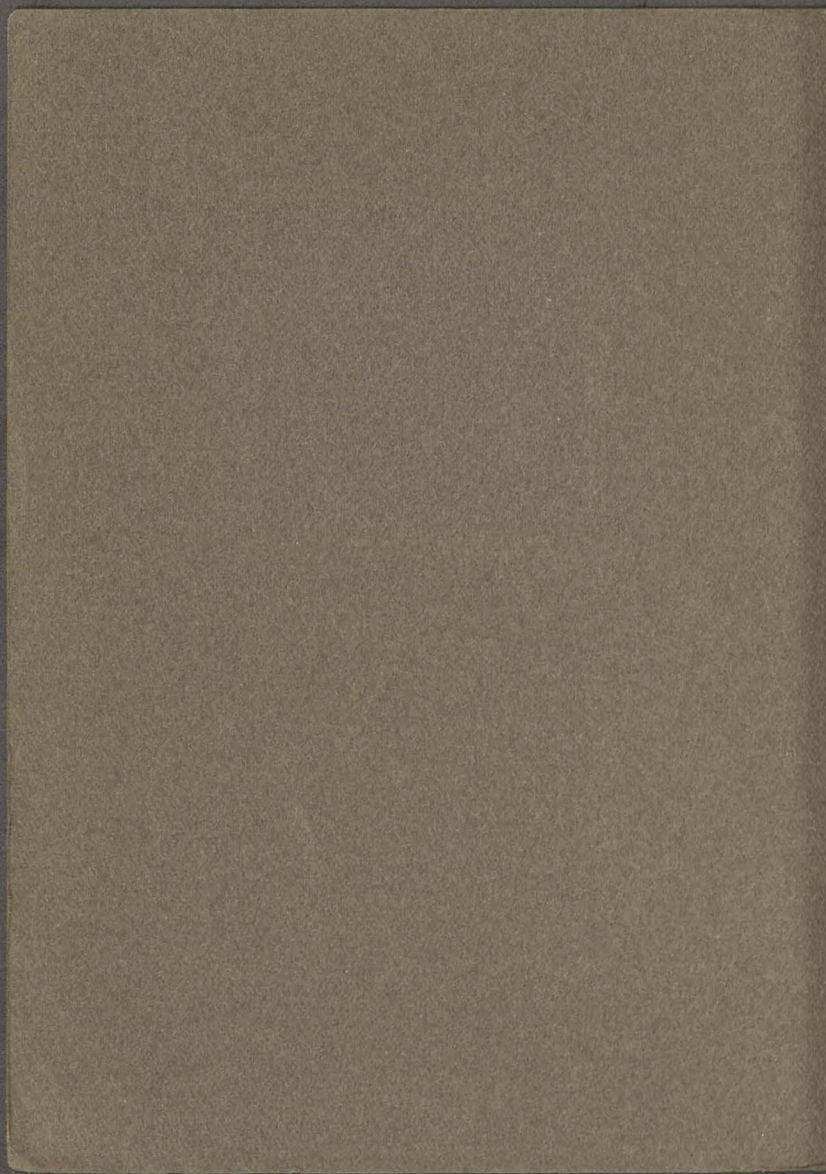


THE TOPAZ



FOREWORD



THE primitive methods which were employed by the ancients in cutting and polishing gems, were capable of developing the softer stones to their full beauty, but the harder gems such as the diamond, the sapphire and the ruby could be but crudely treated. Hence, many of the semi-precious stones were held in higher esteem than the precious ones.

Beauty rather than rarity fixed the valuation, and for this reason the topaz occupied a place of highest rank.

Today, the semi-precious gems are finding greater favor than ever before. Among them the topaz, with its many true gem qualities, deservedly retains its popularity.

We believe that gem-lovers will find much concerning the topaz in the following pages which will be of great interest.

H · J · HOWE · INC
SYRACUSE

For the information contained in this little book, we are indebted to the following authors, to whom we wish to extend our thanks:

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THE TOPAZ

BIRTHSTONE FOR NOVEMBER

SYMBOL OF HONESTY



CENTURIES ago, in the early days of the Roman Empire, a pirate-ship in the Red Sea was driven upon the shores of a barren island. This island, because of the fact that it was generally surrounded by heavy fogs and difficult to find, was then known as *Topazein* (to search for). The crew of the vessel, hard pressed by famine, tore up herbs and roots for their sustenance, and in so doing they accidentally discovered the topaz.

Authorities generally agree that the topaz of the ancients was not the gem which we of today know by that name, but the chrysolite (commonly known as peridot), which is of a yellow-green color. The name topaz, however, was often used to designate various yellow and yellow-green stones, including the citrine, yellow sapphire, peri-

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dot, true topaz, and probably the yellow tourmaline. Not until the Middle Ages was a distinction made between the true topaz and other gems of somewhat similar appearance. At that time the name became restricted to its present application.

TRUE TOPAZ

The true topaz is found in many parts of the world including Ceylon, Brazil,

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Spain, Asiatic Russia, the British Isles, Mexico, Japan, and the United States. The gems from Ceylon, Brazil and Spain are of the finest quality, those from other sources being pale or colorless.

While yellow topaz of a color approaching fine old sherry is most highly prized, the gem is also found in varying shades of indigo blue, blue-green, green, white and occasionally rose-pink. Russia produces fine, large, blue and blue-green crystals, but these stones are seldom used commercially for it is said that they have a tendency to lose their color when subjected to intense light.

