L. M. MONTGOMERY

FURTHER CHRONICLES OF AVONLEA

L. M. Montgomery

Further Chronicles of Avonlea

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

It is no exaggeration to say that what Longfellow did for Acadia, Miss Montgomery has done for Prince Edward Island. More than a million readers, young people as well as their parents and uncles and aunts, possess in the picture-galleries of their memories the exquisite landscapes of Avonlea, limned with as poetic a pencil as Longfellow wielded when he told the ever-moving story of Grand Pre.

Only genius of the first water has the ability to conjure up such a character as Anne Shirley, the heroine of Miss Montgomery's first novel, "Anne of Green Gables," and to surround her with people so distinctive, so real, so true to psychology. Anne is

as lovable a child as lives in all fiction. Natasha in Count Tolstoi's great novel, "War and Peace," dances into our ken, with something of the same buoyancy and naturalness; but into what a commonplace young woman she develops! Anne, whether as the gay little orphan in her conquest of the master and mistress of Green Gables, or as the maturing and self-forgetful maiden of Avonlea, keeps up to concert-pitch in her charm and her winsomeness. There is nothing in her to disappoint hope or imagination.

A part of the power of Miss Montgomery—and the largest part—is due to her skill in compounding humor and pathos. The humor is honest and golden; it never wearies the reader; the pathos is never sentimentalized, never degenerates into bathos, is never morbid. This combination holds throughout all her works, longer or shorter, and is

particularly manifest in the present collection of fifteen short stories, which, together with those in the first volume of the Chronicles of Avonlea, present a series of piquant and fascinating pictures of life in Prince Edward Island.

The humor is shown not only in the presentation of quaint and unique characters, but also in the words which fall from their mouths. Aunt Cynthia "always gave you the impression of a full-rigged ship coming gallantly on before a favorable wind;" no further description is needed—only one such personage could be found in Avonlea. You would recognize her at sight. Ismay Meade's disposition is summed up when we are told that she is "good at having presentiments—after things happen." What cleverer embodiment of innate obstinacy than in Isabella Spencer —"a wisp of a woman who looked as if a breath would sway her but was so set in her ways that a tornado would hardly have caused her to swerve an inch from her chosen path;" or than in Mrs. Eben Andrews (in "Sara's Way") who "looked like a woman whose opinions were always very decided and warranted to wear!"

This gift of characterization in a few words is lavished also on material objects, as, for instance; what more is needed to describe the forlornness of the home from which Anne was rescued than the statement that even the trees around it "looked like orphans"?

The poetic touch, too, never fails in the right place and is never too frequently introduced in her descriptions. They throw a glamor over that Northern land which otherwise you might imagine as rather cold and barren. What charming Springs they must have there! One sees all the fruit-trees

clad in bridal garments of pink and white; and what a translucent sky smiles down on the ponds and the reaches of bay and cove!

"The Eastern sky was a great arc of crystal, smitten through with auroral crimsonings."

"She was as slim and lithe as a young white-stemmed birch-tree; her hair was like a soft dusky cloud, and her eyes were as blue as Avonlea Harbor in a fair twilight, when all the sky is a-bloom over it."

Sentiment with a humorous touch to it prevails in the first two stories of the present book. The one relates to the disappearance of a valuable white Persian cat with a blue spot in its tail. "Fatima" is like the apple of her eye to the rich old aunt who leaves her with two nieces, with a stern injunction not to let her out of the house. Of course both Sue and Ismay detest cats; Ismay hates them, Sue loathes them; but Aunt Cynthia's favor is worth preserving. You become as much interested in Fatima's fate as if she were your own pet, and the climax is no less unexpected than it is natural, especially when it is made also the last act of a pretty comedy of love.

Miss Montgomery delights in depicting the romantic episodes hidden in the hearts of elderly spinsters as, for instance, in the case of Charlotte Holmes, whose maid Nancy would have sent for the doctor and subjected her to a porous plaster while waiting for him, had she known that up stairs there was a note-book full of original poems. Rather than bear the stigma of never having had a love-affair, this sentimental lady invents one to tell her mocking young

friends. The dramatic and unexpected denouement is delightful fun.

