

MARY MARIE

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SYNOPSIS

PREFACE.—“Mary Marie” explains her “double personality” and just why she is a “cross-current and a contradiction”; she also tells her reasons for writing the diary—later to be a novel. The diary is commenced at Andersonville.

CHAPTER I.—Mary begins with Nurse Sarah's account of her (Mary's) birth, which seemingly interested her father, who is a famous astronomer, less than a new star which was discovered the same night. Her name is a compromise, her mother wanted to call her Viola and her father insisting on Abigail Jane. The child quickly learned that he home was in some way different from those of her small friends, and was puzzled thereat. Nurse Sarah tells her of her mother's arrival at Andersonville as a bride and how astonished they all were at the sight of the dainty eighteen-year-old girl whom the sedate professor had chosen for a wife.

CHAPTER II.—Continuing her story, Nurse Sarah makes it plain why the household seemed so strange to the child and how her father and mother drifted apart through misunderstanding, each too proud to in any way attempt to smooth over the situation.

CHAPTER III.—Mary tells of the time spent “out west” where the “perfectly all right and genteel and respectable” divorce was being arranged for, and her mother's (to her) unexpected return. By the court's decree the child is to spend six months of the year with her mother and six months with her father. Boston is Mother's home, and she and Mary leave Andersonville for that city to spend the first six months.

CHAPTER IV.—At Boston Mary becomes “Marie.” She is delighted with her new home, so different from the gloomy house at Andersonville. The number of gentlemen who call on her mother leads her to speculate on the possibility of a new father. She classes the callers as “respectable suitors” and finally decides the choice is to be between “the violinist” and a Mr. Harlow. A conversation she overhears between her mother and Mr. Harlow convinces her that it will not be that gentleman and “the violinist” seems to be the likely man. Mrs. Anderson receives a letter from “Aunt Abigail Anderson,” her former husband's sister, who is keeping house for him, reminding her that “Mary” is expected at Andersonville for the six months she is to spend with her father. Her mother is distressed, but has no alternative, and “Marie” departs for Andersonville.

CHAPTER V.—The diary takes a jump of twelve years during which Marie (always Marie then) has the usual harmless love affairs inseparable from girlhood. Then she meets THE man—Gerald Weston, young, wealthy, and already a successful portrait painter. They are deeply in love and the wedding follows quickly. With the coming of the baby, Eunice, things seem to change with Marie and Gerald, and they in a manner drift apart. When Eunice is five years old, Marie decides to part from Gerald. Intending to break the news to her mother, she is reminded of her own frequent unhappy childhood and how her action in parting from her husband will subject Eunice to the same humiliations. Her eyes opened, Marie gives up her idea of separation, and returns to her husband, her duty, and her love.

CHAPTER VI.—At Andersonville Aunt Jane meets her at the station. Her father is away somewhere, studying an eclipse of the moon. Marie—“Mary”—instinctively compares Aunt Jane, prim and severe, with her beautiful, dainty mother, much to the former's disadvantage. Aunt Jane disapproves of the dainty clothes which the child is wearing, and replaces them with “serviceable” and thick-soled shoes. Her father arrives home and seems surprised to see her. The child soon begins to notice that the girls at school seem to avoid her. Her father appears interested in the life Mrs. Anderson leads at Boston and asks many questions in a queer manner which puzzles Marie. She finds out that her schoolmates do not associate with her on account of her parents being divorced, and she refuses to attend school. Angry at first, Mr. Anderson, when he learns the reason for her detention, decides that she need not go. He will hear her lessons. In Aunt Jane's and her father's absence Marie dresses in the pretty clothes which she brought from Boston and plays the liveliest tunes she knows, on the little-used piano. Then, overcome by her loneliness, she indulges in a crying spell which her father's unexpected appearance interrupts. She sobs out the story of her unhappiness, and in a clumsy way he comforts her. After that he appears to desire to make her stay more pleasant. Her mother writes asking that Marie be allowed to come to Boston for the beginning of the school term, and Mr. Anderson consents, though from an expression he lets fall Marie believes he is sorry she is going.

CHAPTER VII.—At the Andersonville station Mary is met by her father in a new automobile, and finds instead of the prim and angular Aunt Jane a young and attractive woman who she learns is “Cousin Grace.” Mary writes her mother of the change, and is astonished at the many questions she is called on to answer concerning her father's new housekeeper. Mary decides that he intends to marry “Cousin Grace.” In a moment of confidence she asks him if that is not his intention. He tells her it is not, and is dumfounded when she informs him she has written to her mother telling her the idea of the situation. A few days later Mary goes back to Boston.

