THE STORY OF A DIAMOND

By JOHN A. NASH

Diamonds Have Been Sought In Every Far Corner of World Since the Dawn of Christianity

Described by Pliny as "Most Valuable of Gems Known to Kings," and After 1,800 Years Are Still Considered Leading Precious Stones.

HARDEST SUBSTANCE IN NATURE

By JOHN A. NASH.

(Note—High and public school teachers will find this article by John A. Nash worth clipping and saving for future reference.

This little story is written up to interest you in the Diamond itself. Nearly everyone at some time or other desires information as to the characteristics, qualities and grades of these precious stones and we give you this little story believing that it will be of material assistance in this direction as well as proving, as it undoubtedly does, a very interesting narrative.

Its Name.

The word "diamond" is derived from the Greek word "adamas," meaning "invincible."

It is well named "invincible" since it is the hardest—the most unconquerable substance known to nature as it is also the most imperishable in its origin.

The first mention we have of the "diamond" as a gem is by Manlius in A. D. 16, whilst Pliny, in A. D. 100, refers to it as "the most valuable of gems known to kings."

It was at one time worn as a charm to avert insanity. In fancy we hear some of our cynical bachelor friends say that "it is usually an evidence of insanity, or, speaking popularly, the madness of love." In the middle ages it was known as "pietra della reconciliziaone," that is the "peacemaker between husband and wife," and in this connection numerous testimonials as to its miraculous cures at the present day are forthcoming.

What It Is.

The diamond is carbon—carbon which has become crystallized through intense heat combined with great pressure.

It is chemically identical with charcoal and graphite (black lead), into which it may be converted by heat or electricity and yet there is an extraordinary difference in character. As, for instance, the diamond is a poor conductor. It can be electrified or made phosphorescent by friction and if left in the sunlight for a time, will give forth light to a certain extent in the dark.

Frequently, in otherwise fine diamonds, after being cut or polished, black carbon spots will be found. Through refraction and reflection one such spot may be multiplied from two to twelve times.

Needless to say, such spots, however small, form one of the many imperfections that seriously affect the commercial value of diamonds, and yet these spots are seldom detected by the average buyer. The technical name for such being "pique" or spotted.

Its Formation.

Unlike many of the other gems, the diamond is found as a separate unit—unattached as it were—in gravel or diamantiferous clay, from which it is easily washed or separated, whereas many of the other stones, such as the opal, turquoise, amethyst, etc., are found in a matrix of rock appearing somewhat as veins in marble and from which they are cut.

In its natural or rough state the diamond has an adamantine lustre, a rather "greasy" feeling, and resembles gum-Arabic in appearance.

The diamond is found in gray, brown, yellow, white, red, green, blue and black colors. Some of these are very rare indeed and because of this are correspondingly valuable as specimens.

The white—the pure "steel-blue-white," of course, is the ideal and most prized color as a gem.

There is an old saying to the effect that "a little learning is a dangerous thing"; just so with color in a diamond. A slight yellow tint, for instance, which is known as "off-color" or "by-water," affects the value of a diamond very seriously, whereas a deep, bright "canary" color, because of its rarity, adds immensely to its value.

For every pure white diamond you'll find hundreds of off-color stones, but Nash's diamonds are never off-color—"quality first" is our slogan.

The Word "Carat."

As frequent reference will be made to the term "carat," it might be well to explain here that this word, as applied to gold refers to quality only, whereas applied to gems it refers to weight.

In the case of gold, pure gold is composed of 24 parts, but since such gold is unworkable, and in any case would be too soft for wear more or less alloy of silver or copper is necessary. The term 18 "carat" gold simply means 18 parts of pure gold with the remaining 6 parts of alloy required to make the full 24 parts.

In the case of the diamond, however, "carat" means weight only and is said to take its name from a small Oriental seed, not to be confused, however, with the "ordinary garden variety." It is equal to or rather more than three grains in weight, giving 151½ carts to the ounce.

In appearance, the end of an ordinary lead pencil will convey the idea of the 1¼-carat stone, but care must be taken not to suppose that a large stone, say of 15 carats weight, is equal in appearance to a dozen such pencil ends, as the weight is distributed over the entire stone, depth as well as surface, and would not be equal to more than four or five such surfaces in appearance.

Its Uses.

The part that the diamond is called upon to play for purposes of adornment is too well known to call for further comment.

"Diamond, Cupid and Benedict" is a long established firm still carrying on business at the same old stand.

Apart from this phase, however, the diamond has a perfect fascination for the majority of people. Even so intellectual a man as the late Henry Ward Beecher is said to have carried around in his pocketbook, wrapped in soft wool, a number of such gems unset, upon which he would feast his soul from time to time, simply because of his love for the beautiful.

Since a limited number only of the diamonds found are sufficiently fine quality to be used for adornment, the balance serve a very useful purpose in the industrial fields.

The impure diamonds or those which cannot be advantageously used as jewels are known as "Bort" and include all grades, shapes and colors even to the "coal-black."

Because of their excessive hardness, such stones or pieces of stones are valuable for the drilling of glass and porcelain, engraving of stones, dentists' drill, cutting of glass, whilst for rock drills in mining they are almost indispensable.

Where Found.

The diamond is cosmopolitan. It has been found in almost all quarters of the globe, although in few areas of Europe outside of the Ural Mountains.

India, South America, Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, the sea sands of New England (although never showing any signs of being waterworn) in eighteen or twenty states of the union—one stone of 23 carats weight from "away down in Old Virginny."

