

COLLINS WRS W &
76 LIVERPOOL ST
HALIFAX NS
268 19-APR-6

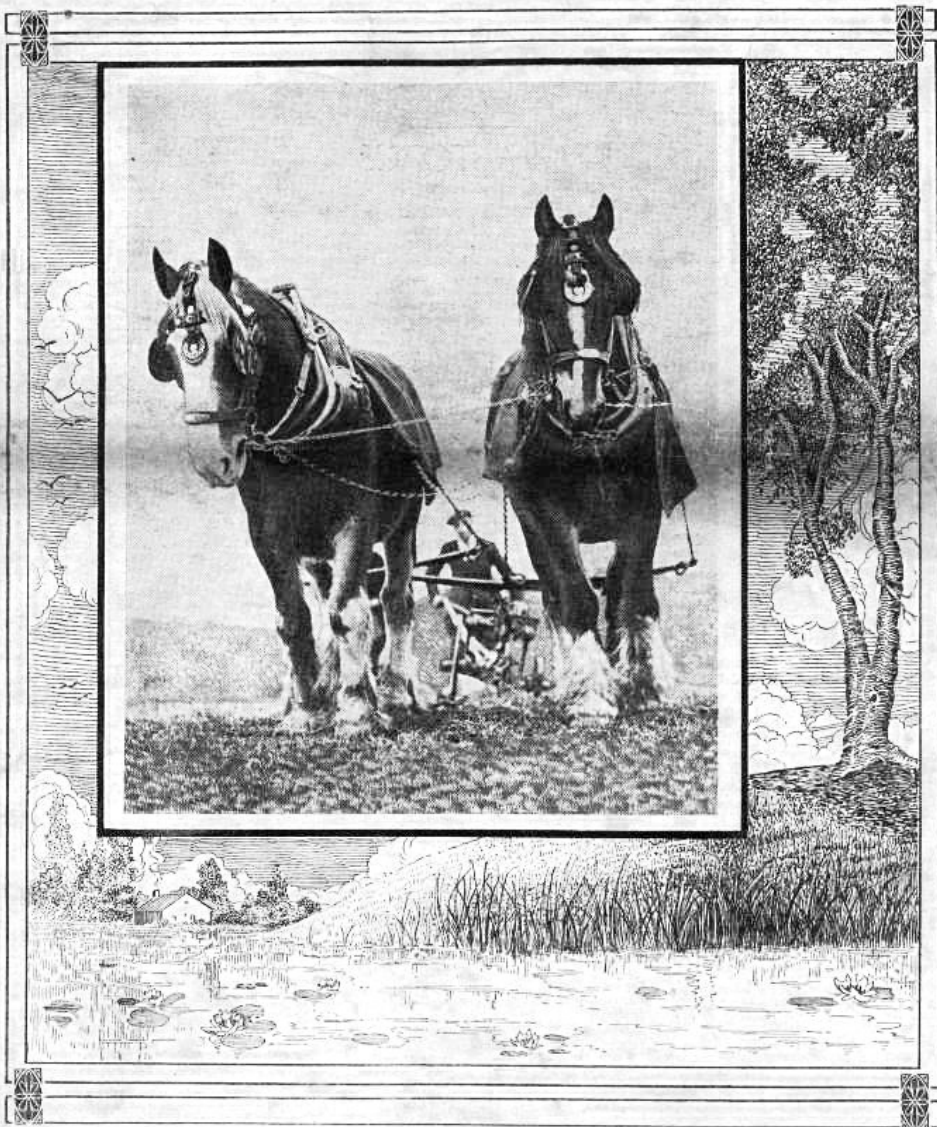
Family Herald and Weekly Star

CANADA'S NATIONAL FARM MAGAZINE

MAY 15, 1935
VOL. LXVI No. 20

MONTREAL, CANADA

Price \$1.00 a year in Canada
\$2.00 a year to Great Britain
\$3.00 a year to United States



*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This ebook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Miss Curtis Comes

Date of first publication: 1935

Author: L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery (1874-1942)

Date first posted: Apr. 5, 2017

Date last updated: Apr. 5, 2017

Faded Page eBook #20170414

This ebook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

Miss Curtis Comes

L. M. Montgomery

First published *Family Herald*, May 15, 1935.

