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JUST A GIRL

BY JANE PHELPS

THE TWO SISTERS SHOP CHAPTER 30

I found some yellow Japanese flower sprays in an artificial flower place. When I explained to the manager what I wanted them for, he hunted around and found a great bunch that had been mused by using them in the window.

"It looks like a million dollars!" Mary declared the day before we were to open. I had spent about \$20 buying our dishes, cooking utensils, and provisions.

"OLD-FASHIONED PANCAKES AND OTHER GOODIES SERVED HERE."

"THE TWO SISTERS SHOP."

"Folks will wonder where the other one is when she sees you!" Mary declared, but I could see she was delighted with the name we had chosen.

The morning we were to open we were up before daylight. We were going to help Mrs. Fagin all the morning—were not to open until 10.30 or 11 o'clock at first.

"You mustn't expect many the first day," Mrs. Fagin said as we hurried along, "and perhaps not for a good many days."

"I know you are saying that so we won't be disappointed if we have to eat all the pancakes ourselves," Mary retorted.

"Well, you see, folks is queer. They gets to goin' to a place and keeps on goin' just because they gets used to it; not always because the vitals is good."

"We only hope they will get used to coming to us," I joined in the conversation, "but we expect them to like the food also."

"Yes, don't try to give too much—too many kinds, but have every thing you give them the very best you know how to make. It is them kinds of things that helps an eatin' place."

"I should have them talk sometimes," she went on. "They say they would walk a mile to get our muffins. And Zena, we must be awful nice to the old folks when they come in, and to the tired work-methers, first as waitress, then as head, had taught her a good many things."

"You should have them talk sometimes," she went on. "They say they would walk a mile to get our muffins. And Zena, we must be awful nice to the old folks when they come in, and to the tired work-methers, first as waitress, then as head, had taught her a good many things."

"I'll take pancakes too," she said, and her companion duplicated her order.

"My done just right dearie. I bought a bit of bread—it won't take but a jiffy to toast—it will be browned off so nicely. I was embarrassed by the praise the woman bestowed."

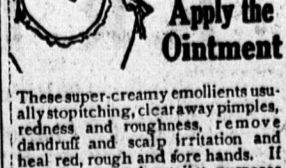
"This is something like toast! It is delicious. You must have a good cook. It's time we had a decent place in this part of town to run for a bit."

"Of course we will be good to them—all of them! Oh, how nice our little place will be! I exclaimed as she unlocked the door.

"Run up the curtain so folks will know you are open for business," Mrs. Fagin advised. "I'll go right into the kitchen and stir up the batter for the pancakes, although

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MOTHER!

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Accept "California" Syrup of Figs only—look for the name California on the package, then you are sure your child is having the best and most harmless physic for the little stomach, liver and bowels.

"I can't kick if we do," Mary declared as she drew up the shades, then arranged our pretty muslin curtains so they hung gracefully.

"THE FIRST CUSTOMER."

Mrs. Fagin had scarcely mixed her batter, and Mary and I set up our tables, when in walked Mr. Pope, the real estate agent.

"Whew! He whistled through his teeth, "but this is scrumptious! Let me compliment you young ladies. Is Mrs. Fagin around?"

"Sure she is, and waiting to serve you some lunch," she answered. "It's good you said nothing against me, because I could hear every word you said. Set right down, the pancakes will be ready in a minute."

"Will you have honey or syrup with them?" I asked as he seated himself.

"Honey, please. What else have you?"

"Nothing today but doughnuts and coffee."

"You mean the kind with lots of sugar on?"

"Yes. The kind your mother made," I answered smiling.

"I don't see where my money went, and all I can hope is you will refuse to serve me when I have had enough."

Mrs. Fagin came out and talked to him while he ate his cakes. She told him she couldn't be there all the time, but would keep track of things. He promised to send us some customers, and they were chatting away when the door opened and two nicely dressed ladies came in.

