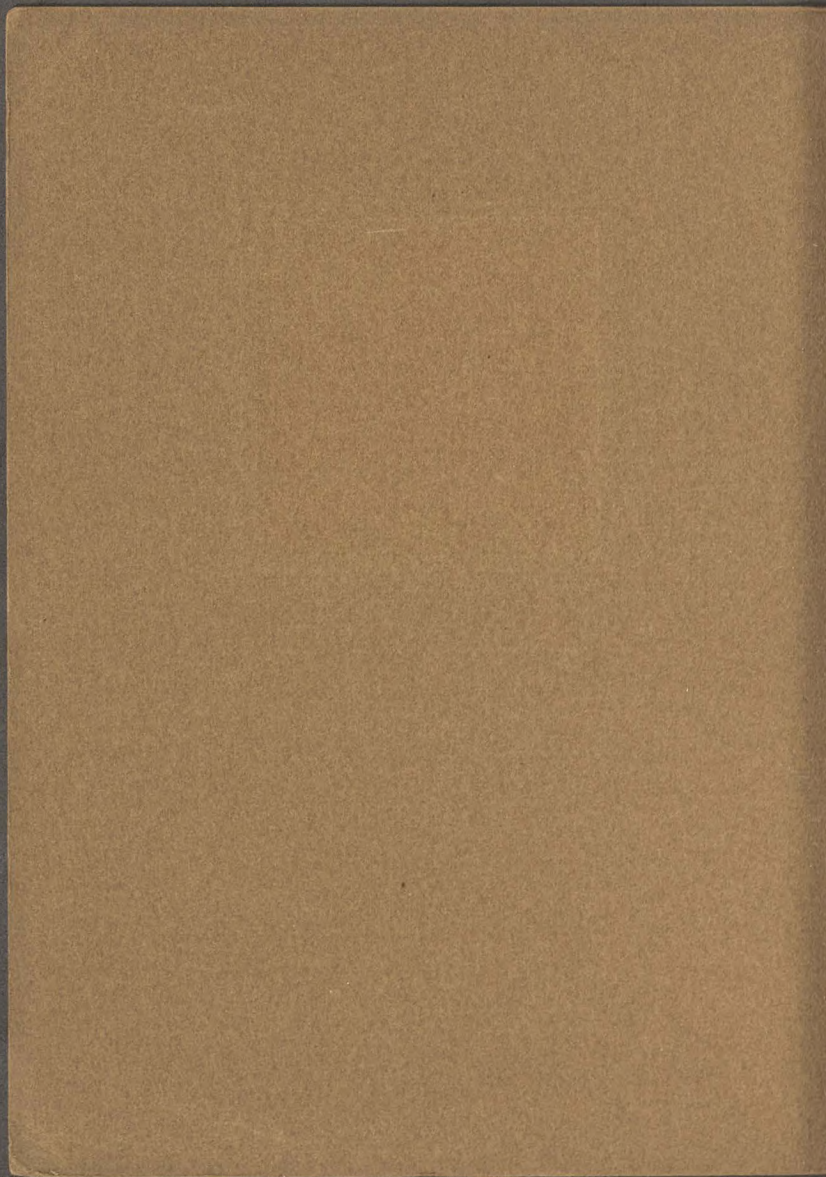


“PHENOMENAL” GEMS



SINKANKAS
RNo 1937 1

FOREWORD



ARDONYX, the birthstone for August offers but little interest to gem-lovers. For this reason we have devoted the following pages to those extraordinary gems which display phenomena.

Both the alexandrite, which resembles the amethyst at night and an emerald by day, and the opal, (birthstone for October), have a most rightful claim to a place among the "phenomenal" gems. They have, however, been described at some length in other issues of this booklet.

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SYRACUSE

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ASTERIAS



FROM the standpoint of interest the most deserving of first mention among the "phenomenal" gems are the star-sapphire and the star-ruby, blood-brothers, for both are corundum and differ in color alone.

These fascinating gems, known as asterias, are procured, for the most part, from Siam, Ceylon and Burma.

Asterias present moving, six-rayed, star-like gleams of light from which their name is derived. They are rarely found in the pure, deep blues and reds of the Oriental sapphire and ruby, but generally show a milky-blue, gray-blue, gray or white appearance in the sapphire, or, in the case of the ruby, a rose tint, rose-gray, lavender, or

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pink. These gems are never transparent, their cloudiness being due to enclosures of minute crystals, or tiny cavities which cause the six rays.

Since time immemorial, throughout the Orient, asterias have been regarded as the most potent of talismanic gems. They are supposed to ward off the Evil Eye, and are believed to be a strong protection against witchcraft of all kinds. In India the influence of these gems is thought to be so powerful that it continues to exercise its force over the first wearer even after the gems have passed into other hands. According to Indian legend, the three cross-bars which traverse the asterias represent Faith, Hope and Destiny.

Sir Richard Francis Burton, the Oriental traveller, had a very fine star-sapphire

which he was wont to refer to as his talisman, for it brought him good horses and prompt attention wherever he went; indeed it was only in those places where he received proper attention that he would show it to the natives who believed that the sight of the stone would bring good luck. The fame of Burton's asteria travelled ahead of him and the gem served him well in obtaining many favors.

In its religious associations the star-sapphire has long been regarded as the gem especially dedicated to Christmas Day, for blue is looked upon as the symbol of high moral, spiritual and religious sentiments while the star is symbolical of the Star of Bethlehem.

