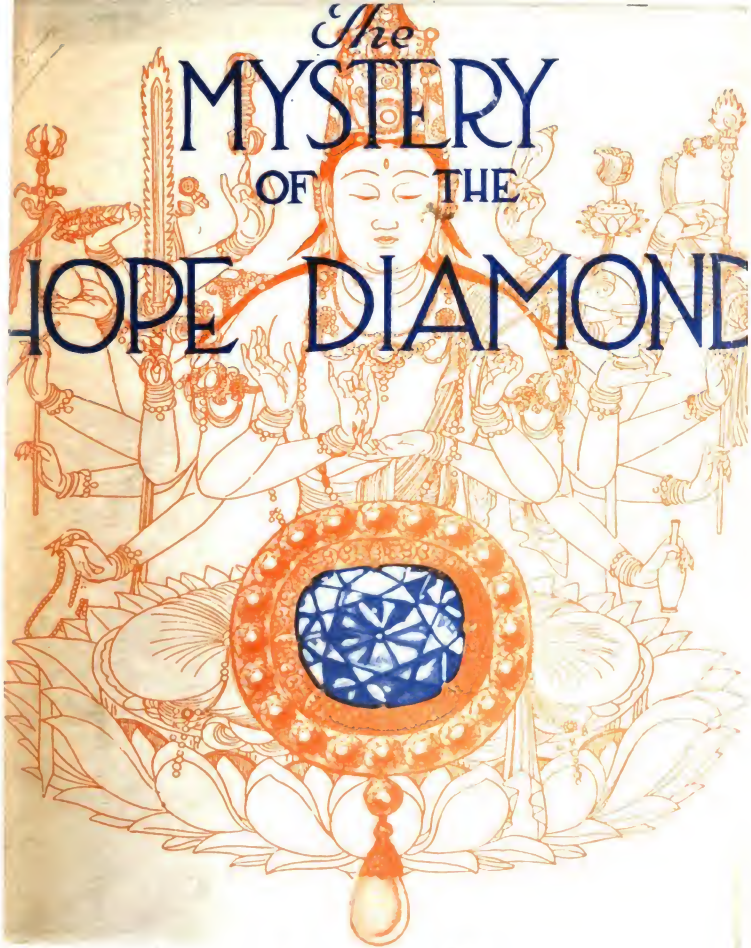
THE MYSTERY OF THE HOPE DIAMOND

Henry Leyford Gates



By H. L. GATES

Author of "Ravished Armenia," "Auction of Souls," etc, etc.

Together with the

)MANTIC PERSONAL NARRATIVE of MAY YOHE (Lady Francis H

Bibi and Gungh, to whom her Father has sold his Virgin Daughter, whether She will or no.

THE MYSTERY OF THE HOPE DIAMOND

AS SET DOWN BY

H. L. GATES

AUTHOR OF "RAVISHED ARMENIA," "THE AUCTION OF SOULS," ETC., ETC.

From the Personal Narrative of
LADY FRANCIS HOPE
(May Yohe)

FULLY ILLUSTRATED FROM THE PHOTOPLAY

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BOOK ONE

Chapter One.

ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY.

Come with me, my reader, while I turn back the hands of time, and leap the centuries that separate us from a dim, almost forgotten past. It takes no recondite philosopher to tell us that all things have their beginnings, and that the beginning of almost everything is in some far away period of which the memory of man is vague. So it comes to pass that for the setting of the stage, upon which the drama we shall after a while enjoy is to be played, we must go back to where the beginning was.

In this backward flight we shall not have to depend upon our fancies, and build a structure upon mere imaginings. For there is a written record of

these things which transpired upon the road to Mandalay, and there are legends and the tales which one generation has passed down to another. When, later, we have read the biography of the unfortunate Lady Francis whose wisdom was not so potent as her love, we shall be glad that first we went back to the beginning and travelled to the Temple with Jean Baptiste.

In the year 1588 there was great rejoicing throughout the length and breadth of the dominions of Majjhima, Son of the Sun, Lord of the Four High Heavens, Sublime Ruler of the Distances, and King of the bountiful lands of Burma. So faithfully had the peoples of this august King observed the teachings of Gautama, the Perfect One, that for the whole of a year they had been at peace with her neighbors, the powerful Moguls to the one side, and the Mongols and Shans to the other; the Gods of Abundance had signified their approval of this state of contentment by showering prosperity upon the land, and Sita, Goddess of Love, revered wife of Rama, had given sign of her delight at such a commendable state of things by sending boy children,

instead of worthless girl babies, into the houses of those who walked faithfully along the nine Paths of Buddha.

So it was that the noble cavalier, Jean Baptiste, was joined by great crowds of pedestrians, in spotless white raiment and with holy joy in their faces, as he trudged along the road to Mandalay.

For, even as Jean Baptiste was intent upon reaching the temples at Pagan, which stood at the end of the Mandalay road, before the Third Day of the August Moon, so also were these people of the countryside hurrying thither, they to pay their reverence and voice their gratitude for the richness of the harvest at the throne of Sita, and he to witness the ceremonials of the festival.

The Cavalier had come far; even from the court of Louis the Magnificent, in distant France. From Sultan to Czar he had gone in his travels into regions little known, and from them he had passed into the land of the Great Mogul, which then was territory wholly strange to Christian eyes. Marvellous, indeed, were the things Jean Baptiste had seen—enough to make [illegible] calling those of the Sheherezade of whom he had heard at Bagdad.

ld tell, for example, of a game he had
with Akbar, the Mogul himself, which quite
ed his familiar chess, at which he was ex-
the salons of his native Paris. But of this
ith Akbar he could say, and enjoy the in-
us stares of those who should be his listen-
t it was not with wooden men he played
he geometric squares, but with live slave
om the Imperial Zenana. Each had been
or her lotus eyed beauty, and for her skill
preting the slightest signal of the master
ved her about from square to square. As
ax to this particular tale, he could tell of
e Akbar fixed for him—the same as for
pecially honored guests at his lavish court.
e won, his beautiful human pawns were
rd—to scold or fondle as he liked; when
it was his cost that he should sit quite still
e eunuchs of his royal host assembled at his
weeping chess and strangled them one by

he had stored [illegible] and many other equally
ng reminiscences for future narration to
tive Parisian audience, the Cavalier had ex-

pressed a desire for further explorations and additional adventure. It was then the Mogul told him of a still stranger land farther on—the land from whence came the most beautiful of his wives, and where there was a temple which housed an idol of solid jade, so heavily adorned with jewels that even the riches of the Golconda could not exceed the treasure of this single shrine.

Thus were the feet of Jean Baptiste turned to the East from Delhi, and came, during the festival season, to the road that led to Mandalay, and just beyond, to the temple of Sita, Mother and Giver of all that is Love.

He hurried, that he might arrive within the walls of the temple city before the festival, which would begin at the third moon day, was finished. He was told, by these joyous folk who walked beside him, and whose chatterings he had learned to understand during the many days of his travels from Delhi, that this was to be the ceremony of Onam, the most important of all prayer fetes. It was explained that the road was crowded because those who had loved according to the wishes of Sita

would attend from scores of miles in each direction.

"A highly entertaining sight it will be," said the Cavalier, to himself, as he hurried along. "There are many pretty ears, of a shell pink texture, which will enjoy a rare treat of listening when I return to Paris, to my description of an actual ceremonial, with temples and priests and votaries, in honor of the Supreme Patroness of Love. 'Twill be a subject of exceptional interest and may serve to ease a troubled conscience here and there where love's adventures are not always so publicly proclaimed."

It was a motley mass his road companions made. The rites of Onam were of the few in which the women were allowed publicly to participate by their masters. Husbands plodded by, surrounded by all the members of their households; fathers led their entire families. It was a time, too, when the distinctions between rich and poor were wiped away in so far as went the sharing of the road in common, and the absence of such luxurious show as slave borne carriages and drag carts. Wealth and poverty walked together; even spoke with one another in pious greeting. Masters rubbed elbows with

their servants, and spoke occasional words to their modest wives. Concubines of rich office holders chatted gaily with the eunuchs of their lords, and long robed priests from lesser temples were openly attended by their own meek nautch girls. Sita received only the humble at her feet; she knew only three divisions among her people—virgins, good wives, and fathers. The wicked wife and the childless man, she would recognize only with an evil spell, and between all others there could be no difference of station. Nautch girls were, of course, excepted. They were wives of Rama and as such needed no other credentials than their calling.

It was not remarkable, then, that among the pilgrims there walked one who at another time, would have been borne aloft, nestling in the silken cushions of a curtained palanquin, on the shoulders of six stalwart slaves. The beautiful Khema, daughter of Asokala, the merchant whose wealth was beyond the power of ordinary folk to measure, was not one accustomed to the pebbles and dust of roadways trod by lesser mortals. The fame of her loveliness was as far flung as the Ramayana. To look with open eyes upon her living presence at

any other time would have been a marvel as tremendous as a glimpse at Nirvana. But at the time of Onam, Khema, like her father, who was fat and waddling, and her mother who was much bejewelled, honored the dust with imprints of her perfumed toes. On such a religious errand it was proper that she should be unabashed by the frank and wondering stares of those who, on other days of the year, she would have ordered flogged to death without mercy had they dared lift their eyes above the hem of her flowing garment.

Upon the strangely garbed, but undeniably gallant figure of the traveller from unknown lands, who came abreast of her, Khema looked with undisguised amazement, and in her glance after it had recovered from its first surprise, there was not a little of that certain feminine interest which is fraught with mysterious meanings quite as indefinable in the Orient as in the Occident. Here, indeed, was something that made this long, annual tramp in the common road at least sufferable! "Surely, this must be a prince from a far dominion where men are different—and much more attrac-

tive—than those who clutter up the streets of the cities of Burma!"

It was forbidden by custom that the pretty Khema should know aught of men. And one so rare of form and grace, "as beautiful and modest as the blooming bud enclosed within its sheaf of yellow leaves," was doubly protected by the argus eyed keepers of her father's zenana from evil result of those insinuating curiosities toward the opposite sex which any maiden may well be forgiven. Yet it must be said outright that the virgin Khema was not unacquainted with certain aspects of masculinity. Rama himself could not have saved her that. For was there a rich man's son, from Rangoon to Manipur, who had not, in the ardor of those First Understandings that bring youth across the bridge to manhood, journied at least once to the city of the rich Asokala that he might climb the hill outside the great merchant's villa with the hope of catching from that vantage point a glimpse of the daughter of the house, alone with her maidens, in her jasmine garden? Certainly, there was no son of a rich man who had not made that pilgrimage; and there was none who, favored of the

good Saint Kanva and given the surreptitious glance he sought, departed without having been made the target of the God of the Five Shafts! Which meant that he bore away with him one separate wound for each of the Five Manifestations of Love.

Of such things Khema could not be ignorant. Nor could her maidenly eyes be restrained from coy turnings to the summit of the hill just outside the walls which enclosed her jasmine garden. And there are slaves in every zenana who may be bribed —or cajoled, perhaps, by a pretty mistress whose "teeth are like the pearls of Dushyanta; whose cheeks are tinted with the ambers of the Main-ka-wan, and whose smile is the magic that reveals the Grove of Gladness." Lotus leaves on which were written ecstatic exclamations as nothingless as any of modern invention for similar purpose, went back and forth no doubt, by secret messenger between the garden and the hill top with adventurous regularity.

So it may be said that while it was forbidden that Khema should know of men, she did, nevertheless. And quite enough—in true maidenly fashion—to discern a great difference from all others in the

Cavalier who seemed about to pass her by with nothing more than a most disrespectfully fleeting glance.

Khema hurried a bit to keep pace with the stranger. Her troop of maid-slaves followed closely. Her stolid father, visioning his pile of treasure bags in half a score of hidden vaults to keep his mind off the length and hardness of this annual foot-way, was unmindful of his daughter's sudden energy. Her mother noted it, perhaps, and would have restrained her, but being a properly humble wife she dared not go in front of her husband, even to reprove his daughter for going ahead and out of sight.

Her parents a safe distance behind her, Khema deliberately planted her dainty, soft skinned foot upon a Kusa-grass. The sting of the Kusa-grass is very painful; it warrants a startled cry from any pedestrian, and from one so delicate and tender as Khema, it justifies a little shriek, then a piteous little groan that becomes a sob. And no sob is complete without at least a few tears, pendant at first in trembling drops from quivering eyelashes,

then moistening their way down the knoll of blooming cheeks.

A maiden in distress was of no consequence to that horde of native pilgrims bent upon arriving as early as possible at the threshold of the Temple of Siva, that they might be first to pay their devotions and thus miss none of the opening festivities of Onam. None knew, of course, that the maiden was the most beautiful of all the daughters of the land, nor that she was the most shining light of the richest zenana in Burma. The dust of the road veiled her beauty and her face was not familiar to the multitude, as would be that of an heiress of today. They looked at the frail sufferer from the sting of the Kusa-grass with more amusement than pity, and hurried on.

That is—they hurried on, with the exception of one. The Cavalier was of different mettle—just as Khema had supposed.

Jean Baptiste was noted, in the gay world that hovered about the court of the Grande Monarque, for his readiness to rescue all and sundry maidens caught in difficulties. He was quick to measure the helplessness of the sufferer's attendant virgins—a

helplessness Khema had guaranteed with a hasty whisper—and rushed to her assistance.

There was nothing to do, but to withdraw the dart which the Kusa-grass had implanted in the delicately tinted foot. (Khema, of course, had not thought to reach down and pull it out.) Then, with a quick, dictatorial order to one of the maidens to open her water pouch, he saturated his handkerchief and bathed the spot where a single drop of blood marked the wound.

Generally the withdrawal of the dart of the Kusa-grass relieves its pain, and a touch of cool water erases the memory of it. But Khema was not eased so quickly. As she rested on the arm of this stranger from some place afar, who spoke to her so softly and tenderly in unfamiliar accents, some strange thrill suffused her. It was something more rapturous, even, than the blissful sensation with which she had sent and received those clandestine and forbidden missives recorded on the lotus leaves which passed between her garden and the hill top. A feeling of the same kind, but more intense. It retarded her recovery and made it

necessary for her to rest longer on that supporting arm.

As she looked up into the face bent down to hers, it seemed that her eyes must be on fire. She closed her lids to ease the burning of them. When she opened them and looked again the fire came back. Her thoughts became confused. She wished to speak, but only certain words quivered at her lips. These were not words befitting a maiden in such a circumstance, and she tried to banish them and frame another thought. When she was sure she had succeeded, and could say something more in keeping with her modesty, she opened her lips and spoke—but her voice was disobedient; the words that came were those she would have withheld:

"If thou but say thou art pleased with me, I will understand why I am in Paradise."

Chapter Two.

WITHIN THE PAGAN GATE.

The Third Moon day dawned propitiously upon the plains which reached beyond Mandalay to the crumbling walls of Pagan. With the first gray light of morning a hundred thousand forms rose from the ground on which they had slept through the night and began pushing, a great seething mass of half hysterical humanity, toward the city gates which had opened upon this same tableau, each year, for ten centuries. From all the roads that converged upon the Pagan plain long lines of tardy pilgrims hurried, losing themselves in the greater mass like little rivulets flowing through ridges in the banks of a swirling lake to add their streams to the eddying bulk.

When the first red glow of the wakening sun tinted the horizon above the low line of hills to the

east, presaging the coming of the Fire Symbol itself, a great clamor arose on the plain. It was the loud shout of lusty men, to which was added a touch of shrillness by the piercing cry of women permitted this one time of the year to raise their voice in a public place. By this spontaneous cry these happy subjects of the good King Majjhima made known to Sita that they had come, on the appointed day, to thank her for the blessings of the year gone by, and to invoke new ones for the twelve months to come.

The mass swayed close to the gates. Within a hundred yards it halted, leaving an open space in the shape of a semi-circle. In this clear space there stood twelve stately, solemn figures. Their eyes were eagerly turned to the east, where the red glow was. Although the dust of many miles was caked on the feet of this little company, each figure was robed in spotless white garments, hemmed with gold thread, which indicated that these were the High Priests of the Twelve Conditions of All Wise.

Hardly had the first deafening outbreak of the multitude echoed away when the Fire Symbol burst above the summits of the hills. Breathlessly the

throng stood until the ball rose free of the hilltops and hung, a blazing silhouette, above the horizon. Then with common impulse the hundred thousand pilgrims dropped prostrate to the ground, foreheads in the dust. Out of a tense stillness there rose the chant of the twelve high priests:

Oh, Beloved Thou, of Perfect Understanding,
Thou who made us as we are in all enduring Oneness
With the Concepts of the Perfect One;
Oh, Daughter of the Moon and Mate to Rama,
Thou giver of the Four Ecstacies and of Fecundity;
Send thou now thy daughter wives of Isvara
That we, thy children stirred by love,
May humbly enter unto thee in gracious Onam's name!

With the droning of the last syllable of the chant the floor of the great plain seemed to surge up into a mighty billow, so quickly did the prostrate forms

that covered it spring to their feet. And while they waited, poised to hurl themselves forward, the shrill soprano notes of an answering chant came from behind the city walls. The gates shook as their inner bars were thrust aside, and then they swung outward, pushed on their leather hinges by the delicate, shapely hands of the most famous bevy of bayardes, "temple virgins," in all Burma. These were the "Daughter wives of Isvara." Sita had sent them in answer to the plea of the multitude as voiced by the high priests to fling wide the gates—and the Festival of Onam was begun.

Among the first to enter the gates was the Cavalier. Twelve hours had passed since that incident of the Kusa-grass and he had not rested, but had pushed steadily ahead that he might be with this vanguard entering the temple city. Now that the gates were behind him, however, and the city with its mysteries lay unguarded before him, he hesitated. His feet, accustomed to steady use, were not wearied, and he might have gone on forgetful of all exertion in contemplation of the wonders about him. Yet there seemed to be something more important than the opening scenes of the re-

ligious drama soon to begin in the temple yard. The thought was the climax of that intriguing memory, which had persisted during the long night walk, of the gentle face that had rested on his arm, and of the hot breath that fanned his cheeks and the fluttering eyelids when he had said, in answer to her yearning query:

"You please me very much, my little one; I vow the wish is mine that we might be satisfied further with one another!"

He had intended his answer to be a gay bantering, such as had gained him a certain fame in many a petticoated circle. But a more romantic impulse had thwarted him. There had been a tender note in his voice which surprised him. And he had been further astonished by the quickening of his pulse when Khema replied:

"It is forbidden that I echo thy wish aloud, but it is not written in the True Teachings that a virgin's prayers shall be fettered!"

That had been his memory during the night. And as each hour passed the recollection had grown fonder. He had pushed ahead, at Khema's gentle urging that her father soon would be upon them

and would be greatly perturbed should he see her in communion with a man, but the vision of her, and the touch of her, remained with him. Now, inside the gate of the city, his goal achieved, he bethought himself suddenly that when Khema and her father passed inside the walls she might be forever lost to him in the spreading out of the pilgrims within the city. He abused himself sternly for the desire to look again upon this bewitching daughter of an unbelieving people and a foreign race, but ended by admitting that the desire was consuming him, and was not to be denied.

So the Cavalier found a stone near the portals, and, making it comfortable with his shoulder-bag as a cushion, sat himself down upon it to await the coming of the pagan maid.

His waiting was long, but not tiresome. The kaleidoscopic qualities of the long stream of pedestrians passing through the gates, coming from many districts with endless variety of costume and demeanor, entertained him considerably. Presently he was aware he had found a new interest in scanning the procession. He had fallen into the habit of picking out, for especial observation, daughters

of high caste families who, now and then, hurried by. Young women, of an age and circumstance which constituted them potential antagonists in a game of hide and seek, always interested the Cavalier. But such was not his sudden interest in these who passed on their way to Onam while he waited for one who was familiar.

One went by whose face was wistful, her lotus eyes wide and deep with that ineffable mystery which the countless centuries of an unknown past seems to have implanted in the eyes of all peoples of the Orient. She looked at the stranger sitting on the rock with frank wonder, braving a reprimand from a watchful mother for looking so unreservedly at a man. The Cavalier returned her stare, and ran his eyes, from the arched eyebrow to the peeping foot, with calm appraisal.

"Now just suppose," he mused, half aloud, "I should take that face back with me to the court of my good patron Louis. What would be the consequence? The Grand Monarque would chuckle at my audacity, I have no doubt, but what of the haughty Montespan? And the impish de la Valerie who may already have profited greatly by that oc-

casional look of approval bestowed upon her by Louis behind Montespan's back? Would such as they—the Paris which is best epitomised in them—take kindly to such a feminine importation and continue its gracious regard for Jean Baptiste? And, on the other hand, how long would I be satisfied with such amusement as that delightful heathen personage might lend me? Would I tire of such an one; even of the remarkably self-effacing love with which these Eastern women seem to endow their lords and masters?"

The wistful one was long gone by while these musings raced through the Cavalier's mind. Then there came a high born maiden, attended by a merry troop of serving girls, whose curious glance was roguish, and whose drooping eyelids bespoke inclinations presumably taboo in a land where there is no word to translate flirtation.

"Or what of such an one as that, who certainly would not permit me to vegetate in a garden of monotonies?" the Cavalier asked himself. "What would be the result to me should I present one like her in the grande salon of my austere godmother, the Duchess D'Uzes, and say 'Here, Godmother

mine, embrace your daughter-in-law—you'll have to speak to her with your hands and shoulders for whether she would or no, she can converse with no one but me'. Of course there can be but one thing the witty Duchess could say in reply; 'twill be something like this: 'At least, my dear Jean, you may be sure of her tongue's fidelity—for a time'. But what I should like really to know is, what else would the Duchess say, and what would she do?"

For each young girl of seeming good estate who came along the Cavalier had a different reflection. He laughed at himself a bit when he discovered what he was doing, and then he knitted his forehead at the very seriousness of it.

Much more than two hours passed, as quickly as a few minutes, so intent had he been upon his mental picturings. Then there appeared in the narrow embrasure of the gateway the familiar waddling figure of the portly Asokala, and behind the merchant walked his wife and her attendants. Alert and eager now, the Cavalier watched until the gateway framed her whom he awaited.

Now that his waiting was ended, and its purpose

achieved, what was he to do? How was he to benefit, and in what way? Suddenly he was embarrassed. A man in Burma, even though he be a traveller from distant lands, does not approach a maiden in the public highway and openly utter the pleasantries of salutation.

The Cavalier stood at the side of his stone, inconspicuous, until the merchant and his meekly following wife had passed. Then he boldly stepped in among the pedestrians and caught step with them. Even a close observer could not have detected with what care he edged his way to the side of one who was, quite apparently, the gentle daughter of the rich man a few yards ahead. And the Cavalier took care that it should not seem that there was any intent in his proximity to this pilgrim maid. He did not even look at her; he seemed unconscious of any neighbor. And yet he had seen the gladness of her surprised recognition of him; the quick fluttering of her hands about her breast; the instant's halting as if her impulse were to throw herself into his arms and, finally the knowing little tilt of her head as she fathomed his intention to keep close by her until opportunity came for another of those sweet communions of words.

This opportunity came quicker than he had expected. Khema's slave girls adored her—and fully understood the meaning of that scene back on the road where she had found the Kusa-grass. And they had lost none of their wits since. Giggling and nodding to each other, enjoying to its utmost the thrill imparted any maiden by a partnership in the forbidden, they formed a circle about their mistress and the stranger who walked beside her closing in upon them and, keeping the pace of the hurrying throng, they completely isolated the infatuated pair from the human mass on all sides.

The Cavalier saw what was happening, and smiled gayly upon the mischievous faces that encircled him. He slackened his pace a bit, until he felt a presence so close to him that its linen garments brushed caressingly against his rougher garb. He looked down into the face that was already awaiting his glance, and smiled again:

"Certainly these are cunning maidens of thine; they display a marvellous understanding." Khema dropped her eyes, but raised them with little loss of time.

"Art thou content that they should thus obstruct the road and prevent thy hurrying ahead?"

"I am afraid I should be content if they would but hedge us in like this forever! They would make fitting bayardes in a real temple of love."