Another note-book reveals a deeper romance in the case of Miss Emily; this is related by Anne of Green Gables, who once or twice flashes across the scene, though for the most part her friends and neighbors at White Sands or Newbridge or Grafton as well as at Avonlea are the persons involved.

In one story, the last, "Tannis of the Flats," the secret of Elinor Blair's spinsterhood is revealed in an episode which carries the reader from Avonlea to Saskatchewan and shows the unselfish devotion of a half-breed Indian girl. The story is both poignant and dramatic. Its one touch of humor is where Jerome Carey curses his fate in being compelled to live in that desolate land in "the picturesque language permissible in the far Northwest."

Self-sacrifice, as the real basis of happiness, is a favorite theme in Miss Montgomery's fiction. It is raised to the nth power in the story entitled, "In Her Selfless Mood," where an ugly, misshapen girl devotes her life and renounces marriage for the sake of looking after her weak and selfish half-brother. The same spirit is found in "Only a Common Fellow," who is haloed with a certain splendor by renouncing the girl he was to marry in favor of his old rival, supposed to have been killed in France, but happily delivered from that tragic fate.

Miss Montgomery loves to introduce a little child or a baby as a solvent of old feuds or domestic quarrels. In "The Dream Child," a foundling boy, drifting in through a storm in a dory, saves a heart-broken mother from insanity. In "Jane's Baby," a baby-cousin brings reconciliation between the two

sisters, Rosetta and Carlotta, who had not spoken for twenty years because "the slack-twisted" Jacob married the younger of the two.

Happiness generally lights up the end of her stories, however tragic they may set out to be. In "The Son of His Mother," Thyra is a stern woman, as "immovable as a stone image." She had only one son, whom she worshipped; "she never wanted a daughter, but she pitied and despised all sonless women." She demanded absolute obedience from Chester—not only obedience, but also utter affection, and she hated his dog because the boy loved him: "She could not share her love even with a dumb brute." When Chester falls in love, she is relentless toward the beautiful young girl and forces Chester to give her up. But a terrible sorrow brings the old woman and the young girl into sympathy, and unspeakable joy is born of the trial.

Happiness also comes to "The Brother who Failed." The Monroes had all been successful in the eyes of the world except Robert: one is a millionaire, another a college president, another a famous singer. Robert overhears the old aunt, Isabel, call him a total failure, but, at the family dinner, one after another stands up and tells how Robert's quiet influence and unselfish aid had started them in their brilliant careers, and the old aunt, wiping the tears from her eyes, exclaims: "I guess there's a kind of failure that's the best success."

In one story there is an element of the supernatural, when Hester, the hard older sister, comes between Margaret and her lover and, dying, makes her promise never to become Hugh Blair's wife, but she comes back and unites

them. In this, Margaret, just like the delightful Anne, lives up to the dictum that "nothing matters in all God's universe except love." The story of the revival at Avonlea has also a good moral.

There is something in these continued Chronicles of Avonlea, like the delicate art which has made "Cranford" a classic: the characters are so homely and homelike and yet tinged with beautiful romance! You feel that you are made familiar with a real town and its real inhabitants; you learn to love them and sympathize with them. Further Chronicles of Avonlea is a book to read; and to know.

NATHAN HASKELL DOLE.

FURTHER CHRONICLES OF AVONLEA

Table of Contents

I. AUNT CYNTHIA'S PERSIAN CAT

Table of Contents

Max always blesses the animal when it is referred to; and I don't deny that things have worked together for good after all. But when I think of the anguish of mind which Ismay and I underwent on account of that abominable cat, it is not a blessing that arises uppermost in my thoughts.

I never was fond of cats, although I admit they are well enough in their place, and I can worry along comfortably with a nice, matronly old tabby who can take care of herself and be of some use in the world. As for Ismay, she hates cats and always did.

