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After Ten Years

BY MARION RUBINCAM

MILLIE'S LETTER
Chapter 65

A few days after Christmas Millie received a long letter from Cora.

Cora was the sort who wrote infrequently, but when she did, she made the little two-cent stamp carry a full weight of correspondent.

"Your pictures are wonderful," she said, pleasing Millie by her flattery. "I've got the one you sent me in the parlor on the mantel, so all my friends can see it. Dodson don't take pictures like that!

"Well, I hear you're going to get a job in the movies, the paper had a paragraph about it, which I'll send."

"Oh, listen to this!" and Millie dropped her letter to hunt for the newspaper clipping in the envelope. It read—

One of the distinguished ex-residents of Wissakeagan, Mrs. Humphrey Buchanan, it is rumored is working in the cinema studios of New York, to which metropolis she recently travelled. Mrs. Buchanan, with mother and sister, are now residents of New York. Our local theatre is making inquiries as to what films Mrs. Buchanan is playing in. Shortly we may expect to see her on the celluloid if not in the flesh."

Silence, while Millie remembered the expensie photographs spread so lavishly around the motion picture studios, and the absolute lack of response. Then Patty giggled at the bombastic wording of the paragraph and Mrs. Parke and Millie joined in.

"How funny our paper seems," Millie commented.

It was the one touch of sophistication she ever acquired during her life in New York. The editor of Wissakeagan's little journal had been a printer's devil, and by means of sheer stubborness and stupidity, often an asset, he had clung to an early idea that he was "literary". That few papers in even as small a town as his, were as badly written as his was an idea tht never entered his head. He continued to pad with adjectives and long words, and, until now, had impressed Millie that this was fine writing. Now Millie happened to see the difference.

She went back to her letter!

"—which I'll send. I expect you'll be rivalling Pickford next. I hear grand things about your apartment in New York, too. Oh yes, some new people named Tearle have bought your house, they painted it green and it looks awful. And I hear your mother's sister is moving into one of those new homes on Pine Lane. They've got grand oak stairs cases and hardwood floors.

"Jim has had a letter from Humphrey. He sent in a subscription to the paper here, to keep in touch with things, he wrote Jim, and they sent him all the back numbers. So he read that piece about your farewell party. Well, he didnt know where to reach you, so he wrote to Jim finally and asked for your address. I didn't know you hadn't answered that letter of his."

"Cat!" Millie observed. "She knew well enough he never sent his address. How could I write? He might have sent me a letter in care of Cora! Nice thing for him to do, go about pretending I've cut myself loose from him and never let him know where I am."

"Cora will spread that idea all over the town," Mrs. Parke observed with gentle bitterness." She's nice, but you know how she does talk."

Not even Cora escaped! Patty smiled a little to herself. Once she would have felt badly at any sign of disloyalty to a friend as good as Cora. Now some of her mother's and Millie's oddities merely amused her. Was this breaking away from her family or was this disloyalty of a minor sort?

She did not listen to the rest of Millie's letter. It consisted of a lot of gossip, including a paragraph of the rumored engagement of Basil and little Margaretta. Millie folded and laid the paper on the table.

"Well, I must say I wish I was back," she announced. "People knew me there, there was something to do now and then."

"But, Millie, think of the theatres and concerts, and the opera and the Museums and the parks"

"Oh you make me tired," Millie cut in rudely. "Who wants to walk around a museum all day looking at bones, or else silly pictures, and we can't afford operas and such. New York's all right when you're rich, but not when you're poor. I want to go home."

Patty shrugged her shoulders a little impatiently. Why should not Millie work, and earn more money? She never even hunted a position after her one attempt at selling She never economized in the sodas and ice cream treats, to buy a concert ticket, she would not climb to the top of the opera house, to hear an opera, as Patty did when she had time. She picked up and dropped acquaintances, but made no friends.

OPPOSITION
Chapter 66

At various times Paul had asked Patty to his mother's house. Once he wanted his mother to send her an invitation to a big dance she was giving, but Patty forbid him asking. Once he wanted to take her to a party at a friend's house, and Patty pleaded her work as an excuse.

One afternoon he announced that he was going to take her to tea with his mother. And Patty accepted, though with a great deal of fear as to how his mother would take it. But a trip out of town interfered with that.

Meantime Paul had gone downtown the day before Christmas and literally grinned his way into a position. There are some people to whom the world is extra nice, Paul was one of this sort.

"I believe," said Patty a few days after Christmas, when Paul was discussing the complaining customers he had seen for eight hours; "I believe you succeed at everything. Tell me, when you play tennis, or bridge, or any sort of game don't you usually win?"

"I am lucky", Paul answered. "I always expect to win."

"That's it," Patty said meditatively. "You are the sort that expects to win, you hynotize others into thinking so, and as they think so they let you win. You psychologize yourself and others, it's the recipe for success."

