

Emmy Destinn's \$27,000 Pearl Necklace

**Did She Get Well Cheated?
Did She Get a Big Bargain?
Are They Really Oriental Pearls?
Are They Really Worth Only \$5,000?
---The Court Must Decide**

PEARLS are declared by experts to be the most beautiful and valuable gems in the world, not excepting diamonds. For this reason it is the dream of nearly every woman of worldly ambition to be the owner of a necklace of real perfect pearls.

That was a dream that lurked in the bosom of Madame Emmy Destinn, the noted opera singer, back in 1914, when her purse was heavy with the proceeds of her stage triumphs.

She confided her desires to Edward Berger, a New York jeweler. He told her that he had in his tender care a perfect marvel of a pearl necklace in two strands of sixty and seventy pearls each, the largest gem attaining a size of a hundred grains, which is quite extraordinary.

They were lustrous, rich, delicate, fascinating pearls. Madame asked the price and the jeweler informed her it was \$27,000, and a great bargain at that. She says he told her their real value would be nearer \$40,000. She was rather startled by the price, but she looked at the pearls again and again and heard about their high virtues and found their lure too strong for her.

She bought them without any further expert advice. Artists have the reputation of acting in a temperamental and impulsive way like that.

And now after six years Madame Destinn has brought suit through her attorney, Joseph J. Myers, of No. 505 Fifth avenue, against the jeweler. She asserts that her precious pearls are only "fresh water pearls," and not "Oriental pearls," as she alleges Berger represented them to be, and that they are not worth more than about \$5,000, instead of \$27,000 to \$40,000, as he represented. She therefore asks for the return of her \$27,000.

Mr. Berger, when asked for his side of the suit, said:

"The statements made by the other side are mostly fabrications. I never said they were Oriental pearls. They are remarkably beautiful pearls and of extraordinary size. Madame Destinn got a good bargain—much more than she paid for. If they were all she expects them to be—if they were the finest pearls ever known—they would be worth \$500,000, perhaps \$1,000,000.

"She never paid me \$27,000, but gave me some diamonds, an automobile and a promise to pay in installments, some of which she has never met."

We are therefore promised a lawsuit in which the whole romance of pearls, their lure and their mystery, and the expert methods of judging and valuing them will be made public.

The manner in which Madame Destinn became disillusioned with her pearls was quite romantic. After buying them she wore them proudly during her season in New York and her tours of the country. In the Summer of 1916 she went to Bohemia, her native land, where she has a castle and estate. There, to her great distress, she was held a prisoner by the Austrian Government as a possible enemy.

She was not allowed to leave until last year, and then passed on to London. While there she says she visited the most noted jeweler and pearl expert in the city, and finding him very interesting said:

"I have a wonderful Oriental pearl necklace. It is worth \$40,000. I suppose you would be willing to lend me \$20,000 on it." The expert said he would like to see the pearls. He examined them long and carefully and then said:

"These are not Oriental pearls, Madame, they are only fresh-water pearls. They are not worth anything like \$20,000."

Madame Destinn was stunned by the revelation. Everybody understands that Oriental pearls are the desirable kind. All the lure and charm of pearls, their association with ancient romances and tragedies, with gem-bedecked tyrants and beautiful sultanas, are inseparably connected with their Oriental origin. Fresh-water pearls, being largely obtained from the Mississippi River and its tributaries, do not appear to have the same prestige.

On her return to New York, Madame Destinn says, she found the London jeweler's opinion confirmed by American experts and so she began her suit.

Wherein lies the beauty of a pearl? What gives a fine specimen its enormous value? What is the difference between an Oriental pearl and a fresh-water pearl? Can a person not an expert distinguish between good artificial pearls worth, say, \$5 apiece, and real ones worth \$5,000?

Dr. George F. Kunz, the noted American expert on gems, whom Madame Destinn says she will call as an expert, answers most of these questions in his remarkable work, "The Book of the Pearl." For instance, concerning the first question, he writes:

"The distinctive characteristic, the great beauty of a true pearl, is its lustre or orient, which is a subdued iridescence, rather than the glittering brilliance of the diamond; and unless the shell growth be lustrous it does not rank as a gem pearl,

no matter how perfect its form or beautiful its color.

"This lustre is due to the structural arrangement of the surface as well as to the quality of the material. The 'nacreous' material forming true pearls, and likewise mother-of-pearl, is commonly deposited in irregular tenuous layers, very thin and very small in area compared with the surface of the pearl. These laminae overlap one another, the surfaces are microscopically crumpled and corrugated and the edges form serrated outlines.

