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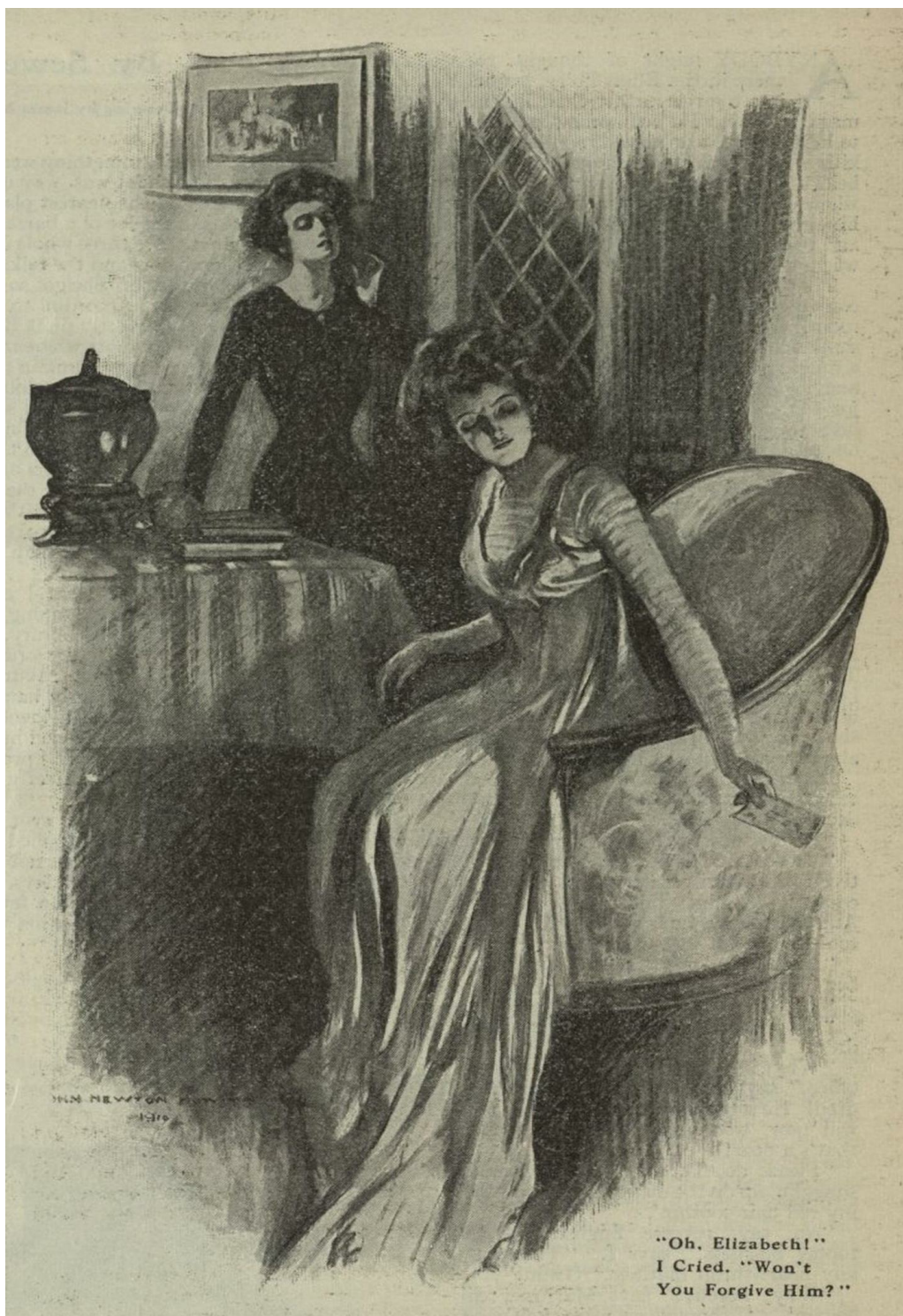
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For the Good of Anthony

L. M. Montgomery

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Drawing by John Newton Howitt



"Oh, Elizabeth!"
I Cried, "Won't
You Forgive Him?"

