



# THE LADY OF DAINTY LUNCHES

How Success Came to Sandwiches and Cake

By CHARLOTTE M. STOREY

SHE'S a canny little business woman, the Lady of Dainty Lunches; so canny that I more than half suspect she can boast of Scotch ancestry. When I asked her to tell me the story of her work, she was diffident, very diffident indeed.

"No, I don't think it's rude of you to ask for it. I think it's a compliment. I'm proud of my work, but," with a frank smile, "I don't think I'll tell it to you."

Notwithstanding the fact that she was refusing me the coveted story, I thought her very gracious, for, though it was late in the afternoon, and she was busy superintending preparations for a dinner party to be held that night in the lunch-room, over which she now presides, she stood chatting pleasantly with me about woman's work. When I was coming away I ventured to make another plea for the story that I felt sure was worth having. I found her relenting ever so little.

"Well, perhaps, but I must think it over"—that Scotch ancestry again—"You come in some day next week. I may tell you. I don't know yet."

It was thus that this busy little woman despatched me and returned to her culinary operations. Her cheeks were slightly flushed and a little dab of flour over one eye betrayed the fact that the Lady of Dainty Lunches was taking a very active part in these operations. I wondered whether it was patties or pies.

The next time I saw her she said: "Yes, I'm going to tell you all about my work. Come in to-morrow and I'll give you half an hour." How very business-like she was, and I found, when she told me her story, this same characteristic running all the way through it, like a rich vein of ore. It was undoubtedly the secret of the splendid success that attended her efforts in building up a work that was all her own, and that led certain ladies to ask her to take charge of a most delightful tea room on Yonge Street, Toronto. Listen! Here's the story as she told it to me.

"I had always wanted to do something. I'm not sure that I had any definite ambition, save to do some kind of work and be independent. Mother was an invalid and I never could bring myself to the point of breaking away from home and leaving her to the care of a stranger. When I talked of it, as I sometimes did, she would tell me that I was doing all that could be expected of me, when I kept house and took care of her. It was delightful to know that my home work was so much appreciated, still the longing was there and would not be appeased. However, as I said before, my ambition was indefinite; so I went on performing my domestic duties, never dreaming that through them I was to realize my heart's desire.

"It came about in the simplest way imaginable. A cousin was spending the afternoon with mother and me, and I had made a cake that morning, intending to have it for supper. I had always had pretty good luck with my cookery, and particularly with cakes. This one was no exception. My cousin came out in the kitchen and began saying all manner of nice things about it. Just in fun I held it up on my palm, auctioneer fashion, and said, 'Will you give me forty cents for it?' Quick as a flash came back an assuring 'Indeed I will. I'm going to have Cousin Julia to supper to-morrow night, and if you'll let me have this cake, I won't have to make one.'

"I could scarcely believe that she was in earnest. That anyone would give me forty cents for a cake seemed incred-

ible. But there it was. That precious bit of silver that I had earned myself. No forty cents that I have earned subsequently has seemed to be worth quite so much. I really think I placed it at double its real value.

"Well, that was the beginning of my 'career.' That first sale had a stimulating effect. It set me thinking. If one person would buy my cakes, why not another? I resolved to try. I told my friends what I was going to do. They thought it was splendid, and some of them gladly gave me orders. They told others, and soon I had quite a little business established. In fact, on the last two days of the week, I often made as many as seventeen cakes. How sweet my growing independence was none can possibly know, save those who have experienced similar sensations. It whetted my ambition for still higher achievements. I aspired to greater things. My sphere was too limited, so I had some little circulars printed telling what I was prepared to do, and whenever I saw a tea or reception announced in the social news of the daily papers, I sent one of my little circulars out on its mission. Sometimes it brought results, but the greater part of my business came from those who were already customers, telling their friends, who gave me or-

man came to see me and proposed that we should go into partnership and supply office lunches. I did not receive the suggestion with favor. My business was growing and I was doing very nicely alone; so I refused. But my would-be partner was keen to try it. I think she realized the possibilities of such a venture more clearly than I did, for she came again and again, and, like the woman in the Bible, because of her much importuning she won the day. I yielded conditionally, and we began to canvas for orders and to serve lunches to bank clerks chiefly, although we had a great many others, who were more or less regular customers.

"Unfortunately, our business relations were not profitable, and after a time, by mutual consent, we dissolved our partnership. When we established the lunch department, it was under a different name from that I had used, and was still using for my cake enterprise. As my co-worker wished to continue furnishing lunches, and she had been the originator of the lunch idea, it was agreed that she should take the name and the customers whom we had been supplying as her share, while I should unite lunches and cakes under my trade title, and seek new pastures.

"If I can get ten a day, or at the

ing that particular concern. Sometimes I was asked for a ten-cent lunch, and I put up a few, but found that I could not consistently continue it.