CHAPTER VIII.—Mr. Anderson visits Boston to deliver a lecture. Mrs. Anderson and Marie hear him and Marie talks with him. Later that day Marie finds her mother crying over some old diary in her attic, and she learns the things were connected with her divorced husband. At a meeting with her father, Marie is sure from her observations that her mother still loves him. She suggests that he call at the house and she will arrange for her mother to meet him without first knowing who the visitor is. Marie is confident that if they meet in a room where mutual misunderstandings are explained, and the two, who have really always loved one another, are remarried.

And right there and then it came to me that Mother said it was her fault, too; and that if only she could live it over again, she'd do differently. And here was Father saying the same thing. And all of a sudden I thought, well, why can't they try it over again, if they both want to, and if each says it was their—no, his, no, hers—well, his and her fault. (How does the thing go? I hate grammar!) But I mean, if she says it's her fault, and he says it's his. That's what I thought, anyway. And I determined right then and there to give them the chance to try again, if speaking would do it.

I looked up at Father. He was still talking half under his breath, his eyes looking straight ahead. He had forgotten all about me. That was plain to be seen. If I'd been a cup of coffee without any coffee in it, he'd have been stirring me. I know he would. He was like that.

“Father, Father!” I had to speak twice, before he heard me. “Do you really mean that you would like to try again?” I asked.

“Oh? What?” And just the way he turned and looked at me showed how many miles he'd been away from me.

“Try it again, you know—what you said,” I reminded him.

“Oh, that!” Such a funny look came to his face, half ashamed, half vexed. “I'm afraid I have been—talking, my dear.”

“Yes, but would you?” I persisted. He shook his head; then, with such an oh-that-it-could-be! smile, he said: “Of course—we all wish—at we could go back and do it over again—differently. But we never can.”

“Yes, but, Father, you can go back, in this case, and so can Mother, ‘cause you both want to,” I hurried on, almost choking in my anxiety to get it all out quickly. “And Mother said it was her fault. I heard her.”

“Her fault!” I could see that Father did not quite understand, even yet.

“Yes, yes, just as you said it was yours—about all those things at the first, you know, when—when she was a spirit of youth beating against the bars.”

Father turned square around and faced me. “Marie, what are you talking about?” he asked then. And I'd have been scared of his voice if it hadn't been for the great light that was shining in his eyes.

But I looked into his eyes, and wasn't scared; and I told him everything, every single thing—all about how Mother had cried over the little blue dress that day in the trunk-room, and how she had shown the tarnished lace and said that she had tarnished the happiness of him and of herself and of me; and that it was all her fault; that she was thoughtless and willful and exacting and a spoiled child; and, oh, if she could only try it over again, how differently she would do! And there was a lot more. I told everything—everything I could remember. Some way, I didn't believe that Mother would mind now, after what Father had said. And I just knew she wouldn't mind if she could see the look in Father's eyes as I talked.

He didn't interrupt me—not long interruptions. He did speak out a quick little word now and then, at some of the parts; and once I know I saw him wipe a tear from his eyes. After that he put up his hand and sat with his eyes covered all the rest of the time I was talking. And he didn't take it down till I said:

“And so, Father, that's why I told you; ‘cause it seemed to me if you wanted to try again, and she wanted to try again, why can't you do it? Oh, Father, think how perfectly lovely it would be if you did, and if it worked! Why, I wouldn't care whether it was Mary or Marie, or what I was. I'd have you and Mother both together, and, oh, how I should love it!”

It was here that Father's arm came out and slipped around me in a great big hug.

“Bless your heart! But, Marie, my dear, how are we going to—bring this about?” Then is when my second great idea came to me.

“Oh, Father!” I cried, “couldn't you come courting her again—calls and flowers and candy, and all the rest? Oh, Father, couldn't you? Why, Father, of course you could!”

This last I added in my most persuasive voice, for I could see the “no” on his face even before he began to shake his head.

“I'm afraid not, my dear,” he said, then. “It would take more than a flower or a bonbon to—win your mother back now, I fear.”

“But you could try,” I urged. He shook his head again.

“She wouldn't see me—if I called, my dear,” he answered.

He sighed as he said it, and I sighed, too. And for a minute I didn't say

anything. Of course, if she wouldn't see him—

Then another idea came to me. “But, Father, if she would see you—I mean, if you got a chance, you would tell her what you told me just now; about its being your fault, I mean, and the spirit of youth beating against the bars, and all that. You would, wouldn't you?”

He didn't say anything, not anything, for such a long time I thought he hadn't heard me. Then, with a queer, quick drawing in of his breath, he said:

“I think—little girl—if—if I ever got the chance I would say—a great deal more than I said to you tonight.”

