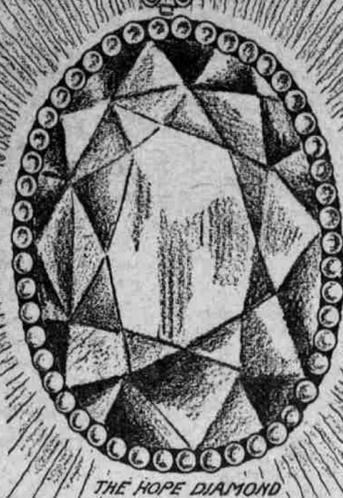


EVIL SPELL of the HOPE DIAMOND?



E. B. McLEAN



THE HOPE DIAMOND



MRS. E. B. McLEAN

WHEN Vinson Walsh McLean, ten years old, the "\$200,000,000 baby," was killed by a casual automobile in front of Friendship, the McLean Washington home, the superstitious people of the country shook their heads with an "I-told-you-so" air and invariably they were heard to exclaim: "The 'evil-eye' Hope diamond is active again!"

Presumably almost everybody has heard of the Hope diamond and of the long history of mystery, misfortune, shattered hopes, blasted fortunes and violent deaths which is declared to center about the famous gem. Suffice it to say that the Hope diamond is a sapphire-blue stone of 44 1/2 karats; that it made its appearance in France in 1668; that it is believed by the superstitious to have the "evil eye;" that its published history, which is probably largely imaginary, would seem to bear out its evil influence on the fortunes of its many owners, and that the parents of the dead boy are the present owners of the gem, so far as the world knows.

The "\$200,000,000 baby" was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Beal McLean. He was expected to inherit a vast fortune from his grandfathers, John R. McLean, the owner of several newspapers, and Thomas F. Walsh, a millionaire mine operator of Colorado. He slept in a gold cradle, the gift of King Leopold of Belgium, a partner with Walsh in the famous Camp Bird gold mine in the San Juan district of Colorado. He had five nurses in five of the finest mansions in America. He had a private car, which carried him to Palm Beach, to California, or wherever he was to go. He had a half dozen automobiles of his own.

From the moment of his birth Vinson was famous as the most carefully guarded baby on earth. A small army of guards, detectives and attendants and a corps of doctors and nurses watched over him 24 hours in the day. When he was an infant he took his airings in a baby buggy which was a veritable steel cage locked by special padlocks. This was one of the precautions against kidnapers.

Then came a moment when the vigilance of his attendants was relaxed. Slipping away, the boy started across the street. A "flivver" bearing a West Virginia license and containing three women came along and ran him down in front of his home!

It was in 1668 that Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a French traveler, appeared in Paris with a diamond of marvelous size and coloring. Some said it had been stolen from its place among the ornaments of a Hindu idol. More insisted it had been taken from the palace of the Grand Moguls of Delhi. Wherever it came from, the story places it immediately afterward in the possession of Louis XIV, who placed it among the crown jewels of France and permitted it to be worn by Mme. de Montespan.

Thus the diamond is launched upon a career of ill fortune and disaster and tragedy.

It was not long, so runs the story, after Tavernier sold it to Louis XIV for 2,500,000 francs and a barony, that Tavernier was torn to pieces by wild dogs while he was on a hunting expedition.

Mme. de Montespan's fall is part of history. She was supplanted soon by Mme. de Maintenon. At this time the diamond weighed 67 1/2 karats. The story says that in the rough it was of 112 karats, and that the king sent it to an Amsterdam jeweler to be cut and polished.

Along with other court jewels the diamond descended upon the death of Louis XIV to Louis XV. Tradition permits several of his favorites to have worn it, and so the lives of all of these are supposed to have ended in tragedy, failure or worse. Louis XVI came into possession of the stone in course of time, and through him it went to Marie Antoinette, who wore it, extending the same privilege to her friend, Princess de Lamballe. Genuine history records that Marie Antoinette died on the guillotine, and that the princess was torn to pieces by a French mob and her head carried about upon a pike.

The stone was lost sight of about 1792. Then, after a span of 88 years the stone reappeared in 1830. In the meantime the story writers again reduced its size to 44 karats. Wherever the gem was in those years of mystery, stories are numerous today that it still was performing its mission of blighting lives and fortunes.

One of these accounts attributes to Daniel Ellason, a jeweler of London, who got the stone in 1830, a story that after it was supposedly stolen from the royal treasures of France by a Paris mob the gem was sold to an Amsterdam jeweler, William Fals, who recut the stone to its present dimensions. The story goes that Hendrik, a son of William Fals, stole the jewel from his parent, who died a ruined man. Then this record disposes of Hendrik by suicide, after which the stone got into possession of one Francis Beaulieu, to whom the story ascribes a death by starvation. It was this man who sold the stone to Ellason.

From Ellason it passed into the ownership of Henry T. Hope, a banker of London, and acquired the name under which it now is known. The price is stated to be \$85,000. It is not clear that Hope suffered greatly through his possession of the diamond; nevertheless stories are to be



VINSON McLEAN AND HIS BROTHER (ON LEFT)

found that he suffered financial reverses and other personal misfortunes.

Hope is credited with having given the diamond to his daughter at the time she married the sixth duke of Newcastle in 1861. But apparently it was the fiction mongers and not she who bequeathed the gem to her son, Lord Francis Hope, that it might get sensationally into the life of May Yohe, the American actress.