It was some time before Khema could reply to that—words would not come out of the hot tempest within her. Her very feet faltered as if unequal to the unaccustomed burden of a heart afire and a soul that suddenly had reached out and gathered in all the ecstacies. It was with difficulty the Cavalier restrained an impulse to reach out his arm and steady her. When, at last, she found her voice, she spoke slowly—words which, she feared, would never be forgiven her by the Beloved One in whose honor the festival of Onam was being celebrated.

"The temple of love of which thou speakest—would there be room within, a niche perhaps, at the altar steps, where Khema might be a witness to thy worshippings?"

He looked down upon her, into her eyes and far beyond them. He had travelled many leagues, many thousands of them, and had learned the women of many countries; the choicest of them at

home, or from the harem of a Sultan, or from among the ladies in waiting to a Czarina, might have been his but for the taking of them. He had amused himself as his fancies prompted, sipping a bit of honey, like the bee, from this flower and that; but, still like the bee, he had flown away content to leave the flowers behind. Here, in these eyes so tender and promiseful in their caressing measure of him, he saw at last that which transmuted whatever of idleness there may have been in his first fancy into a more golden desire.

"If it might come to pass that I may build the temple of love I have now in mind, the place I shall reserve for you will be on the altar itself. Would I, then, be building in vain?"

Khema spoke so softly not even the closest of her slaves could hear, though anyone of them, from watching the flush in her cheeks and seeing the difficulty with which she breathed, might have known the import of what she said.

"Whatever thou shouldst seek to do with Khema is as if it were already done!"

A warning from one of the slave girls drew their attention to the earthly affairs about them. The

Cavalier saw that the pilgrims were spreading into the byways of the city, each little company intent upon finding the least crowded street by which to reach the vicinity of the Temple of Sita. Khema saw that her mother had become anxious about her and was waiting a little further along the narrow road which had begun to wind about among crumbling houses standing since the days of the first kings.

The girl cried out in alarm. She feared not only discovery by her mother in forbidden converse, but the inevitable separation from him who had aroused within her a thousand new thoughts, each with an eager hope to keep it company, and who had, above all, led her to the very threshold of the Four Heavens of Blissfulness.

"We must part," she whispered quickly; "Thou must take another way. If thou shouldst remain where I might even know thy nearness my eyes would reveal my secret and such things are not forgiven. Hear me and we shall meet again. That which I have done in confessing my heart's weaknesses is a sin which only the Twelve Bathings may purge, and purged I must be else I dare not kneel

Bibi, the Virgin amid the Nautch Girls, just outside the Temple of Rama Sita in which is the Buddha with the Great Diamond.

at Sita's feet. Seek thy Khema when a full hour hath passed, on the banks of the Irawaddy where others who must be purified will gather for the bathings."

Chapter Three.

ON THE BANKS OF THE IRAWADDY.

Within the hour Jean Baptiste found his way to the banks of the Irawaddy, that ancient river which hides within its placid bosom the secrets of the time when the human race was cradled. The path, from the city to the river, was marked by a long line of beggars, each with hand outstretched, waiting to receive alms from the sinners who considered it advisable to take precaution of the Twelve Bathings before prostrating themselves before the pure and mighty Sita. None is so generous as a repentant sinner; it was freely whispered among those who professed to know, that many of these mendicants paid as much as a hundred rupees to the high priest of the temple for the privilege of soliciting gifts along this highway to the river during the festival. And it was said further that some

of them required the better part of two full moons thereafter to haul away the gifts of brocades and embroideries, trinkets and metal workings, showered upon them by those who would, by their generosities, impress the Beloved One with their worthiness.

The Cavalier tossed his alms with open hand. The beggars who scrambled at his feet for the largess marvelled at the jauntiness with which he pitched them coins of the highest values. "Here," said they, "is one whose sins have been profitable indeed. It is well there should be such transgressors in the land." But the Cavalier had a different thought for them. "Gather in the coins, my worthies," he sang out to them, in a tongue they could not understand, "for you deserve them; if for nothing else, why just for being guide posts along a path that leads me to my Khema. For she shall be mine—if I have to throttle her father; charm her mother, and bribe all the high priests in Burma."

The sight of ten thousand forms in a great circular mass, reminding him somewhat of a swarm of bees, told him he was drawing near the river.

"How, by all the favor of Karma, am I to identify the one whom I seek, in such a gathering as that," he asked himself with a troubled frown. As if in answer to his thought one of the beggars stepped out from among his fellows, grovelled at the Cavalier's feet, and whined:

"I am thy servant, master, to show the way thou would tread to thy Heaven of Enchantments. Alms, master, alms; then shall my unworthy feet tread straight and true."

"Now what new monging is this?" exclaimed Jean Baptiste, with considerable temper. He was troubled at the prospect of hunting a single maiden out of this throng before him. He flung a coin at the fellow and was about to fling a kick after it, when the supplicant arrested his attention by displaying, in his open palm, a glittering bauble which the Cavalier recognized as having formed the clasp of Khema's robe.

"See, master, one whom thou seekest hath entrusted me with thy good guidance. Another alms and thou shalt return this bauble to its duties. 'Tis a thing thou must do before thy bathings, for to

seek out such a pretty virgin is a double sin indeed."

The Cavalier dropped a whole handful of coins into the beggar's pouch. Without another word the ragged messenger led the way apart from the crowd, to a bend in the river hidden by a clump of trees. This was a considerable distance beyond the common bathing place, and occasional guards in official robes signified that these sheltered spots, away from where ordinary sinners made their ablutions, were reserved for repentants who could afford to pay handsomely for privacy. Some mysterious signal from the guide protected the Cavalier from interference.

They came to a bamboo pergola, over which were draped vines and the boughs of trees, completely enclosing it. From its opening it was but a few steps to the river.

"There, my master, is the bower of the one thou seekest. It is there she awaits thy coming—sly maiden that she is, to thus gain advantage of her mission to the river. Another alms, Oh, Generous One, and thy servant will watch carefully lest an intruder draw too near; it would not be well that

a rambling priest should divine the purposes of thy coming hither."

The additional alms was passed.

"How, now, am I to attract her attention?" asked Jean Baptiste, puzzled as to the etiquette of the occasion. "Presumably she is preparing for her bathing; 'twould be unseemly for me to step in upon her. Yet, if she awaits me, how is she to know I am about? Can you tell me that, my alms collector?"

"Of the ways of love I know naught, O Venturesome One," the beggar replied. "It was written by the Sublime One that 'he who would be wise must keep his mind in subjection lest woman adulterate his wisdom with foolish thoughts. It is better,' further said the Sublime One, 'to fall into the tiger's mouth than to let female entice you'. We who ask remembrance from such as you, oh Fascinated One, must be wise and keep outside the tiger's mouth lest our faults are discernible and our harvests meager. Therefore we learn nothing of the manner of approach to woman."

"All of which seems to mean, then, that you refuse to accept responsibility for what may happen

if I'm found about that pergola," said the Cavalier. "Well, so be it. Hesitating feet ne'er reached fair lady."

With that, the Cavalier walked boldly into the space just outside the opening which led under the vine and leaf covering, and peered within. He saw Khema seated, cross legged on the ground, surrounded by her slave girls. Her eyes were upon the opening. When they took in the form of her visitor, they dropped shyly, and then Khema bowed her head. It was as if she were whispering a prayer of thankfulness for the success of her ruse —this hieing away to an isolated bath house and the bribing of the beggar to bring her suitor.

The Cavalier was never wanting in boldness. His possession of it was one of the characteristics which promoted various successes in new world salons. He walked boldly through the opening and dropped to his knees at Khema's feet. The slave girls nodded their heads in gay approbation of the manoeuver and grouped themselves in a semi-circle at the furthest corner of the pergola, with their backs turned upon their mistress.

"Thy Khema is honored by thy waiting upon

her," murmured the maiden, her eyes still downcast.

"Look up, sweet child," said the Cavalier, "and see if there is not that in my face which proves the gladness mine in being permitted to enter here."

Her eyelids fluttered a bit, and the full depths of blackness underneath confronted him for just a moment; then she looked down again, as if the sight of him dazzled her as would the effulgence of a noonday sun. Gently he reached out to invade her robe in search of her hidden hands. When he found them they did not resist, but folded meekly within his own. He drew them out and kissed their tapering fingers—and kissed them again to convince himself it was the caress which caused those fingers to tremble so violently.

"Thou art cruel," whispered Khema.

"You are divine," returned the Cavalier.

"Is this to be the beginning, or the ending?" Khema asked, so low and tremulously he scarce could hear her.

"The beginning of that which shall never end—of love and devotion that shall bring together my heaven and thy Nirvana."

The Cavalier did not say these words softly—he shouted them with such a joyous loudness that the little slave girls turned their faces around to witness such a marvellous oath. Even the beggar waiting outside came up to the pergola opening to make a sign advising certain cautions. His energy was wasted, for Khema, just then, was experiencing for the first time the ardor of a troubadour's embrace—a ceremony which even her most unbridled imaginings never had encompassed. The little slave girls, when they turned their faces the other way again, swore to themselves they were shocked. They swore it with double vehemence lest their mischievous glee completely dispel proper indignation.

A half hour passed so quickly both Khema and the Cavalier were convinced Time had tricked them. It was the faithful beggar who warned them by putting in his head and persisting in his admonitions until he succeeded in attracting the attention of the lovers. "The last of the bathing ones are departing, my master," he called out, "and thy delayings might prove morsels for the maw of curiosity."

A little scream from Khema, a smothered oath from the Cavalier in his own tongue and a quick repeating of everything they had promised each other, and they separated. Khema fled to the river bank where the ready hands of her slave girls caught her robe as she released its shoulder fastenings. Twelve times she buried her head in the bosom of the stream, preceding each immersion with a prayer for the purification of her soul. The ritual completed she emerged confident of forgiveness if she had sinned, and impatient to speed her reverence to Sita so she might sin again.

Jean Baptiste had laughed at her when first she sought his assurance that he would follow her example at the bathings before he entered the Temple to gaze upon its mysteries—the object of his long travels to Mandalay and Pagan. But so quickly had the look of pain and fright at his temerity come into her lovely eyes that he quickly took another tack and vowed that he would bathe twice the prescribed twelve times, if only to please her. His beggar guide led him to a convenient place and, to make good his vows he plunged into the river. That done he started back along the path toward

the city, still conducted and protected by his beggar companion.

"Now let us see," he mused as he hurried along; "how much that is reasonable and possible did I pledge this little slender waisted queen who has so completely captivated me. I had best take reckoning.

"First, that I love her as I have never loved before. What I have said so often in the past should arouse no qualms another time. This time, however, I mean it—truly. I have said that before, too. But this time, it is different. Seems as if even that is familiar. Well, anyhow, she did not recognize any repetition—but then, they never do. Ah—I am forgetting. It is not what the effect these things may have upon her—it is their meaning to me that counts. Well, I said a thing as old as the world, but its meaning to me was something as new as the hereafter. I am in love and the feeling is delicious.

"Second, I assured her I would always love her and be covetous of none other during the whole existence of Nirvana and Heaven combined. That, most certainly, is a usual thing to say. Of it I have

no concern, except that the birth of such a new and everlasting happiness should have inspired some better invention.

"Third, I vowed that we should be married according to the conventions of both her people and mine, and that she should go with me to my palace beyond the place where earth and sky come together. Now that, at least, I never have said before. I have no palace there, but that, I trust, under the circumstances, is a forgivable extravagance of speech. At any rate, I have taken the Twelve Bathings so Sita will not denounce me, and as for my own conscience, who knows? Love can make the humblest domicile palatial. If I interpret aright that sweet abandon of her body when I held her in my arms, she will not measure the grandeur of a home that has a heart as its foundation.

"Fourth, I stilled her fears with protestation that she would shine as a diamond among pebbles in the company of the women of my people. If that is a prophecy unfulfilled there will be tears where to see aught but smiles will grieve me sorely. And I like not to be distressed. So, let us discuss

the matter—for it concerns her happiness as well as mine.

"She is beautiful—by every standard of the West as well as East. A little dark of skin, perhaps—but no more so than the Spaniards and there was no criticism when I lost my heart to every Senora in the train of the Spanish Duchess of Veragua upon the occasion of that grand dame's visit to my good sire, Louis.

"Her manners are not the manners of Bourbon salons. But, by my hope of salvation, they are far more charming. They will be a novelty. I shall be envied by every courtier at Versailles for having crowned my explorations by bringing back something new in the way of women. I know many students of the sex who do not believe there is such a thing. I am vain; her beauty will gratify my vanity. I am proud; her virtues will expand my ego. In that respect I shall be content—she will be an ornament.

"So far as I recall those were all my pledges. Whatever else I said and promised was mere variation. What shall I conclude? Why, nothing else but this; I love her as I have never loved before,

and if ever I have said those words in the past, they do not count because, this time, I mean it, truly."

Chapter Four.

THE SVAYAMVARA.

The Cavalier came to the end of his reflections and the courtyard of the Temple of Sita at the same moment. It was when he had fully convinced himself that the ardor of his promises to Khema, and the contracts they implied, were not difficult in the keeping that, looking about him with a deep sense of relief at the happy conclusion of his retrospection, he saw before him the high tapering tower, open on one side, which totally enclosed the temple itself.

The tower rose to a height of two hundred feet while the temple proper, a splendidly ornamental structure, was of four stories. The rear wall of the temple was built of great slabs of stone, lifted to their places, no doubt, by tens of thousands of slaves who gave their lives to the early kings in

that sacred toil. It needed many generations of these slaves to complete this wall, according to legends of the neighborhood. As fast as one generation died its corpses were builded into the masonry by the living hands of the next.

The other walls were of a beautiful white plaster, still gleaming though many centuries had passed. The architect kings had planned to preserve forever their fragile beauty by enclosing them within the outside tower, made of cement and logs of wood. It seemed to Jean Baptiste as if the plan promised to be successful, so well had the outer tower protected the temple itself from the sand laden winds from the north.

Outside the gate stood two colossal Buddhas, each protected by a canopy cut from solid rock. Beyond them were two majestic Ramas, silent guardians of the virtue of their common wife, the Sita who presided within the portals which opened behind them.

In the courtyard the Cavalier was swallowed by the horde that elbowed and pushed its religious way in and out in endless stream. Making his bow to one of the stone Buddhas, and bending in salutation to the guardian Ramas, Jean Baptiste

Interior of the Temple of Rama, Showing the Worshippers at the Shrine of Sita.

His Hindu Servant Surprises James Marcon, Owner of the Diamond, while Admiring its Beauty and Studying its Perfection.

passed within the temple and stood at last, after the long travel from the court of the Great Mogul, in the presence of the Beloved One.

Rama's darling wife,
Loved by him as we love life,
Whose favor is a love's caress—
Isvara's miracle of loveliness!

Around the four sides of the inner temple were massive columns of alabaster. Behind these walked the white clad priests, watchful of the crowd of worshippers; guardians, too, of the numberless shining eyed nautch girls who flitted back and forth on the sacred errands of their immutable mistress. It was the first time the Cavalier had seen such a company of these bayardes, whose voluptuousness was cloaked by the license of the temple and the favor of its priests, at the actual performance of their rites. All were garbed alike—a bit of colored sash confining their bosoms; a diaphanous skirt of some filmy texture flaring wide and full from their slender hips; sandals protecting the bottoms of their tapering feet—and nothing else to hide their supple bodies from curious or reverent. No

other temple deity in all India and its environs was so well attended by these meek but impudent purveyors to the senses as was Sita, the Giver of All That is Love.

A day before the Cavalier would have found a way to fathom the esoteric mind of one of these slaves whose very immoralities were the main support of a temple of holiness. But that day he had but a passing glance for them. "None of your guises of love intrigue me now, my dainty sirens," he called out to a group that sought to beguile him to a tryst behind the alabaster columns; "there is one whose shrine inside of me includes no vacancy for idlers to loiter in. Send the invitation of your eyes and eloquent shoulders elsewhere, my pretty ones!" One of the wife-maidens called out to him:

"The samana from far countries thinks he has attained tranquility; a woman has enchanted him; but be thou wise lest thou art burnt by all the sixteen fires of delusion."

After much struggling and elbowing the Cavalier came to the back of the temple enclosure where, rising from a pedestal of solid yu, into which

twenty steps were cut, stood the Beloved One herself.

He paused in deepest awe at the solemn majesty and splendor of the enormous idol he had come so far to see. The great figure was carved from solid jade of a shimmering tint. Its numerous hands and arms symbolized the eighteen manifestations of Rama. In its face was that benign serenity which, in the face of woman, so genuinely expresses the supreme content of unbounded love.

Involuntarily the Cavalier bowed his head in humble reverence before this pagan idol—forgetful of its pulseless nothingness in the marvel of its reign over millions of souls. And as he bent his body to the ground, that he might not be unpleasantly accused by those about him of disrespect, he said a prayer quite as fervent as the prescribed devotion and, no doubt, fully as acceptable to Sita. "Beloved Thou, Daughter of the Moon, Priestess of the Path of No Return,—and whatever else they call you, if you by any chance are aught else than the breathless jade I think you are, forgive my ignorance and spend no punishments for my shortcomings upon her whom your

people call Khema, but whom I have termed the Empress of the Kingdom of Desire."

Risen from the ground, his supplication finished, the Cavalier stood apart from the other worshippers, that he might leisurely examine the idol. It suited him to reflect upon the mighty faith and devotion which made this inanimate thing a power to preserve and shape the ideals of a mighty human race. Throughout India and its neighboring states there was not an idol without its history and its legends reaching back to the time of Buddha himself. The story of this jade Sita, as Jean Baptiste had heard it from learned pundits, was the most fascinating of all. Now, his blood running warm with the strange exaltation of Khema's sorcery, he was much in the mood to recall that story and mentally dramatize it.

In the year 600 A.D. a great and good king, Srong Tsan Gampoo, reigned in the city of Lhassa over the land of Thibet. Travelers brought to King Srong tales of the wondrous beauty of a Princess of Nepal, who was called Brisbun. King Srong had many wives, each more beautiful than the rest, each especially attractive to him for some

loveliness that was all her own. One was round and plump, with curves as full as the circle of the Sun God; another was slight and sinuous, and reminded her master of a poppy stem swaying in the wind; one was languorous and soft eyed, much given to winding her warm arms about the neck of her lord, while still another brought to him at each summons, a merry smile and a blitheness which needed but a nod to seek expression in a spritely dance. King Srong Tsan Gampoo collected wives with a critical eye to variety.

Report of a Princess who was more beautiful, even, than any wife in his harem, aroused his interest at once. Travelers were sent, laden with rarest of treasures from the land of Thibet, to the Nepal Maharaja whose daughter Brisbun was. They carried such messages and treaties as best would serve to lure a princess to alliance with the powerful northern king.

The messengers were successful. The king was enraptured when his new wife stood, unveiled, before him. And, too, he was enslaved—as he soon had occasion to discover. Other wives had shared with one another the favor of their common hus-

band. Brisbun shared with none of them. She garnered all of his preferences for herself. Such always are the ways of a woman from Nepal.

Brisbun carried with her, to the court of Srong Tsan Gampoo, her faith in the teachings of Buddha. Just what her enticements were, only those who know the infinite ways of woman with a man may say. Suffice it to record that Buddhism soon was established, by pronouncement of the king, the supreme religion of Thibet.

Rama's wife, Sita, was the favorite deity of the Princess from Nepal. At her command, indorsed by the King, the artisans of the kingdom gathered at La Brang, a holy city outside the walls of Lhassa, and there, in a great monastery, carved from the largest block of jade that could be found a more imposing Sita than even Nepal could boast.

When the image was completed the King commanded, at its dedication ceremonies, that for all time thereafter each noble in the kingdom should complete his nuptial ceremonies in taking a new wife by bringing his bride to the feet of the Mother of Love for consecration.

"And that bride who is not a virgin," declared

the King, "shall be destroyed by the wrath that the mother stores for such of her daughters as offend the cherished modesties of their sex. She who thus offends before her nuptials may henceforth know she will feel the withering blight of the Beloved One's frown, and will shrivel into death with agonies such as cannot be described by our halting tongues; and her father and her mother and her grandparents and every living relative will be crushed in the oppression of Sita's displeasure.

"But for those who love, and are loved, be they mindful of the restraints of virtue, the Incarnate One has mighty store of approbation and to these she will proffer with gracious hand that priceless jewel, the Key to the Six Heavens of Tusita.

"Let each future bride, therefore, who may come with sin within her knowledge of herself, bring funeral cerements; those who approach the Beloved One on their nuptial day with naught to repent, may bring a token of their gratitude for the blessings Our Mother of Love may bestow."

For many years thereafter, so ran the history of the image, the roads to Lhassa were much travelled by princes, nobles and, even lesser husbands, es-

corting trembling brides to the temple of Sita, that they might be proven, or abashed, in their obeisance before the Queen of Delights. Many a bride was bartered for by a suitor who saw in her all the priceless virtues of purity, and who was led with confidence into the presence by a bridegroom all unconscious of her secret tremblings, bent her knee before the Mother only to fall prone in the fearful torturings of a wretched death. Let it be said, however, to the undying fame of the maidens of Thibet, that many more were escorted by their new lords to face the Nuptial Test, whose brows were serene in the consciousness of maidenly modesties, and over whom the Beloved One spread the veil of her benign good will.

There came a time, however, when the power and prestige of the new religion waned in the land. King Srong died, and the Princess Brisbun, now dowager and regent, was not strong enough to hold her people to the imported faith.

There were murmurings among those who believed their tax levies were heavy because of the magnificence of the mighty temple and the cost of teaching and supporting its army of priests. There

were plots against Sita herself. Hearing these, and fearing them, Brisbun sent word of her tremblings to the nearest of the cities where wise men dwelt, which was the city of Pagan.

There went to her a great horde of pilgrims—wise men in disguise, and these, surrounding the Temple one night, slew many of the priests and took away with them, on the backs of many elephants, the great idol. The Princess superintended the removal. As her farewell gift she fixed upon its breast the Great Blue Stone, the sparkling, shimmering, prison of fires which King Srong had given her upon their betrothal day—the most magnificent jewel in all the world, he assured her.

With the break of day the populace gathered outside the temple, drawn by the wailing of the priests. When the people heard of the sacrilege that had been done, they forgot their own skepticisms of the Sita, and bore down upon the haughty and defiant Brisbun. They tore her to pieces and dripped her blood along the track of the elephants which had borne away the Sita they now bemoaned.

And thus Sita had come to Pagan, and to Man-

dalay. And there it had been enshrined within the temple built for it.

From its breast plate there still shone the wondrous betrothal gem of Brisbun. "And by my faith," said the Cavalier, "it is, truly, the largest diamond the eyes of man have ever coveted. My good King Louis would make of me a Baron, at the very least, could I but lay that down before him and thus provide him with a bauble fit to trade for the highest maiden in France."

From outside, on the field before the Temple, there echoed the call to the "nuptial dance"—the Svayamvara. From a loquacious pilgrim the Cavalier learned that this was one of the principal events of the festivity. Young men who had bespoken their favorite maidens from the fathers of the young women, formed a semi-circle. The maidens themselves, just opposite, made another great half circle. To the beating of weird instruments strange evolutions began—the waltz in its still primitive stage. There was great running and stamping and sinuous twistings. Then there was a sudden pairing off—and in a long line of twos there swept by the watching crowd of elders each

suitor bearing in his arms his captive—the maiden of his heart. If she did not resist, she was willing; if she squirmed she was due to receive the oath of renouncement from her father and to become an orphan and a parasite.

The Cavalier went out to witness this unique revel. As he watched the involved manoeuverings, he was conscious of a keen sympathy with these grave and silent wooers and their evasive mistresses. But when his roving eye settled upon one of the dancing maidens his sympathies changed to anger, then resentment. There was no mistaking that hood and veil—it was Khema, herself!

He drew near the swirling mass. He watched his opportunity and took place beside her. Her whisperings came quick, coherent even between the shortened breaths. "My father, the good Asokala, has ordained that I wed the suitor he has chosen—heir to the second richest man of Pagan. Even now he is preparing to capture me and I dare not resist. Unless thou, beloved, may be permitted to save me, I am doomed and must say to thee, farewell."