"About the time I added lunches to my products, Mother gave me the laundry for a workroom. Although it was in the basement, it was light and dry. I was charmed. That laundry was going to be converted into a studio, wherein I should produce masterpieces. It was to be no mere workroom. I cleaned it all up myself, had the walls whitewashed, put down an old rug that was not worn out by any means, to make the floor softer to walk on, and had a gas stove connected. Wasn't I the proud girl when I moved by paraphernalia downstairs and got it arranged to my satisfaction? Indeed I was. I felt equal to doing double the amount of work I had done hitherto.

"But the telephone! Mercy me! I wonder how many trips a day I made up the stairway to answer calls and then down again only to be recalled. Of course, I know now that I should have had a switch put in and another telephone down stairs. But, you must remember that I was not yet prosperous. I was only beginning to prosper and trying to make my business support itself. Out of my profit I could not yet afford anything that was even suggestive of luxury, and that was what another telephone would have appeared to me to be then. So I went on tripping up and down the stairs and longing for wings. It makes me ache, even now, to think of it.

"But I would not have you think that my work went along always as smoothly as it sounds in the telling. Ah, no! anyone who has ever started out to accomplish anything knows all about the hard work it entails, and the discouraging conditions that arise. Life was a very serious matter with me in those early months. I was up at half-past five o'clock almost every morning. Every moment represented something to be done. Orders had to be sent out on time, and, as in all business establishments, large or small, accidents sometimes happened, and occasionally things went wrong. Just here comes the memory of one morning I had an order for eight dozen small cakes to be rolled in chopped nuts, which were in a dish on the window sill. One of my boys came along and tipped the plate over. Half went inside and the other half outside. Was I annoyed? Oh, don't ask me!

"It was the rule to pay for all parcels on delivery, but there were some who failed to do so, and at times I had quite an amount of money outstanding. If you will stop to make a mental calculation of the amount of money it took to carry on my work, you will realize that this was quite a serious matter to one who had started with a capital sum of forty cents. Take the items of flour and sugar alone. They amounted to a tidy sum. Then there were bread bills, and meat and fruit to pay for. Of course, by this time you will have guessed that my business had outgrown the time and ability of my little neighbor laddie, and I had to employ two boys and pay them well, in order to secure the kind that I could depend upon. This was another big item to be paid out of my earnings. Just to show how important it was that I should have reliable boys, one day something went wrong. I hadn't a boy at all. It cost me four dollars for the messenger service. Of course, I lost money that day, but it was better to do

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IN A COSY CORNER

ders, and they in turn told their friends.

"Occasionally I did a little light catering, but up to this time that sort of thing was a little beyond the limit of my activities, for I had to do almost everything myself except delivering the packages. The young son of one of our neighbors did this for me. Like myself, he was ambitious to earn money, and he was a very faithful little helper. Of course, I always planned to have the parcels ready, so as not to interfere with his school hours.

"Mother was delighted with my success, not from a mercenary standpoint, but because I was so pleased and happy in my newly-discovered vocation. She took a great interest in it. 'Whatever you do,' she would say, 'do it right. Try to have things not only tasty, but make them look dainty as well.' So I bought paper boxes and had white labels printed in blue to paste on them. Then I tied them with blue cord. I chose blue because it was my favorite color. I was putting a great deal of my personality into the work I was doing. Why shouldn't I? It represented me. It was a part of myself, and by it people judged me. They didn't even know my name.

"I was getting along very nicely indeed, and making quite a modest reputation for my cakes, when a young wo-

man came to see me and proposed that we should go into partnership and supply office lunches. I did not receive the suggestion with favor. My business was growing and I was doing very nicely alone; so I refused. But my would-be partner was keen to try it. I think she realized the possibilities of such a venture more clearly than I did, for she came again and again, and, like the woman in the Bible, because of her much importuning she won the day. I yielded conditionally, and we began to canvas for orders and to serve lunches to bank clerks chiefly, although we had a great many others, who were more or less regular customers.

"I endeavored to make my lunches just as appetizing as possible. Each little box contained six meat sandwiches, sometimes a stuffed egg, a tart, a piece of cake, and one or two kinds of fruit, according to the season. I always folded these edibles in butter paper, and on the top put a tissue napkin. I tried to vary the filling in the sandwiches each day, so that those who had them regularly would not tire of the menu. On Fridays I always substituted fish or egg for meat. For these lunches I charged fifteen cents.

"My lunch department gradually grew to rather enormous proportions. For a while I had as many as seventy lunches a day to put up. I was catering to quite a few of the office staff of the Parliament buildings, and also to a manufacturing concern, but the latter I found I could not profitably handle. They were people all more or less actively engaged, and required a more substantial lunch than that which I put up. They preferred quantity to daintiness, and I felt that it would not be wise to change the policy on which I had built up my little business, so I discontinued supply-