



# Unmentionables

*Laurie Loewenstein*

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**Unmentionables** Laurie Loewenstein

A January 2014 MIBA Midwest Connections pick!

"Exceptionally readable and highly recommended."

--*Library Journal* (starred review)

"Engaging first work from a writer of evident ability."

--*Kirkus Reviews*

"Marian Elliot Adams'...tale is contagiously enthusiastic."

--*Publishers Weekly*

"*Unmentionables* starts small and expands to touch Chicago and war-torn France as Laurie Loewenstein weaves multiple points of view together to create a narrative of social change and the stubbornness of the human heart."

--*Black Heart Magazine*

"A historical, feminist romance in the positive senses of all three terms: a realistic evocation of small-town America circa 1917, including its racial tensions; a tale about standing up for the equitable treatment of women; and a story about two lonely people who overcome obstacles, including their own character defects, to find love together."

--*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"Laurie Loewenstein has written a simultaneously heartbreaking and uplifting insight into our world as it was a century ago."

--Carnegie-Stout Public Library

"*Unmentionables* is a sweeping and memorable story of struggle and suffrage, love and redemption...Loewenstein has skilfully woven a story and a cast of characters that will remain in the memory long after the book's last page has been turned."

--New York Journal of Books

"*Unmentionables* is a love story and a journey of self-discovery."

--Historical Novel Society

Marian Elliot Adams, an outspoken advocate for sensible undergarments for women, sweeps onto the Chautauqua stage under a brown canvas tent on a sweltering August night in 1917, and shocks the gathered town of Emporia with her speech: How can women compete with men in the work place and in life if they are confined by their undergarments? The crowd is further appalled when Marian falls off the stage and sprains her ankle, and is forced to remain among them for a week. As the week passes, she throws into turmoil the town's unspoken rules governing social order, women, and Negroes. The recently widowed newspaper editor Deuce Garland, his lapels glittering with fraternal pins, has always been a community booster, his desire to conform rooted in a legacy of shame--his great-grandfather married a black woman, and the town will never let Deuce forget it, especially not his father-in-law, the owner of the newspaper and

Deuce's boss. Deuce and his father-in-law are already at odds, since the old man refuses to allow Deuce's stepdaughter, Helen, to go to Chicago to fight for women's suffrage.

But Marian's arrival shatters Deuce's notions of what is acceptable, versus what is right, and Deuce falls madly in love with the tall activist from New York. During Marian's stay in Emporia, Marian pushes Deuce to become a greater, braver, and more dynamic man than he ever imagined was possible. He takes a stand against his father-in-law by helping Helen escape to Chicago; and he publishes an article exposing the county's oldest farm family as the source of a recent typhoid outbreak, risking his livelihood and reputation. Marian's journey takes her to the frozen mud of France's Picardy region, just beyond the lines, to help destitute villagers as the Great War rages on. Helen, in Chicago, is hired as a streetcar conductor surrounded by bitter men who resent her taking a man's job. Meanwhile, Deuce struggles to make a living and find his place in Emporia's wider community after losing the newspaper.

Marian is a powerful catalyst that forces nineteenth-century Emporia into the twentieth century; but while she agitates for enlightenment and justice, she has little time to consider her own motives and her extreme loneliness. Marian, in the end, must decide if she has the courage to face small-town life, and be known, or continue to be a stranger always passing through.

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