There was no way this stranger in a strange land

could save the unhappy maid from her destiny. She dared not resist when those long, strong arms of her suitor encircled her. Had she done so, she would have been shamed before her people; frowned upon by Sita, and cast out to become lower than the bayardes. It would mean death, she knew, for her Cavalier, to speak with her were this fate dealt out to her. She could but surrender, and look forward to long days and nights of weeping at her own conjuring of a memory.

The Cavalier saw the suitor carry her to the feet of Asokala. He saw this fortunate one receive the parental sign of acceptance. In another day, while he lingered hoping for a sight of her, perhaps a word with her—fruitless hope—he saw the preparations for the betrothal. He could wait to see no more and began to plan a speedy coup that might after some adventure, restore to him the prize he had won—and lost.

The diamond! The great blue stone of the Princess Brisbun! The fire that it would reflect in the eyes of the sire, King Louis, were it laid before him! The rewards that he, the Cavalier,

might demand in return for such a splendid loot of this pagan temple!

It was a daring plan—no thought of crime or wrong entered the Cavalier's mind. All is fair in love and war.

That night, while the temple fires smouldered against the coming of dawn; and while priests and bayardes slept the exhaustion that both holiness and mischief bring, a solitary figure crept through the shadows and into the sacred circle at the base of the idol across which none but the high priest's feet ever had trod. When the ray of the moon had shifted so that the image was black in the shadows, a foreign, irreverent hand slid to its throat and rested there, shutting out for a second the glints of the great blue stone. When the hand came away, the glinting was gone.

The Cavalier was learned in the ways of traveling. Before dawn he had found, within the city of Pagan, a sure guide and a retinue of servants who were of that nature which looks not at purpose or motive, but at the bribe that is offered.

Before the hue and cry of the priests echoed beyond the temple walls Jean Baptiste was far to the

west. There were none so fleet that they could overtake him before he reached the land of the Great Mogul, and there, from his friend, found shelter and safety.

After many months the gem of Brisbun was laid, even as Jean Baptiste had planned, in the hand of Louis the Roué.

As he had hoped, Jean Baptiste was well rewarded; first with a barony—that of Tavernier; second, with a vast fortune that made him one of the richest nobles of the court; and third, with a company of soldiers, veterans all, and each a far traveler accustomed to the ways of strange lands. The Cavalier, a Baron now, Baron Jean de Tavernier, had no desire to remain at home to tempt feminine ambitions with his new riches and grandeur. If so, why should he have asked of Louis that company of seasoned soldiers?

His thoughts were ever across the seven seas—in the valley of the Irawaddy, the road to Mandalay. And the fortune and the soldiers were but the means to return him there. His guardian angel would guide him, surely, to the feet of his lost mistress; his soldiers would capture her and fight

their way out of the land, most certainly. And then, a goodly portion of what should be left of his fortune should be theirs as their reward. The barony would then provide the palace he had promised to the maiden who had been swept away from him.

To plan, with Jean Baptiste, was to act. In a fortnight he departed, riding at the head of his soldiers. At the south of France they embarked in boats. At Constantinople they landed and, thinking to avoid the dangers of the caravan routes across the deserts of Armenia, pushed along the shores of the Black Sea into the Crimea, their route leading them hence into Central Asia.

A seer in Paris, to whom Jean Baptiste had related the story of his gift to Louis had warned him. "Be upon your guard, my noble Baron! In the betrothal gem of Brisbun there is imprisoned Sita's curse for every hand that may profane it with irreverent touch."

Baron de Tavernier had laughed at the warning of the seer. His men, to whom he told it, jested with him. But their jestings turned to horror when, in the dead of night while they were camped out-

side the walls of Moscow, a troop of wild dogs, come from none knew where, bore down upon the camp, surrounded the tent of the chief and before they could be dispersed tore his body into countless shreds.

The curse had begun to cast its spell.

The hand that had profaned the great blue diamond of Brisbun and Sita had paid its debt and the Baron de Tavernier, the gallant Cavalier, was lost forever to the grieving Khema.

And thus, far away and long ago, began the sinister progress of the jewel that came to be known as the Hope Diamond.

Nang Fu Attempts to Secure Possession of the Diamond, but is Frustrated by John Gregg.

What Came After

as told by

May Yohe

(Lady Francis Hope)

BOOK TWO

Chapter One.

ARE YOU SUPERSTITIOUS?

"Tell me truly, Francis, do you believe the Hope diamond curses those who wear it?" We had been married only a few days, and I had been reading the history of the famous jewel.

A shade of anxiety passed over his face; then, quickly recovering, Lord Francis Hope replied with a smile:

"It certainly hasn't cursed me, Maysie dear, because it has brought me the greatest good luck a man can have—the dearest little wife in all the world, your own precious self."

This was a very pretty speech, but I realized that my husband had evaded my question. However,

we laughed about it and told each other how silly it was to be superstitious. Of course, a diamond could not bring bad luck. What nonsense!

No, it was absurd to even think of a jewel as "lucky" or "unlucky." And yet there was a sinister shadow over the lives of every person who had ever owned this diamond. I didn't believe in omens and talismans—and yet could it be that there was something in it after all? I felt like a person who doesn't believe in ghosts, but who happens to sleep in a "haunted house" and wakes up and hears creepy noises.

No indeed, I said to myself, the Hope diamond could not bring misfortune to me; although it was odd that the man who stole it from the temple in India was torn to pieces by wild dogs.

The great Hope family jewel could not wreck my happiness—yet it surely was strange that Queen Marie Antoinette, who owned it, had her head cut off under the knife of the guillotine.

Nothing that this sparkling stone could do should interfere with my happiness—although it certainly happened that Madame de Montespan, who wore it,

was abandoned by her royal admirer, King Louis XIV.

No, they were nothing but coincidences, those shocking tragedies which overwhelmed kings, princesses, sultans, favorites of the harem, ladies of the court, merchants, brokers, collectors and all who had owned that mysterious diamond. And yet I could not quite shake off the feeling that somehow there must be some connection between their misfortunes and the fact that they possessed this strangely fascinating stone.

Coincidences, of course, but today as I look back over the eventful years that have been mine, of struggle and success, of disillusion and disappointment, of pomp and penury, that held the whole gamut of human emotions, there stands out the thought that life for me had been wholly bright until that fateful day when the great jewel first scintillated upon my breast—and dark, ever darker, until I had gotten away from its influence and paid in tears and loss for that hour of pride when it was my choicest possession.

Coincidence, you say?

So be it, but I have followed the story of this

jewel and in its path lies only sorrow, disaster, tragedy.

Beggar and broker, courtesan and countess, duke, prince, sultan and millionaire—all to whom this jewel has passed have felt those great misfortunes which overwhelm and destroy. A mere recital of this list is staggering. In its wake have followed death of the most violent sort, bankruptcy, betrayal, tottering thrones and fallen favorites.

I will tell you my own story in all its sadness and its sorrows, its moment of pride, its days of triumph but before you hear what happened to the girl who rose from the little Pennsylvania village to those dazzling heights of fame in which two continents were at her feet in homage to her art and to the still more impregnable circles of the great titles of the British empire, who has known the smiles of kings, has listened to phrases of love in the pomp of palaces, and then who saw her treasures, one by one, fade from life until her bread was earned in drudgery of the most menial kind, recall to yourself the authentic history of those who have owned this stone and ask yourself whether it be mere coincidence or whether there be some strange curse,

some magic power of evil that followed this great gem from the hour when Tavernier stole it from the breast of a pagan goddess.

Madame de Montespan, who wore the jewel, was abandoned by the King. It had been recut by Amsterdam jewelers by order of King Louis XIV. and reduced to 67⅛ carats.

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. The famous diamond was seized by revolutionists in August, 1792, and kept in the Garde Meuble.

It turned up in a diamond dealer's shop in Holland and in the possession of Wilhelm Fals, who recut it and reduced it to 44¼ carats. It was stolen by his son, and Fals was ruined.

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, including the death of his favorite son.

Lord Francis Hope, his grandson, suffered financial reverses, scandal and unhappy marriage, bankruptcy, and was forced to sell the diamond to Simon Frankel for $168,000.

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 suicied.

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

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

Simon Montharides, 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.

The keeper of its vault was strangled.

Zubayda, the Sultan's favorite, was killed. The jewel was taken from her neck and put among the treasures of Yildiz Kiosk, which was later looted and the diamond stolen.

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

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

Selim Habib, Persian diamond merchant, who had handled the gem, was drowned in the sinking of the French steamer Seyne off Singapore, November, 1909; the stone, however, was safe in Paris.

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, little Vinson McLean, the "Hundred-Million-Dollar Baby," the most closely safeguarded child on earth, rushed from its nurse's side and was crushed to death under the wheels of an automobile in Washington.

And as I recall this list, I try again to tell myself

that belief in a century-old curse is the merest superstition, a weakness of a weak mind, that jewels are but jewels, powerless for good or evil save as they appeal to the souls of men—and yet, I wonder?

Chapter Two.

EARLY DAYS OF HAPPINESS.

No vision of diamonds or of dukes troubled my early days.

There came a time, when I had mounted to the highest rungs of the ladder of success when it became the fashion to relate that I had come from the gutter, had sprung from the very dregs of life.

These stories, of course, were false. No untrained girl, used only to the habits and the morals of the world of poverty could attract, even less hold, the interest of the men who come from the world of culture and of class.

There must ever be a training that brings appreciation of the fine things of life, an education that awakens the soul to the beauties of music and of art, that gives confidence and ease when in the

presence of those accustomed to all the veneer of civilization.

I was born in the old Eagle Hotel at Bethlehem, Pa., owned by an uncle. That town meant even less then than it does today, for it had not yet seen the great steel works that turned it into a real city. It was a small town, with the environment, the thought, the gossip, the habits, the vision of the small town.

In it, my parents did not belong. My father was a soldier, a man of courage and of the spirit of adventure. My mother came from an ancestry, English on her father's side and on her mother's a genealogy back to an Indian tribe.

I scarce remember father. After his death, my mother turned her talents to dressmaking in Philadelphia, where her originality brought to her the theatrical stars of the period, Mrs. John Drew, Georgia Drew Barrymore, Victoria Creese, Clara Louise Kellogg and Marie Van Zandt. They fired, even then, my childish imagination and fanned that desire for the footlights which later led me to the heights—and to the depths.

I grew up a tomboy. I preferred to play with

boys, rather than girls. I was happiest when purloining some fantastic costume and portraying some imaginary character—so ungoverned in some of these impulses that my mother took kindly to the suggestion of some German friends that I be sent to Germany to be educated.

I was sent to a private school at Dresden where the four happiest years of my lift were spent. It was an exceptional establishment and there I made friends of some of the daughters of the finest American families, the Patton sisters of Washington, Louise Corbin of the aristocratic Long Island Corbins, and others.

Here was an atmosphere of training that in later years made it possible for me to appear in the presence of even kings with that surety of poise and self-possession that is not bred in the gutter.

Here, too, occurred one of the two impulsive events that have shaped my life. One led to my marriage with Lord Hope. The other came in these school days when some tableaux were planned.

I was urged to take part, and as my especial 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. I wondered what some of those staid mothers and fathers of the German students would say if we two American girls, who were without the sobering influence of nearby parents, should really do something "devilish." 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 practiced a little dance.

My chum and I appeared with our long rain coats 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 rain coats 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. I looked down into the audience and saw the faces of dignified, adipose mothers and fathers blanched white. But I didn't care. The approbation of the officers and the young men students from the nearby university was elixir to

me. 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 way where we had sewn them onto the trunks, or perhaps the knitted juncture above our knees unravel.

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.

After Dresden came two years at a finishing school in Paris, and then home to the quiet of Pennsylvania, with its limited view of life.

I wanted the stage—and found myself in a church choir.

I wanted life and excitement. I found only routine without revelry.

I could play for myself and there came a day when Mrs. John Drew came to order gowns, hear my voice, encouraged me to try for a place in the

profession and started me for New York with letters to Augustin Daly and Mr. A. M. Palmer. Life for me had begun.

The Prince of Wales, later Edward VII., once asked me what had been the happiest moment of my life. I hesitated between that hour when I found that the man who had wooed and won my heart as a mere man proved to be one of the proudest of English aristocrats and that other hour when Mr. Palmer, from the chill, dark gallery, listened to my voice and promised me my first engagement as an actress. Both had opened for me new worlds—fairy lands in which only the chosen may enter.

It was a pitiful chance, looking back, with a salary of nine dollars a week. But it was a chance and recognition. That counted. It bred confidence. It encouraged study so that when, a year later, there came a chance to appear as an understudy for Miss Jeanne Yeamans in "Natural Gas," a musical comedy, I, too, was ready and my successful stage career really began.

My mother made the gowns in which I first appeared but so exquisite were they that they must

ever be given some credit for the success that was mine.

It was to my mother, out in the audience, that I sang that first night, driving away my nervousness and fright. May Yohe became, overnight, a celebrity and the manager, John Russell, starred me the next season and paid me what in those days was the large salary of $200 a week. Later I was to receive $2,000 when as Lady Francis Hope, one day destined to become a duchess, I crowded the London music halls with those who wished to see and hear this American girl who had broken down the barriers of British tradition by her marriage to one of the greatest titles.

The salary then was but a measure of success. And success it was, taking me across the continent, bringing to my shrine men who love beauty and merit, who bow ever before that glamor of genius and the public eye.

I might have married, on that trip across the continent, men who had won their own places in the sun, men of wealth and of power, who came offering their hearts and hands to the reigning queen of the stage. None touched my heart. How

I often wished that I had, in those hours, let wisdom and prudence control my emotions.

I tasted the sweets of power and of control over men. I did many things unconventional, but deep in my heart I wanted a real romance, a real love.

And so it happened that I was quite ready for that wooing which brought with it, all unknowing, a title and the stone for which men had died and queens had tossed away their sceptres.

Chapter Three

ENTER LORD HOPE.

It has been charged that I married Lord Hope for his title.

I did not know that he had one when we became engaged, much less suspected it on that first day when I saw him in New York and knew in my heart that here was a man who was to change my whole life.

It was at a dinner party at Delmonico's that I first met him and he was introduced as plain "Mr." Hope.

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. I was quite charmed with this "Mr." Hope. He was so well poised and talked so entertainingly. He had the rare gift of being able to talk to an actress such as I without thinking it necessary to "talk shop" or "talk down" to her. He talked to me of world affairs, of politics, of society and art just as if I were a person who never had heard of the stage.

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."

In the next few days Mr. Hope was more and more attentive. He asked if he might not call and pay his respects to my mother, and I gave him the permission readily. Mother liked him very much. I went about with him a great deal, but we seldom visited with or were entertained by mutual friends —just a few cronies of his with whom, I afterwards discovered, he laid a plot which prevented them from telling me who he was.

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

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. Mother and I looked at each other. The Savoy was one of the most expensive hotels in London.

That night when we were ushered into the dining room we found that one whole end of the big room had been roped off with silver ropes, and that behind it was a table set for three—decorated so lavishly I almost gasped. London knew I had arrived, and before the dinner was well under way the word got out that May Yohe was at dinner in the Savoy dining room. Soon there was a regular parade of London Johnnies, sticks, silk hats, evening clothes and Inverness capes, marching along the silver ropes in one endless procession.

I was almost hypnotized by the novelty of it when the parade began. I didn't know what it meant until Mr. Hope explained that the London Johnnie

was an established institution, and that this was its customary reception to a new idol. It meant, he said, that I was already enthroned in the heart of London.

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 Englishman's sportsmanship, so

I may throw 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 even-

ing 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,

"flabbergasted" 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: "Goodness, Maysie, you've caught a lord!"

Chapter Four.

THE DIAMOND IS MINE.

The influence of Lord Francis opened the doors of managers and very soon I had signed for an appearance, cleverly planned to whet the interest already aroused by rumors of the interest which an heir to a dukedom showed to an American actress.

Then came that opening night of "Christopher Columbus," with its song, "Honey, Mah Honey," at which pit and gallery joined the wildest demonstration ever given in a London theater, when men threw pocketbooks and women their jewels at my feet and down from the gallery came that rare tribute, the shower of programs which is the final approval.

May Yohe was the toast of London.

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 someone I liked better, I could leave and forget him.

"And will you be bound by the same privilege—that if you are disappointed in me you will withdraw on your part?" I asked him. He agreed, and so while we merely announced our engagement to the public, to a small group of intimate friends we announced also that we were going to begin living together that very day.

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. My eighteenth birthday came along during the five month period. Lord Francis came into my boudoir that night while I was preparing to retire, with his hat on. I looked at him astonished. "Don't you like to see me with my hat on?" he asked. "Then come take it off." I suspected a joke of some kind, and sure enough when I lifted off his hat there was a red leather case resting on top of his head. It was my birthday gift—a string of gorgeous pear-shaped pearls, for which he had paid $350,000 to a famous jeweler, who had scoured Europe for the perfectly matched gems.

That necklace was my Aladdin's lamp. After that jewels showered upon me from every corner of the globe, so many that the rarest and most costly of gems were the commonest things in my life.

During this "probation" period Lord Francis was as careful in his attentions 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 morn-

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

"I wonder if you will have time today, Maysie, 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 Maysie of "Honey, Mah Honey" transformed into a peeress of the realm and a prospective Her Grace!

The news of my marriage to Lord Francis, after our six months' trial of life together, fell like a bombshell over London—as, indeed, it did over New York. London Johnnies staged many celebrations the night of the announcement in the all-night clubs and at theatre stage doors. Proud and distinguished was the Johnnie who could boast of having had a supper with or an introduction to the new Lady May—yclept May Yohe.

Now I, the poor dressmaker's daughter, was in line for the strawberry crown of a duchess, for my husband was heir to the Duke of Newcastle, one of the most conservative and wealthiest Dukes in the empire. The Duke was my husband's brother. He is childless, so at his death Lord Francis will become the Duke—and if Lord Francis should die first then his oldest son will inherit.

As the prospective Duchess of Newcastle I was in line to be mistress of famous Clumber Castle,

the Newcastle seat since time immemorial. This old castle is filled with old masters, wonderful furniture and art treasures of immense value. The estate consists of 35,600 acres of land. Directly in front of the castle is a lake covering a hundred acres, and throughout the immediate grounds are numerous pieces of old and priceless statuary.

The most splendid apartment in the castle is the State Drawing Room, adorned with gilt carvings. It contains ten beautiful old cabinets from the Doge's Palace at Venice. On its walls hang Van Dyck's "Rinaldo and Armida," said to be the greatest work of that master, and a number of family portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence. Clumber is packed from garret to cellar with art treasures, the Sevres and Dresden porcelain being unrivalled.

The present Duke has built a splendid private chapel on his estate in Gothic style This is almost a cathedral in size. There May Yohe might have worshipped in state.

Another seat of the Duke is Forest Farm, in Windsor Forest. His town residence is Berkeley House, in Mayfair, London.

Mary Hilton. Supposed to have the Diamond, is followed by Nang Fu, who Threatens her Life.

Among the hereditary and more or less ornamental honors held by the Duke are Master Forester of Dartmoor and Keeper of St. Bravel's Castle. He is also a Knight of Grace of St. John of Jerusalem, Lord High Steward of Retford, etc.

The Duke is Lord of the Manor of Worksop, and as such has the hereditary right to provide a glove for the right hand of the King and support the King's right hand at his coronation.

The Duke has an income of $600,000 a year, largely due to coal mines on his property.

It is really very interesting to think of all the court honors that might have fallen to me in the fulness of time.

Lord Francis had inherited from his mother the great Deepdene Castle and estate, quite close to London. This is one of the most beautiful of the suburban residences, and has been occupied frequently by the Duchess of Marlborough and other famous English duchesses. This house, like Clumber, contains many rare paintings and works of art. The Hope Diamond also came to Lord Francis from his mother, who, as the daughter of a wealthy banker, Thomas Hope, brought a large

fortune to the Newcastle family, and when she died left it to her second son, Lord Francis. Lord Francis' correct name is Pelham-Clinton, the family name of the Duke of Newcastle. He assumed the "Hope" that the name of his mother's family might not die out.

The country residence of Lord Francis is Castle Blaney, in County Monaghan, Ireland.

All these became mine when I became Lady Hope. And they would yet be mine if it had not been for the evil influence which threw Putnam Bradlee Strong across my path.

When I was formally introduced to society in London as the prospective Duchess of Newcastle I wore, for the first time, the great diamond.

This was a dinner given by Lord Alfred de Rothschild. It was my first society recognition, and my presence caused a great sensation.

The Prince of Wales was to be a guest, but he arrived late. When he came in there already was a tacit agreement among the others that they would snub poor little May Yohe. The Countess de Mannin walked by me with her nose upraised, looking me over quite superciliously. The Duchess of

Edinburgh, whose husband had just accepted the crown of the grand duchy of Coburgh-Gotha, walked up to me, looked at me and walked away as stiff as you please.

But when the Prince came in what did he do but walk straight up to me. When I curtseyed he said:

"So glad, Lady May, to see you here. 'Now I know we won't be dull. I don't know where they have put me, but I hope they have put you beside me."

Of course there was a scurrying about to see that I was placed beside him. Then it was funny how the Countess de Mannin and the Duchess of Coburgh-Gotha fawned upon me. My readers may be assured I snubbed them good and plenty.

About 5 o'clock in the morning, the dinner still in progress, I said to the Prince: "My goodness, it is getting late and I have a rehearsal at 10 o'clock. I've got to go home."

"But I can't get up," said the Prince.

"What's the matter? Are you glued to your chair?" I asked.

"My dear little lady," said the Prince, "don't you know my brother, the Duke of Coburg-Gotha,

is a reigning monarch now, and no one can get up until he does? But wait, I'll fix it."

He caught the eye of the Duke and made a sign. The Duke rose at once. The Prince then got up, took my arm and led me to the stairway and saw me down the steps. After that I was as popular as Lady Francis Hope in society as I was as May Yohe on the stage.

I was very happy when I went home that morning with the Hope Diamond blazing about my neck.

London society led a miserable, artificial life. There was some good in it and a great deal of bad and indifferent. Everything seemed to be built around "prestige" and "sets." A duchess, of course, was always honored and courted above a mere baroness or "lady." But if the baroness or the "lady" was a friend of the Prince of Wales or some one of the royal family, then society curtseyed to the duchess, but courted the baroness or the "lady."

The glamor of this social prestige wore away. I was happy, however, with my husband, despite certain shortcomings, of which, I suppose, every

good man must have his share. Lord Francis liked to read a great deal—he used to read a book when I thought he ought to be reading me. He liked to hunt, too—and I often felt that he might have spent some of the time hunting ways to enamor me that he spent hunting ways of trapping animals or catching fish.

In 1900 I was finishing a trip around the world with Lord Francis which brought me much adulation and lavish entertainment. During this trip I met many famous men, and some of them obtained Lord Francis's permission to make me presents. Captain James Holford, of the Horse Guards, for instance, was a guest of Lord Francis on board the Hope yacht at Cowes just before we started on this trip. During the evening he said to me:

"You are the most beautiful little woman I have ever seen, Lady May. I wonder if your husband would object if I should send you a little souvenir to remember this evening by?" I told him to ask Lord Francis, and he did so. Months later, when we were at Ashanti, South Africa, there was delivered to me at the hotel a package which

when opened disclosed a diamond necklace, with a huge diamond pendant. With it was a card on which was written simply, "The souvenir I spoke of. Wear it and think of us who love you for the splendid little woman that you are."

The card was signed Holford.

Captain Strong pawned that jewel later for $9,000.

Before you meet Putnam Bradlee Strong and know the chain of evils which he brought, hear of others who have fondled, as I have, this great diamond, caught by its luster and its brilliance only to find that its flashing rays have seared their souls. None have escaped. All, all have suffered.

Chapter Five.

THE FATE OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Most interesting of all the historic characters whose tragic fate dates from their possession of the Hope Diamond is the Marchioness de Montespan, who for twelve years was the left-handed consort and favorite of that greatest of monarchs, Louis XIV.

