

## THE ROMANCE OF PRECIOUS STONES.

"A jewel may rest on an English lady's arm that saw Alaric sack Rome,  
and beheld before—what not?"

THE biggest army that Britain has ever put in the field might truly be said to be fighting at this moment for one of the smallest (though most precious) things in existence, the diamond to wit: for if it had not been for the diamonds at Kimberley, and after that the gold of the Transvaal, Englishmen would not have cared to follow the Boer into the deserted veldt; there would therefore have been no Outlanders with grievances to remove, and the noise of battle would not have been heard to-day in the kopje and karoo. The present war, therefore, may be said to take its origin in the most priceless of all crystals; and in doing so, it only adds another act to the long tragedy which has followed precious stones in all times and in all countries. The tragedy is all the more acute, in that the world has never seen such diamonds as South Africa, especially the De Beers mines, has produced: for since they were discovered a few years ago, they have made the world richer by £40,000,000. But romance, in varying degrees, has always encompassed the search for precious stones; and some specimens have come down to us with a perfect halo of fascination, which make their value

doubly greater than their mere physical lustre could ever lend them. Kimberley diamonds are but things of yesterday, and, as yet, have little history to tell. But a great many stories from the Orient are replete with romance and many a tragedy. Of all the material treasures that men and women covet, nothing can compare

to precious stones. A Western connoisseur bends low before a Raphael or a Velasquez; an Eastern potentate may cling to a peacock's feather; but the precious stone is an object of universal admiration and envy, whether it figure in a Nizam's crown or in a Bond Street jeweller's shop-window.

The diamond has more romance attached to it than any other stone,

although, curiously enough, it is not the most valuable. Mr. Edwin Streeter, the greatest living authority on gems—he has written the standard books on the subject, such as "The Great Diamonds of the World" and "Precious Stones and Gems"—divides precious stones into five classes, according to their relative rank at the present time. Strange as it may seem to some, the pearl heads the list, the Burma ruby comes second, while the diamond comes third, the reason being that the South African mines now produce "diamonds of pure water, rivalling the finest stones ever brought to light from the mines of India,



THE ORLOFF ADORNS THE CZAR'S  
SCEPTRE.

*The Illustrations to this article are taken from the magnificent set of models belonging to Mr. Edwin Streeter, of 18, New Bond Street, and have been photographed specially for "The English Illustrated Magazine" by Mr. H. C. Shelley.*



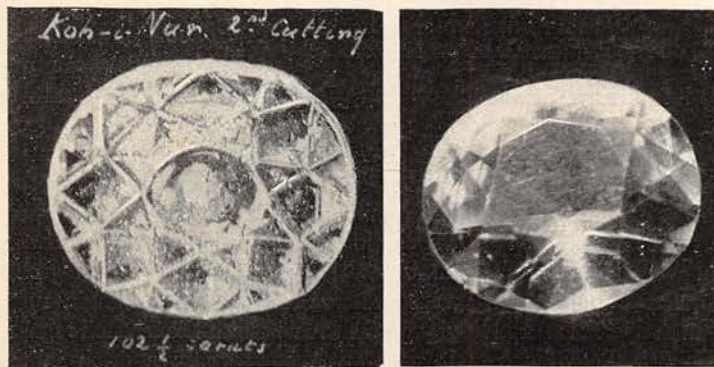
Brazil, or elsewhere." In point of romance, however, the diamond is still first in the popular imagination, none the less that the modern chemist has shown that it is only a natural form of pure carbon, of which a black-lead pencil is but a variety.

At least seventy diamonds are in existence which have a long romantic history well known to experts. Indeed, the career of a great diamond can scarcely be kept a secret. The biggest diamond in the world is the Braganza, which weighs 1680 carats in the rough, and is the size of a goose's egg. It was found in Brazil, and is now guarded in the Portuguese Treasury so

(Hyderabad) in the early years of the seventeenth century, it weighed  $787\frac{1}{2}$  carats. Tavernier, the great French jeweller and traveller, examined it at the Court of Aurungzeb in 1665. From that date its career is a mystery. Various theories exist as to its fate. Some people think it was carried off by the Persians at the sack of Delhi in 1739, and is now among the Shah's jewels. Others believe that it is really the Koh-i-Nur; while a third set of theorists recognise it in the famous Orloff diamond now in the Russian sceptre. Mr. Streeter suggests, however, that it has ceased to exist in its original state. The Persians who carried it off

probably cleaved it into two or more stones so as to avoid detection.

