

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 Owned It and Wore It

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 experience of this remarkable American girl.

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. She is certain, and perhaps others may be, that the "curse of the Hope Diamond" had something to do with it.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier came into possession of the stone in 1642, stolen from the sacred golden statue of Rama. 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.

Simon Frankel, New York broker, who bought it, met financial difficulties. Prince Ivan Kanitovski, next owner, was killed by revolutionists. Lorenz Ladue, to whom he loaned it, was murdered by her lover.

Zubayba, the Sultan's favorite, who wore it, was killed by her master. Abdul Hamid paid \$400,000 for the stone. He was dethroned. Mrs. Edward B. McLean, of Washington, D. C., bought it, wore it, and was sued for \$180,000 by Cartier, the jeweler. Her only son, Vinson McLean, the "Hundred-Million-Dollar Baby," was crushed to death. The extraordinary record of this sinister jewel is related on this page, from week to week, for the first time by the remarkable woman whose own life was blighted.

CHAPTER VIII.

(Continued from Last Sunday.)

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I HAVE often been asked by persons who knew me well enough to admit such curiosity to me how an English lord does his courting. This question has been asked me so often I am wondering if my readers will not like to know just how Lord Francis courted me.

I have already told how we met, at a dinner in the old Hoffman House, in New York, where Lord Francis, whom I had seen on the street during the same afternoon, was presented to me as plain "Mr. Hope, of England."

The Horse Show then was in progress at Madison Square Garden. I told Mr. Hope I intended leaving the dinner party rather early, so I could attend the show, where I was to be the guest of one of the governors. He at once asked me if I would not let him be my escort to the show—he said he had been wanting to go, but had delayed his attendance, hoping for pleasant company, which, he said, gallantly, I could afford him if I would consent. I was very enthusiastic over the horses and enjoyed greatly Mr. Hope's discussion of the good and bad points of the most famous animals. He was very attentive to me. Presently I began to notice lorgnettes from all over the seat tiers turned in my direction. In the boxes near me the splendidly coiffed heads of wealthy society women, matrons of families known throughout the world for their leadership of fashion, were turned upon me with stares that were frank and curious. And here and there I caught bows of friendly recognition to my escort. I thought, of course, these society women, whom I knew only by sight, were just interested in a close-up view of the famous May Yohe, the new star in the theatrical firmament. I was greatly excited about their interest, and talked and laughed about it with my companion. "You are so very beautiful, Miss Yohe," he said smiling, "I can quite well understand anyone's wanting to get a good look at you."

After a week or so I announced to him my intention of sailing with mother to



Lady Francis Hope (May Yohe) in Her Gown for the Fashionable Ascot Races.

London, where a number of managers wanted to offer to stage new productions for me. "I am going home before you sail," he said, "and I want you and your mother to be my guests in London. No, indeed," I replied, "We will have but two thousand dollars or so when we arrive, as I am getting many new gowns made, and we will need every dollar of this to see us through the time of rehearsals or looking about for acceptable contracts. We cannot afford to be guests of any one."

"Well," he said, "you must let me take you around a bit, anyway." We saw him off at the pier. His last words were, "I must be your host anyway—it not for all the time, most of the time." When we arrived we were met by Mr. Hope. He was so glad to see us he really beamed. He held my hand a long time when he greeted me. He said we must come with him to the Savoy, because he was going to insist upon our having dinner with him there that evening.

The next day Mr. Hope went about with us while we looked for a cheaper hotel. He asked me if he might not be with me when I received the London theatrical managers, who already were showering down upon me requests for interviews. It was when he made this request that he said a thing which set my little heart a-buzzing. "You know, Miss May, I am hoping awfully that you are going to let me have a lot to do with your affairs—perhaps have the same interest in them that you have."

It took my breath away. I looked at him quickly. He was just smiling, a strange whimsical sort of smile, but there was a very earnest light shining in his eyes.

"Why," I said to myself, "this is really a proposal—a sort of clearing the decks for the direct question a little later on. He's just giving me warning, with an Eng-

him aside if I decide not to welcome him further."

When I got my breath and could trust my voice I just said, "That will be very nice, Mr. Hope—I'm sure."

He took my hand, gave it a little squeeze and said in a matter of fact way, just as if he were making a casual arrangement for tea or something like that, "Then it's all settled. I'm terribly glad."

We didn't get away from the Savoy that day, and that evening Mr. Hope visited us in our suite. There was a big fireplace in the drawing room, and we, mother and he and I, were grouped in front of this fireplace, talking over the different shows in London, some of which I had seen on this side, and discussing the hundreds of letters that had come to me from London managers. I remember we were trying to pick the manager we would receive first the next day.

We had promised Mr. Hope we would have supper with him that evening at one of the all-night clubs. It would be well, he said, for me to show myself at one of these clubs, as London's prominent theatrical folk gathered there. As the evening was wearing away there was a tap at the door. Mother opened it and saw it was Mr. Hope's valet. Mr. Hope was stopping then at the same hotel.

The valet said, "May I ask his lordship whether he will wear his tuxedo or his evening clothes this evening?"

Mother stared at him blankly. "Ask his lordship? Lordship who?"

"Lord Francis, madame."

Mother turned toward us breathless. I had heard and was almost stunned. Then my heart gave one big jump. I thought I was dreaming. I looked at our guest. He was looking at me with a sort of quizzical expression and smiling humorously. He spoke to the valet, ordering his evening clothes, and then turned to me again. "Murder will out, eh, Miss May? You'd have to find it out some day, anyway. Will you care any the less for me now that you know if you keep me you will have to some day be the Duchess of Newcastle?"

