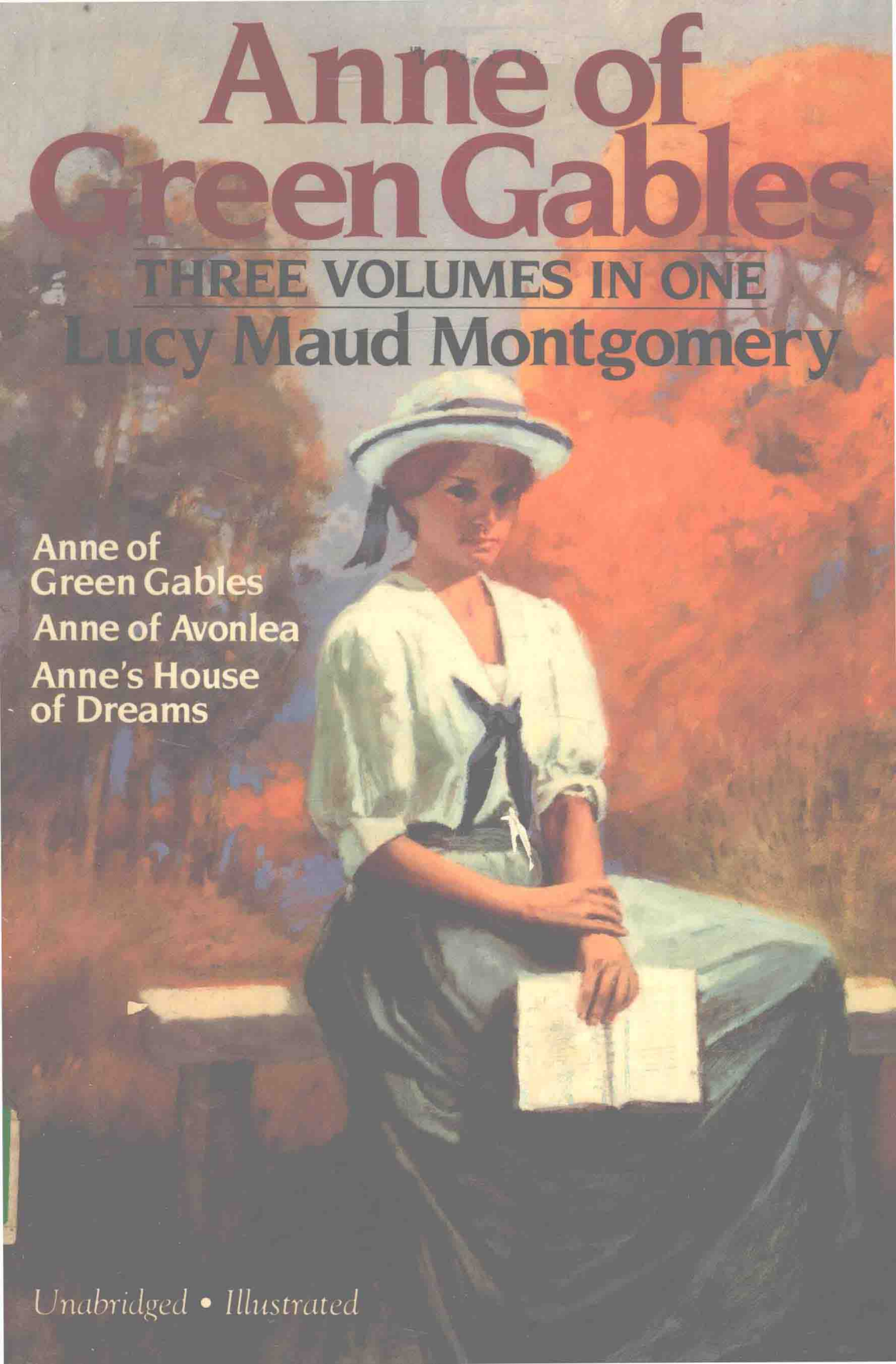
Anne of Green Gables

THREE VOLUMES IN ONE

Lucy Maud Montgomery



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Anne of Avonlea

Anne's House of Dreams

Unabridged • Illustrated

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By Lucy Maud Montgomery

Illustrated

AVENEL BOOKS NEW YORK

Published 1986 by Avenel Books,
distributed by Crown Publishers, Inc.,
225 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003.

This volume contains the complete and unabridged texts of the original editions. They have been completely reset for this volume.

Printed and Bound in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Montgomery, L. M. (Lucy Maud), 1874–1942.

