

The Hope Diamond Mystery—by May Yohe

(Lady Francis Hope)

The Startling History of This Fascinating Stone, the "Curse" That Has Followed It for Fourteen Centuries and the Story of the Ruined Life of May Yohe, Who Once Owned and Wore It

TO find herself mistress of the palace of an English Duke, with jewels outrivalling the jewels of many a crowned head, with London town house, country estates, castles, shooting preserves—would probably fulfill the happiest dreams of millions of American women.

And yet May Yohe, the daughter of a Pennsylvania country dressmaker, had all this in her grasp—AND THREW IT ALL AWAY.

May Yohe, the beloved and petted wife of Lord Francis Hope, was also to share with her husband the added title and still greater estates of the Duke of Newcastle—was it the malevolent power of the unlucky Hope diamond that then intervened and blighted her life?

The story of May Yohe's career will be told from week to week in these pages by May Yohe herself. Few plots in drama or fiction equal the extraordinary real life experiences of this remarkable American girl.

And the "curse" of the famous Hope diamond?

Something, indeed, seemed to cast its sinister shadow over her life and pursued her relentlessly in America, in Asia, throughout Europe, and even in South America. May Yohe discusses this famous gem which once was hers, and reveals much of its past history which has not before been made public—history which begins with its theft from the sparkling ornaments of the Buddhist idol fourteen hundred years ago, and drags its sinister trail down through the centuries to the shocking death of little Vinson Welsh McLean, whose parents now own the "cursed" stone.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier came into possession of the stone in 1642, stolen from the sacred golden statue of Rama, in the Temple of Rama and Sita, Burmah, India. Tavernier was torn to pieces by wild dogs.

Madame de Montepan, who wore the jewel, was abandoned by the King. Nicholas Fouquet, intendant of France, who borrowed it for a festive occasion, was executed by order of the King.

Queen Marie Antoinette, who wore it, was beheaded.

The beautiful Princess de Lamballe, who wore it, was torn to pieces by a French mob.

King Louis XVI., who owned it, was beheaded.

Hendrik Fals, the diamond merchant's son, who stole it, was a suicide in London in 1830.

The first of the Hope family who bought it suffered a long series of misfortunes, including the death of his favorite son.

Simon Frankel, New York broker, who bought it for \$268,000 in November, 1907, met financial difficulties.

Jacques Colot, another owner, was afflicted with madness and committed suicide.

Prince Ivan Kanitowski, next owner, was killed by revolutionists.

Lorenz Ladis, to whom he loaned it, was murdered by her lover.

Simon Montherlaid, who sold it to the Sultan Abdul Hamid, was thrown over a precipice while riding with his wife and child; all were killed.

Zubaya, the Sultan's favorite, was killed by her master.

Abdul Hamid paid \$400,000 for the stone. He was dethroned.

Jehver Agha, an official of the Yildiz, attempted to steal the stone and was hanged.

Selim Habib, Persian diamond merchant, who had handled the gem, was drowned.

January 11, 1911, Mrs. Edward B. McLean, of Washington, D. C., bought it, wore it, and was sued for \$280,000 by Cartier, the jeweler.

In May, 1919, her only child, little Vinson McLean, the "Hundred-Million-Dollar Baby," was crushed to death.

Nothing else in all history, nothing in fiction or the drama parallels the extraordinary record of this sinister jewel, which is related for the first time by a remarkable woman whose own life was blighted—by its wicked "curse." This will be told from week to week on this page.

CHAPTER II.

(Continued from Last Sunday)

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TO the readers of this page last Sunday I explained that I was born in a little Pennsylvania mining town, and the only diamonds I ever saw or thought of were the "black diamonds" which came out of the coal mines. My ambition as a child was to be an actress.

Up to the day Lord Francis Hope made me his bride I had met with every success in my stage career. And then, when I found myself a member of the British titled aristocracy, with all the future seemed to promise—wealth, title, social position, castles, estates, jewels—then there came into my life a sinister influence which ruined everything.

Was it the "curse" of the great, the famous, the malevolent Hope diamond? Can a gem, can any inanimate object, cast a spell, a curse, over a human life?

My intelligence tells me No!

And yet—and yet in the years I have pondered this strange question something within me always stirs me to think that there may be veiled forces at work which influence our lives which we do not understand.

It seemed to me of especial interest and importance to piece together all I could learn of fact and tradition as to that early residence of the diamond in the gorgeous jeweled adornments of the great idol of jade—the goddess Rama-Sita.

