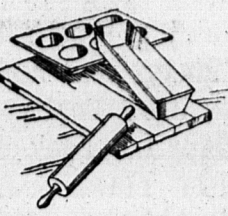


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After Ten Years

BY MARION RUBINCAM

LONGINGS

Chapter 95 It was impossible, of course, not to mingle a great deal with the other people of the village. There were less than 200 including the children, and only a hundred or so besides who lived near enough to make this settlement their centre.

Naturally every one knew every one else, no one stood on ceremony. Millicent Buchanan was "Millie" after the first day, even though, as her mother's wife, she occupied a somewhat better social position than the rest. For a true democracy exists in small communities, complexities and social distinctions creep in with increasing population. Millie, of course, had to call them all by their first names, much as she hated it.

By comparison, her little acquaintance with movies and vaudeville engagements became vast experiences. Patty's stories of the doings of the Committee members became insight glimpses into a great and glittering world, her own brief life in the city an amazing adventure with some almost unbelievable aspects.

Many of these women had traveled more than she ever would. "But always on one plane," she told Humphrey, probably meaning that life in a timber camp would be the same, whether it was near Portland, Maine, or Portland, Oregon.

As for the Thanatopsis Club, it became a great centre of intellect and the Higher Culture. Millie wanted to go back. And she had about decided they could. "And take a small house out near my place," she told Humphrey, "and I can even do my own work for awhile, if I get a scrub woman."

This plan was decided on and then came a letter from Cora. Cora's mother had died shortly after Millie left Wisconsin. She had been a secretive little lady, who was suspected at odd times of owning more property than she would confess. Once with many indignations that he had no one she handed over her papers to her son-in-law to have them straightened and she made a will. Jim found she had only a few thousands, which went in various small bequests, "the residue of the estate" going of course to Cora.

Cora counted on a thousand to be put aside to send the oldest child to college. But it turned out that not only that money, but many thousands came to light, safely laid away and gathering interest in a Chicago bank. The trail of the little old lady must have checked if it could have been the checkered life this discovery caused. The little woman had spent her life making muffins, mending children and doing the work that Cora shirked.

"So they've moved into a big house, and they're going to build a real Tudor house out towards the club," Millie reported from one letter. Details followed—Cora rushed off to Portland when Jim went there next, partly to buy clothes, partly to see whether there was any truth in these reports of this mysterious girl her Jim was interested in out there.

Millie felt her own wardrobe her own new fortune, quite overshadowed. "I went to go back, but I don't want to go back and be poor," she said again, and again, "Cora's got two millions and a nurse for the baby now."

Humphrey was sorry and considered. "I tell you, you go back and I'll stay on here awhile, he suggested at last.

It was tempting. Millie could do very well in Wisconsin in the present income. She could board with Maude, that would be a friendly arrangement where she would pay, and where no one would expect a big establishment, as would be expected if she were back with Humphrey. She even packed a trunk or two.

At last, she turned to Humphrey

"I'm making a poor attempt at looking cheerful," she told Patty with a laugh. "Never mind, we'll have Paul up every weekend."

But they didn't. For when Paul went to Mrs. Munn's mother raged, and when he went to his mother, she raged. And, torn between duty and desire, he never had time to go anywhere else.

Patty meantime occupied a curious position. "I don't quite know what to do about that young girl," one puzzled matron expressed it, as she frowned over an invitation she was writing Mrs. Munn. "Of course if it were the season one would know her status, for then she would be introduced properly. But as it is—"

As it is, our eccentric friend is still too ill to entertain much, and I suspect she is just really enjoying herself more by keeping us guessing," another friend said shrewdly. "But whenever she does have people there, the little Patricia is kept very much in the foreground."

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one evening. He was sitting with his feet stuck up high on the door jamb, chin tucked down on his chest, looking at nothing. She was ironing a waist to go in a trunk. She knew that contemplative attitude.

"I'd rather stay," she said, "or wait and go with you. I don't want to go without you."

For answer he let the tilted forelegs of his chair slide down on the floor. He came inside the room, and the gathering dusk concealed from passing neighbors the fact that he had put his arms tightly around Millie.

But the result was that they left a month later, together. And they hired a tiny house, furnished with all sorts of modern appliances, on the unfashionable edge of the town. Humphrey wanted to see about buying back his business. The man who took it to quote him, "didn't know cedar from beech," and was not making a success of the lumber yard.

They arrived at night. Millie purposely told no one they were coming. "Do you think we'll make it go this time?" Humphrey wondered as they saw the station lights come into view.