But Aunt Cynthia, who adored them, never could bring herself to understand that any one could possibly dislike them. She firmly believed that Ismay and I really liked cats deep down in our hearts, but that, owing to some perverse twist in our moral natures, we would not own up to it, but willfully persisted in declaring we didn't.

Of all cats I loathed that white Persian cat of Aunt Cynthia's. And, indeed, as we always suspected and finally proved, Aunt herself looked upon the creature with more pride than affection. She would have taken ten times the comfort in a good, common puss that she did in that spoiled beauty. But a Persian cat with a recorded pedigree and a market value of one hundred dollars tickled Aunt Cynthia's pride of possession to such an extent that she deluded

herself into believing that the animal was really the apple of her eye.

It had been presented to her when a kitten by a missionary nephew who had brought it all the way home from Persia; and for the next three years Aunt Cynthia's household existed to wait on that cat, hand and foot. It was snow-white, with a bluish-gray spot on the tip of its tail; and it was blue-eyed and deaf and delicate. Aunt Cynthia was always worrying lest it should take cold and die. Ismay and I used to wish that it would—we were so tired of hearing about it and its whims. But we did not say so to Aunt Cynthia. She would probably never have spoken to us again and there was no wisdom in offending Aunt Cynthia. When you have an unencumbered aunt, with a fat bank account, it is just as well to keep on good terms with her, if you can. Besides, we really liked Aunt Cynthia very much—at times. Aunt Cynthia was one of those rather exasperating people who nag at and find fault with you until you think you are justified in hating them, and who then turn round and do something so really nice and kind for you that you feel as if you were compelled to love them dutifully instead.

So we listened meekly when she discoursed on Fatima—the cat's name was Fatima—and, if it was wicked of us to wish for the latter's decease, we were well punished for it later on.

One day, in November, Aunt Cynthia came sailing out to Spencervale. She really came in a phaeton, drawn by a fat gray pony, but somehow Aunt Cynthia always gave you the impression of a full rigged ship coming gallantly on before a favorable wind.

That was a Jonah day for us all through. Everything had gone wrong. Ismay had spilled grease on her velvet coat, and the fit of the new blouse I was making was hopelessly askew, and the kitchen stove smoked and the bread was sour. Moreover, Huldah Jane Keyson, our tried and trusty old family nurse and cook and general "boss," had what she called the "realagy" in her shoulder; and, though Huldah Jane is as good an old creature as ever lived, when she has the "realagy" other people who are in the house want to get out of it and, if they can't, feel about as comfortable as St. Lawrence on his gridiron.

And on top of this came Aunt Cynthia's call and request.

"Dear me," said Aunt Cynthia, sniffing, "don't I smell smoke? You girls must manage your range very badly. Mine never smokes. But it is no more than one might expect when two girls try to keep house without a man about the place."

"We get along very well without a man about the place," I said loftily. Max hadn't been in for four whole days and, though nobody wanted to see him particularly, I couldn't help wondering why. "Men are nuisances."

"I dare say you would like to pretend you think so," said Aunt Cynthia, aggravatingly. "But no woman ever does really think so, you know. I imagine that pretty Anne Shirley, who is visiting Ella Kimball, doesn't. I saw her and Dr. Irving out walking this afternoon, looking very well satisfied with themselves. If you dilly-dally much longer, Sue, you will let Max slip through your fingers yet."

That was a tactful thing to say to ME, who had refused Max Irving so often that I had lost count. I was furious, and

so I smiled most sweetly on my maddening aunt.

"Dear Aunt, how amusing of you," I said, smoothly. "You talk as if I wanted Max."

"So you do," said Aunt Cynthia.

"If so, why should I have refused him time and again?" I asked, smilingly. Right well Aunt Cynthia knew I had. Max always told her.

"Goodness alone knows why," said Aunt Cynthia, "but you may do it once too often and find yourself taken at your word. There is something very fascinating about this Anne Shirley."

"Indeed there is," I assented. "She has the loveliest eyes I ever saw. She would be just the wife for Max, and I hope he will marry her."

