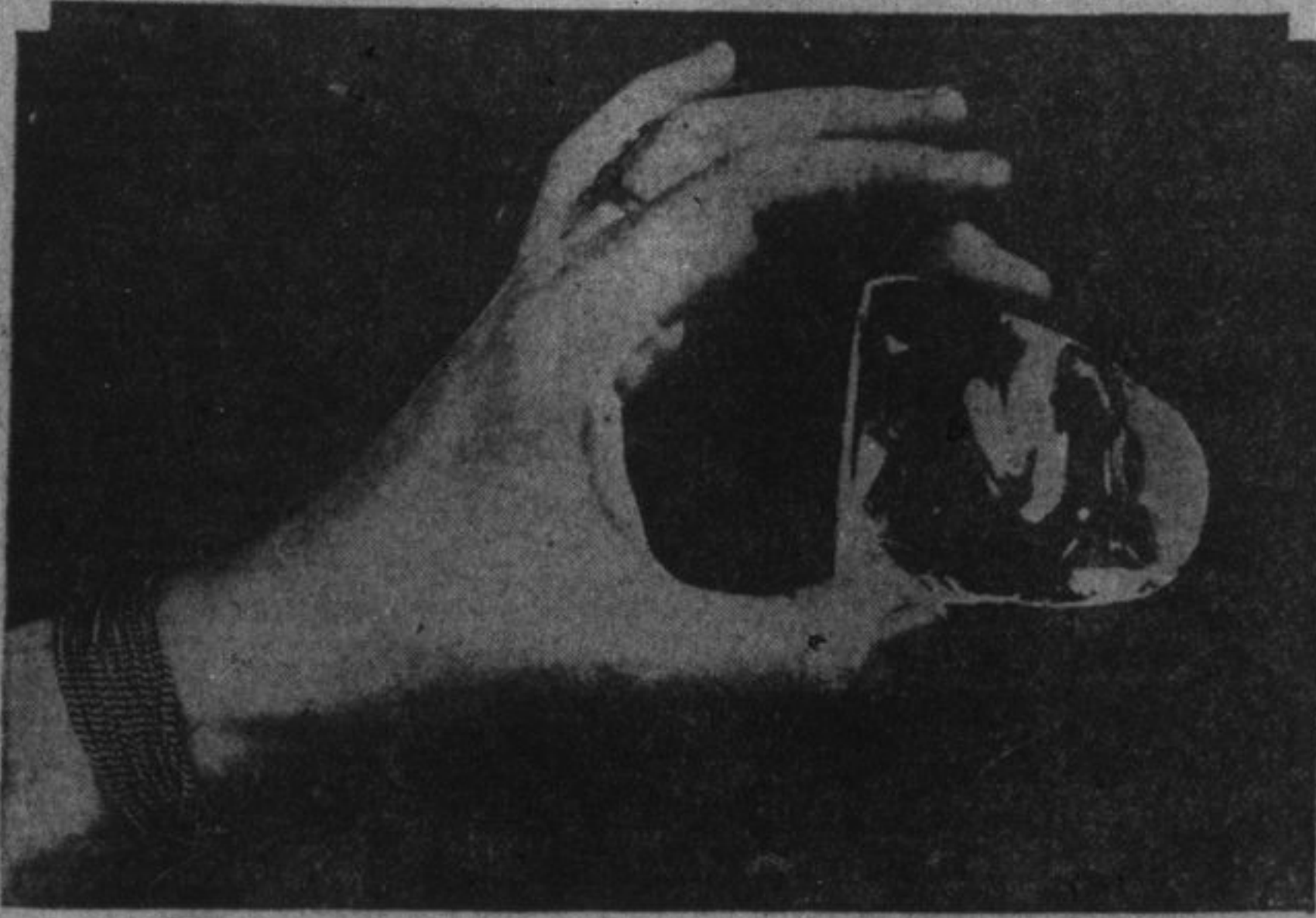
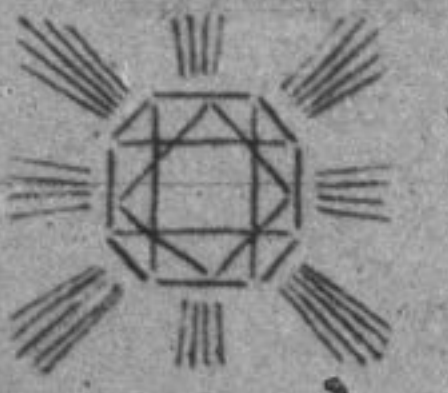


America the Diamond Center of the World



The Jagersfontein Diamond in the Rough.
Weighing 7 1-3 Ounces.