"Yes, I know we will," Millie said so happily at being back that she did not know or care what matrimonial difficulties lay ahead of them.

She felt like a bride again, home from a wedding journey.

MRS. MUNN'S PLAN Chapter 96

Meantime a Summer was slipping away pleasantly, if not entirely happily, for Patty.

Everyone Mrs. Munn knew, of course, left the city for the summer. Mrs. Darlington, having given up the idea of going to France, left the city for her home on Long Island. Paul, pleading his "job," which kept him busy daily, stayed in town in the empty house, with his chauffeur and a servant to look after him, surrounded by the richest pieces of furniture arranged in brown linen covers.

Mrs. Munn, somewhat amused and a little sorry for Patty, opened her own country house on the Connecticut shore.

"You're making a poor attempt at looking cheerful," she told Patty with a laugh. "Never mind, we'll have Paul up every weekend."

But they didn't. For when Paul went to Mrs. Munn's mother raged, and when he went to his mother, she raged. And, torn between duty and desire, he never had time to go anywhere else.

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"I know. But then, any useful companion might be," the other woman answered, pen still held above the notepaper. "Of course we all know now that she was a paid companion, you remember, after Mary's death—I suspect that's what she is now."

A paid companion would hardly wear the sort of frock she had on at tea," remarked the friend, who found another woman's gowns a sure clue to her social status. "Did you see it, a blue organdie embroidered in daisies. Martie made that, I'm sure, and you know his prices! I shall ask her, she's young and pretty and dances well."

was such a pleasure to enhance her content watching the golden head bent over a book as Patty read to her, in the afternoons, or watched from her window while the slim figure in a black satin bathing suit, went swimming in the sea at the end of the garden.

Mrs. Darlington, having settled herself some distance from the disturbing party, decided to ignore the whole affair. When Paul came to her home she smiled, when he wrote and apologized for not coming she raged.

And the Summer passed. Then Mrs. Munn, very much refreshed by some months of quiet and of sea air and sunshine, moved suddenly back to town.

"No one has arrived yet," she said, idly reading the "Society" column of one of the papers, "so we'll be undisturbed, and Paul may come up here every evening."

Patty gave her a little smile, half shyness, half amusement, and then went out of the room to telephone Paul's office.

Mrs. Munn dressed, took her car, and went down to her lawyer's office, a suite of rooms on the forty-something storey of a down town skyscraper.

She came back feeling very cheerful indeed.

"I'm going to adopt you, Patty," she said at the luncheon table, as calmly as though she were saying, "I'm going to get you a blue dress."

"Why—but—how can I mean how lowly," and the girl blushed and smiled and looked worried at that once.

"It's all arranged," Mrs. Munn said cheerfully. "My solicitor has written your mother explaining how it is, and I've written to it's only a slight formality—it makes you legally my daughter and my heir, as I want you to be, so in the event of my death, various unknown business could not come in and make trouble. And it doesn't really make you any less your own mother's daughter, she can see as much of you as she does now."

At first paragraphs appeared in the city papers. "The well-known society leader, Mrs. Grainger Munn (who are people who appear in print often called society leaders)" had adopted Mrs. Patricia Parke of Wisconsin, and so on with many details, most of them about Mrs. Munn's town and country places and her social success as a young woman.

Mrs. Munn had previously sent Patty to have some pictures taken. The expensive photographer that Millie had once patronized—and the result was a series of "art studies" which really brought out all the girl's delicacy and prettiness.

"Though pictures can't show your coloring, which is one of your great attractions," Mrs. Munn observed when the proofs came home, "I've had an inspection of them. Copies of these pictures she gave away to papers and magazines which asked for them.

"Ordinarily I hate publicity, but the more you have at the very beginning, the better," that shrewd lady remarked one morning as she dictated her day's correspondence. "After all, you are unknown and I have lived so quietly since Mary's death that I have dropped out of things. We'll grow conservative after your coming out dance."

"I'm so old and so serious minded to play the debutante," Patty protested. "I'll have Martie make you the proper sort of gowns, changeable silver and blue taffeta. I think, with a lace underskirt and rose garlands, and Dupre do your hair and you won't know you aren't 18."

Later she added: "This isn't the usual sort of debutante affair you know, my dear. I want to introduce you to my friends, more than to their daughters."

