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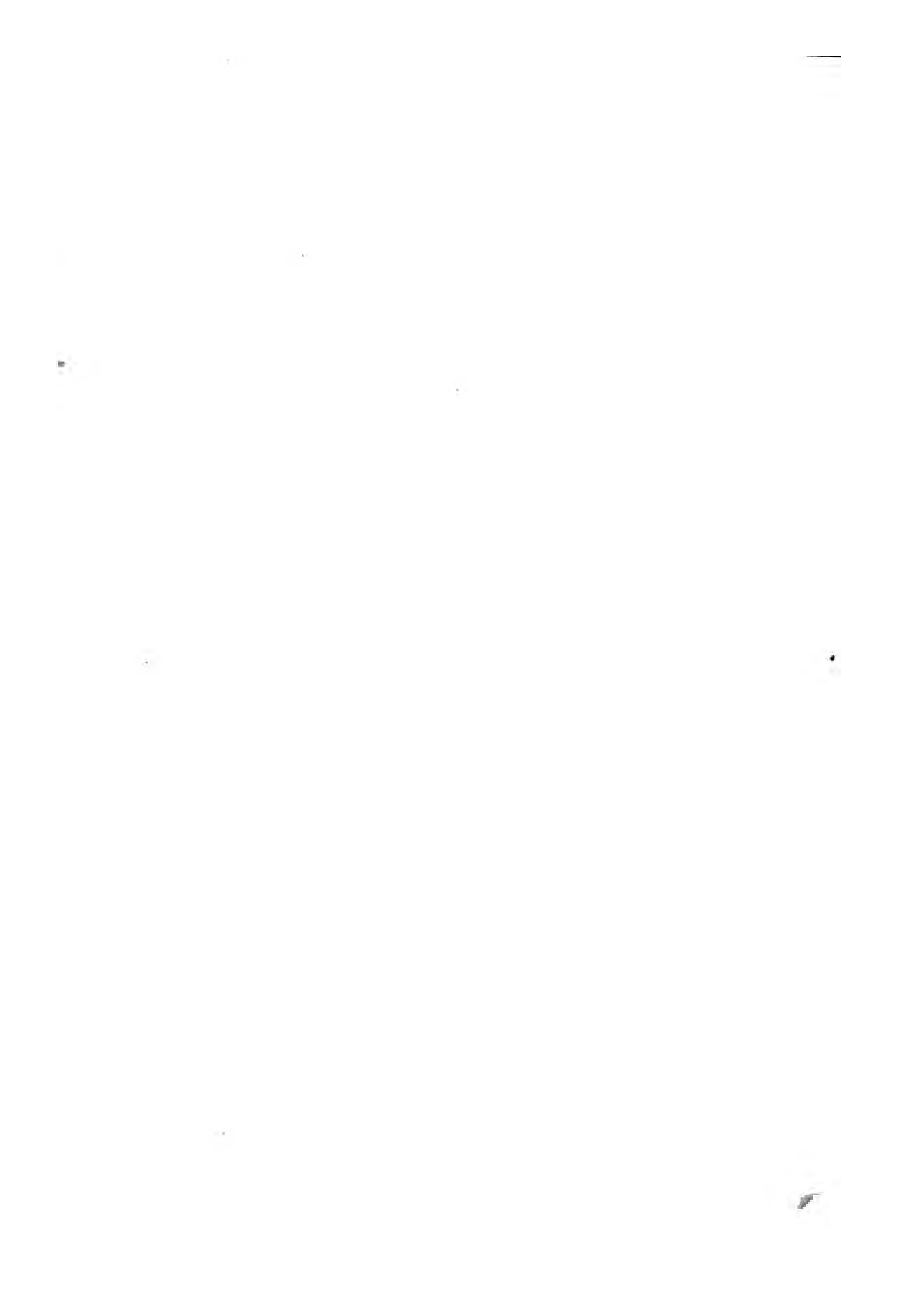
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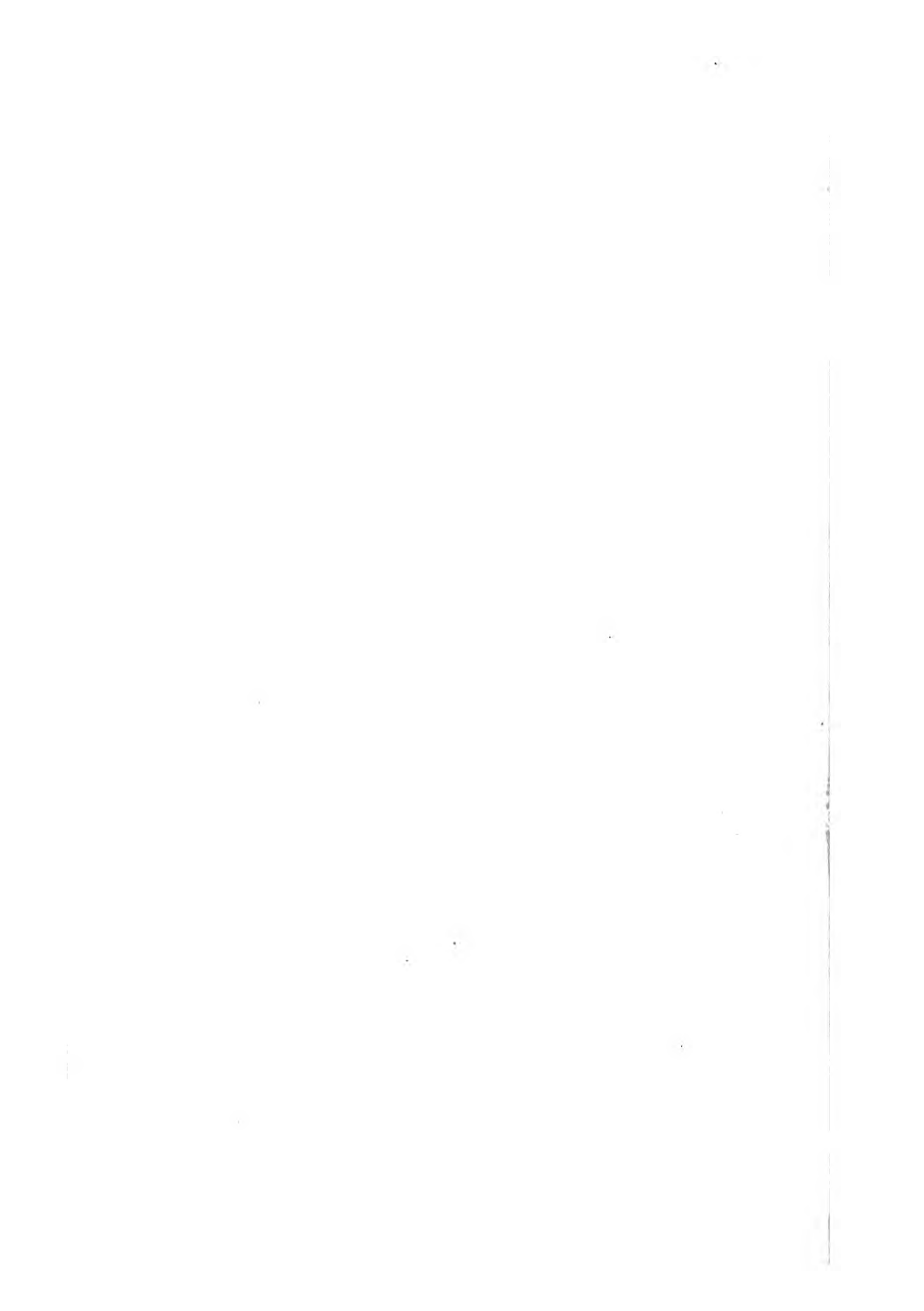
The book cover is a deep red color with a fine, woven texture. It features a decorative border composed of vertical lines and stylized motifs. At the top, there are two heart-shaped motifs on the left and two on the right, each with a long, thin stem ending in a small dot. The central text is printed in a bold, black, serif font. The title 'THE GOLDEN CALF' is the largest, followed by 'BY' in a smaller size, and 'STEPHEN BLACK' in a size similar to the title. The bottom half of the cover is dominated by a row of five heart-shaped motifs, each with a long stem, and a row of seven heart-shaped motifs, each with a long stem, positioned below them.

THE
GOLDEN CALF

BY
STEPHEN BLACK

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THE
GOLDEN
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By BRIDGET KENNEDY

(A First Novel)

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD.

30 New Bridge Street, London, E.C.4

THE GOLDEN CALF

A STORY OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS

BY

STEPHEN BLACK

AUTHOR OF "THE DORP"

LONDON

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD.

30 NEW BRIDGE STREET, E.C.4

1925



MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

THE GOLDEN CALF

CHAPTER I

“ . . . UNLESS you pay in advance.”

Then they mounted painfully a long street; it led towards the Malay quarter. Perhaps among the coloured people they would find kinder hearts.

“ Until I can get work,” said Lily, without addressing herself directly to the child who she then noticed streamed out behind her in the south-east wind. That lodging-house keeper, so frankly suspicious, had set her legs faster in motion up the hill; but now she saw that Margaret was unable to keep pace. Thereupon Lily bent round, holding her skirts lest they blow over her face; with the right arm hooked to the child’s hand she pressed upon the unbroken wind that swept from Table Mountain into the sea. She crossed a wide street that ran parallel with the gale, and little stones beat the side of her face. Margaret saw that her mother was suffering; she freed herself and ran cheerily forward.

“ Margaret, Margaret,” cried the woman, but those sturdy legs zigzagged onward, the child resembling a giant mushroom swayed by unseen forces.

Outside a general dealer’s shop Lily caught up.

“ Come, darling, we will ask here.”

Margaret grabbed her mother’s flowing dress and they entered. A Malay woman stood behind the counter cutting Dutch cheese. She laid down her knife, eyeing the white-skinned child anchored to her mother’s skirts like a boat beside a sailing-ship.

“ Do you know of a room to let about here? ”

Long and thoughtful pause. Then:

“ Only by coloured people . . . Rose Street. Higher up the mountain. Mrs. February, coloured people but

very respectable. Her husband is a sarang by the Docks. Number 36. Say I sent you, Missus."

Lily gave thanks and moved to the door.

"Nice little girl you got, Missus."

The Malay woman wiped the cheese from her fingers and held out a sugar-stick. Margaret's hand went out, but then, withdrawing, her face peeped up at Lily's to know if she might.

"Thank you very much," stammered the mother.

Suck . . . suck, suck, went the child.

"Missus come from England, perhaps?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

"Because Missus skin too fair and little girl too pink for Cape Town ladies."

As Lily went out, the Malay woman, manifestly proud at contact with these white English skins, called after her: "Missus come tell me if she stop by Mrs. February?"

Lily promised to do so. She and Margaret resumed their climb, and presently came to Rose Street, where Mrs. February lived. This coloured householder was surprised at an English lady's wanting her room; she balanced in mind against the risk of financial loss the certainty of social gain. Lily's graciousness, her beauty, her magnificence in that modest quarter, made it impossible for Mrs. February to demand payment in advance, even had this been her rule.

The room was clean. Lily said she would take it that day at fifteen shillings asked. Now she would go to fetch her luggage. Without Margaret she could recover her things with less trouble. Besides, that long walk in the wind would tire the child.

"I will leave my little girl till I come back."

"No, mummy. I want to go with you."

"But, dearest, you will be quite safe."

"No, mummy, no! I will go with you."

Resolute, loving mite, she had to be conciliated.

"It's a wicked woman you're going to see, mummy. I must be with you."

Lily dreaded the scene that was to come over the removal of her mean things, because she owed a week's board and lodging. On the way down she looked in at

the Malay shop to tell the news. But now a boy was behind the counter. Confidences that might have flown froze within her. That Malay woman's face was an invitation to Lily to unburden her over-charged soul. . . . She turned away disappointed.

They crossed Loop Street, and, subconsciously almost, Lily became aware that near her was a theatre. Bills were fluttering that indicated a performance of some play, she did not notice which. It was no occasion for recalling that part of her past, her little triumphs at school concerts and once an appearance on behalf of charity in a town as big as this that she now felt to be so overwhelming and cruel. Her mind was obsessed by the problem before her. Margaret was right—the woman she was going to battle with was a wicked woman, with the soul of a soured lodging-house keeper whose life had curdled cynicism into ferocity. Scenting poverty and hating beauty, this proprietress of the unfashionable hotel to which Lily went from the steamer a week ago had stinted them, determined to extract every penny they owed, but in order to be on the safe side, supplying half the food and comfort to which they were entitled for seventy shillings per week.

As they turned a corner something glittered bright in the road. The child darted out, let go the skirts and scratched in the dust.

“Look what I've found!”

Joy, joy over the first threepenny bit she had seen for a long time.

“Come on, mummy,” she cried, pointing to a baker's shop where penny buns were on sale.

Lily was hungry; she had found it impossible to eat breakfast—“pay up or get out” rang in her ears. She wished to go out as quickly as possible. But a few minutes more or less . . . and the child was happy, holding up her threepenny bit and pointing to the buns. So in they went and found once again a woman's kindly face behind the counter.

The shopkeeper gave Lily a chair; Margaret shared her buns. The sweetness to each other of mother and child attracted the baker's wife; she offered Lily a cup of tea. Margaret was like an amiable dog that created

friendship between its owner and other dog-fanciers. She unloosened everywhere the heartstrings of men and women.

Lily gratefully drank the tea. Time was slipping by, but they were out of the wind. In such an atmosphere it was easy to ask for the daily paper. "My husband subscribes—I'll see if he has done with it." Yes, a grumpy man in the back shop had done with it. Lily ran her eye fast down the wanted column. The baker's wife said things were very bad in South Africa, there was nothing to do but go to the Diamond Fields. Only a fortnight in Cape Town and Lily thought the same. But what use was it telling her to go to Kimberley? She knew that there wealth abounded, pretty women were wanted to sell drink to men whose alimentary organs were stimulated by the sight of beauty. But the rail and coach fare to that far-off land?

This morning's paper contained two announcements of vital interest. Had that threepenny piece brought them luck, Lily asked herself.

Wanted—cheerful housekeeper for well-to-do gentleman on the Diamond Fields. Handsome wages to suitable applicant. Apply A.S., c/o Toole's Hotel.

The second of the two announcements in the newspaper ran :

Wanted—clever, handsome girl to tour with Montague Burlesque troupe. Apply sharp at Theatre Royal.

"Where is the Theatre Royal?"

The woman in the baker's shop answered, "Round the corner . . . up there."

She was now interested, trying to find out if her customer was on the stage. Lily remembered the fluttering bills; she was superstitious, and resolved to follow the omen of the threepenny bit. It was early still, half-past nine; she would first go and fight her battle with the landlady. Try her luck as it were.

Between the baker's shop and the hotel there passed a Malay woman, blown along too by the south-easter. She

looked immensely fat, but possessed slender legs, which were revealed by the wind, in spite of a telescopic set of petticoats. Luck again. Lily gathered inspiration from the underwear. She and Margaret hurried unobserved to their room on the second floor. Mrs. Thom, the landlady, did not seem to be about. But holding tight to her inspiration Lily disrobed, then drew on one frock upon another, until the whole of her wardrobe hung about her like those petticoats round the Malay woman. A few necessaries she packed into a hand-bag with the child's clothes and now was ready to face the landlady. Her trunk, she decided, could be got later, when there was money to spare.

Her nerves trembled; they were slack with the forebodings of strife. Margaret clutched the mother's bag, and down the stairs together they went, Lily putting on a brave air, but making no more noise than necessary.

Luck again?

At the bottom was the office . . . empty. The sound of Mrs. Thom's vulgar voice upbraiding a maid percolated through from the kitchen, and the hall-porter-hotel-runner was stationed far from his post so as to lose no information about a girl he thought of marrying.

Lily's mind flashed back to the threepenny bit, and even before she was safely in the street resolved to recover it and keep it for luck. She produced sixpence which she had found when packing, and the woman behind the counter helpfully emptied the till. They craned over the heap of coins.

"What an idea!" said the owner of them. "But if you believe in such things, and it has brought you luck . . ."

"I'm sure it has. Oh, find it, please!"

But there were so many threepenny pieces; Lily realized that in South Africa they replaced the pennies.

"I think that must be it, that one," she finally declared. "I know it was a new one, dated 1880."

"Yes, but there are three 1880's."

"Darling, look at this. Was it the money you found this morning?"

The little chin trembled. No . . . she was not sure.

"Well, you won't mind letting me have two?"

“Of course not,” said the shop woman. “Look here, may I give your little girl the third one, then you’ll be sure of it? There, I insist!”

It was now nearly eleven o’clock, and high time to go after those situations. Lily reproached herself for the time wasted on foolish fancies. But the reproof she rebutted, reasoning—“My luck is in this morning; all is for the best.”

In this vein she entered the theatre, and only then did she look to her toilet, suddenly seeing herself in the glass of a dressing-room, where the door-keeper had told her to wait. Her appearance was horrifying. The advertisement said “handsome girl,” and she looked a fat, inexperienced mother.

“Good morning, my dear!”

The man who spoke was rather old, rather good-looking, and untidy. He held a tattered manuscript, and with this tapped on Margaret’s head.

“Well, my dear?”

Lily understood that the endearing term was for her. She stifled annoyance, pulled herself together, smiled, then spoke out, stated her case. The man was easy-going, not stern or critical. He listened with detachment, though looking at Lily; his mind was lazy or bent on something else.

“That’s splendid . . . very good. Can you sing?”

Lily was discouraged. She had been telling him of her musical education, concert work and so on. He appeared now to remember it, for without awaiting a reply to his question went on, “Can you dance?”

“A little.”

“Can you wear tights?” By his attitude he might have been trying to see through her skirts.

“I suppose anybody can wear tights!”

“Yes, but would you look well in them?”

She glanced modestly down.

The man seemed to regard her attitude as an admission of defective legs rather than modesty, for he next invited her by word and gesture to raise her skirts. She blushed heavily, remembering those smuggled frocks, and feeling repelled by the invitation. Her distress was evident.

The delicacy from whence it came surprised and seemed to please the man. His detachment was more marked than before.

"Oh, well," he muttered, "we can always see them later, and I've no doubt they're as handsome as the rest of you. We'll try your voice. Come along to the piano!"

They went into a sombre place where no lights burned, and where a strange smell prevailed as of boiling glue. Rolls of gaudy canvas and bits of scenery barred free passage. Margaret was afraid, and had to be urged forward; the lazy man walked like a cat in the dark, he guided Lily by caressing touches. They finally reached a piano in the wings which gave forth the sound of tin in distress when the man's touch caressed it. Lily elected to sing "Annie Laurie." Her voice was rather low than high, flexible, sympathetic and expressive. The accompanist showed his pleasure and surprise by playing worse than usual. Before long he clapped his hands and jumped up.

"Capital! You have a dashed nice mezzo—never mind the dancing; we can always fix that. Come along, I'll introduce you to the manager."

"Oh, I thought you . . ."

"No, no. I was last tour—at Home, you know; I'm 'Stag-Mag' this time. Mr. Montague does his own managing . . . he's the *guy*'nor. Now look here, dearie, I'll crack you up. The old man leaves the musical side to me—*legs* is *his* department. He's great on legs. I suppose yours *are* all right?"

Lily smiled faint reassurance.

"You needn't show 'em, you know," added the stage manager jealously, "so long as they *are* all right. The old man swears he can tell 'em without looking at 'em . . . by the size of the wrists. Now be nice and cheery; not too friendly, you know—his wife's with the show—and be a bit refined. He's strong on legs, *but* with refinement, and he likes a good song well sung, too. Now do as I tell you and you're booked for Kimberley. Once you *are* booked I'll look after you."

Lily made no reply. Mentally she brushed aside her would-be protector as a future problem.

Without knocking, her companion opened a door at the back of the stage, and they all went up to a grey-looking, large man in the corner.

“ Well, Mr. Ashington? ” he not unkindly said.

Lily’s admirer carried out his promise to crack her up. Mr. Montague chatted with Lily, was impressed by her speech and manners, then looking her up and down he repeated the phrase:

“ Can you wear tights? ”

Margaret, hiding behind her mother’s skirts, heard the question for the second time, and she now piped out, “ *What are tights, mummy?* ”

The inquiry fell upon the three adults as though it were a crash of thunder. The big man for the first time seemed aware that the applicant was accompanied by a child; the stage manager laughed with noisy nervousness, as if conscious of a hitch in his plans; Lily was embarrassed beyond blushing. The question remained unanswered, for the manager turned to remark that the little girl was charming.

“ Is she yours? ”

In reply Margaret pressed fondly against her mother, and as Lily patted the child’s head the manager glanced instinctively at her wrists and her slender foot and murmured, “ I don’t think you will be deficient in—er—shape; you look rather stout, but appropriate frocks will make a difference. . . . ”

“ I know they will,” declared Lily with fervour.

She wanted to explain, but Mr. Montague magniloquently waved away her words and said:

“ Naturally we cannot travel a child. You will make arrangements to leave the little one somewhere. . . . ”

“ Naturally, naturally,” added Mr. Ashington.

“ Oh, but surely you don’t ask me to leave her with strangers? ”

Margaret began to cry, and Lily to console her. The two men looked at each other; Ashington was on the defence, and half blustered: “ I understood all this would be arranged.”

“ Arranged? ” said Lily with scorn. “ But how? How can you ask such a thing? Ah, no, ’tis impossible.”

Ashington gave vague, incoherent advice—the theatre

dresser would be able to find somebody reliable; the booking-clerk had a married sister; the stage carpenter knew everybody. . . .

“ Oh, no, no, no,” Lily kept repeating.

“ One thing is certain,” said “ the gov’nor,” “ we cannot travel a child.”

“ Not if I pay?” Lily’s despair disregarded the question of money.

“ I’m afraid not. You see ’tis not so much a matter of £ s. d.—though the fare is terrible—there are business reasons, what one may call the moral aspect of things. . . .”

“ The moral aspect?” interrupted Lily. “ Surely there’s no need to tell people I am not married. . . .”

“ God bless my soul, I don’t mean that—I didn’t know you were unmarried, Miss—Miss—er . . . ?”

“ White,” added Ashington, “ Miss Lily White.”

“ What I mean is, that the moral effect of going to the Fields with a child would be ruinous, absolutely damning. . . . *Why?* WHY! well really! . . .”

“ Miss White’s new to the profession,” remarked Ashington. “ She has such natural talent, I felt sure . . .”

“ We can’t take a child, Ashy, you know that.”

“ Of course, gov’nor. Miss White will see the point.”

Margaret sobbed as though her little breast would burst, and she kept repeating, “ Mummy, don’t go away! ”

It was very distressing. Mr. Montague produced a box of bon-bons which had been presented to his wife by an admirer, and remarked sympathetically:

“ There, there, dearie! . . . Fine emotional little actress she’d make, Ashy? . . . Now if we were a drama company! ”

“ Yes, wouldn’t she be splendid as Little Willie,” declared the stage manager, who had recently been out with “ East Lynne.”

“ Well, Miss White,” said Montague, “ what do you say? ”

The doorkeeper came to tell that another lady was waiting.

“Do you want to discuss terms? We can offer you £4 per week, no nights out, fares paid.”

“I cannot go without her,” answered Lily.

“Mr. Ashington, will you see the next lady?”

And “the gov’nor” added, as he bowed Lily out, “Explain matters to her, Ashy. I’ll hold the ‘shop’ open till lunch because she’s a nice, refined girl, and promises well . . . but a child with a burlesque would simply kill business on the Fields.”

As Lily passed out, Ashington, in the obscurity, explained matters more plainly. Margaret was still trembling, and the mother’s soul cried out in revolt. Men, always men! Was she destined to minister to their instincts for ever? Her child was because of them; now it must *not* be because of them. No matter how she sang or danced, “the men in front” would not be contented to hear she was a mother. The stage manager himself was vicariously discontented. At the door he advised Lily to see what she could do about the child; he promised to keep the place open as long as possible. He made her feel that nothing would suit him better than that she join them, but his eye was already roving absently in the direction of the next applicant, a bold-looking blonde who tapped her feet on the floor, showing that she was familiar with clog-dancing and Life.

Oh, why, Lily asked herself, as she walked away in the abating wind, had she been so incredibly foolish as to go there with Margaret? She could have planned to get her child to the Diamond Fields, and there have defied Mr. Montague and his morals. Now the chance was lost.

Without thinking, she found herself once more before the bun-shop. She explained that it was necessary to go out alone, and bade Margaret wait there. It was nearly noon. Margaret sat down, and Lily hurried away to the address at which a housekeeper was wanted for the Diamond Fields. She had a presentiment that the unknown gentleman would object to a child; life was teaching her to lose her scruples. So long as she reached Kimberley what did it matter?

The advertiser was easily found. Mr. Angel Steinsohn

occupied a suite of rooms on the first floor of a popular hotel. Lily was shown into his presence immediately after a smart page-boy had described her.

The advertiser rose from an easy-chair as she entered. Beside a half-burned cigar, whose size matched the girth of its smoker, lay a yellow-backed novel; with slow ease, that soon became familiarity, the man invited Lily to sit down. She noticed that he was covered in diamonds: one in his tie-pin, one on his finger, a charm hanging on his watch-chain was set in them too.

"You've come to apply for the position of housekeeper? Have you any references?"

"I'm sorry, sir—I have not been in service before."

"Really, that's a pity."

"Does it matter? I'm used to keeping house for myself."

"Oh, are yer?" he observed. "Not married, eh? Because, you see, there isn't room for both of us in the same house—me and your 'usband."

Mr. Steinsohn leered cheerily across, so near that the wax was visible in his ultra-black moustache.

"I suppose room is limited in Kimberley," ingenuously observed Lily.

"Oh, no, I've got a nice place in Du Toit's Pan Road. But natcherally I don't want a man and wife. You understand, don't yer?"

"Well, I have no husband."

"But mind yer," cautioned Mr. Steinsohn, "no clearing off and getting married. You must sign up to stay a year. . . ."

Lily interrupted. "You need have no anxiety—I don't know a soul in South Africa."

"Oh," guffawed Mr. Steinsohn, "don't yer? Well, it won't be long before half the chaps on the Fields will be running after yer. Lot of pirates! A man gets a housekeeper up, pays her fare and . . ."

He stopped short as if this were unnecessary detail, then assumed the heavy air of a responsible employer.

"No experience . . . hum . . . no refs . . . hum . . . you seem well edgercated; can you play the piano?"

"Yes," said Lily, "but surely . . ."

"I've got a grand at my place; cost me three hundred

quid. There's two Kafir boys to do the work. Well, would you like to come? It's £25 a month, and all found."

Lily was utterly taken aback by the munificence of the offer. She hesitated, not knowing what to reply. Steinsohn watched her avidly; he had made up his mind to have her. Luxuries cost money, and he never stinted himself.

"Ain't it enough?" he asked rather pathetically. "I don't mind springing a few sovereigns more . . . if yer please me. I'm sure you will—nice, ladylike girl and all that." Then reflectively—"Just the sort to keep 'em at a distance. Won't yer, now?"

"Certainly," said Lily.

The firmness of her response seemed to disquiet Mr. Steinsohn. He had not hitherto encountered this class of woman; his yearly summer trips to Cape Town "for renewal of stock," as he playfully put it, were one much like another. Women of a certain class invariably replied to his half-veiled advertisements; barmaids or ex-barmaids anxious to get up-country and willing to pay the price, which was one year under the uxorious banner of Mr. Steinsohn. But Lily was more than a suitable applicant—she was strikingly beautiful. Coming into that room with the rose bloom of England in her skin, after battling with the wind, and flushed by that morning of excitement, she affected Steinsohn as no other woman had done. Because of his anxiety to get her he had behaved with remarkable restraint. But he was not going to "back a stumer." Oh, no! Before he paid the coach fare and advanced money he wanted to know as much about his housekeeper as certain savages, before marriage, want to know about their prospective wives. He would be reasonable, of course; he could be the gentleman when necessary—had he not been one for the past half-hour?—but he *had* to know; and in order to know he had to ask a question, as of a horse before he and his friends backed it for a race.

"Have a brandy-and-soda?"

Lily was growing wise. She accepted, hoping for some solution.

Mr. Steinsohn became more genial. He complimented

Lily on her speech and looks. She was curious to know when she would leave for Kimberley, but learned that travelling separately from her employer was out of the question.

Then arose another problem. Steinsohn insisted on her dining with him that night, and a box at the theatre afterwards. The hunted woman pleaded a previous engagement.

"Very well," said he, "to-morrow night then, and we'll leave for Kimberley two days later."

There was no putting him off. Lily realized the position. She could never be this man's mistress, not even for Margaret. How she regretted her weakness of an hour before! Why had she not steeled herself to the idea of separation? Would it not be better for both to suffer than for her to degrade herself by considering a proposal like this? She resolved to hasten back to the theatre. Ashington was not repulsive, and his expectations bound her to nothing.

Steinsohn, in defence of his instincts, moved towards the door as Lily rose to go.

"What's the matter? Don't yer want the place?"

"I'll think it over and call to-morrow."

He knew she would never come back. All the male in him said so. He felt aggrieved. What had he done? Had he not been quite the gentleman? Why, he had never laid a hand on the girl. Nice way to treat a man! It would damn well serve her right if he *did* forget himself! Outwardly he was cool.

"Stay and have a bit er lunch. . . ."

"I must go at once."

Lily reached the door in a stride and laid her hand upon the handle. It was locked.

"Let me out—how dare you!"

"Page must have locked it by mistake," he explained half-exultingly.

"Open the door!"

"I'll have to ring for Page."

"Do so, then, at once!"

"What's the matter?" pleaded Steinsohn. "What have I done to yer? Sit down and be sensible." He made the mistake of laying a fat paw on her arm.

The contact was electrical. Against her will Lily uttered a nervous scream. All the restrained horror of sordid weeks, culminating that day, echoed through the hotel, now full of people for the luncheon hour.

Steinsohn knew there was nothing to gain by waiting. He cried: "All right—I'll open it," then lumbered across, fumbled for a key, and hurriedly unlocked the door.

Lily darted out, passing three men who stood in the passage.

They nudged and winked as she disappeared. Soon afterwards one went to Steinsohn's door and called out: "Hullo, Angel! Ain't you coming to lunch?"

Steinsohn pulled himself together, curled his moustache, and emerged. He was greeted with cries of: "Now then, old chappie! . . ." "We know all about it. . . ." "Sly dog, Angel! . . ." "Is that the new housekeeper? . . ." "Handsome girl—who is she?"

"Ah," replied Steinsohn, with a knowing wink, "that's it—who is she!"

He was much consoled by this flattering assumption, and called for a large bottle of champagne. They then drank to the health of his new housekeeper.

Lily hastened to the theatre. When she reached there it was one o'clock. The doorkeeper had already gone inside, and was starting a brought-in meal.

"Can I see the manager, please?"

"He's gone, Miss."

"Mr. Ashington, then?"

"He's gone too, gone to lunch."

"Oh . . . well, I'll call back after two o'clock."

As she started to walk to the baker's shop for Margaret the doorkeeper called after her: "I say, Miss, if it's about that engagement I shouldn't trouble."

"Why not?"

"Because it's filled—they gave it to the one that came after you. It's her the stage manager's gone to lunch with."

CHAPTER II

DAYS followed of struggle and disappointment. Lily shed her illusions, even her superstitions. Contact with each successive man taught her something more of Life, which for her, she began to realize, meant the other sex in some form. On every hand men barred her passage to Peace and Security. Wherever she looked for it there seemed to stand a man, leering at her with sensual eyes; avid, unkind and dishonest because she was beautiful and appealed to the sexual side of him. Were she unbeautiful Life would be easier, she felt; a ubiquitous Faun would not always stand between her and the door, like that ridiculous Satyr, Steinsohn, with his waxed moustaches in the place of horns.

She began to defend herself. For years she had known the advantages inseparable from beauty, as she now knew the terrible disadvantages. Why should she not trick men, obtain their wealth by false pretences, lies, lure them on to loosen their purse strings as they tried to loosen the strings of her heart? What were their sufferings, their mean little balked desires, beside the sufferings they inflicted on her and Margaret?

After days and nights of intense thought one fact stood out clearly: she and the child must part. For this separation Lily prepared gradually, repeating the process of weaning that she had practised years before. Little by little Margaret became used to her mother's absences; she stayed with Mrs. February while Lily went in search of money like an animal seeking food for its young.

One evening she walked to the theatre, dressed with taste and care. Mr. Montague and his company were still there, and he readily gave her a free pass to a box he could not sell. Posed gracefully in this well-known seat Lily attracted attention; a race-horse owner asked

Montague to introduce him, and this request was as readily granted as the free pass had been to Lily. At the end of the entertainment the charmed sportsman invited Miss White to supper, his own wife being away on a holiday; then he took her home in a spanking carriage and pair, begging to be allowed to call next day and drive her to the races.

Coldly, but not too coldly, she consented, adding "if nothing prevents me," and the following afternoon was the most admired biped on the course.

Mr. Van Murran, Lily's cavalier, was a sly, Anglicized Boer who usually overcame both women and bookmakers. He was vain of his exploits with the ladies, modest of those with the "bookies," which were technically the better performance.

Lily had never been to a race-meeting, and long before the last event had grown sick of the dust, the shouting and the general atmosphere of coarse cupidity. Men were around her staking large sums of money, while want and care lined their faces; she thought of herself, paraded and admired, while Mrs. February was at home with Margaret, and a week's rent due.

Van Murran told her a lot about the horses and riders; at his own valuation he was a most generous fellow, whom the ingratitude of the racing world had saddled with a reputation of a different kind. It was said that he gave away nothing, not even a tip. He was a careful man, and when one of his horses was "on the job" did his best to conceal the fact, staked his money as the jockeys were at the post and told his friends he "hadn't a hope." Worse still, people said, he used his friends for the purpose of "putting off" the stewards and handicapper; thus when he had a horse which was technically styled "dead," he went out of his way to tip it everywhere, even without being asked. He found it difficult to change his habits, even for Lily, on that seductive day.

"Now what is your fancy?" he asked her. "You leave it to me? Right. I'll put a sovereign on Blue Boy for you."

Blue Boy ran last. Next time Lily put her finger on a horse called Sovereign Lady. Mr. Van Murran

generously promised instead to put a sovereign on Welsher. When Sovereign Lady ran second in a close race he said: "I knew she couldn't win," forgetting Welsher had run sixth.

Lily kept her eyes and ears open. A man came to Van Murran and whispered; she heard the words "Rob Roy." She said nothing, her knowledge of racing was so meagre, but just before the flag fell she called animatedly to Van Murran:

"Run and put a fiver on Rob Roy for me; go, they're nearly off."

Van Murran like a gallant man obeyed, and this time Lily, excited as a child, asked to see the bookmaker's ticket.

As he was handing it to her a loud shout proclaimed: "They're off." She clutched the little cardboard, which bore the figure 40, and during the next two minutes experienced the strange thrill of watching a struggle with money staked upon the issue, in her case existence itself, almost.

She could not tell one horse from another. As they flashed along Van Murran vainly offered field-glasses; she pushed them away, but held on to Rob Roy's ticket.

Around her men were muttering, shrieking, shouting; some had in their faces the paleness of death . . . some, as in a trance, stared at the moving pattern of dust and colours, enduring the agony of prisoners on trial for awful crimes. After a minute, isolated, exulting bookmakers began to shout the names of outsiders; the challenge was taken up in the crowd; men ran about to see better; one muttered "Dragon Fly" and chewed a sausage roll; another shrieked "Silver Fox" as he trod on Lily's toes. Her cry of pain was instantly silenced by the piercing shriek "Rob Roy" from a Jew clinging to the railing of the grand stand. Lily began to repeat after him, "Rob Roy," "Rob Roy," and now the name was everywhere taken up, though others tried to help their favourites by shrieking "Silver Fox," "Dragon Fly," and "Dizzy." The horses, unaffected by the twitch of all these human lips, rushed in a phalanx towards the crowd; when they were a quarter of a mile away Van Murran for the first time spoke.

“ ’Tis Rob Roy or Prince Consort,” he said, and gave Lily’s shoulder a significant little pat which plainly said, “ I hope you’ll remember what I’ve done for you.”

The jockeys on Rob Roy and Prince Consort were riding their hardest at the head of the field. The roar of the crowd silenced the swishing of the jockeys’ whips and the thud of the horses’ hoofs. Lily was carried along in the stream of momentary madness; her jaws were clenched, she must have said “ Rob Roy ” a hundred times, and clutching Van Murran’s arm looked up pleading with him to let her win the race.

He did his best . . . Rob Roy flashed past the post seemingly tied to Prince Consort. They were exactly level; the judges announced a dead-heat.

When the excitement had subsided Van Murran said, “ Hard luck, Miss White, you should have won.”

Her heart sank. “ Do I not win anything? ”

“ Of course,” he answered generously, “ but only half.”

She affected to pass off the twenty pounds as of no importance.

“ Shall I collect for you? Give me the ticket.”

“ Oh, let me—I have never won money before.”

When the bookmaker had sullenly paid twenty sovereigns into her trembling palm she handed one back, asking him to change it for two halves. Then looking up into Van Murran’s face she said innocently:

“ How much did you put on for me? ”

“ A fiver,” he answered, “ but don’t bother . . . ”

“ Oh, no, no,” chided Lily. “ I always pay my debts, and I’m sorry ’tis only half for a dead heat.”

With a sweet smile she gave him two pounds ten for the five he had staked; and he lacked both the meanness and the courage to tell her, especially as he had won heavily over the race.

Seventeen pounds ten remained, seventeen pounds ten, after weeks of poverty! It was Saturday night. Lily hurried home to Margaret, despite a pressing invitation to dinner from Van Murran.

She and Margaret had a merry supper, then they went

into the Saturday crowds, bought shoes, and laid in a stock of food. Lily paid Mrs. February, and invited her to a cup of coffee. They chatted, and the coloured woman expressed regret at the possibility of Lily's leaving.

"The house won't be the same without you, Missus . . . you and the little girl."

"No, mummy, I don't want to go away from Mrs. February."

Lily looked at Mrs. February, childless and abounding in motherly instincts. She had not yet acquired Cape racial prejudices, but had never thought of leaving Margaret with coloured people because of the curious accent and the surroundings. Yet now she reasoned: better this kindly woman than a convent in all the coldness of its piety, or a school full of the cruelty of youth. The idea matured quickly. Lily made a practice of chatting with Mrs. February. She still had hopes of finding work in Cape Town; her friend, Mr. Van Murrans, offered to get her "something," but it was obvious he expected to be rewarded.

No, it was to the Fields she must go; the longing grew with the change in her ideas, as if the knowledge that in the town of diamonds men would be found in all their weakness gave her courage for the battle.

A week later she replied to the following advertisement:

Barmaid wanted for Diamond Fields. Handsome, superior single girl. Previous experience unnecessary.

It was the agent of a bar proprietress in Kimberley whom she saw; he offered her £16 per month for one year, and Lily at once signed the agreement.

Mrs. February willingly consented to look after Margaret. The child did not realize the extent of the separation; she only wondered why Lily sobbed on going out one evening. It was to the station, but she did not know it.

Train took the new barmaid to Beaufort West, a townlet half-way between Cape Town and Kimberley; the rest of the journey was performed in a horse coach.

The passengers ate, and sometimes washed and slept, at roadside houses that were half hotels, half stores. The weather was hot, and each day grew hotter; the country was barer than anything Lily had ever seen; mirages danced on the horizon, and sometimes a lonely ostrich danced on the hot stones; sheep were visible cropping invisible plants. Now and then game appeared. Apart from these movements and the incessant shrill song of the cicada, the flow of Life itself might have ceased; there was no current, no rhythm beyond the orbit of the coach, and even the passengers' necks were limp and their eyes closed. Several men kept theirs open to ogle the handsome woman opposite, and when the coach halted there was much competition for the privilege of carrying her bag to the most comfortable room. Lily refused whatever she did not require; since she had to pay for what she got, if only by smiles, she accepted nothing unnecessary. In the coach beside herself were ten men and an old Boer woman, who was going to see her daughter near Kimberley.

At nearly every halting place Lily saw men rushing to her help past this feeble old woman. They were mostly coarse, material fellows, yet three possessed education, and would pass through life as gentlemen. All were seemingly obsessed by the same instinct, an unconscious race determination to perpetuate the human species. In her heart Lily despised them; but she concealed her contempt, doing acts of kindness to the old woman clandestinely, in order to keep on good terms with the men.

On the sixth day, when all were so tired that even the most enterprising of the men had ceased to ogle, the coach began to pass rain-seamed hills of sand that were made of the washed-out "blue ground." Everybody save the Boer woman began to chatter with animation; iron and zinc huts appeared, white men in white clothes and black men in loin cloths, the headgear of mines, buckets and cables, and other evidences of civilization. A place called Du Toits' Pan, stark and unbeautiful in the glare of an appalling sun, was hailed with ecstatic cries; tin and zinc and iron glittered everywhere, bright and dull, smooth and corrugated, reflected and radiated

like red-hot mirrors by the furnace from the sky. As the coach advanced to the centre of the town the metallic domination became intensified, absolute; Lily felt as though she had come on an agonizing pilgrimage to a gigantic feast where Fiends were celebrating the marriage of all the Gods of Metal.

CHAPTER III

“WHAT can I get you, sir?”

“A brandy and . . . well I’m damned!”

“Not for the first time *or* the last I’ll wager!”

Lily’s repartee brought a laugh from Mrs. Solomons, the proprietress of the Golden Bar, but Mr. Steinsohn laughed on the other side of his face.

“What’s the matter, Stonesign?”

Steinsohn pretended to answer off-handedly to this inversion of his name, the obvious outcome of his display of diamonds. He had not been into the Golden Bar for some time, but hearing that morning there was “a new Tom,” had hastened to renew acquaintance with his old friend, Mrs. Solomons.

“Have you and Miss White met before?”

“No . . . not exactly,” he began, but Lily corrected him.

“Why tell fibs, Mr. Steinsohn?”

“Oh, then you *do* know each other?”

Steinsohn looked piteously at Lily. Her glance reassured him; she had no intention of showing him up. Still he was upset, no plausible lie came to his lips, it was left to Lily to extricate him.

“We sat next to each other at the theatre.”

“That’s it—of course,” blattered Steinsohn gratefully. “I knew I knew yer—I never forgit a face.”

“Nor do I.” Lily resisted saying “when it is like yours.”

She had readily picked up the trick of bar repartee, and could score off her admirers all day, but had learned that what to say was of less importance than what not to say. Education, refinement of manner, intelligence, made her the most instantaneous success Mrs. Solomons could recall. There was Violet Arthurs, who had been on the stage, but she was impudent, and offended the young men; Julia Roberts, the daughter of a sergeant, who was over squeamish and irritated the old men; and . . .

Mrs. Solomons thought of many other girls, too; each had some defect, none so approached perfection as Lily White. Ah, was it not a fine thing to give a girl a good education!

Steinsohn did not stay long; more than ever he was attracted by Lily, and her attitude that morning made him think hopefully of their future relations. But Mrs. Solomons was in the way; he would call some day after lunch when he knew she lay down for a nap. Lily suggested a bottle of champagne; as they drank the first glass Mrs. Solomons began to chaff.

"Well, Stonesign, what have you brought back this time?"

A warning look to change the subject. No effect.

"What's the new housekeeper like? Better than the last, I hope—*she* needed repairs badly!"

He tried to pass it off in forced laughter. Mrs. Solomons gave Lily a knowing wink.

"Stonesign is famous for his housekeepers. The last one, they said, had never kept house before—except a bad house!"

At this she roared with laughter, and Lily joined in.

"Oh, really, is he so easily taken in?"

"Taken in? He takes *them* in, the old villain; look at his moustache, gone into mourning for his morals."

"'Pon my soul, Rachel, yer a bit too thick, yer are." And as Mrs. Solomons quaked with barmaidic laughter he cleared out.

"Sat next to you in the theatre, eh? Well, you're lucky he didn't pinch your purse . . . or some other part of you."

Lily corked up the champagne left in the bottle and turned to serve the next customers. They were Tom Sheldon, a digger aged fifty, so stricken by alcohol that he looked sixty-five; and Hector Bennington, tall, dark, handsome, and lightly dissipated, though not much above thirty.

"Two whiskies and one soda, please."

Sheldon paid and swallowed his portion neat. Bennington half peered through the amber sparkle of his drink; he was eyeing the new barmaid.

Mrs. Solomons went away; no need to cast the pearls of her vocabulary before customers like these. Bennington was . . . what was he? Some styled him "a loafer," some "a waster," some "a remittance man"; he certainly did no work, yet sometimes paid for his own drinks. He led Sheldon to a table in front of the counter.

"Now, Tom, shall we call it a deal?"

"'Tis not the money so much, Bennington . . . but what can I do all day till I get hold of something else?"

"You said Julius Hermann had promised you . . ."

"Yes, he has, but he won't be back for a month, and meanwhile . . ." Sheldon threw his arms out descriptively.

"You're not finding five carats a week, Tom, you might as well take a holiday."

"On what? Will you pay cash for the claims?"

"I have told you I cannot. Payment twenty a month in arrears. Isn't that good enough?"

"As for that," replied Sheldon, "I don't see how you'll ever make a profit. If I can't . . ."

"Oh, you leave that to me. If I arrange twenty a month, twenty it shall be." The buyer spoke as though his word were his bond, as indeed it was, he having no other visible assets. Bennington, the black sheep of a west country baronet's flock, did not know all that was surmised in Kimberley on his account; but he did know that everybody speculated upon the source of mysterious incomes, and that the conclusion invariably reached was, Illicit Diamond Buying, or "I.D.B." Cunning and insensitive, this well-garbed loungeur did not shrink

from the assumption that people might suspect him of I.D.B., a definition that comprised also the illicit selling of uncut stones. Squarely he met the assumption; he would be prepared for it, show people their mistake, so long as this did not necessitate actual work on his part. As a claim owner he could account for the means of subsistence, and for any stones in his possession.

A cheeky-looking girl peered in at the door of the bar. In England her age might have been eighteen, in Africa fourteen. Already her outlines were taking shape, and though her complexion was sallow by sun and dust, yet her features were delicate; one with a sense of beauty could see that she would grow into a lovely woman. When she spied Sheldon she shouted: "Hullo—there you are! Don't keep me waiting all day, eh?"

"Don't speak to your father like that, girl."

"Well come home, then, eh? You've had enough, daddy."

"Enough? Do you suggest I am not sober?"

He rose in a pathetic effort to intimidate her.

"What's wrong with having enough, eh? You're not tight till you've had *more* than enough"

Bennington here interposed.

"Your—aw—father and I are discussing business."

"Business! Looks more like whisky from yere."

"Cissie," said Sheldon, "don't speak like that to Mr. Bennington!"

And Mrs. Solomons emerged. She had heard Cissie's voice, she knew what it meant.

"Go along, Tom, we don't want any row here."

"Damned fine, me being cleared out by my youngster."

"Oh, come on, daddy; there's nobody to watch the boys while you're away."

"That's what I'm here about. How can I do business if you will come bothering me?"

"Why can't he come to the claims and talk there?" she retorted, with a scornful look at Bennington.

"There's nothing to offer a gentleman there."

"Why can't he drink dop brandy, same as you, eh?"

"Dop brandy!" shuddered Hector, and turning to

Sheldon, "I say, can you stomach that poison—Cape smoke?"

Sheldon looked ashamed. He glared at his daughter in the face of this social stigma, and she stammered:

"Oh, he didn't always drink Cape brandy. Daddy use' to have the fines' whisky and milk, and only drink in the best bars till he was robbed in that Amalgamation."

"Amalgamation, Cissie."

"Yes, swindle," she asserted with emphasis. "Daddy's always getting swindled. He had the best claims on the Fields an' was swindled out of them!"

"That'll do, Cissie. Come along. See you to-morrow, Bennington."

With vacillating steps Sheldon walked out before his daughter. Hector swung back to the bar counter. Lily stared out at Cissie.

"That's a bright child of his."

"And forward for her age," answered Rachel.

"She acted quite properly."

"Oh, I don't say he deserves anything better, but what'll she be in a couple of years?"

"Has she no mother?" asked Lily.

"No—Sheldon's wife died when Cissie was nine or ten. Best thing she ever did for herself, too."

As Mrs. Solomons spoke Bennington gazed at the barmaid; but her thoughts were distant, she did not respond to his admiration nor hear him order "a whisky and soda and something for yourself."

"A penny for your thoughts," he remarked profoundly, after a while.

"I was thinking what a shame it is that a child like Cissie hasn't a chance, while men fling away diamonds. . . ."

"They don't fling them away here, I can tell you," said Mrs. Solomons.

Lily held up contradictingly a stone set in a gold pin.

"Who gave you that, dear?"

"Not Mr. Bennington, you may be sure."

"I would, 'pon my word, I would if I were flush."

"Look here," said Lily, challenging his vanity,

“you’re doing a deal with Sheldon. Why not add a few pounds to what you pay him, and let that child go to school for a year?”

Bennington laughed loudly, as if at a good joke. “You seem devilish interested in that girl. Why?”

“She reminds me of——”

“What?”

“Somebody else—the child of a friend I used to know.”

“Fancy your being sentimental, Miss White.”

“Sentimental? Her! She’s got a heart like a Brazil nut. Try her and see.”

“No, thank you—frankly she scares me!”

Bowing gallantly, Bennington strode from her. His maxim was “Don’t go after them and they’ll come after you.”

“These good-looking loafers live by the tale,” said Mrs. Solomons to Lily. “My word, the trouble they’ve given me with our girls! One of ’em—he was the son of an archdeacon, oh, my Lord!—well, he told the tale so well to the second girl before you that she started pinching out of the till—gave the money to him. No, my dear, take my tip, and if you must have a fancy man pick one who is too old to run after the girls and too ugly to do any harm if he does.”

“Don’t worry about me, Mrs. Solomons. I assure you they shall not tell *me* the tale.”

“No, I don’t believe they will. I’ve been watching you, dear, and I fancy you’ll be one too many for them. And you’ve never been in a bar before? Well, that’s how it is—some girls are stupid and some are ‘fly.’ You are one of the ‘fly’ kind. But you know I wasn’t always wide myself. Will you believe it, there was a time when I fell to the tale.”

“Then,” said Lily, “some girls are born neither stupid nor ‘fly,’ they learn by experience.”

“I’ll tell you what it is,” confided Mrs. Solomons. “When we’re young and the blood’s bouncing inside, like the sap in a tree in spring, we’re all liable to go off the deep end. If we get past that time without hearing the tale . . . all Sir Garnet, but if we don’t, God help us!”

“Then what chance is there, Mrs. Solomons, for a girl who has nobody to warn her or advise her?”

“Even money if she lives at the North Pole and no man discovers it.”

“And in Kimberley?”

Mrs. Solomons roared with laughter; she declared the odds could not be named.

More men entered the bar, and Lily went to serve them. It was after tiffin hour; everybody was drowsy in the heat of the day. Mrs. Solomons went inside to have a nap. Only Shilling, the Kafir, who washed the glasses, was unaffected by the temperature. He wore loose white clothes, ending in trousers nearly at half mast, and beneath these he had on all the woollen underclothing he could muster. The hotter it grew the more wool he put on, declaring it kept out the heat. The white men hung limp across the counter, like paraffin candles in the sun; Shilling, cheerful and erect, swilled eternal bottles and glasses.

The customers newly arrived included a broker's clerk named Brooksey, one of those men who had come by coach with Lily. On the journey he had handled her bag, he felt a proprietorial interest in its owner. When meeting friends he invited them to “come along and meet a particular friend, jolly nice girl, real lady, not the usual sort of ‘Tom’ one meets in bars.”

Brooksey was a conceited fellow. Lily had no compunction in leading him on to spend more than he could afford. Mrs. Solomons paid her barmaids a commission on the turnover; this was only the half of one per cent., yet it stimulated the girls and mounted to a respectable sum. As for such as Brooksey, decided Lily, “they are not after me for my good, the more they spend the better.”

She had resolved to put Margaret into a boarding-school at the end of the year's work; she could not leave this to Mrs. February. That meant a trip to Cape Town. In any case, Lily had resolved to see her child every twelve months.

Yes . . . let Brooksey and all like him contribute to a worthy cause. Often she reasoned thus, her face taking on a look of reverie, which conceited men took for love

thoughts. Thus those whom she most despised imagined themselves to be her favourites.

“Will you come to the theatre with me?” asked Brooksey. “There’s Montague’s burlesque company just out from home.”

She had been invited by other men, but feared, if she went, to be recognized by the proprietor or his stage manager, who might speak of Margaret. Lily felt some curiosity to see how the post they had offered her was filled by the other woman, but to risk recognition for one so insignificant as this broker’s clerk was not her intention.

Fresh drinks were called for. At length Brooksey said:

“Jove, ’tis near on three. I must be getting back—one round more; set them up, Miss White.”

Afterwards he called her aside.

“I say, give me a card, will you.”

She handed him a blank “I.O.U.,” which he filled in and signed.

“Stupid of me, I came out with hardly any oof.”

“Oh, that’s quite all right, Mr. Brooksey.”

Until Mrs. Solomons gave her contrary instructions she would honour his cards, but it was the beginning of the end. Bars, like banks, adopted the great principle—give credit only to those who don’t need it. Some customers could sign as many cards as they liked, others must not be trusted for a five pound note. Lily’s estimation of Brooksey was about seven pounds ten. Sheldon was on the black list, and Bennington too.

“Cards,” said Mrs. Solomons, “are the ruination of the liquor trade. Customers clear out owing hundreds, others are killed in accidents.”

Brooksey and his friends went away as a grey-haired Jew entered, dignified in appearance, slow and flat-footed in walk. He was genially but respectfully greeted by those in the bar, some of whom called him “Ike” and some “Uncle.”

He addressed Lily with a slow Western American drawl. “Mrs. Solomons lying down?”

“She’ll be out any moment now, Mr. Cohen.”

“Give me a stone ginger while I’m waiting.”

He mopped his perspiring head, and had barely finished the drink when Mrs. Solomons entered, spruce and cheery after her rest.

“Hullo, Ike! Any news?”

“Yes—he left England on the *Greek* yesterday.”

Lily took the opportunity to go out for a breath of air. She knew that Cohen was Mrs. Solomons' business adviser; he had been her husband's intimate friend. When Solomons died, the Golden Bar was acquired on Rachel's behalf chiefly as the result of Cohen's efforts. There was some mystery about it; people said so who affected to know, and not the everyday Kimberley mystery, which was usually a full-blooded man who found money for women friends, and visited them on preferential terms. No, it certainly was not that kind of mystery.

Julius Hermann, regarded as one of the coming men of the Diamond Fields, advanced the money which Cohen had been unable to find. The two men were associated in business; Cohen sold diamonds for Hermann's company. He had much influence over the richer, younger and abler man, but people liked the one and disliked the other.

Why did they dislike Julius Hermann? Assuredly not because things were said of his private life, or because his past was shrouded in mystery. He lived in a house that was surrounded by waste land and solid fences, and his Kafir servants were an old woman and a youngish man, neither of whom frequented the usual nigger haunts. It was whispered that unknown natives did visit there from time to time; peculiar sounds emanated. Also a woman, half-coloured and half-witted, known in the lower world of Kimberley, was seen entering Hermann's house one night, but when questioned on the subject declared that she knew nothing about it. All this was rumour and whisper.

Julius was not the sort of man that even the free-and-easy life of Kimberley made approachable. He was genial when the mood suited him, but never tolerated familiarity, and even his geniality had an under-current of bitter irony that made it hard to digest.

Where had he come from?

Nobody knew. English he was not; he denied being a Jew, he was neither German nor Russian, whether Jew or Gentile, and bore no approximation to any of the Latin races. He had been one of the first to arrive on the Fields, and in six years became powerful in finance. Before most men he realized that the individual digger was doomed, and that only combinations of diggers, whose claims adjoined each other's, could go on working without collapse and ruin. The Hermann company was the result of his efforts. Julius had gone to England in connection with it; Cohen, during his absence, held a power of attorney in regard to the Golden Bar.

Isaac and Mrs. Solomons chatted over business. Now and then she went to serve a customer, for at this hour trade improved.

Lily returned. She had had a wash and brush-up and was ready to continue until dinner-time.

Cohen, seizing an opportunity when the proprietress was at the other end of the bar, said quietly: "Miss White . . . don't let Mrs. Solomons over-do it; she's not very well."

"Indeed, Mr. Cohen. Nothing serious?"

"Well, not yet, but it may become so. Shueh, don't let her know, her heart's badly affected. This altitude is no good. She should be at sea level."

"What is best for me to do?"

"See she doesn't get excited and that she rests every afternoon."

Mrs. Solomons was coming. She looked at Cohen with mischievous eyes.

"What tale are you telling the girl?"

They chaffed each other, she laughing until out of breath.

Next day Cohen called earlier and found Lily alone save for three customers who soon disappeared. Having explained as much as he could of Mrs. Solomons' condition, he continued talking. He told Lily stories of California, where he came from, and where he had seen the life depicted by Bret Harte, a writer whom he spoke of admiringly as one who would soon be known over the English-speaking world.

Lily was much struck by the mining-camp women whom Bret Harte treated with such kindness.

"I'd like to read those stories. Could you . . . ?"

"Get you some? Sure. I have a few here, and my friend, Considine, in 'Frisco, will mail me others."

Then they talked of music, art, even of poetry.

"Good Lord," Cohen exclaimed, "what a conversation for a Kimberley bar! If anybody heard us we should get a fine name."

"Are they as bad as all that?"

"Pretty nearly. What can you expect from the scum of Whitechapel and Houndsditch? Money, that is their only passion!"

"That's why you're here, Mr. Cohen? It is why I am."

"Yes, I admit I don't choose Kimberley because of its climate or surroundings. But one can still retain some refinement."

"I wonder?" Dreamily, almost as if trying to see into the future, Lily uttered the words.

"Oh, but I'm sure of it, Miss White. A love of beautiful things—art, literature, music—keeps us free from sinking into the mud where the money is. Look at Julius Hermann."

"What of him?"

"There's a man redeemed by a love of beauty."

"Who is Julius Hermann?"

"You have surely heard his name?"

"Oh yes, they talk of him in the bar, not always nicely."

"Well, I don't know that on the whole he is a very nice man. I go further, I believe him in many ways to be the reverse. But he loves art, he worships beauty; he surrounds himself with lovely things, Chinese and Japanese art; he'll pay anything for a netsuké that weighs half an ounce."

"Does he love flowers too?"

"I don't know, but I think not. Why?"

"Your description made me think of somebody I had once read about. But *he* loved flowers."

"Well," continued Cohen, "is it not refreshing that

in this suburb of Hell there is a man who loves beautiful things?"

"It would be still more refreshing to know that somebody here does beautiful things. A man may love beauty, Mr. Cohen, yet be a depraved scoundrel."

"I agree, Miss White."

"Or he might love common prints, wear vulgar jewellery, and be a good man. Which do you prefer?"

"No need to answer," he admitted. "The most objectionable member of society is the man who combines Vulgarity with Vice; a man who dresses like a costermonger, talks like a Houndsditch bookmaker, and is as mean as a Scotch pawnbroker."

She smiled at his description. "And the really admirable man is the opposite; a refined, artistic nature with a good heart and a capacity for doing decent human acts?"

"Well," he asked, "whom have we answering the description?"

At that moment Steinsohn entered. It was so apt that both Lily and Cohen burst out laughing.

"Hullo, Ike," said Steinsohn familiarly, "join me in a bottle?"

"No thanks."

"Come on, Mr. Cohen," said Lily, "you've not had anything yet, and Mr. Steinsohn is dying to crack a bottle of fizz."

"Quite right," agreed Steinsohn, but he wished Cohen would go away.

Lily wanted the older man to remain; she exercised her will and determined him to accept.

Cohen hardly tasted the wine; it was not his hour for drinking, and he disliked Steinsohn, who was ill at ease because he wanted to talk privately with Lily.

A noisy group of men came in. There were Bennington and Tom Sheldon and a commercial traveller, also a couple of I.D.B.'s.

"Come on, boys," called Mrs. Solomons, who bustled in on hearing the sound of business. "Stonesign's treating. He's come into a bit of money."

"What?" screamed Angel.

But Bennington was already up to the counter; he

complimented Steinsohn on the mythical inheritance, and called his friends to join him.

The wine flowed, Lily popping the corks off with great celerity and not being particular about draining the bottles to the dregs. Before Steinsohn left he had to pay away the best part of a ten pound note.

CHAPTER IV

TOM SHELDON was still drinking and negotiating with Bennington. A few days after she had found her father in the Golden Bar, Cissie returned there to look for him. It was early morning, business had not yet begun. Lily was tidying up the place, singing as she worked.

"Good morning, Miss! My Jove, you can sing nice!"

"Dear me, you're not looking for your father so early?"

"He's not been home all night."

"What a shame! 'Tis too bad to leave you alone like that."

"It's him I'se thinking about, Miss. I hope nothing's wrong."

She tried to be off-hand, but her eyes were anxious.

"Your father," said Lily, "does not deserve such a daughter. Poor child, having these worries at your age."

"Daddy's a' right if people wouldn' make him booze."

"Do you mean me, Cissie?"

"Not you, Miss. But he use' to drink a lot here before your time."

"'Tis difficult to stop a man if he wants to drink, Cissie."

"But try jus' the same, Miss, eh? Will you please?"

"Yes, I will, Cissie. I'll see what I can do."

"Well, so long, Miss—I mus' go and find daddy somehow. Thanks, eh!"

"But where are you going to look for him?"

"Yes, where?—that's it. P'r'aps he's in the tronk."

"Oh, why should they put him in prison?"

"Drunk and incapable, p'raps. They got him once before and I had to bail him out. Three months ago. It cost five pounds."

"What a shame! Lucky you had five pounds."

"Oh, I didn', that's the worst. I had to go and get it from Mr. Hermann, you know, the rich man; I didn' like to go."

"Did he make a fuss about the money?"

"Oh no. He gave it right off the pop. He likes daddy—he'll give him anything, so daddy says—no, he's not stingy—he always wan's to give me money and sweets. . . . So long, Miss, there's a tec in the street I know. I'll go and ask him about daddy, eh?"

She darted out and spoke to a man whom Lily recognized as Detective Lynch, having conversed with him once or twice and heard him spoken of by customers. Lynch was of middle height, lean, hard of face, with sandy hair and keen, watchful eyes. When Cissie accosted him he bent down amicably and replied to her questions, patting her head as he did so. She swayed on her hips and toes, like a whippet eager to race. Suddenly she started to return to the bar. Lynch called after her and said something, whereupon she ran off and he himself entered.

"Cissie," he said, "asked me to say she's found him."

"He's not locked up, is he?"

"Not quite, this time. One of the night police did find him, but being a decent chap let Sheldon sleep it off. The nights are warm, you know."

"Terribly hot," remarked Lily. "Between the heat and the mosquitoes I hardly sleep a wink."

"You must find it a change from home?"

"Yes, very much so." This mention of home reminded her to send Shilling to the post office for

letters, it being the day on which the weekly coach arrived.

"You're English, aren't you, Miss White?"

"Yes, how do you know that?"

"Oh," said he sagely, "we know a good many things."

He thought this better than telling that her colour and style proclaimed her as a newcomer to South Africa, where the sun, dry winds and dust soon spoiled the most durable skin. By her speech, too, he knew she was not a Colonial.

"I might be Irish or . . ."

"If you're Irish I'm not and I am," said he.

She laughed. He ordered a whisky and then they spoke of Cissie. Lily expressed sympathy and interest in her. Lynch appreciated this; he criticized Sheldon's manner of bringing up a pretty girl verging on womanhood.

