
THE
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AFRICAN
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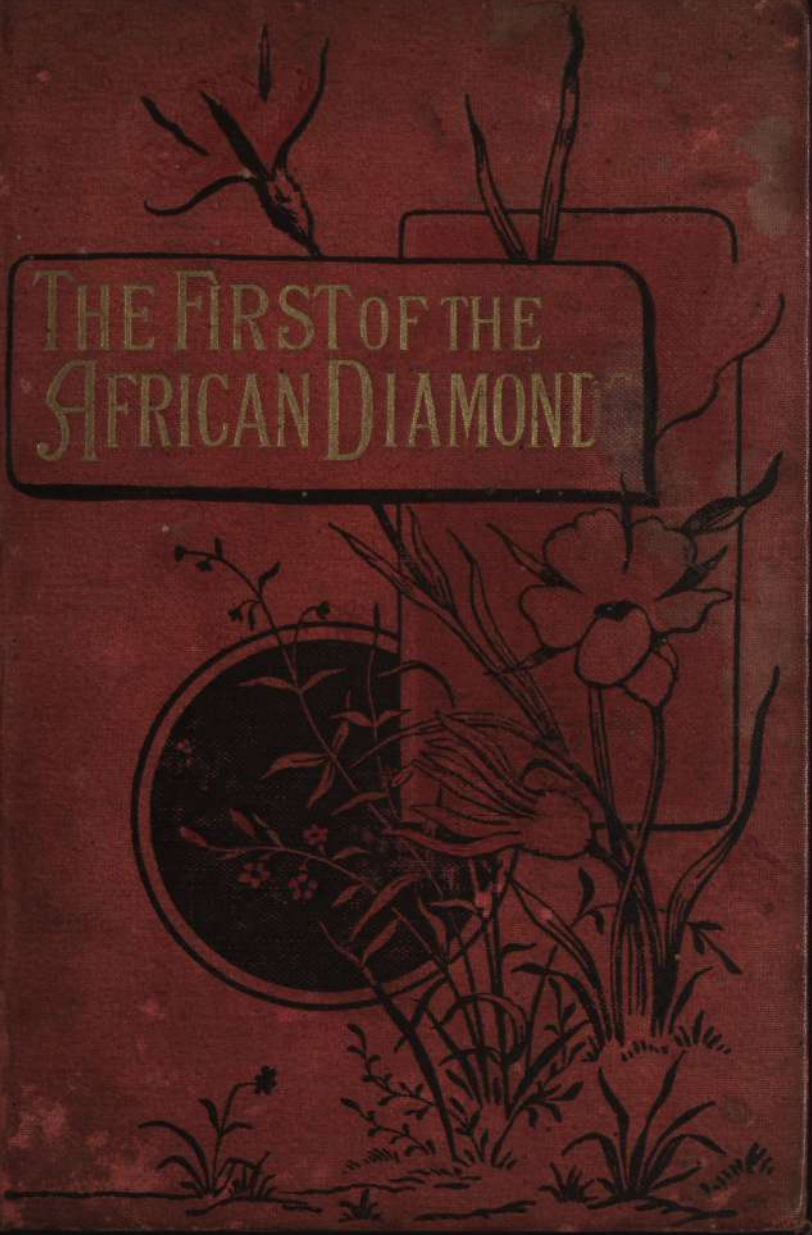

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William Read

THE SUNDAY VISIT

THE FIRST

OF THE

AFRICAN DIAMONDS.

BY

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Author of

"THE EXILE'S TRUST;" "THE NEAREST NEIGHBOUR,"

ETC.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

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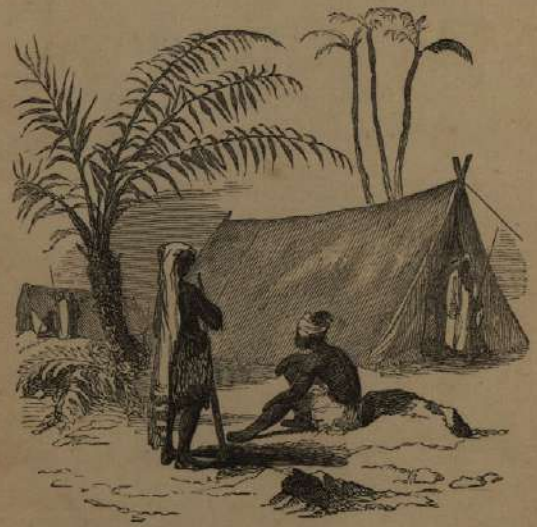

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THE FIRST OF THE AFRICAN DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER I.

THE WIDOW'S SON.

"HAST thou a mind to go, Moris?" said widow Niekirk to her step-son, as the family sat at breakfast in their humble cottage on the outskirts of Hope Town, one bright morning in the month of October.

"I have, mother; that is, if you are willing," said Moris. "The place is a good one; there is not a better farm on the Orange River, they say. Our minister thinks Minheer van Grabein is a good Christian man, who

would deal justly with anybody in his service, and suffer no wrong to be done about his house. He gives good wages, mostly paid in sheep or cows; and if I stayed some years with him, I might get enough to stock a little farm of my own; then you and the children could come and live with me, and not have to work so hard as you do now."

"Thou art a good boy, Moris," said the widow; "and a good son thou hast been to me, before and since the Lord took thy father to Himself. Go, if it seem for thy benefit, with the Minheer; but should things turn out contrary to thy expectations on the Orange River farm, come back again to us, and we shall live and work together as heretofore."

Widow Niekirk and her family were descendants of those Dutch settlers who, in the seventeenth century, founded at the southern end of the African continent what was called the Cape Colony, from its famous headland, the Cape of Good

Hope, and still form a large part of the population, though the land has been English territory for more than seventy years. They are also the most backward part, having advanced little in social or educational respects beyond the condition of their ancestors at the time of their first settlement, and in industry and thrift they are said to have degenerated under the African sky; but, as in all other communities, there are well-disposed and well-doing people among them, and one such was Elsau Niekirk. She had married her distant kinsman, Hans Niekirk, when his only child by a former marriage was a motherless boy of seven years; and being a woman of Christian principle and kindly nature, she had done a mother's part by the young Moris, and he in turn regarded her with the reverence and affection of a son.

While the boy was yet on the borders of manhood, his father was summoned away from this world, leaving Elsau with a

family of four young children, equally divided between brothers and sisters, and no provision except what her hands and theirs could earn; for, though an upright and honest man, he had been but a day labourer.

Moris had striven hard to repay the care and kindness she had shown to his helpless years. Having no trade, he could only follow his father's calling; but the youth had sound sense, prudence, and trustworthiness, qualities which will tell in any station, and they procured him better employment than more advanced men could always find. Thus he had been enabled to take more than half the burden of the family support off the widow's shoulders; her chief help under Providence, she said, Moris was; and by the united efforts of the household, in which every hand found something to do, the Niekirks at last got out of the difficulties consequent on the death of the husband and father, and could live in homely comfort.

