

The Hope Diamond Mystery

by May Yohe

(Lady Francis Hope)

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 1642, stolen from the sacred golden statue of Rome, in the Temple of Rama and Sita, Burma, India. Tavernier was torn to pieces by wild dogs.

Madame de Montespan, 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 \$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.

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.

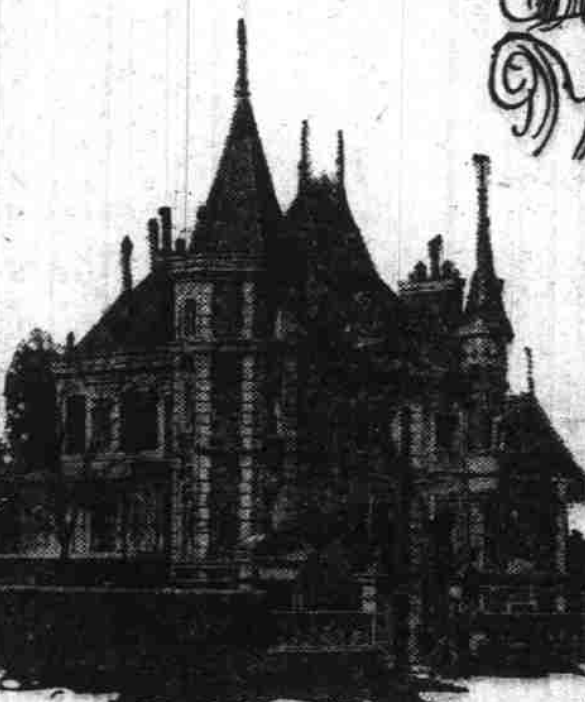
January 11, 1911, Mrs. Edward B. McLean, of Washington, D. C., bought it, wore it, was sued for \$180,000 by Cartier, the jeweler.

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.



Mme. de Montespan, King Louis XIV's Favorite, Who Wore the Blue Diamond and Who Was Discarded and Driven Out of the Royal Court



An Old Engraving Showing the Chateau Louis Built Near Paris for This Early Favorite of His

within the Kings' notice. It was at a ball given by Louis, at which was staged a daring ballet which the monarch called the "Amours of Hercules."

After the ballet was concluded the King called before him the dancers whom he especially wished to compliment. Among these was Mlle. de Tonnay-Charente.

At this ball Louis wore a diamond from his neck chain the flashing blue diamond he had purchased from Tavernier. Perhaps the young mademoiselle was quite as fascinated by its malevolent rays as by the smile of the King himself. At any rate, there are those who, writing their memoirs at that time, have recorded that there is no doubt but that very night Mlle. Francois determined to become the "favorite declared" of France.

Mme. de la Valliere was then the avowed favorite of the King, and she persuaded the monarch during one of the grand military parades he used to give when his army was not busy at war, to allow her to take the blue diamond from its case and wear it around her neck when the beauties of the court gathered in Flanders to witness the parade, which was to be staged there. Louis demurred, but at that time la Valliere was first in his favor—de Montespan only second. He allowed her to enjoy the sensation caused by her appearance in public with the famous gem dangling from its chain, and even watched with satisfaction the admiration bestowed upon it by the many courtiers who thus were given their first opportunity of examining it. A few weeks later Mme. de la Valliere ran away to a convent to escape being made a mere screen for the King's meetings with the beautiful Montespan.

The letter writing Mme. de Sevigne tells us that the very next evening Mme. de Montespan appeared in the grand ball room wearing the blue diamond.

After that de Montespan was accepted by the court as the real favorite. Within a year she suffered the first slight at the hands of Louis, which, while it proved but a lovers' quarrel, worried her considerably and sent her to her friend, the Marquise de Brinvilliers, who, with the aid of la Voisin the poisoner, summoned "witchcraft" to aid de Montespan keep the King bound to her.

De Brinvilliers, la Voisin and their confederate, Guibourg, assured the troubled favorite that even a King could not withstand the sorceries of the "black mass," and declared that this must be the rite performed if she was to have the means of keeping his love.

Accordingly de Montespan appeared, wrapped in a heavy cloak, at midnight before the gate of a gloomy chateau at



An Old Print of the Torture of the Beautiful Marquise de Brinvilliers. A Close Friend of the Montespan, She Was Accused of Poisoning Among Others Certain Ladies of King Louis's Court of Whom Mme. de Montespan Was Jealous. She Was Beheaded

Mesnil. She was admitted by a woman, Françoise Filastre, who, the judges later discovered, had brought her own child, a girl of four years, to be sacrificed, so rich was the fee collected by Guibourg for this sorcery upon the King.

