

A RUN TO FREETOWN.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

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In the nature of the case it was quite out of the question that the story of the diamond dog, under the skin of which gems were smuggled from the mine, should remain a secret for very long. To the illicit diamond buyers every detail of it as it gradually leaked out was as a sweet morsel under the tongue, and to many more honest enemies of the new compound system, mostly tradesmen and canten keepers, it was far too acceptable a story either to be kept dark or to be allowed to lose anything in the retelling.

Added to this, the tragedy in which it had culminated had lent a piquancy to its flavor which sufficiently stimulated the palate of Kimberley society to set it longing for more, and so, little by little, it filtered through the barriers of official reticence until at last a fitting finish was given to the story by the confession of Chief Detective Inspector Lipinski one night in the smoking room of the club that that day's mail had brought him a brief note, written by one Loo Chai, presumably a former resident of that name in Delagoa Bay, requesting that an inclosed acceptance for £250, drawn in his favor by the late Mr. Augustus Lowenfeldt, might be cashed by that gentleman's executors, and the amount, less 10 per cent commission for his (the inspector's) trouble, forwarded at his convenience to 9 Malay street, Singapore. The note concluded by stating that the £250 was a balance due from Mr. Lowenfeldt on the purchase of a certain dog of the estimated value of £11,000.

Despite the fact that not a few of those who heard the note read out and looked at the acceptance as it was handed round had lost some proportion of that £11,000, the irony of the note and the delicate humor of the address given—Malay street, Singapore, having a reputation that is redolent throughout the whole east—provoked a laugh as general as it was hearty, and the next morning all Kimberley was enjoying the heathen's parting joke.

That night a lady variety vocalist at the Theater Royal sent her audience into prolonged and vociferous raptures by singing the then famous patter song, "Keyser, Don't You Want to Pay a Tog?" with appropriate local allusions, and then Kimberley proceeded to improve the occasion in its own way.

"No Dogs Admitted" was found painted in large black letters across the principal entrance to the De Beers compound. The corpse of a large Newfoundland dog sewed up in the skin of a small donkey and carefully packed in a neat case was sent by coach from Vryburg to the chief inspector "to be paid for on delivery." Printed notices were stuck up in conspicuous parts of the town to the effect that in future all dogs entering or leaving Kimberley would have to be skinned alive "by authority," and so on until the very sight of a dog in the street afflicted the worthy inspector and his subordinates with something like a new sort of rabies.

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

There was at that time in Kimberley a Yankee adventurer named Seth Salter, who was known to the detective department as an even more skillful I. D. B. than the late lamented Lowenfeldt. His ostensible means of livelihood were stock and share speculation, billiards and three card monte, varied by the occasional keeping of a faro bank, but though he did well at all these comparatively honest vocations he did not do well enough to satisfactorily account for a style of living and luxuriance of dissipation which could not be adequately supported on less than £5,000 a year at the most modest computation. There were only possible alternative hypotheses, debt or I. D. B., and he had no debts.

Now, Seth Salter was one of the most conspicuous of the humorists who, as he put it, made the department see dogs instead of snakes when the officials thereof had "got a bit too full," and before very long Inspector Lipinski publicly stated in the bar of the Queen's hotel that the next time Mr. Salter tried, either in person or by proxy, to run a parcel of illicit stones over the border to Freetown he would so arrange matters that by the time the circus was over the said Mr. Salter would have good reason to wish that he had been born a dog instead of a dirty, stock rigging, card swindling diamond thief.

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

Nothing less than immediate manslaughter was looked for, and the crowd began to scatter instinctively. But, somewhat to the disappointment of the more festive spirits, Salter strolled quietly up to the bar, took his place about three feet from the inspector and said with the most perfect good humor: "Evenin, boss! Don't seem to be feelin' quite good tonight. Hope no one's been tryin' to sell the department another pup. Take a drink?"