The place of their residence, Hope Town, in more populous countries would have been called a village. It had little trade, and no manufactures; the only public buildings it contained were two churches—the one Dutch, and the other English. Yet Hope Town was the metropolis of a wild and extensive region. From hamlets lying in deep glens among the mountain ranges, from the huts of ostrich-hunters on the barren plains, from farms scattered along the banks of far-flowing rivers, men came to it as a mart, where the produce of their tillage or hunting might be disposed of, and the necessaries of civilised life were to be bought.

Occasionally, some came also in search of hands that might be hired to till their fields, or keep their sheep and cattle; but they were not numerous, only rich farmers thought of such a quest; labour was scarce and dear in the colony, and families of ordinary means were accustomed to do their own farm work and shepherding, or

exchange help with their nearest neighbours.

One of those well-to-do men, bound on that as well as other business, arrived in Hope Town at the time of our story. Minheer van Grabein was a man of the substantial Dutch build, supposed to weigh from eighteen to twenty stone, with coarsely-cut features and a complexion said to vary between the hue of saffron and that of the rising sun; his hair was iron-grey, for he was well advanced in life, but still hale and strong, and his keen glance, which some thought sinister too, gave no sign of decaying powers.

He was known to be the proprietor of a large tract of land inherited from his forefathers. His square-cut coat of English cloth, and nether garments of buckskin, his silver knee-buckles and high-crowned beaver, not to speak of the "Van" before his name, were so many vouchers for his claims to better birth than that of the ordinary boers, or inland-living peasants.

Van Grabein was not exactly a stranger in Hope Town, being accustomed to visit the place three or four times a year. With the trading part of the community he was an important person, for his buyings and sellings were largely and shrewdly conducted. Among the more serious portion he was generally respected on account of his sober walk and conversation, and his regular attendance at the Dutch church every Sunday while he remained in town; but, owing to the distance of his farm, almost fifty miles off on the farther bank of the Orange River, nothing more was known concerning him.

One of Van Grabein's objects in that visit to Hope Town was to seek out a man more trusty and intelligent than could be found among the Boerish labourers of the interior, who might act as a sort of upper servant in and out of doors, and be employed in all matters requiring care and despatch.

Moris Niekirk happened to be out of a

situation for the time, and the Minheer's inquiries being answered by a general testimony to his good qualities, he at once offered him the place, with good terms for the present, and liberal promises for the future; and the young man, after that morning's consultation with his step-mother, agreed to enter his service for a year, and be ready to accompany him on his homeward journey early in the following week.

His going was a sad trial to the widow and her children. They knew how much they should miss his kindly companionship and helping hand; but they also knew it was the best and most prudent course for him, and one and all exerted themselves to help Moris in getting up his requisites for a long year's residence on the banks of the Orange River.

At the hour of parting every one kept a brave heart, not to fret the boy too much. "Farewell, my son," said the widow; "thou art going to live among strangers for a time, rich and prosperous people they say.

But forget not us and the old home thou art leaving; forget not the good ways thou hast learned there—to speak the truth and act uprightly; but above all forget not thy God, and He will never forget thee."

The roads in that part of the colony were, at the time of our story, mere rough tracks, leading over rugged hills and through densely-wooded valleys. The journey, which was performed by Minheer van Grabein mounted on his Flemish mare, and by his attendants, including Moris, in a massive cart drawn by four strong bullocks, and nearly filled with the Minheer's purchases, was consequently a slow one.

It involved resting for two nights at as many rustic inns, that is to say, timber sheds where man and beast found shelter together; but when the sun was wearing low on a Saturday afternoon, they crossed the Orange River by a ford which the warm weather had made passable—for the sultry summer of South Africa drew near

with the end of October—and saw on the other side the farm and homestead of Clipendrift, as the first Van Grabein chose to call the place where he settled.

It was a large extent of carelessly cultivated, but not unfruitful fields, for they were clothed with abundant crops of wheat and barley. The large timber house had farm buildings projecting from it like wings

on either side, and it was painted a brick colour and ornamented with quaint and curious carvings. Neither out-house nor dwelling rose above one storey; the latter had a wide verandah in front, with rustic seats in it, and vines wreathed round its pillars. Behind the premises one could see a farmyard and garden ground; the one full of pigs and poultry, the other of straggling shrubs and fruit-trees; but the place had no neighbours, for there was not a house, poor or rich, within ten miles of it.

As the party approached the house, half a dozen dogs came bounding out of it, and made the air resound with their barking. Two great boys sallied from the verandah, making nearly as much din with their shouts of welcome — they were Van Grabein's two sons, Hans and Peter. Then there appeared a sturdy matron with a more than rosy face, whom one would have guessed to be Van Grabein's vrouw, for as he alighted, she said to him in a querulous tone, "Thou hast come home at

last, Matz; I expected thee a fortnight ago."

The answer was lost in the coming forth of a perfect troop of men and maid-servants to welcome home their master and unload the bullock-cart.

Every one of them looked suspiciously at Moris, but nobody spoke or gave him the slightest sign of greeting; and his new mistress, after surveying him contemptuously from head to foot, said to her husband, "Is this the man thou hast brought, Matz? If it is, I wish thee good of him; but to my thinking we had boys enough of our own, without bringing home another," and without more words she marched at once into the house.

CHAPTER II.

A SOUTHERN HOMESTEAD.

THE bustle of the home-coming subsided, the purchases from Hope Town were marvelled over by the sons and servants, grumbled at and put away by the vrouw, her own careful hands and trusty locks having the sole charge of them. The day sank into evening, the evening into night. Moris had done his part in helping with the settlement of things in general. One after another found manners enough to make room for him at the supper-table—most of them had spoken to him before the meal was over—and so by degrees the widow's step-son entered into the family life.

A peaceful and pleasant one it might have been, neither pinched by necessity, nor overtaxed by toil. The fertile farm

yielded much for little labour, and by its produce every real want was abundantly supplied.

The situation was fair and cheerful—in the midst of a wide valley, watered by a noble river, and bounded by hills which here and there towered up to mountain height. If it were isolated, the number of the household prevented the feeling of solitude, and precluded the necessity of help. The distance of neighbours and friends did not hinder their visiting and being visited by them; miles are of little account with the good horses and hardy people of the colony. Travellers who sought their hospitality, which in the thinly-inhabited land was considered a rightful claim, and passing traders seeking custom for their wares, brought them news from more populous districts, and sometimes even from Cape Town, the London of South Africa.

From day to day, and from week to week, the work of home and farm went

slowly and quietly on; nobody got too much of it, and there were leisure hours for all. The large, low house was a convenient and comfortable dwelling for the climate—which had no extremes to be dreaded, except its summer heat, generally fiercest about our Christmas-time—and for the numerous inmates amongst whom delicacy of health or habits were unknown. The mere on-looker who saw them assembled in its family room, an apartment large enough to be the dining-hall of some collegiate school; round the table, supported on trestles that might have served for a platform, and spread with substantial fare, or whiling away the last of the evening hours beside the ample hearth or in the cool verandah as the season dictated, would have thought Clipendrift might be the habitation of kindness and contentment, willing hands and thankful hearts; but outward conditions alone can never make human life either good or happy.

