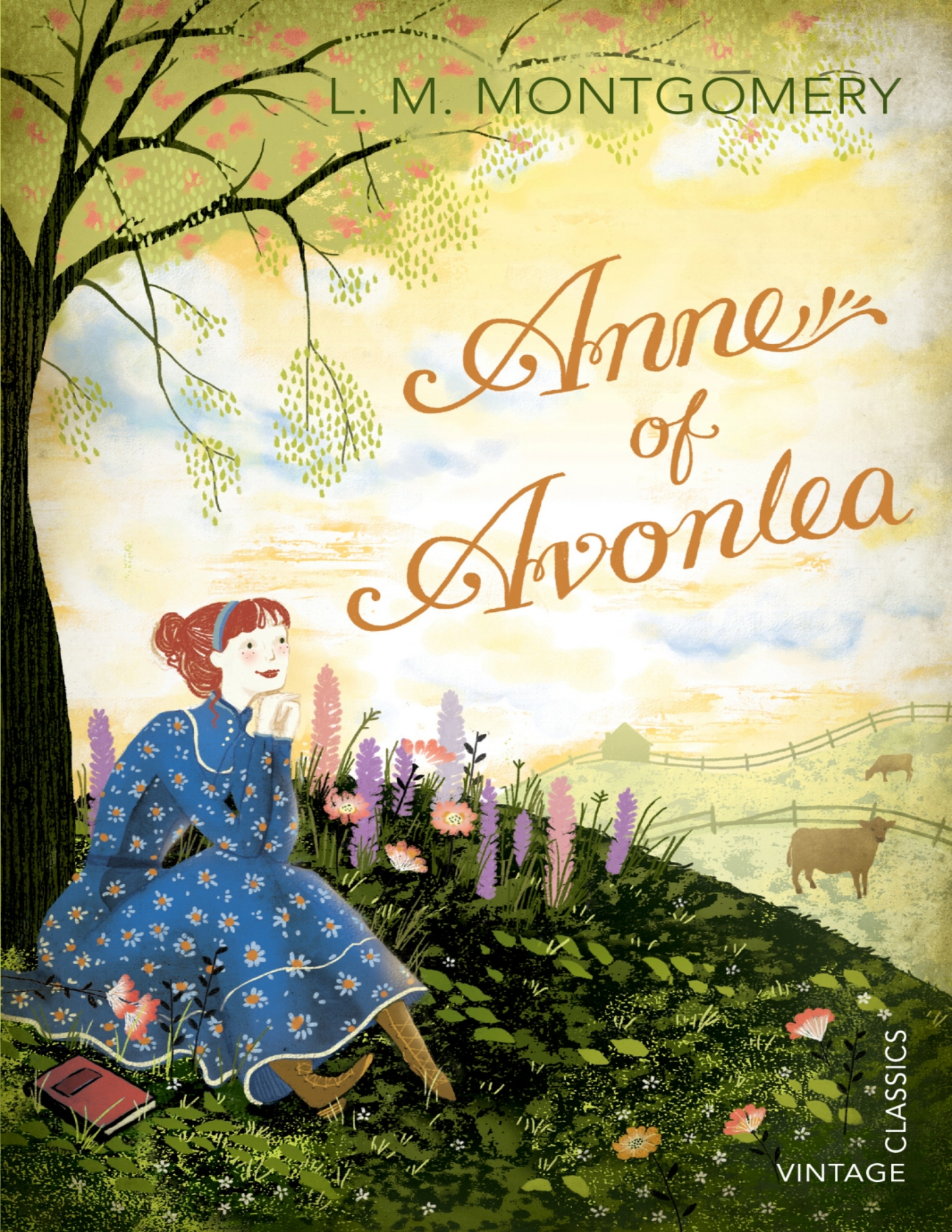
L. M. MONTGOMERY
Anne of Avonlea
VINTAGE CLASSICS

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About the Author

L. M. Montgomery, known as Maud, was born on Prince Edward Island, off the coast of Canada, in 1874. Maud's mother died when she was just a baby and so she had a rather unhappy childhood growing up in the care of her strict grandparents. She was just sixteen when she had her first poem published. As a young woman she worked as a teacher and although she didn't enjoy it much it gave her lots of time to write. Maud wrote hundred of short stories, poems and novels throughout her life but it was the hugely popular *Anne of Green Gables* and its sequels that made her famous. She died in 1942.

ALSO BY L. M. MONTGOMERY

Anne of Green Gables
Anne of the Island
Anne of Windy Willows
Anne's House of Dreams
Anne of Ingleside

TO
MY FORMER TEACHER
HATTIE GORDON SMITH
IN
GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF HER
SYMPATHY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Anne of Avonlea

L. M. Montgomery

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

1

An Irate Neighbour

A TALL, SLIM girl, ‘half-past sixteen’, with serious grey eyes and hair which her friends called auburn, had sat down on the broad red sandstone doorstep of a Prince Edward Island farmhouse one ripe afternoon in August, firmly resolved to construe so many lines of Virgil.

