She wanted some share of the price of the diamond, which sold for 20,000 pounds, to be given to him for finding it, but as she was a minor that was impossible. To the plan of her going home she made no objections, for though she looked forward to a change of life without much pleasure, she knew it was what her father would have wished; and one day, some weeks after the diamond was found, a crowd of diggers gave her a last cheer as Jim Heap drove her across the veldt to Barkly, where she was to meet the wife of the clergyman there, who was going home and had arranged to take her under her protection, and duly introduce her to her father's relations; and nothing was left of the General and Connie except the house in which they used to live and the claims where the big diamond was found; though their memory will live and their story will be told so long as diamonds are dug for on the banks of the Vaal River.

After some months, Charlie came back from the gold-fields on foot, for he had found, as Jim Heap prophesied, that there was nothing much sticking out for him up there. He came back with empty pockets and worn-out boots, but he did not seem sickened of the chances of digging, or had not the energy to try anything else, for he turned to his old occupation again. Fortune thought fit to do him a good turn, as it did to many others down the river that year. The Vaal that winter became unusually shallow, and the diggers who went to work in its bed, as they do when they can get at it, found very well. When the river came down again, Charlie had found a nice lot of diamonds which he sold for eight hundred pounds, and, rather to the surprise of every one who knew him, he announced his intention of going for a run home. Maybe he would never have another chance, he said, and he would like to know a little bit more of the world than South Africa. The truth was that he felt a longing to know something about the world in which Connie would live; not that he supposed there was any chance of his seeing her—he did not want to see her, he told himself. So he took his passage home, and in a few weeks found himself in London.

After a few weeks of the round of theatres, race meetings, and sight-seeing, which colonists generally go in for, he began to feel half tired and bored with it all. The feeling of being alone in a crowd chilled him, as it does those who have always lived in a small community, and he began to feel something that was very like home-sickness. He was delighted when he came across any one he had known on the Diamond Fields, even finding himself pleased to talk to men whom at the mine he had rather disliked and avoided. He was in this state of mind when he met one Brown, a man whom out there he had always looked upon as an ass. Mr Brown was equally lonely and in want of a companion; he was about to set out on a Continental trip; and though he doubted whether Charlie was not a little too colonial to be a desirable travelling companion, still he thought that it would be better to get him to go with him than travel by himself, so they agreed to travel together, and started for the regulation Rhine and Switzerland trip. Mr Brown's misgivings as to Charlie were confirmed by his conduct. He hadn't got the mind for travel, and took nothing in. He was all very well on the Diamond Fields, but he ought to have stopped there, was the opinion expressed to himself of Charlie after they had travelled together for two days. On the Rhine steamer his disgust reached a climax. Charlie showed his hopeless ignorance by saying that the Rhine reminded him of the Vaal River, and he seemed to take more interest in that grovelling fancy than in anything he saw. He refused to listen to Mr Brown's stories from Murray about the castles and islands he was passing by, nor did he seem to care to have the special beauties of the scenery pointed out to him—for Mr Brown had a nice taste for Nature—but he sat silent and stupid. To tell the truth, his thoughts were far away amongst old familiar scenes. He seemed to see the hut by the river, to hear the swish of the diggers' cradles and Kaffirs jabbering at their work, and Connie's silvery laugh as she ran along the bank to her father's claim. That scene had come back to his mind twenty times a day since he had left Africa.

"Did you see that pretty girl who got in at Boppart? You don't see that sort of woman in Africa. There she is, sitting opposite, next to that white-haired old buffer. Oh, what a fellow you are! you won't take an interest in anything," Mr Brown was saying when Charlie woke up from his day-dream, and looking across the deck he saw Connie sitting opposite. She was at the same time wonderfully altered, and yet her old self. The battered old straw hat and the old bright-coloured frock bought at the Barkly store in celebration of one of the General's meagre finds, which Charlie remembered so well, were replaced by soft deftly-made garments, and she had grown even more beautiful than she promised to be; but Charlie knew her at once, and as he saw her she looked round, and a joyous look of recognition came into her face. In a second he was shaking hands and was being introduced (as Mr Langdale, who was a great friend of ours in South Africa, and who found my diamond for me) to a white-haired gentleman and an elderly, somewhat grim-looking lady, who eyed him rather dubiously, as if they were inclined to doubt whether acquaintances made on the Diamond Fields were very desirable ones; but neither Connie nor Charlie troubled themselves much about them.

"What made you go to the gold-fields without waiting to say good-bye to me?" Connie said to him when they were able to talk without being overheard.

Charlie looked rather uncomfortable, and began to tell some story of a party who were going to start and would not wait, when Connie interrupted him.

"If I thought you had had no better reason than that I should forgive you; as it is, I don't think I shall unless you tell me something I want to know. You remember the day of the accident;" and a tear came into her eyes as the terrible memory of her father's death came back to her. "Well, you remember on that day we were talking together under the trees, you and I: you were just going to tell me something when I was called away. Can you remember now what it was you were going to say?"

Of course he could remember, and once for all the heroic resolutions he had made and tried to act upon utterly broke down.

"I suppose I must tell my cousins about this," Connie said, after they had talked for some time, as she glanced in the direction of the gentleman and lady she was travelling with, who were regarding them with looks of surprise and disapproval. "They are my guardians, and perhaps they mayn't like it; but they know I always have my own way, and I think you might have known that too."

She was right, they didn't like it; but she in the end had her own way, and some twelve months after their meeting a digger of Red Shirt, who was reading a tattered English newspaper at the canteen, came across an advertisement of the marriage of Charles, son of the late Charles Langdale, of the Griqualand West Civil Service, to Constance, daughter of the late John Stanley (late Captain —th Light Infantry), which after much debate was interpreted to mean that Charlie had married the old General's daughter after all.

Story 8.

A Duel at "Poker."

Nobody on the Diamond Fields quite knew the beginning of the ill-feeling between Dr Gorman and Mr Bowker.

It had existed, as far as any one could remember, from the early days of the Fields, and had been increased and intensified by a hundred matters of grievance. It is only in a small community, where there is not much change of thought, and where a fresh face is not very often seen, that bitter personal hatred can grow luxuriantly, and the rancorous ill-will between those two men had become part of themselves, adding a sort of enjoyment to their lives, and influencing many of their actions. Men knew and counted upon the fact that one of them would oppose the other in every possible way, and those who were on bad terms with the one could always reckon on the support and friendship of the other.

It was as much owing to their being respectively directors of the Long Hope and the New Colonial Mining Companies, as to anything else, that the disastrous litigation, which eventually swamped both companies, broke out and was carried on to the bitter end. It was owing to some one suggesting to Bowker that it was the cherished ambition of Dr Gorman to represent Kimberley in the House of Assembly, that the former first took to politics, and began that distinguished public career which we at the Diamond Fields believed was attracting the attention of Europe, while the latter, who had no more ambition to become a member of the Legislative Assembly than to be a bishop, when his enemy issued his address, at once came forward and began to canvass the constituency on his own account.

That election was memorable in the annals of the Diamond Fields for years, and was fought with a spirit which a journal that made a good thing out of it said was creditable to both parties, and bore witness to the healthy vitality of the Diamond Fields. Money was thrown about with a splendid recklessness, and some men, who had the foresight to put their Kaffir workmen on the register, made a good thing out of the rise in the value of free and independent voters.

There was no other candidate who stood a ghost of a chance while there were two seats, so the fight between the two was only for the honour of being senior member, but it was none the less brisk on that account. Bowker won, and then both parties got up petitions against each other's return on account of gross bribery and corruption, and succeeded in turning each other out.

From that day they were the prominent leaders in local politics, in fact they helped to form the two parties who became the Guelphs and Ghibbelines of the Diamond Fields.

Bowker was supposed to own the 'Assagai,' a satirical journal that had a stormy existence for some months, and the doctor was believed to have found the money for the 'Knobkerri,' and to have imported its editor, a broken-down London journalist, whose power of invective, until he matured the incipient delirium tremens he brought out with him, was the terror of Mr Bowker and his party.

When the former journal devoted a series of articles to the doctor's former life, and to the incidents connected with the suspicious death of his half-aunt, Bowker was believed to have inspired the attack; while the biography of Bowker, giving a graphic account of his being tarred and feathered on the Ovens Gold Field in Australia, in connection with a charge of petty theft, which sent up the circulation of the 'Knobkerri' to a figure never before or afterwards reached by a newspaper on the Diamond Fields, was put down to the doctor. Bowker, who achieved a great reputation in colonial politics by his command of language, saying "that he recognised the contemptible handiwork of the medical assassin's dastardly brain." The enmity between these two men increased with the prosperity of the Diamond Fields, but did not go down with the shares when the bad times came.

Through good times and bad the feud between them became more bitter. When things were at their worst, the one felt that the other's bad fortune made up to a certain extent for his own. When things began to mend, Bowker felt that his satisfaction at finding himself on the breast of the wave of returning prosperity was diminished by seeing his old enemy floating in with him. But with Bowker's shares the doctor's house property rose in value, and when at length the latter, having become weary of the dust of the Fields, determined to shake it off his feet for ever, and return home, he felt that the knowledge that he was leaving Bowker behind him a prosperous man, who in a year or two would follow him with a larger fortune, spoilt much of his self-satisfaction.

Bowker, on the other hand, heard with considerable chagrin of the other's intended departure; he felt that in a way he would miss him, and thought that life would be dull now there was little chance of seeing his enemy come to grief, and now it seemed certain on the whole that his career on the Diamond Fields might be summed up as a successful one.

One evening some days before Gorman was to leave Kimberley, he was with some of us in the card-room of the club.

We had been playing some mild game of limited loo. We were discussing whether we should go on playing or leave off, no one taking much interest in the game, when Bowker came into the room with a look in his face which showed that he had been taking a fair amount of drink. At that time he was not on speaking terms with Gorman, but for all that, as he came into the room he stared more at him than any one else, and seemed to speak to him when he asked what game we were playing.

"Limited loo! call that a game! No one has got the pluck to play now-a-days. Now I wouldn't mind having a bit of a gamble to-night, but I ain't come down to limited loo," he said with a loud laugh, and a sneer at the doctor.

"What do you want to play?" Gorman said, speaking to Bowker, rather to the surprise of those who were present.

"Well, I'd play a game of poker if any one would sit down who knew how to play, as wasn't afraid of the game," Bowker growled out.

"I know how to play, and I'm not afraid of the game either, Mr Bowker," the doctor answered quietly enough, but with a note in his voice that some of us believed meant mischief.

The rest of us did not offer to join in the play, from the first we fancied it would be a pretty warm game. It was anything but a friendly one, for it seemed to be rather a duel than a mere gamble, and we felt sure that when the two men sat down at the table, each one promised himself that if he could manage it, the other should look back with considerable regret to that little game of poker.

The two men were a great contrast to each other. Bowker was a heavy, coarse-looking, bull-necked man of over six feet high, with a straggling yellow beard growing over his huge red cheeks and jowls. Gorman was a slight, dark man, clean shaven except a twisted moustache, with a pair of sharp black eyes. Both men occasionally played high, though they were not habitual gamblers, and the lookers-on expected to see some sensational playing.

"What do you say to making the blind five pounds?" said the doctor, as he sat down and smiled at his opponent.

"Thought you weren't afraid of the game! but you know what you can afford," the other answered.

"Ten if you like," said the doctor, and then the game began.

For some time the luck ran with provoking evenness; both parties backed their hands with considerable freedom, but after a couple of hours' play neither had lost or won very much.

It happened that they both had a considerable sum in notes, which first collected before one player and then went across to the other. We watched the money pass from player to player, and waited for the more serious period of the game, when one party would have come to the end of his ready money, and play on credit would have begun. After a bit they increased the amount of the blind to thirty pounds, then to a hundred. First one player would be some hundred pounds to the good, then the other would get a turn of luck which would wipe it out again. For a long time they played without what is called a meet occurring; that is to say, when one happened to hold a good hand, the other generally held nothing.

"Hanged if the rent of Gorman's buildings mustn't be going up a bit, since you're man enough to play that game. What do you put your pile at?" Bowker had said, when the other had suggested the last increase of the blind.

"Gorman's buildings are worth about as much as twenty thousand pounds' worth of stock in the Long Hope Company, are not they, Brown?" the doctor said, turning round to a share and estate agent who was looking on at the game.

"Gorman's buildings would fetch twenty-five thousand to-morrow, and we all know the market price of Long Hope," Brown answered.

"Well, play away and hold your jaw. I ain't afraid of you and your damned shanties," Bowker answered.

After this change of remarks neither party said another word, except about the game. We, as we looked on, realised that there was more than mere gamblers' greed in the savage hard look in their eyes. They were anxious to ruin one another, rather than to win money; the hatred of a dozen years seemed to find a vent in that game. The amount that Bowker held in the Long Hope Company was known to be about equal to the price put upon Gorman's buildings, a row of offices near the mine; so the terms on which they met were quite fair. As hour after hour passed the game went on, neither party winning or losing much, but each in turn being to the good. They were both fine players, the doctor the more cautious of the two, while Bowker had on the whole the best luck, which carried him through one or two attempts to win by sheer force of bluffing. As the doctor looked into the mask of red flesh opposite him, he for some time found nothing there to give any clue as to the sort of hand his opponent held; but in the small hours of the morning he began to notice that every now and then the veins in his face would seem to swell, and his breathing would become harder. The luck just then was rather in the doctor's favour, and after he had won several stakes he was able to diagnose his opponent's symptoms of intense excitement pretty satisfactorily. When Bowker had a strong hand he would back it without showing these signs, but when he was in doubt, and backing his hand for more than it was worth, they would appear.

"You had better not try that on again, it's not good for your health, and worse for your pocket, you will find, my friend," the doctor said to himself, as he dealt out the cards, determined that before long he would utilise the piece of knowledge which he fancied he had acquired.

For some time after that, however, Bowker got hand after hand that there was no resisting, and the doctor's winnings were reduced to nothing.

It was getting on into the morning, but the club was still kept up, and several members stayed on watching the

sensational game played out. At last the doctor took up a hand of three knaves, a king, and an ace, doubled the blind, and then changed the king and the ace, getting a queen and another knave. He had four knaves, but he had the best possible four, for he held a queen and had thrown away a king and an ace. Unless Bowker held a straight flush (that is to say, a sequence of the same suit) he could not hold as good a hand. Bowker had taken one card, and his heavy coarse face showed no sign. The betting went up at first gradually, then by leaps and bounds till it came to a thousand pounds.

There was no limit to the amount that could be staked, but the game of poker played on the Diamond fields only allowed a player to raise the amount at one time to double what had already been staked.

"Make it a thousand, that's a good bit of your street," Bowker said coolly enough.

"Two," said the doctor.

"Four," answered Bowker.

The doctor began to wonder whether after all Bowker might not have a straight flush, but just then he felt sure that he saw the signs in his face he had noticed before.

"Eight," said the doctor, and there was an expression in his bright eyes that meant danger, as he looked into the other's face.

Bowker stared at his hand for some seconds, before, in a husky voice, he said—

"Sixteen. That's about all your shanties are worth," he added, seeming to gain courage.

"How much did you say, Brown—twenty-four thousand five hundred? Make it that; that's the amount of my street and your shares, Bowker," Gorman said, and we all noticed the tone of malice in his voice, which had kept calm and emotionless all through the play.

For a second or two Bowker did not answer. He looked like an elephant which had received its death-wound, so a man who had just come down from the Zambesi said.

"Twenty-four thousand five hundred. Well, I will make it up to that and go." Then he stopped, as if he realised he had about got to the end of his tether.

Not only the doctor, but every one in the room, felt pretty sure that he had a bad hand, and that the finish of the game had come.

Every face was turned to Bowker; the lookers-on wondering what he would do, and how he would take his bad luck. For a second he seemed to be trying to think. Then a dazed look came into his face, and he half stood up, and then fell heavily forward, bringing the table down with him. There was a paraffin lamp on the table, which smashed as it fell, and in a second the cloth and table was blazing. There was a rush forward of the men looking on. Bowker was lifted on to a sofa, and a doctor, who on his way home from a case had dropped into the club, seeing it open, began to attend to him.

"By Jove! the place will be burnt down!" some one cried, and some men rushed out of the room to get water, while others tried to put out the fire with rugs.

Gorman stood holding his cards in his hand, looking first at his opponent and then at the blazing card-table.

"Well, how are we going to play this out? This is a damn pretty thing," he said. He did not care about Bowker's state of health, nor did he care whether the building were burnt down or not.

"See here, where are his cards? we have got to see this out. Twenty-four thou, is no laughing matter. He never raised, so we had better show our cards. What's he got?" Gorman said, as he stood with his cards in hand.

The fire was put out. Bowker was on the sofa looking rather bad, but the doctor seemed to be perfectly careless about everything except the stake he felt sure he had won.

"Never mind about the game, man, now; maybe the poor fellow will never get round," one of the men who was looking at Bowker said.

"Beg pardon, but I do care about the game; it's all very well his going into a fit, but that don't alter the fact that we've got to play this out. Where are his cards?"

"You want to see his hand, do you? Well, there you are," some one said, holding up a charred mass which was all there was left of the cloth that had been on the table, or the rest of the cards, except the four knaves and a queen which Gorman held in his hand.

Gorman looked at it for a second, and then with an oath he threw his own cards on to the floor.

"Four knaves and a queen, and I had at first an ace and a king. So I must win with them."

"The question is, what had Bowker? He don't look like telling you, and nobody else knows; besides, the game has not been played out. It's a draw," said one of the on-lookers, and this speech brought a murmur of consent from the others.

Gorman gathered up his cards and showed them to the company. Then he said no more, but watched Bowker, who

seemed to be coming to.

"Look here, what was your hand?" he asked, when the latter seemed to be sensible.

Bowker, however, did not answer the question, and it was some months before he could be induced to talk about that game. Until Gorman left the Fields his mind was a blank on the subject.

The story went, however, that he was induced to tell in confidence the story of that night's play to a particular friend.

He had held three aces and two kings. Not a very good hand, but one worth backing for a little. Gorman, however, had taken him up, and instead of throwing up his hand, he had determined to bluff. He had originally held a queen, so he knew that Gorman could not hold four of aces, kings, or queens. He could remember getting to the end of his tether, and finding Gorman sticking to him like grim death; and then he could remember no more. It was only after Gorman had left for England that this story was told. Some people shrug their shoulders and laugh when they talk of that fit which Bowker had, and they say that under the circumstances it was the best thing he could have done. But the doctor who attended him knows it was real enough, and so does Gorman, who saw it coming on.

Story 9.

"A Whiskey Drinker."