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THE STAR OF INDIA

The remarkable asteria known as the "Star of India," in the Morgan Tiffany Collection in the American Museum of Natural History, has a more or less indefinite historic record of some three centuries. After many wanderings it has finally found a worthy resting place in this great Museum. Its weight is 543 carats.

A MODERN TALISMANIC ASTERIA

On Easter Day, 1913, the Greeks of America presented a richly chased and jewelled sword to King Constantine of Greece. Set in the hilt was a magnificent star-sapphire which was looked upon as a talisman designed to assure good fortune and long life to this sovereign, as well as prosperity to the state over which he ruled.

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In this instance the talismanic virtues of the stone were of little avail.

While star-sapphires and star-rubies are less valuable than the "Oriental" sapphires and rubies, they are, by reason of the phenomenal qualities which they possess, very beautiful gems which lend themselves to use in the rings of both men and women to great advantage, giving pleasure to their owners and attracting the attention of all who observe them.

"CAT'S-EYE"



THE term "Cat's-eye" is used to designate many gems which exhibit "chatoyancy," a changeable, undulating lustre such as is shown by the eye of a cat in the dark.

Precious Cat's-eye, also known as "Oriental Cat's-eye" or "Ceylonese Cat's-eye," is a variety of chrysoberyl obtained, for the most part, from Ceylon, but also procured from mines in the northern part of Brazil, and more rarely from Siberia.

While the phenomenon shown by the "Oriental Cat's-eye" is not quite so extraordinary as that of the asterias, this gem is extremely fascinating, and easily leads the list of "phenomenal" stones in point of beauty and in its true gem qualities.

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The "Oriental Cat's-eye" ranges from a cream tint to a deep olive-green or greenish-brown tone, the preferred color being that of pure honey. A peculiar twinning of crystals causes the phenomenal aspect of this gem, a moving line of a silver or golden hue which varies in width and color according to the light in which the gem is seen. Another strange feature of this stone is that the side of the gem which is presented to the light exhibits limpid shadows of great depth, while the shadow-side of the stone shows the light which normally would be expected to appear on the opposite side. So varied are the different aspects of the "Oriental Cat's-eye" under the influences of light changes, that the wearer almost experiences a feeling of possessing a new gem each time he examines it.

Like the asterias, the "Oriental Cat's-eye" is believed by the people of the East to be a potent charm against misfortune of every kind, and is thought to be especially useful as a protection against diseases and as a cure for epilepsy. It is the gem dedicated to Friday, its wearer being considered immune to the ill luck generally attributed to that day.

The largest "Cat's-eye" known, was a Ceylonese specimen which was in the crown of the King of Kandy. The exact weight of this gem is unknown, but it is said to be well over one hundred carats.

The influence of the whims and preferences of royalty in promoting the popularity of gems was remarkably illustrated by the sudden favor with which the "Oriental Cat's-eye" was invested when His Royal

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Highness, the Duke of Connaught, gave his fiancée a ring set with this gem, which vastly increased the demand for it and caused a corresponding increase in its value.

The “Oriental Cat’s-eye” lends itself to use in either platinum or gold settings, being most frequently employed in rings for both men and women. While fine stones are difficult to obtain, the purchaser of a good specimen will find himself amply repaid in the pleasure and interest which will be derived from this very remarkable gem.

MOONSTONE



MOONSTONES, sometimes called "Ceylon Opals," have a soft attractiveness and a mystic quality which, for many centuries, have held these stones high in the esteem of gem-lovers in spite of their slight value as gems.

As "phenomenal" gems, moonstones, exhibiting the silvery-white, moonlike light changes which give them their name, are certainly entitled to mention. These stones, are, as a rule, of a pearly-white color, though some specimens show a marked blue tint, while a rare variety found in Siberia is of a pronounced greenish cast. The best moonstones are obtained from Ceylon.

Like all of the "phenomenal" gems, the

moonstone figures largely in Hindu legend, and because of its heavenly associations is always displayed for sale, in India, upon a yellow cloth, yellow being the holy color of the Hindus. Even today there are sects in India that actually believe that a living spirit dwells within the moonstone, exercising its potent influence for good.

In the Middle Ages the moonstone was highly prized for its reputed talismanic virtues. It was believed to be a most efficacious love charm, arousing the tender passion and, if held in the mouth during the moon's waning, it was thought to enable the lovers to foretell the fortune, good or ill, that lay in store for them. It was also believed to stimulate the memory of its wearer, to guard him from all forms of misfortune, and to endow him with good-

fortune. It was also used extensively in the treatment of diseases.

A fifteenth century writer tells us of a moonstone that was in the treasury of Pope Leo X, which grew brighter as the moon waxed, exhibiting the soft silvery brilliance of our satellite, and then gradually lost its brightness as the moon waned, growing paler and dimmer and becoming quite obscure as the moon's disk ceased to be illumined by the sun. Another writer of that period relates much the same story of a similar gem which was owned by a friend. It is quite probable that both scribes adhered more closely to imagination than to truth.

While, as we have stated, the moonstone is not a gem of great value, it is, neverthe-

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less, most effectively employed in inexpensive jewelry, being frequently seen in rings and scarf-pins. Cut into spherical beads it is occasionally used in very charming and interesting necklaces, alone, or with other gems.