The topaz is the most popular yellow stone used in modern jewelry. Possessing rich depths of color and being but slightly softer than the sapphire, it takes a brilliant polish. It is to be had in every type of cutting, including many forms not found

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in other gems, and sometimes it is engraved with figures or seals in relief or in intaglio.

RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

The topaz occupied a place of high standing in ancient ecclesiastical circles. It was one of the twelve stones in the breastplate of the Jewish high priest, the especial stone of the apostle Matthew, and in Revelation (XXI, 20) it is given as one of the foundation stones of Jerusalem.

CURATIVE VIRTUES

This gem was supposed to possess pronounced curative virtues, being especially valued as a healing agent for diseases of the skin, and as a cure for dimness of vision. Its wearer was believed to be assured of long life, beauty and intelligence.

A Roman physician of the fifteenth century was reputed to have wrought many wonderful cures of those stricken by the plague, through touching the patients

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with a topaz which had belonged to two popes, Clement VI and Gregory II. The fact that this particular topaz had been in the hands of two supreme pontiffs undoubtedly added much to the faith reposed in the curative powers of the stone by those upon whom it was used.

It seems not amiss, at this point, to call attention to the fact that auto-suggestion, of which we have lately heard much, in one form or another has played its part in curing the ailments of mankind for many centuries.

POPE CLEMENT THE 7TH

At times, however, the therapeutic uses of gems were by no means limited to external applications. We learn that when Pope Clement VII was seized by his last illness, in 1534, the physicians attending him administered powders composed of precious stones. In the space of fourteen days they are asserted to have given him

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forty thousand ducats' worth of these gems, without avail, for in spite of this lavish expenditure, the patient died. Indeed, according to present-day science, the dosage may have considerably hastened the good pontiff's end.

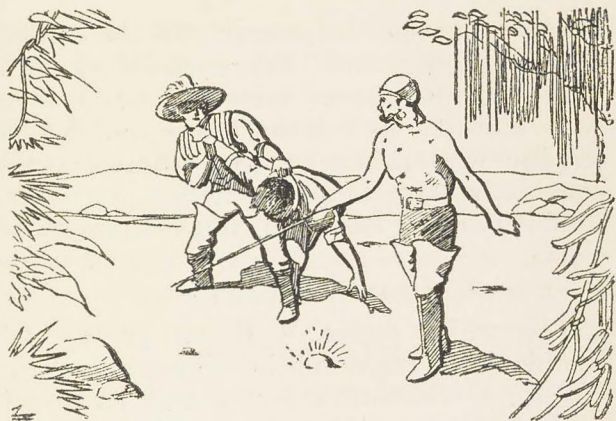
THE CHINESE BELIEF

In China, the topaz is used extensively as an amulet, and it is believed that the gem is a strong agent in warding misfortune from its wearer. Suspended in the doorway of a house, it is supposed to guard those within from evil spirits.

THE "BRAGANZA DIAMOND"

One of the most interesting stories in connection with the topaz is found in the history of the great "Braganza Diamond." About 1760, three political exiles who had been banished from the communities of Brazil, discovered, while prospecting for gold in the interior of that country, a huge gem which weighed 1680 carats and re-

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sembled a diamond. The men took the stone to a mission priest, begging that he present it to the governor and intercede for their return to favor. In recognition of their honesty the men were granted full pardon for their crimes against the state. At the time of its presentation to the governor the gem was believed to be a great diamond. It was sent to Portugal

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where it became the property of the crown, being known as the "Braganza Diamond." This stone has never been cut, nor has its true identity yet been made public by anyone who ranks as an authority upon gems. It is generally believed, however, that it is not a diamond, but a huge white topaz.

"SLAVES' DIAMOND"

The white topaz of Brazil greatly resembles the diamond in appearance, but lacks the diamond's lustre and hardness. It is sometimes known as "Slaves' Diamond," and has at times been sold by unscrupulous dealers as the true diamond.

THE "MAXWELL-STEWART" TOPAZ

Among the finest topazes is the one that is known as the "Maxwell-Stewart." This exceptional gem was brought from Ceylon to England in 1879 with a shipment of inferior rubies and sapphires for use in

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watch-making. It was thought to be simply a piece of quartz. So little was it appreciated that it was sold at auction for \$17.50. When, on closer examination, its true character became apparent, the owner decided to have it cut in brilliant form. This resulted in a beautiful, pure white gem, weighing in its finished state, 368 carats, the largest cut stone then in existence.

A FAMOUS GEM

Another famous topaz belonged to the Grand Mogul Aurungzeb of India. This gem was purchased by that potentate in 1665 for the sum of \$50,500. Its weight was 157 carats.

GEMS CONFUSED WITH TOPAZ

Other stones are occasionally marketed as topaz, generally under distinguishing names. Thus the yellow sapphire is sometimes called "oriental topaz," while citrine quartz is sometimes sold under the name

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“occidental topaz.” There is also the “synthetic topaz,” a misnomer, for this gem is really the manufactured yellow sapphire. While the topaz is occasionally found in very beautiful natural rose colored crystals, most of the “rose topaz” that is sold is really “pinked” or artificially treated. It is a peculiarity of the yellow Brazilian gem that if it be subjected to slow heat it assumes the rose-pink tint upon cooling.

With the ever increasing popularity of the various semi-precious stones, the topaz is more than holding its own. Its golden hues lend themselves to use in gem-pieces of every description, and if it were more rarely found it would deservedly command a price commensurate with its beauty and its charm.

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By Justin Wood