The master of that house was like two

different men among the people of Hope Town and the dwellers on his own farm. Proud of his wealth and descent, he thought it necessary to assume an appearance of seriousness and sobriety, attend church, and conduct himself like an upright and religious man, in order to gain respect from the better part of the townspeople. But, once at home, Matz van Grabein relapsed into the evil ways which he had followed from his youth—immoderate drinking, profane swearing, and graceless housekeeping, in which the only rule was his worldly interests or his selfish caprices, and moral and religious duties were alike disregarded. No prayer went up from his home for the protection of Him who slumbers not nor sleeps, no thanksgiving at the well-spread table acknowledged the Hand that dealt so bountifully with him and His. The Sabbath was so little distinguished from the week-days, that but for an almanac which the vrouw kept among her stores, his household would have lost their reckoning of time; and the only observance accorded to it was that on Sunday they generally laboured less and bickered more.

Bickering was indeed the order of the day at Clipendrift. The vrouw being of a disposition similar to that of her husband, their time was spent in a succession of jangles on every subject that happened to turn up, the pair seldom agreeing on anything, except to sit drinking the corn brandy of their ancestral Holland, and playing cards for the greater part of the evening. Their sons, Hans and Peter, did just what pleased themselves, and that was rarely any good.

If one parent found fault with either of them, the other invariably took his part, by way of carrying on the opposition, and they grew up what might be expected from such teaching. Undutiful and idle, clownish and ill-conditioned, the only ideas they had beyond the meal or the mischief of the hour was that their father was the richest man on the Orange River, and that they

would get his farm and stock to divide between them when he departed this life, an event which the amiable youths seemed to regard as something desirable.

Their entire following of house and farm servants had a chronic dislike to the Van Grabeins, not that the latter acted tyrannically towards them—they were too numerous to be provoked with impunity in that solitary spot—but between the upper and lower divisions of that household there was maintained a constant watch over petty rights, a continual grumbling of paltry wrongs, and a common understanding that neither party cared in the smallest degree what became of the other.

There was a striking contrast between the farmer's house at Clipendrift and the poor widow's cottage in the outskirts of Hope Town, yet amid the ease and plenty, the bickerings and bad temper of the former, Moris Niekirk learned the truth of that inspired proverb, "Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and

hatred therewith." Many a time in his goings out and comings in, among the flourishing fields and at the abundant table, he wished himself back in the humble home, where constant work and meagre meals were accompanied by cheerful faces and kindly words and deeds, where the family greeted each other with smiles in the morning, and sat together in pleasant converse when the work of the day was done, where prayer and praise was offered by united and loving hearts, and the Sabbath rest was welcomed as a blessed interval in their weekly toils and cares.

Moris wished himself back, but he could not go; he had agreed for a year's service, and excepting the society around him, had no cause for dissatisfaction. No stranger among them by this time, his good sense and intelligence, so superior to their own, gained for him a sort of deference from the Boerish following; while the Van Grabeins, old and young, showed him more than civility on account of his usefulness

and honesty. Besides, he had come to the strange outlying land in order to better his fortunes. His wages would be paid in sheep and cattle at the end of the year, and thereby he hoped to realise the design mentioned to his stepmother, in stocking a little farm, where the family might live and work together.

The custom of paying upper servants in stock, current among the inland farmers, whose most available property generally consisted of flocks and herds, was a convenient and profitable way for both parties, as the cheapness of land frequently induced prudent men from the cultivated districts of the south to take service in the wild interior, with expectations similar to those of Moris Niekirk. His employer was as rich in sheep and cattle as any man in the colony, and they had ample grazing-ground in the neighbourhood of his own farm.

From the side of the river on which it was situated, to the foot of the distant mountains, wild pasture lands interspersed

with sandy tracts—a peculiar feature of the country—stretched away in every direction. There herds and flocks that might be reckoned by thousands found scope and sustenance, but human inhabitants there were none, except the aborigines of the land—the poor, harmless, slow-minded Hottentots.

The Dutch, when they governed the country, had enslaved the luckless race, and oppressed them almost out of existence; but under English rule they got some measure of justice, and were allowed to live in peace in their native wilds, the most considerable of which was that pastoral wilderness beyond the Orange River, where two or three villages and several scattered huts were yet to be found. The district was best fitted to their mode of life, which was the same that their fathers had practised before a Dutchman set foot on the land, primitive, regular, and with scarcely an art or occupation except the rearing of cattle and sheep.

Traditional memories of the old oppressing times made the simple people keep close within their own borders; they had hereditary reasons to dislike and fear the Dutch settlers, and therefore kept aloof from them, but they had no objection to act as their herdsmen and shepherds for strictly specified payment, receiving the sheep and cattle of surrounding farmers into their care and country at the beginning of every grazing season, and restoring them to their owners at its end. They were known to be generally faithful and honest in the discharge of their trust; the Dutch farmers got a true account of every hoof committed to their care. But some had a special repute for integrity and skill in the shepherd business above the rest of the tribe, and one of these was a man called by the Dutch Swartzberg, who had pastured Van Grabein's sheep and kine for many a year.

Of all the Hottentot homes his hut was the nearest to Clipendrift, though more

than ten miles distant. It stood in the midst of an undulating plain so well watered by springs and brooks that the grass seldom withered there even at midsummer, and Swartzberg claimed it as his own hereditary estate, because his grandfather had first built on the ground. The family mansion might have been taken for a gigantic beehive, thatched against the winter; but there Swartzberg's old father and mother, himself, his wife, and five children, found shelter at night, and all of them played or lounged in its vicinity by day, except the careful shepherd, who was often to be seen miles away, seated on some low knoll, or moss-grown boulder-stone, watching the sheep and kine for hours together, and unlike most of his people, who generally sit with idle hands, plaiting a basket of rough osiers, or repairing some of his shepherd's gear.

Moris had seen him thus engaged, when carrying a message to one of Van Grabein's friends who lived on the other side of the

Hottentot country, and being doubtful of his way, was fain to apply to Swartzberg for direction. The shepherd was one of the most intelligent men of his tribe, their man of business in all transactions with the Dutch farmers, being able to speak the tongue of their ex-masters, from having spent his youth in the service of a missionary at that time labouring on the Orange River. He directed Moris clearly and kindly; and as subsequent errands brought the young man to his neighbourhood, and Moris had once an opportunity of returning his civility by intelligence of a stray lamb, the pair so different in origin and appearance became very good friends.