Every one knows that one of the outstanding features of all ancient religions was the doctrine of fear. One may easily imagine that no punishment could be so dread as that which would be bestowed upon him who stole from the treasures of the temple or pilfered an ornament from the sacred store of a god himself.

And my diamond—the Hope diamond—the famous blue gem of fateful history, was stolen from the breast of the most powerful god in Buddha's firmament!

A great lapidary, one of the most famous jewel cutters of Belgium, once said to me, as he fondled this magnificent stone:

"Lady Hope, I do not know the history of this gem, but I cannot look at it with-

out seeming to see, in these pale blue glints from its many facets, the sadness of a pretty woman's eyes."

The Princess Brisban! When last her eyes looked into this diamond, 1,600 years ago, out there in the shadow of a great marble temple piled at the edge of her king-husband's city, her eyes were as sad as woman's eyes could be, and she was the prettiest woman in the kingdom! And Marie Antoinette, Princess Lamballe, Mile. d'Argencourt, Mrs. Edward McLean—all pretty women, and all have looked into the mysterious stone with saddened eyes! Surely there was more than a romantic speech in this thought of the great jewel expert.

As I have said before, Brisban was the favorite daughter of a prince of Nepal.

On their nuptial night the King gave his bride his favorite jewel—what to-day is known as the Hope diamond.

Brisban persuaded her husband to have a great idol of Rama-Sita, favorite twin Hindu gods she still worshipped, made for a temple he had built in his honor outside the walls of Lhasa, his capital city. Rama was the god of the sun and Sita was the daughter of the moon, dedicated to Rama as his goddess of love.

When the twin god was unveiled it was decreed by the King that forever after every noble in his kingdom should complete the nuptial ceremony of taking a new wife by submitting his bride at the feet of the great jade idol. Were the bride not a virgin, said the priests of the temple, she would be destroyed at the feet of the god.

There came a day when the power of Rama-Sita waned in Thibet, despite the lovely Brisban. Many of the people were angered at this god, because, they said, their nobles oppressed them; that they might vie with each other in providing their virgin brides with fabulously valuable jewels for this god of the sun and his goddess of love. The idol was in danger of defilement by the mob, and Brisban

Lord and Lady Francis Hope (May Yohe), and Famous Old Clumber Castle, Where She Might Have Presided as the Distinguished Chatelaine.

hastily sent to her native Nepal for advice from the learned Pundits there.

One night there gathered outside the temple a queer-looking band of pilgrims, apparently beggars, who had walked far to do homage to Rama-Sita. They were dressed in rags and clustered about the gates of the temple in humble, weary attitudes. But when they knocked for admittance the gates did not swing open. The priests scented a ruse. They were in fear of their own people, among whom there had been so many murmurings against the exactions of the jade idol. One of the "beggars" detached himself from his companions and trudged into the neighboring city and appeared at the gates of the King's palace. To the guard who refused to admit him he gave a ring, with a strange figure carved upon it, and asked that the token be carried to the King's favorite wife.

Awed, the guard sent for a eunuch and bade him carry the beggar's ring at once to the Princess Brisban.

Within an hour a closely wrapped figure appeared in the guard room. It was the Princess Brisban herself, who had come in response to the call of the ring—a ring she recognized as marking its owner one of the order of Pundits to whom she had appealed for advice and protection for Rama-Sita.