Anne of Green Gables.
Contents: Anne of Green Gables—Anne of Avonlea—
Anne's house of dreams.
[1. Orphans—Fiction] I. Montgomery, L. M. (Lucy Maud),
1874–1942. Anne of Avonlea. 1986.
II. Montgomery, L. M. (Lucy Maud), 1874–1942. Anne's house
of dreams. 1986. III. Title.
PZ7.M768An 1986 [Fic] 85-30606
ISBN-0-517-60517-1

Book design by June Marie Bennett

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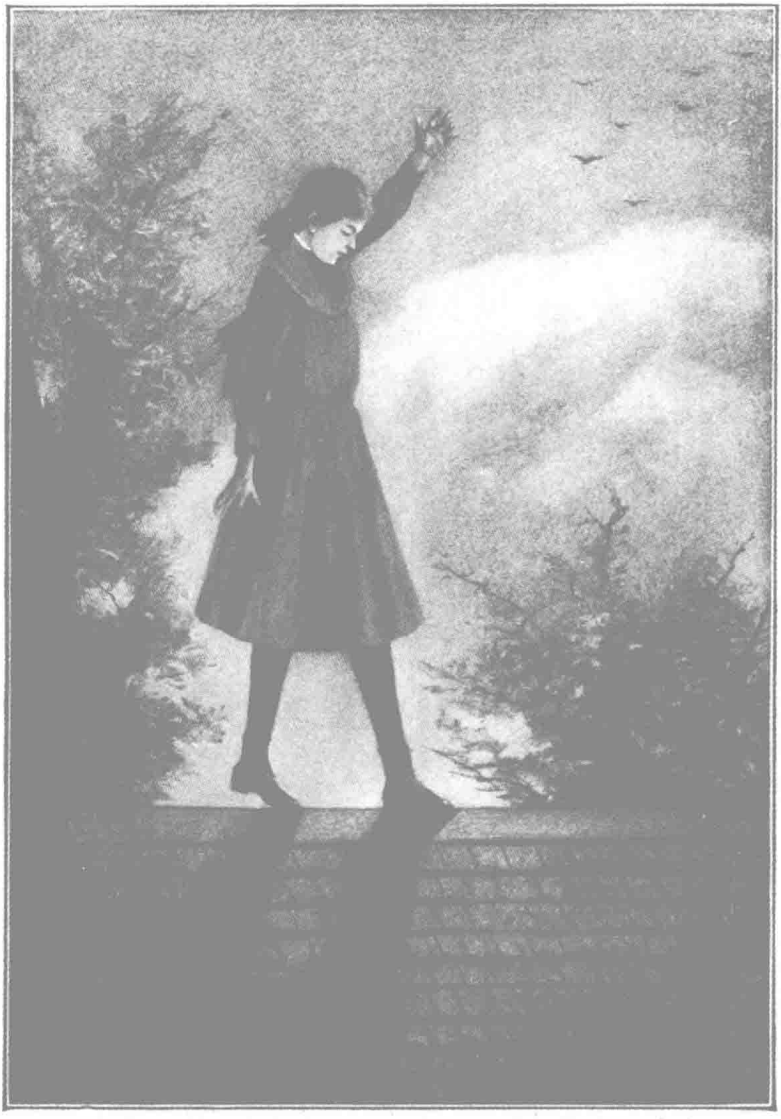

ANNE BALANCED HERSELF UPRIGHTLY ON THAT PRECARIOUS FOOTING. (*ANNE OF GREEN GABLES*, CHAPTER 23)

The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit and fire and dew.

—BROWNING

DEDICATORY NOTE

Lucy Maud Montgomery, not surprisingly, dedicated each of these three books to different people, all important in her life.

Anne of Green Gables was a tribute "to the memory of my father and mother." *Anne of Avonlea* recalled "my former teacher, Hattie Gordon Smith, in grateful remembrance of her sympathy and encouragement." And *Anne's House of Dreams* was dedicated "to Laura, in memory of the olden time."

INTRODUCTION

THE *Anne of Green Gables* books, written by Lucy Maud Montgomery, are threaded through with delight at the unexpected sweetness of human life and of nature, together with an appreciation for the comedy to be found in the matter-of-fact reality of Prince Edward Island village life in Canada. Anne's character, on that first wagon ride to Green Gables, shows the presence of these two qualities: her appreciation of beauty, often expressed in the flowery phrases she remembers from romantic novels, and the uncomplaining humor with which she accepts the harsh, love-starved reality of her past life.