By RENE BACHE

NEW YORK CITY might be called the metropolis of diamonds. The United States Geological Survey says that half of all the diamonds in the world are owned in the United States, and three-fourths of these are in the jewel boxes of the women of New York.

The diamonds owned in this country (says the same authority) are worth over a billion dollars. And yet the demand has never been so great. All the men who made fortunes in "war babies" and through war contracts want to buy diamonds for their women to wear, and they are finding it difficult to get them, even at enhanced prices. There is a shortage of new diamonds, due to partial suspension of mining in South Africa during the great conflict.

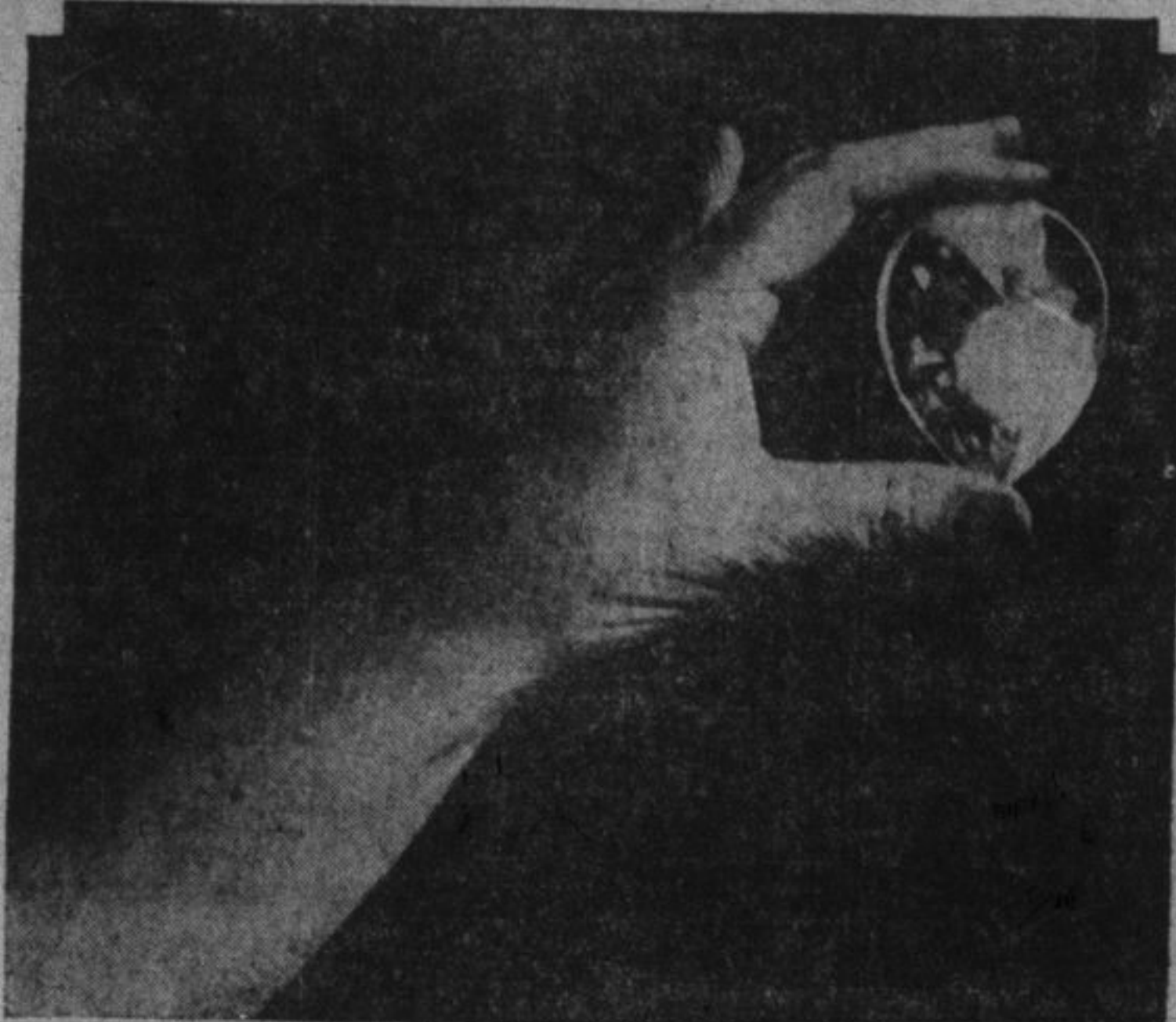
Diamonds have never been so high in price as they are today; and they will go higher, because 95 per cent. of the total world's output henceforward will be controlled by a single concern, the De Beers Consolidated Company.

