



"HER KEEN GRAY EYES SWEPT HIM ONE QUICK LOOK." (See
page 4)

Preface

Dear Boys and Girls Who Are Old Friends of the Little Colonel:

When I finished the eighth volume of the Little Colonel Stories, *The Maid of Honour*, I thought I had reached the end of the series, but such a flood of letters came pouring in demanding to know what happened next, that I could not ignore such a plea, and in consequence *The Little Colonel's Knight* came riding by.

But even with Lloyd married and "living happily ever after" her friends were not satisfied. "You skipped" they complained by the hundreds. "You never told what happened between the time of her engagement and the wedding, and you never told what happened to Betty and Joyce and Mary and Phil and all the rest of them. Even if you haven't time for another book, couldn't you just please write *me* a little letter and satisfy my curiosity about each character."

Of course I couldn't begin granting all those requests, and finally I was persuaded it would be easier to answer your questions with a new book. So here is *Mary Ware*, taking up the thread of the story at the first of the skipped places. The time is September, the same September that Betty went away to Warwick Hall to teach and Lloyd began to prepare for her debut in Louisville.

Now this volume covers only one short year, so of course it can not tell you all you want to know. But if you are disappointed because it does not take you to the final milestone, remember that had we gone that far it would have been the end of all our journeying together. And we have it from our *Tusitala* himself, that best beloved of travellers, for whom in a far island of the sea was dug "a Road to last for ever," that "*to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive.*" A.F.J.



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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"Her keen gray eyes swept him one quick look" (*See page4*)

"Lay back under its sheltering canopy with a suppressed giggle"

"Instead, it seemed as if a small cyclone swept through the room"

"The girlish figure enveloped in a long loose working apron"

"She was a fascinating little creature, all smiles and dimples"

"All she saw was the teller's window, with a shrewd-eyed man behind its bars"

"Out on the porch she heard from Norman how it had happened"

"When she drove a nail it held things together"



THE LITTLE COLONEL'S CHUM:

MARY WARE



CHAPTER I

MARY ENTERS WARWICK HALL

The bus running between Warwick Hall Station and Warwick Hall school drew up at the door of the great castle-like building with as grand a flourish as if it carried the entire Senior class, and deposited one lone passenger upon the steps. As it was several days before the opening of the Fall term, no pupils were expected so soon, and but few of the teachers had returned. There was no one to see the imposing arrival of the little Freshman except the butler, who had been drawn to the front window by the sound of wheels. It devolved on him to answer the knocker this afternoon. In the general confusion of house-cleaning the man who attended the door had been sent up stairs to hang curtains.

That the newcomer was a prospective pupil, Hawkins saw at a glance. He had not been in Madam Chartley's service all these years without learning a few things. That she was over-awed by the magnificence of her surroundings he readily guessed, for she made no movement towards the knocker, only stood and looked timidly up at the massive portal and then across the lawn, where a line of haughty peacocks stood drawn up in gorgeous dress parade on the highest terrace.

"She's feeling like a cat in a strange garret," said the butler to himself with a grin. It was a matter of personal pride with him when strangers seemed duly impressed by the grandeur of this aristocratic old manor-house, now used as a boarding-school. It was a personal affront when they were not. Needless to say his dignity had suffered much at the hands of American school-girls, and although

this one seemed impressed by her surroundings almost to the point of panic, he eyed her suspiciously.

"Eaven knows they lose their shyness soon 'enough!" he said under his breath. "She can just cool 'er 'eels on the doorstep till she gets courage to knock. 'Twill do 'er good."

But she waited so long that he began to grow uneasy. After that first glance she had turned her back on the door as if she repented coming, and, satchel in hand, stood hesitating on the top step ready for flight. At least that is the way Hawkins interpreted her attitude. He could not see her face.

It was a plain little face, sunburned as a gypsy's, with a generous sprinkling of freckles on her inquisitive nose. But it was a lovable face, happy and eager, with a sweet mouth and alert gray eyes that seemed to see to the bottom of everything. Sometimes its expression made it almost beautiful. This was one of the times.