But an August afternoon, with blue hazes scarfing the harvest slopes, little winds whispering elfishly in the poplars, and a dancing splendour of red poppies outflaming against the dark coppice of young firs in a corner of the cherry orchard was fitter for dreams than dead languages. The Virgil soon slipped unheeded to the ground, and Anne, her chin propped on her clasped hands, and her eyes on the splendid mass of fluffy clouds that were heaping up just over Mr J. A. Harrison’s house like a great white mountain, was far away in a delicious world where a certain school-teacher was doing a wonderful work, shaping the destinies of future statesmen, and inspiring youthful minds and hearts with high and lofty ambitions.

To be sure, if you came down to harsh facts – which, it must be confessed, Anne seldom did until she had to – it did not seem likely that there was much promising material for

celebrities in Avonlea school; but you could never tell what might happen if a teacher used her influence for good. Anne had certain rose-tinted ideals of what a teacher might accomplish if she only went the right way about it; and she was in the midst of a delightful scene, forty years hence, with a famous personage – just exactly what he was to be famous for was left in convenient haziness, but Anne thought it would be rather nice to have him a college president or a Canadian premier – bowing low over her wrinkled hand and assuring her that it was she who had first kindled his ambition, and that all his success in life was due to the lessons she had instilled so long ago in Avonlea school. The pleasant vision was shattered by a most unpleasant interruption.

A demure little Jersey cow came scuttling down the lane, and five seconds later Mr Harrison arrived – if ‘arrived’ be not too mild a term to describe the manner of his irruption into the yard.

He bounced over the fence without waiting to open the gate, and angrily confronted astonished Anne, who had risen to her feet and stood looking at him in some bewilderment. Mr Harrison was their new right-hand neighbour, and she had never met him before, although she had seen him once or twice.

In early April, before Anne had come home from Queen’s, Mr Robert Bell, whose farm adjoined the Cuthbert place on the west, had sold out and moved to Charlottetown. His farm had been bought by a certain Mr J. A. Harrison; whose name, and the fact that he was a New Brunswick man, were all that was known about him. But before he had been a month in Avonlea he had won the reputation of being an odd person – a ‘crank’ Mrs Rachel Lynde said. Mrs Rachel was an outspoken lady, as those of you who have already made her acquaintance will remember. Mr Harrison was certainly different from other people – and that is the essential characteristic of a crank, as everybody knows.

In the first place he kept himself for himself, and had publicly stated that he wanted no fools of women around his diggings. Feminine Avonlea took its revenge by the gruesome tales it related about his housekeeping and cooking. He had hired little John Henry Carter of White Sands, and John Henry started the stories. For one thing, there was never any stated time for meals in the Harrison establishment. Mr Harrison ‘got a bite’ when he felt hungry, and if John Henry were around at the time, he came in for a share, but if he were not, he had to wait until Mr Harrison’s next hungry spell. John Henry mournfully averred that he would have starved to death if it wasn’t that he got home on Sundays and got a good filling up, and that his mother always gave him a basket of ‘grub’ to take back with him on Monday mornings.

As for washing dishes, Mr Harrison never made any pretence of doing it unless a rainy Sunday came. Then he went to work and washed them all at once in the rainwater hogshead, and left them to drain dry.

Again, Mr Harrison was ‘close’. When he was asked to subscribe to the Revd Mr Allan’s salary he said he’d wait and see how many dollars’ worth of good he got out of his preaching first – *he* didn’t believe in buying a pig in a poke. And when Mrs Lynde went to ask for a contribution to missions – and incidentally to see the inside of the house – he told her there were more heathens among the old woman gossips in Avonlea than anywhere else he knew of, and he’d cheerfully contribute to a mission for Christianising them if she’d undertake it. Mrs Rachel got herself away and said it was a mercy poor Mrs Robert Bell was safe in her grave, for it would have broken her heart to see the state of her house, in which she used to take so much pride.

‘Why, she scrubbed the kitchen floor every second day,’ Mrs Lynde told Marilla Cuthbert indignantly, ‘and if you could see it now! I had to hold up my skirts as I walked across it.’

Finally, Mr Harrison kept a parrot called Ginger. Nobody in Avonlea had ever kept a parrot before; consequently that proceeding was considered barely respectable. And such a parrot! If you took John Henry Carter's word for it, never was such an unholy bird. It swore terribly. Mrs Carter would have taken John Henry away at once if she had been sure she could get another place for him. Besides, Ginger had bitten a piece right out of the back of John Henry's neck one day when he had stooped down too near the cage. Mrs Carter showed everybody the mark when the luckless John Henry went home on Sundays.

All these things flashed through Anne's mind as Mr Harrison stood, quite speechless with wrath apparently, before her. In his most amiable mood Mr Harrison could not have been considered a handsome man; he was short and fat and bald; and now, with his round face purple with rage and his prominent blue eyes almost sticking out of his head, Anne thought he was really the ugliest person she had ever seen.

All at once Mr Harrison found his voice.

