

United States Purchases Great Portion of World's Diamond Output



ROCK DRILLING IN THE DE BEERS MINE.

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KIMBERLEY.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—The manager of all the great diamond mines lying about Kimberley is an American. His name is Alpheus Williams, and he is the son of Mr. Gardner F. Williams, who took charge of the mines at the time the De Beers company was organized, and who managed them until three years ago. During Gardner Williams' control the mines became the chief source of the diamond supply of the world. He had charge of them for about twenty years, and in that time they produced almost \$60,000,000 worth of diamonds and paid out \$18,000,000 in dividends. Since his son has been handling them they have been yielding in the neighborhood of \$25,000,000 a year, and the prospect is that they will produce millions annually for many years to come.

American Diamond Cutters.
In what shape do the diamonds go to the United States, Mr. Williams?" I asked.

"The most of them are first cut in Europe," was the reply. "We have a duty of 10 per cent on cut diamonds, which is levied to protect the American diamond-cutting industry, but the fact that more than two-thirds of the imports are in the shape of cut stones shows that the tariff is not high enough for that purpose. In 1906 the United States imported about \$34,000,000 worth of diamonds, and of these only \$10,000,000 worth were in the rough, while \$24,000,000 worth were cut stones. Rough diamonds are free of duty."

"But, Mr. Williams, are the American diamond cutters equal to those of Europe? Can the stones be as beautifully shaped and polished at home as abroad?"

"Yes. Our diamond cutters are mainly from Holland and Belgium, and the most of them learned their trade before they emigrated. As it is now, we have over 400 such workmen in and about New York, which is the center of the industry. This is a small number compared with the thousands employed in Antwerp and Amsterdam."

Sawing and Polishing Diamonds.
The business of diamond cutting has materially changed of late years," continued Mr. Williams. "We have now dia-

to his sweetheart to seal the promise of marriage. This is so much the custom that many prospective grooms are now buying such rings on the installment plan, and there is a regular business of selling them on long time, at so much down and at so much per month, until paid. Diamonds are also used largely as wedding presents and as birthday gifts."

Manager of De Beers Company.
It is a big thing to be the manager of a company like this. It means the control of an army of wage-workers greater than that which Xenophon led on his march to the sea, and equal to the standing army of the United States before our war with Spain. During the last two years Mr. Williams has had on his payroll in the neighborhood of 25,000 men. This number has been reduced since the American panic, but still it runs up close to 15,000 and it will be increased as the times improve. All of these men have to be fed and the supplies which they consume cost millions. The great diamond pipes which are now being mined here are operated with the most expensive machinery. They have vast works connected with them, and the weathering fluids, with their miles of cable cars, cover 11,000 acres, or over seventeen square miles. Most of you can realize the size of a 100-acre farm. The diamond floors and washing works of the De Beers company here would cover just about seventy-two such farms, and every square yard of that area is humming with industry. Nearly every square of it yields more or less value; it has to have guards to watch it, and the greatest economy is required to keep the millions from leaking away. In the year 1906 the wages paid amounted to over \$10,000,000 and the food necessities of the native laborers almost \$1,000,000 more. Supplies for the men who have to be fed in walled compounds would tax the capacity of our largest department stores. They used last year almost 5,000,000 loaves of bread and something like 3,000,000 pounds of fresh meat. They drank 1,000,000 bottles of milk, smoked 2,000,000 cigarettes and were supplied with 90,000 new shirts and 35,000 pairs of trousers. The items for mining supplies are even larger. It took 700,000 pounds of candles to light the men at work in the tunnels and more than 1,000 miles of steel wire rope to haul the carts. The new timber for the mines, which came from San Francisco, amounted to more than 18,000,000 feet board measure, and the iron and steel bars, brass castings and bolts and nuts ran high into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

In addition to the mines, the company has a number of other institutions in and about Kimberley. It has 300,000 acres of land, a great farm for raising its horses and mules, an electric railroad, a hotel, and hospitals and clubs. It practically controls the town of Kimberley, which has a population of 30,000, so that altogether the mine manager has little time to spare.

