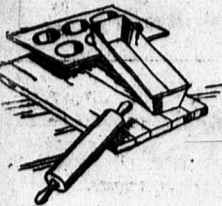


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After Ten Years

BY MARION RUBINCAN

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Chapter 13

By the time Patty's guest came it was Mid-May, and the most glorious weather Wissekeagan remembered. The arrival of Mrs. Grainger-Munn of New York and Newport and goodness knew where else, created an enormous flutter in the little town.

Only had she felt it strongly, when Humphrey had been so obviously taken with the young girl. For a week or two after her arrival, Humphrey had neglected his business to take Patty and his wife and the mother for long rides in his new car. His evenings were theirs for parties, or for the movies, the town's only source of amusement.

Wissekeagan of course had a country club. It was not large enough for a golf course, though some was planned at some future time. I had a few excellent tennis courts, however, and a little lake for swimming.

Patty who had belonged to the junior branch of the club, was now a full fledged member. She was vice-president of the Entertainment Committee. She wondered, as she went about the little town on errands for her mother, whether there was anything at the club to amuse her guest.

But she was glad of one thing, she would have Mrs. Munn for a few weeks to talk to. Since she had come home, several problems were worrying her.

"Who is she anyway? She may be a society leader in New York, but I guess we've got as good a position in this town as she has in New York. The fact that she was somebody grand in her home wouldn't count here. The thing here is that she's staying with us. We introduce her."

Having given voice to this piece of complacent snobbishness, little Mrs. Parke settled herself down to knitting. All Wissekeagan was doing this morning was to get her socks and socks for the poor, or which was more likely for themselves.

"Patty says nobody serious pays any attention to society leaders of that sort of thing anymore," Millie answered, defending her little niece. Curiosity made her ask, "What's she doing?"

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great stock of sense and practical ability. But Mrs. Parke could be very nice. And she was her best for the newcomer. Dreading Humphrey's too boisterous welcome, she herself drove to the station and met her guest. Humphrey had taught the party to run his car; indeed in that part of the country, there are few girls who cannot handle a motor intelligently.

Mrs. Parke was impressed and subdued by the sight of all her "best" things in use, the old china, the heavy linen, the monogrammed sheets that Patty brought out from tissue paper bundles in the closets and put into daily service. The servant, too, was impressed by things into a feeling that "important company" was present, and was on her best behavior.

That evening, happier than she had been for some time Patty slipped into her guest's room and sat down on a cushion on the floor. Mrs. Munn, tired from her trip, was lying on a couch, wrapped in an exquisitely silvery gray velvet robe.

"It's so good to have you around again," Patty said affectionately. "I can't tell you how glad I am of this visit. I feel as though all sorts of things were going to happen now."

All sorts of things did happen to Patty, and to Millie too, and they started with the arrival of Mrs. Grainger-Munn.

"You need not meet anyone, you know," Patty said the first evening her guest was present. "I've a good excuse for you, because you are not well. I've told everyone that."

had clung to Patty, who had been her daughter's closest friend at college, and now she was beginning to feel that Patty was almost another daughter. Her hair was absolutely white now, but her eyes were blue and her face was black still, and set off her fine eyes. When she laughed some faint ghost of the old rose color came back to her face again. She was tall and slender, she carried herself still like a girl, and these days, she dressed entirely in gray, which made her exquisite.

She found Humphrey an endless source of amusement. He remembered all his best jokes and stories and told her and insisted on taking her in his car, to see the "high spots" of Wissekeagan and its outlying country.

"He's genuine and he's good," she told Patty. "And he's worried." "There's nothing to worry him," Patty objected. "His business always runs beautifully, he never has to bother about it. Perhaps Millie worries him."

Mrs. Munn's quick intelligence took in more of Millie's problems in a few days than even Millie was aware of. But she said nothing waiting for Patty to speak. And Patty hesitated.

Meantime, the local paper announced that a team of amateur tennis champions from Long Island was going to play the local champions the last week in May.

