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FIVE CENTS

# THE LADIES' WORLD



*Florence England Nosworthy*

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# The Jewel of Consistency

L. M. Montgomery

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Stephen Winslow backed his horses down to the brook to drink before turning in at his gate, as had been his lifelong custom. To-day he felt tired, and even after the animals had lifted their heads from the water he still sat there, leaning back contentedly against the sacks of flour piled up behind him.

The fir woods were all around, warm and resinous in that deep-tinted sunshine of autumn, which seems to possess the power of extracting the very essence of the odors that summer has stored up in wood and field for the delectation of happy mortals who can wander over the hills in the “ripe o’ the year.”

The woods, cleft asunder by the red gash of the main road, lay in a great mellow over-silence, beneath which a score of finely-wakened sounds made a sort of felicitous music. There was a faraway stir of winds in the lazy branches and a faint, elfin-like rustle in the sere grasses along the bleached snake fence that skirted the farther edge of the brook. In the thicket of young saplings at the curve of the road some squirrels were chattering fussily, and the chirping of myriad crickets filled in all the pauses. Clear through all came the noise of the brook over the pebbles by the gate—a friendly laughter that never failed the summer through, from the melting April afternoons until the ice of December throttled it. Stephen Winslow listened to it with unconscious pleasure; he had heard it so often as he came around the curve homeward that it seemed like the voice of an old comrade—that quick leap of the water in a diamond dance of spray, then the long gurgle of triumph, dying down into a placid murmur as the water gushed out from the ferns and impearled grasses to cross the road under the bridge, whose loose planks always rumbled with a noise like thunder in the bowl of the woods when a carriage crossed it.

“I shouldn’t wonder if I missed that brook,” said Stephen, reflectively. “When you’ve heard a thing for sixty odd years it’s apt to ring in your dreams, maybe. Listen to that laugh, now. One would think the thing was human. Laws, I’m lazy! Pris would laugh if she saw me now. It seems too much of an undertaking to gee the critters out of this hollow. Fact! Time you was giving up work, Stephen—time you was giving up.”

He was a small, lean old man, half lost in loose clothes that seemed far too large for himself. His white beard, combed into straggling locks by his nervous fingers, flowed in a patriarchal fashion over his breast, but his grizzled hair, in sharp contradistinction, grew straight off his forehead and stood up in a stiff, uncompromising bush all over his head. His face was narrow and wrinkled, with mild, short-sighted blue eyes. When he spoke his voice was as thin and squeaky as he looked himself. Presently he chirruped to his horses and they lumbered through the water and up the steep little rise to the turn. As he drove through the open gate

he began to sing. The result would have surprised anyone who did not know him. His voice rose in an old Scotch love-song, clear, full and strong, of astonishing power and compass. Stephen Winslow had enjoyed a local fame as a singer all his life. He was proud that his voice had not yet failed.

“Most everything else has,” he would say, whimsically. “I’ve lost my beauty, as is plain to be seen—and my eyesight ain’t what it was—and sad to say, I’m getting lazy. But the sing is all there yet—ain’t it, hey? Guess they must have some choir work cut out for me in the New Jerusalem.”

He sang lustily as his horses trotted over another loop of the brook and began to climb the hill. Above him were the gray old buildings of the homestead. Standing at the door, you might have thought yourself on some lone clearing in the primeval woods. Owing to a trick of the landfall, not another house was visible from the Winslow place.



“Laws, I’m lazy! Pris would laugh if she saw me now”

It crested a small, steep, circular hill. All around the base was a valley, thick-set with feathery young firs, and beyond it the hills, overgrown with trees, rose like the rim of a verdant basin. On their outward slopes were the houses and farms of Roseneath, within ten minutes’ walk. But their invisibility gave a sense and

appearance of isolation to the dwellers at the Winslow farm.

To be sure, the ventilator on Emmanuel Henderson's barn might be seen over the tree-tops to the north if one knew just where to look for it. And Stephen, who was the most sociable soul on earth, was wont to declare that, but for the ventilator, he would have sold out and moved away years ago.

"I smoke my pipe along in the evenings on the back veranda and look at Emmanuel's ventilator. It's company—yes, sir, it's company. Ye wouldn't believe now!"

The little valley was full of cool green shadows, but the crest of the hill was basking in sunshine as the team lumbered into the tidy back yard. At the front of the house there was a large garden, its gorgeousness of autumn flowering toned down by the dark green of cherry trees that grew at haphazard all over it, as if someone had once stuck them down on the peck-of-potatoes principle. A woman who was walking about it, now came out through the narrow gate between the stiff, berry-laden rowans, the ample skirt of her dark print dress gathered up to cradle a lapful of glowing asters.