'I'm not going to put up with this,' he spluttered, 'not a day longer, do you hear, miss. Bless my soul, this is the third time, miss – the third time! Patience has ceased to be a virtue, miss. I warned your aunt the last time not to let it occur again – and she's let it – she's done it ... what does she mean by it, that is what I want to know. That is what I'm here about, miss.'

'Will you explain what the trouble is?' asked Anne, in her most dignified manner. She had been practising it considerably of late to have it in good working order when school began; but it had no apparent effect on the irate J. A. Harrison.

'Trouble, is it? Bless my soul, trouble enough, I should think. The trouble is, miss, that I found that Jersey cow of your aunt's in my oats again, not half an hour ago. The third time, mark you. I found her in last Tuesday and I found her

in yesterday. I came here and told your aunt not to let it occur again. She *has* let it occur again. Where's your aunt, miss? I just want to see her for a minute and give her a piece of my mind – a piece of J. A. Harrison's mind, miss.'

'If you mean Miss Marilla Cuthbert, she is *not* my aunt, and she has gone down to East Grafton to see a distant relative of hers who is very ill,' said Anne, with due increase of dignity at every word. 'I am very sorry that my cow should have broken into your oats. She is *my* cow and not Miss Cuthbert's – Matthew gave her to me three years ago when she was a little calf and he bought her from Mr Bell.'

'Sorry, miss! Sorry isn't going to help matters any. You'd better go and look at the havoc that animal has made in my oats – trampled them from centre to circumference, miss.'

'I am very sorry,' repeated Anne firmly, 'but perhaps if you kept your fences in better repair Dolly might not have broken in. It is your part of the line fence that separates your oatfield from our pasture, and I noticed the other day that it was not in a very good condition.'

'My fence is all right,' snapped Mr Harrison, angrier than ever at this carrying of the war into the enemy's country. 'The gaol fence couldn't keep a demon of a cow like that out. And I can tell you, you red-headed snippet, that if the cow is yours, as you say, you'd be better employed in watching her out of other people's grain than in sitting round reading yellow-covered novels ...' with a scathing glance at the innocent tan-coloured Virgil by Anne's feet.

Something at that moment was red besides Anne's hair – which had always been a tender point with her.

'I'd rather have red hair than none at all except a little fringe round my ears,' she flashed.

The shot told, for Mr Harrison was really very sensitive about his bald head. His anger choked him up again, and he could only glare speechlessly at Anne, who recovered her temper and followed up her advantage.

‘I can make allowance for you, Mr Harrison, because I have an imagination. I can easily imagine how very trying it must be to find a cow in your oats, and I shall not cherish any hard feelings against you for the things you’ve said. I promise you that Dolly shall never break into your oats again. I give you my word of honour on *that* point.’

‘Well, mind you she doesn’t,’ muttered Mr Harrison in a somewhat subdued tone; but he stamped off angrily enough, and Anne heard him growling to himself until he was out of earshot.

Grievously disturbed in mind, Anne marched across the yard and shut the naughty Jersey up in the milking-pen.

‘She can’t possibly get out of that unless she tears the fence down,’ she reflected. ‘She looks pretty quiet now. I dare say she has sickened herself on those oats. I wish I’d sold her to Mr Shearer when he wanted her last week, but I thought it was just as well to wait until we had the auction of the stock and let them all go together. I believe it is true about Mr Harrison being a crank. Certainly there’s nothing of the kindred spirit about *him*.’

Anne had always a weather eye open for kindred spirits.

Marilla Cuthbert was driving into the yard as Anne returned to the house, and the latter flew to get tea ready. They discussed the matter at the tea-table.

‘I’ll be glad when the auction is over,’ said Marilla. ‘It is too much responsibility having so much stock about the place and nobody but that unreliable Martin to look after them. He has never come back yet, and he promised that he would certainly be back last night if I’d give him the day off to go to his aunt’s funeral. I don’t know how many aunts he has got, I am sure. That’s the fourth that’s died since he hired here a year ago. I’ll be more than thankful when the crop is in and Mr Barry takes over the farm. We’ll have to keep Dolly shut up in the pen till Martin comes, for she must be put in the back pasture, and the fences there have to be fixed. I declare it is a world of trouble, as Rachel says. Here’s

poor Mary Keith dying, and what is to become of those two children of hers is more than I know. She has a brother in British Columbia and she has written to him about them, but she hasn't heard from him yet.'

'What are the children like? How old are they?'

'Six past ... they're twins.'

'Oh, I've always been especially interested in twins ever since Mrs Hammond had so many,' said Anne eagerly. 'Are they pretty?'

'Goodness, you couldn't tell – they were too dirty. Davy had been out making mud pies and Dora went out to call him in. Davy pushed her head first into the biggest pie and then, because she cried, he got into it himself and wallowed in it to show her it was nothing to cry about. Mary said Dora was really a very good child, but that Davy was full of mischief. He has never had any bringing up, you might say. His father died when he was a baby and Mary has been sick almost ever since.'

'I'm always sorry for children that have had no bringing up,' said Anne soberly. 'You know *I* hadn't any till you took me in hand. I hope their uncle will look after them. Just what relation is Mrs Keith to you?'

