

The Free Press Short Story

The Valentine Party Dress

MARGARET E. SANDSTER

HE dress looked back at her from the window. It was almost brazenly beautiful, with its shimmer of bright satin. At nineteen dollars and eighty-five cents the satin may have been synthetic, who knows?

The dress seemed, at the moment, to be alive and laughing. Even a dress in a shop window must have known that Valerie was speaking the truth when she said that pink was her color!

Valerie had known at the beginning, however, nineteen dollars and eighty-five cents was just as inaccessible as nine hundred dollars and eighty-five cents would have been.

This had been, in the first place, such an unusually hard week. Mother had suffered one of her sick spells and the doctor had ordered unusually expensive medicine.

Next Theodore's shoes had chosen this week to break through at the toes. They had broken through so completely that there was not even the slightest use of taking them to a cobbler for repairs!

She needed a lovely frock to wear to a Valentine party that very night. It was an important party she knew, because Roger had been so anxious over the matter of her acceptance!

It is tragic to be young and pretty, to crave nice clothes and to so seldom be able to own them. Valerie, at twenty, was the sole support of a widowed mother and a little brother.

When Valerie was taken out to dine, she was always taken to a smart hotel. When Roger took her to a party, it was a real party at which people wore beautiful clothes!

Roger was new in his profession. He was only a very young lawyer, a struggling one; he laughingly called himself "a lawyer."

Valerie did not pause. The woman's pointing finger had shown her almost half a block distant, a portly, elderly figure dressed in immaculate broadcloth.

"Oh, sir," she gasped, as she came up to the man's side, "did you drop this?" In her hand she extended the green bill.

The elderly gentleman was regarding her benevolently. "Nonsense, my son!" he ejaculated. "What an honest child it is. Yes," he laughed, "I did drop it. I hoped somebody who could use it would pick it up. It's an old—"

For a moment the girl stood gasping. It was like a fairy tale. Almost without her own volition, then, she turned and was running back to the doorway. "It's mine! Roger will—"

She wanted to burst into swift, hysterical tears. All thoughts of tears vanished, however, after she met the look in Roger's eyes.

"Say, but you're lovely," said Roger as he stared at her. "I never saw you back—"

Valerie was flushing. The flush deepened until it reached all the way to her curly hair as she heard Roger repeating himself. "Why," he was saying, "I never in all my life saw anyone look so—"

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and glamor in the shape of rosy satin. Fast the perfume counter she sped. Just as she was passing, she heard a crash and turned sharply to see a thin, white-faced little cash girl wringing her hands above the wreck of a cut-glass bottle that lay on the floor of the aisle.

"Oh, my land!" the little cash girl was sobbing hysterically. "Oh, what'll I do? I broke it. . . . And I can never make up for it!"

Just for a moment in that big store they were isolated, the two of them, Valerie and the cash girl. Just for a moment happy brown eyes looked into frightened gray ones.

The woman in taffeta spoke, and her voice was as soft as her hand. "I guess I don't have to tell you," she said to the trembling cash girl, "what this means!"

Valerie did not know just what prompted her to speak. After all, the cash girl was a stranger. Somehow it was as though "something inside of her" spoke.

"You mustn't blame her," she said swiftly to the taffeta-gowned buyer; "it wasn't her fault. I might have knocked against it when I was passing. Of course," her brown eyes held the gaze of the angry woman, "I'll make good. How much was the perfume?"

The floor manager, still fingering the lapel of his coat, turned away. The crowd of shoppers began to evaporate. The little cash girl, with eyes as bewildered and incredulous as the eyes of a lost dog who has found a friend, was staring at Valerie.

"The coat of it is just twenty dollars," she said aloud. In her heart she said, "After all, it wasn't my money. It was just sort of loaned to me."

Somehow, as she walked back down the aisles of the store, with the empty receipt as tightly clutched as the money had been, she found that she was laughing, laughing aloud. It did not sound like her own voice that was doing the laughing, either.

As she went into the tiny living room to meet him, Valerie was very conscious of the fact that she did not look either grand or successful. She was immaculate enough, for since she had come home from the office she had washed and pressed the white organdie dress, and had shampooed her hair.

She was aware of the fact that the organdie shoes were just summer shoes masquerading, and that there were badly worn places under some of the organdie ruffles.

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Busy Bees Gather Pollen, Sip Sweets at Same Time

Among nature's many unique ways of doing different things in her method of effecting the pollination of different plants. Some plants, it is true, carry out this process without any outside aid whatever, others use the winds as their agent, while still others are completely powerless to help themselves even with the aid of the wind.

