

Beauty Within the Earth

Francis M. Hueber

WHEN I sit in the solitude of my room, I reminisce over the various things that I see there. I look at my Indian relics, knives, and drums, and remember my trips to Guatemala. I see the wood carvings and pictures of feather and straw, and I remember my trips to Mexico. Finally my eyes rest upon the display cases which house my rock and mineral specimens, and I think back to the beginnings of this, my hobby.

My collection began when I was eleven, with a modest array of seven mineral specimens which I bought in a shop in the lead-mining area of Missouri, and for which I gave the last thirty-five cents of my long-hoarded allowances. In the shop the hexagonal crystal prisms of the red ruby, golden beryl, green emerald, blue aquamarine, and purple amethyst were like ornate cells imprisoning the colors of the rainbow. There also were the lustrous cubes of galena gleaming like the most highly polished example of the silversmith's art, and the golden brightness of pyrite which is often labeled "fool's gold" because of its resemblance to the noble metal. There were more elaborate crystals each placed in a more complex classification than the hexagon or cube and each with what seemed to be an untold number of glittering faces. Many of the minerals on display were native to the locality, the metallic ores of lead and zinc and the associate minerals, but many others were from distant states and countries; the rubies, beryls, and emeralds had been imported to add further interest to the display. The variety seemed endless, for each shelf held a treasure of colors, the reds of the sunset, the yellows of the primrose, the greens of spring grass, and the blues of deep waters. It was difficult to realize that these objects were once part of the dark depths of the earth.

From the shelves of minerals I shifted my attention to a display of fossil remains of many animals and plants long extinct. Here were rocks that gave silent testimony to the life that had once flourished upon the earth. There were shellfish and crustaceans from localities once covered by great seas that are now hills, plateaus, or mountains. The plant fossils were from localities once covered by great swamps which are now the areas of the coal mining industries. The slabs of shale and limestone bearing these remains of former life were like pages from a great book of history, a book so immense and covering such a great span of time that in comparison man's entry is but a single letter.

I am hardly the first to realize the importance of stones and their relationships with man; for as long as man's history has been traced, stones have entered the picture in one form or another. The earliest man found them to be the most convenient weapon to protect himself and his family from the attacks of wild beasts or unfriendly neigh-

bors. As man progressed he found that certain stones lent themselves to being fashioned into sharp instruments which were more efficient weapons and useful utensils for daily life. In man's search for stones, out of which he was to fashion these weapons and utensils, he found many brightly colored ones, some of which were very hard and resistant to wear.

These stones were to become the first treasured jewels of man. Certain of these were to gain importance as symbolic fetishes or were to be attributed with healing powers. Here color played a great role in the choice of stones. A green stone was the symbol of health and happiness, for plants were seen to be green when healthy. Later the green emerald was a symbol of immortality to those who were able to afford such a noble gem. The red garnet was recommended as a cure for heart ailments, possibly because of its blood-red cast. The sapphire was to royalty a symbol of divine consideration because of its heavenly blue color. Amethyst, the purple form of quartz, was considered a protector against intoxication. As far back in history as one wishes to go, there will always be found some supernatural powers attributed to stones possessing certain colors or qualities. The chatoyancy of such stones as the star sapphire, moonstone, precious catseye, and opal was believed to be the dwelling of spirits which would protect the wearer from evil influences and bring great luck. At present, however, the opal is supposed to bring bad luck to those who can not claim it as their birthstone, for they are not protected from its evil enchantment. This belief in evil enchantment has been attributed to Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Anne of Geierstein*, in which Lady Hermione, an enchanted princess, wore a particularly beautiful opal in her hair. This opal sparkled brightly when she was gay, and flashed fire-red when she was angry; but when holy water was sprinkled upon it, it faded, and she swooned and died. The enchantment of the stone was broken, and the following day nothing but a pile of dry ashes remained of the Lady Hermione. Scott had not intended a superstition to spring up and spread as it has, for he had used the opal as the magical stone only because of its iridescent qualities. Such superstitions associated with stones are great in number, and there is not a stone that does not have, somewhere in the world, a quality of good or evil associated with it.

Stones have had bizarre uses through the years of man's history. It is related in the biography of Nero that he possessed an emerald of great size which had been fashioned into an eye-glass through which he observed the gladiatorial fights of the Coliseum. It seems a strange use for such a gem so highly prized in the present day. It is thought that Nero obtained this emerald from the mine where Cleopatra obtained hers, for her collection of jewelry was made up of great numbers of these noble gems. Cleopatra was known to have used two stones as a source of her cosmetics. Lapis lazuli, a soft blue stone used extensively for the manufacture of talismans and amulets, was pulverized at her demand and mixed with certain fats

to produce a cosmetic used for eye shadow. Malachite, a green copper mineral, was similarly treated to produce a green eye-shadow.

From weapons to utensils, utensils to charms and jewelry, and jewelry to an eye-glass and cosmetics, all this is but a small part that stones have played in the history of man. The study of these uses of rocks and minerals and the perception of their great beauty have instilled in me a greater realization of the wonders of the earth itself. Little did I suspect when I purchased those seven mineral specimens in the small roadside shop that I was to gain a new insight. I was to realize that all the loveliness of the world is not to be found in the flowers, trees, streams, and animals *on* the earth but that there is great beauty *within* it, a beauty of rock and minerals, as old as the earth itself.

Hay Day

Diane Shoemaker

THE air was still cool at four in the morning, but I knew that today might be the day if rain did not fall before seven, so I dressed quickly and hurried downstairs. Aunt Jean and Uncle Max were already in the kitchen, my aunt mixing biscuit dough, my uncle rinsing a pail in preparation for milking. I set the table, waiting anxiously for the word. After breakfast I cleared the dishes while Uncle Max gazed out the window: "Call the boys," he said. "We're going to put up hay." My heart pounded as Aunt Jean rang for Cunningham's. Haying time was here again.

About nine-thirty I took my position at the corner door. Uncle Max had forbidden me to go any closer to the barn, but I really did not mind, for I was close enough here to see everything that was happening. As the first load arrived, I immediately noticed the sweetness and freshness of the hay, as the fragrance floated and danced past me toward the house. Doc and John set the hay fork and unloaded; Harold scattered the loose hay in the loft; Mr. Webster, his son Norris, and Uncle Max scattered and piled hay on the wagons; Check and Darrell Gene drove the tractors, while Preston Webster drove the horse. Whenever hay season came, the neighbors always traded a day's work. Tomorrow my uncle might help Check, but today everyone was working for him, each performing his individual task with care and pride, even though the work was not for himself.

John Marion was the individual who amazed me. Even though he was in his eighties, he worked as hard as any of the younger men. Wearing long underwear in the summer and letting his mustache grow to cover his lower as well as his upper lip were just two of his idiosyncracies. I was official water-boy, so to speak, and kept the water jar in my shadow. To my unasked question, John told me