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**The Woman Who Loved and Earned**

BY JANE PHELPS

A Modern Story of Home and Business

**GERRY STAYS HOME WITH AUNT FELICIA**

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Carson Murphy had a raise last week. I met him on my way home and he was so full of it he had to spill over. I guess he deserved it all right, although he isn't any too clever."

Robert had been quiet for some time, and I had felt our talk was finished.

"He's a hard worker Jane says. 'He doesn't work any harder than lots of others.' Then, 'He's appreciated, that's all. Then, too, he knows that Jane is dependent on him and so he has to bring in the dough."

"I wonder how much Jane earned teaching."

"A fair salary I've heard. More than Carson did when they were married. It's quite a story."

"Tell me, she promised to stop teaching when he got an advance? He hustled like the devil until he got it, and she kept her word."

"They live nicely."

"It doesn't cost them as much for rent and living as it does us here in the boarding house."

"But she does all her own work—washing and everything."

"I know," I moaned.

"When I keep house I shall have someone to do all that work. I wouldn't mind cooking and keeping things tidy, but no washing or scrubbing for me. I loathe house-work anyway."

"How do you know—you haven't tried it."

"I don't intend to."

Robert looked at his watch, and with a muttered exclamation at the hour, he hurried off to work.

"Well, I'm glad that's over!" I said aloud, satisfied that it had been Glen Turner's advancement and Robert's disappointment that he had not been raised, which had made him so unlike his gay self.

"Isn't it wonderful that I can work?" I added, as I thought of Robert's salary. I know of course that there must be some women who could not earn money outside of the home. But it needn't be all women. Keeping house needn't take up a business woman's life, any more than it did a business man's. Of course, incapable women—well, that was another thing!

Aunt Felicia had been rather "upish," as Robert expressed it, ever since we had talked in which she told me I had made my bed and would have to lie in it, although I never had allowed it to make any difference in my actions towards her. But I couldn't resist the temptation to "crow over her" a little, so I said:

"Robert and I have had a long talk, Aunt Felicia, and we have decided that it would be very unwise to try to keep house until he is going better than he is now. He said until he could earn more he would rather I went right on at the shop." I did not add that he had said "so that I might have what I wanted and be happy."

"As I told you, he is very unselfish," she returned, "if he felt inclined to be a little angry with him when I saw the pretty girl at the motion picture show with him; but he explained to me how it happened. I saw I was wrong to criticise. I wondered what he had talked things over with him. I will go home far happier because of it."

I wanted dreadfully to ask her

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when she was going, but hadn't the courage, Robert needed a new suit. I wanted some things for myself also, and I was beginning to be grudge what I paid for in room and board. Then, too, in other ways she was an expense to us. For a woman of her age, she wanted to go to a great deal. Naturally, one of both of us had to accompany her if she went anywhere in the evening. I insisted that it should be Robert, so was often alone during her visit—even more than I liked she came. For on the evenings we remained at home, he frequently made an excuse to stay out or to go out after dinner. I asked him no questions, and often he said nothing about where he had been. I was afraid to know, I think, too cowardly to face the knowledge that he had been with Marion Hovey.

moment all jealousy was gone. I thought only how terrible it would be to need comfort because I had lost someone, perhaps—Robert.

**ROBERT SINGS MARION**

**HOVEY'S PRAISES**

CHAPTER XXXI.

Robert went to the funeral—as I supposed he would. It was held in the middle of the day, and I did not feel warranted in asking to be let off. I proposed Aunt Felicia should go, but when Robert said he should also go to the cemetery, she decided it would be too tiring for her, so she remained at home.

Robert seemed to have not the slightest compunction at asking for a day's absence from the store, although it was their busy season. I said nothing to him—he was becoming sensitive over his position—but I thought very foolish in him. He had told me several times that his employer hated to have his men absent themselves. That he thought their yearly vacations were all that was necessary, unless there was an absolute necessity, caused them to remain away; I did not consider Marion Hovey's father an absolute necessity, nor Marion herself.