The writer's underlying feeling that the universe has a soul, expressed in nature, goes hand in hand with her humor and compassion towards her characters. She has a feeling for the particularity and eccentricity of the real world that puts a limit on too far a flight of fancy. Yet as romance gives meaning to the world, so the quirks of the real world give flavor to romance. By the interplay of beauty and comedy, Maud Montgomery creates the tension that moves the rhythm of the *Anne* books along. (The writer was always called Maud by those who knew her.)

The skimpy dress given to Anne at the orphan asylum clings to her angular, skinny frame just as Anne clings to her determination to experience and savor the joy of being alive. Following her romantic ideals often leads Anne into mishaps. "I wouldn't mind my misfortunes

so much if they were romantic...but they are always just simply ridiculous." Anne finds encouragement, however, in that

> "I never make the same mistake twice. There *must* be a limit to the mistakes one person can make, and when I get to the end of them, then I'll be through with them. That's a very comforting thought."

Maud underscores the absurdity that lies in the juxtaposition of our daydreams to our everyday life. She sees humor as "a sense of the fitness of things." Anne wears her red hair as a banner from which she wants to, but cannot, escape. When Matthew Cuthbert, who with his sister Marilla will later adopt her, first meets Anne, she tells him,

> "...I *cannot* imagine that red hair away. I do my best. I think to myself, 'Now my hair is a glorious black, black as the raven's wing.' But all the time I *know* it is just plain red, and it breaks my heart. It will be my lifelong sorrow."

Years later, she buys a hair dye that is promised to turn her hair that "beautiful raven black," but finds instead that

> "I thought nothing could be as bad as red hair. But now I know it's ten times worse to have green hair. Oh, Marilla, you little know how utterly wretched I am."

Maud herself had reason to know how often hopes and dreams were dulled by the relentlessness of real life. She was raised by her maternal grandparents because her mother died when Maud was twenty-one months old. Her grandmother raised her according to strict, old-fashioned principles. Maud envied her peers' small freedoms. Yet she gave up both a two-year teaching career and a winter stint at a newspaper to live with her grandmother after her grandfather died, delaying her marriage until she was thirty-six, after the death of her grandmother. Although her grandmother's rigid religious views left Maud with the sense that organized religion made the individual "feel ashamed," Maud married a minister. She spent much of her later life living up to her ideal of a minister's wife. For years, she dealt uncomplainingly with what was then diagnosed as her husband's "melancholia," and only at the end of her life, when her health fell apart, did she admit that these pressures had become too much for her.

We may wonder at the contrast between the freedom Maud allowed her characters, and the roles to which she confined herself in real life. We remember Anne's feeling that "saying one's prayers isn't exactly the same thing as praying."

> "...If I really wanted to pray...I'd go out into a great big field all alone or into the deep, deep woods, and I'd look up into the sky—up—up—up—into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I'd just *feel* a prayer."

We may wonder also at Maud's feelings as she involved herself in the duties of minister's wife. In *Anne's House of Dreams,* the fifth and most philosophical in the *Anne* series, Anne, talking to a writer, contemplates the "queer ache" she experiences when she sees something beautiful and perfect. "Perhaps," responds the writer, "it is the prisoned infinite in us calling out to its kindred infinite as expressed in that visible perfection." Looking at the pale reflection of a sunset in the eastern sky, Anne wonders, "if the spirit of color looked like that." She speaks of mayflowers as "the souls of the flowers that died last summer." Seeing a mossy log struck by a solitary shaft of sunshine, Anne calls it a "poem," and explains to an unbelieving friend who calls a poem "lines and verses," that "the real poem is the soul within" the lines and verses. "I like to fancy souls [of people] being made of light." In *Anne's House of Dreams,* Captain Jim says,

> "When I ponder on them seeds I don't find it nowise hard to believe that we've got souls that'll live in other worlds. You couldn't hardly believe that there was life in them tiny things, some no bigger than grains of dust, let alone color and scent, if you hadn't seen the miracle, could you?"

Captain Jim later asks, "How'd we stand living if it wasn't for our dream of immortality?"

In her short autobiography, *The Alpine Path, The Story of My Career* (published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, in Canada, 1917), Maud writes,

> It has always seemed to me, ever since early childhood, amid all the commonplaces of life, I was very near to a kingdom of ideal beauty. Between it and me hung only a thin veil. I could

> never draw it quite aside, but sometimes a wind fluttered it and I caught a glimpse of the enchanting realm beyond—only a glimpse—but those glimpses have always made life worth while.

