

Cleaning and Dyeing Great Among Modern Domestic Art



THE fact that the National Cleaners and Dyers have been organized but six years, suggests that the cleaning and dyeing business as a large scale industry is comparatively new. And so it is. Even six years ago it was not near what it is now. Every year brings new inventions and new conveniences to the business. Every year adds new facilities that widen the scope of the work done by a first-class cleaning and dyeing establishment. Every year a new device is added to the machinery, or a new machine is invented to do the work better, with less danger to the costly clothing, and with better results generally, until now dresses worth from \$200 to \$300 are cleaned, trimmings and all, brought out in perfect condition, with not a fiber destroyed and with not a particle of the odor of the gasoline clinging to the garment.

It was a Frenchman who discovered the dry cleaning process. It is a process that does not shrink the clothing, while washing with water and soap will naturally shrink many kinds of goods. The most modern dry cleaning process used in the up-to-date cleaning plants now-a-days does not take any of the newness of the goods.

Modern in Strict Sense. Up to twenty years ago the cleaning business was practically not a business. It was a job of an individual who somewhere in a back room or even in his back yard toiled over a tub of gasoline with a brush and a few rags. Maybe he spoiled a garment and maybe he did not. The owner of the garment had to take that chance. Naturally when a garment cost a great deal of money the owner did not like to take the chance. Twenty years ago no more was known about the modern elaborate cleaning plant than was known about an automobile at that time, and that was next to nothing as will be remembered by those who know the history of the automobile industry.

Twenty years ago, or even fifteen years ago, in many instances the cleaning outfit consisted of an iron or two, a gasoline or gas stove, a pressing block, a little table and a couple of yards of canvas. The whole outfit didn't cost more than \$15. Today a plant like that of the Drescher Bros. in Omaha, for example, is valued at \$57,000. From a dark back room as a workshop the business has evolved to where it requires buildings covering a fourth of a block, requires many horses, and automobiles for delivering purposes, a great engine plant to furnish power for the endless amount of machinery, requires tons of gasoline, and a force of seventy-five men and women to operate the plant. Skilled labor, too, is required, for in such a plant the principle of the division of labor comes into play. Expert tailors are employed. Skilled men who do nothing but iron with patent automatic steam irons costing \$800, while the old-fashioned irons cost 35 cents apiece, are employed. Skilled men are employed in the cleaning rooms where great tanks and churn-like devices filled with gasoline are handled. Here men must know their business. Here they must know when gasoline reaches the danger point in temperature. Here they must know the intricacies of the elaborate distilling machinery that distills the gasoline after it becomes dirty from much cleaning.

What a Big Plant Contains. Instead of being a plant of a tub and a scrub-brush today, the first-class cleaning plant is a plant of elaborate piping, steam pumps, great intricate churns, centrifugal wringers, hot-air driers and purifiers, so that when the clothes are finally taken to the room ready for delivery, they are as fresh, as clean, as pure, and as sweet-smelling as the morning air.

There is four times as much money invested in the glove-cleaning machine alone today than there used to be in a whole flock of complete plants some years ago. There is enough money invested in the cash register in the front office of a modern plant today to have bought out all the cleaning establishments in Omaha fifteen or twenty years ago.

Coming into the cleaning room of a modern plant one is reminded of the large creameries. Stretching away from one end of the great room to the other is a row of four or five churn-like devices. Not like the churns that mother used to run on the farm, but like the great cylindrical churns of a giant creamery plant. These are in fact churns. They are complicated and intricate churns that churn the clothes in a tank of gasoline. The inside ladders are so smooth that no damage is done to the garment, although the churns attain a terrific speed. Here a single garment is thrashed around until the volume of gasoline con-

ditioned in the churn has passed through the garment 6,000 times.

