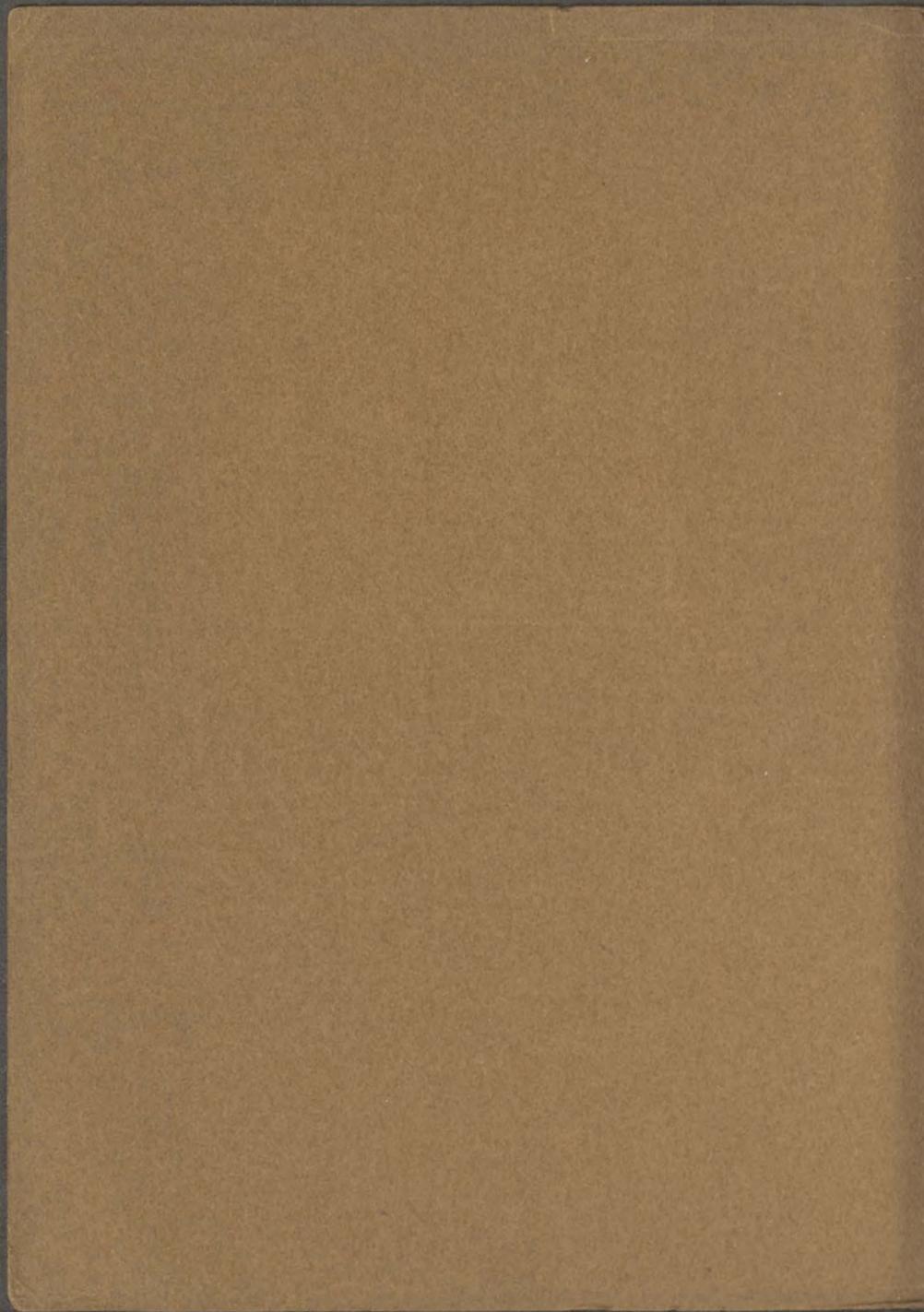


TURQUOISE
LAPIS LAZULI



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FOREWORD



IN THE present issue we have taken up two gems which, because of recent archaeological discoveries in Egypt and Yucatan, have come into renewed prominence and popularity.

Lovers of the beautiful will do well to turn their attention for a moment to the turquoise and the lapis lazuli, gems of pronounced individuality which offer unusual decorative possibilities.

We believe that in the following pages you will find much concerning these two stones which will be of interest to you.

