

MARY MARIE

By Eleanor H. Porter

Illustrations by R. H. Livingstone

CHAPTER IX—Continued

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 effectively (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 that 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 galleant, 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 the handsomest, most popular boy in school, and how all the girls were just crazy to be asked to go anywhere with him; and I argued what if Father had seen him with boys he did not like—then that was all the more reason why nice girls like me, when he asked them, should go with him, so as to keep him away from bad boys. And I reminded them again that he was the very handsomest, most popular boy in school; and that there wasn't a girl I knew who wouldn't be crazy to be in his shoes.

Then I stopped, all out of breath, and I can imagine just how pleading and palpitating I looked.

I thought Father was going to refuse right away, but I saw the glance that Mother threw him—she glanced that said, "Let me attend to this, dear." I'd seen that glance before, several times, and I knew just what it meant; so I wasn't surprised to see Father shrug his shoulders and turn away as Mother said to me:

"Very well, dear. I'll think it over and let you know tonight."

But I was surprised that night to have Mother say I could go, for I'd about given up hope, after all that talk at the breakfast table. And she said something else that surprised me, too. She said she'd like to know Paul Mayhew herself; that she always wanted to know the friends of her little girl. And she told me to ask him to call the next evening and play checkers or chess with me.

Happy? I could scarcely contain myself for joy. And when the next evening came, bringing Paul, and Mother, all prettily dressed as if he were really, truly company, came into the room and talked so beautifully to him, I was even more entranced. To be sure, it did bother me a little that Paul laughed so much, and so loudly, and that he couldn't seem to find anything to talk about only himself, and what he was doing, and what he was going to do. Some way, he had never seemed like that at school. And I was afraid Mother wouldn't like that.

All the evening I was watching and listening with her eyes and her ears everything he did, everything he said. I so wanted Mother to like him! I so wanted Mother to see how really fine and splendid and noble he was. But that evening—Why couldn't he stop talking about the prizes he'd won, and the big racing car he'd just ordered for next summer? There was nothing fine and splendid and noble about that. And were his finger nails always so dirty?

Why, Mother would think—Mother did not stay in the room all the time; but she was in more or less often to watch the game; and at half-past nine she brought in some little cakes and lemonade as a surprise. I thought it was lovely; but I could have shaken Paul when he pretended to be afraid of it, and asked Mother if there was a stick in it.

The idea—Mother! A stick! I just knew Mother wouldn't like that. But if she didn't, she never showed a thing in her face. She just smiled, and said no, there wasn't any stick in it; and passed the cakes.

When he had gone I remember I didn't like to meet Mother's eyes, and I didn't ask her how she liked Paul Mayhew. I kept right on talking fast about something else. Some way, I didn't want Mother to talk then, for fear of what she would say.

And Mother didn't say anything about Paul Mayhew—then. But only a few days later she told me to invite him again to the house (this time to a chafing-dish supper), and to ask Carrie Heywood and Fred Small, too.

We had a beautiful time, only again Paul Mayhew didn't "show off" at all in the way I wanted him to—though he most emphatically "showed off" in his way! It seemed to me that he bragged even more about himself and his belongings than he had before.

And I didn't like at all the way he ate his food. Why, Father didn't eat like that—with such a noisy mouth, and such a rattling of the silverware!

And so it went—wise mother that she was! Far from prohibiting me to have anything to do with Paul Mayhew, she let me see all I wanted to of him, particularly in my own home. She let me go out with him, properly chaperoned, and she never, by word or manner, hinted that she didn't admire his conceit and braggadochio.

And it all came out exactly as I suspect she had planned from the beginning. When Paul Mayhew asked to be my escort to the class reception in June, I declined with thanks, and immediately afterward told Fred Small I would go with him. But even when I told Mother nonchalantly, and with carefully averted eyes, that I was going to the reception with Fred Small—even then her pleasant "Well, that's good!" conveyed only cheery mother interest; nor did a hasty glance into her face discover so much as a lifted eyebrow to hint, "I thought you'd come to your senses sometime!"

Wise little mother that she was!

In the days and weeks that followed (though nothing was said) I detected a subtle change in certain matters, however. And as I look back at it now, I am sure I can trace its origin to my "affair" with Paul Mayhew. Evidently Mother had no intention of running the risk of any more courtships; also evidently she intended to know who my friends were. At all events, the old Anderson mansion soon became the rendezvous of all the boys and girls of my acquaintance. And such good times as we had, with Mother always one of us, and ever proposing something new and interesting! And because boys—not a boy, but boys—were as free to come to the house as were girls, they soon seemed to me as commonplace and matter-of-course and free from sentimental interest as were the girls.

Again, wise little mother!

But, of course, even this did not prevent my falling in love with some one older than myself, some one quite outside of my own circle of intimates.

My especial attack of this kind came to me when I was barely eighteen, the spring I was being graduated from the Andersonville High school. And the visible embodiment of my adoration was the head master, Mr. Harold Hartshorn, a handsome, clean-shaven, well-set-up man of (I should judge) thirty-five years of age, rather grave, a little stern, and very dignified.

But how I adored him! How I hung upon his every word, his every glance! How I maneuvered to win from him a few minutes' conversation on a Latin verb or a French translation! How I thrilled if he bestowed upon me one of his infrequent smiles! How I grieved over his stern aloofness!

