
PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE

Jean Renoir adapted Guy de Maupassant's short story *Une partie de campagne*: 'The story of an unrequited love, followed by a wasted life, can be the theme of a thick novel,' he explained. 'But Maupassant, in a few pages, tells us the essentials. It was the transposition to the screen of these essentials of a great story that appealed to me¹. During shooting, the weather was not good, and the threat of a storm fortuitously brought another dimension to the narrative. The result is a blend of cruelty and humanity. *A Day in the Country* is a refined film, devoid of flourishes to relate the game of seduction and love like an instant of fleeting happiness, commanded by a purely instinctive feeling. Jean Renoir pays homage to his father in seeking effects of shadow and light through the foliage, in the scenes of embracing or boating.

I played Maupassant for a very simple reason: I like Maupassant, and it seems to me that there's everything in a small story like that of 'Une partie de campagne': there are lots of problems; a part of the world is summed up therein. It's obvious that there are few love stories as touching as 'Une partie de campagne'. It is quite frequent in Maupassant, and quite frequent in many great authors.

Another thing: this extremely short story did not bind me: it is not like a play that would impose dialogues on me. 'Une partie de campagne' imposed nothing. It imposed only an ideal framework that allowed me to embroider. This question of framework in which one embroiders - I am a strong believer in it. [...]

A Day in the Country takes place along the Seine. I couldn't shoot on the banks of the Seine for the Seine in 1935 – that was the year I filmed A Day in the Country – was no longer the Seine of 80 years earlier and was no longer my father's Seine of boaters. The Seine of 1935 was a Seine with factories, steamboats and a lot of noise. So I went to shoot along the Loing. I was lucky to have a friend, Anne-Marie Verrier, whose husband, Monsieur Verrier, was the forest warden of the Fontainebleau Forest, and he was lodged in this absolutely marvellous, absolutely delightful little forest house, right next to the Loing, near a bridge. So we wrote 'auberge' on the front of the forest house, we were a band of mates and we moved into Anne-Marie Verrier's house. We shot A Day in the Country at her home.

The most important incident of A Day in the Country was that I had written the script for sunny weather. I had written the script for being seated in the dust and sweating. However, it didn't stop raining. I was nonetheless able to steal a bit of sun between downpours but, given that the downpours persisted, I ended up deciding to change my script and make it a script of rain. And those long rain scenes that you see are quite simply an adaptation to circumstances².

¹ Jean Renoir, *Ma vie et mes films*, Flammarion, 1974

² Jean Renoir, *Entretiens et propos*, Editions de l'Étoile, 1979

A Day in the Country / Partie de campagne

France, 1946 – 50 minutes

Direction: Jean Renoir

Script : Jean Renoir d'après la nouvelle de Guy de Maupassant

Assistants directors: Luchino Visconti, Jacques Becker, Henri Cartier-Bresson

Production : Panthéon Productions

Photography : Claude Renoir

Cast: Sylvia Bataille, Jane Marken, André Gabriello, Georges Darnoux, Jacques B. Brunius, Paul Temps.

The summer of 1860: Monsieur Dufour decides to spend a day in the country, accompanied by his wife, his mother-in-law, his daughter, Henriette, and his future son-in-law, his clerk, Anatole. They encounter two boaters, Henri and Rodolphe, who set about courting mother and daughter.

The film remained unfinished as Renoir had to abandon it to make *The Lower Depths* (1936). Producer Pierre Braunberger edited the film in 1946, ten years after the shooting. In 2013, it was restored by Les Films du Panthéon with the support of the CNC, La Cinémathèque française and the Franco-American Cultural Fund. The 2K digitization and treatment of the image were carried out at the Digimage laboratory, and the restoration of the sound at the L.E. Diapason studio.

