

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 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 AWAY. 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 suddenly cast its sinister shadow over her life and pursued her relentlessly in America, in Asia, throughout Europe, and even in South America.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier came into possession of the stone in 1642, stolen from the sacred golden statue of Kama. Tavernier sold the diamond to King Louis XIV. 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, died miserably in prison. Queen Marie Antoinette, who wore it, was beheaded. 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. Francis Beaulieu, who sold it, died in misery and want. The first of the Hope family who bought it suffered a long series of misfortunes. Lord Francis Hope, the grandson, suffered financial reverses, scandal and unhappy marriage, bankruptcy, and was forced to sell the diamond to Simon Frankel for \$168,000. May Yohe, his wife, who wore it, tells the story of her unhappiness.

Simon Frankel, New York broker, who bought it for \$168,000 in November, 1907, met financial difficulties. Jacques Collet, 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 Montherlides, who sold it to the Sultan Abdul Hamid, was thrown over a precipice while riding with his wife and child; all were killed. Abu Sabir, a lapidary, who polished it, was tortured and imprisoned. Kulub Bey, who guarded it, was hanged in the street by a Turkish mob.

Zubayba, 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 it 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 \$180,000 by Cartier, the jeweler. In May, 1919, her only child, Vinson McLean, the "Hundred-Million-Dollar Baby," was crushed to death under the wheels of an automobile in Washington. The extraordinary record of this sinister jewels, is related on this page, from week to week, for the first time by the remarkable woman whose own life was blighted.

CHAPTER V

(Continued from Last Sunday.)

Copyright, 1920, by International Feature Service, Inc.

LAST week I told on this page of the first great happy moment that came into my life—when John Russell, the star of the old musical comedy, "Natural Gas," told me I was employed to take the place of his prima donna, Jeannette Yeamans, who was ill, at a salary of \$60 a week.

That night I took the part and stepped for the first time before real footlights. Mother was out in the audience, and as soon as I found her I acted and sang to her alone. I was frightfully nervous at first, and stumbled a little in my "lines." But in the second act came my big song. I was confident now that the time had come for me to sing, and I sailed into my song without a tremble. It was "Tootsie's 'Ble Me Good-by and Go.'" I was almost swept off my feet by the applause that greeted the end of the first verse, and when I had finished my success was assured, for that audience proclaimed me a star—never dreaming that this was my first appearance on a stage.

After a short season with Mr. Russell I was offered the principal part in the musical play, "The Crystal Slipper." Now I was known as a star, and my salary was to be \$200 a week. This was a very large salary indeed for those days.

How different might not my life have been if the magnificent Hope Diamond never had been added to the jewels, which came to me as a reward for my success on the stage, and which were mine

King Louis XIV. and His Sweetheart, Mlle. de la Valliere. The King's Jealousy of His Minister of Finance, Viscount Fouquet, Who Helped Himself to the Royal Blue Diamond to Adorn Mlle. de la Valliere's Bosom, Started the Trouble Which Ended in Fouquet's Miserable Death in Prison After Being Stripped of His Enormous Wealth.

King Louis XIV., Who Bought the Diamond from Tavernier and Delighted in Adorning His Favorites with the Famous Stone.

twenty-seven years old, and had just been freed from the supervision of the Cardinal Mazarin by the latter's death. He found great consolation in the charms of the young English Princess, Henrietta, his sister-in-law, and it was not long before there was busy gossip going among the boudoirs of the ladies of the court.

The Princess Henrietta proposed to the King a plan which, she argued, would protect her from the accusing eyes of both her husband and the court—that he should suddenly feel an interest in one of her maids of honor, and openly bestow his attentions upon this "fool." Thus, the Princess argued, the King would be enabled to visit her apartments each evening, ostensibly to call upon this waiting woman.

Louis readily agreed. The Princess chose the one young girl from among her attendants whom she thought, because of her simple manners and unfamiliarity with court intrigues, would be the best to take advantage of such a situation. This was her maid of honor, Louise de Blanc, afterward known as the Duchess de la Valliere.

It was not long before the fickle Louis was paying his attentions in truth to this winsome maid of honor—and the Princess was forgotten.

At this time Fouquet was known to favor the attentions of Mlle. Menneville, a celebrated beauty, who was the intimate friend of many of the most prominent men of Paris. She was not, however, of court rank. The superintendent coldly decided that he would dismiss Mlle. Menneville and replace her in his favor with one of the young ladies who moved in court circles, and thus begin his usurpations of one of the prerogatives of the royalty of those days.

