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A Thousand Stories in Lake District of Manitoba Says Canadian Authoress

Martha Ostenso Gave Best First Novel of Year that Setting

Miss Martha Ostenso, who was awarded the \$13,500 prize and royalties on the book for the best first novel submitted during the past year in a contest organized jointly by Dodd, Mead & Company, Pictorial Review and Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, is a twenty-four-year-old school teacher from Manitoba. Miss Ostenso's novel will be serialized, filmed and published in book form in 1936. The story, which is called "The Passionate Pilgrimage," deals with the romance of the Western Prairies and portrays the romance of one whose ambition to soar beyond the black loam led to dramatic consequences.

More than 1,500 manuscripts were submitted. The judges state that Miss Ostenso's was so far superior that no other story seriously rivalled it.

A brief sketch of her life and the circumstances which inspired her novel, as related by Miss Ostenso, follows:

"Where the long arm of the Hardanger fjord penetrates farthest into the rugged mountains of the coast of Norway, the Ostenso family has lived in the township that bears its name since the days of the Vikings. The name means 'Eastern Sea,' and was assumed centuries ago by an adventurous forerunner who dreamed of extending his holdings over the mountains and through the lowlands of Sweden eastward to the very shores of the Baltic. Although his dreams never came true, the family name recalls it and the family tradition of land-holding has persisted unbroken; the part of the land that borders the lovely fjord is still in its possession, handed down from eldest son to eldest son.

"My father, a young son, was free to indulge his roving disposition. A few years after his marriage to my mother he decided to emigrate to America.

"My mother's parents lived high up in the mountains, remote from the softening influence of the coast town. At their home it was, near the little village of Haukeland, that I was born. This, the first of many small towns in which I have lived, is known to me only through hearsay.

"When I was two years old we came to America.

"The story of my childhood is a story of seven little towns in Minnesota and South Dakota. Towns of

the field and prairie all, redolent of the soil from which they had sprung and eloquent of that struggle common to the farmer the world over, a struggle but transferred from the Ostensos and Haukelands of the Old World to the richer loam of the new. They should have a story written about them—those seven mean, yet glorious little towns of my childhood! In one of them, on the prairies of South Dakota, I learned to speak English. What a lovely



Martha Ostenso

language I found it to be, with words in it like pain and funeral and alone, and ugly words, too, like laughter and cake and scratch! What strange sounds the new words made to me.

"Later, in another of the little towns, I learned that it was fun to make things with words. It was fun living in a little town in Minnesota that I became a regular contributor to the Junior Page of the Minneapolis Journal, and was rewarded for my literary trial-balloons at the rate of eighty cents a column. In the public school of that little town there still hangs, perhaps, a large print of a rural scene in a resplendent frame, with a neat name-plate at the bottom of it. That also came from the Journal, in recognition of an essay which, in my eleven-year-old opinion, placed me abreast of Emerson.

"When I was fifteen years old, I bade good-bye to the Seven Little

Towns. My father's restless spirit drove him north to the rugged mountains of the coast of Norway.

"It was during a summer vacation from my university work that I went into the lake district of Manitoba, well towards the frontiers of that northern civilization. The story that I have written lay there, waiting to be put into words. Here was the raw material out of which Little Towns were made. Here was human nature stark, unattired in the convention of a smoother, softer life. A thousand stories are there still, to be written.

"My novel lay back of my mind for several years before I began to write it. In the intervals of those years, spent as a social worker in a great city, I often compared the creaking machinery of skyscraper civilization with the cruder, direct society of the frontier. Slowly, as my work among the needy brought me nearer and nearer to the heart of the city, the border life began to be limned clearly against the murkier background of my work-a-day scene.

"A year ago last summer I returned to Manitoba. The approach to remembered scenes renewed my interest in my story, the character stood out clear-cut at last and I made the first draft of the novel.

"I was not satisfied with the result and laid the manuscript aside, with no definite purpose regarding it. It was not until spring that I returned to the city and learned of the Curtis Brown contest. It was with diffidence and reluctance that I was persuaded by friends, who thought well of the early draft and its possibilities, to rewrite it in time to submit it for consideration. At best, I felt, it was as good as my friends said, it might not be wholly ignored.

"I leave it to the scientists and pseudo-scientists who argue interminably about the relative influence on men of heredity and environment to decide the responsibility for what ever merit my story may have. The blood of the Norsemen! The Seven Little Towns! Perhaps—I do not know. No—but I have my own very unscientific opinion. It won't bear stating, but this much may be said of it: It has something to do with magic and fairies and all the other impossible, beautiful things that I believe in."

EDMUNDSTON

Edmundston, N. B., Jan. 16—Isaac Kasner is in Montreal on business.

Mrs. C. M. Rideout as indisposed this week with the prevailing cold.