"Humph," said Aunt Cynthia. "Well, I won't entice you into telling any more fibs. And I didn't drive out here to-day in all this wind to talk sense into you concerning Max. I'm going to Halifax for two months and I want you to take charge of Fatima for me, while I am away."

"Fatima!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. I don't dare to trust her with the servants. Mind you always warm her milk before you give it to her, and don't on any account let her run out of doors."

I looked at Ismay and Ismay looked at me. We knew we were in for it. To refuse would mortally offend Aunt Cynthia. Besides, if I betrayed any unwillingness, Aunt Cynthia would be sure to put it down to grumpiness over what she had said about Max, and rub it in for years. But I ventured to ask, "What if anything happens to her while you are away?"

"It is to prevent that, I'm leaving her with you," said Aunt Cynthia. "You simply must not let anything happen to her. It will do you good to have a little responsibility. And you will have a chance to find out what an adorable creature Fatima really is. Well, that is all settled. I'll send Fatima out to-morrow."

"You can take care of that horrid Fatima beast yourself," said Ismay, when the door closed behind Aunt Cynthia. "I won't touch her with a yard-stick. You had no business to say we'd take her."

"Did I say we would take her?" I demanded, crossly. "Aunt Cynthia took our consent for granted. And you know, as well as I do, we couldn't have refused. So what is the use of being grouchy?"

"If anything happens to her Aunt Cynthia will hold us responsible," said Ismay darkly.

"Do you think Anne Shirley is really engaged to Gilbert Blythe?" I asked curiously.

"I've heard that she was," said Ismay, absently. "Does she eat anything but milk? Will it do to give her mice?"

"Oh, I guess so. But do you think Max has really fallen in love with her?"

"I dare say. What a relief it will be for you if he has."

"Oh, of course," I said, frostily. "Anne Shirley or Anne Anybody Else, is perfectly welcome to Max if she wants him. *I* certainly do not. Ismay Meade, if that stove doesn't stop smoking I shall fly into bits. This is a detestable day. I hate that creature!"

"Oh, you shouldn't talk like that, when you don't even know her," protested Ismay. "Every one says Anne Shirley is

lovely—"

"I was talking about Fatima," I cried in a rage.

"Oh!" said Ismay.

Ismay is stupid at times. I thought the way she said "Oh" was inexcusably stupid.

Fatima arrived the next day. Max brought her out in a covered basket, lined with padded crimson satin. Max likes cats and Aunt Cynthia. He explained how we were to treat Fatima and when Ismay had gone out of the room—Ismay always went out of the room when she knew I particularly wanted her to remain—he proposed to me again. Of course I said no, as usual, but I was rather pleased. Max had been proposing to me about every two months for two years. Sometimes, as in this case, he went three months, and then I always wondered why. I concluded that he could not be really interested in Anne Shirley, and I was relieved. I didn't want to marry Max but it was pleasant and convenient to have him around, and we would miss him dreadfully if any other girl snapped him up. He was so useful and always willing to do anything for us—nail a shingle on the roof, drive us to town, put down carpets—in short, a very present help in all our troubles.

So I just beamed on him when I said no. Max began counting on his fingers. When he got as far as eight he shook his head and began over again.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I'm trying to count up how many times I have proposed to you," he said. "But I can't remember whether I asked you to marry me that day we dug up the garden or not. If I did it makes—"

"No, you didn't," I interrupted.

"Well, that makes it eleven," said Max reflectively. "Pretty near the limit, isn't it? My manly pride will not allow me to propose to the same girl more than twelve times. So the next time will be the last, Sue darling."

"Oh," I said, a trifle flatly. I forgot to resent his calling me darling. I wondered if things wouldn't be rather dull when Max gave up proposing to me. It was the only excitement I had. But of course it would be best—and he couldn't go on at it forever, so, by the way of gracefully dismissing the subject, I asked him what Miss Shirley was like.

"Very sweet girl," said Max. "You know I always admired those gray-eyed girls with that splendid Titian hair."

I am dark, with brown eyes. Just then I detested Max. I got up and said I was going to get some milk for Fatima.

I found Ismay in a rage in the kitchen. She had been up in the garret, and a mouse had run across her foot. Mice always get on Ismay's nerves.

