THE AVONLEA CHRONICLES

LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY

The Avonlea Chronicles (Extended Annotated Edition)

Lucy Maud Montgomery

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
www.facebook.com/jazzybeeverlag
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

Autobiographical sketch of Lisa Maud Montgomery

I WAS born on November 30, 1874, in Prince Edward Island, a colorful little land of ruby and emerald and sapphire. I came of Scotch ancestry with a dash of English, Irish, and French from various grands" and "greats."

My mother died when I was a baby and I was brought up by my grandparents in the old Macneill homestead at Cavendish. . . eleven miles from a railroad and twenty-four from a town, but only half a mile from one of the finest sea-beaches in the world. I went to the "district school" from six to seventeen. I devoured every book I could lay my hands on. Ever since I can remember I was writing stories and verses. My early stories were very tragic creations. Almost everybody in them died. In those tales battle, murder, and sudden death were the order of the day.

When I was fifteen I had a "poem" published in a local paper. That gave me the greatest moment of my life. Then I qualified for a teacher's license at Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and taught three years. During those and the following years I wrote all kinds of stuff. Most of it was rejected but enough was accepted to encourage me. Eventually I won a place as a writer of stories for young people.

I had always hoped to write a book . . . but I never seemed able to make a beginning. I have always hated beginning a story. When I get the first paragraph written I feel as if it were half done. To begin a book seemed quite a stupendous task. Besides, I did not see how I could get time for it. I could not afford to take time from my regular writing hours. In the end I never set out deliberately to write a book. It just "happened." One spring I was looking over my notebook of plots for a short serial I had been asked to write for a certain Sunday School paper. I found a faded entry, written many years before. "Elderly couple apply to

orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent them." I thought this would do. I began to block out the chapters, devise incidents, and "brood up" my heroine. "Anne" began to expand in such a fashion that she seemed very real to me. I thought it rather a shame to waste her on an ephemeral seven-chapter serial. Then the thought came: "Write a book. You have the central idea and the heroine. All you need to do is to spread it over enough chapters to amount to a book." The result was Anne of Green Gables.

I wrote it in the evenings after my regular day's work was done. I typewrote it myself on my old second-hand typewriter that never made the capitals plain and wouldn't print "m's" at all. Green Gables was published in 1908. I did not dream that it would be the success it was. I thought girls in their 'teens might like it but that was the only audience I hoped to reach. But men and women who are grandparents, boys at school and college, old pioneers in the Australian bush, Mohammedan girls in India, missionaries in China, monks in remote monasteries, premiers of Great Britain, and red-headed people all over the world have written to me telling me how they loved Anne and her successors. Since then I have published sixteen books. Twenty-three years ago I married a Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Ewan Macdonald, and came to Ontario to live. I like Ontario very much, but anyone who has once loved "the only island there is" never really loves any other place. And so the scene of all my books save one has been laid there. And in my dreams I go back to it.

List of my books: Anne of Green Gables, Anne of Avonlea, Anne of the Island, Anne's House of Dreams, Rain- bow Valley, Rilla of Ingleside, Chronicles of Avonlea, Emily of New Moon, Emily Climbs, Emily's Quest, Kilmeny of the Orchard, The Story Girl, The Golden Road, Magic for

Marigold, A Tangled Web, The Blue Castle, Pat of Silver Bush.

CHRONICLES OF AVONLEA

I. The Hurrying of Ludovic

Anne Shirley was curled up on the window-seat of Theodora Dix's sitting-room one Saturday evening, looking dreamily afar at some fair starland beyond the hills of sunset. Anne was visiting for a fortnight of her vacation at Echo Lodge, where Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Irving were spending the summer, and she often ran over to the old Dix homestead to chat for awhile with Theodora. They had had their chat out, on this particular evening, and Anne was giving herself over to the delight of building an air-castle. She leaned her shapely head, with its braided coronet of dark red hair, against the window-casing, and her gray eyes were like the moonlight gleam of shadowy pools.

Then she saw Ludovic Speed coming down the lane. He was yet far from the house, for the Dix lane was a long one, but Ludovic could be recognized as far as he could be seen. No one else in Middle Grafton had such a tall, gently-stooping, placidly-moving figure. In every kink and turn of it there was an individuality all Ludovic's own.

Anne roused herself from her dreams, thinking it would only be tactful to take her departure. Ludovic was courting Theodora. Everyone in Grafton knew that, or, if anyone were in ignorance of the fact, it was not because he had not had time to find out. Ludovic had been coming down that

lane to see Theodora, in the same ruminating, unhastening fashion, for fifteen years!

When Anne, who was slim and girlish and romantic, rose to go, Theodora, who was plump and middle-aged and practical, said, with a twinkle in her eye:

"There isn't any hurry, child. Sit down and have your call out. You've seen Ludovic coming down the lane, and, I suppose, you think you'll be a crowd. But you won't. Ludovic rather likes a third person around, and so do I. It spurs up the conversation as it were. When a man has been coming to see you straight along, twice a week for fifteen years, you get rather talked out by spells."

