

# Perilous Journey of the Emerald Without

## A Price

### Rare Taj Mahal Jewel Appears in U.S.

Ganeshi Lall, Wealthy Indian Art Connoisseur and Owner of the "Priceless" Emerald, Seated Among His Hindu Servants Who Formed the Only Guard to the Gem on Its Journey to Philadelphia. The Emerald Is Seen in His Hands.

Left: One of the Short, Needle-Point Daggers With Which the Hindu Guards of the Great Emerald Were Armed When They Brought the Famous Gem to the Philadelphia Exposition.

the great Taj Mahal palace, in India. Back in the dim mists of Indian history, long before the Declaration of American Independence was signed, which the Sesqui-centennial is now commemorating, the Taj Mahal emerald first came into historical notice and being. It was at that period in Eastern history when the local Indian emperors had reached the peak of their power and grandeur, just prior to the final undermining of the sectional dynasties through the most extravagant luxury that the world has ever known and a long century of merciless conquest and civil war.

At that time Shah Jahan ruled, and the one figure that was not awed by his pitiless domination was his favorite wife, the beautiful Empress Mumtaz Mahal. One night shortly after her ascension into power she dreamed of a palace more beautiful than any other building in the world. In her vision it rose in misty splendor, a wilderness of white towers and dainty pinnacles gleaming against the dusky blue of the Indian skies.

She awoke next morning with her mind dream filled. She talked of nothing but her imaginary palace. Food she refused day after day, demanding only that her lord and lover should find means to fulfill her splendid desire and make her vision come true.

The most celebrated architects of all India were summoned to the Empress one by one. Each endeavored to fulfill her imperial desire. Beautiful palaces were sketched, elaborate designs were submitted. But in vain! All failed to please her. They were not the materialization of her beautiful dream.

After weeks of hopeless inquiry, a fakir of no reputation at last appeared at the royal court and offered his services to the Emperor. In despair over his beautiful wife's realistic fancy, the great Shah Jahan commanded drawing materials to be brought the stranger. And then, as though inspired by an unseen hand, the ragged fakir set to work sketching steadily until an entire set of plans had been completed.

In haste the newcomer's work was laid before the Empress. Warily, she at first glanced at the many sheets of paper. Then a look of rapture swept her lovely face. "My dream come true!" she cried, and swooned from joy. Five thousand men at once set to work on the fakir's plans. The new palace took shape, and gradually it rose, tier on tier, until it assumed

Right: Photograph of the Famous Taj Mahal Emerald (Actual Size) Showing the Elaborate Lotus Design Carved on the Face of the Gem to Match the Frieze on the Gorgeous Palace of the Same Name.

the peerless magnificence that it still maintains, even in this age. And each day the Empress visited the work, glorying in the realization of what had at first seemed to her but a hopelessly beautiful vision.

As her new palace grew in loveliness, a desire developed in her heart to show her appreciation of her royal master's devotion in some way. She would present him with an appropriate gift of worth commensurate with his patience in trying to grant what had seemed to him at first an impossible whim.

Many beautiful things were brought to her for her approval—tapestries, silks, gems and rare trophies. India was scoured by her agents. Curious articles of Western civilization were laid before her, Muscovite works of art sifted down from Russia and fabulous wonders from the Far East and China were brought for her inspection. At last a rare emerald was shown to her, its startling beauty of color and brilliance having no equal in the then civilized world.

"Only perfection is worthy of my Emperor," the royal lady is reported as exclaiming. "And this has the perfection of all India. Look! The flashing green of its oceans, the green of its sparkling pasture lands and the soothing green of the jungles. Shah Jahan has created for me the Taj Mahal Palace, one of the wonders of our world. To him I will give this wonder of the jewel world. And it shall be known as the Taj Mahal emerald."

So she called the finest gem engravers of the kingdom and had the great emerald delicately carved with a fine tracery of lotus blossoms and roses. The carving was that which was appearing on the walls of the Taj Mahal, and

which long years afterward was to appear on her own tomb. And one night when the great Shah Jahan had turned from the affairs of state and conquest to the charm of his favorite's companionship, she drew the dazzling gift from her bosom and laid it before him, a royal surprise.

Such was the earliest recorded history of the great Taj Mahal emerald. But in the turbulent, bloody days that were to follow much of its three centuries of wandering has become obscured. Occasionally it would bob up in the historical limelight as

of some beautiful woman whose eyes had changed to match the glitter of "the wonder of the jewel world."