“Oh, Elizabeth!” I Cried. “Won’t You Forgive Him?”

My very dear Coz: What shall I say? I am tired,—so tired!—having reached Halifax at three yesterday and Beechlands half an hour later. Yet, tired as I am, I am in the seventh heaven of delight. Halifax is a dear, quaint, grimy, romantic place, and so charmingly old! There is none of our blatant Western newness about it. Then, too, what a flavor life must have in a garrison town! I feel already as if I were living in one of Kipling’s stories. But my impressions of “the warden of the honor of the north” are yet too raw to be of any value—and well do I know that if they were finished to the nicest degree they would only bore you. You want to hear about Beechlands, Aunt Clara, Uncle Maurice, and Elizabeth. Well, you shall have the very best picture my weary pen can sketch.

Beechlands is delightful, a stanch old house of mellow red brick, looking as if it had been steeped in the sunshine of a century’s summers, with ivy and the glamour of royalty hanging about it. For you must know, dear Mils, as Uncle Maurice did not fail to tell me before I was well under his roof, that the Duke of Kent lived at Beechlands for as long as six weeks during his ancient sojourn in Halifax. And it is said that he planted the aforesaid ivy with his own royal hands—which you may believe or not, as you like; but on no account let Uncle Maurice suspect your heresy if you do not. The grounds were also laid out under the same princely supervision, and do credit to his taste, being magnificent. Such trees, dear Mils, you never saw! And the view of the harbor is the finest in Halifax.

Uncle and Aunt are kind, old fashioned folk, much surprised to find that I am not still the little girl of ten from whom they parted nine years ago. And Elizabeth! Ah, now you are interested, much more interested than in all my chatter of Beechlands and its ducal memories! You want to hear all about this cousin of yours and sister of mine whom you have never seen and I have not seen for ten years, ever since our mother died and your parents took me into your Western home, while Elizabeth came to Beechlands.

Well, Elizabeth is very beautiful. And I am so like her that when we look in the glass together I am half puzzled to know which is my own face. Are you shocked at my vanity? My dear, it is the simple truth. Elizabeth and I are marvelously alike. In spite of ten years’ seniority we might, as Uncle assures us, be taken for twins. The only noticeable difference is that I have color, while Elizabeth is pale.

But with our looks all resemblance between us ends. I am, as you know, a most friendly creature; Elizabeth is cold and reserved in manner. I laugh always; Elizabeth never, though her smile is sweet enough to atone for the absence of laughter. I prattle

my secrets to all and sundry; alas! Elizabeth shows no sign of being confidential. I have no dignity; Elizabeth is dignity incarnate. I am capable of holding resentment long enough for it to be serviceable; but I am much mistaken if my stately, sweetly smiling sister has not a most high spirit to resent an injury, and a strength of will—stubbornness, if you think it the more honest word—to sustain it for longer than is wise. With it all, she is charming and I love her dearly already.

I shall write more of Elizabeth in a few days, when my Western breeziness and her Eastern conventionality shall have been mutually adjusted. Until then, dear Coz, I am your most affectionate and most weary,

EVE.

Dear Coz: A week has gone by. And I have not wasted it. I have found out the secret of Elizabeth's romance. For Elizabeth has a romance and has shared it with me; very unwillingly, be it confessed, and only because she could not help herself. I fear that Elizabeth has a most unsisterly disapproval of me, in spite of the fact that I think she loves me also.

At first I did not suspect Elizabeth of human weakness, although it struck even my frivolous perception that in repose or solitude her face was much sadder than the face of a beautiful girl of nineteen ought to be. But I did not speak of this to her. Nor would you, dear Mils. There is a fire in Elizabeth's dark eyes which would daunt any unwarranted curiosity. I think those eyes of hers can flash fiercely upon occasion. She has even favored me with some glances far from loving. And yet if you only knew how charming she is with it all! Even her very pride and coldness seem virtues in her.

