

The Woman Who Loved and Earned

BY JANE PHELPS
A Modern Story of Home and Business

GERRY'S SUCCESS

CHAPTER 112

I had been anxious to have the flat Robert spoke of for a long time. He was such a sociable soul, enjoyed both Frank and Carson so much, that it was partly on this account I desired to move. Then we had one more room, all the rooms were larger, and the apartment much more convenient in every way. We moved the first of the following month. Jane and Betty were delighted to have us in the same building, and we planned many good times for the coming winter. I was now doing on an average of four hours' work a day. That meant nearly \$50 a week to add to what Robert was getting. And it in no way interfered with our home life. I can realize how it might have done so. Had I been a young girl, I might have been a number of gay acquaintances who visited me or whom I wanted to be with, I can easily see how it might have been impossible to keep my home going as I did and work outside. Yet I had plenty of time for good, wholesome amusement, and enjoyed myself all the more because I shared all my pleasures with Robert. I had taken great pains in fitting up our apartment, and had spent considerable to do so. Robert and I talked this over together. "We will buy good things, substantial furniture, then it will last," he had declared, and I had agreed with him. But when it came to draperies, et cetera, I used my own ideas. When we were ready for

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Could Not Sleep Eruption Itched and Burned So

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our second housewarming I was perfectly satisfied with our comfortable and really artistic home. Mary Ann Gardner came. Little Gerry, named for me, came too. They were so happy, so perfectly satisfied with life and with each other that it was a treat to have them where one could look at them. "I am so busy I don't have a minute to myself since baby came," Mary declared. "If you had a baby, Gerry, I can see where we would all have to go to the shops for our hats just as we used to. Talk about making work! They are the greatest little work-makers in the world." "Between the baby and her flowers I hardly knew I had a wife this summer," Gardner pretended to pout. Mary's flower garden had been famous, and as the baby had been born in the early Spring, Gardner might have had cause to say he had little of her company. "You liked the flowers, but of course you don't care for the baby!" Mary teased—"he made more fuss over little Gerry than Mary did. "He had a delightful time, and Robert was so happy, such a prideful host, that as I looked at him the words of our marriage ceremony came to me: "To cherish until death us do part." Yes, that was it to cherish. At first I had thought love once given lasted always; that one need do nothing to conserve it because it had been freely given. Now I knew that of all things in the world love needs the most cherishing if it is to be lasting love, the love that brings happiness and contentment. It also came to me that it was the woman's part to cherish as much or more than the men's. He would cherish her—take care of her, if possible—but she must not only cherish him, but his love, if she would keep it from straying. I have said nothing about Marion Hovey because only once or twice in the last year had Robert visited her, then always at her invitation, and only when she made a plea for help. "I couldn't refuse her, Gerry, although I hated to leave you alone. But they were very kind to me, and I would like to help Marion if I can, he had said 'e last time he went to her. "Isn't the dinner now, then?" I queried, smiling. I would not let him see how I hated to have him go. "No, indeed! I get as good or better at home. Then here I have you besides." My heart sang for joy. I had no more fears of Marion's influence. I had cherished my husband's love that would not stray, even Marion-wards.

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I thought of the old saying, "There is no standing still—one either goes forward or slips backward." I was slipping backward in my work. This was only natural when I came to figure it out: to ask myself the reason. For over a year I had been using up my ideas gained in the shop. I had no way of getting new ones of the same class, so I was degenerating into the ordinary trimmer such as any one could hire for \$2 a day, instead of \$2 an hour. Of course I had not yet quite arrived at that point, but I was fast approaching it. One or two of my customers dropped off. I found new ones to take their place, but it showed which way the wind was blowing. I was glad to get the new ones, but it didn't much help the discouraged feeling I had at losing those with whom I had worked satisfactorily for a year. "How in the world could I expect to keep up with the smart boys?" I grumbled. I knew that at Madame Leets' I had had all the latest ideas from Europe as well as at home. Our imports were very heavy, and she never hesitated to spend any amount to secure the latest, most exclusive models. I had some sale. I suppose it is so with all kinds of work. Away from the atmosphere, away from the place where we see new ideas worked out daily, our work cannot help but deteriorate—as compared with that done under different conditions. Now I spend some time in the shops. But the exclusive shops do not welcome people who simply look, and I could learn nothing of help to me or my clientele in the ordinary stores. I lost two more customers. Mrs. Black was one of them. I had learned to like her very much, and was sorry that I could not please her. I knew that was it, although she made excuses of different sorts. She was trying not to hurt me. Had I not been a business woman, had I not really loved my work, I would have given it up then and there and let Robert take care of me as best he could—which now was very well indeed. But living was high, clothes cost more than before the war as did everything else. We would have to give up the idea of a little home in the suburbs unless I could help. I must find some way to keep my home just as I was keeping it, and still do the work I loved if I was to make our dream of a home of our own come true.

A PROMISING PLAN

CHAPTER 114
For days I thought of my problem. For it was a problem to me, although I knew many who read my simple story will wonder why I could not be contented to be just a housekeeper now that Robert was doing so well. But those women, have never been real business women, or, if they have, it was in some business that did not interest them beyond the size of their pay envelopes. I know that there must be many women in the world situated just as I was, who feel the same. Women without children who have too much time on their hands, but whose husbands do not want them to work outside of the home for fear they, their comfort, will be neglected—or because of false pride. I have known many young couples who, simply because of pride, have grubbed along on starvation wages rather than let the wife help, even when there were no children or other cause for her to remain idle save for the short time it took to do the work of two or three rooms. I can't see how a man can be so foolish. The working girl, whether from shop or office, isn't accustomed to so much time. Usually she gets in to mischief of some sort, and often times the end is divorce, caused simply by nothing to do. Small flats with every convenience do not require the time to take care of that a house does. The small-town girl, with her tiny house and garden, chickens, et cetera, has her day well filled, while the poor city girl—I am speaking now of working girls who marry small-salaried men—often finished in an hour or two, and then has nothing to do but walk the streets.

