

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

thing; 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 waiting 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!

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 tingling 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 factually they helped me over the stones and stumbling-blocks that strewed 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—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 pook-pooked Mother's fears; and I was indignant that she should be so afraid of 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.

Resides, I had just then (again if I remember rightly) fallen in love. Not that it was the best time. Oh, no, not at all. I was thirteen, when 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. It 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 of these he brought to me every morning. All during the school day he was my devoted galant, 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

short of my gate. He evidently had not forgotten Aunt Jane, and did not intend to take any foolish risks! As he said good-bye 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 bit in the way I had hoped he would be. He gave me a swift, shary 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 my 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—the glance 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 braggadocho.

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 she have a 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 special 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 headmaster, 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 body was breaking. How I longed to help

to heal, to cure! How I thrilled at the thought of the love and companionship it could give him somewhere in a rose-embowered cottage far from the maddening 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 would 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. Harold 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. H-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. After all, my recovery was rapid. I was in love with love, you see; not with Mr. Harold Hartshorn. Besides, the next year I went to college. And it was while I was at college that I met Jerry.

Jerry was the brother of my college friend, Helen Weston. Helen's elder sister was a senior in that same college, and was graduated at the close of my freshman year. The father, mother and brother came on to the graduation. And that is where I met Jerry.

If it might be called meeting him, he lifted his hat, bowed, said a polite nothing with his lips, and an indifferent "Oh, some friend of Helen's," with his eyes, and turned to a radiant blonde senior at my side.

And that was all—for him. But for me— All that day I watched him whenever opportunity offered; and I suspect that I took care that opportunity offered frequently. I was fascinated. I had never seen any one like him before. Tall, handsome, brilliant, at perfect ease, he plainly dominated every group of which he was a part. Toward

him every face was turned—yet he never seemed to know it. (Whatever will give him credit for that!) To me he did not speak again that day.

If he did there must still have been in his eyes only the "Oh, some friend of Helen's," that I had seen at the morning introduction.

I did not meet him again for nearly a year; but that did not mean that I did not hear of him. I wonder if Helen ever noticed how often I used to get her to talk of her home and her family life; and how interested I was

in her gallery of portraits on the wall—there were two fine ones of her brother there.

Helen was very fond of her brother. I soon found that she loved to talk about him—if she had a good time. Needless to say she had a very one in me.

Jerry was an artist, it seemed, was twenty-eight years old, and ready he had won no small distinction. Prizes, medals, honorable mentions—a special course abroad— all Helen told me about. She told me about the wonderful success she had just had with the portrait of a New York society woman. She said that it was just going to "make" her; that he could have anything he wanted now—anything.

I saw Jerry myself during the vacation of my second year in college. Helen invited me to go with her, and Mother wrote that she might go. Helen had been home with me for the Christmas vacation. Mother and Father liked her much. There was no hesitation, therefore, in their consent that I should visit Helen at Easter time. So I went.

Helen lived in New York. Her home was a Fifth avenue mansion, nine servants, four automobiles, two chauffeurs. Naturally such a life was entirely new to me, correspondingly fascinating. From elaborately uniformed footmen opened the door for me to the some French maid who "did" my rooms. I adored them all, and moved as I dream of enchantment. Then Jerry home from a week-end trip and I forgot everything else.

I knew from the minute his eyes looked into mine that whatever I had been before, I was now certainly mere "Oh, some friend of Helen's." "Oh, some friend of Helen's," was (so his eyes said) "a decent pretty girl, and one well worth 'tivating.'" Whereupon he began once to do the "cultivating."

In less than thirty-six hours I was caught up in the whirlwind of wooing, and would not have escaped it if I could.

When I went back to college he promised me that if he could gain the consent of Father and Mother, he might put the engagement ring on my finger.

Back at college, alone in my own room, I drew a long breath, and began to think. It was the first chance I had had, for even Helen now had become Jerry—by reflection.

The more I thought, the more frightened, dismayed, and despairing I became. In the clear light of calm, sane reasoning, it was all so absurd, so impossible! What could I have been thinking of? I must forget Jerry.

