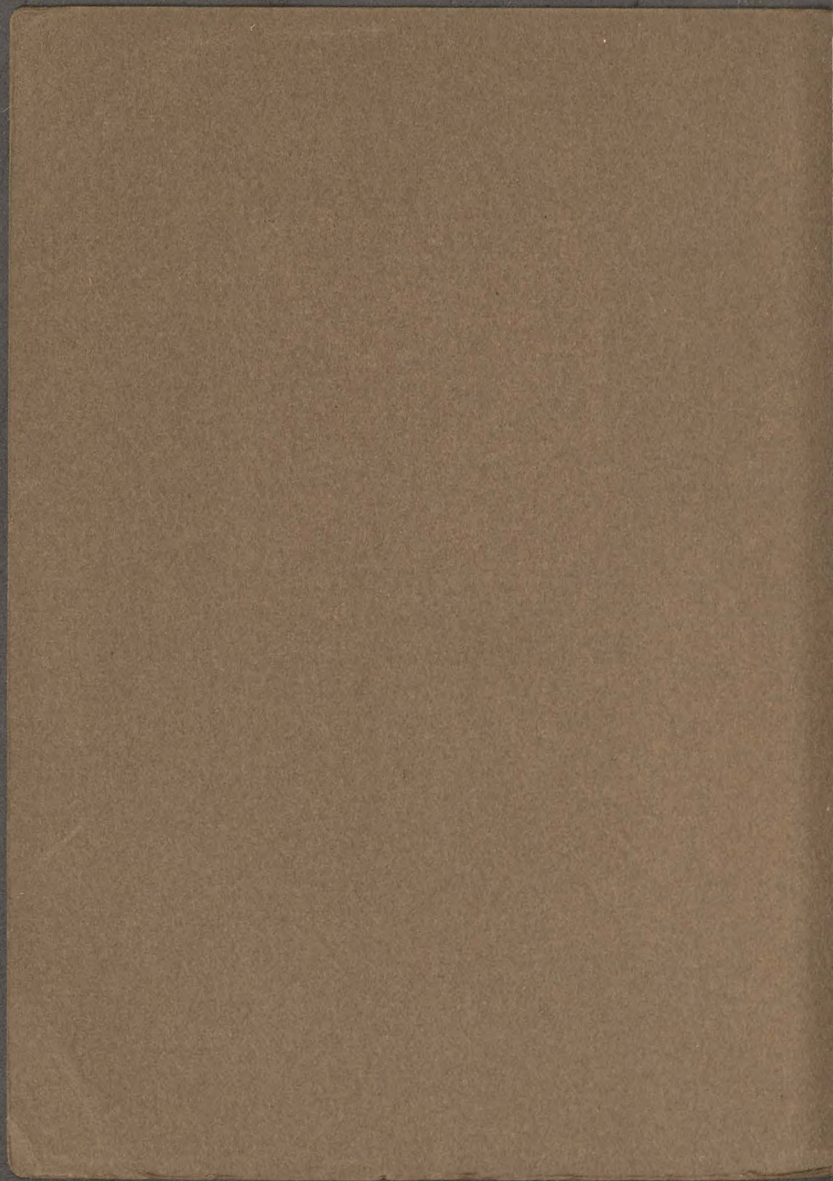


OPAL
TOURMALINE



FOREWORD



IN BY-GONE days, primitive man regarded his gems with superstitious awe, believing that they were the abiding places of spirits. His mind could attribute no natural causes for their splendor, so he invented supernatural ones. Hearing of these things, we smile, for we of the present day find such concepts strange indeed,—yet, who among us has not heard anathemas pronounced upon the opal?

In the following pages we have taken up the unjustly maligned opal, and the tourmaline, two stones which lately have acquired great and rightful popularity.

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SYRACUSE

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THE OPAL

BIRTHSTONE FOR OCTOBER



IT SEEMS very appropriate that the opal with vivid play of color should have been selected as October's birthstone, for in this beautiful gem the fire of autumn foliage, the blue of autumn skies, wood-smoke, and sparkling sunshine are found in happy union.

The opal is the most unique of the gemstones, differing from the rest not only in color aspect but in formation as well. It is not of a crystalline structure although it is related in many ways to the quartz gems. It is, in reality, a solidified jelly, its color display being due to the existence of thin films (probably of a slightly different density), filling what once were cracks in the mass. The rainbow colors are the result of interference of light, the varying thickness of the films causing the different colors.

