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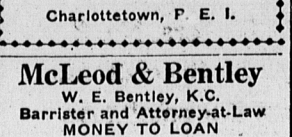
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The Woman Who Loved and Earned

BY JANE PHELPS A Modern Story of Home and Business

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Say Gerry, what do you think has happened?" Mary Ryan said the next morning. She was required to be at the shop half an hour earlier than I was and often retailed a bit of gossip when I came in. "I haven't the least idea." I still felt a bit hurt and worried over Robert, and my mind was upon my own affairs.

"Yours truly is a full-fledged saleswoman. No more hustling down mornings for little Mary. Let George do it now! George or Annie, it makes no difference to me. Watch out or I'll grab your job. I'm out to make a record. Then more seriously: "Ain't it queer what little things do to folks? I had n't been walking behind Madame that day and picked up her pocket book I wouldn't have been here. Then wouldn't perhaps ever been in a millinery shop at all; I wouldn't have known you or anything."

"Yes, it is sometimes a very insignificant action that affects our lives. I am very glad for you Mary. It isn't anything more than you deserve. You can sell as well as I can now. But don't have your eyes or heart fixed on my position; I shall keep it myself—unless I am discharged."

"No danger, of that," she returned then muttered something that sounded like "I wish there was," but a customer came in just then and I forgot all about it. For several days Robert came home regularly. We spent one evening with the Weeds. At first I enjoyed myself, but later, in the evening something happened that made me sorry I went. Betty and I were talking of clothes. I had helped her fix a hat, when I overheard her say to Robert: "I got my expected raise yesterday Bob."

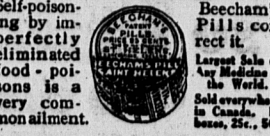
"That's fine," Robert replied. "I didn't." "It must have been favoritism. I know they have always thought a heap of you down there. They used to blow about your ability." "Do you suppose he intends to stay long?" I was rather terrified at the idea of this visit. "Goodness no! How can she? If we were keeping house she might, but not here."

"I felt like saying I was thankful we were there if it would prevent his aunt making a long visit, but he caught myself in time. After all she was Robert's aunt; almost the only relative he had in the world. If he wanted her to remain, it was my business to be nice to her. So I replied: "She may like it here. How old is she?" "Oh, about fifty anyway!"

Two days afterward when I reached home Robert was there and so was Aunt Felicia. "Geraldine, this is my aunt, you remember she wrote she was coming. Aunt Felicia, my wife." As I shook hands with the tall-eyed woman whom Bob had just introduced I did not wonder he had not called me "Gerry." Pet names would not appeal to a woman of her type. I felt sort of dazed and helpless as I looked at her stern forbidding face, and noticed the erect, uncompromising way she sat in the straight backed chair.

"I'll be ready for dinner in a moment," I said as I took off my hat. "Do hurry," Robert said in an anxious tone. "We have been waiting some time for you." "I wanted to talk with Bob about it terribly, but I feared to hurt his feelings. He seemed so sensitive of late; so quick to resent any suggestion. So I chatted of impersonal things all the way home. "Betty Weeds is so helpless about some things," I opined. "It was funny to see her try to fix that hat."

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married and left the place her parents lived when he was a small boy. "Look at that Gerry," he said handing me a letter, "I had forgotten there was such a person."

I opened the letter and turned it over. It was signed: "Your aunt Felicia." Then I commenced to read: "My dear nephew Robert, I expect you will be very much surprised to hear from me, your mother's younger sister. I shall be in you, town in a few days, almost as soon as this letter can reach you and shall look you up. Naturally you will not remember me, as you were a babe in arms when I last, and first, saw you. I hope you will be glad to see one of your mother's kin, and that you have grown up to be the sort of man she would want you to be if she had lived. Your aunt Felicia."

"Well?" I said. "I suppose we will have to make the best of it, but I could have survived if she had not renewed her acquaintance with the 'babe in arms' as she calls me. I remember mother did have a sister of that name. I wonder if she is Miss or Mrs. I can't remember, and nothing she says in that note tells us."

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had loved her he would not have wanted to marry me. It sounds simple, but at the time it did not seem so simple as it sounds. "How long will your aunt stay?" I asked the next morning. "How do I know! Why don't you ask her?"