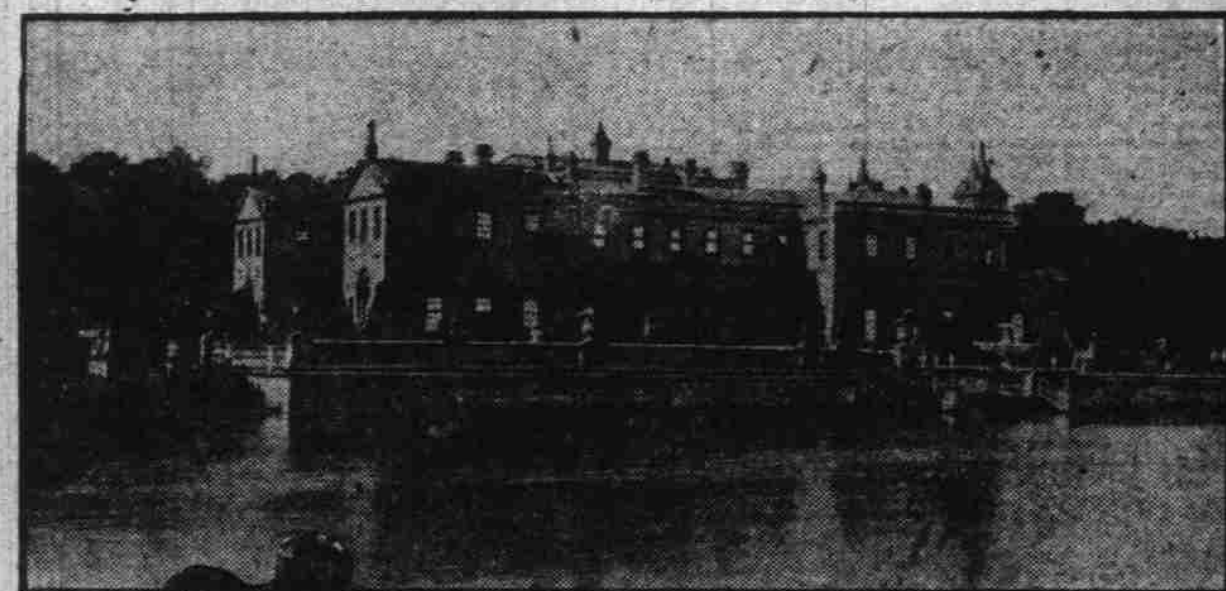
They had come to take the idol away—to a new haven, there to await the return to holiness of the people of Thibet, who were about to betray it.

By certain facts known it is possible to reconstruct the scene that followed.

Holists were brought, and the great idol was reverently lowered from its pedestal. Each Pundit threw himself face down upon the earthen floor before the dethroned idol and, with subdued wailing, pleaded its forgiveness for the violence with which, perforce, they must lay their hands upon it.

Then, led by the Princess, the Pundits struggled under their heavy load along the

"The Princess Brisban entered the temple at night through a secret door and had the great jade idol removed, fastening upon its breast the wonderful jewel which had been her wedding gift—the Hope Diamond."



tortuous paths close to the inner walls of the temple where the moon would not disclose them to any chance watchers on the nearby hills, who might be looking down through the aperture in the roof, until the idol was safe outside the temple. A low whistle from the Pundit chief brought a group of elephants from the nearby bushes, where they were hidden in care of silent keepers.

Thongs of bamboo were quickly wrapped around the idol and two elephants stood ready to swing away, the idol safely hung between them.

The Pundit chief turned to the Princess Brisban and pointed the way to the south. But she shook her head. She would remain. But before they started she asked would they lift her on their shoulders, that she might once more touch her beloved Rama-Sita. Deftly they swung her up. For a moment she was silent, her head bowed against the idol's breast. Then from around her neck she tore the pendant in which was set her nuptial jewel—what to-day is the Hope diamond. Quickly she fastened the great gem into the rope of jewels that hung from the idol's shoulders.

And what became of Brisban? Her delicate hands had defiled the temple—for defilement it was, no matter how worthy her reason. And she was too proud to avoid the consequences. When morning came, and the first worshippers of the dawn, they found the idol gone, but enthroned in its place on its majestic pedestal, the figure of their Princess Brisban, erect, scornful and defiant.

Now that the idol was gone the temper of the populace was aroused and, as is so often the case, it took on a frenzy of righteousness in complete forgetfulness of its own previous plottings against the god. Their love and awe of Rama-Sita returned instantly. The mob stormed toward the pedestal where the Princess Brisban awaited it. The thwarted priests urged it on.

Until the last tremor of consciousness and life had passed out of her beautiful body the Princess stoically submitted herself to the mob. At last she was motionless—dead—where her beloved Sita and her mate, the Sun God, had stood.

The Rama-Sita was carried safely into Burmah, where it was set up in a temple on the outskirts of Mandalay, where ruins of it still remain to this day.

In all the inhibitions associated with the religions of temples and idols there is none more serious than that which forbids the profane hand of a mere worshipper at the shrine of a god to even so much as touch one of the glittering jewels which are so copiously draped about its inanimate person.

These were a source of constant temptation to the beggars and parasites who flocked to the temples—but they knew the awful penalty that would fall upon them if they surreptitiously pilfered even so much as a minor bauble—the dreaded "curse."