Drying Garments By Machinery. Out comes the garment and into the centrifugal wringer. Wringer this must be called for it takes the place of the old wringer in everything, but the habit of tearing clothes and snapping buttons off. For the centrifugal could not tear the finest fabric. There is absolutely no strain and yet the garment is rendered very dry in the process. The centrifugal drier is a great cylindrical contrivance with perforations around the surface. It revolves at terrific speed. When the garment is thrown into the cylinder it is hurled to the side by the force of the revolution. The pressure generated by the great speed forces the gasoline out of the perforations and when the machine stops the garment is dry.

Of the big, churn-like devices for cleaning, four or five are necessary in order that garments of different colors be not cast into the same churn. By this process the plant escaped all possible danger of coloring one garment with the fading of another if there should be any garment that might fade.

So carefully is the process of modern cleaning worked out that the most delicate embroidery, even of gold laces, is cleaned with the dresses and other garments, without even being removed. It is not necessary. No fabric is injured. Dresses of three or four different colors, counting trimmings, and even with from three to five separate and distinct kinds of goods, counting trimmings, embroideries and laces, are handled in this modern cleaning process in such a way that when they come out they are as good as new, and no one but an expert could tell they had ever been worn.

For the Heavier Goods. In another department of a modern cleaning plant will be found the rug cleaning department. Here only rugs are handled. First there is a gigantic patent rug beater in which the rugs are beaten until most of the dust is removed. This is a large tin or sheet iron enclosure in which smooth and harmless paddles operated by steam beat and thrash the carpet and rugs until the dust is largely removed. They are taken through the several processes of cleaning, drying and stretching until when they are complete, they have not lost their shape, but are exactly as they were when they came from the store or home.

Back in the sixteenth century there were cleaners, or rather dyers, for in those days there was

more dyeing than cleaning. When a garment became so soiled that it could not be worn with decency, it could not always be thoroughly cleaned without destroying the fiber or ruining the garment, but it could very readily be dyed some other color, so that the soiled places were carefully concealed. From that day to twenty years ago little progress was made in the cleaning business, except that the use of gasoline was introduced. This was for a time used by hand in a tub, until the introduction of modern machinery in the modern plants.

Steam Furnishes the Power. While a strong right arm furnished power to wield the brush for cleaning purposes twenty years ago, today the modern plant has a large engine room, where the power for the plant is generated. Here great furnaces roar, and stokers have coal to supply the energy for working the plant. The various cleaning and drying rooms are a network of belts, gears, belt wheels and pulleys. The shove of a lever starts the machinery humming. The press of a button stops or starts any one of the great churn-like cleaners. A network of water pipes and steam pipes overruns the walls, many of them for no other purpose than for fire protection in case of an emergency, resulting from a possible gasoline explosion.

The air-drying process for the delicate garments is one of the interesting devices of the modern plant. It is a large drum-like device, much like the dryer in a leather renovating outfit. A few garments are placed into it at a time so that they have plenty of room as the cylinder revolves. Very hot air is forced into the cylinder as it revolves. The garments are blown back and forth from side to side in the revolving cylinder until they are dry and fluffy as feathers. This process not only thoroughly dries the garments, but it renovates them as well, so that not the remotest trace of a gasoline odor is to be found on the garment when it is taken from the cylinder.

In the Ironing Rooms. From this place it is ready to be taken to the ironing room. Here is a great room with numerous patent and automatic steam ironing devices. Many makes and sizes of these irons are necessary to best adapt each to the kind of work it is expected to do. Thus the irons that press out sleeves are vastly different from the irons that press the tail of a coat. The irons that press the legs of trousers are of a different size and shape from those that press the collar of a coat. Likewise, every workman works with his one iron and does not run about the room using every iron in the house according to the garment he happens to be pressing. He stays by his iron. He is an expert, highly specialized in the use of the iron to which he is assigned, and he presses the part of the garment for which his iron is made.

Thus the system of division of labor is as elaborately worked out as it is in a large modern meat packing plant, and the whole gigantic machinery of the plant rolls on grinding out old garments as good as new from morning till night.

