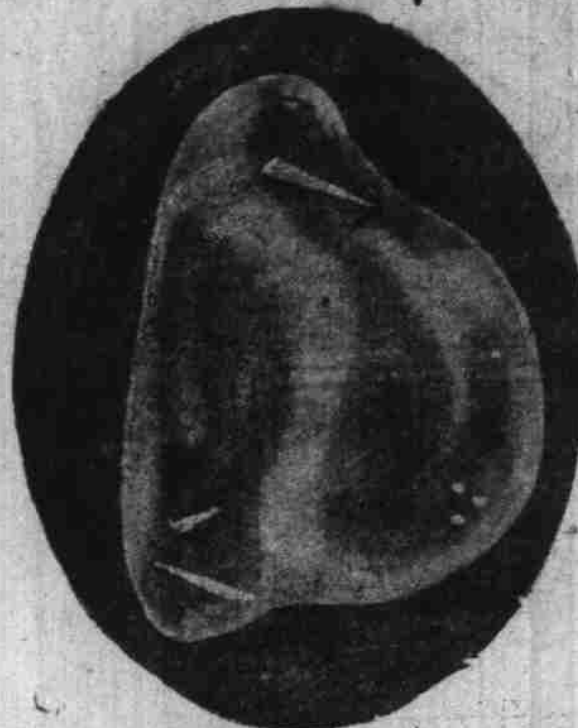


The Hope Diamond Mystery—by May Yohe

(Lady Francis Hope)



The Original Shape of the Hope Diamond Before It Was Recut by European Lapidaries.

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

TO find herself mistress of the palace of an English Duke, with jewels out-rivaling 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 Walsh McLean, whose parents now own the "cursed" stone.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier came into possession of the stone in 1643, 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 Montespan, who wore the jewel, was abandoned by the King.

Nicholas Pouquet, 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 \$168,000 in November, 1901, met financial difficulties.

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

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

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

Simon Montherides, 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.

Jeher 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, 1917, Mrs. Edward B. McLean, of Washington, D. C., bought it, wore it, and was sued for \$180,000 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 III.

(Continued from Last Sunday.)

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AS I said on this page last Sunday, my ambition as a child was to be a great lady on the stage, and all my thoughts and energies were bent in that direction.

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, once an inanimate object, cast a spell, a curse, over a human life?

I would like to ask this question of the long list of personages, great and inconsequential, whose lives and fortunes and misfortunes have been bound up with the history of the famous blue jewel for fourteen hundred years.

Last Sunday I narrated something of the semi-historic or legendary story of the early episodes, centuries ago, which surrounded the first supposed record of the gem on the bosom of the great Thibetan Jade Idol and the unfortunate Princess Brishub.

However much of truth or misty legend may be mixed up in this ancient story we at least have authentic, historic, definite, reliable knowledge of the stone in the year 1642, when Jean Baptiste Tavernier came into possession of it.

Tavernier, in his many travels through the then little known principalities of the maharajas of India, came into possession of many jewels of a kind to fascinate the pretty eyes of the favorites of the rich dukes and nobles in France. He tells us in his quaint, old volume, printed centuries ago, of how he was received at the

miniature court of the Duc d'Orleans upon his return from one of his visits to India with a bag full of "the most precious of stones the fair eyes of the lady of the noble duc had ever looked upon."

Tavernier returned to India. Already his fame as a traveler had spread through the East, and upon his arrival at Delhi he was summoned to the court of the Great Mogul to visit with him the far-famed diamonds and the product of which was dedicated to his purse alone.

With a great elephant train the Mogul and his party, with Tavernier as the honored guest, set out for these mines. They spent many days in the neighborhood, and Tavernier saw, for the first time, how the strangely shaped crystals came from the earth to be cut and fashioned into the sparkling gems he knew.

Some of these crystals were of wondrous size. Tavernier was delighted when the Great Mogul placed in his hand a rough, uncut crystal, larger than any he had yet seen, and told him he might have it as a remembrance "for his favorite wife" back in France.

Tavernier tells us that it was now, when he was so gratefully thanking the Mogul and dwelling upon his admiration for such a large and splendid stone, that the monarch told him of a jewel even larger than that—larger than any he had ever seen in India. There was no more fascinating subject for Tavernier.

Tavernier was accompanied by a carefully chosen group of retainers, selected from those of the Mogul's men whom he thought he could trust—with the aid of bribery. Distributing alms as he went, he was hailed as a foreign prince all along the

Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the Distinguished Traveller, Who Secured the Blue Diamond in India and Sold It to King Louis XIV. and Was Created Baron d'Aubonne. This Painting Shows Tavernier Dressed in the Robes of Honor Presented to Him by the Shah of Persia.

Then from the lips of the Great Mogul himself Tavernier learned the tragic story of the Princess Brishub and how she had placed the gem her husband had given her as a nuptial gift on her favorite idol before she had been slain by the frenzied mob in the Temple of La Brang—as I related on this page last Sunday.