"Look at the crowd he knocks about with. Spielers and I.D.B.'s. If I had a daughter I wouldn't trust her in the society of a swine like Bennington."

"Is he worse than the others, Mr. Lynch?"

"Yes, he is. Mark my words, that fellow will end up an I.D.B. if he doesn't find a girl to work for him."

"Is that unusual? Good heavens, Mr. Lynch, to judge by the talk in this bar all day, half the people in Kimberley are I.D.B.'s."

"That's exaggerated, Miss White. I grant you there are a lot, but don't run away with the idea that I.D.B. is regarded here as a sort of half-way house between drinking and gambling. I.D.B.'s are criminals, and criminals are looked down upon. . . ."

"When found out!"

"They're found out here before they think."

"Then how do they manage to go on?"

"Because the law's too weak to stop any but the fools and drunkards. Wait a bit—we'll get a law soon that will put the fear of God into them, and then you'll see a clearing out. What do you think Julius Hermann's doing at the Cape now? Pulling the strings." Lynch, by force of habit, lowered his voice,

though the information was an open secret. "He arrived from England over a week ago. Parliament is sitting. Julius is not in Parliament . . . but he's pulling the strings. One of these days you'll see a law passed that'll finish I.D.B. for ever."

"After the big men have made enough to be honest?"

"Now then," he retorted, "you're repeating bar gossip. Half this talk about the big men is all my eye!"

Lily was keenly interested. Without letting Lynch see it she led him to talk about I.D.B., quietly putting questions and listening to replies.

"Don't you see the weakness of the Diamond Trade Act of '74?" he said. "Unless we can prove that an I.D.B. has either bought, sold, bartered or pledged a rough stone the case falls to the ground. Now what we want is a law that will make *possession itself* a crime; let the accused show how he came by the stones."

"That would make it illegal to own an uncut diamond?"

"Except under proper control. Every stone must be registered and described like the birthmarks on a criminal. And as soon as we found a rough diamond on anybody it would be his privilege to prove his innocence."

"But surely such a law could be much abused."

"How?"

"Well, suppose someone wanted to ruin an innocent man, it would only be necessary to find a diamond on him."

"We know all the I.D.B.'s—when a man's trapped he deserves it."

"Ah, you mention trapping. Every day I hear stories of men tempted to buy diamonds and then arrested."

"True," admitted the detective, "but they are not forced to buy. If they do they deserve what they get."

"I heard of a man being trapped by his own wife because she wanted to go to her lover."

"I know the case," replied Lynch, "the woman came to me and offered to do the job. We knew her husband was in 'the trade'; we could never catch him, the dirty cur made his wife do the buying. Don't waste your sympathy on him, he's not worth it."

"Perhaps not, but if you can so trap men under the present law what will happen when the possession of a diamond becomes a crime?"

"Oh well," said Lynch lightly, "if it comes to that, every law can be abused. The detective department is not made up of perjurers."

Lynch started to leave the bar. But as if it were an afterthought of no importance he stopped. "By the way, Miss White, you know a man named Steinsohn?"

She was taken aback. "He's been in once or twice. . . ."

"You knew him in Cape Town, didn't you?"

"We met once . . . I believe . . . in the theatre."

"Oh, I thought you had answered his annual advertisement."

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Never mind—that's something else. Look here, don't tell Mrs. Solomons I spoke to you, but if Steinsohn 'gasses' in the bar you might let me know anything of interest."

"Anything of interest?"

Lily did not clearly see the drift of these remarks, though she was half conscious of something sinister. Was it that the police wished to take steps in regard to Steinsohn's conduct in Cape Town? She put a question discreetly.

Lynch replied, "I see you did answer his advertisement."

She looked away.

"That's not my department. I deal with offences against the Diamond Trade Act."

"How did you know I answered his advertisement?"

"Look here," he replied, "I'll be quite straight with you. 'Tis our business to know about everybody that comes here. If a woman's a Miss and calls herself 'Mrs.,' or if she's a Mrs. and calls herself 'Miss,' so

long as she's not 'in the trade' we don't bother her. By the way, how is your little girl?"

"Very well, thank you," she said, lowering her voice.

"Don't worry, I shan't mention her to anyone."

"It really doesn't matter. I'm a widow, you know."

"Of course," he replied, "but as Mrs. Solomons engages unmarried girls, why mention it? Well, so long, Miss White, don't forget what I told you about S., and if anything comes off I won't forget *you*."

At the door he crossed Shilling, who was returning from the post. With eager hands Lily seized a letter, then retired to a secluded corner of the bar and read:

"My own Mummy. . . ."

CHAPTER V

JULIUS HERMANN was back in Kimberley. He came without warning anyone; it was characteristic, he disliked publicity. Mrs. Solomons compared his movements to those of a tiger, who came and went in the dark.

"No, no," said Cohen, "he doesn't like fuss. There's no idea of surprising people. He didn't appear in the office until late this afternoon."

"He has a secretive nature," she replied; "he dislikes things plain and above board."

"Is that why he likes you, Rachel?"

"Julius doesn't like me, Ike; don't make any mistake."

"Come, I know different. When I went to him for you . . ."

She interrupted. "Don't say any more about that, Ike."

"Why? Because a few skunks talked. Treat them with contempt. I tell you Julius behaved decently."

" 'Tis a good investment . . . he gets well paid for his kindness."

" Shall I ask him to reduce the rate of interest? "

" Not on any account," she said quickly. " How has his amalgamation succeeded? "

" I hear it's a great to-do. There will be a meeting of the local shareholders in a few days."

It was with interest that Lily heard of the arrival of the great Mr. Hermann. He had been so discussed, attacked, praised, and criticized by the customers that she was curious to meet the man who, people whispered, was the real owner of this thriving bar. Lily had heard of more than Hermann's financial genius; men did not spare his morals, but their point of view was that to be relentless in the pursuit of pleasure was a redeeming trait in a man. What form did this pursuit take in him?

So much depended on that. When men argued in the bar, with voices scarcely lowered from her, Lily thought of the Christian religion, by ghastly analogy brought into line with this universal Phallic worship of men. There they were, split up and divided like the various churches, differing on details of ceremony and conduct, yet all worshipping the same God.

In which way did Julius differ from his co-religionists? What was there that divided him from other men in Kimberley? Woman-like, she was intrigued by the mystery that surrounded this man; she had a longing to encounter him, to defeat him.

She knew the value of first impressions and wanted to meet him at her best; prepared, with mind elastic and vigorous, her face with colour, eyes bright. She talked with Mrs. Solomons of him, and Rachel said little, but from others she learned that Julius was dark and bearded, neatly dressed and feline, obscure and magnetic. Nobody had a photograph of him; this too was characteristic. He sneered at photography as a means of depicting life.

Her instinct told Lily that he would come into the bar when it was empty, and some vague whisper of remaining superstition said, this man will come into your life. Ah, well, let him come, she was trained

now to the sport, strong and athletic, and could do with a budding millionaire to break. As antagonists she despised all the men she had met in Kimberley. Such thoughts as these ran through her mind, even when the bar was crowded. The men rallied her, and with instant self-control she responded to their mood:

“All right, Mr. Brooksey; two whiskies and one soda for Mr. Sheldon; you’re next—five shillings please—fifteen change, thank you.” And so on.

Sheldon had sold his claims to Bennington and they came to drink success to the change. Believing in luck, Cissie’s father thought that possibly Bennington would strike it rich. He wanted to retain an interest in the claims, but Hector bounced him out of it. Sheldon did not much care now; he was gently obfuscated, and loudly mumbled: “Thash all right, ole man—Julius Hermann’s back; I’ll get something good.”

Mrs. Solomons looked satirically into space. Bennington expressed a desire to be introduced to the great man, having come to Kimberley as Julius was leaving for Europe.

“Shertainly, ole man—with pleasure.” Sheldon by nature was generous. He offered to put in a word for everyone.

Mrs. Solomons asked Bennington to take him away. When drunk he would give away all he owned and much he did not.

Instinct with Lily seldom erred, superstition generally did. But this time instinct misled her. Julius Hermann and she did not meet alone. He came into the bar with Cohen, and Mrs. Solomons too was there, also Shilling, the Kafir. Cohen raised his hat to Lily, who was out before the counter, then he strode gaily ponderous towards Mrs. Solomons, who was behind.

Julius Hermann saw full and erect before him Lily’s graceful body; and she, half turning, met him face to face. Isaac saw nothing of this; Mrs. Solomons did. She saw suddenly her barmaid stiffen, clench her hands and go pale; an inarticulate sound came from between her teeth, she tried to speak, failed, and then threw her head back with strong disdain just before her body

leaned for support across the old piano. He momentarily stood like a statue, staring, as if at a ghost. He was pale, too, like a ghost, though the eyes burned over the black beard covering all his face *but* the eyes. Then with immense control of himself, that was matched only by her own, he crossed the floor towards Mrs. Solomons, while Lily passed a rag over the stains of liquor left on the piano by the drinkers.

The whole scene of silent drama was played out in a few seconds. By the time Cohen reached Mrs. Solomons it was over, and so far as the protagonists knew none had noticed it. Rachel came forward and jovially greeted Julius; Shilling, as ever, bent over the glasses; Cohen turned to Julius and said: "Isn't Rachel looking well?"

When the answer came Lily was straining to hear the voice, though she knew its sound before it was uttered. So many years had passed; and though she felt sure, could it not be possible that there was a mistake? That beard, black and impenetrable, what might it not hide? Even more than the name Julius Hermann.

"You are looking years younger than when I last saw you."

No, no, there was no mistake. How well she knew the timbre of that harshly melodious voice; it was as if some hidden string within her responded to its vibration. And so, after all these years, they met again. They met . . . how? In circumstances of tremendous self-control, so different from the past. Dusting aimlessly in the corner there, one thought chased another through her mind, but one recurred: "Oh, if I had had this self-control at eighteen!"

"Miss White, Miss White."

They were calling her. She must go to him, must meet him, speak with him, and smile on him. Oh well, it was easy after what she had accomplished.

"Coming," she cried.

Then tightening her muscles and filling her lungs, with blood resurging to her face and a smile in her eyes, she went towards him.

"Come and meet Mr. Julius Hermann, Miss White."

Cohen's Western burr boomed good-will across the bar.

"This is our new young lady, Miss White. Miss White, Mr. Julius Hermann."

He hesitated slightly; she saw a flash of doubt, of weakness. It was her turn. She had steeled herself, she was again strong, he should not see her flinch. Walking to him like a queen, so strong that she felt beautiful, Lily held out her hand and said:

"I am pleased to meet you at last, Mr. Hermann!"

His doubt dispelled, anxiety as to her attitude allayed, he faced the situation nearly as well as she did. He wondered even did she know? Had she pierced the secret of his identity so long hidden? But when their hands touched, when her clasp met his, he knew the truth. All she thought was in that grasp: hatred, contempt and loathing she transmitted to fingers as sensitive as her own. She did so while concealing from Cohen and Mrs. Solomons any sign of recognition; so absolute was her self-control that her mistress momentarily lost the conviction she had formed.

"Do you know, Ike, at first I could have sworn Miss White and Julius knew each other."

Lily thought it wise to say: "For a moment Mr. Hermann reminded me of somebody I once knew."

"Well, you see I was not so far out."

"Did I remind you of a very nice man?" said Julius banally.

"No, Mr. Hermann. I am sorry to say he was not a gentleman."

Mrs. Solomons had the usual laugh at this, and Cohen joined her. It broke ice that had frozen the traditional gaiety of the Golden Bar, and before long all were laughing merrily. The wine flowed. Lily drank two glasses of champagne; then flushed with charm she sat down to play the piano, and sang too. Julius had not before seen her in that light; it was since their friendship that necessity had developed in her a gift of song. The sparkle of the wine mounted to her eyes; she was now as fresh and desirable as when he had first known her, with the added beauty that

experience and suffering matures in women, the beauty of intelligence.

He thought how lovely she was, how diabolically attractive, and within him there stirred a feeling of pride at the thought of years ago. How unfortunate that he had not been able to go on loving one so beautiful, so essentially and fully lovable! When he had begun to charm her he was conscious of a desire to possess her always, or at all events had no intention of letting things end as they had. But always it was the same, as he had since learned; hunger and satisfaction, longing and appeasement, before and after. Some hidden power, some force concealed in his blood always urged him on; he likened himself to a goat, nibbling at everything he passed, yet staying at nothing. Were some men descendants of Satyrs, he wondered? Other animals ate their food, swallowed and digested it, but men, he stood reflecting there among the wine, women and song, men were like goats, who passed by tender green grass and sweet corn to browse on paper and straw!

Before and after. Paper and straw. So like a goat, so like . . .

“Come on, Julius, what are you dreaming about?”

Cohen's voice broke in like sunshine on his secret thoughts.

Lily was still at the piano; men had entered the bar and were looking with interest at the group. Mrs. Solomons went to serve. Now and then she glanced back as if still uncertain.

Julius was shaken by the Jew's soft voice; he might have been surprised in the commission of a crime. He muttered something about the music recalling distant scenes. The publicity of this bar was hateful to him; it jarred his nerves. Those men who had come in were waiting to get into sycophantic conversation; Mrs. Solomons' cheery, loud voice, Cohen's sympathetic person, all intruded.

Lily rose from the piano and went behind the bar. The men thronged about her; she teased them, radiant and smiling. Like Julius Hermann they had not hitherto seen her thus. Generally her charm was

a silent, almost negative one, proceeding from the unattainable; to-day a powerful, active attraction emanated from her. Men were caught in the swirl of it, as in a whirlpool. Julius saw how she was desired. To Cohen he said:

“That girl is very popular, eh?”

“She’s the biggest attraction Rachel has ever had.”

Then brutally, as if to tear from Cohen the hateful truth, came the whisper:

“Who’s the fancy man?”

“There is *no* fancy man, Hermann.”

Julius knew he had offended by this question, for Cohen rarely addressed him by the surname. For an instant he looked keenly into Isaac’s face as if trying to read something.

“No offence, Ike . . . do I owe *you* congratulations, perhaps?”

“You do not. Miss White’s name, to my knowledge, has never been associated with anybody’s in Kimberley.”

“Really? Ah, well, that’s good for business; these girls tied up to one fellow . . . no use at all.”

And then brusquely changing, as if the barmaid was not of the slightest interest, he said: “I’m glad business goes so well with Rachel. Are you coming?” He moved to go.

“We’ll just say a word?”

Cohen looked round to say good-bye; when he turned again Julius had disappeared through the door.

“Funny fish,” muttered the grey-haired man.

Lily had seemingly not noticed Julius Hermann’s going, but after his departure her spirits flagged, she relapsed into her usual state of negative refinement, clever and tactful, but no longer dispensing the active force which had charmed everybody for half an hour. She was spent, like a player on the second night. Complaining of a headache she asked to lie down a while.

“Why, of course you can, my dear,” said Mrs. Solomons, “and if you don’t feel better I can get a girl to take your place in the morning.”

“Oh, no, I shall be quite well by then.”

She went to her room and for some time sat staring at the design on the wall-paper. Her eyes followed this ill-drawn figure round and round; it grew into the shape of a mythological monster, half man, half beast, and then finally became Julius Hermann. Awakened from self-hypnosis by the physical pain of her position she had to cross the room and climb upon a chair before she could assure herself that the object on the wall-paper was nothing but a figment of the imagination.

CHAPTER VI

In the emotions awakened by her meeting with Julius Hermann, Lily almost lost sight of the Montague Burlesque Troupe. Now and then she refused invitations from men who wanted to show her off, but all curiosity to see the woman who had supplanted her was dead. How much further off seemed that episode in her life than the events of ten years before!

Her interest in it was revived by the entry into the bar of Mr. Montague, who had been invited by Bennington in return for a free box. She welcomed Montague heartily, trusting that luck would stifle the information she wanted to conceal.

"God bless my soul," he exclaimed, "'tis the little lady with the charming mezzo!"

"Fancy remembering me! Are you doing good business?"

"Enormous. Was not the house a picture last night, laddie?"

Bennington declared it was.

Lily tried to call Montague aside, but Bennington forestalled the move, and she was forced to abandon the idea. Indeed, did it matter after the meeting of

yesterday? And, established as she was, could motherhood lower her market value as an attraction for men? She fenced with the problem, while engaging Montague in conversation, yet she knew it was better for things to go on as they were.

"Join us, Miss White," said Hector gallantly.

"Thank you, Mr. Bennington. Never before lunch."

"A pal of mine has the same rule. Tom Sheldon."

"Sheldon," she cried, "not before lunch? Tell that to the Marines."

"'Pon my honour. But he lunches at daybreak."

As they were laughing heartily at this, Montague inscribed it on his cuff, which was brown, for use as a "gag."

When Lily turned away, Bennington said: "Fancy your knowing her, old man! How did you meet?"

Montague told him. "Jove, I do wish she had joined us; the girl who got the 'shop' is rotten. But she wouldn't leave her little daughter behind."

"Little daughter! She's not married, is she?"

"Not that I know of, laddie."

"Gad," said he, "to think of it—the mugs here call her 'The Virgin Lily.' Ha ha!"

"Hush! Perhaps I should not have told tales out of school. 'Tis not quite professional. Do you promise 'tis on the strict Q.T.?"

After they had gone from the bar Lily's mind connected the events of the previous day with her narrow escape from joining the Burlesque Troupe. Suppose she had come to Kimberley with them and had met Julius in circumstances easy to imagine, for example she on the stage and he near by in a box of that tiny theatre? Unprepared and unarmed how would she have emerged from the encounter? On the whole, did not things happen for the best? Looking back on the miseries she had endured in Cape Town, the struggles and disappointments, could she honestly say that what she had missed was better than what she had gained!

Margaret?

She missed the child as part of herself, as a soldier misses his leg, but now she knew that here again

Destiny had planned better than she, that the child was safer in the care of the coloured woman than she would be in the evil passions of the Diamond Fields.

Sheldon that day visited the bar, full of weak and blatant optimism. He had been to Julius Hermann's office and come away in the belief that the great man would give him some valuable claims on easy terms. . . . Why he should thus be favoured never occurred to him, all he knew was that Julius had cracked a bottle with him, had asked how he was getting on, and even inquired after his daughter. Kind-hearted, vain and credulous, Sheldon, like other failures on the Fields, prided himself on being very "cute" in business. Life taught him nothing except to love his child in a muddled and unpractical manner; though he had lost one lot of claims after another and was on his last legs, he believed himself still to be a person of importance, and in his sharpest mood of self-analysis would ascribe this to Julius Hermann's friendliness.

Their acquaintance certainly began this way; Julius had need of valuable claims which Sheldon owned; by flattery, with champagne freely plied, he obtained them. But after that Sheldon, to him, was a cypher, and the wretched life which he and Cissie led, half out of doors, under sheds and tents, could scarcely appeal to a voluptuary like Julius. Nor could Sheldon's good nature, that thrived on whisky and absence of intelligence, appeal to a mind that was acute, penetrating and malignant. Yet Julius tolerated this drunken failure, even if he did not welcome him with the enthusiasm that Sheldon believed.

Listening now to the vapourings of this man, Lily's mind went back to the morning when she and Cissie had talked in the bar. The girl had said something about Julius . . . what was it? At that time Lily was not interested in him, she did not remember in any particular sense what it was that Cissie told. But since yesterday her mind was alert to every detail—what was it the girl had said?—Julius had given her £5 to bail her father out; he often gave her money

and sweets. To Lily, with mind keenly alive, these details were significant. Hitherto, her desire to protect Cissie was sub-consciously maternal and deliberately feminist; when first they met some fugitive resemblance or quality had evoked thoughts of her own child, she was then suffering the pangs of separation from Margaret, and this suffering was fused into what she had endured through the years of penance for her weakness. She had wanted to save Cissie from a similar fate in relation to *any* man, now it was in relation to a particular man, of all men the one she most hated and longed to injure.

"I tell you Kimberley's worked out. The Pan's the place where I'm going."

"Are you, Tom?" asked a man in from the River.

"Yes, I am," he declared with good-natured truculence. "You think I can't get anything there? Well just wait and see."

"Good health, Tom, ten thousand a year and salmon-fishing in the back garden."

"What have you got hold of?" asked another.

"All I can tell you is it'll be good. When Jul . . . no, no, I must not."

Lily drew Sheldon into conversation.

"I'm glad you are on a good thing. What's Cissie say?"

"Oh, Cissie doesn't know yet."

"She's a bright child, Mr. Sheldon; she deserves the best. . . ."

"If anybody says she doesn't," he declared, "I'll knock him down. There's not a girl in the world like Cissie, God bless her. And when my ship comes home . . . here, let's have another wet."

"Hadn't you better go and tell her the news?"

"I can't tell her yet—it's not fixed, quite. Three whiskies and one soda, two out."

Lily did her best; she served one small whisky into a glass containing distilled water. It was weak enough to pull Sheldon's face awry.

"Won't Cissie be missing you, Mr. Sheldon?"

"Perhaps she will," he said, with maudlin love aroused. "She loves her old daddy and her daddy

loves her. Well, she shall yet mix with the best in the land, not this bloody land of sun, sin and sand, but the old country. God bless her heart! ”

“ Ask her to come in when we’re slack; I want to go over the diggings on my next afternoon off. She knows the diggings? ”

“ Knows ’em! ” shouted the proud father. “ Knows ’em!! Knows ’em better’n I do. Fill ’em once more and then Home, Sweet Home! Yes, boys, I must go home to Cissie.”

In a bursting flood of emotion he swallowed another diluted whisky and loudly called for a card.

Cissie came a few mornings later, bright and charming in a white frock that confessed to being home-made. The piquancy of her face was accentuated by a hat which turned up, and Lily noted the fine lines of the girl’s body, tapering to ankles of unusual slimness. Cissie had already the carriage and modelling of a graceful young woman; there had been a marked change of late; it was clear that the girl had crossed the boundary line dividing childhood from womanhood. Remembering her own sensitiveness at that time, Lily hesitated about broaching the subject.

“ How old are you, Cissie? ”

“ Ah, Miss White, now you’ve got me.”

“ What, don’t you know your age? ”

“ Not ekzactly. Ma died when I was a little girl. . . . ”

“ Surely your father knows? ”

“ Yes, but he’s forgotten. But I know my birthday. Guess what it is, eh? ”

“ How can I guess that? ”

“ It comes just before winter, a day everybody knows—go on, guess, Miss White? ”

“ Now, Cissie, how can I possibly . . . ? ”

“ April the first, Fool’s day! ”

“ But that’s spring, child.”

“ No, you don’t, Miss White, it’s end of autumn—I know that though I’ve not been to school. We still eat grapes then.”

“ I was thinking of spring in England.”

“ Oh, yes, you’re English, eh, Miss White? I can

see that by your complexion. And you talk so different to us."

Lily smiled at the quaint accent with its rising inflexions that reminded her of a Welsh girl whom she had known. Cissie slurred over difficult sounds, she turned her h's into y's or forget them altogether; and through her speech ran the cadence of another tongue, which was Dutch, her mother's language. But she was charming, and her charm was of a young and unrestricted animal, the subtle essence of an opening flower, of a tree in spring. It was the perpetual mystery of youth, the secret of the thing unknown, while Lily before her, beautiful in another way, represented the thing known.

"I should say you're about sixteen, Cissie."

"Oh, not so much. Daddy says I mus' be fifteen."

"You've grown a lot lately."

"Yes—I could hardly get this bodice on to-day, I hadn' worn the dress since I made it."

"Who taught you to make dresses?"

"Nobody—I learned on a doll."

"Do you remember your mother?"

"Oh, yes, Miss White. Rather."

"You must have missed her terribly when she died?"

"I cried and cried till I couldn' cry any more, and then I had to stop and look after daddy."

"Used he to drink then?"

"Not so much. But he took on so, and then he went on the 'tack.' Funny, eh, Miss White, but it made me feel better—I felt I was ma and he was me, and I stopped crying to stop him drinking."

"Do you never long to go away from this life, Cissie, to see other countries?"

"No," said the girl, surprised. "Why?"

"Your father talks of taking you to England."

"Ach, he's always going to 'do something.' Besides, what's wrong with Kimberley?"

"What's your father going to do now that's he sold his claims?"

"He says he's been promised something good."

"By Mr. Hermann?"

“Daddy says so, but he believes everything people tell him.”

“Did Mr. Hermann tell him?”

“There’s something on. I took a letter yesterday.”

“To Mr. Hermann? Did you meet him?”

“No, I jus’ put it down in the office and cleared off.”

“Are you afraid of him?”

“No, not ekzackly afraid, but he looks so stern unless he talks to me, then he changes. But, oh, that black beard and his eyes, he looks like pirates I read about.”

“Can you read?”

“Jus’ a little. You see there was no school down at the River Diggings, and since ma died I’ve had to look after the house, therefore I’m a bit backwards.”

“So Mr. Hermann reminds you of a pirate? Have you told your father so?”

“Oh, no, daddy won’t hear a word against ‘dear Julius’! You’d swear he was Gord Almighty.”

“Have you ever taken letters to his house?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t go there! That’s a funny place, all shut up and fenced in, like Bluebeard’s house. It fairly gives you the creeps. It’s the kind of house you hear about in stories where they kill people. There’s an old Kafir woman looks like a witch—you know Kafirs are up to all kinds of witchcrafts. Ma told me they took white children’s hearts out to make medicine.”

“That was to frighten you from danger, Cissie.”

“Yes, ma said they might catch me and murder me. I use’ to run away from Kafirs. But not now any more.”

“What do you do now?”

“You see this?” She took from her bodice a little thin paper package—stepped back and lifted her arm as if to pitch it into Lily’s face. “That’s pepper.” Cissie told this as a secret of tremendous moment, her face filled with childish self-importance.

“Who put you up to that?”

“A woman was tackled by a Kafir and she chucked pepper in his face and ran away.”

“Do you know why the Kafir tackled her?”

“He wanted to murder her, I s’pose.”

“No, Cissie, it was not that.”

In a motherly and delicate way Lily explained, she talked to the child of physical facts that had hitherto been mysteries to her.

"Kafirs are not the only men who might tackle you. You must be ready for white men too."

"White men?" asked the girl in surprise.

"Yes . . . you spoke of Bluebeard . . . was he a Kafir? No."

Cissie sat pondering. What did Miss White mean? Lily saw that the subtle suggestion was working.

"Will you stay in the bar for a minute, Cissie, while I go to my room to fetch something."

She hurried away, reflecting with satisfaction upon the manner in which she had seized on the simile of Bluebeard; she felt this would remain indelibly associated in Cissie's mind with Julius Hermann as she wanted the child to know him.

Cissie was full of Colonial self-defensiveness. She had courage too, and fighting instincts. Her danger had lain in her ignorance of elementary truths; now she knew, and could protect herself from physical attack or surprise. Against the subtleties of seduction the preparation of her mind would be long and difficult, more delicate; but Lily had sown the seed of doubt and mistrust, now she felt that upon them the father's half-fond tears of pride could safely flow when men flattered his vanity through his "little daughter." Sheldon's credulity was a luminous chink in the armour of his child, already weakened by the absence of a mother's counsels. Against his passive stupidity Lily was pitting her experience, the strength and hatred of her sufferings.

"Cissie, I'm going to take away that packet."

"Oh, why, Miss White?"

"'Tis a poor weapon, child. Take this instead." She held out a dainty pocket-revolver. "Do you know how to use it?" She explained the mechanism.

"I've shot off daddy's revolver to scare niggers away."

"Good. Now keep this hidden in your bodice . . . like that . . . and if you need to use it don't be afraid."

"Is it really for me, Miss White? A present?"

"Yes, of course."

She checked Cissie's flood of thanks and continued the conversation that had been broken off.

She did not tell anything to awaken disgust or shame, nor arouse impure curiosity. The girl, despite her unshielded life, had a mind clear as water in a brook, for the men among whom she grew up had respected her innocence. Since the great change had taken place, Cissie was beginning to perceive certain things; she noticed that some men treated her differently from the way they used to do; there was a light in their eyes she did not understand, and now she realized what it was that repelled her from Julius Hermann. To Lily she said nothing of the realization; her mind, her soul, every fibre of her was a whirling tempest of new emotions. The intimacy of the conversation had carried it upon impersonal, almost abstract ground; had this been otherwise Lily felt that Cissie's modesty would be affronted. These revelations to an innocent and hitherto uninitiated girl were tremendous, they had come at the most critical moment in the life of the child, swirling within her on the foam and ferment of adolescence, every word intensified, every syllable charged with deep meaning.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER this Cissie came often to see "Miss Lily." Sometimes they chatted in the bar, sometimes in Lily's room. One afternoon the girl saw a photograph upon the dressing-table.

"Oh, what a dear little girl! I bet I know who it is."

"Who do you think?"

"Your sister." Cissie clapped her hands.

"How did you know that, Cissie?"

"Because it's you, complete! She's the image of you, Miss Lily. Oh, she's nice and pretty."

The mother was delighted. She had sent money to Mrs. February the month before, asking her to have Margaret photographed in one of the best studios.

"I wish I had a little sister like that," Cissie sighed.

After she had gone, Lily read again Margaret's last little letter. It was so sweet in its childish faults that the mother felt pain at the knowledge that soon the child would be schooled out of her baby errors, as she had been weaned from funny words and twisted phrases.

Shilling knocked at the door to say Mrs. Solomons would like Miss Lily to go along as soon as possible. Though not due at work for an hour she hurried to the bar and found the proprietress reclining in an easy chair.

"Don't look so frightened, dear—it's nothing terrible—I'm out of breath and not up to work this afternoon."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Solomons, 'tis a slack time of the month, I can easily get on alone."

"I haven't been up to the mark of late."

Cohen came in later, and after consoling his old friend, spoke with Lily in the bar. "I'll send for Dr. James—did you notice her colour?—heart's troubling her again."

"Well, don't worry about the business, Mr. Cohen, I can get on alone for a few days."

"Thank you, Miss White. I feel all right on that side; if Dr. James thinks best I won't hesitate to let Mrs. Solomons go for a change; we can get somebody to help you."

Dr. James, who was a clever physician, did not alarm his patient, but told Cohen she was suffering from a dilatation of the heart and should stay away from the bar for a week to begin with, after which he would prescribe further. Mrs. Solomons agreed to take the medicine and to rest for a few days, but ridiculed any idea that she was seriously unwell.

Cohen engaged as temporary barmaid the only girl then out of work, Rose Moore, who had once been the attraction of a bar frequented by I.D.B.'s. She was of the loud and obvious school, and her wit appealed to the more depraved customers. Steinsohn came back again, ostensibly to ask after Mrs. Solomons' health; when he grew unbearably coarse Miss Moore would say:

“ Now then, Stonesign, if you aren't a good boy I shan't keep you warm next winter.”

It leaked out that Steinsohn's last housekeeper was a failure; she had cleared off to Natal with a friend of his, a diamond-broker, who habitually visited the house. Worse still she took a horse-shoe pin set in diamonds, and a solitaire ring. Steinsohn had on several occasions been treated thus; but feared to complain to the police. Miss Moore's jokes seemed to whip him into a state of excitement; Lily wondered more each day at the salacious appetite so many men displayed. When she spoke to Miss Moore about it, not chidingly or critically, but observantly, that genial soul thought her technique impugned, and with a toss of the head, replied:

“ They like it; all the I.D.B.'s do.”

“ Why the I.D.B.'s in particular? ”

“ Horses for courses,” retorted Miss Moore, with immense scorn and knowledge. “ Why does a duck swim? ”

Unable to refute the theory Lily passed to something useful.

“ Can you pick out all the I.D.B.'s? ”

“ Pretty nearly. Of course everybody knows old Stonesign, I don't claim to have picked him out. But the others, they've all got a look of their own, like policemen in plain clothes, 'tecs, or sailors ashore.”

“ And if you are ever in doubt,” said Lily, “ I suppose you try one of your jokes? ”

“ That's it, exactly. Quite easy when you know how, eh? ”

Steinsohn had been talking softly in the far corner with Bennington; he came over and ordered another large bottle of Mumm's. When he had carried it back, to continue drinking, the barmaid continued:

“ Steinsohn made a few thousand quid over a big parcel of stones last week. 'Tis all over the Fields; I suppose he told somebody.”

“ Do you mean to say they tell things like that—it must be gossip? ”

“ They all blab! ”

“ But why do the police not arrest him? ”

“They can’t prove anything, don’t you see? Oh, take it from me he’s one of the cleverest at the game—they’ve tried all they know to trap him.” She shook her head negatively. “Mark my words, if ever they get him ’twill be through a woman . . . oh, he’ll fall to us every time, dear.”

She was contented with the thought, and turning round admired herself in the mirror which formed a flashing background to the bottles of liquor.

Lily saw Hector staring over his glass of wine; something about the man since he came with Montague had been familiar, he addressed her with sureness of ground, seemingly determined to penetrate the barrier of her reserve. She felt insecure with this man, his face proclaimed utter absence of principle, most likely Lynch was right. To Miss Moore she whispered: “That tall, dark fellow there with Steinsohn, is he an I.D.B. too?”

“I shouldn’t wonder. He keeps off the smut and doesn’t wear diamonds, but what has he taken Tom Sheldon’s worked-out claims for? To find stuff they ‘plant’ there. I wouldn’t mind betting he and Stonesign will work together.”

Lily absorbed every item of information. These two dissipated men, one a Jew, the other a Gentile, she regarded as enemies. They fawned on her and paid her compliments, but she felt they were only waiting to fall upon her, like jackals on a wounded springbuck, should she make a false step.

Her impression was quickened when Bennington in a lordly way asked for a card. He had for some time past accepted Mrs. Solomons’ suggestion of cash payments; now that she was laid up, he exercised moral blackmail over Lily, and she felt it wise not to refuse him credit. In retaliation she overcharged Steinsohn, and he too considered it would be unwise to protest.

Lynch looked in next morning. He knew of Lily’s friendship with Cissie; it pleased him. Why, he did not exactly know; in a vague way he felt it would be of advantage to himself as well as to the girl. Since chumming with Miss White, Cissie had become smarter and tidier, also more reserved. She had a smile still

for the detective, yet Lynch missed such little pleasures as her old habit of slapping him on the neck if she came up unseen. He noted the elegance now of her carriage and the lines of her form.

Lily greeted him with marked pleasure. She found herself beginning to be attracted in some indefinable way to the traffic in diamonds; she was always eager to hear the news, who had been locked up, what the case was, the value of gems seized, and so on. This morning, Lynch, after some commonplaces, said: "Would you like to see a nice parcel of stones?"

"Indeed I would."

He took from his pocket a folded paper resembling a packet of salts put up by a chemist, and opening this spread upon the counter a number of rough diamonds. Through Lily passed a little shiver, a thrill of which she could not accurately diagnose the source; something like an emotion of combined pleasure, excitement and fear. Precious stones had, since the inevitable ring of her first romance, possessed little attraction for her, but these dull glazed diamonds that passed clandestinely from hand to hand were different; was it because of the danger attaching to them or because of the wealth they could so easily bestow?

"What are you thinking of, Miss White? You don't seem a bit interested."

"Oh, I am, Mr. Lynch. They are very fine stones."

"You're beginning to know a bit about them?"

"Mr. Cohen has shown me some."

"Ike Cohen . . . he's a licensed buyer. Anyone else?"

"One or two brokers—they explain the good and bad points—now that stone is a perfect octahedron."

"Quite right. What would you say it weighs?"

"Eight carats?"

"Eleven and a half. Diamonds are heavy, you know, their specific gravity is the greatest known."

"What is that off-coloured thing there worth?"

"Oh," said he with disparagement, "not a great deal. Perhaps £2 a carat."

"Well that makes £23, seven more than I earn a month."

"True. Life is not always fair to the honest, hard-working people. We get our reward in the next world."

"I'd sooner have mine here and be sure of it."

He lowered his voice. "You could if you wanted it."

"How do you mean?"

"Well . . . the Government rewards people well . . . for information."

"And those who supply . . . information, are they honest, hard-working people?"

He looked evasively towards the glare of the street as if searching out there for the reply, then slowly answered: "Sometimes they are. Sometimes a person supplies information to right a wrong, to get even for an injury, to rid society of a scoundrel."

"Never from a sense of duty?" she asserted.

"Why not? Suppose you knew that an I.D.B. meant harm to you or to somebody you were fond of, your child for instance. Would you not be justified if you informed the police?"

"That is a Jesuitical argument, Mr. Lynch, I can't contest it."

"Indeed I am right," he replied with persuasion. "Whom would you think it your duty to help—the law, which is for the protection of us all, yourself included, or the I.D.B., who steals or buys the goods stolen from others?"

She was trickling through her fingers the many-sided stones, they might have been bits of glass worn by water or crystals of no worth.

"What gives them their value?" she asked. "Why are they more precious than other stones? Are they useful in any way?"

Lynch gathered up the diamonds and put them into his pocket.

"So far as I can see, no," he replied. "Their value is entirely in their rarity, 'tis a question of supply and demand."

"Rather like the value of ourselves . . . us women, I mean. The more unattainable we are the more men want us."

He laughed, somewhat reflectively it sounded. "I

suppose that is so, Miss White. Certainly the men run after the few girls there are on the Fields. Do you know, the cleverest criminals could be caught if we had women to help us."

"And perhaps some of the cleverest detectives too," she chaffed.

"Um . . . ah, I don't know so much about that."

Cohen came in to visit Mrs. Solomons. Shilling went before him, apparently to announce the caller, and when alone with Lily the detective, with studious off-handedness remarked: "How's Mrs. Solomons going along? . . . Glad to hear it . . . lucky to have a reliable staff . . . best nigger on the Fields, they say, that boy. Very devoted to his mistress, eh?"

"Very," said Lily.

"He's been with her from the day she got this bar. They say he can do as he pleases."

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Lynch. . . ."

"You have no experience of natives have you, Miss White? . . . If you had you'd know that Mrs. Solomons' boy gets a long rope. Strange, too, is it not, that he never goes on *vagaash*?"

"*Vagaash*?"

"All niggers get home-sick; from time to time they must visit their kraals. Nothing can stop them when they're taken that way; the only thing is to let them go away on *vagaash* . . . I can't exactly translate the word, but 'furlough' is near it. The good boys go home, sow their crops and return; in the autumn *vagaash* again perhaps to reap the Kafir corn. Now when a boy doesn't want to go on *vagaash* I always think there is something queer about him."

"I assure you, Mr. Lynch, there is nothing queer about Shilling. . . . Mrs. Solomons is very satisfied."

"Oh, I know *that*," insinuated Lynch. "He's always on duty."

"No, not always," contradicted Lily. But then she saw a quick gleam in Lynch's sharp eyes, something eager, anticipatory; a flash of hope like the twinkle of a friendly light to a lost traveller in the dark. At once she checked the phrase that should have followed and did not tell of mysterious absences from work that

had come to her knowledge. Why should she? There was in this something underhand. Lynch was closely watching, she longed for Cohen to return. . . .

“You said, not always?” Simulating utter indifference, the detective hung upon her reply. Shilling noiselessly opened the door and returned. It gave Lily inspiration. “You see he’s just been away from duty now. Shilling, you must wipe the piano plenty to-day, because yesterday men threw whisky on it.”

“In it too,” she added to Lynch.

The Kafir made no reply, he went to the piano. Lynch observed him closely, then bent towards Lily.

“Don’t repeat what I said, it might only lead to trouble for the boy; after all, if he does his work . . . Well, so long, Miss White.”

“Good-bye, Mr. Lynch.”

“If Tom Sheldon comes in tell him to pick his friends a bit better . . . you see, now that Cissie’s growing up . . . well you understand, do you not, Miss White?”

“Perfectly.”

“He may take advice from you; if I said anything he’d think I was casting a slur on the girl—he’s that sort of fool.”

Lily noted that Lynch now spoke of Cissie as a “girl” where he used to refer to her as a child. Was this the unconscious explanation of his interest? Her thoughts went speculating. She was more than ready to help Lynch in his desire to protect Cissie from the blackguards around her father. She preferred to enlist his friendship by this means rather than by the acceptance of his scarcely veiled invitations to spy on I.D.B.’s. That work, somehow, she revolted from; yet she had squarely faced the suggestion, no false shame of affronted honour prevented her from considering it. Less than three months there, selling liquor, had deepened immeasurably her contempt for men; she admitted that neither a bar nor the Diamond Fields was a place to show them at their best—or women either, for that matter—but she could not restrain a feeling of inward enmity from beginning to dominate all her actions. Yet the denouncing of I.D.B.’s repelled her;

her upbringing had ingrained a code of conduct in relation to others. She could not, for instance, bring herself to write an anonymous letter, no matter what good purpose it might achieve. Towards men in the purely male sense, and in regard to their weakness, brutality and depravity, she felt that no code of honour existed, no rules should restrict her. But I.D.B. she did not regard as a deadly sin; it was practised by women as much as men—perhaps more, when the respective numbers in Kimberley of the two sexes were considered.

Yes, she preferred infinitely to help Lynch in the second sense. She wanted his friendship. Why, she did not know. Something told her to keep this man on her side; some psychic sense had communicated knowledge of deep and secret thoughts still hidden in her sub-conscious mind.

Cohen, returning from within, found Lily deep in thought. His presence acted on her as a sedative; people called him "Uncle Ike" because he was soothing and avuncular; he produced on them the undefinable effect of a beneficent relative. He was, in short, all that an uncle should be.

"Now what's the trouble this morning, Miss Lily?"
You have some mental disturbance, some . . ."

"Well, yes, I have, Mr. Cohen."

"You promised to call me Uncle!"

"I can't . . . this morning, at all events."

"Well, then, plain Ike!"

"Plain Ike . . . I mean Ike . . . yes, that's it, Ike, Ike, Ike; I'll practise when nobody is in the bar."

Already she felt gayer, the effect that Lynch always produced was passing; this man with the clear grey eyes and white hair brought her peace and content; was it, she asked herself, because of the neutralizing effect of white hair? To her, white hair was the negation of sex; it gave the feeling of an individual, not of a man. Towards Cohen she felt no hostility, erected no barrier of self-defence. He was the only man with whom she felt that pure friendship was possible.

"I want to know your candid honest opinion of I.D.B., and I.D.B.'s," she said at length.

"It would take a long time to tell, Miss Lily. But what are you interesting yourself . . . ?"

"It is so much talked about; generally by people biassed one way or the other. I want your views, because you are neither an I.D.B. nor a detective, and will give a fair, competent opinion."

"Thank you. But the subject is too big to treat that way—unless I take a lecture hall and risk being hissed by people of extreme views who are nine-tenths of the population. Ask me a definite question."

Lily pondered a while.

"Is I.D.B., in your opinion, a serious crime?"

"Certainly."

"And an I.D.B. a criminal?"

"Not always, but nearly so."

"Then," said she, "I.D.B. isn't always a crime?"

"It is legally; morally I think not always."

"What use are diamonds to humanity?"

"A certain number are used in machinery—Brazil diamonds are used for cutting glass, ours are too soft."

"Broadly speaking, diamonds are of no use?"

"Except to beautify your sex."

"Say rather," she retorted, "to corrupt us. I see no beauty whatever in diamonds. As gems they are the plainest of all. How can you compare a diamond for beauty with the cheapest opal?"

"But," said Cohen smiling, "what has this to do with I.D.B.?"

"Nothing, except to show that the laws against I.D.B. serve no moral purpose; they merely protect something that is immoral in effect."

"Oh, come, diamonds must be protected like other property."

"But they are *not* protected like other property. I have heard men in this bar boast, yes boast, that ninety per cent. of diamonds are used for the seduction and purchase of women."

"Men give them to their mistresses," he admitted, "and sometimes to their wives, but as for corruption and seduction . . . well ninety per cent is a bit strong."

"If it were only nine per cent. the Government would

still be better employed in protecting girls than in safeguarding diamonds to turn their heads with."

"Do you know of any decent girl who has ever given herself to a man for diamonds?"

"You dear old simpleton!" she cried. "What do you know about these things? When he has to deal with a decent woman or girl a man doesn't come with dyed hair under his nose and diamonds in his hands and say 'there's the brooch and there's the couch!' . . . he gives her a jewel as one throws bait to a fish, makes a present to show what a worthy fellow he is. The silly maid is taken in; she has been brought up to believe that marriages are made in Heaven, that God looks after girls, that diamond rings mean marriage. One would think they were issued by Registrars, Magistrates and Clergymen only to pure, good men who have been examined by a Heavenly Officer of Health and found fit. The man puts this ridiculous ring on the girl's finger. She believes she's as good as wed (the poorer she is the more she believes it); in her innocent gratitude, without passion or desire, she gives herself to her husband. . . . He, as often as not, clears off, leaving her with a miniature of himself in order that a noble species may not die out!"

Cohen looked at Lily in surprise, he had never before heard her so passionate; Shilling peeped upwards from the pedal of the piano, wondering if the barmaid was angry with the baas. As the words poured from her lips Cohen found himself wondering if so much feeling on an abstract matter was not the outcome of an experience, perhaps a personal one, in the past. He found himself sympathizing with Lily's outlook; this view of the I.D.B. laws was fresh to him and sane.

Lily continued:

"What would you say if the Government allowed the publication and sale of books written to deprave women and children, and passed laws to protect them? Or aided and abetted the distribution of love philtres and charms? No . . . the I.D.B. laws are a disgrace to humanity."

"Well," said Cohen, "now they are going to abolish trial by jury and overturn another old-fashioned

fundament of English law, which says a man is innocent until proved guilty. The new law is going to make a man guilty until proven innocent!"

"Surely it will never pass through Parliament!" cried Lily.

"Julius says it will. He is leaving for Cape Town to-morrow morning in connection with it."

Lily became silent. Nothing in her manner betrayed what she thought; but after a pause she asked:

"Has he much influence with Parliament?"

"I can't say, but the diamond industry has."

The sun was now high in the heavens. Shilling had dusted the bar, and began to fill the little tank beneath the bar counter, preparatory to washing glasses.

Cohen went away. He said Mrs. Solomons was better than yesterday, he would look in again and hear Dr. James's report.

The second customer that day was Tom Sheldon. He came in soon after, and Lily noticed that even at that early hour he had been drinking heavily. He ambled up to the counter with that weak and jaunty air which he wore when on "the spree," and ordered his whisky. Lily served it; her nerves were trembling with indignation but she wanted Sheldon to remain long enough to hear Lynch's advice and her own. Sheldon was unfit to have the upbringing of a mongrel bitch, far less of a sensitive and pretty child. She asked about Cissie. He replied by an order for more whisky.

"I'm sorry, but you must pay cash; Mrs. Solomons will have no more cards."

"Who asked for cards? Here's the money." He flung down a handful of gold.

She returned him the change and said: "Since you have so much money 'tis a pity you cannot spend some on sending Cissie to school."

"Send Cissie to school—what for?"

"To get her away from her surroundings. You have no right to let her come in contact with your friends."

"Whash'r matter with my friends?"

"Look here, Tom," said Lily with force, "Cissie is a pretty girl"—he smiled drunkenly—"and she's turning into a beautiful woman."

“Just like her mother when I married her!”

“If you had any affection for her”—he tried to declare his love for the child—“be quiet and listen to me!—any affection, you would see this was no life for her. You should be ashamed to leave her to the mercy of a lot of cads while you go from bar to bar.”

“How dare you say a word against Cissie!”

“Who says anything against Cissie, you stupid man? Can't you see she's become a woman, and that if you don't take care men will be running after her?”

Sheldon stiffened almost into sobriety; he looked defiantly at Lily, he banged his fist upon the counter.

“Let any of 'em dare!”

“Perhaps,” she replied, “you will not see which of your friends are least to be trusted. Soft words and gentle manners often disguise a cad. Don't be taken in by flattery; when men compliment you on your ‘pretty daughter’ ask yourself what they're up to?”

Since hurling defiance at the world Sheldon had subsided into broody silence. His muddled brain was trying to tear the meaning from the woof of Lily's words. He really loved his child, and was hurt and angry that anybody should doubt his affection, his capacity, or way of bringing her up. That anybody should speak to him in this way. . . . His thoughts were interrupted by the appearance of an old friend, a man who had claims on the Orange River some distance from Kimberley. The friendship between Sheldon and Charles Fitzroy was largely the association of a pair of hard drinkers, the sympathetic mingling of two throats with but a single thirst. They had owned neighbouring claims on the river and had there drunk success to the discovery of each stone, the cost of the liquor outrunning the value of the diamonds. Fitzroy had been sent to South Africa by his family, for their benefit. He was prodigal, convivial and musical. Remittances reached him quarterly; when they did he abandoned his claims and made straight for Kimberley. When he had spent all his money on champagne, of which others drank most, he would sign cards and return to the River Diggings, spent in every sense, even

his credit exhausted. These orgies had earned for him the name "Champagne Charlie"; he liked it, and kept in the rôle by singing the popular song "Champagne Charlie is my name."

Fitzroy, always retaining the manners of his class, came over to Sheldon and said: "Good morning, Tom." He held out his hand cordially, and with a certain air of distinction that not even their drinking bouts had broken down. Sheldon lacked his usual geniality, but Fitzroy made no comment; he called the barmaid. "Will you bring a large bottle of Mumm's Extra Dry. . . ."

As she was uncorking it Fitzroy remarked:

"You were not here when I was last in town?—when did you join Mrs. Solomons? Three months ago! Been out from home long?"

He asked Lily questions about the West End of London, chatting animatedly with her in a perfectly inoffensive way. Sheldon said nothing. He was brooding over Lily's remarks. At length Fitzroy extended a glass to him, held aloft his own, and started humming the air of his favourite song. Then he toasted the Queen, next his absent friends, and suddenly he remembered Sheldon's child. Thinking it would draw Tom out of his unfathomable taciturnity, he said:

"And how is the little one? . . . I mean Cissie?"

"She's all right," grunted Sheldon.

"She must be growing a big girl, Tom? And a dashed pretty one, I'll bet. She was looking very bonny the last time I saw her. Miss White, I ask you to raise your glass to the health of Tom Sheldon's daughter."

When they had done so Fitzroy said playfully:

"You'll soon have to be looking out, Tom. Scare away the fellows with a shot-gun."

The effect of this meaningless phrase was surprising and disastrous. Sheldon stepped back shouting, "Damn you, man, don't insult my girl," then flung the contents of his glass straight at the aquiline nose before him. Fitzroy, drenched in liquor, stood gasping, so amazed that he neither attacked his assailant nor defended himself. Sheldon, carried away by maudlin and

muddled heroism, rushed at his old friend, wildly swinging his arms, resolved to punish the betrayer. But his foot slipped at the spot where the wine had flowed on to the floor; he sprawled heavily, his head struck the brass rail that ran along the bottom of the counter, he rolled over in horrible silence, and lay there as still as the broken wine-glass beside him.

Lily was too shocked to scream, Fitzroy stared in uncomprehending amazement; only Shilling behaved rationally. He was used to lifting drunken customers; he raised Sheldon into a chair. As he did so the man's head lolled forward like a ball on a swivel, the Kafir looked at it with a light of perception that rarely came into his eyes, and he breathed one word that to the barmaid sounded like feely. . . .

Lily dashed water upon Sheldon's face and over his head.

"Give him brandy—Three Star," said Fitzroy. "Tom, Tom, wake up, old man; come on!"

Shilling disappeared through the door behind the counter without Lily's being conscious of it. Somebody looked in at the front; it soon became known that Tom Sheldon had knocked himself out on the bar-rail. Men came attracted by curiosity; they were mildly interested. To see Tom come round asking for whisky would be amusing.

Suddenly from behind the counter a woman appeared in a dressing-gown. Mrs. Solomons had got up in disregard of Dr. James's orders; horribly alarmed by what Shilling had told her, she came to deal with the situation. Her face was swollen and purplish, there had been no time to make her toilet, she looked ill, her eyes were full of anxiety.

"That man, that man," she cried, "I always said he'd bring trouble."

"Go in, Mrs. Solomons, you're not well enough to be up."

Different men were trying to revive Sheldon. Most of them treated the accident jocularly; they had seen him thus before. But Mrs. Solomons, lamenting bitterly, went to Shilling. He looked steadily at her and repeated: "Feely, Meeses, feely."

"My God, surely not, it can't be true," broke from the distracted woman.

Somebody cried from the door. "It's all right, here comes Dr. James."

"Quick, Mrs. Solomons, go back to bed; don't let the doctor see you, he'll be furious."

"All right, dear." She vanished through the back door.

"What's up here?" asked Dr. James.

"Oh," said a man, "Tom Sheldon's fallen on his head."

"Tom Sheldon! Bit early in the day even for him." The doctor went forward. As the group parted he saw Sheldon. At once his face lost its almost bantering expression.

"Stand away, please, everybody," he said, "this man is badly hurt." The trivial air of the men in the bar became subdued, voices were hushed. Dr. James knelt beside the inert figure: he made a quick examination; heart, pulse, breathing, head; then rose, and with the utmost seriousness said: "There is no hope. He cannot live an hour."

Lily received the pronouncement with a strange mingled feeling of fear, anxiety and solace. She uttered no word, and her silence served to bring into relief a stifled, sobbing cry of angry lamentation that came from behind the inner door.

"What's that?" asked Dr. James.

Lily darted inside. She found Mrs. Solomons collapsed midway between the bedroom and the bar door. At once she administered smelling salts. Shilling helped her to get their mistress to her room. Meanwhile Dr. James had ordered that the front door be closed and that strangers leave the premises. One man went to fetch Cissie; Fitzroy got into the doctor's cart and dashed down Du Toit's Pan Road towards the hospital to arrange for an ambulance. Dr. James, though certain of defeat, set to work upon the immobile figure of Sheldon, who lay with skull fractured like a fallen gourd, the face swollen, with the brutal glaze and contusions of a drunken Kafir sleeping off a beer drink. He looked up and saw Lily's anxious face bending

over him—"Don't take on, Miss White," he murmured in sympathy, "he was bound to come to this sooner or later."

"I know," she breathed, and already through her mind willy-nilly the thought was passing that his death would free her, that she could stretch out her hands and take hold of Cissie and keep her. . . .

"Will you come, Dr. James, and see Mrs. Solomons. I'm afraid she is taking this very much to heart."

"Who told her?" he exclaimed angrily . . . then realizing the origin of that cry, he followed Lily, muttering as he walked: "Most unfortunate . . . the worst thing that could have happened."

He found Mrs. Solomons much worse. He prescribed a sedative, gave strict orders as to her treatment, and insisted on sending a nurse to take charge of her. Returning to the bar he found Cissie, with head bent to her father's hollow breast, sobbing piteously. Lily went to the unhappy girl, placing arms about her shoulders and comforting her.

But Cissie knew that something sinister and irretrievable had come to pass, that this time her daddy would never awaken, never. Often she had seen him thus, insensible and debased, but now there was something about him of death. . . . She knew he would never speak again. "Daddy, daddy!" she cried, with the pitiful monotony of human suffering.

Fitzroy returned with a stretcher to take Sheldon to hospital. Dr. James went back to the body and Cissie allowed herself to be drawn by Lily into a corner. There some minutes later she heard that her father was dead.

Her eyes by now had run dry, Cissie had shed every tear; and she sat staring hopelessly, in surrender to despair and loneliness. She saw Shilling, the bottle washer, bearing one end of a stretcher, and the Honourable Charles Fitzroy the other; a sheet was laid over the bier, and Cissie realized they were taking her father, her daddy, to put him into a hole in the ground, for ever and ever. She had often seen dead Kafirs carried thus, corpses mangled in the diamond mines; she remembered with childish vividness the

death of her mother, whom she had seen asleep . . . beautified, with face pure as wax; but never before had she realized the horror or degradation of death—all its cruel contemptuousness. She felt more than grief, she had also a sense of disgrace; her first instinct was to follow the corpse, then a feeling of shameful self-consciousness overcame her and she recoiled, hesitating, doubtful. . . .

Lily led her out by the back way. "They are taking him to the hospital, Cissie . . . he will not be buried yet . . . come with me, poor, poor child!" They went to Lily's room, where Cissie unflooded another torrent of tears. She lay upon the bed with face pressed into the pillows, her body shook with the violence of her emotion. Lily let her cry in peace, purging her soul of sorrow. Youth, she knew, reacted quickly; what, after all, was Sheldon but a habit, how could he be called a father?

When the girl had sobbed herself out she fell into a deep and peaceful sleep. Lily stole away, locking the door behind her, and returned to work, opening the bar before tiffin hour. Miss Moore came on duty, and it was well she did, for the death of Sheldon, so long expected by his friends, caused a great run on the bar; men flocked to hear the details, and the liquor they consumed was amazing. Other houses in the neighbourhood suffered complete desertion. Lily had to tell repeatedly the story of Sheldon's tragic fall, and between the rounds of drinks would slip away to her room, look at Cissie, and return. Once she observed that the child was sobbing in her sleep, troubled, no doubt, by horrid dreams. She laid her hand upon Cissie's shoulder and softly pressed her fingers into the warm flesh; the dream was changed, the sobs ceased. Lily, as she went back, murmured: "So her sorrow will go, in a few weeks she will have forgotten all about her father."

Next morning they buried Tom Sheldon, in a deal coffin that looked rich beneath its coat of varnish and brass handles; buried him in a cemetery among the corpses of men killed searching for diamonds. A

clergyman performed the burial service. He said beautiful, touching things about the dead man, and by the poetical language of the Church, and the solemn religious setting, restored to death its majesty and impressiveness. Far from being symbolic of defeat and shame and degradation, he raised the end of this man to a pinnacle of sublimity; the death of Sheldon was a victory. God had summoned him from a world of sin and sorrow to a higher life. Hearing through her tears these tributes to her father, Cissie was appeased; the sense of shame she had involuntarily felt as they carried him from the bar left her; unconsciously, like others at the graveside, she shared in a secret sense of satisfaction, almost pride at her association with the kindly, honest, worthy man, now gone from her for ever. Little stones rattled upon the coffin as they covered it, the soil was yellowish, not the true "blue ground," and a digger among a dozen at the graveside trickled it through his fingers wondering if below it would carry diamonds? When the last spadefuls had covered the coffin and Kafirs had flattened the earth above, Lily took the arm of the sobbing, lonely child and led her home.

Isaac Cohen was not at the funeral. He had known Sheldon very slightly, and he had that morning to go to the coach with Julius Hermann, who was leaving for Cape Town. Julius, since his meeting with Lily, had avoided the Golden Bar; he hated to look back on the past; change and creation were the essence of his being; once he delighted in flowers, now they disgusted him; he had loved in turn the music of a dozen composers, he waned from one and waxed to the other, always with a disgust of the thing left behind. So it was with books and friends, paintings and objects of art, and women—change—always change.

But had he been able to delay his departure, nothing would have suited him less than to see Sheldon lowered into the ground.

"Ike," he said, as they waited for the coach to leave, "What is going to become of Sheldon's child?"

"Well, I don't know, Julius—I guess some of us will start a subscription to help her."

“ And then? ”

“ She’ll probably get a job, she’s a bright youngster. ”

“ Yes . . . she is . . . I saw her the other day. She came with a letter. Grown a lot, hasn’t she? I didn’t know Tom had a daughter so old. Get a job you think . . . what can she do? Too young for a barmaid or housekeeper? ”

“ She ought to go to school, Julius; it’s a shame the way Sheldon dragged her up. ”

“ School . . . hum . . . I’ll think it over, Ike . . . school . . . perhaps . . . hum, there’s the coach . . . listen, I want you to apologize to her for my absence from the funeral—explain, will you?—tell her not to worry . . . and see that she has whatever she needs. Settle the bill for the funeral and all that . . . charge it to me. ”

“ Well that’s damned white of you, Julius. ”

“ Can’t let the girl be in want; we got Sheldon’s claims cheap, but don’t let people know . . . or I’ll have dozens of wasters asking me to help them. Sheldon’s child—what’s her name? Cissie, you say—must promise not to let anyone know who is helping her—say *you* are, Ike. Understand? ”

“ Sure. ”

“ And don’t let her go knocking about the . . . no, she won’t want to go there after this affair. ”

“ Where, Julius? ”

“ Nowhere, nowhere. Well, there’s the coach . . . I must get on board . . . what do you say? . . . Oh yes, how is Rachel to-day? Tch, tch. Well, Ike, do what’s best, don’t forget what I told you . . . oh, of course, give Rachel my regards—hope she’ll be well when I get back. Good-bye, Ike. ”

And the coach rolled away, dust rising about it in a pale yellow cloud.

CHAPTER VIII

SINCE Sheldon's death Cissie had slept on a couch in Lily's room, where she passed most of the days too. A few mornings after the funeral Lily and she rose at six o'clock and together walked into the cool autumn air. Wagons guided by Boers rolled about the market square, Kafirs and half-castes were carrying vegetables, game and fruit; but the people whom Lily and Cissie knew were not yet to be seen. A Cape cart plying for hire was entered by the two women, for Cissie looked quite a woman in a black frock which Lily had given her; she seemed to have become years older, grave and sad and very beautiful. When they arrived at the claims that Sheldon had sold, a Kafir greeted Cissie. She went into a corrugated-iron shanty, and began packing up her few wretched belongings. Bennington had not yet arrived; if there were diamonds to be stolen, and the Kafirs wished to steal, nothing was easier. Bennington loafed by day and gambled by night. He had also certain affairs of the heart and could give little time to the labour of mining, even though this meant watching others work.

Lily helped Cissie to pack up, and they drove away. She had arranged to share her room until they could find better accommodation. As yet Lily had formed no plans as to what Cissie would do for a living; the girl was fretting still; she remembered only the better side of her father, whose end Fitzroy had described without perceiving how ridiculous was the attack on him; this episode deepened the halo about the dead man.

Mrs. Solomons' condition had become worse. Dr. James came out this morning with the remark: "If she's no better to-morrow, she'll have to be sent to the coast." Cohen was there; greatly disquieted he tried to persuade the doctor to a contrary opinion, though he had for days feared the same thing. Dr. James was definite, his

views being borne out by the report of his nurse, who had closely watched Mrs. Solomons.

When the doctor had left Isaac talked to Lily about the business. The receipts had not fallen off since Mrs. Solomons' illness, they had increased. There had been, indeed, a marked upward trend since Lily entered the Golden Bar, and Cohen frankly admitted this was due to the barmaid.

"If things go on like this, Miss Lily, you may count on a nice bonus at the end of your twelve months."

"Thank you, Mr. Cohen—'tis nice to be appreciated."

"Now suppose the doctor is right, and Mrs. Solomons has to go. Do you feel up to managing?"

"I'll do my best."

"Of course I'll help, the buying could be my department."

"Do you really think Mrs. Solomons will have to go?"

"I am positive of it." With slow gravity he added: "I am not sure that she can ever come back."

"Gracious," said Lily. "What would happen then?"

"A change of owners. She would have to sell up."

"Oh, I hope not, Mr. Cohen."

"It would make no difference to you, Miss White—anybody taking over would be glad of your services."

"But I would not like to work for anybody. I am fond of Mrs. Solomons, and then . . ."

"Then what?"

She did not answer. Thoughts . . . hopes . . . dreams, were crowding each other in her mind; perhaps Cohen divined some of what was passing there, he said nothing nor did he press for a reply. In her brain a vague ambition had germinated, too remote yet to be uttered; and now she had set him thinking too.

Lily was pleased that Cohen and Mrs. Solomons valued her services, but she had known before he spoke that these were worth much more than sixteen pounds monthly. She had seen the business grow, counting each day more gold and notes in the till; and men, striving to get into her good graces, had not failed to whisper in her ear that she would make the fortune of

any bar in Kimberley; and that if at the end of her contract she wanted to "start on her own," money could be found for the enterprise. Steinsohn was among the whispering serpents to this deadly Eve who, alas, had eaten and digested the apple of knowledge before she arrived in their Eden. She took full advantage of her knowledge, building to her own profit. Lily was sorry for Mrs. Solomons, whom she liked, but if it were inevitable that the bar change hands, she resolved to make a fight for it on her own account.