The local paper in Wisconsin was much excited. In fact, the Parke and Buchanan families had given the grateful editor a great deal of good copy recently. "I've just got one congratulation to a resident, or rather, to an ex-resident of the town," one item began, "on the occasion of her adoption by one of the metropolis' multimillionaires. Great festivities are being given in her honor in New York and the best known families include all the best known families. We regret that Miss Parke is no longer resident, a resident of Wisconsin, and know her absence will be felt by our younger set, of which she was always a leading spirit"—and so on. Clearly, the editor was not certain whether he was to congratulate or condemn and succeeded in doing both in one paragraph.

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Another excited item appeared a few weeks later in the same paper. "An unexpected event aroused much comment and enthusiasm in local circles this week. This was the arrival by the 10.15 express of Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Buchanan who have taken a house on Elm Avenue, pending negotiations for their old home. If these fall through, it is rumored, that the Buchanans will build a house near the country club where so many of our influential citizens are now putting up palatial residences."

There was more to this item. Paul read it to Patty with exaggerated emphasis as they sat in the drawing room together.

Meantime, as soon as the news of the adoption had gone abroad, Patty found her days and evenings so full that Paul complained bitterly it was all another trick of Mrs. Munn's to keep them apart!

Friends knew what the girl's actual status was.

For now, at least, the puzzled Mrs. Munn dressed, eyed Miriam came and called. "I'm so sorry Paul never brought you to see me again," she said, so prettily that it did not matter whether it was true or not. "You see, I went away soon after your visit, I really had no chance to look you up, but I've taken this first opportunity when I got back."

Paul who was fond of Miriam, believed this. Patty, who wanted to be fond of her and hadn't succeeded, tried to do so.

The rest of the time was taken up with dressmakers and milliners. Mrs. Munn was certain of one thing, her ward was to be a dressed girl in her set of friends, if money and thought and good taste could accomplish it.

At the luncheon she gave for Patty, with her own old friends present, and at the dance, where the older and the younger were all together, she was proud of her results.

Mrs. Darlington had suddenly left town. But one day the maid brought Patty a card. "And it read simply, 'Mrs. P. Trevor Darlington.' Patty turned deadly white.

A MEETING Chapter 98

Patty understood suddenly the point of view of the youngster who turns and flees from some inevitable punishment.

She wanted to run or to hide. But being a responsible adult, and being sensible as well, she realized she had to meet the inevitable sometime, and, if it might as well be now, in fact, it would be over that much sooner.

Nevertheless, she was in dread of going downstairs and confronting the woman who had made her so miserable all these months.

"Tell her I'll be down in a moment," she said to the maid. And rushed to the wardrobe, to pull out half a dozen frocks and swiftly choose the prettiest.

"At least she'll see I can look nice," she murmured to herself, hastily fastening hooks with fingers that were ice cold from nervousness.

Then she powdered her nose and gave her hair several of those useless little pats which do nothing to make it neater, but which somehow reassure the woman herself.

And wondering whether she were impudently late about going down, hurried to the drawing room. Mrs. Munn was out, what ever she had to face had to be gone through alone.

the little blue velvet frock that the girl had on. Wasn't she glad now she had changed! For this little gown set off her hair and eyes and pink coloring in the most flattering manner.

What had she come for? Patty was aware that the creed of this special circle of people was to be as nice on the surface as possible, and never to be frank and openly nasty, when it was possible to imply all the disagreeable things with out saying them.

It was more polite—and meaner. "I'm so sorry not to have been at your luncheon," Mrs. Darlington said, evidently working around to some direct point. "But as you know, I have been away, I came to you as soon as I returned to offer you my good wishes."

She said it again! Patty couldn't murmur another "Thank you," and relapsed into silence. So she answered: "That's very kind. Mother—Mrs. Munn has always been so charming to me that I am, particularly happy to—"

"Oh, but I didn't mean about the adoption!" The tall, beautifully composed lady was at last being frank! "Though of course I can well understand that mean to a lot to you." (That was a mean one! Patty decided, and hated her momentarily. But she managed, to preserve a sweet smile.) "I was thinking of you and Paul."

Patty's eyes opened in surprise the next time.

"Paul? Tahn he's told you?" "Of course she knew he had a long time ago. Had there been an other talk between them? What did this woman mean? She wished she would come to the point.

"Of course he's told me, I'm sure you'll be happy together," Mrs. Darlington's voice dripped cool sweetness.

"But when I beg your pardon, but do you mind telling me when Paul told you? I understand you—she couldn't get it all out, and she no longer desired anything but frankness and the truth.