There had been other enchantresses before her in the affections of the king. Fascinated by the great blue stone, one and all had discovered that favor and fortune faded, once they had succeeded in obtaining the privilege of wearing this insignia of royal interest.

Mme. de Montespan was the beautiful Mlle. de Tonnay-Charente, daughter of the distinguished Duc de Mortemart. Her mother was one of the

favorites at the court of Louis XIV, and her father one of its most popular courtiers.

She was twenty years old, already noted for her train of admirers and for her beauty and rather caustic wit, when she first came within the King's notice. It was at a ball given by Louis, at which was staged a daring ballet which the monarch called the "Amours of Hercules." In this dance there participated a bevy of young beauties, all of them daughters of distinguished families. Among these was the young Mlle. de Tonnay-Charente, who, if we may believe the chroniclers, danced with restraint and extreme modesty until, during one of the figures of the dance, she noticed the eyes of the King turned toward her, when, perhaps in an excess of nervousness, she seemingly forgot herself in her awe of the favor thus shown upon her, and proceeded to whirl into the intricate figures of her dance with an abandon which could not help arousing the interest of a young king whose attentions were always yielding to feminine charm.

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 dangling 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.

Mme. de la Valliere was then the avowed favorite of the King, and she persuaded the monarch during one of the grand military parades 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. 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.

Many years later the Marquise de Brinvilliers, one of the court beauties of the time, while being

racked in the torture chamber, moaned out a confession in which she startled the administrators of the torture with a memory of this time when la Valliere wore the blue diamond with the King's consent, with the conspiring Mme. de Montespan looking jealously on.

This Marquise de Brinvilliers was one of the patrons of Mme. la Voisin, a notorious poisoner. The infamous scandals of the "black mass," had become public property, and this associate of the principal poisoner was being "questioned" by means of the agonizing water cure. She told the judges that a few days after the last military parade, at which la Valliere had been a spectator, Mme. de Montespan had come to her and appealed to her for a "potion" which would cause the death of her rival for the King's affections. She told the judges the Marquise de Brinvilliers had expostulated with Mme. de Montespan, telling her that it would be unnecessary for her to plot against the life of a la Valliere, since it was well known throughout Paris the King's love was rapidly changing from the older favorite to the newer one—but de Montespan had replied that she had just

seen a new sign of la Valliere's hold upon the King, in itself an evidence that la Valliere's influence with her royal suitor was as powerful as ever.

During the first year of her reign over the royal heart de Montespan was more of a queen than France has had since. Although Louis once cautioned his ministers to keep watch over his relations with pretty women and, whenever they saw that one of them was gaining an influence in the affairs of state, to warn him and if necessary to protect him, to use any methods they chose to rid France of the woman thus gaining an ascendancy over him, Montespan even overawed these same ministers, turned them into lackeys for herself whenever she so desired and even ridiculed the Queen before her face.

There were many aspiring young women, daughters of powerful dukes and marshals, who were constantly setting their traps for Louis's favor in those days, but Montespan triumphed over them all. Strange as it may seem, the first signs of her eventual downfall began to appear about the time that Louis bestowed upon her as his gift his choicest treasure—the diamond of Tavernier.

Mme. de Montespan, whose alliance with the King was well known to the court, but who had not yet publicly supplanted the Duchess de la Valliere, boldly tricked la Valliere one night into rushing away to a convent fifty miles from Paris, whence a false message had come with de Montespan's connivance, announcing the serious illness of her sister. When Louis went that night to the apartments of la Valliere he found awaiting him there instead the radiant de Montespan, who confessed to him her ruse and explained that she had thus arranged matters so that he might spend with her undiscovered that full allotment of his time which the court would grant without comment to la Valliere. "She will not dare tell them she was not here," de Montespan reminded the King, "when she learns you remained in her apartment as usual, for fear of ridicule when the busybodies learn that she was replaced during her absence."

Louis was delighted with the prank. 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, flaunting it

before the discomfited la Valliere as a souvenir of the success of her trick the night before.

After that de Montespan was accepted by the court as the real favorite, la Valliere was banished and left her rival in full enjoyment of the honors of the "maitresse declaire." De Montespan had the diamond. Within a year she suffered her first slight at the hands of Louis, which, while it proved but a lovers' quarrel, worried her considerably and sent her again to her friend, the Marquise de Brinvilliers, who, with the aid of la Voisin, summoned "witchcraft" to aid de Montespan keep the King bound to her.

Belief in witchcraft at this period was wellnigh universal. Not only the common people, but the bourgeoisie and the nobility were as ignorant and as grossly superstitious as in the Middle Ages. All sort and conditions of people flocked to the house of la Voisin, sent there by de Brinvilliers; youths barely out of their teens begging her for some charms to soften the hearts of their mistresses or to bend the opposition of some stern parent; women of mature years who had been neglected for fresher charms seeking her aid to compel faith-

less ones to return to them—even young wives anxious for the death of elderly husbands.

To de Brinvilliers, Montespan related her troubles—she was afraid, now that she was acknowledged favorite of the King, the friends of la Valliere, the banished favorite, or the friends of Mme. de Maintenon, then aspiring to be one, would succeed some time in influencing the King against her. She wanted potions or other devices of witchcraft to keep Louis's love firmly attracted toward her alone.

The Marquise de Brinvilliers took de Montespan to the house of la Voisin. De Montespan met for the first time the infamous Guibourg, the sacristan at Saint-Marcel, at Saint-Denis. This man was notorious among certain fashionable women for his willingness to perform sorceries calculated "to remove bothersome husbands or restore and keep the affections of recalcitrant admirers." But so vile and hideous were these sorceries that even those who believed they had benefited from them would not describe their details to even those intimates to whom they recommended them. The most heinous of all these rituals was the abominable

"black mass," which a few years later was to shock all France when the authorities discovered its practice by this sacrilegious wretch with the beautiful Montespan, favorite of the King, as one of its devotees.

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. She asked for a description of the ceremonies, but Guibourg sternly rebuked her for idle curiosity. She must, he said, resign herself to him and present herself at the appointed place, at his command, and be ready to practice that abandon of obedience which "the spirits" demanded.

Accordingly de Montespan appeared, wrapped in a heavy cloak, at midnight before the gate of a gloomy chateau at Mesnil. She was admitted by a woman, Francoise 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. She was eager for the success of the ceremony about to be performed; she was impressed by the weird preparations and awed by the gloominess of her surroundings and the black-robed figures of de Brinvilliers, la Voisin, the old woman, Guibourg and other men and women whose offices were necessary.

At the foot of the "altar" the little daughter of the woman Fialstre 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, Princes of Affection." It was a bestial, pagan ceremony, a hideous travesty of the holy sacrament, 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. It seemed almost unbelievable that a delicate, beautiful young woman of the refinement which was de Montespan's

Nang Fu's Torture-Den. Mary Hilton's Tongue is about to be Cut Out for Lying to him, BUT——

Atherton Dines with Marcon, and Suggests that the Wine is Poisoned, as a Method of Getting hold of the Diamond.

by inheritance, could have borne the shame of a memory of it.

Three times, a week apart, this "La Messe Noire," or "black mass," had to be performed. Then the philtres compounded each time were delivered to de Montespan. Craftily Mme. de Montespan would pour these love philtres 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 worshipers." 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!

The agents of Louis were brutally frank in their

description of what those philtres had contained and how they were compounded. If nothing else could be shown to prove that the great Louis was truly merciful, the fact that he did not have de Montespan tortured to death after these revelations would testify to his benevolence. Instead he allowed her to remain at court, ostensibly in full enjoyment of her position as his favorite, while he transferred his affections to Mme. de Maintenon.

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, retired 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 its constant reminder when sleep was rubbed from her eyes that never again would that summons mean aught but a mockery of her past.

I often wonder if the fate of de Montespan would have been different, even as I wonder if mine had been more happy, if the Hope Diamond had never passed into our hands with its potency for evil.

Chapter Six

THE FATE OF FOUQUET.

The baleful glint of the great stone fell upon Nicholas Fouquet—and his dream of empire, near to realization, turned to the nightmare of prison.

Fouquet wore the stone but once, wore it as the symbol of power, of supremacy over even the king himself, the sentimental, yet cruel Louis XIV.

From a long forgotten box of letters hidden in the archives of the Bourbons of France, which I came upon in my searching out of the history of "my" diamond, I believe that Fouquet was in reality that ill-starred, mysterious, tragic figure of history known as "The Man of the Iron Mask."

Fouquet, the proud Intendant of Louis XIV and minister of his finances, wove his own fabric of intrigue, intent upon elevating himself to the posi-

tion of regent, of establishing himself upon the throne itself.

To him the great diamond proved an irresistible temptation—the diamond and the beautiful la Valliere, whom he tried to win from the king.

His story I gleaned from the letters which I came upon—letters which told the secrets of the court, of its romances, its tragedies, its intrigues.

In this bundle I found many missives which had been written by the fair la Valliere when she was the "left-hand" Queen of France. In these I saw disclosed the ambitions of Fouquet and the reasons for his downfall.

Fouquet was known as an indefatigable worker. Secretly, however, he was a roue of the worst type. Each evening he would leave his assistants and courtiers in his ante-chamber, presumably to retire to his study for late hours of work, but in reality to steal down a secret stairway, where he abandoned himself to a degrading dissipation in the society of some of the most beautiful and high-born women of Paris.

Fouquet gained a power over the court and the monarch himself that was almost irresistible. Both

coveted the blue crystal that afterward became known as the Hope Diamond, and both fell.

Louise de la Baume de Blanc was the daughter of the Marquis de Valliere. Her mother, when widowed, married a controller of the King's household, thus introducing Mlle. Louise into the society of the court. The young girl became one of the maids of honor to the sister-in-law of the King, the Princess Henrietta. This Princess Henrietta, who was the eighteen-year-old daughter of Charles of England, was an outrageous flirt, and "Monsieur," the brother of Louis, to whom she was married, was much older than the monarch and quite sedate. Louis at this time was just 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, 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 seem suddenly to feel an interest

in one of her maids of honor, and openly bestow his attentions upon this "foil." 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 last to take advantage of such a situation. This was her maid of honor, Louise de Blanc, afterward known as the Duchesse de la Valliere.

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

Fouquet looked upon Louis as a frivolous knight of dames, more intent upon his own pleasures than upon affairs of state. At first he encouraged the attachment between Louis and la Valliere, thinking the King would compromise himself in the eyes of the court and the people by his attachment for this daughter of an impecunious family. He hoped to keep Louis busy making love while he built his fortifications against the time when he could boldly

declare Louis incompetent to govern and propose himself for regent.

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 ambition-

mad Fouquet. Louis was handsome, young, debonair and the possessor of a rare grace and charm; Fouquet was an accomplished "elegant" of the intellectual circles, as efficient in his pursuit of women as in his watchfulness over the accounts of the realm, and even as he aspired to the throne he coveted the favor of that power which, because it was feminine, was the throne's real dictator.

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, 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 tete-a-tete with the Mlle. de la Valliere.

Mme. de Soissons hastened to discharge this mission—secretly encouraged, it seems, by designs of her own upon the royal heart, which she now would have welcomed into her keeping with more

enthusiasm than she displayed when it was offered her as Mlle. Mancini.

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:

"The superintendent at once launched into a tirade against the extravagance of the King, compelling little la Valliere to tears with his formidable figures and accounts and his descriptions of a bankrupt court and a poverty-ridden State. The clever Minister dwelt so long upon the sad times which he predicted for the King and his people and painted such a distressing picture of la Valliere's own responsibility for these extravagances of the monarch, which, he told her, she might have prevented, that at last the femme de France was upon her knees begging him to tell her what she might do to overcome a part of the damage already done by the openness of the royal purse.

"With the demoiselle upon her knees before him, the bitter Fouquet softened. How could he but soften when his King had softened so frequently

in a similar situation? His voice dropped its condemnation and became patronizing. He had criticized the King; now he extolled himself. La Valliere was a long time in understanding, but at last the light broke in upon her. The powerful Fouquet the real master of France, was asking her to save the King from the consequences of his financial indiscretions by giving her friendship to the holder of the royal purse that, under her persuasiveness, he might be induced to keep that purse opened.

"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, accustomed to see everything yield before the power of his gold, was not discouraged, however.

The superintendent changed his tactics, and deputed Mme. du Plessis-Bellievre, who was one of his fastest friends and a great power with the King's mother, to inform la Valliere that if she would allow him to share also in her favor she might have at her disposal a million pistoles ($4,000,000) to do with as she might please.

The chronicles go on to relate that la Valliere replied that she would not deceive the King for all the money of France.

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. Its gardens alone had cost France—for they were paid for from the public funds—more than $10,000,000. Whole villages had been purchased by the Intendant, that they might be razed to make way for noble terraces crowned with columns of solid bronze and imported marbles. A thousand fountains played on the esplanade, according to histories of France, and golden nymphs and dryads peeped out from their great marble basins.

Two thousand servants prepared the ball and banquet for Fouquet's royal guests—among whom

would be, he knew, the King's favorite. When these servants had completed their work and the great affair was almost due Fouquet bethought himself of something that was missing—the one thing that, in the eyes of La Valliere and others attendant upon the King, would be a sign that Fouquet, and not Louis XIV, was the real King of France. This one thing, La Valliere's letters tell us, was the "Blue Crystal."

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 the grand fete, this famous jewel. 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.

In all respects but one the triumph of Fouquet the night of the ball was complete. The court was

dazzled by the splendor of the affair. None was there who was not forced to admit that Fouquet was greater than the King himself. Those who might have doubted were convinced when they saw the huge blue diamond hanging from a gold chain around the Intendant's neck. Only La Valliere was unaffected. She was amazed, her letters say, 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. Fouquet was beside himself with rage at such a reception. But 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!

In the courtyard an iron-barred carriage was waiting. Fouquet was thrust inside and hurried to a dungeon. By the Captain of Musketeers, who was none other than the famous d'Artignan, the

King sent word to the prisoner that Louis of France could have no man in his kingdom who was rich enough to give such a fete as that at the Chateau de Vaux, meaning, no doubt, a man powerful enough to force the monarch to part with as valued a possession as the blue crystal.

Thus the Hope Diamond changed the history of the world, for Fouquet, had he not borrowed it, probably would have succeeded in overthrowing Louis XIV., ending the rule of the Bourbons. But those who were his friends while he was in power quickly deserted him when he was in trouble, just as most of my fair-weather friends deserted me, to whom the diamond came nearly three centuries later, when I fell from grace. And Mademoiselle de La Valliere was deserted, too, a year after Fouquet's fall, when she herself borrowed the diamond one day, and in consequence made enemies who brought about her exile from court.

The punishment meted out to Fouquet has been something of a mystery. The lettre de cachet in the hands of d'Artignan took him to the Bastile. There history loses track of him. He never again appeared. It is believed that that mysterious pris-

oner, 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. Each historian has been led inevitably to that scene in the King's cabinet where Fouquet's doom was pronounced, and only the absence of proof lessens the certainty that in this terrible manner Fouquet paid for daring to aspire not only to the King's favorite and the throne itself, but to the Hope Diamond.

Lord Francis Hale and Lady at Home, with Putnam Bradley Stone—and the Hindu gets the Diamond.

Chapter Seven.

MARIE ANTOINETTE PAYS WITH HER HEAD.

The entire course of history changed when next the great Hope Diamond appeared, the proud possession of a queen whose flaunting of so great a gem before a hungry people was the signal of revolt that overthrew a throne and led its owner to the guillotine.

The diamond disappeared with the passing of Louis XIV., and what other human beings felt its sinister power is cloaked in the mystery of its passing until it was discovered in the hands of two court jewelers who never explained their ownership.

Marie Antoinette, married by proxy to the Dauphin, ruled with a supreme disregard for conventions or for expense. Her extravagances started

the fires of revolt among a people who had been accustomed to look upon court lavishness with complaisance. The fact that she came from Austria and as Dauphine had indulged in indiscretions that had shocked France, added to the impetus of criticism.

One after the other there passed in succession long lists of nobles and foreigners of distinction whom the court gossipers whispered of as admirers of the Queen and to whom, these asserted, she gave indiscreet favors. These included the brave de Fersen of Sweden, who loved the Queen devotedly, but with an adoration that was pure; the Duc de Chartres, whom the Queen liked at first and who presumed to trespass upon this liking a little too far—and was given his conge; Gustavus, King of Sweden, who spent long months at the French court as "Comte de Haga," and who flirted outrageously with the Queen, but without apparent success, and at last none less than the great Cardinal Rohan, who not only was impious, but a fool, for he least of all was favorable to the Queen.

But with the Cardinal returned the Hope Dia-

mond, the "Blue Crystal," and Marie Antoinette's downfall—innocent though she was.

Countess Jeanne de la Motte, wife of an impecunious nobleman of low rank, was sufficiently beautiful and lax to obtain for herself a questionable position at court. She was as clever as she was unconventional in her behavior. She it was who became curious at a certain light in the eyes of Cardinal Rohan when that dignitary paid his daily respects to the Queen.

The Countess knew the Cardinal's weaknesses and played upon them. He was the "Grand Almoner," the dispenser of huge funds, and he himself was rich—accustomed to pay well for his diversions. She put herself in the Cardinal's way and accepted the advances she knew he would inevitably make. Her complaisancy was a new amusement for the Cardinal and he made the most of it.

After a short time the Countess' ardor seemingly began to wane. The Cardinal reproached her. In the midst of his avowals—stereotyped avowals he used so often they were mere recitals—she interrupted him to say that he could not im-

pose upon her, that she knew his secret, and, more, she had learned that which would make it nothing less than lese majesty for her to continue accepting his attentions.

The Cardinal was much disturbed and curious. Then the Countess drove in the opening wedge of a clever scheme. She lied to him that she had been fortunate enough to become a confidante of the Queen; that Marie had admitted in a burst of confidence that she had sensed a personal devotion in the glances which the Cardinal had bestowed upon her, and that her heart had fluttered in the realization.

Rohan could not believe his ears. "If it were not true," asked the Countess, "do you suppose I would be so lightly throwing aside the favor Your Eminence has bestowed upon me, especially when to lose that favor is to rob myself of the greatest joy that has come into my life? But I could not be a rival of my mistress, the Queen."

The Cardinal's vanity allowed no answer to this piquant argument other than complete belief that what the Countess said was true. And one may imagine his elation when the Countess further con-

fided that there still was more for her to tell him. "The Queen asked my advice about the dangers there would lie in her writing to you a note by her own hand; I told her the danger was great; and that determined her. She declared danger was the spice of love, and that within the fortnight she would send Your Eminence, by my own humble hand, a written testimonial of her regard."

The Countess used the fortnight in perfecting her plans. She warned the Cardinal he must not display, even were he tete-a-tete with the Queen herself, any knowledge that he had discovered the true state of affairs with the Queen's heart. "Our Queen is proud, you know, and must be cautious; she wants no flush to come into her face for a shrewd waiting woman to detect as a mark of Your Eminence's presence," the Countess said.

In the meantime la Motte took into confederacy with her a disreputable soldier, Retaux de Villette, who was known as a gifted penman. At la Motte's dictation Villette wrote a letter addressed to "My Dear Heart"—the Countess de la Motte, filled with expressions of royal confidence and enthusiastic appraisals of "my adorable friend, the fascinating

Cardinal." "Convey to him, my dear friend," a paragraph said, "such expression as you will of the high regard I have come to feel for his dignity, his generosities, his nobleness of character, and—yes—and his own dear self." When he had written all this Villette signed the letter boldly with a flourish "Marie Antoinette de France."

La Motte took her precious forgery to Rohan—the Queen had said she might convey to him its contents, she explained. Rohan was in the seventh heaven of delight. Still, he was cautioned by la Motte he must not show, even to the Queen herself, his happiness, nor, indeed, that he understood. The intrigante assured him royalty had strange ways, and the Queen must be left to her own plans, and to expect their fulfillment at the Queen's pleasure. In the meantime, la Motte suggested, would it not be well for the rich Cardinal to express his joy in a way that was open to him—by the gift of some handsome sum of money to one of the Queen's pet charities, perhaps send the money direct to the Queen that she might make the gift in her own name?

Nothing, except a rendezvous with Marie, could

have pleased him more. He sent by la Motte a gift of 50,000 francs for the Queen to dispense as she saw fit among the poor. Needless to say, this money never reached the Queen, but was divided between la Motte and her confederate, Villette. Other letters written by the soldier and signed with the name of Marie Antoinette passed from la Motte to the Cardinal, each breathing some new admiration of the Queen for the foolish priest. Each time the Cardinal accepted the hint of la Motte that still another gift of money for the Queen's charities would be fitting.

Then, emboldened by the continued gullibility of the Cardinal, la Motte and her confederate hit upon a brazen scheme. There existed at that time a diamond necklace, unrivalled in beauty and price, to which hung as a pendant the famous "Blue Crystal," which had so mysteriously disappeared from the court of Louis XIV. This necklace was in the hands of two court jewelers, Boehmer and Bassange, who never divulged the secret of their coming into possession of it. It was said they had hung the "Blue Crystal" upon a chain of diamonds at the order of some Eastern monarch, who, when

he learned what the price would be—100,000 pounds—declared with a sigh that he could not afford it.

All the nobles in Paris at that time knew the necklace existed. Once it had been shown to Marie Antoinette, who would have purchased it, but was advised against such an extravagance, in view of the attitude of the public against her, by her sincere friend and admirer, the Count de Fersen. The King would have bought it for her, nevertheless, had he not been dissuaded by his ministers. La Motte remembered this necklace, with its great diamond pendant, and suggested to the Cardinal that if anything would hasten the Queen's decision to throw discretion to the winds and at least acknowledge his devotions secretly, it would be his gift to her of this beautiful and expensive jewel, thus bringing about through her its restoration to the Bourbons.

Rohan accepted this hint, as he had all others of the designing la Motte—influenced no doubt by another letter written by Villette, but to his credulous eyes the penmanship of his adored one. The necklace, with its pendant, was given to the Cardinal by

the jewelers upon the Cardinal's promise to pay for it in four equal instalments, and by him given over to la Motte to be secretly conveyed to the Queen.

La Motte did not intend that the Queen should receive even a single stone from that gorgeous necklace. Her husband went with it to London at once, and there began to sell the diamonds one by one. When, however, he offered to London jewelers the enormous blue diamond there was none who would assume the risk of its purchase.

The smaller stones were bought readily, but the Count was compelled to return to France with the Blue Diamond still in his possession and despairing of being able to dispose of it at all without bringing discovery down upon himself and his wife.

By this time the Cardinal was becoming impatient. He asked of the Countess de la Motte why the Queen, even though she did not wish yet to recognize his love, even between themselves, had not done him the compliment at least of wearing the necklace, if only once, as a slight appeasement of his subdued emotions. La Motte could give the Cardinal no satisfactory answer. When he per-

sisted the plotters held a troubled conference. What was to be done to keep the Cardinal patient? But one solution presented itself—the Queen must be made unconsciously to give the sign the Cardinal desired.

All this time de la Motte really never had been received by the Queen, despite her continued presence at court. Now, however, an audience was granted, upon representation to Marie that the Countess de la Motte had a communication to make to her and a packet to deliver which would bring great happiness to the Queen.

At this audience the Countess, after pleading that the mysterious message she was to deliver required secrecy, persuaded the Queen to send her waiting women from the room. Then, alone with Marie, the designing Countess, laid before her the wonderful Blue Diamond, with the explanation that she had been commissioned to give her this, the most valuable diamond in France, honored already by association with the Bourbons, by one who wished to thus express his high regard for Her Majesty's generosity to the poor. This person, la Motte declared, wished to be nameless, unrecog-

nized, but had instructed her to assure the Queen the gift was but a token of humble loyal esteem, and that she might, if she wished, discharge her obligation in selling some of her lesser jewels and giving the proceeds to charity.

The Queen wore the diamond at the next mask ball. The Cardinal saw it, and was overjoyed. La Motte saw it and was at ease again—but not for long. The court jewelers saw it also and concluded at once the Cardinal had bought their necklace for the Queen. Others saw it and wondered greatly at what they took to be a new sign of the Queen's extravagance. The jewelers were loyal to their Queen. They defended her when the gossip about extravagance reached their ears. Pledging secrecy each time, they whispered right and left that the Queen had expended none of the state funds for a bauble this time—that a great nobleman, one of the greatest and richest in France, had been the purchaser—and the giver.