I pictured him in Andersonville, in my own home. I tried to picture him talking to Father, to Mother.

Absurd, what had Jerry to do with learned treatises on stars, or with the humdrum, everyday life of a stupid, small town? For that matter, what had Father and Mother to do with dancing and motoring and painting society queens' portraits? Nothing.

Plainly, even if Jerry, for the sake of the daughter, liked Father and Mother, Father and Mother certainly would not like Jerry. That was certain.

Of course I cried myself to sleep that night. That was to be expected. Jerry was the world; and the world was lost. There was nothing left except, perhaps, a few remnants and pieces, scarcely worth the counting—excepting, of course, Father and Mother. But one could not always have one's father and mother. There would come a time when—

Jerry's letter came the next day—by special delivery. He had gone straight home from the station and begun to write to me. (How like Jerry that was—particularly the special-delivery stamp!) The most of his letter, aside from the usual lover's chapsodies, had to do with plans for the summer—what we would do together at the Westons' summer cottage in Newport. He said he should run up to Andersonville early—very early; just as soon as I was back from college, in fact, so that he might meet Father and Mother, and put that ring on my finger.

And while I read the letter, I just knew he would do it. Why, I could even see the sparkle of the ring on my finger. But in five minutes after the letter was folded and put away, I knew, with equal certitude—that he wouldn't.

I had been at home exactly eight hours when a telegram from Jerry asked permission to come at once.

As gently as I could I broke the news to Father and Mother. He was Helen's brother. They must have heard me mention him. I knew him well, very well, indeed. In fact, the purpose of this visit was to ask them for the hand of their daughter.

Father frowned and scolded, and said, "Tut, tut!" and that I was nothing but a child. But Mother smiled and shook her head, even while she sighed, and reminded him that I was twenty-two whole years older than she was when she married him; though in the same breath she admitted that I was young, and she certainly hoped I'd be willing to wait before I married, even if the young man was all that they could ask him to be.

Father was still a little rebellious, I think, but Mother—bless her dear sympathetic heart!—soon convinced him that they must at least consent to see this Gerald Weston. So I sent the wire inviting him to come.

Jerry came—and he had not been five minutes in the house before it might easily have seemed that he had always been there. He didn't know about stars; at least, he talked with Father about them, and so ago hold Father's interest, too. And he knew a lot about innumerable things in which Mother was interested. He stayed four days;



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 any-



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

so many tomorrows now! And what do they all amount to?) And so I 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 tell 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 Mary 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,



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! As he said good-bye to me always at a safe distance.

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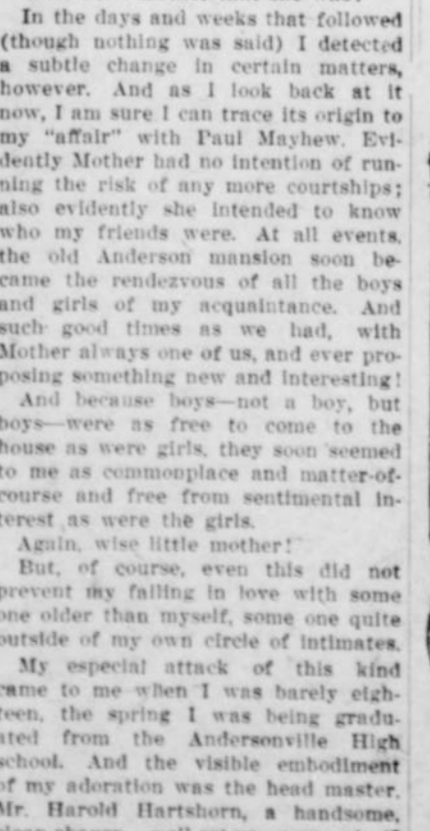
"Humph! Paul Mayhew! Yes, I know him," he said grimly. "And I'm dreading the time when he comes into college next year."

"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.



Jerry Was an Artist, if Seemed.