"Oh, Robert, how could I?" Robert was still depressed and a bit morose. It seemed futile to try to talk to him, so I desisted. It was as bad as living with a bear with a sore paw, I told him, he was so grouchy. "After breakfast I said to Aunt Felicia—as Robert had insisted I call her—

"You must be sure to go to the Museum before you leave." As if I had put into words the thought in my mind, she answered: "I shall have plenty of time for that and other things as well. I told Robert I should remain another month with you—you know you leave me alone all day—that I feel another month will be scarcely enough to become acquainted with you both." She invariably spoke of being left alone in an injured voice that annoyed me. She knew I went to business and if she didn't like it she might go.

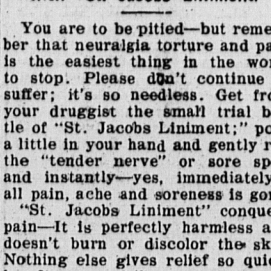
"I really tried to hide my exasperation from her and answered her always in a respectful way. She never sympathized with me or seemed to think it anything out of the way when Robert remained in town. I would not imitate his aunt, I thought, as I repressed the desire. "Did you enjoy the dinner?" "Did I? You should have seen me eat, I was so ashamed of my appetite that I stopped at the drug store on my way home and ordered a big box of candy sent to Marion."

"That probably cost more than you'd dinner," I said, hurt because he had not brought me candy for some time. "Perhaps, but not worth more than to go and sit at a table where everyone is pleasant and happy, and where the talk is interesting, instead of listening to a lot of gossip or talk in which it is impossible to be interested because one cares nothing for the people. I'm sorry you beguiled Marion the candy."

"Be silly, Robert!" "We agreed that I would not sleep. I lay wondering what it could be he had said on the telephone to Marion, and wishing he had brought me a box of candy. As Mary Ryan had said, it is the little things in life that seem to count."

CHAPTER XXVI. Robert had been so frank in his telling of his evening with Marion. Hovey that I tried to be sensible and not feel hurt; but I couldn't. I had spent a miserable evening entertaining his aunt while he was having a good time. It comforted me a little, but only a little, to know he had called me up before accepting her invitation. As always, I said to myself: "He wouldn't have done it when we were first married, and I am no different now. That a man expects more from a wife than from a sweetheart did not occur to me. There was something dangerously close to jealousy burning in my heart. But I tried to remember that Robert had known Marion long before he had known me, and that

Mid-Month List of Columbia Records

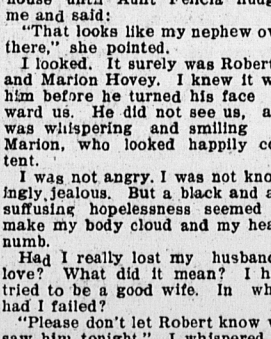


Art Hickman's Dance Orchestra Came From San Francisco to New York To Make These 8 Exclusive Columbia Dance Records

From the St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, by way of the New Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic and the Biltmore Hotel to the Columbia Recording Laboratory. That was the record-breaking, record-making trip this exclusive Columbia organization undertook to play:

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Those Draftin' Blues—Medley Fox-trot—introducing "St. Francis Blues" A-2816 90c
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Sweet and Low—Waltz A-2818 90c

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hoped when we were married." "Perhaps you do not give him any incentive." "I don't know what you mean?" "Some women are so constituted that pretty clothes and a chance to show them off are more to them than the happiness or comfort of the man they marry."

"I suppose you mean—are talking of me?" "Robert tells me he hates this boarding house—that he would rather go hungry than eat here day after day. Why don't you keep house for him?" "What on? You surely couldn't expect us to live on Bob's salary!" I felt like telling her that it was my money what was paying her board while she visited us. "I guess you could if you tried."

But I know the way you feel. You are just like all the city girls nowadays. You hate to spoil your pretty hands washing dishes and working about the house; you would rather sell hats, or work in an office. When I was a girl a married woman thought her place was at home, making her husband comfortable and happy so that he didn't have to run getting into temptation. "It's a pretty poor sort of a man who can't withstand temptation. And as for Robert and me, I never shall give up my position until he earns enough to give us a decent home. There is no earthly reason why I should!" It was the nearest to a quarrel we ever had come. "You make your own bed. You will have to lie in it. But remember, Geraldine, I warned you."

"I'll remember." I wondered why everyone seemed so determined to make me unhappy by blaming me because Robert did not get on. He had not been advanced, and his salary raised. We had been married a year, in which time mine had been raised twice. It would be simple lunacy for me to give up. We were comfortable, had a little now for extras besides our living expenses. I would have a really plain talk with Bob—I had intended to for a long time. I did not believe that it was a simple matter of longing to keep house that was depressing him. It was something else, something more vital to my happiness. It might be that it was Marion Hovey.

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