She knew who would stand in her way. Between her and him there could be no truce; he might overlook the wrong he had done her; she could never forgive him, not even to make use of him. But now he was away and events were shaping themselves to the will of a swift and ruthless Destiny. Cohen, she knew, was on her side . . . there he stood watching her with those kind, emasculate eyes; looking at her across the bar counter as she arranged the bottles. She went to him.

"Mr. Cohen, I did not sign an agreement to come here as manageress, but I want you to know that you can rely on me to take charge and work in the interest of the business as if the bar belonged to me. . . . Don't thank me yet. I am going to ask you to do something for me."

"Tell me what it is?"

"Have I your promise . . . that if I should ask you to do me a service, one that is reasonable, and in your power, you will do it?"

"Anything in my power, Miss Lily. I know you would not ask me to do anything that wasn't right."

"You promise . . . solemnly?"

He bowed his assent. She extended her hand and smiling very slightly, said: "There—let us shake on it, because I shall keep you to your word."

"My," he joked, "you make me nervous"—then, becoming graver—"won't you tell me what it is you want?"

"Good gracious, how can I know!"

But while she fenced with him her brain was working . . . ideas, words, phrases were shaping in her mind, yet she wanted to make no false step, say nothing that

she might regret. Cohen, she felt, would judge her ill if she broached now what was in her mind; she could trust him not to go back on his word, and he was one of those men who gave more when no terms were exacted, when put on their honour.

Julius would be out of the way for a month. Tomorrow Dr. James would give his decision; she could take the first step when this was known.

Cohen was about to go in to see Mrs. Solomons, but at the door recollected something.

“Where is Sheldon’s daughter to be found?”

“She is staying with me.”

“Why, that’s fine. Could I see her this morning?”

“I think so. Nothing likely to upset her?”

“On the contrary, I have some good news for her.”

“May I know it?”

“Well . . . not exactly, Miss Lily. You see it’s rather delicate . . . not quite my own affair. Now you must not be offended. . . .”

“But Cissie looks on me as her mother.”

“Rather a young one,” he observed.

“Don’t try to get out of it like that.” She was determined to know what Cohen wished to tell Cissie, and played back at him with the same light weapon he used; but underlying it all was a deadly seriousness, though he, unaware of the struggle in which she was engaged, saw nothing of it. His secrecy, so utterly unlike him, convinced her that this business was connected with Julius Hermann.

“I cannot understand you,” she said, “Cissie is living with me, and in her present state it is hardly proper to approach her without knowing if the news will be good or bad for the child. However, if you want to see her alone she is in my room.”

Cohen started to express regrets, his position was such that he really felt ashamed, he wished he had never promised Julius this absurd privacy. After all, had he? About a simple act of kindness Julius hedged such ridiculous secrecy, why was he so mysterious?

“Miss White, I will tell you what I want to see Cissie for. . . .”

“Oh, please don’t,” she began.

"I insist, I beg your pardon for not telling you before."

He revealed the details of the offer, suppressing only Julius's name. Lily in her heart knew it. But she wanted proof . . . for her own purposes.

"And who, Mr. Cohen, is the generous man we have to thank for this kind deed?"

"That, Miss Lily, I would rather not tell."

She played another card. "'Tis you, Mr. Cohen, just like you, no wonder they call you 'Uncle Ike.'"

"No, no, it is not I, it is . . ."

She finished the phrase for him . . . "Mr. Julius Hermann."

"Now please tell nobody, Miss Lily."

He explained. The position for her was one of difficulty. On no account could she let Cohen suspect her hatred, even her opinion of Julius. If she did he would certainly hesitate at the proposal she intended to put to him about the Golden Bar. On the other hand, what reason could she give for rejecting the help of a man who had known Cissie's father, and whose position, wealth and influence, qualified him to come forward as the girl's protector? There was one way only out, and that road Lily had paved before Sheldon's death. . . .

The position required long and careful thought.

Shilling came to tell Cohen: "Meeses want see you, baas."

When Isaac had gone inside Lily hurried to her room.

"Cissie," she said, "I want you to go out."

"Miss Lily, I don' want to, I feel so wretched; jus' let me stay here, eh?"

"Oh, Cissie, you can stay with me as long as you like . . . I'm going to be your mother. Do you want me?"

"Oh yes, please, Miss Lily."

"Now listen, child, I want you to go down to Miss Moore—she has a room at the Garnet Hotel—tell her to come on duty as soon as possible."

"All right, Miss Lily; I didn' know you wanted . . ."

"Now hurry, child, 'tis urgent."

When Cohen went to see Cissie later, he found her out, with the result that he asked Lily to convey the

news of Julius's offer. Lily was satisfied—she would convey it in her own way.

That day she expressed public sympathy with the plight of Sheldon's daughter. There were a number of men in the bar, some had good hearts and some wished to please the handsome barmaid; between them they quickly subscribed ten guineas for Cissie. Also at Lily's suggestion, they drew up a proper list, each signing his name for the sum subscribed. This list was soon filled. The men of Kimberley were open-handed, and Cissie was liked by all.

"Damned shame," said Bennington, "the poor little thing is left without a shilling. Put me down for a fiver."

"Thank you."

"Not at all—only too pleased. Make it guineas."

With a bold flourish he signed "Five guineas, H.B."

It soon transpired that Sheldon had muddled his last earthly transaction; he had sold the claims for fifty pounds cash—soon wasted in liquor—and twenty pounds per month for a year, in instalments, payable to him *personally*. It was characteristic of the man that the possibility of death never crossed his mind; he had wished to protect himself against an unpleasant creditor.

Bennington now declared the claims to be a "wash-out"; said Sheldon had misled him, over-stated his findings and so on; here was an opportunity to back out of his engagement, and he did this, keeping the claims and not paying further instalments.

Cissie was left penniless. Lily resolved to extract as much as she could from the men of Kimberley. Money came in freely. Cohen saw the list and was surprised; it seemed that Julius's offer was superfluous. After all, it had been made in the assumption that Cissie would be destitute, but here was enough already subscribed to pay the funeral expenses and give the child a moderate start in life.

"£105 . . . on this list alone—there are two others out," said Lily.

"Well, well . . . I wonder what I should do?"

"May I make a suggestion, Mr. Cohen? Put 'anonymous fifty pounds' on the list."

“ Anonymous? . . . Oh, I see, for Julius? ”

“ You said he didn't want his name to figure; 'anonymous' will hide it.”

He began to write, then said: “ You had better enter it on the list; if I do people will guess.”

She wrote it, and asked: “ Will you pay me now? ”

“ Do you wish it? ”

“ Please.”

“ By the way, Miss Lily, as a matter of form, who will deal with the money you collect? You see, the girl has no parents, relatives, or guardian. . . .”

“ At present I am banking the money.”

“ Oh, well, that's all right.”

He gave her five ten-pound notes.

“ Of course you are charging this to Mr. Hermann? ” said Lily.

“ Why, yes . . . most of it.”

“ Oh, no, Mr. Cohen, unless you assure me that Mr. Hermann is contributing the lot I shall not accept it.”

Cohen laughed. “ Oh, well, rest easy, I'll soak him for the whole fifty. Now take the list . . . I must be down for a few pounds, too. . . . Another anonymous? ”

“ Why not your own name? No? Well, if you want to hide I'll put down 'Father Christmas' . . . how much? ”

“ I can stand ten pounds, I guess.”

“ Ten pounds.” She wrote it down. “ Thank you, Mr. Cohen, you are very good. If you will bend across, I'll kiss you.”

He pretended to laugh, but was not sure of Lily; nobody was, and under the cloak of his banter looked at her with just a little self-consciousness, of bashfulness that a boy feels in his first love-affair.

“ Come on,” she challenged, “ am I so unattractive as all that? ”

He put on a bold and butterfly air, trying to behave as he had seen men with barmaids, but when his face actually approached hers, and she bent forward, touching his cheek with the softness of her lips' edge, he blushed, actually blushed to the roots of his hair.

Lily saw his embarrassment, looked through the veneer

of nonsense behind which he tried to hide his feelings; and suddenly she felt the truth, she knew that Isaac Cohen loved her. No sign revealed her recognition of this. She did not enlighten him; perhaps he was unconscious of it himself, she thought.

When he had gone from the bar a flood of conflicting emotions surged within her; above all she felt regret that the one man whom she had learned to respect should stand in this relation to her. Other men were in love with her, in love as they knew it. Apart from the primitive desire of males like Steinsohn (there were several others), and the silly, half-romantic passion of poor creatures like Brooksey, Lily had learned with satisfaction that a wealthy diamond-broker and the manager of an important mine were her ardent admirers. These passions had their use as well as their inconvenience; but Isaac Cohen . . . could she treat him as she had come to believe all men should be treated? She felt herself strangely compassionate towards this man. Why was it? Surely not because he had refinement, decency and a kind heart? She had met other men with those qualities. For the first time since shaping her resolution Lily found herself hesitating . . . wavering . . . afraid to strike, not even willing to wound. Why was it, she repeatedly asked herself.

In the midst of her self-analysis Dr. James entered the bar. It was well past his time for calling, and he came as though he had entirely forgotten that this was a day of Destiny, and that upon his decision depended the future lives of two women and those associated with them, Mrs. Solomons, Lily, Cissie, Margaret, Shilling, and perhaps many others drawn into their orbit by the complex hazards of Life.

Dr. James did not stay long. He was a busy man, with a large practice, and he announced the fate of Mrs. Solomons without circumlocution.

“She must leave as soon as possible.”

Cohen had come in to hear the decree. “I feared so,” he said. “Where should she go, the Cape?”

“The Cape or Natal, both uncomfortable journeys, I advise the one on which you get the better accommodation.”

Lily came forward. "I must say, Doctor James, that the coach journey to Beaufort West is intolerable. I don't think Mrs. Solomons could stand it."

"Six days and then twenty-four hours in the train . . . well, do the best you can. I recommend Durban for two reasons: first, the coach leaves to-morrow; secondly, there's a very fine medical man there—I know him, Dr. McCall—he specializes in heart troubles."

"I guess we'll leave it to Rachel."

Mrs. Solomons heard the decision cheerfully; she had faith in Lily to take charge of the business, and she did not know the gravity of her condition.

"Well, Ike," she said, "I can't get out of it, you see."

"No, Rachel, there's no putting a doctor off. When he's made up his mind to get rid of us, we've got to go; consider yourself lucky it's no farther; he gives you the option of Cape Town or Durban."

"Let's see, Ike, what's on at Cape Town in winter . . . any racing?"

"Now then, Rachel, there's to be no racing, no spieling, just calm and quiet. Nurse, you'll see to that?"

"Nurse," said Rachel, "which do you recommend—Durban?"

"Well, Mrs. Solomons, I think Cape Town would suit your case better."

"My case! Don't you worry about me, nurse—which would suit *your* case better?"

"I don't understand."

"I mean, where's your young man?"

The nurse stammered that she came from Cape Town, but . . .

"I know," cried the patient, "we'll throw the dice for it. Miss Lily, get the dice box?"

"Rachel, dice are forbidden."

"All right, Ike, a coin then."

They spun a coin, and it said Durban.

Mrs. Solomons was pleased. Lily looked impassive, but was inwardly relieved. Cohen remarked: "If you'd gone to Cape Town you'd have met Julius."

"Then thank God it's Durban," Rachel said with

great heartiness, but then added: "This is on the strict Q.T., nurse."

Cohen went to arrange for accommodation on the coach which was leaving next morning. There were three seats vacant. He reserved them all. By doing so Mrs. Solomons could be made fairly comfortable. He then helped the nurse to prepare for the journey, and drew up such documents as were necessary for the invalid to sign. Mrs. Solomons was excited as a child by the thought of going to the seaside; she looked upon it all as a holiday trip, never doubting its outcome.

But that night she had a violent attack. The nurse administered sal volatile while Shilling ran for Dr. James. Mrs. Solomons experienced the utmost difficulty in breathing, with excruciating pains. The doctor, on arrival, attended her for an hour, and on leaving said to the nurse:

"She has had a severe heart spasm . . . it's a bad case . . . *angina pectoris*. You must be prepared to stay in Durban for some months."

Cohen was sent for; he decided to set aside his own affairs and accompany the invalid. At daybreak he sent Shilling to awaken Lily, but she was already up.

An oil lamp lighted the bar. There Cohen and Lily met to make final arrangements for the conduct of the business.

"Directly we arrive at Durban I shall call in Dr. McCall. If he agrees with James I shall return at once and arrange to sell the business. James says she can't live above sea level."

Cohen gave Lily keys, a cheque in case of need, and a power of attorney to perform the function of proprietress.

"There now, have I overlooked anything, Miss Lily?"

"Only me. You are putting all this into my hands, and you know nothing about me."

"Well, perhaps I'm an old fool who'll return to find you have run away with the cash, but Rachel is a woman, and she says you are all right."

"Well, it's good of you both to have such trust in me."

"My dear Miss Lily, on the contrary, we would be helpless to-day without you."

It was a sad departure from the Golden Bar that morning; even Mrs. Solomons' remark: "I'm rather a big baby for this pram"—she was in a bath-chair—fell flat. There was something too reminiscent of Sheldon's exit, and everybody save the patient knew she would never come back to them with her cheery chaff, big heart and effective vulgarity.

"Now, Shilling," she said, at the door, "you do everything Miss Lily tells you; while I'm away she is Meeses. You boss up and work nicely for her."

"Ya, Meeses."

He went off with a trunk on his shoulder and a bag; Cohen pushed the bath-chair, indifferent to what people thought; inevitably some had already connected his name nastily with Rachel's, and this going with her to Durban would oil the wheeled tongues of gossip.

Mrs. Solomons commended the bar to Lily's care, and told her to add ten pounds to her coming month's salary. "Come on, nursie," she cried playfully to Ike; and waving a gay farewell to the Golden Bar, sailed slowly away.

CHAPTER IX

LILY now found no time for Cissie's affairs. She occupied Mrs. Solomons' double-bedded room, and the younger girl, escaping from her loneliness and for their joint convenience, moved into the back premises of the bar, too; in this way she was able to help Lily at slack times of the day, principally in the morning. There was at first a reluctance on her part to go into the bar and revive memories of her father's death, but Lily's prediction was correct, the elasticity of youth soon prevailed, and in a few days Cissie was running in and out of the place, doing errands, helping to tidy, and washing glasses when Shilling was absent.

A new problem confronted Lily. What would be the effect of this contact with the liquor business and the customers of the Golden Bar? She had told Sheldon that his child ought to be schooled, yet now she revolted from the idea that Julius Hermann might pay to have Cissie educated. She had protested against the men that Sheldon brought her into contact with, and most of them were her customers. She had hated Sheldon's drunkenness, and here Cissie would be schooled to drinkers equal to her father.

Lily met her own argument thus—Julius Hermann's proposal to educate Cissie was indefinite, and in any case could not be entertained because of his vile intentions. Next, it was one thing Cissie's being thrown into contact with loafers like Bennington, when she was ignorant of their natures, and with nobody to watch over her, quite another now. Lily believed also that there were two ways of learning from example, what to copy and what *not* to copy. Cissie would learn contempt for these gallant, seductive men after she had remained a while at the Golden Bar. As for drunkenness . . . she hated men who drank to excess, because in her mind they were the cause of her father's downfall.

At the back of her heart Lily knew these were sophistries. She would have preferred to see Cissie at school, but wanted at all costs to protect her against Julius. She feared to let the girl out of her hands, wanting, above all, to retain influence over her.

After the bar was closed that night Lily sat talking in her room with Cissie. She had not yet divulged Julius Hermann's proposal, and in the excitement of the past two days Cohen had overlooked it. Now the subscription lists were in, and the total made up.

"Cissie, I have a surprise. We have collected some money for you."

"Money for me, why?"

"To give you a little start in life. How much do you think you need?"

"How can I say, Miss Lily. Is it a lot you have got, pounds, eh?"

"Pounds, yes. Guess how many."

"O—O—O—I don' know. Five or six?"

“ More than that. Over ten.”

“ Over ten . . . all for me. 'Leven . . . twelve, thirteen . . . still more. . . . Oh, you're joking, Miss Lily.”

“ No, I'm not. There is nearly three hundred pounds.”

“ Three hundred pounds! Oh, Miss Lily, it's mean to make a fool of me.”

“ Look here, child, here are the lists.”

Cissie gazed in wonder at the lines of figures.

“ I don' know what it means.”

She could barely read print, the elaborate signatures were beyond her. She stopped at each one, and Lily told the name of the giver.

“ I mus' remember them; aren't they kind, eh? What's that there, Miss Lily? ”

“ H.B. five guineas . . . Hector Bennington.”

“ What, him, and I thought he was such a waster.”

“ Up to now he has only signed his name, but some day I hope to get the money.”

“ And that one there? ”

“ That,” Lily said, “ is R.S. five pounds, Rachel Solomons.”

“ You know it's funny, I thought Mrs. Solomons such a nasty woman. She use' to clear me out if I came for daddy. Funny how different people are to what we think, eh? And who's that long name there, Miss Lily? ”

“ Anonymous fifty pounds.”

“ Fifty pounds! O—O—O—all from one man. What's his name? ”

“ He's anonymous.”

“ Anomernus . . . I don' know anyone by that name.”

“ It means a person who does not want his name known.”

“ Ach, but why, Miss Lily, eh? ”

“ One may have reasons for not wanting people to know. Now supposing a man had swindled your father out of his claims, and he felt in his heart that you were penniless because of it, he might want to give some money, and yet not let you know.”

“ Oh, I see. . . .”

“ Or he may just be modest and not . . . ”

“ Miss Lily,” interrupted the girl, “ the man who gave the fifty pounds is Mr. Hermann, eh? ”

“ Why do you ask that, child? ”

“ No, I jus’ thought so.”

“ In any case, I mayn’t tell you. Mr. Cohen forbade me . . . ”

“ Oh, it’s Mr. Cohen? My Jove, they say the Jews are stingy, but I don’ think so, do you? ”

“ There are good and bad of all sorts. . . . Well now, Cissie, ’tis bedtime, come along.”

“ Fancy three hundred pounds for me! What can I do with all that money? ”

“ Would you like to go to school? ”

“ School! A big girl like me to be made a fool of by the other chil’ren because I can’t read and write! Ach, no, I don’ want that.”

“ Well, what do you want? ”

“ Can’t I stay with you, Miss Lily? ”

“ What, here in the bar? ”

“ I don’ see why not.”

“ You’re too young, child.”

“ Too young? You know there are barmaids as young as me in Kimberley. There’s a girl at the Garnet I swear isn’t sixteen, she’s got her hair up, but she’s a youngster nex’ to me.”

“ No, no, Cissie. You say you do not want to go to school . . . but suppose somebody offered to pay for your education, would you still refuse? ”

“ I don’ want to go. Let me stay by you, Miss Lily.”

“ And supposing I let you stay and . . . other people wanted you to go to school, or to them, into service, or anything else, would you stick to me? ”

“ Rather! ”

“ Well, we’ll see. I don’t promise anything, mind.”

“ Oh, but I know you won’t kick me out. I know you won’t! ”

She clapped her hands. It was the first time since her father’s death that she was really merry. In the manifestation of pleasure Lily found some salve for her conscience. Perhaps, she reasoned, the girl would be unhappy at school.

Lily took advantage of her position. She set herself to prepare Cissie's mind against the legalized attacks of men, insidious, wily, or brutal, as the case might be.

The great stumbling-block to her teachings was the impregnable purity, the utter absence of sex instincts usually present in the children of hot countries. To give this girl understanding of what she wanted to know she found a task beyond her powers.

"Why do men want to harm me, Miss Lily? What for, eh? It seems so wrong, I can't understand. . . ."

Again and again the woman tried to explain; she strove, like the inventor of some new force, endeavouring to make comprehensible the thing that is clear to him because of his experiences. Indeed, it recalled her efforts to explain to Shilling the wonders of gas lighting such as they had in England. He could barely understand the paraffin stove they used in the bar for hot toddy on winter nights.

How, then, to this virginal mind, incredibly clean in the midst of the filth in which it had grown, could Lily convey the horror and cruelty of lust, the meaning of carnal desire? Cissie comprehended the wonders of procreation and birth; she knew that animals mated and had young, she knew that marriage or mating of man and woman was necessary for the birth of a child. But the conjunction of two beings or two animals, male and female, meant to her no more than a necessary function devoid of the ugly passions that are buried in the heart of every man, and hidden from the world more or less according to his self-control.

Cissie understood the craving for drink because she could feel the pangs of thirst; she understood gluttony because hunger was a sensation she experienced; love, hate, envy, fear, all these things she comprehended and discussed with Lily; but lust was, to her limpid mind, inexplicable. Instinct told her much; she was repelled by physical familiarity, knew that men embraced girls and kissed them, and would not have permitted freedom on the part of strangers. . . .

Lily began to see more clearly into her own past, and into the past of every woman in her position; into the future of her child and of every female child devoid

of precocity, brought up uncontaminated by vicious children of their own age. After her seduction she had heaped bitter reproaches upon her mother for rearing her in ignorance of necessary truths, but now she asked herself: "Would I have been better able than Cissie to understand?"

It seemed to her that a cruel and implacable Destiny offered up the innocence of woman as a sacrifice to man; that knowledge could only be gained by experience, and that to gain this experience and save her soul a woman was condemned to physical suffering and degradation.

But, she reasoned, in soiling the souls of women men made a rod for their own backs. To retaliate upon them, to make them suffer was the privilege and the function of those who had suffered—the women of experience. No matter what might be the outcome of her efforts to save Cissie, she would at least play her own part to the best of her ability, the ability that men had trained and developed.

Steinsohn came daily to the Golden Bar since the departure of Rachel Solomons' caustic tongue. He had not lost all hopes of Lily. "She's expensive," he said, "that's what it is; she's pretty *slim*, and is looking for a man who'll give her all she needs." He had carefully watched her and, when not carried away by the ebullience of his instincts, was a shrewd judge of women. Steinsohn observed that Lily always invited him to drink champagne, and once he noted she gave him a sovereign short in the change. He watched her, too, with other customers. She was callous and calculating; had a word or a smile for everybody, but distributed these with infinite address; when she talked softly with Noah, the mine manager, the caressing tones of her voice set his slug-like blood on fire, led him to think he stood in her esteem above his fellow-men. Then he would go from the Golden Bar, pressing Lily's hand and receiving from her a discreet look which said: "Do not reveal our intimacy to the world."

Kringe, the diamond-broker, would saunter in soon afterwards and behave in the same way . . . with variations. But Lily never did the obvious thing, her technique was irreproachable, far above that of the

uneducated simple barmaids who winked their eyes, called every customer "dear" or something intimate, and loudly touted for drinks to fling under the counter.

"Yes," thought Steinsohn, "that's what it is, she's expensive." He pondered deeply, curled his moustache and muttered: "Damn the expense!"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Steinsohn?"

"No, no, I wasn't talking, Miss Lily. . . . But, by the way, when are you coming to the theatre with me?"

"Oh, I can never get away now Mrs. Solomons has gone."

"Poor old Rachel. . . . What about when she comes back? Will yer come? Promise?"

"How can I promise, Mr. Steinsohn?"

"I know what it is . . . you're angry with me about Cape Town."

"I'm not, indeed."

"You know I didn't mean to take a liberty; I thought you would stop and have a bit er lunch."

"Don't say any more about it."

"Now look 'ere, Miss Lily, I'd like to be pals with you; let bygones be bygones. Well . . . shake 'ands on it then."

He pushed his fat, scintillating fingers across the counter, and Lily, with a show of cordiality, took them in hers, and sealed the compact. Steinsohn brutally crushed her fine fingers in the joy of reconciliation; she cried out in pain. He excused himself.

"It's this ring of mine, it weighs an ounce, solid gold, and the stone's six carats. Nice colour, eh, that stone? Blue-white, it's a river diamond; cost me a nice day's work."

"Oh," said Lily, "what is a diamond more or less . . . You set such value by trifles."

"Trifles! That ring's worth a nice bit o' money."

"Bah! What do you call money? A man came in the other day and offered me a stone as big as that for a kiss."

"A kiss? What, 'ere in the bar?"

"Yes . . . over the counter."

Steinsohn considered this as the act of an imbecile, but he would be ready to do as much for a kiss,

he declared, if Lily would come to his place and give it!

She flicked him playfully on the cheek with a lace handkerchief. This gave him courage; there was a faint, almost imperceptible odour of roses in the air.

"I would have to be very fond of a man before I went to his rooms," she breathed.

"Oh, come on," he said impulsively, and he drew off the ring.

"I'll make yer a present of it, Miss Lily, and I won't ask you for anything, not like that swine who stipulated for a kiss."

He pulled her hand towards him and slipped the clumsy golden ring over her middle finger. She could easily have worn it on the thumb, and for safety dropped it into her palm, mechanically estimating the weight by a movement of the hand and wrist.

"It's all right, I tell yer," he declared. "Eighteen carat gold, and the stone's worth a hundred Jimmies."

"I'll keep it, a souvenir of our first happy meeting."

"No, you promised to forget *that* bit of silliness."

"I said our first '*happy*' meeting . . . to-day's."

"Oh, that's better. Yer know, Miss Lily, I like yer; I always like a girl to be refined, not like that Rosie Moore—common cow. Now you and me're going to be friends, eh?"

"The worst is you men can't be friends with a woman without ruining her reputation."

"Oh, I say, Miss Lily, come on, have I ruined anyone's reputation?"

"So far as I know, nobody's except your own, Mr. Steinsohn."

"I say, call me Angel, like everybody does."

"Not yet. You see a man is so anxious to have value for his money that he enjoys getting a woman talked about. It reflects such glory on himself."

"Well," laughed Steinsohn, "that's not the sort of value I like for *my* money."

Lily proceeded:

"Now, if I gave my friendship to a man, I should want proof that he had no thought of what he would receive."

"Natcherally, natcherally."

"Otherwise it would be prostitution."

"Person'lly, Miss Lily, I hate prostitutes."

"If I needed help, and a man gave it to me without hesitation, I might grow very fond of him."

"Well, you try me. . . ."

"No, Mr. Steinsohn, I don't believe you are capable of the sort of friendship I mean . . ." She caught sight of Lynch crossing the street. "I may put you to the test one day."

"Try me," he asserted, and then, seeing the detective enter the door, was overcome by an instinctive spasm of fear. Recovering his voice, he loudly called for a brandy-and-soda.

Shilling, too, seemed conscious of Lynch's presence; he made no sign, but Lily felt the boy's mental attitude was different; he was watchful, his ears received every word that fell from the detective, over-studiously he bent to the work.

Steinsohn did not stay longer. Like a hyena beside the body of a dead gazelle, he made way for the King of Beasts.

"What's he been talking about, Miss White?"

"He has two subjects of conversation, women and diamonds."

Lynch smiled. As he did so his little eyes closed in further, and their narrowness gave him a look of cruelty which was seldom seen in his face. Lily read there an inflexible determination to get the better of the I.D.B. Lynch was a man to cultivate. He was looking at her as if to read the secret thoughts of her heart. It was dreadful; she feared to think, lest he divine what passed through her mind. "Could he?" she wondered.

At last he spoke, to her intense relief.

"How long will Mrs. Solomons be away?"

"I don't know. I had a short note yesterday from Mr. Cohen, written on the journey; he said she was no better."

"You must have a lot to do? . . . Got someone to help?"

"Miss Moore."

"Oh, yes, I know. Lives at the Garnet . . . pal of Steinsohn's, eh?"

"Is she?"

"Pal is a way of talking. What does she say about him?"

Lily wondered if Lynch were testing her. She had better tell him, it was of no importance, everybody knew. . . .

"She says he made several thousands over a big parcel of stones about ten days ago."

Lynch's face set harder, yet Lily saw she had told him nothing new. It was merely an expression of malignancy.

"Thank you for telling me, Miss Lily . . . I heard about it . . . anything else? No? He comes in pretty often, eh?"

"Yes."

"Don't discourage him, and let me know anything of interest."

Lily made no reply—she looked into space.

"Is Cissie in, Miss White?"

"At the back somewhere. Would you like to see her?"

She went ahead of him, calling out: "Cissie, Mr. Lynch would like to see you."

Cissie came from within and met Lynch.

He patted her head, his face relaxing into a grim smile.

"So you've taken up your quarters with Miss White?"

"Till Mrs. Solomons comes back," said Lily.

"What will you do afterwards?"

"We don't know yet."

"Oh, Miss Lily, you promised, you know!"

"We will see, Cissie."

"Can't you find a couple of rooms somewhere?" asked Lynch.

He drew Lily aside and whispered:

"Count on me to help if you find it too much."

"Oh, 'tis not that, Mr. Lynch. 'Tis the life; I have so little time to myself, what could she do all day?"

"Well, Cissie," said Lynch, turning to the girl,

“you do look a fine little woman in your new frocks.”

She smiled sadly, like a widow who knew that mourning suited her.

“It’s because it’s dark here p’raps, and my black dress . . . that reminds me, Miss Lily, I mus’ go to the cemetery to-day and put some flowers on daddy’s grave.”

This brought memories. Lynch, noticing tears, said:

“Would you like some flowers, Cissie? Yes? Then come alone and I’ll get you some.”

“Flowers . . . in Kimberley now?” Lily was surprised. It was winter, everything was dry and dusty, the nights were cold, often with frost, where would Lynch find flowers?

“Come with me, Cissie,” he repeated, “I know a girl in a bar who has had a box of violets sent to her.”

Cissie went to put on her hat . . . while she was away Lynch remarked with perceptible irony:

“I hope Shilling doesn’t go away on *vagaash* and leave you in the lurch.”

“Oh, he won’t; he’s hardly been off the place since Mrs. Solomons left.”

“She’d find it hard to replace him if he went.”

“Surely there are plenty of boys to be got, Mr. Lynch?”

“Not boys who would suit Rachel like that nigger.”

Shilling had gone inside. Lily noticed that he had followed Lynch there, apparently to do some work. What was the mysterious, almost sinister, communion between the two? They acted and reacted to each other’s influence; Lynch, she felt, was trying to make her talk of Shilling, and the Kafir, though inscrutable as the African sky, was impelled by the silent inactivity of the detective.

Cissie emerged in a charming bonnet. She really looked bewitching.

“You are a swell. We shall be pointed out in the streets.”

“Miss Lily made me this hat; pretty, eh?”

“It suits you, dear. Run along now. Mr. Lynch, I expect her home by dusk.”

“All right, Miss Lily.”

Away went Cissie, waving back her hand to the bar. Lynch looked proud, his hard features relaxed and his eyes were bright as if with the radiated youth of the girl beside him. Towards dusk they returned. Lynch had gone with her to place the flowers on her father's grave. He had seen her shedding tears for the dead drunkard, and he felt different somehow for the experience, as though his relation to Cissie was a privileged one, as if sharing in her sorrow had established a feeling of intimacy between them.

When the bar was closed and Miss Moore had gone home, escorted by Steinsohn, Lily and Cissie sat chatting. Shilling boiled water for their cocoa and cleaned up for the morning.

"What did you and he talk about all day?"

"Lots of things, Miss Lily. Erbout you and your little sister, and Mrs. Solomons—even Mr. Bennington. Mr. Lynch asked me also about the claims; he wanted to know if the Kafirs ever stole daddy's diamonds, because Bennington is finding plenty now."

"Is he really?"

"He says so, but per'aps it's a lie. That's an old I.D.B. trick, you know. I told Mr. Lynch it didn't make any difference if we watched the Kafirs or not, there was never any diamonds worth talking about on those claims."

Cissie rattled on for some minutes.

"You know, Miss Lily, we saw some lovely flowers. . . ."

"Did you? Where?"

"In the cemetery. Some of the graves are really too beautiful. There are real plants and bushes, too, Mr. Lynch told me the name of one . . . wallflowers. One grave had a little hedge round, with chains, and a lovely angel. Mr. Lynch said he was going to ask you one day to come to Alexandersfontein; he says there is a whole row of trees and water, with grass. You know, Miss Lily, I remember when I was a little girl we had a big tree near us at the River Diggings."

Lily had tears in her eyes. She felt sad and ridiculous. Why weep at the happiness of a child? Her tears had come at the thought of Cissie's wretched youth, her

starved childhood and ugly surroundings. But the girl seemed happy amidst it all. "What is happiness?" Lily repeatedly asked herself in the silence of that night, while the girl slept the sound sleep of innocence. "Why am I not happy?"

She concluded that much of her unhappiness was due to the absence of comforts she had enjoyed in her youth; and the conviction grew that probably Cissie in later life would suffer if she were now sent away and educated to luxuries. Lily was learning from her pupil. She realized that Cissie's happiness was within the child herself, that it was always within oneself more than in one's surroundings. Of her own happiness the keystone was security; the secure knowledge that she and Margaret would not be flung upon a self-absorbed world. Lily had suffered too much for any more misery; she was now imbued with the desire to provide at all costs for her child and for the years of her own life that remained. She had the unquenchable conviction, once their future was provided for, that peace, happiness and serenity would return to her.

CHAPTER X

NEXT morning a letter arrived from Cohen to say that on arrival at Harrismith, Mrs. Solomons had had a mild attack. He considered it improbable that she would return, "but I advise you to say nothing of this, and not to look on the future as uncertain."

What did he mean? Had he some suggestion for going on with the business as they were now doing? It would not be difficult. Mrs. Solomons was with him, he must have sounded her on the subject. That would give Lily time to look around for money. She loathed the idea of going to Steinsohn; in any case it was improbable that he would put money into her hands

without being in a position to reclaim it should her gratitude fall below his expectations. Miss Moore had said: "Steinsohn will fall to us every time," and doubtless women were his weakness. But sooner than sink to his level, Lily preferred to become the third wife of a Cape Malay, and wash clothes for her bread.

Her position was not critical. She was saving nine pounds monthly of her salary; there was the commission earned during a half year's good business; men gave her presents—she had jewellery to the value of a hundred and fifty pounds, and now, instead of having to disburse a few sovereigns monthly, for Cissie's keep, the girl was endowed with money enough to live for some time.

Cohen's letter allayed anxiety in regard to the Golden Bar, but did not diminish her ambitions; it had the opposite effect. Lily saw a prospect of amassing sufficient to keep her and Margaret for life. This could be achieved while the child was being educated; the two operations would synchronize. At the end of, say, six years, Margaret would be sixteen, needing the protection of her mother, who would retire from this sordid life and live with her daughter in some place where they were unknown.

In a vague way Cohen's letter disquieted her. It dissipated the dreams, the hopes that she had woven about herself; it seemed to say: "The road to peace and security will be longer than you imagined." She calculated on paper the length of time necessary, at the present rate, to save enough; even supposing her success continued, and she could go on holding men off, with one hand in their pockets, six years would produce only a couple of thousand pounds. A good school would cost twice as much as Mrs. February charged. If she could put away £250 yearly by her labours as a barmaid it would be as much as she could expect.

That left £1,500; how could she and Margaret live on the interest of it? She would either have to continue working, each day more faded, less attractive, at the very time her child needed protection, or invest in business, with all its risks and losses. Thus the struggle would go on until she was worn out, and then Margaret would have to take it up.

Lily fell at length into a troubled sleep that was broken by dreams. Before her passed in review an endless succession of men, always men—Cohen, Lynch, Sheldon, Bennington, Steinsohn, Kringe, Noah, Julius Hermann, and finally Shilling, the Kafir. Him she saw standing before her holding out a handful of diamonds. Mrs. Solomons was present, but Lily could not see her—she was obscured. Lynch appeared, suddenly and without reason, behind the Kafir. In a mirror Lily saw him, his face was demoniacal; she tried to scream, to warn the boy, but could not utter a sound; it seemed that some great force was holding her back, reducing her to impotence. . . .

With a start she awoke. . . . Shilling was knocking at the door and calling: "Meeses, Meeses, time to get up, Meeses."

She drew softly away from Cissie, who in her sleep had rolled towards her and lain with one arm pressed into the left shoulder. With unutterable relief Lily arose and dressed, watching the serenity in the face of the sleeping girl.

But if her awakening was an alleviation, the effect of the dream was not. What thoughts, she asked herself, had been in her mind when retiring to bed last night? She went back over her speculations of yesterday, but found no trace of the unconscious perceptions buried in her heart.

And now, for the first time, Lily found herself in open communion with herself upon a subject that hitherto she had avoided debating *by* herself, weighing the pros and cons, the whys and wherefores, the profits and losses of I.D.B. Her main doubts centred about the risks of being caught and punished. The sentences for I.D.B. were truly terrible.

Yet Lynch cursed the insufficiency of the law. He said that in its present state it was impossible, without the treachery of some person enjoying absolute confidence, to lay by the heels any but a very unintelligent I.D.B. His coming to her for information was in itself a pitiable confession of weakness. Lynch knew that Steinsohn had recently made thousands out of a parcel of stones, and yet, longing to arrest and charge him, he could not.

And Lily saw around her men who were living by I.D.B., despicable specimens enough; existing without work; gambling, drinking, lusting; the Steinsohns and Benningtons, scum of the East End and froth of the West. Courage was needed for most crimes, but had the average I.D.B. even that saving grace? "Yes," she said, "I have more pluck than they."

She had, too, something which none of them possessed—a motive sufficient to steel her to anything. If a dissipated man could succeed at I.D.B. in order to avoid work, surely she, with her fixed aim, steady as a star, could succeed too?

She decided that she could.

But they had knowledge, these men, they always had. They knew how to trick and turn and circumvent. She must learn from them the secret of "the trade," as they styled it with hypocritical rectitude. How to buy, and where to sell. There were "traps" all over Kimberley, white and black men in league with the police. Anybody suspected of I.D.B. they approached with diamonds, offering gems for sale and denouncing the buyers to the law.

How could she acquire the knowledge? The new law would be far severer than the present one; it might become impossible to continue I.D.B. It was necessary, then, to begin soon.

That morning she opened the bar feeling imbued with great nervous energy, anxious to get on, to find an outlet for her vital force. She was strangely pleased to see Noah, that commonplace man who usually irritated her by the calf-like longing in his unromantic eyes. For Noah was a mine manager; he could teach her things that she wanted to learn. He ordered a rum and milk; Lily was unusually sweet and attentive. She prepared his drink with great care, powdering into it a little brown sugar for which he had a liking. Then she bent over a sheet of paper at the far end of the bar and began to write.

"What are you doing, Miss Lily, writing letters to your sweetheart?"

"Don't tease, Jimmy! You may help me if you like."

"By Jove, I will," he declared with pleasure.

"I am writing to my Uncle Frank, and I want to tell him of the life here, the mines, the diamonds, and especially I.D.B.—he's very interested in that."

"Well, how can I help you, dear?"

He breathed softly against her cheek, a warm odour of rum and milk that made her shudder inwardly.

"Now you know all about the diamond business, Jimmy"—he was very pleased, feeling most important—"tell me about I.D.B."

"Well," said he, scratching his nose for inspiration, "if a man buys diamonds without a licence . . ."

"Stop! Start at the beginning. First, who steal the diamonds?"

"Mostly Kafirs who handle the 'blue' ground—that's the diamondiferous soil, you know. They spot stones on the 'floors.' That's what we call those open spaces fenced in with barbed wire. The soil is put out for the sun and air to pulverize it; afterwards it is washed, then the diamonds are sorted from the garnets and other useless stones."

"Yes, but the stealing, how . . . ?"

"Anybody working in the mines has opportunities to steal. The niggers have sharp eyes; they snatch up stones and hide them in their hair, their toes, their ears, their noses, every imaginable place. Or they 'plant' them near a fence or building, anywhere convenient to fetch when nobody is about."

"What do they do with them?"

"Pass them on to their 'brothers' outside. A 'brother' means a nigger from the same kraal. Yes, and they are very staunch to one another. Well, they get the stones out somehow and dispose of them."

"What becomes of them then?"

"The niggers? . . . Oh, the diamonds. The civilized 'brother,' generally a Christian, passes them on, at a profit, to No. 3 . . . the lowest class white I.D.B."

"Good gracious, how many more are there?"

"Generally two," he smiled, proud of his knowledge. "No. 4, a licensed buyer who sits safe in his little office, trading without risk, and finally No. 5, the English diamond merchant in London, who receives the stolen

property by registered post, fully protected by Government officials."

Noah sipped his rum and milk.

"I had no idea it was so complicated, Jimmy. Surely 'tis very risky? I wonder men go in for it."

"Not men alone, women too!"

"Women too? Really! Now who would have thought it . . . women here in Kimberley?"

"Plenty of 'em. One I could name has done it for years, not a hundred yards from where we stand."

"Oh, tell me her name, do."

"Oh, no—no, perhaps some day I shall."

"But suppose a 'trap' goes to her—Lynch told me about 'traps,' you know—she'd be sent to the Breakwater."

"*She* . . . oh, she's too fly. . . . She never buys a stone herself . . . her boy does that."

"Her Kafir boy?"

Lily felt a violent emotion, the sudden comprehension of a secret long withheld; she trembled, it was all she could do to prevent herself from letting Noah see her agitation. Good God, how unutterably blind and obtuse she had been. This stupid banal man had interpreted her dream . . . yes, it was that, it must be that.

"Now have you got all you want to know?" he said.

She concentrated again upon him.

"Jimmy, tell me, what does the Kafir you spoke of do with the diamonds?"

"What? Gives them to his Meeses, and she sells to a white man."

"Oh, it sounds like a story by Charles Dickens. A white man . . . a man you know?"

He nodded, smiling inanely at the thought of his power.

"A man I have seen? A man I know . . . really? Oh, tell me who?"

He shook his head wisely.

"Oh, do. If you don't I won't serve you for a fortnight."

"I can't prove it," he said weakly.

"Never mind, 'tis only for me, I want to tell my uncle I've seen a real I.D.B."

"On the strict Q.T.? One hasn't the right . . ." He bent forward and whispered, "Kringe."

"Good heavens," she exclaimed. "Truly? . . . Well I never!"

He was much pleased for two reasons; first that Lily should be so impressed by his knowledge, secondly that he had destroyed the prestige of his rival. He took a second rum and milk, then left the bar with something of a spring about his heavy tread. Noah had a good position, but Lily could not imagine life beside him; that stolid, dull mind, symbolized in the moustache he wore—it resembled the buffalo horns that hung over the frame of the door.

She resolved to make no further move until the return of Cohen.

Kringe came in as usual. She observed him closely, without his knowing it; nothing either confirmed or denied Noah's statement. Kringe asked after Mrs. Solomons, whether Lily had heard from Cohen; no, she told him, she expected no further news until they reached Durban.

Lily kept a watch on Shilling, too, but could learn nothing definite. She had reasons to believe the boy met others at the back of the premises, in a yard surrounded by galvanized iron, but she saw nothing. It was Cissie that noticed Shilling there on occasions; this fact Lily elicited by chance. In any case it was unlikely that the boy would risk doing anything there. Lynch, like the man he was after, came in oftener now. He chose the early mornings, which allowed freedom of speech and action without exciting suspicion among the I.D.B.'s. Lynch knew that if it became known that he was a friend of Lily's she would never get the opportunity to put information in his way.

"How is the new law going?" she asked, one morning, about two and a half weeks after the departure of Julius.

Lynch looked at her sourly.

"Are you trying to get at me?"

"Get at you? Why, what do you mean?"

"I thought perhaps you had heard."

"Heard what?"

"I don't think the Diamond Trade Act will be amended this session."

"What does that mean?" She asked this eagerly, hanging on his reply.

"Means it may not be passed for years."

"Really . . . why?"

"Why," he growled. "Probably some Members of Parliament are getting a share of the pickings. There's lots of them with a finger in the pie."

"I thought those stories were exaggerations?"

"Bah!"

"Is it quite certain the law won't be altered this session, Mr. Lynch?" Her voice carried a note of pacification, which concealed its anxiety.

"Not quite certain. But when Parliament starts putting things off, you never know when they'll find time to attend to them again. This session they'll postpone the Bill to next, when that comes along, there'll be a change of Ministry, and the new crowd won't be interested in I.D.B., or . . . oh, a hundred things may happen."

"When does Mr. Hermann return?"

"Don't know. I believe he telegraphed to some of the big pots, and his news isn't good."

"You mean about the new law?"

Lynch looked at her without replying, his eyes seemed to be asking a question, as of something suddenly observed; or he realized he had talked over freely. He knew that Lily was not a gossip, like the average barmaid, yet between his visits to licensed houses in search of information, and himself giving information, was a wide official difference. Lynch disliked being "pumped," he felt vaguely that Lily had been practising the operation on him. He finished his drink at a gulp, and brusquely left the bar.

CHAPTER XI

COHEN returned a few days later, tired out by the journey. He called immediately at the Golden Bar, giving brief news before going to sleep off an intense weariness of mind and body.

“Poor Rachel, I am sorry to say, is in a pretty bad way. The chances of her being cured are about two in a hundred.”

Lily felt almost indecent in doing so, but could not help asking:

“What have you and she decided about the business?”

“She left me to arrange as I think best.”

“What do you think best?”

There was conscious anxiety in her voice, for Cohen took her hand paternally, and, overlaying it with square, practical fingers, patted her reassuringly.

“Don’t you worry, Miss Lily.”

“All right,” she breathed softly, “I won’t worry . . . Uncle Ike.”

He smiled with tired, happy eyes, and went away to sleep. Next day he called so early that to his surprise Lily was not in. Shilling was washing out the premises which at that hour exhaled a sickly smell of stale beer and spirits.

“Mees Leely gone out; she say she come back half-past nine.”

“Probably gone marketing,” said Cohen; he knew there were small daily purchases for the bar. But it surprised him that Cissie had not gone too; he heard her singing in unconscious imitation of Lily.

“Shilling, tell piccanin’ Meeses I would like to see her.”

Cissie came running out happily; it was all so different from when he left, surrounded then by tragedy and suffering.

“Hullo, good morning, Mr. Cohen . . . wan’ to see

Miss Lily? She's gone out, back jus' now. You will wait, eh?"

"Sure. . . . Well, Cissie, you do look fine! But why don't you go out with Miss Lily in the morning and get the fresh air?"

"Oh, sometimes I stop and tidy the room. Besides, this morning she didn' call me; per'aps it was cold, eh? She says I need lots of sleep . . . I go to bed late."

"That's a pity. What makes you late?"

"Ach, you know, Mr. Cohen, I can' go to sleep until Miss Lily comes from the bar. I jus' feel I want to stay up and talk to her or do something."

Cohen realized it must be hard for Cissie to sleep, separated only by a thin partition from the life on the other side, where corks popped, dice rattled, and men's deep laughter and song gave breadth to the barmaids' voices.

"Would you like to go to school, Cissie?"

"School! Ach, no, Mr. Cohen; I won' go to school. Thank you all the same, eh? It's really kind of you, and I thank you very much, but if you send me there I'll run away."

Cohen looked at her, half in sadness, half in amusement. He disliked the life she was leading, or rather the life he feared she was slipping into.

But at that moment Lily came in from the street, pinked by the freshness of that chilly morning. She carried a muff, and had a collar of the same fur about her neck. The frock she wore sat elegantly upon her; she looked most handsome. Cohen regarded her with frank admiration. She was an unusual woman, especially for a mining town. He had not seen anyone else so striking in South Africa.

"I expected you early," she said, and the cultivated tones of her voice, the purity of her vowel sounds particularly, were a vivid contrast to the flow of Cissie's Dutch-Colonial phrasing. "Yes," continued Lily, "I knew you would come early; that's why I hurried out alone."

He took her hand to greet her "good morning," and she returned his pressure with strength that was accentuated by her well-fitting leather gloves.

“ Have you been marketing? ”

She hesitated a moment, then replied: “ Partly.”

She volunteered no more information; it was as if a lie were necessary, and she did not feel like telling one. There was something so fresh and clean about the morning, even in the bar, it made her revolt from deceit; she felt a sense of shame, as though anything sordid would be a desecration. Lily, in spite of everything, retained her code of honour. She calmly faced her position as a prospective I.D.B., and in the ordinary way would not hesitate to tell a necessary lie. Yet at this moment she would not, and could not tell Cohen one; she had tried hard to be there before he arrived, so that he might not wonder at her absence.

Lily had been to keep an appointment with Mr. Andrew Jack, a lawyer who frequently visited the bar. She had considered it prudent to take advice, having no legal knowledge, and wishing to be sure of her position if Cohen that day asked her to go on managing.

Andrew Jack was a North Country Hebrew who thoroughly disliked being taken for what he was, which was why he had adopted this aggressively Gentile name. He came from somewhere near Manchester, “ Cheatem 'Ill,” said Steinsohn, and people who had once done business with the lawyer declared the nomenclature apt. Mr. Jack was a soft-tongued fellow, mild as a rabbit in appearance, with a nervous twitch of the lips like bunny eating grass; and this veil of utter and irreclaimable timidity so hung over him, that his admirers agreed he was “ 'opeless in court.” Indeed, he so played the humble Uriah, that actually he *was* hopeless before a bench. He simply did not know how to be rude or even truthful before getting something out of the person he addressed. Afterwards his manner changed, he rendered the bill of costs, so to speak.

But if Mr. Jack's coating of timidity, and the nerves behind those trembling lips disqualified him for the frankness and brutality of open war, it made him “ perfickly bleedin' marv'llous in consultation,” as Steinsohn readily and ruddily put it. Oh, yes, his advice was sound enough, when he gave it on a matter from which he was detached, for Mr. Jack, despite his

denial of faith, had a Manchester Hebrew's love of money, and, in order to acquire this more freely than the ethics of his profession allowed, he made a side-line of doubtful company promoting. One had, therefore, to be quite sure that he was not interested in the question he advised upon, for no professional reticence would check him from pocketing a client's guineas in the circumstances.

After Isaac Cohen had left on the previous evening, Jack entered the bar. Lily was deep in thought upon the problem of to-morrow; the sight of the unctuous attorney gave an idea. Jack loved pretty women—when they were not too expensive. With liquid, fawning steps, he reached the counter. His walk harmonized perfectly with every detail of his character; one saw no strides when he displaced himself, he flowed like water. He was oily and shiny from head to toe, cleanly oily, for he loved cleanliness of the body—it was so inexpensive; at his hotel soap and baths were included in the monthly tariff.

Even the peaked top of his bald head shone aggressively, like a clean bladder containing lard.

Nobody ever saw a speck on Mr. Jack, he looked after his clothes much too carefully. He was decidedly a well-groomed man; and if tailoring in Kimberley were not so expensive, would have been called dapper. Lily disliked him; he was so mean, but Jack possessed a certain refinement. He approached her with an assumption of respect, as though she were a lady, through which, however, she saw the Satyr in his heavy-lidded, chameleon eyes, in the agitation of his lips, and particularly in the crooning voice so out of keeping with the strong, honest "A" of Lancashire accompanying it.

She fetched him a soda-water plain, which he always drank; for health reasons, he said.

"How's business—money rolling in?"

"Pretty good, thank you. . . . By the way, Mr. Jack, what time do you go to office in the morning?"

"I'm always there by ten."

"Oh . . . ten . . . 'tis rather late, I fear."

"What is it you want, Miss Lily?"

"I would like your advice about something. Could I see you at—say, half-past eight?"

He was immediately on the alert.

"At half-past eight, Miss Lily, I am usually at breakfast, but I can start earlier, and be at your service at half-past eight. Would my hotel do—in the sitting room?"

"I fear not—you see, 'tis rather an important matter, otherwise I would speak to you now. We must be private."

She looked cautiously across the bar where a couple of men were drinking. He saw she was not to be rushed, so did not suggest his private room, though nothing would have pleased him better than such inexpensive intimacy.

"Well, can you give me till quarter to nine; I will meet you at my office." He was anxious to serve her, but breakfast was not served until eight, and he made a rule of going through the bill of fare.

"Very well, I shall be there at quarter to nine, sharp."

Jack was at the office when she arrived; on learning her business he was very interested, for he saw money possibilities that would be absent from the ideal case.

He had been in hopes of something else; divorce, paternity, breach of promise, anything that would enable him to get to emotional grips with his client. But his romantic disappointments could be solaced with money, that, he reflected, was the great joy of his dual nature. Lily would inevitably need more advice, become, in fact, a regular and profitable client. He resisted a violent temptation to be gallant, contenting himself with just the proper amount of appreciation. To pay the tribute men owed to beauty was not merely correct, in his case, it was business. Jack believed in creating within every female client's breast the belief that her attorney was also her slave. It inspired such confidence!

"And what do I owe you, Mr. Jack, for all your kind advice?" asked Lily, at the end of their interview.

He deprecated the suggestion, pushed it vaguely an l

gently aside with a soft movement of the hand that revealed home-manicured nails. His mouth vibrated sensitively; he murmured as if actually hurt:

“ Oh . . . we'll talk about that some other time.”

Lily gathered that Mr. Jack regarded the consultation as too unimportant to be worth any charge.

She hurried to the Golden Bar, thinking that “ little Jack ” was not such a bad sort. He had seemed anxious to safeguard her interests, though she considered he went too far in his mistrust of Mrs. Solomons and Cohen.

She now asked Ike into the small room at the back of the bar. Cissie took tea and fruit there, and went away, leaving them.

Cohen gave her an account of the journey to Durban, half-pathetic, half-humorous. When he had finished he said: “ Well now, let's talk business. I'm going to put all my cards on the table, Miss Lily. The receipts keep mounting, I notice. At the end of your agreement there will be keen competition for your services.”

Jack had told her the same thing.

“ Rachel still hopes to come back.” He shook his head. “ One cannot be cruel enough to shatter her illusion quite. She says: ‘ Ask Miss Lily if she'll go on as manageress at £25 per month, with a percentage of the profits after the end of her agreement.’ Will you, Miss Lily? ”

“ Yes,” she answered slowly, as if thinking.

“ There is something else, isn't there? Fire ahead. This is where we talk business.”

“ If I stay on those terms, what will happen if Mrs. Solomons dies . . . or decides to sell? ”

Cohen's fingers thrummed the table.

“ If she dies, God forbid, I have power to sell up for the benefit of her son, though we might carry it on as now proposed. But if she decided in her lifetime to sell . . . well, I should have to sell.”

“ That's what I fear. I want to be protected against it.”

“ A longer contract? ”

“ That is one way . . . but it would limit compensation.”

Cohen looked at her surprised. She had not hitherto revealed this side of herself.

“What,” he asked, “do you suggest?”

She nerved herself for the effort, brought all her will to bear upon him, and said:

“I want the first opportunity of buying the bar.”

“Buying the bar? Do you know its market value?”

“About £5,000 for the goodwill and building.”

“There is a mortgage on it of £3,000.”

“I know. It is held by Mr. Hermann.”

“I am not saying this to discourage you, Miss Lily, but have you any idea where you could find the cash required, apart from working capital?”

“At the moment, no. But I ask you to give me this opportunity, first refusal—what do you call it?”

“Option.”

“Option—that’s the word. Give me this option. It need not be a long one, and I should feel I was working, in a sense, for my . . . self.”

“Yes,” he reflected. “I understand it is not unreasonable.” But Cohen seemed to lack enthusiasm, as if secretly hurt by her want of confidence or reliance on him. . . . Obviously she had had legal advice. Why was she acting thus? His mind wandered.

Her voice recalled him to the subject. She was saying, “. . . not think me ungrateful or suspicious; I trust you more than I have trusted anybody since I . . . than I have trusted anybody for years. Some day I hope, if we continue to be friends, to tell you my reasons for wanting this . . . option. I hate you to feel there is mistrust . . . if you understood my motives I know you would sympathize with me.”

He looked into the depth of her eyes, and she met his look with candour and strength.

“I hope you believe me?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Then what is your reply?”

“I will consider it.”

“Do you see any reasons for *not* doing as I ask?”

“Not moral reasons, business ones, perhaps. Such an option might hinder an advantageous sale—I must think it over. Have I the right to do this?”

"If you decide there is nothing unfavourable to Mrs. Solomons' interests in granting me an option, will you do it for me?"

"I would like to, Miss Lily, but it requires consideration. You forget there is a bond-holder to consider, too."

"You have his power of attorney?"

"He and I have not discussed a sale. He may not like it."

"Am I likely to displease him as a purchaser?"

"On the contrary . . . I'm rather afraid . . ."

A twinkle showed in his eyes, but then his face clouded.

"After all," said Lily, "if he wished, he could call up the bond."

"Not as quickly as he might like if you displeased him. It requires six months' notice."

She well knew this.

"Others could be found to lend £3,000?"

"At present, yes. But don't forget, Miss Lily, the bar trade is an up and down one—in a year, with bad luck, this place might not be worth £1,000. Otherwise how could you buy it for £5,000 when the profits are that yearly?"

"At any rate," she answered softly, "it is only an option . . . if I could not raise the money it would fall through, and neither Mr. Hermann nor Mrs. Solomons would lose a penny."

"That is so," he said. Then looking straight at her with pathetic frankness: "Tell me, Miss Lily . . . is there anyone you have in view for this venture . . . ?"

She paused slightly, and he leaned towards her.

"No . . . there is nobody."

His face lighted with relief, and Lily suddenly realized how easy her victory had been; she even felt shame, mingled with the sense of triumph, a feeling of having done a mean action. Perhaps because she never felt from Cohen that instinctive maleness against which she could always pit the full strength of her worst nature.

"I am glad to hear it," said Cohen. "You see, I know a good deal about the rotten side of life, though I

am always trying to smell violets through the onions." He was grave and serious as he talked, but he could not avoid those half-humorous images. "There are few men who back women in bars without expecting . . . gratitude. On the Diamond Fields there are some decent fellows, but we have our share of the other kind."

"Yes, I know."

"If you relied on men who whisper across the counter . . . !" He did not complete the sentence, but turned it. "All right, I'll just formally ask Julius for his consent; if he agrees you can call it done."

"Mr. Cohen," she interrupted, "when you were going away I asked you to promise me a service."

"I have not forgotten."

"That service I am now asking you—whatever decision you come to I want you to take without consulting Mr. Hermann."

"But why, Miss Lily, there's no reason. . . ?"

"Call it a whim if you like."

"But in fairness I should inform him. . . ."

"What then is the use of a power of attorney?"

"Of course if I wish I can act without him."

"Then please do. Consider that I do not wish Mr. Hermann to imagine I am under an obligation to him."

"But you would be . . . legally. . . . Why this objection? I assure you he's not all people make him out."

"Do not let us enter into that, Mr. Cohen." Then, becoming warmer in her tone, more personal, less abstract, she continued: "Why place me under an obligation to him? . . . You told me the dangers of being backed by men; do you regard them as non-existent in his case? Is our friendship so much less than yours and his? Do you feel greater affinity with him than me?"

"No—frankly, far less."

"Then you owe me a moral duty greater than you do him."

"I am proud to be in the position you place me, Miss Lily. But I can't see any reason for *not* telling Julius. How could it hurt you?"

Slowly she said, as if thinking over every syllable, "He . . . might . . . refuse."

"Why? What has it to do with him whom Rachel transfers the bar to? No, he would never refuse."

"You feel sure of that?"

"I do."

"Then," she said decisively, "there is no reason whatever for consulting him."

He could not help smiling at the adroit way she had countered his arguments. Lily saw her advantage, and pressed it home.

"On your own admission, you can do as I ask, and if you will not, I shall regard you as . . ."

"What?" he asked, challengingly.

"As not being my friend."

"Not your friend!" he exclaimed, ironically.

"Well, then, as being no uncle of mine."

She had in a flash determined to remove the note of gravity that over-weighted them; instinct told her that in a nature like his, smiles and tears were nearly the same thing, they flowed one into the other, when too closely pressed by the pathos or sadness of life he found an outlet in laughter.

"Well, Miss Lily, I must go now. You know I have given up a lot to Rachel's affairs, it's time my own had a look in."

As he rose, Lily said: "Then I may count on you?"

"Well, I am not absolutely against you. Leave me a day to think over it . . . it is feasible, that's all I will say."

Lily knew that victory was hers, and her heart glowed at the thought. She gave Cohen her hand, on which was now no glove, and the warm pressure sent a feeling of happiness through his veins.

"Don't say anything about this, will you . . . Ike?"

"You have not yet got the option, Miss Lily."

"Oh, I think I have."

"Anyhow," he retorted, "if you want one option, I want another."

For a moment, just a moment, her heart sank; she doubted—was he like the rest of them?

"Go on," she said, dreading the next word.

“If you obtain the option, I want to have the first right to go in with you. I mean this; before you take any partner, man or woman, you must tell me how much you need, and give me a chance to find it for you.”

She experienced such a feeling of relief and happiness, that she could only stammer disconnected words, which he cut short.

“I wish I had enough money to take over the bond of £3,000, but for a year or two I shall not have that much. Well now, so long, and good luck.” He went out in a hurry, and when afterwards Cissie ran into the room, she found Lily White, head bowed upon the table, softly crying.

Cohen did not come in next morning. He was busy, work at the office had accumulated during his absence. But he sent a note:

“DEAR MISS WHITE,—I have considered your proposal of yesterday, and agree to it on behalf of Mrs. Solomons and Mr. Julius Hermann. If you will instruct your lawyer to draw up a document embodying our understanding, I will sign the same.

“Wishing you the best of luck in your venture, I am, yours sincerely,

“ISAAC COHEN.”

She folded up the precious paper and put it into her corsage. It was already close on ten o'clock. Lily determined to see Jack at once. She dreaded the apparition of Julius Hermann, for the next day the coach was due from Cape Town.

“Cissie, I'm going to let you keep an eye on the bar for half an hour.”

“All right, Miss Lily.”

“In case of need, Shilling will show you anything—there is little business at this hour.”

“Right, Miss Lily. Don't I look a fine barmaid, eh?”

“Don't talk like that, child, you're too young for a barmaid.”

Cissie began fluently protesting, but Lily hastened to Jack's office. There was a client before her, but the lawyer, when he heard her voice, hurried the man away.

Jack was pleased when Lily showed him Cohen's letter; he ascribed the result to his clever advice.

"Cohen knew they could not afford to lose you."

Lily explained the urgency, and the attorney promised at once to draw up a fresh agreement containing the option of purchase.

In a spirit of fun and bravado Cissie meanwhile put up her hair and stood awaiting a customer. She was eager to show what she could do behind the counter, a hitherto forbidden spot.

Lynch providentially entered, and Cissie was so pleased that the warmth of her welcome astonished him.

"Hello, Mr. Lynch, good morning—have a whisky and soda?"

"What, you, Cissie? Where is Miss White?"

"Gone out, you know. She asked me to look after the bar. What you think of me, eh?"

"Who put your hair up?"

"Me, of course. Does it soot?"

"Suits you well. Are you wearing it that way, now?"

"Rather! Well, what will you have, dearie?"

She said "dearie" with a professional wink, after the style of Miss Moore; Lynch could not help smiling.

"All right, get me a whisky and soda."

She fumbled about, Lynch looking at her with admiration. But then Lily entered. When she saw Cissie's hair she cried out: "You little imp, what have you been up to. Go and let it down at once."

Cissie bolted into the back room, laughing.

"Does she not look different?" said Lynch. He had been unable to take his eyes off her.

"At first I hardly knew her," Lily agreed. "She has a remarkably well-shaped head, and her ears are so finely set."

"Jove, she is a pretty girl."

"Did you not realize it before?"

"I do not think I did, Miss Lily. You see, I have always looked on her as a wild little devil, a harum-scarum sort of girl, good-hearted and merry, but not as very pretty."

"She is, though, Mr. Lynch."

“What on earth is going to become of her?”

“It is a problem,” Lily answered. “You never realize until too late that even the most useless parent is a loss.”

