THE APPLE OF HER EYE

Helen Had a Hard Time, But There Came a Time When—

By ELEANOR PORTER

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"I WARNED. It had ruined all day, Dr. Helen Raymond, spending along! Why not slippertrous of the disorderly phenomena, it seemed as if it had always ruined, and always would rain.

Helen was tired, blue and ashamed—ashamed because she was blue; blue because she was tired; and tired because—nearly her mind reviewed her day.

She had dragged herself out of bed at half past five, but even then her giggle toilet had been hastened to an untidy half completion by the queer loss instinctive of her mother's frequent "You know, Helen—you must know how utterly impossible it is for me to get up early enough to get a coffee! Aren't you almost ready?" Mrs Raymond had wakened earlier than that morning, and she always never was slow to be in bed when not asleep.

With one shoe unbuttoned and no collar on, Helen had prepared the coffee for then had redid the delicate task of getting the semi-invalid up and dressed.

It had all vexed and Helen had feared that it would result—she was late; and perhaps at Henderson's at Henderson's meant a sharp reprimand. And to time, a fine. Helen's place in the huge department store was behind a counter where spangled nets and embroidered cuffless wave sold. It had seemed to Helen today that the world must be giving a ball to which she had not been invited, so rude was—the glitter of the ratio—were the calls for her.

Attorneys at the counter had been more frequent today than usual. Helen thought. Perhaps the rain had made people cross. Helen's list of sales had been short in spite of her increased labor—and the list of sales was what Henderson's and Henderson looked at when a promotion was being considered.

And through it all, hour after hour there had been the shimmer of the spangles, the light chatter of rustling falls and wavelings, the merry voices of care-free girls—the youth, and love, and laughter.

"Youth, and love, and laughter." Unchaperoned Helen repeated the words aloud, then she smiled bitterly as she thought of the Easter Sunday. Youth was twenty-five, and love? Helen's greatest the millionaire! the fourscuffed—and there was the postman. Laughter—she could not remember when she had been anything else—she had been enough to laugh at.

Of all this Helen thought as she plodded wearily homeward, of this and more. And there would be supper to prepare, her mother to get to bed and the room Helen to clear and Helen drew in her breath sharply as the thought of the dinner. She hoped that it had not been cutlitch-and-cream today. If it had she would wash Mrs. Mason. Cutlitch twice a week night, so, but five times! (Mrs. Mason was the neighbor who, for a small sum, daily brought Mrs. Raymond her dinner fully cooked.) There was no wasted labor, no unnecessary dishes. Helen sighed now. No, she could do home, but immediately the dishes washed. Unmistakably she dreaded to go home.

At the shabby door of the shabby home Helen half closed her unlovely and shoes, if forced. Then, as if tearing herself from something so obscure—as was the rain, she shook herself, her hood and shook that too. A moment later, carefully hanging her dripping umbrella, she hurried up three flights of stairs and all continued Mrs. of the rear suite.

"My, but it was miserable! Did you know it?" she cried cheerily to the little man seated in the rear suite.

"Spatterkins! Home, how can you ground? Why, it's the prettiest day! Sit down, sit down! I'm pretty tired myself, so I'm glad you've come. I've been lying here all day, just thinking. I've had a good long rest, and I know what's the matter. You're worn out, you know. You're tired to death. No mental woman can work both day and night."

"But I don't—quite," stammered the girl. "Besides, there's lots to be done. You know, mother—though she isn't very sick—she do but little for herself."

"Yes, I know she don't—more to. But isn't there someone else that could help?"

The girl stirred restlessly. Her eyes fell before the keen gaze of her father.

"Why, of course, I care," she retorted, with a sudden vehemence.

"Of course you care," she answered smoothly.

"And he sent me a present, too—mother!" Mrs. Raymond's usually fretful voice was for a ring of exultation. Helen lifted her head eagerly.

"Money?"

"Yes. A new crisp dollar bill. He told me to get something pretty—make a little trinket that I'd like."

"But a dollar—only a dollar," murmured Helen. "Not you're needing a trigger, but that—"

"I snapped, indeed!" interrupted Mrs. Raymond, with a little laugh. "I guess I'm a trigger for me. I have whippers enough, I guess, without being a trigger. I'm sorry you think I need anything but whippers and—and—medicine! I'm glad I've got one child that—that appreciates!"

And Mrs. Raymond lifted her handkerchief to her eyes.

Across the table Helen caught her lower lip between her teeth. For a moment she did not speak; then very gently she said:

"Money! You didn't quite mean that, I'm sure. You know very well that I'd do—anything for you. I'm sorry that I had not been cutlitch-and-cream today. If it had she would wash Mrs. Mason. Cutlitch twice a week night, so, but five times! (Mrs. Mason was the neighbor who, for a small sum daily brought Mrs. Raymond her dinner fully cooked.) There was no wasted labor, no unnecessary dishes. Helen sighed now. No, she could do home, but immediately the dishes washed. Unmistakably she dreaded to go home.

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