

should spring the solution of the mystery upon me. Then he stopped and said abruptly:

"I didn't tell you that the next morning—that is to say, Sunday—Mr. Marsden went out on horseback, shooting in the veldt, up toward that range of hills which lies over yonder to the northwestward, between here and Barkly West. I can see by your face that you are already asking yourself what that has got to do with spiriting a million or so's worth of crystallized carbon out of the safe at De Beers'. Well, a little patience and you shall see.

"Early that same Sunday morning I was walking down Stockdale street, in front of the De Beers' offices, smoking a cigar, and of course worrying my brains about the diamond. I took a long draw at my weed and quite involuntarily put my head back and blew it up into the air—there, just like that—and the cloud drifted diagonally across the street dead in the direction of the hills on which Mr. Philip Marsden would just then be hunting back. At the same instant the revelation which had scattered my thoughts about the other little case that I mentioned just now came back to me. I saw, with my mind's eye of course—well, now, what do you think I saw?"

"If it wouldn't spoil an incomparable detective," I said somewhat irrelevantly, "I should say that you would make an excellent story teller. Never mind what I think. I'm in the plastic condition just now. I am receiving impressions, not making them. Now, what did you see?"

"I saw the great De Beers diamond—say, from £1,000,000 to £1,500,000 worth of concentrated capital—floating from the upper story of the De Beers' consolidated mines, rising over the housetops and drifting down the wind to Mr. Philip Marsden's hunting ground."

To say that I stared in the silence of blank amazement at the inspector, who made this astounding assertion with a dramatic gesture and inflection which naturally cannot be reproduced in print, would be to utter the merest commonplace. He seemed to take my stare for one of incredulity rather than wonder, for he said almost sharply:

"Ah, I see you are beginning to think that I am talking fiction now, but never mind, we will see about that later on. You have followed me, I have no doubt, closely enough to understand that having exhausted all the resources of my experience and such native wit as the fates have given me, and having made the most minute analysis of the circumstances of the case, I had come to the fixed conclusion that the great diamond had not been carried out of the room on the person of a human being nor had it been dropped or thrown from the windows to the street, yet it was equally undeniable that it had got out of the safe and out of the room."

"And therefore it flew out, I suppose," I could not help interrupting, nor, I am afraid, could I quite avoid a suggestion of incredulity in my tone.

"Yes, my dear sir," replied the inspector, with an emphasis which he increased by slapping the four fingers of his right hand on the palm of his left.

"Yes, it flew out. It flew some 17 or 18 miles before it returned to the earth in which it was born, if we may accept the theory of the terrestrial origin of diamonds. So far, as the event proved, I was absolutely correct, wild and all as you may naturally think my hypothesis to have been.

"But," he continued, stopping in his walk and making an eloquent gesture of apology, "being only human, I almost instantly deviated from truth into error. In fact, I freely confess to you that there and then I made what I consider to be the greatest and most fatal mistake of my career.

"Absolutely certain as I was that the diamond had been conveyed through the air to the Barkly hills and that Mr. Philip Marsden's shooting expedition had been undertaken with the object of recovering it, I had all the approaches to the town watched till he came back. He came in by the old Transvaal road about an hour after dark. I had him arrested, took him into the house of one of my men who happened to live out that way, searched him, as I might say, from the roots of his hair to the soles of his feet and found—nothing.

"Of course he was indignant, and of course I looked a very considerable fool. In fact, nothing would pacify him but that I should meet him the next morning in the boardroom at De Beers' and in the presence of the secretary and at least three directors apologize to him for my unfounded suspicions and the outrage that they had led me to make

"I saw him standing in front of me, covering me with a brace of revolvers," upon him. I was of course, as you might say, between the devil and the deep sea. I had to do it, and I did it, but my convictions and my suspicions remained exactly what they were before.

"Then there began a very strange and—although you may think the term curious—a very pathetic waiting game between us. He knew that in spite of his temporary victory I had really solved the mystery and was on the right track. I knew that the great diamond was out yonder somewhere, among the hills or on the veldt, and I knew too,

that he was only waiting for my vigilance to relax to go out and get it.