Theodora never pretended to bashfulness where Ludovic was concerned. She was not at all shy of referring to him and his dilatory courtship. Indeed, it seemed to amuse her.

Anne sat down again and together they watched Ludovic coming down the lane, gazing calmly about him at the lush clover fields and the blue loops of the river winding in and out of the misty valley below.

Anne looked at Theodora's placid, finely-moulded face and tried to imagine what she herself would feel like if she were sitting there, waiting for an elderly lover who had, seemingly, taken so long to make up his mind. But even Anne's imagination failed her for this.

"Anyway," she thought, impatiently, "if I wanted him I think I'd find some way of hurrying him up. Ludovic SPEED! Was there ever such a misfit of a name? Such a name for such a man is a delusion and a snare."

Presently Ludovic got to the house, but stood so long on the doorstep in a brown study, gazing into the tangled green boskage of the cherry orchard, that Theodora finally went and opened the door before he knocked. As she brought him into the sitting-room she made a comical grimace at Anne over his shoulder.

Ludovic smiled pleasantly at Anne. He liked her; she was the only young girl he knew, for he generally avoided young girls—they made him feel awkward and out of place. But Anne did not affect him in this fashion. She had a way of getting on with all sorts of people, and, although they had not known her very long, both Ludovic and Theodora looked upon her as an old friend.

Ludovic was tall and somewhat ungainly, but his unhesitating placidity gave him the appearance of a dignity that did not otherwise pertain to him. He had a drooping, silky, brown moustache, and a little curly tuft of imperial,—a fashion which was regarded as eccentric in Grafton, where men had clean-shaven chins or went full-bearded. His eyes were dreamy and pleasant, with a touch of melancholy in their blue depths.

He sat down in the big bulgy old armchair that had belonged to Theodora's father. Ludovic always sat there, and Anne declared that the chair had come to look like him.

The conversation soon grew animated enough. Ludovic was a good talker when he had somebody to draw him out. He was well read, and frequently surprised Anne by his shrewd comments on men and matters out in the world, of which only the faint echoes reached Deland River. He had also a liking for religious arguments with Theodora, who did not care much for politics or the making of history, but was avid of doctrines, and read everything pertaining thereto.

When the conversation drifted into an eddy of friendly wrangling between Ludovic and Theodora over Christian Science, Anne understood that her usefulness was ended for the time being, and that she would not be missed.

"It's star time and good-night time," she said, and went away quietly.

But she had to stop to laugh when she was well out of sight of the house, in a green meadow bestarred with the white and gold of daisies. A wind, odour-freighted, blew daintily across it. Anne leaned against a white birch tree in the corner and laughed heartily, as she was apt to do whenever she thought of Ludovic and Theodora. To her eager youth, this courtship of theirs seemed a very amusing thing. She liked Ludovic, but allowed herself to be provoked with him.

"The dear, big, irritating goose!" she said aloud. "There never was such a lovable idiot before. He's just like the alligator in the old rhyme, who wouldn't go along, and wouldn't keep still, but just kept bobbing up and down."

Two evenings later, when Anne went over to the Dix place, she and Theodora drifted into a conversation about Ludovic. Theodora, who was the most industrious soul alive, and had a mania for fancy work into the bargain, was busying her smooth, plump fingers with a very elaborate Battenburg lace centre-piece. Anne was lying back in a little rocker, with her slim hands folded in her lap, watching Theodora. She realized that Theodora was very handsome, in a stately, Juno-like fashion of firm, white flesh, large, clearly-chiselled outlines, and great, cowey, brown eyes. When Theodora was not smiling, she looked very imposing. Anne thought it likely that Ludovic held her in awe.

"Did you and Ludovic talk about Christian Science ALL Saturday evening?" she asked.

Theodora overflowed into a smile.

"Yes, and we even quarrelled over it. At least *I* did. Ludovic wouldn't quarrel with anyone. You have to fight air when you spar with him. I hate to square up to a person who won't hit back."

"Theodora," said Anne coaxingly, "I am going to be curious and impertinent. You can snub me if you like. Why don't you and Ludovic get married?"

Theodora laughed comfortably.

"That's the question Grafton folks have been asking for quite a while, I reckon, Anne. Well, I'd have no objection to marrying Ludovic. That's frank enough for you, isn't it? But it's not easy to marry a man unless he asks you. And Ludovic has never asked me."

"Is he too shy?" persisted Anne. Since Theodora was in the mood, she meant to sift this puzzling affair to the bottom.

Theodora dropped her work and looked meditatively out over the green slopes of the summer world.