Mme. de Montespan was led to the darkened chapel of the chateau.

At the foot of the "altar" the little daughter of the woman Filastre was strangled by Guibourg himself and its blood drawn to mix in the philter that was prepared, while a chant was sung to "Ashtaroth, Asmodeus, Princesses of Affection."

It was a heinous, pagan ceremony, with rites so degenerate the callous judges of the torture chamber years later could scarce believe their ears when it was described on the rack by the Marquise de Brinvilliers and the degraded Guibourg himself.

Three times, a week apart, this "La Messe Noire," or "black mass," had to be performed. Then the philters compounded each time were delivered to de Montespan. Craftily Mme. de Montespan would pour these love philters into the infatuated monarch's cup at their tete-a-tetes.

At last whispers of these weird ceremonies in the chateau at Mesnil reached the King. His lieutenant of police was summoned and instructed to establish an inquiry, to summon before him all who were said to know about these rites of the "devil worshippers." That any one attached to his own court could be implicated never occurred to Louis, and we may imagine his horror when victims of the torture chamber, including even one of his victorious Marshals, Luxembourg, disclosed the names of those for whom the "black mass" was performed, ladies of his most intimate circle, noble duchesses who were attendant upon his Queen and, most horrible of all—for de Montespan herself!—When she could endure her disgrace no longer de Montespan, bereft of many of the gifts the King had showered upon her, including the splendid blue diamond, re-

tired to a convent. Here repentance seized upon her and her mortification of the flesh makes one of the most unique chapters in the history of the discarded favorites of the French kings.

Her chemises and sheets were of the coarsest and roughest unbleached linen, although in deference to her inherent pride she concealed them beneath ordinary sheets and underwear. She wore continually bracelets, garters and corsets in which were fixed sharp iron points, and, as a most poignant torture of all, she hired waiting women to come to her bed every hour when she slept to awaken her with the cry, "Madame, arouse yourself; the King is approaching!" Could there be a more pitiful punishment—this awakening every hour from forgetful slumber with a summons to receive the king and his constant reminder when sleep was rubbed from her eyes that never again would that summons mean aught but a mockery of her past.

But now I must return again to my own story.

If my answer to the Prince of Wales's question as to what was the happiest moment of my life seems to be, rather evasive, it was because I am not sure at this moment whether the vista of my future in British titled society or the offer of A. M. Palmer of a real opportunity on the stage gave me the greater thrill.

How vividly I remember Mr. Palmer's remark, "Not so bad, little girl; not so bad! I'll engage you." Away I soared into a heaven of delight. I was to be a New York actress. My head began to whirl; I was in the clouds; but I came back to earth again with a rush when the great manager said, "Your salary

"Craftily Mme. de Montespan would pour these love philters into the infatuated monarch's cup at their tete-a-tetes, hoping by such means to keep the fickle King's love."



May Yohe Before She Married Lord Francis Hope

to commence will be nine dollars a week. Nine dollars and keep myself! I could do better than that teaching the piano in Philadelphia. I slipped my hand into the madre's and we crept out of the big, empty, dreary place like two mice that had been badly scared."

I wanted to go back home right then, but mother said, "No, let's go and try Mr. Daly." It was the same thing over again, only he offered me a little more money; but oh! so little—not enough to live on and buy boot leather. We went home and didn't say a word to any one about our blighted hopes, but I became ill with brain fever. I guess I worried quite a lot about that time. One defeat to the very young looks like disaster, but the passing years bring courage if you have any backbone.

Once again Fate threw a bouquet at me. John Russell, the actor-manager, came to Philadelphia with a company. He was producing a musical comedy called "Natural Gas." The leading lady, Miss Jeanne Yeamans, became ill, and I heard that John Russell wanted some one to understudy her, so, without a word to any one, I went and saw him. He looked me up and down rather disdainfully, I thought, and asked, "Can you sing?" "Yes." He seemed rather surprised at my self-confidence, and motioned me to the piano. Down I sat and sang Tosti's famous song, "Bida Me Good-by and Go."

John Russell was just wild with delight. He had expected to have to send to New York for a big salaried prima donna. He beamed on me and offered me the engagement there and then at sixty dollars a week. The sky looked very blue at that moment to me, for sixty dollars a week to the little music teacher, not yet out of short frocks, was a fortune.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday)