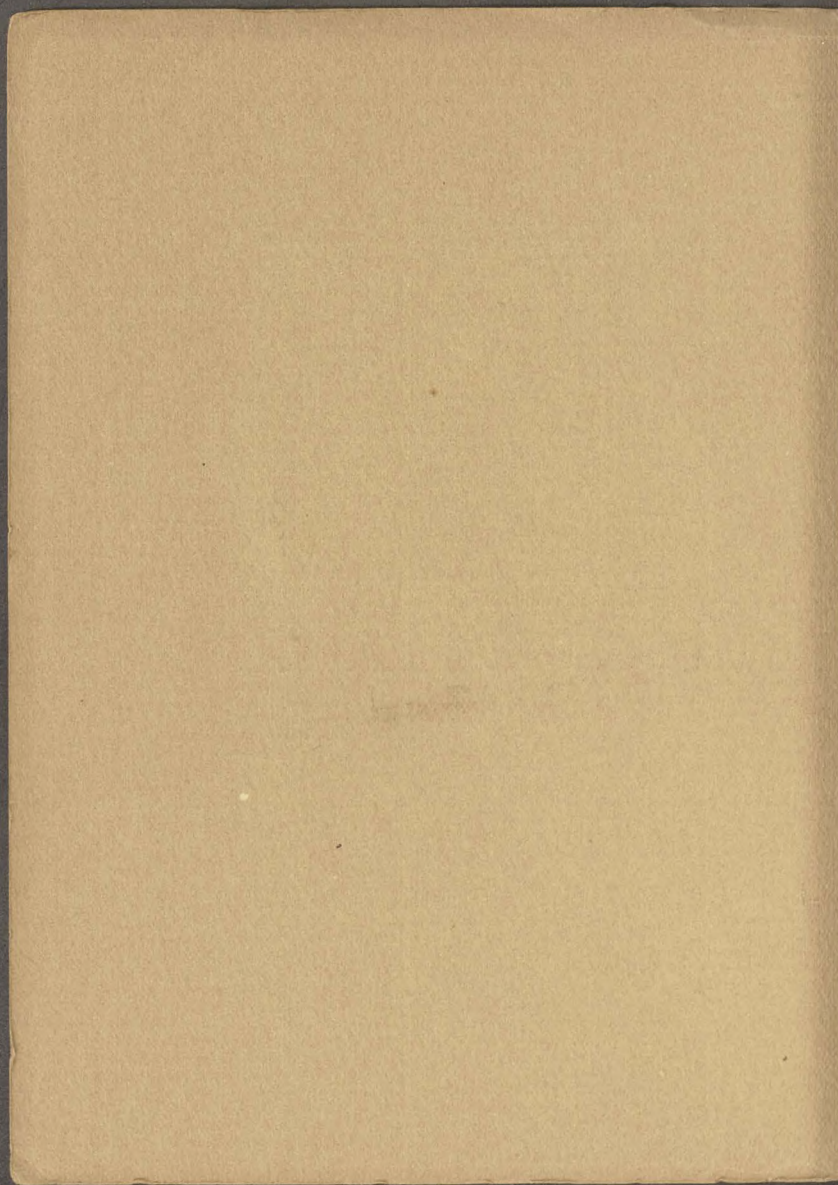




THE PEARL



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## FOREWORD



THE narrow confines of this little book have proved all too limited to render due justice to the subject at hand.

The pearl, the only gem which attains its full beauty unaided by the handiwork of man, is almost invariably the ultimate choice of the connoisseur. The subtle beauty of the pearl is to be likened to the charm of a painting by Monet or Hiroshige, —some study and understanding are necessary before it is fully appreciated, but once that appreciation has been attained it never fails to grow greater with passing time.

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SYRACUSE



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MR. W. R. CATTELLE

# THE PEARL

GEM FOR JUNE

SYMBOL OF PURITY AND MODESTY



THE Pearl,—Queen of Gems! What a story surrounds the pearl! Divers, brown-skinned and breech-clouted, risking life in the shark-infested waters of the South Seas or the Persian Gulf. Ships, storm-ridden and helpless, foundering on hidden coral reef. Intrigue and tribal wars. Piracy and smuggling. . . . What red-blooded romance is involved in procuring this beautiful, essentially feminine gem!

