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# MARY MARIE

By Eleanor H. Porter

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#### SYNOPSIS

**PREFACE.**—"Mary Marie" explains her apparent "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 insisted on Abigail Jane. The child quickly learned that her home was in some way different from those of her small friends, and was puzzled thereat. Nurse Sarah tells her mother's arrival at Andersonville as a bride and how astonished they all were at the sight of the daily sixteen-year old girl whom the sextate professor had chosen for a wife.

**CHAPTER II.**—Continuing her story, Nurse Sarah makes it plain why the household seemed a strange one 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) unaccountable behavior. 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. Her father's "prospective suitors," finally deciding 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 to be spent with her father. Her mother is distressed, but has no alternative, and "Marie" departs for Andersonville.

**CHAPTER V.**—At Andersonville Aunt Jane meets her at the station. Her father is away somewhere, studying an eclipse of the moon. "Marie" now 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" serges 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 Mary. 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 determination, decides that she need not go. He will hear her lessons in Aunt Jane's room. The absence Mary dresses in the pretty clothes 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 soba 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 Mary be allowed to come to Boston for the beginning of the school term, and Mr. Anderson consents, though from an expression he lets "Aunt Jane" believe he is sorry she is going.

Didn't comfort her, 'cause she said I ought to love him. That he was handsome and needed me. He needed me just as much as she needed me, and maybe more. And then she went on again about how unnatural and awful it was to live the way we were living. And she called herself a wicked woman that she'd ever allowed things to get to such a pass. And she said if she could only have her life to live over again she'd do so differently—oh, so differently.

Then she began to cry again, and I couldn't do a thing with her; and, of course, that worked me all up and I began to cry.

She stopped then, right off short, and wiped her eyes fiercely with her wet ball of a handkerchief. And she asked what was she thinking of, and didn't she know any better than to talk like this to me. Then she said, come, we'd go for a ride.

And we did.

And all the rest of that day Mother was so gay and lively you'd think she didn't know how to cry.

Now, wasn't that funny?

Of course, I shall answer Father's letter right away, but I haven't the faintest idea what to say.

#### ONE WEEK LATER

I answered it—Father's letter, I mean—yesterday, and it's gone now. But I had an awful time over it. I just didn't know what "in the world" to say. I'd start out all right, and I'd think I was going to get along beautifully. Then, all of a sudden, it would come over me, what I was doing—writing a letter to my father! And I could imagine just how he'd look when he got it, all stern and dignified, sitting in his chair with his paper-cutter, and I'd imagine his eyes looking down and reading what I wrote. And when I thought of that, my pen just wouldn't go. The idea of my writing anything my father would want to read!

And so I'd try to think of things that I could write—big things—big things that would interest big men: About the President and our country—their—their, and the state of the weather

and the crops. And so I'd begin:

"Dear Father: I take my pen in hand to inform you that—"

Then I'd stop and think and think, and chew my pen-handle. Then I'd put down something. But it was awful, and I knew it was awful. So I'd have to tear it up and begin again.

Three times I did that; then I began to cry. It did seem as if I never could write that letter. Once I thought of asking Mother what to say, and getting her to help me. Then I remembered how she cried and took on and said things when the letter came, and talked about how dreadful and unnatural it all was, and how she was jealous for fear I'd love Father better than I did her. And I was afraid she'd do it again, and so I didn't like to ask her. And so I didn't do it.

Then, after a time, I got out my letter and read it again. And all of a sudden I felt all warm and happy, just as I did when I first got it; and some way I was back with him in the observatory and he was telling me all about the stars. And I forgot all about being afraid of him. And I just remembered that he'd asked me to tell him what I did on Christmas day; and I knew right off that that would be easy. Why, just the easiest thing in the world! And so I got out a fresh sheet of paper and dipped my pen in the ink and began again.

And this time I didn't have a bit of trouble. I told him all about the tree I had Christmas eve, and the presents, and the little colored lights, and the fun we had singing and playing games. And then how, on Christmas morning, there was a lovely new snow on the ground, and Mr. Easterbrook came with a perfectly lovely sleigh and two horses to take Mother and me to ride, and what a splendid time we had, and how lovely Mother looked with her red cheeks and bright eyes, and how, when we got home, Mr. Easterbrook said we looked more like sisters than mother and daughter, and wasn't that nice of him. Of course, I told a little more about Mr. Easterbrook, too, so Father'd know who he was—a new friend of Mother's that I'd never known till I came back this time, and how he was very rich and a most estimable man. That Aunt Hattie said so.

Then I told him that in the afternoon another gentleman came and took us to a perfectly beautiful concert. And I finished up by telling about the Christmas party in the evening, and how lovely the house looked, and Mother, and that they said I looked nice, too.

And that was all. And when I had got it done, I saw that I had written a long letter, a great long letter. And I was almost afraid it was too long, till I remembered that Father had



So I Sent it Off.

asked me for it; he had asked me to tell him all about what I did on Christmas day.

So I sent it off.

#### MARCH

Yes, I know it's been quite a while, but there hasn't been a thing to say—nothing new or exciting I mean. There's just school, and the usual things, only Mr. Easterbrook doesn't come any more. (Of course, the violinist hasn't come since that day he proposed.) I don't know whether Mr. Easterbrook proposed or not. I only know that all of a sudden he stopped coming. I don't know the reason.

