



THE BEST PARTIES IN TOWN

Margaret and Hugh, who began as lovers, had become friends. It was the friendship of two people growing old together. In 1942 Hugh confessed he had become a "toothless old mumbler, as my old plates are no use, a terrible bore." He also said that his hands were getting fat, that he had a hard time writing anything because, with fuel rationed, he was so cold.

Margaret, too, now spoke of mundane things. She sent him baby clothes for Bridget who was expecting her second child, and stockings for Janet. She even sent clothes for Eva Schumann, who was particularly grateful for a warm cloak.

But mostly they began to talk about their grandchildren. Hugh told how his first grandson, Philip, called him Bamba, and how Philip, aged five and a half, "makes bonfires with me and we fall out, as chaps will do, you know, and Philip says, 'do you know what, bamba, you're an old beast?'" Margaret replied that she could "return the praise singing about my little four-year-old Margaret," whom she called Margaret II. "I could make her the first woman President of the United States if I had her bringing up to do. Alas that I have not, but we whisper special secrets to each other about our dreams."

And Margaret II, on her part, remembered years later how "it would have done your heart good to see grandmother run down the garden

path to meet me and my sister Nancy, and how carefully she watched over us during a new polio scare ”

At Christmas Grant, who by now was a gynecologist practising in New York, came to Tucson with his wife and children She wrote glowingly to Hugh about them, especially her grandson Michael “Michael is such a darling little fellow, sensitive like Grant was This is the happiest Xmas I ever thought it possible to enjoy ”

But while Hugh’s life was going steadily downhill, Margaret’s was still going up With her amazing energy, she could go on an extended speaking tour of a largely Catholic state like Louisiana Or raise several hundred thousand dollars for the Tucson Desert Sanatorium, helping it become the ten million dollar Tucson Medical Center it eventually became Or start new birth-control clinics in Phoenix and Tucson Or, since she was now not only famous but rich, get more and more admirers to write her the kind of letters she prized

One new admirer was Hobson Pitman By chance there had been four men in her life whose names started with H Havelock; Hugh, Harold, and Herbert George Wells Hobson was the fifth Hobson was a shy, sensitive artist who taught painting at Penn State College where her brother Bob was coaching football A bachelor in his early forties who described himself as a “stray soul,” Hobson had the same compulsion to paint that Bill Sanger had, he was seldom happy away from his easel Hobson was also deeply religious In one of his first letters to Margaret, dated November 4, 1945, he admitted “When you speak of prayer in connection with my painting, it pleases me a great deal, as I am constantly asking Our Lord to guide me and give me strength to put a spirit and life into my work ”

Margaret praised his delicate and dreamlike paintings, praise he badly needed as he was never sure of himself “I wish—oh so very much—I were with you this morning,” he wrote in another letter “I should find comfort, inspiration, and peace ” By Christmas (three months after he met her), he was unashamedly in love, starting a letter with “Dearest Margaret,” and continuing, “There is much more I feel like saying but you would consider me a fool ”

When she decided to come East for the Christmas holidays he wrote with the enthusiasm of a boy “All nervous and excited!!! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!” And so it went Six months later he had spent a weekend

in New York with her and some friends, and was using the same word to describe her that Angus used—glorious

It was heady stuff for a woman of sixty-seven, especially when he confessed "I love you too much, I'm afraid"

With all this, Margaret's loneliness was not assuaged. She was used to having hordes of people around her. Now that there were fewer people and fewer pressing things to do, she felt empty and depressed. To try to shake off her loneliness, she set off early in May for a two week cross-country clinic tour, writing Hobson when she returned. "I am feeling more and more despondent as I saw & realized more than ever the inadequacy of the diaphragm reaching millions of women who need & should have something as simple as a birth control pill." And soon she was using her ancient anodyne—a trip to London, hoping that Wells in particular would be able to see her. But he had barely received her note that she was coming when he died of the tuberculosis that had been plaguing him all his life.

On August 16, 1946 she wrote a private homage on a sheet of plain paper that she headed simply "To H G Wells"

So, darling H G, you have gone over to the Great Beyond. It's queer that with all your greatness, your mind, your vision, you have not touched this aspect of our Hereafter. Now—today—you are over there. I am fleeing overseas to Stockholm and then to England. England means London & London means H G Wells to me & also to millions of Americans. Darling H G you have been the dawn to me. Your great mind—your humor—your wit—so akin to my Irish failing for keenness of wit, may have drawn me to you.

And now you are over there, beyond my horizon. I wish if you are there—consciously there & alive in spirit—you will endeavor to explore the possibilities of communication with me. I'd like to try to see what you can do. I don't know one thing about it, but loads of things & laws of life are unknown by us humans. My love wherever you are—always.