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SYRACUSE

For the information contained in this little book, we are indebted to the following authors, to whom we wish to extend our thanks:

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THE TURQUOISE

BIRTHSTONE FOR DECEMBER
SYMBOL OF PROSPERITY



TURQUOISE, its cold blue aptly suggesting the snows of December, is one of the most ancient gems of which we have record. It has been highly prized throughout the ages, and indeed, is the only opaque semi-precious stone of today which can aspire to rank as a precious gem.

Turquoise is not of a crystalline structure. It is found in small masses, generally surrounded by a brown, flinty matrix. As pieces of the gem suitable for cutting are seldom procured in large size, big turquoises are almost unknown.

"Turquoise matrix" is often used in medium-priced modern jewelry. The gem and the matrix being cut together, form a very happy color combination which harmonizes perfectly with gold settings.

The name turquoise, meaning Turkish stone, was derived from the fact that the gem was first introduced into Europe through Turkey. The stone is, however, of Persian origin. Today it is

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found in Asia Minor, Turkestan, Egypt, Arabia, Australia, and western United States, but Persia still produces the finest gems.

Turquoise of an azure or robin's egg blue is most highly prized, but the gem is also found in apple-green and green-gray tints. It is almost invariably cut without facets, round, oval, pear-shape, or *en cabochon* (dome-shape) for use in rings. Occasionally it is cut with figures or designs.

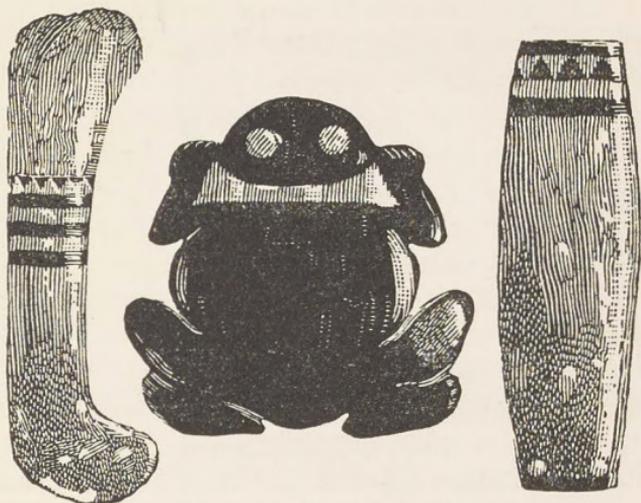
A GEM OF HIGHEST VALUE

Centuries before the dawn of the Christian Era, the turquoise was regarded as a gem of the highest value in Persia and Egypt. It was the gift of kings, and, because its color suggested the blue of the heavens, it was the holy gem, the gem of the gods. For the same reason it was also the religious gem of the Aztecs, ranking in importance with the emerald, the gem dedicated to the rain-goddess.

RELIGIOUS USES

In the tombs and sarcophagi of old Egypt, turquoise is often found in the forms of amulets and talismans. It was used extensively by the

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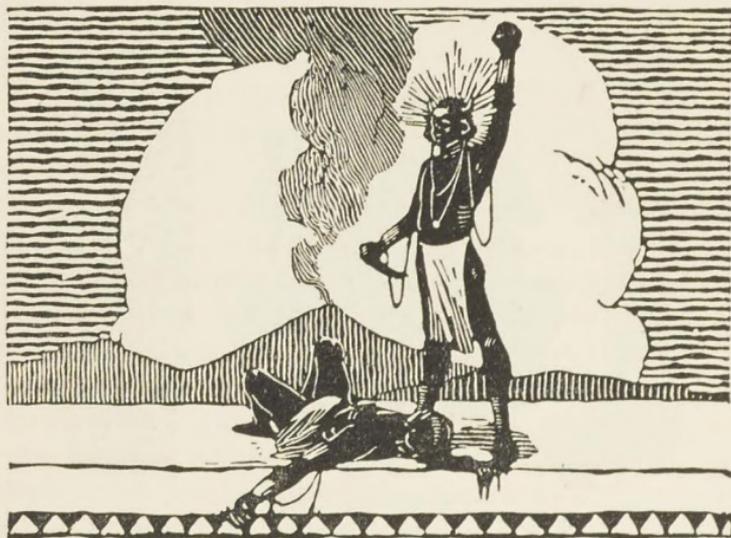
Aztec charms and amulets

Aztecs for the same purpose and for the decoration of objects of religious veneration. While the methods of gem-cutting which were employed by the Aztecs were crude, some of the examples of workmanship by this primitive race ably attest their skill and their keen artistic perception.