Aunt Felicia and I had finished dinner when Robert came in. He quickly ate a bite; then, after we were in our rooms, he said:

"I think Marion was disappointed that you did not go with me today."

"I could not afford to go, Madame does not like us to be away during the busy season. I have my own customers you know, if they don't find me, they often refuse to buy of anyone else, and sometimes go elsewhere for their hats."

"You know your own business of course. But I think you've had a hard day. I saw he was peevish. Where Jane and Betty there?"

"At the house, yes. They did not go to the cemetery. Betty stayed at the house and helped to make things comfortable. She said she never would have believed that Marion could have things so nice—getting over so too. She said there was really nothing for her to do, except to sit in the window and let the sunshine in—I do hope you will have a funeral you won't let the undertaker shut the house up so that it resembles a tomb."

"Don't go off on a tangent about your own funeral, tell us about Marion. What were you saying about her? What did she have that was so nice?"

"Betty said the pantry was full of things to eat. All she had to do for supper tonight was to set the table and put on the food Marion had prepared. She said nothing for the comfort of the relative; had been forgotten, and that Marion had done it all."

"She must be a very wonderful girl," said Felicia remarked, "and she is so accustomed to care for others that it is second nature. I—"

"That's it, aunt!" Robert interrupted, "she is accustomed to caring for others, and also to cook. She is the most unselfish girl I know, as well as one of the most capable."

"When you have finished singing her praises perhaps you will tell me what your boss said when you asked him to give you the day?" I could not keep the bitterness from my voice. I had scarcely seen Robert for a week—the last three days he had spent with Marion Hovey.

"He groused, but I didn't care. I would have lost my position rather than have failed Marion."

"I did not think you cared quite so much as that," I did not intend to say quite that, but the words slipped out. Aunt Felicia gave me her quick bird-like glances, her head on one side, but said nothing neither did Robert reply.

"I am rather tired, I think I will go to bed," she said after a few moments' silence.

"Good night," Robert said, rising "I will go to the corner for a cigar before I turn in."

I made no move to detain him. In fact, I did not raise my eyes from the magazine I was pretending to read. I had foolishly allowed myself to feel jealous of Marion Hovey, and would say nothing more for fear I would show it still more plainly than I already had done.

An hour passed before Robert came back, at once that he had been drinking and for much, perhaps, but it made me uneasy. I feared my lack of appreciation of Marion Hovey, my sarcastic remarks had made him reckless of what he did to hurt me.

**TORN BETWEEN JEALOUSY AND SYMPATHY**

CHAPTER XXX.

Marion Hovey's father died. He had been badly injured in an automobile accident, and after suffering a few days he had passed away. It was frightful for Marion, and I was honestly sorry for her. She was left alone with the two children, both younger than she. He had died on Saturday, and both Aunt Felicia and I went over on Sunday to see if there was anything we could do, and to take over some flowers. Robert had been there all night, sitting up with some distant relative of Mr. Hovey's.

"You are always thoughtful, Gerry," Robert had said when he saw I had stopped for flowers. "Jane and Betty have both sent some. I was about dead broke, so hadn't ordered any, although I have tried to help in other ways. Poor Marion. I am so sorry for her."

"It is dreadful," Aunt Felicia broke in, "dreadful to be snatched away without warning. But we must all bend to the will of the Lord."

"Mighty good comfort, Aunt Felicia," Robert said with a shrug. "Then to me: 'I am terribly sorry for Marion. She is grieving so takes it very hard. She and her father were such good pals. He used to say he had to be father and mother to them.'"

I could not help it, but Robert's familiarity with the family, even with the man who had passed away, hurt me. It was all right for him to feel sorry for Marion—I, too, felt pity for her. But one would think he was a near relative. I thought as he moved away. Surely he would now come home with me. Of course he would go to the funeral.

"Aren't you coming with us, Robert?" I asked after a few minutes. Aunt had whispered she wanted to go.

"No, I shall stay and see if I can be of help."

"You think it is necessary? There seems to be enough relatives to do what is needful."

"Perhaps, but I can't desert poor Marion now."