All the Baldwins rushed into the hall when the postman came. There might be a letter from dad or mother, who were off on a motor trip. There was a letter but Faith turned it over disappointedly.

“It isn’t from mother or dad. Who is it from?”

“Mightn’t be a bad idea to open it and see,” suggested Wayne.

Faith tore open the thick creamy envelope and took out the thick creamy sheet of paper in it. A moment . . . and her jolly, freckled face lengthened in dismay.

“Miss Curtis is coming,” she gasped. “She will arrive on the five-thirty train and will stay over night.”

Wayne whistled. Jim gave one of the sudden grins that had earned for him the nickname of “The Cheshire Cat.” Ten-year-old Jess, as usual, said nothing and . . . also as usual . . . looked sweet and dreamy and faraway.

“Of course she thinks father and mother are home,” said Faith. “There isn’t any address about the letter . . . I can’t make out the post-mark . . . so there’s no getting word to her. We’ll simply have to let her come.”

Nobody felt exactly overjoyed. Miss Curtis . . . the great Janet Curtis, author of those clever, profound, darkly-tragic novels which were away over their heads . . . had been a girlhood friend of mother’s and had always kept up a fitful correspondence with her. She had always been coming to visit mother but had never come. Miss Curtis was a globe-trotter. When she wasn’t writing her books she was on the wing. So none of the Baldwins had ever seen her, but they felt they knew her fairly well for all that. Mother had described her; and the papers were always full of her doings and sayings and likes and dislikes and fads and fancies.

“Lend me your ears,” said Faith resolutely. “We can’t head her off so we’ll have to do our best and not let her think that mother’s home and mother’s children aren’t everything they should be. I’ll just have time to get everything in order and bake those lemon tarts she’s so fond of. And no fire-works! We’ve simply got to control our Baldwin tempers if it kills us.”

“Which will be as easy for the rest of us as for our beloved Faith,” observed Wayne.

Faith flushed. Her quick temper was a trial to her. She was doing her best to control it but sometimes it flashed out in spite of her. Just a flash and a snap . . . then sunshine again. But sometimes the flash and the snap did mischief.

“She hates both cats and dogs so we’ll have to keep ours out of sight,” said Jim.

“Especially Jink,” said Faith. “He’s always picking a fight with either Topsy or Merrylegs.”

“He is such a temperamental dog,” sighed Jim, with a mimicry of Aunt Matilda

when she made excuses for her family, that would have sent the Baldwins into convulsions at a time less fraught with destiny.

“Don’t mimic anyone when Miss Curtis is here,” implored Faith. “Or make any of your comic faces. We can’t help laughing if you do and what will she think of us?”

“Doesn’t she ever laugh herself?” asked Wayne.

“I don’t believe she does. Her books are so terribly serious and gloomy. Not a single funny thing ever happens in them.”

“You musn’t let her suspect you wear knickers,” grinned Wayne. “In spite of her modern novels they say she’s quite faddy about dress and doesn’t approve of any imitation of the men!”

“Oh, I’ll have them off before she comes,” said Faith, who had spent the forenoon picking raspberries in their vacant lot down the street. “Ned, you’re not to be greedy at table, remember.”

Ned’s appetite was enormous. The family always despaired of ever seeing him get enough to eat.

“What’s the sense of starving a fellow just because the great Janet is coming?” he muttered.

“I’ll give you lots afterwards in the pantry,” promised Faith. “Don’t grin at her unexpectedly, Jim. You’ll get on her nerves. Now scoot, all of you. I’ve heaps to do . . . the floor must be waxed for one thing. I’ll do that first . . . then make the tarts . . . then dress.”

“Can’t I help you?” said Jess, of the owl-like eyes.

“No, sugar-pie. You’d only go mooning about and do something queer. All I ask of you is not to do anything queer while Miss Curtis is here.”

“The trouble is,” said Jess gravely, “I don’t think the things I do are queer. They seem quite reasonable to me.”