"The greater the angle which the laminae form with the surface, the closer will be these serrated outlines, and where the plane of the exterior lamina is parallel with the plane of the surface the lines are not present. This arrangement causes the waves of light to be reflected from different levels on the surface, just as in a soap bubble, and, the minute prisms split the rays up into their colored constituents producing the chromatic or iridescent effect."

The surface of a fine pearl reflects the tint of the wearer's skin.

The value of a pearl depends on a combination of size, lustre, perfection of skin, shape and other qualities. Its value per grain rises at an increasing rate with increase in size. Large pearls are rarer and more valuable than diamonds of similar size. A hundred-grain pearl of perfect quality should be worth \$100,000. This is about four times the value of a diamond of perfect quality and the same size.

An "Oriental pearl" is one found in the true pearl oysters called the "Margaritiferae," which deposit a very lustrous mother-of-pearl on the inside of their shells. Fine Oriental pearls have been found in American waters, and some of the finest worn at the Spanish court in earlier centuries came from Venezuela. The majority of Oriental pearls, however, are found in the vast stretch of Asiatic waters running from the Persian Gulf eastward to the Straits of Malacca. Pearl fisheries in these waters have been worked for more than two thousand years.

"Fresh water pearls" are those found in fresh water and produced by various species of shellfish scientifically as "Unionidae," commonly called river mussels or clams. In recent years the Mississippi, Arkansas, Miami

and other Western rivers have been the great sources of these pearls.

"American fresh water pearls," says Dr. Kunz, "have had many prejudices to overcome, often because of the natural indifference in regard to anything that is found at home or is easily obtainable. It has been said that in comparison with foreign pearls they had less specific gravity; that they were not so hard, and that their lustre was not as good. It is certain, however, that the skin is generally smooth, and although they may not have so peculiar an orient, their brilliancy equals that of any known pearls. Sometimes they are translucent and either pink or of a faintly bluish tint, like molten silver. More frequently their hue is white, rose, pale yellow or pale copper, depending to copper red until they resemble the most intense and highly polished copper button."

About 90 per cent of all pearls are Oriental, while about 8 per cent are of the fresh water variety.

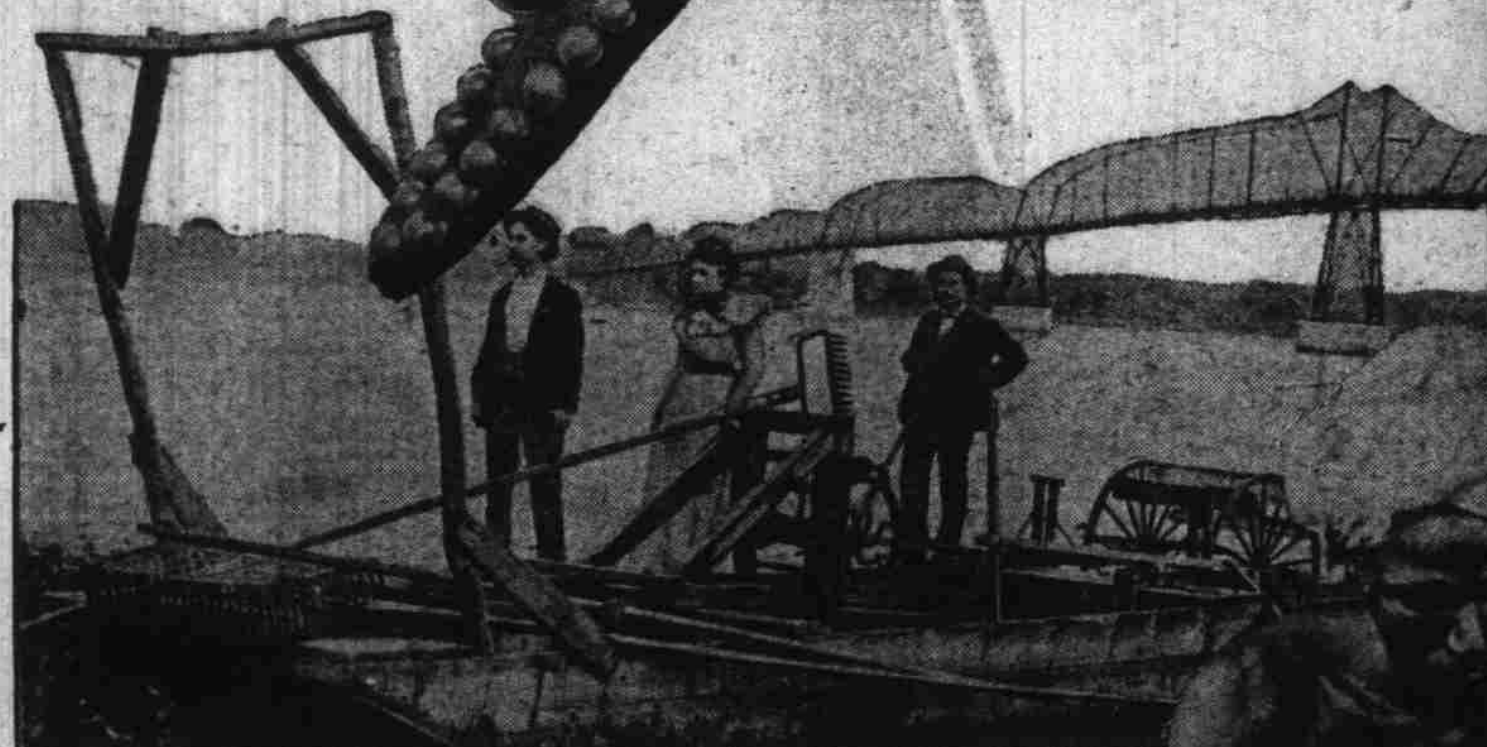
Formerly fresh water pearls were reckoned at about half the value of the Oriental kind, but the former have been rising in value and estimation, and Dr. Kunz cites an American fresh water pearl weighing 44 grains, held at a valuation of over \$6,000.