The 'Queen's Hotel,' Kimberley, was doing a roaring trade. The bar was one dense mass of thirsty men, struggling to get served with splits and other drinks. The large dining-room, out of which the tables had been taken, was crowded. People from all parts of the colony were there. Dutch Afrianders from the western province, Englishmen from the east; colonial soldiers; officers of the Cape Mounted Rifles, and mounted police officers from the frontier; merchants from Capetown and Port Elizabeth, and visitors from every part of South Africa. Besides these visitors there was every sort of Diamond-Field man represented. The honest digger—the expression is considered out there the correct one to use, though if it be your lot to have much dealing with the mining element of South Africa you will wonder how it came into vogue—with his broad-brimmed hat and big beard and bad language is making himself conspicuous as he generally does, wherever he be. The diamond-buyers, licensed and unlicensed, gentlemen of the Jewish persuasion for the most part, given as a rule to wearing much of their stock-in-trade on their hands, and indulging in that shiny smartness of dress so dear to the race; the latter, the unlicensed and unlawful dealers in diamonds, wearing in their eyes that restless uneasy look that is peculiar to those classes who are liable at any moment to find themselves involved in an embarrassing and one-sided misunderstanding with the police. There were merchants, speculators, lawyers, doctors, and civil servants there. About some men who took rather a prominent position there was the unmistakable betting man's look; and they gave one the idea that they would be at home in the ring at any English race meeting. The occasion was the drawing of the lotteries for the forthcoming races, and as times had been good, and money was plentiful, sovereigns were flowing in very quickly to the men who were giving out the chances. I was looking on smoking when I recognised a slight, good-looking man who was taking a ticket in the lottery. His name was Jack Harman, an ex-officer in the army, who had been a digger on the Diamond Fields, had married and settled in the colony.

"How is it you're up here?" I said to him as I shook hands with him. "A married man like you ought not to be wandering about the country."

"You're right—wish to goodness I was at home, for the missis is ill; but I have to look after my horses up here."

"Well, I suppose your horse Marmion is a certainty for the cup, eh?" I said. "Up here they think the race is over."

"All I can say is, that it isn't, I wish it were, for it's a rich prize, and goodness knows I want the money badly enough."

Just then a dark-bearded man pushed past Jack Harman, and as he did so gave him a look of recognition which the latter answered by a blank stare.

"Who's that?—who's your friend?" I asked him.

"That is one of the blackest-hearted scoundrels unchanged; he is a sort of fellow you read about in a book; Solomon Muzada is his name, and he is one of the greatest enemies I have. Do you know that brute wanted to marry my wife; it's an infernal cheek because there is a touch of the tar-brush in him. Dutchman, Jew, and nigger—it's a nice breed, isn't it? Of course she wouldn't look at him, and since our marriage he has been our enemy. There was a mortgage on Laurie's Kloof, on which I ought to have paid the interest, but didn't; well he has bought it, and by Jove he is going to sell us up. He has sworn he will make a bankrupt of me, and I believe he will do it. Do you hear that? I have drawn a horse Storm Drum. By George, that's a rum thing!" he added, as he caught something which the steward of the races, who was managing the drawing, had shouted out. "Look here, are you going to do anything about the races, because don't make any bets till you have seen me. I must see about the selling," he said as he went off.

A steward had got upon one of the tables, upon which a desk had been put, and was about to sell the chances. Anglo-Indians or South Africans need no explanation of a selling lottery, but to some Englishmen an explanation may be given. After the lotteries have been drawn the chances of the different horses are sold by auction; any one present is allowed to bid, but in perhaps the generality of cases the owners of horses buy the chances, this being the best way of backing their horses to win a good amount. The highest bidder has to pay the amount of his bid twice over, once to the owner of the ticket that drew the horse, and again he has to pay it into the pool. The latter money, of course, he gets back again, together with the amount collected for the tickets and the prices paid for the other chances if the horse whose chance he bought wins. After the chance of some outsider had been sold for a few pounds the steward, who was acting as auctioneer, shouted out that the next chance to be sold was Marmion. "Gentlemen, Captain

Harman's Marmion, and three hundred and four pounds in the pool."

The sporting division began to make calculations in their betting-books, and to be all on the alert to learn what those who knew most about it thought of the horse's chance.

I watched Jack Harman carefully. "Poor beggar, he wants money badly! I hope he will be able to buy Marmion's chance cheap," I thought to myself, as I noticed the expression on his face. As I looked away from him I saw Solomon Muzada, the man Jack had told me about; he also was watching Jack, and I believe, from the devilish smile that was playing round his coarse, thick lips, that he too read the expression I saw.

"Captain Harman's Marmion, three hundred and four pounds in the pool," the steward cried out, and the bidding began.

Some one bid twenty pounds, some one thirty, thirty-five, forty, fifty, sixty, a hundred; then the bidding steadied, and went up a pound at a time till a hundred and fifty was reached.

"That's all it will go for," said a bookmaker near me; "it's buying money to give more."

He was wrong though; a hundred and ninety was reached before only two bidders were left—one was Jack Harman, the other was Solomon Muzada.

"Going at one hundred and ninety, three hundred pounds in the pool," said the steward.

"Ninety-one," cried out Jack Harman.

"Ninety-two," snarled out Solomon Muzada.

"Three."

"Bah! what's the good, I bid five," said Muzada.

Jack Harman seemed to be doing a sum in mental arithmetic then, he shrugged his shoulders and walked away, letting Marmion's chance be knocked down to Solomon Muzada.

"See, that is done to spite me; he'd do anything to prevent me winning any money, the brute! I'll sell him though. If Mr Muzada thinks I keep horses in training to win money for him he makes a mistake," Harman said, as he came up to me; then raising his voice he turned to Muzada, who was standing near: "Well, what do you expect to make by this? You're pretty clever to buy a horse against an owner, but you'll find if it wasn't worth my while to pay for the horse's chance it wasn't worth yours."

"Ah! this is the Captain who is such an honourable gentleman, and he says he will humbug me, and not let his horse win because I bought the lottery," Muzada sneered; "but I tink the honourable Captain can't afford to throw away the stakes, so that's why I buy Marmion's chance."

"You think I can't afford to lose the stakes—well, you will find out whether I can afford that; all I say is, that you sha'n't win money by my horse."

"Your horse! well, he won't be your horse long, you will have to sell him after the race. You're a nice man to own horses—a beggar like you; you will be sold up soon after the race is over. I will buy your horse then."

"That depends on others as well as you, for the horse will be sold by public auction; but stop, since you have bought the horse's lottery you had better buy him now at once, you shall have him with his engagements for fifteen hundred pounds, he is worth more to you than to any one else."

Muzada looked eagerly at Harman as he made this suggestion. He had set his mind on buying Marmion after the race, and he thought he might as well buy him before. He could not quite understand why Jack was willing to sell to him. The price mentioned seemed not to be very much, considering that the horse was sure to win the race the next day; so some of the purchase money would come back.

"Don't be a fool, the horse is worth more than that," another owner of race-horses whispered to Jack.

Muzada heard the whisper, and that determined him; after haggling for some time about the price he came to terms with Jack.

"What have you done that for? it seems to me you would have done better to have secured the stakes before you sold the horse," I said to Jack, after the sale had been completed.

"I don't think Marmion is going to win that race; it was not certain before, it certainly isn't now," Jack answered, somewhat to my mystification.

"Why, what's to beat him?" I asked; "what can?"

"There is one that can beat him if he liked, and that's the horse that I have drawn—Storm Drum."

I looked at Jack in surprise. Storm Drum was owned by a Kimberley canteen-keeper, who had bought him after the races the year before. He had gained an evil reputation by his savage temper, and had never started for a race without distinguishing himself by some display of vice. On one occasion he had shown a tendency towards indulging in the luxury of human flesh, having taken a large bite out of the leg of a jockey riding another horse.

"Surely you don't mean that you believe that brute can have a chance?" I asked incredulously.

"It's all chance. If he took it into his head to try it would be a certainty. You needn't tell me all you know about him, you seem to forget that he was in our stable; he belonged to Markham of Port Elizabeth, and I won a race on him in Natal, and have ridden him often enough. He was a better horse than Marmion, in fact he is the best horse that ever came out to this country, only he is such an untrustworthy brute."

I shook my head. Jack Harman knew a good deal more about racing than I did, still I could not help feeling that his anger with Muzada was making him act rashly; and I was still more of this opinion after I had been present at an interview between them next morning. Muzada was standing at the bar of the 'Queen's Hotel,' swaggering about the good bargain he had made with Jack, and the folly of the latter in selling out of pique, when Jack came in. Some one asked him if he was going to ride in the Kimberley Cup the next day.

"Yes, I am; I ride Storm Drum," Jack answered.

Muzada burst out laughing. The horse's eccentricities were so well-known, that he thought with pleasure how the man he hated was certain to look ridiculous.

"So, Captain, you are going to ride; how much will you bet that you ever get round the course?" said Muzada, talking to Jack in his free and easy way, which I knew made my friend's blood boil. "Come, you had better put your pride in your pocket, and ride for *me*," he added, as it occurred to him that this would annoy Jack.

"Thank you, but it is bad enough that you should own a thoroughbred horse, let alone that a white man should ride for you," Jack answered with a glance at the other's dark skin, which was full of meaning.

Muzada looked for a second or two as if he were thinking of hitting Jack, then thinking better of it he pretended not to understand the allusion.

"Well, who would like to back Captain Harman's mount? I will bet ten to one against Storm Drum, even though this famous gentleman jockey does ride for Pat Brady."

"How much will you lay it to?" Jack asked.

There was a gleam in Muzada's eyes as he heard this question.

"To a good deal more than you can afford to pay," he answered, thinking to himself that Jack was going mad.

The idea of Storm Drum's having any chance of winning the race seemed too absurd to be entertained for a minute; and Muzada thought that Jack had realised that he was likely soon to become ruined, and had become desperate.

Jack Harman said nothing, and I whispered to him a warning not to do anything rash.

"Come, I have some money to give you for Marmion, after we have settled the bills I hold; well, I will lay you ten to one to that."

"That's four hundred pounds. Well, I will take four thousand to four hundred," Jack answered in the same quiet voice.

Muzada looked a little surprised; he evidently thought that Jack was mad with annoyance. The idea of winning what he had every reason to believe was Jack's last four hundred pounds in the world was very sweet to him. There were one or two men present, who were fairly good judges, and their expressions seemed to tell Muzada that they thought Jack was mad.

"It's a bet," he said, as he wrote it down in his book.

"Why on earth have you thrown that money away?" I asked Jack, as I followed him into the street.

"It's not thrown away yet," he answered; "and I never could get as much money bet against the horse by any one else; he only does it because he knows that if I lose it will about break me."

"Well, why should you be broke, why not keep your money in your pocket?" I insisted rather wearisomely, for it was not much use lecturing my friend when the mischief was done.

"Look here, I am going to win on Storm Drum. Take my advice and take ten to one or eight to one for the matter of that. You see, it's like this," Jack said, as he noticed my expression, "these races are my last chance of winning some money, so as to prevent that black scoundrel from selling me up. When I married I hadn't much of my own, as you know, and though my wife owned the farm and the homestead, it was mortgaged a good bit. Instead of paying off the mortgage we have let matters go from bad to worse, and have taken things easily enough until we found that Muzada had been quietly getting hold of all the paper I had put my name to, and of all the charges on our property. It was just the revenge that would please him, to make us beggars, and show my wife that she had married a spendthrift, who had wasted all she had and brought her to ruin. Muzada knew that I trusted to winning a fair stake with Marmion, and he came up here to prevent it. He would spend a good deal of money to stop me from winning enough to keep his claws off Laurie's Kloof. Well, I have determined to do my best to disappoint him. I have always had a sort of presentiment that some day or the other Storm Drum would surprise every one, and when I drew the horse in the lottery and no one bid the chance so that it was knocked down to me, the idea came into my head that my only chance of saving Laurie's Kloof was to trust to that uncertain gentleman. Imprudent you may say, well perhaps it is, but let me tell you this, that I know more about the horse than you do, and something tells me that it will be all right, and Mr Muzada will find out to his cost that he has burnt his fingers in meddling with my affairs."

I could do nothing but hope for the best, but I found it very difficult to feel much confidence in my friend's scheme coming off successfully; and that evening I watched Muzada and noticed that he was in a high state of delight, and was counting beforehand on the discomfiture of the enemy.

Racecourse scenes are like one another all the world over. The crowd at the grand stand was composed of much the same materials as the crowd at minor meetings at home. The principal difference probably would be, that on the colonial racecourse people know much more about one another than they do at home; and there is strong personal interest felt in the result of the races. The story of Jack Harman's having sold the horse to Muzada was well-known to every one on the course, and to a certain extent rather decreased the confidence felt in the favourite winning, though it was not easy to see what horse could beat him.

Jack Harman had been a digger on the Diamond Fields before he married and settled down in the colony, and a good many of his old friends invested a sovereign or two on the chances of the horse he had elected to ride, but very little hope was felt as to his chance. The local bookmakers, who had many a time won money from those who had put their trust in Storm Drum's good breeding, were anxious enough to lay odds against him again, although they had heard the story of Harman's sensational bet.

Pat Brady, who owned Storm Drum, was a short, thick-set, good-humoured little Irishman, who had often been subjected to a good deal of chaff on account of the way his horse would shut up and refuse to try a yard in public. At last he had sworn never to bet another farthing upon him, and had declared that after the Kimberley Cup he would sell him for what he would fetch. Jack Harman, however, seemed to have infected Pat with a good deal of his hopefulness.

"Sure then the Captain is going to do the trick to-day; those fellows won't be laughing about Storm Drum in half-an-hour's time, you'll find," he said to his friends, as the bookmakers joked him about his horse.

There were two or three other imported horses as well as Marmion, and one colonial-bred one who was thought to have a chance. I found myself standing on the top of the grand stand, next to Muzada, when the horses had gone down to the post, and I noticed with some pleasure that that gentleman did not seem to be enjoying himself very much. He was evidently thinking of the money he stood to lose on Storm Drum.

"Laid ten to one against him did you? well, if he tried it would be odds on him, but it's more than ten to one he don't try," a well-known colonial racing-man named Langford, whom I had just seen laying two hundred to fifty on Marmion, was saying to Muzada, as he looked through his race-glasses at the horses getting together at the starting-post.

"How is he behaving now—him?" said Muzada, with a scowl on his ugly face. He was not over comforted at the other's remarks. After all Jack Harman had not made such a bad bet, and he didn't like the way the horse was being backed by one or two others; nor was he pleased to hear that Pat Brady had recovered that confidence in the gay deceiver which of old cost him so dear.

"He is behaving himself wonderfully well; wait a bit though, and he will come out in his old character."

"Why, man, you look nervous," said the other; "never fear, your horse is sure to win."

Muzada looked gratified.

"I think the Captain will find he has humbugged himself this time; I think he'll have to walk down to the colony after the race," he said.

"They're off—it's a good start," said Langford, and we put up our glasses.

Jack Harman went straight to the front.

"Who's that leading?"

"Storm Drum."

"Storm Drum has bolted!" they were crying out.

"Devil a bit bolted. Jack thinks that to win at all he must take the lead and keep it, and, by Jove, he's right," said Langford. "But I have never seen him go like that before."

"How about Storm Drum now?" shouted out some one, as he came past the stand leading by twenty lengths.

"Ah, then, who's got the laugh this day?" Pat Brady cried out.

"There's lots of time for him to come out with his old tricks, but if he don't they won't catch him," said Langford.

Muzada snarled out a sentence hideous with blasphemy.

"Even if he wins his bet the triumph will have cost him something," I thought, as I looked at his ugly face, and saw how sick he looked as Storm Drum came along, the gap between him and the other horse rather increasing than decreasing.

"It's a race! Marmion wins!" shouted some one, as for a second the favourite looked dangerous.

"Not a bit of it; Storm Drum has the lot of 'em settled," said Langford as he put down his glasses; "he is on his good

behaviour for once, and he has made fools of us all.”

As Storm Drum came past the post, an easy winner, men began to remember how they had always said he was the best bred horse in South Africa, and better class than anything else out there, and generally to be wise after the event.

Muzada was not able to take his losses so philosophically. He got into a rage, swearing that he had been robbed, that Marmion had been got at, and that the whole thing was a swindle. Nobody sympathised with him very much, and even those who had lost their money found some consolation in his disappointment.

“So, you see, I was not so rash as you thought; but then I happened to know something about the horse that no one else knew,” said Jack Harman to me that evening. “When Tom Markham owned him we found out that he could not be depended upon, and after he had let us in once or twice we determined to get rid of him. One day, however, at Cradock races, a man came up to us and said he thought he could tell us something about the horse. He had been employed in a stable at home, where Blue Peter, Storm Drum’s sire, was trained. Blue Peter was just such another customer as his son, till somehow it was found out that he had a weakness for strong drink. His favourite tippie was whiskey, Irish whiskey, the older and better it was the more he liked it—it seemed to put heart in him, and after he took to drink he won race after race for them, and our informant suggested that the taste might be inherited. Well, we determined to give his idea a trial, and before Storm Drum started for the race he won in Natal, he had his half bottle of whiskey. It seemed to agree with him, for he went right away and won. A few weeks after that Markham went to grief, and had to bolt to South America, and Storm Drum was seized by his creditors. One or two men owned him before he came to Pat Brady, but they all burnt their fingers with him; for no one knew of his family failing, and as a Good Templar he didn’t turn out a success, but I always remembered what he could do if he liked, and when Muzada interfered with me I thought how I could sell him if I put Storm Drum on his good behaviour. Well, it came off all right, but I didn’t enjoy that ride; every moment I was afraid that the brute would stop dead, but thanks to Pat’s whiskey, he had won the race before he remembered himself. It’s the last bet I shall make in this country. I shall go back and look after the farm, and the missis, and the kids, now that I am out of Muzada’s clutches again.”

Jack Harman was as good as his word, and there is no steadier husband or better specimen of the colonial farmer than the ex-hussar. He lives happily at Laurie’s Kloof, and prosperous and well to do.

Story 10.

Jumped—A Tale of the Kimberley Races.

Chapter One.

It was in the flush times on the Diamond Fields; the days afterwards remembered, in the bad times which came so soon, with so much wondering regret. In those days every one had made money out of shares and confidently hoped to make much more. Shares and companies were talked about morning, noon, and night; and what more delightful topic for conversation could any one wish to have? for then almost every one held shares, and those shares, independently of what they were in or where the ground possessed by the company was situated, went up every hour, so that, except when a public benefactor did some thing unusually criminal or eccentric, so giving the Diamond Field public a subject for much interesting talk, no one discussed and no one wished to discuss anything else.

For a short time, however, when the mania was at its very height, shares became a subject of secondary interest, and as the topic of interest the Kimberley races took its place. With a characteristic unanimity and zest the public of the four camps began to talk, think, and speculate about the races. One would only hear scraps of conversation relating to weight for age, the rules of racing, and the performances of the imported horses, as one passed the open doors of bars and canteens.

