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Miss Priscilla's Romance.

By CATHERINE COX.

Miss Priscilla Cresswell adored Romance—spelt with a capital R—and had always dreamed that, some day, it would come to her. From her earliest years she had devoured novels—not the realistic or problematical ones, oh, dear, no! for her simple mind would not have understood them—but the sentimental, mildly sensational tales that dealt with love and hatred, with broken hearts, with troths plighted, with handsome men and exquisitely lovely women, and some day, she mused, some day, in the not very far future she hoped, one of those bitter-sweet experiences, that so often crossed the paths of the beautiful heroines in the novels would come to her. And at last, after many, many years of patient waiting, the one romance of her little, grey, lonely life came.

She met him at the Rectory garden-party, and, although she never cared particularly for going to the Rectory—the Rector's two young daughters, Maudie and Phyllis, being rather apt to look down upon her—for weeks afterwards she looked back upon that day as having been the beginning of a new era in her life. From the very first moment she had entered the drawing-room, he had paid noticeable attention to her—her, the little, faded, middle-aged spinster, whom nobody had ever noticed before, and her starved heart went out to him in affectionate gratitude at once.

He was the only man who had ever admired her—no wonder her head was turned!

True, the incongruity between them was almost ridiculous; he was so young and strong and handsome, and she—well, of course, there was nothing to admire in her personal appearance; but more incongruous

things had happened sometimes in the novels. Why, earls' daughters had eloped with penniless curates, and dukes had married kitchen-maids—and it was well known that fact was stranger than fiction.

So when Lieutenant Cayley-Clavering, aged twenty-four, indefinitely quartered with his regiment at Mudminster, asked Miss Priscilla Cresswell, aged thirty-seven, and definitely quartered at Mudminster until some Prince Charming rode by to take her away, if he might call sometimes at her house and see her, the little lady was thrown into an almost dangerous state of nervous excitement.

"It's awfully kind of you to let me come and see you," the young Lieutenant said, good-humouredly, on the occasion of his first visit to her shabby little drawing-room. "You see, I'm new in Mudminster, and know hardly any of the people here at present. But the first moment I saw you I took a fancy to you—you looked so kind!"

Then he laughed—a good, hearty, boyish laugh, which spoke well for the condition of his lungs—and took another slice of chocolate cake, which she was handing to him.

"And you do have ripping cakes here, too," he added, genially, with his mouth full. "By Jove! but they're infinitely better than that stodgy stuff they give you at the Hall and the Rectory!" And dear little Miss Priscilla, who made the cakes with her own dainty hands every Saturday and Wednesday morning, looked upon the latter remark as a great personal compliment.

"How handsome he is!" she thought, as she watched him devouring with the appetite of a schoolboy, the tempting morsels which she placed before him. "And how polite and

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