“Isn’t Cissie going to remain with you?”

“Will it be fair to her?”

“Well,” said Lynch slowly, “before this morning I thought she could go into some sort of a job; I might have offered to do something for her myself. But now. . . .”

“Of course. She must be with a woman . . . and where are the women in whose hands I can place her? What can she do in Kimberley?”

“It is quite certain,” the detective continued thoughtfully, “she must stay with you or leave the Fields.”

Lynch was right, Lily reflected, she could not fling that pretty girl from the limited vice of the Golden Bar into the immeasurable evil of the world. Why should she hesitate? Why fear what people might say or what her own conscience might whisper—that she did not compel Cissie to leave her, force her away, to school, anywhere, out of this sordid life, because she needed her?

Jack brought the documents in person during the tiffin hour; immediately afterwards Lily left Miss Moore in the bar and retired to the back room. She read through the papers; mistrust showed through every line, she felt the need of much moral courage to present these documents to Isaac Cohen. But this was no time for delay, she could not risk anything; Shilling took a note to Ike’s office asking him to call that evening.

When he entered the Golden Bar, Lily tried by degrees to broach the subject; it was so difficult. But he made it easy for her.

“Well now, what about the agreement? Have you instructed your lawyer?”

“Yes. When would you like to sign it?”

“Whenever you like.”

“Well, it’s ready.”

“What, already? Who is your lawyer?”

“ Mr. Jack.”

“ Andrew Jack. He doesn't lose much time.”

“ Is he a good man? ”

“ Good lawyer, not good man. May I see what he's framed up? ” He read carefully through the paper, and to Lily's surprise found it quite in order, passing over the stern “ whosoever ” and “ wherefore ” without flinching.

“ Can you get two witnesses to our signatures? ”

She found Brooksey among the customers; as a man of the world he signed without inquisitiveness; Miss Moore was the second witness. When she had attested, Lily asked her to fetch a bottle of champagne, which they drank to the health of Mrs. Solomons.

CHAPTER XII

THAT night, with mind at peace after the long strain, Lily slept like a child tired from play. She looked forward to a letter from Margaret next day; in the excitement of the past weeks the interval between each mail had been unfelt, but now that she had won the first battle for her child, Lily felt the need of contact with the little one. But no letter came that mail, it was the first time a week had passed without one. Lily's victory was overshadowed by the haunting dread that Margaret was ill or maimed, perhaps dead. Why could she never find rest; what was this eternal decimation of every joy?

She asked a customer, Mr. Harvey, a clerk in the post office, to send a telegram to Mrs. February, but he explained that there were complications, delays, washaways, the line was not working properly; he held out no hopes of a reply under two days. She must suffer agony meanwhile, cheering worried men at their drink with jokes and smiles.

But the coach that brought no letter brought Julius back to Kimberley. Lily did not know if she was pleased or upset. She was ready for him, longing to make him feel the strength which he had done so much to develop. But she had fear of him too; it was not purely his deadly and malignant nature, he had defeated her in their first duel, and left on her soul the memory of the defeat. He was so ruthless and evil, she could not measure the extent to which he might go; that was largely why she feared for Cissie. Balanced between this fear and the longing for revenge, she swayed like a rope-walker between two shores; before Julius she felt continuous insecurity, yet could not retreat to safety, so strong was her hatred and desire for revenge.

He did not come that day, but she knew he would find his way to the Golden Bar before long. She wanted to see him and Cissie meet. Julius knew all about Mrs. Solomons' departure, and of the change in the business. But Lily had asked Cohen not to tell him yet of the option.

Julius came as she expected, when the bar was empty on the next day. And on her their meeting once again produced a shock, for he appeared almost exactly as she had known him in the past; lithe, graceful and handsome, with silky moustache, the masking beard gone, and with it the evil of his eyes. Only the mouth told a tale; Lily read there the history of twenty years. In the last ten years the marks of the male had deepened, they were stamped upon his face for all to read.

He glided in like a wire cable, he seemed to have muscles that propelled him with the undulations of a mamba in the veld. Lily instantly knew him this time; nevertheless she was momentarily shaken, and, as she stared, was aware of a certain physical admiration, mingled with the loathing and hatred she felt.

"Good day, Miss White," he said with the ease of a prince.

Lily bowed, but feeling she had been caught off her balance. To-day he was better poised than she. But soon she pulled together. With a beautifully modulated touch of sarcasm, she said:

"Do you know, Mr. Hermann, I hardly knew you.

When we first met, some months ago, you wore a beard, did you not?"

"Quite right," he replied.

"You look so much younger. Of course you know that?"

"I am glad you like it, Miss White."

"I'm not sure that I do. What can I get you?"

"A Benedictine. Will you join me?"

"Yes, Benedictine . . . a very good choice—the drink of the Benedicts—I'll take the same."

Lily went to search for a fresh bottle of liqueur; she found Cissie, told her to put on her hat at once and come through the bar, to go out on an errand. Returning, she served Julius his Benedictine, took one herself, and together they raised their glasses. Cissie came in through the door; Julius, facing that way, saw her, and Lily, looking at him, read it in his face.

"Cissie, come here. Do you know this gentleman?"

"No, Miss Lily, I don't."

"Look well at him—are you sure?"

"Yes, I think I'm shore."

"You see what a good disguise it was, Mr. Hermann."

"Mr. Hermann?" asked Cissie. "Is that Mr. Hermann?"

"Yes, Cissie," he said, with charm in his voice, "we have had many little chats together."

"My Jove, I didn' know you, Mr. Hermann. You look so differen' without your beard."

"Mr. Hermann has shaved it off specially to please you, Cissie."

Lily assumed a joking manner, and Julius pretended to appreciate her spirit. He was full of magnetism, of charm; she, who knew, was forced to admiration. How could a girl utterly without experience of men, let alone this master male, scent the reality? The woman knew how deadly and subtle he was; she watched him spinning his web with infinite sex science, with the art of a Phallic priest. How well she understood that simple detachment, that frank, almost rude, off-handedness. For a few moments he skirmished to inspire confidence, perhaps even without knowing it. He asked Cissie what she was doing in the bar.

"Cissie is my guest; she is about to go out on an errand for me. Will you, Cissie?"

"Well, of course, Miss Lily."

They walked together to the front door. Lily quietly told the girl to hurry to the post office and clear the box.

"The mail came in yesterday, Miss Lily."

"I know, but there may be a telegram. Go and see Mr. Harvey."

Julius was observing them with studied carelessness.

Conscious of every movement, Lily saw that Cissie was at her best, walking with the tread of health, the harmonious movement of perfect proportion. How graceful she was, how rhythmic, how beautiful. To anybody with a sense of art, Cissie represented the perfect model. As she ran off into the street, the light fall of her feet, her cadence, suggested the freedom of a springbok at play. Lily went back to Julius knowing his inattention was assumed; she knew he was conscious of all she had perceived and felt, with much also that she had not.

"Active girl. She should be useful . . . running messages."

"I hadn't thought of her that way. She might be better employed."

"What as . . . barmaid?"

"When old enough, why not?"

He shrugged his shoulders in reply. She knew he dare not put before her the usual objections to bar life.

Lily continued:

"You think she should go to school, don't you?"

He knew then that *she* knew; she had pumped Cohen—damned old fool!

"People think everybody ought to go to school; I wonder is it any use to a woman?"

"Why not . . . Mr. Hermann?"

"Well . . . after all there's only one profession open to her. . . ."

"You mean the oldest in the world?"

He looked at her with pain, as if reproving coarseness.

"I mean she can only get married. And men don't

mind how little a girl has learnt at school if only she knows how to look pretty."

"Yes," agreed Lily. "I was well educated, went to the continent for French and music, learnt elocution and domestic economy, and it did not help me to find a . . . husband."

With head laid on one side he looked at her like a physician studying a patient.

"And yet you were beautiful, Lily; you are still beautiful. What fools we men are! Fools! Fools!!" Then after a pause he said reflectively, descriptively, "Goats!"

"Pigs," she added.

He stretched his hand towards the bottle and poured out another glass of Benedictine.

"Why did you not marry me?" she asked.

"What difference would it have made? I should have gone just the same; you see we men are rovers, Bohemians, morally and physically; you women are not. You love peace and security, love it so much that you give anything for it, everything, even yourselves."

"And when we give that we lose our peace for ever."

"Why haven't you married, Lily?"

"Someone else? Perhaps nobody wanted your leavings! . . . But in fact I could have married . . . often."

"Why did you not?" he persisted.

"I was afraid."

"Afraid . . . of the men?"

"No, of myself. As men go they were fairly decent; at least I thought so then."

"But now you are all right, eh, Lily? You can make money and marry one of these stupid, future millionaires."

"To pick out a millionaire in the making is not easy. It is like finding the winner before a race."

"I can do it, Lily. I mean the millionaires, not the horses. I can show you half a dozen men in Kimberley who will some day own twenty million pounds between them."

"Are you among them?" she asked with a slight sneer.

He shook his head.

"It is not my ambition. If I become a millionaire it will be in spite of myself. The greatest qualification for wealth is that it must be the ruling passion. It is not mine."

"No . . . but money gives the key to all others."

"Wrong again, Lily. Our desires give us our food."

"Many die of hunger, longing for it."

"They are the weak creatures of the world. They do not desire strongly enough. If you want a thing, let nothing stand in your way. . . ." He stopped, as if in realization.

"Oh, yes," she said, with bitter irony, "I understand." Then changing tone, as if she had forgotten the past: "But do tell me more about these millionaires in bud. How does one recognize them; what is the recipe? Are they Jews or Gentiles, spendthrift or stingy, bold or cautious?"

"Oh, it would take too long to tell you. They are not worth it, half the swine. They do not live; they might as well be dead. But if ever some man *does* interest you, ask me and I'll tell you his worth."

Lily saw Miss Moore coming through the front door.

"Can I give you some more Benedictine . . . Mr. Hermann?"

He was absorbed in thought; she replenished his glass. Miss Moore bustled cheerily past, going behind to don her war-paint.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Hermann," said she, with an inviting smile. But the barmaid might have been a blue-bottle on the mirror for the attention she attracted, and with a resentful bang she closed the door behind her.

Julius heard the door slam; the noise jarred his nerves. He looked at Lily, and made to go.

"Would you like a card . . . Mr. Hermann?"

"No—I'll pay cash." He disliked Lily's habit of pausing before she pronounced his name, and irritably flung a sovereign upon the counter.

She took ten shillings for the Benedictines, and returned him the change. He bent towards her slightly and uttered words that went in a little hiss. Lily alone heard them.

“ You will find me here,” she replied, “ if you want me, early in the morning or late at night. Oh, yes, *do come*, I have some things I want to say to you, too.”

Julius turned to go; he saw Shilling in a corner of the bar, and passed near by him. The Kafir looked at him with fear. Cissie came in from the post office; Lily wondered if Julius had seen her coming, and halted there to cross her in the door, as he now did.

“ Did Mr. Cohen give you my message, Cissie? ” he asked.

“ Yes, Mr. Hermann.”

“ When you get the bill for the funeral expenses send it to me. I’ll settle it.”

“ Oh, but it’s paid a’ready, Mr. Hermann.”

“ Cohen told me he had not paid it.”

“ No, Miss Lily did.”

Julius half turned and saw Lily smiling pleasantly.

“ Is that so? ”

“ Quite correct, Mr. Hermann. You see, the men got up a subscription for Cissie. We collected £300, and she needs nothing now . . . but a mother’s care.”

Julius smiled, and brought to his voice a manly resonance.

“ Would you like to go to school, Cissie? ”

“ Oh, no, Mr. Hermann, I won’ go to school. I’m not going to be made a fool of by little chil’ren! ”

“ That’s how she goes on every time school is mentioned.”

“ It’s no good trying, Miss Lily. I won’ go to school! ” Cissie said this almost with temper, and then ran indoors, colliding with Miss Moore in the semi-darkness.

“ What’s the matter, Cissie? ”

“ Mr. Hermann wants me to go to school—I won’t! *Hai Kona!* ”

The Kafir emphatic gave her relief; Miss Moore soothed her further.

“ What’s he want to send you to school for? The damned beast! What’s he think they teach girls there? Don’t you go, Cissie—stop here. I’ll look after you.”

From the bar Lily watched Julius go down the street,

the smoothness of his gait unbroken by events. But she was conscious of something overhanging the satisfaction she felt; her plans had worked out well, but some spiritual disturbance was present . . . no, it was not the worry of Margaret, *that* she gauged exactly; there was something else. Lily searched in her mind, and she found it . . . Cissie.

Miss Moore came on duty, curled, powdered, perfumed.

"Has the great man gone?" she asked.

Lily smiled. "You mean Mr. Hermann?"

"Lot of side he puts on, the dirty swine! Who's he, I'd like to know, that he can't say 'good day' to a girl? I've had better men than him many a time, rotten beast."

Something in Lily's face encouraged Miss Moore to continue:

"Wants Cissie to go to school—ought to go there himself and learn manners. . . . And you take my advice, Miss White, keep him in his place, he's a dirty brute with women. Mark my words, if he pays to have Cissie schooled he'll want something in return. They all do."

"You seem to know men pretty well, Miss Moore."

Lily said this and passed inside as men came in for liquor.

"I do," concluded the barmaid. She adjusted her curls and smiled tremendously at the new customers.

"Hullo, duckie, what can I get you? . . . Brandy and soda? O—h! I say, I'm feeling very queer. Who'll stand me a bottle of fizz?"

Lily went indoors and lay down, presumably to rest.

Cissie joined her and busied about, in sweetness, to show regret for her ill-temper.

"I'm sorry . . . don' be angry, eh? You know I jus' hate the idea of going to school."

Later she broached the matter that Lily wished to discuss.

"My Jove, didn' Mr. Hermann look differen' without his beard, eh?"

"Very different, Cissie. Which do you prefer?"

"Oh, like he is, of course. I hate his beard."

"He doesn't look like a pirate any more?"

“ No, he doesn’.”

“ You used to compare him with Bluebeard, Cissie—do you remember? ”

Cissie nodded.

“ You don’t think a bad man becomes good by shaving? ”

“ Of course not, Miss Lily. Catch me! You don’t see any green in my eye, eh? . . . No, I mean he looks a little bit better.”

“ Younger? ”

“ Much! I use’ to think he was as old as daddy.”

“ And now? ”

“ About as old as Mr. Lynch. You know his eyes use’ to frighten me. Now they look rather all right.”

“ Did you notice his mouth, Cissie? ”

“ No, Miss Lily. Why, eh? ”

“ He has a vile mouth; cruel, vicious, depraved.”

“ My, how can you tell all that? ”

“ Cissie, we inherit all our features save the mouth—that we make for ourselves. In simpler words—our lives shape our mouths. If we are wicked or good or weak or strong, it can be read in the mouth.”

“ You know, Miss Lily, you are clever.”

“ No . . . experienced. To a woman experience is better than cleverness.”

But she felt that much of her abstract teaching had broken down. Cissie did not actually trust Julius Hermann, but she no longer feared him with the imagination and instincts of a child.

Early next day Lily hurried to the post office. A telegram awaited her. She tore open the envelope and found her own message returned. A clerk explained that it could not be sent through; the line was broken between Kimberley and Victoria West. He advised a letter to the rail-head, from where it could be telegraphed.

“ How long will it take? ”

“ The Cape coach leaves to-morrow. It will be at Victoria West four days after.”

There would be another coach in before a reply could be got that way; she must wait five days more. Five long days!

How interminably these passed. When midnight came each twenty-four hours she was mentally and bodily worn out, and wondered if attendance on half-drunken men, with laughter and song, jokes and dice, was not a blessing in the circumstances? Left to her own thoughts the suspense would have been unbearable. To cope with business her mind had to be keenly edged all day; she began to fear her present means would be insufficient; money was sure to be needed—she was now convinced that the child was seriously ill; she must work harder than ever to earn and save. To do this she had to be at her brightest and best, like an actress playing a merry, irresponsible rôle. The result was that the bar trade grew greater than ever.

As an outlet to her feelings she confided in Cissie: “My little sister, I fear, is very ill.”

Cissie consoled her; she had the gift of sympathy, a warm, responsive nature, and her feelings were easily stirred. She gave herself emotionally, but here again Lily regretted the very qualities that now eased her heart, for these would lay Cissie open to the world. The exchange of affection, however, brought them closer together; it was the one consolation.

At last the coach arrived. Lily left the bar to Miss Moore and waited in dreadful agitation while they sorted the mail. Men, white and black, came and went, bearing letters, keys, papers. At last the clerk raised his head in her direction, beckoning to her. She went to the counter, he passed beneath the grille a letter, her hand trembled as she took it; for some moments she scarcely dared look at the handwriting of the address. When she did so, love and joy came into her eyes.

“Thank God,” she said, and stood staring at the envelope, asking: “Why did she not write last week? If she is able to write she must be well, why . . . ?”

She realized this was folly, that her questions were answered within that envelope; she tore it open and began to read. A scented flower fell from the folded paper.

“MY OWN DARLING MOTHER,—I rite to say I love you on the mowntain I picked this sweet flowr because

it is spring yesterday Mrs. Februewerry took me to the mowntain and we did not clime it . . .”

“Miss White!” The clerk was calling her. She went back. He gave her a second letter, addressed by the same hand. She opened it, ran quickly through the sprawling lines, nothing about illness . . . she understood; Margaret had missed the post.

Then she chided herself for the folly of those wild imaginings; were they the voice of conscience? Had she done wrong to leave Margaret in Cape Town. She was walking back to the bar; now she began to wonder if, in her changed position, she should not get Margaret with her? There was a sense of guilt, the feeling that she was depriving her child of something; attention, care, love, she did not know what; a pang of jealousy towards Cissie passed through her; was she as loyal as she should be? But in the joy of the good news, the swing and surge of the streets, the cracking of whips, cries and the greetings of men she knew, these thoughts passed quickly.

In the bar she found Cohen, who, as if by instinct, had come into her joy. He had seen her anxiety, divined that she was filled with sorrow; had he guessed that she was waiting for the mail? Or had somebody told him? Did he know . . . perhaps? She hoped he did not know anything; she would like to tell him herself, some day; but this was not the time. He was just his usual, calm, sympathetic self; asked no questions, but saw that all was well, read happiness in her eyes, and looked happy too.

A few days later when he entered the bar Lily saw that he was oppressed by trouble, and she tried to cheer him.

“What is the matter, Uncle Ike?”

“Poor Rachel . . . she gets worse and worse.”

“You have had bad news?”

“Dr. McCall has written. He says her case is hopeless; thinks she had better see her son. He’s in London, you know, in Hatton Garden.”

“Does Mrs. Solomons know the truth?”

“I have to tell her. It is a nasty letter to write.”

“ But,” said Lily, “ She must be aware by now . . . ”

“ No—she’s an optimist by nature—with her, hope is always stronger than realization.” He continued: “ You need be in no more doubt as to this place. It will be in your hands as long as you like . . . of course she may decide to sell, you had better be prepared.”

“ Yes,” said Lily abstractedly.

“ I suppose I should let Julius know about the option? Have you seen him? ”

“ Once.”

“ Friendly? ”

“ Quite. But don’t tell him yet; not until you are sure.”

“ Very well, if you still feel that way about it.”

Shilling was near. Cohen called to him:

“ Shilling, Missus not come back—very sick.”

“ *Hau!* Meeses not come here again? You sure, Baas, never? ”

“ Never,” replied Cohen solemnly. “ You stop here, work for Miss Lily? ”

“ Yes, Baas. Me work for Mees Leely.”

“ Miss Lily is good Missus—you must please her, she is now the big Missus, *inkosikazi*. She takes the place of Mrs. Solomons.”

Shilling raised his right hand and declared he would.

Lily looked closely at him, and suddenly saw him in a new light. Hitherto the boy to her had been an abstraction, without personality or individual traits, the part of a whole, a black form detached from the mass of natives that surrounded them. Now she saw things that had escaped her; he had strange eyes, full of fervour, intensity; they were clouded as if by smoke, and the whites were unduly large, with reddish streaks through them. There was devotion in the dog-like crouch of the body, something fierce and primeval in the voice; it had many low tones, but frequently burst out like the hiss of escaping steam, or the passage of a sickle through grass.

“ I think he will serve you well, Miss Lily,” said Cohen; and then went away to write to Mrs. Solomons.

Boys still came and went in the backyard, and Shilling

was absent on three occasions by night. In the new conditions Lily considered it her duty to ask him where he had been, but could obtain no satisfactory reply. She thought this due to her speech, and Cissie translated the questions into Zulu. The replies remained unenlightening.

"I s'pose he's been among his brothers in some canteen, drinking." Cissie had had considerable experience of natives; she could teach Lily this side of life, at all events.

"After all," concluded Lily, "he must have some pleasure."

Winter had passed; it was September. No spring rains had yet fallen, and the nights were growing uncomfortably hot. Flies buzzed in the bar by day, and the diggers already wore white drill. Lily began to find Mrs. Solomons' double bed insufferable; she would have to see about a separate room for Cissie. There was the room previously occupied by herself, but this was isolated. Being reached from the back of the premises, it gave on to a lonely street. Nobody had seriously troubled Lily during the months she lived there. Once a drunken prospector, in town for a spree, came to her door with a light, "looking for trouble with a lantern," as Mrs. Solomons put it.

"Why didn't you push his face, dear?"

"I did better," said Lily with a smile, "I emptied a bucket of dirty water over his head."

Mrs. Solomons went into peals of laughter—it was before her illness—declared she would have gone one better than that.

Cissie could, of course, lock her door, and then she had a revolver . . . and her packet of pepper!

Apart from the heat and the limitation of space and air in the interior double room, Lily wanted her little friend out of the way for a time. She had told Julius to come and see her, night or morning, she had things to tell him that required no witness; and this way, Cissie too, would not come into contact with him, except over the counter—or if they met by chance in the streets. As to this, Lily had small apprehension; Kimberley enjoyed little privacy, no trees, parks or sombre build-

ings; everybody knew the girl; she was as safe as a heroine pursued by the villain on a public stage.

That night was sultry. Lily slept badly, and Cissie awoke.

“ Shall I go and lie on the sofa? ”

“ 'Tis rather cramped, Cissie.”

“ Oh, it's quite big enough for me. There, look! ”
She crimped her legs and kept them from going over the edge.

“ Cissie . . . I shall have to fix you up differently in summer. Would you be afraid to sleep in my old room? ”

“ Afraid, why, eh? ”

“ Well . . . suppose somebody entered in the night? ”

“ They wouldn' stop long.” She fingered her pistol.

“ But you must keep your door locked.”

“ Oh yes, I will.”

“ You promise? Otherwise I won't let you go.”

“ You can trus' me.”

Yet Lily had misgivings. She thought of Miss Moore and asked that breezy person if she would care to share the room with Cissie. But the barmaid was unwilling to do this, excusing herself on the grounds of hot weather. She liked her liberty. Lily, on reflection, decided that the contact, too, would be unwholesome for Cissie. Miss Moore was free-and-easy, her precepts were more vulgar than vicious, but her practice might lead a young girl to regard promiscuity as harmless.

Next day Cissie moved into her new room, the one she had shared with Lily for a few nights after her father's death. Going there revived memories that were sad, and this, coupled with the separation, depressed her at first. Lily had a good lock placed on the door, with a spare key. She instructed Cissie to leave her own key in the key-hole after turning it.

“ I will pop round, dear, and try your door from time to time. Don't be alarmed if you hear my key; if awake, just speak to me.”

“ I really don' know why you want to take such trouble, Miss Lily. I slep' for years on the claims and nobody bothered me.”

“ But, suppose a . . . Kafir were to get in? ”

"He can't, Miss Lily. I'll lock the door every night."

But this insistence gave Cissie a real impression of danger such as she had been brought up to guard against, attacks by natives at night; she used to think these crimes were robbery, murder, and similar acts of violence. But now she knew of other crimes, though she could not yet understand why a white man drawn by her charms should wish to do her harm.

She settled down soon in her new room, her first experience as mistress of a furnished apartment. There was a bed, wash-stand and wardrobe; also a table and a sofa covered in chintz. Cissie took great pride in it all; she kept the room spick and span, hung ribbons and pictures about the walls; then she placed photographs of her dead parents on the table. Her father's picture she draped in black.

Lynch met her in the bar, and gaily she invited him to "come along and see my room, eh?" He looked at Lily and smiled.

"Go along, Mr. Lynch," she said, realizing that he wanted permission.

Cissie made no secret of the inspection; she bounded along, talking loudly and laughing; when a few yards away from her door she ran to it and turned the key. But suddenly she cried: "Wait a minute," then ran inside and pushed under the bed her stockings and slippers. After this she flung the door widely open and said: "Come in, Mr. Lynch."

He entered rather sheepishly.

"Well, what do you think of it, eh?"

"Very nice, indeed, Cissie. Very cosy."

"Hope you'll come and see me sometimes, eh?"

"Um . . . ah . . . of course."

"What's up? You needn' come if you don' wan' to!"

When they returned to the bar he found an opportunity to speak privately to Lily, telling her of Cissie's innocent invitation.

Lily's face shadowed.

"'Tis all right with you, Mr. Lynch . . . do you think Cissie will use discrimination?"

"Well, she and I are old pals. I knew her father."

"But she does not look on *you* as a father?"

"No . . . of course not."

"Ah, 'of course not,'" Lily seized on this . . . yes, she was right. Now could Lynch be trusted? She thought he could.

"You see, Mr. Lynch, she has come into touch with such a queer lot. Men like Bennington. . . ."

"If he lifted a finger to Cissie I'd finish him."

"Mr. Lynch, I think you would be a very bad enemy."

"Or a very good friend, Miss Lily."

"Yes. I wish Cissie knew more men like you, and . . ."

She stopped. Lynch waited for her to go on. He asked: "And what?" She poured him out a whisky. He stood thinking, and she, with studied carelessness, looking away, asked:

"Do you know much about Mr. Hermann?"

"Julius Hermann . . . ?"

She nodded.

Lynch at once was on the *qui vive*, his eyes took on that extra narrowness, his mouth hardened.

"He can be very cruel," Lily told herself, and the knowledge was pleasing.

"Julius Hermann? Well . . . I know what everybody does."

"What do they know?"

But Lynch seemed disinclined to talk.

"Why do you ask me about him?" he said at length.

"Oh, I don't know." She turned away as if unwilling to pursue the subject.

"Has he . . . is he getting . . . interested in Cissie?"

"Why do you ask that, Mr. Lynch?"

"Well . . . he has a reputation . . . for that sort of thing. Look here, Miss White, I know you're fond of Cissie. As for me I would be capable of shooting any man who . . . tried anything on her. Cissie is not ordinary; she's clean, clean as a young tree—perhaps because she's grown up without other children. They corrupt each other very often, you know, the bad spoil

the good. Oh yes, take it from me, 'tis so. I used to be in the Detective Force at Cape Town, before I came here, and how different it was from the life at home! Girls of twelve and thirteen walking out with young men, and all their confidences to each other about 'fellows' and 'chaps.' You can't always blame the boys for what follows. Now, at home, as you know—anyway 'tis so in Ireland—girls of fifteen and sixteen are children in mind, though they may not be in body. Cissie reminds me of our girls at home."

"I'm not sure, Mr. Lynch, that from a woman's point of view, it's an advantage to be so backward in sex understanding."

"Perhaps not, Miss White, but to a decent man it is very agreeable to meet such girls."

"To the other men perhaps even more agreeable?"

He smiled faintly, his mind for an instant diverted, but then glowered at Lily.

"'Twill be no joking matter for the cad who interferes with Cissie. . . . And so you think Julius has his eye on her?"

"I did not say so."

"But you inferred it."

She remained silent.

"Have you any reason for thinking so? . . . You must have or you would not have told me."

"I have told you nothing, Mr. Lynch."

"Oh, go on with you, Miss White, I won't give it away."

"It would not matter. Do you think I'm afraid of him?"

"Maybe not afraid . . . but he could do you a lot of harm."

"How?"

"Well . . . it's him who's behind Mrs. Solomons."

"Look here," said Lily, with intention, "I have not half as much fear of him as you have."

"I? Do you imagine I am afraid of him?"

"He has a lot of influence."

"Damn his influence. If he did anything crooked I'd run him like anybody else."

The danger signals hung out, Lynch's mouth

shut so tightly that Lily thought she heard his jaws snap.

"All right, don't get angry with me, Mr. Lynch. And as you're not ever likely to get him for I.D.B. perhaps you'll keep an eye on him . . . otherwise."

He calmed down and affected to laugh off the incident. But she knew that the train of thought she had started would rankle, and give him no peace; like the wound-up spring of a clock it would keep him in motion, awake, on the watch.

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. SOLOMONS was sailing for England. On this she and Cohen were agreed; he was going to Cape Town to see her on board the *Nubian*. The Golden Bar would go on in the same way until the proprietress had consulted her son. Cohen asked Lily if there was anything she would like him to do for her in Cape Town, but she said "no." She was herself longing to go, to combine a farewell glimpse of Mrs. Solomons with a settlement of Margaret's school problem, but it was out of the question. Her fortune was flowing; she must hold to it, not lose grip of the situation; she recognized this, and did not express to Cohen her wish. For a moment she was tempted to let him call on Mrs. February; she would like him to know Margaret. But this, too, she put aside as premature and unwise, and Cohen left without suspecting how much he had been in her mind.

On the morning after his departure, about the time at which the bar was usually open, Lily missed Shilling. She called for him to unlock the shutters, but obtained no reply. Yet he had been there ten minutes earlier arranging the spittoons. Lily then remembered having heard a peculiar whistle at the back of the premises, and she went to see why Shilling had chosen this inconvenient hour for a brotherly *indaba*. As she

penetrated into the semi-obscurity she saw daylight gleam through a stack of bottles, cases and baskets. There must be an entrance of which she was unaware. It occurred to her to go to this hole and call for the boy, but as she was about to do so his black head, framed in sunlight, appeared as if in a halo.

“Where have you been, Shilling?”

“Meeses . . . my brother he call me.”

“Yes, but at this hour . . . you must not clear off like that . . . your brother must come some other time.”

Shilling looked up at her from where he crouched in the frame. His face was perplexed.

“Meeses . . . my brother come when he got klip.”

“Klip, Shilling, what do you mean?”

“Diamond, Meeses, look, mooi klip.”

As he said this he fumbled about the ears, then his left hand slid forward, and in the palm lay a dull, angular stone which Lily recognized as a diamond. Over her passed a shivering emotion, and in the situation of deadly and recognizable danger her mind performed an inexplicable jump to the race-meeting at Cape Town; Van Murran, horses, even the voice of a bookmaker were evoked. Her feelings were analogous with those on the race-course; her sensation was one of fierce excitement that was almost sensual.

Shilling had passed the frame, was advancing towards her, the light at his back, his face in shadow. The sun struck over his shoulder upon the uplifted palm, and the diamond gleamed there like a glow-worm, its warm, yellow tones in strong contrast with the black hand holding it.

“Look, Meeses, look.”

“No . . . no . . . take it away. I don't want to see it.”

It was a lie; she knew it. Her words were mechanical, a cloak to her feelings, an assumption of respectability, of lawfulness. She was burning to look at the stone, examine it, fondle it, possess it. “I don't want it . . . I don't want it.” She knew the Kafir would not take her at her word.

“Meeses don't want eet? Meeses wrong—mooi klip, very cheap. Look, Meeses!”

He was now before her, standing in humility, his hand was in shadow, the diamond glowing by contrast more than before. She hesitated still, and Shilling advanced his arm. Suddenly she put out her hand, looking quickly over his shoulder at the same time. Her thumb and index finger were feeling, searching for their quarry; something cold, smooth, met them, and they closed upon it. Without looking at the stone Lily glanced behind her; all was obscure. She brought the diamond upwards in her hand, turned it upon its points; round and round, under and over; held it between finger and thumb while the light of the sun played on it.

“ Why do you bring this to me, Shilling? ”

“ For Meeses to buy.”

“ But I did not ask you to. What is your reason for doing so? ”

“ Old Meeses not come back. Mees Leely now big Meeses.”

“ Did Mrs. Solomons buy stones from your brothers? ”

He remained silent, inscrutable.

“ If she did not, why do you think I will? ”

But no reply came from him.

“ Come, Shilling, speak the truth. If you do not I shall send you away . . . suppose I tell Mr. Lynch? Suppose I give him this diamond? ”

“ Why Meeses do that? Meeses want put me in tronk? ”

“ I don't want to put you in prison, Shilling, but you must be careful or you will get me there.”

Her tone was more conciliatory; her mind had reasoned. She recalled the conversation with Noah.

“ Used you to buy stones for Mrs. Solomons? ”

“ If I say ‘ yes,’ Meeses, you cannot trust me either, and if I say ‘ no ’ you will not buy.”

He was stubborn, bestial; his devotion was that of a dog.

“ Why do you want me to buy, Shilling? ”

“ Meeses make plenty money, my brother make money, me get some, too.”

“ How much . . . does your brother want for this. . . ? ”

“ He ask £25, Meeses.”

“That is too much, Shilling.” Lily looked very wise; she imitated a diamond-broker whom she had seen. “It is not a pure white stone . . . how much would Mrs. Solomons give for it?”

Shilling ignored the question.

“Mooi klip, Meeses, very good stone.”

“I’ll give him £20 for it.”

“Meeses, all ’ight, give me money.”

Lily handed him the diamond instead, and hurried to her room. She had not yet banked the previous day’s cash, and from it took four five-pound notes. With these she went back to Shilling. He took the money, pressed the stone into her hand and melted through the aperture. Lily proceeded cautiously back to the bar.

Just as she got into it a loud, almost insolent, knock sounded upon the front door; a shiver passed over her. “Good God, trapped . . . they had sent Shilling to tempt her, and were now coming to hunt for the diamond!”

In the frenzy of fear she lost her reasoning powers, could not think what to do with the stone—hither and thither she flew, like a fly on a window-pane. The remains of her last supper lay upon the table—suddenly she realized it. There was a cold ox-tongue; into the end of this she stuffed the diamond, pressing it between the muscles that had held to the beast’s throat.

The knocking was repeated . . . louder than at first. She ran to the door, trembling, pale as death, utterly unfit to defend herself. For a moment she stood collecting the fragments of her usual courage. Another knock sounded; she flung open the door, and before her Cissie smiled.

“My word, Miss Lily, what’s up? It’s past ten; I thought you mus’ be sick. . . .” Then observing the pallid face, “Aren’t you well, eh?”

“No, I’m not, dear . . . ’twill soon pass.”

Her relief was great; she embraced Cissie almost theatrically. Cissie noted this; as a rule Lily was restrained.

“Pore Miss Lily . . . can I help you?”

"No, everything's done, Cissie."

The boy returned from the yard, impassive, impenetrable. To her overcharged feelings Lily now gave way; she sharply reproved him for being late. Cissie sympathetically added fluent Zulu to Lily's pidgin-English; she fell upon Shilling like a civet cat. He made no reply, merely doing his work.

All through the next hour Lily lived on her nerves; her body might have been dead. She and Cissie made a light breakfast, while the Kafir brightened the brass around the counter, then dusting, polishing, and finally rinsing glasses. Lily took courage from his carelessness. She now understood Lynch's attitude in regard to the boy, and was reassured; Shilling was not a "trap." And she reasoned thus: "If he is not a 'trap' the police know nothing, and I am safe." There was a cupboard used as a larder, in this she placed the cold tongue. After it was done she felt safer, like a murderer who has concealed the body of his victim.

The disposal of the diamond now obsessed her. Evidently she was following in the beaten track of somebody else; everything pointed to Mrs. Solomons. To pick up the threads should be easy. She risked no more than the loss of Kringe's esteem in testing Noah's information; but if Noah had made a mistake or lied, or she had misconstrued his reference to "a woman not one hundred yards from here?" Kringe would have a hold on her such as she wanted no man to have.

Should she try Steinsohn; familiar, eager, branded with the letters I.D.B.? No, she would not allow him to be upon such terms with her. Of late he had grown more enterprising. And then he boasted so. She feared he would not conceal his friendship, even a business one, and that Lynch would get to hear what she was doing. This troubled her more than the personal advantage Steinsohn might seek to take of their business relations, for in that respect she felt she had his measure, and could keep him in his place.

She knew Kringe's hour for popping in, and waited eagerly to see him, collecting her forces for the comedy to be played. He had not been there yesterday. She chided him with this when he came.

"I'm sorry," he answered. "I had a day's buying outside."

"Do any good?"

"Not bad. Some nice stuff turning up on the river."

He showed her a parcel of river stones and she, always ready to learn, examined them, listening closely to his expert description.

"But what did you want to see me about, Miss Lily?"

"Well . . . you know Ike Cohen left for Cape Town?"

"I heard to-day. What's he gone for?"

"Surely *you* know."

"I don't . . . Ike and I are not special pals."

She gave him an understanding look. It said: "Of course not . . . he's jealous of you." Then speaking detachedly:

"But you and Mrs. Solomons are great friends? You know Ike's gone to see her on her way to England."

"You mean to say Rachel is going home?"

"Surely *you* know that?"

"Honour bright I don't. Is it true?"

She was watching him narrowly, trying to read something in his face. He looked a trifle glum, that was all. It might be sympathy with the invalid; he knew why she had gone to the coast.

"I'm sorry to hear it, Miss Lily. I suppose she'll be away some time?"

She dropped her voice a tone, and impressively said:

"A very long time, poor woman; she will never come back."

"What! Who says so? . . . Doctor? What do they know . . . go on! Rachel only needs a holiday."

"No, her case is very serious."

It was the quietest hour of the day, only a couple of strangers were in the bar.

"Go into my office. I will join you in a moment."

She went to call Cissie, asking her to keep an eye on the bar.

Kringe was perplexed. Lily had never before invited him inside. As he lifted the flap and passed within she called:

"I won't be a minute, Mr. Kringe, just let me find the invoice here."

The men in the bar believed Kringe to be a commercial traveller.

Lily joined him in the little room behind, taking with her a bottle of champagne. They drank a glassful each. Then she explained the situation in regard to Mrs. Solomons and the Golden Bar, without divulging the option.

Kringe sat thoughtfully gnawing his little black moustache; he realized that Lily had replaced the proprietress. He was keenly interested in her on personal grounds, and she knew that he was well-to-do, and could put up money towards the purchase of the bar if she asked him. But to tell him that she believed him to be a criminal, and that she also was willing to become one with him was not easy.

"I'm surprised," she ventured at length, "that Mrs. Solomons didn't tell *you* she was going, because, Louis, she *told me* I would have to see you about a *certain matter*."

"See me . . . ? Um, did she say that? "

"Yes, before she left for Durban. She said: 'If I don't come back I'll drop a line to Lou Kringe and let him know.' "

He paused a long while. Then leaning forward and looking at the bottle without seeing it, he slowly said:

"What was it, the 'certain matter' she spoke about? "

She looked evasive too, avoided his eyes, suggested something furtive.

"Surely *you* know . . . Louis."

"I do not . . . honour bright. She never spoke of anything . . ." He broke off.

Lily asked: "Did you and she do business? "

"Oh . . . well . . . matters outside the bar trade. . . ."

"I see . . . not 'in the trade? ' "

She used this phrase with calculated intent; it was a current euphemism for I.D.B.

Kringe, in reply, sipped his wine, and Lily now fixed her eyes on him, straight and frank.

“ Whatever it was . . . she wanted you to discuss it with me.”

“ Yes, I suppose so.”

The situation was peculiar, almost ridiculous. They were like two bashful, inexperienced lovers, each longing for the other to utter the first word, give the first caress, neither daring to risk the consequence of being in error.

She finally pushed him over the brink.

“ Oh, come on, Louis, you know what it is. She told me all about you.”

“ What did she tell you? ”

“ ‘ Outside the bar trade! ’ ” Oh, you’re very deep, and ’tis a good thing you are. ‘ Outside the bar trade ’ . . . may be . . . but ‘ inside the other one. ’ ”

“ Well, of course, I’m a diamond-broker . . . licensed.”

“ And if I happen to have a parcel of . . . stones . . . ? ”

“ Shueh! ” He warningly raised a hand. “ Not so loud, old girl. You want to be careful. It’s a risky game . . . I would not see you in trouble for anything.”

“ What do I do . . . ? ” she whispered, “ if I get hold of anything . . . for you? ”

“ Pass it over the counter in a sandwich . . . or anything like that.”

“ And then? ”

“ I’ll let you know what it’s worth, and if we do business I’ll pay cash on the nail.”

“ Who are your people? ”

“ Don’t know and don’t care. You wouldn’t like me to tell them who I buy from, Lily? ”

She noted that for the first time he had dropped the “ Miss,” which had become part of her name on the Fields.

She arose, and he, thinking her action a hint, got up to go.

“ No, sit down . . . I have something to show you.” She went to the cupboard and pressed her fingers into the cold meat. “ Look at this and tell me what you’ll give for it.”

Suspiciously he again went to the door, listened, then

felt if it was locked. Lily looked reassurance and slipped the stone into his hand. Kringe's manner grew stronger, more confident, as though the diamond had inspired him, or the desire to possess it was stronger than his fear of the law. His eyes, sparkling like the gem in his fingers, instantaneously took in the points of the stone: shape, colour, weight, purity, origin, and so on. Finally he said: "It's not bad, I'll give you eighty for it."

Not a business woman by nature, Lily had a feeling of almost choking joy. She would get sixty pounds clear—on the old scale nearly four months' salary—to bank for the future. The blood mounted within her; it seemed to be pumping up and lifting her heart. She heard Kringe saying:

"That's a good price, you know, it's off-coloured."

Then it came to her that his tone was defensive, as though she had complained, that Kringe was a Jew and Rachel a Jewess, and that both would inevitably bargain. She had heard them do so, separately, with other people.

"Oh, no, 'tis not enough. It cost me nearly that; I must get something to make it worth while."

"If you paid eighty for that stone, they had you. They knew you were fresh at the game. . . . Look here, because it's you, I'll make it the level hundred, but I can't pay a penny more."

"Yes you can, Louis," she persuasively said. "You can pay a hundred and fifty."

"A hundred and fifty! Now look here, Lily. If I didn't know you had no knowledge of . . . that sort of thing, I'd be angry. I would, s'help me. You stand on me; I'll do the best I can for you every time. I'll tell you what, I'll make it £105, and if I get more for it than it's worth, I'll pass you a bit extra."

"No, Louis. I don't like that way of doing business. Give me £120 and 'tis yours."

"Oh, all right, all right. Jove, you're harder than Rachel."

Once again he listened at the door. There were people in the bar talking loudly. He drew from his pocket-book a roll of £10 notes, and paid twelve of them to

Lily. Then he opened the parcel of diamonds which he had bought legally on the river and placed with it the softly-glowing gem that Lily regarded as the corner stone of peace and security.

CHAPTER XIV

SHILLING now re-opened relations with mysterious brethren; he paid discreet visits to canteens, clandestine liquor houses, yards where small groups of "boys" gathered about an outstanding or popular figure. Sesuto he spoke well, and in consequence was able to take part in Basuto *indabas*. Many of the labourers in the mines crossed the Orange Free State from Basutoland. They kept in touch with touts—idle natives whose nerves were sufficiently robust to stand the strain of constant police supervision. Sometimes Shilling would join the Sesutos under a galvanized iron roof, which they threatened to lift by the explosive force of their palatal clicks. Or they would crouch about a tiny fire in the yard, beneath the gleam of the stars, chattering of their kraals in strong voice; laughing and shouting, childlike and tremendous. One would talk of women, then voices would fall to a crooning cadence, and hunched upon their buttocks they would bring heads together and whisper softly of "klip," the money it would bring them, the cows they would buy with the money, and the wives they would buy with the cows. For they too wanted peace and security; the certainty of home, with babies about them in the sun, and blankets and warm, full bellies when there would be no sun.

Shilling took to his mistress all the diamonds he acquired, and she passed them on to Kringe, who soon

learned that it was better to pay her a fair price than to excite resentment and combativeness. By the time Cohen returned from Cape Town the new business was strongly under way. In the dangerous excitement of this traffic Lily had lost touch with the sentimental side of her existence. She was caught up in the maelstrom of infectious cupidity that swirled off their feet nearly all the men and women of the Diamond Fields. Some gave expression to the lust for gain by gambling with cards; others speculated in unsubstantial diamond shares; dice rattled on every bar counter, billiard balls clicked continuously; those who could, bought and sold diamonds legally, those who could not, or would not, plunged into the dirty waters of I.D.B. Kimberley held out no prospect of permanent life; treeless, waterless, with blazing sun and blinding dust, corrugated iron that intensified the heat and caricatured the cold. The spirit of the place was, hurry up and get out, purge the soil, clean its bowels, pick its eyes, suck its blood.

In this rapture of evil passions Lily White, now on the flowing tide, felt the edge of her hatred blunt, the force of her love weaken. Hatred and love had placed her where she was, but for the time they had ceased to dominate her existence; they were still present, but subconsciously.

Isaac Cohen felt a subtle change in Lily. Their semi-private, half-intimate chats were no longer of books and other refinements, but of diamonds. She always contrived to veer him towards the subject; she wanted to learn all about uncut stones, and of these Cohen often carried parcels. He was one of the leading experts on the Fields, and had the gift of imparting his knowledge. He had no suspicion why Lily was interested in diamonds; he thought the atmosphere of the bar had begun to stamp itself on her receptive mind, that she was adapting herself to the place.

The most discernible effect of her new passion was a relaxed hold upon Cissie, whom it was often necessary to send out of the way; on other occasions somebody was wanted to look after the bar, if Miss Moore were not there it fell to Cissie to amuse the customers. The hiring of another barmaid was considered, but Lily

feared being spied upon; since her traffic in I.D.B. she dreaded even to chat with Kringe, the knowledge of her guilt making her suspicious and watchful. Gradually Cissie assumed the rôle of supernumerary barmaid. She was so happy and vital by nature that the men looked forward to meeting her. When she was kept in the background they asked after her.

Julius seldom came to the bar, but in some strange way seemed to keep himself informed of what was going on. Between Lily's hours for withdrawing from the publicity of the liquor business and Miss Moore's time for assuming duty was a gap which Cissie bridged, and it happened that Julius's rare appearances coincided with this. That in itself would not have been remarkable, but twice also Cissie went on pre-arranged errands of some length beyond the town, and each time had met Julius. She came home excitedly.

"Yes, Miss Lily, I met Mr. Hermann again. Down by the debris heap, just when I was crossing for a short cut."

"Ah . . . you should not go that way . . . what did he say to you?"

"He asked me if I had all I needed, and I said, 'Yes, I've got £300,' and he said, 'I know, I gave fifty towards it.' My word, he mus' be rich, eh?"

"He can afford £50 to you. He robbed your father; swindled him out of his claims."

"Daddy said they swindled him, but he never said Mr. Hermann; he said the amalgamation."

"Well . . . he told me it was Mr. Hermann. So even if he did give £50, it was only a tiny bit of what he owed you. Now, child, don't go letting that turn your head. Mr. Hermann never dreamed of giving £50 . . . he was in Cape Town when that happened."

Lily explained the circumstances. "Do you see, Cissie? Then what's his intention in telling you he gave the money? To make you grateful towards him!"

By further reasoning of the same kind, Lily contrived to make Cissie suspicious of the mine magnate. But she felt anxious; she saw that Julius was eternally on the watch; she feared he might gradually convert Cissie's mistrust into trust, and then gratitude, or give her a

longing for luxury and comfort. Of late Cissie had said repeatedly that she wanted to earn money. The next time the subject was broached, Lily replied: "Very well, Cissie, I agree. You can start work tomorrow, on a salary of £14 a month."

"Really, Miss Lily? Oh . . . I love you! You are so kind."

She jumped at Lily's neck, clutching it in both arms, hugging and kissing her.

Next morning she was awake early, smartening herself for the great day, and putting up her hair, which richly overflowed its limits, and threatened her with blindness. Then she got high-heeled shoes—old ones discarded by a previous barmaid—and added so much to her height that Cohen, when he came in, did not know her.

"Is Miss White not in?" he asked.

Cissie, with a straight face, mimicking an English accent, answered:

"Excuse me a moment, sir, while I call her."

When Lily came Cohen said: "You didn't tell me you were getting a new young lady."

"Well, we discussed it often . . . I hope you don't mind?"

"Not at all. You have been working too hard of late."

"How do you like the new girl?"

"She is very pretty, I guess she will be popular."

"Come here and be introduced . . . Miss Sheldon," called Lily.

"Sheldon," he mused, "I seem to know that name?"

As Lily and Cissie burst out laughing, he admitted: "That's on me, all right."

"What do you think of her?"

"After fooling me so sweetly, how can I say she's too young for the job?"

Cissie put her hand across the counter and asked:

"*Hoe gaat het, Oom?*"

Cohen coughed and spat in comic imitation of the Dutch "G."

Lily remarked: "Cissie is going to learn to speak English properly."

“ Yes, Miss Lily, but I’ll always remain a Colonial.”

“ It seems to me,” said Cohen, “ that the most useful language she could learn here would be Yiddish.”

The word soon passed round that Cissie was employed in the Golden Bar. Some thought it a shame that such a youngster should serve in a bar, but the majority had no views on the subject, and came along to see the new girl. Among them was Steinsohn, who stood champagne freely, and made characteristic jokes, until Lily put him in his place. But his silly attentions to Cissie aroused the anger of Rose Moore; she was piqued by the employment of a girl younger and more attractive than herself. Steinsohn’s goings-on so maddened her that she filled her mouth with champagne and blew it spray-like into his face. He capered about the bar, mopping up the wine in his palms and pouring it over his ears for *mozzel*. But Lily was disgusted; she allowed the incident to pass for jocular, thinking no girl deserved dismissal for a wretch like Steinsohn. Yet she feared that Rose was jealous of Cissie, and that they would not get on together, the younger girl having never liked the breezy philosopher.

That night, when the bar was closed, Lily wanted to speak kindly with Rose about the incident of the afternoon, and asked her if she would come into the room at the back.

“ Sorry I haven’t the time to-night,” replied the barmaid impudently. “ My chap is waiting for me.”

“ I won’t keep you long, Miss Moore.”

“ No, you won’t, indeed,” she shouted, “ because I’m damn-well clearing out to-night.”

“ Why, whatever has come over you? ”

“ Here have I been working like a nigger to help you out of a hole, and the first chance you get you shove her into my place—that sly little bitch! ”

“ Here, don’t you talk like that, frizzy head,” cried Cissie, and she rushed across the floor in such a fury that the big ornamental barmaid felt safer when Lily interposed.

“ Cissie, behave yourself, I’ll have no brawling here! ”

The girl subsided, and Lily spoke to Miss Moore:

“ Would you like me to settle up now? ”

“ I don't care if you do. My chap's got plenty of ooftish.” Nevertheless she stood waiting, and Lily paid her what was due. At the door Rose cried: “ And he's not a dirty swine like your friend, Julius Hermann, neither. Put that in your pipe and smoke it! ”

“ You see, Cissie, how careful you have to be,” Lily said, making use of the episode when Rose had gone. “ Before you know where you are she'll go round the Fields connecting your name with Mr. Hermann's.”

“ My name, Miss Lily? What have I done? ”

“ Nothing that I can see, unless he paid you more attention than he paid her.”

“ He never talked to her at all. And he said hardly anything to me.”

“ I know, Cissie. He just stood and looked at you like this ”—Lily bent on one side in imitation of Julius—“ with sleepy, heavy-lidded eyes . . . ”

“ Yes, that's right, jus' like that.”

“ ‘ Just,’ Cissie, ‘ just,’ don't forget the ‘ t ’ . . . And now and then he smiled at some little remark you passed, and made you think you were amusing—so entertaining. And he scarcely said a word all the time.”

“ My Jove, Miss Lily, it's wonderful. You've got him off to a tick. How did you know all that? You wasn't in the bar.”

“ ‘ Were not ’ in the bar, not ‘ wasn't,’ Cissie.”

Ah, how did she know? . . . Would it yet become necessary to tell all to this child, to confess the whole of the past? For Lily had resolved to do so rather than let Julius be the winner.

Lynch came in a few days afterwards; he had of late frequented them less. Somehow Lily feared to meet him, she vaguely wondered if he knew? He seemed less cordial than when she had last spoken with him. Was it her imagination?

But Cissie teased him into good humour. Upon him she had the effect of sunshine on frost. Lily, closely watching them, realized that Cissie was a protection to her, just as she was one to Cissie. Lynch was lost in wonder at the way his little favourite had blossomed out; he stood regarding her with frank, wholesome

admiration; if hitherto he had not been in love, there was now no doubt in Lily's mind that he was enamoured of Cissie. If she found him to her liking, why not? Sooner a man like Lynch, said Lily, than a flashy gentleman or loafer, too often the same thing in Kimberley. There was something substantial, irrefutable about Lynch; she felt that the tears of his own mother could fall on him without turning him from his duty. That was why she feared him, and was anxious to undermine his judgment in her favour.

To her relief Lynch did not mention I.D.B., nor did he ask any questions about Shilling or Mrs. Solomons. Yet when he had gone Lily began to wonder why? Why had he avoided the subject? Was it because he mistrusted her?

It was always the same; she suspected even the gifts that Life granted to her. Peace in her troubled soul was unattainable.

CHAPTER XV

THE Golden Bar was closed. Lily made up the cash, took the key of her old room and went out by the main entrance. She passed into the side street and stopped at Cissie's door. In the room a light faintly burned, the window was open at the top, for it was a suffocating night. Bending to the keyhole, Lily through it saw a candle in the candle-stick. She softly said: "Cissie . . . are you awake?" But no answer came. So Lily quietly slipped her key into the keyhole and unlocked the door. Cissie lay asleep under a mosquito net, so peaceful that Lily did not wake her, but blew out the candle, and softly stole away, resolving to reproach the girl next morning for failing to leave her key in the lock.

She was about to enter the bar when a smooth, dark

form moved from the wall and stood before her. She started back in surprise, for it was Julius.

“ Good evening, Lily.”

“ Good evening, or should I say, good morning; it’s past midnight.”

“ Is it too late to . . . give me a drink? ”

“ You know it is. Have you come to see me? ”

“ Don’t be afraid . . . you have the right to admit me at all hours.” He was not ironic. “ You see I hold a bond over this place and have the legal right to inspect it whenever I like.”

“ Shall we go in together . . . *Werther*, or would it damage your reputation in Kimberley? ”

“ As you have become so clever with that lady’s weapon, the tongue, would you mind calling me Julius? ”

“ Not at all, it really is more familiar to me than the other.” She had opened the door, and was standing upon the threshold in the light. “ Well . . . are you coming, or are you afraid? ”

“ Afraid, Lily? ” He moved inside the door. “ Afraid to follow a pretty woman . . . why should I be afraid? ”

“ *Why*,” she repeated very deliberately, and facing him. “ *Why*? Well . . . supposing I drew a revolver and shot you through the heart? ”

“ You couldn’t,” he mocked.

“ Couldn’t I? ” she uttered, with the coldness of hate, “ Why not? ”

“ Because I haven’t a heart. Go over a bit to the right . . . I’ve got a liver; at that damned club they give me nothing but curry.”

“ Are you never serious? ”

“ Sometimes . . . oh yes, Lily, too serious when the occasion calls for it.”

“ Doesn’t this one? ”

“ On the contrary, I came here so happy.”

“ To meet a person whose life you wrecked, I might be the ghost of somebody you murdered; for ten years I have lived . . . how have I lived . . . and you come to see me after months of hesitation, and talk about your liver! ”

He saw she was vibrating with anger, he feared his evening would be spoiled. After all these years, how absurd to go on like that!

"My dear Lily, what do you want me to do? Shed tears? You would not believe them; they would be just dirty water! Do you want me to pull a face like an undertaker at a charity funeral?"

"Why haven't you come before?"

"I had no reason to think you wanted to see me."

"Isn't the past reason enough?"

"It would be if we had not already lived it, Lily."

"Yes, that is it exactly."

"Well, let's have a bottle of wine; we can chat pleasantly."

She fetched the champagne, asking as she stripped the cork:

"What do you want to talk about?"

"The future, Lily." He raised the glass and it seemed as if he were offering a toast.

"No," she retorted, filling her own glass, "not the future—let us talk of the past."

"My God," he said, and then stopped to swallow, "You women are extraordinary; you live in the past . . . on dead things."

"Ah, but you're not dead, you are very much alive."

"Oh . . . so it's money you are after?"

"I don't think so . . . not at present, anyway. Still, it's an idea."

He bent forward, suddenly, brutally.

"How much do you want?"

"What for?"

"Consolation . . . damages, if you like to call it that. Come . . . give it a figure?"

"I want a lot," she said dreamily, "more than you'll want to pay me."

"Why? What terrible thing did I do to you? I made love to you—you were very beautiful, Lily," hurriedly he added, "you still are. I made love to you . . . and then I went away. You women are so sentimental . . . one would say I had committed a crime."

“ You killed all my belief in humanity.”

“ You’re no worse off for that, believe me. Especially in the liquor business, with all these ‘ cards ’ flying about.”

“ As you will reduce everything to money, I’ll tell you how much I want. . . .”

“ Yes . . . how much do you want? ”

“ I want . . . ”

She was struggling; the remnants of her self-respect and pride against her desire for that security she coveted, which his money could give her. She would like to be so far above him as not even to tell him of the child, but against this her sense revolted.

“ I want money enough to pay for a lifetime . . . ten years gone and ten years to come. You are said to be a financial genius—work that out and tell me the figure.”

He laughed noiselessly.

“ You want twenty years alimony, for twenty minutes pleasure? ”

“ So far as that goes, Julius, you are wrong; you spent a whole week with me.”

“ Don’t spoil an epigram for the sake of the truth,” he protested.

“ But I was not talking of myself; the life I mean isn’t mine; I don’t want alimony; I want you to settle an account for board and lodging and clothing and everything else that I have had to give, and will have to give, the child.”

For the first time in her knowledge he was utterly knocked off his perfect mental balance. It took him fully five seconds to frame a reply, and then it was neither mocking nor ironic. As he was building the phrase he looked searchingly, amazedly at her. His lips were closed tightly, but Lily heard a long drawn-out “ M—m,” the whining cry of a dog in distress. Yet Julius was not in distress, though the jeer was off his lips for once.

“ I am astonished, Lily; I did not dream that our little *passade* had consequences.”

“ You might have waited to see.”

But then his mind, ever-leaping, in mental acrobatics,

went obliquely to the possible ugly aspect of the episode and he said:

“When was it born?”

For a moment she did not comprehend, and he saw this and regretted the question even before she had replied, with crushing scorn:

“Nine months after you deserted me.”

“I did not mean that, of course.”

“Whether you did or not makes no difference.”

“It might . . . in law.”

“I am not going to law. I do not want to disgrace the child or myself.”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“If I am that sort of man why do you think I would pay anything?”

“Because, as you have said, love of money is not your ruling passion; you will not want your child dragged up in poverty.”

“My child? No, no, put that out of your head; the wonderful egoism of the father I do not possess. Because I have, unfortunately, or fortunately, been your collaborator in a human masterpiece . . . I am sure it is a beautiful child, eh? . . . by the way, male or female? A girl? Well, then, she has a dowry—her mother’s beauty.”

“But not her father’s cunning—she will suffer in life unless somebody protects her.”

“Oh, you worry such a lot, Lily, you always did. Come, don’t be so melancholy; have another glass of wine.”

She took the champagne which he offered, and drank it almost greedily. He watched her with that detached air, her face was flushed, but her eyes were drab and unapproachable; she was living in the past, and the red of her cheeks was the flush of shame at its memory.

Impalpably, Julius, the master male, sent forth a current of sympathy; he diffused a manly, honest compassionateness; made Lily feel that he was full of regret. He hardly spoke now, but his littlest actions, movements, looks, were charged with pity . . . the empty glass in her hand he filled again. She stared

before her, as though looking into eternity, or back at the ten years that seemed like it.

Imperceptibly he brought his chair nearer, leaning across the table until he nearly touched her; speaking with agitation, sounds harsh and soft in his voice of mystery, discords that were strangely pleasing. . . .

He touched the glass she held, lifted it with her hand, and unconsciously she drank again. Light was coming into her eyes, the light he had seen there on the day they met in the bar; he poured out more, drinking also to encourage her.

How beautiful she was, how very beautiful. Did they realize it, these pigs, the *canaille* of Kimberley, who came to the bar? Could they tell the difference between her pure, natural loveliness and the harlotry of the average barmaid's curls and rouge?

He was carried away by it, overcome by the subtle essence of this woman, as he had been ten years ago. What a fool he was, what a fool! He almost cried aloud. To think, only to think, that he had run away from this thing of beauty, to rummage like a Kafir's pig in the offal and refuse of Kimberley!

"Lily," he said, "I am so sorry . . . so sorry."

She sat silent, staring before her.

"There is no excuse for what I did; I have none to make; I can only say I regret."

At last she spoke, bitterly, cruelly:

"Regrets are not much use; your conduct was so abominable. . . ."

"Abominable," he exclaimed. "Yes, it was insanity."

But then inwardly he cursed himself for the irony of the remark . . . he was like that fool Heine, he would die grinning!

"I can only think that I was insane, Lily. When before me I see you so beautiful, so desirable, I can only think I was mad."

"No, Julius . . . bad, utterly, irreclaimably bad. When I asked you the other day why you had left me . . . like that . . . you said it was bound to be, because in love men are rovers. You will never say a truer thing, nor explain men better."

“ Well, supposing that it is so, how can I help it? You should feel sorry for me.”

“ Sorry for you! Is this more madness? ”

“ Don't jeer at me, try rather to understand. Here am I, poor devil, one of the slaves of Nature, forced, driven, lashed by instincts that somebody gave me, that I never asked for . . . ! ”

“ But not forced to run away afterwards.”

“ Go to Nature, look everywhere. Does the male stay at home to nurse the baby? No, he clears off as fast as he can. Don't ask me to explain it. I cannot. It is the mystery of man, the secret hidden in the blood of the male. How can I explain this frenzy, this thing that drives us, like monster butterflies, from woman to woman, this universal instinct of fertilization? ”

He talked thus for some minutes, his voice rising and falling like a chant, a pagan hymn; its cadence soothing as the cradle song of a mother. Lily ceased to hear the words or to understand or combat them; she felt only the singing rhythm, the restfulness and the peace that it brought her. She was weary with work and anxiety; the wine had first quickened and then dulled her senses. She was filled with an aching, intense desire for rest, for sleep. . . .

Julius drew nearer. He touched her hand, soothingly, hypnotically. She did not stir. His face took on an expression of slow eagerness; for some time he let his hand stray upon hers, and then holding it he softly rose and crept around the table until he stood before her. Nothing harsh in his movement had broken her peace. Lily was asleep. He remained looking down with a faint, almost imperceptible smile in the corner of his eyes, feasting on her beauty. He bent and kissed her hand.

A shuddering sigh passed through her like a cold wind in autumn trees. She rose as in a dream, obscure and perplexed, standing before him with wonder in her face. The blood surged in his veins, it beat upon his temples; his head would burst!

He spread his arms wide, folded her into them, and kissed her brutally on the mouth, holding her head in his hands with a clutch like some strong animal.

It was so violent, unexpected, so passionate, that she offered no resistance, did not know if she wanted to resist; and then suddenly he slipped one arm down, nearly to her feet, and she felt herself lifted from the floor, lying prone in his arms . . . and he was walking away with her, carrying her like a baby to her cot. . . .

Then consciousness returned; she made a swift, unpremeditated leap, striking at his eyes with her right hand. The blow fell truly.

Julius, in turn taken by surprise, lost grip of her legs. She fought down, down, forcing her feet to the floor, finally breaking free, and facing him with hatred and loathing in her eyes.

