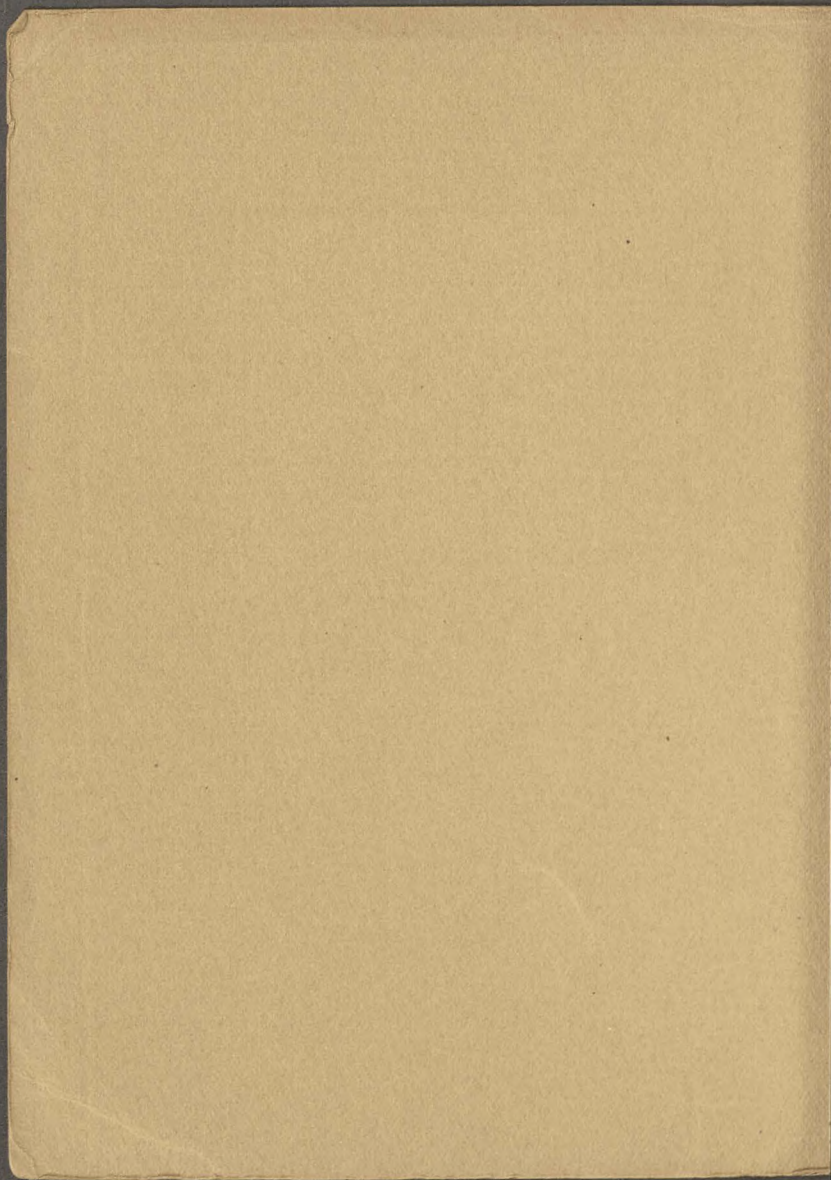


# THE SAPPHIRE



SIVKANKAS  
R2019323



WHEN the young Cingalese maidens  
sway, with the tips of their  
fingers, the stems of the laveli  
blossoms, then do the two dark  
blue eyes of the Daitya fall, eyes  
with a sheen like that of the lotus in full  
bloom.

“Hence it is that this island, with its  
long sea-coast and its interminable forests  
of ketskas, abounds in magnificent sap-  
phires, which are its glory.”

*(Old Indian Legend)*

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SYRACUSE



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## THE SAPPHIRE

BIRTHSTONE FOR SEPTEMBER

*Symbol of Constancy, Truth, and Virtue*



IT SEEMS incongruous that corundum, the material composing the polishing-wheel found in our machine-shops, should be basically identical with the beautiful sapphire. They are, nevertheless, one and the same, save for the crystallization of the gem.

“Sapphire” is the name that is generally applied to any gem corundum excepting the red variety (ruby). More specifically, it is the name that is applied to the blue stone which is the most highly prized, the desired tints being royal blue and cornflower or cobalt blue.

Ranking next to the diamond in hardness, the sapphire is one of the most beautiful and popular gems, as well as one of the most ancient ones, for it is mentioned in the earliest written histories, its name differing

but slightly in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongues.

Sapphires are found in Siam, Ceylon, Kashmir; in the north-west Himalaya Mountains in Australia, and in the United States. It is said that Siam yields over half of the sapphires that are marketed, and those of the finest quality. There the gem is found in a light, sandy clay within two feet from the surface. In America, sapphires of a somewhat inferior quality are found near Helena, Montana, for years a field of operations for placer miners who undoubtedly panned out sapphires and rubies for a long time without identifying them as precious stones.

Sapphires are cut "brilliant", "en cabochon", "cushion", and "step", while in the Orient they are usually found in the "rose" cutting. Occasionally the stones are engraved and used as seals, while rare sapphires of the Roman imperial period bore

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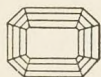
Brilliant



Cushion



*en cabochon*  
(side view)



Step Cut



Rose Cut

carved figures or astrological symbols. The ancients regarded the sapphire as a powerful talisman, and it was believed that carvings placed upon the gem would often enhance its talismanic properties.