The Koh-i-Nur, which now weighs  $102\frac{1}{2}$  carats, has a history traceable from the year 1526, while tradition gives it a career of 5000 years. When Tavernier saw it in 1665, it was



THE KOH-I-NUR ADORNS THE BRITISH CROWN.

safely that no expert has been able to examine it thoroughly.

But by far the finest and certainly the most famous diamonds in the world have come from India, especially from the treasure-chest of the Great Mogul, whose House ruled the vast territory of Delhi and Agra, which we took from him. The break-up of his empire was followed by the scattering of his treasures, and hence his diamonds were dispersed—the Koh-i-Nur now resting in the regalia at Windsor; the Orloff in the sceptre of the Czar; the Moon of Mountains in the Russian crown, and so on.

The gem of the Great Mogul's collection was the stone named after him. Its fate is now wrapped in mystery, for it has either disappeared or been spirited into another form. Found in the Gani mine

in the possession of the Great Mogul, where it remained till 1739, when Nadir Shah invaded India. His family held it until the time when they betook themselves to the court of Runjit Singh, the "Lion of the Punjab." It remained till 1839 in the Lahore jewel-chest, which was seized by us ten years later and brought home to England in the charge of two officers. In 1852 it was reduced from 186 1-16 carats to its present size by an Amsterdam cutter, who took thirty-eight days to cut it, at a cost of £8000. Another famous diamond in our crown jewels is the Hastings, though it cannot now be identified. It was sent, in 1786, by the Nizam of the Deccan to George III.

The Orloff diamond, which is the chief ornament in the imperial sceptre of the



Czar, is the biggest diamond in Europe, weighing 193 carats. It, too, belonged to the Great Mogul, and formed the eye of an idol in Seringham, an island in the river Cavery, near Trichinopoly. It was stolen by a French grenadier, who sold it to an English sea-captain at Madras for £2000. The mariner brought it to a Jew. The Hebrew parted with it to a Greek, who went to Amsterdam, where he sold the stone for £90,000 (and an annuity of £4000) to Count Orloff, who gave it to his avaricious Empress, Catherine II.

Another splendid diamond in the Russian crown is that known as the Moon of Mountains. It, too, came from the Great Mogul's Treasury. It travelled to Europe, apparently from Delhi, through Persia, Bagdad, and Constantinople. An Armenian merchant then got it, and took it in 1766 to St. Petersburg, where Catherine tried to buy it from him. He did not care for her terms.

The gem of the French regalia was the famous Pitt diamond, which has had a very curious career. It was found by a slave in the Parताल mines on the Kistna in the year 1701. The finder bolted on board an English ship. The skipper threw him overboard, and sold the stone for £1000 to a dealer in the East, who sold it for £20,000 to Thomas Pitt, then Governor of Fort St. George, the grandfather of Lord Chatham, and the great-grandfather of William Pitt. It was

brought to London and reduced from 410 to 137 carats, at a cost of £5000. The Duke of Orleans, then Regent of France, bought it in 1717 for £135,000, Pitt making £100,000 over the whole transaction. He was afterwards always known as "Diamond Pitt." The "Regent," as it was now called, was stolen in 1792, along with the whole of the French regalia. It was found, however, in a ditch in the Champs Elysées, the thief receiving a free pardon because he turned King's



THE PITT DIAMOND SPARKLES IN THE REGALIA OF FRANCE.



THIS MAGNIFICENT STONE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST.



THIS STONE WAS BOUGHT BY THE GAIKWAR OF BARODA FOR £80,000.

however, and vanished with it to Astrakhan, where he ultimately sold it to Russia for 500,000 roubles and an annuity of 6000 roubles.

evidence. Napoleon pawned it with the Dutch Government, but it was afterwards redeemed. It has been valued at £480,000.