“ You . . . touch me! You . . . dare to touch me! You! You!! ”

His surprise was greater than hers. He had thought her won, carried away by the violence of his passion. She stood before him vibrating, outraged, like one of the Angels before the men of Sodom. He had lost; he knew that. She had not come back to him; she would not come back to him. And he wanted her, he wanted her. He had never before seen her thus; she was new and mysterious, another woman, more beautiful, desirable; she diffused a rare essence of something fresh and virginal. It was as if he had never known her before. . . .

But she was pointing to the door.

“ Go away from me, you beast! Don't ever come here again.”

“ Lily . . . Lily . . . ! ”

“ No, no, none of that. What did you think I was? What did you think! ”

Her face was pallid with anger; the colour had gone from her lips. She was an avenging goddess.

“ Go away from here. Go away! ”

The contempt in her words, the hatred and loathing in her face, aroused him.

“ Are you afraid to trust yourself with me? ”

She laughed now—an involuntary nervous effort more than a laugh.

“ If only you knew how far that sort of thing was from me to-day.”

“ Yet, Lily, you used not to be so cold.”

He walked calmly to the table and poured out a last glassful of champagne for each of them. The bottle was nearly empty; there was no sparkle left in the wine.

“ A last drink before we part? ”

He held out the glass, but now the sight of it repelled her. It was flat and stale like dead love, and Julius pulled a face as he tasted it. He set the glass upon the table, and as he did so his eyes caught sight of a key on the floor.

“ That was a poor glass of wine. Would it be asking too much for a fresh bottle? ”

“ I want you to go . . . please.”

She had control of herself again; the horror of his touch did not endure.

“ Oh, come, Lily, just a small bottle.”

“ I shall not drink with you. I am tired, and want to go to bed . . . alone.”

But she went to fetch the wine. He laughed at her last word, and then, as her face was averted, he bent to the floor and picked up the key. When Lily turned again to set the champagne before him, Julius was erect, at his usual ease.

“ So you won't be friends with me, Lily? ”

“ Please make haste; I am tired.”

“ Let us understand each other, anyway. You wanted to see me. Why? As the father of your child? But a father is a husband, Lily, and a husband has privileges as well as responsibilities.”

“ Don't you intend to do your share? You mean to let me go on working for Margaret? ”

“ Ah, Margaret? Very nice name, Lily. We should not have quarrelled if you had asked me to help you name the baby! ”

He was in his old mood again. She did not know which way she liked him less.

“ I don't see why you need money from me,” he proceeded. “ You must be making lots here. Soon you are to get a share of the profits. Then there are other things, presents . . . ”

She cut in on him.

“ What has all this to do with your debt? ”

“O—h, without my help, Lily, you might be worse off. I see you do not understand, so I will explain . . . if Rachel Solomons sells the bar it is my intention to buy it.”

“Really . . . ?”

“And when I buy it, Lily”—he spoke with a sense of dawning power—“you shall . . . or shall not work for me.”

For one moment she was tempted to crush him with the knowledge of her power, tell him how she held the bar in her hand. But she merely said:

“When you *are* master here it will be time to talk. And now I must really bid you ‘good night’; it is past two o’clock.”

Without a word more he suddenly rose and walked out of the little room. At the door he turned and said “good night,” then disappeared in the darkness.

Worn out with the strain of her long fight, Lily fell into bed, and slept soundly for seven hours.

“Cissie, I am very cross with you,” she said next morning.

“Oh—what have I done, Miss Lily?”

“You promised never to go to bed without leaving your key in the lock, and last night your door could be opened by anybody with a duplicate. Why did you take the key out?”

“I’m very sorry, Miss Lily—I did it without thinking.”

“Did you?”

“Yes. But in my sleep I remembered, an’ I got up in the middle of the night and put it in.”

“You must not let this happen again, Cissie. I was very worried.”

“Yes, I heard you at the door after I had got up. . . .”

“You heard me . . . *after* you had put the key in the lock? Are you sure?”

“Yes, Miss Lily, shore. You tried to put your key in the keyhole, and when you couldn’t, you went away, eh?”

“Are you positive? Didn’t you hear me enter the room?”

“ No, Miss Lily. I know you didn’ because I laid awake for a long time afterwards.”

“ Was your candle alight? ”

“ No, it was all dark.”

A dreadful thought passed through Lily’s mind, and now, for the first time, she missed Cissie’s key. At once she called Shilling to ask him if he had found it.

“ Ya, Meeses, I pick up this key outside, this morning.”

“ Whereabouts? Come and show me.”

Shilling led her to the front door and pointed to a ledge.

Lily said nothing; she was racked with anxiety and suspicion, wondering if the boy spoke the truth, and, if he did, how she had come to drop the key there. . . .

She strove to recall whether or not she had it on entering with Julius, but the emotions of the night had upset everything in her mind. She could not remember. It was possible she had dropped it outside the door, but there was the strange story told by Cissie. What was the solution of this mystery?

One thing was certain. If the lock had been tried in the early morning, with her key, the person who used it was in a position to manufacture a duplicate. She was glad to see Lynch enter the bar. She told him what had happened, and asked for advice.

“ Get a man in,” he said, “ and put a bar across the door, inside. Here, I’ll tell you what. I’ll put a nigger on the watch for a few nights—a police boy that I can trust.”

Lily did not want any of the detective’s spies on duty near the Golden Bar, but she thanked Lynch and asked him to speak seriously with Cissie, and warn her against forgetting to lock the door. Apart from her obsession, Lily realized the danger of prowling natives, separated from their own women, and brought into hourly contact with white women, whom they served, often intimately. Young virile Kafirs took breakfast into the bedrooms of their mistresses, made their beds, and washed their linen. It was so pleasant to have Jim or Sixpence to do everything; lazily and voluptuously many of the mistresses lay in bed, strangely reasoning that these

savages must be further removed from primitive, animal instincts than the masters. Yet many possessed secret longings, dreams, ambitions they would risk their lives to fulfil. Lynch explained this to Lily. He was seriously perturbed at the thought that the girl might be in danger.

But nothing happened to cause further alarm. Lily came to the conclusion that Cissie had confused the sound at her door with the first one, or had been dreaming. After a few nights the police boy was withdrawn, and Shilling again began to buy stones.

CHAPTER XVI

PROSPERITY came in full measure. Trade grew in the bar; Cissie was an attraction, and Shilling brought some large and valuable diamonds, one realizing close on £1,000. The boy had transferred all his fidelity and service to the new mistress. He obeyed her with the courage and devotion of a beloved dog.

Shortly before the end of her year's agreement Lily was informed by Cohen that Mrs. Solomons had instructed him to sell the bar.

"I must now tell Julius of the option you hold."

"Do you mind letting *me* tell him? You see, Mr. Cohen, I wish to speak to him about the mortgage."

"Of course." But suddenly he added, as if afraid Lily would forget his offer, or accept somebody else's help: "And what about me and the little bit I offered?"

She smiled into his eyes.

"I have not forgotten it . . . Ike."

He was so glad that for the first time she had called him Ike.

"How much will you need, Lily?"

"I don't know. It depends . . . on circumstances." She was expecting a large parcel of stones shortly. It would add greatly to her savings.

"I can go up to the full two thousand if you are stuck," he said.

"Thank you . . . dear friend."

He was ill at ease, though very happy.

"It would leave me short. I couldn't put anything in for working capital . . . and there is the stock to be taken over."

"Oh, don't worry, Ike, I think I can find that."

She would have liked to tell him that she had nearly £1,500 saved, but how could she account for the money?

"Anyway," said Cohen, "you are exercising your option?"

"Yes, I am . . . unless you fail to come up to the scratch."

There was a challenge in this joking phrase. Lily feared that Julius, in anger, might tell enough to change Cohen's opinion of her. It was impossible to gauge any of his actions; he stayed when people wished him to go, and he went when they wanted him to stay. He was alternately mean and generous, charming and abominable. Perhaps he spoke the truth when saying his life depended largely on his liver.

But Cohen agreed that she herself should tell Julius about the option.

After he had gone away, Lily called Shilling inside.

"Shilling, you know Baas Hermann?"

A quick flash in the eye.

"Yes, Meeses . . . he come here sometimes."

"Go to his office and tell him these words . . ."

"Office, Meeses . . . where it is, his office?"

"Ask Miss Cissie, she will tell you."

"Meeses . . . I can go by his house to-night . . . ?"

"No, Shilling, go at once to his office, say to him alone, to nobody else, 'Miss Lily wants to see you, quarter-past twelve to-night.'"

"Yes, Meeses . . . him come here?"

His face betrayed nothing. He bowed his head and hurried out.

Julius came that night, fragrant and fresh; he must

have thought Lily wanted to come back to him. He did not wait outside the front door.

Shilling entered with mysterious eyes, to say: "Baas Hermann is there, Meeses."

"Where, Shilling?"

"Here, Lily," cried Julius, in a voice so young and ardent.

He was seated in the little back room, having followed Shilling through the door where Lily had first greeted her fortune.

"Come here, Shilling," called Lily. She had made up the cash. "Come and clean up the bar." With the Kafir there she went to Julius feeling more comfortable.

"I asked you to come here to-night . . ."

"Ah, yes, Lily," he said, with anticipation alight in his eyes; then he opened the door and softly uttered a few syllables of Zulu.

Shilling laid down his cloth and passed silently out by the back way.

Lily called to him, but he seemed deaf or uncomprehending; he went without replying.

"I have told him to go away," said Julius, with amorous music in his voice, "because you sent for me. . . ."

"I sent for you to tell you I am going to buy the Golden Bar."

"What!"

"You lent £3,000 on it; will you lend me the same amount?"

"What are you talking about? What is this? You want me to put up the money to buy the bar for you?"

"No . . . I want to know if you will leave the £3,000 on mortgage?"

"Huh," he said. "This is bluff—you can't find the money. Cohen can't sell you the business."

"Yes, he can . . . I have a month's option to buy it."

"O—h, that is Isaac's little game, eh? A—h, now I see who is the fancy man!"

"Don't be more of a pig than usual. Why shouldn't I buy the bar?"

"Because if it had not been for me, Rachel would

never have owned it. I am entitled to the first chance."

"Well it will save a lot of useless talk if I show you this—a copy of the option."

He read it swiftly.

"So . . . he gave it when I was in Cape Town? Lily, you were pretty slim."

"I had a good teacher, Julius."

Since this disclosure his attitude had insensibly changed; he sat before her like an antagonist, the lust of the flesh under the lust for power. He was thinking, quickly and eagerly.

"Where are you getting the money?"

"That is my business."

"Cohen, too?"

"That is his business." But having scored, she thought it wise to keep Ike out of the matter. "I will tell you this—I can get the money to buy the business, lock, stock and barrel, from five or six different people."

"It would be a polyandrous concern, eh?"

She did not even reply to his insult. He went on to tell of a native queen in the Transvaal who lived in polyandry with her councillors.

"These stories do not interest me, Julius. All I want to know is this—are you prepared to leave the £3,000 on first mortgage?"

"Why not? I like the privileges of a bond-holder."

"Very well, I will instruct my lawyer to send you a document for your signature."

"It is not necessary—you have my word."

"Thanks. This is a question of your bond—not your word."

He smiled appreciatively.

"Who is your lawyer?"

"Andrew Jack."

"Oh . . . cunning little rat. All right."

He submitted with surprising good grace. It was difficult to know what were his real feelings or desires—had he truly intended to buy the bar; did he resent the way she had bested him; did he feel actual contentment in the position of preferential creditor? To Cohen he

made some protests, formal ones, that smelt of the stage; he saw that nothing would affect Ike's attitude.

The expected parcel of diamonds did not come to her aid; there was a hitch in somebody's plans, but Lily succeeded, nevertheless. Transfer was passed soon after; licensing formalities were fulfilled, and Miss White became proprietress of the now extremely fashionable Golden Bar. She had let Isaac Cohen go to the full extent of his funds, not so much for the use of the money as to avert suspicion from her acquisition of sudden wealth.

Soon it leaked out that Cohen was behind her, and the men of evil tongue yelped in unison that "Uncle" was a slim old rascal; that he had also been more than an "uncle" to Rachel Solomons, and so forth.

Steinsohn was disgusted; he entered the bar immediately after it was known that Lily had bought it.

"Why didn't yer let me know, Miss Lily? I'd 'ave put up the cash like a shot."

She stalled him off with vague phrases, having no wish to lose so good a customer, and he concluded that Cohen was "a mug in the hands of a clever woman." Steinsohn did not despair of his own eventual success. In him there was none of the refined brutality that made Julius Hermann so profound a sensualist, his artistic perceptions were embryonic, and he could be very patient. "But yer might 'ave let me known, Miss Lily . . . yer might 'ave let me known!" How he harped and twanged on this string! He "made a good fellow of himself," but Lily did not forget that in Cape Town he had refused to put up a penny for her coach-fare until he could be sure of her.

Lynch came in and offered his congratulations; there was a sub-sour taint about them that Lily disliked.

"You know, Mr. Lynch," she explained, "I am not really proprietress at all, merely a figure-head."

And she whispered details for his private ear. Lynch had once again changed his tactics. He now frankly discussed the I.D.B. traffic with Lily, impressing upon her its dangers and penalties. He said also that the law would be amended next session, and that things would become very hot for all known to be "in the trade."

To save her face Lily joined heartily in his denunciations of the I.D.B. crowd, she had indeed no great admiration for them.

One day she said: "Have you noticed the absence of refinement in people connected with I.D.B.? Diamonds seem always associated with vulgarity."

"Really, Miss Lily, I had not thought of that, but generally speaking, you are right, though you can't label men as you can diamonds."

"Well, I can only say that all the reputed I.D.B.'s are as flashy and common a lot as one could imagine."

"Not always," he retorted. "I know I.D.B.'s who are as refined as . . . yourself."

Somehow this answer perturbed her.

Then a strange thing happened. Shilling entirely disappeared; for some days he did not come to the bar. Lily could have engaged other Kafirs, but hoped every hour her faithful servant would return. She and Cissie worked harder to cope with the situation, at nights being utterly fatigued by the heat and the toil.

On the morning after Shilling's departure, Cissie came from the yard to say that a strange Kafir was there asking for his brother. She had questioned him and he replied that he wanted Shilling or "the Meeses."

Lily went to the boy; she was anxious, thinking Shilling had been arrested.

"What do you want?"

"Meeses . . . me want Shilling, my brother."

"What do you want Shilling for?"

"Me bring klip for Shilling."

"Go away," cried Lily, "I don't understand you!"

"Look, Meeses, look; mooi klip."

He opened his hand and exposed a large white stone of great value.

Lily was about to take it, but suddenly an instinct, a presentiment of danger laid a hand upon her; something about the Kafir inspired her with mistrust.

"Go away, boy, at once! Shilling does not buy klips—go, or I will have you arrested!"

"Mooi, mooi klip, Meeses . . . me want money to buy woman, only twenty pounds, Meeses."

It was a maddening temptation. Kringe would pay her at least £1,000 for the gem. She dreaded that the Kafir would sell it to somebody else. She must get him to return.

"Come back when Shilling is here."

"Meeses, me want go home now . . . *umame* sick; my mother go die . . . Meeses buy klip . . . give me ten pounds."

In after years Lily wondered whether she would have bought the stone had Cissie not at that moment come into the yard; but never was able to answer definitely . . . the moment was one of fateful irresolution. All she knew was that Cissie ran out and that she clutched at the moral support.

"Send him away, dear; send him away at once!"

Cissie, with angry words, drove the Kafir from the yard.

"What did he want, Miss Lily?"

"He offered to sell me a diamond."

"Well, my Jove, if I knew that I'd have *sjambokked* him." She picked up a piece of wood and ran to the gate, but the boy had disappeared.

Shilling came back two days later. He had, he said, been set upon "by Fingo dogs"; they had beaten him with knobkerries, and he had lain sore and sick in the hut of a friend. Lily told him of the Kafir with the diamond. Shilling could not understand the episode; he declared that none of his friends would offer klip to the Meeses, but said he would make inquiries.

Next day Lily asked him if he had found out who the boy was, for she was anxious to buy the stone.

"Meeses, *pas op*, Meeses, that boy, I know him, he is a police trap."

A sense of dreadful fear passed over her, for she knew that "traps" generally approached people known as I.D.B.'s. The whole business had been cleverly arranged, her boy had been waylaid by accomplices of the "trap." What a narrow escape! She told Shilling not to buy any more stones for a time, and thought seriously of giving up I.D.B. altogether.

This incident created a violent reflux of tenderness for Margaret and Cissie. Good God, supposing she had

been trapped! What would have come to her child? She had no right to imperil Margaret's existence. Then affection for Cissie surged within her; she felt a need for demonstration, wanted to give something as a mark of gratitude, and at length she hit upon the idea of a little stone monument for Sheldon's grave. It was unbeautiful and costly, she felt that the twenty pounds for it was wasted, but she had to do it. The work was secretly carried out, and one Sunday morning Lily took Cissie to the bare cemetery, where carved on stone were the words:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF

THOMAS SHELDON

who died in Kimberley, March 21, 1881, aged 55 years.

Erected by his daughter, whom he loved, and who loved him.

The effect of this modest little gravestone was tremendous. Had Lily planned it with deep intention, she could not have succeeded better. A flood of thankful tears flowed; Cissie was shaken with sobbing, but a joyful sobbing; she felt deep gratitude; this stone she valued more than all the education and up-bringing that her father had failed to give her. How splendid it looked there among the crosses and angels! For the first time she felt that her father would really go to Heaven, felt that she understood the meaning of "Our Father which art in Heaven."

Lily was now overcome by a longing to see Margaret. The thought of the danger that might have separated them for years quickened her love; she spent hours over the child's letters, thinking of her, picturing her. She longed to press the little one to her heart.

So far as the diamonds and the bar were concerned, she was ready to abandon everything and leave Kimberley for a while, but there was Cissie. Both of them could not be away together, and she could not leave Cissie alone.

The railway now reached Victoria West; the coach journey was quicker, but this was no solution of the

essential difficulty. In the end she decided to make inquiries as to the best available schools, and to arrange by post for Margaret's being placed there. It was not easy to learn much from the customers of the Golden Bar; and Lynch was now difficult to approach. There remained Cohen, "Inevitable Isaac," as he laughingly styled himself when Lily went to him for help. To him she explained broadly her requirements.

"So you have decided to send Cissie to school?"

For a moment Lily felt like seizing on this pretext to hide the truth, but she felt lonely and overwhelmed, she longed for somebody to share her moral burden. Cohen was so trustful, sympathetic, so large in his views; she felt she must confide in him.

They were in the little room. Impulsively she seized his hands, as though determined to confess before her courage failed.

"Ike, you have been a true friend, I won't deceive you; I want a school for my own daughter . . . Margaret . . . she is nine years old, a sweet, dear child."

She looked into his face, but read nothing there; his grey eyes were set clear and straight before him, his face was immobile.

"You think I have been deceitful not to tell you before?"

"No," he answered. "Go on, tell me about your little girl."

In short, broken phrases she gave a description of her experiences in Cape Town, and of Margaret's life there. "I had made up my mind to go back at the end of the year, but you see how Fate disposes of us. And Margaret must be put to school."

"Of course. Why didn't you tell me when I went to Cape Town? I'd have done it."

"Yes, Ike, why didn't I?" She dared not tell him that she had wanted first to be sure of his help in the purchase of the bar.

"I thought seriously of asking you, but somehow I . . . didn't."

"Why didn't you, Lily?" He was gravely insistent; the first sign he betrayed of wanting the truth.

"Well, Ike . . . it was not very easy to tell, was it?"

"You were foolish, Lily; I have been waiting a long time to hear this from you."

"You knew?"

"I was told you had a child in Cape Town. Do you remember when I went down, I asked you if you had nothing you wanted me to do? I was hoping you would tell me then."

"Don't be angry, Ike; Life had set me on the defensive; I was afraid to tell you."

He was human and inviting, she went on . . . "I have never been married. At eighteen I fell in love with a man whom I met at Eastbourne. He was clever, handsome, and said to be of noble birth. He pretended to be in love with me. My parents did not like him—they were Cornish people, and though of mixed descent, had prejudices against foreigners. I asked for their consent to become engaged—they refused. We became privately engaged; he gave me an engagement ring which I dared not wear because of my parents . . . In the end I eloped with him. We went to France, to be married in Boulogne. I knew nothing of French laws; he did. When we had crossed the Channel I found it was impossible for me to be married without the consent of my parents. . . . I was full of belief and trust, and very headstrong—would not be turned from my purpose. I wanted to show my parents how they had misjudged him . . . We stayed together one week in an hotel at Boulogne, and then he disappeared, leaving a return ticket, my engagement ring, and . . . Margaret."

Lily said this bitterly, but without flinching, without tears. Cohen took her small hand in his and gently soothed it. After a pause that was full of meaning and relief, she exclaimed:

"I think it is since then that I have hated diamonds!"

"Yes," he said, "I understand now."

He was thinking of the day she was so eloquent.

"Well, now," he proceeded, "Margaret can't go on like this, living with coloured people; it is time she was at school. Unless you'd like her here?"

"Oh, no, no."

"I agree. This is no place to raise a girl. Well, why don't you go down yourself, you could be back in twelve days—I'd keep an eye open. . . ."

"No, Ike, 'tis out of the question."

He tried to persuade her; she was singularly obstinate, he thought, or mistrustful. Finally, he said:

"Well, if you can wait a month I'll go down and do the job for you."

She was grateful; intensely and truly grateful. Carried away by her feelings, she said:

"Would you like to see a photograph of Margaret?"

"I would," he answered, "very much."

She went to fetch the precious picture, while from the bar came the girlish laugh of Cissie, and the words of a comic song, sung by a drunken miner.

"They all do it, they all do it,
Though they very often rue it."

Lily had no misgiving until she stood actually before Cohen. Then the thought passed her mind, did the child possibly bear some resemblance to its father, which she, in her hatred of him, had failed to see? She wanted to look into the photograph, search it; but already Cohen's eyes were on her; he was holding out his hand.

"Let me see it."

She gave it to him.

He scrutinized the picture, long and thoughtfully, as if it were of somebody he had seen, whom he was trying to fit into its setting. This was so clearly written in his face that Lily, to break the silence, cried out:

"Is she not as pretty as I led you to believe?"

"Not at all; she is prettier. But she seems so familiar, I could believe I had seen her. Are you sure I never have?"

"I don't think so, Ike . . . Oh, I know—'tis me you are thinking of; we are the image of one another."

"Of course—of course; that's it." He laughed merrily, but the thoughtful look returned.

"Would you know her if you met in the streets,

Ike?" Lily spoke lightly, trying to chase the gravity from the conversation.

"You bet I would. And it's fixed; I'm going down to put her to school."

After she was relieved of half her secret, Lily found mental intercourse easier with Cohen. They talked incessantly of Margaret; it was a subject that never wearied her; and he chatted of the child with seemingly the same love that the mother did. This she remarked gratefully upon, and he was too shy to admit it was the mother he addressed by way of the child.

"You know, Lily, we Jews are most domesticated people. We love children."

"Your own, not other people's."

"Well, I feel as if Margaret were mine."

She looked with gratitude at him; gratitude, tinged with apprehension. These were the first words he had uttered on the subject of his own feelings. Engaged in a battle of one kind with Julius, she feared to be launched on another with Cohen's goodness, and what was left of her own conscience. Love him she did not, and she had learned that the embers of passion still smouldered within her; with shame she self-confessed that the man she most despised had revealed her weakness to herself.

Sometimes she longed to grow old quickly; old enough to withstand the weakness of her still warm flesh. At other times she felt that if Julius were dead, all would be well. She wanted him dead, to leave her free, body and soul. She knew Isaac Cohen could give her the peace and security for which she longed; and she dreaded that Julius would come between them, either of his own will, or of hers.

Lily narrowed the choice to three schools which Cohen would inspect and choose from. She sent money to Mrs. February, and set aside £10 as a present to the good foster-mother. Each week she and Cohen chatted over this wonderful pilgrimage; read the child's letters, and altogether lived in a sweet, pure air, which enfolded them spiritually amidst the sordid life around.

Steinsohn and Bennington one day saw Ike go into the back room.

Hector winked at Angel, and loudly said:

“Who’s that just gone through, Cissie? Miss White’s sleeping partner?”

Then they laughed understandingly.

Cissie had learned a great deal since being there, and could already use her tongue to good purpose.

“I dunno about ‘sleeping partner,’ but I know he’s paid up the money he put on my subscription list.”

“Ah, well, my dear, he makes a lot out of this place.”

“Not out of you, anyway! There’s a lot of your cards there—per’aps you’d like to settle them?”

Steinsohn laughed at his friend’s predicament, and Bennington with a lordly air drew out a cheque book.

“How much is it?”

“O—h, my Jove, he’s going to pay! Here, I’ll go and call Miss Lily!”

Cissie rushed into the back room and at once Lily came out.

“Ah, Mr. Bennington, ’tis a long time since we’ve had the pleasure of seeing you.”

“Been devilish busy of late.”

“Cissie tells me you want to settle your cards?”

“Yaas.”

Lily already had them upon the counter, and quickly totalled the sum.

“Eight pounds ten and sixpence.”

He asked for a pen and ink and splayed his cheque-book formidably.

“Can’t you let me have cash?” asked Lily.

“Sorry. As a matter of fact I’m going to make this out for £10 more, and ask you to kindly give me the change.”

“I’m sorry I can’t do it, Mr. Bennington. I really can’t.”

“Well I’m damned . . . I beg pardon! . . . Surely . . .”

“Indeed, you owe me another five guineas. Do you remember you put yourself down on Cissie’s list?”

“Didn’t I pay that? Thought I did. Quite slipped me. Well, there you are; there’s a cheque for the lot—thirteen-ten.”

He seized the cards and tore them across.

Next day his cheque was returned by the bank: "refer to drawer." It went into the old pigeon-hole where the cards had lain so long.

At length Cohen left, laden with messages, letters, instructions, and little presents. Cissie was as excited as Lily. She sent Margaret her most precious possession—all the garnets and other poor relations of the diamond that she had collected on her father's various claims. It was estimated that Cohen could return in fifteen days.

How long they were! They recalled that week when Margaret missed the post. Lily told Cissie not to speak to anyone of Cohen's business, but themselves they talked of nothing else. Cissie began to put questions which were impossible to answer without untruths that made Lily feel contemptible. Cissie was loyal and straight; she deserved to be frankly treated.

So one day Lily told her the truth, with a certain amount of paraphrase, to make Cissie realize that it was a serious thing to be an unmarried mother, that it carried with it the social stigma of the defeated. The effect was peculiar. The social stigma Cissie did not comprehend, but she said it was awful that a father should desert mother and child.

"Why did he make love to you, Miss Lily, if he didn't love you?" No, she could not understand the mystery of the flesh; and to Lily it seemed that the experience and the tears of countless ages of women were futile against the cunning of Nature. Nothing would profit this girl but her own experience, and then, would it not be too late? Life, Love, Death . . . how strangely alike! How they kept their secret from men and women, kept it unto the last.

A saying of Cohen's beat like a hammer on her brain: "You cannot buy a pound's worth of Experience for nineteen and elevenpence." No, there was no profiting by the experience of others. If the Golden Apple of Knowledge were presented to Cissie, with time, place and circumstance fitting, she would eat of it, as the first woman did, and as she, Lily White, had done. It all depended on Chance, Fate, Luck. Would the right man come first or would he miss the coach, and arrive after the wrong man?

Lily now unconsciously pursued another line. Without being aware of it, she was picking a husband for Cissie. She realized that woman could not live without man, any more than man without woman, and she pursued the tactics of a match-making mamma. But what a sterile atmosphere for matrimony it was! Heavens, there was scarcely a man who entered the bar whom she would have liked to see in charge of a Kafir's dog. The younger ones had not even money!

And she noticed that Cissie showed a marked preference for the younger men; perhaps because they were less affectionate, perhaps because, healthy and natural herself, she was directed instinctively to youth. Once a good-looking Scotsman took her eye, another day it was a tall, sunburnt Boer, perhaps twenty-two years old. Ah, if only she could keep the older men at bay, those over thirty, who had lost the illusions of youth and had gained cunning instead!

Shilling on several occasions approached Lily; with pathetic, mysterious eyes he implored her to look at some nice klips that were offered to him. But she refused; she knew they would tempt her. She did not want to see the hateful things. At this time the best in her was uppermost; she lived in thoughts of Margaret, waiting for Cohen's return to have news of her beloved child. In the bar business had never been so brisk. They were, as Kringe said, "coining money." He waited patiently for more diamonds, and Shilling waited patiently too.

And then at last Cohen returned. The coach drew up before an hotel not far from the Golden Bar. It was a busy hour of the day; Lily sent Shilling with a note:

"DEAR IKE,—If you are not too tired, can you come in at once and see me before you go to your rooms."

Cissie was on the watch.

"Here he comes, Miss Lily!" Then she ran behind the counter to serve, and Lily greeted Ike at the door with a long, intimate hand-grip.

"Is Margaret well?"

"Quite."

"Happy?"

"Well, I guess by now she is . . . poor little kid. . . . My God, Lily, I wouldn't like that job again."

"Oh, Ike, I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

But then he saw men staring and nudging.

"Don't you worry," he softly said. "I'll come round when things are quieter and tell you all the news. Meanwhile, this is for you, and this, and this. Letters from Margaret, Mrs. February—presents from Margaret. I've got one for Cissie—give it to her."

"No, you give it. Look, I'll pop behind now. She'll see you for a second . . . come back to-night after closing."

"Right, that'll give me time for a nap. I'm pretty tired."

His manner was strained, and his face drawn from want of sleep.

"You poor old dear," breathed Lily with gratitude. "I will never forget your kindness."

He smiled serenely, and she went to take the place of Cissie, who jumped joyfully at Cohen's neck, giving him a smacking kiss.

Behind the bar somebody said, "Oh," and another drew his lips together to produce a kissing noise such as wits make in the gallery at pathetic moments in the play.

Cissie whispered: "Did you see her? Is she pretty? I bet she is. . . ."

"This is for you, Cissie. See you later. So long."

That night, after hours, they crowded together in the bar, for it was suffocatingly hot in the office.

"Now," said Lily, "tell us all the news."

"Well, I first saw the little girl . . . on the front stoep of Number 36 Rose Street. As soon as she spotted me she cried:

" 'You're Uncle Ike, I know you are.'"

" 'Yes, I am. How did you guess?'"

" 'Because you look just like it,' she said. 'You look like Santa Claus without his beard.'"

" 'Oh, ho,' I said, 'as old as that?'"

" 'Perhaps not quite as old, but very like him.' Then she ran into the house, calling out: 'Mrs. February, here's my Uncle Ike!' My word, she does talk pretty!

“ Along came a brown woman—almost what we call a mammy in the States. She said: ‘ Come inside, Boss.’ Into a clean front room I went. I gave your letter, and the little girl read it for her, and then read her own. And they both began to cry, realizing that Margaret had to go to school. So I handed the ten pounds to Mrs. February, and told her it was a present from you.”

“ What did she say? ” asked Lily.

“ Said it wasn’t money she wanted. She was willing to keep Margaret for nothing if you would let her stay. I tell you, I felt pretty mean.”

“ So do I, Ike.”

“ ‘ Yes,’ she said, ‘ my husband has got very fond of the little girl, and now, perhaps, when she’s gone, he’ll feel angry with me because I haven’t any children for him.’ ”

“ But if she’s married, why can’t she have children, Miss Lily? ” Cissie’s voice broke in on them strangely.

Cohen went on, his Western burr calm and soothing in the night.

“ I explained things, and she said she knew it had to be, that Margaret could not stay there always; but still it made her unhappy. She asked me if I didn’t know of anyone who had a little girl to leave with her for keeps; said she might even adopt a boy. Well, I told her there were plenty of children about the world without parents, and I showed her how to set about getting one.”

“ Where have you put Margaret to school? ”

“ Don’t disarrange the story, Lily. I’m coming to that. Well, Margaret began kicking . . . ”

“ Kicking? Surely not! ”

“ Asserting herself. ‘ I won’t go to school far from Mrs. February. If you put me there, I’ll run away and come back! ’ ”

“ Well, I talked to her, and gave her all the little presents—Cissie, she loved your garnets; she thinks they’re beautiful.”

“ Oh, Cissie, you were so attached to them. You shouldn’t have given them away,” said Lily.

"She wrote me a letter, Miss Lily, with a pansy pressed in it. I'll read it, eh?"

" 'DEAR KUZIN CISSIE,' she starts, 'I rite to thank you for your sweet roobys and all the prety stones and also the blue beeds and the red wuns. I hav only a perpil pansy to send you, but my uncle Ike will giv you a loving kiss from your loving Kuzin.

" 'MARGARET.'

"Isn' she ole-fashioned, eh? Fancy to write like that at nine!"

Cohen again took up the story.

"I pacified the little mite, and promised that Mrs. February should go and see her every week. Well, then I cut out Stellenbosh and those far-away places, and I went to the Fredeburg Seminary in the Gardens of Cape Town."

"I know," said Lily recollectively. "We often walked up there, Margaret and I, to eat our lunch under the oaks in the avenue, when it was hot."

"It is a lovely school, Lily. Large grounds and fine view, nice teachers, good food."

"Will she be happy?"

"Yes, if children are ever happy in schools. When I took her there she cried, but simply because she was parting from Mrs. February. I made them promise to let Mrs. February do Margaret's laundry, so that every week she can take it to the school and see the child. That seemed to cheer her . . . but I must say, these partings and separations are cruel things in children's lives."

Then they chatted, sadly at first, but soon with animation. Cohen gave quaint descriptions; he spoke of Margaret with affection. "She jumped with both feet into my heart." And so they went on until suddenly Cissie cried:

"My word, it's past two o'clock. I've never been up so late before."

"No, dear, you must go to bed at once. And don't get up for breakfast. I'll give you some in bed."

Cohen rose, but Lily said:

“ Will you wait five minutes, and see Cissie to her room as you go? ”

“ But I’m not afraid, Miss Lily! ”

“ No, Cissie, but I am.”

Then Lily sat down to write, for the coach was going out next day, and she wanted Cohen to post a letter.

CHAPTER XVII

A PERIOD of calm succeeded the troubled year of Lily’s initiation into the life of the Fields.

Margaret’s letters grew cheerful; she was happy at school, and making way with her studies, as her mother could see by the riper style of composition, and her spelling. At the end of the first quarter came an excellent report:

“ Margaret White,” it read, “ has made remarkable progress . . . first in her class for English . . . diligent, attentive . . . at times wilful.”

“ Good,” exclaimed Lily. “ She has a will, and is not going to be flattened out by life.”

Letters from the principal were addressed to Mrs. White, Poste Restante. Lily did not wish it known that she kept a bar; the Cape was full of snobbery and class prejudices, from which Margaret might suffer.

She did not begrudge £30 for the next quarter’s fees. Margaret was happy! So was Cissie, now growing into the most attractive young woman on the Fields. She was so piquant, very lively, and intelligent of face, with childishly alert movements that were held, not lost, in the maturing curves of her body. She rallied and chaffed the men; but if any of the Tight Brigade (as she called the unsober) forgot himself, or Steinsohn became

over-true to type, she quickly put him in his place. Oh, yes, Cissie was beginning to know a thing or two. Sometimes Lily thought that under supervision the education of the bar was good training for a girl not naturally vicious.

Shilling kept on looking at his mistress with pathetic eyes, hoping she would let him buy more klips. One day he entered the office with a beautiful stone, pure white, flawless—really a perfect gem—but she would not buy it.

Then the boy began to protest.

“Meeses, if you not buy klip when my brothers bring to me, they got angry and will never come back no more.”

“I don’t care, Shilling; let them go away.”

“But, Meeses, why you don’t want to buy this klip?”

“You know the police are watching me.”

“Yes, Meeses, but this boy not police boy. Him good boy; steal always. He bring you before many klip; he know you buy.”

“Tell him I don’t buy any more.”

“Meeses must buy, Meeses. This boy want twenty pounds. If Meeses don’t buy he got angry; he say he tell poolice that I did buy from him before.”

“Did he say that, Shilling?”

“Yes, Meeses, he got angry; he say me no more brother of him. He go tell Baas Lynch, put me in tronk.”

Shilling spoke with sincerity; he was afraid of the boy in the yard. . . . Lily took the stone in her fingers; it was worth even more than the one offered by the “trap.” She let it roll in her hand; there was no need to get out the scales, the weight was close on eighty carats.

“If I buy it, Shilling, it is to please you. But I shall not take the klip now; you can pay the boy, and hide it until to-night, then give it to me.”

She had perfect confidence in him. Had he been white her prejudices against men might have created suspicion in her mind. But Shilling was black—a cross between some useful domestic article and a faithful dog.

Already she had acquired the South African point of view. . . .

Late that night she told him to give her the diamond. He took it from the astrakhan-woolly hair of his head, where it had lain like a scab on a sheep.

“ Mooi, mooi klip, Meeses! ” he murmured.

“ Yes, Shilling. Now go on cleaning the floor.”

She went into the back room and took up a large-necked bottle. The diamond was so broad that it would not go in. For five minutes she searched to find a hiding-place, and at length looked up by chance into the reproachful eyes of a koodoo, whose stuffed head hung on the wall. She climbed upon a chair, undid two stitches, and pushed the stone into the stuffing.

Lily knew that in its present state the law could not touch her unless evidence were forthcoming that she had herself bought or bartered the illicit gem. She went to bed feeling secure, in pleasant anticipation of a large profit, but she slept badly, nevertheless.

Kringe did not come in all next day; since she had stopped buying he frequented the bar less. Lily asked herself if his attentions had not originally been paid with the object of I.D.B.? Noah still came in; he had proposed love first, then marriage, and showed signs of restiveness, though not despair. He was a patient man, and felt sure he would in the end succeed. Lily had once gone to the theatre with him; he regarded this as encouraging.

Andrew Jack flowed in after tiffin, always suave and attentive, whispering across the counter. He informed Lily that he had left the Court Hotel, and now had a small house.

“ Lucky man,” said she. “ I wish I didn’t have to spend my days in this oven.”

“ Now look here, Miss White. I have a very good cook, a Cape boy; won’t you come and dine with me? ”

“ Oh, I can’t get away, Mr. Jack.”

“ Do come . . . I have a piano; I would love to hear you play.”

“ Are you musical? ”

“ Very,” he said. “ I am very fond of music.”

Cissie, passing at the back of them, was carrying

cigars. She heard Jack's remark and stopped, slipping a band off a large Havana as she did so.

"You're fond of music, eh? Well then, here's a band for you."

She laughed merrily, and so did Lily, but Jack was annoyed. He felt ridiculous; the incident brought him unpleasantly before the crowded bar-room. He tried to continue his persuasion, but he had been knocked out of his stride. He was a consulting lawyer with a bedside manner, but "'opeless in court." Public repartée was not his forte.

Lily brushed him easily aside. Next day his long-deferred bill came in. Apart from the actual transfer fees, it amounted to over fifty pounds. The excessive charges surprised her; she asked Cohen about them.

"You can do nothing but pay," he replied. "If a lawyer is dirty he can load the dice against you every time."

Jack did not return to the Golden Bar. He followed Steinsohn's example, but more thriftily. He persuaded a knock-kneed contralto to join him as housekeeper; she had been left in Kimberley by an unprosperous burlesque company.

Two days later Kringe came in. Lily had passed through torments of apprehension. She told the diamond-broker this; he softly reassured her.

"You've nothing to worry about."

"Well, Louis," she whispered, "I've been very anxious, as you know, since . . . look here, I'll get you your drink from inside. When you get it, look out." He understood. At the door she turned and called loudly: "One moment, Mr. Kringe, I'll get you yours; there's none left here."

Into his port—it was fruitily opaque—she placed the diamond, and Kringe, in swallowing the liquor, was left with it in his mouth.

He chatted no more, but walked sharply away. Next day, after some haggling, he paid Lily £1,100, himself selling the stone for £1,900.

The success of this transaction nearly doubled her savings, and tempted Lily back into "the trade."

Scornfully she likened herself to a boy sitting on the brink of a pool, afraid to take the plunge with his chums because a policeman might be round the corner. No, now was the moment—now or never. The time to keep *out* of I.D.B. would be after the new law.

Noah had told her that the authorities were thinking out various ways to deal with the problem. There was a proposal to shut up all native labourers for their whole term of service. This would automatically cut off supplies of illicit diamonds.

Lily passed from one extreme to the other. She let Shilling now buy as much as he could, and no longer quibbled over a few pounds. Any price in reason she paid. The result was more stones, and the Kafirs also asked better prices.

In that mysterious way in which unpleasant secrets "get about," it began to be whispered that Lily White, the virtuous and unapproachable, was an I.D.B. Certain sage men said she had been specially brought there to take Rachel Solomons' place. The rumour appeared to start in a neighbouring bar, whose star had waned as Lily's grew brighter.

Lynch heard it with anger. He was anxious also because of Cissie; he had tried his best by fear and persuasion to discourage Lily from the traffic. He came often to the bar. He and Cissie were friends as good as ever; she did not know that he was in love with her. He would come in and ask for a drink, chat with her—now a little shyly—and as she went to serve other customers would stand feeding his hard, unloverlike eyes on her beauty. To Lily he was polite, but a feeling of strain held them apart. He no longer chatted in the old style, and of diamonds spoke hardly at all. This atmosphere of restraint led Lynch to keep an off-duty watch outside, and one day he met Cissie going to the cemetery.

"Hullo, Mr. Lynch, coming with me, eh?"

"May I, Cissie?"

So together they went along. It was the end of winter; the sun shone hot overhead, but the veld was bare; dust flew from the arid soil and off the debris heaps; a chill wind blew from the Orange Free State.

Altogether an unpleasant day. In the cemetery the graves looked poorer than before; some wild daisies that Cissie had planted over her father were dead.

Coming away, Lynch, taking her in her most serious mood, approached the subject of her life at the Golden Bar.

“ But it was you, Mr. Lynch, who asked Miss Lily to take me.”

“ I know, Cissie, but I regret it. What will you become? ”

“ What do you mean? ”

“ Ah, Cissie, 'tis not easy to tell. I know Miss Lily has been good to you, and you owe her a duty . . . no matter what people may say.”

“ What do people say? A fat lot I care what they say! ”

He did not reply.

“ Go on, tell me what they say.”

“ No. You would repeat it to Miss Lily.”

“ No, I won't . . . here, I bet I know what it is—it's I.D.B., eh? They say she's an I.D.B.? ”

He remained silent.

“ Ach, what,” she shouted, “ it's a lie. Wasn' I there one day when a Kafir tried to sell her a big white stone, and she told me to clear him off. If she was an I.D.B. would she do that? You know what it is, Mr. Lynch, they say everybody's an I.D.B. in Kimberley. I wonder they don't say I'm one.”

“ They will, Cissie, if you stay at the Golden Bar.”

“ Oh, yes, eh! And what do you want me to do? Go on the streets? ” She had heard that women “ went on the streets ” without any real perception of what they did there. “ Yes, eh . . . go on the streets, I suppose? ”

“ No, Cissie. Why don't you get married? ”

She nearly shook the hat off her head laughing.

“ Married! Me!! And who could I marry? Little Brooksey who's getting warts on his chest running after barmaids, or that old *smeerlap*, Steinsohn! ”

“ You needn't marry either of them, Cissie . . . if I were to ask you, would you marry me? ”

She started to laugh, but then, seeing that Lynch was

in earnest, gradually froze into an attitude of half-joking shyness.

“ Would you? ” he repeated.

“ Ach, go on, Mr. Lynch, you’re pulling my laig.”

“ Indeed I’m not, Cissie. I am speaking truly.”

“ Oh, it’s not sensible,” she answered. “ I’m only a little girl ‘ with the milk still wet behind my ears,’ as ma used to say. And you are quite an old man . . . I mean next to me.”

“ I could look after you better than all those wasters who tell fairy tales across the counter! ”

“ Oh, don’t you worry about them, Mr. Lynch! See any green in my eye? I only lead them on to spend their money, that’s all. Miss Lily puts me up to *their* little games. Break girls’ hearts and clear off. I know them.”

She assumed a wise and experienced air.

But suddenly a lot of goats came towards them, and Cissie darted away to play with a kid whose long ears attracted her. When this was finished she and Lynch resumed their walk, and no more was said on the subject until they approached the Golden Bar.

“ Don’t tell Miss White what I said to you, Cissie,” he whispered.

“ I won’t make any promises,” she chaffed. “ Come in and have a drink? ”

“ No, thank you . . . not to-day. So long . . . don’t forget my offer always holds good. I will wait for you until you are old enough to know your mind.”

Cissie told Lily. Her nature was so expansive and reciprocal she could not wait even for the privacy of midnight, but found occasion to whisper as she and Lily were reaching for the sherry on the back shelf.

“ Well, I’m not surprised, Cissie.”

“ No—why, eh? ”

But Lily had gone to serve the customer.

When the bar was closed they resumed. . . .

“ What did you answer to him, Cissie? ”

“ Of course it’s all rot, you know . . . I don’t want to marry anybody.”

“ If a good-looking young fellow came along and told you ‘ the tale ’ you’d change your tune.”

“ No, I wouldn’.”

“ Don’t be too cocksure! Men around you all day, flattering . . .”

“ Men? Fine lot they are! ”

“ Cissie . . . Cissie! If it weren’t so serious I could laugh to hear you, a child of seventeen, talking as if you knew all about life. Mind that the first young scoundrel who comes along doesn’t make you change your opinion.”

“ I bet he won’t! ”

“ Will you make that a promise, Cissie? ”

“ Yes, I will.”

“ You promise not to fall in love or do anything foolish without telling me first? No love affair without my approval? ”

“ Yes, I promise, honour bright! ”

“ All right, Cissie, I’ll keep you to your word.”

“ It’s a bet, Miss Lily.”

“ Now tell me . . . why don’t you like Mr. Lynch? ”

“ Oh, I like him all right. I don’t want to marry him.”

“ I believe he’d make a good husband.”

“ Would he? Why, Miss Lily? ”

“ Oh . . . those sandy-haired men nearly always do. Husbands are like frocks, neutral colours are safest. Beware of the very dark or the very fair. . . . By the way, have you seen Mr. Hermann lately? ”

“ He came in the other day, Miss Lily, when you were laying down.”

“ *Lying* down, child, not *laying*. What did he talk about? ”

“ Oh, nothing partic’lar. Asked me if I still liked being here, so I said: ‘ I never want to go away.’ ”

“ What did he say then? ”

“ ‘ Bravo!’ Just like that, ‘ bravo.’ Then he patted me on the cheek and went away. He’s really not so bad when you know him, eh? ”

“ But you *don’t* know him, Cissie. He’s a beastly man, but never lets you see it until . . . well, you know what I’ve told you.”

“ Oh, don’t think he can ‘ tell me the tale,’ Miss Lily . . . I’m no mug, you know.”

“ Yes, Cissie, you think you are very knowing—that

will get you into trouble. Look at the way you invited Lynch into your bedroom! ”

“ Why, what’s wrong with that? ”

“ In Lynch’s case, nothing. But you didn’t know he was in love with you. Suppose he had been somebody else? ”

“ But I wouldn’t ask a man into my room unless I knew him.”

“ Poor Cissie! There are few of them we *do* know until they have been into our rooms. Supposing Mr. Hermann wanted to go into your room? ”

“ I wouldn’t let him.”

“ Do you like him, Cissie? ”

“ He’s no worse than any of the others. He doesn’t eat spring onions, anyhow! My, don’t some of their breaths whiff when they blow over the counter and try to kiss me! ”

“ Does he try to kiss you? ”

“ No, never.”

“ He’s very cunning, like a tiger; waits—waits until he can reach you in one jump.”

“ Well, he can’t jump over the counter,” said Cissie innocently. And then she laughed, thinking of Julius jumping over the counter.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME days after this, Bennington, well-dressed and groomed, entered the Golden Bar. He swaggered up to the counter and said:

“ Oh, by the way, my bank informs me that by error it returned a cheque drawn in your favour for thirteen. I’m sorry; it was a mistake—quite unintentional.”

He then laid down two five-pound notes, and three pounds ten shillings in gold.

Lily thanked him.

He called for a bottle of champagne, and asked them to join him.

“Doing well, Mr. Bennington?”

“I don’t know . . . it seems as if the claims might turn out better than I thought. Of course, if they do I will see that Cissie stands in for a bit—in spite of Sheldon’s agreement.”

“Well, that’s kind of you, Mr. Bennington.”

His attitude and general behaviour were amazing. Lily did not believe in him; she wondered what he was up to.

“What are you getting to the hundred loads?” asked Cissie technically.

“Aw, well,” said he, “’tis not so much that, Cissie. There are some big people after the claims.”

“Go on,” she cried.

“Fact. I’ve had indirect offers.”

“Are you going to sell?”

“If they come up to the scratch, why shouldn’t I? As a matter of fact, I want Miss Lily to allow you out for a couple of hours to-morrow, after tiffin, because I’m in a bit of a fix over the boundaries. You are the only person who knows the property.”

Lily made no reply, nor did Cissie. They thought they saw now through his change of front.

“Suppose you do sell, what do you propose to give Cissie?”

“Oh, ho, Miss Lily,” he laughed. “You are wide awake.”

“Well . . . one has to be . . .”

“I don’t blame you. Look here, what do you say to £50?”

“But you agreed to pay £240 to daddy,” Cissie cried.

“Oh, I don’t want to haggle; he had two instalments, and legally I owe him nothing. Will a hundred do you?”

“Yes, I think that is quite fair,” said Lily, who thought it amazingly generous.

“Good . . . then I’ll call for Cissie at two o’clock to-morrow?”

“I can’t get away, too; somebody must chaperon her.”

“ Oh, really,” he chaffed. “ You’re not very complimentary.”

“ On the contrary. No, no, she can’t go alone.”

“ Ach, Miss Lily, I don’t need anyone,” interrupted Cissie. “ There are the boys on the claims. . . .”

“ We shall be quite a little party,” Hector added. “ Several mining men . . .”

“ No, no, Mr. Bennington. Cissie cannot go alone. I will see if I can find a friend to accompany her. Cissie is only a child. By the way, that reminds me . . . will you be kind enough to put your offer of £100 into writing.”

He resigned himself to the humiliation of the moment, and signed a brief document.

“ ’Tis conditional on her indicating the boundaries to-morrow.”

“ Quite so.”

Cissie had now gone to serve other men.

Hector bent forward, and, with a knowing leer, whispered :

“ How’s your little daughter going on? ”

Lily was taken by surprise, but pulled herself together.

“ Very well, indeed, Mr. Bennington.”

He sipped the amber wine.

“ I hear she’s going to have a stepfather one of these fine days.”

“ Really, who told you that? ”

“ ’Tis all over the Fields that you and Cohen are going to set up house together. Some say you’re actually going to be married.”

She matched the insolence of his tone :

“ I might do worse, Mr. Bennington.”

“ Has Ike met . . . the little girl? ”

“ Suppose you ask him yourself? He will probably be with you to-morrow afternoon.”

“ Ged . . . really? I hope not. I haven’t much love for the Chosen Race. . . . Good Lord, ‘ Mrs. Ikey Cohen ’; sounds awful, you know.”

“ It might sound worse,” she retorted. “ It might be Mrs. Hector Bennington.”

“ But you could do better for yourself, Miss Lily. You must have had a lot of good offers? ”

"Oh, lots . . . seventeen proposals of marriage, and one hundred and seventy of the other thing. I have calculated that ten per cent. when driven to desperation, propose marriage."

"But why marry a Jew?"

"Not for the pleasure of abstaining from bacon. I'll tell you a secret—Jews are the best husbands in the world."

"Oh, I see, you choose hubby on this principle—the bigger the nose, the bigger the bank balance."

"Not only that. Jews are very good to their women. . . ."

"Because they like to show 'em off in fine togs and jewels, and do themselves proud."

"Whatever it is, Mr. Bennington, 'tis very pleasant for the women. And now I'll tell you another secret . . . there's no truth in the whole story; there's nothing at all between Ike Cohen and me."

"Not even the bar counter," he chaffed.

"By the way," she asked, "how is your Scottish friend, Steinsohn? We see little of him now."

"Oh, Stonesign," said Hector, "has a new housekeeper. He bought her by public auction."

"What are you saying?"

"Don't you know—there's a little clique of amateurs, Steinsohn, Goldie and a few more, who bid between themselves if a desirable . . . companion turns up, and is running loose."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Quite," said he. "They pool the money; the chap who gets the housekeeper pays the rest of 'em. One of the winners married the girl—idiot—and she left him six months after."

Bennington said this with urbanity, and walked out leaving Lily so nauseated that she had to follow him soon after into the air.

She called at Cohen's office, and he was so happy to see her that he behaved like a boy of eighteen.

"No, no; I can't stay to tea, Ike . . . I must fly."

She explained the object of her visit.

"Yes," he answered, "I'll go with Cissie. What is this deal Bennington talks about? I'll make inquiries

and let you know if it's genuine. I wonder if it's any use letting Cissie go on the off-chance?"

Isaac had business next morning at Julius Hermann's offices, and with surprise learned that Bennington was apparently engaged in a serious deal. The interested financiers were said to be nervous regarding the title-deeds. Perhaps Sheldon had legally not been properly obliterated; his heirs might be troublesome.

Cohen decided that Cissie should go that afternoon. All the morning he was engaged off and on with Julius. Between noon and one o'clock he started to leave.

"Come and lunch with me, Ike . . . I want to talk over that question of the bort with you."

"I wanted to go and see some claims."

"But I won't keep you . . . there'll be time."

"Oh, all right then, Julius." He could not refuse; it was of importance this question of low-grade diamonds or bort.

They lunched at the club. Julius was in high spirits, pressing upon Cohen more wine than he usually took. Time went quickly. It was quarter-past two before the guest got away. He hailed a cab and hurried to the Golden Bar.

Bennington was there, fuming and trying to get off. Lily had firmly refused. Hector's welcome was a sour one, but Cissie made up for it by slapping her "uncle's" one cheek, and kissing the other. The "mining men," whom Bennington had so bombastically spoken of, consisted of a one-eyed prospector, whose field was the billiard-rooms, and whose most notable mining exploit was a hole dug in the green cloth when drunk. The nose of this individual gleamed like a boiled beetroot, and its condition was now fostered by repeated rounds of free whisky. Bennington angrily and airily signed cards, but at length the cart, hired for the excursion, started off. It had barely turned the corner when a clerk from Hermann's office stepped into the street and hailed the driver.

"What's up, Solly?" asked Cohen.

"The boss would like to see you about a parcel of stones just come in."

“ Well, tell him I’ll try to be back early, and call in before closing time.”

“ We’ll never do it, Ike,” declared Bennington. “ Better get out now.”

“ No, I’m not going.”

“ Mr. Hermann will be in a temper,” argued the clerk. “ He told me to be sure to catch you before you went.”

Cissie also took a hand. “ Go on, Uncle, get out, we’ll wait.”

Irritated out of his habitual calm, Isaac got down. He walked as if with a settled, angry purpose. But when he entered the Hermann Co.’s offices, intent on giving its principal the end of his cool tongue, there was no Julius!

“ Well, I’m damned,” said the clerk. “ He was here.”

Ike hurried to where he had left the cart, but the vehicle had disappeared.

“ I suppose the drunken sweeps have gone back to the bar.” He started to walk there, but, before rounding the corner, the cart came into view, Cissie waving excitedly.

“ They wanted to go without you, but I swore I’d jump out if they did!”

“ Rot,” said Hector. “ ’Twas a little fun, that’s all.”

“ No, it wasn’t,” persisted Cissie. “ You wanted to go without him.”

By this time Cohen was in the cart again. The driver smartly whipped up the horses, and in less than half an hour they drew to a standstill before the claims.

And here a third surprise awaited them—Julius himself. By now Ike’s choler was calmed; without anger he asked Julius for an explanation.

“ Do you mean to say that damned fool Solly told you I was at the office? ”

“ He took me there.”

“ I’ll sack him to-morrow. I told him I’d meet you here.”

“ But you didn’t know I was coming here.”

“ Yes . . . I heard so after you left me,” and then, turning it to laughter, he poked Ike’s ribs jeeringly:

“Going to see some claims, eh? Very nice claims they are, too,” looking at Cissie with admiration. “Ah, Ike, you’re getting old, my boy; it’s a sure sign when you go chasing after the youngsters.”

Cissie joined in the general hilarity; there was no denying Julius this day; he was full of the wine of life, radiating a charm that was felt by everybody; his eyes were bright and sparkling, and his face luminous. He had days like this; when he went out women in the streets turned to look at him; he was irresistible. On other days it was not so, and he had learned to realize that these, his off-days, came either when his health was poor, or his spirits low, or followed upon periods of overstrain and exhaustion.

Now he rallied Cohen, cleverly making Cissie the pivot of his remarks, chaffing and paying subtle compliments at the same time. Lily was not there; her seriousness would overhang him like a pall; she could “weigh him up” and weigh him down at the same time. Oh, no, to-day he felt like a lark; he wanted to rise in the air. Cissie had never before seen him like this, and she lost all fear of him, looking on with laughing, wide-open eyes. On such simple, unsensuous natures, Julius knew the power of laughter; he possessed this power, the power of a low comedian with the advantage of his handsome face; an irresistible combination. Cohen was brought back to good humour, and Bennington haw-hawed immoderately until Julius turned him into ridicule for the benefit of the others.

“Well now, suppose you start in and go over the claims.” Isaac spoke.

“All right. But before you begin work,” replied Julius, “we will drink good luck to the enterprise.”

The alcoholic prospector and Bennington applauded the suggestion, though neither Cohen nor Cissie wanted liquor. But to refuse such a toast was out of the question. Julius produced a case of choice champagne and some sandwiches; he himself filled the glasses.

“Don’t be afraid, it won’t hurt you, Cissie.”

“But I’m not used to drinking, Mr. Hermann.”

“What about all you take with customers in the bar?”

“ Oh, I don't . . . ” And then she stopped, Julius finishing the sentence for her:

“ You throw them under the counter, you little *schelm*. ”

It pleased her to be called a “ skellum, ” it was so South African; somehow in her eyes it simplified Julius immensely, as when a king pats a newsboy's head and asks him for a match. This powerful man, so aloof, so feared, treating her as an equal, laughing and joking; Cissie scarce knew where she was. She gulped down the champagne. It was pleasant; a very ladylike wine, and the tingling, bubbly sensation had never failed to amuse her. She again emptied the glass which he had quickly refilled.

“ My Jove, if Miss Lily saw me drinking so much fizz I would catch it! ”

Isaac heard this through the noise of the men; it recalled him to his duties.

“ Yes, Cissie, you must not take any more. ” But he had lunched well, and the wine now made him feel drowsy. He wanted to lie down in the shade, but there was no shade save a corrugated iron shed and a tent, both insufferably hot.

Julius remained with him, ostensibly to discuss bort. Hector and Cissie began walking round the claims; a Kafir bore wooden pegs, and occasionally stopped to drive one in. Cissie could not understand the whole thing—it was needless; there were the boundaries clearly marked. Julius looked at them now and again, but went on talking; Cohen's eyelids fluttered; occasionally they shut for a few seconds . . .

“ But who wants to buy these old claims? ” said Cissie.

Hector winked, and jerked his thumb in the direction of Julius.

“ What? ” she cried, “ Mr. Hermann? ”

“ Yes, and he'd pay a better price too, Cissie, if it was for you. ”

“ Would he . . . why, eh? ”

“ Oh, you little minx. As if you didn't know he was mashed on you! ”

“ Mashed on me? Go on, don't talk rot. ”

"Anyone can see it with half an eye. Look here, you tell him we're partners in the deal, and you'll see how he puts the cash up."

"I won't do anything of the kind. It's all rot, anyway . . . and if I tell Miss Lily, she won't half go for you!"

He laughed.

"You're a little fool, Cissie. You could have everything in the world you want, and you stick to the damned stuffy bar."

"Easy to talk, eh?"

"If I were a girl and Julius fell head over ears in love with me, I would not stick in a bar."

"What would you do?"

"I'd . . . well, I'd do better for myself, that's all."

They passed to the other side of the claims, and there stood Julius. Cissie felt suddenly shy and embarrassed, the knowledge that Bennington had imparted to her set up a barrier, instead of bringing her and Julius closer together.

"Where's Uncle?" she asked.

Julius pointed. "There he sits, quite comfortable." He did not say asleep.

"Well, have you fixed on the boundaries?"

"Of course, Mr. Hermann. They are all quite plain; jus' as daddy marked them." She climbed on the rickety old sorting-table, and sat above him like a fawn, her ankles peeping out.

"You see, Cissie, if we buy, we don't want any bother."

"Yes, I see, Mr. Hermann."

"You must have been glad to hear you were going to get some money out of them?"

"Yes," she answered doubtfully. She looked round at Hector, but he was strolling away towards the liquor.

"Cissie," said Julius pleasantly, "if we buy the claims, I'll see that you get a square deal."

"Oh, but . . ."

"Because your father was an old friend of mine. We should not forget old friends, Cissie."

"No, Mr. Hermann."

"Do you remember, long, long ago, when you were a

tiny thing, about twelve years old, I used to go and see your father?"

"Yes . . . I remember that."

"You were always afraid of me?"

"It was your beard, Mr. Hermann."

"And I used to take sweets to you . . . do you remember?"

"Yes."

"Why do you let those things be forgotten, Cissie? You let new friends fill you with all sorts of ideas, huh?"

"No, I don't."

"Yes you do, Cissie. People put you against me."

"No, they don't."

"They tell you I'm a bad man, eh? That I would do you harm?"

"I don't know why you say such things, Mr. Hermann."

"Because they're true. They try to make you afraid of me."

"But I use' to be more afraid of you."

"Really, Cissie?" His face lighted up.

"Before you shaved your beard off."

He laughed boyishly.

"Ah, if it would please you I would cut my head off as well . . . only then I couldn't see you any more."

Now she laughed. He was funny.

"You know, Cissie, it is such a great pleasure to see you."

She made no reply.

"You make me feel happy, you are like the spring—fresh, growing, tender."

"Ach, go on, Mr. Hermann, I'm not."

"Yes you are. Youth is the eternal spring. Even when I see you in mid-winter I feel the spring; there is something about you so fresh, it opens my heart, it makes me nearly cry, the emotion."

"I don't know why you tell me this, Mr. Hermann." She was glancing nervously towards Cohen, who lay with a handkerchief over his face, fast asleep.

"Because it is the first day of spring, and I feel young too . . . and tender."

The last words he tacked on almost comically, and they both laughed.

"Come on," said Cissie, "we must go back now; I promised Miss Lily . . ."

"Cissie," he brusquely said, "why don't you let me send you to school?"

"What do I want to go to school for?"

"To be educated, I suppose."

"I don't want to be educated. Bennington's educated—look at him." She pointed to Hector who had, with the point of his top-boot, brutally kicked a Kafir whom he found draining the empty bottles.

"Well, if you don't want to go to school, what would you like to do?"

"Stop with Miss Lily."

"But you can't be always a barmaid. What is going to be the end of it?"

"I s'pose I'll get married like everybody else."

"Exactly," he suavely said, with voice sensuously falling at the thought. Then, suddenly: "Have you a sweetheart?"

"Oh, yes," she mockingly replied. "I've got two—Andrew Jack and Steinsohn."

He laughed, but then said earnestly: "You gave me a fright; I thought you meant it."

In a vague way she liked the admiration of this man; there, safely within sight of Cohen, she was tempted to ask more; why had he had a fright?

"Because I thought you were lost to me."

"How could I be lost to you, Mr. Hermann? I'm nothing to you."

"Yes, you are, Cissie; you are everything to me. I have you in the blood—I want you."

