



She COUNTS the SPOTS on the NATION'S VESTS

From October to June, school children show up with ink spots, reports Miss Miriam Cooper, shown above.

By Helen Welshimer

COUNTER of the spots! Gravy spots, soup spots, ink spots, liquor spots, molasses spots, chocolate spots—any kind of spots!

In brief, the slips between the cup and the lip are becoming spot news today. When home ornamentation is added to a vest or frock, the public is taking the count. There are 200 dry cleaning firms in America that are keeping score. They are doing it because Miriam Cooper, who likes to add, spotted herself a new career.

She describes her new count willingly.

"In the 200 dry cleaning firms from which we gather statistics we discovered last year 4,785,000 gravy spots were removed by dry cleaners following the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year gaieties," she says. "We obliterated 3,230,000 of them from men's suits and 890,000 from men's vests alone."

Men, it seems, are more likely to spill the gravy than are women!

"During January and February dry cleaners have an odor that reminds you of a distillery. That's because liquor stains are being removed. Our co-operating firms reported more than a million stains that were removed from evening gowns and men's formal clothes early this year.

"April and May are good for perfume. Women's dresses yielded more than three million sweet smelling spots in the spring months. Then, in September and October, we have the tar and grease months when people are taking automobile rides and bringing home evidence on their clothes. Last year, during these two months, the score we compiled revealed 2,879,000 smudges from oil, tar and grease."

It is from October to June that the school children show their spots. They are ink. More than 3,000,000 of them were reported last year.

Miriam Cooper didn't undertake her job because she is good at arithmetic. She doesn't think that knowing the number of spots from any given cause is worth even 47 cents, let alone a dollar or two, unless there is a purpose back of the compilation. She has a definite one.

"It just happened, though," she says. "When I was graduated from New York University I wanted to go on the stage. My father, Phil Cooper, who owns a chain of dry cleaning establishments, wanted to come into his business. Finally he saw me in a play and decided to lend me his encouragement. Broadway was hard to crash and as I watched old actors, out of parts, trying to obtain roles, I decided that the stage was too hard a life, perhaps, after all.

"Meantime my father announced that he was going to give me \$25 a week,



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and that I should come into his business and do anything that I pleased."

So the pretty dark-eyed, dark-haired girl went down to the main office one day. She went to the subsidiary offices and the manufacturing plant and every place else connected with the system. She saw clothes checked in, separated, put in the cleansing baths.

She didn't know what to do about it, though. She kept coming to the office. Gradually an idea was born.

"I had been drifting from store to store when I discovered I was becoming immersed in all phases of the cleaning business," she explains. "I began to notice that the general approach to dry cleaning wasn't nearly as progressive as was the approach to cosmetics, for example.

"Women were asking themselves if certain rouges and creams were good for their skin. They didn't puzzle much about whether certain methods

of cleaning were good for their clothes. Each dry cleaner was interested in his own peculiar business instead of the general field, as were the cosmeticians.

"So I began to work on the idea of spots as a beginning. It was a general approach for the dry cleaners to use in getting together.

"If dry cleaners had accumulated working data on the relative progress of spots, they would know just what spots to expect each month. Therefore, they could prepare the right chemicals for those special stains. Different spots require different treatment.

"**T**HEN I decided that the public needed to be educated into helping the dry cleaner. You see, if you get a spot in a dress and it stays there too long, it sets and the cleaner must use much stronger chemicals to remove it than he would have to do otherwise. People should be taught to bring their clothes in at once. The garments would wear much longer, for nothing is ever used that injures color or fabric in good dry cleaning."

The public should be trained to be spot conscious, too, the spot expert contends.

For instance, if the yellow-haired creature who sits on your left at dinner suddenly discovers that her black velvet frock has an adornment, she should make a mental note of the fact that a potato slipped or a soup spoon wavered. When she goes to the dry cleaner the next day she should point to the stain and say: "That is a soup spot."

If her pink chiffon shows trace of vanished perfume, she should be definite. "That is a perfume discoloration," would be her best statement. In fact, Miss Cooper says a wise woman will pin slips of paper over the spots, indicating what they are.

"In that way the spotter is able to identify them without experimentation," she explains. "When spots have been in material for two days it isn't easy always to tell what produced them. Blood and ink look alike after 48 hours, for instance."

One of Miss Cooper's contentions, which her own father and other experts are trying, is the presenting to clients of a list of instructions as how to remove spots. For instance, if you spill ink on your handkerchief or dress, run to the bathroom, turn on the cold water, and daub water on the place until the stain is gone. It's simple enough to do. It saves work, too.

"At first sight, this appears to be a way of spoiling our business," the expert spotter says. "It isn't, though. There are some people always who will want to practice homemade removal of spots. Therefore they might as well know how to do it.

"The hundreds of garments that are constantly brought in, showing places where color has been removed by use of wrong home remedies, shows the need of this knowledge. After all, if people know what to do, when the time comes that their clothes must have a professional cleaning it is much easier for the dry cleaner to take care of them."

There is quite a process back of the spot count. Imagine, for instance, that you let some coffee spill on your vest. The vest would be separated from other clothes. It would join other vests of the same color and about as dirty.

In fact, here is the line-up. Garments are segregated according to types of material, types of color, types of garment and degrees of dirtiness. Then each lot is put into a separate bath of fluid.

Maybe 50 lots are cleaned, each garment remaining for two hours. Then, after they leave the fluid, they are put in a dry room where the fluid and the odor are removed. The spotter then takes a hand. Now it is time for the count!

The spotter examines each garment for spots and treats each one separately. This is good work for women. They learn to do it swiftly, the expert reports.

Miss Cooper hasn't given up her interest in the stage, though she now keeps her eyes on the wardrobes. She swims, drives a car, plays tennis, and likes walking. Moreover, she is married to a young real estate man, Leonard R. Miller, in New York, and keeps house in a modernistic apartment overlooking Central Park. It is, as you may have imagined, spotlessly clean.