



Charming Classics

# Anne of Avonlea

L. M. MONTGOMERY

**Anne of Avonlea**

**L. M. Montgomery**

*To my former teacher*

HATTIE GORDON SMITH

*in grateful remembrance of her sympathy and encouragement*

*Flowers spring to  
blossom where she walks  
The careful ways of  
duty,  
Our hard, stiff lines of life  
with her  
Are flowing curves  
of beauty.*

—WHITTIER

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# I

## *An Irate Neighbor*

A TALL, SLIM girl, “half-past sixteen,” with serious gray 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 splendor 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 schoolteacher 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. This 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 neighbor, 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 may 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 house 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 pretense 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 Rev. 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 Christianizing 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 practicing 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 center 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 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 jail fence couldn’t keep a demon of a cow like that out. And I can tell you, you redheaded 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-colored 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.