Last of all the diamonds—though one has to pass over many famous ones—reference may be made to the Hope diamond,



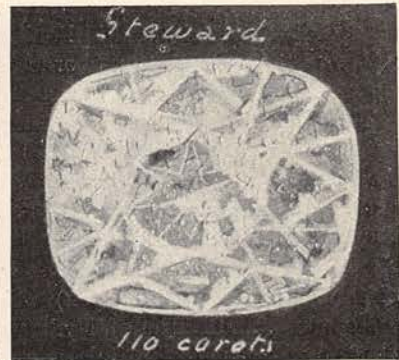
A DIAMOND THAT BELONGS TO THE  
DUKE OF WESTMINSTER.

which Lord Francis Hope (the husband of Miss May Yohe and the brother of the Duke of Newcastle) tried to sell. It is a blue colour, and has had a tortuous history. Bought by Tavernier in India in 1642, it was sold to Louis XIV. in 1668, and was seized with the rest of the French regalia in 1792, and deposited in the Garde Meuble and stolen within a month. Nobody knows what became of it, but in 1830 a similar stone, weighing  $44\frac{1}{2}$  carats (the Regent in its late stages had weighed  $67\frac{1}{8}$  carats), came into the possession of Henry Thomas Hope, who bought the stone for £18,000. Hope was a member of an old Scotch family that had made a fortune as merchants in Amsterdam—hence the fine collection of Dutch pictures which Lord Francis Hope recently

sold. The stone which Hope bought is believed to have been the famous Regent, the rest of it having, probably, gone to form what is known as the Brunswick Blue Diamond, which weighs 12 carats. Lord Francis inherited the diamond from his maternal grandmother, who left him, among other things, the beautiful estate of Deepdene, now tenanted by Lord William Beresford. Lord Francis was born a Pelham-Clinton, but on attaining his majority in 1887 he assumed, by royal license, the additional name of Hope. He may yet succeed his brother as Duke of Newcastle.

One of the largest diamonds found in the New World was picked up by a negress in the province of Minas-Geraes, Brazil, in 1883. Her master, who released her in consequence, sold it for £3000. It was ultimately bought thirty years ago by the Gaikwar of Baroda, who was afterwards deposed by our Government. The stone is known as the Star of the South, and weighs 254 carats. A stone known as the Regent of Portugal was found in the same mines by a negro in 1775. It is worth 396,800 guineas.

One of the heirlooms of the House of Austria is a citron-hued diamond known as the Austrian Yellow. It originally belonged to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and came into the hands of Maria Theresa.



THE STEWARD DIAMOND, FOUND IN AFRICA, IN ITS ROUGH  
AND ITS CUT STATE.

The history of the diamond-mining in South Africa begins with the discovery of the stone at first known as the Star of



South Africa, picked up by a trader called O'Reilly in Griqualand West in 1867. O'Reilly's host one night was a Boer, whose little girl was playing with a lot of pebbles, among which was the diamond. The Boer gave it to O'Reilly, who sold it to Sir Philip Wodehouse, the Governor of the colony, for £200. It was



THE LARGEST DIAMOND IN THE WORLD.

ultimately bought for £11,000 by the Earl of Dudley. The most famous of the stones found in the early days at the Cape is known as the Steward diamond, which weighs 288 3-8 carats. In 1881 a still more magnificent stone, the Porter-Rhodes, weighing 150 carats, was found at Kimberley. It created a great sensation when it was exhibited in Bond Street, and was taken down to Osborne for the Queen's inspection.

The Duke of Westminster owns the famous Nassak diamond, which fell into our hands in the Mahratta War of 1818. It weighs 89 $\frac{3}{4}$  carats, and was bought by the Westminster family in 1837. The Sultan of Matan, in Borneo, owns a diamond (found by a Dyak) weighing 376 carats. The Nizam of Hyderabad, in whose territories lie the Golconda mines, famed in song and story, owns a fine stone of 340 carats, still in the rough state. The Nizam, as it is called, was broken in two pieces by a "very ominous accident."

India has produced not only the best diamonds but the most beautiful rubies. In holding Burma, Britain possesses the finest ruby-mines in the world, although up to the time of our annexing Theebaw's dominions, thirteen years ago, no Englishman had described the ruby district. One of the most famous rubies in Europe is the one—of the size of a pigeon's egg—which figures in the Russian regalia. It was presented to the notorious Empress Catherine by Gustavus III., when the Swedish monarch visited her in St. Petersburg in 1777. The famous "Black Prince" ruby which adorns our own Imperial crown is not a ruby at all, but a "spinel," under which name several minerals are included. This particular "spinel" was presented in 1367 to the Black Prince (the son of Edward III. and Philippa) by Don Pedro the Cruel, King of Castile, whose cause he espoused. Henry V. wore it in his helmet at the Battle of Agincourt.