It came into the hands of Ganeshi Lall, its present owner and a member of the second highest caste in India, in a typically Indian fashion.

Since then many have tried to obtain the emerald from Lall, but with no success. Foremost among these have been Princess Mohnessa, called India's most beautiful woman, who offered a fortune for the gem.

For years Ganeshi Lall has traveled in quest of rare and beautiful art objects of his native country, and now he is internationally known as the outstanding authority on ancient Indian art.

Three years ago word reached Lall that the famous Taj Mahal emerald, lost sight of for many generations, was in the possession of a certain man, descendant of a distinguished family, but now facing starvation. Eventually the great gem must come into the jewel markets of the world.

Lall did not hesitate a day. He rushed north, made the acquaintance of the owner of the emerald and placed a servant on guard at a large fortune to report if other art seekers came there. Then followed a curious bargaining. For three years Lall paid polite homage to the owner of the gem, visiting frequently and bringing presents to all the family on each visit. Among other gifts was an automobile and all told they amounted to more than \$15,000. Yet never once was the great emerald mentioned.

At last starvation pushed the owner to the point where it was necessary that he sell his only possession, the emerald. One night he showed it to Lall with never a word of price. Next day Lall placed a check in his hand, a check for a large fortune. At the amount, the owner turned over the gem, the Taj Mahal emerald, to his friend, the art connoisseur.

When Lall, recently decided to bring his most precious possession to America, along with many other jewels, he did not hire an elaborate body-guard, equip them with revolvers and make arrangements for armored trucks to meet him. Instead, wise to the ways of his people, he chose five of his most trustworthy servants. These natives have spent most of their lives guarding the treasures of Lall, all are more than six feet tall, silent of movement, speechless when it comes to their master's business, and armed with short, slim daggers tucked away in the wide sashes of their girdles.

Without the slightest mishap, but watched during every second of his long trip by at least two pairs of eyes, Lall journeyed from India to London and from London to America. That the little party was trailed by international jewel thieves more than once is a certainty, due to many suspicious circumstances. But never once did they come within striking distance.

Lall himself carried the jewels secreted on his person at all times. And just how much of a job this must have been is realized when it is considered that the Taj Mahal emerald itself weighs 83 carats, while among the rest of the collection that came safely through to Philadelphia were the "Royal Blue" sapphire, a string of mammoth pearls valued at \$275,000, a rich red ruby said to have been

a crown jewel of the great Shah Jahan and a double string of emeralds made up of 204 great matched stones which are said to have been the result of two generations of searching, that of Jahan Gir and his son Shah Jahan, the two men who ruled in India when its art had reached the height of its glory.

Princess Mohnessa, Chosen by the English Artist, E. O. Hoppe, as the Most Beautiful Indian Woman, Who Tried and Failed to Buy the Priceless Emerald to Add to Her Collection of Famous Gems, Said to Be the Most Valuable in the Orient.

the ransom of some prince, some kingdom or the cause of some particularly bloody intrigue or plot. But most of its record has been an obscure one, of theft and murder, of fugitives from justice, clutching the great gem frantically as they fled by the knife of some second robber or in the arms

of some beautiful woman whose eyes had changed to match the glitter of "the wonder of the jewel world."



Shah Jahan, Builder of the Famous Taj Mahal Palace and the First Indian Emperor to Possess the Great Priceless Emerald, Which Was Presented to Him by His Favorite Wife, the Beautiful Mumtaz Mahal.

THE most precious emerald in the world recently came out of mysterious India on a long journey to America, along with a million dollars' worth of other precious gems. And this glittering fortune in jewels was brought safely through a dozen possible dangers with no other guard than that of the Indian owner, Ganeshi Lall, and his native servants.

The goal of this pilgrimage half way around the world was the Sesqui-centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, where the jewels are being displayed as among the most priceless examples of Indian craftsmanship. The trip was made without the wicked little daggers that the natives carried for arms being once drawn. Yet a century ago far shorter journeys of the Taj Mahal emerald had cost the lives of as many men as the gem has had owners.

For the Taj Mahal emerald is more than a mere jewel without price, as it is known throughout the East. Not only has it figured intimately in the colorful history of the Indian courts since early in the seventeenth century, but also it is bound up with the creation of what is acknowledged as the most beautiful building in the world,

The Great Taj Mahal Palace, Conceived in a Beautiful Woman's Dream, Planned by a Hindu Beggar, Built by a Merciless Emperor and Now Recognized as One of the Most Costly and Beautiful Buildings in the World.