The sporting division scented the carcass from afar, and thought with glee of the abundance of money there was in the camp and the enthusiasm for sport which had come over the public. The big event of the races was the Diggers’ Stakes, a handicap, for which the weights were out, and very little admiration was expressed for the wisdom of the stewards who had made it. What with those who knew something about racing and had games of their own to play, and those who knew nothing about it but, though honest and ignorant, were too self-important to stand aside and refrain from taking any part in it, they had made the handicapping a farce. Men said there were only two horses in it which had any chance—Mr Musters’ Our Boy, and Mr Saul Gideon’s The Pirate. They were both of them imported horses, and the former had won a race or two in England; both were four-year-olds. Besides these there was one other imported horse, Captain Brereton’s Kildare, and a good many colonial horses. Kildare was said to be lame, and the handicappers had not given the colonial horses a chance; in fact it was hardly a handicap at all, as two favourites carried not much more than weight for age. That evening Mr Saul Gideon had come into the Claimholders’ Club in Kimberley with a glare in his hard black eyes and a twitching of his claw-like hands that might well have warned any one who knew him that he was dangerous. Mr Gideon was a sport, not a sportsman—anything but that—but certainly a sport. In any pastime on which money could be risked by way of wagering he took an interest. Before the law put down those institutions he had, with great profit to himself, kept a gambling saloon. When prize-fights occurred every now and then, just over the border of the Free State (the P.R. is or was an institution on the Diamond Fields), he had much to do with getting them up, and sometimes would have much to do with settling their issue in a peaceable and humane manner before the men went into the ring. In fact there were few sporting frauds on the Diamond Fields but Saul Gideon had a finger in the pie. He probably only just could tell the difference between a dray-horse and a racer, but he was satisfied he was clever enough to hold his own and win money at racing, and perhaps with reason, for success such as he coveted requires rather a knowledge of men than of horses. The Claimholders’ Club was crowded with men who were talking about the races, and Mr Gideon had not to wait long before they began to discuss the event in which he was interested, the Diggers’ Stakes.

"Take my tip, boys," said Dr Buckeen, an Irish medical man much given to racing, who in his time had done a good deal to maintain in South Africa the character which some Irish sporting men have gained for themselves at home; "there is only one in it, that's The Pirate; never mind about Our Boy and the race he won at Sandown. I know all about it, I was there and saw, and after the race Lord Swellington, who owned the horses that ran second and third, came up to me and said, 'Buck, me boy'—all thim fellows call me Buck—'Buck, me boy,' me lord said, 'be crimes, that wore the biggest robbery I ever wore in.'"

"But Lord Swellington wouldn't say 'be crimes;' he is not an Irishman," said one of the doctor's audience.

"'Deed he did, though, to chaff me; the old divil is always chaffing me, we are like brothers."

"But, doctor, you could not have seen Our Boy win that race at Sandown; you weren't home that year," said another objector.

"Not home that year?" said the doctor, taken rather aback. "That's all you know about it. But never mind, what I say is that The Pirate will win the Diggers' Stakes."

"That's all you know about it, Buckeen," said a tall man with a red nose and a squint, who looked as if he were gazing at the bottles behind the bar, though he really was watching Mr Gideon.

"I will take a thousand to five hundred from any one," said Buckeen, who liked to talk loudly about bets which no one who knew him would think of taking from him or dream of his ever intending to pay.

"Not from me, Buckeen," said the tall man, whose name was Crotty, as he continued to squint hideously while he watched Mr Gideon.

Mr Crotty was remembering a little battle at the noble game of poker which he once engaged in with Mr Gideon. On that occasion he—Crotty—had been dealt four kings; and as at last they showed their hands after much money had been staked, Mr Gideon had said, "For the first time in my life, believe me—though I have played since I was a lad in California, in '49—four aces." And as he remembered this little episode in his life and watched Mr Gideon he hoped soon to be even with him.

"Bedad, I must go and see after me patients. I am just murdered be the work I have to do in me profession," said Buckeen, and he swaggered out of the club.

"Well, Mr Crotty," said Gideon when the doctor had gone, "what will you do about the stakes?"

"Even money against The Pirate," was Mr Crotty's answer.

"It is odds against my horse. Come, I will take two to one," said Gideon.

Mr Crotty only shook his head and asked Mr Gideon to take a drink with him, which offer the other excused himself from accepting on the plea that he had to go and see a man on business. "See you again in a half-an-hour or so," he said, as he left the club to visit several other places where betting men congregated.

However, he found there was not much to be done about his horse; betting men, like politicians, like to know how the cat jumps before they commit themselves to any great extent; and there was a tendency to wait a bit before doing much about "the Stakes."

After half-an-hour Mr Gideon returned to the Claimholders' Club, looking more restless and anxious than ever.

"Will you lay me six to four?" he asked Mr Crotty, who was still there.

"Even money," answered Crotty, who was a man of few words.

For a minute or two Mr Gideon said nothing, then he gulped down his drink, and clearing his throat, said:

"I hate fiddling about with one bet here and one bet there. Will you lay me a good big bet at even money?"

"I am not a millionaire, like you Diamond-Field men," answered Crotty, "but I will lay you an even thousand against The Pirate."

"I will take that," said Gideon.

Mr Crotty produced his betting-book and wrote down the bet.

"Will you double it?" said Gideon.

"You want to sell me up," said Crotty, "but I will double it," and again he wrote in his book.

Mr Gideon felt sure that Crotty would go on a little more, but something told him that he had better wait a bit. "I will see Nat first," he said to himself; and he left the club, followed by the inquiring glances of most of the men who were present, for the bet he had made was a large one and excited a good deal of interest.

When Mr Gideon left the club he got into a Cape cart, and was driven to an hotel near some stables, on the outskirts of the camp.

An undersized man, with a look of Newmarket about him, which South Africa had not erased, who was sitting in the bar of the hotel, got up and went out when Mr Gideon touched him on the shoulder. Mr Gideon told him what he had

done at the club, and the little man received his news with a long whistle.

"You're so clever, ain't you?" he said, as he eyed Mr Gideon with unconcealed scorn. "You don't look like a blessed infant with that nose on you, but blessed if you don't be'ave like one."

"You ought to remember your proper place more," said Mr Gideon, "and let me tell you something you don't know. See here," and he produced a telegram, "Our Boy has broken down."

"And don't you think Crotty knew that? Why, I heard it just now," answered the little man, "and a lot it matters; Kildare will win these stakes."

"He is no good; and he is lame."

"Lame? A party as knows what he sees saw him striding along at Buffelsfontein, where Captain Brereton has him as sound as a bell."

"But my horse can beat Kildare," said Gideon.

"Not weight for age he couldn't, if what I hears is true. Only just now I got a letter from home about him, from a pal of mine. Fit and well, he is the best horse that ever came to this country, and fit and well he is. And your horse don't meet him weight for age, you give him seven pounds; those precious stewards seem to have forgotten all about him," answered Nat.

"What's to be done? What shall I do for all that money? I can't lose two thou, and it seemed so good. Oh dear! oh dear me!" Gideon almost sobbed out.

"Well, it ain't lost yet, guv'nor. Kildare might go wrong," said Nat Lane with an evil grin.

"Oh, what a blessing that would be. Don't you think now, Nat, something might be done?"

"The Captain looks after the horse night and day, nothing could be done on the quiet; but Buffels is a very solitary place to keep a valuable animal like Kildare. Look here, now, suppose you put me on a thou, of that two thou. I might show you how to save that bet, and make a good bit more."

After a little haggling Mr Gideon consented to give Nat Lane a thou, if Kildare was made a dead 'un and The Pirate won.

"It will have to be done with a rush if it is done at all, but there is a party in camp just now who can do the job if any man can, and I will go and see him," said Nat. "It's no good your coming, I will drop round to your place afterwards."

Mr Gideon walked off feeling much out of sorts and out of conceit with himself. His old acquaintance Crotty had got the best of him and had known just as much as he did and a little more when he made the bet. When Mr Gideon left him Nat Lane walked back into the town, or camp, as it was more often called, though its canvas age was over and it was gradually changing from iron to brick, and turning up a street by the side of the mine, which had already, though Kimberley was not ten years old, acquired a very evil reputation, made his way to a canteen known as the Red Bar. This establishment, which consisted of a room, billiard-room and bar combined, seemed to be doing a roaring business. A perspiring barman was hard at work opening bottles of champagne, spirits, and soda-water, while two very smartly-dressed young women were busy serving the crowd of customers who thronged round the bar, and at the same time carrying on a conversation with a favoured few. The majority of the company had an unmistakable Jewish type of face, but there were men of every other white race there. Few if any towns three times the size of Kimberley could produce such a choice selection of scoundrels as the guests at the 'Red Bar,' and Jews and Gentiles alike bore on their faces a hunted, a bird-of-prey look which denoted that they were at enmity with the honest portion of society. The most conspicuous figure in the place was that of a tall dark man, whose face might have been called a handsome one were it not for his sinister expression, exaggerated by a scar which reached from his mouth to his eye, and seemed to stand out all the more as the drink which he was taking flushed his face. From the way in which he lounged against the bar, taking up more room than three or four men might have done, though there were many men trying to get up to it to be served, and from the silence which was kept when he was speaking and the laughter and applause with which his not over-brilliant remarks were received, it was clear that he was a man who had managed to gain the respect of his associates.

"Bill, I want to speak to you; I can put you on to a good job," Nat Lane whispered into his ear.

"Right; if there are good pieces in it, for I want some. They cleared me out at faro properly last night," he answered as he left the bar and went out with Nat Lane. "Now, then, what do you want?" he said when they were outside.

"It's like this: I can put you on to a good game, for I suppose you're on the same lay up yonder you were always on, and have one or two working with you?"

"Yes, fire away and speak clear," said Bill.

"Well, Brereton has got two or three horses at Buffelsfontein, which would be well worth getting hold of; one of them is worth a thousand pounds almost."

"That's no good game—too risky, and I couldn't get much for the Captain's horse. People who buy racers want to know more about them than I tell when I sell a horse."

"That could be managed all right, Bill," said Nat. "If you only got the horse away there would be a good bit of money to come to you. And I take it you would sooner take a good horse than a bad one any day; besides there are the

Captain's two horses. I think I know how the job could be done."

Then the two men had a long conversation, and it was arranged between them that Nat Lane's acquaintance, whose name was Bill Bledshaw, and whose place of residence was a kraal over the border in Bechuanaland near Tawns, where he carried on the fine old-fashioned calling of a cattle-lifter and horse-stealer, should find out when Brereton was going to take Kildare and his other horses into Kimberley, and with a party of his comrades surprise Brereton, seize the horses, and carry them over the border.

Buffels Drift was not very far from the border, and there was a place which Bill knew of where he could surprise Brereton and get the horses. As soon as he had got away with Kildare he was to send a messenger back to Kimberley, who would let Nat Lane know that the plot had been successful, and give the confederates an opportunity of betting against the horse, which would be far away when the Diggers' Stakes was run. Bill Bledshaw stood out for a good share of the spoil, for it was a very risky job, which would create much indignation against him on the Diamond Fields and perhaps lead to his arrest; but Nat Lane managed to dispel his scruples, and before they parted the two worthies had a drink together to the success of their venture, Bill Bledshaw promising to start the next morning for his head-quarters near Tawns, where he could complete his arrangements and see one 'Long Alex,' who would work the job with him.

Chapter Two.

"By Jove, no horse in this forsaken country ever galloped like that before," said Jack Brereton, as he stood outside his house at Buffelsfontein and watched Kildare leave his other horse, The Muffin Man, as if the latter was standing still.

Those horses and his pony Nobbier represented pretty nearly all Jack Brereton's possessions, except the money he had already invested on Kildare's chance for the Diggers' Stakes.

After having speculated in claims, diamonds, ostriches, and sheep, he had taken to the more congenial pursuit of putting his capital into thoroughbreds, and so far he had not done very badly in that somewhat risky investment.

About eighteen months before, he had bought The Muffin Man, a colonial-bred racer, with some money he had made in a lucky digging venture. As he rode and trained his horse himself he was not robbed as other owners were, and had won several races at Kimberley, Cradock, and Port Elizabeth. He had bought Kildare with the money made by the other, having commissioned an old brother officer in England to buy a useful racer that was better than anything in South Africa. Kildare was an Irish-bred horse, and had been sold rather cheaply after his former owner had been warned off the turf for having him pulled in a two-year-old race. It was a shame, so Jack's friend said, to send such a good horse to South Africa, but he felt bound to do his best for Jack.

Jack Brereton was about thirty-five, and though he was as active as he ever was, and seemed to take life cheerily as he always did, his years had told on him more than men would at first think.

The last ten years of his life had been spent in the colonies, the five years before that at home in a light cavalry regiment, and very marked was the contrast between them, though the Jack Brereton of the latter days and the former was outwardly much the same man, a little harder perhaps and more able to take care of himself, but the same light-hearted, happy-go-lucky fellow. The colonies are full of men whose lives have gone all askew—misfits well made enough, one would have thought, but all wrong when they are tried on. Jack Brereton seemed to be fit for something better than the adventurer and gambler he had drifted into becoming. There was the making of a good soldier in him, only he had gone to grief somehow and had to sell out.

He was a good deal more shrewd in his knowledge of character and business than many a man who had succeeded on the Diamond Fields by sticking to his work instead of drifting from one thing to another as he had done. He was well liked and to a certain extent admired by almost every one, from the administrator of the province downwards, but he never got any appointment, though there were several billets he might very well have filled. Sometimes he had been very much down on his luck, sometimes he had experienced a run of good fortune, but he kept his bad or ill-luck to himself and was always in excellent spirits. Every one said he was a good fellow, and many half envied his light heart and good spirits. Of late he had lived a good deal out of Kimberley, looking after his horses, and the visits he paid to camp every now and then were the occasion of much revelry; very late hours being kept at the club, where men would sit up listening to his stories and bantering chaff till long past the usual hour for closing that establishment; but for all that men who knew him best thought they often saw a sad, wistful look in his eyes, and that in his laugh there was an after-sound of bitterness and melancholy. For all his cheeriness he was beginning to get very tired of the life he was leading, and to long to get home again, or to some new country where he could have a fresh start.

As he watched Kildare gallop he was full of hope and excitement, and he felt certain that he would win the Diggers' Stakes with him.

"Yes, Captain, fit and well, the other horses won't be very near him. But I wish the race were over and won; they seem to be doing a lot of betting on it at the Fields, laying two to one on Kildare, but there are lots of takers. The Pirate's lot have backed their horse for a lot of money, and won't lose it if they can help," said a rough-looking man with a broken nose and scarred face, who was standing by the side of Jack Brereton.

"They will have to lose it whether they like it or not. It's a pity you can't come back to Kimberley with us, I know you would like to see the little horse win."

"Yes, Captain, I'd like it dearly, but I shouldn't be let see the race if I did come back; the man I hammered is so blamed vindictive that he would have me stuck in quod before I was in camp an hour. You see, his being a policeman

makes it awkward. No, when you start I will just foot it in the other direction—Christiana way—wishing you good luck in the race.”

“There is twenty pound on for you, Tom, if he wins, remember,” said Brereton, as he followed the horses back to their stables.

Tom Bats was a not very excellent character who had once been in Jack Brereton’s regiment, and for a short time was his soldier-servant. He was not a bad-natured man, but unsteady, hot-tempered, and pugnacious. Jack Brereton had liked him very well, and he had from the first a wonderful affection and admiration for ‘the Captain.’ Strangely enough, both of them drifted to the Diamond Fields, where they met again, and very rejoiced was Tom Bats to see his old master. On the Diamond Fields Tom did not become a reformed character; he was straight, as the saying there was, and did not buy diamonds or do anything that was dishonest, but was much given to going on the spree and punching heads, and had on several occasions given the police a great deal of trouble.

Unfortunately, when on the spree he had fallen foul of a policeman against whom he had an old grudge, and had knocked the guardian of the peace about severely, thus making Kimberley too warm for him, and obliging him to start off at once for some place of refuge.

He had turned up at Buffelsfontein, where Jack Brereton gave him shelter and food for some days, and employed him looking after the horses, for Jack was not quite certain that though Buffelsfontein was a quiet place some forty miles from Kimberley, it would not be worth some one’s while to pay it a visit and try and get at Kildare.

“Look ‘ere, captain,” said Tom after Jack had left the tables, “I think I had better come back with you to-morrow, it’s rather a lonely journey for you to take with such valuable property as the horses, and no one but the Kaffir boys with you. I will see you as far as the camp and then turn back again.”

“No, you shan’t do that; what’s the good? It’s lonely, but it’s as safe a road as any high-road in England; no one will harm the horse when I am by looking after him.”

Tom Bats felt that this was about true, so he settled to leave for Christiana the next morning, when Jack and the horses started for Kimberley.

The next morning Jack started for Kimberley riding his pony Nobbier, Kildare and The Muffin Man being ridden by two little bushmen who were in his service. It was a dreary journey from Buffels Drift to Kimberley, only one or two farm-houses were on the way, and a great part of the road was deep sand through which the horses laboured painfully. Jack had arranged for the horses to be put up at a farm-house on the way, so he took the journey easily enough; and as he rode along a little behind the others, he looked at Kildare and added up the money which he felt confident that he could win with the brave little horse. Kildare was a black horse—not very big. At first sight one would think that he was not quite big enough to hold his own, but any good judge would recognise that he was good enough if he were big enough; and when one saw him stride along one forgot about his being on a small scale.

The Diggers’ Stakes would come to about five hundred pounds; besides that Jack had about a thousand pounds in bets for that race, for he stood half of the bet Crotty had laid Gideon. It was hard luck not being able to get odds about the horse, but as several people in Kimberley knew how good the horse was, and that the theory of his being lame which, somehow or the other, had got about was false, it was necessary to get this money on the race at the best terms they could. Though Kildare had been actually backed for very little by either Brereton or Crotty, for the latter had only bet against The Pirate, he was the favourite, with slight odds laid on him, and it would not be easy to back him to win much at any reasonable price. Still, there would be his lottery, which would come to some five hundred pounds or so more, and perhaps it would be possible to get a little more money on, but it was a pity that he could not make more of a *coup*. There was another race on the card which he hoped to win with Kildare, and he might win one or two minor races with The Muffin Man. Altogether Jack hoped, with what he could win and with the price he could get for his horses, which he intended to sell, he would be worth about five thousand pounds after the races. As he watched Kildare stepping along he thought that he would like to take him home to England and win a big handicap with him, as he believed he could; but his good sense told him that it would be better to sell the horse on the Fields. With the money that he would have after the races he determined he would clear out of the country, and either go home, where he might get something, or to some other colony. It is ill counting your chickens before they are hatched. As Jack was thinking what he would do with the money he would win he had come to a place where the road ran between some mountains, and where by the side of the road there was a good deal of thick bush. Just there some Kaffirs who were coming from the direction of Kimberley were passing the horses; they looked as if they had been working in the mines and were going back to the kraals up country, and Jack paid very little attention to them. Suddenly he was startled by seeing them close round the two horses, Muffin Man and Kildare, and take hold of their bridles.

In a second he had whipped out a revolver and was riding up to them, when a man with crape on his face jumped from the bushes by the road and struck him a heavy blow on the head with a knobkerri, which stretched him on the ground senseless.

When he came to again he found two white men with crape round their faces engaged in tying him up with a rope, which they knotted in a way that would puzzle the Davenport brothers. When they had finished they carried him away from the road along a water-course which came down from the hills. He did his best to struggle, but it was no use for he was helpless. As he was carried along he saw that the two horses and his pony were in the possession of the enemy, and the two bushmen were also captive and were being carried off by some of the Kaffirs.