A grain of sand or perhaps a minute parasitic animal is washed into the open shell of a mollusk anchored to the floor of that mysterious other world which lies beneath the ocean's surface. In an attempt to protect itself from irritation caused by the foreign body, the shellfish covers the intruder with a layer of "nacre," the same material which is applied to the inner surface of the shell forming what is known as "mother of pearl." As long as the foreign body remains within the shell the oyster deposits one layer of nacre upon another over it, the process sometimes lasting as long as eighteen years. Then,—one day a dusky pearl-

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diver comes silently and swiftly from the world of air, wrenches the gaping shell from its anchorage, and your pearl is taken from its lowly birth-place to be looked upon by all mankind as the insignia of refinement and cultured taste,—possibly to be sold (if it be a large and perfect gem), for a king's ransom.

Pearls are procured from innumerable sources, but the principal ones are the fisheries of Ceylon and India, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, China, the Malay Archipelago, Australia and Venezuela.

While there are many different varieties of pearls, ranging from purest rose white through every imaginable color and hue, produced by many different species of shellfish, the finest gems are procured from the salt-water mollusk known as *Meleagrina Margaritifera* which inhabits tropical seas. Second to this in importance is the fresh-water mussel which is found in abundance in the tributaries of the Mississippi River, and in many of the streams of England and Scotland.

Occasionally we hear of pearls of great value which have been found in such mollusks as are commonly served upon our tables. It will be noted that the interior of the shell of the common



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oyster is not particularly attractive, whereas the shell of the pearl-bearing oyster is a thing of great beauty, indeed nine-tenths of the revenue of the average pearl-fishery results from the sale of the shells for the manufacture of buttons, knife-handles and similar items. While many favorable and flattering things may be said of the succulent Blue Point and the Cotuit, the production of valuable pearls is not to be listed among their virtues.

### "ORIENTAL" PEARLS

In the early days pearls brought from the Orient were called "Oriental" pearls. The mellow lustre which characterized these gems and made them superior to others came to be known as the "orient" of the pearl. Later, when pearl-bearing mollusks of the same kind as those of Ceylon and the Red Sea were discovered in other parts of the world the term "Oriental" was extended to them and is now applied to nearly all salt-water pearls to distinguish them from the fresh-water or "sweet-water" varieties.

Unlike other shellfish which are sometimes exposed by the tides, to be gathered by man without difficulty, the pearl-oyster is never left uncovered by the sea. It is found usually on shoals some

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distance from the shore, from five to one hundred and fifty feet from the surface. Modern diving apparatus has been used to some extent in securing the pearl-oyster, but throughout the Orient the diving is practiced, for the most part, after the same manner that was in vogue in the days of the Pharaohs and the Caesars. The naked diver greases his body, puts cotton into his ears, compresses his nostrils with a forked stick or a tortoise-shell clip, hangs a wicker basket or net at his waist, and he is ready.

Standing upon a spring-board for a few seconds to fill his lungs, he suddenly plunges head-first into the water and passes smoothly and rapidly to the shoal beneath. Quickly gathering as many oysters as possible while his breath lasts, he places them into the net at his waist, attaches the net to a rope hanging from the boat's side, and shoots to the surface. A minute or two for recuperation and he is ready for his next dive. Sometimes this method of diving is varied and the diver, slipping his foot into the loop of a rope to which a large stone is attached, is dropped to the bottom by an attendant, a *manduck*, who raises the line upon receiving a signal from the diver. By these methods the divers go to a depth of from 60 to 120



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feet, and remain under water from one to two and one-half minutes. The average working day for the diver is about four hours. Women, boys and girls also engage in diving, being almost as expert as men.

### THE DANGERS OF PEARL DIVING

Monsters abound in the waters of the pearl-fisheries. Should a diver be attacked by a devil-fish, sting-ray, shark or sword-fish he does not

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use his knife, as blood would attract other foes and becloud the water to his own disadvantage. Instead he seeks to avoid his enemy, and if the troubler is a sword-fish, tries to find shelter among the rocks. If the fish departs quickly he escapes, but the time of a live man under water is short and sometimes the sword-fish overstays it. The following, an excerpt from an article by Beatrice Grimshaw which was printed in the "Graphic," paints a vivid picture of the dangers that beset the pearl diver.