"You want me, Mr. Hermann? I don't understand. You mean you want to marry me?"

Julius was thrown off his centre for a moment. Then his cunning returned.

"Cissie, do you want me to answer that?"

"If you like, Mr. Hermann."

"I will answer if you promise to say 'yes.'"

"No, I won't; certainly not!"

"Then will you promise not to tell anybody?"

"What's the good? I can't keep a secret; I mus' tell somebody."

He smiled. "You may tell one person, to get it off your mind . . . But not one who is an enemy of mine."

"You call Miss Lily an enemy?"

"She is not a friend."

"Well—who can I tell? Here, I know . . . him." She pointed to Cohen who was uneasily stirring beneath the handkerchief, trying to chase away the first flies of spring. "Go on, Mr. Hermann. Tell me, do you want to marry me?"

"Yes . . . with all my heart."

She could suddenly see the passion in his eyes, a burning pain for possession of her; she felt instinctively that above all the men she knew, he wanted her most. Lynch had not the temperament, the male of this man; his patient, faithful devotion, his watching and waiting, had failed to express one fraction of Julius's yearning. His vital force, so great to-day, fell drop by drop upon her untenanted heart, her fresh young heart, still waiting for its mate. Love, she did not know; she had never known; but the wanting of this man so much above her, she found strangely pleasant on this warm day of spring.

"You want to marry me, Mr. Hermann?"

"Now, what is your answer? Say 'yes,' Cissie?"

"How can I say 'yes,' Mr. Hermann? I don' want to marry at all. I'm only a child; you mus' be twice as old as me."

"Years are nothing when the heart is young."

"But I don' love you, Mr. Hermann, and people are supposed to be in love when they marry."

His unerring instinct knew that passion is repulsive to the pure; that laughter would win this girl more than love.

"Supposed to be in love!" he mocked. "In love!! Some are in doubt, some are in debt, and some are in drink . . . when they marry. Do you dislike me?"

"No."

"Do you like any other man better?"

"Yes . . . Uncle Ike."

"Oh, he doesn't count. I mean a young man, like

me. Don't laugh, you little devil; I *am* young, you make me young. See!"

Suddenly, like a goat, he leapt into the air, and landed on the table beside her. She cried: "Look out, it's a rotten affair," and, balancing his body, he took hold of her hand to steady himself. She pulled him forward and then tried to withdraw, but he held to her.

"Don't be silly, Mr. Hermann, let go."

"First give me your answer."

"No!"

"Yes," said he.

"No!!"

"Yes."

"Let go, Mr. Hermann, there's Uncle coming; if he sees you, *pas op!*"

"Say 'yes,' Cissie."

"I'll think about it and tell you some other day."

"That's a trick, like your 'look out, there's Uncle!'"

"No, really, Mr. Hermann, I will think about it."

He looked searchingly into her face.

"Very well then, Cissie; but until you give me your answer you must not tell anyone about . . . my offer."

"All right, Mr. Hermann. Now let go my hand."

A sigh passed over him, he half moved forward, and she drew back, going nearly over the edge of the sorting-bench. Then, as if he thought better of it, or found that the contact would be unbearable, he relinquished his desire, bent down and kissed her rough, brown hand, worn and soiled with years of manual labour. And boyishly, without a word, he leaped from the table and held out his hands to help her down.

"Poof," said Cissie, "I don' need help!" She sprang off at a tangent, nearly four yards from the bench, and raced like a young reed-buck to where Cohen lay. He awoke at the sound of her feet scrunching the dry soil; and as he sat up the handkerchief tumbled from his face.

"My word, have I been asleep?"

"Yes, you have, Uncle. They might have carried me away for all the good you were."

"Where's everybody? Where's Julius?"

He was coming up at a smart pace, though the

youthfulness with which Cissie inspired him did not equalize their running powers.

“ Here I am, Ike; come on, you’ve slept enough.”

“ Have you done the job? ”

Julius smiled mystically, and shouted to his driver to prepare for the return.

“ There was nothing to do hardly,” said Cissie.

They went back to the carts, looking with indifference at the washing and hauling gear, the pans, buckets, and other paraphernalia.

Julius offered a remaining bottle of champagne, and when Cissie refused to drink, did not insist.

“ Ike,” he said, “ I want to talk business with you. I’ll get into your cart, if you don’t mind; Bennington and his friend shall take mine.”

So they returned, Cissie beside the driver, Cohen and Hermann next to each other.

“ Now, Julius,” said Ike, “ what are you going to do about the claims? ”

“ I cannot say, Ike . . . it depends.”

“ On what? ”

“ Many things . . . but I don’t see why our company should not take them. Even if there isn’t a diamond left, we can always float the proposition in London.”

CHAPTER XIX

CISSIE did not at once tell Lily of the afternoon’s surprising occurrence. She had a feeling of having done wrong, and now, back in the close heat of the bar, wondered if it were not a dream. Had Mr. Hermann really proposed marriage to her as she sat on the old sorting-table, where her fingers had once scratched for garnets? It seemed so strange; the afternoon had been dream-like. Besides, she had promised not to tell, though, to be sure, she had also promised Miss Lily not to embark on any love-affair without telling her. Nor

would she do so; she would tell her everything, everything—Miss Lily who had been so good to her—only there was no hurry. She would first give Mr. Hermann her answer. She had promised this.

Lily, of course, had been told of Julius's presence at the claims. She was vexed that he had stolen a march on her, and filled with misgiving as to the effect. From Cohen's replies to her questions she obtained some relief, yet could not comprehend the purpose of the proceedings. Perhaps it was genuine; a matter of business in which Julius was interested with Bennington. Cissie's sense of guilt prevented her from replying frankly or fully to Lily's questions; she did not actually tell lies, but she concealed facts. Yes, clearly something was being suppressed. Lily felt this.

She began to wonder if Cissie could be wholly trusted. Was the girl attracted by Julius more than she admitted? Could she be relied on to speak the truth?

Owing to this doubt, Lily did not press too closely; she feared to alienate Cissie's affection and confidence. She recalled her own disastrous adventure, due largely to her parents' restraint; a thing forbidden became more precious, she knew, and often more desired. Lily thanked herself that matters had not turned out worse, due, no doubt, to her prudence in sending Cohen with Cissie.

Business occupied her attention largely these days, particularly on the illicit side. Shilling bought stones daily. Her savings were swelling; soon she would have to bank the money, passing it through as profits resulting from the bar. The risk of keeping bank-notes was too great, the Diamond Fields being full of desperate characters. Money was flowing in so fast that Lily began to be reckless. She knew Lynch suspected her, and being no longer restrained by the desire to keep his esteem, she let Shilling buy almost openly, so long as he knew the sellers. This he did. He was uncanny in his reading of black faces. Any stranger would be subjected to a long cross-examination, and finally have to go away and return when vouched for by a brother. They had their secret signs and key-words; a klip was not of itself open sesame.

With Shilling between her and the law, Lily began to feel impregnable. I.D.B. drew her, it governed her existence. Not only were the profits enormous, but there was the secret fascination of the unknown, the rhythmic force that draws men to the end of the earth, the fascination that urges the gambler on. She began to understand the thrill on the race-course at the Cape; why she had been drawn to Julius . . . and many other things.

Nothing so well marked the change in the once timid buyer as her relations with Bennington. He never told how he knew, but shortly after that visit to the claims called on Lily, and with almost truculent faith in himself invited her to a private chat in her office.

She stared at first, did not understand, and he whispered:

“I’ve got something extra special to show you—very cheap, too.”

She hesitated, then called out: “Go inside, Mr. Bennington, I’ll be with you in a moment.”

He swayed through with his dandified air, and Lily said to Cissie, loudly for others to hear:

“I’m going to see if there is anything in that offer for the claims.”

Inside, they did not long equivocate. Lily had got past this stage, but she let Bennington take the risk of acknowledging that he was an I.D.B.

“Well, what have you got to show me?”

He took out three medium-sized stones—not first quality—laid them on the table, and calmly said:

“What are they worth to you?”

“What makes you think I buy stones, Bennington?”

“Oh, I say, come on, Miss Lily; we all know. Look here, do you think I’d take the risk unless I were sure?”

“Well, you’re mistaken.”

But he laughed knowingly.

“Why don’t you want them? I’ll let you have them cheap . . . £2 a carat.”

This was cheap, she knew, though not so cheap as she could obtain them through Shilling.

“They don’t interest me.”

“Why not?”

"Not good enough . . . at the price." She wanted to test him, to see if this were a trap.

"What will you give for 'em?"

Now she looked critically over the stones; made him feel that she was interested. If he were a police agent he would part with the bait on any terms.

"I'll give you ten shillings a carat."

Hector laughed a little insolently, and put the stones back in his pocket.

"After all, I'm not a Kafir."

He was preparing to go.

"I'm not interested in that class of stuff," added Lily. "If you get hold of anything really good I'll pay a fair price."

As he was leaving, Lily said:

"Has Hermann decided to buy the claims?"

"Not yet. But I think the deal will go through."

After this Hector came frequently to the bar, several times bringing good stones, which Lily bought and sold to advantage. Gradually he wormed his way into her confidence; she forgot her first judgment of him, and his utter unworthiness.

I.D.B. was eating into her, vitiating all standards, all honour except in regard to one thing. Here she presented a curious contrast to the men of Kimberley, so many of whom were devoid of that moral sense, though strong enough to keep from I.D.B.

Lily kept as careful a watch as ever on Cissie; talked seriously to her, and even when utterly fatigued would at nights go round and try her door.

But impalpably the girl, too, was being poisoned by the atmosphere. She was losing that detestation of I.D.B. which her father had taught her to feel.

Lynch still came to see her, always devoted, and the contempt he expressed for "the trade" was the only antidote Cissie received against the narcotic influences of the Golden Bar. The detective's rôle was an ungrateful one. He felt like a man preaching against popular opinion, an atheist in a Dutch dorp, a sanctimonious puritan in a gambling hell.

Cissie began to poke fun at him, for in spite of everything, she was deteriorating. The loose talk, the lax

morality, the advances of men, were drawing her further from Lily's control and the influence of Lynch. He felt this deeply, and spoke with her—gently but firmly.

"Oh, go on, Mr. Lynch," she replied. "I don't know why you always preach at me!"

"Preach at you, Cissie? I have tried to be your friend."

"Yes, I know, but how can I help if girls in bars go to the dogs?"

"Cissie . . . why don't you marry me?"

"I don't want to. I'm too young for you, anyway."

"You are young, I know, but I'd be good to you, my girl; you'd be better off than you are in the bar. Are you fond of somebody else?"

Ah . . . an idea. She began teasing him. His dour North Irish nature irritated her.

"Yes . . . I *am* fond of somebody else."

His face fell, then the cruel look came into it.

"Who is it?"

"Ah . . . that would be telling! But he's young and handsome, and comes of a good family. English, you know."

Afterwards she told Lily, and was scolded.

"You should not do that, Cissie. Lynch is so sincere and vindictive; he has no sense of humour. If he believed you were in love with somebody else he might be nasty."

She resolved to set matters straight with the detective herself, but for weeks saw nothing of him.

Julius Hermann waited long and patiently before reappearing. On a warm, glowing day, when the first spring thunderstorm had laid the dust and freshened the air, he entered the bar.

Lily had gone out on business—had he been told this?

"Good afternoon, Cissie—how well you look!"

"Oh . . . good afternoon, Mr. Hermann," said she, all of a flutter.

"Nice little storm," he remarked. "Did the lightning frighten you?"

“ Oh, no . . . I'm use' to that.”

He drank kummel in large draughts from a whisky glass. A couple of men were at the counter; Julius watched them go out into the pure air.

The fragrant odour of rain upon hot, dry earth, came from the street, permeating the Golden Bar—a hopeful, inspiring smell that told of life germinating. In a few days the grass would magically rise.

“ My,” sniffed Cissie, “ doesn't it smell nice? ”

They chatted commonplaces, each knowing what was in the mind of the other—strained, anxious.

At last he said: “ Cissie, you know what I have come for? ”

She grinned. Behind the counter she enjoyed a little sense of security.

“ Cissie, don't fool with me! I have come for your answer.”

“ Oh . . . that. I made sure you'd forgotten all about it.”

“ Have you learned to say ' yes ' ? ”

“ No . . . I haven't. I don' want to get married.”

But her tone was not as serious or as strong as she wished. She was overborne by his superior strength; she found it hard, without reason, to be unpleasant.

Julius felt that she stood in fear of him, and suddenly he decided to try the effect of force—of brutal male strength.

“ It's no good your telling me that, Cissie. I am going to have you, no matter what you say.”

“ Oh, are you, Mr. Hermann, really? ”

Her little voice stiffened insensibly; she felt a tightening of the muscles. . . .

“ Yes, I am,” he growled, like a great cat, and looking from the corner of his eyes he saw the bar was utterly empty. “ Give me a kiss.”

He snapped his hands upon her wrists and drew her to him across the counter. She held her head back, denying him her lips, swaying from side to side. But he saw she was afraid of him, that his strength would outlast hers, and in his heart he exulted; the male would triumph over the female, if not by cunning—by force. It was the glorious gift of Nature. He looked straight

into her eyes to will her to him, to compel respect for his force, his sex.

“Are you teaching Cissie a Kafir dance?”

Julius turned to face Lily, and Cissie's merry laugh echoed through the bar.

“We were seeing who could pull the hardest,” he coolly answered. “You don't mind?”

“'Tis one of the privileges of a bond-holder, I suppose.”

“By Jove, she is stronger than you'd think.”

“Yes,” challenged Cissie, “you couldn't,” and she poked out her tongue at him.

“Couldn't what?” asked Lily.

There was an awkward pause.

“Pull her over the counter,” answered Julius. “But I'd have had you, Cissie, if she didn't come in.”

“Oh, would you?”

“What made you stop the performance?” asked Lily.

“I thought people were coming in without paying.”

Cissie laughed at this, but Lily's sense of humour was obscured; she felt oppressed.

When Julius had gone she turned fiercely on Cissie.

“What's the meaning of this?”

Her manner was so accusing that the girl burst into tears.

“What's going on between you and him?”

“Nothing, Miss Lily. Nothing.”

“How can it be nothing? You are not speaking the truth. He was trying to kiss you.”

“Nearly all do, except Uncle. It's only fun.”

“There is no fun in that man. Either he doesn't notice a woman, doesn't see her, or else he wants her for one thing!”

“Well, I didn't let him kiss me.”

“No,” answered Lily, a little more softly, “but you should have been angry. Why didn't you hit him on the head with a bottle!”

“And spill the kummel all over the bar! . . . besides, he got hol' of my hands.”

Men now came into the bar.

“Go to my room and lie down awhile, Cissie. Wash your face, 'tis stained with tears.”

After midnight they resumed the subject.

"Come, Cissie, tell the truth. What happened out on the claims that day?"

"Nothing happened, Miss Lily."

"Well, what was said . . . he didn't go there for nothing. Come, dear, tell me; you promised, you know."

Seated there, calm and beautiful as a virgin mother, Lily took the child's head in her hands, and Cissie, kneeling before her as if in prayer, told everything.

Lily let her go to the end without interruption, then said:

"So he offered to marry you?"

"Yes, Miss Lily."

"Cissie, I believe you. The only thing I complain of is that you did not tell me as soon as you came home."

"And s'pose I did? What difference would it have made? After all, he's not the first who's asked me. . . ."

"Oh, but Lynch is different. He, at all events, is a man. . . . Cissie, you don't know how vile, how terribly wicked Julius Hermann is! Some day I will tell you all my reasons why I hate him, and want you to be on your guard. Yes . . . I will tell you." Then suddenly:

"You are not in love with him?"

"In love!" laughed Cissie. "Spoony on him! Why, Miss Lily, I'm only seventeen, and he mus' be nearly forty."

"Yes . . . he is over forty. Now, child, as I want you to be always perfectly frank with me, I am going to tell you something that I have not told anybody else . . . I knew Julius Hermann before arriving in Kimberley."

"Really, Miss Lily!"

"Yes . . . in England, many years ago. You see, I am not judging him by what people say here. You must not repeat what I have told you; if you do it may cause me a great deal of harm. Go along to bed now."

They kissed each other good night, but on second thoughts Lily took Cissie home, locked the door, and returned, to sit thinking into the early hours of morning. She felt sure that the girl had tolerated Julius without being attracted to him, for he was a man whose passions

were fed by resistance; they did not call for reciprocal love, possession being all he desired. Clearly he was obsessed by ungovernable longing for this quaint, elf-like girl. That he would marry her Lily did not for a moment believe; that was merely a trick, a feint to throw the child off her guard. But suppose he were infatuated to an extent she could not calculate? Suppose he were prepared to go as far as marriage in order to obtain Cissie?

The mail coach was leaving next day, and until the early hours of morning Lily sat writing letters for home that must leave at once.

Some days later she received by post an anonymous communication written in a disguised hand.

LOOK OUT. I.D.B. DANGER. From a friend.

What could it mean? An attempt would be made to trap her? Shilling was warned to leave off buying until further orders; for a week Lily lived in a state of intense anxiety. But nobody suspicious presented himself, and gradually her fears were dulled. After all, she reflected, it would be easy to stop I.D.B. if everybody gave up the "trade" on receipt of an anonymous letter. Lynch and his staff need only sit down and write!

But during the time that she abstained from the illicit trade, Lily focussed her attention on the bar. With disappointment she saw that the takings had fallen considerably. Trade was decidedly bad. She talked it over with Cohen.

"I suppose they are getting tired of us, Ike," she joked, with strained face.

"No, no, Lily; don't you know why trade is bad?"

"Oh, vaguely. . . ."

"It's reaction after a wild orgy of scrip gambling. For the past few years every thief who owned a bit of soil and hadn't the pluck to put it in a sand-bag and go on the streets, has floated it as a diamond mine. The fools have rushed at it with open jaws, ready to swallow the magic scrip. Wonderful how people are mesmerized by printing ink! Well, now comes the back-wash.

Money has been paid for wallpaper; banks have lent hundred of thousands of pounds on mural decorations. You can see this wild-cat embroidery everywhere. Haven't you got any?"

From a pigeon-hole she drew a rich-looking parchment, on which the words stood as if embossed:

GREAT HOPE DIAMOND MINE.

Capital £500,000.

"I lent that little fool Brooksey five pounds on this."

"It's worth about sixpence to-day," said Cohen.

"You are lucky to have got your experience so cheap." He went on to explain the slump that followed. "It will pass, of course, but while the sound men are pulling the diamond industry into shape, *their* shape, trade is bad, and you are suffering your share of it."

"So are you," she said.

"Oh, don't worry about my cut, Lily. I am doing quite well. Julius and I have straightened out an important matter, the sale of low-grade stuff, and my earnings have actually increased."

"You do a lot of selling for him, don't you?"

"My dear, his company is the main source of my income."

"You couldn't afford to fall out with him?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Why should I? So long as he's straight, we get along well in business."

After some weeks Shilling resumed operations, and soon brought Lily some large white stones.

Kringe was away at the Cape, and not liking the risk of holding, Lily disposed of the gems to Bennington, who said he had found a buyer for the very best stuff only.

"Who is your man, Benny?"

"God alone knows," he whispered. "Somebody buys for somebody else. The moment a stone gets into his hands, it goes off the market for ever."

"How funny," she observed. Kringe had told her that often a diamond would be sold five or six times before passing into legal hands.

Lily noticed that Bennington was less cool and self-possessed than Kringe. He seemed to live in dread of Lynch. She decided that he had no nerve for the trade. She disliked doing business with him.

CHAPTER XX

LILY WHITE'S operations had now become so notorious that orders to trap her were given by officials higher in the Service than Lynch. Instead of blaming the inefficiency of the law, they blamed the Detective Department for the growth of I.D.B. There was no doubt that this traffic ate largely into the profits of the companies, and was contributing to the depression.

The detectives' difficulty in Lily's case, was great; they had to prove two things; that Shilling bought the stones, and that he passed them on to his mistress. In order to establish the case, they would have to find the diamonds on the premises.

Lynch decided on a long and careful preparation of the bait with which to hook Shilling. He sent back to his kraal a Basuto "trap," sprung, and now useless, who had orders to train boys, and send them straight to him, before they went into the mines. In this the companies were glad to give co-operation.

One good boy came to hand as the result of Lynch's plan; an excellent Basuto, who could not pay his *lobola* (marriage cattle), and was longing to get full possession of his wife. He readily undertook to present himself with a parcel of stones at the back of the Golden Bar, and was taught everything necessary by Kafir police experts. After a few weeks in Kimberley, to make himself acquainted with brothers, and every detail of his task, he went forth to trap Shilling. On presenting himself he underwent the customary native inquiries and polite cross-examination that signify interest; then he

told a curious, but straightforward story. To his kraal, he said, a brother from the mines had returned with a number of diamonds. The head-man got to hear of the stones, and demanded that they be given up to him. Fearing to lose everything, the possessor of the diamonds revealed his hoard to this "brother by the same mother," asking him to go to Kimberley and sell them.

"And why do you come to me, a Zulu?" said Shilling.

"I come from your brother, Umtamo, he sent me to you."

"Let me see what you have brought?"

From a purse made of the skin of rock-rabbits the Basuto drew seven diamonds.

"Ow," exclaimed Shilling. "Is that all your brother could steal in a year? They are not very good."

But he agreed to meet the Basuto that evening in a canteen which Umtamo frequented. The "trap," highly excited, went back and reported to the police; then proceeded to where Umtamo would be found, ingratiating himself further by tactful purchase of liquor.

Lily heard from Cohen this day that Julius had gone out of town on business, and she sent Cissie on an errand towards Market Square. The weather had become very warm, and after a long spell of quiet colours, to respect her father's memory, Cissie appeared in a pink delaine frock, with a Gainsborough hat that perfectly suited her delicate features. In the streets men turned towards the slim, dainty figure, openly admiring the girl who had, less than a year ago, been regarded as an untidy, amusing child.

The coach, after delay caused by rains in the Karroo, came in as Cissie passed along; and with interest she watched its passengers get out and stroll about with the heavy movements that follow a cramped voyage. Most of the newcomers appeared stunned by the glare of the low, metal buildings, which bordered the streets; they gaped like fish out of water.

Two detached themselves, and walked briskly forward, the older man pointing out the direction of the mines,

the diamond market, and so forth. As they passed by Cissie, she noticed the younger man; so fresh, clean and frank he was, with skin almost pink, and with clear, honest eyes.

"English, I'll bet," she said to herself. Without thinking, she looked straight into his face, an unreserved glance, such as she would have given a tree or a gravestone—really it was surprise and unconscious appreciation of an agreeable personality.

And he stared back at her in the same way, astonished to see there, such a pretty girl, as though she were a zebra in London, or a cherry-tree on the Diamond Fields; a striking object out of its setting and environment. In England he might not have noticed her; here she was focussed for his attention, became intensified, like a woman whose charms are unperceived until she appears on the stage, in the prisoner's box, or behind a bar counter, where men can see her and compete for her.

This was the view that Cissie Sheldon and Alan Warrenton first had of each other. She went on her way, wondering who he was, and what he had come there for; and he, replying absently to the questions of his companion, walked in the other direction. But presently Cissie was overcome by curiosity, and turned to see where he had gone, and it chanced that Alan turned his head at precisely the same moment. Each felt a sense of shy guilt; Cissie, in her inexperience, wondered what the young man thought of her. He was rather pleased, and said to the man beside him:

"What a pretty girl! I wonder what she does here?"

The other turned.

"'Tis a year since I left," he said, "I don't know her. Most likely a barmaid."

"Barmaid," replied Alan. "I don't think so; she seemed to me a lady."

"My dear chap, barmaids in South Africa are often girls of good family. They don't wash bottles and glasses; they fascinate men."

Alan made no reply, but after being shown to an outside room at the Central Hotel, hurried away into

the streets. He was not quite clear why he did so, but felt great satisfaction when, before long, Cissie reappeared, covering the same ground as before. But now the young man was seized with a feeling of shyness, and stood beneath the hot veranda, watching where she went. "We'll soon find out if she's a barmaid!" He did not for a moment think so; the man he had met on the coach was a soured, sceptical person. At a long distance, with the utmost discretion, yet feeling like a spy, Alan stalked Cissie. She walked quickly homeward, disappearing suddenly into the Golden Bar.

"He was right, after all." Alan was disappointed, a little unhappy, even. He walked slowly back to his room, undressed and bathed, changed into fresh clothes, and for the rest of the day, mooned about. He would have liked to go into the bar where that strangely attractive girl had gone, but was checked by a feeling of reticence, of bashfulness.

Next morning, following a satisfactory *indaba* with Shilling and Umtamo, the Basuto trap again presented himself at the back of the Golden Bar. Shilling motioned to him, and they went together into a stuffy shed, and there sat chewing tobacco. Then they talked around the subject, but finally the stranger produced one smoky-white stone, a perfect octahedron, off-coloured, and easily recognizable.

"Where are the others you showed me yesterday? That is the worst of them all."

"I have hidden them away; I have brought you the smallest."

"Why have you done this?"

"Because I fear. The stones are not mine; if harm should come to me, only one will be lost. If you pay well for this klip, I will bring you the others to-morrow."

It was a convincing explanation, well rendered. Shilling, versed in the wiles of black men, was satisfied. He took the stone to his mistress.

"How much, Shilling?"

"Meeses, boy ask you give plenty for klip. If him pleased, he bring six klip to-morrow."

He explained that they were fine white stones, not like

this one. To attract the seller back again, Lily offered ten pounds; a very good price to a native for such a stone. Its actual value was not above £55. After some feigned reluctance, the Basuto accepted the sum. It was paid in gold.

The transaction had taken an hour, and now the bar was open. Bennington came in early, he had been up all night gambling, he wanted a pick-me-up. He called for a bottle of Mumm's Extra Dry, and asked Cissie to put into it a dash of Guinness's stout, this being a favourite morning drink on the Fields. Having lost all his money the previous night, he called for a card.

"There's quite a stack of them," said Cissie sharply. "Miss Lily will go for me."

"Rot," said Hector. "You're peevish this morning. Join me in a glass of wine, it'll pick you up."

"Don't want anything to pick me up! Or anybody either. Not even your baas, Julius Hermann."

"My dear," said Hector, "you're a little fool. Any gal at home would jump at the chance."

"Home . . . Where's your home, I'd like to know?"

"*England*," he replied. "I am *English*, not one of your Colonial Johnnies."

He drawled this insolently, pronouncing "Eng" with the affected short "e" instead of the "ing" sound.

Cissie mocked his drawl. "*England*, wheah's *England*, haw? My dear fellah—nevah heard of it befoah."

Lily this moment came in from her deal in diamonds, and Cissie took the opportunity to get away from Bennington by going inside.

"You're early," remarked Lily to the tired dandy.

"Yes, been spieling all night—lost a hundred. Can you let me have the loan of a tenner?"

She went to get the money, and suddenly looking into the street, exclaimed: "Hullo, there's Champagne Charlie! In from the River Diggings, I suppose. Look here, Hector, you'll have to wait—come in later."

"Perhaps he's got some ooftish," said Hector, cheerily.

"I hope so, there's a pile of his cards here . . . oh, dear me," she said disappointedly, "I don't believe

he's coming in . . . that's too bad, considering what he owes!"

Lily went to the door and cried: "Mr. Fitzroy, Charlie, Charlie!"

His aristocratic voice could be heard in reply from the street.

"Good morning, Miss Lily. How do ye do!"

"You are a nice one, to pass like this . . . on my birthday."

"Dear me, many happy returns. But was it not your birthday last time I came in?"

She turned his remark to advantage. "'Tis a long time; about a year ago."

"And how old are you to-day?" he asked.

"Ah, at my age 'tis a secret every woman keeps."

"Yes," replied Fitzroy. "For a present some of 'em will tell you all their past, except how long it's taken 'em."

"Well," chaffed Lily, "you have a guess."

"Whatever you are I'm sure you don't look it! Not a day over twenty-five, I know."

"Flatterer. Why were you unkind enough to pass by like that? Come in."

They were now in the bar, and Fitzroy looked at the shelves, richly garnished, sniffing the battle like a pointer dog drawing near partridges. Bennington obliterated himself in a corner at a sign from Lily. He was a gentleman, too, and would not spoil business.

"Look here, my dear," said Fitzroy, "I'll be frank with you; the last time I was in I got so beastly drunk my boy had to pull me out of a prospecting shaft."

They both laughed.

"Ah," she sighed, "you're a devil with the wine," reaching at the same time for a bottle. "Now, Charlie, a little private drink with me."

"No, no; I really mustn't."

"I've been longing to open a bottle all morning. I kept saying, 'If only Charlie were here!'"

"Well then . . . just one little one. One *little*, little pint. I mustn't touch any more. But you shall have it with *me*."

"Oh, I asked you," she protested.

"I have never yet let a man pay in my presence; do you think I'll let a lovely woman?"

"Ah, you still have your West End manners."

"Besides," he added, "after many blank months I've had a bit of luck."

"Found something decent?"

"Yes, a beauty. The first and last I shall ever find."

"Oh, Charlie, why?"

"Because I'm clearing out. My people won't send me another bob, and if I stay here longer, I shall go straight to hell."

"We'd be very sorry to lose you."

"You wouldn't for long," he laughed.

"Now then! . . . Let me see what you found."

Fitzroy took it from his vest pocket, and laid it upon the counter.

"There you are—I haven't registered it yet. Is it not pretty?"

She gave a stifled gasp of admiration.

"Glassy white, flawless," he said with pride.

It really was a beautiful stone, the best that Lily had yet seen in this informal way. The sight of it produced a violent emotion, she was seized by a longing to possess it. Would he sell it? Dare she risk asking him?

"Come on . . . the wine's spoiling," she whispered.

"Good luck, Miss Lily—another year off your twenty-five."

Together they drank. Lightly she said:

"If you loved me you'd make me a present of that little stone."

"What! And walk back to Piccadilly?"

"I'd love to buy it . . . Oh, I do wish I were a dealer. Did you say a large bottle?"

"Yes."

"But I'll tell you what, Charlie, go to Ike Cohen with that stone; he may have it cut for me."

Fitzroy heard Cissie singing at the back of the premises. He asked for news of her; went into reminiscences of the fatal day when Sheldon died.

"Don't speak of it," said Lily. "She's forgotten the horrible affair."

"All right . . . but, I say, do call her."

She hesitated, not wanting Cissie there, but now Bennington appeared for a drink and the *tête-à-tête* was broken.

"Hullo, Bennington. Join us?" Fitzroy then shouted: "Cissie, come and join us too."

"Hullo, Mr. Fitzroy!" Cissie came from inside, and the change in her appearance amazed her father's old friend.

"Well I declare! My word, little girl, how you have come on! You should be up the river at Henley, in that frock. Jove, you look bonny!"

Bennington thirstily raised his glass.

"Many happy returns!"

"Is it your birthday, Mr. Fitzroy?" asked Cissie, innocently.

"No, *mine*," replied Lily, with meaning. "Didn't you know?"

"Cissie, have a glass of wine," said Fitzroy.

"There's none left . . . I'll get another." Lily went to the back shelf.

Bennington thrust his hand into an empty pocket.

"Look heah, Charlie, this one with me."

"Not at all."

"Oh, all right . . . my turn next."

Cissie saw that Fitzroy was on the road to intoxication. She led him to the piano. "Come on, give us your old favourite, 'Champagne Charlie.'"

He struck up this air, and Hector joined in singing the words with execrable voice.

"Oh, my Jove," cried Cissie, "What a row!"

Fitzroy jumped up and cried for another bottle of wine.

"Better have a magnum," said Lily.

"Don't care; make it a Jeroboam."

He waltzed about as Lily went for the huge bottle of champagne, and at length staggered to a table and sat there.

"Mr. Fitzroy," whispered Cissie. "You've had enough."

"What! Me had enough? Never so insulted in my life."

He rose and sang:

“Champagne Charlie is my name,
Drinking wine I’ve earned my fame. . . .”

and rolled up to the counter, knocking over a bottle of wine. Hector gave him a push; he upset another one. Then Fitzroy fell upon the Jeroboam, which towered above him like a sentinel at the gates of Paradise. . . . Business had not been so good in the bar for a long time.

But this scene of hilarity saddened Cissie; it recalled the day of her father’s death—she felt like the accomplice in a crime. This was the way they used to lead her daddy on to drink. . . . “Oh!” Fitzroy had danced across the floor, circling round, he had slipped and fallen.

Cissie began to sob, half hysterically.

“What’s the matter, child?”

But she did not reply to Lily’s question.

“Better get him out, Bennington. Go on, lift him.”

“Heah, I say, come on, Charlie, get up!”

Shilling was called. He lifted the prostrate man.

“I’m a’ right,” issued unsteadily from Fitzroy’s lips, all stained with wine and saliva. “Give me a drink.”

“No, you’d better not have any more,” said Bennington, “you can’t stand your liquor, man.”

“I’m quite a’ right,” answered Fitzroy, with a show of dignity. “What do I owe you?”

“Seventeen-ten, please.”

In answer to Lily, Fitzroy flung upon the counter a handful of gold and silver coins. “There you are, take it out of that.”

“Thank you. . . . By the way, what about these cards—shall I take for them, too?”

“Of course.” He recommenced to sing.

Lily counted the spread money. “There’s not enough—£17, 10s. 0d., cards £23 10s. 0d., that makes £41; there’s only twenty-two here; that leaves £19 owing.”

“I’ll sign a card.”

“No thank you, Mr. Fitzroy. . . as you’re going home.”

“Well I’m damned; nice way to treat a gentleman.” In dignified rebuke of such mistrust, he tossed

upon the counter the diamond which Lily coveted.

"Take it out of that!"

She sharply covered the stone with her hand.

"'Tis all I've got," cried Fitzroy, and he continued to sing.

Lily momentarily bent under the counter.

Hector was conducting Fitzroy to the door.

"Hi, you," cried Cissie, checking her tears, "he hasn't got his diamond back."

"There's his stone, Cissie; send him away!"

"Ach fie, Miss Lily! Here, Mr. Fitzroy, I'll tie it in the corner of your han'kerchief for safety." Cissie put it into his inner pocket.

"Now go to Ike Cohen and ask him to pay you for it to-morrow when you're sober, eh?"

She led him to the door and watched him totter unsteadily into the glare of the sun.

"Well," said Hector, "we can drink the wine in comfort now."

But Lily corked the barely touched Jeroboam, and put it upon the back shelf.

"I say, he paid for that, didn't he?"

"S'pose you pay for once," retorted Cissie. Then she went out to wash her tear-stained face. The atmosphere of the place was oppressing. The scene had recalled the past, and Cissie had been thinking of the clean, honest-looking young man she had met in the street. Would she meet him again? Would he come into the bar, perhaps?

"I say, Lily," said Hector, familiarly, "what about that tenner? I'm stoney, this morning."

"Well, you know business is very bad."

"I'll let you have it back to-night."

Suddenly she had an idea. "I can put you in the way of making something."

"Now?"

"At once. I got a nice stone this morning; I fancy it should suit your man. But he must pay the price."

She wished Kringe were back, she disliked doing business with Hector.

"Can I see it?" he asked. "Where can we go?"

"Not inside—Cissie is there."

"Can't you trust her?"

"Hush . . . she mustn't know. She's too young. And . . ."

"That's the best of it. Nobody would suspect—besides, Lynch is mashed on her. She could buy for you."

"No . . . say no more about it, we are wasting time. Here, look under my hand."

She had the diamond on the counter, and her palm concealed it from anyone but Bennington.

When he saw the stone he was struck by its beauty so that he forgot to be afraid.

"Phew, where did you get that?"

"What's it worth to your man?"

"Hard to say . . . perhaps £600?"

"What, for that stone?"

"I'll give you £800."

"No. Twelve hundred and 'tis yours."

"Give me till to-night?"

"All right."

At this moment Cissie entered the bar, and Lily picked up the diamond to hide it. But, without apparent reason, Hector held down her hand.

"What's up, Miss Lily; is he making love to you?"

"Go on, you can trust her," said Hector. "Cissie is not a sneak."

"No, no!"

But Hector forced the stone from her hand, and said: "Promise you won't split, Cissie."

"What's up, Miss Lily?"

"'Tis really nothing—Bennington had a stone given him in payment for a debt; he was wondering what he should do with it."

"You won't tell a soul?" entreated Hector.

He handed her the diamond, and without concealment, she fingered it.

"My Jove! what a lovely klip!"

"Ah, Cissie knows a good stone when she sees one."

But Lily was nervous and irritated.

"Do be careful, Cissie."

Shilling was near the window; suddenly he turned his head and hissed over at them with awful intensity:

"Meeses, *pas op*, Baas Lynch!"

A feeling of dreadful fear overcame Lily and Hector; for a second neither knew what to do. Then he snatched the stone and, treating it like a sweet for a pretty child, put it into Cissie's mouth just as Lynch walked into the bar, looking harder and crueller than Lily had ever known him. He came straight to the counter—so straight that the guilty woman would have felt a sense of relief and completeness had he laid his hand upon her shoulder and said: "I arrest you for I.D.B." But he was quite pleasant, though not for a moment did he take his eyes off Cissie and Lily as they moved about in the limited space behind the counter.

Bennington tried to divert Lynch's attention by strained affability from behind, but Lynch barely turned.

"What's up, Cissie," he joked. "Get out of the wrong side of the bed this morning?"

She was afraid to speak, the diamond in her mouth felt tremendous.

"Oh," answered Lily quickly, "she and Bennington have had a tiff . . . he was chaffing her."

"What about?"

"About . . . you!" She thought this would please him. "You see Bennington's jealous."

"I'd have thought he had enough hay on his fork." And as Hector breasted the counter Lynch added, "Whose wife are you hitched up to now?"

Of course everybody roared at this, Hector loudest of all. But Lynch stuck to Cissie; she could not get away from him.

"You are not very amiable this morning, Cissie."

"Sorry," she mumbled.

"Got a toothache? Your face is puffed. Little swelling there," he added, trying to touch it with his fingers.

"She's been suffering from neuralgia," said Lily.

Hector tried to divert attention by inviting Lynch to a glass of wine.

"Been doing well lately, Bennington?"

"Yes—found a few decent stones."

"Hum. Strange how those claims have improved since you got them."

"Tom's niggers used to rob him—didn't they, Cissie? I watch mine too well."

"From here?" asked Lynch, with perceptible irony.

"My system is wonderful."

"So I've heard."

Lily held out a glass of champagne.

"Will you join us?"

"No, thanks, 'tis my rule. Give me a whisky."

"Oh, Cissie, child, go and fetch me a notebook and pencil; I want to write down an address . . . do you remember that laundry-woman I asked about, Mr. Lynch?"

But before Cissie could open the back door he held out a book and pencil, saying pleasantly:

"I have them here. I came for a chat with you, Cissie, so don't run away."

"You'll have to do the talking," Lily remarked. "She has been sulky all morning. Cissie, have a glass of fizz, 'twill do you good." Lily poured out the liquor and added: "You're not well, child. You need nourishment. Take some porter in your wine."

Cissie nodded, she was afraid to utter a word.

"I say, what's the matter with her?" asked Lynch. "Never knew but one woman so silent before—Fanny Lepitski when I nabbed her with a mouth full of diamonds."

"I wonder she did not swallow them." Lily spoke with strangely suggestive voice.

"She did," grinned the detective. "That's how I bowled her out. A stone stuck in her windpipe."

"Awful!"

Lily went to the piano; Hector to the front door.

"Don't go away, Bennington," said Lynch. "I want to see you about something." His manner was full of horrible menace.

Hector dared not inquire what was wanted; he sat down, a prey to nervous fear.

"Good luck, Miss Lily! I wish you a mansion in Mayfair."

As Lynch said this he seemed to turn half away. Cissie seized the opportunity, lifted to her mouth the glass of stout and champagne, and, instead of drinking,

swiftly spat the diamond into it. But as she did so he whipped round again and looked straight into her face.

“What’s the matter?”

“It’s not nice,” she stammered. “I don’t like it.”

“Let me taste.”

“Don’t be silly, I spat in it.”

He noticed that instead of throwing the liquor away she placed it under the counter.

“I see you’ve found your tongue again.”

“Don’t tease, Mr. Lynch.”

“Well, Cissie, could you come out for a walk this afternoon? I want to talk to you.”

“What about, eh?”

“You know. What I asked you about.”

“What was that?” This she asked him teasingly, as though he were just any customer.

“I suppose *that* sort of fellow is more in your line?

... A thing who lives on women. . . .”

“I believe you’re jealous, Mr. Lynch.”

“Women and . . . the other thing!”

“What’s that?” asked Cissie, despite the warning, agonizing looks with which Lily told her to pacify him.

“You know what I mean.” He lowered his voice to a whisper of hatred. “I.D.B. . . . that’s what I mean. And that’s what you’re coming to.”

“Me?”

“Yes . . . don’t try to fool me. Look here, you leave this bar . . . marry me. You don’t know how far it will go. I am talking seriously, Cissie. For God’s sake don’t play about. Make up your mind at once . . . before it’s too late. You would be glad of my friendship then.”

“No more than usual, Mr. Lynch,” she said, floating in a mist of doubt and indecision, wondering what to do, for she felt the menace of his words; feared that he suspected her as well as Lily.

While Lynch crouched over the counter in an attitude of intense anxiety, a tall, straight figure crossed the threshold of the outer door, and rather timidly advanced towards Cissie.

She started violently and blushed, was pleased

and embarrassed, waiting for the young man to address her.

“ Good morning,” he said, trying to be bold.

“ Good morning,” replied Cissie, assuming Lily’s very best manner. “ Nice day, isn’t it? ”

“ Very,” said he. “ Is it always like this here? ”

“ Oh, not always, but nearly. What can I get you? ”

“ Let me see, it’s rather early. . . . You know, I’m not used to much liquor.”

“ Well, have a glass of sherry.”

“ Capital idea.”

“ You’ve just come to the Fields, haven’t you? ” asked Cissie, as she poured out his drink.

“ How do you know that? ”

“ Ah . . . I saw you yesterday! ”

“ Do you mean to say you remember me? ” His face was alight with pleasure.

Lynch looked at him dourly from an angle, his own eyes holding the expression that Lily feared to see. She came over and fussed about Lynch, trying to propitiate him. She saw that Cissie was goading the man.

“ Cissie,” she sharply said, “ I think Mr. Lynch wants another whisky.”

“ Oh, sorry. ’Scuse me one moment,” she whispered, “ I won’t be long.”

The young man smiled stupidly.

Lynch overheard every word, every tender intonation, so unlike her.

“ No, thanks,” he said. “ I’m not drinking any more this morning.”

To Lily the phrase sounded like the voice of Fate. She nudged Cissie in passing, but the girl, unconscious of the calamity overhanging them, only knew that before her stood the nicest man she had ever, ever seen.

“ I saw you, too, yesterday,” he softly said.

“ How did you know I was here? ”

“ I followed you.”

“ Oh, my . . . did you really? You shouldn’t’f, you know.”

She was about to ask his name when she looked up and caught Lynch’s eye.

Isaac Cohen at this moment came into the bar, and Lily went to him.

"I say," said Cissie, "don't run away . . . go and sit down over there, and I'll see you just now."

Feeling deliciously uncomfortable, Alan went to a table.

"Hullo, Uncle," cried Cissie. "Did you see Charlie Fitzroy?"

"Sure I did, Cissie. His stone is safe . . . there." Ike tapped his vest pocket. "I'm to pay him to-morrow."

"Well, that's a good job," she said. "He was getting so tight I was afraid he'd be robbed."

Cohen turned to the detective.

"Hullo, Lynch, is it true what I hear—there's a warrant out for Louis Kringe's arrest?"

"Kringe!" exclaimed Lily, feeling that her face was grey.

"Yes," said Lynch cruelly. "He was at the Cape a week ago. . . . Oh, we'll have him. He's been at the game a long time; he's had a good run."

"Just fancy, Kringe, eh, Lily! Who'd have thought it of him? He had one of the best straight connections on the Fields. Well, you never know."

"That's what I say, Ike—if John the Baptist came here I'd keep an eye on him." Lynch smiled.

"Lily," said Cohen, "has Julius Hermann been in this morning? He asked me to meet him here."

Lily thought this strange; Julius had of late kept away. Under the strain imposed by Lynch's presence she readily turned the conversation to the subject of the magnate. Soon he was being freely discussed.

"Oh," argued Cohen, "you say he's hard. Why? Because he is trying to kill I.D.B. That can only be done by severity, otherwise men will take the risk of being caught. I.D.B. is a special crime; the value of a town can be contained in a square inch. Now here's a stone I bought this morning"—he showed the bulge in his pocket—"it might be worth half a million—it might not—Champagne Charlie finds the wrong stuff every time; but imagine that bit of carbon a fancy stone, and a little bigger!"

Lily dreaded he was going to exhibit the diamond; she turned him to a general discussion on I.D.B., hoping desperately to throw dust in Lynch's eyes.

"Those who grow rich and respectable by I.D.B.," she said, "are the ones that cry for laws to stop the others."

"Heah, heah, Lily," Bennington chimed in.

"The big men are the worst. What are the Kafirs who steal, or the people who run the risk buying from them?"

"Yes," said Cohen, "there is the crooked broker who sits safe and sleek in his office, and says: 'Thank God, I am not as other men . . . I have a licence.'"

"Like Kringe. Those are the swine I like to get." Lynch interjected this with quiet savagery, looking towards Cissie.

"Ah," Cohen sighed, "it's a heavenly profession!"

"Heavenly, no," protested Lily, "but it has one advantage over Heaven—there are two roads to it, or rather from it. . . ."

"Miss White," interjected Lynch, "I know only one . . . the road to the Breakwater at Cape Town."

"But I know another," Lily retorted. "It leads to Park Lane, London."

How they all laughed!

But Lily was febrile, excited.

"And what is it all for," she cried. "Why are diamonds dug from the earth? This toiling, sweating, cursing, stealing—what for? We laugh at the Boers because they want to stop mining; but the Boers are right, and the Basutos are right; their land is full of diamonds, and they let nobody touch them because of the misery they bring."

Cissie took advantage of the general animation to go across and renew her chat with the young man.

"What's your name? I want to know."

"Well, it's Alan."

"Alan what?"

"Warrenton."

"Oh, that's nice! I like it. I thought perhaps it might be Albert or Edward or something like that."

"Well now, will you tell me yours, Cissie?"

“ But you know it! How did you find out? ”

“ They all call you Cissie,” he said jealously. “ Who are those men? ”

“ Customers. That one’s Mr. Cohen, a big diamond buyer—we call him Uncle; and that’s Lynch, the I.D.B. detective . . . and you see the man coming in at the door there? That’s Mr. Hermann. . . . ”

Julius had just entered and completed the strange, picturesque little group there about the beautiful woman whose eyes flashed such indignation; the white-haired Jew; the flashy dandy; and the cold, hard, eager detective, watching a glass behind the counter, while from the side his eyes observed every movement of the young, attractive girl, bending softly over a handsome boy. On the far side, in dark contrast, was Shilling, the Kafir.

Julius walked to the centre of the group and faced Lily. He was cool; master of himself; he saw that she was not. To-day should be his day.

“ Good morning, Miss White,” he said, almost mockingly.

“ Hullo, Julius,” Cohen cried. “ You’ve come in time to answer an awkward question . . . Lily wants to know what use diamonds are in the world? ”

Julius looked at her self-revealingly. “ Diamonds . . . hum . . . diamonds, my dear Miss White, give to lovely women the luxury they long for, and to men they give . . . lovely women! ”

“ What a cad! ” whispered the boy to Cissie.

Bennington’s loud haw-haw shook the bottles on the shelves. Cohen smiled, for he read in the remark nothing of what Julius, Lynch and Lily did; it seemed merely an effectively sarcastic reply.

By now Julius’s eyes had grown used to the light of the bar, and in the darkest corner he perceived Cissie bending over Warrenton. He looked at her in that apparently unobserving way of his, and he read in her radiant face something he had never before seen there. Such an overwhelming passion as his doubled the strength of his insight that had made a study of the female heart.

“ Good morning, Cissie, my dear,” he murmured caressingly.

“ Good morning, Mr. Hermann.”

As she stepped away, feeling embarrassed by the familiarity of Julius’s address, he defiantly touched her chin, as if it were his property.

“ Come along and serve me, Cissie.”

She felt a sudden, active repugnance for him of which she had hitherto been unaware. Then she glanced towards Lily, unconsciously dishonest, giving the impression that it was her mistress whom she had in mind. But another force now governed her actions, everything she did was influenced consciously or unconsciously, by the young man in the corner. Him she was trying to please, not Lily.

Behind the counter she again fell into her acquired attitude.

“ What can I get you, Mr. Hermann? ”

“ Fetch me a magnum of Bollinger . . . you know the year I drink.”

As she went to fetch the wine, Julius bent towards Lily.

“ Who’s the young chap over there? ”

“ I don’t know—never seen him before.” She knew why he was interested—it pleased her.

“ I don’t suppose you’ll ever see him again,” Julius said, almost absently. “ Come, Ike, join me? Bennington, never known to refuse—Lynch? ”

“ No thanks.” Nothing made him move. Lily could have screamed out the pain of her mental suffering, the suffering of years condensed into minutes. . . . Twice she had tried to remove the glass or empty it . . . anything; and each time felt Lynch’s eyes burning upon her. Now, as Cissie brought the champagne, Lily found an opportunity to whisper to Shilling.

“ That’s one, two, three, four, five, and one for yourself—six glasses, Cissie.”

“ No thank you, Mr. Hermann, I don’t want any.”

“ Bai Jove,” cried Hector, “ you didn’t refuse the other day at the claims.”

“ Well, that wasn’t working hours—I had the afternoon off.”

Cissie was annoyed. She felt that the young man in the corner was absorbing every word.

"Working hours," Julius remarked. "All the more reason for joining—what about Miss Lily's profits if you refuse to drink . . . eh, Miss White?"

"I don't force any girl to take it."

"Come on, Cissie, what's the matter with you to-day?" He playfully pulled her ear.

"Don't do that, Mr. Hermann!" she snapped.

"Are you going to have some wine?" he challenged back, roused by her resistance.

"No, I'm not!"

She glared defiance at him, conscious of pleasing the two people in the world whom she liked most. Lily gave silent encouragement; besides wanting to see Julius humiliated, she hoped in the excitement to find a solution of the awful enigma in which she was held.

"Cissie," said Julius, "do you know what I have decided to do with you?" He suddenly snatched her wrists. "With Miss Lily's permission, I am going to finish our interrupted kiss."

He and Lily looked at each other; they knew the battle was between them, that Cissie was only a token of their deep, essential hatred.

"Evens the field," shouted Hector.

"No, Ike, leave them," said Lily. "'Tis only fun."

"Let me go!"

"Ask me nicely." Julius was pressing his thumbs into the sides of Cissie's wrists, hurting her, though none knew it but she and he.

"He's got you," cried Bennington.

Julius had drawn her face towards him.

"Let her go!"

Again Cohen started to protest, and was checked by Lily. Lynch moved too. Cissie saw what was in his eyes.

"Leave us," she breathed, and then, like a tigress, snarled into Julius's face: "You can't. Never, never, you beast!"

He grew more savage, as if stimulated by the struggle for her lips. The young man rose at the far table. . . .

"I'll spit in your face," cried Cissie.

And here she made a final, desperate effort, tearing her right hand from his left, a red weal encircling it.

Stretching out for a weapon, her fingers closed upon the stem of the glass into which she had spat the diamond.

Whether she would have struck, or pitched the liquor and diamond into his face, Cissie never knew. An awful cry of despair went from Lily. Lynch rose to his full height, and then Cissie, recollecting, half-stepped, half-stumbled back, and shakingly set the glass upon the shelf behind the counter.

Julius still held to her left wrist.

"Hang on," shouted Hector, "I'll go round and hold her." He was trying to do so when he felt himself seized by the neck and flung upon the floor.

Alan then savagely gripped Julius's shoulder.

"Now then, that's enough, don't you think?"

Julius let go, but Cissie, robbed of victory, expressed no gratitude; she only panted:

"Why didn't you leave us? I could have managed him."

"Sorry if I was a little rough, Cissie." Julius spoke quite smoothly, as though it had been a joke.

And Alan looked very foolish. "I thought it was in earnest."

"Where do you come from?" asked Julius.

"England."

Julius turned to Cohen.

"Englishman's idea of California, Ike. This is only South Africa, Mr. . . . Buffalo Bill. Where are your pistols?"

"Never mind," whispered Cissie in Alan's ear.

"Now then, sir," blustered Bennington, "I want an apology."

"Well," said Alan, "I thought . . ."

"Never mind what you thought. Do you know who that gentleman is? That's Mr. Julius Hermann. You've heard of him?"

"Yes."

"And do you know who I am?"

"No."

"He's Captain Bennington, I.O.U.," said Cissie.

The others laughed at Hector's expense.

"I.O.U.," explained Cohen, "is the popular brother of I.D.B."

"I advise you not to lay your hands on a gentleman," blustered Bennington.

"Oh, shut up!" said Cissie. "Don't take notice of him. You'd like a drink, wouldn't you? Come over here."

She led Alan away from the group. The pleasure stamped on her face, the light in her eyes, told not only Julius, but Lynch and Lily, that she liked the new customer very much.

"Cissie," the older woman called out. "Attend to Mr. Lynch."

"Join us, Lynch," cried Julius.

"No thanks, I've got a job on to-day."

Lily began to hate Lynch, hate him worse than Julius; he was torturing her so. Even Julius brought her solace, momentary relief, when he cried:

"Come, gentlemen, fill up"—some of the glasses had been elbowed over in the struggle—"I want you to drink a toast to friendship."

He gave Lily a full glass.

"To friendship, past, present, and future."

Lily took it, meeting his eyes as she did so; she echoed, almost dreamily: "To friendship." Then she turned towards Lynch and lifted her glass.

"Sorry, Miss White, in my job there is no friendship." They were slightly separated from the group, which Cissie held in conversation.

"I think 'tis unkind of you, Mr. Lynch." Lily was weak, cornered, living on hope.

"*She* doesn't want me as a friend." The words went out in a little hiss, Lynch indicating Cissie by a move of the head.

"Of course she does," answered Lily ignobly. "Cissie, come here, you naughty child." But the girl had gone over to talk to the young man, and now they came back together to the main group.

"I asked her to invite you, my young friend," Julius was saying, "we are all very fond of Cissie, so we appreciate the good intention of your dramatic performance."

This raised a laugh; Alan looked somewhat ridiculous.

"Well . . . Cissie's friend is my friend; what do you propose to do here?"

"Work, sir," Alan answered. "Any job I can get."

"Good . . . come and look me up one of these days. I'll see what I can do for you."

"Many men would bear malice," Alan stammered.

"Malice! God forbid . . . come, let's drink the toast; to friendship, past, present, and future . . . especially future."

They all took up their glasses; Cissie stood by Alan, her arm almost familiarly touching his shoulder.

"But," said Lily, "Mr. Lynch won't join us."

"Lynch, this is *my* toast." Julius gave a side glance at Alan and Cissie, and the detective following it, noted the affection in her attitude. His face became harder.

"Don't let it ever be said you refused to be friendly with a new chum." There was almost a warning in Julius's words.

"All right . . . I'll join you," said Lynch.

He took up a glass and turned to them. As he did so Lily looked over to Shilling, who came quickly behind the counter, presumably to wash glasses. As he reached the flap he bent low to pass beneath it. . . .

"Friendship," cried Julius, "joined with the name of Mr. Warrenton."

"Friendship," they all repeated.

Shilling crouched behind the counter, he did not rise, but Lily, watching the glass, saw a black hand stretch up and take it . . . she dared look no longer . . . Shilling put the soiled drink to his lips, but before he could swallow it, was taken hold of by Lynch, who stretched over the counter like a steel wire.

"I've got you."

Lily, standing on the right side of the Kafir, snatched away the tumbler.

Lynch at once released the boy.

"Give me that glass."

"What's the matter?" Lily at last was cool, in the face of deadly danger.

"Matter is, I've a warrant to search this place for illicit diamonds."

He drew a paper from his pocket.

Isaac Cohen stood as if dazed; Julius's face was placid, inscrutable as death.

“ A stone was bought this morning by your boy,” proceeded Lynch. “ It is now in that glass.”

“ This is monstrous.” But Lily was pale to the lips. “ The boy tried to steal a drink, nothing more.”

“ I believe you, Lily,” said Cohen, “ but it’s no good getting excited. You are accused, and everything you say may be used against you . . . now, let’s do the job legally.”

“ It’s legal, Ike,” said the detective. “ Read the warrant.”

“ Describe the stone you’re looking for, Lynch.”

“ Yes,” cried Lily, with sudden hope; “ describe the diamond.”

“ Octahedron, off-coloured, smoky-white river stone, weight $18\frac{1}{4}$ carats.”

Cohen started slightly.

“ Value? ” he asked.

“ £3 a carat. Now, Miss White, hand me that glass.”

“ Hold on, Lynch; can you identify the stone? ”

“ I can, Ike.”

“ You say it’s in that glass . . . now be careful, Lynch, because if you’re making a mistake, Miss White has legal redress; this imputation on her character . . . ”

“ I know all about that. Give me that glass.”

“ Stop! ” cried Cohen. “ You’re barking up the wrong tree.”

“ What are you talking about? ”

“ This concerns me, Lynch. I have the stone you are looking for—octahedron, smoky, off-coloured, river diamond, $18\frac{1}{4}$ carats.”

“ What! ” There was murder in Lynch’s voice.

“ Is that the stone you’re after? ” asked Cohen, as at last he produced the thing that had bulged in his vest pocket.

“ Yes . . . damn it! Sorry, Miss White. Better luck next time.” He turned to go.

“ And you know, Lynch, I’m a licensed buyer,” continued Cohen. “ You are wondering how I got hold of it, eh . . . ? We’ll walk along together, and I’ll tell you.” As they were going out of the door, Ike could be heard talking. “ You see, there must be a mistake,

because Fitzroy brought that stone in from the river this morning, it's entered in my books. . . ."

Lily, meanwhile, had taken the diamond out of the liquor, and placed it in the rinsing-tank beneath the counter. Now she was holding the glass aloft, and pouring out the contents for everybody to see. . . .

"What a horrible law the Diamond Trade Act is," she said.

"Un-British, absolutely un-British," agreed Hector. "Let's have a bottle of wine."

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN the Golden Bar closed its doors that night Lily and Cissie sat to rest, while Shilling boiled water.

"I'll make you a nice cup of tea," said the girl; "you've had an awful day."

"Yes, Cissie . . . what do you think of me?"

"What I think of you?"

"I don't mean Bennington's trick to get you into it—you know that wasn't me—but now you know what I am . . . an I.D.B., Cissie, yes, an I.D.B."

"Shueh . . . don't talk so loud, Miss Lily."

"What difference can it make Everybody knows . . . they all suspected it, but you. Yes, Cissie, I'm like the others,

" 'They all do it, they all do it,
Tho' they often rue it.' "

"Well, anyway, he didn't catch you, and now you've got a chance to get rid of it . . . don't ever do it again, eh?"

"Get rid of it? I've hardly the nerve left to touch the cursed thing. Bennington should have taken it away, but he funk'd it."

"I'll take it, Miss Lily, when I go to my room. And I'll chuck it away!"

“ Fling away a stone like that! ”

“ It's ten years' hard if they find it. I wouldn't risk it.”

“ No, don't you, Cissie. I.D.B. kills all our decent instincts; my God, what it makes of us! ”

“ Give it up, Miss Lily, please, eh? Think of the little girl. Would you like her to know one day? ”

“ Oh, 'tis a trade like many others,” said Lily, defensively. “ Worse than selling liquor; better than selling your body. Yes, I must give it up, the game's not worth the candle.”

“ And what about Mr. Fitzroy's klip? ”

Shame darkened Lily's face. “ I admit I did a mean thing, Cissie, but he'd have squandered the money on drink. Margaret deserves more than Fitzroy or any man on earth. Lot of brutes! ”

“ Not all men, Miss Lily.”

“ What do you know of men, child? ” Her voice was charged with scorn. Cissie dared not reply. Then, very suddenly, but with no violence, Lily said: “ That young fellow was in again, this afternoon . . . has he been blarneying you? ”

“ He doesn' blarney.”

“ Water boil, Meeses,” crooned Shilling. Cissie rose to brew the tea. The Kafir went away. Thoughtfully and with deliberation Lily spoke:

“ You like Warrenton, don't you, Cissie? ”

“ Don't you, Miss Lily? ”

“ As men go, child, he does not seem the worst. . . . ”

“ Oh, he is *not*, Miss Lily! ”

In these words there was such revelation that the woman said coldly, in reply, “ As bad as that, eh? ”

For some moments there was silence. From outside in the street, where men were still being spewed from the neighbouring bars, came sounds of alcoholic reaction; shouts and snatches of song; cries of pain or pleasure. Cissie set the tea before Lily.

“ Where is Warrenton now? ”

“ I don' know; he promised to see me home.”

“ Call him in! ”

“ But I don' think he's there.”

“ Call him in.”

Cissie went to the door.

"When a man's about," said Lily, "'tis better to keep an eye on him."

"Alan, Alan!" cried the girl, with soft voice.

"Are you coming, Cissie?" he answered from the dark street.

"Not yet . . . come in and have some tea."

On Lily's face was a strange look; contempt, hope, anger, amusement. Her thoughts were troubled and complex.

"Come in," she said, as he hesitated on the threshold.

"Miss Sheldon said . . . you didn't like men hanging about her."

"Sit down and take some tea with us. I am going to have a straight talk with you, Mr. Warrenton."

"Yes?" His manner showed surprise.

"Miss Lily, your tea's getting cold."

"Sit there, Cissie, and be quiet. Now then," she said very suddenly, turning on him, "What's your game? Why are you waiting for Cissie?"

"To see her home." His voice had a note of resentment.

"Why?"

"Because it would please me."

"Honest, anyway. Mr. Warrenton, your introduction to the Fields has shown you that our society is, er . . . well . . . mixed. You saw I was *suspected* of a serious crime."

"I don't believe it. It was a blunder, or spite, or something."

"Cissie, too, is suspected."

"Never."

"What do you know of her?"

"Everything," he cried, with boyish ardour. "It's written in her face. Anyone can see she's honest, and . . ." Awkwardly he stopped. Cissie gave him a grateful look.

With quiet scorn, Lily remarked: "You should do well on the Fields . . . anyone who can walk into a bar, and see in the barmaid's eyes all you do, should find every diamond in Kimberley."

"Anyway," he persisted, "I'd never believe a word against her; why, she's only a child! Really, I think it's a shame she should have to be working in a bar. It's no life for her."

"Thank you . . . Have you anything better to suggest?"

"I'm sorry if I offend you, Miss White, but is it?"

"It's better than the alternatives men would offer her." She told him of Cissie's past, of her upbringing, her lack of education, how she had been thrown on the Fields by her father's death. . . .

"Haven't you any relatives, Cissie?"

"Daddy's people are all in England," she answered, "or what's left of them. I have an auntie in the Transvaal. . . ."

"You see, Mr. Warrenton, 'tis not so easy to find a solution. Girls here can't go into domestic service, that is Kafirs' work. Cissie couldn't be a governess or teacher, she needs schooling herself. The only thing open to her is this, or to become housekeeper to an unmarried man."

He sat thinking. Lily sipped her tea. Seeing that he had not touched his, she said: "Would you prefer something else?"

"Oh, no, I like tea. I was wondering. . . ."

"What?"

"Will it be easy for me, do you think, to get a job?"

"Not just at present," Lily replied. "There's an awful slump."

"Yes, I know. Otherwise . . . No, what's the use, I will first try to get work. . . ."

