

# WOMAN and HER WORK.

The opal, that long despised stone, which nearly everyone admired, even while they looked askance at it on account of the evil properties it was supposed to possess, has been making pitiful efforts to win its way into public favor for the past ten years. But except in the case of a few strong minded people who loved to show that they despised such silly superstitions, it has not made much headway; and just as its admirers were thinking of giving up the struggle and leaving it to his fate some unexplained freak of fashion has launched it upon the full tide of popularity almost in a moment.

I don't imagine the opal has undergone any change of nature during the past year; it is probably just as unlucky as it ever was; emblem of hope and misfortune it was, and will continue to be, but those who are versed in such matters say that the last characteristic is subservient to the first, and while the exquisite stone burns with the clear rosy flame which is its greatest beauty, it can bring nothing but good luck to its owner. It is only on the approach of sickness or misfortune that the ruby light pales, and a livid green tint warns the owner of some coming sorrow. It is this curious property which is said to have given the opal its sad character, and now that the little misunderstanding has been explained the opal will doubtless enjoy a double share of favor.

Strange to say it has been almost invaluable for the past twenty years, and during that time anyone who was brave enough, or eccentric enough to buy an opal, could get one at a great bargain, almost a third of its original value.

I read a curious story the other day, about this depreciation in the value of one of the most beautiful of precious stones and it is said to be the true explanation of the fall of the opal.

Nearly twenty five years ago, a Belgian jeweler finding that the demand for opals in Brussels far exceeded the supply, and scenting a large profit in securing a monopoly of the trade, sent one of his clerks to London, where the gems were known to be very plentiful and presumably cheap, to lay in a stock. On arriving, the agent was surprised to find that though opals were to be found there in great quantities, they were by no means cheap, being by far the most popular jewel in the English kingdom. He must have been a clever fellow and a man of resource, for instead of returning to his employer and reporting the price too high, he bethought him of a much better plan, which was to spread a story that opals brought bad luck to anyone who purchased, or wore them, and that in Germany and Belgium they were regarded with great disfavor, being looked upon as a talisman of evil.

The wily young man succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, and in the course of two months the highly valued gems were carefully avoided as they had been eagerly sought and the price declined so rapidly that they were soon selling in London for less than half their previous value.

Needless to say the innocent young Belgian had remained in town waiting for this result of his little scheme, and he hastened to buy up all that were to be obtained, rush back to Brussels, and give his firm an opportunity of placing them on the market before the evil name he had given the gems had time to cross the English Channel and reach the continent.

Of course the firm reaped an enormous profit, and I hope they gave their shrewd clerk a decent percentage, but whether they did or not, the mischief he had started was not easily rectified. The story of the ill fortune which pursued the wearer of an opal, spread far and wide, and the popularity of the opal was doomed.

The story sounds plausible enough, and would account for the jewel's restoration to favor, provided it has only recently been unearthed, only unfortunately for its authenticity I am afraid the belief in the opal's evil influence existed for centuries before that Belgian jeweler, or his wide awake clerk ever saw the light, and like the supposition concerning peacock's feathers, it had its origin in historical fact.

Whatever the cause, I am heartily glad that the fickle goddess of fashion once more smiles on the lovely gem, I love an opal, and never grow weary of watching its changing tints, and the curious flames that seem to glow and leap in its heart. But for all that I would not either wear, or possess one for anything, tradition may be vague in its way, but it usually has a pretty good authority for what it says, could we only trace it sufficiently far back, and this much I know of my own experience—that I never knew anyone who wore an opal to be very fortunate and I have known one or two people who got through the world as well and as pleasantly as the common race of humbly up the time that they came into possession of an opal, after which misfortune of every kind from the death of friends, to the loss of their own health, well as happiness seemed to dog their footsteps. It may have been a mere coincidence of course, but somehow I have not the least desire to attract coincidences of that kind in my direction—hence, no opals shall shine in my tiara, if I can help it.