One day at luncheon Uncle Maurice remarked casually that Anthony Allen would return from New York next week. Now, I had never heard of Anthony Allen and Uncle's item of news, and it would have gone in at one of my small ears and out of the other if I had not at that very moment happened to glance at Elizabeth. Wonder of wonders! My sister's eyes were studiously cast down at her plate; but the point of dissemblance between us was gone, for Elizabeth was no longer pale. Pale, dear Mils? You never saw a rose so crimson! From the tip of her deliciously pointed chin to the "moonshine parting" in her hair was all one painful blush. So amazed was I that I stared at her, quite forgetful of all good form, until she looked haughtily up and, finding my curious eyes upon her, favored me with an indignant flash of those before mentioned proud, dark orbs. I looked promptly away, and was just in time to intercept an amused family look on its way from Uncle Maurice to Aunt Clara. Not being duller than most people, I could divine a meaning in all this;

but what meaning? Who was Anthony Allen, and why should Elizabeth Stuart blush so painfully at the mere mention of his name? I determined to find out,—and you, dear Mils, who know me tolerably well, do not need to be told that I succeeded in my determination,—at the cost, I fear, of some of Elizabeth's affection; for she loves me none the better for compelling her confidence.

After luncheon that day I followed Elizabeth to her room, and found her standing at the window looking out on the Pine Walk. She was pale again and her eyes were sad; but oh how proud her face was!

"Elizabeth," said I, sitting down in a chair whence I could see her profile, "who is Anthony Allen?"

Again that magnificent color! But her voice was steady and even toned as she answered, without turning her head, "He is the son of our neighbor, Mr. Allen. They live over there at Rockywold; you can see the house over the pines of the walk."

"Is he your lover, Elizabeth?" I asked daringly.

Elizabeth flashed round upon me in right royal anger. "How dare you, Evelyn?" she cried. "No—no—no!"

"Methinks the lady doth protest too much," I quoted provokingly. "One 'no' would have been more convincing."

"Anthony Allen is nothing to me," said Elizabeth coldly, mastering that blaze of temper instantly.

"I should not put myself to blush over the name of a man who was nothing to me," I said with a smile.

How angry she was, and how well she hid it! She did not deign to answer me; but turned haughtily away to her contemplation of the Pine Walk. I went over and slipped my arm about her.

"Sister mine, tell me all about it," I coaxed.

"There is nothing to tell," said Elizabeth freezingly.

"Then Aunt Clara can tell it as well as another," said I.

"You would not ask her!" cried Elizabeth. "Oh, Evelyn, you are cruel! I—I— Since you will have the truth of the matter, take it! Anthony Allen and I were to have been married this fall; but his conduct was so—he behaved disgracefully to me, and I broke the engagement. I do not repent it. I do not care for him in the least—now."

That was a fib, dear Mils, and I knew it. This little bit of femininity endeared Elizabeth to me wonderfully. "Does he care?" I asked sympathetically.

"He has tried to make our quarrel up," she answered reluctantly; "but he need not, for I will never forgive him."

And if you had seen the light in her eyes and the haughty curve of her lips as she

spoke you would have thought poor Anthony's chances about as fair as I do. Then, after having told me so much, she took leave to be angry with me and told me never to speak of the matter to her again. But I shall please myself about that. And I know quite well that Elizabeth is breaking her heart in secret over this same Anthony.

Aunt Clara has since told me something of him. He is, she says, a gay, handsome fellow, frank and friendly, and very fond, or so it would appear, of jesting and talking with our sex, among whom he is a decided favorite. Not at all a flirt, you understand; but simply as Nature made him. And this, it seems, Elizabeth does not like. Oh, in spite of her queenliness, she is not above a little honest human jealousy. Hence her quarrel with Anthony, and the present deplorable state of affairs. Yet Aunt says that Anthony cares for no woman in the world except Elizabeth, and never has cared for any other. But such is my sister's pride that she will not listen for a moment to any pleas of his for forgiveness and has sent back all his letters unopened.