"No, I don't think it is that. Ludovic isn't shy. It's just his way—the Speed way. The Speeds are all dreadfully deliberate. They spend years thinking over a thing before they make up their minds to do it. Sometimes they get so much in the habit of thinking about it that they never get over it—like old Alder Speed, who was always talking of going to England to see his brother, but never went, though

there was no earthly reason why he shouldn't. They're not lazy, you know, but they love to take their time."

"And Ludovic is just an aggravated case of Speedism," suggested Anne.

"Exactly. He never hurried in his life. Why, he has been thinking for the last six years of getting his house painted. He talks it over with me every little while, and picks out the colour, and there the matter stays. He's fond of me, and he means to ask me to have him sometime. The only question is—will the time ever come?"

"Why don't you hurry him up?" asked Anne impatiently.

Theodora went back to her stitches with another laugh.

"If Ludovic could be hurried up, I'm not the one to do it. I'm too shy. It sounds ridiculous to hear a woman of my age and inches say that, but it is true. Of course, I know it's the only way any Speed ever did make out to get married. For instance, there's a cousin of mine married to Ludovic's brother. I don't say she proposed to him out and out, but, mind you, Anne, it wasn't far from it. I couldn't do anything like that. I DID try once. When I realized that I was getting sere and mellow, and all the girls of my generation were going off on either hand, I tried to give Ludovic a hint. But it stuck in my throat. And now I don't mind. If I don't change Dix to Speed until I take the initiative, it will be Dix to the end of life. Ludovic doesn't realize that we are growing old, you know. He thinks we are giddy young folks yet, with plenty of time before us. That's the Speed failing. They never find out they're alive until they're dead."

"You're fond of Ludovic, aren't you?" asked Anne, detecting a note of real bitterness among Theodora's paradoxes.

"Laws, yes," said Theodora candidly. She did not think it worth while to blush over so settled a fact. "I think the world and all of Ludovic. And he certainly does need somebody to look after HIM. He's neglected—he looks frayed. You can see that for yourself. That old aunt of his looks after his house in some fashion, but she doesn't look after him. And he's coming now to the age when a man needs to be looked after and coddled a bit. I'm lonesome here, and Ludovic is lonesome up there, and it does seem ridiculous, doesn't it? I don't wonder that we're the standing joke of Grafton. Goodness knows, I laugh at it enough myself. I've sometimes thought that if Ludovic could be made jealous it might spur him along. But I never could flirt and there's nobody to flirt with if I could. Everybody hereabouts looks upon me as Ludovic's property and nobody would dream of interfering with him."

"Theodora," cried Anne, "I have a plan!"

"Now, what are you going to do?" exclaimed Theodora.

Anne told her. At first Theodora laughed and protested. In the end, she yielded somewhat doubtfully, overborne by Anne's enthusiasm.

"Well, try it, then," she said, resignedly. "If Ludovic gets mad and leaves me, I'll be worse off than ever. But nothing venture, nothing win. And there is a fighting chance, I suppose. Besides, I must admit I'm tired of his dilly-dallying."

Anne went back to Echo Lodge tingling with delight in her plot. She hunted up Arnold Sherman, and told him what was required of him. Arnold Sherman listened and laughed. He was an elderly widower, an intimate friend of Stephen

Irving, and had come down to spend part of the summer with him and his wife in Prince Edward Island. He was handsome in a mature style, and he had a dash of mischief in him still, so that he entered readily enough into Anne's plan. It amused him to think of hurrying Ludovic Speed, and he knew that Theodora Dix could be depended on to do her part. The comedy would not be dull, whatever its outcome.

The curtain rose on the first act after prayer meeting on the next Thursday night. It was bright moonlight when the people came out of church, and everybody saw it plainly. Arnold Sherman stood upon the steps close to the door, and Ludovic Speed leaned up against a corner of the graveyard fence, as he had done for years. The boys said he had worn the paint off that particular place. Ludovic knew of no reason why he should paste himself up against the church door. Theodora would come out as usual, and he would join her as she went past the corner.

This was what happened, Theodora came down the steps, her stately figure outlined in its darkness against the gush of lamplight from the porch. Arnold Sherman asked her if he might see her home. Theodora took his arm calmly, and together they swept past the stupefied Ludovic, who stood helplessly gazing after them as if unable to believe his eyes.

For a few moments he stood there limply; then he started down the road after his fickle lady and her new admirer. The boys and irresponsible young men crowded after, expecting some excitement, but they were disappointed. Ludovic strode on until he overtook Theodora and Arnold Sherman, and then fell meekly in behind them.

Theodora hardly enjoyed her walk home, although Arnold Sherman laid himself out to be especially entertaining. Her

heart yearned after Ludovic, whose shuffling footsteps she heard behind her. She feared that she had been very cruel, but she was in for it now. She steeled herself by the reflection that it was all for his own good, and she talked to Arnold Sherman as if he were the one man in the world. Poor, deserted Ludovic, following humbly behind, heard her, and if Theodora had known how bitter the cup she was holding to his lips really was, she would never have been resolute enough to present it, no matter for what ultimate good.