'Mary? None in the world. It was her husband – he was our third cousin. There's Mrs Lynde coming through the yard. I thought she'd be up to hear about Mary.'

'Don't tell her about Mr Harrison and the cow,' implored Anne.

Marilla promised; but the promise was quite unnecessary, for Mrs Lynde was no sooner fairly seated than she said:

'I saw Mr Harrison chasing your Jersey out of his oats today when I was coming home from Carmody. I thought he looked pretty mad. Did he make much of a rumpus?'

Anne and Marilla furtively exchanged amused smiles. Few things in Avonlea ever escaped Mrs Lynde. It was only that morning Anne had said: 'If you went to your own room at midnight, locked the door, pulled down the blind, and

sneezed, Mrs Lynde would ask you the next day how your cold was!'

'I believe he did,' admitted Marilla. 'I was away. He gave Anne a piece of his mind.'

'I think he is a very disagreeable man,' said Anne, with a resentful toss of her ruddy head.

'You never said a truer word,' said Mrs Rachel solemnly. 'I knew there'd be trouble when Robert Bell sold his place to a New Brunswick man, that's what. I don't know what Avonlea is coming to, with so many strange people rushing into it. It'll soon not be safe to go to sleep in our beds.'

'Why, what other strangers are coming in?' asked Marilla.

'Haven't you heard? Well, there's a family of Donnells, for one thing. They've rented Peter Sloane's old house. Peter has hired the man to run his mill. They belong down east and nobody knows anything about them. Then that shiftless Timothy Cotton family are going to move up from White Sands, and they'll simply be a burden on the public. He is in consumption – when he isn't stealing – and his wife is a slack-twisted creature that can't turn her hand to a thing. She washes her dishes *sitting down*. Mrs George Pye has taken her husband's orphan nephew, Anthony Pye. He'll be going to school to you, Anne, so you may expect trouble, that's what. And you'll have another strange pupil too. Paul Irving is coming from the States to live with his grandmother. You remember his father, Marilla – Stephen Irving, him that jilted Lavendar Lewis over at Grafton?'

'I don't think he jilted her. There was a quarrel – I suppose there was blame on both sides.'

'Well, anyway, he didn't marry her, and she's been as queer as possible ever since, they say – living all by herself in that little stone house she calls Echo Lodge. Stephen went off to the States and went into business with his uncle and married a Yankee. He's never been home since, though his mother has been up to see him once or twice. His wife died two years ago and he's sending the boy home to his

mother for a spell. He’s ten years old, and I don’t know if he’ll be a very desirable pupil. You can never tell about those Yankees.’

Mrs Lynde looked upon all people who had the misfortune to be born or brought up elsewhere than in Prince Edward Island with a decided can-any-good-thing-come-out-of-Nazareth air. They *might* be good people, of course; but you were on the safe side in doubting it. She had a special prejudice against ‘Yankees’. Her husband had been cheated out of ten dollars by an employer for whom he had once worked in Boston, and neither angels nor principalities nor powers could have convinced Mrs Rachel that the whole United States was not responsible for it.

‘Avonlea school won’t be the worse for a little new blood,’ said Marilla dryly, ‘and if this boy is anything like his father he’ll be all right. Steve Irving was the nicest boy that was ever raised in these parts, though some people did call him proud. I should think Mrs Irving would be very glad to have the child. She has been very lonesome since her husband died.’

‘Oh, the boy may be well enough, but he’ll be different from Avonlea children,’ said Mrs Rachel, as if that clinched the matter. Mrs Rachel’s opinions concerning any person, place, or thing were always warranted to wear. ‘What’s this I hear about your going to start up a Village Improvement Society, Anne?’

‘I was just talking it over with some of the girls and boys at the last Debating Club,’ said Anne, flushing. ‘They thought it would be rather nice – and so do Mr and Mrs Allan. Lots of villages have them now.’

‘Well, you’ll get into no end of hot water if you do. Better leave it alone, Anne, that’s what. People don’t like being improved.’

‘Oh, we are not going to try to improve the *people*. It is Avonlea itself. There are lots of things which might be done to make it prettier. For instance, if we could coax Mr Levi

Boulter to pull down that dreadful old house on his upper farm, wouldn't that be an improvement?'

'It certainly would,' admitted Mrs Rachel. 'That old ruin has been an eyesore to the settlement for years. But if you Improvers can coax Levi Boulter to do anything for the public that he isn't to be paid for doing, may I be there to see and hear the process, that's what. I don't want to discourage you, Anne, for there may be something in your idea, though I suppose you did get it out of some rubbishy Yankee magazine; but you'll have your hands full with your school, and I advise you as a friend not to bother with your improvements, that's what. But there, I know you'll go ahead with it if you've set your mind on it. You were always one to carry a thing through somehow.'

Something about the firm outlines of Anne's lips told that Mrs Rachel was not far astray in this estimate. Anne's heart was bent on forming the Improvement Society. Gilbert Blythe, who was to teach in White Sands, but would always be home from Friday night to Monday morning, was enthusiastic about it; and most of the other young folks were willing to go in for anything that meant occasional meetings, and consequently some 'fun'. As for what the 'improvements' were to be, nobody had any very clear idea except Anne and Gilbert. They had talked them over and planned them out until an ideal Avonlea existed in their minds, if nowhere else.