In December 1947, Willowlake was finally sold. It went for eighty-five thousand dollars, a good price for a large difficult-to-maintain property. After the sale Margaret started a new diary.

It was an odd diary. Like so many older people, she made small

unimportant economies Back in 1927 she had kept a diary complaining how Sir Bernard Mallett had cut her name from the Geneva Conference program, the entries were made in a notebook, using one side of the page only Now, she used the other side of the page in a handwriting sometimes as clear and bold as before, sometimes so wobbly it can hardly be read

In 1947 she wrote sadly from Willowlake that the buyer was a man named Orlando Weber, "an actor-poet, son of the famed Orlando Weber of Carbide Chemical or other business firm " She went on to tell how terribly upset she was when she went to get out her furniture "Orlando Weber was a homosexual, very rich, had torn the place in pieces It was too awful he had turned the place into a horrible dude-ranch It was wrong to return to see it "

To lessen her grief, she turned as ever to Hugh

Some day soon I shall feel I am finished and know that my contribution to humanity has been given & done I think Hugh it is nearing the end now I have launched a League and have planned its machinery in such a way that it must go by its own momentum

I think of you, when I long to get away and live in beauty and in love

Do you make your dreams come true, Hugh? Always I dream of your lovely Wantley Your tall figure on the lawn, Harold the philosopher with his pipe and knowing smile like Mona Lisa, Janet & Bridget adding music & laughter to the perfect day Your place has been such a joy to me, and you, dearest Hugh, are a double joy because you are one of the highlights one meets in life

Blessed Hugh, do you think of me ever at all? No letter for years Do write me—it's very comforting to have a few friends who are like the stars, whose love shines on just the same

When Hugh didn't answer, as he seldom did now, she left New York and hurried back to Tucson to distract herself by giving parties She had once spoken of "publicity, the greatest of all intoxicants", she would get publicity by giving the most lavish parties the town had ever seen

She gave at least one party a week, each built around a different theme There was, for instance, a Japanese party, then a Chinese

party, then a Hawaiian party, and at each she not only served authentic food even if she had to send thousands of miles to get it but she provided her guests with native costumes from her copious trunks. As time went on these gatherings became even more sumptuous—at one party she served foods of half a dozen countries at once. As a result, everybody who was anybody was vying for an invitation.

The servants at these parties at first had been mainly untrained Mexicans, but then she had a stroke of luck. She found a White Russian couple named Efrem and Lisa Voronoff, who had escaped from Russia during the Revolution and run a boardinghouse in Manchuria before emigrating to the United States. Efrem, whom she preferred to call John, was tall and aristocratic, Lisa was small and dignified with a carefully combed bun piled high on her head.

Margaret persuaded them to come to work for her as a husband-and-wife team, John as a combination butler and chauffeur and Lisa as housekeeper, while faithful Daisy stayed on as cook. But Margaret, quite parsimonious where salaries were concerned, started John and Lisa at the combined salary of twenty-five dollars a month, they didn't get a raise until ten years later when Stuart made it fifty dollars. And with all the party food around, her servants were permitted to eat so little they had to go out and buy extra food for themselves.

With secretaries she was more generous. She hired a male secretary whom she proudly titled Administrative Assistant to the Honorary President of Planned Parenthood. He was an uncouth man named Jonathan Schultz who had been a farm boy and unsuccessful lawyer but had smelled out a good thing and begged for the job. He claimed he had influence with the Nobel Prize Committee in Stockholm and would show her how to get the prize. As she coveted the Nobel Prize more than anything else in the world, she took him on at the whopping salary of one thousand dollars a month.

From time to time she also took on a female secretary to help with her mail and keep track of her lecture dates, though now she did little speaking. "I am in a state like stagnant water," she confided to Hugh. "The aching pain is upon me, plus lack of confidence. It seems time for me to give others the job of speaking on B C."

But she didn't give up other kinds of birth-control work. When the original clinic in Amsterdam—the one that Ellis had sent her to years ago—ran out of supplies early in World War II, she wrote Herbert Simonds asking him to send some to Amsterdam, preferably as a gift.

She also took regular trips to New York to look in on her Sixteenth Street Bureau and to protest loudly because the Birth Control Federation of America had changed its name to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA). When its officers told her they had made the change because they thought the new words had a more positive approach, especially after they added a service to help infertile couples as well, Margaret went uptown to the PPFA's headquarters and angrily pounded the table "Birth control" were famous words, she insisted, they were easier to say. But it was too late. Planned Parenthood the federation had officially become, and Planned Parenthood it remained.

