

THE ALPINE PATH

The Story of My Career

By L. M. MONTGOMERY

Author of "Anne of Green Gables," "Anne of the Islands," etc.

(FIFTH INSTALMENT)



THE notable incident of the liniment cake happened when I was teaching school in Bideford and boarding at the Methodist parsonage there. Its charming mistress flavoured a layer cake with anodyne liniment one day. Never shall I forget the taste of that cake and the fun we had over it, for the mistake was not discovered until tea-time. A strange minister was there to tea that night. He ate every crumb of his piece of cake. What he thought of it we never discovered. Possibly he imagined it was simply some new-fangled flavouring.

Many people have told me that they regretted *Matthew's* death in "Green Gables." I regret it myself. If I had the book to write over again I would spare *Matthew* for several years. But when I wrote it I thought he must die, that there might be a necessity for self-sacrifice on *Anne's* part, so poor *Matthew* joined the long procession of ghosts that haunt my literary past.

Well, my book was finally written. The next thing was to find a publisher. I type-wrote it myself, on my old second-hand typewriter that never made the capitals plain and wouldn't print "w" at all, and I sent it to a new American firm that had recently come to the front with several "best sellers." I thought I might stand a better chance with a new firm than with an old established one that had already a preferred list of writers. But the new firm very promptly sent it back. Next I sent it to one of the "old, established firms," and the old established firm sent it back. Then I sent it, in turn, to three "betwixt-and-between firms, and they all sent it back. Four of them returned it with a cold, printed note of rejection; one of them "damned with faint praise." They wrote that "Our readers report that they find some merit in your story, but not enough to warrant its acceptance."

That finished me. I put *Anne* away in an old hat-box in the clothes room, resolving that some day when I had time I would take her and reduce her to the original seven chapters of her first incarnation. In that case I was tolerably sure of getting thirty-five dollars for her at least, and perhaps even forty.

The manuscript lay in the hatbox until I came across it one winter day while rummaging. I began turning over the leaves, reading a bit here and there. It didn't seem so very bad. "I'll try once more," I thought. The result was that a couple of months later an entry appeared in my journal to the effect that my book had been accepted. After some natural jubilation I wrote: "The book may or may not succeed. I wrote it for love, not money, but very often such books are the most successful, just as everything in the world that is born of true love has life in it, as nothing constructed for mercenary ends can ever have."

"Well, I've written my book! The dream dreamed years ago at that old brown desk in school has come true at last after years of toil and struggle. And the realization is sweet, almost as sweet as the dream."

When I wrote of the book succeeding or not succeeding, I had in mind only a very moderate success indeed, compared to that which it did attain. I never dreamed that it would appeal to young and old. I thought girls in their teens might like to read it, that was the only audience I hoped to reach. But men and women who are grandparents have written to tell me how they loved *Anne*, and boys at college have done the same. The very day on which these words are written has come a letter to me from an English lad of nineteen, totally unknown to me, who writes that he is leaving for "the front" and wants to tell me "before he goes" how much my books and especially *Anne* have meant to him. It is in such letters that a writer finds meet reward for all sacrifice and labor.

Well, *Anne* was accepted; but I had to wait yet another year before the book was published. Then on June 20th, 1908, I wrote in my journal:

"To-day has been, as *Anne* herself would say, 'an epoch in my life.' My book came to-day. 'spleet-new' from the publishers. I candidly confess that it

was to me a proud and wonderful and thrilling moment. There, in my hand, lay the material realization of all the dreams



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and hopes and ambitions and struggles of my whole conscious existence—my first book. Not a great book, but mine, mine, mine, something which I had created."

I have received hundreds of letters from all over the world about *Anne*. Some odd dozen of them were addressed, not to me, but to "Miss Anne Shirley, Green Gables, Avonlea, Prince Edward Island." They were written by little girls who had such a touching faith in the real flesh and blood existence of *Anne* that I always hated to destroy it. Some of my letters were decidedly amusing. One began impressingly, "My dear long-lost uncle," and the writer went on to claim me as *Uncle Lionel*, who seemed to have disappeared years ago. She wound up by entreating



L. M. Montgomery

gives out, I can always fall back on what that young man assured me was "a thrilling life-history!"

"Green Gables" has



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been translated into Swedish and Dutch. My copy of the Swedish edition always gives me the inestimable boon of a laugh. The cover design is a full length figure of

Anne, wearing a sunbonnet, carrying the famous carpet-bag, and with hair that is literally of an intense scarlet!

With the publication of "Green Gables" my struggle was over. I have published six novels since then. "Anne of Avonlea" came out in 1909, followed in 1910 by "Kilmeny of the Orchard." This latter story was really written several years before "Green Gables," and ran as a serial in an American magazine, under another title. Therefore some sage reviewers amused me not a little by saying that the book showed "the insidious in-

the Island and was the terror of my childhood. We children were always being threatened that if we were not good Peg would catch us. The threat did not make us good, it only made us miserable.

Poor Peg was really very harmless, when she was not teased or annoyed. If she were, she could be vicious and revengeful enough. In winter she lived in a little hut in the woods, but as soon as the spring came the lure of the open road proved too much for her, and she started on a tramp which lasted until the return of winter snows. She was known over most of the Island. She went bareheaded and barefooted, smoked a pipe, and told extraordinary tales of her adventures in various places. Occasionally she would come to church, stalking unconcernedly up the aisle to a prominent seat. She never put on hat or shoes on such occasions, but when she wanted to be especially grand she powdered face, arms and legs with flour!