USES BY AZTECS

Among the examples of work by the Aztecs are found figures of toads, birds, and other animals,

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beautifully carved from bone, shell, jet, and substances of a similar nature, skilfully inlaid with turquoise. These were evidently used as amulets for protection from evil spirits. The costumes of the Aztec priests bore turquoise in large quantities, and the masks which were worn by the priests during religious ceremonies were generally incrustated with the gem. Some of these

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masks, while beautifully made, are exceedingly gruesome, the stones being laid on bases which are formed from the fronts of human skulls. We may well imagine them being worn by the priests of Tlatloe, god of the earth and the lower regions, when about to offer human sacrifices to him on the summit of the Teocalli.

KNOWN TO GREEKS

The turquoise became known to the Greeks by its occurrence in spoils brought home by Macedonian soldiers from the Persian campaigns. Goblets, dishes, and armor were commonly inlaid with precious stones in that age. The extent to which such decoration was resorted to is shown by one example from antiquity.—The sheath of the sword of Mithridates (when his corpse in its royal attire was sent to Sylla (63 B. C.) was valued at 400 talents (\$400,000).

VALUE UNKNOWN TO SPANIARDS

While the turquoise was well-known and highly esteemed throughout Europe during the middle ages, knowledge of its value does not seem to have been current in Spain at as late a date as the sixteenth century. Had the Spanish been famil-

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iar with the gem, it would have been as much of an object for exploration during the Conquests as were the emerald and gold.

LORE AND TRADITION

Few gems were invested with more wonderful properties than the turquoise by the credulity of the medieval naturalists. Like most of the blue stones, it was supposed to cure blindness and other infirmities of the eyes, and it was thought to possess many other virtues that were peculiar to it alone. To render its wearer happy and optimistic, to protect him from broken bones that might be incurred in falls, taking the damage unto itself, were qualities that were attributed to this gem. If mounted in the trappings of a horse, it was believed to make the animal sure-footed and immune to distempers. It was said that the stone would prophesy the illness or death of its wearer by growing pale or losing its color.

Such superstitions in regard to the various gems were widely believed. To quote Dr. George Frederick Kunz, (*The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*), "From the Middle Ages and even down to the seventeenth century, the talismanic virtues

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of precious stones were believed in by high and low, by princes and peasants, by the learned as well as by the ignorant. Here and there, however, a note of scepticism was sometimes apparent, as in the famous reply of the court jester of Emperor Charles V, to the question, 'What is the property of the turquoise?' 'Why', replied he, 'if you should happen to fall from a high tower whilst you were wearing a turquoise on your finger, the turquoise would remain unbroken.'"

USE IN THE ENGAGEMENT RING

During the Middle Ages the turquoise was the gem most widely used in betrothal rings, for the permanency of its color was thought to be dependent upon the steadfastness of the wearer's affection. We may believe, however, that the gem was by no means limited to this use, for one medieval writer states that no gentleman in his day (ladies for obvious reasons eschewing its use) thought his hand becomingly decorated or his elegance complete without the adjunct of a handsome turquoise. The practice of using this gem in the engagement ring still prevails in certain parts of Germany, and it is evident that the custom

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was known in Shakespeare's time for Shylock had a turquoise which he would not have lost "for a whole wilderness of monkeys," for he "had it of Leah when he was a bachelor."

Today, fine turquoise of pure color and waxy lustre is in popular demand, and is found in many of the most beautiful modern rings and gem-pieces. The owner of a turquoise of first quality will derive no little pleasure from the gem's distinctive beauty.

LAPIS LAZULI

ALTERNATE BIRTHSTONE FOR DECEMBER
SYMBOL OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE



LAPIS LAZULI is a rich blue stone which sometimes shows sparkling, golden flecks of iron pyrites. It is opaque and in composition and structure is very similar to the turquoise. Like the turquoise it is one of the most ancient gems, references to it dating back prior to 4500 B. C.

As lapis lazuli is comparatively soft it was easily worked into many forms by the ancients. For this reason it held the highest place in their estimation, being considered a gem of greatest value by the Babylonians and the Egyptians. It abundantly occurs in their jewelry that has come into our hands, worked into signets, tablets, pendants, and charms. Lapis lazuli was also particularly valued by the ancients for the fine dye that it yielded when ground to a powder, and indeed, many of the beautiful, permanent blues which are seen in the canvasses of the old masters, owe their beauty to the use of this material.