During the rest of his visit to the Great Mogul this diamond of the ill-fated princess, which had rested untouched upon the idol Rama-Sita for almost two thousand years, guarded by jealous priests and revered by millions upon millions of worshippers, was constantly in Tavernier's mind and the subject of most of his conversation. He discovered quickly that the Great Mogul himself coveted this gem—for the Persian princess who was at that time the newest and prettiest of his wives. But even the Great Mogul did not dare to brave the wrath of Rama-Sita and its followers, else he would have secured the famous gem long before.

With his servants, slaves and guides loaned him by the Mogul Tavernier travelled toward Mandalay, a fabled city upon the famous Irrawaddy River, in what now is known as Burmah. Few travellers had yet ventured that far.

Here he was received at the court of the Sultan and entertained with the romantic dances and fetes of the Burmese. As a friend of the Great Mogul he was accorded every courtesy. But Tavernier, he tells us, was restless. Here from every pundit, or religious teacher, with whom he talked he heard new stories of the famed Rama-Sita in the temple at Pagan.

Tavernier does not tell us that he deliberately set out from Mandalay to steal the diamond from the idol. Rather, he tells us, he hoped to "barter" for it—from the priests on guard. Perhaps he had had experiences with these temple priests in connection with his many other trips and the bags of rare jewels he brought back to France. But history lives long among the peoples of the East, whose pundits and professional story tellers bring down through countless generations tales of things that happened even thousands of years ago as clearly and with as complete romantic detail as if they were told in the printed record. So from these tales that one may still hear in the market place of Mandalay, where the name "Hope Diamond" means nothing, but where the merest mention of "the gem of Brishub and Rama-Sita" stirs vengeful gleams in the dark, mysterious eyes of the native priests and pundits, we may gather almost a detailed narrative of what happened when Tavernier started out from Mandalay toward the nearby city of Pagan.

Tavernier was accompanied by a carefully chosen group of retainers, selected from those of the Mogul's men whom he thought he could trust—with the aid of bribery. Distributing alms as he went, he was hailed as a foreign prince all along the

How Travellers Journeyed Through the Orient Fourteen Hundred Years Ago. This Picture Gives an Idea of How the Distinguished Lapidary and French Traveller, Tavernier, No Doubt Made His Way to Delhi When He Secured Possession of the Great Hope Diamond.

road. He announced that he had come to pay his devotions to the famous Rama-Sita. Arriving at the outskirts of Pagan, he won the respect of the natives by going with the whole company to the river and "bathing twelve times that he might be pure in the presence of the God of the Sun and the Goddess of Love."

For five days, until the novelty of his visit began to disappear, Tavernier stayed at Pagan. Each morning, noon and night he visited the temple and made his devotions to Rama-Sita. And at each visit he added one more to the gems which decorated the idol. These gems were of his own store, and one may believe they were not the most valuable, either. But they gratified the priests.

On the fifth day, after a day of unusual ceremonies—a distribution of largess among beggars by the rich traveller—priests and travellers retired to their sleeping quarters much wearied. That is to say, the priests were really fatigued and the travellers apparently so. It was a moonless night. There were no watchers on the hillside to see the small herd of elephants used by the travellers noiselessly assembled by drivers who moved with echoless feet and muffled commands. The white robes donned by the travellers at their first approach to the city were replaced now by sombre garments, which reflected none of the star gleams.

Suddenly there was a quickly hushed cry from some belated priest or attendant still hovering within the temple. A few beggars who had taken advantage of their privilege of sleeping on the stone floors of the temple moved uneasily and then awakened to find themselves neatly bound and gagged. There was a swift rush of feet toward the silent, majestic jade idol. A subdued rattle of golden chains, and then outside the temple the soft thud of the elephants' feet.

In the morning, when the priests awakened to observe the early morning devotions of the first worshippers, there was panic among them. They unbound the beggars, who may have had fanciful tales to tell of what happened to them. From the outside came the shout, "The travellers have gone!" It was some time, we may well believe, before the priests discovered that their idol had been defiled—that from among its breastplate of gorgeous jewels the most magnificent of all was gone! We may imagine, too, that it took some time for the priests to realize that their eyes were not deceiving them—for such a sacrilege might well have seemed to them impossible.

At any rate, we hear of Tavernier again, many miles away, with his retinue, safe in the domain of the Raja of Luckimpur.

Tavernier set out at once for France. In the year 1648 the King of many folies, Louis XIV., known as the "Grand Monarque," ruled France. His was a reign of fickle loves and extravagance. The two hobbies of the Grand Monarque were beautiful women and beautiful gems.