Stephen placidly rolled out the chorus of his ballad before he spoke or moved. Then he scrambled down spryly and said:

"Yer old nuisance is back again, you see, Pris. S'pose yer thought I'd tumbled into the brook. Fact was, I called at the store—and there! I guess I needn't say another word. You know my failing."

Pris smiled—although not, as one might have supposed, at hearing herself called Pris. She had never been called anything else, incongruous as the name seemed with her dignified face and figure. The full Priscilla would have been better, although there was in it a savor of primness out of keeping with her full-blown matronliness.

She looked much younger than her husband, but there was really little difference in their ages. She was taller than he, with a stout, majestic figure and a placid, meditative fashion of moving. She gave the impression of serenity and self-reliance. Her face was fresh and unlined, with deep-set gray eyes and a resolute line of jaw. She had a good forehead and the profile of a thoughtful, intellectual woman. The same face, somewhat intensified, was to be found in her son, who was president of the university in Redmond.

While Priscilla carried some store parcels and her asters into the house, Stephen put away the flour and turned the horses' heads into a clover aftermath on the southern slope. Tea was ready in the kitchen when he came in. The table was set opposite the open door, through which Priscilla might see the western hills, with the sun hanging low above them. Stephen did not care for that view. It was too

lonesome, he said. But Priscilla loved it.

“Well, everything is about wound up at last, Pris,” he said, contentedly. “I went into Dan McCulloch’s on my way to the mill, and we made the dicker. He’s rented the farm for a year. ’Twould ha’ been better to have sold outright, I s’pose, and I wisht’ I could, but nobody wanted to buy just now. Dan’s a good farmer. The land’ll be all right in his hands. We can call an auction right off now, and sell the stock and machinery and what furniture we don’t want to take. Then we’ll go. Laws, Pris, it makes me young again to think of it! Seems ’sif we were starting out in life all over again, don’t it, now?”

Priscilla smiled.

“Maybe you’ll be wanting to get back before you’ve lived long in Redmond,” she said.

Stephen chuckled as if at a joke.

“That was all the talk at the store to-day. Peter Shackford says, says he, ‘Winslow, you’ll never be contented in city life. You’ll be wild to get back here afore next spring,’ says he, Shackford-like, as if he knew it all. I says to him, Pris, says I, ‘Look here, Peter, I guess you don’t rightly know what you’re talking about. I’m tired of living in a place as far from anywhere as Roseneath. I want to live where a man can open his door and see something besides a ventilator,’ says I. And that’s the truth, Pris. I’m tired of the old rut. Says I to Peter, ‘Three miles from a church and a hundred from a library! Sixty-five years of that’d tire any man. I want to get right into the thick of things once afore I die. I want to live among men who are thinking and talking of what goes on in the world—not just of potato bugs and local politics—men who read something more’n a little one-horse partisan paper and ain’t more given to gossip than their wives.’ Peter didn’t like it, I tell ye now, Pris. But he pretended to laugh. Says, says he, ‘Big talk, Stephen, big talk! Ye were always good at it. But we’ll see.’ Then he winked at the others. They’re all kind of narrow-minded—bound up in crops, as it were. It’s creeping on me, I dare say, and I want to get away from it. I ain’t so old but I can expand a bit yet. The folks ’round here don’t care for anything they can’t see. ’S long as the local member looks after the bridges and sprinkles some jobs among his biggest supporters, they don’t care who’s making history in the world.”

“I don’t know that I care a great deal myself,” said Priscilla, placidly. “But I’m tired of this lonesome life, too, now that the children have all gone. I’ve so much spare time on my hands, I want to be where I can do something with it—be interested in what other women are interested in—see things—do things—learn things that are worth while. I’m sure of myself, but I’m not so sure of you, Father.

You are as full of enthusiasm as a boy over moving to the city, but perhaps you won't find it all you expect, and you may feel discontented."

"No, I won't, Pris," protested Stephen. "I've thought it all out, I tell you. I've worked hard all my life. I want a resting spell now, and I'll enjoy it, never fear. There'll be no hankering for Roseneath on my part. You're more likely to be homesick yourself."

"Not I," said his wife, with emphasis. "I'll never want to come back. I've always had a longing for city life—though I've been very happy here, Father; I must say that. We're getting old, and we have enough money to keep us in comfort. So we may as well take satisfaction out of it and suit ourselves before we die."