Paul looked sidewise at her and smiled a little.

"Have it your way," he answered airly. "You do adore philosophizing! Anyway, I know I don't deserve success. I don't work for it, I only expect it, and it comes."

"Yes, it's probably your sub-conscious mind working upon the sub-conscious mind of someone else"

"Patty!" protested Paul and laughted at her, though he thought her theory very clever and probably true.

The girl laughed, pulling her blue woolly cap closer over her ears. They were driving again on perfect and cold Sunday afternoon.

"I think you've psychologized yourself into the idea that you have to overwork yourself to succeed," Paul told her. "Come home with me for tea, mother will be there, and we never did manage that other date you know."

Patty nodded, and they drove to the big house that stood on the Avenue looking into Central Park. Mrs. Darlington had bought a "brown stone front" years ago, when Fifth Avenue was slightly less expensive, and had replaced the monotonous brown stone with antique brick and the plate windows with latticed ones.

But it happened that she wasn't home, and Paul insisted upon Patty staying. The butler was sure Mrs. Darlington would come any moment and served them tea in a pretty but much too formal dining room. Paul felt a little embarrassed because his mother did not come, and Patty left early, dreading Millie's comments.

A few days later she heard a curious echo of this. Mrs. Darlington, Mrs. Munn and some others were working in the Committee room. Someone was planning a week end in Massachusetts for skating and sking.

"I'll come with pleasure," Mrs. Darlington said. "But I can't profise for Paul, except for Saturday night and early Sunday."

"Going away?" a voice asked idly.

"Going to work," Mrs. Darlington answered in tones of the greatest disgust. "Why I can't imagine! He has everything, and he says now that having everything bores him. The ways of one's children are beyond comprehension. And such work! In the most awful store, full of bargains and bad goods"

"What does he do?" Mrs. Munn asked with great interest.

"Listens to complaints! Fancy having a whole staff of people to do nothing but hear complaints! I suppose their.. stock is so bad the things go to pieces as soon as bought, then all the customers come back and complain. Paul says he coaxes them into a good temper again."

There was a general burst of laughter. Mrs. Darlington complained that he left at 8 o'clock in the morning and returned only in time to dress for dinner.

"I never see him, he gets out his car at 9 and disappears. Says he must have fresh air, which I can well believe. But if he can't leave promptly at 9, he's furious! And one doesn't always finish dinner at 9," her tones were pathetic.

"No, it can't be a girl," Mrs. Darlington answered another question. "Or else it wouldn't matter if he happened to be a few minutes late. He watches the clock like a hawk, until I'm ashamed before my guests. I must ask little Miss MacKeen to use her influence—in fact, I think he brought her to tea Sunday—he wouldn't give the name and looked embarrassed when I mentioned it. My butler—hadn't been there three days so he didn't know any one—"

Patty began to think. She was making trouble between Paul and his mother. That gulf stretched and yawned—how foolish she was! Not even a friendship was possible. She would have to give him up—

THE UNEXPECTED
Chater 67

As Patty looked back over her friendship with Paul, it seemed to her that most of her meetings with him had been clandestine drives in his motor through a world made safe and private by the winter twilight

After overhearing Mrs. Darlington, Patty made up her mind that this friendship had to cease. It might be cutting out her own heart, in fact, it would be quite as painful, but she decided there was more than herself to think of.

Patty was the type that, having decided upon a thing, wanted to carry out the decision as soon as possible.

Besides, if one has decided to cut out one's heart metaphorically, the prospect of doing it is so painful that it is a mercy to have it over as soon as possible. In a way, it is like sitting in a dentist's waiting room, knowing that in 10 or 15 minutes one will be sitting in a chair while the dentist holds up a pair of forceps to extract a tooth. The waiting is almost as painful as the extracting, and the sooner it begins, the less painful the whole business is. So Patty waited impatiently for the time when she should see Paul next, having made up her mind that that time would be the last. She did not see him every night now. Paul had certain social obligations. And he had a mother. In the days before he decided to find himself a job, time hung heavy on his hands. When his mother wanted him to attend certain entertainments, it was always easy to do so. The pretty Miss MacKeen and two or three dozen other girls that he knew, saw quite a bit of him.

But now he was at work eight hours, which meant he was away from 8 o'clock until after 6. To pacify his mother, who was violently opposed to "this nonsense", he had to spend many of his evenings with her.

So there was an arrangement between Paul and Patty that when he could, he would call at the business school for her. He would be at the door with the car. If the car was not there, she was not to wait, that evening he could not make it.

She did not see him for four nights after the decision that she must never see him again Then, as she hurried down the stairs from the night school, she saw the long green car standing patiently at the curb. Her heart gave a leap within her. She ran down and through the door, and stood with a shining face looking up at Paul. He tucked the robe around her and they started off. In most cases they simply circled the Park or ran up and down the Drive until it was time for Patty to go home.

