

Platinum, Once Worthless, Now Joins Metallic Nobility

Heat and acid resistant, capable of withstanding intense heat, this ore now competes with gold on jewelry counters and commands high prices on the metal markets.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

WITHOUT quantity manufacture of heat and acid-resisting equipment such as platinum and its alloys afford the laboratory, the tremendous progress of chemistry in the last hundred years would not have been possible.

Platinum utensils, able to withstand white heat necessary for analysis, have helped geologists determine the composition of rocks, and chemists to make many alloys.

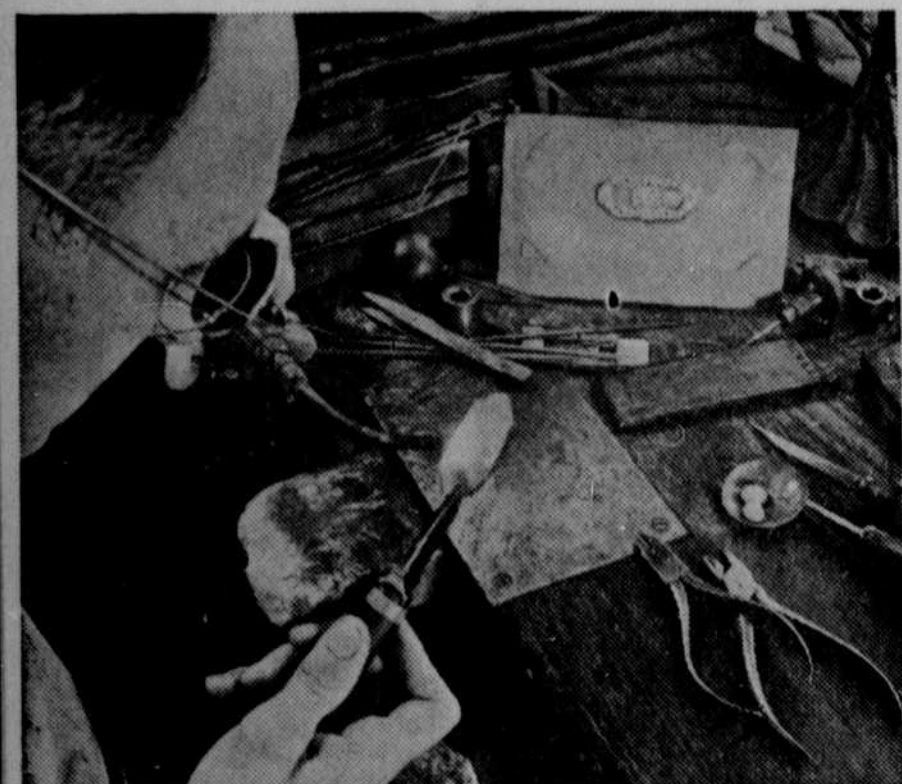
For absolute accuracy, the national bureau of standards in Washington, D. C., as well as similar institutions abroad, uses weights of 90 per cent platinum and 10 per cent iridium—their unchangeable nature insuring constancy. Again, in electric-furnace apparatus, and in measuring extremely high temperatures, platinum serves the scientist. With it operations may reach a temperature up to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

A continuous circle here; but not one to cause economic pain!

Fantastic now the thought of that South Seas merchant who cursed his luck on receiving payment in platinum "debased" bars that he could "neither dispose of, nor find any means of refining." Incredible, too, that a metal prominent now in jewelry cases the world over should have been used in remote Siberia for hunting-bullets, just as gold bullets were used in old North Carolina.

Cents to Dollars

But platinum was not always in the luxury brackets. The crude metal sold for as little as 34 to 41 cents an ounce in the early 1800s, in contrast with that all-time high, after the World War, of more than \$150 an ounce. It was then apparently because of its scarcity and high price, that a fickle public reached for platinum jewelry. Wed-



Welding platinum to fashion a setting for star sapphires. It is hard to realize that this metal, which brought more than \$150 an ounce shortly after the World War, and sold for 34 cents an ounce in the early 1800's.

ding bands, cuff links, pencils, knives, cigarette cases, settings for jewels—all turned pale to meet the demand.