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streets or go to motion pictures. This is especially true of the very young wife. Girls like Betty and Jane, who wait until they are 25 or more before marrying—and then, as Betty and Jane did, have families—often regret their waiting. One more customer dropped out. Mrs. Platt, the woman to whom Mrs. Black had so kindly recommended me. I was to go to her that day. In the morning mail was a note from her—a kind, rather thiny message, saying for saying she would not need me any more. I sat down and cried. I had hoped so much from my work, and I had failed. Of course I had succeeded for a time, and it had helped wonderfully in keeping me contented, and alive in furnishing our home. But to fail!

TELLING ROBERT

CHAPTER 116
We all know that most of the objections against a woman continuing to work after her marriage are founded upon prejudice and pride—the world-old idea that a wife must be a clinging vine to the public, even if she takes in washing to do at home. A young man thinks it reflects upon him not to support his wife in a supposed idleness, even if that support is of the meagerest. Oftentimes the girl is partly to blame. She fears that people will think she has not 'married well,' or that her choice of a husband has been a mistake, if she continues to shop or office. Skimping, going without what they might enjoy did both work, does not tend to make happiness. Then, too, most women who have been in any sort of business long enough to make themselves felt, to prove ability in their particular line, regret giving up their work. They may not say so at first, but after a time. Then they may have been accustomed to the excitement of feeling they were necessary to the support of the wheel of some business. They become bored and lonesome when the hours hang heavy on their idle hands. If the men poor working girls marry were able to let them sit on a cushion and see a man's seat might be a different matter. But as rule the poor boy with his way to make, marries the poor girl who is caring herself. Of course, children sometimes make it a difficult problem. But even so, if a wife can earn more than her cost of living, why not have one who is capable, and not go on helping Tom, Dick or Harry? Jane, Betty and I used to talk about this subject by the hour. While their husbands were doing well, earning good salaries, they had not been thinking of it in the portion the expenses had increased. The girls felt just as I did, although both had given in to their husband's wishes in the matter. Now they also decided to help. Their children kept them from taking positions, but Jane registered did copying for a friction writer, so helping out considerably. The month passed swiftly and happily. I had found it no harder than the house-to-house work, and had soon regained all I had lost. I had plenty of time for my home, kept it spotless, and Robert happy. Naturally, had we lived in a large house, even in a large apartment, I could not have done as well. But people on small salaries have no business with large expensive apartments or houses. "I want to talk to you dear," I said one night after dinner. Robert was in particularly good humor. Things had gone unusually well at the store and he had thoroughly enjoyed his dinner. "Fire away, dear." "Robert, I want to work for Madame Leets." Then without giving him time to reply, I went on an explained how I had lost my knack by seeing nothing worth studying, and that I felt sure I could make him just as happy as I did now. "I haven't proved, Robert, that a woman can make a home and still earn money?" "When she is a sort of a free lance, yes." He was very serious. "But if you were working for her it would be very different. She would demand all your time—then where would I come in?" "So you don't want me to take it? She will give me \$50 a week. And Robert, food, clothes, everything is costing so much more. I feel wicked to allow you to pay for everything when I can help—and love to." "I'd rather live on bread and milk than to go back to the old regime. Whenever I think of Madame Leets and the boarding

you the very best there is in me from 10 in the morning until 4.30 in the afternoon—I had figured that I might take an hour more in the morning, and a half hour in the afternoon as I would not be running from place to place as I had been. "What salary do you want?" "What are you willing to give me for those hours? And Madame, I will try to make up in my work for the shorter hours." "I will give you \$50—and glad to do it. I hope you won't leave me again."

I went out to talk to the girls literally walking on air. I had not expected quite so much. I would have taken \$40. I visited a moment or two with each of the girls I knew, then hurried home. Those of my customers who still remained must be told that I could visit them no longer, and invited to come to me at Madame Leets'. Then I had not yet decided what to do about telling Robert. I had already proved to him that a woman could earn money and still neglect her home or her husband. But now I had to show him that a woman could take a permanent position, and be just as good a wife.

Whenever we had talked the matter over he had contended that the latter was impossible. "It's quite another matter when you are a free lance, going on your own time. But if a woman is tied to hours, has to be on the qui vive to make money for someone else, she can't keep house, or be any sort of a companion for her husband. We tried it without the housekeeping, Gerry, and even then it didn't work. You were tired to death all the time, and so bound up in your work you could talk of nothing but hats. I had no companionship at all."

I might have reminded him that now he talked about that I scarcely ever spoke of my work. But I didn't. Living was soaring. It wasn't fair, aside from everything else, for me to sit idle a great share of the time, while he strained every nerve to meet the increased cost.

Finally I decided not to tell him for one month—to try it out before I said anything. I made Jane and Betty promise not to mention it. Then I took my old place in the shop.

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"I'd rather live on bread and milk than to go back to the old regime. Whenever I think of Madame Leets and the boarding

house, I have a chill!" "Have you been happy this last month?" I asked abruptly. "Indeed I have," he replied heartily. "That's why I cannot bear to think of your going back to steady hours in some shop. I may be selfish, Gerry, I guess I am. But when

we are so comfortable, so happy in this little nest, why won't you forget all about shops and making money—do what you like at odd times, but don't take a position," he begged me. "You say you have been happy this last month? Have you noticed

any difference in it from those preceding?" I insisted. "No, unless this has been best of all. It grows better all the time, Gerry."

"Well dear, I have been working for Madame Leets just a month today."

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