Additionally, Maud displays a love for the eccentricities of the village people. She relishes the quirk of character that lends individuality to seemingly ordinary village folk. Though they might not indulge in Anne's flights of imagination, they had their own ways of expressing their needs and wishes. In one sentence, Maud describes the relationship of two elderly sisters who live together,

> Eliza was sewing patchwork, not because it was needed but simply as a protest against the frivolous lace Catherine was crocheting.

Maud introduces Marilla, who with Matthew will adopt Anne, by exposing her vulnerability, telling us that she is a woman who is "always slightly distrustful of sunshine." She tells us of "Mrs. Jasper Bell, whose family was said to be the only one in the world in which accidents never occurred."

Maud was a prodigious writer. In *The Alpine Path,* she says, "I cannot remember the time when I was not writing." When teaching, Maud would rise early to write, "with fingers so cramped [from cold] that I could scarcely hold the pen..." As a newspaper woman, she found she had to make time for her own creative writing in the midst of a busy and interrupted day,

> ...in a newspaper office, with rolls of proof shooting down every ten minutes, people coming and conversing, telephones ringing, and machines being thumped and dragged overhead....

In the spring of 1904, after returning to live with her grandmother, Maud began *Anne of Green Gables,* finding the germ of the idea for the plot in a notebook of jottings she had written years before: "Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent them." Maud intended to write only a short serial for a Sunday school paper. As she developed the character, "she soon seemed very real to me and took possession of me to an unusual extent." Maud realized that here was a character who could sustain a full-length book. Completing

the novel in October 1905, Maud sent it in turn to five publishers, all of whom rejected it. She put the manuscript away in a hatbox, but, rereading it one winter day, decided to try again. It was accepted by L. C. Page and Company of Boston and published in 1908.

Maud would go on to write seven more books about Anne, but, because she found taking Anne into adulthood a burden, she began these only at the insistence of her publisher. This volume contains three of the novels: *Anne of Green Gables,* the first in the series, *Anne of Avonlea,* the second, and *Anne's House of Dreams,* the fifth. *Anne of Green Gables* introduces Anne, chronicling her passage from the beguiling, freckled "witch" of a child into teenager. She meets Gilbert Blythe, who soon changes from tormentor into admirer. In *Anne of Avonlea,* we see Anne as the teen-age village "schoolma'am," bringing together the lives of the "kindred spirits" she discovers in her community. Gilbert continues to show his interest in Anne, and together, with Anne's inspiration, they form a village improvement society. *Anne of the Island* follows Anne in college with her first serious experiences with real-life romance. Anne becomes engaged to Gilbert. *Anne of Windy Poplars* consists of Anne's letters to Gilbert, written during the three years she is principal of Summerside High School while he is studying medicine. *Anne's House of Dreams* begins with Anne's wedding and describes the memorable characters she meets during her early married years.

Maud was to write other novels about young heroines: Emily, Jane, Pat, and Marigold. Like Maud herself, several of these are fatherless. Maud wrote many potboilers, both poems and short stories. Like the people in whose lives Anne involves herself, many of the characters in the short stories search for a lost love—father, mother, lover—and always find it. Maud wrote two novels for adults as well.

For forty years, Maud had pen-friendships with two men she met only briefly: Ephraim Weber, a self-educated homesteader in Alberta who later became a teacher, and George Boyd MacMillan, a writer in Scotland. In her correspondence with both men, as well as in her diary, Maud revealed many of her feelings that lay hidden beneath her masks of conscientious granddaughter and wife. As Mollie Gillen quotes in her biography of Maud, *The Wheel of Things* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, Canada, 1975), Maud wrote in 1906,

> I used to be a most impulsive, passionate creature....But I used always to *rush to extremes* in any emotion, whether of hatred, affection, ambition, or what not, that came upper-

> most....I fear that, given favorable circumstances, it might blaze up as strongly as ever.

As with Anne, "The pleasures and pains of life came to her with trebled intensity." Truly, Maud could have said of herself, as Anne did, "There's such a lot of Annes in me."

ELLEN S. SHAPIRO

New York City
1986

EDITORIAL NOTE

The editions that were chosen for this anthology are the early or first ones, published in the first quarter of this century. The modern reader may be surprised to discover certain old-fashioned styles of punctuation and spelling, as well as some archaic references and descriptions, but these have been retained in order to convey the flavor of the originals.

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