When she and Arnold turned in at her gate, Ludovic had to stop. Theodora looked over her shoulder and saw him standing still on the road. His forlorn figure haunted her thoughts all night. If Anne had not run over the next day and bolstered up her convictions, she might have spoiled everything by prematurely relenting.

Ludovic, meanwhile, stood still on the road, quite oblivious to the hoots and comments of the vastly amused small boy contingent, until Theodora and his rival disappeared from his view under the firs in the hollow of her lane. Then he turned about and went home, not with his usual leisurely amble, but with a perturbed stride which proclaimed his inward disquiet.

He felt bewildered. If the world had come suddenly to an end or if the lazy, meandering Grafton River had turned about and flowed up hill, Ludovic could not have been more astonished. For fifteen years he had walked home from meetings with Theodora; and now this elderly stranger, with all the glamour of "the States" hanging about him, had coolly walked off with her under Ludovic's very nose. Worse —most unkindest cut of all—Theodora had gone with him willingly; nay, she had evidently enjoyed his company.

Ludovic felt the stirring of a righteous anger in his easy-going soul.

When he reached the end of his lane, he paused at his gate, and looked at his house, set back from the lane in a crescent of birches. Even in the moonlight, its weather-worn aspect was plainly visible. He thought of the "palatial residence" rumour ascribed to Arnold Sherman in Boston, and stroked his chin nervously with his sunburnt fingers. Then he doubled up his fist and struck it smartly on the gate-post.

"Theodora needn't think she is going to jilt me in this fashion, after keeping company with me for fifteen years," he said. "I'LL have something to say to it, Arnold Sherman or no Arnold Sherman. The impudence of the puppy!"

The next morning Ludovic drove to Carmody and engaged Joshua Pye to come and paint his house, and that evening, although he was not due till Saturday night, he went down to see Theodora.

Arnold Sherman was there before him, and was actually sitting in Ludovic's own prescriptive chair. Ludovic had to deposit himself in Theodora's new wicker rocker, where he looked and felt lamentably out of place.

If Theodora felt the situation to be awkward, she carried it off superbly. She had never looked handsomer, and Ludovic perceived that she wore her second best silk dress. He wondered miserably if she had donned it in expectation of his rival's call. She had never put on silk dresses for him. Ludovic had always been the meekest and mildest of mortals, but he felt quite murderous as he sat mutely there and listened to Arnold Sherman's polished conversation.

"You should just have been here to see him glowering," Theodora told the delighted Anne the next day. "It may be wicked of me, but I felt real glad. I was afraid he might stay away and sulk. So long as he comes here and sulks I don't worry. But he is feeling badly enough, poor soul, and I'm really eaten up by remorse. He tried to outstay Mr. Sherman last night, but he didn't manage it. You never saw a more depressed-looking creature than he was as he hurried down the lane. Yes, he actually hurried."

The following Sunday evening Arnold Sherman walked to church with Theodora, and sat with her. When they came in Ludovic Speed suddenly stood up in his pew under the gallery. He sat down again at once, but everybody in view had seen him, and that night folks in all the length and breadth of Grafton River discussed the dramatic occurrence with keen enjoyment.

"Yes, he jumped right up as if he was pulled on his feet, while the minister was reading the chapter," said his cousin, Lorella Speed, who had been in church, to her sister, who had not. "His face was as white as a sheet, and his eyes were just glaring out of his head. I never felt so thrilled, I declare! I almost expected him to fly at them then and there. But he just gave a sort of gasp and set down again. I don't know whether Theodora Dix saw him or not. She looked as cool and unconcerned as you please."

Theodora had not seen Ludovic, but if she looked cool and unconcerned, her appearance belied her, for she felt miserably flustered. She could not prevent Arnold Sherman coming to church with her, but it seemed to her like going too far. People did not go to church and sit together in Grafton unless they were the next thing to being engaged. What if this filled Ludovic with the narcotic of despair

instead of wakening him up! She sat through the service in misery and heard not one word of the sermon.

But Ludovic's spectacular performances were not yet over. The Speeds might be hard to get started, but once they were started their momentum was irresistible. When Theodora and Mr. Sherman came out, Ludovic was waiting on the steps. He stood up straight and stern, with his head thrown back and his shoulders squared. There was open defiance in the look he cast on his rival, and masterfulness in the mere touch of the hand he laid on Theodora's arm.

"May I see you home, Miss Dix?" his words said. His tone said, "I am going to see you home whether or no."

Theodora, with a deprecating look at Arnold Sherman, took his arm, and Ludovic marched her across the green amid a silence which the very horses tied to the storm fence seemed to share. For Ludovic 'twas a crowded hour of glorious life.

