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Gems of Evil.

THE SHAH'S HOODOO DIAMOND.

By STUART MARTIN, in Pearson's Weekly.

In one of the rooms of a London diamond merchant there is a peculiar gem of pale yellow about an inch

across. It is a diamond, but it is a diamond which has a strange history, and one which is known throughout the East as peculiarly sinister. "Your Majesty," said the diamond merchant, "this is the diamond which was given to the Shah of Persia by the British Government. It is a diamond which has a strange history, and one which is known throughout the East as peculiarly sinister."

It was this stone which the Prophet Muhammad carried when he went to war. He wore it in his turban. He took it with him whenever he wished to conquer any Arab or wandering tribe. It was laid on the altar of his shrine in Mexico until his son-in-law, Ali, tried to claim the Caliphate.

On that day the yellow stone was found on the floor of the shrine—true indication that Ali would fail. All fell, poisoned by subtle power which had been laid on the stone; the poison entered his blood as he touched the stone with his fingers, one of which was scratched. His son Hussein

was also slain when he wore the stone on the plain of Kerbala.

Every year in the month of Mohur-rum there pass the Shah's palaces long processions of men and women crying aloud: "O Husain! O Husain!"

The processions are headed by fanatics, who beat their breasts and call for vengeance on the slayers of Husain, son of Ali. And every year a sort of Passion Play is performed showing the death of Ali, and so great is the emotion shown that the actor who takes the part of the assassin is often himself killed by the mob.

Just before the month of Mohur-rum in the year 1913, the Imam Riza sought an audience of the Shah concerning the stone.

"Your Majesty," he began, "the wisdom of the ancients is come to pass, and the words of the Prophet are being fulfilled. For centuries we have lain under the curse of the Yellow Devil, which is the name given to the Yellow Diamond of the Prophet which lay on the shrine of Mecca. It was foretold that one day a Frank would come and lay hands on the stone, and his coming would remove the curse. The Frank has come."

"Who is he?" asked the Shah. "He is a general of the Kaiser's army—Frankenstein. He is an envoy who has been asking your Majesty to come into league with his Kaiser so that they could build a railway to Baghdad and oust England from the East. He seeks an audience of your Majesty, but I have denied it to him."

"What has he to do with the Yellow Diamond and the prophecy?" asked the Shah.

"This general has decided to make a pilgrimage to Mecca," replied the Imam gravely. "I am keeping watch on him."

Now, for a foreigner to enter Mecca is sacrilege to the Mohammedan creed, yet it will be remembered that at the time when the Germans were trying to upset the treaty between England and Persia General Frankenstein announced that he was about to make the pilgrimage.

He turned Mohammedan in order to carry out his plan; but he never came back.

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"It has come," he announced calmly. "The prophecy is fulfilled. The Yellow Devil has been handled by the German. Islam is freed from the curse of the stone."

"And the General Frankenstein?" asked the Shah.

"The general is dead. The Yellow Devil slew him. But it has disappeared."

More information was not to be had; but the Imam, after prayers that day, began to recite to the Shah the long tale of tragedies for which the stone is blamed. The list includes every prominent Persian for generations before the stone was laid on the shrine.

The Shah knew that he could never get more information of how the Germans had removed the stone, or what had become of it, for the mullah Riza was a great holy man and would not tell even if he could.

The great European War broke out. Persia was wooed by Germany more than ever, but Persia stood firm to her loyalty to England. But one day just before the Armistice was signed the Imam Riza once more sought his Shah.

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He opened his palm, and there was the yellow diamond of Muhammad. The mullah seated himself before the Shah and began his new story.

"The German general," he said, "was never a Muhammadan. He only pretended to be so that he might get to Mecca. I let him go, for I knew he would be fulfilling the prophecy."

"He stole the Yellow Devil. But he was killed by the mob. His friends took the stone away, escaping in the turmoil. They travelled to India, then to China, and presented it to the Chinese Emperor. The same day revolution broke out in China and the Japanese landed on the coast. Amongst the loot taken from the Peking palace was this stone. The Germans brought it back with them, and by order of the Kaiser, it was presented to the Sultan of Turkey. It was a gift for his share in the War."

The mullah spread his arms wide in explanation, for now he was talking of a Sultan who was also a Muhammadan.

"Your Majesty may remember that trouble has come upon Turkey. This stone was for many years in the crown of the Sultan Ab-dul Hamid. It was in his chamber when he was dethroned. It was on the neck of his favorite wife, who was murdered by the mob of Young Turks who broke into the palace of Yildiz. It was in the hand of his young son, Ab-tul-arrum, who was killed as he tried to escape a few days later."