"You understand I objected, I did believe me, for your good as well as his. An engagement between you was impossible, as things stood before. But don't you think that it's quite changed now?"

"I'm sorry I don't see," Patty answered, with a rare bit of stammer. "I wish, if you don't mind—that you explain."

"Patty wanted to be mean now! She couldn't help it!

NEW PLANS Chapter 99

Of course Patty understood only too well what Mrs. Munn for an explanation because she felt the whole matter was so important that the only way to clear it up was to have everything on a frank and open basis.

Mrs. Darlington, who excelled in talking around a subject rather than directly discussing it, was somewhat annoyed. In her turn she decided that Patty was being exceedingly clever in making her talk frankly, and rather tactful too.

Therefore, strange to say, she developed a little admiration for this girl, who could annoy and make her uncomfortable! It was a curious way for Patty to gain the respect of her future mother-in-law. It was certainly not the way she would have chosen. She was too simple and sincere to want to go in for all the round-about methods of more sophisticated characters.

So she said, "I wish you would explain."

"Mrs. Darlington with a little reserved smile answered, "I'm glad that you are so interested. Sometime ago Paul told me he was in love with Miss Parke—Miss Parke I knew as a nice, willing little secretary at a woman's club, a very sweet girl who seemed to be a protégée of a generous friend of mine. What else could I say but when I did? I was sure Paul wasn't serious—boys fall in and out of love easily, and girls as well." Patty was grateful that she covered that little sting so well, though it hurt just as much.

"Naturally I refused to take him seriously. It was his continued devotion to you that finally impressed me."



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this point. Instead, she changed the subject.

"I'd like you to know that I would not have married Paul with out your consent," she said.

"There you would have been very foolish," Mrs. Darlington told her with surprising candor. "You say you are both deeply in love. In that case, had the various obstacles not been removed to make way for a peaceful marriage, you should have married anyway. Of course Paul would have lost his money, had he married without my consent, but I know you are not mercenary, and that that point did not count for you."

Patty almost choked with anger at this. For, in spite of her words, and the sincerity of her manner, Mrs. Darlington had a way of suggesting the very thing which was denying.

"I did not care about the money," Patty said, the red running into her cheeks again. "I was thinking of Paul. I did not want to deprive him of any of the things he was used to."

"Very foolish of you," the astounding woman replied. "Paul is spoiled. I spoiled him. That's my privilege. I'm his mother. One of the tasks I shall turn over to you is to undo some of that."

This left Patty quite helpless with astonishment, and therefore gave Mrs. Darlington the advantage in the conversation.

"Naturally I cannot expect you to agree that he is spoiled," said Mrs. Munn with a smile. "But with great cheerfulness. The thing is that it's quite all right for you to be engaged now. I hurried to visit you and offer my good wishes."

As soon as I came back to town, I've only one thing to ask, I'd rather you wouldn't make it public for a few weeks.

"I think you'd look better so," she was smiling and chatting white glove as she talked, fastening a ring scarf around her neck. "I'm giving a dinner party the end of the week, to which you'll come. You'll meet some more of Paul's friends then. I shall have to take you up quite enthusiastically to make your sudden engagement seem natural."

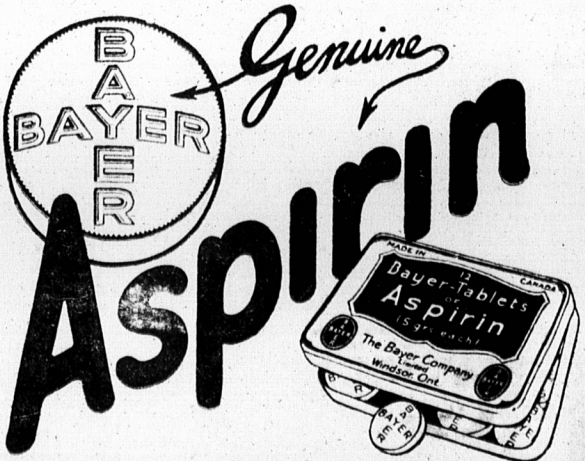
"She rose, holding out a hand, as Mrs. Munn came hurrying in. "My dear, I'm so sorry. I must leave just as you come back. But I've had such a charming visit with Patricia. We've agreed the engagement shall be announced just before Christmas. Such children as they are to be marrying! But I'm so pleased about the affair."

"She was smiling and chatting and making her way out—leaving Patty quite helpless in the drawing room. Mrs. Munn turned with a smile. "Amazing woman," she commented.

(Continued on Page Two)

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