Tavernier spread before the King twenty-five gems of great beauty, rubies, emeralds and uncut diamonds. Among the latter was one of great size and wonderful color—a pale, opalescent blue, as delicate in its shimmering tint as the frothiest cloud on a summer's afternoon. This was the "blue crystal" which had rested in the breastplate of the great idol, Rama-Sita, in the temple at Burmah, as I told last Sunday. It weighed 112½ carats, and was then, as now, one of the largest diamonds in the world.

The French monarch was fascinated by the jewels, especially the blue one, and insisted upon purchasing them immediately.

Louis sent word to Tavernier that if he would part with them he would be given 2,500,000 francs and, besides, a title of nobility and be created Baron d'Aubonne.

The title appealed to Tavernier, who was old and ready to cease his travels and settle down to an enjoyment of the fortune he had gathered in his years of wandering. He sold the gems to Louis, and thus the "blue crystal," which afterward became known as the Hope Diamond, came into the possession of the Grand Monarque. Tavernier had possessed the diamond but a few months, and when he parted with it he seemed in a way to enjoy his declining years in luxury and with the full



Lady Francis Hope—May Yohe.

joy of his new title. But the "devil in the diamond" did not spare him. Soon after he transferred it to the King, Tavernier discovered that his favorite son had embarked upon a most disastrous series of speculations during his last absence in the East. The son had gotten into debt and had even committed many serious indiscretions from which his father had to save him. Tavernier was obliged to part with not only the 2,500,000 francs he had received from the King for the blue crystal and the other stones, but with all the rest of his immense fortune.

Broken-hearted, impoverished, but still courageous, Tavernier, at the advanced age of eighty-one, embarked upon another journey to the East, hoping to discover more diamonds and rubies and thus recoup a portion of his lost fortune. But the old man never reached his destination. He arrived safely at Moscow, where he fitted out an expedition with which to penetrate the then comparatively unknown, below the Caucasus. Leading his company, he set forth bravely, but just outside the city gates he was set upon by a pack of ferocious dogs, which came from no one knows where. Poor Tavernier was torn to pieces before help could reach him, and his followers, attacked in turn by the dogs, fled in a panic, leaving the old man's body where it had fallen. Thus Tavernier paid for having taken the blue crystal from its resting place in the Buddhist temple, and from his time to mine the history of the Hope Diamond is a continuous story of ruined lives and wrecked ambitions.

Let me now return to the broken narrative of my own childhood.

During my girlhood student days in Dresden, Germany, I was regarded as a wild, untamed American tomboy. When I "finished" my schooling in Dresden my mother sent me to Mme. Bronier's School in the Rue de Passy, Paris. After two terms there I had completed my education and sailed home to my mother.

Mother wanted me to be a fashionable governess—to teach the piano and French and German. I did not intend that this should be my career, although I apparently submitted to mother's wishes. I was determined to go on the stage, though I didn't know how, and at last destiny intervened in my favor.

Quite unexpectedly I was asked to sing a solo in church, and consented. I was astonished at the effect my singing had

upon the congregation. The people all turned and looked at me as I sang, and it set me thinking that if the public would stare like that in a church they would pay to hear me sing on the stage.

My stage aspirations I nursed in secret until one day Mrs. John Drew, then one of the most celebrated of actresses, came to our house to order some new gowns from mother. While she waited in the drawing room until mother disposed of another caller I gathered courage to speak to her. I told her I wanted to go on the stage, that I wanted to sing, and that I was sure I would succeed if only I could get a chance.

Mrs. Drew was very kind and much interested. I went to the piano and, playing my own accompaniment, sang one of the popular songs of the day. Mrs. Drew told me such songs as that would never do if I were to obtain serious consideration of my voice. She told me to learn something better, a dramatic poem, which would also display my interpretative ability, and then come to her again.

I was quick at study and very impatient. I soon had a new "piece" by heart, and Mrs. Drew gave me another hearing, this time in her own hotel suite.

When I had finished she said, "Quite nice, child." Then, putting her hand on my shoulder, she remarked: "If you work hard I don't see why you shouldn't win on the stage; but remember, it is work, work, work! If you're afraid of hard labor, keep away from the footlights." I told her I was willing to work, and she gave me letters of introduction to two big New York theatrical managers—Mr. Augustin Daly and Mr. A. M. Palmer.

Armed with these letters, mother and I went off to New York from our home in Philadelphia.

My gracious! I'll never as long as I live forget my first trial. I had to recite to Mr. Palmer in his theatre. The place was empty, except that mother and Mr. Palmer were in the gallery. The theatre was cold and dreary, for it was a winter evening; everything looked dim, miserable and uncanny to me. There was no scenery, no big audience, no music, no lights; the place smelt very badly of stale cigars, and I felt very wretched; my heart was down in my boots and I was sick; but I went through my piece and felt I had failed miserably, and was astonished when Mr. Palmer said, "Not so bad, little girl, not so bad! I'll engage you."

(To be Continued Next Sunday)