Ups and Downs

Like silver and gold, platinum has had its rushes and speculative booms—and its depressions. Small finds, scattered over the globe, add their bit to ever-changing problems of adjustment between scarcity and surplus. A few years back, when platinum fields were discovered in northern Alberta, Canada, nearly every available man in the region made for the "diggings." A de luxe rush, writers called this short but enthusiastic stampede, because parlor cars and comfortable river steamers made the trip easy for sourdough and greenhorn.

In South Africa, on the Johannesburg stock exchange in 1925, platinum madness took its place beside diamond frenzies and gold fevers. Everybody was buying or wanted to buy shares in the unexpected platinum rock deposits.

"Lode deposits in the Bushveld Complex alone," wrote one commentator, "probably contain in the aggregate more platinum than all the rest of the earth's crust."

Yet later this industry came practically to a standstill because of the low prices then prevailing for platinum.

Some years ago the course of native life in a deserted plain at Yubdo, Ethiopia, took a new turn when an Italian explorer and prospector discovered there platinum-bearing sands. Fringing the edge of shallow ponds, whole villages of rough-hatched huts sprang up. Men and women stooped to wash the sands in crude wooden basins, a primitive method still used in many places.

By 1840, a total of 21 platinum mines had been opened. Here was enough to supply 90-odd per cent of the world's market, until the World War and the Russian revolution for a time halted activities. Accumulated stocks could not hold up. Once more platinum users worried, but needlessly.

New Diggings

Two important new sources came suddenly to light, a wealth of platinum metals mixed with copper-nickel ores of Canada, and in large rock deposits of South Africa. Or, as one British platinum house naively put it, these opportune finds came "with the good luck which so consistently favors this country."

Individually, however, prospectors make few lucky hauls. Big platinum nuggets, such as excite gold hunters, are rare. The 21-pound nugget discovered in Russia in 1843 is the largest the world has known.

A shining heap of all platinum yet recovered, it is estimated, would weigh little more than 580 tons, or less than half the weight of the gold produced in 1936. Canada, Russia, Colombia, and the Union of South Africa furnish the bulk of our platinum needs and for a time controlled the industry through an international company.

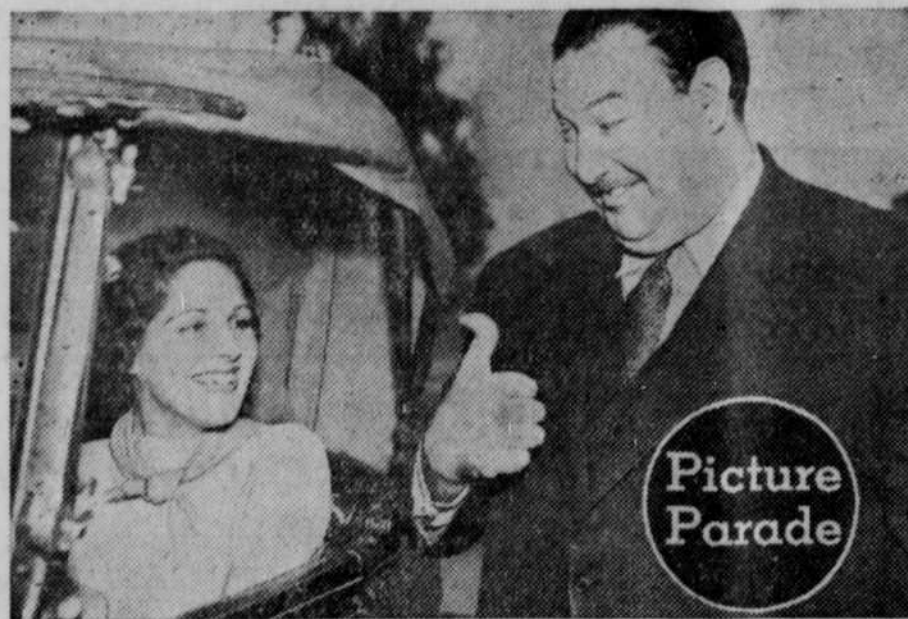
Other countries, including Spain, Panama, Brazil, Australia, and Japan, as well as Alaska and some of our own states, also yield the metal.

From many places only a few grains of crude platinum are recovered from each cubic yard of material treated. To supply a metal-hungry world, however, even such tiny amounts are worth the effort. Worth too, hardship in primitive country and struggle against hostile nature.