Young Niekirk found the Hottentot the most civil and best disposed individual of whom he had the slightest acquaintance in that quarter, and further converse with him made the reasons clear. Swartzberg had learned from the missionary whom he had served in early life the fundamental truths of Christianity, and as far as his

knowledge went he continued to practise its studies, avoiding the savage superstitions and vices of his people, leading an honest and temperate life, and maintaining in his family a simple form of Divine service, which consisted of an extempore prayer and the repetition of a few texts from the Dutch Bible, translated by himself into the Hottentot language after he learned them by heart, for Swartzberg could not read. "My good master was teaching me," he said; "but before I could spell, the Dutch farmers drove him away; they hated him all round because he reproved them for drinking so much, and spoke against the traders who came through the country with their pack-horses, selling corn brandy to them and to us. So they set on bad men to kill his sheep and destroy his crops by night; some of them would have killed him if he had not left the neighbourhood, but the Lord, whose servant he was, directed him to another settlement where better men lived far up the river; they

call it Routersland; there he is still preaching and teaching, and there I go to see him once every summer before the heat sets in."

Sincerely religious himself, and thrown among a society so differently minded as the inhabitants of Clipendrift, Moris took a deep interest in the humble, pious son of a savage race, who cherished the same blessed hope,

and walked by the same faith in those pastures of the desert. Whenever time and opportunity served, the young man made it a point to sit down beside Swartzberg on the grassy knoll or mossy rock, and talk with him awhile, always endeavouring, as far as he could, to enlarge the limited scope of his knowledge on religious subjects.

He spoke with him of the dear Jesus, who is the Saviour of all who love Him, and trust in Him. He is an almighty and faithful Friend as well as Saviour, and never leaves nor forsakes those who choose Him for their companion.

"Having loved His own that are in the world He loves them unto the end." He loves them to the end of their lives, however long these may be, and then takes them to dwell with Him for ever in those heavenly mansions that He has gone to prepare for them.

Often on Sundays when he had a few hours to himself, and Van Grabein was in good humour enough to lend him one of the

rough horses of which there was no lack about the farm, he would take his Dutch Bible and ride away to Swartzberg's hut, for the purpose of reading an hour or two to the unlettered shepherd. The Hottentots, though not deficient in understanding, are slow of comprehension. Swartzberg had to think for some minutes over anything that was told or read to him; but the man was earnest to learn; he would wait for hours about the spot where Moris might be expected. His brown face, the colour of a faded leaf, like those of all his people, would light up with smiles of joy when he caught a glimpse of the young man, and, if it were at all safe to do so, he would leave the sheep and cattle, and run to welcome his friend.

So time passed with Moris Niekirk in the land beyond the Orange River, till the fervid summer of South Africa reached its height.

The Sunday visits to Swartzberg had to be made late in the evening now, for neither

man nor beast could travel in the burning day; and he read his Bible by the light of a blazing torch, as lamp or candle there was none among the Hottentots. Moreover, the visits had to be shorter and less frequent; Van Grabein had little inclina- to grant him time or lend him a horse for the journey, because Moris had lost his good graces through an untoward circumstance, and not by any fault of his own.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPRING-BOK.

THE wealthy farmer had a cousin living on the other side of the valley, with whom he kept a closer intimacy than with any other of his relations, perhaps because the man most resembled himself in character and habits. In evenings spent at each other's houses they used to indulge in long drinking bouts, generally terminating with a furious quarrel, which was forgotten or made up in the morning. In short, the two men could not have been more alike in their way, except that while Matz, the owner of Clipendrift, spent his time in a sort of indolent oversight of his farm, his cousin Hans, the master of Kilderdyke, and also a Van Grabein, gave a considerable share of his to the more active pursuit of hunting. In the course

of that occupation he had taken alive a young and very handsome spring-bok, a species of deer yet to be seen in herds of hundreds strong among the wilds of the Cape Colony, which he made a present to his cousin Matz.

The latter was proud of the gift on account of its rarity. The spring-bok is a wild and shy creature, and though often killed, is seldom caught by the hunters. Matz thought that if properly tamed it might be an ornament to his fields and farmyard, for most men chose some sort of a pet for a time, and his was the spring-bok; his best milch cow was not so well-cared for, and Moris, being the most trusty and intelligent of his men, was appointed to the special charge of it.

Naturally humane, and impressed with a Christian's obligation to remember that the lower animals were the work of the same Almighty hand that had formed himself, and to act as became his Lord's deputy set over them for the time, the

young man would have dealt justly and kindly with the least regarded dog about the house or farm ; but in the case of his master's new favourite thus particularly committed to his care, there were additional reasons for kindness and consideration.

The poor spring-bok was gradually won over by his patient gentle ways ; it learned to know and welcome him when he came with food or water, would allow him to lead it out to the grassy meadow, where, fastened to a tree by a long rope, which allowed the creature space to move about, it could feed at ease undisturbed by any of the farm cattle.

There were other disturbers not so conveniently kept at a distance. The young Van Grabeins found a new opportunity for mischief as regarded their father's pet, and took to playing teasing tricks on the poor animal, when out of danger from his anger, or Moris's observation. The trusty man had often warned and reproved

them, but all to no purpose ; and one day when he was at work in a distant part of the farm, and the spring-bok grazing in the meadow, they so annoyed the shy,

timid creature, that with a desperate bound it broke the detaining rope, and fled with the speed of the wind to join its wild kindred in the wilderness.

Matz van Grabein was furious at the

loss of his cousin's present, and Moris having seen the tracks of their feet about the spot, frankly told him what hand he believed his sons to have had in the affair. Hans and Peter denied all knowledge of it with their usual effrontery, at the same time suggesting that it was entirely owing to his own negligence in not properly fastening the rope. The farmer and his vrouw had one of their most considerable quarrels on the subject, the lady powerfully taking the part of her amiable sons; but at length they agreed to cast the whole blame of the loss on Moris. As the present-maker, their cousin from Kilderdyke, arrived at the same time with two sagacious dogs and some of his men most experienced in hunting, it was resolved to commence an immediate search of the adjacent wild country, in which young Niekirk was expected or rather commanded to assist with all his might.

The party set forth and searched for hours in the wooded country up the river,

where they had reason to suspect the fugitive might have taken covert, but no trace of it could they find; and as the day was declining, the Van Grabeins turned their steps to Clipendrift, cousin Hans agreeing to remain there for the night, and renew the search early next morning.

Scarcely was that arrangement concluded when they met a Boer of their acquaintance coming from the Hottentot lands, and in answer to their inquiries regarding the lost spring-bok, he informed them that the shepherd Swartzberg had some days before rescued a beautiful creature of the kind from a pack of jackals, bent on devouring it, and meant to tame and keep it among his flock. Owing to the circumstances already mentioned Moris had not been able to visit the shepherd for some time, and on hearing the tale he believed, with the rest of the party, that their search was at an end, and hastened to Swartzberg's grazing ground.