"Not Schiller nor Edgar Allen Poe ever conjured up a picture more ghastly than that of a Penrhyn diver caught like a rat in a trap by some huge, man-eating shark or fierce kara mauua, crouching in a cleft of the overhanging coral, under the dark green gloom of a hundred feet of water, with bursting lungs and cracking eye-balls, while the threatening bulk of his terrible enemy looms dark and steady, full in the road to life and air. A minute or more has been spent in the downward journey; another minute has passed in the agonized wait under the rock. . . . Has he been seen? . . . Will the creature move away now, while there is still time to return? The diver knows to a second how much time has passed;

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the third minute is on its way; but one goes up quicker than one comes down, and there is still hope. . . . Two minutes and a half; it is barely possible now, but—the sentinel of death glides forward; his cruel eyes, phosphorescent in the gloom, look right into the cleft where the wretched creature is crouching, with almost twenty seconds of life still left, but now not a shred of hope. A few more beats of the laboring pulse, a gasp from the tortured lungs, a sudden rush of silvery air bubbles, and the brown limbs collapse down out of the cleft like wreathes of seaweed. The shark has his own.”

### HISTORY

The use of pearls as jewels and their recognition as objects of value date back into the earliest days of history. It is probable that the pearl was the first gem known to man, for the shellfishes which produce this gem were a part of the diet of the early dwellers by the sea.

Pearls were known to the Persians seven centuries before Christ, and to the Egyptians as early as 3200 B. C. They are mentioned in Chinese literature dating back to 2350 B. C. The modern recognition of the pearl as the gem of highest rank



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was established by the Romans, about 300 B. C. This gem was regarded by the Romans as an insignia of pomp and luxury, and laws were made by them forbidding the wearing of pearls by those who had not attained a certain rank. It is said that the presence of pearls in the streams of the British Isles played some part in causing Caesar to press his campaigns so far into the west.

During the days of Rome's ascendancy the vogue for pearls was so extreme that it amounted to a frenzy. Where a woman's influence was required, pearls were given her. To convey an indirect bribe to a man of high standing, a pearl of great price was presented to a member of his family. The Emperor Caligula decked his favorite horse with a necklace of pearls, and Pliny says of Lollia Paulina, Caligula's wife, that he had seen her so bedecked with pearls and precious stones that "she glittered and shone like the sun as she went." Clodius, the glutton, swallowed in a cup of wine a pearl worth forty thousand dollars that he might have the pleasure of consuming so much value at once.

Prior to the twelfth century, pearls were used in England solely for the treatment of diseases, being

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especially esteemed for use in salves for healing sores or eradicating scars. It is interesting to note in this connection, that powder of pearls is to be obtained in the Parisian apothecary shops of today, and is believed to be a remarkable agent for whitening the skin. From the thirteenth century pearls were highly regarded as gems in England and were worn in great quantities by both men and women. They were extensively used in church decoration as well.

Columbus found that pearl fishing was extensively carried on in the Gulf of Mexico by the natives, the gems being used chiefly as offerings to the Indian gods. When Cortez interviewed Montezuma, the Aztec chieftain wore a ceremonial robe covered with gold and precious stones. His cloak and sandals were adorned with pearls.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the demand for pearls was such that they became very scarce, and the value of them increased greatly. Early in the present century new pearl fisheries were discovered, and the supply of pearls was greatly augmented, but the demand for them has increased with the supply so that the pearl still holds its position as the premier gem.

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### FAMOUS COLLECTIONS

The most noteworthy collection of pearls is that of the Gaekwar of Baroda, (India). It is said that this collection is worth upwards of \$7,500,000.

Another prince of India, the Rajah of Dholpur, possesses a magnificent collection in which is a single string worth over two million dollars.

There are many exceptionally fine strings of pearls owned in this country, some of them being valued as high as one million dollars. For obvious reasons the purchasers of such gem-pieces generally desire that their names be withheld.

### GREAT PEARLS

The finest pearl known, La Pellegrina, was for many years in the Museum of Zosima, Moscow. This gem was perfectly round and so lustrous that it seemed to be transparent. It weighed 112 grains.

The largest known pearl is in the Beresford Hope collection. It is two inches long, four and a half inches in circumference, and weighs 1818 grains.



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A former Shah of Persia is said to have owned a single pearl which was valued at \$320,000.

### THE PEARL TODAY

At the present time in this country and in Europe the pearl is at the height of its popularity. From year to year the demand for the pearl increases with a corresponding increase in value as the available supply fails to meet the demand. The ever-growing popularity of the pearl is a sure indication of increasing culture, for while many gems make an instant appeal through their flashing colors, the love for the pearl denotes a discriminating appreciation for the subtle qualities of refinement possessed by this gem alone.

The pearl is never out of place, the retiring qualities of its beauty making it a fit complement for any costume at any time.