Dredgers and Divers

Riding small steamers up the San Juan, passengers meet strange contrasts. First a dredge, insatiably scooping up mammoth mouthfuls of sand, gravel, and water, to pass through screens and over riffle boards. Then, just around the next bend, brown diving girls tie heavy stones to their bodies before sinking to river bottom in search of plati-

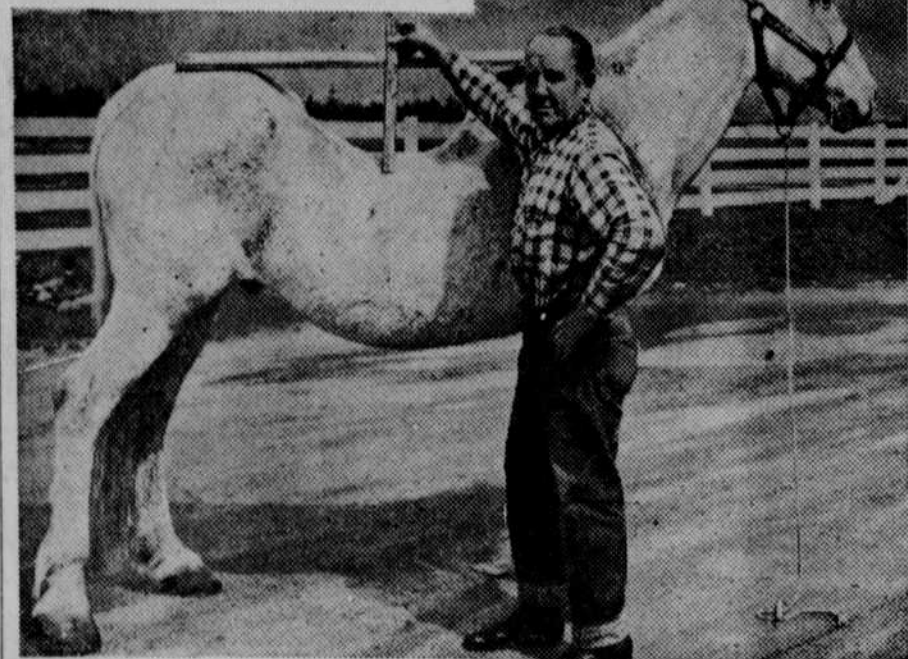
Avocation Into Vocation



Whether Hollywood producers need doubles for dangerous roles, or insects or animals for atmosphere, their wants can be supplied at almost a moment's notice. This constant striving for reality has made vocations out of many an avocation. Imitators find a ready market—when needed—for their specializations. Collectors can rent out their menageries, early vintage or imported cars and other objects needed for "props" or "gags" in colossal or just spectacular productions. Jack Lipson (above) is the man with the thumb that is the envy of all hitch-hikers. It brings him \$50 a day when used as a comedy gag.



Above, S. W. Allman, who gathers bats, spiders, bugs and snakes, examines part of his collection of tarantulas. At one time he had a call for a dozen big bats from a producer who didn't want to make a \$400 trip to Arizona for them. Allman visited a mine near Los Angeles and returned with eight bats, renting them for \$5 apiece. Right, Slicker, the trained seal, gets instructions from H. W. Winston.



No spine where the spine should be . . . Lionel Comport, whose specialty is supplying swaybacked horses for "gag" purposes, measures the spine dip of one of his equine freaks. From top to bottom, it's an 11½-inch drop. Nature, it seems, has provided this nag with its own saddle, bringing Mr. Comport \$15 a day for his rental.



Two more different ways of earning a livelihood a la Hollywood. Mary Wiggins (left) examines the scrapbook filled with pictures of some of the stunts in which she has taken part. She thinks nothing of running a motorcycle through a fence, and her specialty is high and fire diving. Right, Cliff Jones shows some of the grasshoppers he rounded up for a "plague" scene. He gathered 35 barrels of the bugs.



Eugene Lejuine rents old cars for movie productions.

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Reviewed by CARTER FIELD

No hope of peace between government and public utilities is in sight . . . Towns hazy over what constitutes a "reasonable offer" for a utility . . . Federal treasury is buying all the silver Mexico chooses to offer . . . Little hope of lifting the burden of armament costs.

WASHINGTON.—If it were not that such a conclusion would be utterly untrue to form, knowing the slant of President Roosevelt and PWA Administrator Harold L. Ickes on the electric industry and public ownership, one might almost assume that peace was in sight between the government and the utilities.

