

Wedding Gift for Elnor

BY
MARGARET WATERMAN

Illustrated by
Ralph Pallen Coleman

MRS. HENDERSON wet her fingers, twisted the end of her white thread, and pulled in her chin until her eyes were the proper distance from her needle for her to thread it. She had waited since last night for this moment, the moment when the twenty-odd members of Campus Club would be assembled in the sunroom of the president's house for the first of their two April meetings.

The thread slid neatly through the eye and Mrs. Henderson looked up. Now was the time. Just before Mrs. Kirk started the book review. "Had you heard," she asked with the assurance and deliberation fitting to the oldest member of the group, "that Miss Rondelle is being married this summer? Some young man she knew in art school." She obviously hoped they hadn't.

And strangely enough, considering the size of the Oakhurst campus and the lusty interest habitually shown by all faculty wives in the extra-curricular activities of everyone on the campus, no one had heard. Not even the women faculty members who had their meals at the women's dormitory, where Miss Rondelle usually had lunch.

In fact Mrs. Henderson's announcement was greeted with exactly the kind of female explosion she had hoped for; everyone said something loud and exclamatory to the person beside her without listening to anyone else's loud exclamations.

The women faculty members at Oakhurst were not ordinarily the marrying type, and of course most of them were not young. The dean. The librarian. The nurse. The French teacher? Well, four or five years ago most of Campus Club would have said there was a fifty-fifty chance for her. But not any more. She was approaching thirty-five, was still fairly attractive, but, it was agreed, much too shrewd and outspoken to please men.

Most of the women faculty had been at Oakhurst almost as long as Mrs. Henderson's husband had been registrar, but there were always a few young ones who came and went. And Elnor Rondelle, the art teacher, was one of these, by far the youngest and the best-looking. As a matter of fact, it didn't even seem strange to the members of Campus Club

Elnor gave a quick start; she apparently hadn't seen Ma'm'selle come in. She obviously had been crying.

that Miss Rondelle should be getting married. And that in itself is a much greater compliment than most people could conceivably realize.

"You know," Mrs. Henderson recalled, "she is the first woman of the faculty proper to get married since 1935. Not counting secretaries and lab assistants I mean, just those eligible for Campus Club." (For all faculty women were *ex officio* members of the club whether they liked it or not.) "I've been wondering what we as a group should do for her. We don't have many weddings."

Usually the club concerned itself with only three things: refreshments, babies, and book reviews. But the idea of adding a bride to their interests and activities they accepted with enthusiasm even though Miss Rondelle was little more than a name to most of them. Already each faculty wife was running through her mind for something new or something blue that she imagined herself slipping into Miss Rondelle's hand

You'd never think romance or envy would rear its ugly head in pious Campus Club . . . Luckily an ironic blast of truth blew the faculty dames back to the routine of babies, book reviews, begonias.



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some day and whispering, "Here, my dear, it's just something—" Some sort of magic, they assumed, was to be responsible for their recognizing Elnor Rondelle now that she was to be a bride. So far, especially in her dungarees with her hair flopping around her shoulders, they had habitually mistaken her for a student—unless, of course, she was carrying her sketching materials or a canvas.

There was good reason for the faculty wives being so little acquainted

with her, though. She had put in an appearance at Campus Club only once, early last fall. Frankly some of the less Christian members suspected her of purposely arranging her sketching class on Tuesdays so that she couldn't come to the meetings. That was exactly what she had done, for she found it easier to discuss water colors and dates and hair-do's with her students than to join in the Campus Club discussions of wall-paper cleaners and gall-bladders and thumb-sucking and lice on azaleas.

It would have been hard, of course, for
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