While opals of different varieties are

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found in many parts of the world, the best gem-stones come from the mines of Hungary and New South Wales. The New South Wales deposits were discovered quite by accident. In 1889 a hunter, when tracking a wounded kangaroo in the arid and forbidding White Cliffs district, picked up an attractively colored opal. But for such a chance the Australian deposits might still remain hidden.

Very beautiful "fire-opals," and "cherry-opals," are found in Mexico but these stones are not of great value, being somewhat softer, more porous, and more apt to lose their color than the Hungarian and Australian gems. In Mexico the practice of immersing the gems in hot oil to improve their color is quite current, a dubious improvement, for gems that have been so treated soon go back to their original state.

By popular preference the "black-opal" of New South Wales finds the readiest

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OPAL DEPOSITS, NEW SOUTH WALES

market, probably because it has been untouched by the stigma of totally unfounded "bad luck" superstitions which have been associated with the opal in recent years.

THE OPAL IN ANCIENT TIMES

The opal or *opallus* was known in Roman days although it was then a very rare gem and ranked next to the emerald in value.

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In all probability the Romans did not have access to the mines of Hungary, and it is generally believed that the opals obtained by them came from deposits in India or Arabia although those sources (if they ever existed), have long since been exhausted. The opal alone among the gem-stones was developed to its full beauty in the hands of the Romans, for as it was quite soft and invariably cut *en cabochon* (dome shape), its cutting and polishing were a matter of time and care alone.

The keen admiration excited by the opal in those days is evidenced by Pliny's enthusiastic description of the stone: "Made up of the glories of the most precious gems, to describe it is a matter of inexpressible difficulty. In it is the burning fire of the Carbuncle, the brilliant purple of the Amethyst, the sea-green of the Emerald, all shining together in incredible union. Some aim at rivalling in lustre the brightest azure

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of the painter's palette, others the flame of burning sulphur, or of a fire quickened by oil."

SUPERSTITION AND THE OPAL

We have heard much of the opal as a stone of ill-omen, a groundless and foolish fancy such as we might expect to find in the dark ages rather than in our enlightened day. From the earliest times up to the last century, the opal was regarded as a stone possessing the united virtues of every gem whose color it contained, being especially potent in warding sickness and infirmities of the eyes from the wearer. It was also believed to have the power of rendering its wearer invisible and for this reason was especially favored by thieves.

That the beauty of the opal was fully appreciated in the sixteenth century is shown by one writer of that period who states that he once bought one of these stones for fifteen gold crowns and found as

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much pleasure in its possession as he did in that of a diamond that had cost him five hundred crowns. Although superstitions were the rule rather than the exception at that time, none of the silly fancies regarding the ominous qualities of the opal were then current.

PROBABLE SOURCES OF SUPERSTITION

It is probable that the present-day superstition connecting the opal with misfortune owes its origin to a careless reading of Sir Walter Scott's novel "Anne of Geierstein," wherein an ill-fated princess always wore a dazzling opal in her hair. The story contains nothing to indicate that Scott meant to represent the stone as unlucky, but without question the impression created by the book, coupled with the fact that opals, on rare occasions, have been known to lose their color or break because of climatic conditions, have served to prevent many from owning and enjoying this

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most beautiful gem. Another factor in fostering this superstition has undoubtedly been the fact that because of its fragility the opal has always been disliked by the gem-cutters (who are responsible to the owners for breakage.)

AN AMUSING INCIDENT

An amusing incident relating to the superstitious belief in the malign influence of

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the opal, is found in the experience of a little Parisian shop-girl, who, while awaiting an opportunity to cross a traffic-crowded street, was confronted by a well-dressed woman. Suddenly removing a beautiful opal from her own hand the woman placed it on that of the girl, who, being of a practical nature, went to the nearest jeweler for the purpose of selling it. There, however, she was arrested on suspicion of having stolen the gem, but upon being taken before a magistrate her story was given some credence. Personal advertisements in widely read newspapers soon brought the original owner who explained that her superstitious dread of the stone had led her to resort to the means which we have related for getting rid of it.