“Now, then, take it easy and keep quiet, or the rope will choke you,” said one of the men as he secured Jack to the tree with an elaborate and improved Tom Fool’s knot. “Well, you might as well have a smoke, there is nothing like making the best of things,” he added, as he pushed a cigar into Jack’s mouth and struck a light. There was some

sense in this, so Jack pulled at the cigar.

"So long, boss," said the man who had spoken before, and after gazing at his workmanship with some pride he walked away with the other. Jack could hear them laugh as they crashed through the bushes, and he thought he heard one say:

"What about Kildare for the Stakes?" Then voices were farther and farther off, and he was left alone to himself. Of course he began to try and get out of the knots, but there was no doubt about it that the man who tied him up was a master of his craft, and the rope round his neck tightened when he tried to struggle against the knots. Then he began to shout out, but that was no use; there was probably no one near, and the echo of his voice seemed to mock him. Then he kept quiet and tried to enjoy smoking. He might possibly burn the rope with the lighted end of his cigar, he thought; trying to do this gave him occupation for some little time, but he did not succeed, though he could just touch the rope with the end of his cigar, and at last the cigar burnt shorter, and he was unable to touch the rope with it, and then he began to cough and it fell out of his mouth. Then he began to think of the wretched plight he was in. The remark he thought he heard made him believe that the object of stealing the horse was to prevent his winning the Stakes; but for all that they would have to pay unless they could prove collusion between the men who had made the bets and the horse-thieves, and that would not be very easy.

Hour after hour passed, and he began to think that if he were only free he would not mind about anything else, though if he lost all his bets, and lost his horses, he would be without a penny in the world—in fact, he would be hardly able to pay his losses. Then he remembered that it was the day the mail-cart passed along that road, and he calculated the time at which it would pass. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when he had been tied, and at about sunset the cart would pass, judging by the time at which it generally left Buffels Drift. He could not see the road from where he was, and the sand would prevent him hearing the cart as it came along; but as the sun went down and the time for the cart came near, he kept up a shouting, his voice growing hoarser and weaker, as he was afraid, every minute. At last the welcome sound came of some one coming through the bushes, and he heard in Dutch an exclamation of astonishment. It was the driver of the mail-cart who had heard shouting, and fortunately, as there was a passenger in the cart who could hold the rein, had got out to see what was the matter. The man was provokingly slow, staring at him stupidly for a little time and expressing his surprise again and again, but at last he cut the ropes and helped Jack, who was unable to walk, his limbs being all cramped, to get to the cart.

About four hours after they had parted at Buffelsfontein, Tom Bats was taking a spell, having done about ten miles of his journey to Christiana. His thoughts were with Captain Brereton and Kildare, and he kept regretting that he was not with them and that he should not be on the racecourse to see the horse win the Diggers' Plate. Though he knew that Brereton was very well able to look after himself and his horses, and that when he came into the camp he would have the advantage of sage advice from Mr Crotty, who was as sharp as most men, he felt somewhat mistrustful. The lot who were backing The Pirate would not stick at a trifle. He knew something of Mr Gideon. Once when he had been matched to fight a man for fifty pounds a side, that worthy had tried to drug him when he found he would not be squared, and he would be up to the same sort of game with the little horse, he was afraid.

Well, he had better be getting on, he thought, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and filled it up again. Just then he saw some men riding towards him, along a road which some miles south cut into the road from Buffelsfontein to Kimberley. They seemed to be some white men and some Kaffirs, all on horseback. As they came nearer Tom gave a start, nearly jumped up, but in a second crouched down amongst the bushes.

He recognised two of the men, Bill Bledshaw and Long Alex; but that was not what alarmed him. What startled him was that he saw that Bill Bledshaw was riding The Muffin Man, while one of the Kaffirs was on Kildare, and another on Captain Brereton's pony Nobbier. It did not take him long to understand what had taken place. Captain Brereton had been robbed, they had got the horses from him and were taking them away to Tawns, where Bledshaw's headquarters were. Tom felt very concerned about Brereton's fate, for though he did not suppose that Bill would harm him more than he could help, he knew that Brereton would not let the horses go without a fight unless he were taken by surprise; but even if he were fit and well he would be in a sorry plight, Tom Bats thought, if he did not get back Kildare. "This is Master Gideon's little game," he said to himself, and he thought it would be worth a trip to Kimberley, dangerous though it would be, to have the pleasure of smashing that gentleman's evil-looking face in. There were two white men and four or five Kaffirs, so it was useless to show himself and fight for the horses. Long Alex and Bill were both very awkward customers, and were sure to be well armed. About six miles off there was a place called Gordon, where there usually were one or two of the mounted police, but before he could get there and give information to the police, Bill would have the horses over the border; and Tom Bats was by no means eager to come across any of the mounted police, for they would most likely recognise him and know about the warrant there was against him.

Near where Tom Bats was resting there was a pool of water, and when the horsemen came up to the place they off-saddled, the two white men throwing themselves down on the ground under a tree for a rest.

Tom Bats' heart began to beat, for he saw his chance when one of the Kaffirs took Kildare and another horse down to the water. He had a heavy iron-bound knobkerri, and clutching it with a grip that meant business he sneaked from the bush he was hiding behind to the water, without the Kaffir seeing him. Then when he had got close to the water he sprang up, and was on his man with a rush, dealing him one heavy blow with his stick. In a second he had jumped Kildare's back and was riding as hard as he could in the direction of Gordon. The other Kaffirs had seen him, and as he rode he could hear them shouting out and waking up the white men, and turning round he saw that Long Alex had snatched up a carbine and was pointing it at him, while Bill was mounting The Muffin Man, to give him chase. Long Alex's bullet whirled unpleasantly near him, but the ground, which sloped down a little, gave him a little cover. There was no saddle on Kildare, though his bridle was on, and Tom Bats, though he had been a trooper in a cavalry regiment, was by no means a finished horseman; still he was able to stick on. Long Alex had run up to the brow of the hill and there he took another shot, it was a long shot, but this time it hit, and Kildare stumbled as Tom let the rein fall loose over his head, as his shattered left arm fell helpless to his side. He was not hit so badly that he could not

keep on. Bill on The Muffin Man was sticking to the chase, and he waved his hat and gave a yell when he saw Long Alex's shot had taken effect. Tom Bats felt himself growing weaker every second, and for once in his life he longed to see the cord uniform of a mounted policeman as he rode on, longing to get to Gordon and safety—for the horse, that is to say; as for himself it was by no means a desirable haven.

"Hullo, that's a nice-looking horse; this looks a queer start, too," said Sergeant Brown of the mounted police, who was lounging in the verandah of the one store at Gordon—the rising township of the future, which consisted at present of a farm-house, a store, and some tents belonging to the police, but which had a Market square, a Main street, a Church street, and several other streets, only the houses had not yet been put up—as Tom Bats rode up on Kildare.

"Now, then, hold up, man!" he cried out, as Tom fell off the horse's back in a swoon when he tried to get off. "By George, though, I think we want this gentleman; there is a warrant out for Bats, isn't there, Jim?" he said to a police trooper, who was standing by, after he had picked up Tom and brought him into the store.

"Yer right, sergeant, I am the man and there is a warrant; but never mind me, look after the horse—Captain Brereton's Kildare, favourite for Diggers' Stakes; they got Bill Bledshaw to jump him, and I have jumped him from Bill. Look after the little horse; he has been knocked about fearfully to-day," said Tom, getting fainter and queerer as he spoke.

The sergeant gave some orders about the horse, then looked after Tom Bats, whom he saw to be a good deal hurt, and when he was revived a little asked him more about the whereabouts of Bill Bledshaw.

It happened that the sergeant took a good deal of interest in the Kimberley races, and he at once shared Tom Bats' suspicion that Bill was acting for some one else; so thinking it would be a capital thing if those who plotted to get Kildare out of the way were caught in their own trap, he said nothing about Kildare having turned up in the letter he wrote to the authorities, while he wrote another letter, to be opened by either Brereton or Crotty, saying the horse was safe and did not seem much the worse. After he had sent off these letters by a Kaffir on a horse he started off with two policemen—all the force he had—to see if he could come across Bill Bledshaw.

Chapter Three.

"It's all right, now go and back The Pirate for what you can get," said Nat Lane, as he came into Mr Gideon's house, where that gentleman had been waiting for some hours on the day of Jack Brereton's misadventure in a fever of excitement.

"Are you sure he has done it all right?" asked Gideon.

"Certain; I have got this," and Nat showed the other a piece of paper on which the words "Done the job all right" were written. "That's what we settled that he was to write; a boy just brought it me. Now you go and look for clever Mr Crotty; we ought to have him for a good bit."

Mr Gideon at once started off to make prompt use of his information. First he went to two men who usually worked with him, and were in this robbery to a certain extent, and commissioned them to back The Pirate and lay against Kildare; then he tried to find Crotty, whom he intended to make his chief victim. They had made Kildare a very hot favourite. In fact, with the exception of The Pirate there was no other horse backed. It happened that Mr Crotty had gone to the river that day, so Mr Gideon was destined to be disappointed of his prey, and waited up hour after hour at the club without meeting him, for Mr Crotty on his return had supper at the house of the men he had gone to the river with, and then had gone straight to bed. After he had been in bed some hours he was roused by a knock at the door of his own house, and opening it let in Jack Brereton.

"They have done us," said Jack, as he helped himself to a brandy and soda, the materials for which were on the table.

"What do you mean? they have not got at Kildare?"

"Got at him? They have got him," said Jack, and he told his story.

Very furious did Mr Crotty become as he listened to it; he at once came to the conclusion that Mr Gideon had something to do with it. However, he saw that it would be very difficult to prove any knowledge, and saw that he would have to pay the bets he would lose. They talked for some hours, but were not able to comfort each other or devise any scheme for getting the horse back. Mr Crotty took his loss very well, and did not, as many a man in his place would have done, blame Jack at all for it. He was a somewhat sharp customer, was Mr Crotty, by no means scrupulous when he was dealing with outsiders, but he was straight to his friends, and he really felt as sorry for Jack as for himself, though perhaps his first feeling was bitter anger against Gideon.

"Well, it is no good stopping up all night talking," he said at last, and he got a mattress and some blankets for Jack.

In the morning Jack was woke up by hearing a cry of triumph from Crotty.

The letter from Gordon had come and Crotty had read it. "We have got 'em," he cried as he gave the letter to Jack. They were both delighted; the only question was whether the horse would be much the worse for its knocking about. They came to the conclusion that they would chance that, as the note said the horse was all right, and they believed he could win on three legs. "Then leave me to deal with Mr Gideon," Crotty said as he dressed; "I will take care to come across him this morning."

That morning it was all over the camp that Bill Bledshaw had jumped Kildare, and great was the consternation amongst the backers of the favourite, and the rejoicing of a section of the Jews who had backed The Pirate. Mr

Gideon was afraid that it would be too late to victimise Mr Crotty, though for a minute or two as the latter came into the club, looking by no means out of spirits, he felt a little hopeful.

"Well, how's The Pirate?" he said to Gideon.

"Fit as he could be. Will you go on laying against him?" answered Gideon.

"Now why are you so keen about backing The Pirate this morning? Not because you have heard about Bill Bledshaw jumping Kildare?" said Crotty with a grin on his face; "but I think we shall sell you by getting him back from Bill."

Mr Gideon could not help laughing to himself, the idea of Bill's being persuaded to give up the horse or allowing it to leave him fit to run for the Stakes seemed too absurd.

Then the two had a long conversation, which ended in Mr Gideon laying the other three thousand to one thousand against Kildare, and stipulating that the money should be staked by that day, as he thought that he would win about as much from Gideon and his confederates as that division would think it worth while to pay.

There was a lot of excitement all over the camp when it was known how Jack Brereton had been robbed. Jack had nothing to say but that the story was true; he took his bad luck as he had taken bad luck before, wonderfully coolly, but to his friends—and most 'white men' in the camp were his friends—he imparted the advice not to be in a hurry to bet against Kildare. "The little horse will win for all that you have heard," he said.

As a rule his friends thought that Jack did not speak without reason, and a good many of them took the odds which the Jews were eager to lay on their horse The Pirate. This state of things went on for some days, all sorts of stories going about as to the chances of the missing horse being recovered.

Mr Gideon laughed when he heard these stories. It amused him to think that people could be fools enough to believe that a horse could be got out of Bill Bledshaw's clutches, and be fit to run in a few days.

One morning, a day or two before the races, most of the sporting element of the Diamond Fields were on the racecourse, watching the horses engaged in the races do their morning gallops.

Gideon and Nat Lane were standing a little way from the rest of the company, and had been having a very confidential talk.

"Altogether I stand about ten thousand to five thousand. Some of it I have laid on The Pirate, some against Kildare; Barney and Ike Sloeman have done half as much again between 'em! Where the money comes from I don't know. S'help me, I can't see what they are at—all backing a horse that Bill Bledshaw has jumped," said Gideon.

"It's just as well for us that there are some fools," answered the trainer.

"Do you think any other horse has a chance of beating The Pirate? I heard something about May Morn."

"Never mind what you hear; that's May Morn; looks like having a big chance, don't it?" said Nat, pointing to a horse that was coming round. "Hullo! why that's Captain Brereton and be damned to him. What is that he is on? something that can gallop a bit," he added, as he saw another horse that had just come on to the course. "Is that one of yours, Mr Crotty?" he called out to that gentleman who was standing some yards off.

Kildare had been brought into the camp the night before, and Jack was giving him his first gallop on the racecourse.

Crotty and Jack had determined that they would not try to keep the secret of the horse's recovery any longer, as it would be difficult to do so; and they had already backed it for as much as Gideon's friends could pay. Even a tyro like Mr Gideon could see that the game little horse was of a very different class from the plater May Morn.

"That, Mr Gideon! why that is Captain Brereton's Kildare; you ought to know the horse. And now what price Kildare? what price Bill Bledshaw?" shouted Mr Crotty, and he burst into a peal of mocking laughter, in which a knot of men, his and Jack Brereton's friends, who were standing near him joined.

"The little horse is not much the worse for your kind attentions," he added.

"Curse 'em, but they have done us," said Nat Lane between his teeth.

Mr Gideon turned pale. The mocking laughter of Crotty and his friends maddened him. He was almost ruined, for the money he had staked represented pretty nearly all that he had in the world; his only hope was that still The Pirate might somehow win, and this hope was a very feeble one.

Shout after shout of laughter came from the men on the course, who seemed all to have been let into the secret by Crotty, and followed by the jeers of their enemies Mr Gideon and Nat Lane got into a cart and were driven back to Kimberley.

Mr Gideon and Nat Lane had several very anxious conversations before the day of the race, but their upshot was nothing but talk. It was impossible for them to hedge, and they could only trust in the chapter of accidents, which, however, did them no good.

The story of the Diggers' Stakes that year was a very simple one. It was rather a procession than a race. Kildare won with the greatest ease from The Pirate, while the rest of the field were beaten off. Good fellows on the Diamond Fields rejoiced, and for the most part had very substantial reasons for their joy.

Mr Gideon and his friends "the sharp division," as they thought themselves, for once were shorn, and they look back to that race with anything but pleasure. Mr Gideon paid all his losses, for he was afraid that if he did not an attempt might be made to prove he had something to do with stealing Kildare, and was anxious for some time lest Bill Bledshaw, who was afterwards caught before he got rid of Brereton's other horses, should give evidence against him. It remains only to say that Tom Bats had the pleasure of seeing Kildare win. His arm was well enough to allow him to be brought into Kimberley, and public feeling was so much in his favour, as the man who had rescued Kildare from the enemy, that the magistrate took a lenient view of the charge of assault on which he was brought up, and only inflicted a fine, which in a few minutes was raised for him by subscriptions of those who had backed Brereton's game little horse.

Story 11.

A Queer Race.

"Who's that man?" asked George Marshall of his friend Joe Warton, a Kimberley digger, as a slightly-made, good-looking man, dressed in a well-fitting suit of tweeds, which no colonial tailor could have turned out, walked past them as they were sitting on the stoop of the club.

"That man! why he is the hero of the day—our last distinguished visitor, Sir Harry Ferriard. You will hear all about him if you are long on the Fields, for every one is talking about him."

"Sir Harry Ferriard! why he is the crack gentleman rider and owner of race-horses; the man who won last year's 'Grand National,' what's he doing up in Kimberley, of all places in the world?" asked George Marshall, looking through the door of the club at the gentleman in question with some interest.

"He is going a trip into the interior, when some friends of his for whom he is waiting arrive. I wish they would come and he were off, for I am sick of the sight of him. Since his arrival the camp in general has begun to take an interest in the British aristocracy. The proprietor of the club has procured a big 'Peerage and Baronetage,' which is always in use. Sir Harry of an evening tells stories of his friend Lord This, and the Duchess of Something Else, till one feels sick. Little Lazarus picked him up coming here in the coach. He likes you to think that he knew him at home, and that he is a fair sample of the pals he made in London. The little cad is as proud as a peacock of his friend Sir Harry, and is never tired of drawing him out and showing him off."

"Shouldn't have thought they'd have stood much of that sort of thing here," said Marshall. "We have our faults, and perhaps our weaknesses, but I never would have said snobbishness was one of them."

"Well, we are a very 'English community,' as they are always saying in the papers. Besides, this fellow Ferriard makes himself infernally pleasant to every one, and half the fellows in the camp think they are going to get something out of him. Says that he has been turning his attention to the city and financial business lately, and that now he is out here he may as well take a look round and see what investments are sticking out. That makes him popular, you bet. He says he sees that Fools' Rush might be turned into a company, and floated as a big thing on the London markets. Thinks there is a fortune for any one who would buy up the shares in the Diddler Diamond Mining Company. He is going to make home capital flow into the place, and every one is to be better off even than they were in the wildest days of the share mania. Then he is very friendly to every one—asks you to stay with him at Melton the first winter you are in England, before he has known you for an hour. And tells you about the shooting he will give you in Norfolk, and his moor in Scotland. The men all swear by him, and the women think that there never was any one like him, confound him!"

"You don't appear to like him, Joe, as much as the rest of 'em do," said Marshall, after he had listened to his friend's unusually long speech.

"Like him! I think him an infernal outsider; but I see he has settled down to play at poker, so I will go down to the Shorts', as he won't be hanging about there making himself a nuisance, as he generally does of an evening."

"Does Polly Short find him such a nuisance then? Looks the sort of man who could make himself pretty agreeable."

Warton answered by a growl rather than by any articulate speech, and George Marshall laughed to himself. It was not difficult to diagnose his friend's case, and guess why he did not particularly like the new arrival.

Polly Short was the prettiest girl on the Diamond Fields, and a good many men had been more or less in love with her, but Joe Warton had begun to be looked upon as the favourite. In fact, the other candidates had almost given up all hope; and Joe, though he was not exactly engaged, was supposed to have arrived at a very fair understanding with her. She, though she had not much harm in her, was decidedly fond of admiration; while Joe Warton, though he was a capital good fellow, was a little heavy in hand; and his great affection for Polly sometimes showed itself in fits of jealousy, which were as near surliness as they could be. Given a man like the brilliant Sir Harry Ferriard, and let him admire Polly as he well might—for she would be an unusually pretty girl, not only on the Diamond Fields, but anywhere else—it would be easy to understand, so George Marshall thought, how the course of his friend's true love should have got a little tangled.