Now, I love my sister who is unhappy: and, although I have never seen him, I also like this Anthony, who is very certainly unhappy too. Would that I could unravel this tangle in their loves! Perhaps Fate has brought me to Halifax for no other purpose; and, though I must confess that I do not at present see any way of helping this unlucky pair of lovers out of their dilemma, still, my vision may be clearer later on. It is on the knees of the gods. Be assured that if I can do anything, I shall, even if, as I suspect, this strange Elizabeth would resent successful interference as keenly as failure.

But her anger shall not daunt me from doing her a sisterly kindness!

I am, dear Coz,

Your most affectionate, EVE.

Dear Coz: Did I not tell you that Fate was mixed up in this matter? When you hear my story you will doubtless say that Evelyn Stuart seems to have taken a much more prominent part in it than Fate; but that will be your shortness of sight, my dear, even as Elizabeth persists in being angry with me. For two whole days she has not vouchsafed me a word or a look; but I have the approval of my conscience. And, besides, I think Elizabeth will come to her senses and forgive me in time.

But to my story. Oh, my dear, such a story! And remember it is a secret which none but you and I and my lovely and provoking sister must ever know; least of all Anthony, who must go to his grave in ignorance of it.

Four days ago I was curled up comfortably in the library at dusk, indulging in brilliant day dreams, when one of the maids entered with a letter which she said had just been left at the door for me. I took it, opened it without looking at the address,

and walked to the window to read it by the fast fading light. Well, the letter was not for me. It began. "MY DEAR ELIZABETH," and was signed, "Yours repentantly, ANTHONY ALLEN." I picked up the envelop, which was addressed plainly enough to Miss Elizabeth Stuart. In the dim light the maid had mistaken me for her, which happens frequently. Did I read the letter? you ask. Verily, yes; or, rather, when I glanced at it the meaning of the few lines written on the page was borne in upon me without any effort on my part. As nearly as I can remember,—for I had no after opportunity of refreshing my memory, the letter being in ashes five minutes later, they ran thus:

For the last time I implore your forgiveness. On Friday morning I sail for England. I am going there on business; but I shall remain there indefinitely if you will not pardon me. Will you meet me at the old spot at the end of the Pine Walk to-morrow evening at sunset? If you do not come, I shall know that you have wholly ceased to care for me, and I shall never trouble you again.

I went to Elizabeth with the letter. "The maid brought me this," I said, laying it on the table before her. "I opened it and caught the sense of it before I knew it was not mine."

Elizabeth snatched up the letter, glanced at it, and flung it into the smoldering fire in the grate beside her. With all her beauty and dignity, I must say that for the moment she looked the shrew and vixen and nothing else.

"Oh, Elizabeth!" I cried in dismay. "Won't you forgive him? Won't you go to the Pine Walk?" Which was a foolish speech; for I had had time enough to learn right well that my sister goes by contraries.

"No!" said Elizabeth, all her pride and anger flaming in her face and behind it the heartbreak looking out of her eyes.

"But he is going away," I pleaded, still unwisely, "and he will not come back unless you forgive him! You are setting the feet of your pride on the neck of your happiness, Dearest."

"Do not speak of this again, Evelyn, if you value my affection," said Elizabeth in her haughtiest manner. "Once for all, I will not go to meet Anthony Allen!"

I said no more then; but ventured to hope that she hardly meant it. Anxiously all the next day I watched for a hint of relenting. No such hint came. Dearly would I have loved to shake the girl! At sunset I went to her again as she was reading in the library. I say "reading," dear Mils; but, considering the fact that she was holding the

book upside down, I take the liberty to think that the pain of deciphering it must have outweighed the pleasure of the story.

“Elizabeth,” I said pleadingly, “he is waiting there for you now. Think of it! Won’t you go?”

“Evelyn Stuart,” said she icily, “must I tell you in plain English that I permit no interference with my affairs, before you will cease to intrude yourself into that which does not concern you?”

