

THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

Breadfruit

Breadfruit has had an unusual literary as well as botanical and economic history. It plays an important part in such books as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Probably most Americans and Europeans made their first acquaintance with breadfruit in reading the story of



"BREAD" THAT GROWS ON A TREE

The fruits of the breadfruit tree are a staple in the diet of the inhabitants of most South Pacific islands. The flowering and fruiting branch shown above is on exhibition in Martin A. and Carrie Ryerson Hall (Plant Life—Hall 29).

Daniel Defoe's hero on a "desert island." In recent years perhaps the story of Captain Bligh's ill-fated expedition to Polynesia, in quest of the breadfruit tree, has received more prominence, especially since a motion picture version attained wide popularity.

In Martin A. and Carrie Ryerson Hall (Plant Life—Hall 29) Field Museum has an exhibit of a flowering and fruiting branch of breadfruit. This is supplemented by a cut section of the fruit showing the edible pulp, and also some of the resinous gum obtained from the breadfruit tree and used by natives of the South Sea islands to caulk their canoes. The timber of the breadfruit tree is used by the Polynesians in various types of construction; exposure causes it to attain the color of mahogany.

Originally a native of Malaya, breadfruit became widely dispersed by the Polynesians through the islands of the south Pacific. It has been introduced in most tropical regions—a few of the trees have even been grown in Florida. Its introduction to Jamaica was the aim of Captain Bligh's

expedition on the *Bounty* (1787–89); his ship had been loaded with the plants, but because of the famous mutiny did not reach its destination. However, a second expedition four years later was successful.

The breadfruit tree belongs to the mulberry family. Its scientific name is *Artocarpus incisa*. In the Museum exhibit is shown also the related, much larger, jackfruit (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) likewise used as a food.

The pulp of the breadfruit is whitish. It is farinaceous, and of a constituency between that of new bread and sweet potatoes. The fruits are round or oval in shape, and about as large as cantaloupes. The seedless variety, which is that used for food, has a rather smooth exterior. It is the principal dietary item in most of the south Pacific islands, where the fruit is usually baked in underground ovens heated by hot stones. For this purpose it is plucked before it is ripe. Various other methods of preparing it for consumption have been developed.

MORE FAMOUS DIAMONDS

(Editor's Note:—Republication of excerpts from FAMOUS DIAMONDS, *Field Museum Geology Leaflet No. 10*, by the late Dr. Oliver C. Farrington, former Curator of Geology, was begun in last month's FIELD MUSEUM NEWS. Data on a few other diamonds are presented herewith. The complete leaflet, with 27 pages of text and 5 illustrations, is available at THE BOOK SHOP of FIELD MUSEUM, price 25 cents.)

PIGOTT

Lord Pigott, an Irish Peer who served as Governor of Madras, India, brought this diamond of 85.8 carats to England about 1775. It is supposed to have been presented to him by an East Indian princess.

In 1818 it was sold to Ali Pasha, Khedive of Egypt. He was assassinated in 1882 by his enemy, Raschid Pasha, but before expiring ordered that the diamond should be crushed to powder in his presence and that his wife, Vasilica, should be strangled. His wife escaped, but the diamond was destroyed.

REGENT OR PITT

The tradition associated with this diamond is that it was found by a slave in India in 1701. Instead of reporting the find to his master, the slave cut his leg and in the bandage covering the wound enclosed the diamond. He gave the diamond to an English skipper for free passage to another country. The skipper threw the slave into the sea, sold the stone to a merchant for \$5,000, squandered the money in dissipation, and hanged himself.

Sir Thomas Pitt, Governor of Fort St. George at Madras, bought the diamond reputedly for \$100,000. Governor Pitt on returning to England in 1710 found that reports of his acquisition had preceded him,

and he was accused of having procured it by unfair or violent means. He developed a morbid fear that he would lose or be robbed of the gem, and is said to have gone about much in disguise and rarely to have spent more than two nights under the same roof.

The Duke of Orléans, then Regent of France, purchased it for the French Crown in 1717. The large diamond remained among the French Crown jewels until 1792, when, with many other jewels, it was stolen from the Garde Meuble. Some weeks later an anonymous letter informed the Commune that some of the stolen objects could be found in a ditch in the Champs-Élysées. The Regent diamond was among the gems returned in this mysterious way.

Later it was for a time pledged to the Dutch Government as security for a loan to carry on the Napoleonic wars. Then, as Emperor, Napoleon is said to have had it mounted in his sword hilt. Afterwards it remained in the French treasury. It has been appraised as high as \$2,040,000; a more likely valuation is \$900,000.

SANCY

Although not a large diamond, the Sancy has had a more extensive circulation among the kings and queens of Europe and a longer authentic history than any other except, perhaps, the Kohinoor. Like some other famous diamonds, it was at one time the price of a man's life.

This stone was brought from the East to France by Nicholas Harlai, Seigneur de Sancy, French Ambassador to the Ottoman Court, about 1570. It was loaned or sold to Henry III of France, later returned to de Sancy. Henry IV made de Sancy his superintendent of finance and shortly after desired to borrow the diamond. The messenger entrusted with carrying the diamond was killed on the way, evidently by robbers. Knowing the trustworthiness of the messenger, de Sancy believed that in some way he had found means to outwit the robbers. Accordingly he had the body disinterred, and in the stomach the diamond was found.

De Sancy sold the diamond to Queen Elizabeth of England between 1590 and 1600. It seems to have remained among the English Crown Jewels until the widow of Charles I, Queen Dowager Henrietta Maria, presented it to Somerset, Earl of Worcester. By purchase or gift it again came to the English Crown, for we next hear of it in the possession of King James II. James is said to have sold it for \$125,000 to Louis XIV of France about 1695. It then passed to Louis XV and Louis XVI.

In the famous robbery of the Garde Meuble in Paris (1792) the Sancy was among the Crown Jewels stolen, but it suddenly reappeared in 1828. In 1875 it was sent to Bombay and sold to the Maharaja of Patiala.



Farrington, Oliver C. 1941. "More Famous Diamonds." *Field Museum news* 12(8), 5-5.

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