By the end of a month I had evolved this: His stern aloofness meant that he had been disappointed in love! His melancholy was loneliness—his heart was breaking. How I longed to he-

to heal, to cure! How I thrilled at the thought of the love and companionship I could give him somewhere in a rose-embowered cottage far from the madding crowd! (He boarded at the Andersonville hotel alone now.) If only he could see it as I saw it. If only by some sign or token he could know of the warm love that was his but, for the asking! Could he not see that no longer need he pine alone and unappreciated in the Andersonville hotel? Why, in just a few weeks I was to be through school. And then—

On the night before commencement Mr. Harold Hartshorn ascended our front steps, rang the bell, and called for my father. I knew because I was upstairs in my room over the front door; and I saw him come up the walk and heard him ask for Father.

Oh, joy! Oh, happy day! He knew. He had seen it as I saw it. He had come to gain Father's permission, that he might be a duly accredited suitor for my hand!

During the next ecstatic ten minutes, with my hand pressed against my wildly beating heart, I planned my wedding dress, selected with care and discrimination my trousseau, furnished the rose-embowered cottage far from the madding crowd—and wondered why Father did not send for me. Then the slam of the screen door downstairs sent me to the window, a sickening terror within me.

Was he going—without seeing me, his future bride? Impossible!

Father and Mr. Harold Hartshorn stood on the front steps below, talking. In another minute Mr. Hartshorn had walked away, and Father had turned back on to the piazza.

As soon as I could control my shivering knees, I went downstairs. Father was in his favorite rocking-chair. I advanced slowly. I did not sit down.

"Was that Mr. Hartshorn?" I asked, trying to keep the shake out of my voice.

"Yes."

"Mr. Hartshorn," I repeated stupidly.

"Yes. He came to see me about the Downer place," nodded Father. "He wants to rent it for next year."

"To rent it—the Downer place?" (The Downer place was no rose-embowered cottage far from the madding crowd! Why, it was big, and brick, and right next to the hotel! I didn't want to live there.)

"Yes—for his wife and family. He's going to bring them back with him next year," explained Father.

"His wife and family!" I can imagine about how I gasped out those four words.

"Yes. He has five children, I believe, and—"

But I had fled to my room.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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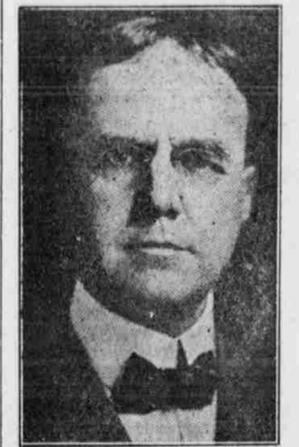
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NOTICE OF THE FORMATION OF PAVING DISTRICT NO. 16 IN THE CITY OF NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA.

To the owners of the record title all property adjacent to or abutting upon the streets hereinafter described and all person interested therein:

You and each of you are hereby notified that the Mayor and City Council of the city of North Platte did under date of June 20, 1922 pass and approve a certain ordinance forming and creating paving district No. 16 of the city of North Platte, Lincoln County, Nebraska. And that the following streets including the intersections thereof within the limits of the city are comprised within said paving district, to-wit: All that portion of Eighth Street commencing at the west line of the intersection of Eighth and Locust Streets in the said city of North Platte, thence running west along said Eighth Street to the East line of the intersection of said Eighth Street and Augusta Avenue of the city of North Platte, Lincoln County, Nebraska, there to terminate.

Unless objections are filed as required by statute within twenty days from the first publication of this notice, the Mayor and City Council shall proceed to construct such paving.

Dated this 2nd day of June, 1922.

E. H. EVANS
Attest: O. R. ELDER, Mayor
City Clerk. (SEAL)

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PRIMARY ELECTION

By virtue of the authority vested in me by law and in accordance with Section 2159 of the Revised Statutes of Nebraska, I, A. S. Allen, County Clerk of Lincoln County, State of Nebraska, do hereby direct and proclaim that a Primary Election be held in the several voting places within Lincoln County, State of Nebraska, on Tuesday the 18th day of July 1922, during the hours dictated by law for the following purposes, to-wit—

For the nomination by each of the political parties one candidate for United States Senator.

For the non-political nomination of two candidates for Judge of the Supreme Court for the Sixth Supreme Court Judicial District as provided by the Constitution of the State of Nebraska.

For the nomination by each of the political parties of one candidate for Congressman from the Sixth Congressional District within the State of Nebraska.

For the nomination by each of the political parties of the following candidates for State Offices, to-wit—

One Governor
One Lieutenant Governor
One Secretary of State.
One Auditor of Public Accounts
One State Treasurer
One Attorney General
One Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings.

For the non-political nomination of two candidates for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as provided by law.

For the nomination by each of the political parties one candidate for State Senator from the 30th Senatorial District as apportioned by the Session laws of 1921.

For the nomination by each of the political parties of one candidate for the State Representative from the 99th District as apportioned by the Session Laws of 1921.

For the nomination by each of the political parties of one candidate for State Representative from the 90th District as apportioned by the Session Laws of 1921.

For the nomination by each of the political parties of the following candidates for County Offices, to-wit—

One County Clerk.
One County Treasurer
One Register of Deeds
One Sheriff
One County Attorney
One County Surveyor
One County Commissioner from the 2nd District.

For the non-political nomination of two candidates for County Superintendent of Public Instruction as provided by law.

Polls will open at 8 a. m. and remain open until 8 p. m. of the same day.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal this 26th day of May, A. D. 1922.

A. S. ALLEN
County Clerk (SEAL)