Anne walked all the way over from Avonlea the next day to hear the news. Theodora smiled consciously.

"Yes, it is really settled at last, Anne. Coming home last night Ludovic asked me plump and plain to marry him,—Sunday and all as it was. It's to be right away—for Ludovic won't be put off a week longer than necessary."

"So Ludovic Speed has been hurried up to some purpose at last," said Mr. Sherman, when Anne called in at Echo Lodge, brimful with her news. "And you are delighted, of course, and my poor pride must be the scapegoat. I shall always be remembered in Grafton as the man from Boston who wanted Theodora Dix and couldn't get her."

"But that won't be true, you know," said Anne comfortingly.

Arnold Sherman thought of Theodora's ripe beauty, and the mellow companionableness she had revealed in their brief intercourse.

"I'm not perfectly sure of that," he said, with a half sigh.

II. Old Lady Lloyd

I. The May Chapter

Spencervale gossip always said that "Old Lady Lloyd" was rich and mean and proud. Gossip, as usual, was one-third right and two-thirds wrong. Old Lady Lloyd was neither rich nor mean; in reality she was pitifully poor—so poor that "Crooked Jack" Spencer, who dug her garden and chopped her wood for her, was opulent by contrast, for he, at least, never lacked three meals a day, and the Old Lady could sometimes achieve no more than one. But she WAS very proud—so proud that she would have died rather than let the Spencervale people, among whom she had queened it in her youth, suspect how poor she was and to what straits was sometimes reduced. She much preferred to have them think her miserly and odd—a queer old recluse who never went anywhere, even to church, and who paid the smallest subscription to the minister's salary of anyone in the congregation.

"And her just rolling in wealth!" they said indignantly. "Well, she didn't get her miserly ways from her parents. THEY were real generous and neighbourly. There never was a finer gentleman than old Doctor Lloyd. He was always doing kindnesses to everybody; and he had a way of doing them that made you feel as if you was doing the

favour, not him. Well, well, let Old Lady Lloyd keep herself and her money to herself if she wants to. If she doesn't want our company, she doesn't have to suffer it, that's all. Reckon she isn't none too happy for all her money and pride."

No, the Old Lady was none too happy, that was unfortunately true. It is not easy to be happy when your life is eaten up with loneliness and emptiness on the spiritual side, and when, on the material side, all you have between you and starvation is the little money your hens bring you in.

The Old Lady lived "away back at the old Lloyd place," as it was always called. It was a quaint, low-eaved house, with big chimneys and square windows and with spruces growing thickly all around it. The Old Lady lived there all alone and there were weeks at a time when she never saw a human being except Crooked Jack. What the Old Lady did with herself and how she put in her time was a puzzle the Spencervale people could not solve. The children believed she amused herself counting the gold in the big black box under her bed. Spencervale children held the Old Lady in mortal terror; some of them—the "Spencer Road" fry—believed she was a witch; all of them would run if, when wandering about the woods in search of berries or spruce gum, they saw at a distance the spare, upright form of the Old Lady, gathering sticks for her fire. Mary Moore was the only one who was quite sure she was not a witch.

"Witches are always ugly," she said decisively, "and Old Lady Lloyd isn't ugly. She's real pretty—she's got such a soft white hair and big black eyes and a little white face. Those Road children don't know what they're talking of. Mother says they're a very ignorant crowd."

"Well, she doesn't ever go to church, and she mutters and talks to herself all the time she's picking up sticks," maintained Jimmy Kimball stoutly.

The Old Lady talked to herself because she was really very fond of company and conversation. To be sure, when you have talked to nobody but yourself for nearly twenty years, it is apt to grow somewhat monotonous; and there were times when the Old Lady would have sacrificed everything but her pride for a little human companionship. At such times she felt very bitter and resentful toward Fate for having taken everything from her. She had nothing to love, and that is about as unwholesome a condition as is possible to anyone.

It was always hardest in the spring. Once upon a time the Old Lady—when she had not been the Old Lady, but pretty, wilful, high-spirited Margaret Lloyd—had loved springs; now she hated them because they hurt her; and this particular spring of this particular May chapter hurt her more than any that had gone before. The Old Lady felt as if she could NOT endure the ache of it. Everything hurt her—the new green tips on the firs, the fairy mists down in the little beech hollow below the house, the fresh smell of the red earth Crooked Jack spaded up in her garden. The Old Lady lay awake all one moonlit night and cried for very heartache. She even forgot her body hunger in her soul hunger; and the Old Lady had been hungry, more or less, all that week. She was living on store biscuits and water, so that she might be able to pay Crooked Jack for digging her garden. When the pale, lovely dawn-colour came stealing up the sky behind the spruces, the Old Lady buried her face in her pillow and refused to look at it.