I have had a communication from a lady friend on the subject of the bodies which hook under the left arm as near the back as possible, and far over on the left shoulder! It will be remembered by the careful student of these pages, that I touched lightly on that same theme last week, and made a brief reference to my own sufferings in that direction? But my friend has had the hardihood to inform me that I don't know anything about it. I thought I did, though I had not told the half of my sufferings before! When a woman has spent half an hour clutching wildly at her shoulder and the left side of her spinal column, in a vain effort to undress herself and go to bed, and then has to desist, with flushed face, and perspiring brow, settling down with what patience she can summon to wait till someone—anyone, comes in, to release her from the tyranny of her clothes, and has to sit up until twelve o'clock before help arrives—she is apt to think she does know a little about that particular kind of dress. But my friend maintains that I should have consulted her before venturing to touch upon such a topic since no one, who has not gone to Boston by herself arrayed in such a gown, knows the first thing about it.

I am not going to drag that girl's sufferings before the eyes of an unsympathetic public so I will draw a veil over the greater part of her story, but her description of her coy efforts to ingratiate herself with the colored porter of the pullman car in which she made her journey, and the modest and decorous advances she made to him before she felt sufficiently well acquainted to ask his assistance into and out of her gown, would draw tears from a heart of stone.

"What in the world did you wear such a dress for?" I said.

"What did you say about yours last week?" she answered with spirit. "You said it was the best fitting dress you had. Well that was just the reason I wore mine!"

Oh Woman in your hours of ease, The latest fashion's sure to please—

No matter how uncomfortable it may be, 'Let us all, O my friends,' as Mr. Chadbond would say, take warning by these sad experiences, and if we must have our dresses made to fashion in such an outlandish manner see to it that the dressmaker uses buttons instead of hooks, then procure a long handled button hook, and you will find that you can fasten your gown with comparative ease.

The very latest fad in card cases is to have them made to match the visiting costume. This would certainly give the woman of fashion great scope in the matter of variety, as far as her card cases are concerned, and at first sight the new fashion would seem too expensive ever to become very general. In reality, however, though there is some little trouble there is really economy in the new fancy, since the card cases can be easily made at home.

A pretty example seen recently was of black and white satin to match a dress of the same. To make it a strip of black satin seven inches long and five wide was used. To each of the four corners a triangular bit of white satin was stitched, just as one sees corners of filigree silver on a black leather card case. The case was not stiffened with cardboard, but felt soft like a photograph case. A layer of cotton batting sprinkled with powderedorris root being tacked to the reverse side, and a lining of white sarah silk added. Two other strips of black satin five, by three inches wide, were then taken, two corners of each decorated with white satin tips, and similarly lined; there were laid lining side in, upon each end of the long piece, making the inside pockets for holding the cards. They were firmly over-sewed all around, and a black and white silk cord was neatly sewed round all the edges, inside and out.

Of course such a piece of work would require extreme neatness, but when finished it well repaid the care lavished upon it, and was a very charming card case, dainty, unique and serviceable, if the satin used was of a good quality.

Any material could be utilized for a card case and if something more substantial was desired it might be lined either with stiff canvas, or cardboard.

This is the Christmas season and, of course, with Christmas comes candy. And with the wish for candy comes the desire to make it for oneself. For who is there who does not prefer home-made candy to any other, no matter how expensive. And candy making is such easy work, too—when you know how. There are two ways of making cream candy. One is to mix pulverized sugar with white of egg, and water, and the other is to boil the granulated sugar. The first is a little the easier and it has this advantage that you can make a great variety of candy without any fire. But once they're boiled 'fondant' and you will not go back to the other.

Here is the way to make 'genuine French creams.' Put on your sugar in a granite or bright tin pan in the proportion of 2 lbs sugar, 2 cups of hot water, and 1 dessert

spoonful vinegar. Stir until the sugar is well melted then put over the fire where it will not boil quickly. Do not stir it after it is on the fire. Stirring or jarring the pan while it is boiling is apt to make it turn sugary. Let it boil until a little dropped in cold water will form a very soft ball, then turn out on a slightly buttered platter to cool. When cold beat up with a wooden spoon or mix with your hands. First it will be stiff and sticky, and you think with horror that you will never get your hands free from it again. Then it will get very white and so soft that it will drop heavily through your fingers, then before you know it it will change again and you will have a lump of dough, about the consistency of soft putty. In this you have the 'fondant' or foundation of the most expensive French candies. If you are not ready to work it up now pack it in a bowl, cover it closely with buttered or waxed paper and set it aside. It will keep creamy for weeks. If you should get it a little too hard don't think it is ruined. Break it down with a rolling pin or potato pounder and work it up with a little water to the right consistency.