Perhaps no place in the country has the cleaning and pressing business better specialized than has Omaha, for certainly few if any places do the work for less money than it is done by the large and elaborate plants in this city. It is said by those who know that there are no better cleaners in the world than there are in Omaha.

Saving the Gasoline. For the gasoline is not thrown out of the back door when it is once used to clean garments. Exactly 400 gallons of gasoline are used in cleaning a suit. It is worth 20 cents per gallon. That means that \$80 worth of gasoline goes to the cleaning of a suit. And the customer pays \$1.50 for the cleaning which has taken \$80 worth of gasoline to accomplish.

Now comes the work of the elaborate system

of distilling the gasoline. The dirt the gasoline took from the suit must be removed from the gasoline. The liquid goes into great tanks, is drawn through other tanks, through water and then through other heated tanks, finally evaporating and again being condensed, so that when it reaches the final tank it is as clean as it was before the first suit was cleaned. This process of cleaning clothes and then cleaning the gasoline, goes on continuously, and all that the plant loses is the little bit of gasoline that actually evaporates while the various processes are in operation.

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Business Program

- MONDAY, JULY 7.**
8 a. m. to 1:30 p. m.—Industrial Exposition Hall open to delegates and guests.
1:30 p. m.—Address of Welcome by Mayor James C. Dahlman. Response by President William H. Morgens. Delivery of Convention hall to the National Association of Dyers and Cleaners by C. V. Higby, president Nebraska Cleaners' and Dyers' Association. Convention called to order by President Morgens. Roll call of delegates. Regular order of business.
- TUESDAY, JULY 8.**
8 a. m. to 10 a. m.—Industrial Exposition hall open to delegates and guests.
10 a. m.—Convention called to order. Regular order of business.
12 m. to 3 p. m.—Industrial Exposition hall open.
3 p. m.—Convention called to order. Lecture (to be announced). Regular order of business.
- WEDNESDAY, JULY 9.**
8 a. m. to 10 a. m.—Industrial Exposition hall open.
10 a. m.—Convention called to order. Regular order of business.
12 m. to 3 p. m.—Industrial Exposition hall open.
3 p. m.—Convention called to order. Lecture (to be announced). Regular order of business.
- THURSDAY, JULY 10.**
8 a. m. to 10 a. m.—Industrial Exposition hall open.
10 a. m.—Convention called to order. Regular order of business.
12 m. to 3 p. m.—Industrial Exposition hall open.
3 p. m.—Convention called to order. Lecture (to be announced). Regular order of business. Adjournment.

Entertainment Program

- MONDAY, JULY 7.**
7 a. m. to 12 m.—Arrival and greeting of delegates at Hotel Rome, 16th and Jackson streets.
8 p. m. sharp—For the Men—Grand Ak-Sar-Ben initiation and opera at "Den" of "Samson," 20th and Spruce streets. Special cars leave Hotel Rome at 7:30 p. m.
8 p. m.—For the Ladies—Reception at Hotel Rome. Entertainment and refreshments.
- TUESDAY, JULY 8.**
8 p. m.—For the Ladies—Automobile sight-seeing trip for ladies. Automobiles will leave Hotel Rome at 8 o'clock sharp. The tour will include principle business and residence sections, together with parks and other points of interest. A very interesting feature will be a ride over part of the path of the tornado which visited Omaha Easter Sunday.
8 p. m.—Good Fellowship meeting at Hotel Rome. A Dutch lunch will be served and there will be ample liquid refreshments. Something doing all the time. For members and ladies and their friends.
- WEDNESDAY, JULY 9.**
10 a. m.—Shopping tour for ladies, with luncheon.
8 p. m.—Theater party at the Empress theater, 1314-D Douglas street, for members and ladies. Special vaudeville program, including a sketch written and staged expressly for this occasion by Edith Spencer O'Donnell. Something original that will drive away the blues.
- THURSDAY, JULY 10.**
7:30 p. m.—Banquet for members and ladies at Hotel Rome. Something different in a menu, and a fine list of toasts.