She was not gazing regretfully after the departed 'bus as Hawkins surmised, but with a pleasure so keen that it fairly made her catch her breath, she was looking at the strange landscape and recognizing places here and there, made familiar by kodak pictures, and the enthusiastic descriptions of old pupils. There was the long flight of marble steps leading down the stately terraces to the river—the beautiful willow-fringed Potomac. There was the pergola overhung with Abbotsford ivy, and the wonderful old garden with the sundial, and the rhododendrons from Killarney. She had heard so much about this place that it had grown to be a sort of enchanted land of dreams to her, and now the thought that she was actually here in the midst of it made her draw in her breath with a delicious little shiver.

Hawkins, from his peep-hole through one of the mullioned sidelights of the great entrance, to which he had now advanced, saw the shiver, and misinterpreting it, suddenly opened the door. It gave her such a start, so absorbed had she been in her surroundings, that she almost toppled down the steps. But the next instant it was Hawkins who was having the start. Unabashed by his pompous manner, her keen gray eyes swept him one quick look from his sphinx-like face to his massive shoe-buckles, as if she had been given some strange botanical specimen to label and classify. Without

an instant's hesitation she exclaimed in the tone of one making a delightful discovery, "Why, it's *Hawkins!*"

It was positively uncanny to the man that this stranger on whom he had never laid eyes before should call him by name. He wondered if she were one of these new-fangled mind-readers he had been hearing so much about. It was also upsetting to find that he had been mistaken about her delay in knocking. There was anything but timidity in the grand air with which she gave him her card, saying, "Announce me to Madam Chartley, Hawkins."

She was a plump little body, ill adapted to stately airs and graces, but she had been rehearsing this entrance mentally for days, and she swept into the reception room as if she were the daughter of a duke.

"There!" she said to herself as the portières dropped behind her. "I hope he was properly impressed." Then catching sight of her reflection in a long mirror opposite, she wilted into an attitude of abject despair. A loop of milliner's wire, from which the ribbon had slipped, stood up stiff and straight in the bow on her hat. She proceeded to put it back in place with anxious pats and touches, exclaiming in an anguished whisper,

"Oh, *why* is it, that whenever I feel particularly imposing and Queen Annish inside, I always look so dishevelled and Mary Annish outside! Here's my hat cocked over one eye and my hair straggling out in wisps like a crazy thing. I wonder what Hawkins thought."

Hawkins, on his way up stairs was spelling out the name on the card he carried. "Miss Mary Ware, Phoenix, Arizona."

"Humph!" was his mental exclamation. "From one of the jumping hoff places." Then his mind reverted to the several detective tales that made up his knowledge of the far West. "'Ope she doesn't carry a gun 'idden hon 'er person."

Now that the first ordeal was over and she was safely inside the doors of Warwick Hall, the new pupil braced herself for the next one, the meeting with Madam Chartley. She wouldn't have been quite so nervous over it if she had been sure of a welcome, but the catalogue stated distinctly that no pupils could be received before

the fifteenth of September, and this was only the twelfth. She had the best of reasons for coming ahead of time, and was sure that Madam Chartley would make an exception in her case when once the matter was properly explained. The friends in whose care she had travelled from Phoenix had expected to spend several days in Washington, sight-seeing, and she was to have been their guest until the opening of school. But a telegram met them calling them immediately to Boston. She couldn't stay alone at a strange hotel, she knew no one in the entire city, and there was no course open to her but to come on to school.

It was easy enough for her to see why she might not be welcome. There was a vigorous washing of windows going on over the whole establishment, a sound of carpenters in the background and a smell of fresh paint and furniture polish to the fore. Everything was out of its usual orbit in the process of getting ready for the opening day.

Lying awake the night before in the upper berth of the hot Pullman car, Mary had carefully planned her little speech of explanation, and had rehearsed it a dozen times since. But now her heart was beating so fast and her throat was so dry she knew the words would stick at the very time she needed them most. Feeling as if she were about to have a tooth pulled, she sank into a large upholstered rocking chair to wait. It tipped back so far that her toes could not reach the floor, and she sprang out again in a hurry. One could never feel at ease in an infantile position like that.