Mrs Rachel had still another item of news.

'They've given the Carmody school to a Priscilla Grant. Didn't you go to Queen's with a girl of that name, Anne?'

'Yes, indeed. Priscilla to teach at Carmody! How perfectly lovely!' exclaimed Anne, her grey eyes lighting up until they looked like evening stars, causing Mrs Lynde to wonder anew if she would ever get it settled to her satisfaction whether Anne Shirley were really a pretty girl or not.

2

Selling in Haste and Repenting at Leisure

ANNE DROVE OVER to Carmody on a shopping expedition the next afternoon and took Diana Barry with her. Diana was, of course, a pledged member of the Improvement Society, and the two girls talked about little else all the way to Carmody and back.

‘The very first thing we ought to do when we get started is to have that hall painted,’ said Diana, as they drove past the Avonlea hall, a rather shabby building set down in a wooded hollow, with spruce trees hooding it about on all sides. ‘It’s a disgraceful-looking place and we must attend to it even before we try to get Mr Levi Boulter to pull his house down. Father says we’ll never succeed in doing *that* – Levi Boulter is too mean to spend the time it would take.’

‘Perhaps he’ll let the boys take it down if they promise to haul the boards and split them up for him for kindling wood,’ said Anne hopefully. ‘We must do our best and be content to go slowly at first. We can’t expect to improve everything all at once. We’ll have to educate public sentiment first, of course.’

Diana wasn’t exactly sure what educating public sentiment meant; but it sounded fine, and she felt rather

proud that she was going to belong to a society with such an aim in view.

‘I thought of something last night that we could do, Anne. You know that three-cornered piece of ground where the roads from Carmody and Newbridge and White Sands meet? It’s all grown over with young spruce; but wouldn’t it be nice to have them all cleared out, and just leave the two or three birch trees that are on it?’

‘Splendid,’ agreed Anne gaily. ‘And have a rustic seat put under the birches. And when spring comes we’ll have a flower bed made in the middle of it and plant geraniums.’

‘Yes; only we’ll have to devise some way of getting old Mrs Hiram Sloane to keep her cow off the road, or she’ll eat our geraniums up,’ laughed Diana. ‘I begin to see what you mean by educating public sentiment, Anne. There’s the old Boulter house now. Did you ever see such a rookery? And perched right close to the road too. An old house with its windows gone always makes me think of something dead with its eyes picked out.’

‘I think an old, deserted house is such a sad sight,’ said Anne dreamily. ‘It always seems to me to be thinking about its past and mourning for its old-time joys. Marilla says that a large family was raised in that old house long ago, and that it was a really pretty place, with a lovely garden and roses climbing all over it. It was full of little children and laughter and songs; and now it is empty, and nothing ever wanders through it but the wind. How lonely and sorrowful it must feel! Perhaps they all come back on moonlit nights – the ghosts of the little children of long ago and the roses and the songs – and for a little while the old house can dream it is young and joyous again.’

Diana shook her head.

‘I never imagine things like that about places now, Anne. Don’t you remember how cross Mother and Marilla were when we imagined ghosts into the Haunted Wood? To this day I can’t go through that bush comfortably after dark; and

if I began imagining such things about the old Boulter house I'd be frightened to pass it too. Besides, those children aren't dead. They're all grown up and doing well – and one of them is a butcher. And flowers and songs couldn't have ghosts anyhow.'

Anne smothered a little sigh. She loved Diana dearly and they had always been good comrades. But she had long ago learned that when she wandered into the realm of fancy she must go alone. The way to it was by an enchanted path where not even her dearest might follow her.

A thunder-shower came up while the girls were at Carmody; it did not last long, however, and the drive home, through the lanes where the raindrops sparkled on the boughs and little leafy valleys where the drenched ferns gave out spicy odours, was delightful. But just as they turned into the Cuthbert lane Anne saw something that spoiled the beauty of the landscape for her.

Before them on the right extended Mr Harrison's broad, grey-green field of late oats, wet and luxuriant; and there, standing squarely in the middle of it, up to her sleek sides in the lush growth and blinking at them calmly over the intervening tassels, was a Jersey cow!

Anne dropped the reins and stood up with a tightening of the lips that boded no good to the predatory quadruped. Not a word said she, but she climbed nimbly down over the wheels, and whisked across the fence before Diana understood what had happened.

'Anne, come back,' shrieked the latter, as soon as she found her voice. 'You'll ruin your dress in that wet – ruin it. She doesn't hear me! Well, she'll never get that cow out by herself. I must go and help her, of course.'

Anne was charging through the grain like a mad thing. Diana hopped briskly down, tied the horse securely to a post, turned the skirt of her pretty gingham dress over her shoulders, mounted the fence, and started in pursuit of her frantic friend. She could run faster than Anne, who was

hampered by her clinging and drenched skirt, and soon overtook her. Behind them they left a trail that would break Mr Harrison's heart when he should see it.