"We need a cat badly enough," she fumed, "but not a useless, pampered thing, like Fatima. That garret is literally swarming with mice. You'll not catch me going up there again."

Fatima did not prove such a nuisance as we had feared. Huldah Jane liked her, and Ismay, in spite of her declaration that she would have nothing to do with her, looked after her comfort scrupulously. She even used to get up in the middle of the night and go out to see if Fatima was warm. Max came in every day and, being around, gave us good advice.

Then one day, about three weeks after Aunt Cynthia's departure, Fatima disappeared—just simply disappeared as

if she had been dissolved into thin air. We left her one afternoon, curled up asleep in her basket by the fire, under Huldah Jane's eye, while we went out to make a call. When we came home Fatima was gone.

Huldah Jane wept and was as one whom the gods had made mad. She vowed that she had never let Fatima out of her sight the whole time, save once for three minutes when she ran up to the garret for some summer savory. When she came back the kitchen door had blown open and Fatima had vanished.

Ismay and I were frantic. We ran about the garden and through the out-houses, and the woods behind the house, like wild creatures, calling Fatima, but in vain. Then Ismay sat down on the front doorsteps and cried.

"She has got out and she'll catch her death of cold and Aunt Cynthia will never forgive us."

"I'm going for Max," I declared. So I did, through the spruce woods and over the field as fast as my feet could carry me, thanking my stars that there was a Max to go to in such a predicament.

Max came over and we had another search, but without result. Days passed, but we did not find Fatima. I would certainly have gone crazy had it not been for Max. He was worth his weight in gold during the awful week that followed. We did not dare advertise, lest Aunt Cynthia should see it; but we inquired far and wide for a white Persian cat with a blue spot on its tail, and offered a reward for it; but nobody had seen it, although people kept coming to the house, night and day, with every kind of a cat in baskets, wanting to know if it was the one we had lost.

"We shall never see Fatima again," I said hopelessly to Max and Ismay one afternoon. I had just turned away an old woman with a big, yellow tommy which she insisted must be ours—"cause it kem to our place, mem, a-yowling fearful, mem, and it don't belong to nobody not down Grafton way, mem."

"I'm afraid you won't," said Max. "She must have perished from exposure long ere this."

"Aunt Cynthia will never forgive us," said Ismay, dismally. "I had a presentiment of trouble the moment that cat came to this house."

We had never heard of this presentiment before, but Ismay is good at having presentiments—after things happen.

"What shall we do?" I demanded, helplessly. "Max, can't you find some way out of this scrape for us?"

"Advertise in the Charlottetown papers for a white Persian cat," suggested Max. "Some one may have one for sale. If so, you must buy it, and palm it off on your good Aunt as Fatima. She's very short-sighted, so it will be quite possible."

"But Fatima has a blue spot on her tail," I said.

"You must advertise for a cat with a blue spot on its tail," said Max.

"It will cost a pretty penny," said Ismay dolefully. "Fatima was valued at one hundred dollars."

"We must take the money we have been saving for our new furs," I said sorrowfully. "There is no other way out of it. It will cost us a good deal more if we lose Aunt Cynthia's favor. She is quite capable of believing that we have made

away with Fatima deliberately and with malice aforethought."

So we advertised. Max went to town and had the notice inserted in the most important daily. We asked any one who had a white Persian cat, with a blue spot on the tip of its tail, to dispose of, to communicate with M. I., care of the *Enterprise*.

We really did not have much hope that anything would come of it, so we were surprised and delighted over the letter Max brought home from town four days later. It was a type-written screed from Halifax stating that the writer had for sale a white Persian cat answering to our description. The price was a hundred and ten dollars, and, if M. I. cared to go to Halifax and inspect the animal, it would be found at 110 Hollis Street, by inquiring for "Persian."

"Temper your joy, my friends," said Ismay, gloomily. "The cat may not suit. The blue spot may be too big or too small or not in the right place. I consistently refuse to believe that any good thing can come out of this deplorable affair."