The trusty Hottentot confirmed the in-

telligence they had received, but after some inquiries concerning the date of Van Grabein's loss, remarked that it could not be the same spring-bok that he had rescued from the jackals three days before; and at the first sight of the animal, which he immediately brought out of his hut to show them, Moris knew that it was not his runaway charge. It was equally young and handsome, however, and the Van Grabeins at once claimed it as their own. In vain did Swartzberg protest that it had been in his possession three days before their spring-bok was lost. Both the cousins refused to believe him, asserting with many oaths that the animal was theirs; they knew it by certain marks, and they would not be cheated by any Hottentot knave.

"Well," said the patient honest man, when they had abused and sworn for some minutes, "there is Moris Niekirk. You say he had charge of the creature, and I know he will tell the truth. Let him say whether this spring-bok is yours or not,

and I will give it or keep it, according to his saying."

"It is ours, Moris, is it not?" said Matz van Grabein, with an admonishing glance at his hired man. But Moris never hesitated when the truth was required of him.

"It's not yours, master," he said. "It has not the same spots on its neck," and he would have proceeded to point out other marks of unlikeness, but the wicked fury which flashed from the eyes of both cousins made his blood run cold, as with a volley of ill names and imprecations they galloped away in the direction of Clipendrift, followed by all the company except himself.

Moris had dismounted from the horse he rode to tighten the girths, which had got out of order before the controversy began, and the nervous creature, startled by the high-pitched voices of Matz and his cousin, and perhaps desirous of getting home, flew after the party, leaving its unlucky rider to follow as best he could. The young man

was doing so at top speed, when he heard a running step behind him, and a voice shouting his name. He turned, and there was Swartzberg in a state of excitement one would not have expected to see among his tribe.

"Stay, Moris, stay!" cried the shepherd; "for your life do not go home with them; they are evil men, and you have spoken against their minds. There was a man from the south here once who did something of the same kind; he went with them to hunt one day, and was never seen again; they said he had stolen away to his own country, but nobody believed it. Do not go back to Clipendrift, but make your way to Hope Town as quickly as you can."

Moris stood stock still with terror and astonishment; he knew that every word Swartzberg had spoken was true, and his recollections of the Van Grabein faces made it plain that to take the shepherd's advice was the only safe course for him. The

searching party were far out of sight and hearing by this time; the soft clear night of the South African summer was falling fast, and promised pleasant hours for a journey if he set forth at once.

Moris might be many a mile from Clipendrift before he was missed and inquired for there; but in that case he must leave behind him his hard-earned wages, his small stock of clothes and personal requisites; he must go without preparation or provisions, and even without a knowledge of the way. Hope Town was full fifty miles distant from the spot where he stood. How was the intervening wild country to be crossed? He had traversed it but once, that was months ago, and retained little recollection of the rough sheep-tracks through the woods and plains, and the deep ravines among the hills.

Besides, his long day's search for the runaway spring-bok had left Moris more fit for rest than to begin a journey; but go he would, in spite of every difficulty.

After a silent prayer for help and direction, Moris turned to the shepherd, who stood with folded arms, leaning against a rock hard by, and inquired if he could assist him in finding his way to Hope Town.

"I would go with you myself, and get some of my friends to keep the sheep and cattle if I knew it; but I have never been farther south than Hackershold," said Swartzberg. "That is a good farm, about seven miles off, it may be, on the other side of the river, and a good man lives there, Daniel Liderdick. His mother belonged to our tribe, and if you give him this from me" —the shepherd took a curiously notched stick out of the leather pouch at his side, and handed it to Moris—"he will give you good entertainment in his house, and direct you on your way as far as he can."

"Many thanks, my friend; and a good friend you have been to me this night. But how am I to find the way to Hackershold?" said Moris.

"When you cross the ford above Clipendrift, you must turn to the right and take a sheep-track, which leads across the open plain to lands overgrown by brush and underwood — the remains of an ancient forest they say. But there is a sort of cleared path, which you will know by a great tree that has been struck by lightning, at the opening of it. Keep straight along that path, and it will bring you again to open country, where you will see the house and farm of Hackershold," said Swartzberg. "With our Lord's help you will escape the evil designs of those wicked men by setting out in this first hour of night. I am sorry you must go, for who will read the blessed Book to poor Swartzberg now? But I will pray that He who keeps shepherd and sheep may keep you on your journey.

"How shall I send you word, Swartzberg? There are no posts passing through this country; and if I send a letter, who would read it to you?" said Moris.

"There are more ways of sending word

than by letters, though that is the only one the white man knows," and the shepherd slily smiled. When you get home to Hope Town, inquire for one they call Brown Joseph; he is a man of our tribe, and serves Minheer Van Beck, the great merchant there, who deals in jewels and other precious things. Tell Joseph your message to me, and I will hear it before two Sabbath days have come and gone: for traders and shepherds know each other, and carry tidings like the birds of the air."

"Be sure that I will find Brown Joseph, and send you word as soon as I arrive in Hope Town. Now bid me farewell, and let me go," said Moris.

"Stay yet a moment," and the shepherd stepped into his hut, which was near enough for the heavy breathing of its early-resting inhabitants to be heard. He returned in a few minutes with a provision of beef, so dry and hard that it might be taken for carpenter's chips, and cheese as firm as any sea-biscuit.

"You may want them before you reach home," he said; "and if you do not, leave them to the ostriches on the nearest plain, for white men despise the Hottentot's fare."

Moris accepted his present with the sincere gratitude which the thoughtful act deserved, and then, under the brilliant stars of a southern night, the two knelt down and commended each other to the care of Him who is the preserver of men, and parted with many a blessing and many a kindly farewell.

CHAPTER IV.

FINDING THE DIAMONDS.

TRAVELLING on foot, and labouring under the fatigues of the day, Moris made but slow progress on his journey southward. There were miles of the Hottentot country to be traversed between Swartzberg's hut and the Orange River, and thus it was near midnight when he crossed the ford above Clipendrift.

There was safety in the time of silence and stars; the farm and farm-house lay still and dark, without sign or sound of life about them; and after resting a little time on a convenient bank, Moris found the sheep-track mentioned by the shepherd, and pushed on across the open plain. The African summer morning dawns much later than our own; there were yet some hours till its breaking, when he reached the wild

overgrown lands, through which lay the last of his way to Hackershold.

Wild lands they were as could be found in the Cape Colony, abruptly broken into height and hollow, and covered with a succession of thorny and tangled thickets.

With some difficulty Moris found the path marked by the lightning-struck tree; it was a narrow and a rugged one, in some places so overshadowed by tall shrubs, that the light of the stars was lost to him, and he had literally to grope his way. It seemed to wind too, though Swartzberg had not mentioned the fact, and was therefore likely to be long; weariness was growing fast upon him, and Moris would fain have sat down to rest on the trunks of the fallen trees, which lay here and there by the wayside, but there were terrors that made him press on.