The purchasing of pearls presents an attractive feature possessed by no other gem, for being worn in a necklace, pearls may be purchased singly, in pairs, or in quantity, and in any size, and added to the necklace at such times as the purchaser feels able to make such additions. Many beautiful necklaces have come into being in this manner,

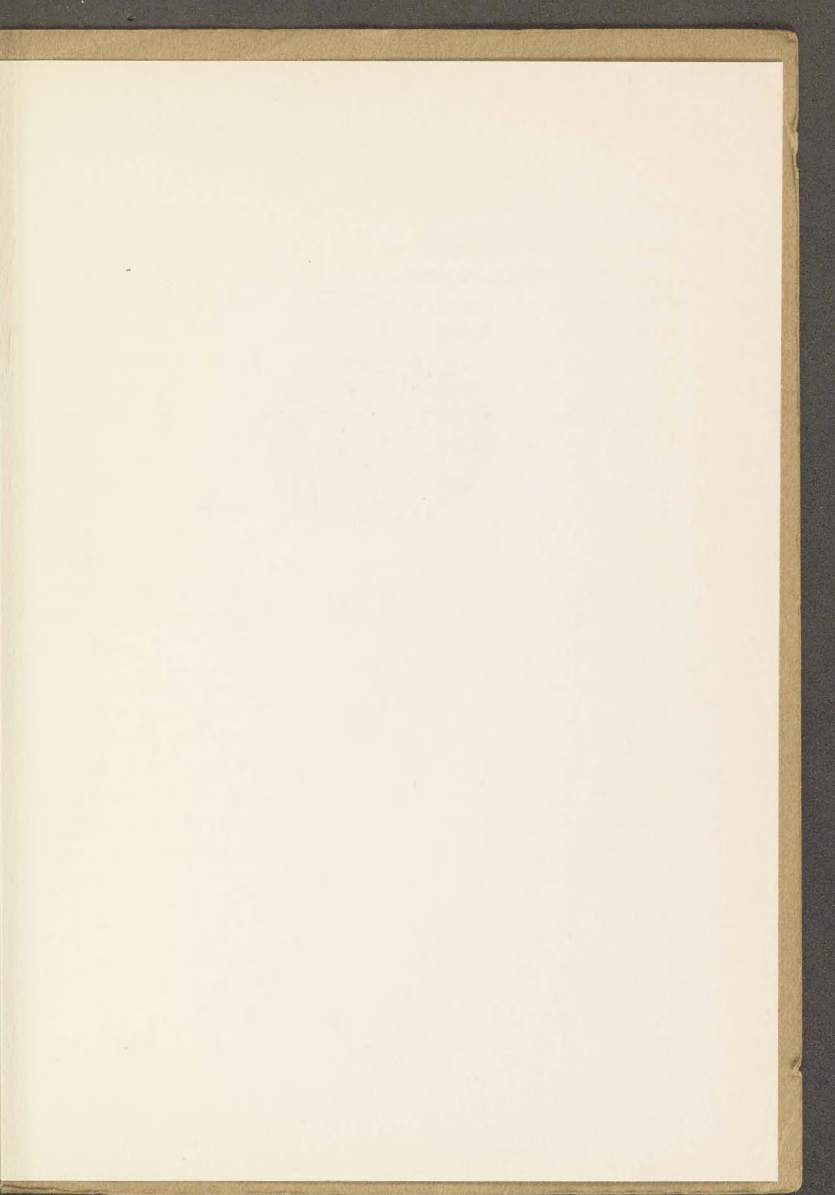
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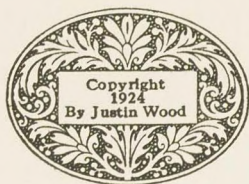
having been acquired gradually over a period of years. Among parents and relatives of baby girls the custom of purchasing two or three pearls strung upon a gold chain, and adding others to them upon anniversaries or other occasions, is rapidly spreading. By the time the young girl has reached graduation or wedding time a beautiful pearl necklace will have been completed.

A word in closing upon the imitation pearl. The pearl, like other gems, is imitated very beautifully, often so closely as to deceive all but the expert,—and *the wearer*. Such imitations often lend very attractive notes to costumes, and employed for that purpose, the wearing of them is justified.

It should be remembered, however, that the difference between the pleasure of possessing a true gem and owning an imitation is as great as is the difference in art between owning an original masterpiece or a copy. The true gem will always repay its purchaser many times over in the pleasure which he or she will derive from its possession.







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