Back home, she decided to work off some of her anger by inviting the Bishop of Arizona to debate with her on the morality of birth control. As neither would appear on the same platform with the other they had to speak on alternate nights. Still, she felt she had to do something exciting besides give parties, and this at the moment was it.

When William Mathews, editor of the *Arizona Star*, heard about the debate, he exploded in an editorial "Who do these women think they are to take on the Bishop of Arizona?" Mrs. Benson Bloom, an ardent birth-control worker, stormed into Mathews' office and answered him "One thing you forget, Mr. Mathews, is that these little women happen to be right!"

Meantime Margaret lamented in her diary that Jonathan Schultz (her administrative assistant) had no sex appeal. "I am only a third older than he," she noted, "but among cultivated people that makes no difference." In truth, he was forty and she was sixty-eight.

Sexually attracted to him or not, she flew to Stockholm with Schultz in 1946 to lobby for the Nobel Prize. Unsuccessful, she came home to throw parties with men she found sexier—a musician who danced with her and played for her party guests, a teacher at a boys' school who dropped in to visit with her every morning, and a bridge pro at the Arizona Inn who played cards with her afternoons. Grant Sanger dismissed them all as sycophants. Some would have called them gigolos, but they pleased her by telling her how lovely she still was, and escorting her to various events.

And what parties she now gave!

One New Year's Eve when the champagne was flowing, they all set to thinking up the wildest stunt they could come up with. They decided to telephone Hitler in Germany and when they got him on the phone to give him the "raspberry" or Bronx cheer. They almost suc-

ceeded, too They got through to one of his secretaries in Berchtesgaden on the grounds that important Americans had a message for Hitler, and the wealthy Tucson cattleman Jack Spieden was just about to blow the cheer when the secretary caught on to the joke and hung up, making Margaret and her guests laugh and laugh On another occasion the Episcopal minister who was dancing with Margaret fell backward into her lily pool, and they laughed some more

At other times there were painting parties to Hermillio and Nogales just across the Mexican border There were few lulls between parties

When the parties began to pall she turned again to Hugh, begging for a letter, she wrote so wistfully it woke him from his silence and their correspondence began again Though it was eight years since Havelock had died, Hugh still talked about him "Havelock dear still shines through you," he said He also dwelt on Eva, wondering when Margaret would ask, "Whom do you love best, Eva or me?" When she did ask, his answer was evasive, "The more I love Eva, the more I love you Just as one bright star in the Heavens makes all the other stars shine brighter, and one truth illumines all other truths, so my love for Eva makes me love you more" Margaret answered humbly, "Thank you for explaining this to me"

By now Margaret was a grandmother many times over, and she wrote Hugh about her new role

Yesterday I spent the day at Mount Kisco (Grant's home) as it was Michael's fifth birthday He sprang into my bed at 6 A M & demanded that I sing "Happy Birthday"—at six A M! I croaked out a tune, so all was ready for some birthday presents The prize was a small tool box filled with saws, augers, etc This red box was constantly shown to everyone—so I was happy too

My thoughts are of you and Janet and Eva The winter soon on its way I wish you could shut up Sand Pit & come over here until Spring You could write in comfort & warmth—why not?

Hungry for company, she kept inviting Hobson to come West also, or if he wouldn't do that, to take a year off and go to Europe with her But Hobson was too fearful "I am always skeptical of myself and what might turn up Who knows but what I may become an invalid and the thought of giving up my position for just a year frightens me I must

plan ahead for the days to come " Margaret, he insisted, was the only one who believed in him In gratitude he sent her a picture he had just finished called "Poetic Reverie "

But Hobson also wrote less often now, except to lament that their paths crossed too infrequently

In July 1948 she again begged him to go to Europe with her He agreed to go in late August, then, just as they were about to leave, re-neged on September first "My school has announced they want me back by Sept 12th It just wouldn't be enough time "

Margaret made a note on the bottom of this letter "You should resign They are trying to push you out and make you toe the mark to humiliate you—don't take it!" But he did take it, pleading "You must forgive me Some day I'll be a better boy—just wait!"

Yet she was so lonely she began to consider proposing marriage to Hobson She wrote Angus "I'm thinking of getting married again You are my first choice, but alas! Unavailable Next comes a lawyer in New York, then a hermit in Vermont, then a painter 30 years younger than myself " Angus was so thrilled about heading the list that he rushed out in his plane to see her, though again after he left, she noted he had found her "impossible " As for Hobson, Juliet caught her up short with "For God's sake, don't marry H P He wants a mother, not a wife!" She ended up marrying no one

Meanwhile, she continued to think of ways to spend her money, bragging to Stuart, "I'm going to spend it down to the last cent and die broke "