It was the time when lions roar for their prey, and beasts of the forest creep abroad, to use the words of the Psalmist; more than once his ear caught a crashing sound,

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as of some large creature making its way through the underwood, and at another time the night wind brought what he knew to be the cry of the jackal. With a fervent though brief prayer for preservation from the prowlers of the wilderness, the young man held on his toilsome course, and it seemed like an answer from above when through the canopy of leaves overhead, he saw the first grey light of the morning mantling over earth and sky.

Hope and courage return to man's heart with the day, and so it was with Moris. The strength of his vigorous youth was almost spent, but as the light increased, he could see that his way out of the wood was clear; and as the crimson flush that precedes the sunrise was kindling in the eastern sky, he emerged from shade and thicket on the open country once more.

The open country indeed, but where was the farm and homestead of Hackershold?

Moris saw before him a wide extent of open land, that stretched away until it

seemed to meet the horizon; and close on his right hand a river, half dried by the summer heat, murmured on between sedgy banks studded with trees, but no trace of human life or habitation appeared on moor or river.

The young man's heart sank within him at the sight; it was now plain that he had lost his way, and travelled all night through those rugged wilds only to reach a desolate waste where neither shelter nor sustenance could be found. Overcome with exhaustion and disappointment, his brave spirit failed at length, and having just strength enough to crawl to a shady spot beside the river, Moris sat down in a stupor of despair. It did not last long; all nature was waking up around him to that new life that comes with every sunrise. As the glorious traveller climbed the eastern steep, the voices of wild creatures resounded along the moor. Moris could hear far off the strange call of the quagga, from which its name is taken, and a sound of tremulous

lowing told him that a herd of spring-boks was passing in the distance.

Flocks of waterfowl rose from their nests among the sedges, and flew screaming and

whistling to the lands beyond; parrots began to chatter in the trees, a troop of red flamingoes stalked across the plain, the white pelican flapped its great wings above the river and prepared to begin fishing.

All the untamed dwellers of that African land were astir and in search of their daily food: would not the Lord of all things, who provided for their wants in the wilderness, provide for his also? The desolate and solitary places were known to that all-seeing Eye as well as the most populous; no region was out of the reach of Providence; why, then, should he give himself up for lost?

Then, for the first time in his life, Moris thought what a blessing it was to be at peace with God, and he knelt down and thanked Him for having saved him from the power of sin, and called him while he was still young.

It is in moments of danger and grief that we realise most the joy of believing; how sad, then, is it for those who delay making their peace with God. Reader, have you found salvation? Do not delay seeking for it. The mercy of God has spared you till now; who can tell how much longer you may be permitted to live?

By what you continually see around you, and what you feel in yourself, you must be convinced of the shortness and uncertainty of your days on earth. Is not the salvation of your soul of more importance to you than anything else can be? Why then delay? Death may came in a way and at a time you least expect. Time to obtain peace with God may fail you then. Will you not, therefore, this very hour seek with fervent prayer that your heart may be renewed by the Holy Spirit, that your sins may be blotted out through faith in Jesus Christ, and that being reconciled to God, you may live in his fear all your remaining days. And then when danger or death shall come, your peace with God will be sure, and full of comfort to your soul.

But we must return to Moris. The thought of the universal goodness of God gave him new strength and courage. He looked up with the simple prayer, "Lord, help me, for I have no help but Thyself;" and then he tried to think of

some expedient to procure food in a place where game was so abundant, for it was clear to him that he could not live much longer without it. What could he do in his present worn-out state? But all at once Swartzberg's parting present occurred to the young man's memory.

The shepherd's thoughtful warning, "You may want it," was soon verified; the dry beef and hard cheese, which at other times Moris would have thought fit only for the dinner of an ostrich, which is popularly believed to devour stones, were eaten with as much eagerness as the best meal ever set before him at the end of a harvest day, and were washed down with the half-stagnant water of the river, in a cup furnished by one of the broad-leafed flags that grew hard by.

The most pressing want of nature thus satisfied, coarse though the fare was, the young man felt sufficiently refreshed to take observations of his surroundings. The

place was strange to him in every direction except the river, which had a familiar look ; and on further consideration he concluded it was the same that flowed past Clipendrift, but his belief was that he must be now at a considerable distance from the farm. That comfortable conviction sent Moris to the sleep he much needed.

The young man had found, as it were by accident, a shelter from the summer sun formed by the branches of a branching tree, which bent over and entirely concealed a little creek of the river, now diminished to a shallow pool, in which Moris cooled his sore and weary feet, while he sat on the moss-grown root of the tree, that rose like a low chair just above it, and leaned against the massive trunk. How long the young man slept there he could never say, but his slumbers were broken by a sound of loud and angry voices, which made him imagine himself again in Clipendrift. Peeping through the overshadowing boughs as cautiously as confusion of mind would

allow him, he saw on the opposite bank of the river Van Grabein's two sons, Hans and Peter, engaged in a furious quarrel. His distance from the farm was not then so great as he had imagined. By losing his way in the tangled wood, he had wandered back to a point but little removed from the ford, though unfamiliar to him. Terror took possession of Moris on his first discovery of the fact, and yet he was safe without knowing it. The bending branches effectually concealed him from any passing eye, and had he been less perfectly hidden, the young Van Grabeins were too much engrossed by their fierce dispute to take the slightest notice.

For a good way along the sedgy bank they kicked, cuffed, and shouted abuse to each other; Hans endeavouring to force out of Peter's clenched fist something which Peter was equally determined to retain. But the eldest brother was the strongest, and might have won the prize, for which he had seized Peter's one arm

and almost caught the other, when the younger boy put him to a final defeat by flinging the contents of his fist so far into the river that they splashed in the creek at Moris Niekirk's feet, and then wrenching his arm away from Hans he fled, as if for life, pursued by his raging brother.

Moris looked down where the contested substance had fallen. There were three small stones, gleaming like so many sparks of fire at the bottom of the creek; he had heard of beautiful pebbles for which good prices were given at Hope Town, being found in the Orange River, but these were brighter than he ever imagined any stones could be, and carefully picking them up, he bound them securely in the corner of his handkerchief, saying to himself, "Some of the rich people in the south will give me a trifle for them may be; it will be a little help when I have to come home so poor, with all my goods and wages left at Clipendrift."

Then finding that his strength was in

some degree restored, Moris took a general survey of the land around him, and seeing that he was utterly alone as far as his eye could reach, hastily rose and quitted his hiding-place, for the vicinity of the Van Grabeins would let him rest no longer there. Where to turn in search of rest and shelter, the luckless traveller knew not, but resolving at any rate to get as far as possible from the dreaded farmhouse, he committed himself to the guidance of Providence, and took his way along the river's bank in an opposite direction to that in which he now knew it to stand.

The grassy soil was grateful to his weary feet, the branching trees gave him shade from the summer sun which was still high and hot, and he walked on from one spot where he could conveniently rest to another, in hopes that his slow progress might at length lead him to one of the many farms which he knew to be scattered along the Orange River.