"I hate the new day," she said rebelliously. "It will be just like all the other hard, common days. I don't want to get up

and live it. And, oh, to think that long ago I reached out my hands joyfully to every new day, as to a friend who was bringing me good tidings! I loved the mornings then—sunny or gray, they were as delightful as an unread book—and now I hate them—hate them—hate them!"

But the Old Lady got up nevertheless, for she knew Crooked Jack would be coming early to finish the garden. She arranged her beautiful, thick, white hair very carefully, and put on her purple silk dress with the little gold spots in it. The Old Lady always wore silk from motives of economy. It was much cheaper to wear a silk dress that had belonged to her mother than to buy new print at the store. The Old Lady had plenty of silk dresses which had belonged to her mother. She wore them morning, noon, and night, and Spencervale people considered it an additional evidence of her pride. As for the fashion of them, it was, of course, just because she was too mean to have them made over. They did not dream that the Old Lady never put on one of the silk dresses without agonizing over its unfashionableness, and that even the eyes of Crooked Jack cast on her antique flounces and overskirts was almost more than her feminine vanity could endure.

In spite of the fact that the Old Lady had not welcomed the new day, its beauty charmed her when she went out for a walk after her dinner—or, rather, after her mid-day biscuit. It was so fresh, so sweet, so virgin; and the spruce woods around the old Lloyd place were athrill with busy spring doings and all sprinkled through with young lights and shadows. Some of their delight found its way into the Old Lady's bitter heart as she wandered through them, and when she came out at the little plank bridge over the brook down under the beeches, she felt almost gentle and tender once more. There was one big beech there, in particular, which the Old Lady loved for reasons best known to herself

—a great, tall beech with a trunk like the shaft of a gray marble column and a leafy spread of branches over the still, golden-brown pool made beneath it by the brook. It had been a young sapling in the days that were haloed by the vanished glory of the Old Lady's life.

The Old Lady heard childish voices and laughter afar up the lane which led to William Spencer's place just above the woods. William Spencer's front lane ran out to the main road in a different direction, but this "back lane" furnished a short cut and his children always went to school that way.

The Old Lady shrank hastily back behind a clump of young spruces. She did not like the Spencer children because they always seemed so afraid of her. Through the spruce screen she could see them coming gaily down the lane—the two older ones in front, the twins behind, clinging to the hands of a tall, slim, young girl—the new music teacher, probably. The Old Lady had heard from the egg pedlar that she was going to board at William Spencer's, but she had not heard her name.

She looked at her with some curiosity as they drew near—and then, all at once, the Old Lady's heart gave a great bound and began to beat as it had not beaten for years, while her breath came quickly and she trembled violently. Who—WHO could this girl be?

Under the new music teacher's straw hat were masses of fine chestnut hair of the very shade and wave that the Old Lady remembered on another head in vanished years; from under those waves looked large, violet-blue eyes with very black lashes and brows—and the Old Lady knew those eyes as well as she knew her own; and the new music teacher's face, with all its beauty of delicate outline and dainty colouring and glad, buoyant youth, was a face from the Old

Lady's past—a perfect resemblance in every respect save one; the face which the Old Lady remembered had been weak, with all its charm; but this girl's face possessed a fine, dominant strength compact of sweetness and womanliness. As she passed by the Old Lady's hiding place she laughed at something one of the children said; and oh, but the Old Lady knew that laughter well. She had heard it before under that very beech tree.

She watched them until they disappeared over the wooded hill beyond the bridge; and then she went back home as if she walked in a dream. Crooked Jack was delving vigorously in the garden; ordinarily the Old Lady did not talk much with Crooked Jack, for she disliked his weakness for gossip; but now she went into the garden, a stately old figure in her purple, gold-spotted silk, with the sunshine gleaming on her white hair.

Crooked Jack had seen her go out and had remarked to himself that the Old Lady was losing ground; she was pale and peaked-looking. He now concluded that he had been mistaken. The Old Lady's cheeks were pink and her eyes shining. Somewhere in her walk she had shed ten years at least. Crooked Jack leaned on his spade and decided that there weren't many finer looking women anywhere than Old Lady Lloyd. Pity she was such an old miser!

"Mr. Spencer," said the Old Lady graciously—she always spoke very graciously to her inferiors when she talked to them at all—"can you tell me the name of the new music teacher who is boarding at Mr. William Spencer's?"

"Sylvia Gray," said Crooked Jack.

The Old Lady's heart gave another great bound. But she had known it—she had known that girl with Leslie Gray's

hair and eyes and laugh must be Leslie Gray's daughter.

Crooked Jack spat on his hand and resumed his work, but his tongue went faster than his spade, and the Old Lady listened greedily. For the first time she enjoyed and blessed Crooked Jack's garrulity and gossip. Every word he uttered was as an apple of gold in a picture of silver to her.