Mrs. Fagin fairly scuttled off to the kitchen, while Mary placed chairs for them at the window table, the choice one of them all.

"What a pretty place!" one of them exclaimed. "It looks so neat and clean." Let me see a menu please."

"We ain't got none," Mary replied. "We only serve pancakes, doughnuts and coffee today."

"Oh—I did so want some toast and tea!"

"I think I can manage that. Madame had overheard, and had no intention of disappointing our first customers—and such nice looking ones too."

"I'll take pancakes too," she said, and her companion duplicated her order.

"I whispered to Mrs. Fagin. I bought a bit of bread—it won't take but a jiffy to toast—it will be browned off so nicely. I was embarrassed by the praise the woman bestowed."

"This is something like toast! It is delicious. You must have a good cook. It's time we had a decent place in this part of town to run for a bit."

"Of course we will be good to them—all of them! Oh, how nice our little place will be! I exclaimed as she unlocked the door.

"Run up the curtain so folks will know you are open for business," Mrs. Fagin advised. "I'll go right into the kitchen and stir up the batter for the pancakes, although

the afternoon. She would come back to be at tea and dinner time.

"Gee, but ain't it swell!" Mary exclaimed when we were alone. "It is going to be very nice, Mary, and it is all owing to you. I never would have thought of it—never dared to try it had you not been so sure we could succeed."

A HAPPY DAY.

CHAPTER 32.

I shall always remember that first day at our little shop with delight. We were so wonderfully happy that I felt almost as if all my troubles were over, and that I never should be sad or lonely again.

For weeks I had sorely missed my dear Kenneth Lawrence. I had been so wrapped up in my unhappy thoughts, so discouraged, when so busy getting the shop in order, that I had—if not forgotten, at least ceased to think of him.

But that first day, about 5 o'clock a man came into the shop who reminded me so forcibly of Kenneth, that I could not get him out of my mind and lay wide awake for hours that night thinking of him. I recalled many things he had said about work and the pleasure of seeing him. He had been poor, but rich in heart as I had been. I smiled a bit sadly in the dark as I wondered what he would think of me as a business woman—whether he would laugh at me, or have faith in me.

When I finally slept, I dreamed of him. I was making pancakes, frying them on the griddle in our little kitchen, while Mrs. Fagin looked on. I awoke with a wish that it were true—that I could see him once more.

I had written Mother all about our venture, and the morning mail brought me a long letter. "I have faith that you will succeed. Keep your business small, dear. Do not try to expand, anyway for a long time. You are not strong enough—neither from what you have told me, is Mary—to handle anything big. Then, too, it takes capital to run a big business, and the lack of it means worry."

"I am so glad you mention that," I thought. "I have to go to a friend in Mrs. Fagin. Try to repay her as you go along by little kindnesses. You will see opportunity if you look for it."

"Aunt Susan is sending you a box of her wonderful preserves. You must ask a big price for them because they are most delicious—the sort city people never have."

"Among my things I found some napkins. I am sending them to you. I only kept the plainest ones we had, thinking some day you and I might keep house. But that is far away still, so use them in your 'Two Sisters Shop.' I do not like the idea of paper napkins. Women dislike them, and men abominate them. They might drive people away."

"I think constantly, dear, of my brave little girl, of the happy times she had before she left us, and of her struggle to get on her feet. Tell me all. Someway I thought not when I read your letter about the shop. It breathed such relief, such hope for better times that I feared it had been even harder for you than I have thought—sheltered as I am."

"Susan is an angel to me. I am well cared for and as happy as I can be with Dad on the other side, and you so far away. But perhaps some day we can be together again. If not, his will be done."

There was more, but only about intimate matters. I read what Mother had written about the shop to Mrs. Fagin and Mary.

She's right about them napkins," Mary said. "The men used to wad them up into tight little balls, and the women would try to use them but they were always slipping on the floor. We'll be bigger swells than ever when we get them linen napkins."