Just at this moment there was a knock at the door and I hurried out. The postmaster's boy was there with a telegram. I tore it open, glanced at it, and dashed back into the room.

"What is it now?" cried Ismay, beholding my face.

I held out the telegram. It was from Aunt Cynthia. She had wired us to send Fatima to Halifax by express immediately.

For the first time Max did not seem ready to rush into the breach with a suggestion. It was I who spoke first.

"Max," I said, imploringly, "you'll see us through this, won't you? Neither Ismay nor I can rush off to Halifax at once. You must go to-morrow morning. Go right to 110 Hollis Street and ask for 'Persian.' If the cat looks enough like Fatima, buy it and take it to Aunt Cynthia. If it doesn't—but it must! You'll go, won't you?"

"That depends," said Max.

I stared at him. This was so unlike Max.

"You are sending me on a nasty errand," he said, coolly. "How do I know that Aunt Cynthia will be deceived after all, even if she be short-sighted. Buying a cat in a joke is a huge risk. And if she should see through the scheme I shall be in a pretty mess."

"Oh, Max," I said, on the verge of tears.

"Of course," said Max, looking meditatively into the fire, "if I were really one of the family, or had any reasonable prospect of being so, I would not mind so much. It would be all in the day's work then. But as it is—"

Ismay got up and went out of the room.

"Oh, Max, please," I said.

"Will you marry me, Sue?" demanded Max sternly. "If you will agree, I'll go to Halifax and beard the lion in his den unflinchingly. If necessary, I will take a black street cat to Aunt Cynthia, and swear that it is Fatima. I'll get you out of the scrape, if I have to prove that you never had Fatima, that she is safe in your possession at the present time, and that there never was such an animal as Fatima anyhow. I'll do anything, say anything—but it must be for my future wife."

"Will nothing else content you?" I said helplessly.

"Nothing."

I thought hard. Of course Max was acting abominably—but—but—he was really a dear fellow—and this was the twelfth time—and there was Anne Shirley! I knew in my secret soul that life would be a dreadfully dismal thing if Max were not around somewhere. Besides, I would have married him long ago had not Aunt Cynthia thrown us so pointedly at each other's heads ever since he came to Spencervale.

"Very well," I said crossly.

Max left for Halifax in the morning. Next day we got a wire saying it was all right. The evening of the following day he was back in Spencervale. Ismay and I put him in a chair and glared at him impatiently.

Max began to laugh and laughed until he turned blue.

"I am glad it is so amusing," said Ismay severely. "If Sue and I could see the joke it might be more so."

"Dear little girls, have patience with me," implored Max. "If you knew what it cost me to keep a straight face in Halifax you would forgive me for breaking out now."

"We forgive you—but for pity's sake tell us all about it," I cried.

"Well, as soon as I arrived in Halifax I hurried to 110 Hollis Street, but—see here! Didn't you tell me your Aunt's address was 10 Pleasant Street?"

"So it is."

"'T isn't. You look at the address on a telegram next time you get one. She went a week ago to visit another friend who lives at 110 Hollis."

"Max!"

"It's a fact. I rang the bell, and was just going to ask the maid for 'Persian' when your Aunt Cynthia herself came through the hall and pounced on me."

"'Max,' she said, 'have you brought Fatima?'

"'No,' I answered, trying to adjust my wits to this new development as she towed me into the library. 'No, I—I—just came to Halifax on a little matter of business.'

"'Dear me,' said Aunt Cynthia, crossly, 'I don't know what those girls mean. I wired them to send Fatima at once. And she has not come yet and I am expecting a call every minute from some one who wants to buy her.'

"'Oh!' I murmured, mining deeper every minute.

"'Yes,' went on your aunt, 'there is an advertisement in the Charlottetown *Enterprise* for a Persian cat, and I answered it. Fatima is really quite a charge, you know—and so apt to die and be a dead loss,'—did your aunt mean a pun, girls?—'and so, although I am considerably attached to her, I have decided to part with her.'

"By this time I had got my second wind, and I promptly decided that a judicious mixture of the truth was the thing required.