“Good!” I just crowed the word, and I think I clapped my hands; but right away I straightened up and was very fine and dignified, for I saw Aunt Hattie looking at me from across the room, as I said:

“Very good, then. You shall have the chance.”

He turned and smiled a little, but he shook his head.

“Thank you, child; but I don't think you know quite what you're promising,” he said.

“Yes, I do.”

Then I told him my idea. At first he said no, and it couldn't be, and he was very sure she wouldn't see him, even if he called. But I said she would if he would do exactly as I said. And I told him my plan. And after a time and quite a lot of talk, he said he would agree to it.

And this morning we did it.

At exactly ten o'clock he came up the steps of the house here, but he didn't ring the bell. I had told him not to do that, and I was on the watch for him. I knew that at ten o'clock Grandfather would be gone, Aunt Hattie probably downtown shopping, and Lester out with his governess. I wasn't



At Exactly Ten o'clock He Came Up the Steps of the House Here, but He Didn't Ring the Bell.

so sure of Mother, but I knew it was Saturday, and I believed I could manage somehow to keep her here with me, so that everything would be all right there.

I did it, and five minutes before ten she was sitting quietly sewing in her own room. Then I went downstairs to watch for Father.

He came just on the dot, and I let him in and took him into the library. Then I went upstairs and told Mother there was some one downstairs who wanted to see her.

And she said, how funny, and wasn't there any name, and where was the maid. But I didn't seem to hear. I had gone into my room in quite a hurry, as if I had forgotten something I wanted to do there. But, of course, I didn't do a thing—except to make sure that she went downstairs to the library.

They're there now together. And he's been here a whole hour already. Seems as if he ought to say something in that length of time!

After I was sure Mother was down, I took out this, and began to write in it. And I've been writing ever since. But, oh, I do so wonder what's going on down there. I'm so excited over—

ONE WEEK LATER

At just that minute Mother came in to the room. I wish you could have seen her. My stars, but she looked pretty!—with her shining eyes and the lovely pink in her cheeks. And young! Honestly, I believe she looked younger than I did that minute.

She just came and put her arms around me and kissed me. And I saw then that her eyes were all misty with tears. She didn't say a word, hardly, only that Father wanted to see me, and I was to go right down.

And I went. I thought, of course, that she was coming, too. But she didn't. And when I got down the stairs I found I was all alone; but I went right on into the library, and there was Father waiting for me.

He didn't say much, either, at first; but just like Mother he put his arms around me and kissed me, and held me there. Then, very soon, he began to talk; and, oh, he said such beautiful things—such tender, lovely, sacred things; too sacred even to write down here. Then he kissed me again and went away.

But he came back the next day, and he's been here some part of every day since. And, oh, what a wonderful week it has been!

They're going to be married. It's tomorrow. They'd have been married right away at the first, only they had to wait—something about licenses and a five-day notice, Mother said. Father fussed and fumed, and wanted to try for a special dispensation, or something; but Mother laughed, and said certainly not, and that she guessed it was just as well, for she positively had to have a few things; and he needn't think he could walk right in like that on a body and expect her to get married at a moment's notice. But she didn't mean it. I know she didn't; for when Father reproached her, she laughed softly, and called him an old goose, and said, yes, of course, she'd have married him in two minutes if it hadn't been for the five-day notice, no matter whether she ever had a new dress or not.

“And that's the way it is with them all the time. They're too funny and lovely together for anything. (Aunt Hattie says they're too silly for anything, but nobody minds Aunt Hattie.)

And, as I said before, it is all perfectly wonderful.

So it's all settled, and they're going right away on this trip and call it a wedding trip. And, of course, Grandfather had to get off his joke about how he thought it was a pretty dangerous business; and to see that this honeymoon didn't go into an eclipse while they were watching the other one. But nobody minds Grandfather.

I'm to stay here and finish school. Then, in the spring, when Father and Mother come back, we are all to go to Andersonville and begin to live in the old house again.

Won't it be lovely? It just seems too good to be true. Why, I don't care a bit now whether I'm Mary or Marie. But, then, nobody else does, either. In fact, both of them call me the whole name now, Mary Marie. I don't think they ever said they would. They just began to do it. That's all.

How about this being a love story now? Oh, I'm so excited!

CHAPTER IX.

Which Is the Test.

ANDERSONVILLE. TWELVE YEARS LATER

Twelve years—yes. And I'm twenty-eight years old. Pretty old, little Marie of the long ago would think. And, well, perhaps today I feel just as old as she would put it.

