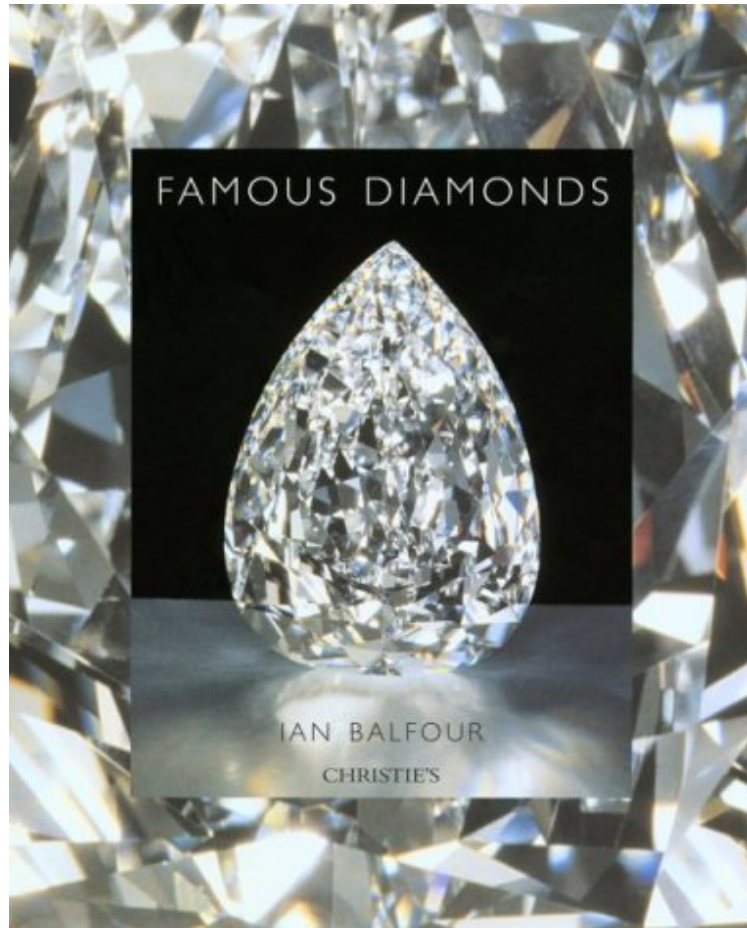


## Famous Diamonds

*Ian Balfour*

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#4894222 in Books 2004-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 1.16 x 9.65 x 11.94l, #File Name: 090343265X320 pages | File size: 24.Mb

**Ian Balfour : Famous Diamonds** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Famous Diamonds:

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A history of great diamonds and their possessorsBy ealovittRomantically-inclined historians and lovers of rare and costly diamonds will enjoy the stories in Ian Balfour's "Famous Diamonds." These gems lead endlessly fascinating lives, often touched by tragedy. For instance, the Emperor Maximilian Diamond was worn by its owner when he was executed by firing squad in Mexico. This 41.94 carat gem, which possesses a very strong blue fluorescence, was returned to his widow Carlotta, who "as the result of these events, was to remain mentally deranged until her death near Brussels in 1927. The gem was sold in order to help pay her medical expenses."The Hope Diamond which is well-known for its dark sapphire-blue coloring, has acquired a reputation for bringing bad luck to its owner. It was stolen, along with many of the French Crown Jewels during the Revolution and made its way to England. Eventually it was bought by a Russian Prince named Ivan Kanitowsky who either gave or loaned the Hope to "a Folies Bergères actress who was shot across the footlights next day by her lover

or by the prince as she wore the stone; the Prince was later stabbed to death by [Russian] revolutionaries..."The Mirror of Portugal, once part of the Crown Jewels of Portugal was stolen by the same French thieves who absconded with the Hope diamond. Unfortunately, it was never recovered. Connoisseurs of rare fancy-colored diamonds can learn the history of the Dresden Green, the Hope (which glows like a red-hot coal after exposure to ultra-violet light), the champagne-colored 890 carat Incomparable, and the pink Hortensia, which was also stolen during the French Revolution--- "As he was on the point of being executed, a man named Depeyron disclosed that he had hidden [the Hortensia] in a bag containing gold and other diamonds, including the Regent, in a garret."The author doesn't say whether Depeyron's confession obtained him a reprieve from Madame Guillotine. Ian Balfour tracked down the histories of these famous diamonds as he worked in various capacities in the diamond industry for almost 30 years, most recently as a consultant to a firm of diamond brokers. (He is also the composer of seven operas!) In this book, he attempts to give, "as straightforward and accurate an account as possible of the world's greatest diamonds." He debunks some of the legends that have become attached to the most famous stones, e.g. the Idol's Eye, the Eureka, and the Great Mogul. However, there is still enough intrigue and skulduggery attached to the diamonds' verifiable histories to satisfy even the most romantically inclined reader. No photograph can capture the true beauty and fire of the 'king of gems,' but the photographs, many in color, in this coffee-table-sized book are an interesting supplement to the text. Some show the various owners (maharajahs, empresses, Folies Bergères actresses, Ziegfield Follies Girls, Elizabeth Taylor) in proud possession of their costly and fascinating gems.

The history of great diamonds is intimately interwoven with the lives of emperors and conquerors, great kings and queens, with statesmen and soldiers, the rich and worldly - but also, inevitably, with those who lead more shadowy lives. They have been objects of passion, sometimes of war, violence and theft. As well as being objects of exceptional beauty and rarity, they were once thought to possess magical properties which protected their owners from enemies. Initially a male prerogative, reflecting status and authority, they later adorned the wives of powerful men, and at times were offered as influential gifts. Few were immune to the temptation of diamonds; many sacrificed their lives and souls to them. In the past decade some historical diamonds have resurfaced, whilst the market has also seen an unprecedented arrival of 'fancy-colour' and modern gemstones, amongst them some of the biggest and finest ever seen. In this updated fourth edition of Famous Diamonds, Ian Balfour tells the fascinating stories of almost eighty of these remarkable gems. Some have detailed histories that can be traced from the present day back to the moment they were mined, while others have a more mysterious past or have disappeared from view. Also included are shorter entries on a further selection of some forty notable diamonds.

About the Author Ian Balfour was educated at Eton and served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1945; he later read modern languages and music at Magdalen College, Oxford. For almost 30 years he worked in various capacities in the diamond industry, latterly as consultant to a firm of diamond brokers, visiting the world's important diamond centres and working closely with many of the leading personalities in the industry. Fascinated by these unique gems, he spent much of his spare time researching their backgrounds, which led to writing numerous articles and finally gave rise to this reference work.