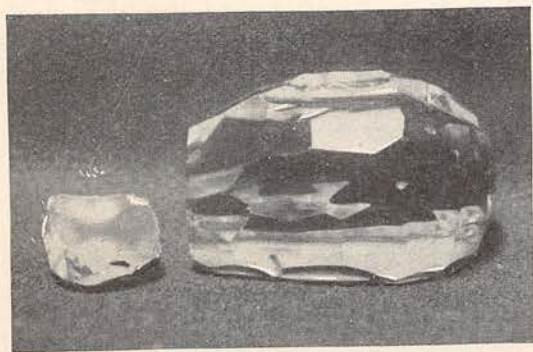
The sapphire, though only a variety of crystallised aluminium, has probably had more "imposing allegories" attached to it than any other stone. Its typical colour is blue, though greens and greys, and even whites, occur; and, like the ruby, it is found in Burma and Siam, while some fair specimens have been found in Australia and the United States. A magnificent sample of the sapphire may be seen in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, where there is such a fine mineralogical collection. It has had a curious history. Found in Bengal by a poor man, it made its way into the treasure-room of the family of Raspoli, in Rome. Then it wandered into the possession of a German Prince, who sold it to a French jeweller for £6800. It now weighs 123 1-16 carats. Cardinal Wolsey had a beautiful sapphire engraved with his coat of arms. King Theebaw possessed some excellent specimens of Burma sapphires, although these stones are not of the finest quality.

The emerald, which is green, is really a form of silicon, in combination with aluminium and another very rare metal. The tiara of Pope Julius II., who died in 1513, and who was more famous as a



patron of the arts than as a shepherd of souls, contained a beautiful emerald about an inch long and one and a quarter inches thick. The Hebrews believed that a serpent on fixing its eyes on an emerald became blind. Certain it is, many a woman has been tempted to become morally blind as she has eyed some brilliant specimen of the gorgeous green.

The opal, which used to come exclusively from Czerwenitz, in Hungary, combines, as an old lapidary has it, "the bright, fiery flame of the carbuncle, the fine, refulgent purple of an amethyst, and a whole sea of the emerald's green glory."



A DIAMOND THAT BELONGS TO THE NIZAM OF HYDERABAD. IT IS SAID TO BE WORTH £200,000.

Napoleon's consort, Josephine, was the proud possessor of a splendid specimen, called the "Burning of Troy," from the numberless red flames blazing on its surface. How often she must have flashed the jewel in the eyes of the ladies of her court who seemed to be stealing the Emperor's devotion from her! Indeed, jewels have ever been the cause of much heartburning. For example, Marc Antony once proscribed a senator who owned a fine specimen, valued at £20,000. The senator, however, rather than part with it, bolted from Rome, and cheated Antony of the jewel; otherwise it might have found its way to Cleopatra's lap.

The turquoise, which seems to have escaped the notice of the ancients, was

highly prized in the Middle Ages. The Shah of Persia possesses the finest collection, for the best opals are found in his dominions. A heart-shaped stone, with a verse of the Koran engraved upon it in gold, once belonged to Shah Nadir, who wore it as an amulet. Somehow or other it found its way into the hands of a Moscow jeweller, who wanted £780 for it. The Russians have a peculiar love for the turquoise. One of their proverbs, for instance, declares that a turquoise given by a loving hand carries with it happiness and good fortune, and that the colour of a turquoise fades when the well-being of the giver is in danger. Some opals, especially those found in Egypt, fade rapidly. Mr. Streeter once paid £2000 for a specimen which lost its colour, and of course much of its value.

The amethyst, which is usually found in association with agate, is a crystal of quartz, and is found in nearly all parts of the world. Of recent years it has lost its commercial value. Thus Queen Charlotte once had an amethyst necklace which was valued at £2000. To-day it would fetch scarcely more than £100. Mr. Streeter, however, ventures the opinion that the Americans may be the means of

reviving its popularity, just as they have made opals fashionable.

What rich romance resides in these precious stones! Macaulay summed up their career when he wrote: "A jewel may rest on an English lady's arm that saw Alaric sack Rome, and beheld before—what not? The treasures of the palaces of the Pharaohs and of Darius, or the camp of the Ptolemies, come into Europe on the neck of a vulgar pro-consul's wife, to glitter at every gladiator's butchery in the amphitheatre; then pass in a Gothic ox-wagon to an Arab seraglio at Seville; and so back to India, to figure in the peacock throne of the Great Mogul; to be bought by an Armenian for a few rupees from an English soldier; and so at last come hither."