

"The adobe is my birthstone.

What else could it have been in the little mud-brick pueblo of Los Angeles on the day of my birth... The adobe? Perhaps gringos would question why I speak of it as a birthstone at all. They might say it is just a dirt block.

To me, the adobe is more than that. It is the good earth upon which the questing steps of men and women have trod for so many centuries seeking something fine from life. With this good earth is mixed the water upon which all mankind has depended for existence since life was created. And upon this earth and water the sun has cast its radiant beams to unite the mixture so that the resultant adobe is the happy fusion of nature's finest elements.

Even the making of the adobes is a symbolic act. The water and earth are mixed under the bare feet of man himself. Man treads with vigor and purpose upon the adobe to which straw is added for strength. Man, who always is noblest when he works, thus furnishes his labor to what God has given him, and from the honest toil the adobe emerges ready to be placed in large forms for drying in the sun.

When they are baked by nature's own heat they are used for the building of homes. We are surrounded then in our dwellings by the elements of earth and water fused by the divine actinic rays of the sun. The adobe bricks become the witnesses of our lives. These adobe walls mellow with age. They share in the love of our young people, the birth of our children, the death of our old.

They enclose us comfortingly. They are our shelter from cold and heat. They enfold us like a mother's arms.

Of course, it might be said that more elegant birthstones could be chosen. The scintillating diamond is credited with indications of wealth and power. The star sapphire is linked with good fortune and even with the Star of Bethlehem. The ruby is associated with strange deeds and spells cast upon those born within its sphere.

Yet the adobe possesses qualities which none of these can match.

Pais, agua, sol.

Earth, water, sun...

Pais means more than soil or earth, far more than the Spanish word "tierra," which is merely mundane. It means something spiritual; that as a man's feet touch his native ground there is a mystic bond between him and the dust from which he was moulded....

from "The California I Love" by Leo Carrillo