Examination has proved that fresh water pearls are of the same chemical composition as Oriental pearls.

Few but experts can judge the value of a pearl, or even decide if it is genuine. To



Madame Emmy Destinn, Showing the Double Row of Pearls, Which She Paid \$27,000 for and is Now Told Are Not Worth More Than About \$5,000.



And This Is the Common, Unpoetic, Uninteresting Pearl Diving Outfit Which Scoops Up Mussels from the Muddy Mississippi River—the Kind of Common Fresh Water Pearls, Which She is Told the Necklace Is Made Up Of.

the average woman the chief value of a genuine pearl necklace is the sense and satisfaction of possession.

"There are several things that are essential in pearl-buying," says the expert. "And one of the most important of these is that the light in which the pearls are selected shall be absolutely pure daylight, with no reflections from the side or from above that can enhance or detract from the color of the pearl."

"In absolutely pure daylight it is possible to see the exact tint or color of the pearls; that is, whether each is really a pure white with a tinge of pink or an orient tending to cream-white, or whether it is more or less tinted with what is considered to be a crude or red color in a pearl."

"Besides this, in a pure light it is possible to see whether the pearl is brilliant, and to estimate the exact degree of its brilliancy; whether there are any cracks, scratches or marks on the surface; and, lastly, whether the form is regular."

Pearls appear to have increased brilliancy by artificial light, and the presence of a great mass of them heightens the misleading impression. If all the royalties of Europe or the millionaires of New York were to wear all their pearls at once in a lighted hall they would appear, the expert tells us, to have a quality they never possessed.

How does the pearl originate? The oyster and allied species have the power of



This Is the Pretty Scene of Oriental Pearl Diving Which Madame Emmy Destinn Loved to Think About as She Fondled Her Pearls.

misfortune, furnishes a wonderful lesson upon the uses of pain and adversity by converting its affliction into a precious gem, symbolical of all that is pure and beautiful."

By their animal origin pearls are entirely different in nature from all other gems.