'Anne, for mercy's sake, stop,' panted poor Diana. 'I'm right out of breath, and you are wet to the skin.'

'I must ... get ... that cow ... out ... before ... Mr Harrison ... sees her,' gasped Anne. 'I don't ... care ... if I'm ... drowned ... if we ... can ... only ... do that.'

But the Jersey cow appeared to see no good reason for being hustled out of her luscious browsing-ground. No sooner had the two breathless girls got near her than she turned and bolted squarely for the opposite corner of the field.

'Head her off,' screamed Anne. 'Run, Diana, run.'

Diana did run. Anne tried to, and the wicked Jersey went round the field as if she were possessed. Privately, Diana thought she was. It was fully ten minutes before they headed her off and drove her through the corner gap into the Cuthbert lane.

There is no denying that Anne was in anything but an angelic temper at that precise moment. Nor did it soothe her in the least to behold a buggy halted just outside the lane, wherein sat Mr Shearer of Carmody and his son, both of whom wore a broad smile.

'I guess you'd better have sold me that cow when I wanted to buy her last week, Anne,' chuckled Mr Shearer.

'I'll sell her to you now, if you want her,' said her flushed and dishevelled owner. 'You may have her this very minute.'

'Done. I'll give you twenty for her as I offered before, and Jim here can drive her right over to Carmody. She'll go to town with the rest of the shipment this evening. Mr Read of Brighton wants a Jersey cow.'

Five minutes later Jim Shearer and the Jersey cow were marching up the road, and impulsive Anne was driving along the Green Gables lane with her twenty dollars.

'What will Marilla say?' asked Diana.

‘Oh, she won’t care. Dolly was my own cow and it isn’t likely she’d bring more than twenty dollars at the auction. But oh, dear, if Mr Harrison sees that grain he will know she has been in again, and after my giving him my word of honour that I’d never let it happen! Well, it has taught me a lesson not to give my word of honour about cows. A cow that could jump over or break through our milk-pen fence couldn’t be trusted anywhere.’

Marilla had gone down to Mrs Lynde’s, and when she returned knew all about Dolly’s sale and transfer, for Mrs Lynde had seen most of the transaction from her window and guessed the rest.

‘I suppose it’s just as well she’s gone, though you *do* do things in a dreadful headlong fashion, Anne. I don’t see how she got out of the pen, though. She must have broken some of the boards off.’

‘I didn’t think of looking,’ said Anne, ‘but I’ll go and see now. Martin has never come back yet. Perhaps some more of his aunts have died. I think it’s something like Mr Peter Sloane and the octogenarians. The other evening Mrs Sloane was reading the newspaper and she said to Mr Sloane, “I see here that another octogenarian has just died. What *is* an octogenarian, Peter?” And Mr Sloane said he didn’t know, but they must be very sickly creatures, for you never heard tell of them but they were dying. That’s the way with Martin’s aunts.’

‘Martin’s just like all the rest of those French,’ said Marilla in disgust. ‘You can’t depend on them for a day.’

Marilla was looking over Anne’s Carmody purchases when she heard a shrill shriek in the barnyard. A minute later Anne dashed into the kitchen, wringing her hands.

‘Anne Shirley, what’s the matter now?’

‘Oh, Marilla, whatever shall I do? This is terrible. And it’s all my fault. Oh, will I *ever* learn to stop and reflect a little before doing reckless things? Mrs Lynde always told me I

would do something dreadful someday, and now I've done it!'

'Anne, you are the most exasperating girl! *What* is it you've done?'

'Sold Mr Harrison's Jersey cow – the one he bought from Mr Bell – to Mr Shearer! Dolly is out in the milking-pen this very minute.'

'Anne Shirley, are you dreaming?'

'I only wish I were. There's no dream about it, though it's very like a nightmare. And Mr Harrison's cow is in Charlottetown by this time. Oh, Marilla, I thought I'd finished getting into scrapes, and here I am in the very worst one I ever was in my life. What can I do?'

'Do? There's nothing to do, child, except go and see Mr Harrison about it. We can offer him our Jersey in exchange if he doesn't want to take the money. She is just as good as his.'

'I'm sure he'll be awfully cross and disagreeable about it, though,' moaned Anne.

'I dare say he will. He seems to be an irritable sort of a man. I'll go and explain to him if you like.'

'No, indeed, I'm not as mean as that,' exclaimed Anne. 'This is all my fault and I'm certainly not going to let you take my punishment. I'll go myself and I'll go at once. The sooner it's over the better, for it will be terribly humiliating.'

Poor Anne got her hat and her twenty dollars and was passing out when she happened to glance through the open pantry door. On the table reposed a nut cake which she had baked that morning – a particularly toothsome concoction iced with pink icing and adorned with walnuts. Anne had intended it for Friday evening, when the youth of Avonlea were to meet at Green Gables to organise the Improvement Society. But what were they compared to the justly offended Mr Harrison? Anne thought that cake ought to soften the heart of any man, especially one who had to do his own

cooking, and she promptly popped it into a box. She would take it to Mr Harrison as a peace-offering.