The only very important diamond fields in the world are in South Africa. Hitherto the mines of German Southwest Africa have been in market rivalry with the British mines, but now that territory has been absorbed by the De Beers Consolidated.

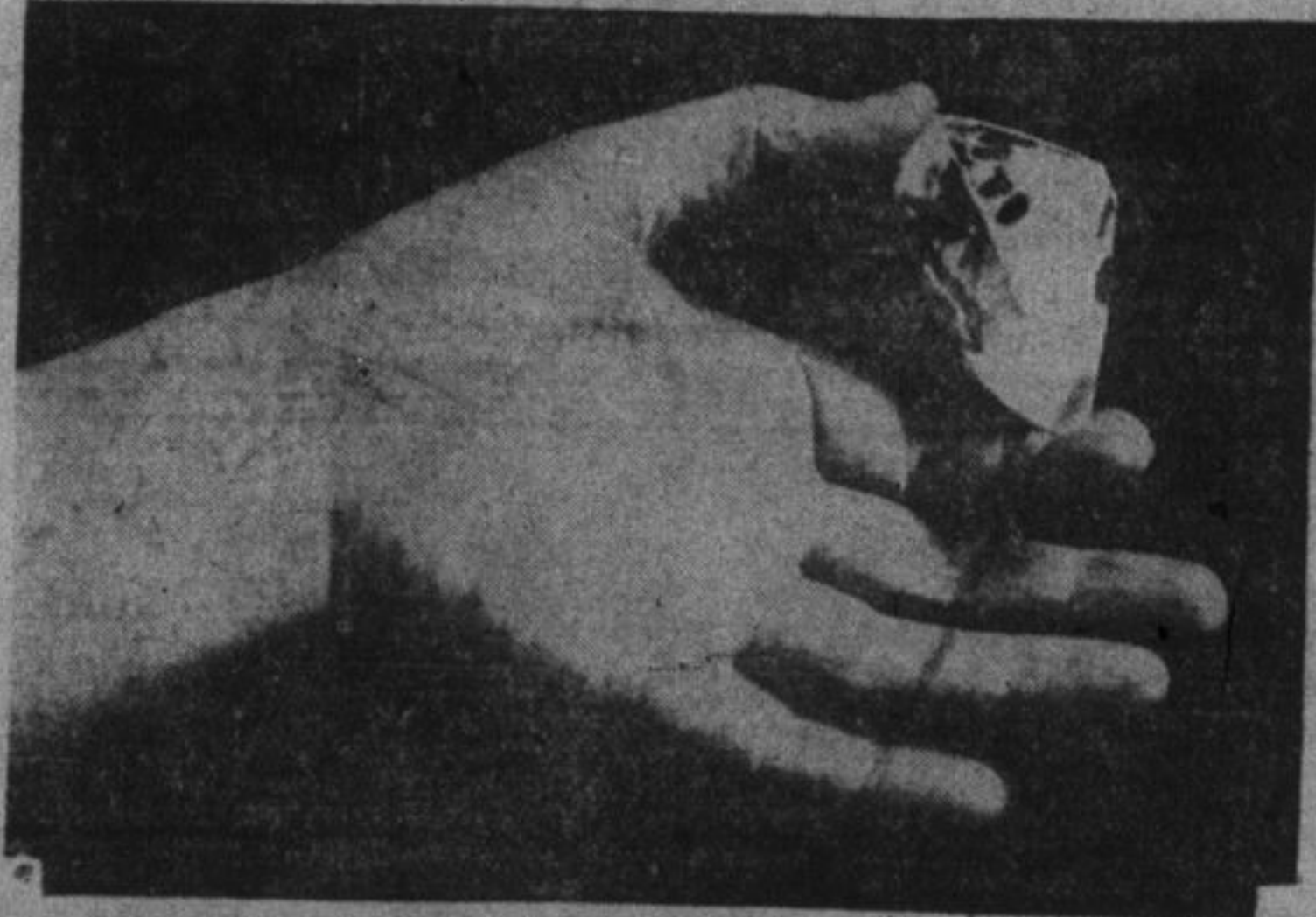
In Brazil and other parts of the world diamonds are washed from stream gravels, but in South Africa they are found under altogether peculiar conditions, that is to say, in volcanic "pipes."