He had not proceeded more than a mile

or two in this manner, when Moris saw to his dismay that the tall trees abruptly terminated a short distance before him, the fierce sun shone full upon the shadeless bank, exhaustion was coming upon him again, and he could see but one place of refuge from the heat. It was a great bluff rising for miles along the river's bank, so high as to shut out the land beyond it from his view, and looking as if one of the dykes of Holland had been transported with her children to the African colony. It must have served a similar purpose in protecting the adjacent land from inundation when the river was swollen by winter rains, and the dry scorched path, by which Moris painfully travelled, formed part of its bed. The natural rampart seemed of considerable breadth ; tall but ragged shrubs grew on its top, and bent over the sloping side next the river, overshadowing a deep cleft which the winter floods had worn in it, and there Moris, worn out but thankful, sat down. He was a good way from Clipendrift now,

and could rest in safety till the cool of the night came on. Some of the Hottentot's present yet remained ; it was not fare that a man might be tempted to over-indulge in, but as Moris took out the store, wondering what he should do when it was consumed, the lowing of buffaloes mingled with a sound of bells came from the landward side of the bluff.

It was not wild cattle whose lowing had such an accompaniment ; there must be a farm or some shepherds dwelling there. Hope gave him new strength, and making one great effort with the help of the bending shrubs, Moris climbed to the top, crept across it and looked below. A burst of thankfulness poured from his lips as he did so. There in a deep and sheltered dell was a small encampment, consisting of three tents, a number of buffaloes, oxen, and horses, resting after a journey, a pile of well-covered packs and bales, several men at work lighting fires and in other ways preparing for a goodly meal, as might be

guessed from the joints of mutton and ribs of beef displayed. Overseeing the whole, with his pipe in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, Moris recognised the honest weather-beaten face of David Jacobs, an old friend of his family.

CHAPTER V.

THE DIAMONDS SOLD.

However much any other man would have been surprised out of his composure at the figure that appeared at the top of the bluff, David merely looked up and said, "Ay, lad, what art thou about; or how didst thou get up there?"

"I have lost my way in the wild country, and am dying of hunger and fatigue; for charity's sake send me some help," said Moris.

"Thou shalt have it, lad;" and in a few minutes David and two of his men had climbed the bluff by a path of easy ascent which led up from their side of it; and by their assistance, the worn-out young man was soon safe in the camp below, seated in David's tent, with a good meal before him and a hearty welcome.

"Say no more, lad," said the friend of the Niekirk family, who that day proved himself such a friend in need; "thou hast thanked the Lord as became a Christian for thy preservation from the perils of the wilderness whereby many a wandering man has perished. Now say no more till thou hast eaten and drunk and slept. We will not move from this place till midnight; that will give thee time to rest and recover strength, and as we journey on in the cool watches of the night thou wilt tell me thy tale, and how it came to pass that I found thee here."

It was the best advice that could be given under the circumstances, and Moris was fain to follow it. With a thankful heart he lay down on the heap of dry grass that was to have been David's own bed, and dropped asleep, sheltered from the sultry afternoon by David's tent, while all the camp without and all the dell around resounded with dinner doings by man and beast.

The important business was finished before the sun began to decline; the weary and well-supplied company, after seeing that all was right with the goods and the animals, found sleeping-places each according to his choice in tent or in shaded corner; and David, having seen that his guest wanted for nothing but time to sleep, wrapped himself in his travelling cloak and lay down on the dry ground between his tent and one of the burned-down fires, with two great dogs, the sentinels of the camp, lying quietly at his feet.

David Jacobs was a man of mark among those travelling traders who carry on nearly all the inland business of the Cape Colony. With his own company of hardy men for defence and assistance, and his own train of beasts of burden laden with all the wares in demand among the primitive population, besides tents and every requisite for travelling in lands where neither inns nor pot-houses were to be found, he journeyed every year from Cape

Town to the uttermost bound of European settlements, and even into the savage regions beyond, a welcome man to isolated village, lonely farmhouse, and shepherd hamlet far among the wilds. He was said to be of Jewish origin, as indeed his name implied; but David maintained in his life and conversation, not only the profession, but the practice of Christianity.

In noble contrast to most of the inland traders, nothing would induce him to make profit by dealings which his conscience disapproved; the Dutch Boer, the Hottentot, and the Kaffir knew that his word and his wares were alike to be depended on. He supplied them with English hardware, cotton cloth, and blankets; but ardent spirits, gunpowder, or fire-arms, were not to be bought from David at any price. His upright conscientious course had been crowned with success rarely attained by the most unscrupulous of his trading brethren.

David had begun commercial life with

a mere trifle by way of capital, in Hope Town, where he was born of poor parents; and now when his hair was getting silvered, David was reckoned among its wealthiest and most notable inhabitants. His settings forth and returnings home were annual events in which the whole town had an interest. The former took place in early spring, the latter about the end of summer; like everything else in the colony, it might be a month sooner or later. His return journey was earlier than usual this time; the dell below the bluff was a favourite camping-place of his, so he had pushed on to reach it in the afternoon, and thus came to the help of poor Moris.

David would have rejoiced in coming to the succour of any over-spent and straying traveller; he had that happiness at sundry times before, for cases of the kind were not uncommon in the wild lands through which his journeys lay. But the Niekirk family were the friends of his humbler days, from whom David's rising fortunes

never estranged him. Moris was his particular favourite from early childhood; and the good man's last words before falling asleep beside the burned-down fire, were words of thanksgiving to the gracious Providence that brought them both by such different ways to that timely meeting on the banks of the Orange River.

The sultry afternoon, the rosy evening, and more than half the starry night were slept away, and then Moris awoke from dreamless slumber to find David's heavy hand on his shoulder, and David's deep voice in his ear, saying, "Wake up, lad, it is an hour beyond our usual starting time. The night is fresh and fair; art thou strong enough to rise and go with us on our way to Hope Town?"

"I am," said Moris, springing up. The energies of youth are soon restored, and so it was with him. The camp was all astir with preparations to resume the journey; and after a meagre and hasty breakfast made by the light of the rekindled fires,

the laden train of horses, oxen, and buffaloes, and their escort of mounted men, set forward, with David Jacobs at their head, and Moris Niekirk riding by his side.

The country they traversed was too wild and broken to admit of rapid progress: it was slow and steady work; and thus David had time to inquire after, and Moris to relate all that befell him since the two parted at the door of his mother's cottage, on the outskirts of Hope Town. He told the cause of his going to Clipendrift with Matz van Grabein, the circumstances that led to his quitting the service so hastily, the Hottentot shepherd's warning, his own losing the way homeward and return to the dangerous neighbourhood which he had been most anxious to avoid; his concealment under the bending tree beside the river; the quarrel he saw between Van Grabein's boys on the opposite bank, and the shining stones he found at the bottom of the little creek when they were gone.