The developments are surprising. Electric Bond & Share figures several ways. First it announces it will submit to the securities and exchange commission on the death sentence situation. This follows the sale of its subsidiaries in Knoxville and, just prior to its "surrender" announcement, in Memphis. Incidentally most experts agree that Electric Bond & Share got pretty fair prices for both these properties. This is surprising, because the general impression had been that Electric Bond & Share was second on the list of best hated electric holding companies as far as the White House is concerned.

Whereas Commonwealth & Southern had been regarded as being pretty near the top of the most favored list, yet it is having a tough time getting the city of Chattanooga and other communities that want to roll their own to make fair offers.

All over the country cities and towns that had counted on PWA allotments for electric distribution, or generating plants, have been amazed at the dictum that they must make reasonable offers for the privately owned plants in their communities before federal money will be forthcoming. This is carrying out the so-called Barkley promise.

Towns and Cities Bit Hazy About What Is "Reasonable"

In the closing days of the last session of congress opponents of what they regarded as unfair government competition with private business were pressing for an amendment to the relief bill which would have prevented loans or grants to any cities where privately owned systems were already serving the public. To head off passage of this amendment, which looked very strong, Sen. Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky, Democratic leader of the senate, promised that, if the amendment were not adopted, PWA would make no loans or grants unless reasonable offers to buy out existing facilities had been refused by the private owners.

Now the cities and towns desiring loans do not know what to do. They have very hazy ideas as to what a "reasonable" offer for the plant they want to buy is. In very few instances have they anything to go on except the figures of the existing company. As a result, they have appealed to Secretary of the Interior Ickes to loan them experts to make the calculations on which they will make their "reasonable" offers.

Treasury Buying All Silver Mexico Chooses to Offer

Despite the popular impression to the contrary, the federal treasury is buying every ounce of silver that Mexico chooses to produce and sell. Furthermore, it is holding up the world price by so doing. Besides that it is paying a handsome subsidy into the Mexican treasury because Mexico imposes a tax of eight cents an ounce on silver produced, so that every time Uncle Sam pays 43 cents for an ounce of Mexican silver eight cents goes into the Mexican treasury direct. Of course, there are other Mexican taxes on the producers, so that actually the net benefit to the Mexican treasury is a good deal more than eight cents. In addition, Mexico collects a new export duty amounting to 12 per cent of the value of the silver!

A somewhat comparable situation would be if England decided to buy all of America's chief export crop, cotton, and to pay for it, not the world price, but a couple of cents more, say 10 cents a pound now and if the United States government imposed a tax of one cent a pound on all cotton produced, the federal treasury in Washington would then benefit not only by the direct tax on the cotton that would be sold, but in taxes on the handlers and what little could be raised from the producers themselves.

Actually, a fairer comparison would be copper, because that is produced by large corporations, largely, as silver is produced in Mexico, and hence the higher price paid by England would produce larger federal corporation and individual income taxes.

Now Treasury Is Buying Direct From Producers

No one hesitated much about this policy up until last March when Mexico seized the oil wells owned by British and American interests, valued at about \$150,000,000 for the American property and \$250,000,000 for the English. On March 31, this year, shortly after this seizure, the treasury here formally announced that it had abrogated the agreement with the Mexican government under which it was buying this Mexican silver. There was general public approval, not only because most folks did not see why this government should continue to subsidize Mexico after such a seizure of American property, but actually most folks could not see why this government had subsidized Mexico in the first place.

Actually, this government has been buying Mexican silver at an increased rate since this March 31 announcement. The only difference is that the transactions are no longer formally handled with the Mexican government. Instead the purchases are made from the producers, though of course after they have paid the eight cents an ounce tax to the Mexican government.

In March, the last month under the agreement, Mexican silver amounting to 5,089,997 ounces was bought by the United States treasury. In April, the first month following conclusion of the agreement, Mexico sold our treasury 5,061,803 ounces. In May, this rose to 5,439,234 ounces, and in June to 5,998,978 ounces.

Inquiries at the treasury here are answered by the statement that the treasury is acting "under orders" in buying this silver. Inquiry as to where the orders come from are answered by the statement that no reply will be given, but the hint is thrown out that after all there are only two places the orders could come from. One is the White House, the other is the state department.