Faith laughed, kissed Jess . . . everybody loved Jess . . . drove the boys out and fell furiously to work.

“Oh, I do hope everything will go right,” she breathed fervently. “I do want Miss Curtis to have a good opinion of mother’s family.”

Faith was just dropping a drop of red jelly like a gleaming ruby in the pale yellow centres of her lemon tarts when the bell rang. She sent Jess to answer it and Jess came back, placidly and serenely towing into the kitchen a tall, immaculate lady, beautifully and smartly dressed.

“Miss Curtis!” gasped Faith, dropping her spoonful of jelly on the table.

Miss Curtis! There in the kitchen which Faith had not yet tidied up! Where Jink was gnawing a malodorous bone he had brought in! Where the lunch dishes were

yet unwashed! Where the shades were crooked! Where three cats were beautifully folded up for slumber in a patch of sunshine on the unswept floor. Oh, Jess, Jess!

“And this is Faith,” said Miss Curtis, offering a well-groomed hand. “I’m so glad to see Ursula’s daughters. I found I could catch an earlier train and I wanted to have all the time I could with Ursula after all these years. It seems impossible to think that Ursula has such a big daughter.”

Faith knew she looked twice her size in those baggy knickerbockers. She was sure Miss Curtis’ eyes swept over them with disapproval.

“And mother isn’t here,” she said regretfully. “She and dad went off for a trip last week. She’ll be so disappointed, Miss Curtis. But we’ll try to make you comfortable.”

Faith was really hoping desperately that Miss Curtis wouldn’t stay when she found mother was away. But Miss Curtis only smiled, said she was disappointed, too, but since she was here she would stay and get acquainted with dear Ursula’s family.

Faith took her up to the guest room, not daring to trust Jess . . . Jess was quite capable of ushering her absent-mindedly into Jim’s combination of bedroom and museum. Luckily all the rest of the house was in apple-pie order and the spare-room bed, as sleek and smooth as if it had never been slept in, was a thing of beauty with its lace spread and silken cushions.

Faith left Miss Curtis in the living room and fled to doff the knickers. She slipped into a fresh dainty dress and set about her dinner preparations hopefully. She was an excellent cook and, according to all reports a good meal, daintily served, atoned for much in Miss Curtis’ eyes.

Things went well . . . except that her first bowlful of whipping cream meanly turned to butter . . . and Faith was not ashamed of her table when they sat down to dinner. The boys were clean and quite presentable. Jess looked sweet enough to eat, and . . . except for the fact that Ned forgot and “made a face” at Jess just as Wayne began to say grace, thereby sending Jess into a spasm of repressed laughter that ended in a choking fit . . . everything went very well. Miss Curtis was quiet and they all felt she was rather bored but surely she couldn’t find fault with anything.

Then, just at the last, came the catastrophe, swiftly and suddenly. Topsy, a big gray-and-white cat, very proud of her prowess as a huntress, suddenly appeared from nowhere, leaped up on the table and dropped a large, very dead mouse right by Miss Curtis’ plate. Startled by Miss Curtis’ involuntary scream, she sprang to the floor and Jink, who had followed her in, made a dart at her. Terrified Topsy dashed

head foremost through the window-pane, sending splinters of glass in every direction. The mouse still reposed by Miss Curtis' plate.

It was no use . . . the Baldwins had to laugh. Laugh they did and Faith, despite her dismay laughed as heartily as any of them. Afterwards, when Miss Curtis had been taken back to the living-room and the mouse thrown out of doors, poor Faith had a bad time. She was terribly ashamed . . . of her animals and her family and herself.

"Even our cats and dogs can't behave," she groaned. "And it was dreadful of us to laugh . . . just dreadful. Miss Curtis will think we are perfect barbarians."

Things picked up in the evening. Faith sang and Wayne played a violin solo, both of which they did very well. Nevertheless, time dragged a little and everybody was secretly glad when Miss Curtis said she was tired and would like to go to bed early. Faith took her up to the guest-room and turned on the light. Then she gazed at the bed in horror.