Originally coming from Afghanistan and Egypt alone, lapis lazuli is now found in several other

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localities, very good specimens being produced by Siberia and certain parts of South America. The varieties coming from Egypt are not of the best, being pale or chalky in color. It is of interest to note in this connection that the finest gems still come from the first known mines (visited by Marco Polo in 1271), which are over 6500 years old.

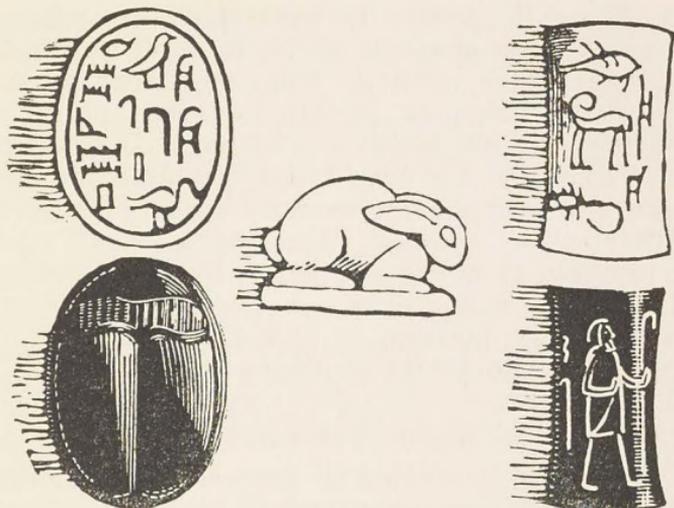
THE SAPPHIRE OF THE ANCIENTS

That the sapphire of the ancients was our lapis lazuli is evident. Theophrastus and Pliny describe the Sapphirus as a stone with golden spots, and Epiphanius, writing about 400 A. D., states—“The stone Sapphirus is purple in color like that of a dark blue beetle. Of this there are many kinds, for there is the Royal, spotted with gold, yet this is not so much esteemed as the sort that is altogether blue. And this is reported to be found in India and Ethiopia, wherefore they pretend that the sacred place of Bacchus among the Indians has a flight of three hundred sixty five steps made out of the Sapphirus,—though most people think this story incredible.”

RELIGIOUS USES

Lapis lazuli, known as *chesbet* by the Egyptians, was regarded from the earliest times as an object

LAPIS LAZULI



Scarabs and seals taken from Egyptian tombs

of religious veneration for the same reason that the turquoise was thus esteemed. Its color suggested the heavens with their myriad stars. Lapis lazuli often appears as an important item in the lists of tribute paid to Egypt and among the gifts sent by Babylonia to the Egyptian monarchs. The Egyptian high-priest is said to have worn, suspended from his neck, an image of *Mat*, (Goddess of Truth), made from lapis lazuli.

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In Egypt it appears to have been the rule to engrave certain chapters of the Book of the Dead upon particular stones. For this reason the twenty-sixth chapter is often found engraved upon the very old specimens of lapis lazuli which have come into our hands from Egyptian sources. These specimens are generally in the forms of amulets, often scarabs, which were placed upon the mummy to afford protection from the malign influence of evil spirits, or perhaps, by some strange occult powers, to guard the soul of the departed in the under or upper world whither it had journeyed.

MEDICINAL LORE

One who is interested in the various medicinal virtues which were supposed to be possessed by stones, soon discovers that there was, from an early period, a tendency to attribute the virtues of one gem to another. This was probably due to the commercial instinct which urged the dealer to praise his wares in every possible way so that no part of his stock should fail to find a purchaser.

We learn, however, that lapis lazuli was supposed to exert a tonic influence, and to counteract the wiles of the spirits of darkness and procure the aid of the spirits of light and wisdom. It was

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looked upon as an emblem of chastity. We also discover that it was given internally as a cure for certain ills, such as melancholy, and the "quartern fever", an intermittent fever returning each third day, or each fourth day counting in the previous attack.

AN UNUSUAL SPECIMEN

One of the finest specimens of lapis lazuli extant is found in the figure of an owl, eight inches high and exquisitely carved, which has descended to us from ancient Grecian times. This, no doubt, originally accompanied a statue of Athena.

LAPIS LAZULI TODAY

Lapis lazuli is today an inexpensive gem, but one which is constantly growing rarer and more valuable. It lends itself beautifully to use in many modern gem-pieces, particularly harmonizing with gold. It has always been held in high esteem, and in recent years it has fully regained the rightful favor with which it was regarded in the days of old Egypt. It is the most popular, opaque, semi-precious stone.