A ROYAL PATRON

The late Queen Victoria of England, scoffing at superstition, was a great admirer of the opal and wore the stone on every

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occasion. Her patronage undoubtedly did more to restore the beautiful gem to its present and rightful popularity than any other influence.

A PECULIAR BELIEF

In Turkey a strange fancy connected with the opal is current. There, it is believed, the opal is not a mineral of the earth, but is a heavenly gem, a promise of the glories of the hereafter, which descends to the earth in the lightning flashes.

THE OPAL OF NONIUS

Among the famous opals, the one most deserving of first place was the "Opal of Nonius," a gem the size of a hazel-nut (the largest of its kind up to that time), then valued at \$100,000 in our money. Its possessor, Nonius, a Roman senator, was proscribed by Mark Anthony purely for the sake of the gem, but he made his escape carrying the ring with him. About the

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middle of the eighteenth century a peasant found an opal as large as a hazel-nut, set in a ring, in some old ruins at Alexandria. Popular fancy identified this as the "Opal of Nonius", but facts render this identification extremely doubtful. An opal probably would not hold its color over a period of nearly twenty centuries.

SOME OPALS OF NOTE

In medieval times a splendid opal was set in the crown of the Holy Roman Empire ("to preserve the regal honor"). There was a tradition that this gem once shone in the night time.

The Empress Josephine owned one of the finest opals of modern times. This stone was known as the "Burning of Troy." Its present owner is not known.

A gigantic opal was exhibited in the Imperial Cabinet at Vienna, for which, it

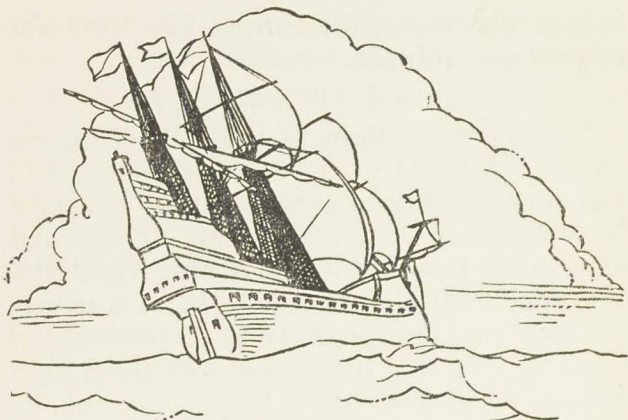
THE OPAL

is said, the incredible sum of \$250,000 was offered and refused.

OLD BELIEFS FOR NEW

We are more than justified in returning to the old belief in the manifold virtues of the opal, only remembering that the gem is a little more fragile than others and should be handled a little more carefully. Its wonderful play of color will be a never-ceasing source of pleasure to its owner, and in that respect, the stone will be a true bringer of *good fortune*.

THE TOURMALINE



THE TOURMALINE

ALTERNATE BIRTHSTONE FOR OCTOBER

The Tourmaline must have been well known in very early times for it is found in many places in both the old world and the new, yet, in history we find no references to gems that can definitely be classified under this name.

THE TOURMALINE

The name tourmaline is derived from the Ceylonese word turamali and was first employed when a Dutch ship brought a parcel of the stones to Amsterdam from Ceylon in 1703. Prior to this time, however, (about 1650), green tourmalines had been discovered in Brazil and the stones were introduced to Europe as "Brazilian emeralds." They were widely accepted as a variety of true emerald, a fact which shows how ignorant of the character of gemstones the people of that time were, for in the nature of their structure the tourmaline and the emerald are not at all similar. They show, however, about the same degree of hardness, and good, green tourmalines more nearly approach the emerald in color than any other stone, being slightly bluer or slightly more yellow.

Of the tourmalines which are marketed today, Brazil and Russia produce the best

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varieties, although many fine specimens are found in the United States in Maine and California.

While the rich, deep green stone is the one that is most highly prized, the tourmaline, in its variety of color, is unsurpassed, for it is found in green, pink, blue, lilac, yellow, and myriad intermediate tints and hues. The red and blue gems are sometimes sold as "Brazilian rubies," and "Brazilian sapphires."

In recent years the rich color qualities of the tourmaline have made this stone very popular, giving it one of the foremost places among the semi-precious gems. It lends itself to almost every type of cutting and is used singly or in conjunction with different precious or semi-precious stones in some of the most attractive gem-pieces.