Of course the crowd laughed. The double pointed gibe was irresistible, and the laugh did not improve the inspect-

or's inward feelings. But he was far too well skilled in his business to show the slightest trace of irritation, so he replied, with an easy smile and the most perfect politeness of tone: "Ah, good evening, Mr. Salter! I was just talking about you. No, thanks, the department is not buying any dog flesh just now, not even skins. As to your kind invitation—well, as I say, I was talking about you just now when you came in, and perhaps—"

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

"Don't take the trouble to say it again, boss. I've known your opinion of me for a long time, and now I've heard it. If you'd backed down, you might have heard somethin' drop, but as you didn't I'm free to say that I've too much respect for your honorable department to think of removin' its respected chief to another and may be less congenial sphere on account of an honestly expressed opinion—not me, sir! So, now, N. G. and name the poison. Will you join us, gentlemen?"

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

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

At last the Yankee rallied him, quite good humoredly, on his lack of festivity, but rather unfortunately, as it seemed to the company, dragged in something about shortage on mine returns. That was too much for the inspector, and his long bottled up wrath suddenly flared out.

"Shortage, confound it! You're a nice one to talk about shortage, Mr. Salter. You know as well as I do that there's about £15,000 short of the month's average on De Beers and Kimberley returns, and you know a big sight better than I do where the stones have gone to. But we'll have you yet. You're wide and you're deep, but you're not quite the cleverest man on earth, and when we do get you—"

"Well, why'n't thunder don't you, boss?" the Yankee laughed, with still undisturbed humor. "Say, now, I'll give you a pointer, as them sneaks of yours don't seem to have got on to it yet. I'm gin across to Freetown some time between now and Sunday on a little private business of my own. S'pose, now, I was takin' that bit of shortage with me, what'll you lay against me gettin' it through?"

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

"No, you don't," laughed Salter. "That's for me to lay. Now, look here, I'll lay you ten years on the breakerwater to £1,000—that's only £100 a year, and I think my time's a darned sight more valuable than that, so I'm givin' you big odds—that I'll take that little lot through for all you can do to stop me."

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

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



"That bluff won't work, Mr. Salter." presence of mind nor his professional promptitude. Like lightning a revolver jumped out of his coat pocket, and as he covered the Yankee's heart with the muzzle he said sharply:

"That bluff won't work, Mr. Salter. I'll see your hand for £1,000 now. If you don't want a sudden death in your family, come along to the office and account for the possession of those diamonds."

To the added amazement of every one in the room, Seth Salter burst into a loud laugh and said, without moving out of the line of fire: "Waal, boss, I did think you had a better eye for klips than that. D'you fancy I'd be such an almighty sucker as to—good Lord, man, can't you see they're all schlenfers? There's no law against carryin' them round, I reckon. There's plenty of good judges in the room to help you."

A very brief examination satisfied the disgusted inspector that the astute Yankee had once more turned the laugh against him. The things were schlenfers, or "snide diamonds"—imitations made of glass treated with fluorine acid to give them the peculiar frosted

Don't shoot, for that's murder, and you're covered three times over."

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

"Ah, it's you, inspector, is it? Sorry I've brought you a bobby hunt like this and given the department a horse to pay for. Klips! Waal, I did hear of some goin' across last night inside a Kaffir dog, but you've struck the wrong shebang for stones tonight; true's death, you have! But you can search and see if you like."

The inspector took no notice either of the Yankee's extended hand or his speech. He just covered Salter with a revolver and ordered his men to light their lanterns and search everything thoroughly. They obeyed, and after a 20 minute investigation, during which they employed every device that their ingenuity and experience could suggest on the cart, clothing and person of Salter, who submitted like a lamb, and even on the horses, they were forced to confess that they had drawn a blank.

"Waal, boss, are you satisfied that I ain't sellin' you a pup this time?" said Salter as he finished remaking his toilet, for he had stripped to the buff with the true hardhood of a man who is playing for a big stake and means to win.

Not so much as a schlenfer had been found, and Mr. Inspector Lipinski felt that he had got himself into a very nasty place. He had stopped a seeming-



"Mother of Moses, what a lot!"

ly honest traveler, shot one of the horses and submitted him to the indignity of a personal search. Visions of his lost bet, of a civil action for damages before a jury that might probably be I. D. B.'s to a man, of heavy damages and of the storm of ridicule that would overwhelm him at the end flashed in quick succession past his mental gaze, and, being only human after all, he decided to temporize.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Maguire looked at the signature, glanced curiously at the astounded inspector, then opened the envelope, unfolded the bulky packet that was in it and disclosed about 50 rough diamonds, the sight of which made even his experienced eyes water. Orange and blue, green, rose and pure white, they glittered most tantalizingly in the light of the paraffin lamp which hung above the bar counter.