Diamonds are always a volcanic product, being carbon crystallized out of molten rock by enormous heat, but in South Africa they are found "in place"—i. e., where they were originally formed. Not only do they occur there in astonishing numbers, but occasionally of a size far greater than any gems of the kind known until very recent years.

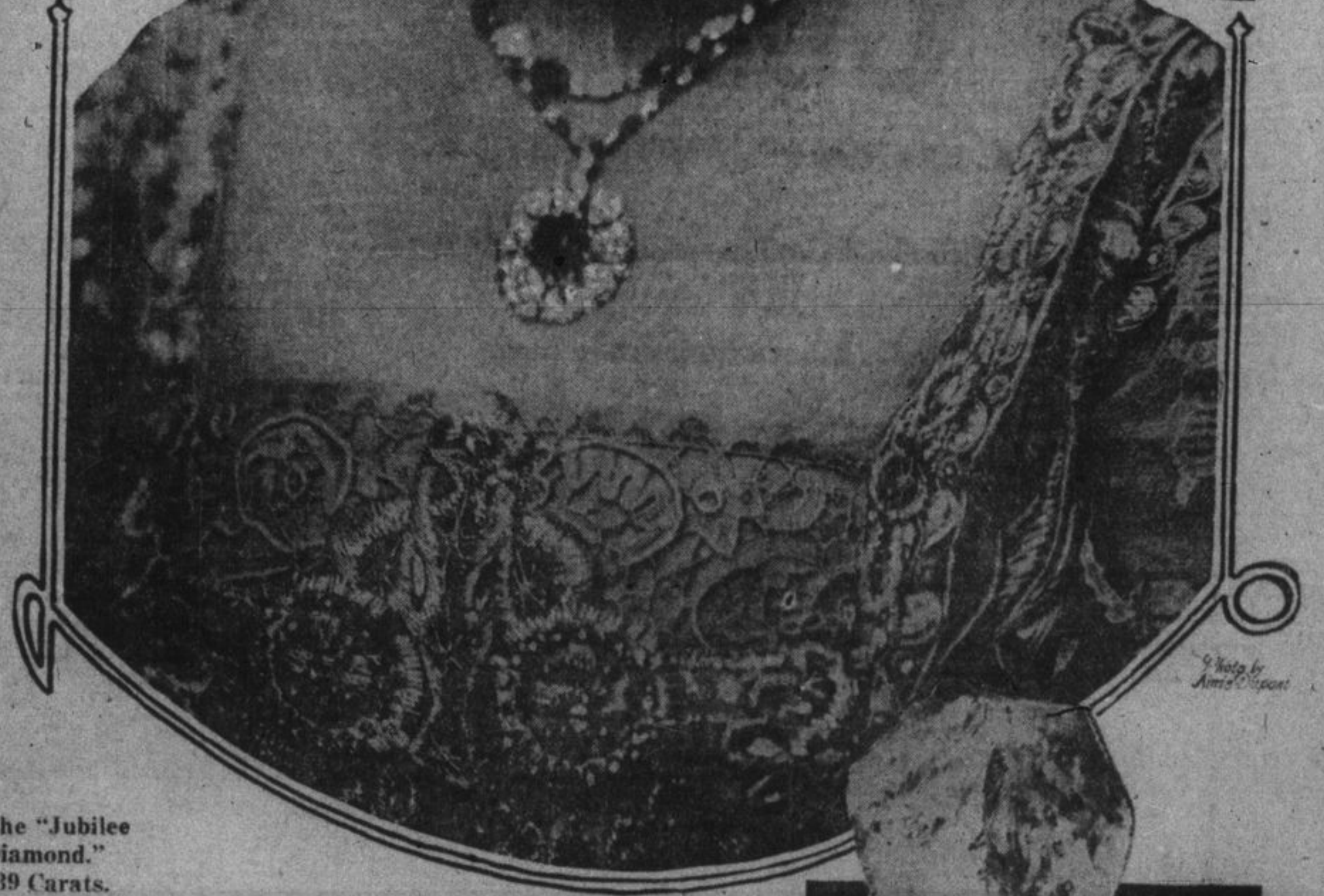
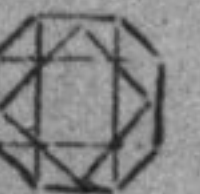
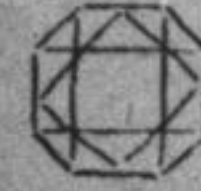
Who, until recently, would have thought of