"Very well, I shall probably be there when you decide to come," I returned, but my sarcasm was entirely thrown away on Robert. I don't think he even heard what I said. He had already started toward Marion.

"What a kind heart Robert has," Aunt Felicia remarked when we reached the street. "It isn't every young man who would remain so long in the house of mourning simply because he thought he might be of help."

"I don't think mainly would just because of that," I replied. "Something in my voice must have shown my feelings for Aunt looked at me keenly and said:

"I hope Geraldine that you will be worthy such a husband as Robert. He is one in a thousand."

"I will try to be worthy," I answered meekly, "and you have told me many times that he is one in a thousand. I also think he is, but just the same I think he should have some wealth. You are his guest," I added as an afterthought. "It is his duty to look after you. They have relatives—Mr. Hovey's relatives are there. I think it would have looked decidedly better if Robert had left when we did."

"Perhaps, but he can't get along," she had at once accepted my version, and now I could see really she thought Robert was neglecting her. When he came in hours later told him she felt that way.

"But, Gerry, I couldn't leave Marion when she was in trouble. I have known her so long, and she is such a good little soul."

"Of course you could not. But your aunt didn't seem to realize that you and Marion were so close—I did not add—'after I had put it into her head."

"Gerry, will you call on—Marion after—it is all over? I should like to have you. She will be very lonely for some time. I am afraid, and I will cheer her. I am sure she would come to you if you needed her."

"Of course I will, Robert!" and I said it wholeheartedly. For the

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**MARY RYAN PLANS A FLAT**

CHAPTER XXXII.

Mary Ryan had listened quietly to the talk of Marion Hovey. What Robert had said of her capacity for doing all these things. Then she said:

"Gee! but it would be nice to know all these things. How to cook—everything."

"I'd like to see her sell a hat, or earn a dollar," I returned sarcastically. "She'd probably starve to death if she had to earn the money to buy materials to cook with."

"Did her father leave her anything?"

"I believe so—a little. Bob says just enough to live on and keep the home."

"She has them two young kids to raise too."

"They aren't so very young. They'll be out of the way in three or four years."

"What makes you speak so bitter, Gerry? Sounds as if you were jealous."

"Nonsense!" I knew there was a shadow of irritation in my voice. "No, it ain't nonsense. Say Gerry a girl like Marion Hovey makes me feel like two cents. Any man can earn money, but no man can make a home. Unless there's a woman in it. Look at bachelor girls and really old maids live alone or together, and they make a home. But did you ever hear of men having a real home? I guess not; not on your tin-type. Some of them pretend they do. They hire a flat, and a Jap, and pretend they have a home. But it ain't no home at all. It's just a place where they stay and eat and sleep. There ain't no home spirit in it and a bit."

"That's a queer girl you are, Mary. I never heard such peculiar notions. Where in the world do you get them?"

"They just come to me, that's all. Say Gerry, I've a notion to do something."

"Now what's in your mind?"

"I've a notion to get a flat." I'm sick of living in one room at the top of someone else's stairs. I want my own kitchenette, and my own bathroom. I don't mind if my table makes a bed at night, if it is my own table and my own bed, but I do mind when it ain't. I want one of them fifty window boxes you see in some places. I want to have a piano lamp, if I can have an easy chair, and a gas stove."

"What in the world are you talking about, Leastways the one I'm going to have. Yes, I am!" as I laughed, "Just talking to you made up my mind. I was kinda wobbly before."

"All the same I would think it over if I were you," I replied. "What do you know about cooking? You'd be down sick in no time."

"I'm sick now. My heart's sick, and my stomach's sick, and my legs are about worn out climbing them stairs. So I guess, Gerry, I won't be so worse off even if I am sick. Just think of making a cup of nice hot chocolate before I go to bed, or an oyster stew with honest-to-goodness oysters swimming in it—oysters that you can see. And in the morning to have a cup of coffee that was coffee, and not some kind of bean ground up to look like coffee, but taste like something else. And I'd have griddle cakes to, nice brown ones all swimming in syrup with big bunches of butter, between them so they'd look like hills till the butter melted and I'd have."