Now, for making your creams. First butter some large sheets of brown paper to lay the candies on as they are made; next gather on your table bottles of your favorite flavors, one of cochineal, a half-pound package of Baker's chocolate, an assortment of shelled nuts, some figs cut in strips and some dates with the stones neatly removed through a lengthwise cut.

Now, your best artistic taste will come into play. Divide your 'fondant' into as many parts as you wish to use flavors. On each piece drop a few drops of one flavor and work it thoroughly. Be very careful not to have your candies flavored too strongly. A few cents worth of oil of wintergreen and oil of peppermint will last you a year. Five cents worth of cochineal will last you longer still. A drop or two will make your 'fondant' a delicate pink, or a little burnt sugar will make it a pale yellow.

Into another portion of the 'fondant' work some desiccated cocoonut. Then either roll it into balls or press it out into a flat sheet and cut it into diamonds or squares. Or on this layer of cocoonut cream spread another of vinella cream colored a faint pink, and on this another layer of cream and chocolate mixed. Let this set for a few hours and then cut up in small diamonds or squares.

When you are almost done you will have a number of scraps left; ragged edges of cream and broken bits of nuts. Throw your nuts together, chop them coarsely, mix them with your cream, and what chocolate is left, and roll into balls, or cut into pieces as you wish. Every one who tastes these will be sure to ask you for the recipe.

So much for the elaborate kinds. Here is something very easy. Put on some more sugar and water and vinegar just as if you were going to make French creams; boil till it forms a soft ball when dropped into cold water, boil it just the least bit harder than for 'fondant', pull it till it reaches the second stage described in making the 'fondant', that is, till it is white and much softer than when you started; then pull it out long and about the width of three fingers and lay it on buttered paper. If you make this at night it will be quite crisp by morning and may be broken up as you choose.

A candy that many prefer to almost any other is made in just the same way as the above cream bar, except that brown sugar is used instead of white and a piece of butter added. It is just butter scotch pulled before it gets cold. If you want different flavors pour your candy out to cool on as many different plates and put one flavor on each.

Now, a capacity for dainty handling will stand you in good stead. With light fingers roll your 'fondant' into little balls and cakes and cones. On some press a half walnut, on others an almond, on others a strip of fig or raisin. Make little rolls and with them fill your dates letting the cream peep out at the side and ends. There is almost no end to the varieties that can be made. For chocolate creams roll up some little balls and set them away to harden a little on the outside. Then dip them in chocolate melted in a bowl over the tea kettle. Some like the pure unsweetened chocolate (the writer has never found any to work well but Baker's) but some prefer to melt over the tea kettle some of the 'fondant' and some of the chocolate together. Whichever way you do, dip the cream balls into the mixture, and drop them on buttered paper to harden.

And now one word about pulling. Al-

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most every one will tell you to put butter on your fingers. Do nothing of the sort. There is not the slightest need of it; in fact, it will spoil your candy. But one thing above all others bear in mind. Handle it only with the tips of your fingers. The object of the pulling is to make the candy porous by filling it with air. Squeezing it up in the hot hand as so many do gives you only a solid, disagreeable sticky mass as different from the porous, light, crisp candy you should have as night is from day. And by all means have a 'canly hook.' Some use a big meat hook, such as you see in butchers' stalls; others merely drive in some convenient door frame a six or eight inch spike. This lessens the labor of pulling quite one-half. Candy pulled over this too, will be much better as it comes less in contact with the hand.

ASTRA.

**PAIR OF DREAMS.**  
In Both Instances the Opposite Interpretation was Accepted.

It is a strange story; but perhaps the less strange because there is not a thread of fiction in the entire fabric, says a writer in the Detroit Free Press. I am thus positive, because I am Marcia Clomas and telling only what happened to myself.

I did not need the evidence of a mirror to convince me that I was handsome. Friends and strangers told me so till I was weary of it, even as the monody of a song bird may make one weary. That I was young had affirmation in the thick family Bible with its brazen clasps and well-thumbed leaves. That I was not dull was attested in a diploma from Vassar, a knowledge of French that did not puzzle Frenchmen, music that musicians liked to hear and a literary ability that never brought back more than one out of four of my contributions. In social life I had the rare luck of success without envy, save as those who are less fortunate naïve to join those who are more so.