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

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

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appearance of the real rough stones—which were used chiefly for the purpose of swindling the new chums and greenhorns who were making their first essays in I. D. B.

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

"Waal, now, that's a bet, eh?" said Salter as he put the packet in his pocket. "Now let's take another drink on it and then go home. It's gettin' late, and I've got to pack. There's no knowin' how soon I might have to start."

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

The next day Seth Salter openly hired a Cape cart and team of four horses to take him to Bloemfontein, which is about 80 miles by road from Kimberley, and when the bargain was struck he privately informed the driver, an off colored Cape boy who had made more than one run of the kind, that if he would start at midnight instead of midday and go via Freetown instead of Boshoff he should have £100 for that part of the journey alone, which was not a bad fare for a drive of less than an hour. The boy jumped at the offer and within a couple of hours had accepted one of twice the amount, with half cash down, from Inspector Lipinski to pull up at a certain spot about 400 yards from the Free State border.

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

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

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

A little before noon Salter changed his plans and said he would go the next day, and a few minutes before midnight he got into his cart just outside Beaconsfield. The boy whipped up his team, and the cart rattled and jolted away at a quick trot toward the border. The night was dark, but fine, and as they spun along mile after mile without let or hindrance Salter began to think that, after all, Lipinski had funk'd the trap that he had laid for him and decided to risk letting the diamonds through rather than make a fool of himself by the capture of a lot of worthless schlenfers.

The lights of Freetown were already glimmering in the distance across the veld. Ten minutes more would see him safe across the border with the most valuable packet of diamonds that had ever been run out of camp, and then—suddenly his strained ears caught the

sound of a voice in the distance, followed by the clinking of horses' bits and the ominous "click click" of rifle locks.

He was sitting, as usual, on the seat behind the driver, and just as the boy turned round and whispered in a frightened way, "P'lice, baas, better pull up, eh? Might get shot," he thrust the barrel of his revolver under his nose and said in a low but very businesslike tone:

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

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

"Halt, or we'll shoot!"

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

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

"Well, gentlemen, may I ask what is the meanin' of this outrage on an unoffendin' traveler?" said Salter in a cool but angry voice as the police rode up.

"That'll do, Mr. Salter," said Inspector Lipinski's voice out of the darkness. "The bluff's played out. Pass up with the klips and come along quietly."

"No, boss, they're not schlenfers this time—a little steam and a little skill, you know. Waal, here's to you, and now I'll just take your good-for [the South African form of I. O. U.] for that £1,000, Mr. Lipinski, and then we'll say good night. I'm not comin' back to Kimberley till I've done my business down in Port Elizabeth. Chinn chin!"

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

That round of drinks was drunk and then another and another, and then—alas for the weakness of the best balanced human nature!—Mr. Seth Salter, with a confidence born of the fullness of his triumph, left the barroom with the diamonds in his pocket and went out into the night to see his discomfited friends off on their homeward journey. Exactly what happened during the next quarter of an hour was never known. Distant sounds of shouts and shots reached the waiting ears of Mr. Maguire, but he knew his business and quietly bolted the door, remarking to himself the while:

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

Shortly before 3 o'clock that morning Inspector Lipinski and his merry men

escorted the three horse Cape cart into Kimberley. The horse that was lying dead on the field was paid for to its full value, and the driver got his £200, coupled with a private intimation to the effect that if he ever opened his mouth on the subject of that night's doings 50 lashes and five years as an illicit diamond runner would be the least that he could expect. Inspector Lipinski slept the balance of the night out with a £15,000 parcel of diamonds under his pillow, and the next day there was no one in Kimberley who had anything to say to him on the subject of double skinned dogs or the selling of pups.

Of course there were many in camp who would have given a good deal to know what had become of Mr. Seth Salter, but that is part of quite a different story.

THE END.

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