Such a delicious morsel of scandal could not be bottled up by pledges at secrecy. All the world knows how the scandal spread until at last it came to the innocent ears of the Queen herself. Marie

Antoinette was sometimes weak and vacillating, often frivolous—but never lacking in courage. She summoned the Cardinal before her and heard his confession; she ordered the arrest of the Countess de la Motte and insisted upon a public trial. The diamond itself she consigned to the strong box of the royal jewels, intending, it is explained by historians, to leave its final disposition to the judges of the court before which she sent Rohan to trial.

The Cardinal was acquitted. The Countess de la Motte was condemned, but she escaped from the Bastile and with her confederates fled to London. The populace saw in both the acquittal and the mysterious escape of la Motte signs that the Queen really was guilty. Plotters against the throne took advantage of the popular suspicion to lay the foundation for the Revolution which broke out soon after and ended in the beheading of both the Queen and Louis XVI. and in the downfall of the monarchy. So at least once in its sinister career the Hope Diamond has changed the history of the world.

Even after the exposure of Cardinal Rohan and

the discovery of the base motives which prompted him to give the Blue Diamond to his Queen, Louis would not permit his ministers to return the gem to him, but ordered that it be kept with his other jewels. Often he would send his valet de chambre for this particular gem and toy with it, much as had his ancestor, Louis XIV. Frequently he insisted that Marie Antoinette wear it at a ball in the Tuileries, 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 extravagances and frivolities and the King for his subservience to the wilfulness of Marie.

Events moved fast after the Blue Diamond came into Louis' possession. At the behest of his Queen he dissolved the Parliaments. The people rose in their first tumult of revolution. He was deprived of much of his executive power. In a few months the King found it necessary to run away from Paris and take refuge in a retreat far outside the city.

Persuaded by his Ministers to return to the Tuileries, Louis and Marie Antoinette at last were seized by the mob, which invaded the palace, and

dragged away, with their children, to the Temple, where, although still King and Queen, the heads of the state, they virtually were prisoners. On January 21, 1792, Louis 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. There had been a brief farcical examination before an illegal tribunal, which was dominated by the infamous Robespiere.

Former Kings of France had been buried with great state ceremonies. Periods of mourning lasting weeks had been declared throughout the kingdom. The death of Louis XVI. was, however, made the occasion of general jollification. His headless body was taken to the cemetery of the Madeline and quicklime was thrown into the grave. Nine months later Queen Marie Antoinette herself was taken to the guillotine. I wonder if there were not many spectators of these two tragedies who wished that the Blue Diamond with which the chronicles of the Bourbons had already associated so many catastrophes had never returned to the royal family after its disappearance with Louis XIV.

The crown jewels were sent to the Guarde Meuble, having been seized by the Jacobin Commune. After several months many of these jewels were missed, among them the Blue Diamond. It was found later by some dishonest revolutionists among the effects of Marat, the Communist, who was assassinated by Charlotte Corday. Marat had stolen the gem from the Guarde Meuble, and it was in turn stolen from him by the ruffians who went through his effects after his assassination was discovered.

Chapter Eight.

THE PRINCESS KILLED BY THE MOB.

Out of all the sad stories, that of Princess Lamballe, gayhearted, loyal, girlish is to me, most tragic. For her love of the great jewel was the deep-seated adoration for the perfection of beauty held by the great stone.

But to her, once she had worn it, came the most terrible and brutal of deaths.

Her love for it was not the greed of possession and of ownership, but was based upon the simple delight of wearing it, permitting her own great beauty to be overshadowed by this flawless gem.

Her story is told in the archives of the Bastille, written into the very history of France.

She was descended on her mother's side from Louis XIV., and stands out in the history of the gay

Bourbon courts as one of the very few untouched by scandal. She was one of the earliest and always the most devoted friend of Marie Antoinette, and was appointed superintendent of the Queen's household. As such she had charge of the treasures of the Queen, which included a great store of precious stones, so great was the young Queen's love for costly jewelry.

When to this assortment there was added one day the Blue Crystal the Princess de Lamballe was astounded. The Queen confided to her that an unknown admirer had given it to her, as a mark of his esteem, she said, for her charities. The Princess de Lamballe did not suspect the Queen of duplicity, of which she probably was not guilty. It was not until some time later, that the Queen learned the diamond had been purchased for her from some Paris jewelers by the Cardinal.

The Princess admired the Blue Crystal greatly, and upon more than one occasion the Queen pressed it upon her, bidding her wear it at some court function or upon the occasion of some public celebration. At this time the people were clamoring against the frivolities and extravagances of the

young Queen. The sight of the Princess wearing the diamond which the people supposed the Queen had purchased with state funds, then sadly low, served to bring down upon the Princess the hatred which later had such horrible expression.

In August, 1792, the savage mob descended upon the Tuileries, where the lovely Princess was in close attendance upon her beloved Queen, seized her and took her away to the prison of La Force, the crowds in the street hooting her as the carriage in which she was being rushed to a cell passed by, many voices raising the cry that she be strangled with the chain with which she had hung the costly diamond around her neck!

In September a mock tribunal, of which the notorious Herbert was president, summoned one by one the aristocratic prisoners in La Force from their cells.

When the Princess de Lamballe was called she replied to the jailer who summoned her that she would have to have time to dress, since she was not fully robed. The ruffian responded that it was de Lamballe the judges wanted to see, not her garments. So she was escorted, but partially gowned,

though still haughty and defiant, before the tribunal sitting in a room across the courtyard.

The examination was very brief. Here is a transcript of it, as it is preserved in the archives of the Bastille:

"Who are you?"

"Marie Therese Louise, Princess of Savoy and Lamballe."

"Your employment?"

"Superintendent of the household of the Queen."

"Have you any knowledge of the plots of the court?"

"I have not."

"Swear to liberty and equality and hatred of the King and Queen?"

"Readily to the former, but not to the latter."

The cruel judge, a mocking gleam in his eyes, said briefly, "Let Madame be set at liberty."

The poor Princess was not aware of the sinister meaning of these words. She was led, half fainting now, not toward the door through which she had entered from the prison courtyard, but to another door that led into the Rue des Ballet, an open street. Here was gathered a wild, shrieking

crowd of men and women, hardly human, their feet drenched with blood, waiting to rush forward and hack and tear with all sorts of clubs, axes and stones each aristocrat as he or she came out of the door "set at liberty" by the judges within. The crowd outside knew the Princess de Lamballe was to be its next victim. They called her name in great shouts. When the door opened the concierge of the prison, who was conducting her, she thought, to her liberty, bowed with ironical gallantry and said with a sweep of his chapeau:

"Madame la Citoyenne is free to depart. I wish her long happiness of her freedom."

The Princess stepped into the opened door and then shrank back. Outside the crowd greeted her with a mighty roar. Men and women leaped forward. She would have drawn back, but the concierge had closed the door behind her. A savage ruffian caught her by the hair and pulled her down to the crowd in the street. A woman pressed forward and thrust a knife into her neck. The sight of blood trickling from the wound transformed the fury of the mob into frenzy. Her clothes were torn from her body and then her denuded form was

passed back over the heads of the crowd until at last it was flung upon a heap of corpses, stabbed through and through.

In the meantime the crown jewels, including the Blue Diamond, had been seized by the Jacobin Commune. They were deposited in the Garde Meuble, under guard of the National Militia. In September of 1792 they were mysteriously stolen or abstracted.

It has been hinted that no less a person that the great Murat managed to possess himself of the diamond and that it was in turn stolen from him at the time of his assassination by Charlotte Corday by one of the committee, who sold it to a wealthy Indian potentate, who was then visiting in Paris, and who recognized the stone. This Hindu dared not take it back to India, however, in a form which in any way resembled its original size and shape or could be identified as one of the missing jewels from the sacred temple of Rama in Burma.

He took the stone to Amsterdam, Holland, where the most famous lapidaries of the world have worked for centuries, and delivered it to Wilhelm Fals about the year 1800. Fals was one of the

best experts in diamond cutting in the city of Amsterdam.

His task was to recut the diamond, alter its shape and return it, with the salvaged pieces, to the Indian potentate. This he did with great skill, reducing the diamond from 67½ carats to 44¼ carats. Thus in passing through the hands of Wilhelm Fals the treasured gem of the French Louis had shrunk about twenty-three carats—just about one-third of its size when it was the prized jewel of the ladies of the French court and considerably less than half its size when Tavernier brought it to Paris in 1642.

Wilhelm Fals was a man of unimpeachable honesty and high character, but he had a dissolute son, Hendrik. After the father had finished recutting the great stone and had sent word to his customer that the stone was ready for delivery, but before the Indian Prince found it convenient to take it into his possession, it was stolen by the dissolute son, Hendrik. The father, Wilhelm Fals, was ruined and died of a broken heart.

Hendrik Fals, with the diamond in his possession, set out for Paris and sold it to a Frenchman named

Francis Beaulieu. With the proceeds of the sale of the stolen gem Hendrik Fals embarked upon a wild orgy of dissipation, and when the last of his money was gone committed suicide in London in 1820.

Ten years later a well-known diamond dealer of London named Daniel Eliason received a message to call at an address in a poverty-stricken section of the city. With some misgivings Eliason kept the appointment, and found a dying man in utter destitution. It was Francis Beaulieu, and in his wasted hand rested the famous Hope Diamond. He died the day after he sold the jewel.

Eliason realized the wonderful bargain he had made and set himself about finding a purchaser at a good round figure. After many offers he finally sold the diamond in 1830 to the Hopes, the wealthy British bankers, for 18,000 pounds, or about $90,000.

But ever as it went from hand to hand, until it became the Hope Diamond—and after—always came the note of tragedy and heartbreak, of death and disgrace, of evil destinies for those who held it, that the thought comes always and ever, "Is it coincidence?"

Chapter Nine.

BLASTS LIVES AND FORTUNES.

The misfortune that came to the Hope family is much my own and fills those sordid chapters of my own life that I shrink from recalling. While we trace the jewel on its sanguinary course, suffice to say that my husband, Lord Francis, became a bankrupt and the great gem which had become known by his mother's name was sold.

It was purchased by a New York jeweler named Frankel. The story of its evil association had preceded it to America and delay in finding a purchaser sent Frankel into insolvency.

Came then Jacques Colot, a French broker. Before he had succeeded in disposing of it at a sacrifice sale, he had been compelled to give up his

home, his wife had eloped with another man, Colot himself became ill to the point of death.

And then the great jewel passed into the hands of a Russian Prince, Ivan Kanitovski, dissipated roué, who had come to Paris to indulge in the mad revels of its bohemian circles.

The Prince, however, was a gay fellow, whose heart was not in the least loyal to one dancing girl more than another. He had been fascinated by one of the professional beauties of Paris, Lorenz Ladue, a dancer at the Folies Bergere.

But if Mlle. Ladue was generous with her smiles, she was evasive to the suitor who asked more of her favor than the graciousness she gave to all. When her evening banquets were over, and while she still was being toasted with the countless bottles of champagne opened in her honor nightly in all the cafes of Paris, she went quite modestly to her home with her favored suitor, Emile Etard, a young man about town who had been, before she lifted him with her own rise to famè, a noted Apache.

One night the impassioned Prince Ivan drew out the wondrous Hope Diamond. At the feet of his charmer he pleaded with her to accept from him

the famous gem as a token of his sincerities. For a time Lorenz was fascinated by the jewel.

She promised she would think of the Prince—kindly—and weigh him in the balance against her other admirers—but he must wait until the morrow, or even another day. In the meantime, if he pleased, she would keep the diamond to be reminded of his supplications.

The Prince could do nothing else but agree. She described her experiences to Emile, but she did not tell him of the diamond. She feared he would not understand that —perhaps that would cause him to doubt her. But she could not refrain from arranging, for that very night, a box party of her friends at one of the theatres.

Emile Etard never appeared at these celebrations of his sweetheart. He wisely remained, as a rule, in the background. This night, however, something prompted him to attend the same performance chosen by Lorenz for her "diamond" party. The dancer joined her friends during the third act, and he saw the gestures of astonishment and envious admiration as she threw back her coat and bared her jeweled throat, on which hung the

great "Blue Diamond." He, as had all Paris, had read of its purchase by the Russian Prince for a feminine favorite.

The former Apache went to their apartments, there to await the coming of Lorenz. She came, after midnight, and greeted him with her customary kiss. She held her cloak tightly around her, and attempted to pass directly into her boudoir, where she would have removed the jewel. But her sweetheart clutched her arm, and, whirling her about, dragged her cloak away from her shoulders. She screamed at the fierce gleam that shot out from between his heavy, half-closed eyelids. She fell to her knees and tried to soften him with her pleadings. But his passion had him in a deadly grip.

Picking her up, he threw the delicate, exquisite form onto a couch. The Blue Diamond scintillated in the hollow of her beautiful throat. It tantalized him. His passions flamed to conflagration. One hand clutched at the blazing gem, the other fastened around the slender neck. Both hands clenched and tightened.

When they found her, next morning, Lorenz

Laduc was dead—Paris had lost its queen of beauty.

The authorities found the great gem gleaming on the bared throat of the pulseless body. The murderer had not carried it away.

Prince Ivan appeared and claimed his property, stating that he had but loaned the diamond to Lorenz, their pact being that if she would listen to his pleadings and take the place in his affections theretofore held by a Russian dancing girl, he would allow her to keep the gem. But, he said, if she decided over night to repulse him, she was to have returned the jewel.

He told in great detail about this pact, and the emotional Frenchman easily understands such things. The authorities returned the gem to him as his property.

Forty-eight hours after that morning when the Judge of the Examinations returned to him the Hope Diamond agents of Russian Nihilists sought him out in his bachelor apartments, where, despite the tragedy that had befallen Lorenz, he was entertaining her successor to the laurels of the reigning Parisian beauty. This young woman was the

charming Anastasie Romane, of the Opera Comique, whose auburn hair and exquisite daintiness had long enraptured Paris.

The Nihilist agents waited until the Prince's servants withdrew and left their master and his newest charmer alone. Then they crept from behind the draperies and plunged their knives into the Prince's heart.

Anastasie must have tried to escape the room. Her lifeless body, its filmy draperies stained with blood, was found stretched across the threshold. And on the floor, not far from the couch on which Anastasie had been reclining when the assassins burst into the room, lay the Hope Diamond.

Chapter Ten.

ANOTHER TRAIL OF EVIL.

Remarkable how these coincidences of misfortune and possession of this jewel follow its entire history. If its potency for evil came from an ancient curse, the power lost nothing as the years passed and the jewel changed owners from Russian prince to Turkish sultan and finally an American millionaire.

No one escaped who had aught to do with the sale and barter of this decoration of a pagan goddess.

After Prince Ivan's lifeless body was borne to the home of his father, the stone was placed on sale to pay the debts he had incurred in his mad revels among the beauties of the Parisian stage.

Here enters a Greek, Simon Montharides, who

was in Paris with his beautiful Italian wife and their two children.

He paid $300,000 for the diamond and at once gossip tried to locate the principal in so colossal a transaction.

It developed that Montharides was acting for Selim Habib, a Persian, a close friend of the Turkish Sultan, Abdul Hamid, who had commissioned the Greek to buy the gem that he might, in return for substantial favors, present it to the "Sick Man of Europe." Observe the fatal consequences that came to both these men, who had the stone in their possession only for a very brief period.

Montharides set out to return to Greece. He made a pleasure trip of it, in celebration of his profitable transaction with the Hope Diamond. But the pleasure turned to tragedy—just a week after the gem had left his hands.

In Switzerland he was thrown, with his wife and daughters, over a precipice in the foothills of the Alps, and all were killed. At the time, I remember, there was considerable discussion about the accident. It was rumored there was evidence

that it was not an accident at all, but that a mysterious Hindu, who had been staying, with several associates, in Berne, had been seen to climb the foothills early in the morning of the day set aside by Montharides for his outing. He was never seen again, but there were footprints near where the family tumbled to death which were identified as resembling those of this strange Oriental.

In view of my own experience with a Hindu in Paris, who frankly said he was devoting his life to the task of recovering the gem from the outraged idol from which it was stolen, I should not be surprised if the accident were a deliberate and vengeful murder.

Selim Habib, who delivered the diamond to Abdul Hamid, remained in Constantinople to entertain his many friends there. One night he disappeared from his rented palace. There was a great to-do among the officials of Constantinople over his disappearance, but search as they would they could find no trace of him.

It was a week later that his body was washed up with the tide from the straits of the Bosphorus. How he had fallen into the water, whether he had

The Unsuspecting Inhabitants of Burma, near which is the Great Temple of Rama Sita.

been thrown in or whether he had committed suicide or whether an accident had befallen him, none could tell, nor ever has told. He was just another victim of the strange fate which seems to come inevitably to all who brave that legendary "devil" in the Hope Diamond.

Chapter Eleven.

TRAGEDY IN THE HAREM.

Abdul Hamid had ruled Turkey and his harem for many years, scornful alike of the opinion of the world or the protests of the great powers of Europe against some of his barbaric acts. He had defied them at times. Diplomacy had failed to dislodge and no show of force had been able to unseat him.

To him came the great Hope Diamond—and almost from the hour when he received it until it was smuggled out of his empire, himself in exile and disgrace, there was trouble and tragedy.

It fell first upon the favorite, Zubayda, a Georgian girl of exquisite beauty who had been given to Abdul as a "birthday" present.

This Zubayda was one of the very few "birth-

day" presents to Abdul he ever kept for himself. Abdul early in his reign established the practice of receiving these gifts of beautiful young women, only to transfer them immediately to rich Turks, with his compliments. These slave girls thus were given husbands instead of being kept in the imperial harem.

When Zubayda was presented to him he received her, as was customary, in the throne room, just within the seramlik gates—the furthest any male official of the court or masculine dignitary may venture behind the harem walls. At such a ceremony the trembling maiden who thus, after years of preparation, is brought to the feet of the "King of Kings," lifts her veil that her august master may look upon her beauty and appreciate the value of the favor thus bestowed upon him by the giver of the human "birthday present."

Lovely maidens had knelt there, year after year, at the feet of Abdul and, lifting their veils, had hoped the "King of Kings" would see enough enchantment there to feel a desire to keep them for himself—and bestow upon them their chance to win the intoxicating power and position of "fa-

vorite." But for many years the Sultan merely nodded his approval of the face thus exposed to him, expressed stereotyped words of acknowledgment to the giver, and waved the maiden aside to be handed on the next day to the subordinate official he had chosen for the honor of receiving that year's wife at his hands.

But Abdul looked twice at the face Zubayda uncovered for him. His attendants were electrified when, instead of the customary wave of his hand dismissing her to the care of eunuchs waiting to take her to temporary apartments within, he summoned before him "the Crown of Veiled Heads," none other than his ancient mother, who, bearer of that grandiloquent title, was ruler and autocrat of the harem.

It was to his mother he confided the keeping of the new slave—and that meant he intended to keep her for himself.

Within the harem Zubayda was received with all the honors and dignity due a "gueuzdes," or "One Who Has Received the Master's Glance." A luxurious apartment was set aside for her and a train of personal slaves and eunuchs provided her.

The imperial princesses of the harem, daughters of the Sultan, waited upon her and showered her with every attention. For to be a "gueuzdes" in the Imperial Serai means that there is no earthly splendor, no mundane luxury of imperial power and influence that she may not attain if she is wise in the wisdom of her sex.

It was a member of the harem, one who had once been "eyed" herself, who told me of Zubayda's extraordinary rise to power, her flaunting of the Hope Diamond in the eyes of rivals, ministers and even the Sultan's wives, and her tragic ending. This was Selila Misrilli Hanoum, who had entered the Imperial Serai as a slave and who had won emancipation upon her marriage to a palace official, who later became an attache of the Turkish Legation at Paris. This little woman was a very dear friend of mine—she came to see me when I was in Paris. And it is her narrative, not my own, of the events in the Sultan's palace which I tell here.

As soon as Zubayda had been installed in her apartments there began the long daily routine of preparations for that supreme moment when the

great black bodyguard of the Sultan should stop at her corridor door and summon her to his master's presence.

These preparations comprised every beautifying method known to the lore of a feminine civilization which depends for all its happiness upon physical attraction. Each morning there was the masseuse, whose duty it was to manipulate with skilled fingers against each ounce of superfluous flesh that had gathered where it marred the dainty traceries of her beauty. Slaves who had been taught from infancy to be adept at the manicure shaped the finger and toe nails of this newest of the gueuzdes. Each day her eyebrows were carefully shaped. With every morning she was summoned from her sleep with the first rays of the sun and her hair carefully dressed in the mode most admired by the Sultan, and the poor girl had to be very careful throughout the day, until past the retiring hour of the Sultan in the evening, not to disarrange a hair —for who knew at what moment the almost breathlessly awaited summons might come, and she would have to fly lest the master become impatient at a moment's waiting?

In the afternoons there were lessons in speech, for the seraglio has a dialect all its own, a dialect best fitted to terms of endearment and promises of devotion, and it is well for each "Eyed One" to know well this seraglio language when her ambition is realized and she is alone with the King of Kings for the first time.

And during all this daily excitement within the personal apartments of the new and "eyed" slave, there was gathering with constantly increasing momentum that subdued tempest of jealousy, rivalry, feud and intrigue, which is what ever keeps the pulses of a harem stirring and its brains alert. For it is over many broken hearts, broken ambitions, shattered illusions that each new favorite attains her peculiar throne in the Imperial Serai!

First there are the four Kadui Effendis, the legally married wives of the Sultan, to employ all the influence of their high position in the harem to embarrass the one who threatens to attain greater power than theirs. Each of these imperial wives has her own court, and her proteges among the slaves and princesses of the haremlik. Each is in a position to grant many coveted favors to the most

powerful eunuchs, and the favor of any one of them would lift any menial slave or attendant upon the person of the new gueuzdes far above her rightful rank in the harem scheme of things.

Thus the intrigue reached directly into the personal household of Zubayda. She could not tell whether her masseuse would not secretly seek to leave blemishes rather than beauty spots. She had to be very wary lest her hairdresser singed her tresses too close to the scalp instead of just at the edges. And of her eunuchs she had to fear lest they discredit her to their overlords, who would, in turn, convey the discrediting reports to the Sultan's bodyguard and to the imperial ear itself.

And besides all these who might be suspected of seeking to harm her chances of favor with the master, there were the imperial princesses, daughtrs of the Sultan, who were always jealous of any mere slave girl who might aspire to more than passing attention from their father.

It was an exciting, busy life for Zubayda, while she awaited the imperial summons, and fraught with dangers, but she was shrewd enough to seek supporters among the less favored cliques in the

haremlik, and these were faithful to her in return for the honor thus conferred upon them.

The big black stopped at her corridor door at last, and bowing low, spoke the magic words that set her little heart a fluttering and every nerve in her body quivering—"The lord of lords desires that you attend him."

Like the reverberations of the bursting of a bomb the news spread to even the farthest detached palaces of the seraglio. Hundreds of women flocked to the wing wherein were Zubayda's apartments, hoping to catch a glimpse of her as she fled at the appointed moment, down the passageways that led to the Sultan's chambers. There was but one thought in all those feminine breasts—the same thought in the hearts of imperial wives and princesses as in the hearts of the vast army of young and old slaves who dared not hope they themselves would ever have such a summons spoken to them—a wonder if the morrow would see a new favorite enthroned, or a new dream castle shattered.

Zubayda had been carefully trained since her childhood, in the house of the scheming governor

who raised her to be a birthday gift to his master, to be prepared for just this hour. She was confident of her own charm and her ability to use it. When she returned to her own apartments there gleamed from her wrist the sign that settled all the speculation of the curious harem—a bracelet of diamonds, emeralds and rubies. It was the traditional gift by which the Sultan indicated his intention to repeat his command for her attendance upon him—the sign that enthroned her as a new queen of the harem, a reigning favorite!