"'Well, of all the curious coincidences,' I exclaimed. 'Why, Miss Ridley, it was I who advertised for a Persian cat—on Sue's behalf. She and Ismay have decided that they want a cat like Fatima for themselves.'

"You should have seen how she beamed. She said she knew you always really liked cats, only you would never own up to it. We clinched the dicker then and there. I passed her over your hundred and ten dollars—she took the money

without turning a hair—and now you are the joint owners of Fatima. Good luck to your bargain!"

"Mean old thing," sniffed Ismay. She meant Aunt Cynthia, and, remembering our shabby furs, I didn't disagree with her.

"But there is no Fatima," I said, dubiously. "How shall we account for her when Aunt Cynthia comes home?"

"Well, your aunt isn't coming home for a month yet. When she comes you will have to tell her that the cat—is lost—but you needn't say WHEN it happened. As for the rest, Fatima is your property now, so Aunt Cynthia can't grumble. But she will have a poorer opinion than ever of your fitness to run a house alone."

When Max left I went to the window to watch him down the path. He was really a handsome fellow, and I was proud of him. At the gate he turned to wave me good-by, and, as he did, he glanced upward. Even at that distance I saw the look of amazement on his face. Then he came bolting back.

"Ismay, the house is on fire!" I shrieked, as I flew to the door.

"Sue," cried Max, "I saw Fatima, or her ghost, at the garret window a moment ago!"

"Nonsense!" I cried. But Ismay was already half way up the stairs and we followed. Straight to the garret we rushed. There sat Fatima, sleek and complacent, sunning herself in the window.

Max laughed until the rafters rang.

"She can't have been up here all this time," I protested, half tearfully. "We would have heard her meowing."

"But you didn't," said Max.

"She would have died of the cold," declared Ismay.

"But she hasn't," said Max.

"Or starved," I cried.

"The place is alive with mice," said Max. "No, girls, there is no doubt the cat has been here the whole fortnight. She must have followed Huldah Jane up here, unobserved, that day. It's a wonder you didn't hear her crying—if she did cry. But perhaps she didn't, and, of course, you sleep downstairs. To think you never thought of looking here for her!"

"It has cost us over a hundred dollars," said Ismay, with a malevolent glance at the sleek Fatima.

"It has cost me more than that," I said, as I turned to the stairway.

Max held me back for an instant, while Ismay and Fatima pattered down.

"Do you think it has cost too much, Sue?" he whispered.

I looked at him sideways. He was really a dear. Niceness fairly exhaled from him.

"No-o-o," I said, "but when we are married you will have to take care of Fatima, *I* won't."

"Dear Fatima," said Max gratefully.

II. THE MATERIALIZING OF CECIL

Table of Contents

It had never worried me in the least that I wasn't married, although everybody in Avonlea pitied old maids; but it DID worry me, and I frankly confess it, that I had never had a chance to be. Even Nancy, my old nurse and servant, knew that, and pitied me for it. Nancy is an old maid herself, but she has had two proposals. She did not accept either of them because one was a widower with seven children, and the other a very shiftless, good-for-nothing fellow; but, if anybody twitted Nancy on her single condition, she could point triumphantly to those two as evidence that "she could an she would." If I had not lived all my life in Avonlea I might have had the benefit of the doubt; but I had, and everybody knew everything about me—or thought they did.

I had really often wondered why nobody had ever fallen in love with me. I was not at all homely; indeed, years ago, George Adoniram Maybrick had written a poem addressed to me, in which he praised my beauty quite extravagantly; that didn't mean anything because George Adoniram wrote poetry to all the good-looking girls and never went with anybody but Flora King, who was cross-eyed and red-haired, but it proves that it was not my appearance that put me out of the running. Neither was it the fact that I wrote poetry myself—although not of George Adoniram's kind—because nobody ever knew that. When I felt it coming on I shut myself up in my room and wrote it out in a little blank book I kept locked up. It is nearly full now, because I have been writing poetry all my life. It is the only thing I have ever been able to keep a secret from Nancy. Nancy, in any case,