

# The KING of DIAMONDS.

By Louis Tracy,  
Author of "Wings of the Morning," "The Pillar of Light," Etc.

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"Take it that you want the best?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Yes."

"Are you lurching in the hotel?"

"I would like something set here, if you please, and there again your advice will be most gratefully accepted."

The manager felt that a generation was growing up of which he knew nothing, but he simply answered:

"I will see to it. Do you—take it?"

Philip laughed, but pleasant who seemed to laugh of his which instantly secured him friends.

"Not yet, monsieur."

"Foret is my name."

"Well, M. Foret, am far too young as yet for either wine or tobacco, promised my mother I would not touch either until I am twenty-one, and I will keep my word. I think I would like some cafe au lait."

"I understand. Your dejeuner will be sent up in ten minutes. By the time you have finished I will have people here from two or three establishments who will meet all your requirements in the shape of clothes and the rest."

An hour's talk and the payment of checks on account worked wonders. Before many days had passed Philip was simply provided with raiment. His presence in the hotel, too, attracted no comment whatever. People who saw him coming or going instantly assumed that he was staying with his people, while the manager took care that gossip among the employees was promptly stopped.

As for the rascal youth with the diamonds, he was forgotten apparently. The newspapers dropped him, believing, indeed, that Isaacstein had worked some ingenious advertising dodge on his own account, and Messrs. Sharpe & Smith never dreamed of looking for the lost Philip Anson, the derrick from Johnson's Mews, in the Fall Mall hotel, the most luxurious and expensive establishment in London.

That afternoon Philip visited the Safe Deposit company. He had little difficulty, of course, in securing a small strong room. He encountered the wretched surprise at his youth, but the excellent argument of a banking account and the payment of a year's rent in advance soon cleared the air.

He transferred four of his portmanteaus to this secure enclosure. The fifth was sent to his hotel. When the light faded he drove to the East End and made a round of pawnbrokers' shops. Although some of the tickets were time expired, he recovered nearly all his mother's belongings excepting her watch.

The odd coincidence recalled the inspector's implied promise that he should receive one as a recognition of his gallantry.

How remote, how far removed from each other, the main events in his life seemed to be at this eventful epoch! As he went westward in a hansom he could hardly bring himself to believe that barely twenty-four hours had elapsed since he traveled to the Mile End road in company with Mrs. Wrigley.

And the curious thing was that he felt in no sense awed by the possession, of thousands of pounds and the tenancy of palatial chambers in a great hotel. His career had been too checked, its recent developments too stupendous, to cause him any undue emotion. Existence for the hour was a species of well ordered dream, in which imagination was untrammelled save by the need to exercise his wits in order to keep the phantasy within the bounds not of his own brain, but of other men's.

At the hotel he found the French valet setting forth a shirt. The man explained that he required a spare set of studs and handkerchiefs.

"This reminded Philip that there was still a good deal of shopping to be done. He was about to leave the room for the purpose when the valet said:

"Another portmanteau has arrived for monsieur. Will you be pleased to unlock it?"

"No," said Philip. "It must remain untouched." He smiled at the thought of the sensation his tattered rags and worn boots would make in that place. Yet just a week ago he passed through the street outside bound in the piteous raiment for Johnson's Mews and bent on suicide.

He walked into Regent street and made a number of purchases, not forgetting some books. A double silver mounted photograph stand caught his eye. It would hold the two best pictures he possessed of his father and mother, so he bought it. He also acquired a dispatch box in which he could store his valuables, both jewelry and documents, for he had quite a number of receipts, letters and other things to safeguard now, and he did not wish servants' prying eyes to examine everything belonging to him.

When alone in his room he secured the album and looked that special portmanteau again, after stowing therein the letter found beneath Mrs. Anson's pillow. Soon his mother's dear face smiled at him from a beautiful border of filigree silver. The sight was pleasant to him, soothing to his full mind. In her eyes was a message of faith, of trust, of absolute confidence in the future.

It was strange that he thought so little of his father at this time, but the truth was that his childhood was passed so much in his mother's company, and they were inseparable during the last two years, that memories of his father were shadowy.