‘That is, if he gives me a chance to say anything at all,’ she thought ruefully, as she climbed the lane fence and started on a short cut across the fields, golden in the light of the dreamy August evening. ‘I know now just how people feel who are being led to execution.’

3

Mr Harrison at Home

MR HARRISON'S HOUSE was an old-fashioned, low-eaved, whitewashed structure, set against a thick spruce grove.

Mr Harrison himself was sitting on his vine-shaded veranda, in his shirt-sleeves, enjoying his evening pipe. When he realised who was coming up the path he sprang suddenly to his feet, bolted into the house, and shut the door. This was merely the uncomfortable result of his surprise, mingled with a good deal of shame over his outburst of temper the day before. But it nearly swept the remnant of her courage from Anne's heart.

'If he's so cross now what will he be when he hears what I've done?' she reflected miserably, as she rapped at the door.

But Mr Harrison opened it, smiling sheepishly, and invited her to enter in a tone quite mild and friendly, if somewhat nervous. He had laid aside his pipe and donned his coat; he offered Anne a very dusty chair very politely, and her reception would have passed off pleasantly enough if it had not been for that tell-tale of a parrot who was peering through the bars of his cage with wicked golden eyes. No sooner had Anne seated herself than Ginger exclaimed:

‘Bless my soul, what’s that red-headed snippet coming here for?’

It would be hard to say whose face was the redder, Mr Harrison’s or Anne’s.

‘Don’t you mind that parrot,’ said Mr Harrison, casting a furious glance at Ginger. ‘He’s ... he’s always talking nonsense. I got him from my brother who was a sailor. Sailors don’t always use the choicest language, and parrots are very imitative birds.’

‘So I should think,’ said poor Anne, the remembrance of her errand quelling her resentment. She couldn’t afford to snub Mr Harrison under the circumstances, that was certain. When you had just sold a man’s Jersey cow offhand, without his knowledge or consent, you must not mind if his parrot repeated uncomplimentary things. Nevertheless, the ‘red-headed snippet’ was not quite so meek as she might otherwise have been.

‘I’ve come to confess something to you, Mr Harrison,’ she said resolutely. ‘It’s ... it’s about ... that Jersey cow.’

‘Bless my soul,’ exclaimed Mr Harrison nervously, ‘has she gone and broken into my oats again? Well, never mind ... never mind if she has. It’s no difference ... none at all. I ... I was too hasty yesterday, that’s a fact. Never mind if she has.’

‘Oh, if it were only that,’ sighed Anne. ‘But it’s ten times worse. I don’t ...’

‘Bless my soul, do you mean to say she’s got into my wheat?’

‘No ... no ... not the wheat. But ...’

‘Then it’s the cabbages? She’s broken into my cabbages that I was raising for exhibition, hey?’

‘It’s *not* the cabbages, Mr Harrison. I’ll tell you everything – that is what I came for – but please don’t interrupt me. It makes me so nervous. Just let me tell my story and don’t say anything till I get through – and then no doubt you’ll say plenty,’ Anne concluded, but in thought only.

‘I won’t say another word,’ said Mr Harrison, and he didn’t. But Ginger was not bound by any contract of silence and kept ejaculating ‘Red-headed snippet’ at intervals until Anne felt quite wild.

‘I shut my Jersey cow up in our pen yesterday. This morning I went to Carmody and when I came back I saw a Jersey cow in your oats. Diana and I chased her out and you can’t imagine what a hard time we had. I was so dreadfully wet and tired and vexed – and Mr Shearer came by that very minute and offered to buy the cow. I sold her to him on the spot for twenty dollars. It was wrong of me. I should have waited and consulted Marilla, of course. But I’m dreadfully given to doing things without thinking – everybody who knows me will tell you that. Mr Shearer took the cow right away to ship her on the afternoon train.’

‘Red-headed snippet,’ quoth Ginger in a tone of profound contempt.

At this point Mr Harrison arose and, with an expression that would have struck terror into any bird but a parrot, carried Ginger’s cage into an adjoining room and shut the door. Ginger shrieked, swore, and otherwise conducted himself in keeping with his reputation, but, finding himself left alone, relapsed into sulky silence.

‘Excuse me and go on,’ said Mr Harrison, sitting down again. ‘My brother the sailor never taught that bird any manners.’

‘I went home and after tea I went out to the milking-pen. Mr Harrison ...’ Anne leaned forward, clasping her hands with her old childish gesture, while her big grey eyes gazed imploringly into Mr Harrison’s embarrassed face ... ‘I found my cow still shut up in the pen. It was *your* cow I had sold to Mr Shearer.’

‘Bless my soul,’ exclaimed Mr Harrison, in blank amazement at this unlooked-for conclusion. ‘What a *very* extraordinary thing!’