I came up into the attic this morning to pack away some things I shall no longer need, now that I am going to leave Jerry. (Jerry is my husband.) And in the bottom of my little trunk I found this manuscript. I had forgotten that such a thing existed; but with its laboriously written pages before me, it all came back to me; and I began to read; here a sentence; there a paragraph; somewhere else a page. Then, with a little half laugh and a half sob, I carried it to an old rocking-chair by the cobwebby dormer window, and settled myself to read it straight through.

And I have read it.

Poor little Mary Marie! Dear little Marie! To meet you like this, to share with you your joys and sorrows, hopes and despondencies, of those years, long ago, is like sitting hand in hand on a sofa with a childhood's friend, each listening to an eager “And do you remember?” falling constantly from delighted lips that cannot seem to talk half fast enough.

It was almost dark when I had finished the manuscript. It was written on the top sheet of a still thick pad of paper, and my fingers fairly tingled suddenly, to go on and cover those unused white sheets—tell what happened next—tell the rest of the story; not for the sake of the story—but for my sake. It might help me. It might make things clearer. It might help to justify myself in my own eyes. Not that I have any doubts, of course (about leaving Jerry, I mean), but that when I saw it in black and white I could be even more convinced that I was doing what was best for him and best for me.

So I brought the manuscript down to my own room, and this evening I have commenced to write. I can't finish it tonight, of course. But I have tomorrow, and still tomorrow. (I have

And the way he drew her into his arms and kissed her.



And the Way He Drew Her Into His Arms and Kissed Her.

so many tomorrows now! And what do they all amount to? And so I'll just keep writing, as I have time, till

I bring it to the end.

I'm sorry that it must be so sad and sorry an end. But there's no other way, of course. There can be but one ending, as I can see. I'm sorry. Mother'll be sorry, too. She doesn't know yet. I hate to tell her. Nobody knows—not even Jerry himself—yet. They all think I'm just making a visit to Mother—and I am—till I write that letter to Jerry. And then—

I believe now that I'll wait till I've finished writing this. I'll feel better then. My mind will be clearer. I'll know more what to say. Just the effort of writing it down—

Of course, if Jerry and I hadn't— But this is no way to begin. Like the little Marie of long ago I am in danger of starting my dinner with ice-cream instead of soup! And so I must begin where I left off, of course. And that was at the wedding.

I remember that wedding as if it were yesterday. I can see now, with Mary Marie's manuscript before me, why it made so great an impression upon me. It was a very quiet wedding, of course—just the members of the family present. But I shall never forget the fine, sweet loveliness of Mother's face, nor the splendid strength and tenderness of Father's. And the way he drew her into his arms and kissed her, after it was all over—well, I remember distinctly that even Aunt Hattie choked up and had to turn her back to wipe her eyes.

They went away at once, first to New York for a day or two, then to Andersonville, to prepare for the real wedding trip to the other side of the world. I stayed in Boston at school.

In the spring, when Father and Mother returned, and we all went back to Andersonville, there followed a long period of just happy girlhood, and I suspect I was too satisfied and happy to think of writing. After all, I've noticed it's when we're sad or troubled over something that we have that tinging to cover perfectly good white paper with “confessions” and “stories of my life.” As witness right now what I'm doing.

I had just passed my sixteenth birthday when we all came back to live in Andersonville. For the first few months I suspect that just the glory and the wonder and joy of living in the old home, with Father and Mother happy together, was enough to fill all my thoughts. Then, as school began in the fall, I came down to normal living again, and became a girl—just a growing girl in her teens.

How patient Mother was, and Father, too! I can see how gently and tactfully they helped me over the stones and stumbling-blocks that strewn the pathway of every sixteen-year-old girl who thinks, because she has turned down her dresses and turned up her hair, that she is grown up, and can do and think and talk as she pleases.

It was that winter that I went through the morbid period. Like our childhood's measles and whooping cough, it seems to come to most of us—women children. I wonder why? Certainly it came to me. True to type I cried by the hour over fancied slights from my schoolmates, and brooded days at a time because Father or Mother “didn't understand.” I questioned everything in the earth beneath and the heavens above; and in my dark despair over an averted glance from my most intimate friend, I meditated on whether life was, or was not, worth the living, with a preponderance toward the latter.

Mother—dear mother!—looked on aghast. She feared, I think for my life; certainly for my sanity and morals.

It was Father who came to the rescue. He pooh-poohed Mother's fears; said it was indigestion that ailed me, or that I was growing too fast; or perhaps I didn't get enough sleep, or needed, maybe, a good tonic. He took me out of school, and made it a point to accompany me on long walks. He talked with me—not to me—about the birds and the trees and the sunsets, and then about the deeper things of life. Until, before I realized it, I was sane and sensible once more, serene and happy in the simple faith of my childhood.

