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## Prospecting and Mining

*Diamond Discoveries in Namaqualand, 1925–1927*

**T**he many legends and stories about prospectors, however interesting, have very little relevance in the world of large-scale mining by wealthy companies and corporations. But to understand something of the means whereby companies acquire their rights to mineral resources, it is worthwhile to explore the days of discovery; it will help us gain a perspective on such matters as the way property is transferred. The process of acquiring property is often long and drawn out, complex, and carefully schemed, and it involves many parties, some of whom may have no interest in mining operations at all.

As mining companies establish themselves around the world, they take on some of the qualities of colonial powers, wielding enormous economic and political control over their “little colonies.” The understanding of that ascendancy and power requires an examination of the strategies used to acquire new enterprises—strategies over which prospectors, diggers, and small-scale miners have little control. There may be glamour in prospecting, but there also is a sinister and murky side to the mining industry, and beginners in the business have little knowledge or understanding of it. I have in mind, of course, the vulnerability of the small operators, not only to the impersonality of big business but also to the entrepreneurial world of middlemen (and women); the middlemen work for their own interests until compelled to bow to the bigger, capital-dominated world. Examples of these themes emerge in the three chapters that follow.