He had been working at William Spencer's the day the new music teacher had come, and what Crooked Jack couldn't find out about any person in one whole day—at least as far as outward life went—was hardly worth finding out. Next to discovering things did he love telling them, and it would be hard to say which enjoyed that ensuing half-hour more—Crooked Jack or the Old Lady.

Crooked Jack's account, boiled down, amounted to this; both Miss Gray's parents had died when she was a baby, she had been brought up by an aunt, she was very poor and very ambitious.

"Wants a moosical eddication," finished up Crooked Jack, "and, by jingo, she orter have it, for anything like the voice of her I never heerd. She sung for us that evening after supper and I thought 'twas an angel singing. It just went through me like a shaft o' light. The Spencer young ones are crazy over her already. She's got twenty pupils around here and in Grafton and Avonlea."

When the Old Lady had found out everything Crooked Jack could tell her, she went into the house and sat down by the window of her little sitting-room to think it all over. She was tingling from head to foot with excitement.

Leslie's daughter! This Old Lady had had her romance once. Long ago—forty years ago—she had been engaged to

Leslie Gray, a young college student who taught in Spencervale for the summer term one year—the golden summer of Margaret Lloyd's life. Leslie had been a shy, dreamy, handsome fellow with literary ambitions, which, as he and Margaret both firmly believed, would one day bring him fame and fortune.

Then there had been a foolish, bitter quarrel at the end of that golden summer. Leslie had gone away in anger, afterwards he had written, but Margaret Lloyd, still in the grasp of her pride and resentment, had sent a harsh answer. No more letters came; Leslie Gray never returned; and one day Margaret wakened to the realization that she had put love out of her life for ever. She knew it would never be hers again; and from that moment her feet were turned from youth to walk down the valley of shadow to a lonely, eccentric age.

Many years later she heard of Leslie's marriage; then came news of his death, after a life that had not fulfilled his dreams for him. Nothing more she had heard or known—nothing to this day, when she had seen his daughter pass her by unseeing in the beech hollow.

"His daughter! And she might have been MY daughter," murmured the Old Lady. "Oh, if I could only know her and love her—and perhaps win her love in return! But I cannot. I could not have Leslie Gray's daughter know how poor I am—how low I have been brought. I could not bear that. And to think she is living so near me, the darling—just up the lane and over the hill. I can see her go by every day—I can have that dear pleasure, at least. But oh, if I could only do something for her—give her some little pleasure! It would be such a delight."

When the Old Lady happened to go into her spare room that evening, she saw from it a light shining through a gap in the trees on the hill. She knew that it shone from the Spencers' spare room. So it was Sylvia's light. The Old Lady stood in the darkness and watched it until it went out—watched it with a great sweetness breathing in her heart, such as risen from old rose-leaves when they are stirred. She fancied Sylvia moving about her room, brushing and braiding her long, glistening hair—laying aside her little trinkets and girlish adornments—making her simple preparations for sleep. When the light went out the Old Lady pictured a slight white figure kneeling by the window in the soft starshine, and the Old Lady knelt down then and there and said her own prayers in fellowship. She said the simple form of words she had always used; but a new spirit seemed to inspire them; and she finished with a new petition—"Let me think of something I can do for her, dear Father—some little, little thing that I can do for her."

The Old Lady had slept in the same room all her life—the one looking north into the spruces—and loved it; but the next day she moved into the spare room without a regret. It was to be her room after this; she must be where she could see Sylvia's light, she put the bed where she could lie in it and look at that earth star which had suddenly shone across the twilight shadows of her heart. She felt very happy, she had not felt happy for many years; but now a strange, new, dream-like interest, remote from the harsh realities of her existence, but none the less comforting and alluring, had entered into her life. Besides, she had thought of something she could do for Sylvia—"a little, little thing" that might give her pleasure.

Spencervale people were wont to say regretfully that there were no Mayflowers in Spencervale; the Spencervale young fry, when they wanted Mayflowers, thought they had to go

over to the barrens at Avonlea, six miles away, for them. Old Lady Lloyd knew better. In her many long, solitary rambles, she had discovered a little clearing far back in the woods—a southward-sloping, sandy hill on a tract of woodland belonging to a man who lived in town—which in spring was starred over with the pink and white of arbutus.

To this clearing the Old Lady betook herself that afternoon, walking through wood lanes and under dim spruce arches like a woman with a glad purpose. All at once the spring was dear and beautiful to her once more; for love had entered again into her heart, and her starved soul was feasting on its divine nourishment.

Old Lady Lloyd found a wealth of Mayflowers on the sandy hill. She filled her basket with them, gloating over the loveliness which was to give pleasure to Sylvia. When she got home she wrote on a slip of paper, "For Sylvia." It was not likely anyone in Spencervale would know her handwriting, but, to make sure, she disguised it, writing in round, big letters like a child's. She carried her Mayflowers down to the hollow and heaped them in a recess between the big roots of the old beech, with the little note thrust through a stem on top.