"By the by, shall you ride Lone Star for her gallop to-morrow?" Joe Warton said to his friend after he had got up. "We shall win the Ladies' Purse with her again this year, seems to me."

"Yes, if nothing else is entered that can beat us," Marshall, who was a man not much given to express a decided opinion, answered.

Lone Star belonged to Joe Warton, and had been for some time in training, for the forthcoming Kimberley races, on George Marshall's farm. He had brought her into Kimberley the day before. She was a very nice mare, but of no particular class. Warton had, however, won The Ladies' Purse, one of the minor races, with her the year before, and he had set his heart on winning the same race again that year.

"Wait till the entries are published and then I will tell you whether we shall win or no. The mare is fit enough as far as that goes, and she's a good bit honester than most of her sex, but she is no wonder," Marshall added.

"Oh, they won't enter anything better than Lone Star—it wouldn't be worth their while when the winner is to be sold for fifty pounds," Warton said as he got up, and saying "good night" to his friend, walked up the street in the direction of the Shorts' house.

As luck would have it, however, it chanced that he saw a man he knew, whom he wished to speak to, in the bar of a hotel he was passing. So he went in and said what he had to say to him, and was going to leave when a certain Mr Howlett appeared on the scene—who about the race meeting became an important individual on the Fields. He was called in the papers "our leading local bookmaker." He came into the bar, and seeing Warton began to talk to him about the races.

"Is that mare of yours, Lone Star, going to go for anything this time? You were lucky to win with her last year," Mr Howlett said, looking at Joe in a way that somehow or other annoyed him.

"Lucky! what do you mean by that?" Joe asked; "she won easy enough; what would you like to bet against her winning again?"

"Well, it's full early to talk about betting, but I shouldn't mind just backing my opinion as I gave it. Though it ain't business, I will lay you fifty to twenty-five."

It happened from one cause and another that Warton was in an half-irritable, half-excited humour—when it's a relief to do anything. He thought to himself that at the start it would as likely as not be odds on Lone Star, so he took the bet. Mr Howlett booked it with a twinkle in his eye that annoyed Warton.

"You're one of the sort who are always in a hurry; take the advice of one who knows a bit more than you do, and wait a bit in future," Mr Howlett said.

The man's manner irritated Warton strangely. "Like to go on with it, as it's such a bad bet for me?" he said.

Mr Howlett at first said he didn't want to go on with it. It wasn't business to bet before he knew the horses entered. He only had offered a bit of advice to Warton which was meant to be friendly, and if he didn't take it friendly he could take it how he chose.

Presently, however, he appeared to get irritated too by something some one else said, and it ended by his first doubling the bet, and then laying Warton three fifties to two against his horse.

As Warton walked on to the Shorts' he was half inclined to think that it would have been better for him if he had taken the bookmaker's advice, and not been in such a hurry. The entries would be published the next morning, and he might just as well have waited before he made his bet. He might have guessed that Howlett, though he did seem at first unwilling to bet, was not the sort of man who would throw away his money merely because he got warm in a dispute.

When he bet against Lone Star he must have had an idea of some other horse being entered which could beat her. Still Warton thought he knew pretty well the horses entered for the race. It was then limited to colonial-bred horses, and he was sure that there was nothing to beat him.

The Short family consisted of the father, mother, and one daughter—the fair Polly. Old Tom Short was a taciturn old gentleman, who spent his evenings sitting in the corner of the stoop of his house, with a glass of whiskey-and-water before him, and a pipe in his mouth—now and then growling out some remark about the wages of the Kaffirs, the price of wood, or other subjects connected with the winning of diamonds. He met with his wife during a visit to England, after he made some money on the Australian gold-fields. If he had since repented of his bargain he kept it to himself. She in her way was a very fine lady, being the daughter of a bankrupt grocer, but also the half great-niece of a London alderman, who had been knighted. The alderman's picture always hung on the wall in the drawing-room of their house, and Mrs Short generally found an excuse for referring to it, when strangers were present, at least once in ten minutes. As one looked at Polly Short one wondered how she could have been the child of her parents, and where she could have got all her beauty and charm from, and the keen sense of humour that gave a mischievous twinkle to her eyes. Her love of admiration might have come from her mother, and she had, for all her dainty beauty, a curious look of her rugged old father. But there was much about her which seemed incongruous with her surroundings. When Warton came in he thought that he detected a considerable diminution in the cordiality of Mrs Short's greeting. Once he had been rather a favourite visitor, but since Sir Harry Ferriard had come on the scene, he had noticed a decided alteration.

"How do you do, Mr Warton, we 'alf expects Sir 'Arry would drop in this evening—have you seen him?"

"I don't think you will see him to-night, I just saw him setting down to a game of cards," answered Warton, whose expression by no means brightened up when he heard Ferriard's name as soon as he came into the house.

"Dear, dear, it's a pity he is so fond of play and gambling. But there, it's a weakness of the aristocracy; they are 'igh spirited, and must 'ave excitement, as I know only too well!" Mrs Short gave a sigh and looked at the picture.

"He won't hurt himself at it, I fancy," Warton said with rather a snarl. "From what I hear he has been rather a heavy winner."

"Well, somebody must win at cards, and I don't see why you should sneer at any one who happens to be fortunate, as if there was anything wrong about it," said Polly, resenting rather the tone of Warton's remark than the actual words.

"You're quite right; I am sure I don't wish to say anything against him, everybody seems to like him very well, and all I know is more or less in his favour," Warton answered, feeling somewhat ashamed of himself for having spoken rather unfairly about a man whom he disliked.

He did not quite make his peace though, and the visit did not seem likely to be a very happy one. After some time he began to talk about the races. Polly had worked the purse in which the stakes for "the ladies' prize" were to be given to the winner, and this was the secret of his being so anxious to gain it.

"You will be glad to hear your favourite, Lone Star, is very fit—I am going to gain that smart purse this year again, I hope," he said after some time.

"Are you sure you'll win? I don't think you will. Do you know, I shall make my bets the other way."

"Surely you're not going to bet against Lone Star?" Warton said, remembering how pleased she was at his success the year before and feeling a good deal hurt at her words.

"Sir Harry Ferriard tells me he is sure to win—he rides for Mr Lascelles, who has entered Induna."

"What! has that little—I mean has Lazarus entered Induna for the Ladies' Purse? why he told me he was not entering him for anything but the two big races. It's a shame, and a low trick of his," Warton said, remembering with anything but pleasure the bets he had just made.

"Sir Harry persuaded him to do it because he wanted a mount in the race. I thought it very nice of him, considering he has won so many races in England, to wish to win our Purse here."

"Yes, and a speech he made about it too," struck in Mrs Short, smiling encouragingly at her daughter; "he said that he had never coveted any prize so much as the purse our Polly had worked, and that he had made Mr Lascelles promise that if he won he was to keep it. Ah! after all it's only the real titled classes that can pay compliments with grace, as well I remember was the case in dear Uncle Sir Peter's time!"

"Well, after that I can hardly hope that you can wish me success, though I think you might have kept some kindly feeling for old Lone Star," Warton said as he got up to go.

"Well, you see, you don't ride yourself, and Mr Marshall rides for you, and he never speaks to a lady if he can help it, so you must allow me to wish Sir Harry to win," Polly said, as she shook hands with him.

"Of course you may wish who you like to win; and what's more, you will have what you wish for, for Lone Star won't have a chance against Induna," he said, as he left the house.

Polly watched him go through the garden, and listened to the tread of his feet as he walked away along the road. His very walk seemed to tell how angry and hurt he was. For a minute or two she felt a little guilty and sorry. After all she liked him a good deal. Though he was heavy and perhaps a little stupid, and at times by no means sweet-tempered, he was a good honest fellow and perfectly devoted to her. To tell the truth she had been upset by the attentions of her new admirer, Sir Harry. She was not more silly than most girls of her age, but she could not help thinking that the element of romance which was wanting in Joe Warton was present in the other. When she looked at Sir Harry's good-looking face she told herself that he could care a good deal more for a woman than Joe could. Then he had a title and two or three places in England, and if she married him she would live in London and be in society, instead of living on the Diamond Fields, and that counted for a good deal with her, as it naturally would with a high-spirited girl who had plenty of ambition and wish to see the world. She knew that colonial girls had married Englishmen of family and gone home and held their own there, and she did not see why she could not do it.

Warton went round to his friend Marshall's house, and found him turning in.

When he told the latter what he had done about Lone Star, and what he had heard about Induna being entered by Mr Lazarus, or Lascelles, as that gentleman had taken to call himself since he had made money on the Diamond Fields, he got very little sympathy.

"You must have been a fool to have backed the mare before you knew the entries. Believed Lazarus would not enter Induna because he said he was not going to, why he would sell his brother to please his friend Sir Harry; besides, he is not above a robbery on his own account. And as for its not paying them to enter the horse, and to have to buy it in, why they can back it for a good bit. Probably Howlett was doing it for them when he laid you those bets," said Marshall.

"Do you think we have any chance? I should like to beat that fellow Ferriard."

"Chance! devil a bit; no race is a certainty till the jockey is weighed in, and it's all right. But this goes pretty near one."

Warton went off greatly irritated with himself, and very much cut up and pained about Polly Short's treatment of him. When he got back to his house he sat for some time in a chair outside his house, smoking and thinking over the unpleasant events of the evening. He had half gone to sleep when he was woke up by hearing the voices of two men,

who were passing along the road on the side of the reed fence round his garden.

“Waste my time, do you say? don’t see it—why we haven’t done badly to-night, or this week either; and one can’t be always at business. What’s life without sentiment, my dear Bill?”

“All right, we ain’t done so bad to-night, only it’s a bit rilin’ when one sees a chance of getting up a bit of Poker or Loo to find that you’re hanging after that girl and out of the way.”

The first speaker spoke in the tones of an educated man and a gentleman. The second voice was a loud, gruff one, and seemed to belong to some one in a lower grade of society.

Joe Warton somehow thought he knew both voices, so he got up and looked over the fence. He found that the men had parted company; one had turned down a road and was out of sight; the other he could see. He was a heavily built man over six feet high, and Warton recognised him as a man called McNeil, who had not been long in Kimberley. He was rather a rough sort of fellow, who had knocked about the world a good deal. He professed to have come out to look at the mines, and report on them for a syndicate of capitalists at home. He was a good deal at the club, though some members thought him rather a doubtful character. The queer thing was, that Joe could not help suspecting that he had recognised in the other voice that of Ferriard. He remembered that Ferriard, though he was friendly enough to most men, had been rather standoffish to McNeil, and professed some surprise at meeting a man like him in a club, though he had afterwards played cards with him on several occasions, as they both seemed to have a keen taste for play. Yet if Warton’s suspicions were right, the two men seemed to be on the most confidential footing. After all he was not sure. He had no reason to suspect that Ferriard was not perfectly *bonâ fide* and straight, and because he disliked the man and was jealous of him, he ought to be all the more careful not to spread injurious reports about him. It was no business of his, and he would not mix himself up in it, he thought, as he undressed and went to bed.

When the day of the races came, Joe Warton’s chances of winning the Ladies’ Purse did not look any more hopeful than they were when the entries were published; nor had he managed to hedge any of the money he had put on Lone Star.

The public considered that it was a certainty for Induna, and it was generally thought that Mr Lascelles had been somewhat greedy and unsportsmanlike in entering his horse for the minor event, instead of trying to win one of the big ones. However, Mr Lascelles had joined his forces with some other owners, and had settled to take a share in the stakes they might win, instead of opposing them with Induna, one of the fastest horses ever bred in the colony, and one which several good judges thought might at the weights have a chance of beating the imported horses in the two principal handicaps. Men grumbled and said that the races were being made a cut and dried affair of, but Mr Lascelles did not care, so long as he was backed up by his friend Ferriard, about whom he swaggered and boasted more and more every day. He liked to think that Ferriard was going to ride for him. The race would be reported in the home papers, and there would be a crop of paragraphs about it, and the world in general would learn that Sir Harry Ferriard had sported his, Mr Lascelles, colours.

If Joe Warton’s chances of winning the race looked hopeless, his chances of winning what he cared a great deal more about, namely Polly Short’s affections, seemed to be almost as small. Their quarrel had grown more serious during the last few days. The Kimberley Race Ball had taken place, and Joe had attended it. He had not asked Polly to dance with him, and though he was an awkward dancer enough, generally managing to get her more or less torn and in trouble, she was none the less inclined to be angry with him for taking so little notice of her. At the same time Ferriard’s attentions had been very marked, and people were canvassing her chances of becoming Lady Ferriard. A good many of her friends laughed at the idea of his being such a fool as to bring home a bride from the Diamond Fields, but they did not know as much as Polly did, as she sat on the grand stand watching the horses entered for the Ladies’ Purse. The day before Ferriard had asked her to marry him, but his proposal had been a somewhat strange one. He had just received a cablegram he said, which made it necessary for him to put off his trip up country and start for England almost at once, and he wanted her to marry him in a week’s time and go home with him. Now that she had to make up her mind she felt half afraid. It had come so suddenly. Though she felt certain that Ferriard was in love with her, she felt somehow that she was doubtful whether she did not like her old lover best.

As she watched old Lone Star being saddled, and saw Joe Warton looking glum and out of spirits, she experienced a feeling of something like remorse. After all old friends were surest, she thought.

Lone Star had not many supporters. The old mare had won a good many races on the Diamond Fields, and his owner was one of the most popular men there. Little Lazarus might just as well have run Induna in one of the other races, and left the Ladies’ Purse for Lone Star, and one or two others, who would have had a fair chance. But there is no sentiment about betting, and the bookmakers’ cry of “Odds bar one, eight to one bar one, ten to one bar one!” met with very few responses. One or two men took the odds to a few sovereigns on the off-chance. People on the Diamond Fields are as a rule great believers in the off-chance. Still Joe Warton himself said he did not think he could win, and he advised his friends to leave it alone.

“Beg your pardon, sir, but will you let me have a look through your race-glasses for a second?” said a grey-haired, elderly-looking man, whom Joe never remembered having seen before, and who had just bustled into the grand stand, just as the horses were going down to the starting-post. “That black is the horse Sir Harry Ferriard rides, isn’t it? blue and yellow cap? Thank you, sir, I’ve seen what I want,” he added, with rather a satisfied air, as he gave the glasses back again to Warton.

“That’s the horse which will win,” Joe said, as he took the glasses.

“So they all seem to think, but maybe it isn’t one of Sir Harry’s lucky days,” the grey-haired man answered, as he bustled away, and Warton saw him in a second or two afterwards speaking rather earnestly to an inspector of police,

who was in the ring. Whatever the grey-haired man had to say, seemed to surprise the latter a good deal.

"All right, in the weighing-room after the race. It will be done neatly and quietly, and no fuss; and a very pretty little bit of business it will be," the grey-haired man said, as he bustled away, and he seemed to leave the inspector with something to do, for the latter at once went and spoke to one of the mounted men.

Joe Warton was Wondering who the grey-haired man was, when he noticed that after he had spoken to the inspector he passed closed to McNeil, the man whom he had recognised the night before outside his garden. The latter seemed also, so Warton thought, to be a good deal interested in the grey-haired man. In fact, he would have wagered, from the expression of his face, that he recognised the stranger.

However, Joe Warton did not bother himself any more about them, for just then there was a cry of "They're off!" He was not long in suspense. "Induna wins!" was shouted out before the horses had got a furlong.

"Lone Star is coming up—No, it's no good, she can't catch Induna," Warton said, as he put his glasses back in their case, for the race was practically over.

Polly Short looked at the race and felt that she was sorry, and that she would give a good deal to see old Lone Star win and that Joe should have the purse she had worked, though she supposed he would not care much for it now.

It was about as tame a race as could be seen, but as the winner passed the post, followed by Lone Star, a somewhat startling incident occurred. The grey-haired man who had borrowed Warton's glass, had not gone up to the stand; McNeil also had stopped below and stood just behind him. Suddenly he sprang forward, seized the grey-haired man under his two arms and lifted him clean up into the air, at the same time shouting in a voice that could be heard all over the course,—

"Jim! Slim Jim! ride like hell! look here! Old Sharp has come out after you!"

"Hullo! what's the matter with Sir Harry? he don't seem to be able to stop the horse. Why, he's going round twice—no he ain't! Where the deuce is he going?" said Mr Lascelles, as he saw his horse shoot out from a canter into a gallop, and dash past the paddock at a racing pace. "Well, that's a rum way to finish a race! I suppose it's what they do at the club meeting where he rides at home. But I don't see the sense of it."

Mr Lascelles' astonishment increased considerably as he saw a mounted policeman set off in hot pursuit of the winner.

"He's gone mad! He can't stop the horse! He's got a sunstroke! He don't know where the winning-post is!" were the opinions shouted out by the lookers-on.

"What price against the peeler?" called out some one in the ring. To which there was an answering yell of "Any odds!"

"He knows where he's going to finish—it's Stella Land he is making for, and my opinion is he will get there, for none of our men have anything that will catch him," the Kimberley inspector said, and he looked at the grey-haired man with grim smile.

"Where is that man who interfered with me? Ah, it's you, is it?" the latter said as he saw McNeil, who was straining his eyes at the race, not on the card, which was now taking place; "so you knew me, did you? I fancy I know you."

"Know you, old man! I'd have known yer made into soup. Glad you remember me, for you've no old accounts against me," the big man answered cheerily enough.

In the mean time George Marshall, the rider of Lone Star, had gone to the weighing-room.

"I'll weigh in at once, I think; and I fancy old Lone Star has won this race after all, for Sir Harry Ferriard won't pass the scales unless he loses the race he is riding now, and it's long odds on him for that," he said to the stewards who were superintending there.

The rider of Induna, Sir Harry Ferriard, *alias* Slim Jim, *alias* Captain Barton, *alias et cetera*, never did come back to weigh in. He never came back to Kimberley at all.

Mr Lascelles never saw his aristocratic acquaintance or his horse Induna again. The former turned out to be a well-known criminal, who was wanted by the London police for a heavy Bill forgery case. Inspector Sharp of Scotland Yard had tracked him out to the Diamond Fields, and just arrived by the coach in time to get up to the racecourse and see him go down to the start on Induna.

The inspector does not often speak about that trip to South Africa, which he hoped would have been such a successful episode in his professional career. He has a mean opinion of a country where a fast horse enables a fugitive to get away from the police.

Joe Warton won the bets he was in such a hurry to make, and he spent the money in furnishing a house for Pretty Polly Short, who became Mrs Warton after all. She told him that before the sensational end of that queer race she had determined to give up the idea of becoming Lady Ferriard, on the chance of making it up with him again, and he believed her.

A Compact.

It was at the 'George Hotel' at Portsmouth (said Gordon, as we paced the deck of the 'Trojan' on our voyage home) that I spent my last evening in England with my brother. The next day I was to see him off for Cape Coast Castle, where he was going to serve with his regiment in the Ashantee war.

