

PRECIOUS STONES.

BY MISS BURKE.

SOME of us are a wee bit superstitious (though we will generally not admit it) and are always interested in things we cannot understand or fathom. Most of us are sentimental and to these I am sure my article will appeal. Strictly speaking "Precious Stones" is not a nursing subject, I trust however that the Editor will find a little space in the journal for it. "Precious Stones" are not only valuable, but give much pleasure to the wearer and are sometimes centered with romance, tragedy and grief.

My story begins: Once upon a time during the 1st century a writer named Josephus told about the "Precious Stones" and their virtues, he described the breast-plate of the high priest which is mentioned in the Book of Exodus (Exodus 28: 17—19). The stones in the breast-plate were set in four rows with the names of the children of Israel engraved, one on each stone. The modern names of these stones are generally thought to be the following: carnelian, chrysolite, emerald, ruby, beryl and jasper. The breast-plate had not only these twelve magical stones for the twelve tribes, but also the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Perhaps the custom of wearing birthstones grew out of this. The sentiments attached to a birthstone vary with the different nations, this custom was first started in Poland among the Hebrew gem traders.

Stones must be cut and polished to look as they do when we use them, otherwise they will seem dull, irregular and opaque. The practice of cutting stones is very old. The Phoenicians learnt the art from the Assyrians. Stones are cut in different ways *viz.*, cabochon, table, step, rose or brilliant and are sometimes cut in curved surfaces or in facets like diamonds.

It requires skilled workers (who wear rubber gloves) to polish etc., the valuable stones, as the slightest mistake on the workers part means a diminution in the value of the stone. The carat as a weight is used in weighing precious stones and the word carat is derived from the name of a bean used in the East. Another form of carat is used in measuring the fineness of gold. Imitation stones can be made by experts and are hard to detect.

In the Museum of Natural History in New York City there is a wonderful collection of over 4,000 specimens of gems each with its history. In one of the show cases can be seen the finest opal found in Mexico, which is the fire opal of 17½ carats, a garnet cameo, which was for centuries in the Vatican. There is a Persian turquoise engraved with a whole chapter of the Koran, containing over 2,000 words and many more interesting stones.

As I said before, "Precious Stones" are often centred with romance, tragedy and grief. I give some stories of famous stones and trust it will interest the reader. I will commence with the diamond the most precious though I myself prefer the emerald or the pearl.

Large diamonds are very rare. In fact there are only about 150 stones weighing over 300 carats in the world. I give the strange history of the stone or diamond known as the "Orloff". In Mysore, whilst a French soldier who was stationed to guard a Brahmin temple picked out this beautiful large diamond which was one of the eyes in the statue of the god and ran off with it. It was stolen from him by the Captain of an English ship who sold it to a Jewish dealer in London. It was finally sold to Prince Orloff who presented it to Catherine II of Russia. It was in the Royal sceptre and was prized as one of the most beautiful of all the stones in the world. It was valued at \$1,649,000. Since the Russian Revolution it has been lost sight of. It weighed 194 carats.

The Hope diamond, so called because it belonged to a banker of that name. It is the largest blue diamond in the world. It is supposed to have been stolen from the French crown jewels. It was lost and found again in 1851.

The diamond called the "Saucy" had an exciting history. It is also called the sphinx. It is of a beautiful almond shape, (Indian diamond) covered with tiny facets and weighed 54 carats. This stone had a habit of hiding away for long periods. The history is that it belonged to Charles the Bold of Burgundy, but it was stolen from him by a soldier who prized the golden box in which the famous stone was kept. Thinking that the bright box was more valuable than its contents he tossed the white stone in the road. After a time he began to think that the contents of such a lovely box must be of value, so he returned to the place where he had thrown it and picked it up. He sold this stone to a priest for a florin and the priest sold it for 75 cents.

No trace of the stone was found for 100 years. Then it appeared in the possession of Nicholas de Saucy. Queen Elizabeth also owned it, so did Louis XIV. It was stolen in 1792 when the regalia disappeared.

The Cullinian is the largest diamond ever found. Before cutting it weighed 3,025 $\frac{1}{2}$ carats and measured 4 x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 2 inches. It was bought by the Transvaal Government for one million dollars in 1907 and was given as a present to King Edward VII on his birthday, November 9th, 1907. Three years after it was found it was cut and divided into nine large stones and a number of small brilliants, two of the stones, the largest in existence are in the sceptre and in the British regalia.

There are several large diamonds each with its history, *viz.*, The Star of South Africa, The Stewart, The Portu Rhodes, The Tiffany, etc. They are all beautiful stones, (Book of Knowledge).

There are splendid descriptions of other stones, but my article is a long one. When in a certain large Indian State in India I held in my hands a string of Pearls of beautiful lustre. It was valueless, that is it was so precious that the jeweller could not fix a definite value. Precious stones have been and always will be the cause of much joy, misery, jealousy and envy. The poor man's lot is the best. He cannot have them, so he never dreams about them. For the sentimental I give the following—

January, the garnet. February, the violet amethyst. March, the blood-stone. April, the diamond. May, the emerald. June, the pearl. July, the brilliant ruby. August, the sardonyx. September, the sapphire. October, the opal. November, the yellow topaz. December, the turquoise.