

Famous Jewels and Their Strange Stories.

THE PITT DIAMOND.

Perhaps one of the strangest of all jewel histories—and mysteries—is that of the "Pitt" or "Regent" Diamond.

It is generally supposed to be the most perfect brilliant on record, about the size of a pigeon's egg, and to weigh 185½ carats. It is also one of the "youngest" of the great diamonds, as well as probably the largest, next to the half-legendary "Great Mogul" or Mirgamola's diamond.

In the year 1702 at the Puteal, about 45 leagues from the fa-

mous diamond mines of Golconda, the Pitt Diamond was discovered by a Hindoo coolie employed in the workings. This man realised that he had found a stone of unusual value, and he proceeded to conceal it in a gash in the calf of his leg, and so escaped with his treasure trove to Madras. But the coolie was a foolish fellow. He boasted of his find in the waterside taverns, and a certain British sea captain, hearing rumours of this mighty diamond, lured the Hindoo on board his ship, took the stone by force, and then disposed of the native summarily by throwing his overboard.

And so the Pitt Diamond began its career with theft and murder; and, moreover, brought down a curse on its possessor.

The sailor sold his prize to a Parsee called Jamchund for the comparatively small sum of one thousand pounds—small, that is, when one considers its real value. The money, earned by murder, gave no happiness; it was soon squandered in drink and debauchery, and the sea captain, haunted in his conscience, ended a few weeks later by hanging himself.

§ § § §

The curtain went down on the first act of the drama; it rose again when the Governor of Fort St. George at Madras, a certain Thomas Pitt, got wind of the fabulous diamond, and bought it finally from Jamchund for £12,500.

Once again the curse—that curious doom which dogs the possessors of

all the great diamonds, so it seems—began to work. Pitt had the diamond cut by the greatest Indian craftsman at a cost of £5000—the fragments alone were worth £2500—and carried his prize back to England.

His fame, or that of the diamond, had preceded him, much to his future embarrassment. Pope had got wind of the incident of the jewel's finding, and, twisting it according to his own malicious fancy in his poem "Sir Balaam." Under a very thin disguise he indicated Pitt—and brought ridicule upon him by the half truth:—

"Asleep and naked as an Indian lay,
An honest factor stole a gem away.
He pledged it to the Knight, the
Knight had wit,
So kept the diamond and the rogue
was bit."

The possession of the great diamond brought utter misery to the unfortunate Governor Pitt—his head could not have been more uneasy if he had worn a crown!

He was obsessed with the idea that it would be stolen from him. Consequently he would let no one see it, even if they brought indisputable credentials. A certain Uffenbach, attached to the German Embassy, tried vainly to obtain a sight of the wonderful diamond in 1712, but Pitt's door remained obstinately closed to him, as to all other callers.

More than this, Sir Thomas refused to give his address; even to friends, and he constantly changed his lodgings, so as to evade the attention of possible thieves, moving from place to place at night and secretly.

Everyone who saw the unfortunate man noticed his state of nerves, his constant starts and sideways suspicious glances—and small wonder, since the huge diamond was constantly carried on his person, never leaving him night or day.

At last the strain became too much for human nature to bear. Pitt came to the conclusion, which had been reached officially and as Court some time before, that the diamond "was of too great value for any subject to possess."

He decided that he would sell it, and since the reigning house of England was not open to purchase the stone, he made advances to the Regent of Orleans, then ruler of France, through Law, the Scots financier, and the subsequent promoter of the ill-fated "South Sea Bubble."

Pitt retained his suspicions to the end. He did not intend to let the diamond go out of his hands until he had received payment for it, and consequently Law could not show it to the Regent "in person." An exact model was prepared, and, after examining this, Orleans made an offer of £135,000 for the stone.

This was less than its estimated value, which was considered to be £450,000 at least, but it was considerably more than Pitt had given for it, and a very comfortable fortune—especially in those days.

The great gem changed hands, becoming the "Regent" instead of the "Pitt" and the ex-governor must have felt a great weight removed from his mind and transferred to his purse.

With the money received and carefully invested, he founded the Pitt fortunes very solidly, and thus the career of his grandson, the famous Earl of Chatham, may be said to have been based on the great diamond.

§ § § §

It was now established as one of the chief glories of the French regalia, and St. Simon describes in his memoirs how it was admired and treasured.

The Regent wore it; it glittered at the coronations of Louis XV., and of the ill-fated Louis XVI. Set as a huge brooch, it was "too heavy" for the wearing of Marie Antoinette, who preferred the exquisite "French Blue" or Hope Diamond, but the appearance of the "Regent" at Court was always duly admired.

But once more came disaster—that disaster which threatened and swallowed up not only the great diamond, but the whole royalty and kingship of France.

The Revolution broke its bounds, and the terrible summer of 1793 found the "Regent," with the rest of the French regalia, preserved carefully in the Garde Meuble.

The storming of the Tuilleries and the massacres in the prisons had disorganised all the police and National guards of Paris; there was no one to keep order, and no order was kept. On the night of September 15-16 the Garde Meuble was broken into, and all the most famous treasures deposited there stolen—all, that is, which were at all portable.

Next day there was a great hue and cry. Roland, the Minister, notified to the Assembly that the Garde Me-

ble had been robbed, and that its

treasures were missing.

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §

§ § § §