Yet the physiognomist would have found that the boy owed a great deal of his strength of character and will to the frame to the handsome, stalwart man whose name he bore.

Philip loved his mother on the compensating principle that persons of comely features often have an overpowering affinity for each other. He remembered her neither in features nor in the more subtle traits of character.

After a dinner the excellence of which was in no wise diminished by lack of appreciation on his part, he undertook a pilgrimage of curiosity to which he had previously determined to devote the evening.

He wandered unhesitatingly to whom he was indebted for the good meals he had enjoyed in prison. Now he would endeavor to find out.

A hansom took him to Holloway, but the first efforts of the driver failed to discover the whereabouts of the Royal Star hotel.

At last Philip recollected the warder's added direction—"opposite"

which he handed to his ungrateful backer.

"There was a bet, too," he said.

"Ra-ther!" roared Judd. "Two bob, which I've paid. Out with you, Tomkins. Lord lumme, I'll stand treat at the George for this!"

"There's something funny in the kise," growled Tomkins as he unwindingly produced a couple of forins.

"I was sure you would see the joke at once," said Philip. "Goodby, Mr. Judd. Goodby, ma'am. You will hear from me without fail within a fortnight."

He was gone before he realized his intention. They saw him skip rapidly up the steps leading into Holborn, and London had swallowed him forever so far as they were concerned.

Ten days later a firm of solicitors wrote to the greengrocer to inform him that a client of theirs had acquired the freehold of his house and shop, which property during the life of either himself or his wife would be tenanted by the greengrocer.

"Yes," interrupted the lady. "I only heard this mornin' that he was out."

"Would you mind telling me who your client is?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, it was overpaid," was the reply. "You see, the pore lad was mannaed for a week, and Mr. Judd, a man 'oo lives in the Farrington road, ken 'ere 'ad 'em arranged for his week's board. Hav' ye heard 'ot 'appened to 'im?"

Philip's heart was in his mouth, but he managed to answer that the boy was all right; there was no charge against him. Then he escaped into the street. The one man he had forgotten was his greengrocer's friend, who had indeed acted the part of the good Samaritan.

There was some excuse for this, but the a-bombing good nature would admit of none. He hastened to Farrington road with the utmost speed and found his fat friend putting up the shutters of his shop.

The restaurant next door was open. Philip approached quietly.

"Good evening, Mr. Judd," he said, holding out his hand.

"Good evening, sir," said the greengrocer, his eyes revealing as the first glimpse of the identity of the smart young gentleman who addressed him so familiarly.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Judd?"

"Well, sir, I can't exactly bring to mind."

"I suppose the good fare you provided for me at Holloway has so altered my appearance that you fail to recognize me again?"

"What do you mean to say?" "Ere, Eliza, this young gent is the lad I was a-tellin' you of. Remanded till Saturday, you was. I saw in the paper last night. Well, there I'm done."

By this time Philip was inside the shop, and the stout greengrocer and his equally stout spouse were gazing open mouthed at this well dressed youth who had supplanted the thin tatterdemalion he much discussed by them and their neighbors.

Judd and the restaurant keeper were the only men in the locality who could claim actual acquaintance with the boy whose strange case, as reported by the newspapers made London rage. Indeed, both men had been interviewed by police and reporters many times. They were living links with the miracle, a pedestal of common sense for an aerial phantasy.

And now here he was back again, dressed like a young gentleman and laughing Judd as a valued friend. No wonder the greengrocer lost his breath and the stout wife's eyes were staring.

But Philip was smiling at him and talking.

"You were the one man out of many, Mr. Judd, who believed in me and even stuck up for me when you saw me led through the streets by a policeman to be imprisoned on a false charge. I did not know until an hour ago that I was indebted to you for an abundance of excellent food while I was remanded in prison. I will not offer to refund you the money you spent. My gratitude will take another form, which you will learn in a few days. But I do want to pay you the ninepence I borrowed. Would you mind sending the receipt to the restaurant to step in here for a moment?"

"I am present, I wish to avoid a crowd, you know."

Judd had time to collect his scattered thoughts during the long speech.

"Now the ninepence?" he cried.

"What the ninepence?" he cried.

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