"It seems rather early for a tennis tournament," Patty said, reading the paper. "But quite often boys out of college make up teams and go about challenging local clubs like ours. We've three or four good players, older than these challengers, I should think."

Mrs. Munn looked at the names of the visitors. "Paul Darlington!" she read. "But he's not a college boy, he's 25 at least—that is, if it's the Paul Darlington I know. It must be the other one. Long Island. She glanced over at Patty. "You'll meet him," she added. "He's very nice, I think you'll like him."

It was June finally, before the expected tennis players arrived. Mrs. Munn was to leave the first of June. But she liked the little town. She had found a lot of amusement and a lot of real pleasure there too, so she prolonged her visit.

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She had met half the town by this time, that is, the set that considered itself the town.

Patty smiled a little wryly as the names were mentioned. "Basil comes nicely, and I like playing tennis with Jimmy. But Basil will say 'Oh absolutely' instead of 'Yes' until I want to scream. And Jimmy is so afraid people will think he is putting on airs that he uses the worst slang and the most awful language, and there are other things. Mother says I'm finicky."

Mrs. Munn's answer to this was a laugh, a laugh that sounded pleased. "The worst is," Patty went on. "I am afraid I shall fall in love with one of them, Jimmy and Basil are the nicest boys here, and mother particularly likes Basil. That's because his family is well off. You see, there aren't any others possible. And I want to fall in love."

Flushing a little, she turned to her friend. "Isn't that a confession? I'm afraid I don't sound very lady-like."

Mrs. Munn's answer was to the point. "My dear, we're women long before we are ladies. Indeed, I do understand. Must you stay here then, where your opportunities are limited and where you are obviously out of place?"

"I'm afraid Mother expects me to go to college. I coaxed her into allowing me one year, then deliberately took another one to travel with you. Now she thinks I should stay at home with her, so I must."

"Besides there's Millie. She's wretchedly unhappy, and she doesn't quite know why. She's making Humphrey unhappy too. I'm awfully fond of them. Millie has been lovely to me. Indeed, mother would not have let me go away if Millie had not coaxed her into it. And Humphrey has been splendid to me always."

was so glad to see her she forgot to make notes about the gray, chiffon dress that billowed so enchantingly in the warm breeze.

Great festivities were always planned for the visiting tennis players. There was to be a dance the night of their arrival. Patty was in charge of that.

"There are six of them," said another member of the entertainment committee who was helping Patty decorate the single big room at the club for the evening's dance. "Think of having six new men in this town, all at once! What a blessing where there are at least two girls to every man!"

"Mrs. Werner's grabbed them a for dinner," the other girl rattled on. "She would, of course! If she thinks they're any good, she'll try and keep them the whole time. If not, she may let the rest of us have a look now and then. Are you going to wear that blue velvet, Patty?"

But when Patty reached home after she had decided that the club looked festive enough, she found that Mrs. Werner was only having five guests after all. The sixth was having dinner at her mother's house.

A strange figure was seated on her porch, a figure in tweed travelling suit. All she could see at first was the back of the suit and the cap that lay on the table, and a very thick head of hair.

It was argued by sensible and even romantic people, that there is no such thing as love at first sight. A real passion, they say, must grow much by a gradual development. Its roots must go deep into one's consciousness a process that takes time.

Patty believed all this. Hadn't she met hundreds of nice young men without a flutter of her heart? She met Paul Darlington now with only a little heightened color, and that was because he was a friend of her beloved friend Mrs. Munn. She wanted him, as Mrs. Munn's friend to like her.

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ed into the men's smoking room and refused to be drawn out except for the supper. "That's like him!" Millie said in a furious undertone to Patty. "Now no one will dance with me. I'll have to sit against the wall with the old ladies."

Millie's evening was ruined in advance; the new salmon pink satin dress was as much as wasted. For, like most towns its size, Wissekeagan drew social lines between the married and the unmarried as well as between the well-to-do and the poor. The young men rarely "wasted their time," as they said, being gallant to the married women. And if a married woman did take an interest in a young bachelor, tongues wagged for months.

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