"Gee, but it's good to see you again!" Paul said with sangy enthusiasm. "You know, Patty, it's almost worth staying away from you four days to be this glad to see you."

Patty laughed a little. It was so wonderful to be with him again! She forgot her decision for a moment, and gave herself up to the sheer pleasure of being with him, and listening to him.

She would tell him on the way home. Meantime, this was their last drive—why not enjoy it, most of it, as much as possible?

"What have you been doing? How is the work?" she asked.

"The work? Oh, I've got a new position. I've so many things to tell you." The car swerved into Fifth Avenue, and ran smoothly up its shining asphalt. New York at 9 had settled to its evening and was indoors, either at home or in theatres and restaurants. It would be two hours before the scurry of cars and the home going subway crowds would make things alive once more.

"First of all, Tuesday Mother decided that if I had to work, I might as well have what she called a gentleman's job. So she began talking to a lot of people we know, with the result that Keen, Squier and Company have made a place for me in their offices."

"Wht are you?" Patty asked with interest.

"Oh, at present a bank runner at the munificient salary of $15 a week. I carry bonds and stock back and forth from one office to another. That's to make me familiar with the streets down there and the names and members of the firm. In two weeks I go inside to do office work. Then I begin to sell bonds and little by little they will push me along."

He laughed a little.

"Of course it's infuence. Mother will keep at them, and most of them are family friends. We have runners at our place who have worked there 30 years, and they're still bank running."

But Patty was sure that influence had nothing to do with it. She glanced at Paul as he guided the car easily over the streets at a little more than allowable speed. Paul could do anything she thought. He held out his hand to Success, laughing in his easy infectious way, and that temperamental damsel came directly to him. Men who held inferior positions for 30 years did so because they deserved nothing better, Patty decided.

They paused at a crossing for some traffic to go by.

Paul slid his hand under the rug and took hers.

.....Chapter 68.....

They had been chattering about impersonal things so long that Patty had not expected any sentiment.

Paul was in love with his work. He had been telling her all the new and amusing things that happened to him each day. For each day was an adventure to this energetic enthusiastic young man. Paul had that great and enviable gift, undying enthusiasm. Whatever he did was always the most fun of anything.

Then, while they waited for street cars to pass a corner, Patty felt his hand come under the motor rug and close over her own. It held hers tightly, while the trolleys clanged past and the motor of the engine made impatient noises.

She wanted to pull away. She didn't want to be sentimental—it was silly to sit in a motor and hold hands!

But it was their last night! What did it matter?

"Hello, Patty!" Paul said, and squeezed her hand and let it go.

The last trolley passed the crossing, a policeman waved his arm like a semaphore, and Paul, holding the wheel, shot the car ahead. They were off on the same Hunter's Island Road. Se had to tell him!

Other cars passed them, when Paul would let them pass, filled with parties going out to dance at some of the road houses along this favorite drive. Occasionally a car passed them going towards the city. Once in a while they ran over a bridge that spanned an inlet of Long Island Sound. Otherwise the road was dark, except where the car's headlights made a yellow lane that ran before them. The air was rather warm and wet, promising rain next day.

"I'll tell him on the way home," thought Patty, putting off the evil moment to enjoy the rushing, sweet air, the motor's hum, and above all the nearness of this man.

She realized she had not spoken since that moment, miles back, when he reached under the rug and caught her hand, with his laughing enthusiastic, "Hello, Patty!"

"Tell me more about what happened—what happened at the store. You had such a good time there," she began hurriedly.

Paul began accounts of the complaining customers.

"Of course, they simply wanted to exchange their Christmas gifts for other thing," Paul said once. "Sometimes it was hand painted vases for cotten stockings, which I considered laudable. Sometimes they only wanted to know what the things cost. I rather believed in exchanging vases for stockings, you can't think how awful those vases were! Great roses, done by hand. Heaven knows what artist perpetrated them. Larger than life, they were, and several times as natural, and the china with a rough finish that made your blood run cold when your fingers scraped over it.

"I nearly lost my job on them. The manager said they can sell stockings anytime but it appears that hand painted vases are a luxury only indulged in at Christmas. To exchange them means to put them away for another holiday."

He rattled on while Patty sat silent, listening. She loved his voice and his mannerisms. Sometimes she sat and listened to his voice alone, only half hearing what he said.

She had to tell him! A cold hand tightened around her heart, clutching till it pained. But the telling had to be done. But Paul was still talking. And of course she coudln't interrupt.

"I used to have Brace drive me down to the store in the car." She remembered Brace as a nice freckle-faced young man in the proper sort of chauffeur's outfit who seemed to possess but two human enthusiams, one was Paul Darlington the other the engine of his car.