"All these things were remembered by the new Sultan when he received the stone from the Kaiser of Germany. He gave it in fear to Mahmud Pasha, his general-in-chief. Need I remind your Majesty that Mahmud Pasha was slain by assassins as he crossed the square which leads from Stamboul to Yildiz?"

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"I remember," said the Shah. "What became of it afterwards?"

"It fell into the gutter, and lay in the mud between the stones of the street. It was trampled upon by strangers of all nationalities, by friend and foe. It was picked up by an old beggar woman, who sold it for a paltry sum to a Jew, not knowing the value of the stone. The Jew took it to Salonique, but there, having it valued, he could find no purchaser, for it was so valuable. A Turkish merchant took it to a mosque, to a wise mullah, on behalf of the Jew, to seek for its story."

"Mullahs know everything, your Majesty. The Salonique mullah sent word to me, and I travelled to Salonique."

Imam Riza stopped and bowed his head to the floor and murmured a prayer.

"I arrived in time to see the city of Salonique in flames. Fire had broken out and was consuming the face of the earth. I wandered for days among the tents of the people as they were spread on the plain of Karabournou near the city, seeking the mullah."

"At last I found him. He had hidden the Yellow Stone in a hard hole over by Mount Hortiach. He told me that the Jew who owned it had died in the fire. The Turk who had brought it to him had been killed by a falling beam as he tried to escape. He handed the stone to me, and I have brought it back."

"Then you will take it back to Mecca?" cried the Shah. But the mullah shook his head.

"It cannot go back into the shrine again. It has been polluted by being handled by strangers, Christians, and by being thrust into the mud, and because of its adventures. It can never be a part of the sacred shrine again."

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The Yellow which Devil which claimed so much blood and so many victims cannot longer live here. Nevertheless, I have brought it back with me to receive your commands; but so long as it remains in your Majesty's possession it will be sacred."

"What do you suggest, Riza?" "Your Majesty is going to England. They tell me that they are very wealthy in England and do not place much reliance on our Eastern beliefs. Take the stone to England and sell it. We shall then all be free from it. The people will cease to have their passion plays and murder each other, the prophecy will be fulfilled, and your Majesty will be safe to live a hundred years."

So it came about that when the Shah came to England he was accompanied by the Imam Riza, who bore the diamond, and who sold it in Hatton Garden through an agent.

The famous Riza was a very wise man, and knew that the Shah needed several gifts from England, among them being two of the famous new motor-cars, which were sent out with the returning party to the land of the Arabian Nights.

And for his wisdom the Imam received from the Shah money to build the new mosque of Toheran and the benefits of being famed throughout the land as the saviour of Islam.

White flannel bound in dull red makes the collar and straight tie-end bands at the wrists of a tailored frock of Poiret twill.

A smart sports costume is a knitted frock, a loose striped coat collared with raccoon or beaver and a small felt hat.

Afternoon gowns are conservative in color. One graceful model achieved a slim silhouette by godets in skirt eight yards wide.

Chameleon tones will feature largely in the spring dance frock. Three-ply taffeta and small fruit ornaments will be seen.

The smart jacquette may be made of black or taupe caracul, ermine edged with monkey, seal, one of the brown furs or cloth.

As though the frock were tired of the plain bateau neckline, an erect band collar, beautifully embroidered, finished the bateau neck.

The popular monogrammed blouse is being made of moisture-proof plain flannel. Totes of white flannel have piping and motif in black.

A brown cloth jacquette is worn with a skirt of darker brown and a helmet-like hat of platted brown crepe de chene edged with fur.

The spring silhouette will show a waistline very near normal and a straightened effect. The circular skirt and baggy will have departed.

A frock planned for the spring collection will be developed in gold crepe Romain and trimmed with metallic thread and ribbon braid.

Fur is playing an important part as trimming. Both frocks and coats appear ornamented heavily with beaver, mink, squirrel and caracul.

Gold and silver cloths and brocades make beautiful bodices for regal evening gowns of velvet. Touches of brilliants and jet are used in trimmings.

The three piece costume dress will be shown for spring; and flat crepes printed crepes, and taffetas will make many of the afternoon frocks.

An unusual tea gown is of silver fish net over a slip of pale yellow chiffon. Tiny ostrich tipped with silver edges it and there is a delectable cap to match.

A cunning felt hat for a child was a bluish-colored mushroom shape banded with Kolinsky and trimmed at the sides of the brim with clusters of bright flowers.

A charming and simple frock of Joffe blue crepe has wide pockets topped with Bulgarian embroidery. The embroidery also outlines the neck, sleeve seams and edges of sleeves.

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