Events piled fast, and spectator to all of them was my later friend, Selila Misrilli, for at that time she was attached to Zubayda as Mistress of the Allowance, or keeper of the new favorite's private purse.

At noon of that next day a messenger came from the "Crown of Veiled Heads," the Sultan's mother, commanding her presence in the dowager's reception room. This was Zubayda's first audience with this haremlik potentate, and was the first of the ceremonies due her as "Ikbal," the unofficial title of a favorite. It was an important occasion in the new career of Zubayda. For it was here she

was to learn whether or not her reign was to be acknowledged by the Imperial Mother, or whether war was to be declared upon her within the haremlik.

No member of the harem may ever enter the presence of the Imperial Mother except when commanded to do so. No one may ever sit in the presence of this august personage under any circumstances, nor speak to her unless a question is asked and then only with the fewest possible words. It is a rule of the harem that a slave, or a wife, or an imperial princess, or any other member of the seraglio, appearing before her, must wear the most formal of dress and with hands crossed on her breast and with head bowed and eyes lowered. To violate one of these rules is to court instant disaster —for the power of the imperial mother is that of the Scimitar. Her orders frequently have peopled the nearby Bosphorus with the bodies of harem inmates who dared to brave her anger.

Zubayda, with her train of attendants, which already that morning had been augmented through the potency of the Sultan's bracelet, appeared for her audience, her heart palpitating. The Imperial

Mother had not entered the room, and Zubayda was compelled to stand in the centre of the great chamber, before the dowager's throne, silent and humble, awaiting the entrance of the "Crown of Veiled Heads." At each side of the room there stood the scores of women of harem rank, each of whom would have given her soul to be in the position of this newcomer to the seraglio. There were the four wives, the imperial princesses, the Hanoum Effendis who were mothers of the Sultan's sons and daughters, and the long list of gueuzdes who had been summoned once by the Sultan, but who had come away without a bracelet. These had attained an envious rank by that one visit, but could never again entertain the great ambition that every new slave in the harem may nurse in secret until she grows old.

Zubayda, while she waited, cast furtive glances at these who had gathered to inspect her under the ordeal of an audience with the Imperial Mother. What she saw in their faces, and in their cruel, vindictive gaze, suddenly determined her to trust her future, her ambition, her fate, to one startling gamble against the dreaded power of her who, next

to the Sultan himself, governed the harem and its thousands of inmates.

Suddenly, without a word, and oblivious to the startled gasp which echoed around the room, she gathered her train and, flinging it over her arm, turned her back to the throne and walked, silent and haughty, out of the room and down the corridor to her own apartments. As soon as the horrified eunuchs who awaited the appearance of the Imperial Mother could recover their senses they rushed after the favorite and warned her that if she valued her very life she must make haste to return to the audience chamber—and consider herself favored of Mahomet if she arrived before the Imperial Mother entered.

"Tell 'Our Lady'," said the daring favorite, "that her humble slave, Zubayda, dutifully appeared in the audience chamber at the appointed hour; tell 'Our Lady' her humble slave, Zubayda, waited long and patiently, as becomes her; tell 'Our Lady' that her humble slave, Zubayda, awaits 'Our Lady' here, where there may come at any time a summons from 'Our Lord of Lords', whom Zubayda would not dare keep waiting while she tarried for a tardy audience with 'Our Lady'."

"Those of us who heard this amazing speech," said my friend, Selila Misrilli, to me, when she related the incident, "fell upon our knees at the feet of Zubayda and pleaded with her, even with screams and tears, to recall her unprecedented words and to fly, before it was too late, to the audience chamber. She just smiled at us and turned haughtily away, saying: 'You are silly slaves; you do not know my secrets. We shall soon see, now and for always, who is to be the mistress of the Serai'."

But Zubayda was not so confident as she seemed to be, for she hurried to the jewel chest, that had been so plentifully filled for her, and put on every one of her gems. She sat before her mirror and rearranged stray wisps of hair. Her hands trembled and her face was white. To her faithful Selila she said wistfully: "Perhaps I am to die soon—if so, I must look my best when they plunge in the knife."

But she did not die—now. To say that there was consternation among those who were in the audience room and the eunuchs who faced the ordeal of explaining to the Imperial Mother, is to put

it weakly. A thousand women trembled in their every muscle, and a hundred eunuchs shook with dread as they decided which among them must carry that message to the dowager.

The Imperial Mother was saved embarrassment before all the ranking women of the harem who were gathered in the audience room by one of her most faithful slaves, who braved her wrath and, entering her private apartments where she was preparing herself to enter the throne room, prostrated himself and, begging her mercy for the intrusion, rattled off his account of Zubayda's defiance. The aged woman fainted—whether it was a real faint or whether it was presence of mind that so quickly suggested that solution, I do not know—nor did Selila. Being so stricken, however, the audience was cancelled—and the Mother's face was saved.

It is needless to say there was a great buzzing of feminine tongues that night. There was not a slave in the harem who slept. Word was passed around that a messenger from the imperial Mother sped to the chambers of the Sultan as soon as the evening prayer was over, and that soon after his return the Mother herself entered those chambers.

Of course it was to report the impertinence of Zubayda and to demand her punishment.

Zubayda was sent for the next day by the master. She obeyed the summons, trembling again, and with much the same emotion that welled within her when she trod that passage before. When Zubayda returned her head was held higher than ever, her eyes were triumphant—and her lips were shaped into a meaning smile. She whispered to Selila that the Lord of Lords had scolded her, and then patted her on the shoulder and laughed!

From that moment there were two queens of the seraglio—the Imperial Mother and Zubayda—but one ruled only where the other's interests were not involved. My readers may imagine which one this was—for the Imperial Mother was queen in name only.

Such was the rise of Zubayda—a rise that made her, for one short year, the real power behind the Sublime Porte. Abdul was a shrewd Sultan, but none the less a doting one—and what man can ignore the beseechings and the gently cooed counsels of the woman who has her fingers clutched around his heart?

And then came the fall!

Besmi Kalfa, a beautiful slave girl, who once had attracted the Sultan's attention, but who had not been trained in those arts which were necessary to the slave girl who wished to hold his affections, had won the regard of the Imperial Mother, who had once been a slave girl of Cairo, whence Besmi had come. Thus honored Besmi wielded great power in the harem, her beauty and soft Egyptian charm creating few jealousies, because she once had been discarded by the Sultan, and the great opportunity seldom comes twice.

Shortly after Zubayda's entrance into the harem, however, Besmi attained a new honor—one which aroused new hopes within her breast. She was to become one of the Hanoum Effendis, the mother of a little prince or princess. And as such she would be again brought to the attention of her master.

The Imperial Mother, ever seeking revenge upon Zubayda, now took Besmi Kalfa closer to her. She attached her to her own person, and began to carefully groom her for that auspicious time when she should again be received by the master.

In her weekly audiences with her son the Im-

perial Mother dropped occasional words of praise for Besmi Kalfa, who was to become a Hanoum Effendi. She said but little, but enough to arouse in her son a new interest in the slave girl he had discarded.

In the meantime Zubayda was secure in her position. It was at her bequest that when news went abroad the Hope Diamond was to be sold at auction in Paris the Sultan summoned Selim Habid and directed that the gem be purchased for him. When Selim had received the stone from his agent, Simon Montharides, and had brought it to the palace, it was already destined to gleam from the throat of the proud Zubayda.

Was it a mere coincidence that almost at the very moment the Sultan hung around her neck the ruby set chain from which the Hope Diamond hung, fate put into the hands of the Imperial Mother the weapon she needed for her revenge, and gave to Besmi Kalfa the opportunity to plunge her eunuch's scimitar into the heart of her haughty rival.

While Zubayda was holding special levees for all the wives of ministers, officials and wealthy

Turks, who paid sycophantic court to her, that she might flaunt before them her new symbol of favoritism, the great diamond, Besmi became the mother of a son. To be the mother of a Sultan's son is the third highest honor that can come to a member of the seraglio, which means the third highest honor that can come to a woman in all Islam.

But for Besmi the crafty Imperial Mother had prepared more than this. She had dwelt so often, in her periodical talks with her son, of the full-bloomed charm of the lovely Besmi, whom he once had cast aside, and had spoken so fondly of the slave's never lessening devotion to the memory of her single hour with him that Abdul's interest increased.

When the news was sent to him that his Besmi had given him a son he was elated. The birth of a son in the seraglio is an event of great importance in the Sultan's household. Also it is made the occasion of a national celebration, the offering of special prayers in all the mosques. Delegations of emirs, aghas, sheikhs and effendis came from throughout Islam, from Scutari and far away Bagdad, from Kadui and distant Afghanistan—wher-

ever Mahommet is worshipped—to pay their respects to the Sublime Porte and pass, in grave, solemn single file by the little basket in which the little heir is nestled for their inspection. Happy, indeed, and honored, is the mother, for her name is linked in every prayer—the only time such consideration is shown a woman in Turkey.

It was while the excitements and emotions of this great happiness still shone in the face of the beautiful Besmi that the Sultan sent his black to her door with the summons for her attendance in his apartments. This was the moment the Imperial Mother had so long awaited and had so carefully planned for. The Sultan had had his new son brought to him every day. New he was to see the mother and remember, the Imperial Mother hoped, those praises she had sung of her. And it was as she had planned!

Abdul was again fascinated by the gentleness, the submissiveness and the enchantments of his Besmi. He talked long with her, and fondly. And when she left him there was that in the Sultan's eyes which told her that she would be summoned again—and often.

Quickly the satellites of the harem gathered around Besmi. Aided by the influence of the Imperial Mother she began almost at once to build around her a powerful haremlik clique which fortified her against the domineering of the haughty Zubayda.

The favorite, fearing that her throne was tottering beneath her, used all her enchantments upon her doting lord. He would not admit that he was displeased with her, and she was heartened somewhat. But the Imperial Mother knew the secrets of her son's fickle favor and bade Besmi assume new and more arrogant haughtiness.

Chapter Twelve.

ABDUL DETHRONED

When Zubayda saw that Besmi gradually was usurping her place in the royal master's affections she resorted to every enchantment of which she was capable, to hold the fickle Sultan slave to her imperious will.

But the Imperial Mother's little plot was fast succeeding. Abdul found new delight in those more and more frequent tete-a-tetes with the slave girl whom he once had discarded, but whom the Imperial Mother had thrust upon his notice again, now as a Hanoum Effendi—the mother of a son.

In the secrecy of her dairas, her private apartments, where only her personal slaves and eunuchs were near her, she indulged in hysterical outbursts, followed by long hours of sulking. But in the

presence of the harem itself she was as austere and domineering as ever. She wore the great Hope Diamond constantly, a flashing, beautiful symbol of the power she has wielded over the "King of Kings," and those who were wondering whether it were yet time to transfer their allegiance from her to the beautiful Besmi, who was summoned so often to the Sultan's chambers, grew timid when they looked upon the gem, and were afraid to brave the power of her who had been such a capricious favorite.

The Sultan still assured Zubayda that she was but a foolish girl if she thought he planned to discard her. He would point to the great diamond scintillating from her throat and ask in his stolid way if that was not a worthy sign of his continued regard. But the Sultan's chief bodyguard continued to take his summons to Besmi more and more frequently.

There never could be two favorites—two rulers—in the satin-hung and divan-cushioned Yildiz Harem. Rivalries grew too bitter. There were too many to watch closely the signs of the Sultan's fancies, and the balance of favor attracted at once the balance of harem adulation.

The Imperial Mother, still unsatisfied with her revenge upon Zubayda for the slight she had suffered at her hands, was impatient. Besmi, her protegee, was looked upon with new interest now by the Sultan, but would her power over him last? Would not Zubayda, after all, possessor of the richest gem the Sultan ever had conferred upon one of his slaves, regain her proud estate? There was no opportunity, no time, to be lost.

The Imperial Mother decided that the die must be cast and the rival claims of Besmi and Zubayda put to the test. Besmi, who was an ambitious Hanoum Effendi, despite her meek loveliness, listened to the hints the Imperial Mother whispered into her ear.

Zubayda went to her bath, in the great alabaster pools in the marble seraglio court, just before the First Prayer, at sunset. All activities in the harem are halted during the First Prayer, even though the women do not join in the prayer itself. It is one of the rules of the harem etiquette that when the muezzin's call is sounded each slave girl, princess and Kadui Effendi—the Sultan's legal

wives—remains motionless wherever she happens to be for the ten minutes that is required for the Sultan, in his private mosque, to go through the rituals of the prayer. Zubayda planned daily to finish her bath just before the prayer, that its ten minutes might find her resting on her couch, surrounded by her attendants.

Besmi knew this custom. She waited one afternoon in the ante-chamber of the alabaster pool, where, hidden behind the damask curtains, she watched her rival playing in the water. She saw her, as the dusk settled on the open court and the myriad of harem lights began to glimmer, come out of the pool, draw her rich robe of lamb's fleece about her beautiful body and come toward the ante-chamber. Her slaves followed, but at a respectful distance.

Just as Zubayda was about to pass through the damask-hung arch into the passageway which led to her apartments Besmi, a miniature scimitar such as the harem eunuchs carry, gleaming in her hands intercepted her. Bitter denunciation of her rival trembled at her lips for utterance, but Zubayda saw the glittering knife, and saw, too, her

fate written in the flashing eyes of the Hanoum Effendi.

She tried to scream, but no sound came from her parched throat. She dropped her robe and turned to flee to the safety of her slaves, but Besmi leaped upon her and drove home the long, cruel knife—drove it into the favorite's heart. Zubayda fell at Besmi's feet, the beautiful body inert and lifeless.

In another moment Zubayda's company of slaves, bearing her toilet articles, trooped into the antechamber and fell, screaming, about the form of their mistress. Eunuchs, answering their cries, came from all directions. The alarm was spread, but Besmi was safe by then in the apartments of the Imperial Mother, where none dared to seek her.

Before word could be carried to the Sultan the muezzin called the hour of the First Prayer. Every frightened eunuch dropped to his knees, his face to Mecca, and every woman in the harem, from the lowest slave to the highest, stood silent and motionless, though her veins were pulsing with the exquisite excitement caused by the assassination of the mighty Zubayda.

When the five prayer minutes passed the Imperial

Mother, through whom the news of the haremlik tragedy must reach the Sultan, went at once to her imperial son's apartments and requested an audience.

What the Imperial Mother said to Abdul will never be known, of course, nor how she pleaded for Besmi, but it is safe to assume that she convinced her son that Besmi's act was inspired by her overpowering love for him and a punishment for Zubayda's treacheries. The Imperial Mother formally summoned Besmi to a trial before her for her deed, and after a few short ceremonies of accusation and defense ruled that the deed be condoned and Besmi restored to her position and rights as mother of an imperial son. That evening the Sultan's black came to Besmi's dairas and called her to the imperial presence—sign of her complete forgiveness.

The Hope Diamond was removed from the jewel boxes of the slain favorite and placed in the Sultan's private vaults, from which it emerged only with the Sultan's fall.

World politicians and statesmen will scout the thought that fate began to set the stage for the de-

thronement of the cruel Abdul at the very moment the Hope Diamond passed into his possession—even as historians do not like to say that the tragedy that befell Louis XVI., of which I have told before, was the result of Marie Antoinette's wearing the Blue Gem, but my readers will agree with me that it is at least strange that every monarch who ever owned this sparkling stone lost either his throne or his favorites, and sometimes both. And Abdul, the last monarch to have it in his vaults, began to feel his throne tottering under him the moment the diamond of Tavernier came into his possession.

The news of the assassination of Zubayda spread through Constantinople with startling results. Within the haremlik the Imperial Mother was all powerful. She could save Besmi from punishment and even, by working upon the senses of her son, persuade him to condone the crime and place Besmi in the high position of favor Zubayda had occupied.

But in the year that Zubayda had been the ruling favorite, and the real power behind the throne, influencing nearly all the Sultan's official acts, she had bound to her many influential men and women

in official life. She had been shrewd enough to attach to her several of the Imperial Princesses, daughters of the Sultan, who had married ministers of state, and lived in palaces of their own. Almost every one of these princesses was jealous of the Imperial Mother, and glad to thwart her plans at every opportunity. They ruled their husbands absolutely, as no man in Turkey is high enough in the social or official scale to cross an Imperial Princess, even though she be his own wife.

When it was learned that Besmi had slain Zubayda and had been retained in the Sultan's favor, intrigue against the Imperial Mother and the new favorite at once began to manifest itself in the capital. Great pashas, beys, and governors, stirred by the Governor of Scutari, who had been the recipient of many favors from Zubayda in return for his pains in training her for the imperial harem, bound themselves to bring about the punishment of the Imperial Mother and the debasement of Besmi.

Secretly there was assembled from all quarters of the Empire leaders who belonged to those who had been friendly to Zubayda or her supporters.

In Constantinople, in the very shadow of Yildiz Palace itself, these vowed that they would revenge the murder of the slave girl even if the Sultan himself had to be dethroned.

For several years the movement went on, gathering political impetus, until every court in Europe began to fear the unrest that had been stirred up throughout Turkey.

There came suddenly into prominence a young Turk, not of the noble classes, who seemed to be a leader of the malcontents. His name was Enver, and he had been a barber in Salonica, but it was rumored that he was a brother of the slain Zubayda and that his barber shop had been purchased with the money his family received from the Governor of Scutari when she was sold to him to become a birthday gift for the Sultan.

Of course Enver had not been so loving a brother as to object to that sale of his sister, nor to refuse to use his share of the money it brought to his family to set himself up in business. But now that the friends she had made as the Sultan's favorite were seeking to avenge her death, he projected himself into their counsels as one who was most wronged of all—a grief-stricken brother!

In this pose Enver brought into play all that shrewdness and determination which, later, was to make him virtually the master of Islam and the main influence in bringing Turkey into the Great War. He found ready support for his contentions, and raised a standard, under the name of "The Committee for Union and Progress," which, popularly christened the "Young Turk Movement" because of the youth of Enver himself and many of his followers, began to stir up intrigue and rebellion throughout the empire.

The Sultan, surrounded by his nine hundred wives and concubines, and dependent largely upon the Imperial Mother and Besmi for his counsels, ignored the gathering storm until it was too late.

The events which led directly to the dethronement of Abdul are well-known history with which my readers will be familiar. First, the "Young Turks" compelled the Sultan to establish a constitution and to permit the election of a popular assembly. The Imperial Mother tried in vain to persuade her son to refuse this demand, but the friends of Zubayda, which had been a hundred or more, now were numbered by the millions, and

the Sultan dared not defy them. For a year he plotted, however, aided by Besmi and the Mother, to overthrow the constitution and drive all of Enver's Young Turks into prison. He was aided in this design by the German Emperor, but even this powerful assistance was not enough.

At last came the day when Enver, now known as Enver Bey, determined upon his master stroke. Gathering around him the most powerful of those who answered to a call that may have been something like "Remember Zubayda," he summoned before him the leaders of the Parliament. "Dethrone the Sultan," he demanded of them. "Proclaim a fetva and put the 'question of righteousness' to the Sheikh-ul-Islam."

No more revolutionary demand had been made in the history of the Turkish Empire. A fetva is, in effect, a trial of the chief of the Ottoman Government—of the Sultan. It is an impressive ceremony, as old as Islam itself, through which the voice of all the Sultan's subjects is supposed to express itself. The Parliament, as representatives of the people, arrogated to itself the right to proclaim a fetva and, as popular sentiment was against

Old Gungh, the Wealthy Merchant, on his Way to the Home of Bibi, Daughter of the Miser who would Sell Her.

Abdul Hamid, there was none to deny it that right.

The "question" was a ceremony in which the Sheik-ul-Islam played his part as the spiritual adviser, the actual religious head, of all Mohammedanism. The Sultan merely is Emperor, the governmental ruler. But Abdul Hamid had been enthroned, also, as the representative on earth of the Prophet. No civil power alone could deprive him of that religious caliphate. But if, to the "question," the Sheikh-ul-Islam should make affirmative answer, then a Sultan might lose his throne and his caliphate as well.

The followers of Enver obeyed him. The Senate was assembled and resolved itself into a "fetva." Every member voted for the removal of Abdul, in the name of the people, under the accusation that he had defied the constitution he himself had sworn to support.

Then messengers of the Senate were sent for the venerable Sheikh-ul-Islam. When he had been seated on the Senate dais the "question" was put to him:

"What is to be done with a caliph who, on several occasions, has infringed the prescriptions of

the Koran, who has governed the country tyrannically, who has burned the sacred books, who has appropriated unto himself the public property, who has filched the public money, who has broken his vow to govern according to the Sheriat, and who, by means of money, has been the cause of civil war and led the nation to kill one another?"

To this the Sheikh-ul-Islam replied:

"He must abdicate or be deposed."

The Senate denied to Abdul the right to abdicate. So a commission was appointed to wait upon him at his palace and notify him that the twenty-fourth era of the Ottoman dynasty had come to an end, and that he must go into exile.

To the dwellers in the harem, a household of a thousand women, the news that the nation was about to dethrone the King of Kings fell like a bombshell. The Parliament proclaimed the fetva on Friday morning. A member of the household of Enver Bey brought the news the night before.

In all that city of more than a thousand women, who existed only with the one common ambition, to attain favor in the eyes of their common master, there was only a handful that gave a thought in

that dark hour to him. The others thought only of themselves—for traditions in Oriental countries yield but little of comfort for the occupants of the harem of a fallen lord.

The handful of faithful ones was composed of a group of the young slaves in the Sultan's wing. They were still at his side when a pasha closely attached to the court sent in word early in the morning that the Parliament had clung to its decision to form itself into a fetva.

To Selila, my friend in later years, one of these slave girls, Baffa Kalfa, a Georgian girl, described the scene:

"The Pasha who took word to the Sultan was Tashin Bey, his personal secretary, an aged man, who was freely admitted at all times to the outer chamber of the Sultan's suite. All through the night before Abdul had sat, silent, dreaming, in his great chair facing long, deep windows, through which he could overlook the courtyard of the harem and, beyond, catch the glinting of the moon and stars on the Bosphorus. At his feet and on a little circle of ottomans ranged around him a dozen or so of his "pets," the most faithful of his slave girls,

reclined, sad, tired, but watchful for even the slightest movement of their lord. At a distance behind his two favorite eunuchs sat, cross legged, on floor cushions, too awed by the presage of the morrow to even nod their heads at napping.

"The 'King of Kings,' his doom impending, had not moved even a hand or changed the slope of his body for hours. When dawn came and the lights along the Bosphorus began to dim, flicker and go out, he turned his eyes to the right over the city of Pera and watched the first gleams of the sun turn the minaret towers to gold. It was a sight that always infatuated Abdul, and one for which he had often arisen from his couch before dawn. He did not know now but that he never again would see these monuments of his glory as the Caliph of all Islam welcome the radiant day.

"A little slave girl, one of his newest, broke into sobs. Slowly the King of Kings turned to look at her. He gazed long, as if unseeing, at the fresh young face, down which the unbidden tears were coursing. The girl, startled, was frightened at his gaze. She dropped to her knees in mute appeal to be forgiven for disturbing her lord's reveries.

"The King of Kings raised one heavy, pudgy hand and motioned her to his feet. The concubine, trembling, slowly moved over to him. The pudgy hand reached down until it fell on the shoulder of the girl who sat on the cushion nearest him. This shoulder he brushed aside, much as it would have brushed out of its way a docile dog. The concubine who had sobbed took the vacant place on the cushion and, entwining her arms about the knees of the King of Kings, rested her head lightly on his lap. This was the only incident that interrupted the silence of the long vigil.

"Then came Tashim Bey with the announcement. 'Olnus,' the Sultan grunted—'So be it.' That was all.

"At noon there had been no change. Still the Sultan sat there, with the same group of faithful slaves, waiting, watching. Suddenly a hundred cannons blazed out at the arsenal near Seraglio Point. Startled faces looked up into the Sultan's. He returned their gaze, stolidly, heavily, without speaking. All knew the Assembly had acted and that the fetva had been proclaimed.

"It scarcely was ten minutes later when the great doors at the far end of the room opened noiselessly

and Tashim Bey came in. The two eunuchs rose to their feet. Tashim crossed to a place directly behind the Sultan and bent to his knees. The Sultan did not turn to look at him, but raised his hand as a sign of his permission that the secretary speak.