Then she tried a straight chair, imitating the pose of a majestic gentlewoman in one of the portraits on the panelled wall. It was one of Madam's grand ancestors she conjectured. A glance into the tell-tale mirror made her sigh despairingly again. She was not built on majestic lines herself. No matter how queenly and imposing she might feel in that attitude, she only looked ridiculously stiff.

Once more she changed her seat, flouncing down on a low sofa, and struggling for a graceful position with one elbow leaning on a huge silk cushion. It was in all seriousness that she made these changes, realizing that she could not appear at her best unless she felt at ease. But the humour of the situation was not lost on her. An amused smile dimpled her face as she gave the sofa cushion a

thump and once more changed her seat. "I'm worse than Goldilocks trying all the chairs of the three bears, but that's too lippy!"

She whisked into a fourth seat, this time opposite the portières. To her consternation the parted curtains revealed an appalling fact. Not only could the winding stairway be seen from where she sat, but the entire interior of the reception room must be equally visible to any one coming down the steps. The dignified white-haired Personage now on the bottom step must have seen every move she made as she darted around the room trying the chairs in turn.

The faint gleam of suppressed amusement on Madam Chartley's face as she entered, confirmed the girl's fears. It was unthinkable that such a mortifying situation should go unexplained, yet for a moment after Madam's courteous greeting Mary stood tongue-tied. Then she burst out, her face fairly purple:

"Oh, I *wish* you could change places with me for just five minutes! Then you'd know how it feels to always put your worst foot first and make a mess of everything!"

Madam Chartley had welcomed many types of girls to her school and was familiar with every shade of embarrassment, but she had never been greeted with quite such an outburst as this. Desperate to make herself understood, Mary began in the middle of her carefully planned speech and breathlessly explained backward, as to why she had arrived at this inopportune time. The explanation was so characteristic of her, so heart-felt and utterly honest, that it revealed far more than she intended and opened a wide door into Madam's sympathies. As she stood looking down at the girl with grave kind eyes, Mary suddenly became aware of a strangely comforting thing. This was not an awesome personage, but a dear adorable being who could *understand*. The discovery made the second part of her explanation easier. She plunged into it headlong as soon as they were seated.

"You see, I've heard so much about Hawkins and the way he sometimes confuses the new girls with his grand London airs till they're too rattled to eat, that I made up my mind that even if I am from Arizona, I'd made him think that I've always 'dwelt in marble halls, with vassals and serfs at my side.' I thought I was making a perfectly regal entrance, till I looked into the mirror and saw how

dilapidated I was after my long journey. It took all the heart out of me and made me dreadfully nervous about meeting you. I was trying to get into an easy attitude that would make me feel more self-possessed when you came down. That is why I was experimenting with all the sofas and chairs. Oh, you've no idea how the Walton girls and Lloyd Sherman and Betty Lewis have talked about you," she went on hurriedly, eager to justify herself. "They made me feel that you were—well—er—sort of like *royalty* you know. That one ought to courtesy and back out from your presence as they do at court."

Madam laughed an appreciative little laugh that showed a thorough enjoyment of the situation. "But when you saw that the girls were mistaken—"

Mary interrupted hurriedly, blushing again in her confusion. "No, no! they were not mistaken! You're exactly as they described you, only they didn't tell me how—how—er," she groped frantically for the word and finished lamely, "how *human* you are."

She had started to say "how *adorable* you are," but checked herself, afraid it would sound too gushing on first acquaintance, although that was exactly what she felt.

"I mean," she continued, in her effort to be understood, "it seems from the way you put yourself in my place so quickly, that once upon a time you must have been the same kind of girl that I am. But of course I know you were not. You were Lloyd Sherman's kind. She just naturally does the right thing in the right place, and there's no occasion for her being a copy-cat. That's what Jack calls me. Jack is my brother."