Probably the most common of this type is white clover, says Pathfinder Magazine. One of nature's cleverest plans is carried out before our eyes without our being aware of it. Having utilized from the structure of this plant any means by which it can cross-pollinate its own blossoms, nature provides faithful agents. Most of such work is carried on by the bee. The bloom, having a substance which the bee desires for food, attracts the bee to them.

In the course of getting his food he performs the required service for the plant. Coming in contact with the stamens of one blossom, some grains of pollen adhere to his body and are then carried to other blossoms.

In tests to determine what amount of this work was done by insects two equal-sized patches of white clover were chosen. One was surrounded with screens to prevent the entrance of any insects and the other was left entirely open. At the end of the season the enclosed patch yielded five shriveled seeds as compared to the 50,000 healthy ones yielded by the open patch.

Some Presidents Served While Parents Survived

Four fathers and eight mothers had the singular pleasure of seeing their sons serve as Presidents of the United States.

Jesse Grant served as postmaster under his son, U. S. Grant, and his mother lived for fourteen years after his Presidency and died two years before he died.

Calvin Coolidge was administered his oath of office by his father, John Coolidge. Zachary Taylor's father was living when he went to the White House, as was John Quincy Adams' father, the former President, John Adams. George Washington's mother was alive at the time of his inaugural and so was Mrs. Susanna Adams, mother of John Adams. Mrs. Nelly Madison was living at the time her son, James, became the nation's executive, and Mrs. Jane Polk outlived her son, James Polk.

The mothers of James A. Garfield and William McKinley attended the funerals of their sons, as did Mrs. James Roosevelt on March 4, 1903, when her son took the country's helm.

Free and Easy

Sans souci is from the French and means without care, free and easy, and if it is the name Frederick the Great gave to the royal palace he built near Potsdam in 1747, Mme. Sans Gene was the nickname of the wife of Lafayette, duke of Dantzic, one of Napoleon's marshals.

She started out life as a washerwoman and while her husband was in the ranks, during the Napoleonic wars, she followed the army from camp to camp. Fame and fortune came the couple's way and they entered the court of France. Though she was a kind, pleasant woman, her lack of etiquette made her the laughing stock of the court and earned her the nickname, which still clings to her and means "without constraint."

Founding the Epworth League

The Epworth league was founded in Cleveland, Ohio, May 15, 1889, by a group of five societies of Methodist young people. No particular individual seems especially identified with the founding. The league takes its name for Epworth parish in England, where John Wesley, founder of Methodism, was born. It has grown rapidly and is represented in both the Methodist Church North and South and has branches in a dozen foreign countries, including China. There are 30,000 chapters and 2,000,000 members.

Part of Roman Empire

The countries now known as Great Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Luxembourg, San Marino, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Monaco, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt, the borderlands of northern Africa touching the Mediterranean sea, and Spain and Portugal were included in the Roman empire at the height of its power.

Homelessness

Homelessness sometimes becomes so intense that the sufferer not only loses all desire to eat and sleep but develops a melancholia which leads to insanity and death. In fact, army medical officers recognize it in extreme cases, as a disability which warrants a furlough, or even a discharge, in order to save a soldier's life. —Collins' Weekly.

Number Thirteen

Various theories of the origin of the superstition surrounding the number thirteen are advanced, but probably the one most widely circulated is that it arose from the fact that thirteen persons sat down to the last supper with Christ, just before the betrayal by Judas. The superstition that Friday the thirteenth has no evil to mention is explained by the fact that Friday became feared as the day of the crucifixion.

News! 'SALADA' TEA announces a new delicious blend Yellow Label 28c - 1/2 lb Outstanding Quality - Low Price

"You can't stop stoking a steam engine" said Wrigley. Interviewed, and asked to what he attributed his phenomenal success, the late Mr. Wrigley, of chewing gum fame, replied "To the consistent advertising of a good product." "But," asked the reporter, "having captured practically the entire market, why continue to spend vast sums annually on advertising?" Wrigley's reply was illuminating. "Once having raised steam in an engine," he stated, "it requires continuous stoking to keep it up. Advertising stokes up business and keeps it running on a full head of steam." This applies to your business, too. Don't make a secret of your product. Tell people all about it. Tell them what it does. Tell them its advantages. Tell them where to get it. Tell them through the press and keep on telling them. Everybody Reads Newspapers Free Press Advertising PAYS! If You Expect to Sell, You Must Advertise