" 'A commission from the Assembly begs audience with the King of Kings. It asks that it be granted immediately, as its tidings are of importance to the Caliphate.'

"Now the little group of concubines could not restrain itself any longer. Piercing screams rent the air as each of the slaves threw herself at the Sultan's feet, prone upon the ground, and beat the floor in poroxysms of grief and fear.

"Slowly the Sultan crossed the great room, through the open doors and into the audience chamber beyond. There he faced Hekmet Pasha, Essad Pasha and Carasso Effendi, the deputies who had been named by the Assembly to bear its message to the monarch. The Sultan's favorite son, Prince Burhan Eddin, hardly more than a child, came running down a corridor and entered the room just behind his father. The Sultan turned to him and motioned that he go behind a screen near the door through which he had entered. The Prince obeyed.

"The three deputies of the committee observed every rule of etiquette due their Sultan and Caliph. They bent their knees to the floor and went through the motion of picking from the ground the hem of a robe and kissing it. Then they rose and stood very straight and firm. It was Essad Pasha who spoke:

" 'Milet seni hal etdi'—'The nation has deposed thee.'

" 'And the lives of myself and my family?' the Sultan asked.

" 'Thy life and the lives of thine shall be spared to thee,' said Essad Pasha.

"Abdul bowed his head, turned and walked back into the room from whence he had come and when the group of terrified concubines was awaiting him. Thus was the twenty-fourth Sultan and Caliph of Islam dethroned—as the result of troubles that began to bear down upon his house with the entrance into it of the sinister Hope Diamond.' "

That was the story of that dread day in the Sultan's palace, just as it was told to me by Selila Hanoum.

The next day the dethronement was made complete. Abdul was summoned early in the morn-

ing, told that he was to be sent to his magnificent palace at Salonica, where he would be quartered with such of his household as he cared to take with him—up to a certain number.

Every customary respect was outwardly paid the fallen King of Kings. He superintended the placing of his concubines in the railway carriages, and when the train was ready to depart the officer in charge knelt before him and asked:

"Have we your permission, sire, to proceed?"

The ex-Sultan raised his hand, and his exile was begun. No more chapters of tragedy were written into the history of Europe by Abdul Hamid.

Enver Bey's triumph was complete. He brought from the prison in which Abdul had confined him Raschid Pasha, Abdul's brother and heir to the throne. While Abdul was on his way to Salonica, with nothing left of his caliphate but his twelve concubines, Raschid was being proclaimed twenty-fifth Sultan and the new King of Kings. It is this Raschid who still occupies the throne of the Ottomans to-day—a throne that never has been stable since that day Abdul Hamid ordered his jeweler to purchase in Paris the great Blue Diamond for the fair Zubayda.

Chapter Thirteen.

IT COMES TO AMERICA.

America furnished the only possible market for a gem of such great worth, when, deposed and in exile, Abdul Hamid succeeded in sending it to the market in an effort to raise funds.

A syndicate was formed of French jewelers to purchase the Hope Diamond. At the head of this syndicate was the firm of Cartier, a house which has an important branch in New York.

Pierre C. Cartier, head of the Cartier firm, brought the diamond to America, hoping to sell it here.

Then one day there came to Cartier a telegram from Washington, asking that his firm send to the palatial home of Mrs. Edward Beale McLean, daughter of the wealthy Thomas F. Walsh, of Colo-

rado, some jewel suitable as an ornament for a headdress. Mrs. McLean was planning to give a sumptuous entertainment to the Russian Ambassador, M. Bakmeteff, and his wife, and her friends had said this ball was to be one of the most splendid functions ever given in America.

Pierre Cartier himself went to the McLean mansion with a package of his most elaborate jewels. But none of them would suit. None was worthy to decorate the hair of the beautiful Evelyn Walsh McLean.

"If you will permit me," said the noted jeweler, "to send back to New York I will have brought for you the most beautiful gem in all the world—the famous Blue Diamond of Louis XIV., lately known as the Hope Diamond."

Mrs. McLean clapped her hands with glee. "By all means, bring it. I should like to wear the diamond that brought death to the Princess Lamballe and Marie Antoinette."

Mr. McLean then arranged to purchase the stone. He gave the jeweler an emerald and pearl pendant, valued at $30,000, a cash payment of $40,000, and arranged to pay $114,000 additional. But

Mrs. McLean was fearful of the "devil." Here is the contract of sale just as it was signed by Mr. McLean:

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 28, 1911.

In consideration of the payment of $40,000 in cash, the delivery of an emerald and pearl pendant and the payment of $114,000 in three annual installments without interest, payable bi-monthly, I hereby agree to sell to Edward B. McLean what is known as the "Hope Diamond" and necklace, delivery to be made forthwith, and, if desired by the purchaser, a necklace in the shape of a bowknot and diamonds to be taken at cost and deducted from the sum of $114,000 deferred payment.

Should any fatality occur to the family of Edward B. McLean within six months, the said Hope Diamond is agreed to be exchanged for jewelry of equal value at the selection of Wilton J. Lambert.

It is further agreed that the contract for said deferred payment is not to be negotiated.

P. C. CARTIER.

The above terms accepted.

EDWARD B. McLEAN.

See how anxious Mr. McLean was about the diamond's evil spell! In the contract he stipulated that if the jewel brought him or his family any fatality he could rid himself of it at once. It must have been some strange premonition that caused him to insert this clause. And how the evil spirit of the diamond must have grinned—if such a spirit there really be—at that six months' time limit. As if it had not been patient a century at a time while awaiting its opportunity to strike!

The six months passed, and no "fatality" had come to the McLean home. Instead there came a baby son. "See," said Mrs. McLean, "the Hope Diamond has not brought me misfortune—instead it has brought the blessing we have longed for above all else."

As "the hundred-million-dollar baby," little Vinson McLean, became known around the world. His mother's father, Thomas F. Walsh, owner of many gold mines, had left $150,000,000 to his daughter in trust for his grandson. John R. McLean, the millionaire newspaper proprietor, left another $100,000,000, which some day was to go to Vinson. He was the richest baby in the world.

Little Vinson lived apart from the rest of the world. A veritable army of servants hovered about the nursery and the McLean home, their time devoted to the service of the baby's head nurse. Outside the home the detectives kept guard night and day against possible kidnappers.

The McLeans have four homes, the Colorado estate, the Washington mansion, Friendship, a country place outside Washington, and an estate at Bar Harbor. Beautiful nurseries and great playgrounds were constructed at each of these homes. At all the estates the playgrounds were set in miniature forests, in which scores of wild animals were loosed, so Baby Vinson might sit with his nurses in steel cages and watch them.

A special railroad car was built to take him from one home to another. It contained elaborate apparatus for purifying the air and keeping it at even temperature and for guarding the baby against car sickness and shocks. At each house, except the city mansion, there was a complete farm and garden conducted only to provide the baby with fresh vegetables, selected meats and milk from pedigreed cows.

A steel baby carriage, the fame of which went around the world, was constructed for him to insure protection when he was taken out for a ride by nurses. This carriage was so constructed that the upper part of it closed down and locked automatically when the baby lay in its cushions. A detective was given the key when the nurse took the child out, and he walked at a distanc—even if kidnappers had overcome the corps of servants, nurses and detectives that surrounded him, they could not have stolen him from his carriage.

In each of his nursery playgrounds was a goat cart, a trained pet donkey and Shetland pony, and whole troops of dogs.

At the Washington mansion a high wall was built around the garden in which Vinson played, and even the baby's nurses could not reach the street once they had entered his nursery without calling a detective. The nursery door inside the house was of iron and only the head nurse had the key. When a nurse or other attendant went inside the door was locked behind her. From the nursery a passageway led to the garden playground,

shut in with its locked gate to which the head nurse and the gardener only had keys.

In such surroundings Vinson grew to be nine years old. Then, one day, the old gardener, not noticing that the child was playing in the nursery grounds, left the gate ajar just long enough for him to pick up his coat from the ground nearby. Little Vinson never had been outside that wall except when in charge of someone. He never had walked along the pavement or into the street—for he always was in an automobile when he went abroad, with detectives and nurses all about him. He saw the gate ajar and quick as a flash he ran through the opening . Screaming his delight he sped across the sidewalk, into the street—and was killed by a speeding automobile!

Another tragedy had punctuated the career of the Hope Diamond!

Chapter Fourteen.

THE CLOUDS GATHER AROUND ME.

These are the things I learned about the great gem which had been my pride when I was received at court and which to me at that moment was but a symbol of the triumphant success which the girl from the colliery town had achieved.

I was envied by the richest and the noblest of a great nation. I had the admiration and the good will of its aristocrats. I was received in the most select circles. I had a husband who seemingly, adored me.

Yet almost from that first hour the course of fortune changed until I was forced down through all the humiliations that can come to a proud woman.

I was the rage of London in the music halls and to me came not only the highest salary ever paid

an actress but that homage of gifts which was the right and due of those who ruled in the world of amusement.

Lord Francis was as serious as he had proved sentimental in his wooing and winning. More and more he retired to his library and less often did he personally escort me to the theater until the thought came to me that a honey-moon trip around the world might revive all the romance that had been mine when I first discovered that the man I loved was a real lord.

We started and were welcomed everywhere most generously. The fame of Lady May, as I was now known, extended to wherever men and women read, wherever human hearts beat in sympathy with the stories of real romance.

My own love for Lord Francis had not cooled. His unvarying courtesy, his thoughtfulness, his open adoration were all that a woman's heart could desire or demand.

Then came Captain Putnam Bradlee Strong—and with him disaster and heartbreak.

We were sailing, Lord Francis and I, from New York to Southampton as the last leg on our world

wide trip. On the same boat passage was booked for Captain Strong, who had been assigned by President McKinley to France for the army manoeuvres there. I never had met Captain Strong, but my attention was attracted to him when he came aboard, accompanied by a group of army officer friends, who had come to see him off. He was a striking figure in his dapper uniform, very military and romantic. Some one told me he was the son of the former Mayor of New York and one of the handsomest men in the regular army.

My cousin, Thomas Parke, a Philadelphia broker, was on board, going with us to London. That evening Tom came to me, saying, "I find I have an acquaintance on board, Captain Strong. He wants to meet you. He said he was struck by your beauty, and when he learned you were Lady Francis Hope he begged me to present him."

I told him I would be pleased to meet Captain Strong, and he was presented as soon as Lord Francis could be found. My cousin confessed to me that evening that he had not known Captain Strong, but that the latter had obtained an introduction through the captain of the boat.

Throughout the trip Captain Strong was most attentive. He cultivated Tom assiduously, and these two became fast friends. My cousin was a great admirer of me, and Captain Strong, learning this, sang my praises day and night to him. Tom brought me all the good things Captain Strong had to say about me, and I was quite flattered, for Captain Strong soon became the life of the ship. He was a fascinating man, with a suave gallantry which charmed women. I never have known a woman who, after being thrown in Captain Strong's company for a while, did not fall in love with him —wife or maid or widow, it was always the same.

Lord Hope paid little attention to my activities. He professed to be pleased that I should enjoy myself, and was satisfied to be a spectator to my triumphs. Captain Strong was most respectful to him, and seemed to know just how to humor him. Strong drew me out about my early experiences, and was wonderfully sympathetic when I told him of my early troubles and enthusiastic when I recounted my successes. He knew men and women attached to every court in Europe, and was a splendid conversationalist.

He made no advances to me at all during the trip. Had he done so I would have repulsed him without hesitation. Instead, though, he talked to me of my husband, and congratulated me for keeping "an English lord" in love with me. "They are so careless about their women usually, you know," he said, echoing just what was in my heart, "and once they have caught them think the romance-job is done."

Instead, a man should be a sweetheart always, I think—always planning to humor his wife, to surprise her with little unexpected attentions, to keep her on the same distant plane she occupied as his fiancee. You should be happy to have found a Britisher who still remains your lover."

Of course, Captain Strong knew I hadn't found a Britisher who thought it worth while to still be my sweetheart. He just acted as if he thought that, knowing that he was hitting me in a vulnerable spot, without my realizing that he knew. Unconsciously I began to think how much happier I would be and how much brighter the world would be if my husband were as attentive and thoughtful

as this Captain Strong evidently would be if he were in my husband's shoes.

When a woman begins to think of that comparison between her husband and another man she is slipping. If the other man is clever he will land her for the fall. And Captain Strong was beyond all things else clever.

When we reached Southampton the Duke of Newcastle met us with a special train. Strong was near by when the Duke approached and was presented to him. Lord Hope made the presentation, saying to his brother, "Captain Strong is a good friend. He made the trip across very pleasant for us."

The Duke invited the Captain to go up to London with us on the Duke's train, and during the trip he extended this invitation to include dinner with the ducal party at the Carlton.

For this dinner I got out all the Hope jewels and my own as well and picked from them the most attractive, including the Hope Diamond. Something prompted me to want to look my best, although at that time my thoughts of Captain Strong never had strayed from the boundaries imposed

upon a good wife. Yet, somehow, I wanted to impress this gentleman of the world who had been so attentive to me. It was the first sign of what was to come.

The gown I wore was a replica of the gown worn by the Empress Eugenie in her most famous painting. With the big diamond shining at the bodice and my own jewels, more than half a million dollars' worth, supplementing it, I must have been very impressive.

That evening Lord Francis invited Strong to accompany us and spend a few days at Folkstone, a country place of ours. My mother was staying here while we were going around the world. He accepted, of course, and during the next few days there he almost ignored me, so busy was he with attentions to Lord Francis. I instinctively knew, however, that he was playing a game—although I did not admit it to myself, or I might have been warned. He merely was making up to Lord Francis, my husband, so he could pay me attentions with more safety later on.

Sure enough, after a few days, when I announced that I was going to Paris to see some theatrical

agents who wanted to give me alluring contracts, Captain Strong announced that he, too, must make a trip to Paris, and expressed the hope he might see me there. Lord Francis spoke up at once: "Why don't you two run over on the same boat? You will be company for each other, and I will know May is in good hands."

Captain Strong expressed delight, but doubted that I would want to be "bored" with him. I was quite willing, however, and so we went to Paris on the same boat, Captain Strong very attentive and kind.

In Paris he sent me candies and flowers every day. My cousin came over to help me with the contracts, and Captain Strong took him into his hotel, and now, with my cousin present to make a party, took us everywhere—to all the best restaurants and theatres. He just showered me with his courtesies, and as we saw more of each other I began to notice more and more a sort of sadness in his eyes, an ineffable, wistful, longing, whenever he looked at me. Tom saw it, too, and joked me about it. I began to feel sorry for the Captain, for I thought perhaps he really had become smitten

with me during our many hours together, and was trying to hide his feelings. My readers will see how gradually the ground went out from under me, and how cleverly Captain Strong pulled the strings that tugged at my heart. Always he stood before me, my ideal of the devoted, impulsive, romantic man I would like my husband to be. Meantime Lord Francis was paying little attention to me—letting me go about my own affairs, always kind, but never exhibiting any of the little tendernesses which are so dear to a woman.

After my return to London, having refused to sign the contracts offered me, my agents in New York cabled me to come over for the "Giddy Throng." Lord Francis said he could not come, but for me to go along and return for a while, if I could, before rehearsals. I said good-by to Captain Strong in the presence of my husband and boarded the boat. What was my surprise when the boat sailed to meet Captain Strong on deck. He laughingly said he could not bear to say good-by to me so shortly, and that he was going as far as Cherbourg and stretch the ceremony of parting that

far anyway. This just struck me as a rather delicious escapade, and I entered into the spirit of it.

"Why, Captain," I said laughingly, "you make me feel quite like a guilty wife—as if I were doing something delightfully wicked. I just tremble at the thought of what my husband would say if he knew you had stolen back aboard the boat."

Captain Strong sobered immediately. He looked at me with the familiar sadness and longing in his eyes. "I wonder if being so wicked as you play at being would really be delightful—with me as the other part of the wicked bargain?" he said. I was startled. "I mean it, Lady Maysie," he said. "I'd like it awfully, if you and I were eloping now, and you were leaving your husband behind and were to become my wife. But I mustn't talk that way. Forgive me. I'm getting off at Cherbourg, and you mustn't think of what I've said again."

But I did think of it again. I couldn't help it. When I got to New York I found a cablegram awaiting me for every day at sea. At my hotel there were great banks of flowers in the apartments I had reserved, and among them was the florist's

card with Captain Strong's name written on it. Every morning with daylight came a new cablegram—each just saying "Good morning." And every afternoon came a new bunch of flowers with a card on which the florist had written, under cabled instructions from Captain Strong, "Good afternoon."

Presently I found myself thinking more about Captain Strong's whereabouts, what he was doing, what he might be thinking about, etc., than of the same things in connection with my husband. When I caught myself at this errantry I put such vagrant thoughts aside, but it was such a joy in my life, this having someone who seemed to be thinking of just me all the time, that I was not as firm with myself as I should have been.

There came a time when I was very ill with pneumonia. Meantime Lord Francis had come to America with his brother, the Duke, for some tarpon fishing in Tampa Bay, Florida. I had never written Captain Strong even so much as a postal card, but a friend of his in New York, who called upon me occasionally, must have cabled him that I was ill. As fast as a boat could get to America

the Captain came over, and much to my astonishment walked into my room at the hospital one morning as early as the nurse would admit him. Of course, he brought a huge cluster of flowers, and was almost broken-hearted when the nurse assured him there was nothing he could do for me. He asked if he might not come each night and sit on a bench in the hall outside my door—just to make sure, he said, he would be close if some emergency should arise. The nurse smiled and told him she was afraid his presence, watching, waiting, would worry me. When he had gone the nurse said to me, "That is the kind of man God ought to give every woman."

I only laughed a little, but I found myself agreeing with her. The Captain's apparent deep concern over my condition, his eagerness to sit on that bench outside my door all night long, willing to just sit there with the knowledge that he was close to me, even if not with me, was more soothing to me than I would admit. I thought of it all that morning—and then that afternoon came the reply to a telegram my physicians had sent during the night to Lord Francis.

My physicians had begun to fear for my recovery. They had wired my husband as follows:

"Wife dangerous condition. Recovery not assured. She asks you hurry here."

The reply read:

"Sorry can't come now. Midst of fishing season. Departure would seriously disarrange trip. Advise of developments.

HOPE."

I dropped the telegram to the floor. That instant I became the property, body, soul and mind, of Putnam Bradlee Strong—although neither he nor I knew it yet.

Captain Strong read the telegram. He came over to me, put his arms around me for the first time, and said:

"Poor Maysie—I'm sorry. But I knew it all the time. When you are well you are going with me."

And when I was well I did go with him—to the ends of the earth, sacrificing everything a woman holds dear, only to learn that it was all a clever game, that Captain Strong was after, not me, but my half million dollars' worth of jewelry.

We decided to elope to Japan. Captain Strong

had left France without leave, and was being sought by General Corbin, the Adjutant-General. So we went to San Francisco secretly, assuming the names of Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Hastings, and taking with us eighteen trunks, five dogs and two servants.

Chapter Fifteen.

THE DESCENT TO AVERNUS.

Then, mingled with moments of happiness, came those unhappy days when I was to learn that my fascinating master simply desired my fortune of gems and not myself.

When we eloped the army authorities sought to intercept us, using a technical charge of absence without leave against him. Their plan really was to separate us, influence having been brought to bear upon President Roosevelt by the Strong family. Mayor Strong had appointed Mr. Roosevelt Police Commissioner, and the President always was interested in the Strong family.

When we arrived in Japan we set about finding a home for our honeymoon at once. Captain Strong had a little money. He explained that he

could not draw his army pay, as he was, practically, a deserter, and that it had not been safe for him to get any from his family—but that he would later. I had plenty for a while, however, something like fifty thousand dollars in cash.

We found a house on the bluff outside Yokohama, a beautiful little palace-bungalow, that had been built for King Edward when he visited Japan as the Prince of Wales. We paid $300 a month rent for the house, which included beautiful furniture, which we soon supplemented with rare ivories, carvings and other beautiful things.

When I paid my first visit to the place, after Captain Strong had arranged the lease, the door was opened by the cutest little Japanese maid servant I had ever seen. I fell in love with her on the spot and adopted her. Later I brought her to the States with me, and she has been as my daughter ever since. She is married now to a wealthy Japanese in New York. Her name then was Yori Kamatezu.

We gave many beautiful banquets at our house on the bluff. Captain Strong liked playing host—with my money—and he had many friends in

Japan. He had begun negotiations with the army authorities, through his family, for a discharge, and was able to see his friends and entertain them. Our house became the Mecca of diplomatic officials and tourists. One of our entertainments was a wonderful Roman dinner—served after the vogue of Nero, beginning at sundown and lasting through three whole days and nights. To this we invited many fascinating people, some of the stage beauties then visiting in Japan, some of the younger diplomatic men and some of the Europeanized Japanese officials.

We all dressed in Japanese costumes. The rarest of wines and cordials were served, and to each guest Captain Strong and I gave a little diamond as a favor. The dinner cost us something like $20,000.

We spent a great deal of time running about in jinrickshas, visiting the old temples and being entertained by the European colonists. Captain Strong was everything a sweetheart-husband should be. He could not hold himself from spending money, and I gave him freely of what I had. When he couldn't think of anything else to do he

Atherton Wreaks his Spite upon his Wife—on the Desert Island where they have been Cast from the Wrecked Yacht.

would walk into a cafe, shoot out all the lights and tell the proprietor to send a bill for the damages to me. I paid, and thought it was great fun. Once to amuse him I put on all my jewels and rode along Theatre Street in Yokohama during a temple celebration blazing with diamonds and pearls and rubies.

When we began to run out of money the Captain came to me one day and said he knew a friend who had plenty, but who was not close enough to him to make him a loan. If I would let him take a jewel or two, he said, he would pawn it with this friend and recover it later when his money came from the States. I told him to take whatever he wanted. He took the $50,000 diamond necklace Captain Holford had given me and went away with it. He came back later with $9,000, saying he had pledged the necklace with his friend for what he thought we would need. Later I discovered that he had sold the necklace to a Japanese who had only $9,000 to his name. Captain Strong told him to produce the money and he wouldn't bother about going any further.

That was the beginning. It was not long before

my last little diamond had gone, transmuted into money, into Captain Strong's pocket.

From Japan we went through the Suez Canal to Naples.

Captain Strong had not yet received any of the money from his family he said he expected. So in Naples I parted with my pearl and diamond coronet, which I had purchased shortly after my marriage to Lord Francis for wear upon formal occasions. It was a very beautiful piece of jewelry. The willingness with which I allowed Captain Strong to take it out for pawning indicated that I was ready to make any sort of a love's sacrifice. This coronet represented the attainment of my ambitions—wealth, power, love and position. And now I allowed the man who had wrecked all these hopes to pledge it for the money with which to buy the excitement he craved and I submitted to.

From Naples we sailed back to New York. There we were met by throngs of newspaper men and camera men who had flocked to the pier to see us land, talk to us and get our pictures. We were accompanied by my Japanese maid, Yori, whom I had adopted; a colored man servant, a big chimpanzee

we purchased at Colombo and which kept the ship's passengers in an uproar with his antics; a pair of parrots, four Japanese spaniels, two Great Dane dogs, a Persian cat and several other pets—even a flying squirrel. And besides these we brought thirty-three trunks filled with the collections of our trip almost around the world.

Mother was waiting for us at the pier. It was the first time I had seen her since my elopement. Tears were in her eyes and mine, but all she asked me was, "Maysie, dear, has he given you happiness?" When I answered "Yes," mother was satisfied. Captain Strong put himself out to make a good impression upon her, and for a time succeeded. He could captivate any woman if he chose.

Mother took us to the beautiful home at Hastings she had built with money I had given her. That I had been able to give mother this house was always a happy thought to me. She had worked so hard to help me make my success when I was struggling. Captain Strong began at once to attempt negotiations with his family for their forgiveness. He was told his mother said she would

have nothing to do with him until he gave me up. He said this, of course, shut him away from his mother forever. I was proud of him then.