To-day I can remember the dingy old smoking-room in which we sat till late at night, talking over the home and school days which were over, and our lives, which having always run together, seemed then to be branching far apart. We had no other relations alive; our father had died that year. The old castle in Sutherland, in which we had been born, had been sold to a rich London stock-broker, and our old life seemed to have come to an end. My brother, he was the elder, had chosen the army for his profession. He would have little but his pay to live upon, but it seemed to him to be the proper career for one of his race. I had determined to make money; it had been my dream that I would make my fortune in some distant part of the world where fortunes were to be made easily, though I did not quite know how. I was to come back to Scotland and settle down there, and we Gordons were to take our own place again. A few days after my brother sailed I was to start for South America, the country I had at last determined to be the land where that fortune would be soonest made. My brother had listened to all my schemes; and then we had talked about the campaign for which he was going to start. I think we both thought a good deal of the terrible climate he was going to face, and we became grave as the idea came into our minds that the next day's parting was likely to be a long one. There was a story in our family that both of us must have been thinking of, for while it was in my mind my brother Donald suddenly spoke about it. The story was of a compact made between our grandfather and his brother. They were both soldiers, and their regiments were on service, one in Spain and the other in America. The agreement was that if one of them were killed, he would, if he were allowed to do so, appear to the other. Our uncle was killed in America, and it was always believed most religiously in our family that he was allowed to perform his promise, and that on the day he was killed my grandfather, who was in Spain, saw him and knew of his death. It was of this story, as we grew more thoughtful, on that last evening we were to spend together, my brother reminded me. "Let us make the same promise; the one who lives will be the last of our name and race, and perhaps it would be as well for him to know it at once," he said to me. We had both become grave and earnest enough, and as we grasped each other's hands and made that promise I think we felt it was not one lightly made. The next morning I saw him off. He said no more about our promise, yet as he stood on the deck of the troopship and I on the dockyard, I think we both thought of it.

Neither King Koffee or the more dire potentate King Fever hurt my brother, and he came home well and in good spirits, and got on in the service, and of what fighting there was managed to see plenty.

I am sorry to say that, unlike him, I did not fulfil the career I had mapped out for myself. I went to South America and did not succeed; and then tried one country after another, until one day, some nine years after I left England, I found myself in South Africa, finishing a long tramp from the gold-fields to the Diamond Fields. So far that fortune which I had gone out to seek was as far away in the future as ever. I had ceased even to hope for it. I had been a proverbial rolling stone and had gathered no moss. I had tried my luck in Canada, Australia, and South Africa, and had found each country worse than the one I had been in before.

My experiences were not very interesting, and they would only make a tale which has already been told many a time before. I had begun to laugh grimly at my old hopes of making a fortune and buying back some of the family property. And yet my ideas had not been so absurd either; I had seen men whose chances did not seem to be much better than mine succeed and make something like the fortune I had dreamt of. Still I laughed when I contrasted my life with what I had expected it would have been. Certainly there had been plenty of incident in it; but it was a better life to talk about than to live—a life full of long dreary days of rough uncongenial society, and I am sorry to say, of coarse, brutalising dissipation and of degrading poverty brought about thereby. I failed at first from bad luck, and afterwards from my own fault. After one or two failures I came to South Africa and went up to the Diamond Fields. Kimberley, when I came there, seemed to be the city of the prodigal son. He was there devouring his substance and getting the worst of its kind for it, and feeding the swine, or rather, minding a bar, which is a good colonial equivalent, and only too ready to eat of the husk he served out. I had little substance to devour, and when I had used it up was not even as lucky as the prodigal, for I got nothing to do at all. From there I went up to the gold-fields in the Transvaal, and two years of varied luck in digging ended in my being on my way tramping back. I had not done much towards making my fortune, I had not a penny in my pocket, my boots were worn out, and I had not had a meal for twelve hours, and I was very doubtful as to how or where I should get the next one. I was doing my last day's tramp. Far away across the veldt I could see the mounds of earth that had been taken out of the Kimberley mine, and as slowly and painfully I dragged across that weary flat they seemed to grow longer every step I took.

It was with little feelings of hope I saw the distant view of that most hideous of towns, Kimberley. When I left the gold-fields I had thought that I could hardly be worse off than I had been there, and that I would get some work at the diamond mines. But, weary with my long journey, and weak from hunger and dysentery that had come over me, I had lost all strength, and thought that the best I could hope for would be that I should be allowed to crawl into the hospital at Kimberley and die there. Every step I took pained me, for my feet were sore and swollen. I remember I had been thinking a good deal about my brother and contrasting his career with mine. Already he was known as one of the most promising young officers in the army. I had not heard from him for years, for I had left off writing, and he did not know where to write to me. But I had seen by the papers that he had gained the Victoria Cross in Afghanistan. I thought of him and I thought of myself, and cursed my luck then, for I was too weak and out of spirits to fool myself; I cursed my own folly, which I knew had been the cause of my having come down so low. Slowly and hopelessly I stumbled along through the sand. "When should I get to Kimberley, what should I do when I got there?" I kept asking myself, and I felt too dull and tired out to answer the question. I had very few friends there, and my appearance, ragged, almost barefooted and obviously penniless, would not tell in my favour. "What was the good of walking any faster? I might as well sleep there on the veldt as go on," I said to myself; and then stumbling over a stone, I half fell, half threw myself down beside the road, and lay there exhausted, thoughtless, and almost insensible. I was roused by some one lifting me up and pouring brandy down my throat.

"Played out, eh? well, take a good nip of this, it will pull you together if anything will, it's Eckshaw's Number One, the best brandy that comes to this cursed country. Where have you come from, eh?" The voice I somehow seemed to remember, and as the brandy revived me I took a look at the Good Samaritan who had come to my assistance. I knew him; the pleasant voice belonged to Jim Dormer, and it was his handsome reckless face I saw looking down at me.

"I have come from the gold-fields and have had a hardish time of it," I said in answer to his question.

"Well, I don't know that I'd have done myself up like that to come to this wretched hole Kimberley; but you'd better get into my cart—I'll give you a lift in anyhow," he said. Of course I was glad enough to accept his offer and to get into his cart, which was drawn up close to where we were, his Kaffir boy holding the reins.

"Let's see, ain't you Mr Gordon, who used to have claims at old De Beer's? Thought I knew you. Do you remember that day on the racecourse when Cockney Bill and his pals tried the system of going for the banker at faro and jumping his satchel? That system would have come off if it hadn't been for your taking a hand in the game." I remembered the incident he alluded to, which took place one evening after the races. Some roughs had made an attack upon him and his partner, who were keeping a faro table, and I, who had been losing my money to him, came to his assistance. "I haven't forgotten it and shan't in a hurry. 'That's the sort of chap I'd like to have with me in anything that wanted good grit,' I said to myself when I saw you in that row," he said.

"Look here, Mr Gordon, where are you going to put up when you get to Kimberley?" he added, after thinking for some time. "If you like to come to my place I can look after you and give you as good a room as you will get at any of the hotels, and you'll be made quiet and comfortable." It was a good-natured offer, and all the more good-natured from the way he put it; but I hesitated before I accepted it.

"Ah, you think that stopping with Jim Dormer won't sound over well, and I don't say you're not right; but times are bad in the camp and there isn't much chance of your getting a billet all at once, so you might stop at my place till you get over your tramp down; but you won't hurt my feelings by refusing, I ain't one of the respectable crowd and don't want to be."

He had guessed my thoughts. He was a pleasant, well-mannered fellow enough, but he had acquired rather a doubtful character, and I am afraid to a certain extent deserved it. It would be difficult for any one who wished to do so in a friendly spirit to say how he lived and had lived for the last ten years. He himself would probably admit that he was a professional gambler. His enemies would declare that in the matter of buying stolen diamonds he was not altogether without reproach. This charge, however, was not true, for he preferred winning money from the buyers of stolen diamonds to indulging in such a risky trade on his own account. He never for one moment was able to see that he was one whit worse than the people who belonged to what he called the respectable crowd.

He won money from some of the biggest thieves in the camp, so he was called a sharper and an associate of bad characters, while your respectable men got hold of honest men's money with their bubble companies. "He wished he got as much the best of it at a deal of faro as honest Mr Bowker, the member of the Legislative Assembly, did when he started the Boschfontein Mining Company. He was too straight to be respectable, that's where he went wrong," he would say to me when I got to know him better; and I believe he thought it.

"Thanks, you're a good fellow, but I don't like to sponge on you; I am dead broke," I said in answer to his invitation.

"Dead broke be blowed! No man's dead broke till his neck's broke; and as for sponging on me, one never loses anything by doing a good turn to one of your sort who has good grit. You're looking pretty bad though—dysentery do you say? Well, you'd better watch it; come up to my place and I'll put you straight," he said.

It was not, perhaps, a very wise thing to do, but beggars can't be choosers, and I was very little more than a beggar, besides I liked Jim Dormer's cheery, free-and-easy manner. It was pleasant to meet a man who seemed to think something of one although one was unsuccessful and dead broke. So I accepted his offer, and leaned back in the cart, relieved to think that I should have a place to rest in after my long weary journey.

Jim Dormer was on his way back from a visit to a roadside canteen, where a man he was interested in was training for a foot-race. "I am glad I met you; I like a man who has got grit; maybe it will be a lucky meeting for the pair of us," he said somewhat enigmatically. I did not take much thought about what his motives might be, I was too tired. "Take a man as you find him; he has been a good friend to me anyhow," I thought as I drove through the well-known street. The town looked dull and depressed; there was a marked change, one could see that bad times were felt more than they were when I left some months before. Bars, stores, and billiard-rooms that used to be doing a roaring business were empty. Several stores were to let; there was not as much traffic in the streets, while I fancied there was something in the listless gait of the men one saw lounging about which expressed bad times. Glad enough was I when we pulled up at a neat iron house where Jim lived, and where that great luxury, as it seemed to me then, a bed, was to be found provided for me after I had attempted a meal.

A fortnight afterwards found me still staying with Jim. The morning after I had arrived at his house I had found myself too ill to get up; and nothing could have been kinder than he was to me, nursing me very carefully and seeing that I had everything that I wanted. When I had become well enough to go out and look for work he did not show much sympathy with my endeavour to find something to do. He had, I found out, a deep-rooted conviction that any attempts to get on in life by what people called honest labour was a vanity and a delusion. To make a pile and clear out of the country ought to be the aim and object of every one, and it was absurd being too particular as to how that pile was to be made, was the doctrine he was always preaching. Of all the more generally accepted modes of making a fortune he was most sceptical. Digging was a losing game, he considered. Even canteen keeping was hardly good enough. "What one wanted," he would say with much candour, "was to go in for one good swindle and then clear off."

"You bet what you and I want to do is to get hold of a few thousands, and then say good-bye to the country. Don't tell me we can't do it, there is lots of money in the camp, though times may be so bad," he said to me one evening as I was sitting in the verandah after a tiring day spent walking round the mines looking for work. "I was thinking of something in the New Mine line; there is a good deal to be done at that, but I hardly care to go in for the game; it's too much one of your respectable man's swindles for me, taking some poor devil's last sov or two, who thinks the new rush is going to turn up trumps: it's always your poor devils who are landed by that sort of swindle, now I only want to catch the big fish." I made some remark in answer to this, more or less commending him for indulging in his conscientious scruples. I am afraid in my then frame of mind Jim Dormer's peculiar code of morality was very taking. I began to agree with him that every one was more or less of a swindler, and that the more prosperous men were the adroiter scoundrels. Tramping about all day looking in vain for work put one in a suitable frame of mind for listening to my friend's notions of things in general and of the Diamond Field public in particular.

"Yes, we must get hold of some money somehow. See there, look at that cart," he said, pointing to the mail-cart that was being driven along the road past the house, "there is not less than thirty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds going across the veldt to-night, for that is a good bit less than the average amount they send home every week! Thirty thousand pounds, my boy! that would be a good haul, eh?" I watched the cart being driven along towards the open veldt, and I thought of how it was going to travel across miles of desert veldt with only one policeman upon it to guard its precious contents. So far as I knew, that mail, which started on Thursday with the week's finds to catch the home steamer, had never been robbed. My friend did not say anything more about the cart, though I noticed he watched it till it was out of sight, and then he smoked in silence for some time. Then he returned to the subject, and made some remark about how strange it was that the mail had never stuck up; and we began to discuss how easily it could be done. "Nobody would lose one penny except the insurance companies and banks, for the diamonds are insured for more than they will sell for; yes, it's just the thing sticking out; sooner or later it will be done, and then they will put on a stronger guard," he said, looking at me rather carefully as he spoke, as if he wished to see how I took what he was saying. My evil genius led me to grumble out some sort of agreement with what he said.

"Believe me, I'd like to collar that pool, or take a half or a third share of it," he answered, "then I'd leave this cursed country. And it ain't so tough a job neither. One only has to wait with a string across the road to upset the horses, and as they go down jump on the cart, get the mail-bags, tie up the driver and the guard, and get back to camp, and the next morning at breakfast look as mild as milk while every one's jawing about one's work the night before. It would be a pretty little game to play, eh, my boy? Better than going round to those managers and asking for a job as an overseer and being treated like a nigger, and being told to clear off and be damned by 'em."

"But there's the policeman; he is armed and would show fight, and I shouldn't like to hurt a chap who was only doing his duty," I answered.

"Well, nor would I; but I never see that mail-cart pass without wondering who will take the pool; some one will, mind you," he said, and then turned the conversation to some other subject.

A week or so more passed and I got nothing to do. At one time I thought I ought not to go on staying with Dormer and living upon him, but he laughed away my scruples. "What did it matter? it wasn't as if I was always going to have bad luck. Was I ashamed of staying with him?" he would remark when I talked of going away. It always ended in my staying on. I was generally seen with him, I used to get money on for him when he played billiards or shot pigeons or made any other match, and to do some other little things for him; in fact, I began to be identified as Jim Dormer's pal.

Very few visitors came to see us at the house. Dormer carried on his business down the town in billiard-rooms and canteens; he never asked me to help him at faro or roulette or any of the games he played, nor did he impart to me any of the tricks of his trade. Nothing could be kinder than his manner to me; but nevertheless I felt that I was bound to repay him for his kindness, and that I was under a great obligation to him. After some time he once or twice stayed at home of an evening and a man came in to see him. The visitor was not a pleasant-looking person. He had a shifty, half-ashamed expression, and as he sat clumsily playing cards with Dormer he looked as if he knew he ought not to be where he was.

"Who's that? Don't like his looks, can't look one in the face," I asked Jim one night when he had left.

"That! oh, he's a most respectable man, a sergeant in the police. We are thinking of going in for a little spec together, and you ought to be in it too. That's the chap who goes down with the diamond mail. Old Jacobus the driver is going to be made a little drunker than usual, the policeman is to make a desperate resistance, and to be overpowered by us two, and then the three of us divide the swag, do you see?"

Though I had not been boarding very luxuriously for some time, I had been drinking heavily. There was always drink to be had at Dormer's house and when I went about with him, and lately I had drunk to drown my anxiety. I don't intend to ape the canting cry of the criminal who, when he's convicted of jumping upon his wife, tells the judge that "it's all the drink wot's done it." Drink of itself doesn't often make a criminal of a man, but it often enough robs him of all that sense of prudence which men mistake for conscience. If my brain had been clear of alcohol I think I should have refused Dormer's suggestion at once; as it was there was something in it that took my fancy. Instead of refusing, I began to question him as to how it could be done. His answer was that it would be easy enough. The mail-cart was to be stopped by a rope tied across the road; the guard and the driver were to be tied up—the latter would not be likely to make a very determined resistance, while the former would be our confederate. When we had secured the diamonds we had nothing to do but to get back to Kimberley. Our confederate would take care not to be able to identify us, and there would be, so Jim urged, very little risk of our getting into trouble or failing to secure the rich booty.

"It's our last chance of making a good pile in the country; every day I expect that some one else will try the trick, and then they will put on a strong guard. It's the one good thing left in the country," he said; and then he began to talk about the rich prize we should secure without any one except the banks and insurance people being one bit the

worse.

"I don't know whom to go to if you won't go in for this; there are plenty of men in the camp who would jump at the chance, but they ain't the sort I'd like to trust, but you're good grit and I'd trust you any day," he said; "come, I know you will stick to a pal." For a second or two I hesitated, and then I said I would go in for it, and we shook hands over the agreement.

It was on a Monday that I had this conversation with him, and it was on the following Thursday that the cart was to be stopped. The next day the police sergeant came up to the house to finally arrange his plans. I didn't like the man's looks any better on that occasion. In his presence I began to feel ashamed of myself because I was going to become a thief. It seemed disgraceful to be mixed up in such a business with that shifty-looking scoundrel. Dormer's society, on the other hand, made me reckless and in good spirits, while he took care that I had drink enough to prevent my thinking too much.

The place we had chosen to make our attack upon the cart was about twenty miles from Kimberley, and the cart would pass there about ten o'clock in the evening. An hour before that time Jim Dormer and I were sitting behind some rocks near the road at that place where we had agreed to stop the cart. We had the rope ready to put across the road when it was time for the cart to pass, while we both had our revolvers, with which we intended to make a great display of a determined attack.

"It's no good being too soon with the rope, the cart won't be before its time, and something else might pass," Dormer said as he lit a match to look at his watch.

"How long have we to wait?" I asked, for I began to feel rather nervous and to wish the time for action had come.

"An hour or more before the cart is due here; take a drink," he said, handing me a whiskey-flask. I half emptied the flask and lit a pipe, and listened to my companion, who, to cheer me up, I fancy, began to talk about the time we would have when we cleared out of the country with the nice little pile we would make by that evening's work. Dormer's conversation and whiskey had its intended effect, and I got back my careless, reckless spirits.

It was not very pleasant work waiting, the night had clouded over an hour or so before, and the flashes of lightning seemed to be terribly near us, while soon after the first flash the storm broke and the rain came down in torrents, as it does on the South African veldt in a summer's thunderstorm.

"All the better for us, my lad, just the night for the job," he said as we tried to huddle behind the boulders to get out of the rain. Dormer talked away about the delights of Paris and London and the time we would have at home, while we both took several more pulls at the whiskey-bottle; for all that the time went slowly, and we began to feel wretchedly uncomfortable.

As we sat there waiting for the time to arrive for us to begin our work and to stretch the rope across the road which was to stop the cart, it certainly seemed that my fate was sealed, and that I was destined to become a successful scoundrel or a skulking jail-bird for the rest of my life. Looking back I cannot remember that I felt much shame or remorse. I was infected with Dormer's ideas of things. What we were going to do would not hurt any individual very much; it seemed to me then that it was a much more harmless thing than the financial robberies which were carried out by men who were considered most respectable persons; and as for the danger of being found out, I didn't see where it came in, I thought, as I took a drink from the bottle.

"Easy with that bottle, old chap, or you will be hitting some one when you let off your revolver; keep yourself cool, and mind you go straight for old Jacob, and see that he don't pull the crape off your face," Dormer said to me. Then he walked some yards off to take a look at the spot in the road he had chosen for tying the rope across.