I was seventeen, if I remember rightly, when I became worried, not over my heavenly estate now, but my earthly one. I must have a career, of course. No namby-pamby everyday living of dishes and dusting and meals and babies for me. It was all very well, of course, for some people. Such things had to be. But for me—

I could write, of course, but I was not sure but that I preferred the stage. At the same time there was within me a deep stirring as of a call to go out and enlighten the world, especially that portion of it in darkest Africa or deadliest India. I would be a missionary.

Before I was eighteen, however, I had abandoned all this. Father put his foot down hard on the missionary project, and Mother put hers down on the stage idea. I didn't mind so much, though, as I remember, for on further study and consideration, I found that flowers and applause were not all of an actor's life, and that Africa and India were not entirely desirable as a place of residence for a young woman alone. Besides, I had decided by then that I could enlighten the world just as effectually (and much more comfortably) by writing stories at home and getting them printed.

So I wrote stories—but I did not get any of them printed in spite of my earnest efforts. In time, therefore, that idea, also, was abandoned; and with it, regretfully, the idea of enlightening the world at all.

Besides, I had just then (again if I remember rightly) fallen in love.

Not what it was the first time. Oh, no, not at eighteen, when at thirteen I had begun confidently and happily to

look for it! What a sentimental little piece I was! How could they have been so patient with me—Father, Mother, everybody!

I think the first real attack—the first that I consciously called love, myself—was the winter after we had all come back to Andersonville to live. I was sixteen and in the high school.

It was Paul Mayhew—yes, the same Paul Mayhew that had defied his mother and sister and walked home with me one night and invited me to go for an automobile ride, only to be sent sharply about his business by my stern, inexorable Aunt Jane. Paul was in the senior class now, and the handsomest, most admired boy in school. He didn't care for girls. That is, he said he didn't. He bore himself with a supreme indifference that was maddening, and that took (apparently) no notice of the fact that every girl in school was a willing slave to the mere nodding of his head or the beckoning of his hand.

This was the condition of things when I entered school that fall, and perhaps for a week thereafter. Then one day, very suddenly, and without apparent reason, he awoke to the fact of my existence. Candy, flowers, books—some one of these he brought to me every morning. All during the school day he was my devoted gallant, dancing attendance every possible minute outside of session hours, and walking home with me in the afternoon, proudly carrying my books. Did I say “home with me”? That is not strictly true—he always stopped just one block short of “home”—one block



All During the School Day He Was My Devoted Gallant.

short of my gate. He evidently had not forgotten Aunt Jane, and did not intend to take any foolish risks! So he said good-by to me always at a safe distance.

This went on for perhaps a week. Then he asked me to attend a school sleigh-ride and supper with him.

I was wild with delight. At the same time I was wild with apprehension. I awoke suddenly to the fact of the existence of Father and Mother, and that their permission must be gained. And I had my doubts—I had very grave doubts. Yet it seemed to me at that moment that I just had to go on that sleigh-ride. That it was the only thing in the whole wide world worth while.

I can remember now, as if it were yesterday, the way I debated in my mind as to whether I should ask Father, Mother, or both together; and if I should let it be seen how greatly I desired to go, and how much it meant to me; or if I should just mention it as in passing, and take their permission practically for granted.

I chose the latter course, and I took a time when they were both together. At the breakfast table I mentioned casually that the school was to have a sleigh-ride and supper the next Friday afternoon and evening, and that Paul Mayhew had asked me to go with him.

“A sleigh-ride, supper, and not come home until evening?” cried Mother. “And with whom, did you say?”

“Paul Mayhew,” I answered. I still tried to speak casually; at the same time I tried to indicate by voice and manner something of the great honor that had been bestowed upon their daughter.

Father was impressed—plainly impressed; but not a. all in the way I had hoped he would be. He gave me a swift, sharp glance; then looked straight at Mother.

“Humph! Paul Mayhew! Yes, I know him,” he said grimly. “And I'm dreading the time when he comes into college next year.”

“You mean—” Mother hesitated and stopped.

“I mean I don't like the company he keeps—already,” nodded Father.

“Then you don't think that Mary Marie—” Mother hesitated again, and glanced at me.

“Certainly not,” said Father decidedly.

I knew then, of course, that he meant I couldn't go on the sleigh ride, even though he hadn't said the words right out. I forgot all about being casual and indifferent and matter-of-course then. I thought only of showing them how absolutely necessary it was for them to let me go on that sleigh ride, unless they wanted my life forevermore hopelessly blighted. I explained carefully how he was

(To be continued next week.)