The newspapers, of course, gave us many columns of publicity. They raked my life out for public inspection. and commented at length upon the character of the love between Captain Strong and me. Among those who read these accounts was Thorley, the florist. From him there came to me a bill, with demand for its immediate payment for the flowers Captain Strong sent me while I was ill in the hospital—just preceding our elopement. And it was those flowers which helped to make me love him! In the next mail came a bill from another florist for flowers Captain Strong sent me for my opening in "The Giddy Throng." This was when he first began to talk to me of his love for me. And in the same mail came a bill for twenty little diamond rings Captain Strong had distributed to that many intimate friends of his and mine who gathered for a farewell dinner the night before we eloped. The Captain had arranged this dinner, and his extravagance and his skill as a host had

impressed me greatly. I didn't know then I was later to pay for this dinner given me by him.

I went with the Captain to the Knickerbocker Trust Company to rent a safety deposit vault in which to store my jewels. Here is a list of what I put in the box:

A diamond and turquoise necklace, a gift from the same Captain Holford who gave me the $50,000 necklace pawned at Yokohama. This was valued at $25,000.

A diamond and turquoise bracelet to match the necklace, a gift from Mr. Henry Guest, valued at $15,000.

A cluster diamond brooch, with an immense emerald set in the centre, presented me by a Mr. Walters, whose first name I have forgotten, worth $12,000.

A turquoise and diamond arrow, given me by Mr. Alfred Rothschild, the famous London banker, worth $8,000.

A diamond brooch, set with twenty of the purest diamonds I have ever seen, each one cut differently, a gift from Mr. Barney Barnato, the spectacular

South African diamond king, and valued at $20,000.

A diamond and sapphire, "dog collar," sent me by the Maharajah of Kusch-Behar, worth $80,000. This dog collar was the duplicate of one worn by the Maharajah himself.

A black lace fan, with tortoise shell frame studded with diamonds. This fan was given me by Charles Rose. Tiffany's, in New York, once told me the fan could not be duplicated for less than $8,000.

A score or more of diamond rings, in different settings—dinner rings, banquet rings, clusters and solitaires—all together valued at $95,000.

A ruby bracelet, valued at $17,500.

We had rented the box jointly, so that when I one day discovered that Captain Strong had fled with all these jewels, the police informed me that he was fully within the law, if not his rights.

And even in that hour, deserted, robbed, disgraced, his fascination held and I vowed to myself that he should come back to me.

Chapter Sixteen.

DOWN TO THE DEPTHS.

The theft of my jewels, the desertion by Captain Strong was but the beginning of other sorrows and disappointments.

My popularity on the stage never waned and I was able to make good contracts. Lord Francis had stubbornly refused to divorce me. Misfortunes had come to him, too. He sacrificed the family jewels, including the malevolent diamond.

I trailed Strong to Paris and later to Lisbon. When I had reached him it was only to furnish him with more money, for he was invariably penniless when I found him, and just as invariably ready to spend in the most lavish extravagances the last penny I possessed.

We decided to go to South America where I al-

ways was popular, so we sailed for the Argentine.

Captain Strong threw all our past troubles over his shoulder the moment we boarded the ship, and was the wonderful sweetheart again, smiling, debonair, fascinating. It was a new honeymoon. When we landed in the Argentine I counted myself the happiest woman in the world.

While we were living as man and wife, openly, at the most fashionable hotel in Buenos Ayres, every one knew, of course, that we were not married, and that I still was Lady Hope. When we arrived the newspapers mentioned our coming, and told the story of my elopement with Captain Strong all over again. But it made no difference. The people of Argentine are the broadest minded people on earth, I think. They ask a young couple only the one question: "Are you in love with each other?" If they are, or if their actions indicate they are, and they are not common, there is nothing more to be said. It is wrong, of course, but it made everything pleasant for me during my stay in South America.

Breach of promise suits, suits for damages because of libelous affairs in which women's names

are apt to figure, never appear in courts in Argentine. Men dispose of wounds to their feelings, or of slights to their lady loves, by the duel. And there are, indeed, many affairs of this kind that have to be settled in this way, for there is no place under the sun where there is so much lovemaking, clandestine correspondence between fair senoritas and lovelorn caballeros.

If a maiden demurely droop her eyelids over shining black eyes on the evening promenade when a gay caballero looks at her with meaning glance as he passes by, then a love affair is born. Every day the caballero waits for his enchantress. Every day she lifts her eyebrows and then droops her lids as she passes him. After a few days she drops her handkerchief. He picks it up, and in handing it to her passes her a note. The next day the comedy of the handkerchief is played out, only this time he abstracts his answer from the piece of linen before he returns it. The duenna is looking on all the time, of course, and, of course, she knows just what is going on—but she doesn't see the note, nor the telegraphing of the eyes, so she says nothing.

After awhile there is another caballero who at-

tracts the maiden. The handkerchief no longer is dropped for the first. Promptly the jilted one challenges his rival to a duel. The maiden's heart is thrilled and she waits breathlessly through the day she knows the duel is to take place. That evening at the promenade on the plaza one of the two caballeros passes and sweeps his hat to her. She knows he was the conqueror, and the vanquished knows better than to ever notice her again.

And when it is the suitor who jilts the maid she would never think of taking his love notes into court and asking damages for a breach of promise. She simply tells her brother or another admirer—perhaps an admirer to whom she has never spoken nor written a note, but whose yearning glance she has met on the plaza, that Senor So-and-So has wounded her. Ah! Quickly go gallant feet to hunt up the Senor So-and-So, who, upon being found, is slapped across the cheek. Senor So-and-So bows gracefully to his assailant. He even offers him a cigarette, which is accepted. Sometimes they will stroll away arm in arm, discussing the time and place of tomorrow's meeting and whether they are to use pistols or swords. No woman's name is be-

smirched, you see, for the Senorita who is to be avenged or chastened, according to the outcome of the duel, is never mentioned nor referred to. Not even the seconds know who she is. It may be fantastic and old-fashioned, but I think it's the most romantic and the best way to settle the arguments of love.

It was while I was in Buenos Aires that good news came from England. Lord Francis had divorced me. Now I was free to demand my honor from Captain Strong.

That afternoon I faced him. The time had come, I told him, when he could make good the promise he had so often made me, and give me a name. He demurred. He said it would be bad policy for us to do such a thing there where we had been accepted already as man and wife—that he would marry me as soon as we returned to the States, etc., etc.

"Bradlee," I said to him, just as quietly as if we were talking over a commonplace subject, "you swore to me when I eloped with you that come what might, whether we were happy or whether we tired of each other, you would go to the ends of the earth, if necessary, to marry me the minute I should be

freed by Lord Francis. Every time you have deserted me and I have taken you back, you have made the same promise. Now you will have to make good. I will give you just long enough for me to change my gown and put on my hat to decide.

"As soon as I am dressed we will either go together to the registry office, get a license and marry according to the civil code before the registry clerk, or I will go alone to the Jockey Club and ask them to post you as a cad and expel you from the club. Now take your choice." With that I flung out of the room into my dressing room and began to change my gown—and I was sure the dress I was putting on was to be my wedding dress. Captain Strong knew just what it would mean to him if I should carry out my threat to go to the Jockey Club. He knew they would post him as a cad and write the reasons after it, if I told the managers I had received news of my divorce and he had refused to marry me. Every member of the club would have sent him a challenge to a duel, some with pistols, some with swords; and he would have to fight them all, one at a time, until

one of them had killed him. That was the unwritten law of the club.

When I opened the door and confronted him, my gown changed and my hat on—there he stood, with his hat and cane, looking at his watch. Was he angry or shamefaced or glum? No, indeed. He was smiling and eager. Here is what he said:

"My, but you were a long time, Maysie, dear! You know I can hardly wait when I realize you are going to be my wife at last. Come, let's hurry."

Now I had a double reason to be happy. Not only was I, again, an honest wife, but I had, I thought, dissolved the spell of the Hope Diamond. I was no longer owner of this malevolent gem. I believed the unhappiness, which had been mine ever since I held it in my hands and put it around my throat for the first time, was at an end. But, as I learned afterward, I was not to find happiness until I had put aside, also, the man who had come to me while the diamond still was mine.

We took a beautiful little house. Captain Strong received some money from the States. I did not know how much, but he told me it was several thousand dollars, and that we could go ahead

and spend as much as we liked until he found some way of getting into a profitable business. I sent to the States for my collections of old ivories and period furniture, and my many chests of rare bric-a-brac. Soon our house was one of the show places of the Argentine, and all the best people came regularly to visit us.

But soon we were in difficulties. I learned the money Captain Strong had expended was from the sale of some of my jewels I supposed were in the bank. We went to England where I procured an engagement.

He went to Paris. I sent him money earned in England. I returned to America and occasionally he would appear with his bland smile and blander excuses.

Finally I heard that he was in the Orient and at once made my plans for a divorce. I had gone to the very depths. My jewels, my name, and now some part of my health and all of my peace of mind had been paid as tribute to his alluring personality.

It was in Yokohama that I finally came upon him

and had the slight satisfaction of personally breaking with him.

He was accompanied by a beautiful American girl who was introduced as Mrs. Strong.

I went to their little cottage and confronted them. There was no chance of evasion. It needed the personal visit and proof of betrayal to wipe away the last vestige of influence which he held over me—an influence that had begun to wane on the day Lord Hope divorced me and took away any possible contact with the Hope Diamond.

Chapter Seventeen.

I ESCAPE THE CURSE.

Is there any escape from the curse of this stone? The answer lies in the fact that I have found contentment, and some measure of peaceful happiness, only after struggle and sacrifice.

Gone are the days of the world's plaudits. Gone are the homage of princes and of dukes. Gone are the luxuries, the lavishness, the extravagances of life.

But in their place is a little cottage in Los Angeles—and the love of an honest man.

And I came to them literally upon my knees.

I procured my divorce in Oregon City. Then I went abroad after a season of stage success in California. I played again through England and Scotland and accepted the offer of an engagement

in South Africa. There I met Captain John Smuts, a cousin of the famous Boer General, Jan Smuts. It was a swift courtship on his part—a speedy realization upon mine that here at last was the man set apart for me. We were married in great state, with all the officials of Boerland in attendance.

We travelled through Africa and the Far East. The great war broke out and we rushed back to Capetown, where Captain Smuts took command of his company. His operations were against the German colony garrison. I followed the troops as a Red Cross nurse, and was in the thick of the fighting, never far from my husband's side. He was wounded repeatedly, and eventually was sent to the base hospital. When he was convalescent we went into India, where both of us had many friends. His last wound had been in his foot and had left him with what is known as a "hammer toe." There was no promise of his being fit for service again.

Captain Smuts was poor. He had only his income as an officer, and now that he was invalided he had only his pension. In India I gave several concerts, and so kept money in the family purse while he looked about for a commercial connection.

We might have lived on his pension and his savings, but I wanted him to have luxuries, and since I could earn them, why should I not?

He tried many ventures, none very successful financially. A friend suggested that if he could get to America he might be able to get back into the service through a "back door" method here. At once he was eager to try it. Travelling was difficut in those days, with all the passenger ships taken for war purposes. It took us twelve months of constant travelling, leaving boats here and waiting for passport vises there, to reach Vancouver. From there we went to Seattle, where there was a British recruiting mission.

Captain Smuts presented himself and was royally received. But when he had been examined his hopes were dashed to the ground. They told him he never could join the army again.

We were "broke." It was no new experience for me, but my husband was not strong and was in a strange country. I left him in Seattle and went to San Francisco to seek engagements. For a time I was successful. I might have gone East and obtained better opportunities, but I would not leave Captain Smuts, who needed the Western climate.

One day I received a letter from my husband telling me he had found his way to "do his bit." The Mayor of Seattle issued a proclamation calling upon citizens to take their places in the shipyards, that ships might be hurried along for transports. Captain Smuts went to the shipyard foreman and asked for a job. He was inexperienced, so he was taken on as a laborer. I gave two more concerts, made a thousand dollars and hurried back home.

We settled down then to a home-y life. Captain Smuts came home to me each evening, very dirty and tired, and found a hot dinner waiting for him—cooked by May Yohe, of "Little Christopher" fame, who once had owned the Hope Diamond and who might have been a duchess! And they were good dinners—and he was enthusiastic about them.

He dislocated his arm one day, and before he had fully recovered was stricken with influenza. He was ill for twelve weeks, and our savings disappeared.

What was I to do? I could not earn money on the stage and remain in Seattle taking care of my sick husband.

I put on a gingham dress and a cotton apron, tied my hair in a knot on top of my head, wrapped an

old shawl about me and went to the shipyards. "Please let me help a bit," I said, "even if I have to scrub the office floors."

They asked me who I was, and I told them "Mrs. Smuts." The name meant nothing to them. They asked me if I were experienced with the mop. Once I had played the part of a slavey in a comic opera, and during one of my songs waved a mop back and forth over the stage floor. So I said I was an adept scrubwoman.

I was told to report for duty at 7 o'clock that evening—night shift—and that I was to be the office janitress at $18 a week.

So every night for many long weeks I scrubbed those office floors. The night force of clerks and managers sat at their desks all around me. Some were gentle and thoughtful of the "janitor woman" and dropped kindly greetings to me as I mopped around them. Others were curt and overbearing. Quite often I would hum while I worked, and sometimes, if the office were quiet I would sing snatches of my old songs—especially the one which helped me to become famous, "Honey, Mah Honey."

Many times while I swung that mop I wondered what these men about me would say if they knew

their janitress was May Yohe, who had been Lady Francis Hope, and whose throat, now covered with grime and perspiration had glistened white behind the great Hope Diamond and countless other gems men liked to hang upon it—the same May Yohe who might have become a duchess!

My husband went back to work after a while, and although he was very angry with me I kept on doing the scrubbing. Then the armistice was signed and we moved to Los Angeles, where the wondrous climate is best for his health. He is in business now, a modest little business, which just supports our little bungalow. I am up early in the mornings cooking breakfast while my husband stirs about in the garden. While he is at his little business I am sweeping and dusting and chatting with the neighbors about our chickens. Saturday nights we go to the movies and Sundays we take long walks, hand in hand, out along the boulevards—and Mrs. John Smuts, housewife, is happier than May Yohe ever was, and prouder of the good dinners she cooks than she would have been sitting at the head of the banquet table at Newcastle, with a hundred servants to call her "Your Grace."

IS THIS THE END?

Will there be written some day a sequel to this story of the Great Hope Diamond—a sequel that may explain the sinister history that has marked its course since the day when the French cavalier ravaged the pagan temple?

Can the guarded vaults in which this treasure now reposes restrain and emprison whatever evil genius lurks beneath its glitter and its glory?

Will there ever come a time when it shall again receive the adoration of worshipful glances, when no shudder shall pass through those who know its story and attempt to laugh at any hidden power of disaster as the merest of superstition and but mere coincidences?

For the hour the story pauses. The trial is ended for the moment. The blending of legend and of history, of romance and tragedy, of intrigue and melodrama, of stealthy crime and pomp of courts, of eager greed and haughty pride, of jealous courtiers and zealous husbands, of beauties who have changed the course of history, and women who have paid in tears for their brief hours of power, throws out now the picture only of a stone so precious that it must be guarded by the strongest locks, seldom

if ever worn, and hidden from the gaze of men.

Would you solve the great mystery of this stone? Listen then to the voices of the scientist, the poet, the philosopher, the historian and choose.

"Mere coincidence," says the scientist. "Countless centuries before that goddess of jade ever fastened itself upon the imaginations of a pagan devotee, the world was a molten mass, with great clouds of gases cloaking its course in its orbit, cooling the lightest fraction of a degree each century. "And as it cooled, the elements were gathered into solid forms. The iron of the hills, the granite rocks, the beds of coal were the inevitable result of laws of chemistry.

Those laws foreordained the making of this diamond—the result of so much heat, so much carbon. Then, because the conditions which produced the diamond instead of coal occurred so seldom, man when he emerged from the lowest animal state to that point where possession and ownership were his traits, selected the diamond as the symbol of power because of its rarity.

"Its only value is that given it by the human mind. Its only power can be that bestowed upon it by human imagination. Nothing within it dif-

fers from any other diamond in the world so that any effort to claim that the stone itself has a potency for evil is denied by every fact of science and of common sense.

"The world has had other tragedies. They are a part of human life, due generally to weakness or to the frailty of the human mind. Weigh carefully each step in your story of disaster. Your cavalier, torn to death by dogs, paid the penalty of his daring common dangers. Your scheming mistress of a king went to her end because she could not rule against the passions of the hour. Your merchants who came to bankruptcy were victims of bad judgment in business. The duchess who came from the stage and then went to poverty, might find the solution in her own weakness to the flatteries against which she had no guard and her violation of the common laws of life.

"Weighed in the scales of exact fact, the entire list of woes fades into a series of mere coincidence, proving nothing and meaningless—though more than interesting."

Let the Poet speak:

"All life is a matter of the soul. Great loves live forever. Great hates never die.

"The pagan goddess upon whose breast the great diamond glittered, drew to herself the highest and the noblest thoughts of those who worshipped at her shrine. To them she was the emblem of all good, the protection against all evil, the inspiration of their every act.

"To ravage her was the unspeakable crime and when a ruthless hand stretched forth to rob her of her priceless symbol of power there was turned loose such forces of hate that neither time nor space could kill.

"Thought is as real as stone. Love is a greater fact than steel. Hate, its opposite, is more enduring than granite.

"When the cavalier rushed from the scene of crime, he carried with him the spoken source of the priests of the temple, and the unspoken hatred of the simple souls that worshipped before the jade goddess.

"In his own heart was fear. He met the death of a coward.

"When he bestowed the gem upon his king, he gave him also that unconscious hatred which he had carried with him—the bitter, undying atmos-

phere of malevolence which centered about the stone for those who had taken it from a shrine.

"The great love which had been given to the goddess followed through the years and the great hate which went to him that stole it lived on and on, in that mystic realm where no great love ever dies.

"To me the story is not terrible, but beautiful. Love is life. Life is endless. Love is eternal. Love protects its own. Love avenges its wrongs. The great Hope Diamond is the romance of all ages, the greatest story of a pure love given by men to a goddess, ever watchful, never faltering. It is not a mystery. It is one of the facts of all life."

"With God there are no trifles and in life there are no coincidences," writes the philosopher.

"For every effect there is a cause and he, who would dismiss the unbroken array of disastrous facts as mere superstition or an idle, fanciful tale, brands himself as ignorant.

"Did you walk down the sunny side of the street this morning? On the other side a careless workman let fall a brick. You saw it fall, harmless.

Had you chosen the other side, it would have meant the end for you.

"You stop for a moment on your way to a train for a casual chat with an acquaintance. The train you missed, is wrecked. Was it mere accident that saved you?

"You plan a voyage. The ship on which you seek passage is filled and you are delayed a week. On board you find the woman who becomes your wife. Is it mere chance?

"Take your cavalier. He had the world in which to satisfy his longing for adventure. He chooses the warm suns of India. He bickers with his servants. He idles away his hours along the road until that moment when he comes upon the merchants' caravan, the moment when the maid of wondrous beauty is apart from the watchful eyes of her mercenary father.

"Then comes the great love, the strange, unusual battle of the adventurer to gain his heart's desire, his throwing away of all caution, all emotion save the one which will grant to him the maid who means to him all happiness.

"Was it chance that brought him back too late to claim the maid? Was it chance that threw him

into the depths of desperation in which he saw the theft of the great diamond as the one way in which he could gain his goal?

"Was it mere coincidence that led the ill-fated queen to risk her throne the moment that she obtained the jewel?

"Was it a coincidence that threw the ill-starred favorite of fortune who had fought her way from the humble coal camp to the palace of a duchess into the arms and temptations of the philandering gambler?

"In every episode the stone has played its part —always and ever the determining factor in those events which seemed like trifles in themselves but which led on to tragedy, to tears, to terrors and to heart-breaks.

"It requires no belief in esoteric power of pagan curse to given credence to the power of evil in the stone—and no chemical analysis will push aside the startling array of facts which form its history.

"In the beginning of things there was written one law and one rule. No act ever ends with itself. Its results last forever. No act of sacrifice for a

great cause is ever futile. No crime ever ends with its immediate punishment."

And yet—

Down through all the ages, from the time when the bare-breasted guardian of the goddess hurled himself upon the sacrilegious Frenchman to those gay hours in Paris when the actress-duchess was playing her part in the history of the gem, there was ever in the background some shadowed menace in dark skin, seemingly bent on recovering the stone?

Is the spirit of the goddess fretful and will its restless influence blight the lives of those who hold her treasure until that hour when it shall be returned to the temple from which it was taken?

Is that cult of pagan priests still intent on its recovery and do they send, from time to time, their agents out into the world to scheme and plan and aid in all the tragedies that have happened in the hope that in the end it may be carried back and placed again upon the jade idol in the wilderness?

Are there still, in those hidden fastnesses of the East, those who believe in the enduring power of the goddess, who still fear her wrath, who pass

from generation to generation the vow that some day the great diamond will be returned?

Are there men to whom time means nothing and who believe that their devotion to the creeds of other centuries is the aim of all existence and who have sworn to avenge that crime of centuries ago?

Are these men trained with that oriental twist of mind to fetes of metaphysics by which they cast their suggestions into the unconscious minds of those they seek—directing and driving with a hidden power into acts which can bring but sorrow?

Some there are who so believe. Some there are who shudder as they fear this mystic brotherhood, who once stood guard in the jungle temple, watching ever for that next act which will bring but another evidence of evil fortune.

To them, this is the answer to the well-authenticated tale. To them, back of each act has been the unseen influence of some member of this priestly band, bound by a solemn oath to regain the stone, to whom human lives are as nothing if they gain their ends, to whom the downfall of dynasties, the disgrace of duchesses, the heartbreaks of mothers are but as the passing breeze, if in the end they win.

Has the evil chain of events been broken?

Only the future can answer.

Has the curse that followed the cavalier spent its force and will there be no more pages of disaster written about this marvelous gem? Who knows?

Centuries have passed since the stone started on its path from the temple in India to the vaults in a great American city.

Almost forgotten are those women who gloried in its possession for their brief hours of triumph and long hours of woe.

The kings and courtiers who once prized it are dust these many years. Their mistresses who ruled in courts and palaces have faded into that misty realm of mere memories. Forgotten are their triumphs and their smiles. Forgotten are their intrigues, their cajoleries, their petty schemings.

Only the stone remains—that and its plain record that marks it apart from all other gems.

Does it retain its pagan curse? Does it sparkle only with reflected evil? Does it bring death, dishonor, disgrace?

When will the world know the answer to the MYSTERY OF THE HOPE DIAMOND?

THE FATEFUL RECORD

OF

THE HOPE DIAMOND

(Diamond of Disaster)

Owner	Fate.
Jean Baptiste Tavernier	Torn to pieces by wild dogs.
Madame de Montespan	Deserted by the King and ruined.
Nicholas Fouquet	Executed by royal command.
Queen Marie Antoinette	Beheaded.
Princess de Lamballe	Torn to bits by a French mob.
Louis XIV	Beheaded under the guillotine.
Wilhelm Fals	Ruined financially.
Hendrik Fals, his son	Suicide in London, 1830.
Francis Beaulieu	Died in misery and want.
Lord Hope (First)	Misfortunes, ending with death of favorite son.
Lord Francis Hope	Financial troubles, scandal, unhappy marriage.
May Yohe (his wife)	Ruined and unhappy.
Simon Frankel	Financial reverses (1901).
Jacques Colot	Insanity and suicide.
Prince Ivan Kanitovski	Slain by Revolutionists.
Lorens Ladue	Killed by her lover.
Simon Montharides	Thrown over a precipice and killed.
Abu Sabir	Tortured and imprisoned.
Kalub Bey	Hanged in the street by a Turkish mob.
Keeper of its vault	Strangled.
Zubayba	Killed by her master, Abdul Hamid.
Abdul Hamid	Dethroned.
Jehver Agha, tried to steal it	Hanged.
Selim Habib	Drowned off Singapore, 1909.
Mrs. Edward B. McLean, who bought it in 1911	Only son killed by automobile.