As he left me a strange change seemed to come over me. The reckless devil-may-care spirits I had been in left me, and I felt a sense of awe as if I knew that something was going to happen. Then a feeling came over me that some one was present, and all at once the rocks in front of me seemed to fade away, and where they had been I saw an unearthly luminous mist, and through it I saw a figure dressed as an officer in a Highland regiment. I could see that his arms were thrown back, his sword was falling from his hand. There was a rent in the breast of his coat, and in his face was the look of death. I knew him; he was my brother Donald; he had grown from a lad into a man, and he was handsome and more soldierlike than when I had seen him last. I remembered our compact, and then I knew that my brother was dead. There was the proud look of one who had earned the respect of his fellow-men in his highbred face. For one instant our eyes seemed to meet, and then as I sprang forward calling to him by name the figure and the mist surrounding it seemed to fade away. "Heaven help me," I thought, "I am the last of our race." A flood of home memories, which for some time I had done my best to banish from my thoughts, came back to me. As I touched my face and felt the mask of crape I had on, I realised what I was going to do, and that I was about to become a common criminal.

"What on earth are you shouting for? what's the matter with you, man? we'd better be moving and fixing the rope," I heard Dormer say as he came back to where I was. I did not answer, but stood irresolute for a second or two. I felt half-ashamed to give up the adventure I had engaged in, but after what I had seen I was determined not to engage in it.

"Jim, I am going to cut it; I have had a warning not to go on with this—let's give it up."

"Give it up by—" and Dormer gave vent to his surprise and disgust in very strong language. "Well, I did think you were good grit; but you can't give it up now. What's come over you all at once?" He was thoroughly disgusted with me; such faith in human nature as remained to him had evidently received a shock. "Well, I'd have never thought it of you, you whom I always believed in. Come, pull yourself together and do what you said you'd do; it's too late to turn tail now." And then looking into my face and seeing how agitated I was, he asked me what on earth had

happened to me. I think, like many a gambler and adventurer of his type, Jim had a strong vein of superstition in his nature. When I told him something of what I had seen he was somewhat impressed by it, and on my again expressing my determination to turn back and have no more to do with it he did not attempt to persuade me. Nor did he think of doing the thing by himself. He growled out a few sentences of disgust, and sulkily walked after me as I turned and made the best of my way towards Kimberley. We kept some way from the road; I hardly know why I did this, but I think it was because I did not wish to pass too close to the post-cart. After about half-an-hour we saw the post-cart driven along, and then Jim Dormer's feelings became too much for him again, and he burst out into a string of oaths and reproaches. I must say I quite saw how contemptible my conduct must seem to him, and to a certain extent I sympathised with him. Suddenly he came to a stop and clutched my arm, motioning me to dodge behind some bushes. I did so, and in a few seconds three horsemen rode almost by where we were.

"We are well out of that little trap. Did you see who they were? I will swear to two of them being Lamb and Stedman, the detectives. By George! but I will go back from all I've been saying; that was a straight tip you got wherever it came from to give up this job," Dormer whispered to me when they had ridden past. "That hound of a policeman has rounded on us and given information," he added. It turned out afterwards that this idea of his was right. It was pretty clear that we had just been in time in leaving the place where we had agreed to wait for the cart. Our plot had been betrayed and a very warm reception had been arranged for us. Even as it was we felt that there was some chance of our being arrested, and we were both glad enough when we were got back to Kimberley and were safe in our beds.

Tired though I was, I slept very little, but I lay awake and thought of my brother, whom I was convinced was no more, and of the old home days. I thought more seriously of my degraded life and made more good resolutions than I had done for many a long day. I think I kept them fairly well, though I had a hard time of it for some time to come. At last I got some work to do for a company on the Transvaal gold-fields, and since then I have made a living, though I don't know that I am likely to make the fortune I used to dream of. Dormer and I parted good friends. "Your second-sight seems as if it had been a warning to you to keep straight, and I'd do it if I were you; as for me, well, it's different," he said as we shook hands. He left South Africa shortly after this, and I don't know what happened to him.

The Kimberley newspaper a day or two after had a telegram in it telling of the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, and when I saw full particulars of it some weeks after I learnt that my brother had been shot when leading his company in that engagement.

Story 13.

A Fatal Diamond.

Chapter One.

It was a pure white stone of over two hundred carats, and since nature had somehow brewed it ages before it had rested peacefully in its native 'blue' as innocent of harm as the meanest pebble near it. No sooner, however, was it unearthed by the pick of one Sixpence, a Kaffir in the employ of the Union Diamond Mining Company of the Kimberley Mine, than its evil influence began to work. Sixpence's eyes glittered as he saw it glisten in the South African sunshine, and then he gave one stealthy glance at an overseer, who was paid to watch over him and keep him from straying from the paths of honesty, and found that he had little to fear from that quarter. The overseer was indulging in a day-dream, and in his imagination was reacting the incident of the previous Saturday evening, when he had engaged in four fights, three of which he could quite remember. While he was thus occupied Sixpence clutched the diamond, and when he had got it up and hidden it away in the rag he wore round his waist, began to indulge in a delicious day-dream on his own account. He would sell the diamond to a canteen-keeper he knew of, and have one last drinking bout and then farewell to the white man and his troublesome ways. He knew, however, that on leaving the mine he would have to pass through the searching house, and that it would be dangerous to take his chance with the diamond. So he hides it somewhere near where he is working, and when he goes home he has the lump of blue ground, a few yards from which the diamond is buried, photographed in his mind with an instinct strange to any civilised man. That night, an hour after midnight, he steals away from the compound where the Union Company Kaffirs sleep and makes his way to the side of the mine.

At the far end of the mine a company was working by electric light, and the brilliant glare in its claims made the rest of the huge pit look weirdly gloomy, and seem bottomless and infernal. Sixpence, however, had not much imagination, cared little enough for the picturesque effect. He had no room in his mind for any other picture but that of the exact spot where he had concealed the big diamond. Glancing around to see that there was no one about, he turned down a track which led from the reef to the bottom of the mine. Without much difficulty he found the exact spot in the claims where he had hid the diamond. Then, as he held the stone in his hand and realised that the prize was his, he felt inclined to give vent to his joy in a wild Kaffir song of triumph. That bit of a pebble for which the big fools of white men would give so much money and undergo so much toil was his. His last day's work was done. No overseer would again awaken him in the morning and compel him to go to those hateful claims. His future would be made up of days of delicious loafing, watching his wives hoe in the mealie patch, and his cows feed round his kraal, while he would have an ever delightful story to tell to the young men of his tribe, of how he had fooled the white men, and carried off the biggest diamond that ever turned up in their claims.

Perhaps it was fate, or some wayward influence exercised by the big stone he had found, that made him choose another way to ascend by than that which he had followed when he went down the mine. This brought him up about fifty yards from where he had gone down. It was just as good a path to take as the other, or rather it would have been just as good a path for him to take but for one circumstance.

As Sixpence reached the top of the reef, and was just starting off at a run, he found himself tumbling over something which when he was on the ground he discovered to be a pair of long legs. Those legs happened to belong to one Jack

Enderby, a searcher in the employ of the Kimberley Mining Board. Mr Sixpence, who did not read the local papers, was unaware of the fact that the Mining Board, in order to put a stop to exactly the course of proceeding which he was carrying out, had instituted the system of putting men on guard round the reef at night.

Though the idea was a good one, it was not being carried out in a very satisfactory and efficient manner by the owner of the legs. Going on night guard, particularly after one has spent a somewhat convivial evening, is tiresome work enough. Mr Jack Enderby had found it so, and after he had walked about for some time, and grumbled at his luck in having to earn his living in that way, he had settled himself down to smoke a quiet pipe and think over things. He had yawned, stretched himself, looked into the mine, and wished devoutly that the infernal place had never been found at all, or that he at all events had never seen it. And then his thoughts had begun to stray listlessly over his somewhat chequered career, which was perhaps all the easier to follow as it was all downhill. His history was one which he was willing enough to tell any one who would listen to it.

"Went from Eton to the —th Hussars; about as lively a lot as any in the service. Went the pace as strong as any of 'em for a time, but couldn't last. Found myself dead broke when the numbers went up after one Derby. Had to go after that, and for my sins managed to find my way out to this forsaken hole of a place," was his oft-told tale. At one time he had owned some claims in the mine, but he soon gambled them away. Then he lived by his wits for a period, but falling upon bad times had been glad to take the billet of a searcher upon the Mining Board, which some of the few friends who continued to stick to him were able to get for him.

The appointment was grumbled at by some men who cared more about the interests of the mine than about the welfare of Jack Enderby, and certainly they would have been able to justify their stricture if they could have seen him, for he had found his thoughts soothing, and having found a comfortable place had gone fast asleep.

His peculiar way of looking after the interest of the Kimberley claimholders, however, was destined to prove as disastrous to Mr Sixpence as if he had been performing his duty with the most exemplary zeal.

Sixpence did not know what he was there for, but he realised that all white men were dangerous to a black man who had a big diamond in his possession, and he sprung on to his feet and set off at his best pace.

Just then, however, Jack woke up, saw Sixpence making off, and in a second was on his legs and in pursuit of him. Sixpence had managed to get about twenty yards' start, and he took a path that led away from the mine to some ground given up to washing machines, depositing-floors, and *débris* heaps. In that direction he would not be likely to meet with a policeman, and if he got a good start from his pursuer, there would be plenty of hiding-places where he could take cover and dodge behind. Unfortunately for him, however, Jack Enderby had once won the 'quarter' at Sandhurst, and though he was not improved by the fifteen years that had passed since then, he could still go better than most men, so long as he could keep his wind. Mr Sixpence soon began to know that he had a good man behind him, and to believe he was outpaced. He would have to use his hands as well as his legs if he meant to keep the diamond, which he had in the pocket of the tattered soldier's coat he was wearing. Sixpence meant to keep that diamond, and he gave the heavy iron-bound knobkerri he had taken out with him a savage grip, and had a vision of a smashed white face as he slackened his pace. Then, as his pursuer came up, he stopped suddenly, and turning upon him before he realised that he was going to show fight, struck him one blow full on the face. Enderby staggered back dazed and half stunned, hardly able to avoid the second blow the Kaffir aimed at him. He had nothing in his hands, having left his stick at the spot where he was lying asleep, but it chanced on that particular evening that he had a revolver in the side-pocket of his coat. As a rule he never carried arms, few men on the Diamond Fields ever do, but as luck would have it, that evening before he went on duty he had encountered in a canteen an intoxicated young gentleman, who was possessed of a revolver, and not having been long on the Diamond Fields thought it the thing to make a flourish with it, to the great danger of the company present. Jack had considered that he would be safer without it, so he had taken it from him. The circumstance turned out to be rather an unfortunate one for Mr Sixpence.

"You blasted nigger! I'll stop that game," Jack said, as he felt some blood running down his cheek, and his hand went to his pocket. He fired without taking particular aim, but the Kaffir's hands went up, and he fell on his back. "Well, it's not your night out, my boy; there is a dead run of luck against you. First of all you must tumble over me as you come out of the mine, and it's long odds against that; then I have a revolver on me, and then when I do shoot I put a bullet through your brain instead of missing. Well, we will see what it was you were taking away with you," Jack said to himself, as he bent over the fallen man and put his hand into the pocket of the tattered soldier's coat he had on, and then as he touched the diamond he gave an exclamation of surprise.

"By the Lord, Harry, it was worth going to get," he said, as he pulled it out and looked at it in the moonlight.

Jack Enderby was a good-hearted fellow enough as men went, but it is no libel upon him to say that he was far more moved by the sight of the diamond than by the fate which had befallen the Kaffir. It was his duty to stop any one whom he found surreptitiously visiting the mine, and when he had a revolver he could hardly be expected not to use it in self-defence. Not much trouble would be made about the Kaffir's death. He would report it to the police, an inquiry would be held, but the state of his face would show the provocation he had received before he fired. No, there would be no fuss about the nigger, but the diamond—that was a very different matter—that would be something to talk about, when people saw it; and then Jack Enderby thought to himself that for some time no one should see it. Hitherto in the matter of diamonds he had been straight; but he had never concealed from himself that if he got one good chance of getting hold of a big diamond he would make no bones about it. Well, the chance had come, and he was not going to be such a fool as not to avail himself of it, he thought, as he put the diamond into his pocket, and like poor Sixpence began to think of what he would do with it.

In his case, too, it meant farewell to the Kimberley mine, and work which he hated. It meant also, if it were as good a stone as he believed it to be, his having that good fling at home, which he had longed for without much hope.

As he grasped the diamond a vision of Newmarket Heath rose up, and he seemed to hear the thud of the horses as

they passed the post, and hear the roar of the ring. He thought of the card-room of his club, and the pleasant excitement of *écarté*; and then he thought of the Richmond dinners he would partake of again in congenial society, and realised that he would soon be enjoying all these pleasures again.

He remembered that for a wonder he happened to have a little store of ready money, which he had won a few days before on the Kimberley races, about twenty-five pounds, enough to get him home if he travelled steerage in the steamer; and what did a little discomfort matter if it were only rewarded by the good time he intended to have. Once he was home with the diamond he was safe. On the Fields he would only get a small price for it, because of the danger of buying a diamond from a man like himself who had no right to own one; but in England no troublesome questions would be asked. For the present, the sooner he got the diamond hidden away the better, he thought, so he made the best of his way to the little iron house near the mine where he slept, and found a hiding-place for it there. Then he went to the police-station.

The sergeant of police looked at his face, which was badly bruised from the blow he had received. "He gave you that, did he? no wonder you fired at him. What made him show fight though? Had he a big diamond on him?"

"No such luck. I disturbed him when he was going to fetch one he had hid," Jack answered, and when he looked into the other's face and saw that his story went down all right, he felt a good deal relieved. "Poor beggar, I don't know what put it into his head to go for me as he did." He added this as he left the place.

People would wonder whether the Kaffir had had a diamond on him, but they could never know that he had, he thought. The finest diamond in South Africa was now his, and he was the only man alive who had seen it.

The inquiry into the death of the luckless Sixpence resulted in the magistrate coming to the conclusion that it was a case of justifiable homicide. The crown prosecutor was of the same opinion, and Jack Enderby was generally considered not to be to blame in the matter. One circumstance was discussed with a good deal of interest: people asked why should the Kaffir have shown fight if he had no diamond? Some people argued that he was going to get one he had hidden away in the mine, but others, however, more cynically disposed, were inclined to take a different view. It wasn't likely that a diamond would be found on him after Jack Enderby had sorted him. No, Jack had his own notions of what a Searcher's perquisites were, so one or two of his friends suggested. Jack shrugged his shoulders when he was asked about it. It was just like his luck, he said; if the poor devil of a Kaffir had had a diamond on him he supposed he would have been allowed a percentage on it, which would have come in handy enough. As it was he had got a smashed face, and was thought a thief for his pains. There would soon be a searcher's billet open for any one who wanted one, for he was tired of the job and meant to leave Kimberley and go and try his luck up at the gold-fields. In a week or two he did clear from the Fields without leaving any great gap there or causing people to trouble themselves very much about his absence.

Chapter Two.

Strangers, who find themselves for the first time in Hatton Garden, are probably somewhat surprised when they learn that they are in the principal diamond market of the world. If they turn into the street from Holborn they find it a common place enough at first, and towards the other end it becomes mean and shabby, and wears an expression suggestive of anything but riches. The houses seem to suffer from a premature age and mouldiness, and give one the idea of their being occupied by persons who are in anything but a large way of business. From the names on the doors, however, one learns that the majority of their occupiers profess to be dealers in diamonds and precious stones, and those who know about diamonds will inform you that they do deal therein to a very considerable extent, and will have strange tales to tell of the huge quantities of precious stones which the merchant of that dingy thoroughfare have in their safes, and will hold until some long-looked-for turn in the market comes.

Its population is much given to gather in knots on doorsteps and at the corners of streets. They are as a rule swarthy-visaged, hungry-eyed men, rejoicing in much jewellery, gorgeous raiment, and glossy hats. With very few exceptions—who do not often make fortunes—they belong to the chosen race.

The scraps of the conversation which one hears as one passes along the street generally relates to matters affecting the trade. That is a somewhat wide margin, for all public events, from a threatened European war to the death of some dusky potentate, more or less influence diamonds. But most of the talk is of the precious stones themselves and the mines in which they are found—of falls of reef in Kimberley, and of the price of glassy stones, cape whites, off-coloured stuff, and boart. Many of the men who gather together there are birds of passage who are constantly backwards and forwards between London and the Diamond Fields, and often enough there are one or two men who have just come back from the Cape with a budget of Diamond Field news which the others are not a little interested in.

One morning, about two months after the adventure which ended so badly for Sixpence, Jack Enderby turned into that thoroughfare from Holborn. As he did so he pushed a soft felt hat of a decidedly colonial shape well over his face, for he saw two men on the opposite side of the street whom he had known on the Fields, and did not wish the recognition to be mutual. Taking a quick look at the numbers on the doors, he made the best of his way along the street and disappeared through a doorway on which he saw a name he was looking for, namely, that of Mr Le Mert, diamond merchant.

Mr Le Mert was in his office. He was a man of about fifty, who still looked mentally and physically not far past his prime. Some people would have called him a good-looking man, and there was plenty of strength in his face. But as he scanned some figures he had scribbled on the back of an envelope, there was rather an ugly gleam in his eye, which became a little more pronounced when his clerk came into the room and said, that a gentleman wished to see him. It changed, however, into one of relief when he read the name which his visitor had written on a piece of paper.

"Well, Jack, my boy, how goes it? You have just turned up from the Fields, I should say, from your get up!" he said heartily enough, as he shook hands with his visitor. "Wonder what that fool wants of me?" was his inward comment. But though, as a matter of fact, he was not particularly pleased to see Jack, he had expected an unpleasant visit from a man who had obtained some very awkward information about a company he had promoted, and was threatening to make things very unpleasant. So it was a relief to him to find it was one with whom he had been pretty friendly in former days on the Diamond Fields.

"Well, Le Mert, so you have become a great swell—one of the great guns of the diamond trade. Things are altered a bit, are they not, since the old days?" Jack said, after they had talked together for some time.

"When I kept a roulette-table at Dutoitspan, and you used to punt away the price of yours and your partner's diamonds at it," the other answered, wondering to himself what Jack wanted. He had at first been half inclined to suspect that his visitor was in quest of a loan, but his manner struck him as being too independent for that.

"I suppose you go in for being quite the straight and upright merchant now?" Jack asked, evidently remembering some old Diamond Field transactions.

"Well, I don't suppose you have come all this way to inquire into my moral character, or bother me about old stories which nobody would believe, though I should not much care if they did," Le Mert answered, looking at Jack and wondering what his business could be.

"No, I came on business. I have a diamond I found, which I thought perhaps you might make me an offer for."

"Oh, one you found, eh? Yes, you were a policeman or something like that out there at the last, weren't you? still you managed to find a diamond which you wish to sell to me. Well, let's have a look at it."

