

## PANCAKE PANIC

With collar up and head scrunched low to protect against the wind Bill threw himself against the door to catch his breath and get a moments rest from the biting cold. Two deep breaths and then he wrenched the door open and thrust himself inside, fighting madly with the wind for control of the door, gaping wide behind him. He finally slammed it shut and faced into the room, thrusting his head up for the first time since leaving home. He took stock of the surroundings. Cold! And dark too! Well that was Mr. Patch. Never did believe in wasting light if he didn't have to. The stoves were going, he could hear the fires crackle but they hadn't been going long and it was going to be a few hours before the chill left this place. He looked up at the clock over the old piano on the far wall. Seventeen minutes after nine. Two hours and thirteen minutes until the main event. Pancake Day, 1909.

Mr. Patch peered out of the cavernous kitchen. "Oh it's you Willie! I was beginning to wonder if anyone was coming. I don't wonder that we've left it a bit late . . . Lots to do you know, . . . lots to do!"

Bill smiled across the gloom of the dark church hall. Good old Patch! Always the same! "Oh I think we are OK Mr. Patch. The others should be here any minute now and you know pancakes, they don't take too long once you get going." Patch withdrew into his kitchen lair and Bill lit some lamps and began to busy himself in arranging the tables and chairs.

The others arrived in dribs and drabs and the jobs were doled out according to need and special preference. Mac on the grill, since no one could handle pancakes like he could, having that special blend of confidence and know-how that is the mark of the true pancake chef. Mr. Beamish on coffee and tea, Bill and Andy on table setting and serving and old Arnot on dishes and pots. They'd have been glad to help him with this but he wouldn't have it. Kept him out of the hall with all that jabbering, he said and besides, it left him free to smoke his pipe as he worked. Couldn't do anything without that pipe! And so they left him to it.