

**AN I. D. B. IN  
SOUTH AFRICA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649095780

An I. D. B. in South Africa by Louise Vescelius-Sheldon

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**LOUISE VESCELIUS-SHELDON**

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CHAPTER I.

*The Marked Diamond.*

“Who is that beautiful woman in the box opposite us, Herr Schwatka?”

“Which one, Major? There are two, if my eyes may be trusted.”

“She with the dark hair?”

“That is Mrs. Laure, and the gentleman is her husband, Donald Laure.”

“What a beautiful creature, is she not?”

“Yes, beautiful indeed, as many of the Cape women are. But the union of European with African produces, in their descendants, beings endowed with strange and inconsistent natures. These two bloods mingle but will not blend; more prominently are these idiosyncrasies developed where the Zulu parentage can be traced, and naturally so, for the Zulus are the most intelligent of all the African tribes. Now they are all

love, tenderness, and devotion, ready to make any sacrifice for those on whom their affections are placed ; again revengeful, jealous, vindictive."

"But surely that woman has no African blood in her veins," said the major.

"Yes," replied Schwatka, quietly ; "but the fact is not generally known."

"What eyes ! I should like to know such a woman. To analyze character moulded in such a form would be a delightful study. And the lady with her, who may she be ?" continued the major.

"Miss Kate Darcy, an American lady now visiting her brother, a director in the Standard Diamond Mining Company. These Americans turn up everywhere," and Schwatka lifted his shoulders with an expressive shrug.

"Then the gentleman with her is the brother, eh ?" persistently continued the major.

"No, that is Count Telfus, a large dealer in diamonds, said to have made much money. There goes the curtain."

The preceding conversation between Major Kildare and Herr Schwatka took place



in a box of the  
Theatre Royal  
on the Kimberley Dia-  
mond Fields. As Schwatka  
looked at Donald Laure, the latter glanced

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across the house ; their eyes met and a sign of recognition passed between them. Presently Mrs. Laure turned, disclosing an exquisitely beautiful face, but one apparently unconscious of the effect of its beauty. Her height was slightly below the average, and her form faultless. Her short, black, wavy hair adorned a small but beautifully-shaped head, crowning a swan-like neck, encircled by a necklace of diamonds and rubies sparkling like drops of dew. Her toilet was conspicuous by its elegance—an elegance that well became her unusual style.

Shortly before the end of the first act, while the attention of the audience was riveted on the stage, a man quietly entered the Laure box, and touching Count Telfus on the shoulder whispered a few words in his ear. The Count gave a sudden start, his face blanching perceptibly, but with perfect composure of carriage he arose, and, excusing himself to the ladies, retired from the box. The stranger had entered unnoticed by the other occupants, who were attentively listening to the music of the opera, with the exception of Donald Laure, who



had been an observer of the proceeding. As the curtain fell at the end of the act he followed the Count.

Major Kildare, who had been interested in watching the face of Mrs. Laure, observed this scene in the box and drew Herr Schwatka's attention. The latter sprang to his feet, at the same time exclaiming, in a voice low but audible to those in the immediate vicinity, "Detectives." Drawing the Major's arm through his, he led him out of the theatre, into the café adjoining, where they found Count Telfus in charge of two men of the detective force. The Count stood silent in the midst of the excited crowd that filled the room; but his pale face and the nervous manner in which he bit on an unlighted cigar plainly showed that he was suffering intensely.

"Count Telfus," said one of the detectives, "we have an order for your arrest, and you must also permit us to search you. We trust that we have been misinformed, but a marked diamond has been traced to your possession, and our orders are imperative."

"I have nothing about me not mine by a

legitimate ownership," said the Count, in a cold, clear voice, "and I will not submit to the outrage of a personal search. It is well known that I am a licensed diamond buyer; here is the proof of it." And he drew a paper from his pocket.

"That you are a licensed buyer is the greater reason why your dealings should be honest," rejoined one of his captors, proceeding to search him. Even as he spoke he drew a large diamond from the Count's vest-pocket.

"Fifteen years in the chain-gang," cried an ex-Judge who had bought many a stone on the sly.

"Father Abraham!" exclaimed a sympathizing Israelite, "how could he be so careless with such a blazer." Similar ejaculations rose from the crowd around him.

In those bitter moments a despair like death fell on Telfus; for his life was blighted and his family name disgraced. He did not see that excited crowd of which he was the centre; he only saw, in his mind's eye, his mother's face filled with an agony

of shame. And he heard, with the acuteness that comes only in times of greatest distress, the low contralto tones of a soulful voice floating from the stage of the theatre within, and breathing out the words: "Farewell, farewell, my dear, my happy home."

Alone he stood, bidding an inward farewell to his own home—condemned to an infamous exposure.

His friends around him were powerless to aid, for the diamond had been found on him. "Sorry for you, old boy," said Dr. Fox, an American, as he wrung the hand above which the detectives put on the bracelets of the law, which shutting with a click, struck on the Count's consciousness like a knell of doom. He gasped, and stifled a cry that rose to his lips. When his hands were secured, followed by a noisy crowd, he was led to a Cape cart standing in front of the door. He sank into the seat, a broken-hearted man, his thoughts far away in that home in Paris, which on the morrow would be filled with sorrow and anguish.

Suddenly arousing himself he asked to