"Just what I said to Peter!" said Stephen, triumphantly. "Just what I said to him, Pris. I guess you and I see things pretty well in line. There ain't never been any pulling different ways with us, has there, now?"

They looked at each other across the table, full of contentment.

Stephen and Priscilla Winslow had decided to sell or rent their farm and move to Redmond for the remainder of their days. Their three children were settled there, and they wished to be near them. Gordon, the oldest, was president of the university. Besides the natural tie, there was a bond of intellectual comradeship between him and his mother, from whom he had inherited his most marked characteristics. Theodore, commonly called Ted, was a prominent Redmond lawyer, and Edith, who was the youngest, had recently been graduated from college, and was the teacher of mathematics in the Redmond seminary. She was a clever woman, and she was very anxious that her parents should come to Redmond.

"Mother has been giving us 'chances' all her life," she said to her brothers. "It's time she had a chance herself. She is really cleverer than any of us."

The day after the auction Stephen and Priscilla went to Redmond. Theodore and Edith had come to accompany them, and in the general excitement they did not feel particularly sorrowful at leaving their old home. The next three weeks were busy ones. They rented a town house in a good locality, and furnished it comfortably. A servant-girl was also included in the scheme of things. Priscilla thought they did not need one, but Edith insisted.

"You will want your time for study and social life, Mother," she said. "You don't want to burden yourself with housework, too. You've done enough of that."

Priscilla yielded gracefully, but she put her foot down with firm decision when Mrs. Ted suggested two girls—a cook and a housemaid.

"One is enough," said Priscilla, and one it was—a good general girl, who came highly recommended. Mrs. Ted looked out for that.



By Christmas they were settled down.

"I'm glad it's finished," said Priscilla. "I've had enough of shopping and 'harmonizing.' I must say I like the result, though. Don't you, Father?"

"Yes," piped Stephen, with alacrity. In his heart he was wondering if he would ever feel like anything but a visitor in this fine new house of his. But he would not say so to Priscilla. He was ashamed and alarmed to find that he was longing for Roseneath—"after all my bragging," he reflected, sheepishly. He grew more ashamed as the winter went by. He could not feel like anything but a stranger in the city—"like a pilgrim and sojourner," as he told himself. At first the bustle and excitement, the sense of busy life and accomplishment, had interested him. He did not like it now; he found himself remembering the quietness of the homestead, where one could think easily.

He missed his old cronies of the store. He had been wont to laugh at them to Priscilla, but he had in reality enjoyed his simple pre-eminence among them. He had been looked up to as a clever, well-read man. Now he did not like being a nobody.

Things disappointed him. Men in Redmond were doing clever things, but were too busy in the doing of them to talk about them. The men who did talk Stephen did not care to listen to. He was shrewd enough to see that they were not worth it. In the scholarly circle which revolved around Gordon he felt hopelessly behindhand. They were too far in advance of him. In the social set where Theodore and Mrs. Theodore shone like fixed stars he was still more out of place. He thought their amusements and pursuits as trivial as anything in Roseneath had been.

"I don't amount to a row of pins anywhere," he groaned to himself, feebly groping after his lost individuality.

He missed his old work. When he grew tired of reading there was nothing for him to do—nowhere he cared to go. There was nothing in Redmond answering to the corner store, where he had been wont to betake himself and hold forth on the subjects of his reading. He had been accustomed to complain to Priscilla that none of his listeners understood them or could discuss them intelligently, but now he suspected that he had really liked this and the distinction his superior knowledge conferred on him.

In other ways he was out of joint with his surroundings. He could not get over that irritating sense of being a stranger in his own house. He felt afraid of the servant-girl—a dashing, energetic young person with very modern ways of doing things. That she did them well was indisputable, but Stephen held her in uncomfortable awe. He would never have dared to go into her kitchen or invade her pantry in search of a snack at odd hours. He even developed a fashion of tiptoeing about the house as if

he were a burglar or trespasser.

But no one knew of his unhappiness. He would not admit it after all his confident anticipations. It became his great aim to hide it. He grew very quiet and taciturn, but this was not noticed in a place where everybody was deeply absorbed in something. Even his sons, although they thought their father was not so chatty as he used to be, did not realize the difference in him. They had lived away from him too long.

Not one of his skeptical Roseneath neighbors who had listened to all his confident boasts must ever hear of his disappointment. His children, who had done so much for him, must not know that he hated Redmond. Above all, Priscilla must never suspect it—Priscilla, who so evidently enjoyed the new life as fully as she had predicted.