One research party at least from "across the line" spent considerable time making investigations in the Hudson Bay district, without, however, any satisfactory results.

It has even been found in meteoric stones, the result of intense heat and pressure as crystallized carbon.

The Mines of India.

Nearly all the great diamonds of historical interest had their birth in India—in fact, until the middle of the 18th century, India had no rival in the field. They are there found in river-gravel and old sandstones and sand derived from them.

At one mine in India, as far back as 1650, no less than 60,000 natives were employed.

Although the name "Golconda" is associated in the public mind with diamonds, it was really not important as a producer so much as a market for a scattered mining district.

When visiting India a few years ago, stopping at Secunderaband, and hearing of Golconda a few miles away, we had a desire to visit the place and were accompanied by the proprietor of the leading hotel, a rather intelligent fellow. In the olden times this was an important fortress, situated at the top of a flight of steps. Speaking to him, on our way there, about the Golconda diamonds, our guide said he had never heard of them, but drew our attention in passing to a very large mass of huge cube-like stones covering acres and acres. "These," he said, "are the only stones I ever heard of here, and the tradition is that the Great Architect of the Universe completed his work here at Golconda and these stones represent the surplus material left over after the creation of the world." Needless to say, we will not vouch for the correctness of the statement, although it is accepted by the natives in perfectly good faith.

How They Are Cut.

Before the diamond is polished it must be suitably trimmed, and great skill and judgment are called for, that the very best results may be obtained.

Within recent years a very few diamond cutters have introduced a process of "sawing" their diamonds before polishing, incredible as this may appear.

Picture to yourself a little circular "saw" about two inches in diameter, without any teeth, made of a sort of bronze no thicker than writing paper, fastened between two steel washers about 1½ inches wide to keep it from bending or "buckling," and revolving at a very rapid rate, whilst a paste of diamond dust and thick oil is applied—that's all, and yet it saws the diamond very, very slowly, of course, notwithstanding the fact that it is the hardest known substance in nature.

With the great majority of cutters, however, the process of "cleavage" is the one followed. There is a line of cleavage in every rough diamond which must be followed just as the "grain" in wood.

This line of cleavage discovered, the workman uses the sharp edge of one stone to make a slight cut or mark in the stone to be operated upon; a steel edge, like the blade of a dull knife, is inserted and with a smart knock or blow the cleavage follows.

Its Polishing.

After the stone has been properly trimmed it is ready for polishing. The present method was first introduced by one Von Berquin, in the town of Bruges, about the year A. D. 1450, and is quite simple.

A flat solid disc of soft steel of 16 or 18 inches diameter (somewhat like a grindstone laid on its side), revolves at the rate of 3,000 turns per minute. Upon this is placed a paste of diamond dust and heavy oil.

The stone is set in a little core of fused spelter, or some such soft metal, to hold it absolutely firm. When cooked this is gripped in a sort of claw, upon the end of an adjustable arm, which is weighed down upon this fast revolving disc.

As a grinding or polishing process is a very slow one, owing to the extreme hardness of the diamond, the one operator is enabled to attend to several such machines at the same time.

The "Kohinoor."

The word "Kohinoor" means "mountain of light." This is undoubtedly the best known of the great diamonds of the world and its mention will recall to many their visit to the Tower of London, where it is shown amongst the crown jewels.

It may well be a matter of pride to us to know that with but one or two minor exceptions all the important jewels of the world are within the British Empire.

There is much mystery veiling the early history of the "Kohinoor," but it is supposed to have had a place in the renowned Peacock Throne which once stood in that exquisite gem of architecture, the throne room in the palace of Delhi in India.

In later years it was owned by the Rajah of Lahore, passing into the hands of the East India company, by whom it was presented to our late majesty, Queen Victoria, in the year 1830.

The great importance of the cutting of a diamond is brought home forcibly to us when we bear in mind that whilst the "Kohinoor," after it was first cut weighed 186 carats, it was re-cut to its great advantage to 106 carats—thus losing 80 carats in weight but gaining immeasurably in brilliancy and effect by the operation.

The Cullinan.

It remained for the latest discovered mine, the "Premier," in the Transvaal, to make all previous discoveries sink into insignificance.

This stone was of exquisite quality and weighed not less than 3,025¾ carats, or if you prefer buying your diamonds like beefsteak, by the pound, that means exactly one and one-third pounds.

It was known as the "Cullinan" diamond and was subsequently sold to the Transvaal government by whom it was presented to his late majesty, King Edward.

In Conclusion.

So ends our little story of the Diamond. Having been patient enough to follow it through we hope that you know a little more about the diamond than when you began.

We have told you of its origin, how and when it was discovered, how it is mined, and, in fact we have given you sufficient information to, we hope, cause you to believe that our knowledge should be useful to you the next time you wish to make a purchase. Suppose now you allow us to suggest to you that you come in and see the selection of My Jeweler's Diamonds. We can then convince you even more successfully than we can ever hope to do in print. Moreover we can prove that you may buy them from us to the very best advantage. There are certain other good reasons for this. Our purchasing power is very considerable and we sell only Perfect Diamonds and at reasonable prices.

We are hoping this little story and the illustrations of cutting of diamonds will enable people to buy their diamonds with greater confidence.

Remember the store, John A. Nash, My Jeweler, "Where you will eventually buy."

Meet My Jeweler and wear diamonds.