Right in the middle of it lay a child . . . a dirty and disreputable looking child, with jam all over its face, and a still more disreputable Teddy Bear hugged to its breast.

"Is that my bedfellow?" said Miss Curtis mildly.

Before Faith could open horrified lips Jess, who had been absent all the evening, walked calmly in.

"I forgot to take Nannie away," she said. "Mrs. Wegg asked me to look after her while she went to the picture show. I gave her some bread and jam and then she got sleepy so I brought her up here. I guess I'll take her back now . . . Mrs. Wegg will be home."

Faith was furious. Her voice trembled with anger.

"Just why . . . may I ask? . . . did you put her here, Jess?"

"Cause she saw the lovely pillows and wanted to lie down on them," explained Jess matter-of-factly.

Faith's anger passed. There was no use in being angry with Jess . . . the dear little thing with her wide friendly smile. Jess could never see why dirty little Nannie Wegg shouldn't have been put on the spare-room bed if she wanted to be.

Jess carried Nannie off. Faith got out fresh bed-linen and re-made the bed. Then she rushed down to the living-room in despair.

"Oh, what will she think of us?" she groaned to the convulsed Wayne. "I'm sure she thinks Jess isn't all there. But oh Wayne, if you could have seen Nannie lying there on those pillows, all jam and Teddy Bear!"

They all laughed and their laughter penetrated to the guest room where Miss Curtis was undressing. She smiled rather grimly as she pulled down the blind.

Breakfast went off beautifully. The golden brown triangles of toast were just right . . . the coffee was perfection. Miss Curtis declared she never had tasted anything so delicious as the apple fritters and bacon. After breakfast she announced her intention of leaving on the eleven o'clock train and it could not be said that the announcement grieved anyone too deeply.

"At any rate," said Faith, "surely no more dreadful things can happen. Surely we can all behave for two hours."

Faith reckoned without her dogs. At a quarter to eleven Miss Curtis came into the living-room ready for her flitting. Wayne took her suit-case and Faith started across the room to say good-bye. At that moment through the open side door rolled two dogs, clenched in furious combat. Jink was settling up a long overdue score with an impertinent neighbor dog who had dared to come into the yard. Miss Curtis, trying to avoid them, slipped on Faith's proudly polished floor and went down. A wave of dogs closed over her . . . a mass of furry, twisting, writhing bodies. It was Jim who saved the situation. He dashed into the kitchen . . . he returned in a moment with the big pepper-shaker. The contents of the shaker went into the dogs' faces.

Never was such a transformation. Two outraged dogs released their frantic grip and bolted through the door with melancholy howls.

Miss Curtis sat up and Wayne, shaking with laughter, helped her to her feet. Faith was rocking with helpless mirth, mingled with gasps of regret, Jim and Ned were in convulsions, even sober Jess was laughing. Miss Curtis laughed, too, albeit a bit ruefully. She was not hurt but her clothes were decidedly rumpled. Faith apologized feebly. Of what use was it? They must be condemned forever in the great Janet's eyes. But oh, how funny she had looked with the dogs fighting all over her!

Two weeks later father and mother were home and another letter came from Miss Curtis.

"Dear Ursula:—

Faith will have told you of my visit. I can't tell you how sorry I was to have missed you but I'm coming again soon. I have never enjoyed a visit so much . . . even the unexpected finale was enjoyable . . . in retrospect. Jim's presence of mind was quite wonderful. Who else would ever have thought of separating two rampageous dogs with a pepper-pot? But what I liked especially in your family was their knack of carrying off embarrassing situations with laughter. I do like to see people who can laugh in the teeth of disaster. And it was so sweet of Faith not to be angry . . . over-much . . . with that dear thing, Jess, for putting Nannie Wegg on

the guest-room bed. Had I been in her place I would have torn up the turf. Tell her I think she has all the qualities of a good comrade and I want her to come with me for a camping trip through the mountains next month. There will be a few others, a well-recommended young man or two, and she ought, with her fun and philosophy to have a good time. Tell her we'll all be wearing knickers of course.

“Your delighted friend,
Janet Curtis.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Miss Curtis Comes* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]