Talk About Diamonds.

It was in the office of the De Beers company that I had a talk with the man who controls all the institutions. Mr. Alpheus Williams is not yet over 25 years of age. He was born in the United States, and educated at Cornell and the University of California before he came out here some years ago to be his father's assistant. When the latter retired in 1904 he was elected in his place, and since then he has been in charge of all the De Beers company's properties here. During my talk with him the subject of the diamond demand came up, and he replied that it had been excellent until our great panic occurred. Up to that time the market was taking all the whole of the Kimberley output, and the company had comparatively few diamonds on hand. The people were everywhere prosperous, and they were buying diamonds as never before. This was especially so in the United States, which was taking almost three-fourths of all the diamonds produced here. Then the panic came, and our demand dropped. Fortunately the De Beers company had an enormous amount of blue ground on its floors, and it has been able to reduce its expenses without any danger of being unable to supply the demand of the near future. Today the mines are running with a much decreased force, and they will be operated on a very conservative basis until the times improve.

American Market.

In talking with Mr. Williams about the American market, I asked him what kind of stones were purchased by us. He replied:

"The very best. The finest and purest of our diamonds go to the United States and within past years that country has been by far our best customer. For some time it took two-thirds of all the diamonds we mined and during the past year or so it has bought even more. We send also many ordinary stones there. There is a great demand in our country for diamond rings, and in fact, we are about while the city was profusely decorated the only people among whom every young man thinks he must give a diamond ring in plain sight numerous Bryan banners at

mon saws by which we can cut pieces from a diamond and make two or more diamonds out of one. Here, for instance, is the kind of saw which is most commonly used."

Diamonds Not Falling.

I asked Mr. Williams whether we would ever have a diamond famine, saying that I had heard that the mines were playing out. He replied:

"Any statement of that kind is not true.

We have enough diamonds in sight to keep us busy for many years, and we shall probably be supplying most of the diamonds of the world for several generations to come. As it is now, we have something like 10,000,000 loads of the blue, consisting of diamonds, weathering upon our floors, and there are between 50,000,000 and 60,000,000 more loads in sight. In the De Beers there are more than 5,000,000 loads ready to be taken out above the 2,000-foot level, and in the Kimberley more than 1,000,000 loads above the 2,000-foot level, which we have now reached. In the Wesselton there are 30,000,000 loads above the 200-foot level, and in the Dutoitspan 21,000,000 loads above the 750-foot level, while the amount in the Buffonton mine above the 600-foot level, to which we have sunk the shaft, is about 7,000,000 loads. All told, we have somewhere between 60,000,000 and 70,000,000 loads of blue ground on our floors and in sight. The total amount washed and crushed last year was over 5,500,000 loads, and that produced diamonds which realized about \$28,000,000. At the same rate of washing the blue on the floors and in sight would last for over eleven years and would produce considerably over \$200,000,000 worth of diamonds."

"It is on this same principle that all diamonds are ground and polished," said Mr. Williams. "The only thing that will cut a diamond is a diamond itself, and all polishing must be done with diamond dust. In the cutting establishments this is done on flat wheels of soft iron as big as a dinner plate, which are so moved by machinery that they go around at the rate of 2,000 revolutions a minute. These wheels are covered with a mixture of diamond dust and water, and the precious stones fastened into cement are pressed upon the wheel and ground off into the facets, which so increase their brilliancy. The splitting of diamonds is done by other diamonds, which might be called diamond knives. The latter are fixed in cement and are used to split the diamonds at the flaws which the stones frequently have. There are something like 10,000 men and women employed in the diamond cutting and polishing industry of Amsterdam, and they handle gems worth many millions of dollars every year. The greater part of the De Beers output is cut in Europe, and the center of the industry is Amsterdam. It is said that more than \$8,000,000 is paid out in wages to the diamond workers of that city

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