"King Edward's Diamond," 310 Carats, Cut from the Cullinan, the Largest Cut Diamond in the World.



The "Jubilee Diamond," 239 Carats.



Mrs. Wm. B. Leeds, Wearing Some of Her Remarkable Diamond Jewelry.



The Great Cullinan Diamond in the Rough. Weighing 19 Ounces.



Washing Gravel for Diamonds in a Brazilian Diamond Field.

weighing diamonds by ounces, or of measuring them by inches? Recently the Jagersfontein mine, in the Orange River Colony, yielded a blue-white stone of nearly three ounces; and another, 3 3/4 ounces in weight, was picked up by a Kaffir on the Dutoitspan mine dump, at Kimberley. Yet these finds made no great sensation, because they were far inferior in size to other diamonds previously obtained.

A volcanic pipe is a chimney descending into the bowels of the earth, where everything is molten, and temperatures are unthinkably high. The South African diamond mines are excavations made in such chimneys, which ceased ages ago to belch fire. Rock dug out of them is brought to the surface and spread over wide areas of ground, where it is left to disintegrate under the influence of sun and weather. Then,

being in a friable condition, it is washed and examined for gem stones.

Thus it is that the world's great diamond crop is now gathered. But it was not until 1893 that the first real monster gem turned up. It was found, in June of that year, by a Kaffir laborer, who surrendered it to the overseer of the Jagersfontein mine. An irregular crystal, looking like the broken-off end of a big icicle, it was of purest water-white in color, and tipped the scales at 7 1-3 ounces. Its sole imperfection was a black spot near the centre.

Certain details of its structure appeared to indicate that the crystal had originally been part of a larger mass. But as it was, the owners were puzzled to know what to do with it. The final decision was to cleave it in twain, to get rid of the black spot, and, when this had been safely accomplished, the famous "Jubilee diamond," named in honor of the 60th anniversary of Queen

Victoria's accession to the throne, was cut from the larger piece.

Thus was obtained a peerless gem, surpassing any existing other not only in size but in faultless perfection of color, lustre and "water." In form it was so symmetrical that, when placed on the truncated apex of its basal pyramid, it stood perfectly balanced.

The lesser fragment was split into 10 pieces, the three largest yielding cut diamonds of 158, 147 and 139 carats respectively (a "pear," a "drop," and a "marquise"), among the most beautiful ever seen.

Here, then, was inaugurated the practice, previously unheard of, of chopping up big diamonds into smaller ones. But, if a crystal of this kind be beyond a certain size, it is hard to know what else to do with it—as illustrated in the case of the "Cullinan," greatest of all diamonds, which will presently be discussed. The "Jubilee" was appraised at \$2,500,000, and hopes were entertained that some Oriental potentate or American multi-millionaire would buy it; but, if a purchaser has been found, the transaction was secret.