"Bring them home to be washed," practical Mrs. Fagin broke in. "They will last twice as long."

"My word! It is nice to have them preserved!" Mary exclaimed, smacking her lips. "I'll bet they're scrumptious."

"From what Mother has said, I judge Aunt Susan is a great housekeeper. She has fruit right on her little place, so of course it is better than the store fruit. How much shall we charge, Mrs. Fagin?"

"Wait until it comes. Perhaps it will be small jars, and you can sell them as they are. Folks pay an awful price for such stuff if it is nice."

"But that seems like cheating our regular customers," Mary spoke again. "I think we should ask so much for a portion, and serve it with toast or thin bread and butter."

"I agree with Mary," I told Mrs. Fagin and she, too, finally said Mary was right—that it would not

"I was going to propose selling them."

"Not on your life! You have learned to make pancakes so you won't mind if I take a little time to see if I can't put up preserves." Mary had first learned to make the cakes, then I had insisted that I, too, must know—one of us might be ill, or something happen. Our pancakes were our 'one best bet,' as Mary said.

Mrs. Fagin joined with Mary. "It is a good idea," she said. "And I don't think it will make too much work. The preserving is easy, and when business is light, and lasts only a few weeks. You can use my kitchen. That hole in the wall at the restaurant isn't big enough to do anything more in."

"I am the idea factory, but you are the real thing when it comes to putting them over!" Mary declared.

"You are sure it won't make too much work for you?" I asked. "Go with you! I'm only

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be fair to keep something very nice for just a few.

TIPS—AND PRESERVES CHAPTER 33.

"I hate taking tips from people!" I declared one day as Mary and I were counting the week's return in that direction.

"Why?"

"I feel like a beggar."

"You never ask for them, you even act as if you would give up anything."

"I know—but I would like to put up a sign. 'No tips received'."

"Do you know what that would mean?"

"Why, just that we wouldn't take tips—wouldn't it?"

"Yes—and something else too. A whole lot of people would set us down as cheap, and wouldn't come. Then we would get a lot of tight-wads who wouldn't spend anything to speak of and would fill our tables. Then, too, when we made our prices we considered the tips. If other places would not take tips we could cut them out, too, and I would be just as pleased as Punch to add a little to the prices, and let it go at that. But as long as others do take tips, we better not spring any surprise party on our customers."

"I guess, perhaps you are right, Mary. But I hate it just the same."

"I did it! I felt small and mean every time I took a tip, although I nearly always, escaped from my table before it could be handed to me. I took good care, too, not to pick it up until the donor had left."

I had agreed with Mary, but when I had become really established, I determined I would try the no-tip system, and see if it wouldn't work. The preserves came, three dozen small glasses. We gave Mrs. Fagin three of them, different fruits, and she said she never had tasted anything so good in all her life. They were perfectly delicious. We charged 25 cents a portion of each glass.

We told Mr. Pope and two or three of our regular customers we had them, and after they had ordered them once we did not need to say any more about them.

"They'll blow the roof off talking about them preserves!" Mary told me. "I don't know what they will do when we can't give them any more. Mob the place, I guess."

"It all shows that if you give people what they pay for they are only too glad to patronize you. But if you take their money and don't give them what they think they ought to have, they get sore and go to some other place," Mrs. Fagin returned.

"Say, Zena," Mary turned to me, a light in her eyes, "why can't we learn to make them preserves? Won't your Aunt Susan give us her receipt?"

"I guess so, but—"

"Now don't say we have too much to do. We haven't! There's money in them. You remember the letter she wrote, and said she didn't expect to get more'n 25 cents a glass for the ones she sold? We got 75 cents. I'll bet they don't cost more'n 15 cents after the first year. We have to buy the glasses, of course, but we can use them over and over. We've got them 36 to start with."

"I was going to propose selling them."