"Day after day, week after week and month after month the game went on in silence. We met almost every day. His credit had been completely restored at De Beers'. Lomas, his connection, and, as I firmly believed, his confederate, had been, through his influence, sent on a mission to England, and when he went I confess that I thought the game was up; that Marsden had somehow managed to recover the diamond, and that Lomas had taken it beyond our reach.

"Still I watched and waited, and as time went on I saw that my fears were groundless and that the gem was still on the veldt or in the hills. He kept up bravely for weeks, but at last the strain began to tell upon him. Picture to yourself the pitiable position of a man of good family in the old country, of expensive tastes and very considerable ambition, living here in Kimberley on a salary of some £12 a week, worth about £5 in England, and knowing that within a few miles of him, in a spot that he alone knew of, there lay a concrete fortune of, say, £1,500,000, which was his for the picking up if he only dared to go and take it, and yet he dared not do so.

"Yes, it is a pitiless trade, this of ours, and professional thief catchers can't afford to have much to do with mercy, and yet I tell you that as I watched that man day after day with the fever growing hotter in his blood and the unbearable anxiety tearing ever harder and harder at his nerves I pitied him—yes, I pitied him so much that I even found myself growing impatient for the end to come. Fancy that, a detective, a thief catcher, getting impatient to see his victim out of his misery!

"Well, I had to wait six months—that is to say, I had to wait until 5 o'clock this morning—for the end. Soon after 4 one of my men came and knocked me up. He brought a note into my bedroom and I read it in bed. It was from Philip Marsden, asking me to go and see him at once and alone. I went, as you may be sure, with as little delay as possible. I found him in his sitting room. The lights were burning. He was fully dressed and had evidently been up all night.

"Even I, who had seen the despair that comes of crime in most of its worst forms, was shocked at the look of him. Still he greeted me politely and with perfect composure. He affected not to see the hand that I held out to him, but asked me quite kindly to sit down and have a chat with him. I sat down, and when I looked up I saw him standing in front of me, covering me with a brace of revolvers. My life, of course, was absolutely at his mercy, and, whatever I might have thought of myself or the situation, there was obviously nothing to do but to sit still and wait for developments.

"He began very quietly to tell me why he had sent for me. He said: 'I wanted to see you, Mr. Lipinski, to clear up this matter about the big diamond. I have seen for a long time—in fact, from that Sunday night—that you had worked out a pretty correct notion as to the way that diamond vanished. You are quite right. It did fly across the veldt to the Barkly hills. I am a bit of a chemist, you know, and when I had once made up my mind to steal it—I saw that it would be perfectly absurd to attempt to smuggle such a stone out by any of the ordinary methods.

"I dare say you wonder what these revolvers are for. They are to keep you there in that chair till I've done, for one thing. If you attempt to get out of it or utter a sound, I shall shoot you. If you hear me out, you will not be injured, so you may as well sit still and keep your ears open.

"To have any chance of success I must have had a confederate, and I made young Lomas one. If you look on that little table beside your chair, you will see a bit of closed lead piping with a tap in it and a piece of thin sheet india rubber. That is the remains of the apparatus that I used. I make them a present to you. You may like to add them to your collection.

"Lomas, when he went on duty that Saturday night, took the bit of tube charged with compressed hydrogen and an empty child's toy balloon with him. You will remember that that night was very dark and that the wind had been blowing very steadily all day toward the Barkly hills. Well, when everything was quiet he filled the balloon with gas, tied the diamond—

"But how did he get the diamond out of the safe? The secretary saw it locked up that evening!" I exclaimed, my curiosity getting the better of my prudence.

"It was not locked up in the safe at all that night," he answered, smiling with a sort of ghastly satisfaction. "Lomas and I, as you know, took the tray of diamonds to the safe, and, as far as the secretary could see, put them in, but as he put the tray into its compartment he palmed the big diamond as I had taught him to do in a good many lessons before. At the moment that I shut the safe and locked it it was in his pocket.

"The secretary and his friends left the room. Lomas and I went back to the tables, and I told him to clean the scales, as I wanted to test them. While he was doing so he slipped the diamond behind the box, and there it lay between the box and the corner of the wall until it was wanted.