I don't know what I would have said if it hadn't been for mother. She dropped into her chair and was looking at Lord Hope with such a comical, "fashed-out" expression, her mouth agape, that we both broke out laughing. "His lordship!" she gasped.

"No, just Francis to you both from now on," said Lord Francis, reaching out for my hand.

He bowed himself out then, to dress. Mother said, when the door closed: "Good-night, Maymie, you've caught a lord."

I was started in "Christopher Columbus." In this piece was the song "Honey, Mah Honey," which became my greatest song. The first night when I sang the last word of the first verse of this number the pit and the gallery rose to their feet together

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French Revolutionists Tramping Along the Palace Corridor to Arrest King Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. From Painting by Flameng.

The Recently Discovered Knife Which Cut off the Head of Queen Marie Antoinette at the Guillotine.

King Louis XVI.



with one long, loud cheer. I have heard it was the wildest demonstration ever seen in a British theatre. Men in the pit threw pocketbooks onto the stage; the women tore off jeweled rings and diamond tiaras and threw them at my feet. Down from the gallery came fluttering that rarest of I had captured them.

Lord Francis one Saturday night took me up to his shooting box for a stay over Sunday. It was after we returned that our engagement was formally announced. But few people really ever knew just what Lord Francis and I agreed upon that Sunday at his shooting box.

He asked me if I would be angry with him if he asked me to marry him in a peculiar way. I assured him I would not be—"always remembering," I added, "that I may refuse."

His peculiar proposal was that we have a "probation" marriage for five months. If at the end of the five months I still loved him we would be married formally. If by that time I had found him wanting and had grown tired of him, or found some one I liked better, I could leave and forget him.

We were supremely happy. I took a beautiful house a little way out from the city, and here Lord Francis came to be husband and suitor at the same time.

During this "probation" period, Lord Francis was as careful in his attention to me as if he were, indeed, just a suitor for my hand. He was with me constantly, and took me everywhere. His kisses never lost their warmth. We never spoke of our being together as we were as a "trial."

One morning, while we were at breakfast together in my dressing room, Lord Francis said to me:

"I wonder if you will have time to-day, Maymie, to run down to Hempstead with me?"

"I'm afraid I won't, dear," I replied. "I have two engagements with my modiste and one with a committee that wants me to do something for some charity."

"But this is a very special trip," he insisted. "It has something to do with a certain five months that expired this morning."

I was shocked. I had forgotten all about the passing of the time. We seemed to have been children in a lover's dream forever. "And what has Hempstead to do with it?" I asked.

"I have arranged for a quiet wedding there in the vestry at noon."

Of course, the other engagements were cancelled. Lord Francis summoned a few of our closest friends and we all went down

to Hempstead. If there was any change in Lord Francis after that noon time it was only that now he had become in sight of all the world my really truly husband. And for me—well, now I was Lady May, on the way to becoming one of the proudest and richest duchesses in the British empire, mistress of half a score of wonderful castles and palaces—the Maymie of "Honey, Mah Honey" transformed into a peeress of the realm and a prospective Her Grace!

Of course it was not long after Lord Francis and I became everything to each other that I learned of the great collection of Hope jewels, in point of individual excellence and purity of its different gems the most remarkable assortment of jewels in the world. Lord Francis did not, for a time, show them all to me, but he did bring out to the house one evening for my inspection the huge "Blue Diamond." I shall never forget the strange, weird thoughts that fascinated me that night as I held in my hands for the first time this beautiful gem. Lord Francis remarked with amusement that I gave him the same sort of feeling Louis XVI must have had when that last of the royal Bourbon owners of the diamond saw it upon his Queen, Marie Antoinette.

Louis XVI, as I have told before, came into possession of the Blue Diamond when Cardinal Rohan purchased it from jewelers into whose hands it had passed mysteriously after the death of Louis XIV. Frequently he insisted that Marie Antoinette wear it at a ball in the Tuilleries, little caring that each time it appeared around the royal neck the gossips and critics of the court found new material for their attack upon the royal family—the Queen for her extravagance and frivolities and the King for his subservience to the willfulness of Marie.

In a few months the King found it necessary to run away from Paris and take refuge in a retreat far outside the city.

On January 21, 1793, he was taken in a common cart through the assembled mobs of Paris to the Place de la Louis XV., and there his head was struck off by the guillotine.

Years later the gem was found, as I have told before, in the hands of a pauper in London, after passing through the hands of the diamond cutters in Belgium. I shall tell at another time how the diamond came into possession of Thomas Henry Hope, the maternal ancestor of my husband, Lord Francis.

Of course my marriage to Lord Francis caused a great stir in London society. My first social appearance was at a house party where the Prince of Wales, afterward Edward VII., was a guest. Naturally the most prominent society women of Britain were there also. Lord Francis was very proud of me, but those austere women decided to "teach me my place." It was a Christmas season party. During the afternoon a very haughty woman, a Duchess who was known as one of the arbiters of London society, passed near me while I was speaking with the Prince. She stopped and obtained the Prince's permission to speak to me. "May I ask, Lady May, what your Johnny gave you for Christmas?" she said to me, with a most contemptuous sneer.

I turned to the Prince. "Have I your permission, sir, to reply?" I asked him. He merely nodded his head. Then, turning my look full upon the dowager's face, I replied:

"Many beautiful things, your grace. And now may I inquire what all your Johnnies gave you?"

The Prince burst out laughing. From that day on that dowager Duchess was ridiculed in all London society and I, poor little me, was lionized.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)