Indeed, at that I had almost left her to her fate. And I should have had she alone been concerned; but there was Anthony. It was for his good I did what I did.

I ran up stairs to her room, whipped her crimson dress out of her wardrobe, and hastened to my own. The dress fitted me perfectly, and, when I had wrapped Elizabeth’s red scarf around my head to shade my face and peered into the mirror, I was well satisfied. True, it was a very rosy Elizabeth I saw; but surely even she, at such a time, would be flushed, and by now the light would be very dim in the Pine Walk.

I slipped out of the side door and hurried down past the pines. A curve in the walk shut me from the house just before I came to the hedge between the demesnes of Beechwood and Rockywold. There at the gate was a manly figure. Indeed, my heart could not have beaten more uncomfortably if I had been Elizabeth herself.

At sight of me he sprang over the gate and hastened toward me. Oh, dear Mils, he was very handsome, this same Anthony! No wonder that Elizabeth loves him in spite of herself! A dash of fair hair over a sunburned brow, a pair of frank, blue eyes, a laughing mouth—so much I had time to see before I found myself engulfed in his arms.

“Elizabeth!” he cried. “My darling—my darling!”

And then—and then—but I really could not help it, dear Mils, and I took good care that it should not happen again; for I drew myself quite haughtily away and averted my face.

“You have forgiven me?” he said, holding my hand.

“Yes,” I whispered; “but I cannot stay any longer now. I must hurry back—Anthony. You have forgotten that this is the night of Mrs. Dacre’s dance and I have yet to dress.”

“Oh, yes,” he cried gaily. “I wasn’t going; but now I will. And I shall meet you there, my sweet?”

“Yes,” I promised, although I had my painful doubts.

“Wait just another moment,” he entreated. He put his hand into his vest pocket, and the next moment I felt, something slipped over my finger.

"That is never to be taken from its rightful place again!" he said triumphantly, and then he bent his head; but I broke away and fairly ran back through the Pine Walk.

Arriving at the house, I went straight to the library again. Dear Mils, surely my errand was a righteous one, and I needed that assurance to sustain me.

"Elizabeth," I said, "it is time you were dressing for the Dacres' dance. Remember, it is six miles out to the place."

"I am not going," said Elizabeth without looking up from her book. And, indeed, it had been arranged that Aunt Clara and I should go without her.

"Oh, yes, you are," I said. "I have just been down to the Pine Walk to meet Anthony. He took me for you, not unnaturally, and I forgave him most whole heartedly and promised him that you would meet him at the dance."

"Evelyn!" Elizabeth stood up. If you could have seen her, dear Mils! For once in my life I was frightened; but I would not show it.

"Don't eat me, dear sister," I said. "I knew you wanted to forgive Anthony and that your pride would not let you. You ought to be very grateful to me for having spared you the trouble and humiliation. I shall not go to the dance—and you will. If you keep your own counsel, Anthony will never know it was not you he met in the Pine Walk. And here is your ring."

I laid it on the table beside her and got myself out of the room; for, dear Mils, she looked as if she might throw it at me. And I was not at all easy in my mind, either; for I had not the least idea whether she would go to the dance or not.

But go she did, with mystified Aunt Clara, and I stayed home. The next day Aunt Clara told me that Anthony and Elizabeth were reconciled.

"She was very gracious to him at Dacres' last night," said our good, unsuspecting aunt. "I was a little surprised; for the child is so proud and so resentful when her anger is really aroused that I feared she would never forgive him. But I suppose that when she found out he was going away her love got the better of her pride."

It was hardly that way, dear Mils; but I did not say so to Aunt Clara—and all is well that ends well. Elizabeth will be long in forgiving me; but I think that in time she will. As for Anthony, he is safely off to England, and before he returns I shall be gone. So he will never suspect that the girl of the Pine Walk was not his stately Elizabeth, after all. Dear Mils, is it not all a delightful little comedy? I laugh merrily to myself about it. Laugh with me when you read this.

Your affectionate Coz, EVE.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *For the Good of Anthony* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]