He wanted to speak of Julius Hermann's offer, but Shilling came in and silently looked at his mistress. He stood waiting, evidently for the stranger to leave.

Then a light knock was heard, three beats at regular intervals upon the shutter.

"Somebody after a drink, I suppose," said Cissie. "They'll go away." But the knock was repeated. "Who can it be?" Cissie asked Shilling where Lynch was. He pointed to the street in reply.

Lily arose. "Mr. Warrenton, we'll resume this chat . . . some other time. 'Tis late, and I fear . . ."

"Of course, licensed premises," he agreed.

"Will you see Cissie home?"

"May I?"

"Oh, thank you, Miss Lily," cried the girl impulsively.

"Take great care of her. Remember I am trusting both of you as I have not trusted anyone for years. You understand me?"

"If she doesn't, Miss White, I do," answered Alan. "And you need have no fear, on my word of honour."

"Good. You and I understand each other." She held out her hand and gripped his tight, as if trying to find and test his soul. "I am giving you a last chance."

"I don't understand?"

"I mean your sex," she said, trying to smile. "If you don't disappoint me perhaps some day I'll explain it. Good night. Shilling, *vula 'mnyango*."

The boy obeyed, cautiously opening the door.

"Shall I see who was knocking?" asked Alan, as he stepped out.

"Don't trouble, they've gone, eh, Shilling?"

The Kafir made no answer, he went out and did not return.

"Good night, Miss Lily."

"Good night, Cissie, God bless you, child!" Impulsively and passionately she took the girl in her arms and kissed her many times. Her emotion was so great it seemed she would find relief in an outflow of nervous tears. But none came, though Cissie was shedding hers freely.

"You're not angry with me, Miss Lily . . . because I like him a little?"

"There, there, child, go along now," and she whispered: "I like him a little, too."

Cissie gave back a last kiss and went to the door. But there she turned, and, coming again to Lily, softly said:

"Where is it? Let me take it."

"No, no. Lynch is there—suppose he stopped you? Go now."

From the street Alan's fresh young voice could be

heard calling like the voice of Hope: "Are you coming, Cissie?"

She made a last effort. "Let me take it, Miss Lily, and give it back to Fitzroy."

"No. I'll pay him for it."

She made this sacrifice in the place of tears that would not flow, for her heart was filled with gratitude, and once again she felt the need of giving something to Cissie, as she had given her the stone cross.

When the girl had gone Shilling returned, and Lily curtly asked, "Where?"

He glanced towards the yard. "*Laapo.*"

"Open," she said, and he went through the back door. She followed swiftly behind the counter, dipped her hand into the rinsing-tank, and then went to the piano, opened it, and dropped in the diamond. It was done so quickly that when Julius entered by the inner door, Lily was seated in an attitude of peace and calm, almost of reverie. He was silent, and she gave no sign of hearing him, but as he peered searchingly beneath the counter, she quietly said, "Come in."

He passed into the bar where she sat before the tea cups.

"Why did you keep me waiting, Lily?"

"She had not gone yet. I felt tired."

"Yes, it's a tiring business . . . yours." His tone was the ironic one, but she did not lift her head.

"Three cups," he remarked. "Visitors, eh . . .?"

"Since you know, why ask?"

An evil, subtle look came into his face.

"Are you coming, Cissie?" He mocked the voice of Warrenton. "Already she calls him Alan—yes, I heard them as they went away—and he calls her 'Cissie.'"

"What about it?"

"This about it. It shall not be. It has to stop. This little love affair shall be stifled at birth."

"Very well . . . stifle it."

"You must do that, Lily."

"I, really?"

"Yes, I'll explain why." He sat beside her and crossed his legs. "You heard, of course, I offered to marry Cissie?"

"Yes, I heard."

"You were surprised?"

"No *offer* of yours could surprise me."

He laughed agreeably.

"Don't be vindictive, Lily, think of the poet's words; remember what we have been to one another, and 'be grateful for the past.' Now I'll tell you a little secret—Cissie likes me."

"She has a strange way of showing it."

"Perhaps that was to please you, Lily. You have been doing such a lot of anti-Hermann propoganda. Now," he continued very, very gently, "*that*, too, must stop . . . from to-day."

"From to-day," she answered, facing him at last, "nothing will change her opinion of you—she has seen what you are."

"Oh, that was nothing," he said. "A little bit of fun never does a girl any harm. No, no; what is more important, to-day we all saw what *you* are. The only person who can save you now is . . . little Julius. You see, Lily, some people *think* you are what you are; Lynch *knows*; but I can *prove* it."

"You think so, do you?" She trembled with anger and hidden fear.

"Listen, Lily, while I tell what happened to-day. This morning you bought a stone from a 'trap.' "

"Lynch said so in front of everybody." Her tone was sneering.

But with the smoothness of flowing water he continued:

"Fitzroy came in from the river with a diamond worth twenty times as much; you made him drunk, changed your stone for his. He sold the 'trap' stone to Cohen . . . shall I go on?"

"You were always good at invention."

"Invention? Let us empty that little tank where the boy washes the glasses."

"So *you* have me watched, too?" She said this with the bitterness of death; were there no child to think of she would gladly have shot him dead, and paid the price of her pleasure. "After all you have done to me, can't you leave me alone?"

"Why have you not left *me* alone? Why have you

set yourself to keep me from this girl, the one thing I desire?" He had now ceased to play a part; his irony had left him. They stood before each other with hearts laid bare, concealing nothing. "What right have you to come between us?" he passionately cried. "You did not want me yourself, Lily, yet you did all you could to make her hate me."

"It is my duty, knowing what you are."

"Your duty? You got hold of her to keep her from me. Perhaps you even pushed Sheldon out of the world to get her . . . who knows. . . . And I am mad with love for that girl!"

"Love? I know that side of you. Love? Lust!"

"Love, lust? Choose your word, Lily. They mean the same. What is love but a poetic, respectable word for intense desire, or lust? And what is the difference between my passion for a beautiful girl and yours for money? Is mine lust more than yours?"

"I tried to hide my feelings," said Lily.

"I tried to hide mine, but to-day she challenged me—oh, yes, I know why; because there was that boy—her eyes, her lips, her teeth. . . ."

"Is all this necessary? Good God, if you have no decency, have you no sense of humour left? Can't your mind go back ten years? Don't you realize? How can you forget the child, who is nearly as tall as this . . . child."

"Lily, don't be a hypocrite. Cissie Sheldon, in these surroundings, a child? In this place where the birds have no song, the flowers no scent, and the women no virtue?"

"Listen to me—I tell you Cissie is a child, pure at heart, pure in spite of the bar, as pure as your own child."

He turned brutally on her.

"I have no child."

"No, you have no child; remember that."

"Any fool can be a father, Lily, it takes a wise man *not* to be one."

"Hadn't you ever a mother?"

"Yes . . . she left me to starve on the steps of a prison in Buda Pesth."

"Do you love nothing good?"

"How can you ask that," he said with rapture. "You know I love everything beautiful; beauty I cannot resist . . . a picture, a flower, a statue, a woman. . . ."

And quietly she added: "A child."

"What does the poet say? 'Beauty is youth, youth beauty.' Ah, Lily, my longing for her will become madness."

"Yes, you never want a thing until you can't get it; and when you've got it you don't want it any more."

He shook his head sadly.

"That is the tragedy. When I saw her growing so fresh and desirable I loved her; and when I knew that all the *canaille* of Kimberley wanted her, my passion was doubled. And now comes along this pink boy . . . ah, Lily, it is bad luck, bad luck."

"Yes, it has altered things." She was unable to hide her pleasure—the secure knowledge that love had come to her aid. She had done her utmost, yet in the end realized that she could only oppose man by man.

"Lily," said Julius, "at least, if we are not friends, we understand one another. Now is it clear to you I want Cissie Sheldon?"

"Quite clear. But you can't have her."

"I can, if you help me."

"But I won't help you."

"Yes, you will, Lily." Once again he was cool and ironic, all the passionate avowal gone from his voice, his face. "Oh, yes, you will. Unless you prefer ten years' hard labour."

"I have already done ten years for you."

"Lily, whom do you love more, Cissie or my child, Margaret?"

"Your child? What did you say a minute ago?"

"You had better make up your mind. While you are in gaol . . . well, I will do my duty and look after Margaret."

"Don't talk nonsense. Legally you are nothing to her. And as for gaol, I have made up my mind not to touch another stone."

"What of it? The new law is to pass soon. If diamonds are found on your premises you are guilty."

You needn't touch another stone; you are known as an I.D.B. What will be easier for the police than to find diamonds . . ."

"As they found them to-day?" she sneered.

"Lynch was a fool. He should have emptied the glass." Julius got up and took a notebook from his pocket. "But I shan't depend on the police. I do my own detective work. Listen . . . I am going to tell you how much illicit you bought during last month."

She stared up at him dazed, while he read in an even voice:

"Monday, the first, 138 carats; second, 149; third—good business—288½, including one white stone of 66 carats; then the fourth, hum, slack day, only 18 carats. . . ."

"For God's sake stop," she cried; she could bear no more. "Where did you get that?"

"Never mind," he replied. "I have the original entries made by you in your *own book*. Do you admit?"

"What you like . . . here. You can't prove it. I never buy a stone myself."

"I know," he said, nodding to the place where Shilling usually stood. "*He* does."

"Shilling will never give me away. You'll only find white men low enough; that Kafir is faithful to me as a dog to his master."

"Exactly . . . to his *master*." Julius gave a low whistle, and soon afterwards the Kafir entered, with fear grey in his face.

"Shilling," said Julius in English, so that Lily might follow every word, "who is your master?"

The Kafir raised his hand and cried: "*Inkos*" (chief).

"Who sent you here to work for Meeses?"

"*Inkos*."

"Who you buy klip for?"

"For Mees Lily."

"Who you give klip to?"

"Mees Lily."

"You can swear that?"

"*Ehé*, yes, *inkos*."

"Are you satisfied, Lily?"

But she had given in, and sat weak, with bowed head.

" You see, Lily? "

" Oh, God . . . even that Kafir! " She could barely find the words.

" Don't be afraid, he is faithful as a dog to his master. If I tell him he will die before he hurts you. You should thank me, Lily; under the new law, fifteen years." He walked thoughtfully up and down the bar, giving time for the words to go to the heart of her consciousness. Then he said gently: " Now all I want you to do is *not* to set Cissie against me."

" It is not I; she's in love with that young fellow."

" She'll be tired of him soon. Anyway, he's my affair. Do you promise not to work against me? "

" Yes . . . I promise."

" You must swear, Lily, swear to help me."

Her dazed brain was trying to react, to function; an idea floated through it, too vague for definition; she was so weary, so beaten and maimed in body and soul. " I swear to God . . . "

" No, no, not God. On the life of your child, swear you will try to make Cissie fond of me, advise her to come to me. . . . "

" You offered marriage; you will legally and honourably marry her? "

For a moment he hesitated, but only for a moment.

" Ah," he said, " the beautiful sanctity of the wedding ceremony! Yes, Lily, I will make ' an honest woman of her.' You swear to help me; I will protect you from the police."

She paused, thinking it out as well as her tired brain would allow.

" Come, Lily," said Julius, " Lynch is waiting for me outside."

" Lynch? You? . . . "

A flash of inspiration lighted her eyes, which had been heavy with fatigue. She saw it all: Shilling, who had tempted her, who had betrayed her, stolen the incriminating book, who held her in the hollow of his hand; the revelation to Lynch of her doings, and finally the appearance, on that awful morning, of Julius Hermann, to see her downfall, and to gloat over her.

What could she do but kill him! Yet she lacked the

strength and courage for the act; she was afraid, afraid. Life was horrible. . . . Death was worse. Between the best and the worst diamonds was a great gulf, but the law set the same price on the best and the worst of dead men. And there was Margaret. . . . These thoughts raced through her consciousness, and he stood there all the while with the little book in his hand, as though he were God holding the Book of Life. . . .

“ I swear . . . by the life of my child, that I will not set Cissie against you. . . . ”

“ And you will advise her to marry me, ” he added.

“ That I will influence her to the best of my ability to marry Julius Hermann. ”

“ Good, ” he said. “ Now don't try any tricks, Lily, my girl, because if you do, look out. ”

For a few moments he paused thoughtfully, then slipped the little book into his inner pocket and softly went out as he had come—by the back door.

CHAPTER XXII

At dawn the next morning Lily was awakened by a beam of sunlight which struck into the bar through a crack in the shutter. She got up from the floor, where she had fallen, feeling wretched and debased, worn with mental agony and bodily pain. She undressed and went to bed, but could not sleep. Again she arose. How stale and evil the bar seemed—how beastly. Usually when she entered it in the morning Shilling had sweetened the place with soap and water, washed clean its stains. But now all was disorder; there were the half-filled cups of the night before; the bottles and glasses with their dregs; thick English beer and porter smeared on the counter and splashed on the floor, like fermented yeast overflowed from its vessel. And worst of all was the smell of evaporating whisky, mixed with the odour

of half-finished cigars and the stale, imprisoned smoke under the galvanized roof.

Her soul cried for air, for sunlight. She could no longer endure the place.

"Shilling," she cried. "Shilling." But he did not appear, and her mind, going back to the scene of the night before she asked herself, "Will he be there?"

She washed, dressed, and went into the yard to tell him to clean the bar while she went for a walk to Bultfontein. But Shilling was not there. He had taken a few of his scanty belongings and gone. "It is as well," she thought. "After last night I could never bear him near me again."

It was now seven o'clock. Lily went out into the fresh air, walked briskly to the market square and back, and then roused Cissie, who sleepily called out:

"Who's there? What do you want?"

"'Tis me, Cissie. Get up, child, and help; Shilling's gone."

Lily went to open up, Cissie following when dressed. Between them they washed and scrubbed the bar.

Alan came in that morning, and was allowed to go with Cissie on an errand to Isaac Cohen, whom Lily asked to find a trustworthy boy.

That night a Basuto took Shilling's place. He was experienced, and soon became familiar with his duties. Lily had decided to give up the traffic in diamonds; she grew reconciled quickly to the new boy, who was as smart and thorough in ordinary work as Shilling.

The Golden Bar was soon again pursuing its normally hectic course.

But business continued to decline. To Cissie it seemed that the decay started from her meeting with Alan, and she reproached herself, wondering if her open attachment was not the cause. She had estranged several hard-drinking admirers, while the current rumour that Cohen had a preferential claim on Lily's favours alienated others.

But the depression that began as a reaction against worthless scrip was now swelled by another great and unforeseen factor. This was the new law. As Lynch had predicted, it put into the I.D.B.'s of Kimberley

“the fear of God.” Several of their most highly respected, intelligent practitioners, were at once arrested. After preliminary examination by a Magistrate they appeared before the Special Court, consisting of two senior Magistrates and one Judge of the High Court. The accused had to prove their innocence; acquittal was almost out of the question. In I.D.B. circles the word “acquittal” became a synonym for “impossible”; sometimes if a billiard-player found the white and red in baulk he would say: “Blimey, he’s left me an acquittal.” Many decided to leave the country before being found in the possession of diamonds.

The police were feverishly occupied. Lynch was not wrong in his statement that they knew all the I.D.B.’s, for they knew even more; often they suspected innocent men. As it was no longer necessary to prove anything but possession, the guilty trembled. They never knew when or where a treacherous man or discarded woman would “place” stones for a well-informed detective to find.

The arrest of Steinsohn created a vivid sensation. He had amassed a fortune, and even before the new law came into effect had decided to withdraw from “the trade” and live peacefully with a new and handsome housekeeper. The happy young couple (their combined age did not exceed seventy-five years—his fifty-five, hers twenty) were preparing to go *home* for the honeymoon when the bridegroom was arrested. A rich parcel of stones had been discovered in his bedroom. The housekeeper left Kimberley at once, rumour describing her as a police “trap” brought there to ensnare this Samson of the I.D.B. brotherhood. But others whispered that Rose Moore was the avenger, and the majority considered Steinsohn as guilty.

He was committed for trial, and lay in prison awaiting conviction before the Special Court. Friends who were allowed to see him said he had grown pitifully thin; that the calamity had turned his hair white.

Lily dreaded every day to hear that Kringe was arrested. So far he had escaped.

The Golden Bar was still yielding a profit, and she placed her savings on fixed deposit at four per cent.,

which would pay Margaret's school fees. But the new law affected particularly the class of man who wasted money on liquor and gaming; and the future was dark for the Golden Bar, with a mortgage of £3,000 on the business.

The lining of silver to Lily's cloud was the wholesome change that had come over Cissie—the clean, healthy love she and Alan felt for each other; and the letters each week from Fredeburg School. These were consolations indeed. But Alan found it impossible to get work. He tried everywhere, and then, when his money was exhausted, went, on Cohen's advice, to see Julius Hermann. Next morning he joined the staff of the Hermann Company to learn the classification of diamonds. For this light work he received a salary of one pound per day, and was much congratulated by his friends, among whom he most esteemed Isaac Cohen. The acquaintance begun in the Golden Bar was continued as a natural outcome of Alan's attachment to Cissie. There was much sympathy between the older and the younger man; Alan was of a grave, serious nature, not highly gifted intellectually, but eager for knowledge and ready to pay for it by labour. To improve himself he had studied law for a year in England, and knew quite a good deal about it. He was honourable, modest and staunch, listened rather than spoke, and was so frank and truthful himself that he failed to comprehend the veiled warnings which Lily White uttered to discourage him from entering the employment of the Hermann Company.

Cohen advised him not to hesitate, but to go straight in and see Julius. Alan that day came under the spell of the magnate, who exercised the charm of his personality to the captivation of the boy's mind.

"Well, how did you like him?" asked Cohen afterwards.

"I could not believe it was the same man."

"You see, Alan, you should not judge hastily. You were prejudiced by what happened in the bar."

"I admit it. Look at the way he behaved."

"I thought he was going too far that day, but Miss White explained it was a wager between them that he

couldn't kiss Cissie. You know that sort of thing is common here, and Mr. Hermann had been drinking champagne."

The boy's face clouded; he did not like to think of it. But had not Mr. Hermann afterwards behaved manfully? And now he had again shown a decent spirit. How many men would have given him work after that?

Cissie was glad to hear that her lover had got employment; she knew his failures had dispirited him, that he wanted to earn, and make a position for himself. His aim she knew, too; he had said that he wanted her to give up being a barmaid, and he had not hesitated to tell Miss Lily so, declaring that he and Cissie would be married as soon as his position gave him the right.

Lily was reserved in her comments when Alan joyfully announced that he had found work; a difference in her attitude towards Julius had of late been felt by Cissie; there was no sign of the old rancour, the unrelenting enmity. When one day they talked of this, Lily explained: "You see, Cissie, now that you care for Alan, I feel you are safe, your affection has opened your eyes . . . Love is watching over you."

"But, Miss Lily, you said 'Love is blind.'"

"Love is blind, Cissie, that is, it blinds its victims; but in this great gamble we call Life, you are one of the lucky ones, you have chanced on a decent man."

"Yes, he is," cried the girl happily. "He's the best in the world."

Lily shrugged her eyebrows.

"The best you've met, Cissie; let that suffice."

"Oh, I know what you mean, eh? *You've met another. Yes, you, Miss Lily . . . and his name starts with 'I'—guess who he is?*"

"You mean Mr. Cohen, of course."

"I say, Miss Lily . . . why don't you marry him?"

"But who says he wants to marry me?"

"Ach, what, anybody can see that."

Lily laughed.

"How wise we're getting, Cissie! How the scales have fallen from our eyes! . . . so you're going to teach your grandmother to suck eggs . . . teach Lily White her trade!"

"Don't tease, Miss Lily. But really, why don't you marry Uncle?"

"Perhaps I don't believe in marriage. Perhaps Mr. Cohen doesn't—he has certainly never asked me."

"That's because you haven't wanted him to," said the girl with the wisdom of countless ages. . . "But do marry him, Miss Lily, I'd love him to be my uncle really."

Lily laughed enigmatically, and with obvious cynicism, to cover her deepest feelings.

"Well, if business goes on as it is, I shall have to do something for a living."

"Yes . . . business is rotten, isn't it?"

"By the way, Cissie, are you meeting Alan this afternoon?"

The answer was a blushful look.

"How do you young people spend your time? . . . No, I'm not going to guess, because . . ."

"I'm teaching him something—what do you think it is?"

"You, Cissie, teaching *him*? Where do you go?"

"By his room—I mean *to* his room."

"Well, child, I know it's all right, but I hope others are as broad-minded. What are you teaching him?"

"Kafir."

"Why does he want to learn Kafir?"

"To get on. He says he may have to go into the mines, and then he must be able to speak to the boys."

"I'm glad he's prudent. Why don't you, Cissie, take the chance to improve yourself at the same time?"

"I do. Alan's teaching me to speak like he does; I can say 'don't' and 'must' and 'isn't,' and all those hard words with 't's' at the end."

"Yes, I have noticed a great improvement in your speech. You couldn't do it for me, Cissie," added Lily, with a spice of jealousy, "but you have done it for him."

"Ach, but I can't change my Colonial accent, you know! I don't want to, either."

Warrenton had long since left the Central Hotel, which was beyond his means. He now occupied an outer room at the Diggers' Hotel, a hot little shanty which gave on to a veranda of corrugated iron. It was here

that he took his lessons in Kafir, sitting outside, though Cissie disliked being stared at by people and wanted Alan to go in. But he feared this would be misconstrued.

“ They will be talking about you, Cissie.”

“ But why? ”

“ Well, it *is* my bedroom.”

“ I see, if there wasn't a bed it would be all right, eh? ”

“ Yes . . . more or less.”

“ Well then, Alan,” she answered, “ ask the landlady to take the bed out; you can sleep on the sofa? ”

He laughed . . . “ You don't understand.”

“ Yes, I do,” she replied, “ it's a lot of damn rot.”

“ Cissie! ”

“ I'm sorry . . . I'm sorry; did I say that with a Colonial accent? Heah, I'll say it like Bennington—lot of demned rot! ”

“ You mustn't swear at all.”

The hours passed so pleasantly this way. Cissie looked forward to them, and with Alan as protector, Lily had no objection to the afternoons off, rather she encouraged them. But summer was drawing to its end, and it became chilly immediately after sunset.

Then Cissie was happy, she made Alan go indoors with her, and found various pretexts for kissing him. “ But he's so English, Miss Lily,” she told afterwards. “ He's always worrying about what people think. Lot I care! ”

“ No, Cissie, he's shielding your good name—it proves he's fond of you.”

Months went by and Alan was making a name and a position with the Hermann Company. Cissie was still in the Golden Bar, but looked forward to the time when she and her lover would be married. Lily had advised them to wait not less than a year.

“ You are still a child, Cissie. I think Alan should have a few hundred pounds saved before you think of setting up house.”

He agreed with this view, though Cissie put forward her small capital, about £125 remaining from the

subscription. The young man found that living in Kimberley cost three times as much as in England. Any little pleasure or luxury to which he treated his sweetheart or himself, made such a hole in his salary. It was hard to save. Cissie, truly, was better off than he, she could put away half her earnings. He decided to ask Julius Hermann for a better job with an increase of salary.

“ Ah, anxious to get on, eh, Warrenton? ”

“ Yes, sir. ”

“ Well, my boy, you have learned quite a lot about diamonds since you came here; you are eager to go ahead; you want to save money; what’s the hurry? ”

“ Well, you see, Mr. Hermann . . . I want to get married. ”

“ O—h, married, already? Tch, tch! So soon! And who is the blushing bride? Oh yes, I remember her, Cissie, little Cissie Sheldon . . . of course, of course; I knew her when she was so high. ” He measured off a yard in the air.

“ She has told me so. ”

“ Well, Warrenton, I am going to give you a big chance, but you must not tell anybody I offered it to you. ”

“ You have my word of honour, Mr. Hermann. ”

“ You see if the older men knew, it would create jealousy . . . I am thinking of starting London offices—How would you like to go there for a year at double your present salary? ”

Alan’s face fell—then he thought it over and said:

“ When would you want me to go? ”

“ Immediately. ”

“ I’m afraid I can’t accept it, sir. ”

Julius betrayed just the faintest movement of impatience.

“ I thought you would jump at the offer. A young man of your experience seldom has such a chance. ”

“ I’m very grateful to you, Mr. Hermann, but I can’t leave Kimberley just now. ”

“ How soon could you go? ”

“ Well . . . as soon as Cissie and I could settle affairs and get married. We could then go together. ”

“No, no—I don’t want to send a married man, I want somebody unattached, who will devote himself to the Company’s interests; sleep on the premises if need be.”

Alan was tempted. On £50 per month in London he could in one year save as much as he could here in four. But separation from Cissie was unthinkable. He declined the offer, feeling rather ashamed of himself. Mr. Hermann dismissed the subject curtly. Alan did not think this surprising.

Twelve hours later Julius had a midnight meeting with Lily at the Golden Bar.

“Lily,” he said, “what have you done regarding the matter we last . . . discussed?”

“What I could,” she replied. “I have not said a word against you since that night.”

“No more than that?”

“What more do you expect—what can I do?”

He looked at her lazily.

“That is your affair.”

Silence came between them for a while.

“You have let her promise to marry him.”

“I am helpless. She is not my daughter, and if she were, I could do nothing; I told you she was in love with him.”

“Hum.” He drummed his fingers elegantly on the counter. “In love with him! Love? A costly amusement.”

“I know that.”

“Life is cruel, Lily. Every mistake we make has to be paid for, by ourselves. . . .”

“I have paid heavily for mine.”

“You must pay for one more; I mean all the propaganda you did against me before I . . . asked you not to. It is difficult to undo, I know, but you *must* undo it. Otherwise . . . well, we’ve already talked about that, eh?”

“Yes,” she said.

“By the way, Lily, how is business? The bar, I mean.”

“Indifferent.”

“I thought so. Times are bad. Everybody needs money. Even I need money. Scrip has fallen hundreds

per cent. That reminds me—you will be getting a notification from my lawyers, they are calling up the bond.”

She looked at him with quiet scorn.

“They will legally demand repayment of the £3,000.” But he explained reassuringly: “Perhaps when the time comes, I can arrange to let it stay on mortgage . . . that depends. . . .”

“Yes, I know on what.”

“But, of course, Lily, it makes no difference to you, because you have so many friends who will put up the money?”

She made no reply, and he went away, leaving her to think over her position. He was well aware how the conditions had changed. Her mind took in the situation instantly, it always saw the dark side of things; Noah had lost his position by an amalgamation; Kringe was a fugitive; Steinsohn in gaol; Shilling gone, and all revenue from I.D.B. cut off. Business in the bar grew daily worse, and now people began talking freely of a coming big consolidation of the mines, with compounding of natives, that would ruin the shop-keepers of Kimberley, followed by deadly reaction in all places of luxury.

How in a few months all her golden dreams had vanished! It was as though the magic wand of an all-powerful devil had, by a stroke, laid waste her little world.

What could she do? She had no faith, she believed nothing pleasant save what was before her eyes; now she foresaw the Golden Bar sunk to the value of a canteen; Kimberley in the hands of a few great capitalists. And over her hung the constant menace of Julius Hermann. Should she put into the bar the few thousand pounds scraped together by I.D.B. and the sale of liquor? Risk all she had in the world, every penny set aside for the child? Or should she, while there was time, pack up and run away from the field of battle, leaving Julius and all he stood for triumphant?

Commercially that seemed the safest, the sane course. Lily had invested little in the Golden Bar. She had paid for the stock, slightly over £1,000, but this could

be gradually realized even if no buyer for the bar could be found. With the money she had saved, and the little she might still set aside, she could escape from the ruins with, perhaps, £5,000. That sum would now content her, though it was not half of what she had set out to obtain.

Cissie she would take with her, and Alan could find work elsewhere. Two great obstacles remained—Isaac Cohen, who would lose the money he had advanced; and Lily White herself, who, once again, would bow the knee and acknowledge man as her master.

For days following the stormless, almost peaceful, visit of Julius, she brooded over the new aspect of her tangled existence. Even the customers found that she was “not up to the mark.”

How she regretted being a mother! What would she not give to be able to solve the problem in her own way—a bullet for each of them, him and her.

But with pain and suffering she had brought Margaret into the world, and in pain and suffering she must stay with her like a mother animal, until the child no longer had need of her.

She did not despair, hoping always for a satisfactory answer to a letter she had written to London. Her solicitor had acknowledged receipt of it, and of the money sent to pay for the information required, but his reply held out faint hopes of success. Still there *was* hope, and this gleamed like a beacon in the black sky of doubt and apprehension.

When the demand came for repayment of £3,000, Lily spoke to Isaac Cohen. He saw her anxiety, and promised to do his best and help her to find the money.

“Unfortunately,” he said, “I invested in good scrip that is down 200 per cent. In less than six months’ time the market should rise—if so, I will see you through.”

He was so good about it that she felt shame at having considered surrender and flight as a solution. Cohen knew that dark days were ahead, yet did not hesitate to offer further help. His sympathy and courage sustained her; she again felt strong and fit for the fight, no longer doubting herself.

He did not tell her that, to his intense disappointment, the Hermann Company had resolved henceforth to sell its output of diamonds in London and by this means obtain better prices, and save the commissions paid to Cohen and another large broker. He regarded the step as wise, and read into it none of the significance which Lily did when she heard the news from Resky, the broker who had shared the commission. He stormed like a defaulting book-maker forced to pay, calling Julius Hermann "a dirty bastard," without any knowledge of his antecedents.

"Mr. Resky, Mr. Resky, better language, please." Lily protested mechanically, then a faint smile brightened her eyes.

"Sorry," mumbled the broker, and, turning his thoughts into Yiddish, he uttered the lonely word "*Momza*," after which relief he called for a small bottle of champagne.

That night Lily was told by her Basuto boy that a Zulu in the yard wished to speak with her. She went out and was amazed to see Shilling. He stood there with head bowed, humble, suppliant.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"Meeses . . . Mees Lily, me been home, *vagaash*."

"Why did you run away?"

He made no answer, looking upon the ground in shame.

"I don't want you, Shilling," she continued. "You are a bad boy, no good, *skellum*. Go away, go to your master!"

In the face of her biting words he slunk from the yard. But next morning he was again there, and the Basuto had gone.

Indignant and amazed Lily cried: "If you don't go away, I will have you arrested."

"Meeses, I go by Baas Hermann when you tell me and he say, I must come back to you."

"Where is the other boy—Jim?"

"Him go 'way, Meeses; tell me to stop here."

Lily cross-questioned Shilling for some time, but got no further. She felt herself utterly in the dark, helpless in the hands of Julius, and finally accepted the position. Shilling, after all, was a pawn, like herself; and would

it not be better to keep him near her, than to send him roaming the Fields, possibly to end as a police "trap?" Here, at least, she might by kind treatment make him grateful.

CHAPTER XXIII

SINCE the day of his attempt to trap Lily, Lynch had cut himself adrift. He was now an open enemy, no more coming to the Golden Bar, no longer cherishing hopes of Cissie. The new Act had been in force over a year, and its administration gave him and the whole of the Detective Force responsible and dangerous work. The I.D.B.'s, to avoid the risk of being found in possession of stones, now sent needy adventurers by night across the border of Griqualand West into the Orange Free State and Transvaal. These "runners" delivered the gems to agents, who in perfect safety sent the stones on to London.

It became a part of police duty to patrol the border and search suspects, many armed and reckless, all cunning, with knowledge of a thousand tricks to gain their end.

Stones were concealed in the wool of sheep, and the flocks were driven over the border. Men gave diamond pills to dogs, goats, oxen and horses, which, if strong purges were ineffective, they slaughtered across the border. Many of the runners took no risks whatever, themselves swallowing the gems before starting. One desperado went on a hunting trip, both barrels of his sporting gun loaded to the muzzle with diamonds; this he was resolved to fire into the first detective who tried to take his weapon from him. He really was a keen sportsman, and on the way saw a steinbok suddenly get up. Instinctively he flung forward his gun and fired. The right barrel split nearly the whole way up, the buck

escaped, and few stones were recovered, the "runner" himself being nearly blinded.

In times like these Lynch had no leisure for private affairs. He brooded over the loss of Cissie, whom he still loved with unswerving faith; grew sterner in the exercise of his functions, but to all appearance had forgotten the existence of Lily White. There was no official record of her since the New Act, the closest watch having failed to discover any illegal traffic at the Golden Bar. Lily was separated from all, save Bennington, of her suspicious associates: Kringe, Shilling and Steinsohn (now serving a sentence of fifteen years hard labour). Yet Hector still visited her, and Lynch knew that he practised I.D.B. And because of his relations with Lily, and because Hector was considered the sort of man who would serve as trap when wanted, Lynch had allowed him a pretty long rope. The conviction of Steinsohn had "put the fear of God" into nobody so much as Bennington. Had it not been for the existence of an English warrant charging him with theft by conversion, he would long since have returned to his native land and despairing family.

For some time after the New Act Hector refrained from touching a diamond. How he lived could only be surmised. But now he began to see that I.D.B. still flourished. Fortunes would be made until all the mines were consolidated, and the natives impounded for the full period of service. Hector resolved once more "to have a cut in."

Lynch soon learned of this, and suddenly his interest in Lily and Cissie was rekindled, too; first, by a report that Shilling was back, and the proprietress of the Golden Bar again dealing in stones; secondly, on hearing that application had been made to the courts on behalf of the orphan, Cissie Sheldon, for permission to marry.

On an afternoon in late summer, more than a year after the drama of the Golden Bar, Lynch sat in his office talking to Smith, an official of the Department who, among other things, drew the indictments against those accused of I.D.B., and sometimes also appeared for the Crown at preliminary examinations.

"And you really think you can nab her, Lynch?"

“ I do. I'd have had her before but for that fool Fitzroy or . . . Ike Cohen . . . I never really knew which. Did she sell the stone to the old man? He may have done it to get her out of a hole. Fitzroy would not say a word against her; I heard she paid him handsomely to clear out.”

“ I suppose,” mused Smith, “ Cohen is above suspicion? ”

“ Nobody is above suspicion,” Lynch growled, “ but I know he doesn't touch anything crooked.”

“ Well, if you can get her, Lynch, it will be a feather in your cap. Jove, it will cause a stir, she's so notorious. But the old man, I know, will never let me have the case.” Smith said this longingly; he had a keen desire to appear against some important prisoner; he had been years in the service, and his prospects grew daily dimmer of helping to send an accused to the Breakwater for a long term. “ By the way,” he added, “ you'll need a good ' trap ' for Lily. What have you got—her nigger? ”

“ No good, Smith. I must have a respectable white man, if it costs the Government a thousand.”

“ Well, what have we got on the list? ”

Lynch took out a little book from a locked drawer and ran his eye through its pages.

“ Somebody with a skin of his own to save . . . ah, here we are—Bennington, H.”

“ Do you think he'll do it? ”

“ Do it? Smith, my boy, Bennington would trap his own mother to save his lousy hide.”

“ I'd sooner see him there than her.”

“ All in good time. First, we'll use him as bait for a few others.”

“ It's all he's good for.” Smith got up and left the room.

Later that day Lynch enjoyed a strong and pleasant emotion, his heart beat faster, colour came to his cheeks. He received a report that Alan Warrenton's conduct was highly suspicious; that he consorted with Kafirs, and was concerned in I.D.B. with Lily White and Cissie Sheldon. Hope lighted the hard, official face.

Lynch had been suffering greatly since the news that

Alan and Cissie were to be married. Now he reacted, finding a human interest in his work. He went to Julius's home—a place to which few were admitted—and divulged the report. The magnate, seemingly, was not surprised.

“So,” he said at length, “you have heard that, too?”

“What do you know?” asked Lynch.

“No, no, Lynch, make your own investigations; when you have your confirmation I will give you our help. First of all, keep an eye on him; send somebody to try him . . . I'd like the boy to have a chance. If then he still comes racing me for a castle in Park Lane . . . !” Julius shrugged his shoulders.

Lynch smiled. Oh, yes, he would try the young man.

“By the way, Lynch, who gave the information—Bennington?”

Lynch did not reply; it was a departmental rule never to divulge the names of informers.

“But,” he asked, “why do you say Bennington?”

“Oh . . . because he knows all about Warrenton.”

“Really?” Lynch's eyes diminished appreciatively. He saw fresh use for Hector—the reward of long and patient toleration. Warrenton and Lily White . . . Cissie more or less an accomplice. . . . He must arrange to take them, if possible, on a Sunday evening. He knew that Cissie would then be with Alan.

Julius narrowly watched the man he was tempting, saw the evil thoughts reflected in a face that had no subtlety. He had his own ideas on the problem, and, as he had said, would first “give the young man a chance” . . . to clear out.

Alan, a few nights later, was approached by a Kafir. To lose no opportunity of learning Zulu, he had made a rule of chatting with natives. After a little conversation the boy told a story of need. He had a fine klip, which he would sell to the Baas very cheap; to prove this, he put one hand to his nose, as if to take snuff, and from the broad, negroid nostrils extracted a diamond.

“Clear out,” said Alan angrily, and the Kafir ran away. The incident was not looked on as significant by

the young man; he regarded the native as one of the many possessors of stolen diamonds on the Fields. But some days after this a Zulu named Hercules, one of the hotel servants, who had regularly conversed with Alan in his spare time, said:

“ Baas Alan, can you please lend to me, your servant, five pounds? ”

Alan demurred, it was an extraordinary request; he said that he was unable to take such a risk. . . .

“ Yes, Baas, but I give you something worth more than five pounds to keep, indeed, until your servant shall return the gold. ”

“ What do you want to give, Hercules? ”

Without another word the Kafir drew out a diamond, not a fine specimen, but still worth much more than five pounds.

“ Where did you get that stone? ”

“ Baas, I one time work in mines. ”

“ What mine? ”

“ Du Toit's Pan. ”

But Alan looked carefully at the diamond.

“ You're a liar, that is not a Du Toit's Pan stone. ” To his practised eye it seemed that it had come out of the Hermann Mine. “ If you take my advice, Hercules, ” he said, “ you will give it up to the police. They pay you ten per cent. of its value—about five pounds. That is what you need, isn't it? ”

But the boy twisted and turned, trying to persuade Alan, until angrily told to “ clear out. ”

On Sunday evening, nearly a week later, Lynch was awaiting somebody. When it was dusk a timid knock sounded upon his door.

“ Come in, ” he cried, and then, swaggering to hide his fear, Bennington entered the room.

“ Evening, Lynch . . . sorry I'm late; business kept me. Nothing urgent, is it? ”

Like a prisoner awaiting the verdict, he listened for the answer, dreading the worst.

“ Bennington, ” said Lynch, “ reports have been made to us that you . . . ”

“ Lynch, I swear 'tis not so. 'Pon my honour, scandal . . . ”

Lynch interrupted the exculpatory flow and continued: ". . . Are you on intimate terms with notorious I.D.B.'s?"

Hector was relieved.

" 'Tis difficult out here to preserve one's social status, you understand."

" Quite. I hope you do? "

" Certainly, Lynch. Tell me their names; I'll cut every one of them."

" On the contrary, Bennington, the best way you can prove your *bona fides* is by cultivating certain people."

" You want me to let you know what they are up to? "

" No," growled Lynch, in his most bullying manner, " we want your help in trapping them."

Hector grew pale. This was dangerous work.

" Of course, Lynch," he stammered, " I'm a man of the world. I know somebody must help the law, but I'd simply hate it known."

" 'Tis a dirty job, Bennington, but it's saved many a man from the Breakwater." There was terrible menace in his words; Hector perfectly understood them. " It's simple enough," continued the detective. " We'll search you first, then give you a parcel of stones; off you go. I'll be close at hand with some of the boys; as soon as your man has got the stones. . . ."

" Who? " asked Hector in sepulchral voice.

" We'll tell you that before you start."

" What if he resists—suppose he's armed? "

" Don't worry—we'll be sharp on him, and he'll get ten years for the first offence. You're not afraid? "

" Afraid! Jove, Lynch, nobody can say that of me."

" That's the spirit."

" Talking of spirits, Lynch, have you a drop of something about? "

The detective then saw that Hector was violently trembling, and he fetched out a bottle, then two glasses, which he charged.

" Good luck," he said, lifting his. " May he get the full penalty . . . look out, man, you're spilling it over my papers."

“ Sorry, Lynch, nerves all gone—late hours, booze.” He was a pitiable sight. “ Wish I could get home; cooler climate, ride to hounds, and all that. I suppose I get something for the job? ”

“ Half value of all stones seized, and so much a head for those you trap, according to who it is.”

Hector brightened up. It might be an opportunity to say farewell to the Fields. He owed a lot of money; it would be worth his while to leave. But on hearing a knock at the door he was upset.

“ I must impress on you, Lynch, that all this is on the strict Q.T. . . . Who’s out there? I don’t want to be seen.” The door opened; a sigh of relief went from the wretched man.

“ Ah, Bennington, at last,” said Julius genially. “ Have you, too, joined the P.W.D.? ”

Hector smiled pathetically. “ P.W.D.? ”

“ Public Works Department,” explained Julius, “ who send labourers across the desert to Cape Town, where they build a Breakwater stretching out into the sea, a monument to the I.D.B.”

He chanted the words ironically, making of them rhyme and metre, and lifting from Hector the terror and gloom that oppressed him. Julius had this power of making ghastly, revolting things seem trivial and commonplace.

Lynch brightened too. “ What brings you here to-day? ” he asked.

“ Duty,” smiled the magnate. “ Lynch, my company is calling for greater police activity. Every day I see around me I.D.B.’s, parasites who teach Kafirs to steal our diamonds; who drink sparkling wine and keep sparkling women; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet they live on the fat of the land . . . so long as it’s not pork. What has come over you? Are you afraid to lock up somebody by mistake? Why do we pay hundreds of thousands per annum for a Detective Department? Why does Parliament make laws to protect our diamonds? Why? . . . ” He paused, then burst violently forth: “ To stop this accursed traffic, the cancer that eats into the heart of the diamond industry, sucking the life-blood from us, and knocking

down my company's yearly dividend to six hundred per cent."

"Well," said Lynch, "after that speech they should put you into Parliament. To come down to business . . . Bennington is ready to help us. Suppose we go straight for Lily White?"

"Hum," said Julius, "you think she's . . . ?"

"Still at it. Can't stop, it's got into her blood. Bennington's the fellow for her; they are pals"

Hector moved uneasily in his chair, looking piteously at Julius.

"No, no, Lynch," argued the magnate, "let us rather begin on Warrenton."

"Warrenton," cried Hector. "He'd never buy from me."

"But you told us he was buying from niggers." Turning to Lynch, Julius asked: "Have you got Shilling here?"

"Yes. He's in the cells, and will stay there until his 'Meeses' follows him. . . . No, no, Lily doesn't know where he is—he was going off to-day on a little jaunt towards the border; no doubt to get in tow with niggers from Basutoland. Well, we fixed him instead."

"What's the charge?"

"Charge be damned! We know all about him."

"Are you sure," Julius slowly asked, "that Shilling fixes boys coming to work?"

"Look here, Julius," replied Lynch. "Someone has organized the traffic, and is getting all the big stones. I can put my hands on fifty niggers from the same tribe as Shilling—well, whom do they steal for?"

"Some say the niggers take our diamonds back to the kraals and buy wives with them."

"Oh, rot," jeered Hector. "They're not civilized enough."

"Anyhow, let's talk to Shilling."

Lynch went to the door and called out for Fogarty. He explained that he had already questioned the boy without result.

"He won't give Lily away," said Julius, "but I bet he squeals about Warrenton."

He reviewed the events leading up to Alan's arrival.

"... The same night, half-past twelve, he took Cissie home. Are you sure he took nothing else? Where is the big stone Fitzroy lost in the bar? Have you traced it, Lynch?"

"No."

"Well, I have," said Julius. "Warrenton, to play the hero to Cissie, carried it away, and that stone started him off. Now he not only steals in our office, but buys from Kafirs."

"What's he do with the money?"

"He never spiels or stands a wet," said Hector.

"He's putting it away for the wedding," answered Julius sweetly. "He's going to marry Cissie and live happily ever afterwards in his own home."

The detective became sullen; Julius, with deadly malice, further provoked him.

"Lynch, is it true that *you* wanted to marry Cissie?"

"What has that to do with business?"

"We must be careful not to let defending Counsel suggest you ran the boy in because he cut you out."

Here Fogarty pushed Shilling into the room.

"Leave me your *sjambok*," said Lynch. Shilling looked appealingly to Julius; the detective was now before him with a rhinoceros-hide *sjambok*. "Come on, you black swine. Are you going to talk? Who are the boys that steal for your Meeses? Speak, speak," he shouted in Zulu, "*kaluma!*"

"No, no, Lynch, you don't understand them. He's afraid of you. Let me talk to him," suggested Julius.

Lynch stood aside, angry and baffled.

"Shilling," said Julius in Zulu, "tell the truth and you shall not be punished. Your brother Inkomo died last Friday; he told me he gave klips to you, and you sold them to a white man. Who is this white man?"

In a low voice Shilling replied: "Baas Alan."

"Well I'm damned!" said Lynch.

"You are sure it is Baas Alan, the Englishman who is the *isixebi* of Miss Cissie?"

"*Yebo, inkos.*"

"He buys klip?" asked Lynch.

"Yes, Baas."

"And sells to your Meeses?" quickly added the detective.

"My Meeses not buy klip."

"Doesn't she!" cried Lynch, lifting the *sjambok*. But all his efforts were vain. At last he shouted: "Go on, clear to hell out of it."

Fogarty came in and led the Kafir away.

"I'll have a private talk to him later on."

"Well—satisfied?" Julius smiled superiorly.

"I am. He won't last long."

Hector took a drink.

"You're not going to spoil his honeymoon, I hope, Lynch?" said Julius.

"Now then, Bennington, not too much of that bottle. We've got work for you."

"What . . . to-day?" asked Hector. "Sunday?"

"Yes, in a couple of hours' time I hope to see the young sportsman in this room."

"I don't think he'll buy from me." Hector was pessimistic in manner.

"Bennington," purred Julius, "imbibe the principle of the New Act: 'When a man is in the trade, get him whether he'll buy or not.' There are more ways of catching an I.D.B. than choking him with *pâté de foie gras*."

Suddenly Hector brightened: "Look here, I've got an idea. You know the little girl who keeps house for me?"

"Which one?" asked Julius, "the white or the black?"

Hector replied in the same bantering tone: "She's really a bit of both."

"I know her," said Lynch, "Lizzie-coffee-and-milk; her father deserted from the Black Watch and took up with a black bitch."

"Keeps house for you, eh?" said Julius. "And what's she do for a living?"

"At present," Hector answered cunningly, "she's housemaid at the Diggers' Hotel."

"Where Warrenton lives? That's very clever of her."

"Isn't it. Look here, shall I call her? She's

outside. Watches me eternally. Barmaids on the brain. Pardon."

As he went out Lynch relieved himself of his feelings.

"I know her," he said. "She buys from Kafirs, and sometimes, they say, doesn't pay with money—she passes the stones to him—he sells them. Do you know why Lizzie is out there? He didn't know what I wanted him for; if we'd kept him, she'd have cleared off and tipped the wink to his pals."

Soon afterwards Hector led in a half-caste girl, cowed and degraded, but not otherwise unpleasant to look upon. She was terrified, but on seeing Julius Hermann, plucked up courage.

"So help me Gord, Mr. Lynch," she moaned, "I haven't done nothing wrong."

"It's all right, Lizzie, so long as you do what you're told."

"Yes, you shut up," said Hector, and she stopped so suddenly that afterwards she hiccupped.

Julius interposed; softly explained to the girl what was required.

"You want me to be a 'trap?' Oh, my Gord, I can't."

"If you don't do it," Hector bullied, "I'll have nothing more to do with you."

"O'right, 'Ector, I on'y said so because my father is doing seven years, and he was trapped."

"Well," laughed Julius, "isn't Bennington a father to you?"

"Yes, don't I look after you? Gratitude!"

"Now then, Lizzie," Lynch interposed, "you know Warrenton?"

"Yes, Mr. Lynch." Then, turning to Hector, "the young chap you told me to watch, who's sweet on that barmaid?"

"The one," added Julius, "who gets letters by hand—in the night—and who talks to Kafirs."

"Listen, Lizzie." Lynch took out his watch. "It's half-past six. In two hours' time Bennington is going to see Warrenton on *private business*."

"Ah, er . . . *she* will."

"Me, 'Ector?"

"Yes, I'll send them in by you, that makes two witnesses."

"I'll be near at hand with Fogarty," said Lynch. "We'll do the rest."

"The great thing," Julius impressed on her, "is to give good evidence; speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"S'help me, Gord," Lizzie added.

"Ah, you've been in the box before. Remember, when you start, stick to your story."

"I'll back you up," said Hector.

"Thank you, darling. Can I go now, Mr. Lynch?"

And Hector added: "I'd like to go and get a bite, Lynch."

"No you don't . . . you, Bennington, stay here till it's time for the job. We'll find you something to eat. Lizzie . . . you can go in a minute; first come and get your orders. . . ."

Lynch was about to take her out when Fogarty burst into the room.

"Come along, chief, quick; they've got Bill Hunter."

A look of satisfaction illumined Lynch's face.

"You must come at once," said Fogarty. "He's cut his throat."

"Damnation," cried Lynch. He hurried out. "Have you got the doctor?" At the door he turned. "Don't anyone leave this room till I return."

As soon as he had gone Julius drew out his pocket-book and gave Lizzie a £5 note, promising to make it up to £100 if she trapped Warrenton. Then he produced a paper enclosing diamonds.

"You see these? Put them away; don't let Lynch know about them."

"Oh, my Gord, s'pose I'm searched?"

"Bah," said Hector stoutly. "That's the place." He pushed the paper into her dirty corsage. "They're going to search *me*, not you."

"When you get back to work," whispered Julius, "go to Warrenton's room and put the parcel into the pocket of his coat."

"S'pose he's there. Oh, I'm afraid!"

"Do as you're told," said Hector.

“Say nothing about this lot, mind you,” warned Julius. “It’s between you and me only. You don’t have to swear anything about it, the detectives will find it, they’ll do the swearing. Now, Lizzie, listen carefully. If Cissie is there when they get Warrenton, you come straight and tell me. I’ll be in the street. Then go like hell to the Golden Bar and call Miss White; say I want her, tell her what’s happened.”

Lizzie nodded. Hector took another whisky. They heard the detective coming towards them, growling at Fogarty.

“The biggest fool in the Force,” he said. “What did he want to worry me for? The damned fellow’s been dead half an hour. Now then, Lizzie, off you go, back to the Diggers’ Hotel. Bennington will give you the stones.” To Hector he said: “You can come through and strip, here are the stones—what do you think of them, Julius?”

Critically Julius and Hector bent over the diamonds, remarking on the characteristics of the different gems. Bennington had been fortified by the liquor, and was resigned to the idea of trapping. Lizzie had relieved him of much responsibility . . . It was Sunday evening, church bells were determinedly chiming, the air was sweet and cool. Hector gazed out of the window at a sunset that eclipsed the subtle tints of every diamond that had ever come from the earth.

Julius rolled the “trap” stones in the palm of his hand; thoughtfully, affectionately. . . .

“Twelve little beauties,” he rhapsodized, “twelve.” Then with an impulse of generosity he pulled another from his pocket.

“Let me add one, Lynch; make it thirteen, for luck.”

The three men laughed darkly; they gathered about the whisky and took a final, formal drink, to bless the enterprise.

CHAPTER XXIV

EVERY alternate Sunday evening Cissie had off, and spent with her lover. In the afternoon she and Alan would go for a stroll over the debris heaps or, more rarely, drive to Alexanderfontein, where were trees and water. To-day they had been to Du Toit's Pan. On returning she went to the bar to see Lily and have dinner. Alan had his at his hotel table—thus they economized. Immediately after he had eaten the cold Sunday-evening meal he went to tidy his room. By the aid of skins Alan liked to turn his ugly iron bedstead into a couch, and to obliterate all signs of intimate life. But when he entered he found, to his surprise, in place of Hercules, Lizzie the half-caste maid, with bucket and rag.

On hearing his footfalls, she started.

“Hullo, what are you doing here?”

“Missus ask' me to take the slops. The boy has run away.”

“Oh, all right.”

He went out on the veranda; paced up and down several times. It seemed to him Lizzie was very slow. Impatiently he went inside. The girl was needlessly brushing his working jacket.

“You needn't trouble about that.”

“No trouble, Baas. I'm use' to lookin' after gents.”

“I didn't know they employed girls for that here.”

Lizzie raised her head proudly from its attitude of abasement.

“I don' mean as a servant, Mr. Alan.”

“Are you married?”

“Not quite, but I've got a gen'leman friend.”

“Really.”

She thought his tone supercilious, and added: “A real gen'leman, very hen'some, with a big moustache.”

“What's he do for a living?”

"Nothing," she scornfully answered. "He's a real gen'leman . . . No, I can't tell you his name. He don' like it."

"Why all this secrecy, Lizzie?"

"Private reasons," she whispered. "Between you and I and the bedpost, he's hare to a title."

"And he's going to marry you?"

"Yah. Oh my Gord, I'm a heppy girl!"

Alan felt pity for her. It was evident that some rascal was taking advantage of her credulity. . . .

"Are you fond of him, Lizzie?"

"Oh Gord, yes, Mr. Alan. I wish he wasn' so hen'some. You see, the barmaids run after him . . . it makes me so jealous I could kill him."

"Barmaids? What barmaids run after him?"

"Certain parties," she hissed. "I won' mention no names, but, Gord, if I ketch 'em, they can look out, and him too."

Soon after Lizzie had gone, Cissie arrived.

"Alan," she asked, "did that girl Lizzie clean your room to-night? I saw her going in and out of the bedrooms. You shouldn't let her come in here."

"Why not, Cissie?"

"Because she's a thief, and worse. They call her the white nigger; she's lousy, too, I bet!"

"Cissie!"

"What do you want me to say? It's the only word I know for a person with lice. You won't let me say 'damn' or 'stink' or . . ."

"Be quiet, you little ruffian," he cried, but half-laughing, as he put his hand over her mouth. "Come now, start my lesson."

"No, Alan," she gravely said, "don't let Lizzie come into your room. She's an I.D.B., and she's in tow with Hector . . ."

"Bennington?" he finished. "He's a scoundrel, I'm sure."

"Now, Miss Lily told me to warn you not to be careless. You know it's got about we are going to be married, and I'm not conceited, but there's a lot of men who'd like to be in your place."

He smiled contentedly and kissed her.

“ Yes, never mind that, Alan, don’t forget if one of them wanted to do you a shot in the eye, it wouldn’t be hard.”

“ How do you mean, Cissie? ”

“ Suppose they found a diamond in your room? ”

“ If they found a diamond I’d be able to prove that I came by it honestly.”

“ Tch! Look here, suppose this brooch of mine is a klip ” (she put it into his tobacco jar) “ and I’m a ’tec. I find it—please explain how it came here.”

He laughed.

“ It’s absurd. I’m not an I.D.B. Then how . . .? ”

“ It has been done before, Alan. Daddy had a friend who was trapped by his wife. Suppose that somebody has ‘ got the needle ’ with you, they report to the police that you’re ‘ in the trade,’ next thing a Kafir comes along to sell you a stone, then . . . ”

“ Oh, they try that on everyone.”

“ Not everyone, only those suspected of I.D.B.”

“ But, Cissie, they’ve tried *me*.”

“ What! ” Her face clouded. “ Oh, Alan! ”

“ Don’t worry,” he said consolingly, “ I’m not a fool, and I have never bought a diamond, and never will . . . except these tiny ones.” He took from his pocket a charming little ring, slipped it on her finger, and said: “ Now, you belong to me, for ever and ever.”

Tears of joy and pride came to her eyes; she kissed him very tenderly, but then, half-laughing, whispered:

“ Alan, you silly, you’ve put it on the wrong finger of the wrong hand. That’s where it ought to go.”

He fetched out a couple of little books, one a Zulu primer, and together they repeated the resonant, beautiful words, the most musical sounds, with strength added, to be found in any language of the earth. It was an inspiring lesson. For each mistake that Alan made he gave Cissie a kiss, and for each one he did not make, she gave him one! Great was their joy over “ isixebi,” which Cissie translated by “ girl who loves a man and will be his sweetheart.”

“ You see, Alan, I’m your ‘ isixebi.’ ”

He thought the clicks sounded like kisses, and she criticized his pronunciation of “ X.”

The word "impumalanga" interested Cissie. She knew it meant "east" and now learned it was derived from "puma," go out, and "ilanga," the sun. She thought her lover very clever to discover this.

They came to verbal blows over "umtagati," for in defining it Cissie let slip the name of Julius Hermann. Quickly she tried to cover her indiscretion. But Alan was like a bull-dog.

"Why do you compare him to a witch doctor, a bad man?"

"Oh that's the way Miss Lily would talk."

"Really—I've never heard her. I thought she was friendly with him."

Cissie nearly blurted out what she knew, but suddenly remembered that Lily had told her in confidence.

"What were you saying, Cissie?"

"Nothing. Miss Lily used not to like him."

"And yet," said he accusingly, "she let you be friendly? Went betting that he couldn't kiss you!"

"She didn't, Alan. She warned me against him."

"Warned you?" said the boy, darkly. "What about?"

Cissie grew impatient. She tossed her head.

"The usual sort of thing; said he might want to get familiar."

"Why didn't you tell me before? Do you think I'd have gone into his office if I'd known?"

"Go on, Alan, you're jealous, eh? What was there to know? And it's all past now."

"To-morrow," said the boy, "I chuck up my billet."

"Alan, you fool! Why?"

"I don't like the man I'm working for, and I don't want to know him."

"Fancy being jealous of an old man!"

"Make fun of me if you like. To-morrow he can find somebody else in my place. I'll get something else."

"You know how easy it is! Mr. Hermann pulls a lot of strings, and if you're out of a job they'll say you're an I.D.B."

For once Cissie was pleased to hear a knock at the door.

"Come in," shouted Alan.

It was Lizzie, the half-caste.

"What do you want, eh?" asked Cissie sharply, but Lizzie disdained the question, addressing herself to Alan.

"Somebody asked me to give you a message."

"Well?" he invited.

"They said it was private."

"They? Who is it?"

Lizzie gave a side-glance at Cissie and repeated:

"It's stric'ly private."

"Oh," said Cissie, "is it a lady?" And, as the other remained silent, she added: "I'm going to see."

"Don't be silly," Alan cried.

But Cissie, jealous in turn, darted out of the room.

"It's a letter," said Lizzie, mysteriously, and she gave him an envelope.

"You said message. Letter? Funny sort of letter—what's this?" Suddenly he opened the paper and saw diamonds, cunningly wrapped in wadding. Alan shouted loudly: "Diamonds—this is a trap!" at the same time flinging stones and wrapping to the floor.

Lizzie, cowering in a corner, heard Cissie cry from outside, "Let me go!—Alan, look out, they're trying to trap you!"

Simultaneously with this Lynch and Fogarty entered from the veranda.

"What's this mean?"

"You're arrested for I.D.B.," replied Lynch.

"You damned swine," shouted the boy as the detectives fell upon him. "Let me go, let me go."

But Fogarty had already screwed one arm back and slipped a hand-cuff on it, and, as Cissie burst free from somebody outside and rushed into the room, she saw her lover helplessly struggling.

"Oh, my God! Lynch, you devil! You beast! Let him be, let him go." She cried and fought until Lynch seized her arms. "Call yourself a man! Dirty lot of traps!"

"British Justice!" screamed Alan. "Oh, it's too funny! You call this legal!"

Lynch quietly warned him. "Anything you say may be used against you. Fogarty, search the room."

“What for?” sneered Cissie. “You’ve got the stones, you brought them with you, eh?”

“He’s suspected of stealing, too—from the offices of the Hermann Company,” was the retort, as if to say, “Nice young man you’ve got hold of.”

Fogarty searched diligently, but without success until he held up Alan’s working jacket.

On seeing this, Lizzie stole from the room.

“Ah . . .”

“Found anything, Fogarty?”

“A parcel of stones in the pocket.”

Cissie shouted: “That girl put them there.”

“Come along,” said Lynch to Alan, “You tell that to the Court.”

He and Fogarty dragged the boy out upon the veranda, where already people were gathering.

“Here, take him, Johnson, and clear away all that mob.”

Cissie was pushed back into the room, and Lynch returned, locking the door behind him.

“You low thing!” she sobbed.

“Cissie, be careful. I may have to take you, too.”

“Take me, take me now, I want to go with him!”

“Maybe for ten years,” he warned.

“I’m not an I.D.B., Lynch, you know it. Neither’s Alan.”

“What about the stone you spat in the glass?”

“Why didn’ you arrest me?” she retorted.

“I wanted to give you a chance, Cissie, wanted to help you. And I’ll help you now . . . why don’t you say you’ll marry me, Cissie, I’ll . . .”

“Marry *you*? You poor imitation of a dirty ’tec—I’d sooner go on the streets than marry you.”

Somebody tried the door. Lynch looked uneasy, for Cissie was violently sobbing. Now an imperious knock sounded. Lynch went impatiently to open, and in walked Julius.

“Lynch,” he said, “they will need you; he’s fighting all the way. I’ll stay here.”

“Oh, all right,” growled the detective. He did not wish to go, he disliked Julius there. But he left the room, and Cissie, through her tears, called after him:

"I hope he kicks your brains out."

When they were alone Julius went to the girl, and standing over her compassionately, said:

"Cissie, my poor little Cissie!"

A prey to doubts and fears, but eager to attack somebody, she wept:

"Mr. Hermann, you've done this!"

"I, Cissie? Why?"

"Because," she stammered, "because——" and then, unable to say the thing that was choking her, she flung her head down, shaking with sobs.

"Why don't you say it, Cissie? You think I did this because I am in love with you? . . . Well, I *am* in love with you; I have come to help you."

"Help me?" she tried to say scornfully. "After you have trapped him!"

"I tell you I had nothing . . ."

"Lynch said he is accused of stealing from your offices. And Lizzie—who got her to do this job?"

Julius composed himself into an attitude of gentle pity and judicial calm.

"You say Lizzie did it; the police say Warrenton. But suppose you are right, then she did it for Lynch. Didn't he want to marry you? In love we are all cruel, Cissie. If you treated me as you treated Lynch, I could also be cruel instead of kind."

"What do you mean . . . kind?" Sudden hope brightened her tear-stained face.

"Warrenton," said Julius, "will get ten years certain; perhaps fifteen."

"Oh, my God, don't say that!"

All the fight had suddenly gone out of her, at the thought of Alan's deadly peril. She went almost on her knees to Julius.

"You love him very much, eh? You would make any sacrifice to save him?"

"Any, any; I will do anything!"

"There is a way for you to save him, Cissie."

She rose and looked up into his face, entreating help.

"One way only," he relentlessly continued. "Can't you see?"

He bent down to her poor little face, and the passion

was revealed in every line of his own. In the realization at last of his inexorable lust, Cissie fell sobbing upon the couch.

“ Oh, God, no, no; don't say that.”

“ I know it seems I'm taking advantage of your trouble, Cissie, but I want you so much.”

Subconsciously the girl, though overwhelmed by the horror of the position, was hoping to excite Julius's pity. He had always been kind to her; she knew he liked her. Surely he would forego this desire, this awful passion.

“. . . Mr. Hermann, in a few days you'd forget me, but I could never forget, and Alan either; it would finish us.”

“ You are mistaken, Cissie; I don't want you for . . . a day, I want you for always.”

She shuddered, but then hope gave her cunning.

“ So you say! ”

“ Let me prove it, Cissie. I ask you again to marry me.”

“ But how would this help Alan? ” she asked, dazed, uncomprehending.