But one quick move of fate changed this life of sunshine and brightness. Father failed, and when millionaires fail it seems as though one never could fathom the depths of disaster. To me the one great tragedy of the wreck was the impoverishment of Charley. Of course it is necessary to explain that I mean Charley Truman, for the familiarity of our set does not extend to the reading public. Charley was ruined with his eyes open, but to me that only meant that there was suspense as well as actual suffering without the buoyant influence of hope. He had insisted upon coming to the help of my father though the great risk incurred was made plain as day.

How like physical torture this was to me can be inferred when it is known that Charley and I were engaged, but 'an old fashioned love watch. He made light of the calamity in which we were all involved. But to me it was the saddest reality that could have come into my life. That may account for all that follows, but I have thought over it

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much more than any one else will do, and am inclined to doubt. My one thought was to restore the fortune that Charley had so generously sacrificed. I invented a score of quixotic schemes, but had good sense to abandon them because they were quixotic. But I can only plead the perversion of human nature in admitting that I adopted what seemed the most quixotic of them all.

I dreamed that I went to Monte Carlo with a mint of money and lost it all. I only read of the place, but it was spread out before me as a vivid picture. I saw the esplanade, the cafes, the clean asphalt pavements, the palm trees, the grass plots, the arcade, the Hotel Metropole, the laggard faces of those who wander up the hillside to disappear forever among the foliage, the false cheerfulness of the electric lights, the bright red and black of the tables, even the many colored metal disc over which the ball of fate danced and skipped as though it brought nothing but happiness into the world. No less graphic were the details of my losing. Bet after bet was swept into the omnivorous maw of the great gambling Mecca, and the mechanical movement of the insatiable rake seemed to harrow my vitals.

If I had any superstition it was the result of heredity. No old nurse or foolish companion ever sought to impress me with the mysteries that cloud reason until it seeks explanation in the supernatural. I do not even recall ever hearing that dreams go by contraries. Yet I had not thought over that dream for a day before I had an unalterable desire to visit Monte Carlo for the purpose of restoring what my fiancé had lost. I would not apply to him or to my father. This was not because of their impaired fortune, but because I could not defend the resolve I had. It was the family physician to whom I went for funds and who was willing to respond without asking any questions that would have embarrassed me. He went farther and assumed the professional responsibility of sending me abroad, though he could never explain why he thus compromised his conscience.

When I reached what seems to me one of hell's principalities, I felt as one going into battle. All my surroundings were familiar. I passed through the glittering attractions as though they had been a part of my whole life. I could not have delayed to scan the daily papers or avail myself of the fine stationary that suggested a duty to those left behind. The fever of the gambler was upon me, and yet I knew nothing of gambling. Entering the fatal rooms, I passed the trente-et-quarante table. It might be surer, but it was slower, and I had read as much. My fight was to be a Waterloo, with the role of Napoleon assigned to the bank.

After confidently seating myself I played with an abandon to astonish even the stoical feeders of the tiger. I had no system. No color, no number, no combination was tried as the result of any previous thought or suggestion. I was an automaton with eyes, placing my money as the divinity scattered the scented blossoms. When a godly heap of gold was in front of me an old Prussian officer made an elaborate apology for addressing the handsome young American, but he had seen so many give back a fortune after winning it. The devilish fascination of the game was the chief dependence of its backers. Aside from chances in their favor, infatuation was their chief reliance. Would

I not stop while Dame Fortune was so generous? But I played day and night with the regularity of planetary movement. I won and won till the corps of regulars were following my plays and sharing in my prosperity. When I appeared a seat was given me as though I had a proprietary right, while the poor wretch who had given the place his all was ruthlessly put aside. At the wheel or at the table I seem'd to dictate the course of fortune, and I had more than enough to re-establish the two men I loved best.

One morning I awoke with a vivid impression of a dream that gave me a clear title to the little principality and all its belongings. Straightway I came home as nearly as the crow flies as the facilities of steam will permit. I am no more superstitious than before all this happened, and there is nothing uncanonically about the little ones that call Charley 'papa'. I only know what happened.

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Forgiving Others.

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