"Not on your life! You have learned to make pancakes so you won't mind if I take a little time to see if I can't put up preserves." Mary had first learned to make the cakes, then I had insisted that I, too, must know—one of us might be ill, or something happen. Our pancakes were our 'one best bet,' as Mary said.

Mrs. Fagin joined with Mary. "It is a good idea," she said. "And I don't think it will make too much work. The preserving is easy, and when business is light, and lasts only a few weeks. You can use my kitchen. That hole in the wall at the restaurant isn't big enough to do anything more in."

"I am the idea factory, but you are the real thing when it comes to putting them over!" Mary declared.

"You are sure it won't make too much work for you?" I asked. "Go with you! I'm only

leaving the kitchen." That night I wrote for the receipt.

STRAY THOUGHTS CHAPTER 34.

The recipe came almost immediately, and with it a long letter of instructions just how to proceed.

"We couldn't spoil them if we wanted to," Mary said, but I noticed she read the letter several times. I chafed her about learning it by heart.

"I'll stay away mornings I can get enough to last us," she said, "and who knows what mischief you will get into if I leave you alone all day."

Her preserves were just as good as Aunt Susan's. We had followed Aunt Susan's advice and had a farmer bring us his berries. They were much firmer and better than those sold in the markets. We bought the sugar at wholesale, and also the glasses.

"We're the real thing when it comes to business," Mary boasted. "In the fall we added to our menu tea biscuits, and eggs cooked in any way desired."

"We just want to have the biscuits," Mary explained to Mrs. Fagin. "They go with preserves, you know."

It had been a suggestion of one of our steady customers. She had praised the preserves, then said: "They would be delicious with hot tea biscuits." Mary had overheard, and the addition to the menu had been the result.

"We were doing very well, and so hired a girl to wash dishes and clean. We had put in three more tables, and even so, were often obliged to make people wait."

"Well, you must have to have a bigger place," I remarked to Mrs. Fagin one day after we had been running nearly seven months.

"Yes—but finish this year where you are. I was talking to Mr. Pope about you, and he is looking out for a larger place."

"You wonderful woman!" I said again, as I had said once months before.

"She's Irish, ain't she?" Mary asked again.

Mary had begun to study seriously. She bought some second-hand school books, and then we read to each other. I thought would help her. I had to have her studies drudgery for her, and so used the school books only when necessary. She was very quick; her grammar, her speech, was her greatest stumbling block.

"I never shall talk right—never. If I live to be as old as that fellow in the Bible who lived 900 years," she bemoaned.

"Oh, yes, you will. You improve every day." And she did. "Ain't and word like that which she had at all her life were still often on her lips, but almost invariably she would correct herself. You see, she had always been companionable, but now that we read good standard books together she would discuss them with me, often bringing out points I had failed to see. Her mind, like her wit, was quicker than mine. Her sense of humor, her quaint speeches, all made her most attractive."

"You would be a belle in any set if you could mingle with young people instead of having to spoil your days in the shop," I told her once.

"Ain't really doing better, Mary?"

"Indeed, you are! You never forget your 'Go' nowadays. You used to 'think them unnecessary.' Then I added, 'I notice Mr. Pope talks to you a lot, Mary. He's a bachelor. Be careful!'"

"Stop your kidding! He only talks about the shop and you. I honestly think he is falling in love with you Zena."

"Nonsense! We scarcely exchange a word unless we talk about pancakes."

"They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Perhaps the road to his riffs through his pockets."

I laughed, but as always when anything of the sort came up, my thoughts flew to Kenneth Lawrence—the man I never expected to see again, yet who had kept me from caring for any other—perhaps from marrying Jack Pryor. If he had not obeyed Mother, I should have heard from him—of that I was sure.

Some way, deep down in my heart, I knew that in that time so far away he had cared for me, cared more than he had allowed me to see. He had been a butterfly girl then, so he said, and he a poor man, and I had to care for me now? I doubted it. I had changed, and to my own fears, not for the better.

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