Priscilla was now a very busy woman, brisk, alert, absorbed. Already she was a shining light in the Mothers' Club, which was dear to Mrs. Ted's heart, and in the charitable organization whereof Edith was secretary. But it was in a purely intellectual woman's club, which Mrs. Gordon Winslow herself had founded, that Mrs. Winslow, senior, shone most brilliantly. Even her children, who knew her so well, were surprised at the ease and readiness with which she took and held her own in its charmed circle of women, who had breathed the atmosphere of culture all their lives. Once she read a paper before the club on an historical subject. It was thoughtful and well-written, and was discussed appreciatively by the foremost members of the club.

Stephen was immensely proud of his wife's success, even though it emphasized his own loneliness. He revelled in every word of praise he heard about her. In this new life she was expanding like a flower in its native air. In part it reconciled him to his exile, although it could not dull the ache.



“Stephen shook hands with his former neighbor. ‘I thought I’d come out and see how the old place was’”

Priscilla, under Mrs. Ted’s wing, blossomed out socially also. She went to afternoon teas and luncheons, and found herself popular among the city matrons. Between all her children, she got to almost everything worth hearing and seeing in the city—lectures, concerts and plays. She enjoyed them all, too—there was no doubt of that. She read a great deal and got through with a surprising amount of committee work. She was far busier than she had been on the farm. There she and Stephen had had long hours of leisure to talk to each other or sit together in happy silence. There was nothing of this now, and Stephen missed their old companionship bitterly. She

seemed to have suddenly outstripped him in everything.

“She belongs here, but I’m only a miserable old square peg in a round hole,” he reflected, dolefully. “But I’ll never give in to it—never!”

When April came his home-sickness grew worse. The spring air wakened in him a keen desire to get back to the farm and its old, homely ways. One day it overpowered him. He had been to a scientific lecture that afternoon with Gordon. It was on a subject he had been interested in on the farm, but he seemed to have lost his grasp of it now. The lecturer went beyond him. He walked home with his son and two of the other professors. He would have liked to join in their discussion of the lecture, but, as usual, it left him behind. He could not keep up with their trained intellects.

He was very tired when he got home, and sat down in the parlor to rest. He was hungry also, but he was afraid of Henrietta if he ventured to prowl about her domain. Priscilla had gone to some of her interminable committee meetings.

“Things’ll be wakening up in Roseneath by now,” he thought. “These evenings the store’ll be full. Wisht’ I could drop in! S’pose Dan’ll be getting ready to work the farm. Wonder what he’ll put in the south hill field? ’Tought to be wheat, but like as not he’ll sow it with oats. Wisht’ I was there! Stephen, Stephen, did ye ever think ye’d come to this?”

Presently Priscilla came in, flushed and bright-eyed from her walk. There was an air of excitement about her. Stephen looked at her admiringly and wistfully. She was dressed with quiet elegance in a dark street suit that suited her fine figure. Stephen admired her smart, well-groomed appearance even while he resented its element of strangeness. It never seemed quite possible to him that this handsome, fashionably-gowned woman could really be the Priscilla Winslow he had always known—the wife of his youth, the mother of his children, the keeper of his home and hearth! Priscilla did not concern herself much with household matters now, beyond keeping an untroubled eye on Henrietta. She had apparently sloughed off her old life with an ease that left Stephen breathless with astonishment.

“Did ye have a good meeting of your club, Pris?” he asked, with his usual affectation of spruce interest.

“Very good. Did you go to the lecture with Gordon?”

“Yes—and it was great, Pris—great. It’s worth hearing things like that. Something ye wouldn’t get in Roseneath, I can tell you.”

“Father,” said Priscilla, abruptly, “do you think you can get along without me for a couple of days next week? The—the Mothers’ Council meets in St. Andrew’s then, and I’ve been appointed one of the delegates.”

“Think of that, now!” said Stephen, admiringly. “Of course you must go. I’ll be all right. I’ll be as jolly as a sand-boy.”

“If I go I will leave here Tuesday morning and not be back until Wednesday evening. Why, Father, what is the matter?”

Stephen had sat bolt upright, with an exclamation.

“Nothing, nothing,” he said, hastily, as he subsided. “I just thought of something I’d—I’d forgotten—but it’s of no importance. Yes, you were saying you’d go on Tuesday, Pris. Well, all right, all right.”

“It’s settled, then,” said Priscilla, absently. She usually talked over her club doings with him and explained their significance, but she did not seem anxious to discuss this matter. She gathered up her gloves and card-case and went up-stairs in a slow, meditative way.