"I didn't say I had it with me—it's a pretty big stone, just about the largest you have ever seen, and I mean to get a price for it."

"Well, bring it out; it's no good talking about the price of a diamond before one has seen it. You have it on you, I can see," Le Mert said, for he had noticed Jack's hand fidgeting at his waist, and guessed he had the diamond on him.

He was right. Jack Enderby undid a leather belt, which he seemed to wear next his skin, and he took the diamond out of it. The half-bantering, cynical expression which the diamond merchant's face generally wore left it as he looked at the stone. He was well able to judge how valuable it was, though he did not know the exact price it would fetch. It is not easy to say how much you can get any one to pay for a single stone, but Le Mert knew that the answer to that question represented the price of that diamond. He had never seen such a gem before, and did not believe such another existed above-ground. For some time he was silent, looking at the stone and thinking what he could do with it if it were his. It happened that just then his affairs were in a desperate condition. He had been a poor man, and had made a large fortune. Had over speculated—gone in for one or two rather doubtful transactions, and now he was being pushed very hard, and everything pointed to his having to begin the world again at fifty—a ruined man without money or character. He looked at the prize that fortune had thrown 'that fool Jack Enderby,' whom he had always despised as a man never able to get or keep money. Then he thought for a second or two, for what he saw reminded him of something.

"That was a devilish lucky shot of yours that brought down the Union Company's nigger that night, Master Jack. You ought to put up a monument to that poor beggar's memory, for he did *you* a good turn," he said at last.

Jack started and looked at the other as if he thought he was in league with the evil one.

"What on earth do you mean?" he said, snatching up the diamond.

"Don't be so startled, my friend; I read about the nigger in the Kimberley paper that came a mail or two back, and now I remember it I understand how you managed to find that diamond, it don't want a very sharp man to guess that much."

Enderby felt that it was useless to waste any time in trying to argue the other out of his opinion.

"Look here! the question is not how I got it, but what it's worth," he said rather sulkily.

"Yes, but the second turns on the first. You have got something worth a good bit of money, but it's something you can't go into the open market and sell. But don't cut up rough! Sit down again, and we will talk over the matter. I ain't afraid of buying the diamond from you; there is no cursed Diamond Trade Act in force in this country," Le Mert said, and there followed a good deal of talk about the price of the diamond, but it did not end in anything definite, for the good reason that Enderby did not mean to part with the stone until he was paid for it, and the other had not an available penny in the world beyond five hundred pounds in cash, which he had by him ready for an emergency. It was very aggravating to think of the lot of money he would have made if he had only possessed some thousands.

That diamond was to be bought on very good terms, but Enderby wanted ready money, and until he had got ready money he did not intend to let it go out of his possession. Of course something could be done. It was possible to find buyers for the diamond, who would be content if it were worth their while not to ask awkward questions, but they would want to make a very good bargain themselves, and the commission that would fall to his share would be a very paltry sum compared to what he considered he ought to make out of such a chance, knowing what he did about that stone.

"Well, it's rather a big thing for me to go in for just now, but we will see what can be done; maybe I will get some one to take a share in it," he said, after they had talked for some time. "By the by," he added, "what are you going to do

with it? it's rather a valuable piece of property to carry on you."

"I can look after myself, I fancy," Jack answered. "I have the six-shooter on me that I had that night, and I mean going about with it and the diamond until I can sell."

"Why not let me keep it for you? and give you a memorandum—it would be better in that safe than in your belt."

"No fear, Mr Le Mert! maybe you're a very respectable diamond merchant, and are worth your thousands, but somehow, remembering old times, I think I would sooner have the diamond on me; you might be inclined to make things rather awkward for me if I wanted it back in a hurry."

Le Mert took this outwardly with great composure, but inwardly he cursed the other's pigheaded suspicion.

"By the by," Jack said, when the conversation about the diamond was concluded, "you must let me have something to go on with—a hundred or so won't inconvenience you, and will be the very making of me; for I came off the ship with about a pound in my pocket, and when I pay my hotel bill I sha'n't have a rap."

Le Mert thought that a hundred or so would inconvenience him a good deal more than the other imagined, but he intended to keep the state of his affairs a secret, so he produced ten ten-pound notes from his nest-egg, and handed them to the other. Jack crushed them up in his hand, and hurried away, eager to spend some of them, and begin to enjoy the good time he had been looking forward to ever since he had put his hand into the pocket of Sixpence's coat.

When his visitor had taken his departure, the diamond merchant looked at his diminished roll of notes. Four hundred pounds was all he had left, and not another penny did he see his way to raise, except what he hoped to make out of the diamond. Then he made a calculation or two on a piece of paper, and thought out the situation. Here was Jack Enderby with a diamond that he could not sell for one tenth of its value. He had no money to buy it, while the other would not let it go out of his possession, though so long as he kept it and appeared as the seller there would always be a clue to its real history.

Chapter Three.

Twenty-four hours after Jack Enderby received the hundred pounds he was dressing in some furnished chambers he had taken in Jermyn Street. Those twenty-four hours had done a good deal for him. When he first landed he had felt by no means at his ease. A valuable diamond is all very well, but it is not ready money, and as Jack had fingered the few shillings he had left in the pocket of his old pea-coat, he felt anything but confident, and realised that there was something in the atmosphere of London which made want of money worse than it is elsewhere. Then it was not very pleasant for the once brilliant Jack Enderby of the —th to have no better clothes than the colonial rags he was wearing, and to have to walk about the street in them. But the touch of the crisp bank-notes had changed everything, and had acted as a powerful tonic on his system. They enabled him to get into comfortable quarters, and order suitable raiment; and as he dressed that morning he looked at himself in the glass, and felt satisfied that he was not so very unlike the Jack Enderby of a dozen or so years before. Shaved, and with the beard that he had been wearing cut off, his face did not look so very much the worse for wear. There were some streaks of grey in his moustache, and some lines about the eyes, and on his cheek he had the scar of the blow he had received from Sixpence's knobkerri, which he would carry to his grave, still it had been paid for pretty handsomely. The last years had been hard ones enough, and he had had a rough time of it, but he had come out all right, and there were not many of his old friends, he expected, who had made as much money off their own bats as he would have done when he sold his diamond.

As he ate his breakfast—enjoying his food wonderfully, the tea, toast, and even eggs, seeming better than they did in Africa—he glanced at a daily and saw that it was Ascot week. Why should he not go down? he asked himself. There was nothing to prevent him now, for though he might come across some of the men who were looking for him very anxiously one Monday some dozen years before, even if they remembered him they would be appeased when they learnt that he would soon be able to settle with them. He was soon dressed—how strange it seemed to be wearing a black coat and a tall hat again—and was in a hansom bound for the station.

As he was paying for his entrance to the enclosure he felt some one touch him on the shoulder, and somewhat to his surprise heard his name spoken by a shabby, horsey-looking man, whose gloomy countenance for a second was lit up with something like satisfaction as he seemed to recognise him.

"How are you, Captain?" he said; "why I haven't seen you a-racing for this ever so long. You've been letting it alone, and you're right—wish I had; but you must have just one more shy at it this time for the stakes. Do you remember how I put you on to the winner at Cambridgeshire at thirties to one. Well, I've got as good a thing as that for you."

Jack recognised the man who had kept a public-house in a Berkshire village, near where he had been at a tutor's, before he went into the army. There was a training-stable in the village, whose fortunes the publican used to follow very faithfully. He had had one wonderful tip, which he had imparted to Jack, and they had both backed it to their profit.

"Ah, Captain, things ain't what they used to be with me by a long chalk. I haven't got the 'Horse and Jockey' no longer; and that bit o' land I had is gone; and now that I knows a good thing, blessed if I can raise enough to back it to win me a fiver; and mark my words, Captain, there never was a better thing than Revolver for the stakes. Now look 'ere, Captain, it's putting last year's Derby winner in at 7 stone 4—how'd that be, ay? I saw the trial, and I knows what I see, and you know that it's not from knowing too little but too much that I've hurt myself betting."

There was a note in the man's husky voice which convinced Enderby that he believed in his information. Revolver too, he rather liked the name. It was owing to a revolver that he was at Ascot and not in South Africa.

"What can I get about it?" he asked.

"They have got it at fiftens on the lists, but they are laying twenties in the ring—there is a price! Well, well, one don't know what's in store for one, but I'd lay against there being any worse torment than knowing a real good thing and not having a mag to back it with," the lout said, looking the picture of gloom, but his face lit up with pleasure when Jack promised to back the horse and put a sovereign on for him at the odds.

And then Enderby hurried away to back the horse, the other urging him to make haste and lose no time, as he believed that the horse would be backed for a good bit at the post, and its price was sure to shorten.

Going up to a ready-money bookmaker whom he remembered as a good man, Jack took twenty to one to twenty-five pounds. Then he saw another man back the horse for a little, and that made him feel more confident, so he doubled his bet. Then he went on to the top of the stand, and smoking a cigar as he looked over the grand stretch of Berkshire landscape one sees from it, he thought of the years that had passed since he drove over from Aldershot to Ascot, a cheery, happy-go-lucky young subaltern. Then some shouts from the ring caught his ear, and he learnt that Revolver was evidently being backed, for a hundred to eight against Revolver was taken by some one near him on the stand. Though he would not have much of Le Mert's hundred left if he lost, he felt curiously confident, and began to have a belief in his luck.

It was a capital start for the Ascot Stakes, and the horses were all together till they were about three furlongs from home, then the favourite looked like winning, but Jack, as he caught sight of the horse he had backed, felt pretty confident that he was not done for. Then there was a cry of "It's a race!" as Revolver came up with a rush. And a grand race it was, and even Jack Enderby was hardly certain, till the numbers went up, that Revolver had won the stakes by a head, and he had won a thousand pounds.

Yes, there was no doubt about his having got into a streak of luck, he thought, as he travelled back to town that day, having won a little more on the other races, and being altogether some twelve hundred pounds to the good.

That evening, Enderby and Le Mert had arranged to dine together, and have some more talk about the sale of the diamond. The latter, as he eat his dinner, began to feel anything but pleased at the turn matters had taken. When he lent the other the hundred pounds he thought the loan would help to make their relations more confidential, and to keep Enderby to some extent in his power, and that the latter would spend the money soon enough, and when it was gone be ready to sell the diamond and fill his pockets again. He had not taken into consideration the chances of his gambling and winning.

But Jack Enderby with his pockets full of notes was a very different person from the man who had dodged into the office in Hatton Garden a day or two before. When Le Mert mentioned a price he laughed, and asked him if he thought he was dealing with a baby.

"Look here, I've been thinking over matters, and maybe it's better to wait a bit till people have forgotten that yarn about the nigger. I shall stick my diamond into a bank, and hold on till I get a good offer for it."

"And in the mean time how'll you live?" asked Le Mert.

"Live! why I have over a thou, and I've my luck."

"Luck!" snarled Le Mert.

"Well, luck! I believe in it, don't you?"

Le Mert did believe a good deal more in what gamblers call luck than he would have confessed. Enderby's luck, however, seemed likely to upset his last chance of getting out of his difficulties, and he felt savage enough, though he answered carelessly—

"I expect your luck will mean your getting to the bottom of that money in a week or two, and in a year that diamond will be sold, and you will be dead broke, and wishing yourself back again at Kimberley searching niggers."

After dinner Jack announced his intention of going home, and asked the other to come with him and smoke a pipe and drink a glass of grog. He did not feel easy with the diamond on him, he said, while he did not like leaving it at home, though no one except Le Mert knew that he had in his possession a stone worth fifty thousand pounds.

Le Mert said nothing, his thoughts were busy with his own affairs. Things had begun to look as if he must make a bolt for it. What a convenient piece of portable property that diamond would be to take with him, he thought.

Enderby in his own rooms, with a glass or two of grog on board, did not become much more companionable; on the contrary, he began to indulge in some not very civil pleasantries on the subject of the diamond.

"You would like to fool me out of that stone and get your claws on it, wouldn't you? If you were a better plucked one than you are I shouldn't feel so comfortable smoking my pipe and watching you glare at me, though you are the respectable Mr Le Mert, the director of a dozen flourishing companies, and the big diamond merchant; but you'd—soon follow that Union Company's boy if you tried that game on."

Le Mert growled out something about the diamond not being worth quite as much as Jack fancied, but the other paid very little attention to him, and taking another gulp of brandy-and-water, began to follow out a train of thought which something he said had suggested to him with sublime indifference to his guest's feelings.

"Le Mert the millionaire! Hah, hah! you weren't a millionaire in the old days down at Dutoitspan, were you? I can see you now. What a hatched-faced thief you used to look, grinning at one across that patent spring-fitted roulette-

table—that was a profitable bit of furniture for you, that was.”

“Yes, it was, or I would not have been able to pay you as good a commission as I did for introducing custom to it,” answered Le Mert, getting up as if he were going away.

“Sit down, old chap; don’t cut up rough because I talk about old times. Take another cigar, they are up there, and mix for yourself,” Enderby said.

If he had been able to read the expression on Le Mert’s face he would not have been very anxious for his company. The latter, however, did not go, and took another cigar from the mantelshelf.

“Hullo! what’s that? you don’t drink that stuff, do you?” he said, as he touched a little bottle that was near the cigar-box.

“Drink it, no! I have had a bad tooth, and I have been rubbing my gums with it,” Enderby answered, as he looked at the bottle the other was holding up. “Look here, Le Mert,” he continued, when his guest had sat down again, “why don’t you give me a fair price for that stone? you can afford to go in for a spec like that, and make a pot of money out of it.”

“Perhaps I can afford it, but you want too much. I will treat you as well as any one, you will find; we are old friends, and none the worse friends because we know each other pretty well,” Le Mert answered with a peculiar smile. It amused him to think how little the other knew about his real circumstances.

For some time the two sat smoking, Jack rambling away about the earlier days of their acquaintance, and Le Mert saying very little. After a little time Le Mert asked for some more water, and Jack left the room to get some from a tap in the passage outside. As he left the room a look of triumph came into Le Mert’s face, and he got up, took up the little bottle on the mantelshelf, and poured some of its contents into the glass of brandy-and-water Enderby had just mixed. He had just time to get back to his seat, when Enderby came into the room with the water. It would have startled the latter if he could have read the meaning of the look with which Le Mert watched him as he sat down in his chair, glancing listlessly for a second or two at his brandy-and-water before he lifted his glass to his lips. Was he going to sip it, or would he gulp it down as he generally did? Le Mert was wondering. If he took the former course, then Le Mert knew that his chances of getting the diamond would vanish, for Enderby probably would detect the taste of the laudanum.

“You’re infernally silent—what robbery are you hatching now?” Enderby said, as he sat with the glass provokingly held in his hand, while his visitor’s nerves began to jump with excitement. He was not afraid of the consequences being found out, other than losing all chance of the diamond. Enderby, if he suspected him of having tried to drug his drink, would most likely treat him rather roughly, but he would do no more. At last the glass went up to the mouth and was tipped up and put down empty, Enderby saying that there was a queer taste in the brandy.

“Queer taste! I don’t notice it; and I will take some more,” Le Mert said. “Why you remind me of that story of Sam Gideon, of Dutoitspan,” he continued, and he began to tell a story. It was rather a long and involved narrative, and required a good deal of harking back and explanations. Before he got to any point, Le Mert stopped. Enderby’s head had fallen down over his chest and he was insensible.

“Ah! I thought that would do for you. You’d have sat up drinking brandy-and-water all night, and the only effect it would have had on you, would have been to make you more insolent; but that’s done the trick,” Le Mert said, as he looked at the other who was huddled up in a heap in his chair, and going up to him felt for the belt and undid it. Then, as he looked at the diamond, and then at the heavy form of Enderby lying back in the chair, he laughed to himself. The revolver which Enderby had trusted in had not proved of much service to him. When he came to again he would know what the robbery was that he had been hatching. Then Le Mert went to the door.

“Good-bye, Mr Enderby. When you wake you will find Le Mert, the great diamond merchant, a rather more difficult man to come across than you think he is,” he said, as he put on the belt and looked at the figure in the chair. A change seemed to have come over the face, and Le Mert started and went back and bent over it. Then he listened at the heart, and turned pale and shuddered; something told him that Enderby was not merely stupefied. He tried to think what he ought to do, but a panic came over him, and he was mastered by a longing to get out of the room and away. Then he left the room and went down-stairs and out into the streets.

The next morning the servant found Enderby in the chair, and could not wake him up. A doctor was sent for, and when he came his verdict was that he was dead. The bottle of laudanum on the table near him suggested that he had taken an overdose, and a *post-mortem* examination bore out this theory.

Jack Enderby, though he looked tough enough, had a weak heart, so it seemed, and the dose, which would only have stupefied most men, had caused his death. The diamond had proved as fatal to him as it did to Sixpence, and his run of luck had suddenly come to an end.

One circumstance which was thought rather strange, was the absence at the inquest of the man who had been in his rooms the night before, and who must have been the last man to see him alive. This, perhaps, was the reason why the jury found an open verdict, though all the other circumstances pointed towards his having taken too much laudanum by accident.

The police, however, when they made inquiries, and found out from a waiter at the restaurant that Le Mert was the man who had dined with the deceased, thought that his absence was explained. That gentleman was wanted at other places as well as the inquest. He was not to be found at his office or anywhere else, and the accounts of some companies he had been connected with, and what came out about the state of his finances, fully explained his absence. Shareholders in his companies and men in Hatton Garden were vowing vengeance against him, without

much hope of ever seeing or hearing of him again. People were asking themselves, as is so often the case after a smash, why they had put any trust in a man of whom they knew so very little which was at all to his credit?

At last the police, who were put on his track as a defaulting bankrupt, got a clue which enabled them to say that he had taken a passage in a steamer bound for a South American port, where there was no extradition treaty.

His creditors, however, did not give up all hopes of bringing him to an account until they got some news which told them that he had gone further from their clutches than they supposed. The ship in which he had sailed had gone down, and though all the other passengers were saved, he was missing. The ship had been run down by another vessel, and after the collision had begun to sink rapidly. Le Mert, with several of the passengers, had been in the smoking cabin, and when he had seen that the boats were being lowered he had turned to go down below to fetch something from his cabin. One of the officers had warned him not to leave the deck, and told him that if he went below he would not get up again, but he would not listen, but had rushed down to his cabin. He was never seen again, for the boat had only time to put off and get clear of the ship, before she settled and sank. His creditors wondered what it was he went below to get, and some believed that he had a store of embezzled money. Others, however, who heard the particulars of Enderby's death, and rumours of the diamond that had been found by the Kaffir he had shot, put two and two together and formed a theory, which agreed with the history of the fatal diamond that Le Mert clutched as he went down in the sinking ship. It had claimed its last victim, and it lies at the bottom of the sea, and is as harmless as it was before it was unearthed.

The End.

[| Story 1 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 2 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 3 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 4 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 5 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 6 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 7 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 8 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 9 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 10 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 11 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 12 Chapter 0](#) | [| Story 13 Chapter 0](#) |

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LUCK AT THE DIAMOND FIELDS ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are

removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different

terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution™ of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-

readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.