"For heaven's sake, Mary Ryan, will you stop! I've laughed until I am sick. A lot of you know about cooking all these things. Where would you learn."

"Can't I read? Ain't book stores trying to make a living selling books, and ain't there some cook books among them? Ain't I got common sense, and when I read take a cup of sugar and a half cup of salt, can't I do it—if I have a cup? It makes me mad to talk about it. You just watch little Mary do it. No more boarding houses for little bright eyes as soon as I find that flat."

"When you do, I'll invite myself to dinner."

"No you won't! I'll do the inviting myself. Will you please take dinner with me in my flat, Mrs. Meredith—with you and Bob—Mr. Meredith?"

"With pleasure, Miss Ryan. I gave a mock courtesy, but even though I laughed I wondered why I was hesitating when she spoke of Bob."

course her hours were long, and when we were through, everyone of us were tired out.

That night I told Aunt Felicia of Mary's foolish talk, I thought Robert was engrossed with his book so paid no attention to him, but told my story with much laughter, and fun making. Aunt too, while perhaps not seeing it in so humorous a light, thought Mary not strong enough to work in the shop and do even the little necessary for her own comfort.

"She'll probably live on store food, and get sick!" Aunt grumbled. She liked Mary, I knew.

"Oh, I don't think she will be so idiotic as to attempt it! She's always planning something," I answered.

"Perhaps she isn't so idiotic as you seem to think," it was Robert who spoke. "Mary is pretty level-headed about most things. She'll make a go of it if she tries."

"But it is so silly for her to try," I countered.

"I don't know about that. Mary has lived a long time in boarding houses. She is sick of them—I guess."

"Well she has invited you to dinner," I returned, "and so you have something to look forward to. I invited myself when she was running on so like a lunatic, and then she gave me a formal invitation to dine with her and bring you."

"Tell her I accept; also that I will come as often as I am invited. It was foolish but I suddenly felt almost jealous of Mary Ryan. Robert had spoken feelingly. Then Aunt Felicia made things worse by saying:

"You seem to like to visit young women who keep house, nephews. Of course I thought of Marion Hovey."

"I do!" he answered decidedly. "A good home cooked meal is a great attraction I assure you."

"You hate a boarding house, so much why don't you urge Geraldine here to stay at home and let you earn the money while she keeps house?"

I could have throttled Robert's aunt. I was so angry with her. It was my money which paid for her board, money I earned. I waited anxiously for Robert's answer.

"I shall have to be content with what my friends can do for me in that direction—for a time at least. Gerry and I have talked it over and concluded it is best for us to remain here at least for a time. Later, when my ship comes in, we will keep house—perhaps."

If I felt like throttling his aunt I could have hugged Robert for his reply. He was a good sport after all—even if he couldn't make very much money. He had not allowed her to know anything of our finances, nor would he let her blame me in any way.

"Ships have a way of not coming in," she replied, then bade us good night and left us alone.

"Do you really think Mary will do as she said?" he asked.

"Not she was just talking. She wouldn't be such an idiot!"

"It is the idiots who don't have homes of their own—idiots like me—who can't earn enough to have one, he said bitterly."

I made no answer. I really thought—as I invariably did—that it was because he was sore over his earning capacity, not over the lack of a home.

As he lighted his pipe for his late smoke he said carelessly, too carelessly, I thought afterwards: "I shan't be home to dinner tomorrow night, Gerry. Marion has some papers to look over, and I promised to help her."

"So you will dine there?"

"Yes."

Again a wave of jealousy swept

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morrow night, Gerry. Marion has some papers to look over, and I promised to help her."

"So you will dine there?"

"Yes."

Again a wave of jealousy swept over me. But I beat it back, and said pleasantly:

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**ROBERT ENVIES MARY'S NEW HOME**

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I did not really believe Mary Ryan meant what she said about renting a tiny flat of her own, and keeping house for herself. It seemed so ridiculous as to be almost silly. She knew nothing about cooking and had very little time. Of course she was bright and clever and perhaps could learn quickly if she had the chance, and time; but it was the busy season, and of

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