As I have already said, the story of *Nancy* and *Betty Sherman* was founded on fact. The story of the captain of the *Fanny* is also literally true. The heroine is still living, or was a few years ago, and still retains much of the beauty which won the Captain's heart. The "Blue Chest of Rachel Ward" was another "over-true tale." *Rachel Ward* was Eliza Montgomery, a cousin of my father's, who died in Toronto a few years ago. The blue chest was in the kitchen of Uncle John Campbell's house at Park Corner from 1849 until her death. We children heard its story many a time and speculated and dreamed over its contents, as we sat on it to study our lessons or eat our bed-time snacks.

IN the winter of 1911, Grandmother Macneill died at the age of eighty-seven, and the old home was broken up. I stayed at Park Corner until July; and on July 5th was married. Two days later my husband and I sailed from Montreal on the *Megantic* for a trip through the British Isles, another "dream come true," for I had always wished to visit the old land of my forefathers. A few extracts from the journal of my trip, may be of interest:

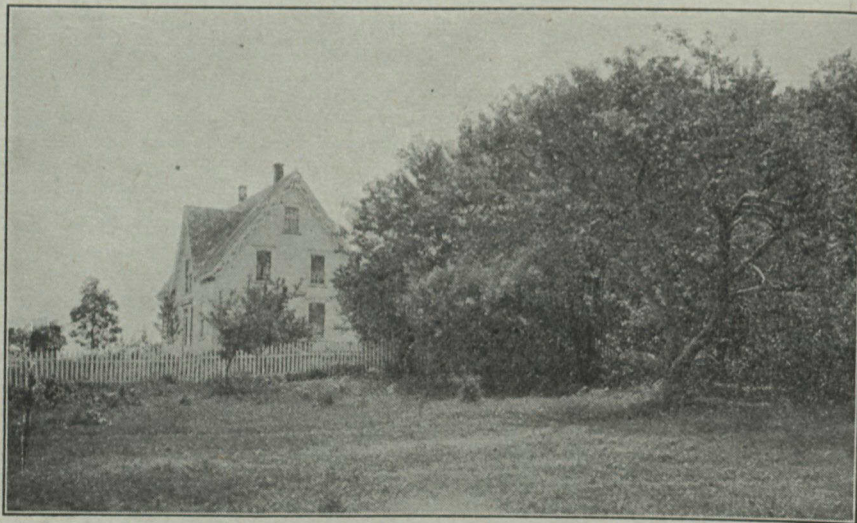
"GLASGOW, July 20, 1912.

"Thursday afternoon we left for an excursion to Oban, Staffa, and Iona. We went by rail to Oban and the scenery was very beautiful, especially along Loch Awe, with its ruined castle. Beautiful, yes! And yet neither there nor elsewhere in England or Scotland, did I behold a scene more beautiful than can be seen any evening at home, standing on the "old church hill" and looking afar over New London Harbour. But then—we have no ruined castles there, nor the centuries of romance they stand for!

"Oban is a picturesque little town, a fringe of houses built along the shore of a land-locked harbour, with wooded mountains rising steeply behind them. Next morning we took the boat to Iona. It was a typical, Scottish day, bright and sunny one hour, showery or misty the next. For a few hours I enjoyed the sail very much. The wild, rugged scenery of cape and bay and island and bleak mountain—the whole of course, peppered with ruined, ivy-hung castles—was an ever changing panorama of interest, peopled with the shades of the past.

"Then, too, we had a Cook's party of French tourists on board. They jabbered incessantly. There was one nice old fellow in particular, with a pleasant, bronzed face and twinkling black eyes, who seemed to be the expounder-in-chief of the party. They got into repeated discussions, and when the arguments reached a certain pitch of intensity, he would spring to his feet, confront the party, wave his arms, umbrella, and guide book wildly in the air, and lay down the law in a most authoritative tone and fashion.

"As the forenoon wore away I began to lose interest in everything. Ruined castle, towering mountain, white torrent, ghosts, and French tourists lost their charm. In the morning I had been much (CONTINUED ON PAGE 58)



The House of Uncle John Campbell at Park Corner, where I was Married

me to write to my "affectionate niece" and explain the reason of my long silence. Several people wrote me that their lives would make very interesting stories, and if I would write them and give them half the proceeds they would give me "the facts!" I answered only one of these letters, that of a young man who had enclosed stamps for a reply. In order to let him down as gently as possible, I told him that I was not in any need of material, as I had books already planned out which would require at least ten years to write. He wrote back that he had a great deal of patience and would cheerfully wait until ten years had expired; then he would write again. So, if my own invention

fluence of popularity and success" in its style and plot!

"The Story Girl" was written in 1910 and published in 1911. It was the last book I wrote in my old home by the gable window where I had spent so many happy hours of creation. It is my own favourite among my books, the one that gave me the greatest pleasure to write, the one whose characters and landscape seem to me most real. All the children in the book are purely imaginary. The old "King Orchard" was a compound of our old orchard in Cavendish and the orchard at Park Corner. *Peg Bowen* was suggested by a half-witted, gypsy-like personage who roamed at large for many years over

Nine years ago this fall, Lucy Maude Montgomery of Prince Edward Island published her first and most popular novel "Anne of Green Gables." Mark Twain declared "Anne" to be "the sweetest creation of child life yet written."

Mrs. Ewan Macdonald, as she is now, has written for the readers of "Everywoman's World" this fascinating story of her own life, which is so full of interest to those who love the author of "Anne." This month she gives to us some of the thrills of a first visit to the historic places in England and Scotland.—THE EDITORS.