Mrs. Nicol Franchetti is visiting Mrs. Robert England at Blue River.

Archie St. Onge, we are sorry to hear, has been quite sick this week.

Mrs. Robert England of Blue River, Quebec, spent her week-end with the Rev. N. and Mrs. Franchetti.

Hillside Bridge Club met on Tuesday evening at the home of Mrs. Rideout, the prize winner being, Miss Beth Rideout.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Magoon have been laid up with sickness this week and confined to their home.

Miss Ann Kilburn of Kilburn is a visitor at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Matheson.

Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Landess have returned from a short vacation at Farnham, Quebec.

David Moscovitz has joined the staff of the Supreme Sales Co. at St. John.

G. T. Lowry, N. B. Hydro Electric engineer was in town over the week-end.

Mrs. T. M. Sherwood has been confined to her home with a bad cold this week.

The Annual Business Meeting of Edmundston Board of Trade will be held on Wednesday evening, January 21st at the town office at 8 p. m.

Miss Helen Stevens entertained informally at bridge on Tuesday, the prize winners being Mrs. Landers, Miss Kilburn, R. D. Murphy and Stuart Henderson.

Billie Brebner entertained at a very enjoyable birthday party on Saturday last. Among those present were: Wilfred Connolly, Mary Matheson, Isabel Matheson, Joyce Rideout, Janet Hardwick, Dickie Dunbar, Marguerite and Cecile Belanger, Burns Hay, Jerome and Monica Sullivan, Lester McCabe and Alice Stevens.

Radio music at breakfast is the latest. At 7 o'clock, Mr. Armbruster of Canada Road, made connection with St. Louis. Whether it was early birds at St. Louis or a late worm, we are unable to say.

DOGS HAD A CLOSE CALL

Atlantic City, N. J., Jan. 13—Twelve Penningese dogs, a bed-ridden man, his wife and two firemen were carried from a burning house here today.

The man was George W. Penn. The Pekes were unnamed, even one pampered pup with a wooden leg, which when firemen rescued the dog from the basement of the house, was charred and smoking.

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Do you know that in a recent canvass among women users of the Vegetable Compound over 220,000 replies were received. To the question, "Have you received benefit by taking this medicine?" 98 per cent replied "Yes." This means that 98 out of every 100 women are in better health because they have given this medicine a fair trial.

Mrs. Morse is simply another case of a woman receiving "great benefit." Women suffering from the troubles so common to their sex should listen to what other women say who have experienced the same sufferings and found relief. Give this dependable medicine a chance—and at once. It is sold at all drug stores.

HOSPITAL MAY BE ESTABLISHED IN EDMUNDSTON

Group of Graduate Nurses Consider Proposition of Opening Private Institution

(Edmundston Observer)

Three young ladies, graduate nurses were here for several days last week, looking into the proposition of establishing a private hospital here. These young ladies, natives of Woodstock, we believe have had considerable experience in private hospital work and are well qualified to operate an institution of this kind successfully. No announcement has yet been made as to what their final decision is. A number of houses were looked at, a number of people including the doctors were interviewed, and a great deal of encouragement was given to them in their proposed venture.

As our readers know, we have always felt that there should be a hospital in Edmundston, the size of the place, the industrial character of the place, the long distance from St. Basile, all demand that we shall have within the borders of our own town, a place where the sick and injured can be taken with the greatest expedition.

We would like to see a publicly owned hospital here, but failing that we should like to see a privately owned one established in Edmundston. Everything looks favourable at the present time. It looks as though that which we have advocated for so long will bear fruit, not in the way we expected or hoped, but in another way.

We are sure that hundreds of our citizens will be glad if the ladies concerned come here, and they undoubtedly gain a great deal of support in their undertaking.

It will mean that a great deal of suffering will be alleviated, a great deal of expense for individuals saved and we earnestly believe a great many lives saved.

We are emphatically in favour of its establishment here, and there is not one single adequate reason why it should not be successful both from the standpoint of the town and the standpoint of the ladies who propose to run it.

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EAST GLASSVILLE.

East Glassville, N. B., Jan. 20—Our school teacher, Miss Stright returned again on Saturday last.

Malcolm Brown has gone to Halifax for a few weeks.

Wm. McDougall spent Sunday at the home of John Anderson.

Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Dingee spent Saturday at Centre Glassville.

Robert Anderson has gone to the woods for the winter.

Harold McDougall and his lumber crew spent Sunday at their homes.

Gibson Brown spent Sunday at Richard Bromley's.

We are sorry to hear that Ella Anderson has the whooping cough.

The young people of this place met at the home of Willie McDougall on New Year's Eve and all enjoyed a good time.

George McFarlane is helping Harold McDougall cut timber for a few weeks.

J. B. Anderson of Piercemont was in this place on business one day last week.

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