There were many charming young women among the maids of honor of the various princesses at court, and many, no doubt, would have been deeply flattered by the notice of the powerful superintendent of the finances of France. Fouquet canvassed them all, and but one appealed to him—none other than la Valliere herself.

That la Valliere was known to be the favorite of the King, and, besides that, she gave to Louis that happiness so rarely vouchsafed a King—love for himself alone and not merely for his royalty—seems to have made no difference to the ambitious Fouquet.

Fouquet summoned to his cabinet Mme. de Soissons, who had been the Mlle. Mancini with whom Louis had enjoyed his first love affair. Mlle. Mancini had been a shy,

"There in his cell, his face hidden behind the grotesque mask, the violin his only solace, was Louis's mysterious prisoner—the famous 'Man in the Iron Mask.' Was he Fouquet?"

diffident girl, very much embarrassed by the plan of her uncle, the Cardinal, to attach her to the King. She had piqued Louis by her sensitiveness, and he transferred his suit elsewhere rather than be troubled with obstacles.

Now, however, Mme. Soissons was not so conventional as she had been as Mlle. Mancini. Fouquet desired that she procure for him a tête-à-tête with the Mlle. de la Valliere.

Mme. de Soissons brought la Valliere and the Superintendent of Finance together in her apartments. She then withdrew, leaving Fouquet and the favorite alone. For what passed we must turn to the letters of Mme. de Soissons, who says:

"We who watched from an ante-chamber were much interested to observe the haughty Minister depart from the presence of the favorite with an indignant refusal." Fouquet now planned what in his narrow soul he believed would be an irresistible coup—a parade of his own power and of the wealth at his command, hoping to awe the young favorite with a splendor which even the King himself could not equal.

The Intendant invited the King and his court to a great ball at the Fouquet estate, Chateau de Vaux, in northern France. This chateau was the most magnificent of its time, in beauty and magnificence exceeding anything possessed by the royal family.

Fouquet decided that his display of pomp and power would not be sufficiently dazzling unless he could further prove his influence over the King by persuading him to loan him, for the evening of this grand fête, the famous blue crystal. At first the King was astounded by his request and indignantly refused, it is related. Fouquet blustered and threatened. There was a bitter scene in the King's cabinet. The minister threatened to withdraw from the court and wreck the kingdom. The King feared that he could. Louis at last sent his lackeys for the velvet box, and the blue crystal passed temporarily into the possession of Fouquet, we are told.

In all respects but one the triumph of Fouquet the night of the ball was complete. Only la Valliere was unaffected. She was amazed, her letters say, when she saw the diamond on Fouquet's neck, but she remained loyal to the King, despite Fouquet's promise that he would defy the King and present the diamond to her if she would favor him.

Early the next day Fouquet presented himself at the court to return to the King's own hands the precious gem.

The King said nothing, receiving the gem in silence and motioning to the Intendant that the interview was over. When he stepped outside the cabinet he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to look into the face of the Captain of Musketeers. He was under arrest.



May Yohe in One of Her Early Stage Successes.

The punishment meted out to Fouquet has been something of a mystery. The letter de cachet took him to the Bastille. There history loses track of him. He never again appeared. It is believed that that mysterious prisoner, who ended his days under a peculiar torture and whose identity has come down to us only vaguely as "The Man in the Iron Mask," was none other than the fallen Fouquet.

Now I will return to my own story. I have told how I suddenly became a star in the "Crystal Slipper" and became known, especially in the West, as one of the highest salaried of musical comedy stars.

I have met a lot of very fine gentlemen in my wandering life, but the old-time Westerner was just a prince. The men just bubbled over with courtesy, and a girl was as safe in their midst as in her mother's arms. They used to do a good deal of shooting about that time, but I fancy the folks who managed to get shot were about ripe for another world anyway. I learned to play poker in the West, and I have always loved a little gamble. I never did care for anything in this life with a "half-penny" limit. I have always preferred things with a chance attached. In one place a girl of the company took sick. She had an orphan brother to keep, and that boy was absolutely destitute without her earnings. But she was an awfully proud, independent sort of a girl, and would take help from no one.

That sickness of hers looked like spoiling her life. Somehow a whisper got around among our friends, and they were eager to find a way to help without giving offense to the little lady.

Next week I will tell you on this page how these splendid men "found the way" with their poker chips.

To Be Continued Next Sunday.