

THE WONDERFUL PROPERTIES ASCRIBED TO GEODES

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The present-day mineralogist is concerned fundamentally with the investigations of minerals by physical and chemical techniques which are based on solid scientific principles. He aims at establishing, for example, the composition of the species under examination and how, and under what circumstances, it can be created by natural processes. Others, most of whom are not mineralogists, are interested solely in the beauty displayed by single crystals, cut or in the natural state, and by aggregates of crystals. And there are those people living today whose interest in minerals stems, from their belief that some of them possess curative and other magical properties. In the past such beliefs were doubtless far more widespread and common than they are today. The geodes are such bodies which were thought, as will be clear later, to possess some remarkable properties.

In case there are those who when reading this note, do not recall the characteristics of geodes I insert the following abstract from "Dictionary of Geological Terms", 1962, p. 204, New York:-

Geodes are "Hollow, globular bodies, varying in size from an inch to a foot or more Significant features are (1) subspherical shape, (2) a hollow interior, (3) a clay film between the geode wall and the enclosing limestone matrix, (4) an outer chalcedonic layer, (5) an interior drusy lining of inward projecting crystals, and (6) evidence of expansion or growth".

On page 104 of the 1955 translation, by Bandy and Bandy, of Agricola's *De Natura Fossilium* (Textbook of Mineralogy) which saw the light of day in 1546, one finds the following account of the remarkable properties which geodes were then thought to possess:- *"All geodes are dry and certain ones are astringent. A geode will purge matter which may cover the eyes and when mixed with water and used as a salve it reduces inflammation of the breast and testes. When it contained small pebbles the Greeks believed that it would keep the fetus in place and prevent miscarriage if fastened to the left forearm of a pregnant woman and when bound to her left thigh would reduce labour pains and permit a painless delivery. Pliny writes, however, that it is efficacious only when it has been newly taken from the earth".*

Did these beliefs stem, at least in part, to the fact that to the ancients, the geode was shapewise, etc., reminiscent of the womb?

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