“ If you marry me I shall get him out of this mess. He would then be given £500 and allowed to leave the country.”

Cissie realized that there was a plot to get rid of her lover. Light began to break in upon her; no doubt Julius had played upon the jealousy of Lynch. She sat thinking deeply, now and then a sob broke the train of thought. She knew that men charged with I.D.B. were rarely acquitted; she saw nothing but evil in store, misery and suffering. Had she the right to let Alan, her lover, her darling, go to the Breakwater?

Strangely, in all this she did not think of Lily until hushed voices were heard outside, and Lizzie said: “ Yes, in there, Miss White.” And then a rustling rush of silk, Lily came in, and hope revived in Cissie's heart. To her Lily meant friendship and support; the unhappy girl flung herself into the woman's arms, weeping hysterical tears.

“ There, there, dear, don't cry any more; he'll be all right.” Her resolute tone gave courage. Lily turned on Julius. “ You sent for me? ”

"Yes. I thought Cissie would like you near."

"Did *he* send for you, Miss Lily?"

"Yes."

Cissie looked gratefully at Julius. She had not expected this of him.

"Lily," said he, "I have been talking to Cissie about young Warrenton, who has come to the usual end."

Cissie tried to defend Alan, but was silenced by Julius, who explained the proposal he had made.

"Please say *exactly* what you mean, Mr. Hermann." Lily spoke with the cold impartiality of a judge.

"This," he replied, "Warrenton will be brought up for preliminary examination in three days' time—Wednesday, at ten-thirty, to be precise. Before my friend, Michel Quiller, the Magistrate, goes on the bench, I propose that Cissie and I appear before him in his private office and be married."

"You hear, Miss Lily," said Cissie, as if in a dream.

"After the ceremony," continued Julius amiably, "at which only two court officials need be present . . ."

"And I," said Lily, "as witness."

"Very well . . . after the wedding, Cissie, I shall take you to my home, and leave you there until I return to tell you Warrenton is free."

"No," she answered. "I'll go to the Court. I must be a witness for him."

"But, Cissie, if you do so, what guarantee have I that you won't run away?" Julius spoke in lightly mocking tones. "In any case your evidence is *not* needed until trial by the Special Court. On Wednesday they will only take evidence for the prosecution."

"Then how will Alan get free?" she asked.

Julius now spoke with slow and deadly deliberation.

"I will so give my evidence that the case will fall to the ground right away. He shall not be committed for trial."

"And," said Lily, "if he is *not* acquitted?"

"She will be free to leave me at once."

"But," wailed the girl, "I should be married to you; I could never marry Alan."

“What would that matter,” he retorted. “If he does *not* get off you can’t marry till he comes out—ten or fifteen years.”

“No,” said Cissie, “I won’t do it. I’ll see what happens. If you get him off I’ll marry you afterwards. . . .”

He laughed derisively, but with brutal desire shining in his eyes.

“On Wednesday I give my evidence. It will be damning. Unless you are my wife when I go into the box, he shall go to the Breakwater.”

“It is too wicked!” cried the unhappy girl. “He never bought a stone in his life. Oh, Miss Lily, help me.”

“Cissie, I see no other way,” she answered.

“Oh, Miss Lily! And how will I know he’s free? I must see him myself; I must be there.”

“And afterwards you and he will clear off, eh?” Julius sneered. “No, no, Cissie.”

Here Lily interposed quietly but convincingly.

“Cissie, this is the only safe way to free Alan. He is in a terrible position.”

“You think so, Miss Lily, really . . . ?”

“Do as Mr. Hermann suggests. I will attend the Court, and return with him when the case is over. I will certify whether or not Mr. Hermann has kept his word.”

“You will, Miss Lily, you promise?”

“You’ll believe Miss Lily, eh?”

“Yes. I trust her, and I don’t trust you!”

He nearly laughed; a thought here played tricks with his brain.

“Cissie,” continued Lily, “if he doesn’t keep his word you will wait for Alan, and go to him, married or not. What is the marriage ceremony but a form?”

“Oh, must I really do this, Miss Lily?”

“You are in his hands, child. Do you love yourself or Alan best?”

“Alan,” she cried, “Alan!”

“Then do as I tell you, marry Mr. Julius Hermann.”

He fancied there was subtle mockery in the way she

accented his name, but the realization of it was obscured by the sweetest words he had ever heard from maiden's lips:

"All right, I will marry you, Mr. Hermann."

CHAPTER XXV

MR. MICHEL QUILLER, the Magistrate before whom Alan had to appear, was a self-taught Irishman, red-whiskered, with face to match, who had risen from the ranks of the police. He was domineering; he rode rough-shod over all in his Court, where judicial procedure adapted itself to the suppression of I.D.B. Many thought Mr. Quiller owed his responsible position to this. In private life the Magistrate was popular; he frequented the principal club—there told smutty yarns round the coffee-urn, drank freely, and with his whisky imbibed due respect for the heads of the diamond industry, and a proper attitude towards I.D.B. On one occasion only had he entered the Golden Bar—it was in Mrs. Solomons' time—and the memory remained a bitter one. Rachel foolishly miscalculated; she charged for nine whiskies when Mr. Quiller had only drunk six. He was very human, for ever afterwards he remembered the Golden Bar and all associated with it.

Everybody rose obsequiously as he entered the Court on Wednesday morning to take the preliminary examination of Alan Warrenton.

Firmly seated in the magisterial chair, Mr. Quiller glared around.

"Call the first case," he said, with an imperial gesture.

Here Smith rose for the prosecution.

"The first case, Your Worship, is that of Alan Warrenton, charged with . . ."

"Bring in the prisoner!"

There was movement and murmur; Mr. Quiller looked about, and the usher cried: "Silence in Court."

Then two constables appeared with Alan, one each side of him. The youth and freshness of the boy provoked a murmur of surprise in the large audience, which was now increased by the appearance of Isaac Cohen, who passed quietly before the front row of spectators and went to a vacant seat among the legal element. Quiller looked sharp resentment at this piece of audacity, then said to Alan:

"What is your name?"

"Alan Warrenton. Your Worship, may I . . . ?"

"Silence! Are you guilty or not guilty?"

Smith hurriedly interposed:

"Your Worship, I have not yet read the charge."

"Well, why don't you read it?"

Lifting a sheet of foolscap the prosecutor read:

"The accused, Alan Warrenton, is charged with the crime of having contravened Section 3 of the Diamond Trade Act 48 of 1882 in that on the 26th day of March, 1883, and at Kimberley, he, the said Alan Warrenton, not being legally authorized or licensed thereto, was unlawfully in possession of certain rough or uncut diamonds."

"Prisoner at the bar," said the Magistrate, "are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," replied Alan, almost indignantly.

Mr. Quiller seemed surprised and resentful.

"Not guilty, eh? . . . Call the first witness."

As Lynch was entering the witness-box Alan again addressed the Court.

"Your Worship, I wish to be legally represented."

"Why aren't you?"

"I've had no opportunity. It seems impossible for me to see a friend."

Here Cohen rose in the well of the Court.

"Your Worship," was as far as he got, for Mr. Quiller shouted:

"Do you appear for accused?"

"No, sir, I'm not a lawyer, unfortunately."

"Then how dare you address the Court? 'Tis *ultra vires*."

"I want to explain, Your Worship," pleaded Cohen. "On accused's behalf, yesterday I instructed Advocate Hawke to appear . . . ten minutes ago he threw up his brief."

"I don't blame him," remarked Quiller. Murmurs arose at the back of the Court.

"Silence," shouted the usher.

"For some mysterious reason," Cohen went on, "all the lawyers I have seen refuse to defend the case. Is this justice, sir?"

"Sit down," ordered the Magistrate, "and be silent." To Alan he said: "You'll have time to get a lawyer after I commit you for trial."

"I protest," cried the boy, and Isaac, seeing argument was futile, sat down with a notebook to make a report of the proceedings.

Lynch was sworn, giving his name as Jeremy Denis Lynch.

"In consequence of information," he said, "I have had accused under observation. At nine-thirty p.m. on Sunday, I, and Detective Fogarty, entered his bedroom. He was talking with a girl, Lizzie Hopkins. Prior to entering I heard him say 'diamonds'; when he saw me he flung down an envelope containing thirteen rough stones. I arrested Warrenton, cautioned and charged him."

"What did he say, Lynch?"

Lynch read from his notebook in a dead, insignificant monotone, as if it were an extract from a grocer's catalogue: "'Trapped . . . oh, my God; it's too funny.'"

"I'm glad he thinks so," said Mr. Quiller. (Laughter in Court.)

"A girl named Cissie Sheldon," continued Lynch, "then entered, shouting."

"What did she say?"

Again from his notebook the detective intoned: "'Oh, God,' and 'you devil.'"

On hearing this the Magistrate remarked, amid great amusement:

"They seemed to talk of nothing but the two H's . . . Heaven and Hell."

"Prisoner was agitated," said Lynch, "perhaps due to fear." He described Fogarty's discovery of the stones in the pocket. . . .

"His working jacket?" asked Mr. Quiller.

"They were put there!" shouted Alan.

"Silence, prisoner! Lynch, did he resist arrest?"

"He did, Your Worship."

Smith here blundered unwittingly upon delicate ground.

"Detective Lynch," he asked, "what became of the girl Sheldon?"

Mr. Quiller glared, and Lynch hurriedly replied:

"Our search warrant did not include her."

"Ah . . . you had a warrant, Lynch?"

Alan (indignantly): "He did not produce it."

The Magistrate: "Did you ask him to?"

"He gave me no time."

"Ah, well, maybe the Special Court will."
(Laughter.) "That will do, Lynch, thank you."

But as the detective started to leave the witness-box Alan stopped him:

"One moment, I have some questions to ask."

Mr. Quiller was indignant. It was already eleven o'clock, and he lunched at twelve-thirty.

"What do you want to ask?"

"From whom did you get information about me?"

"Lynch," said the Magistrate, "you need not answer that."

"Is it the police custom," continued Alan, undiscouraged, "to send traps to people suspected of I.D.B.?"

"It is," Mr. Quiller commented, "and a very good custom, too."

"It is done sometimes," admitted Lynch.

"Before Sunday last did you send traps to me?"

"I decline to answer."

"You know you did. They failed to sell me stones."

The Magistrate grew impatient.

"Some," he said philosophically, "buy one way . . . some another. One man's meat is another man's poison. Don't waste the Court's time."

"How much did I pay for those stones, Mr. Lynch?"

"That is *ultra vires*," declared Mr. Quiller. "The charge is illegal possession."

"Still," argued Alan, while the many I.D.B.'s in Court gave murmurs of sympathy and encouragement, "the inference is . . ."

"*Exceptio probat regulam*," pronounced the Magistrate oracularly, and then, as was his rule, he translated it: "the exception proves the rule."

"It seems here that rules prove the exception," Alan loudly answered.

At this there was laughter in the back seats, and even Lily, sitting with agonized face on the front bench, could not refrain from smiling. The Court officials frowned, the usher bawled: "Silence in Court," and Mr. Quiller severely addressed the prisoner:

"If I hear such a remark again I'll commit you forthwith."

Now Alan pulled together all his courage to question the detective about Cissie, for during the time he had lain in gaol he had realized the true position.

"You spoke of Cissie Sheldon. You know that she and I are to be married?"

"Are you?" said Mr. Quiller ironically.

"Mr. Lynch," said Alan, "did you ever ask her to marry *you*?"

Lynch looked very awkward; there was loud whispering all over the Court. Cohen leaned forward, and so did Lily, but suddenly Mr. Quiller shouted:

"Do you dare insinuate that Detective Lynch has allowed a private matter to influence his official conduct? I will not have Her Majesty's officers submitted to such insult! You may stand down, Lynch. You leave the witness-box without a stain on your character."

Now the public whispering recommenced.

Isaac Cohen went to Lily and softly said:

"It's not all over yet; that will be a good point for the trial. . . ."

Fogarty was in the box. He had been sworn, and was proceeding to give evidence point by point when the Magistrate looked at the Court clock.

"Have you been in Court during Lynch's evidence? You have? Do you corroborate it? You do? Ah . . . now, Fogarty, tell us," he encouraged, "what do you know about prisoner's character and habits?"

"I never saw him till Sunday night, Your Worship."

"Stand down," shouted Mr. Quiller. "Mr. Prosecutor, why don't you have witnesses who know something about the case? . . . I thought I heard that prisoner was in the habit of associating with Kafirs?"

"Your Worship," protested Smith, and here the spectators muttered angrily.

Alan asked: "Your Worship, are you Prosecutor or Magistrate?"

Cohen let slip a "Hear, hear."

"Silence in Court," shouted the Magistrate himself. "If I hear another sound I'll clear out the lot of you." Then to Alan he said brutally: "How dare you address me like that? I fine you £5 for contempt. Call the next witness."

"I call Mr. Julius Hermann," said Smith respectfully.

"Mr. Julius Hermann, Mr. Julius Hermann," echoed the usher subserviently.

"Is Mr. Hermann present?" asked the Magistrate amiably.

There was a short space of tremendous emotion; excitement among the public; agonized expectation; hope and fear almost unbearable, in Lily's heart; wonder and doubt in the mind of the prisoner; pleasant faith and hope expressed in the face of Isaac Cohen who, against everyone, held out to the last that Julius was not as black as he was painted. Into the witness-box, neatly dressed in a frock-coat, with a rose blushing in his button-hole, stepped the magnate.

"Mr. Hermann," said the usher, "will you please swear . . ." He repeated the formula.

Julius kissed an inner page of the Bible, saying: "So help me God."

“Put on your hat,” shouted somebody at the back of the Court. Discreet laughter at this. Resky, the diamond-broker, was afterwards felicitated as the author of the jeer.

Julius gave formal testimony as to the losses his Company sustained through I.D.B.

“Warrenton,” said Smith, “for the past year has been in your employ? Reports about him have reached you? What reports?”

Julius looked unhappy.

“Oh, Your Worship . . . the usual reports.”

“You heard he was mixed up in I.D.B.?” said Quiller bluntly.

“Well . . . not exactly that.”

Smith was surprised at the witness’s attitude.

“Were you not told that Warrenton was frequenting the society of Kafirs?”

“Yes,” admitted Julius.

“I was studying the language,” Alan cried.

“Hum,” commented Quiller, “we’ll take that *cum grano salis*.” Politely the Magistrate explained—
“Latin . . . with a grain of salt.”

Smith was not disposed to spare the witness.

“Mr. Hermann, had you reason to believe prisoner was stealing diamonds?”

Julius seemed unwilling to reply.

“Did you so report to the police?”

“I asked Lynch to keep an eye on him . . . for his own good.”

Again there were murmurs in Court.

“I’ll read from your affidavit,” said Smith.

“Oh, don’t trouble,” protested witness.

Here Mr. Quiller impatiently interrupted:

“Mr. Hermann, were you given to believe prisoner was an I.D.B.?”

“Your Worship, am I compelled to answer?”

“Yes, you are, Mr. Hermann.”

Only then, slowly and painfully, did Julius breathe
“Yes. I was much distressed,” he quickly added,
“because I had taken an interest in him.”

“Very creditable of you, Mr. Hermann!”

“Not at all, Your Worship.”

“After that,” asked Smith, “did you hear Warrenton had been warned, but continued the traffic?”

“So it was reported . . . I could not believe it.”

“Now, Mr. Hermann, tell us about one of your Kafirs, named Inkomo, who died last Friday.”

“He had been swallowing diamonds, Your Worship.”

“Did you say Inkomo or Ostrich?” asked Mr. Quiller; and now there was a perfect outburst of laughter, for all knew that Inkomo was Zulu for “cow,” and they regarded this as an extremely neat quip. The Magistrate was pleased; for some minutes he became almost genial.

Julius continued: “Inside Inkomo was a beautiful stone, sixty carats, worth £100 a carat. Never saw a finer white in your life, sir.” He held up his fingers, circled to a hoop. “That size . . . He just rolled over and said ‘Oh’ . . . the doctor made a post-mortem and found the stone inside him.”

“He was then dead?” said Quiller. (Renewed laughter.)

“Oh, yes, Your Worship . . . we never make a post-mortem till they are dead.”

“Before dying, did he tell you something?”

“Oh,” replied Julius, “you know what Kafirs are.”

“What did he say?”

“It seems hard on Warrenton . . . perhaps he lied.”

“It was a serious accusation?”

“*Very* serious . . . he said he swallowed a stone . . .”

Quiller was intently listening:

“One moment. Did he put it in the third person, Mr. Hermann, or the first?”

“He put it in the first person, Your Worship—himself.” (Loud laughter.) “He said it was for his brother to sell to Baas Alan.”

“It’s a lie,” said the angry boy in the dock.

“Zulu lessons, eh?” Quiller made copious entries on the record, Julius remarking that he would not care to vouch for Inkomo’s truthfulness.

Cohen had now lost his hopeful, trustful look; Lily gave him a glance full of meaning.

Smith’s voice was heard . . . “Do you recognize that parcel of diamonds?”

A constable handed this up.

“Do they come from the Hermann Mine?”

As though the admission was wrung from his heart, Julius nodded “yes.”

“You know the stones from your own mine, Mr. Hermann?”

“Better than my own father,” he replied, gazing at Lily with subtle, hidden mockery in his eyes.

There were two lots of gems, the Magistrate got mixed up as to which was which. The point was of much importance.

“Which are those?” said Mr. Quiller, “the parcel he received last night? Oh, well, look at these, Mr. Hermann, the second lot, tell us what you know about them?”

Julius, too, was perplexed.

“Are those the stones found in Warrenton’s pocket?”

“Yes,” said Smith, irritably. “Do you identify them as missing from your offices?”

“Not positively.” (Sensation in Court.)

Smith, Lynch and Quiller together exclaimed: “What!” Lily’s face had an expression of wonder; hope lighted Alan’s and Isaac Cohen’s.

“I should not like to swear they were from us,” said Julius, amid tense, painful silence.

“Are they from your mine?” asked Smith.

“I’m afraid so.”

“Had the accused the right to be in possession of rough stones, from your mine or any other mine? Had he a licence?”

But Julius would not reply.

“Mr. Hermann,” said Quiller sternly, “the Court appreciates your generous conduct, but you must not screen the prisoner.”

“Screen him . . . oh!” burst from Lily in spite of herself.

“I would not like a young man sent to gaol if there was the slightest doubt”

“Mr. Hermann, look at the wrapping. Is it paper used solely by your Company for stones?”

Compassionately the witness looked at the prisoner.

“Yes,” he admitted.

Triumphantly the Magistrate said: "That will do. You may leave the box."

"Before I do so," said Julius, "may I express my regret at Warrenton's position. . . ."

"Thank you," burst bitterly from the boy.

". . . Apart from this . . . he had given entire satisfaction, and promised to do very well."

"You damnable hypocrite!"

"Silence, prisoner," said the Magistrate.

"You come here and pretend good-will and stick me deeper in the trap you set. I won't be quiet. I have the right to speak."

"Have you any questions?" said Mr. Quiller. "No speeches."

"Questions? To ask that cad?"

"Your Worship!" . . . said Julius pityingly, as though he were Christ turning the other cheek, "I am ready to answer him."

"Good," said Alan. "You remember my stopping you from insulting a young woman in the Golden Bar?"

"Melodrama, Your Worship!"

". . . A young girl, Cissie Sheldon, now engaged to me."

"You can call her to give evidence on that," beamed the Magistrate. "Is she here?"

"I do not see her," replied Alan, miserably.

"Hum. Your fiancée?" Mr. Quiller was satirical now. "The girl you said Detective Lynch was pursuing? Now 'tis Mr. Hermann. Erotomania, that's what you're suffering from."

"There are people can prove it," said Alan.

"After which you went to work for him? All this play-acting," Mr. Quiller remarked judicially, "has no effect on the Court. Mr. Hermann, before leaving, will you give a general denial to prisoner's allegations?"

"Emphatically, Your Worship."

"I repeat them," said Alan. "She warned me on Sunday to beware of you. . . ."

"Why should Cissie say that to you, Warrenton?" Julius suddenly asked, in a cruel, hurtful tone.

"Because we are to be married."

“ Really? ” Julius and Mr. Quiller exchanged looks.

“ I can prove that is a lie, ” said the witness.

“ How, Mr. Hermann? ” asked Quiller, encouragingly.

“ Because Cissie Sheldon was married to me this morning. Here is the certificate. ”

The statement, followed by a bold flourish of the official document, created a profound sensation, of which the Magistrate proudly claimed his share. Indeed, his radiant face proclaimed without words, “ I married them. ” Lily bowed her head, for Isaac had risen in amazement and was staring at her, a perplexed, undiscerning stare that asked for enlightenment. Upon Alan the effect was stupefying; like one in a trance he heard the Magistrate reading from the certificate . . . “ Julius Hermann, bachelor . . . Cissie Johanna Sheldon, spinster. . . . ” Through a mist he saw the wide blue paper passed by way of the Prosecutor back to the witness, and then Mr. Quiller said: “ Thank you. That disposes of the romantic side of the defence. ” And Julius was stepping down, and already they were calling “ Lizzie Hopkins, Lizzie Hopkins, ” for it was nearing the Magistrate’s tiffin hour.

Into the box slunk the half-caste girl, looking a poor thing socially and morally with which to damn the frank-faced boy in the dock. She took the oath furtively, and when asked her name and profession, replied in a low, doubting voice, as if feeling she would not be believed.

“ Now, then, my girl, ” bawled Mr. Quiller, “ speak up. There’s nothing to fear. ”

“ Address His Worship, not me, ” said Smith. “ Do you know the accused? ”

She earnestly examined the Magistrate, then replied,

“ No, sir. ”

This caused amusement.

“ That’s prisoner there, ” Smith explained with a gesture towards Alan. “ Do you know him? ”

“ Yes, sir. ”

“ Had he a room in the hotel where you worked? . . . What were his habits? ”

“ He never asked nothing from me, sir. ”

“ Tch! Was he on good terms with Kafirs? ”

“ Oh yes,” she said brightly, to this leading question.

“ You saw men visit him? What kind of men? ”

“ All kinds, sir—Kafirs, Dutch, English. . . . ”

“ Any Jews? ” asked Mr. Quiller.

“ Yes, and Scotchmen and Irishmen.” (Loud laughter.)

“ Confine yourself to the question! ” blared the Magistrate at her, and she trembled.

“ Have men given you packages for the accused? ”

She hesitated, then said: “ Little parcels.”

“ Did somebody call on Sunday night? He did? ”

Then impressively Smith added: “ Did he give you an envelope for prisoner? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ What is the name of the man who called? ”

“ Hector Bennington.”

This produced another sensation. Everywhere in Court a whispered hubbub arose, like smoke issuing from the sides of a volcano.

“ Silence in Court,” shouted the usher, without effect, for as the hostile murmurs died out in one place, they percolated through the gaps of people in another.

“ Ah, Bennington was the trap . . . dirty *momza* . . . he was the Judas, they would look out for him, the swine,” etc., etc.

“ Silence in Court,” sternly ordered Mr. Quiller, and Smith proceeded:

“ When you delivered this envelope was somebody else there? ”

“ His ‘ Tom,’ a barmaid, but she wen’ out of the room when I gave him the embelope.”

“ What did prisoner say when the detectives . . . ? ”

The Magistrate impatiently interrupted: “ The usual thing about being trapped? Go on.”

“ The barmaid run in and screams, ‘ Oh, my Gord ’ . . . ! ”

“ No, no, Lizzie, before that? ”

“ I don’ know what I mus’ answer.” (Laughter.)

“ Did you point to accused? Did they arrest him? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

Mr. Quiller: “ You mean by that that accused was the

man who habitually received parcels, and that he had there and then received the aforementioned packet? ”

Feebly she replied: “ I don’ know, sir.”

“ You don’t know? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

He wrote down the long phrase and said: “ That’ll do,” but then added as an afterthought, “ Any questions, prisoner? ”

It was unnecessary. Alan lay across the rail of the dock seemingly oblivious to all around him.

“ Alan, Alan! ” whispered Cohen softly, for which contravention he was sharply reprovèd by the usher.

Bennington was called.

Mr. Quiller remarked: “ I hope this is the last witness, ’tis a hot day, and . . . ”

A faint hissing could be heard from the crowd as Bennington completed the oath “ So help me, God.”

“ And God help him,” muttered an I.D.B.

“ Witness,” said the Magistrate, “ ’tis just on tiffin time. *Verb sap.* ”

Smith took the hint. He rushed the evidence along.

“ You know accused? Did you arrange to sell him stones supplied by the Detective Department? ”

Hector looked down. “ Yes, sir.” (Murmurs in court.) “ May I explain my position? ”

“ I’ve heard all about it,” said Quiller, brutally.

“ Believing him to be an I.D.B., did you co-operate with the Department and did Warrenton agree to buy stones? ”

“ Yes, but my position . . . ”

“ Confine yourself to the question,” shouted Mr. Quiller. “ We are not concerned with your position.”

“ How was accused to pay for the stones? ”

“ He was to sell them and pay me afterwards.”

“ I think,” observed the Magistrate humorously, “ you can regard this as a bad debt.” (Laughter.)

Hector bore out Lizzie’s statements, and when asked if he had received any money for the stones, replied:

“ There was no time, sir.”

Mr. Quiller: “ Oh, ’tis not necessary. The *onus probandi* is on prisoner—he may call evidence to prove legal possession. As he has no licence I do not see how

he can, but as the case is *sub judice*, I refrain from comment. Anything more, Mr. Smith?"

"That is the case for the Crown."

Here Mr. Quiller took out his watch, and unconsciously, with the left hand, stroked his well-nurtured stomach.

"Any questions, prisoner?"

Isaac Cohen was near Alan, he had remained there since being admonished by the usher.

"Yes, say yes, Alan," he whispered. "Ask him about *her*," and pointed at Lizzie, heedless of the stern, magisterial order, "Leave the Court."

"Constable, turn that man out," roared Mr. Quiller.

Isaac rose. "Don't trouble," he said, "I'm going, because I can't listen to this mockery of justice." Sensation number three. It was indeed a feast for those who never missed a criminal trial, and so seldom heard anything good.

"These demonstrations by your friends, prisoner," said Mr. Quiller, "will not help you. Have you anything to say before I commit you for trial?"

Hector was stepping down, everybody regarded the hearing as at an end. Already those at the back were taking positions near the door.

Suddenly Alan, invigorated by the spirit of Cohen, stood erect and said: "One minute, Bennington, I have something to ask."

"Are you calling witnesses?" asked Mr. Quiller.

"Not until the Special Court, but I have some questions to ask now. Why have you played the part of trap, Bennington?"

"I will explain, Your Worship."

"We don't want any explanations."

"Have you turned trap," asked Alan, "to save yourself, because you are an I.D.B.?" (Applause in Court.)

"How dare you," Hector feebly said. "I repudiate that emphatically. Detective Lynch can certify that I'm not an I.D.B."

Lynch saw through this artful dodge. If Hector were publicly whitewashed by the Crown, he would escape, scot-free.

There was a long and awkward pause. The Magistrate said: "Quite irregular, *ultra vires*."

Finally Smith spoke: "The police cannot vouch for the *bona fides* of anyone." (Whispering in Court.)

Alan's next question embarrassed the witness much.

"You know the girl, Lizzie Hopkins?"

"She's my housekeeper," replied Hector. (This provoked general hilarity, even Mr. Quiller smiling.)

"Nothing but your housekeeper?"

"'Pon my honour, no, certainly not."

"Haven't you promised to marry her?"

"Certainly not," cried Hector.

"Why certainly not?" asked Alan, and now Lizzie had risen at the back of the Court, and was staring at her lover with a strange, wild look. Men had ceased to snigger; a pin could be heard to drop as Hector answered:

"I want you to know, even if I have co-operated with the law, that my family is one of the oldest in England; I am a gentleman."

"I see," said Alan, "she's not good enough to marry? Only good enough to be an I.D.B. for you!"

"I deny that absolutely," said Hector, but his face was pallid; the lie lived in it for all to see.

Alan looked straight at Lizzie Hopkins.

"There is one person here who knows if you are speaking the truth."

"Is that all?" growled Mr. Quiller.

"No. Bennington, is it a lie also that one day in the Golden Bar I pitched you out from behind the counter?"

"You assaulted me unawares."

"Why? Come, tell the truth for once. Weren't you holding Cissie Sheldon for . . . somebody else to kiss?"

Lizzie advanced stealthily towards her lover, eyes filled with hatred and evil desires.

"Absurd," he stammered.

"Why absurd?" Alan asked.

Mr. Quiller was no psychologist; Lizzie did not interest him.

"Why," said he genially, "because everybody knows Bennington's reputation with barmaids—he doesn't hold them for anybody else to kiss."

“Rather not,” said Hector fatuously.

The accused was looking at Lizzie. He saw the hatred in her eyes; he decided to stop.

“That is the case for the Crown,” said Smith.

Hector stepped down with a sigh of relief, passing by Lizzie as though she were dirt.

“Prisoner at the Bar, you have been . . .” began Mr. Quiller, and then, recollecting that he had no sentence to inflict, stopped and formally said: “Any witnesses?”

“I will not call them till I get a lawyer.”

“Very well, you plead not guilty, and reserve your defence . . . the usual thing. I formally commit you for trial.”

But here Lizzie Hopkins suddenly and passionately arose, crying out:

“I’ve something more to tell the Magistrate . . . something I forgot.” She was already at the door of the witness-box.

“Very well, hurry up,” said Mr. Quiller, in hopes of further damning testimony.

“Swear . . .” began the usher.

“I don’ want to swear,” she shouted. “I won’ swear because I jus’ now swore by Gord and the Bible and I told lies.”

“What?” cried the Magistrate, but his full, strong voice was lost in the murmur that burst from the spectators.

“Yes, I told lies,” screamed Lizzie in the strident, rageful voice of the half-caste. “He put me up to it, ’Ector and Julius Hermann.”

Dead silence had succeeded the surging sound of the crowd.

“Do you know the penalty?” asked Quiller.

“I don’ care,” cried Lizzie with mad, passionate strength. “I don’ care; punish me if you like, I won’ tell no more lies. ’Ector said he would marry me, and now he says I’m not good enough for him. I see his game, running after barmaids. It ain’t true that I took parcels to Mr. Alan—Sunday was the first time. The stones in the pocket Julius Hermann paid me to put there. Yes, I done it, and I’ve told lies, lies, for that

thief, that I.D.B., that pimp! I've been buying diamonds from Kafirs and giving to him—he's the one to put in tronk, him and Julius Hermann." (Loud applause.)

"Perjury!" shouted Quiller. "You know what that means?"

"I don' care, I don' care—send me to the Breakwater, so long as you send him with me."

"Mr. Prosecutor," said Quiller, "I cannot compliment you on the way you have conducted this case."

"Your Worship, the Crown was in ignorance . . ."

"The prisoner is remanded . . . *pro tem!*"

Amid the unrestrained applause of the people Bennington was sneaking out of Court. But Lynch had his eye on him, and sharply nudged the Prosecutor.

Smith arose, gallantly leading a forlorn hope.

"In view of the serious statements by Lizzie Hopkins I ask for the arrest of Bennington."

At the door Hector was stopped.

"Bring him here," said the Magistrate.

In low tones Smith explained that the conduct of Mr. Hermann having been brought into question, there would have to be investigations. Unfortunately he had left the Court immediately after giving evidence.

The Magistrate turned savagely upon Bennington.

"Hector Bennington, you are detained in custody pending investigation of the serious charges against you . . . perjury, subornation, conspiring against justice and I.D.B."

"Your Worship . . ."

"Silence. Mr. Prosecutor, prepare the charges against him and Lizzie Hopkins, and bring them up on Friday."

"Your Worship," appealed Hector, "I apply for bail."

"Your Worship," said Smith, "in view of the grave nature of the charges, I oppose the application."

But the Magistrate was irritated and contrary; he now found joy in opposing the Prosecutor.

"Why do you oppose it?"

"Well, Your Worship, I ask at least that bail be fixed at a substantial sum."

Mr. Quiller quickly disposed of that.

“ Personal surety, £2,500; second surety of like amount. Prisoner, can you find £5,000 bail? ”

“ No, sir,” firmly replied Hector, “ but I’ll sign a card.”

CHAPTER XXVI

MR. MICHEL QUILLER, as a special favour to a mine-owner and fellow clubman, had attended office at nine o’clock that morning to perform the ceremony of marriage between Julius Hermann and Cissie Sheldon. As witness to this there were present Lily White and an old messenger employed around the Court. Thus it came about that none knew of the wedding save these five persons. Mr. Quiller smoothed away little difficulties regarding Cissie’s age and legal status; afterwards he unofficially joined the bride and bridegroom in a bottle of champagne, and wished them prosperity.

At half-past nine all was over. There remained one hour before the beginning of the trial and, by pre-arrangement, Lily, Julius and the young bride entered a hooded Cape cart and drove to the home of the bridegroom.

Cissie was strangely calm after the storm and agony of Sunday night. She passed through the ceremony and into the cart as if a deep and abiding peace had spread its wings over her; but when, after fifteen minutes driving, they stopped before the lonely house of Julius Hermann, a shudder passed through her, and at the door she broke down.

“ What is the matter, Cissie? ” he asked tenderly.

“ Let me go with you and hear the case.”

It was absurd, he shrugged his shoulders.

“ Come, we are wasting time.”

Suddenly the girl stiffened up.

"I won't go in, I won't!"

"Cissie, Cissie," gently said Lily, "you promised."

"I know, Miss Lily, but I can't."

"Come," remarked Julius persuasively, "it is nearly ten o'clock, and I must go back to give my evidence." There was no mistaking the threat.

"Leave her to me," whispered Lily, "she's a little excited and nervous."

Julius went into the house, and Lily spoke to the girl.

"You are not going to back out at the last minute, Cissie? I promise not to leave you to him—may I never again see Margaret if I fail. . . . I will come back with such good news, better than you can ever imagine." She spoke strangely, as if inspired. "It is Alan's best chance; we must get Mr. Hermann's evidence for him. Have you got the little friend?"

Cissie whispered "Yes," and touched her bosom.

"Come, child, we are wasting time. For his sake?"

"All right," she answered, almost sullenly it seemed.

Lily knocked at the door, which immediately swung open. A stout Kafir woman, of impassive face, stood within. Taking Cissie's hand Lily gripped it tightly, and they entered, stepping immediately into an entrance hall that was furnished in a manner unlike anything they had hitherto seen. Certainly the style of decoration was unique in South Africa, and out of all keeping with the ugliness and aridity of the Diamond Fields.

Upon the floor were simple but exquisitely-woven Asiatic rugs; a great copper god rose on one side—Chinese or Japanese, Lily at once decided. Cissie had no views whatever on the subject; she knew only that the ugly, grinning face, with great folds of fat, frightened her. Old ivory ornaments, rich skins, quaint weapons and vases, few in number and rare; then a tapestry upon which danced fawns and nymphs. . . .

The Kafir woman was holding open to them an inner door, through which they passed into a reception-room that was equally choice in its adornment. Here Julius appeared, smiling and genial, offering chairs and refreshments as if time were of no importance.

"No, no," said Lily, "it is ten o'clock; there is no time to lose. We must go."

"Very well," he replied, calling the Kafir woman and giving a few instructions. "You will await us here, Cissie. If there is anything you want you have only to tell this woman. Come, Lily, we shall not be long."

"Good-bye, Cissie, dear . . . be brave," said Lily White.

But now faced with this parting in that house, strange and terrifying, and suggestive of an almost forgotten Bluebeard, Cissie lost her courage; she clung to her protector, winding arms about her, and kissing her feverishly, while tears ran down her cheeks.

Julius stood in the background with inscrutable face; the tears of his young bride, her suffering and agony, thrilled him pleasantly; the parting now meant as much to him as to her. What fools these women were to think that only they suffered! How beautiful she was; how he longed to stay by her!

"Come," said Lily, "it is quarter-past ten."

Together they went from the room, and when the door closed upon her Cissie burst into violent sobbing, as though this were the end of all things.

Seated beside Julius, as they drove back to the Court, Lily's feelings contrasted vividly with those of Cissie; they were strong and hopeful. Since the marriage a sense of power had come to her, as though some burden had been lifted from her back.

"Julius," she quietly said, "will you now return me the book that Shilling took from me?"

"What?" He started as though awakened from the sweet thoughts of a day-dream.

"Yes, you agreed to give it back after the ceremony."

"Well . . . I will do. It is at home—locked away. When I go back I will send it to you."

"Give it to me, you mean. I am going back with you."

"It is not necessary."

"Yes, it is. We promised Cissie."

“To pacify her, but what do you want to go back for?”

“To keep my word. And let me tell you this: Cissie will never believe you . . . especially to-day.”

He smiled. “I will get a paper from the Magistrate to show the boy is to be released. You must not forget, Lily, there are two charges, or rather that evidence will be given on two separate counts. My evidence will clear him . . . I hope . . . of one—the stones found in his room, I mean.”

“And the other?” she asked.

“Well that,” he said, “depends on Shilling, because he was mixed up with the boy who died.”

“I don’t know all the details of the damnable business, but I do know this, Julius”—she spoke very slowly and gravely—“if you do not get the boy off you will regret it more than anything you have ever regretted in your . . . exciting life.”

“I hope you are not trying to threaten me?”

“Not threaten, Julius, warn. I warn you. Be very careful. Where is Shilling, he disappeared from the bar on Sunday morning?”

Julius looked across the mine dumps that they were passing.

“I believe the police know,” he replied. “Don’t be afraid; he won’t trouble Warrenton. That leaves only Bennington and Lizzie to swear to the other charge. Against their word are Alan and . . . Cissie . . . one side as good as another.”

“Providing you keep your word.”

“Of course. And I will—why should I not?”

“Because I don’t think you want him at liberty. You want him to leave the country, perhaps. It will suit your book better if he leaves with an uncleared charge hanging over his head than being acquitted here.”

“How this woman knows me!” he mocked.

“If he’s committed for trial on a doubtful charge you could, I know, have the case suspended, and get him smuggled away.” She looked straight at Julius. “But don’t be mistaken—Warrenton will not fall in with such a scheme, and I warn you again, if you fail to clear his name to-day . . .”

The cart violently swerved, cutting the thread of the conversation.

"I think I'll get down here and walk, Lily," said Julius, "it would be unwise for us to drive up together."

"You are right. I will see you at the door of the Court after the case," she answered, and he hurried away.

He felt she was up to mischief, some scheme to snatch the cup from his lips after he had obtained Warrenton's release. He had not forgotten the way she acquired the Golden Bar. Well, he would be a match for her. From her veiled words he gathered that she knew what had happened in prison after Warrenton's arrest; she was hinting at the consequences, though against these he had taken care to protect himself. Ah . . . if she was building on that!

But, as a fact, Lily did not know that Andrew Jack, the attorney, had been admitted to the cell of the accused, and that, after making him swear never to divulge the conversation, offered, on Julius Hermann's behalf, to get the charge suspended, probably abandoned, if Alan would secretly leave South Africa and guarantee never to return or communicate with anybody in it. The young man had indignantly rejected the offer, saying he was innocent, and would clear himself of the charge.

"You are foolish," said Jack, and he went away to eat all he could in preparation of Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of Atonement, which fell on the morrow. For he kept the faith of his fathers on this solemn occasion, striving to purge his soul cheaply for all the sins of the Christian year.

Cissie tried in vain to see her lover; neither she, Lily nor Isaac Cohen was allowed within the prison.

After some minutes weakly spent, Cissie began to look about. Doors led to other rooms. Should she open them? A vague fear held her back; she dreaded to see what might be in them, but at length tried the handle of one . . . it was locked. At the far corner was another door, and this, too, held fast. Now fear retook her; she did not know why, but the locked doors frightened her. She went to the entrance by which Lily and she had

come in, meaning to go outside, but this was shut, too. "Oh, I see," she said aloud, "he means to make sure I don't run away."

She went to the window, which was darkened by heavy curtains, and here found no passage.

One door remained at the other end of the room, and there she went, hoping to find a way out, no longer afraid of what she might discover. And in the midst of her misery and despair a new interest in life spurred her on; her tear-lined face magically brightened as the handle yielded to her touch. She drew back and stood on the threshold, peeping timidly within.

It was a bedroom, evidently Mr. Hermann's, though Cissie had never before seen such a large and sumptuous bed—totally different in material and style from all other beds on the Diamond Fields, with prettily-painted panels, stout wooden posts, and rich hangings that were not a mosquito net, as they ought to be. There was little light in the room, and Cissie went to the windows to lift the jalousie, but here again it was locked. By the diluted sunshine that came in she examined the room closely; noted the beauty of wardrobes and chests of drawers, and of what rich wood the tables were. On the floor lay soft, tanned African skins; leopards and zebras, she knew, and other pelts from Lake Ngami that she had never seen before. "Fancy this a man's room! My Jove, he lives like a queen!"

Then she looked again at the bed, and now noticed that it had two sets of pillows. Perhaps it was not his room after all, but then, whose could it be? Who else lived in this house? By a strange mental process she had excluded herself from all these deductions as though her being there was part of a dream, or a story; it was all unreal, an episode that would end when Miss Lily returned to fetch her, like the brother of Bluebeard's last wife. Passing dreamily through the room, she tried doors right and left, and at length, just to the side of the bed, the drawer of a pretty little cupboard rewarded her.

Surprise first, and wonder, then admiration, and finally realization passed through her. For in the open drawer were all the accessories of a dainty woman's toilette, every article she had seen on Lily's table, only richer

and ampler, and in a corner, neatly folded, lay a pair of beautifully brocaded slippers, just her size, and a nightgown woven of fine silk, edged with lace.

A sudden feeling of repugnance overcame her; the passing curiosity was succeeded by a return to black despair and overwhelming pity for Alan. She shut the cupboard and went out of the room. Oh, why had she not yielded to the impulse of Sunday night, after they had left Julius Hermann, when Miss Lily had explained everything to her? She had then wanted to kill, and had Lily let her, she would willingly have sought out Lynch, Bennington or Julius Hermann, and shot any of them. Lily had persuaded her from this impulse, urged her to go through with her undertaking, promising that a way out would be found. How could it be? Here was she, locked into this devil's house, married and helpless, while poor Alan stood in the dock charged with I.D.B. A moral panic seized her. She ran up and down the room, shaking the handles of the doors, shouting beside the windows, and finally under the large door.

Then the soft voice of the Kafir woman asked: "What you want, Meeses?"

"Let me out. Open the door! *Vula 'mnyanga!*"

In Zulu the woman replied that she could not, and after this was heard no more. By now Cissie's spirit was aroused. From her bodice she drew the revolver, "her little friend," making sure it was in working order. She replaced it, and made another tour of the permitted area, even returning to the bedroom. She went to the window, which was farthest from the side of the house where the woman was. By the sun's position she judged that this room gave on to a piece of enclosed land, and for no special reason, but simply because she felt the need of protest, put her lips to the bottom of the window and once more shouted:

"Let me out, open, *vula, vula!*"

And now, to her amazement, she heard a panting voice reply:

"No can open, Mees Cissie."

"Shilling, it's you? Let me out, Shilling," she implored in the native tongue.

"I cannot," he replied. "My master would kill me; besides, all is locked."

"What are you doing here, Shilling?"

"I ran away because the police beat me. My master said I must hide."

"You mean Baas Hermann? Where was he?"

"By the Court. They wanted me to speak against Baas Alan."

"Shilling . . . did you see Baas Alan?"

"Yes, Mees Cissie."

"Was he free . . . was he, tell me?"

"No, but I ran away too quick because I was frightened to tell lies to the Queen's judge. I have a brother who is police boy; he said they will send me to Breakwater. He showed me to escape."

"Wait, Shilling," cried Cissie, "don't go away."

She ran to the large room where she had seen a writing-desk, and quickly scribbled:

"DARLING,—Come to me at once. Miss Lily knows were. If not I kiss you good-bye til the Spesl Cort. I love you so much forgif me I did for the bes.

"CISSIE."

Into the aperture between the window and the sill she forced the letter, with a five-pound note, which she had in her purse.

"Go and find one of your brothers, quick; give him a pound for himself, tell him to give four pounds to your brother, the police boy, to give this letter to Baas Alan."

Shilling tried to protest, said he might be caught and forced to speak against Alan, but Cissie entreated him, and at length he promised to do his best.

Having sent this letter, she felt better, as if she had struck a blow for her lover. Perhaps Lynch had depended on Shilling's false testimony, and as this would not be given, Alan might be released. She had vague ideas of the law; the knowledge that Alan was innocent sustained her, in spite of all she knew about the iniquities of the trapping system. Once more she returned to the reception-room, going round and round like a bird in a cage. She began to observe the curious things, bronze,

ivory, earthenware; beautiful vases, prints and draperies, all bearing a touch of the grotesque or hideous, that made them incomprehensible, even terrifying to her.

She was examining some wonderfully-coloured silken birds on a Japanese hanging when sounds caught her ears; she listened—yes, it was the gallop of horses hard driven. Were they coming here? It must be Miss Lily returning to say Alan was free. Perhaps it was Alan himself? The sound died away. Had the cart gone by or had she failed to hear it pull up?

She went nearer the entrance door and stood expectant. There came a sound, she moved closer . . . but either was mistaken or somebody had passed and gone into the house. Why didn't Miss Lily come? What did it mean?

A key grated; Cissie stood ready, but before she could change her position or readjust her thoughts Julius had stepped into the room by an upper door, which he locked behind him. Despite her great disappointment Cissie's first quick words were of Alan.

"Where is he? Have they let him free?"

"Alan is safe," said Julius.

"Free?"

"After my evidence there was no doubt whatever."

"Thank God, thank God!" she cried, and fell upon a couch, sobbing in wonderful relief after days of agony. . . . Alan was safe, Alan was free!

Julius grew impatient at all these tears flowing for another man on his wedding morn. He softly touched Cissie's shoulder, and this brought her face to face again with her own problem.

"Where is Miss Lily? Why hasn' she come to tell me?"

"You know what women are. She was slow in starting. I knew you were waiting to hear. I wanted to reassure you, to comfort you; I came at once, Cissie. She will follow."

He sat down beside her, and she got up.

"Hah, Cissie, you are not grateful. You shudder when I come near you—is that how you treat . . . your husband on your wedding day?"

"Mr. Hermann," she said, going farther from him,

" please don't say that. Till I know Alan's free I can't think of anything else."

" I have told you he is free, Cissie," but sadly she shook her head, and he went again to her. " Yes, the boy is free; I am the prisoner . . . Samson chained by your charms, Delilah."

She wondered why he called her this strange name; she had heard of Samson—at the next bar there worked a boy by that name—but she had not heard of Delilah. At first Julius had eased her heart, but now the feeling of unrest and anxiety again oppressed her; she wanted to believe Alan was free, but she could not until she saw him or heard it from Lily's lips.

" Was the case over when you came away? "

He brushed aside the question.

" I tell you, Cissie, I did what I promised—I said I had no knowledge of diamonds stolen from our offices, that the boy had served us well, that I was sorry to see him in his position, that the Kafirs were probably lying. . . ."

Now he was near to her, speaking strongly, feelingly, impressing her by his words. He took her hand.

" Leave me, Mr. Hermann, oh, be kind, don't do that please."

" Kind? Why, Cissie, that is all I want to be."

" But you have not kept your word. You promised Miss Lily would tell me."

" Well, she will," he crooned. " She is coming, Cissie." Again he set his hand upon her.

" Mr. Hermann," she suddenly said, " get me a cup of tea? I have such a headache."

" Why, yes," he answered, then went to the door and shouted: "*Itiyé*. They will make it for you. But soon we shall have tiffin—a nice meal, fit for our wedding-day. . . ."

Her asking for tea gave him an idea; from an antique chest he took a bottle of champagne.

" I don' want any fizz," said Cissie, " and I'm not hungry. I'd like a cup of tea; I've been longing for it all morning."

" But why didn't you give orders . . . ? "

She interrupted him.

"Why didn't I? Why did you lock me in like this? Yes," she said, her tones growing hard and combative, "that door is locked. And that one and that. And the windows . . ."

"That one is not," he broke in, pointing to the bedroom. Then he went to it, and opened the door wide. "A very nice room, Cissie . . . if you are not feeling well why don't you go in and rest? It will do you good."

"No . . . I can't rest till I see Miss Lily. Tch, how long they are with that tea."

"The water must boil first. What an impatient little girl you are. Tea! On our wedding day—how beautifully English. Now a nice glass of champagne?"

"I hate it!"

But he cornered her. "Don't fib. Remember how you loved it that day on the claims?"

The allusion was unfortunate. Ever since she had met Alan, Cissie hated to think of that day—the day when Julius had charmed her, and she had spent happy hours in his company. Its memory now brought a flush to her cheeks; in her whole-hearted love she went to the other extreme and accused herself of being unfaithful to her lover, of whose existence she had not then known. With such thoughts crowding upon her, she glanced up and saw the great, rich bed within the room, and the sight of it filled her with loathing. She approached the door, and Julius, thinking she would enter, followed, soft-footed, behind. But she merely shut the door to hide the view, and all that it evoked.

Stifling his disappointment, Julius poured out a glass of wine and extended it to her.

She put it curtly aside.

"Afraid it is drugged?" he lightly said, drinking to reassure her. "I shouldn't want to drug you, Cissie . . . to-day of all days."

Once again she turned him to impersonal topics.

"What strange things you have, Mr. Hermann." She went to an inlaid table on which were many ornaments.

"Do you like them?" he asked.

"No . . . they give me the creeps. What's this?"

“That’s Buddha . . . don’t ask me who *he* is. I’ve never met the gentleman.”

She smiled wanly. “And what’s this one?”

“The God of Plenty. . . .”

“Plenty, plenty of what? Belly, eh?”

He laughed.

“They look awful, your ornaments, cruel.” Then suddenly pointing to a gilded, sacred cow of Indian origin, she inquired: “What’s that awful thing?”

“That? A—h, that is the Golden Calf.”

“Golden Calf?” said Cissie, “what they say you worship?”

“They say that?”

“I heard a man in the bar say so. Are you a heathen, Mr. Hermann?”

“Because I worship the Golden Calf?” He uttered a little dry laugh. “Ha . . . on the contrary, that is the hall-mark of a good Christian or a pious Jew.”

Cissie seemed scarcely to hear him. She had found a way to gain time, if only he would go on talking!

“Golden Calf,” she repeated, “I like that! Looks more like an old cow!”

“Ah, yes, but his colour is right, golden, golden, like this wine . . . Come,” said he, pouring out another glassful. “Drink, Cissie. The sparkle goes out, as it goes out of us when we get old.”

To humour him she touched the wine with her lips, and at once returned to his curios.

“Fancy a rich man like you keeping such ugly things.”

Julius touched the Golden Calf.

“People worship this, that, and the other God,” he mocked. “They cry to him for help, mercy, pity, but they never see him and they don’t know if he exists. Now *my* God, I keep near, when I want him I can find him, fondle him, feed him. . . .”

“Feed him?” she asked with real interest, so powerful was the impression he had created by the ecstasy of his words.

Julius stopped suddenly, he seemed disconcerted.

“Feed him . . . that is a way of speaking.”

“He looks well fed,” she joked. “Heavy, eh? May I hold it?”

His face lighted eagerly.

"Yes, yes, but be careful, don't let him fall and break."

She lifted the strange thing.

"Oh my, how heavy! Is it gold?"

"Better, Cissie." He slipped one arm about her.
"Ah!"

Her hands were occupied, holding the massive calf.

"Let go," she shouted, "or I'll drop it."

He was seized with alarm.

"Don't, Cissie, I was only playing." He took his treasure from her and carefully set it upon its pedestal.

"You seem very fond of it?"

"There is only one thing I love more . . . you."

She tried again to counter him.

"Do see about that tea, please."

"Cissie, you have fooled me long enough with that 'tea!'" He went nearer, watching her avidly.

"I am thirsty," she said, feeling like a hunted beast.

"Not so thirsty as I am . . . for you." And suddenly, before she could move or think, he seized her arms and fought her for her lips.

"Don't, don't," she cried, the words sounding still-born and smothered.

"It is our wedding day," he panted. "You have never yet kissed me."

"I hate you," she breathed, "hate you."

"You . . . shall . . . love . . . me . . . yet," he answered in gasps as they struggled.

"Love? Is this your idea of love?"

"Give me your lips. Give me your mouth. I want you."

"Let me go."

For half a minute in complete silence, save for the laboured breathing, they struggled, he with the strength of desire, she with the instinct of a hunted female, striving against the male. But at last by his unsparing strength she was overborne, and lay panting in his arms, though still on her feet, her will unconquered.

"My God," he gasped, "you growl, you scratch, you

bite—is it a woman I married or a tiger? Ah . . . you are a tonic to me, you make me mad.”

He had worked her to the door of the bedroom, but it was closed. Cissie had shut it and now he was compelled to take one hand away from her to open it. At once she fumbled in her bodice for the pistol, but before she could get it, he had again taken hold, and was dragging her into the room. Relinquishing her desire to kill, she fell back on self-preservation, clinging with both hands to the frame of the door.

“I have fulfilled my part,” he panted, “fulfil yours.”

“I won’t; never, never!”

“Your bargain,” he muttered. “Your promise.”

“I said I would marry you. I have done so.”

“You must be my wife.”

“I’ll sooner die than that.”

“So,” he said, “you didn’t mean it? You tricked me!”

“You trapped Alan.”

“I did not.”

“Don’t lie. I know better.”

“And you went through the marriage to humbug me?”

“I don’t care, I don’t care! Let me go.”

“You are married to me,” he sang triumphantly, “and you shall be my wife.”

He pulled her brutally, trying to make her let go, and then, in angry desperation, beat her fingers with his fists. This gave Cissie a moment’s respite, and like a hare she leapt back into the large room, and ran to the far corner, pulling out her pistol as she went. He followed madly, but, in activity, was no match for her; she ran behind a heavy table, and, facing him across it, menaced him with the revolver.

“If you come near me, I’ll kill you,” she said, in a deadly tone.

For a second he was utterly amazed, stood still, staring. Then he walked calmly to the door by which he had entered, opened it and called out words in Zulu.

Cissie stood waiting in awful suspense, resolved to shoot, but wondering what he would try next. She expected to see the mysterious Kafir servants rush into

the room, and she took up a position farthest from the doors, wondering if she should enter the bedroom and barricade herself in. But Julius was still on the threshold, standing there as if he, too, was undecided—and still no Kafirs answered their master's cry.

Then came a sudden, violent noise, as if men were stampeding; she saw Julius swiftly step back into the room, followed by Alan himself, fresh and fair, but with something cruel in his face. His eyes rested on Cissie as if in tortured inquiry—he did not speak.

“Alan,” she cried, “Alan! You're free, free!”

“Free?” said Julius, in a dead voice.

“What have you done to her?” asked the boy, walking towards him.

“What are you doing in my house?” retorted Julius.

Again, with voice strained and unfamiliar, Alan asked: “What have you done to her?”

“*Her?*” said Julius. “You mean . . . my wife?”

“Your wife!” repeated the boy, as if he were dazed.

“You break in and ask explanations from her husband?”

“I know everything, Mr. Hermann . . . I've come to settle up with you.”

“Clear out.”

“Not till I've settled with you.”

“You know what you are doing, Warrenton? My house, my wife—you break in here!”

“She's not your wife—she is *my* wife,” said Alan.

Lily came in now, and Julius turned to her.

“Tell this young fool—is Cissie married to me?”

“She has told me all,” Alan answered.

“No, Alan, *not* all,” said Lily.

“You brought him here?” burst angrily from Julius. She nodded “yes.”

“Very well,” he menaced, “I'll deal with you later. Meanwhile, did you sign this marriage certificate as witness?”

“Yes,” she calmly answered.

“You see, Warrenton, she's my wife, I have the right to her.”

“But I *have* her.” And Alan took Cissie in his arms. This sight maddened an habitually cool man.

"Leave her, Warrenton," he said dangerously. "Leave her, or I'll kill you. I find my wife in your arms; I have the right."

Lily came forward, cold as ice, urbane, deadly.

"You are mistaken—Mr. . . . Hermann."

"Be careful," he warned. "You know what I mean?"

"Oh, yes, I know. But let's finish this farce . . . Cissie is not married to you."

"Not married to me?" he mocked, while Cissie and Alan craned to catch every word.

"Did you think I would sell her body to you in exchange for my liberty? Such a clever man as you Mr. . . . Hermann, couldn't you see why I let her go through that farce, this morning?"

"Farce?" repeated Alan, while Julius had a look of unrest, of apprehension, as though he knew the next words.

"Do you recognize *this* marriage certificate?" suddenly said Lily, in a sharp, businesslike tone. "Not the one you signed this morning as 'Julius Hermann, bachelor,' but another you signed twelve years ago, in London, as 'Herman Van Werther,' when you married Rose Hadley?"

"Rose Hadley," he murmured, as if in voluptuous memory.

"Married already!" cried Cissie.

"I did not tell you, I was a widower."

"Don't lie, Hermann or Julius or Werther. You knew that Rose Hadley was alive when you took me to France eleven years ago to marry me, and found a way of not doing it, Julius . . . shall I stick to Julius, the local name . . . ?"

He was regaining his strength.

"Please, Lily, for the sake of these young people's brains, they haven't any too much."

"Well," she continued, "Rose Hadley is still alive, you will be interested to know, and she will have the pleasure of seeing you get what you deserve."

He smiled. "Your little bit of melodrama, Lily . . . reminiscence of the village concert."

"Well, you two children," she said, addressing them,

“ he says you haven't much brain, perhaps he's right, because he has. Listen to how he's used it—he has black-mailed me because I used to be an I.D.B.—yes, it's true, Alan—an I.D.B., while he kept within his rights as a liar, a seducer and a deserter of silly girls, which is permitted by the law. But then at last this clever man fell in love . . . with poor little Cissie, and now the funny part of it is that he's to be punished for the nearest he has ever felt to a real, sincere passion.”

“ If it were not so true, Lily,” said Julius, “ I'd think you were making a public speech.”

“ All this may amuse you,” she answered, “ it does not amuse me. There is something sad and terrible in the downfall of a man, even so vile as you.”

“ Downfall?” he mocked. “ More public speeches.”

“ Julius,” said Lily gravely, “ don't you realize that this is the end of you?” She told him what had happened in Court after he left it; he listened in silence, now and then muttering, “ Tch, tch.” Lily saw that her words had struck deeply into him, that he was shaken in his sublime and confident audacity. “ You see what you are,” she went on, “ a self-convicted bigamist, a perjurer who bribes and conspires to defeat the ends of justice, an I.D.B. . . .”

“ What are you talking about, Lily? You are the I.D.B. I have the proofs here in your hand-writing.”

He held out a little book.

“ That is always good for ten years on the Breakwater.”

But before he could return it to his pocket, Alan sprang at him, crying:

“ Give it back to her.”

In the struggle that followed Julius drew his revolver, broke away and levelled it at the younger man. There was madness and evil in his eyes; he wanted to kill. Cissie and Lily cried out in terror, but the weapon mis-fired, and before Julius could pull the trigger a second time, the boy was again on him, strangling his throat and beating his face. To and fro they swayed; Cissie hovering about for a chance to help her lover. Lily snatched up the coveted book, then the fallen revolver, from which she drew the charges. At last Alan struck a crushing blow which sent Julius into the pedestal of

the Golden Calf, and suddenly the struggle ceased, all stood still as though an earthquake were rocking the world, for the strange object had crashed upon the floor, and from it rolled a number of large and beautiful rough diamonds.

Lily ran forward and picked one up.

"My God! I know this; I sold it myself." She examined another. "That was the stone Champagne Charlie found, which I sold. Ah, Julius, now we know who organizes the I.D.B. traffic, who buys all the big stones."

He had risen from the floor. "They were so beautiful," he panted. "I could not part with them." His irresistible sense of irony inspired him. "You didn't know I was a customer, Lily? What a pity you can't give evidence against me!"

"There is no need for that. Possession is ninety-nine points of your beautiful law . . . Lynch will find them here, that's sufficient. Alan, call him."

"Is that fool there, too?" asked Julius.

Alan stepped to the door.

"Hold on, Warrenton, just a minute."

The boy did as he was told, dominated by Julius, whose sense of power had come back to him since his mind was cleared of doubt.

"What is Lynch doing here, Lily?"

She quickly explained. The detective had morally joined forces with her from the moment Julius produced the proof of his marriage to Cissie. Lynch saw then how vilely he had been used. He scented the real reason for Julius's disappearance from the Court, and expedited Alan's release on bail. Lily asked Isaac to get a cart and swift pair of horses. They waited outside the Court. Cohen wanted to accompany them.

"No, no, Ike, I have a lot to tell you; when I come back you shall hear it, every word, I promise."

"Come on, Miss Lily," shouted Alan. Lynch flogged the horses. They galloped away.

While Lily was telling how closely the circle was drawn about him, Julius was examining the situation, physically and morally. Perhaps the house was not surrounded, there was a way out by the bedroom window;

Lynch he could see inside by peeping through the key-hole. He went into the inner room and from the window saw detectives on that side of the house. And even if he did get away from Kimberley, or out of this accursed country? What was left to him? As if speaking his thoughts he began to intone strange words.

“ This is a day of humiliation for me, of lamentation . . . Julius Hermann’s Yom Kippur, the day on which the fools triumph over him. Eleven days ago it was Rosh Hashona and the Almighty decreed who shall live and who shall die. Did he think of me, I wonder? Because if he didn’t, he will feel so foolish. Lily,” he quietly added, “ I am getting old. I don’t hate you, I don’t hate the boy there, though he has taken the fruit out of my mouth. I thought I loved Cissie, but it cannot be so, because what I love I never fail to get. So I do not love, and I do not hate, and when a man has lost the power to love and to hate, he is growing old and feeble.”

Turning, he looked at the revolver upon the table.

“ In my case,” he continued unbrokenly, “ there are complications which coincide with the mental and physical decay . . . or the decay with the complications . . . it hardly matters which; the outstanding truth is this—it is time for me to go away, to leave Kimberley.”

“ Lynch is there, Julius,” said Lily, pointing. “ You can’t get away from that bull-dog.”

“ Lynch,” he sneered. “ Bah . . . Lynch cannot stop me. Unless you help him. Will you help him, Lily, Cornish woman that you are, so full of hate?” She looked into space; he could not read her thoughts. Opening the breach of the revolver he saw that it was empty. He bent towards Lily and whispered so that Cissie and Alan heard nothing. “ There is a way out from here; one way only . . . I will pass through there . . . the bridal chamber . . . you must help me.”

“ What do you want?” she asked in a hard, dead voice that rang like brass in his ears.

“ I want some of those cartridges.”

She stood motionless, unwrought, reflecting.

“ Come, Lily, come,” he urged, “ do not be so

revengeful; give me one at all events. See, it is empty. You must give me 'a sporting chance,' huh?"

Alan and Cissie stood still under the curtains, like figures on the tapestry, trying to comprehend. They saw Lily and Julius look fully into each other's eyes; then slowly she handed him a cartridge. Without a word he turned and walked to the bedroom door, and was about to enter it when something came to his mind, for he circled upon his heel to Lily, and almost lightly said:

"Ach, I nearly forgot . . . there's the child, eh? If you look inside that gilded thing there, the very inside—look well—you will find more stones, many more . . . and nobody knows better how to sell them than you, eh, Lily," he added, almost mischievously. "That will pay the old debt between us . . . if you never hear from me again. Good-bye."

He went within, locking the door behind him, for Lynch was now banging loudly on the other side. Soon afterwards one faint and solitary shot was heard. . . .

When later Lynch forced his way into the room he found Julius in bed, at peace in his last sleep, with face calm and untroubled as the surface of a beautiful lake, so serene that the compassion Lily felt was dominated by a feeling of envy.

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