### TRADITION

Not unlike most of the precious and semi-precious stones, the history of the sapphire is interwoven with interesting lore, tradition and superstition. The sacred



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character of the stone was attested by the tradition that the Law given to Moses on the Mount was engraved on tablets of sapphire. (This probably should have been translated "lapis-lazuli".) In Revelation (xxi, 19), we are told that the second foundation stone of Jerusalem was sapphire. We also find that the sixth Mohammedan heaven was sapphire.

Writing in the twelfth century, the Bishop of Rennes lavished great praise upon this stone. "Sapphire was like pure sky and mighty Nature had endowed it with so great a power that it might be called sacred and the gem of gems. Fraud was banished from its presence and necromancers honored it more than any other gem for it enabled them to hear and to understand the obscurest oracles".

Voicing the general belief that the sapphire was endowed with the power to influence spirits (for this stone was a favorite



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with those who practiced necromancy), another early writer states, "Also wytches love well this stone, for they wene that they may werke certen wondres by vertue of this stone."

### CURATIVE POWERS

Especial curative powers were attributed by the ancients to most of the gems, although, to be sure, some of them were believed to be potent poisons. In his book,

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“The Curious Lore of Precious Stones”, Dr. George Frederick Kunz tells us of a medieval receipt for “the most noble electuary of jacinth”, which contains jacinth, emerald, sapphire, topaz, garnet, pearl, ruby, white and red coral, and amber, as well as many animal and vegetable substances, in all thirty-four ingredients. Dr. Kunz observes: “It would indeed seem that a good dose of such a mixture should have provided a cure for ‘all the ills that flesh is heir to’, by the simple and effective means of removing the unhappy patient to a better world.”

The sapphire was believed to be a potent cure for eye troubles, an antidote for poisons (a most praiseworthy quality in ancient and medieval times), and was thought to preserve the wearer from many infirmities as well as to free from demons. Those of a scientific turn of mind will be interested in the experiment made by a

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gentleman in the thirteenth century for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the sapphire as an antidote for poisons. An account of his observations reads as follows: "His vertue is contrary to venyme, and quenbeth it every deale. And yf you put an attercoppe (spider) in a boxe and hold a very saphyre of Inde at the mouth of the boxe ony whyle, by vertue thereof the attercoppe is overcome & dyeth as it were sodenly. And this same I have assayed



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oft in many and dyvers places. His vertue kepeth and savyth the syght, & cleareth eyen of fylthe wythout ony greyf”.

Relating to the general belief in the curative qualities of the sapphire as applied to eye troubles, in 1391, Richard Preston, a citizen and grocer of London, gave a sapphire to the shrine of St. Erkinwald, in Old Saint Pauls. He stipulated that the stone should be kept at the shrine for the cure of diseases of the eyes and that proclamation should be made of its remedial virtues. We also find an entry in the inventory of Charles V, which notes “an oval Oriental sapphire for touching the eyes, set in a band of gold.

While there sometimes seems to be no logical reason for a superstition, it is quite possible to explain the belief in the remedial virtues of the sapphire for eye diseases, and to illustrate the curious transformation through which an originally reasonable idea

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may pass in the course of time. The sapphire of the ancients was our lapis-lazuli. In one of the old Egyptian manuscripts lapis-lazuli is given as one of the ingredients of an eye-wash. This ingredient is believed to have been originally the oxide of copper sometimes called lapis Armenis, a material possessing marked astringent properties, and which might be used to advantage in certain conditions of the eye. Lapis-lazuli, another blue stone was later substituted because of its greater value, its similarity of color rendering it equally efficacious according to primitive ideas on this subject. When, however, in medieval times, the name sapphire came to signify the blue corundum gem, the special curative virtues of the lapis-lazuli were transferred to this still more valuable stone.

### A SAPPHIRE OF NOTE

Among the famous sapphires possessed of an interesting history is one which was

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in the South Kensington Museum, in London. By daylight this remarkable gem displayed a rich, blue color, but by artificial light it showed a violet hue and resembled an amethyst. In the eighteenth century this stone was in the collection of a Polish nobleman, and, it is related, was used as a test of female virtue, the change of color indicating unfaithfulness on the part of the wearer. If the owner wished to prove that the subject of the test was innocent, she was made to wear the sapphire for three hours of daylight; but in the opposite case the test was so timed that it began in daylight and ended when the candles or lamps had been lighted. This gem was for a time in the collection of the Duke of Orleans, who bore the name of Philippe Egalite during the French Revolution.

### A FAMOUS CARVED SAPPHIRE

A carved sapphire, once in the collection of the Marquess of Northampton, shows



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a representation of the Hindu divinity, Si-va. It is of Indian workmanship and the stone measures  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in thickness.

### MANUFACTURED SAPPHIRES

Of late years we have heard a great deal about "reconstructed" and manufactured sapphires. Science has been able to produce genuine sapphires by artificial methods; stones which have the same color aspect, chemical properties, degree of hardness, and specific gravity as the natural gem; and to the unskilled eye they present the appearance of the true sapphire. To the trained observer, however, they present several differences, namely, their color is not distributed in the same manner as the natural stone; where the natural stone shows a grain and a crystalline structure the fabricated gem shows no grain and under a lens shows countless minute air bubbles; and last but far from least, the true gem has a

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velvety luster that has never been successfully imitated in the manufactured stone. It is exceedingly doubtful that the artificial stone will ever affect the market value of the natural sapphire.