Left alone, the weazened little figure in the wicker chair sat up and slapped its right leg smartly thrice.

“I’ll do it,” said Stephen, excitedly. “I’ll do it! She’ll never know. I’ll come back Tuesday night.”

He was silent for a minute—then added, explosively:

“I am dod-gasted sick of the town!”

There was some satisfaction in voicing his heresy aloud—getting rid of it as it were, even at the expense of what he remorsefully considered a swear word.

Stephen went about for the next few days with an almost jaunty exultation, tempered by a guilty doubt that he was in some way disloyal to Priscilla. He was uncomfortable in her presence lest she should suspect his design, and he avoided her all he could.

Early Tuesday morning he went to the station with her and saw her off on the St. Andrew’s Flyer. His own train did not leave until later. It landed him at Roseneath station in the mid-forenoon.

Roseneath proper was three miles from the station, and Stephen started to walk it, over the long, moist road that wound and twisted up to the wooded hills, through the young, green saplings. As he tramped onward, Peter Shackford overtook him, jogging along with all of the Shackford placidity in what was locally known as a “go-devil.” Peter pulled in his lank roan with a whistle of astonishment.

“If ’tain’t Stephen Winslow! Get in, man, get in.”

Stephen came over, shook hands with his former neighbor and climbed in.

“Fine day, isn’t it, Peter? Yes, I thought I’d come out and see how the old place was. Pris went to St. Andrew’s to-day as a dillygate to that big Mothers’ Council they’re holding there, and I thought I might as well run out to the country for a day.”

Stephen looked furtively at Peter as he spoke of the Mothers' Council, with as much pride as was possible with the furtiveness. He wanted Peter to take in the full significance of the honor.

Peter was quite unmoved.

"Hasn't enough gumption to understand what it means!" thought Stephen, in disgust. Nevertheless, his heart was very warm to his old, friendly antagonist.

"And so ye like city life, Stephen?" queried Peter.

"E-mensely," answered Stephen, lying splendidly. "It just suits me to a T—me and Priscilla. Ye ought to see that woman, Peter. A dillygate to the Mothers' Council! Of course," he added, warily, knowing that to overdo was fatal with Peter, "I haven't forgotten Roseneath and never will. It was home to me for sixty-five years, and I'll always take an interest in it and the folks here. That's why I came out here to-day."

He enjoyed every minute of the drive in the jolty go-devil, and he listened greedily to Peter's gossip. The latter insisted that Stephen should go home to dinner with him.

After dinner he started for his own farm. As he struck into the woods and saw their green barriers close behind him, shutting him out from all the world, his heart expanded with pleasure. He stepped along the muddy road with his old-time briskness. Presently he began to sing. He had never sung since he left Roseneath. His voice had not failed, either, he reflected comfortably.

He stopped singing when he heard the gurgle of the brook—stopped and listened, slapping his leg with delight. It had not changed—that long, clear laughter of his old friend.

"Your foot's on your native heath, Stephen," he said, as he walked up the hill. "You're Stephen Winslow again here. Back there in town ye ain't anybody."

He stood with his arms on the yard gate, feasting his eyes on the gray buildings and gardens. There was a lonely, deserted look about the place that hurt him, but it was home. He would spend the whole afternoon here. He would go over the farm in its length and breadth and visit every field and nook. The Shackfords had asked him back to tea. In the evening he would visit the store and pose before the old circle of wise-heads in all his city glamor. He could return to town on the night express. Turning, he saw the Henderson ventilator over his trees, and again slapped his leg in exuberant delight.

"Look at that, now—look at that!" he exclaimed. "It's like an old friend. Does me good just to see that. How peaceful and quiet everything is!"

He went through the barns and outbuildings, but he did not go into the house.

The shutters were nailed up, and it would be dark and lonesome. Then he followed the brook back to the spring, over the damp, spongy pasture field, under the red-budded maples that filled the hollow.

When he came back he went into the garden. The moist buds were swelling on the cherry trees, and Priscilla's perennials, many of them planted in her bridal days, were pushing green spears through the rich mold along the paths. He wandered about contentedly in the fresh, chill air, feeling a kinship with all the living, growing things about him.

He was down on his knees by the day-lily plot when he heard the eastern gate swing back with its old, peculiar creak. Stephen hastily got upon his feet. A woman was coming through it—a majestic figure in a smart traveling suit, carrying her hat in her hand. The delicate April sunshine was streaming on her hair as she walked. Stephen's mouth fell open.