"We all left the room as usual, and, as you know, we were searched. When Lomas went on night duty, there was the diamond ready for its balloon voyage. He filled the balloon just so that it lifted the diamond and no more. Two of the windows were open on account of the heat. He waited his opportunity and committed it to the air about two hours before dawn. You know what a sudden fall there is in the temperature here just before daylight. The diamond upon that to descend to

volume of the gas sufficiently to destroy the balance and bring the balloon to the ground, and I knew that if Lomas had obeyed my instructions it would fall either on the veldt or on this side of the hills.

"The balloon was a bright red and, to make a long story short, I started out before daylight that morning, as you know, to look for buck. When I got outside the camp, I took compass bearings and rode straight down the wind toward the hills. By good luck or good calculation or both I must have followed the course of the balloon almost exactly, for in three hours after I left the camp I saw the little red speck ahead of me up among the stones on the hillside.

"I dodged about for a bit, as though I were really after buck, in case anybody was watching me. I worked round to the red spot, put my foot on the balloon and burst it. I folded the india rubber up, as I didn't like to leave it there, and put it in my pocketbook. You remember that when you searched me you didn't open my pocketbook, as of course it was perfectly flat and the diamond couldn't possibly have been in it. That's how you missed your clew, though I don't suppose it would have been much use to you, as you'd already guessed it. However, there it is at your service now."

"And the diamond?"

"As I said these three words his whole manner suddenly changed. So far he had spoken quietly and deliberately and without even a trace of anger in his voice, but now his white, sunken cheeks suddenly flushed a bright fever red, and his eyes literally blazed at me. His voice sank to a low, hissing tone that was really horrible to hear.

"The diamond!" he said. "Yes, curse it and curse you, Mr. Inspector Lipinski—for it and you have been a curse to me! Day and night I have seen the spot where I buried it, and day and night you have kept your nets spread about my feet so that I could not move a step to go and take it. I can bear the suspense no longer. Between you—and that infernal stone—you have wrecked my health and driven me mad. If I had all the wealth of De Beers now, it wouldn't be any use to me, and tonight a new fear came to me—that if this goes on much longer I shall go mad, really mad, and in my delirium rob myself of my revenge on you by letting out where I hid it!"

"Now, listen. Lomas has gone. He is beyond your reach. He has changed his name, his very identity. I have sent him by different posts and to different names and addresses two letters. One is a plan, and the other is a key to it. With those two pieces of paper he can find the diamond. Without them you can hunt for a century and never go near it.

"And now that you know that—that your incomparable stone, that should have been mine, is out yonder somewhere where you can never find it, you and the De Beers people will be able to guess at the tortures of Tantalus that you have made me endure. That is all you have got by your smartness. That is my legacy to you, curse you! If I had my way, I would send you all out there to hunt for it without food or drink till you died of hunger and thirst of body, as you have made me die a living death by hunger and thirst of mind."

"As he said this he covered me with one revolver and put the muzzle of the other into his mouth. With an ungovernable impulse I sprang to my feet. He pulled both triggers at once. One bullet passed between my arm and my body, ripping a piece out of my coat. The other—well, I can spare you the details. He dropped dead instantly."

"And the diamond?" I said.

"Is at your service," replied the inspector in his suave manner, "provided that you can find it—or Mr. Lomas and his plans."

THE END.

"Guilty," but Penitent.

Among the specialists whom the government employs here in Washington is a learned gentleman who was once the superintendent of a Sabbath school. One of the stories he tells of that epoch is of a day when a visiting clergyman addressed the school. On the very front seat sat a pale little boy who had come to Sunday school that morning for the first time in his life. He watched the visiting clergyman with almost painful interest. The visiting clergyman was a large man, with great, dark eyes and a voice like unto that of the bull of Basham. He rose.

"Children," he thundered, "who made this glorious universe?" His black eyes glared fiercely at the new boy on the front seat. The new boy squirmed and trembled.

"I did, sir," he said huskily, "but I won't ever do it again."—Washington Post.

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