Even the slanting eyes of the Chinese and the Thibetans are said by some authorities to have been the result of a curse put upon a young Tartar prince who stole a golden brazier from the temple of a sun god in a spirit of defiance against his father's wise men. He was killed in a rebellion of his people, but after his death a son was born, and this son's eyes were set obliquely. The poor mother was forced to flee the country with her accursed son. The young man's strangely deformed eyes attracted the attention of the people of the surrounding countryside,



May Yohe's First Appearance on the Stage as "Prince Prittinita" in "The Crystal Slipper" in Chicago.

and after a while the chiefs of twelve neighboring tribes gathered to look at him.

The mother did not tell these chiefs that the slanting eyes were the result of a curse. She told them a fanciful tale about her son having been born to her in a temple, and that the idol, who really was its father, had told her to take her son to the mountain, where a great destiny would await him.

This the twelve chiefs believed, and they at once elected this strangely eyed young man to be their king. His name was Gnya Btsampo, and thus he became the first of the kings of Thibet. But even though this good fortune came to him, the "curse" had lost none of its potency, says the legend, for, behold! after that every child that was born had slanting eyes—and so they are in Thibet and all the surrounding country of China to this day—a "curse" that has lasted thousands of years, the superstitious believe, because a temple was defiled by theft.

So much for the early history of the Hope diamond—how much of it is true, how much is legend or what part of it may be the confused history of some other great gem I do not know.

Now, to return to the narrative of my own unimportant life. As I have already said, I was a good deal of a tomboy, and my mother was rather worried because I always preferred to play with the boys, and did not like little girls at all. Mother began to fear I was not growing up as a well-bred little girl ought to.

She had some German friends who advised her to send me to a school in Dresden. I was sent away like a bride in a C. O. D. package. In a big yellow trunk were packed "six of everything," in accordance with the school regulations. At this school were the little daughters of some of America's best known families. I remember especially as classmates with whom I used to like to play Louise Corbin, of the "Long Island Corbins"; Edith Coovise, of Boston, and Edith, Lulu and Mamie, the famous Patton sisters, of Washington, D. C.

I have always been impulsive, and my tomboy propensities when I was a youngster have often asserted themselves in freakish desires to do the unconventional. One day during the last months at the school in Dresden some of my classmates planned some school theatricals. They were to be tableaux, of course, since these were the only things we could originate. I was urged to take part, and as my special chum, the daughter of a very rich Chicago family, also was asked, we decided that whatever we did would be together.

A prankish thought came to me. The

others all were doing such sedate things—I had been to the theatre so often I knew instinctively that while these tableaux would be very pretty, they would hardly be entertaining to any one except mothers and fathers who, of course, would be proud of anything their young daughters did. So, in the secrecy of our room, my chum and I planned to go out on that stage dressed in tights.

We had a great time making these tights. We got silk stockings and carefully knitted the upper part of one stocking onto the upper part of another; then cutting off the foot and ankle of one of them, until, out of eight stockings we had made two pairs of shimmering silk tights. We made trunks out of two red silk petticoats which we bought in a Dresden shop. For bodices we bought white shirt waists. Then we practised a little dance.

We would not tell the other girls anything about our costumes, but rehearsed our dance in our usual school dresses. When the night of the tableaux arrived the school assembly hall, with its improvised stage at one end, was filled by a fashionable Dresden audience, with a brilliant sprinkling of officers of the Guard regiment stationed at the Dresden barracks. These school theatricals always were great fun for the young officers.

My chum and I appeared with our long raincoats wrapped around us, and we held them tight, too, when other girls ran up and begged for a peek at our costumes. When the time came for us to run out of the wings onto the stage we suddenly flung our raincoats aside and tripped out into the glare of the footlights and in full view of the audience in our tights.

In later years I played many parts which called for scant costumes, but in all my professional life I could never have been persuaded to appear in such a costume as that one. I can realize now why, when we came from behind the scenes there was a quick gasp from the audience and then a minute of dense, pregnant silence. Then there was a shout from the German officers. The shout grew into a hilarious guffaw and a great din of pounding canes. My chum and I whirled into our dance, kicking and jumping merrily, although not without a terrible fear on my part that the improvised tights would give away.

To say that our dance was a success is putting it mildly—it was a sensation. The other girls hugged and kissed us rapturously when we danced off the stage. But there was no such greeting from our teachers and the school authorities. We were almost expelled. Still, I had meant no harm. I didn't understand the heinousness of my offense—I just wanted to be different.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)