Then the Old Lady deliberately hid behind the spruce clump. She had put on her dark green silk on purpose for hiding. She had not long to wait. Soon Sylvia Gray came down the hill with Mattie Spencer. When she reached the bridge she saw the Mayflowers and gave an exclamation of delight. Then she saw her name and her expression changed to wonder. The Old Lady, peering through the boughs, could have laughed for very pleasure over the success of her little plot.

"For me!" said Sylvia, lifting the flowers. "CAN they really be for me, Mattie? Who could have left them here?"

Mattie giggled.

"I believe it was Chris Stewart," she said. "I know he was over at Avonlea last night. And ma says he's taken a notion to you—she knows by the way he looked at you when you were singing night before last. It would be just like him to do something queer like this—he's such a shy fellow with the girls."

Sylvia frowned a little. She did not like Mattie's expressions, but she did like Mayflowers, and she did not dislike Chris Stewart, who had seemed to her merely a nice, modest, country boy. She lifted the flowers and buried her face in them.

"Anyway, I'm much obliged to the giver, whoever he or she is," she said merrily. "There's nothing I love like Mayflowers. Oh, how sweet they are!"

When they had passed the Old Lady emerged from her lurking place, flushed with triumph. It did not vex her that Sylvia should think Chris Stewart had given her the flowers; nay, it was all the better, since she would be the less likely to suspect the real donor. The main thing was that Sylvia should have the delight of them. That quite satisfied the Old Lady, who went back to her lonely house with the cockles of her heart all in a glow.

It soon was a matter of gossip in Spencervale that Chris Stewart was leaving Mayflowers at the beech hollow for the music teacher every other day. Chris himself denied it, but he was not believed. Firstly, there were no Mayflowers in Spencervale; secondly, Chris had to go to Carmody every

other day to haul milk to the butter factory, and Mayflowers grew in Carmody, and, thirdly, the Stewarts always had a romantic streak in them. Was not that enough circumstantial evidence for anybody?

As for Sylvia, she did not mind if Chris had a boyish admiration for her and expressed it thus delicately. She thought it very nice of him, indeed, when he did not vex her with any other advances, and she was quite content to enjoy his Mayflowers.

Old Lady Lloyd heard all the gossip about it from the egg pedlar, and listened to him with laughter glimmering far down in her eyes. The egg pedlar went away and vowed he'd never seen the Old Lady so spry as she was this spring; she seemed real interested in the young folk's doings.

The Old Lady kept her secret and grew young in it. She walked back to the Mayflower hill as long as the Mayflowers lasted; and she always hid in the spruces to see Sylvia Gray go by. Every day she loved her more, and yearned after her more deeply. All the long repressed tenderness of her nature overflowed to this girl who was unconscious of it. She was proud of Sylvia's grace and beauty, and sweetness of voice and laughter. She began to like the Spencer children because they worshipped Sylvia; she envied Mrs. Spencer because the latter could minister to Sylvia's needs. Even the egg pedlar seemed a delightful person because he brought news of Sylvia—her social popularity, her professional success, the love and admiration she had won already.

The Old Lady never dreamed of revealing herself to Sylvia. That, in her poverty, was not to be thought of for a moment. It would have been very sweet to know her—sweet to have

her come to the old house—sweet to talk to her—to enter into her life. But it might not be. The Old Lady's pride was still far stronger than her love. It was the one thing she had never sacrificed and never—so she believed—could sacrifice.

II. The June Chapter

There were no Mayflowers in June; but now the Old Lady's garden was full of blossoms and every morning Sylvia found a bouquet of them by the beech—the perfumed ivory of white narcissus, the flame of tulips, the fairy branches of bleeding-heart, the pink-and-snow of little, thorny, single, sweetbreathed early roses. The Old Lady had no fear of discovery, for the flowers that grew in her garden grew in every other Spencervale garden as well, including the Stewart garden. Chris Stewart, when he was teased about the music teacher, merely smiled and held his peace. Chris knew perfectly well who was the real giver of those flowers. He had made it his business to find out when the Mayflower gossip started. But since it was evident Old Lady Lloyd did not wish it to be known, Chris told no one. Chris had always liked Old Lady Lloyd ever since the day, ten years before, when she had found him crying in the woods with a cut foot and had taken him into her house, and bathed and bound the wound, and given him ten cents to buy candy at the store. The Old Lady went without supper that night because of it, but Chris never knew that.

The Old Lady thought it a most beautiful June. She no longer hated the new days; on the contrary, she welcomed them.

"Every day is an uncommon day now," she said jubilantly to herself—for did not almost every day bring her a glimpse of Sylvia? Even on rainy days the Old Lady gallantly braved