This part of the story is mere fiction. It is true that May Yohe married Lord Francis Hope. It is true that she eloped with Capt. Putnam Bradley Strong, son of a former mayor of New York. Lord Francis obtained a divorce, and the wife married Captain Strong, only to be divorced a second time.

But May Yohe, although she has been quoted as saying that she wore the Hope diamond only twice and that her troubles were due to its malignant influence, probably never even saw the stone. Certainly Lord Francis never had possession of it. So, when the story goes on to say that he sold it for \$168,000 to Joseph Frankel, a New York jeweler, the statement is untrue.

It is true that Frankel had the gem in New York. Where and from whom Frankel acquired the stone never has been made clear, but the stone went back to Paris and into the possession of Jacques Colet, who bought it from Frankel. Colet has been reported as having killed himself after losing his mind.

Before that tragedy, however, the diamond is reputed to have passed into the ownership of Prince Ivan Kanitowski, and the legend promptly disposes of the prince at the hands of a mob of Russian revolutionists. Thence the story skips to the murder of Mlle. Ladue, to whom the Russian prince had loaned the diamond. A jealous admirer is charged with this murder.

Next in the legend of the jewel is listed Simon Moucharides, of whose identity there appears to be uncertainty. But the legend sends him riding close enough to a precipice to be thrown over and killed. Just before his death Moucharides is credited with having sold the diamond to Selim Habib, a Persian, who acted as agent for the Sultan Abdul Hamid.

One version of the next chapter is that Habib was drowned in a wreck and the diamond lost. The publication of this was later explained as a ruse to throw thieves off the trail. This version takes the stone to Constantinople, where it cuts a wide swath in violence, misfortune and death and finally brings about the end of Abdul Hamid.

Be all that as it may, it appears that instead of having drowned with the gem in the shipwreck, Habib got back to Paris with it. It was sold at auction for \$80,000 June 24, 1909.

The gem then passed into possession of P. C. Cartier, and the Cartier firm brought it to this country. In January, 1911, announcement was made that the stone had been sold to the McLean family and that the purchase price was \$180,000. Mrs. McLean wore the stone at least once in public, according to the newspapers.

An authoritative article by T. Edgar Willson in the Jewelers' Circular Weekly about the time of the McLean purchase states that the "evil eye" reputation of the Hope diamond dates from the publication of a sensational article in 1901, when

Newcastle was ever made. Frankel was prosperous while he had the stone and Habib's misfortunes came after he sold the stone. Sir Francis Hope never had the stone and May Yohe never saw it. All of which states T. Edgar Willson, as aforesaid.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding, the reputation of the Hope diamond is probably blasted for all time. If it hasn't the "evil eye" there are millions of superstitious people who believe it has and will give credence to everything evil they may read about it.

They may, in the course of time, even attribute to its malignant influence the automobile accident which made Vinson McLean at his birth the sole heir to the great Walsh fortune. In 1905, when automobiles were rare, Vinson Walsh, brother of Mrs. McLean, was killed in a smashup at Newport. Mrs. McLean, who was then Miss Evelyn Walsh, was also in the car and received injuries which made her an invalid for a year.

Two other children have been born to Mr. and Mrs. McLean, both boys, one of whom is four and the other a year old.

At the time of the probating of his grandfather Walsh's will it was found that there was only \$9,210,000 to be divided between the two heirs of the McLean union, Vinson and John R., Jr.

Young McLean was a democratic youth. For several years his boon companion was a small negro boy. His tutors said he was an exceptionally bright student, and he was popular with his mates.

He was fond of animals. Fifty-six Shropshire sheep were sent all the way from Colorado to Bar Harbor by express for him. They came from the big Walsh ranch, Wolhurst, near Denver. He himself directed the purchase of a great flock of white Brahma chickens, ducks and turkeys, a Russian wolf hound, six blooded terriers, two Great Danes and a half score of other dogs and a great number of ponies.

Are the McLeans superstitious about the beautiful gem? Nobody seems to know definitely. But one of the stories about the stone since it has been in their possession seems to indicate that its evil reputation had its effect upon them.

Anyway, as the story goes, there was some hitch about the payment of the purchase price of the stone. It evidently was not because of lack of money. There was a law suit. In the course of the controversy stories were printed to show that Mr. McLean harbored a feeling of timidity because of the evil history attributed to the stone, and that he stipulated that the jewel should be taken back by the Cartier firm in the event that any tragedy occurred in the McLean family within six months. Whether that story is true is not clear, but eventually formal announcement was made by attorneys connected with the suit over the purchase price that a compromise had been effected.

The superstitious who believe in the "evil eye," which is world-wide belief that neither Christian nor civilization has been able to kill, will pin their faith on the evil spell of the Hope diamond to this fact:

Vinson McLean was probably the most carefully guarded child in the world, yet a casual automobile came along and killed him.

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Such Is Life.

It happened the other Sunday at one of the downtown churches—the christening of a pair of twins. All went well up to the moment when the rector asked, "and what is the child's name?" The father drew himself up proudly and answered:

"Pershing Foch Haig Marne Mons Lloyd George Wilson Jones."

The rector gasped. Then, taking a deep breath he turned to the mother, who was holding the other child. "And the name of this?" he asked.

The meek little woman smoothed her dress nervously and almost whispered "Maud."

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Banker—How do.

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Banker—Sign here.

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A small man is sometimes a big nuisance.

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