The "Cullinan" was found at the Premier mine by Fred Wells, the manager, who, while on a stroll in the walled area over which the "blue ground" rock was distributed for weathering, caught sight of it where it lay glittering amid the debris. He could hardly believe his eyes; and no wonder, for the stone was 4 1/2 inches long, 2 1/2 inches broad, and 1 1/2 inches thick. It weighed 19 ounces.

Think of it! A diamond weighing a pound and three ounces avoirdupois! It was nearly three times the size of the Jagersfontein stone. Experts reckoned its value, in the rough, at \$45,000,000. What was to be done with it? To find a purchaser was obviously hopeless. The only thing to do was to chop it up.

The stone—described as resembling a chunk of extremely transparent and glittering ice—had two bad flaws, which could be got rid of by cleaving it into three pieces. But whether this should be done or not was a question referred to the decision of King Edward VII., for it was at length determined that the Transvaal government should make a present of the monster gem to His Majesty.

His approval being obtained, the stone (sent to London by ordinary registered mail, and thence forwarded to Amsterdam) was taken in hand by the most skilful of living diamond-cutters. The contemplated job was one of tremendous responsibility, and it was not begun until a number of glass models exactly like the big diamond in size

and shape had been made and split experimentally.

At the start a slit half an inch deep was made with a metal wheel carrying diamond dust and operated like a circular saw. Then a steel knife was inserted, and a few sharp taps with a small hammer broke the stone in two. It was ticklish business, for a diamond, though the hardest of known substances, is very brittle, and there was no certainty that the crystal thus dealt with might not fly into dozens of fragments, many millions of dollars vanishing, so to speak, at a blow. Happily, however, no such untoward accident occurred.

By a repetition of the same process one of the two pieces was split in twain, thus converting the great stone into the three portions desired.

It was in this way made possible, while getting rid of the flaws, to obtain from the stone three huge diamonds, which when cut were absolutely perfect. The largest of them was a "drop brilliant" of 516 1/2 carats, 2 1-3 inches long and 1 3-5 inches broad, so shaped as to have the form of a heart when seen from above. The second was a "square brilliant," of two-thirds the weight of the first.

These two largest of the three gems are today by far the biggest cut diamonds in existence, even the smaller one far exceeding the "Jubilee" in size. In addition to the three big diamonds obtained from the "Cullinan," the stone yielded seven of important dimensions, and 95 minor sparklers. All of which went to compose a gift to King Edward on the occasion of his 66th birthday.

The great drop brilliant, estimated to be worth \$5,000,000, is today the most valuable item among the jewels of the British Crown. The square brilliant is set in the royal scepter of George V. But all of the other diamonds yielded by the "Cullinan" are the personal property of the dowager Queen Alexandra. Her husband had them made up into a necklace, the most magnificent probably in the world, and gave it to her.

Up to the time of the finding of the Jagersfontein stone (in 1893), the largest diamond ever known was the "Great Mogul," which was obtained in 1650 from the famous Golconda diggings, in the territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad. There, as elsewhere, diamonds were procured by washing old stream gravels. This stone weighed 787 carats in the rough, and was of the shape and size of half a hen's egg. Tavernier, the famous traveler, who was an expert in gems,

saw it in 1657, so that the account given of it may be considered authentic.

A Venetian lapidary, then residing at the court of the Nizam, undertook to cut the stone, and did it so clumsily as to reduce its size to that of half a hen's egg. It is supposed to have been carried off by the Persians at the sack of Delhi, in 1739, and to have been broken up to disguise it. Some experts are of the opinion that the "Orloff" is a piece of it. The "Orloff" was given by Prince Orloff to Catherine II., to compose a lovers' quarrel, and since that time it has been the principal ornament of the Russian imperial scepter.

The "Great Mogul" as originally found was less in weight than the Jagersfontein stone by nearly 200 carats. As for the celebrated "Koh-i-Noor" (belonging to the British Crown, and formerly the property of an Indian rajah), it sinks into insignificance when compared with the great diamonds herein described. It weighs only 186 carats, and is not of perfect "water," having a slight grayish tinge.