

The Bee's Home Magazine Page

SILK HAT HARRY'S DIVORCE SUIT

Judge Rumhauser Helps Out a Fellow Judge

By Tad



Married Life the Third Year

In Which Helen's Efforts to Economize Turn Out Most Disastrously.

By MABEL HERBERT TURNER.

"Five dollars," asked Helen in dismay. "Will it be that much? With this drop skirt and all the lace on the waist?" The woman took the dress from the box in which Helen had brought it and shook it out on the counter. "Why, we never clean any dress with a drop less than \$5."

Helen hesitated. "I'm afraid that's more than I care to pay," flushing slightly. "I didn't think it would be three."

"You couldn't get it cleaned any where for three," sniffed the woman, haughtily, putting the dress back in the box. "Why, we get it for a plain white slip like that," pointing to a white muslin dress in the case.

Meekly Helen took the box and hurried home. This was the second cleaner's she had been to, and they both wanted \$5. She felt it would be useless to try to get it cleaned at any good place for less, and she was afraid to risk the cheaper ones.

In her own room she took out the dress and spread it on the bed. What could she do with it? It was her best afternoon gown—a pastel blue crepe miette. She needed it desperately. But it was too soiled to wear it as it was—and she couldn't pay \$5 to have it cleaned. Since the humiliating letter from Warren about the expenses, Helen had grimly resolved to spend not 1 cent on herself personally.

Money for the house and Winifred—she must take from him. But money for herself—she would do without until she herself could earn it. She had written Warren that she had resolved to be independent of him as far as her personal expenses were concerned, and this resolve she intended to keep.

But first of all she must get her clothes in shape. Whatever new adventure any woman contemplates, her first thought is always to first put her clothes in order. And so Helen was now going over her limited wardrobe. She had had so little in the last year, and yet she thought bitterly, Warren had accused her of extravagance.

This little blue afternoon gown she had wanted to have cleaned for some time, but had put it off, hoping to have it done some week when the expenses were less than usual.

Now everything else Helen loved her gown fresh and dainty. And now this must be cleaned. She could no longer wear it as it was. With a sudden impulse she took it out to the kitchen.

"Why, you're as white as paper, ma'am; what's the matter?"

"Oh, the gasoline—it was awful in there. Here hang this up quick."

Della took the dripping dress and hung it on the wooden hanger. And Helen fell almost fainting on the couch.

"Open the window, Della. Oh, I'm sick."

Della threw open the window and dragged the couch before it. Helen, deathly white, was lying almost in a stupor. Soot up in the bathroom, with the fumes from two gallons of gasoline, the effect had been as drugging and much more sickening. She was growing faint and dizzy, as though she was being chloroformed. And her hands were red and smarting.

Almost overcome with the fumes, she still tried to swish the dress around. It was only a black, wet mass now, and she could not tell whether or not the streaks were out. Yet, with desperate determination she kept at it. It would be hard to get more gasoline, and now that she had begun she must do it as well as she could. So she shook and swished the dress about until she could stand it no longer.

Then she opened the bathroom door and staggered out, the wet dress on her arm. "Get a coat-hanger, quick, Della. Hang this up somewhere."

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Thoroughly frightened, Della wanted to send for a doctor. But in spite of the stupor, the word "doctor" brought to Helen the thought that had dominated her through it all, "the saving of expense."

"No, no," she protested faintly. "I don't need a doctor. I'll be all right in a few moments."

As she lay on the couch by the open window the horrible sense of nausea gradually passed away. Slowly the fresh air revived her, blew away the worst effects of the gasoline, but left her with a throbbing sick headache, which lasted the rest of the day.

Della brought some cold cream for her hands, which were still red and smarting from the gasoline. At length she sat up.

"Bring me the dress, Della. Let me see how it came out."

"Wait till you feel better," urged Della. "You're dead white yet, and it ain't dry nowhere."

"Oh, it must be dry by this time. Bring it in—I want to see it."

Reluctantly Della brought the dress, laid it on a chair by the couch and discreetly went back to the kitchen. Helen saw one glance at it, and then buried her face in the pillow. It was gasoline-stained. All over it the dirty gasoline had settled in clotted, mottled streaks. She turned her face to the wall and burst into tears.

"Cleaning Fluid," Helen read aloud from the label. "Cleans the most delicate fabrics without injury."

"Directions—Moisten a soft flannel cloth with the Cleaning Fluid and gently rub the article to be cleaned. Do not confine rubbing to the soiled spot; by going over more of the surface no ring will be left. Will not change color or injure the most delicate fabric. Caution: Do not use before an open fire or gas."

"The Cleaning Fluid Co."

Helen quickly covered the dining room table with a sheet and then spread the dress out upon it. Pouring some of the fluid in a saucer, she sponge-spooned the stains around the bottom of the skirt, carefully following the directions.

But, to her dismay, dark rings outlined the places that had been cleaned. And when she tried to sponge away the rings she succeeded only in making them

larger. Hurriedly she poured out half of the bottle and went over one whole breadth of the skirt, hoping that by going over a large surface and rubbing it dry the rings would be cleared away. But wherever she sponged with the fluid it left the same mottled, streaked appearance. She used the other half of the bottle trying to improve it, but only made it worse.

Almost in tears, she shook the dress out over a chair. "Hush, ruined it!" Oh, if she only hadn't touched it! At least she could have worn it at night—even if it was soiled. But now, with one whole breadth streaked and mottled, she could never wear it.

"I told you, ma'am, I didn't take no stock in them cleaning fluids," said Della. "They ain't none of them no good." And then, seeing Helen was almost in tears, she added consolingly: "But I guess you can take them streaks out if you dip the whole thing in gasoline—it's much better than all them cleaning fluids, and cheaper, too."

"Oh, can it?" asked Helen eagerly. Why didn't I think of gasoline? But where can we get it enough to dip the whole dress in?"

"Paint store. I'll take two of them gallon water bottles and get 'em full." Half an hour later Della returned with the big bottles of gasoline weighing down the basket on her arm.

"My, that's heavy," she grumbled. "And I had to go to three places 'fore they'd sell it to me."

Helen cooed into the bathroom, where there would be no danger of fire. Emptying one of the bottles into a large dishpan, she dipped the whole dress in. The odor was sickening. Not wanting it to get through the house, she kept the bathroom door closed.

In a few minutes the dress had soaked up the whole panful, and she had to pour in the other bottle. Most of this, too, was quickly soaked up, and the rest was almost black. She tried to rinse it up and down, but there was not enough gasoline left for that. The fumes were more and more sickening. She was growing faint and dizzy, as though she was being chloroformed. And her hands were red and smarting.

Almost overcome with the fumes, she still tried to swish the dress around. It was only a black, wet mass now, and she could not tell whether or not the streaks were out. Yet, with desperate determination she kept at it. It would be hard to get more gasoline, and now that she had begun she must do it as well as she could. So she shook and swished the dress about until she could stand it no longer.

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