‘Oh, it isn’t in the least extraordinary that I should be getting myself and other people into scrapes,’ said Anne mournfully. ‘I’m noted for that. You might suppose I’d have grown out of it by this time – I’ll be seventeen next March – but it seems that I haven’t. Mr Harrison, is it too much to hope that you’ll forgive me? I’m afraid it’s too late to get your cow back, but here is the money for her – or you can have mine in exchange if you’d rather. She’s a very good cow. And I can’t express how sorry I am for it all.’

‘Tut, tut,’ said Mr Harrison briskly, ‘don’t say another word about it, miss. It’s of no consequence – no consequence whatever. Accidents will happen. I’m too hasty myself sometimes, miss – far too hasty. But I can’t help speaking out just what I think, and folks must take me as they find me. If that cow had been in my cabbages now ... but never mind, she wasn’t, so it’s all right. I think I’d rather have your cow in exchange, since you want to be rid of her.’

‘Oh, thank you, Mr Harrison. I’m so glad you are not vexed. I was afraid you would be.’

‘And I suppose you were scared to death to come here and tell me, after the fuss I made yesterday, hey? But you mustn’t mind me. I’m a terrible outspoken old fellow, that’s all – awful apt to tell the truth, no matter if it is a bit plain.’

‘So is Mrs Lynde,’ said Anne, before she could prevent herself.

‘Who? Mrs Lynde? Don’t you tell me I’m like that old gossip,’ said Mr Harrison irritably. ‘I’m not – not a bit. What have you got in that box?’

‘A cake,’ said Anne archly. In her relief at Mr Harrison’s unexpected amiability her spirits soared upward feather-light. ‘I brought it over for you – I thought perhaps you didn’t have cake very often.’

‘I don’t, that’s a fact, and I’m mighty fond of it, too. I’m much obliged to you. It looks good on top. I hope it’s good all the way through.’

‘It is,’ said Anne, gaily confident. ‘I have made cakes in my time that were *not*, as Mrs Allan could tell you, but this one is all right. I made it for the Improvement Society, but I can make another for them.’

‘Well, I’ll tell you what, miss, you must help me eat it. I’ll put the kettle on and we’ll have a cup of tea. How will that do?’

‘Will you let me make the tea?’ said Anne dubiously.

Mr Harrison chuckled.

‘I see you haven’t much confidence in my ability to make tea. You’re wrong – I can brew up as good a jorum of tea as you ever drank. But go ahead yourself. Fortunately it rained last Sunday, so there’s plenty clean dishes.’

Anne hopped briskly up and went to work. She washed the teapot in several waters before she put the tea to steep. Then she swept the stove and set the table, bringing the dishes out of the pantry. The state of that pantry horrified Anne, but she wisely said nothing. Mr Harrison told her where to find the bread and butter and a can of peaches. Anne adorned the table with a bouquet from the garden and shut her eyes to the stains on the tablecloth. Soon the tea was ready and Anne found herself sitting opposite Mr Harrison at his own table, pouring his tea for him, and chatting freely to him about her school and friends and plans. She could hardly believe the evidence of her senses.

Mr Harrison had brought Ginger back, averring that the poor bird would be lonesome; and Anne, feeling that she could forgive everybody and everything, offered him a walnut. But Ginger’s feelings had been grievously hurt and he rejected all overtures of friendliness. He sat moodily on his perch and ruffled his feathers up until he looked like a mere ball of green and gold.

‘Why do you call him Ginger?’ asked Anne, who liked appropriate names and thought Ginger accorded not at all with such gorgeous plumage.

‘My brother the sailor named him. Maybe it had some reference to his temper. I think a lot of that bird though – you’d be surprised if you knew how much. He has his faults of course. That bird has cost me a good deal one way and another. Some people object to his swearing habits, but he can’t be broken of them. I’ve tried ... other people have tried. Some folks have prejudices against parrots. Silly, ain’t it? I like them myself. Ginger’s a lot of company to me. Nothing would induce me to give that bird up – nothing in the world, miss.’

Mr Harrison flung the last sentence at Anne as explosively as if he suspected her of some latent design of persuading him to give Ginger up. Anne, however, was beginning to like the queer, fussy, fidgety little man, and before the meal was over they were quite good friends. Mr Harrison found out about the Improvement Society and was disposed to approve of it.

‘That’s right. Go ahead. There’s lots of room for improvement in this settlement – and in the people too.’

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ flashed Anne. To herself, or to her particular cronies, she might admit that there were some small imperfections, easily removable, in Avonlea and its inhabitants. But to hear a practical outsider like Mr Harrison saying it was an entirely different thing. ‘I think Avonlea is a lovely place; and the people in it are very nice, too.’

‘I guess you’ve got a spice of temper,’ commented Mr Harrison, surveying the flushed cheeks and indignant eyes opposite him. ‘It goes with hair like yours, I reckon. Avonlea is a pretty decent place or I wouldn’t have located here; but I suppose even you will admit that it has *some* faults?’

‘I like it all the better for them,’ said loyal Anne. ‘I don’t like places or people either that haven’t any faults. I think a truly perfect person would be very uninteresting. Mrs Milton White says she never met a perfect person, but she’d heard enough about one – her husband’s first wife. Don’t you think