I don't overhear so much as I used to, anyway. Not but that I'm in the library window-seat just the same; but 'most everybody that comes in looks there right off; and, of course, when they see me they don't hardly ever go on with what they are saying. So it just naturally follows that I don't overhear things as I used to.

Not that there's much to hear, though. Really, there just isn't anything going on, and things aren't half so lively as they used to be when Mr. Easterbrook was here, and all the rest. They've all stopped coming now, 'most. I've about given up ever having a love story of Mother's to put in.

And mine, too. Here I am fifteen next month, going on sixteen. (Why, that brook and river met long ago!) But Mother is getting to be almost as bad as Aunt Jane was about my receiving proper attentions from young men. Oh, she lets me go to places a little, with the boys at school; but I always have to be chaperoned. And whenever are they going to have a chance to say anything really thrilling with Mother—Aunt Hattie right at

my elbow? Echo answers never! So I've about given up that's amounting to anything, either.

Of course, there's Father left, and of course, when I go back to Andersonville this summer, there may be something doing there. But I doubt it. I forgot to say I haven't heard from Father again. I answered his Christmas letter, as I said, and wrote just as nice as I knew how, and told him all he asked me to. But he never answered, nor wrote again. I am disappointed, I'll own up. I thought he would write. I think Mother did, too. She's asked me ever so many times if I hadn't heard from him again. And she always looks so sort of funny when I say no—sort of glad and sorry together, all in one.

But, then, Mother's queer in lots of ways now. For instance: One week ago she gave me a perfectly lovely box of chocolates—a whole two-pound box all at once; and I've never had more than a half-pound at once before. But just as I was thinking how for once I was going to have a real feast, and all I wanted to eat—what do you think she told me? She said I could have three pieces, and only three pieces a day; and not one little tiny one more. And when I asked her why she gave me such a big box for then, if that was all I could have, she said it was to teach me self-discipline. That self-discipline was one of the most wonderful things in the world. That if she'd only been taught it when she was a girl, her life would have been very, very different. And so she was giving me a great big box of chocolates for my very own, just so as to teach me to deny myself and take only three pieces every day.

Three pieces!—and all that whole big box of them just making my mouth water all the while; and all just to teach me that horrid old self-discipline! Why, you'd think it was Aunt Jane doing it instead of Mother!

#### ONE WEEK LATER

It's come—Father's letter. It came last night. Oh, it was short, and it didn't say anything about what I wrote. But I was proud of it, just the same. I just guess I was! He didn't get Aunt Jane to write to Mother, as he did before. And then, besides, he must have forgotten his stars long enough to think of me a little—for he remembered about the school, and that I couldn't go there in Andersonville, and so he said I had better stay here till it finished.

And I was so glad to stay! It made me very happy—that letter. It made Mother happy, too. She liked it, and she thought it was very, very kind of Father to be willing to give me up almost three whole months of his six, so I could go to school here. And she said so. She said once to Aunt Hattie that she was almost tempted to write and thank him. But Aunt Hattie said, "Pooh," and it was no more than he ought to do, and that she wouldn't be seen writing to a man who so carefully avoided writing to her. So Mother didn't do it, I guess.

But I wrote. I had to write three letters, though, before I got one that Mother said would do to send. The first one sounded so glad I was staying that Mother said she was afraid he would feel hurt, and that would be too bad—when he'd been so kind. And the second one sounded as if I was so sorry not to go to Andersonville the first of April that Mother said that would never do in the world. He'd think I didn't want to stay in Boston. But the third letter I managed to make just glad enough to stay, and just sorry enough not to go. So that Mother said it was all right. And I sent it.

#### APRIL

Well, the last chocolate drop went yesterday. There were just seventy-six pieces in that two-pound box. I counted them that first day. Of course, they were fine and dandy, and I just loved them; but the trouble is, for the last week I've been eating such snappy little pieces. You see, every day, without thinking, I'd just naturally pick out the biggest pieces. So you can imagine what they got down to toward the last—mostly chocolate almonds.

As for the self-discipline—I don't see as I feel any more disciplined than I did before, and I know I want chocolates just as much as ever. And I said so to Mother.

But Mother is queer. Honestly she is. And I can't help wondering—is she getting to be like Aunt Jane?

Now, listen to this: Last week I had to have a new party dress, and we found a perfect darling of a pink silk, all gold beads, and gold slippers to match. And I knew I'd look perfectly divine in it; and once Mother would have got it for me. But not this time. She got a horrid white muslin with dots in it, and blue-silk socks suitable for a child—for any child!

Of course, I was disappointed—and I suppose I did show it—some. In fact, I'm afraid I showed it a whole lot. Mother didn't say anything then; but on the way home in the car she put her arm around me and said: "I'm sorry about the pink dress, dear. I knew you wanted it. But it was not suitable at all for you—not until you're older, dear. Mother will have to look out that her little daughter isn't getting to be vain, and too fond of dress."

I knew then, of course, that it was just some more of that self-discipline business.

But Mother never used to say anything about self-discipline. Is she getting to be like Aunt Jane?

#### ONE WEEK LATER

She is.

I know she is now. I'm learning to cook—to cook! And it's Mother that says I must. She told

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