"I'll be dod-gasted if it 'tain't Priscilla," he said, helplessly.



“Stephen hastily got upon his feet. ‘I’ll be dod-gasted if it ’tain’t Priscilla,’ he said”

Priscilla it was. She came leisurely up the middle path, stooping here and there over the beds to pull away a mat of dead leaves or loosen the earth around the upspringing emerald spikes. She held her skirt up with one hand, and her shoes were very muddy, as if she had walked for it. She did not see Stephen until she came around the last cherry tree on the path.

“Father!” she exclaimed.

They stood and looked at each other in silence for a few moments. Stephen’s brain worked in a succession of jerks. He had begun to understand things before Priscilla had recovered herself.

“Priscilla, Priscilla,” he said, solemnly, but with a twinkle in his mild eyes. “Where



are the mothers?"

Priscilla had to laugh.

"They're in St. Andrew's, no doubt, Father. You know I didn't tell you I was going there. I just said the Council met there and I was appointed one of the delegates. I never meant to go. I meant to come here, but I couldn't bear to admit to you that I was so crazy for Roseneath that I had to start off in mud and mire for it. And after all my talk last fall, too! How did you find out I came here?"

Her question showed Stephen that it was still possible to retreat with honor. But he did not mind Priscilla knowing the truth now, and she was the only one who really mattered.

"I didn't know you did come," he answered. "I thought you was safe in St. Andrew's. I came on my own account, because I was so homesick I couldn't stand it a day longer, and because I was lit'rally dying to get out of sight and sound of that town, if only for a day."

"Why, Father," said Priscilla, in astonishment, "you don't mean to say that *you* are not contented in town! Why, you seemed so interested in everything—I thought you were just as happy as you expected to be!"

"All put on, Pris—all put on," said Stephen, walking all over the day-lily bed in his excitement. "I've hated it—name o' goodness, what a relief it is to say it at last! But I wouldn't let on for the world for fear you'd laugh at me and say you told me so, for all my brag. I didn't think you were hankering for Roseneath. You seemed so taken up with everything in town and as busy and happy as if you were just in the place that fitted you."

"Oh, I just pretended, to hide the truth from you," cried Priscilla. "I—I—couldn't bear to admit how disappointed I was after being so sure of myself. Oh, the clubs and committees and things—well, Stephen, I did enjoy them and I liked being of some importance—but all together it wasn't enough to make up for other things. I wanted to be back here. Why, Father, I missed the loneliness of it! I just wanted to feel lonely again, with all my heart. And the worst of it was, it came between us. I was determined you should not suspect what I felt like. I don't care now, when you're feeling the same way. So I came out to-day. I brought a lunch with me, and I meant to stay all night at the Hendersons'. I've been all over the farm already. I wish we'd never left it—we were old fools to run after new things at our time of life. Good as they are, it's too late."

"We can come back, Pris," said Stephen, eagerly.

"Oh, if we only could!" cried Priscilla. "But the children——"

"Never mind the children! See here, Pris. It's not going to do them any good for

us to be miserable. They'll be willing enough to let us come when they find out how we feel. And we'll come, whether or no. We're our own bosses yet, I guess, Pris. We'll move out as soon as come good roads. Won't them Shackfords cackle with delight over my back-down! But I don't care a mite since you're in it, too. I can just snap my fingers at the whole world."

He laughed squeakily with joy. Priscilla smiled and drew a long breath.

"It'll be good to be in my own kitchen again, doing things my own way," she said, emphatically. "I've *ached* for it, Father. That Henrietta makes me dizzy, the way she whisks around. I never feel provincial or green among all those club women, but I do with Henrietta. She just makes me feel raw."

"Does she, now? Does she, Pris? Why, I thought you didn't mind her a bit. I tell you, we'll have good times when we get back here. Dan can have the farm this year, and we'll just have a good, lazy time pottering 'round. I've worked so hard at being consistent all winter, that I feel 'sif I needed a rest."

"Isn't it nice to look around and not see anybody but our two selves?" said Priscilla, slowly. "Just you and me, Father? We belong here, with the hills and the woods and the brook. They're part of us, grown into us in long years, and we might have known we could never leave them behind. And you and I—we belong to each other, and those new interests only came between us. Isn't it a good thing we happened to come out here? If we hadn't, we might never have found each other again."

"Won't the Shackfords rub it in, though?" said Stephen, reflectively.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Images have been edited to remove age discolouration.

[The end of *The Jewel of Consistency* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]