Little Hope for Loosening Burden of Armament Costs

Optimism about the much talked about armament limitation conference, with a view to removing the terrific burden of armament costs from the various peoples of the world, has little foundation in anything that Washington diplomats can see or understand.

It was no surprise to them when President Roosevelt recently admitted at a press conference that the expenditures for the navy next year will be greater than this year. That has been known to everyone connected with or interested in the navy.

Its real importance lay in the fact that there had been some who thought the United States might make a gesture, in the hope that the other nations would follow it. President Roosevelt does not believe such a gesture would be effective. He believes furthermore that it would be positively dangerous for the United States to relax in arming itself. The more powerful in modern war weapons and readiness to fight the United States is, in the President's opinion, the less danger there is that some other nation will pick a quarrel with us.

There is no suspicion at the state department that any particular country wants, at this time, to pick a quarrel with the United States.

Foreign Powers Straining To Increase Armament

Actually, however, the big point that makes unlikely the success of any armament conference which might be held, is that the powers that seem to American eyes already armed to the teeth are straining every nerve to increase their military power. Although the four-power group at Munich dispelled the immediate danger of a European war, the armament race by Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia has increased instead of slowing down.

Since that Munich discussion France has publicly announced tremendous increases in her defenses against Germany.

Russia has said little about her preparations, but it is known here, by shrewd diplomats, that Russia grimly intends to have an air force which will be at least equal to that of Germany. The best indication of this, it is pointed out, was the bitter resentment in Moscow over the alleged statement of Col. Charles A. Lindbergh as to the superiority of the German air force.

This is the more interesting because in the first place it seems to have been a cock and bull story.

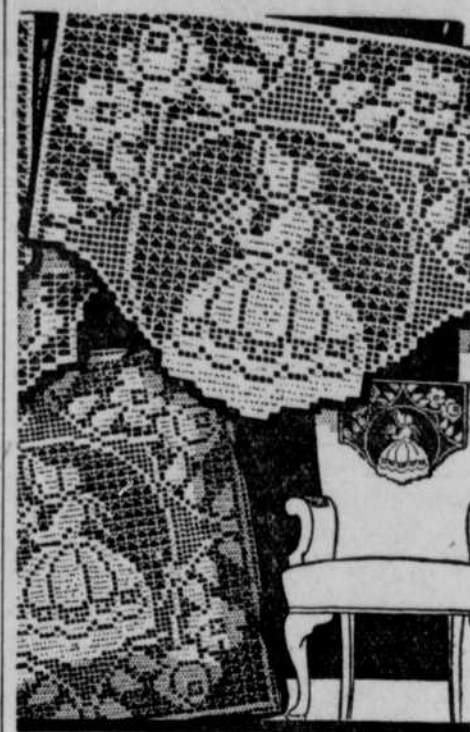
Lady Astor, at whose party Lindbergh was alleged to have made the statement, has denied that he was even at the party. Lindbergh himself has not denied it, but that is not significant, because as every newspaper man who has contacted him knows, he bitterly resents any intrusion by the press into what he regards as his private life. This was true long before the tragic kidnapping and murder of his child.

But the Russians, though they must have known that there was no basis in fact for the alleged Lindbergh statement, rushed out a statement signed by many of their aviation experts characterizing the alleged Lindbergh statement as a lie.

No, it looks as though the armament race would continue for a long time.

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Pillow and Chair Set Of Crocheted Lace



Pattern 6168

Spend spare moments profitably with your crochet hook and some string and add charm to your home with crocheted accessories that match! Interesting to make and inexpensive, too, you could make either chair set or pillow alone or make a pillow with matching scarf ends. Can't you see what attention they'd attract at a bazaar? Pattern 6168 contains charts and instructions for making the set; illustrations of it and stitches used; materials needed.

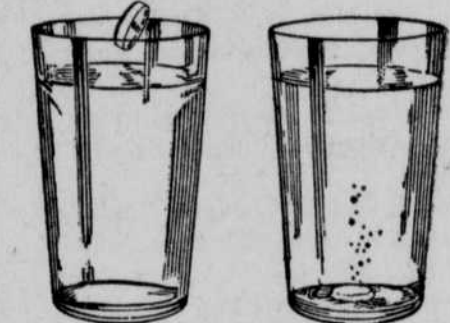
To obtain this pattern, send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) to The Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 259 W. 14th St., New York, N. Y.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

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