Madam laughed again, such an appreciative, friendly laugh, that Mary joined in, wondering how the other girls could think her cold and unapproachable. It seemed to her that Madam was one of the most responsive and sympathetic listeners she had ever had, and it moved her to go on with her confidences.

"Jack says I am not built on the same lines as the Princess. Princess Winsome is one of our names for Lloyd. And he says it is ridiculous for me to try to do things the way she does. He is always quoting Epictetus to me: 'Were I a nightingale I would act the part

of a nightingale; were I a swan, the part of a swan.' He says that trying to copy her is what makes me just plain goose so much of the time."

Madam Chartley, long accustomed to reading girls, knew that it was not vanity or egotism which prompted these confessions, only a girlish eagerness to be measured by her highest ideals and not by appearances. She saw at a glance the possibilities of the material that lay here at her hand. Out of it might be wrought a strong, helpful character such as the world always needs, and such as she longed to send out with every graduate who passed through her doors. Many things were awaiting her attention elsewhere, but she lingered to extend their acquaintance a trifle further.

"You know Lloyd Sherman well, I believe," she said. "I remember that you gave Mrs. Sherman as one of your references when you applied for admission to the school, and I had a highly satisfactory letter from her about you in reply to my inquiry. Now that we speak of it I am reminded that Lloyd added a most enthusiastic post-script concerning you."

Mary's face flushed with a pleasure so intense it was almost painful. "Oh, did she?" she cried eagerly. "We've been friends always, even with half a continent between us. Our mothers were school-mates. Lloyd was more Joyce's friend than mine at first, because they are nearer of an age. (Joyce is my sister. She's an artist now in New York City, and we think she's going to be famous some day. She does such beautiful designing.) Lloyd has been my model ever since I was eleven years old. I'd rather be like her than anybody I ever knew or read of, so I don't mind Jack calling me a copy-cat for trying. One of the reasons I wanted to come to Warwick Hall was that she had been here. Would you believe it?" she rattled on, "Last night on the sleeping-car I counted up forty-two good reasons for wanting to come here to school."

It had been many a moon since Mary's remarks had met with such flattering attention. Not realizing she was being studied she felt that Madam was genuinely interested. It encouraged her to go on.

"Jack gave me my choice of all the schools in the United States, and I chose this without hesitating an instant. Jack is paying my

expenses you know. I couldn't have come a step if it hadn't been for him, and there wouldn't have been the faintest shadow of a hope of coming if he hadn't been promoted to the position of assistant manager at the mines. Oh, Madam Chartley, I *wish* you knew Jack! He's just the dearest brother that ever lived! So unselfish and so ambitious for us all" —

She stopped abruptly, feeling that she was letting her enthusiasm run away with her tongue. But Madam, noting the quick leap of light to her eyes and the eager clasping of her hands as she spoke of him wanted to hear more. She was sure that in these naïve confessions she would find the key-note to Mary's character. So with a few well chosen questions she encouraged her to go on, till she had gathered a very accurate idea of the conditions which had produced this wholesome enthusiastic little creature, almost a woman in some respects, the veriest child in others.

Mary had had an uneventful life, she judged, limited to the narrow bounds of a Kansas village, and later to the still narrower circle of experiences in the lonely little home they had made on the edge of the desert, when Mrs. Ware's quest of health led them to Arizona. But it was a life that had been lifted out of the ordinary by the brave spirit which made a jest of poverty, and held on to the refining influences even while battling back the wolf from the door. It had made a family of philosophers of them, able to extract pleasure from trifles, and to find it where most people would never dream of looking.

As she listened, Madam began to feel warmly drawn to the entire family who had taken the good old Vicar of Wakefield for an example, and adopted one of his sayings as a rule of life: "Let us be inflexible and fortune will at last turn in our favour."

Mary had no intention of revealing so much personal history, but she had to quote the motto to show how triumphantly it had worked out in their case and what a grand turn fortune had taken in their favour after so many years of struggle to keep inflexible in the face of repeated disappointments and troubles. It had turned for all of them. Joyce, after several years of work and worry with her bees, had realized enough from them to start on her career as an artist. Holland was at Annapolis in training for the navy. Within the last