"I know these Van Grabeins well," said David; "they are ill-guided and ill-conditioned, old and young. Had I heard of the business thou shouldst never have gone among them; it was dangerous quarters for an honest and friendless lad, but the Lord Himself had thee in His keeping. I know Swartzberg too; he is a true follower of our heavenly Master, though brought up in heathen darkness, and he directed thee aright to reach Hope Town from the Hottentot country. It was strange that thou shouldst have lost the way, and wandered back to see those young sinners quarrelling about the pebbles, which one of them threw away rather than let his brother get. I know that was the case, for they were always grubbing for the like in the river sands. I am told there are some pretty stones to be found there; are those thou hast got of any value, my boy?"

"Here they are," said Moris, taking the three from the corner of his handkerchief,

and placing them in David's hand, where they shone like fire-flies in the night.

The skilful trader looked at them for about five minutes and then said, "Moris,

the best day's work thou hast ever done, or art like to do, was that losing of thy way and sitting down beside the Orange River. No doubt the hand of Providence was in it, to bring thee good out of in-

tended evil. I wonder what the old ruffian Matz would say, not to speak of his vrouw, if they knew what their ill-taught son had cast away that early morning; for, Moris, my lad, these stones are diamonds of value sufficient to make thee rich for life."

"Are you in earnest, Minheer?" said Moris, scarcely believing his ears.

"I am," said David; "untruth on such a subject would be but a sorry jest. Diamonds they are, or I have lost my skill, and it would not surprise me if more were found in the sands of that same river. I have heard my grandfather say that in old times, when our Dutch people first settled at the Cape, the country lying between the Vaal and Orange Rivers was called the Diamond Land, and rare gems were found there; but the fact had passed out of living memory before his day, for the knowledge of certain things dies out among men as the generations come and go. At any rate Providence has sent the precious stones to thee, lad; keep them carefully

till we reach Hope Town, and the merchant Van Beck, whom Swartzberg's friend Brown Joseph serves, will give thee an honest price for them."

Quietly and cautiously Moris tied up the three diamonds again in the corner of his old handkerchief; none of the company guessed what he had hidden there, for the secret was kept between Jacobs and himself. By noon they reached another station, where the camp was again pitched, and Moris slept off in long hours of rest the last ill-effects of his wanderings in the wilderness. So they journeyed on from one camping-place to another, travelling in the cool hours and resting in the sultry time, till one glorious morning when the early sun was gilding its spires and chimneys, they came in sight of Hope Town.

The Niekirk family were gathered round their breakfast-table, as they had been on the morning when Moris got his step-mother's leave to go with Minheer van

Grabein; the widow had just said grace, without which no meal was eaten in her cottage, when the latch of the outer door was lifted, and Moris himself walked in, saying, "Dear mother, here I am come back to you."

"The Lord be praised for His goodness that hath brought thee back to us once more," said the widow, as she kissed him with tears in her eyes.

The brothers and sisters gave him the same hearty welcome; with loving hands they brought a chair and sat him down at the table, saying he would surely stay with them now and never more go away.

"I hope thou art come to stay, Moris, for we have missed thee much, and by all appearance thou hast not fared well," said the widow, taking a sad survey of her step-son's tattered clothes, and look of being acquainted with hardships.

"Better than I once expected, mother;" and as they discussed the frugal breakfast together, Moris related to the eagerly

listening household his mishaps, adventures, and final good fortune. The delight of the young people when the corner of his handkerchief was untied and the treasure it contained shown to them, may be imagined. They danced round Moris, and inquired if he would be able to buy two cows with the price of those shining stones, for then they should grow rich by making butter and cheese, and all get new shoes like gentlefolks.

"I have never seen diamonds before, nor should I know them," said their mother, as she gazed on the brilliant things; "but David Jacobs is a God-fearing man; he would not tell thee falsely, or speak beyond his knowledge. Go to the merchant Van Beck, as soon as you can, and learn what is their value; he will deal justly with thee; and if our Lord has indeed sent thee riches, may He give thee grace to make a good use of them."

Moris went to Minheer Van Beck the same forenoon, and heard to his great joy,

that the three stones he had picked up from the sands of the shallow creek were diamonds of the first water.

Van Beck's firm was the only one in Hope Town that dealt in such valuable goods; and after some prudent negotiations, conducted by David Jacobs on his behalf, Moris sold his diamonds to the really honourable merchant for a sum which, while admitting of profitable returns to all parties, proved a fortune to him and his family. It enabled them to exchange the poor cottage for a good farmhouse, with fair fields and thriving stock about it; but there the Niekirks led the same pious, united, and industrious life that had made their humble home so peaceful and so happy.

Their neighbours who remained on the level from which they had risen had no reflections to cast on the pride of got-up people, as regarded them; and though now reckoned rich in the rustic land, they were never tempted by the flush of worldly

prosperity to let slip their hold on the true riches.

Before Moris had taken the first of these upward steps, he committed to the care of Brown Joseph a friendly message for Swartzberg, and such small tokens of gratitude and friendship as he knew would be most esteemed by the Hottentot shepherd.

Brown Joseph assured him that they had been safely transmitted; but further intelligence from his friend in the wild pastures he heard none, till one evening when the household were sitting at supper in the well-furnished family room of their farmhouse, a low knock came to the outer door, and as he rose and opened it the light from within flashed on the brown face of Swartzberg.

"The Lord is good to let me see you once more," he said, grasping the young man's hand. "I have come here to sell a diamond which I saw shining in the sands below, when crossing the ford near

Clipendrift. It is of no use in our country, but the price of it will enable me to give up shepherding there, and take my family away to where we shall live among good men, and beside my dear master the missionary; but, friend, I could not go without one sight of your face."

Moris brought him in, and the shepherd got a kindly welcome from all his family. He stayed with them for some time, sold his diamond also to the merchant, Van Beck, renewed his old friendship with Brown Joseph, and then took his homeward way, carrying with him a Dutch Bible, which he said the missionary would teach him and his children to read.

The gem which Swartzberg had found, coming so closely on those Moris had brought from the same region, stirred up Hope Town and its neighbourhood to a fervour of diamond-seeking, and some additional finds in the succeeding year stirred up the whole colony. Diggers and searchers from every town and village flocked to the

banks of the Orange River; families, with much of their household goods, went there to live in huts and waggons; companies of young men with tents and baggage, rich speculators with money to purchase claims

and every requisite to make the most of them, crowded to it.

We will add only that the solitary farm of Clipendrift was one of the chief centres of the movement, being carved into claims

which generally proved profitable, and Matz van Grabein might have realised something handsome by his land but for the everlasting disputes which he and his family carried on with the searchers, chiefly it was said, by vain endeavours to mulct and overreach them. The unruly spirits who always abound among claims and diggings, ultimately drove the Van Grabeins out of the district; they were obliged to settle southward of the Orange River in comparative poverty; but the name of Moris Niekirk is still popular as that of the man who found the first of the African diamonds.

LONDON: KNIGHT, PRINTER, MIDDLE STREET, E.C.