"Some of the employees saw me getting out. Oh Brace didn't approve any more than mother did. He pretended he'd never heard of the store—only knew the smart ones uptown. I todl him I bet he got his ties and things these, that I intended to, they had such gaudy colors.

"And he hated the employees' entrance. I had to punch a time clock you know. I had a card with a number on it. I was 6,541, and the clock marked when I got in and went out, and if I was late I got docked ten cents. Lovely idea, one isn't an individual, merely a number. Anyway, some of the employees began talking about the car and I was afraid of gossip, so I pretended to be fiend of a chauffeur. I said he dropped me off on his way uptown to get his employer."

"One day—"

She had to tell him. They were running way out into the country, and she had to be back by 11 at the latest.

She broke in desperately.

"Paul, Paul, listen to me. I must tell you something, now! I don't want to, but I must."

Her voice showed him that she felt intensely whatever this thing way. A small road ran across before them. He turned the car into it and snopped.

"All right," he said quietly. "I just thought I'd get out of the way of these other machines. What is it?"

"Paul," she began. "I can't see you after tonight."

REFUSAL
Chapter 69

There was a short silence. Ane, then Paul asked:

"What do you mean?"

"Just that," Patty answered. "I can't see you after tonight."

The engine had stopped purring, the car had settled down to silence. So had the country, which spread around them in a huge level shaow. Once in awhile a car shot behind them along the main road.

"Why not?" Paul asked.

It was hard to explain.

"Oh—your mother, you mother's friends, if they knew it—my mother thinks it odd because we run off together in your car"

"Then we won't. I'll come to your flat. The only thing is that your mother and sister are always around, that seems rude to say, I like them, and all that—only I'd rather see you alone now and then."

He said "now and then" as though he practically never saw her alone!

"I know," Patty answered.

"Besides,"—and Paul said it as though it had been his guiding motive all the time —"besides, you never get any fresh air. You are indoors at the Committee, and indoors at your school in the evening, you would lose your health if I didn't drag you out now and then into the fresh air."

"That's true,' Patty agreed, glad to have an excuse given her for going out with Paul. Neither of them admitted the fact that they went off together like this because they wanted the world to themselves.

"Well, then!" said Paul, as though he had met and conquered every argument. But this brought Patty back to the point.

"I can't see you again—really Paul. Your mother—"

"Well?"

"I ovcheard her talking to some of the Committee members the other day. She's cross because you are working—and is trying to find out what has made you want to work—"

"I'll tell her the example of a girl who wasn't afraid to go out and support her family!" Paul cut in viciously.

"That won't help—not with your mother. She's not—democratic."

Paul laughed at this mild way of stating it. Patty went on.

"She thinks it's a sudden enthusiasm on your part that you'll get over. She says she's going to take you to Europe with her, where you'll get over this American idea that every man should know a trade, or else get Miss MacKeen to talk to you and bring you to a more sensible point of view."

Paul laughed.

"Meaning her point of view," he said. "Don't I know what she'll do, too! If her friends can't help her out, she'll get very ill, and then her doctor will order her to Southern France, and she'll make me go along, and as she'll ill, I won't dore refuse, and—"

Patty had heard this very thing talked over. Mrs. Darlington had a tiny villa on the Riviera, which she opened every two years. Patty had heard her plan a house party there. Mrs. MacKeen, a rare worker at the Committee, had consented to be one of the party and her daughter, the lovely dark-eyed girl Patty saw sometimes and envied, was to go along.

It was so obvious. Patty could see it from the bits she gathered in the talk of the workers. Mrs. Darlington would go if her doctor would officially order her away. Paul could not refuse to attend an ailing mother, so urged even he saw and admitted.

They would sail, the charming little house would be opened—and what as more natural than to ask Mrs. MacKeen and her daughter for a month or so, since these good friends are also traveling abroad. Then there would be the charming girl, and Paul, isolated from her other friends, thrown with her to bathe in the marvellous surf, to dance, at the casinos, to ride and walk with—why in such beautiful and romantic surroundings, and engagement would be sure to result—it would be the only natural thing!

But she could not tell Paul this. Paul was still laughing.

"If she's ill I'd have to go, but I'll make sure it isn't just a little game of her. As for Miriam MacKeen—"

"Don't you see?" Patty asked desperately, "she thinks it's all right now. She doesn't know where you go when you take your car out in the evenings. She thinks it isn't a girl—but when she finds out that I'm the reason she'll be furious. She'll not let you see me, don't you understand—I mustn't see you again!"

"Oh yes, you must!" Paul turned in the car and faced her. He was leaning towards her, very near her.

(Continued on Page 23)

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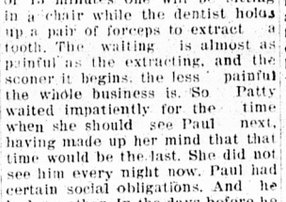

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