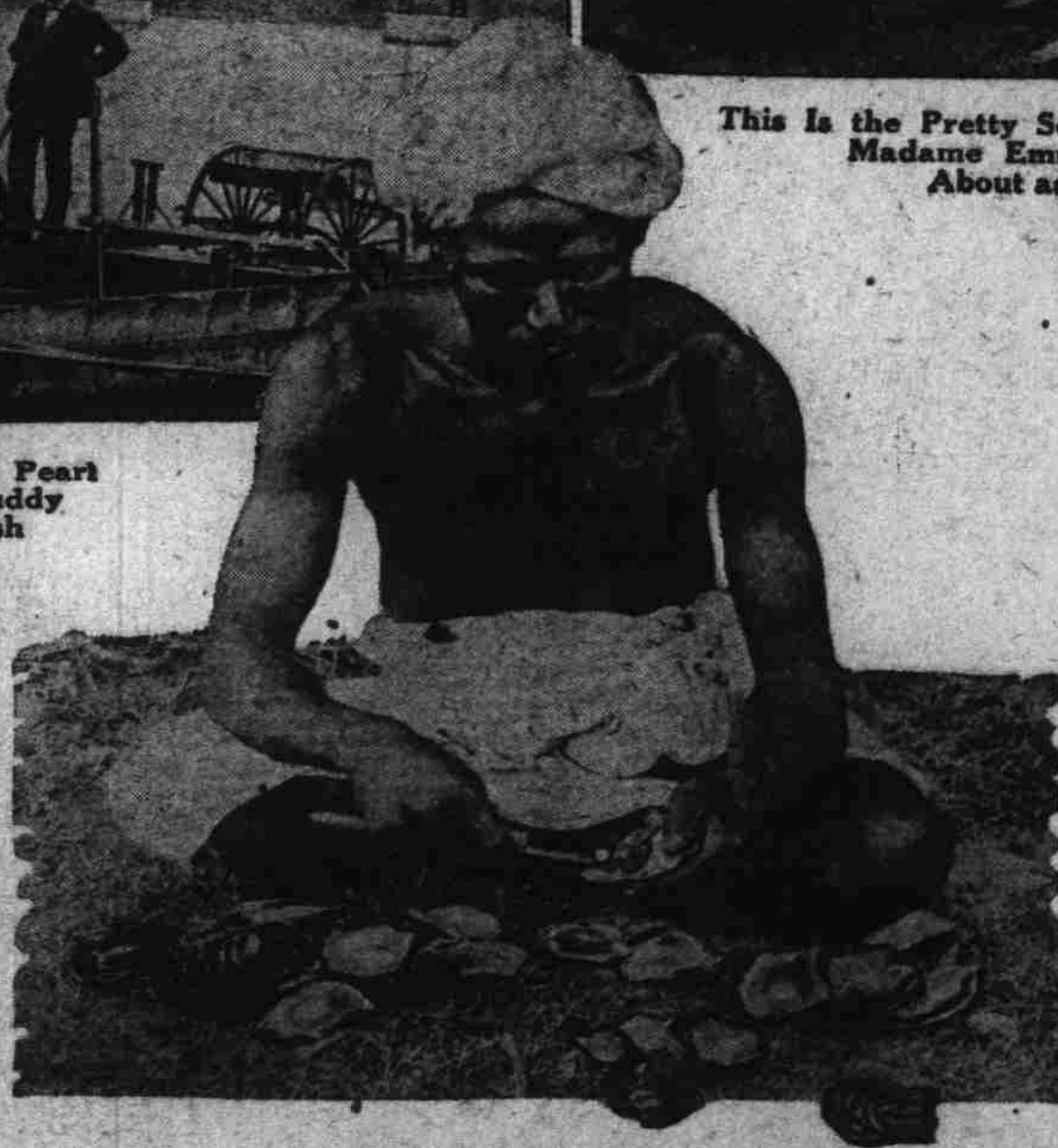
Many romantic legends are current about the history of pearls, their death and decay, how some persons exert a baneful influence on the gems, while others enhance their brilliancy. Upon this point the gem expert makes this admission:

"Occasionally they are affected by the wearer having exudations from the skin induced by some disease, or else by acids, which pass out through the pores with the perspiration. A smoky atmosphere, in which a sulphuric acid is present owing to sulphur in the coal, violent usage, such as knocking severely or dropping, all of these in time will cause more or less injury to a pearl, especially to the whiter varieties."

What are the qualities of a perfect pearl that Madame Destinn should have looked for before making her purchase? They are defined as follows:

"First, it should be perfectly round, pear-shaped, drop-shaped, egg-shaped or button-shaped, and as even in form as though it were turned on a lathe. It must have a perfectly clear skin and a decided tint or color, whether white, pink, creamy, gray, brown or black. If white, it must not have a cloud or a blur or haze, nor should the skin have the slightest appearance of being opaque or dead. It must be absolutely free from all cracks, scratches, spots, flaws, indentations, shadowy reflections or blemishes of any kind. It must possess the peculiar lustre or orient characteristic of the gem. The skin must be unbroken and not show any evidence of having been polished."

When this interesting lawsuit comes to trial we shall learn from experts whether Madame Destinn's pearls possessed these qualities and a great many other important facts on this fascinating subject.



This Is a Picturesque Oriental Pearl Diver Opening the Pearl Oysters in Search of a Priceless Pearl. This Is the Sort of Thing Madame Destinn Enjoyed Contemplating as She Toiled With Her Precious Necklace.

taking up carbonate of calcium from the water and converting it into a shell. The inner surface is lined with a perfectly smooth, lustrous material called "nacre," or "mother-of-pearl," to protect the body.

The oyster deposits nacre upon any substance that irritates its body and thus produces a pearl. The cause of irritation may be a tiny parasite called a fluke invading the shell, a bit of sand or mud or an inflammation of the tissue. Dr. Kunz

regards all these as possible causes of pearls, and concludes poetically:

"The pearl is not a product of health associated with undisturbed conditions, but results from a derangement in the normal state of the mollusk. Unable to resist, to rid itself of the opposing evil, it exercises the powers given to it by a beneficent Creator and converts the pain into perfection, the grief into glory. One of the lowest of earth's creatures, suffering a