



This picture was made when I was sixteen and the flame of an ambition to write something big was beginning to sear my soul.

THE ALPINE PATH

The Story of My Career

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"Anne of Green Gables," and "Anne of the Island," etc.

(FOURTH INSTALLMENT)

forge the Windsor correspondent's nom de plume—and there's your society letter! I used to include funerals, too, but I found the news editor blue-pencilled them. Evidently funerals have no place in society.

"Then I write a column or so of giddy paragraphs for Monday's *Echo*. I call it 'Around the Tea-Table,' and sign it 'Cynthia.'

"My office is a back room looking out on a back yard in the middle of the block. I don't know that all the Haligonian washerwomen live around it, but certainly a good percentage of them must, for the yard is a network of lines from which sundry and divers garments are always streaming gaily to the breezes. On the ground and over the roof cats are prowling continually, and when they fight, the walls resound with their howls. Most of them are lank, starved-looking beasties enough, but there is one lovely gray fellow who basks on a window sill opposite me and looks so much like 'Dafty' that, when I look at him, I could squeeze out a homesick tear if I were not afraid that it would wash a clean spot on my grimy face. This office is really the worst place for getting dirty I ever was in."



When Anne of Green Gables was published, I had a very good reason for smiling. And even this smile did not express my feelings.

GRANDFATHER died in 1898 and Grandmother was left alone in the old homestead. So I gave up teaching and stayed home with her. By 1901 I was beginning to make a "livable" income for myself by my pen, though that did not mean that everything I wrote was accepted on its first journey. Far from it. Nine out of ten manuscripts came back to me. But I sent them out over and over again, and eventually they found resting places. Another extract from my journal may serve as a sort of milestone to show how far I had travelled.

"March 21, 1901.

"Munsey's came to-day with my poem 'Comparisons' in it, illustrated. It really looked nice. I've been quite in luck of late, for several new and good magazines have opened their portals to this poor wandering sheepkin of thorny literary ways. I feel that I am improving and developing in regard to my verses. I suppose it would be strange if I did not, considering how hard I study and work. Every now and then I write a poem which serves as a sort of landmark to emphasize my progress. I know, by looking back, that I could not have written it six months, or a year, or four years ago, any more than I could have made a garment the material of which was still unwoven. I wrote two poems this week. A year ago, I could not have written them, but now they come easily and naturally. This encourages me to hope that in the future I may achieve something worth while. I never expect to be famous. I merely want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession. That, I honestly believe, is happiness, and the harder to win the sweeter and more lasting when won."

In the fall of 1901 I went again to Halifax and worked for the winter on the staff of the *Daily Echo*, the evening edition of the *Chronicle*. A series of extracts from my journal will tell the tale of that experience with sufficient fullness.

"11 November, 1901

"I am here alone in the office of the *Daily Echo*. The paper is gone to press and the extra proofs have not yet begun to come down. Overhead, in the composing room, they are rolling machines and making a diabolical noise. Outside of the window the engine exhaust is puffing furiously. In the inner office two reporters are having a wrangle. And here sit I—the *Echo* proof-reader and general handy-man. Quite a 'presto change' from last entry!

"I'm a newspaper woman!

"Sounds nice? Yes, and the reality is very nice, too. Being of the earth, it is earthy, and has its drawbacks. Life in a newspaper office isn't all 'beer and skittles' any more than anywhere else. But on the whole it is not a bad life at all! I rather like proof-reading, although it is tedious. The headlines and editorials are my worst thorns in the flesh. Headlines have a natural tendency to depravity, and the editor-in-chief has a ghastly habit of making puns over which I am apt to come to grief. In spite of all my care 'errors will creep in' and then there is the mischief to pay. When I have nightmares now they are of headlines wildly askew and editorials hopelessly hounded, which an infuriated chief is flourishing in my face.

"The paper goes to press at 2.30, but I have to stay till six to answer the 'phone, sign for wires, and read extra proofs.

"On Saturdays the *Echo* has a lot of extra stuff, a page of 'society letters' among the rest. It usually falls to my lot to edit these. Can't say I fancy the job much, but the only thing I positively abhor is 'faking' a society letter. This is one of the tricks of newspaperdom. When a society letter fails to turn up from a certain place—say from Windsor—in due time, the news editor slaps a Windsor weekly down before me and says blandly, 'Fake up a society letter from that, Miss Montgomery.'

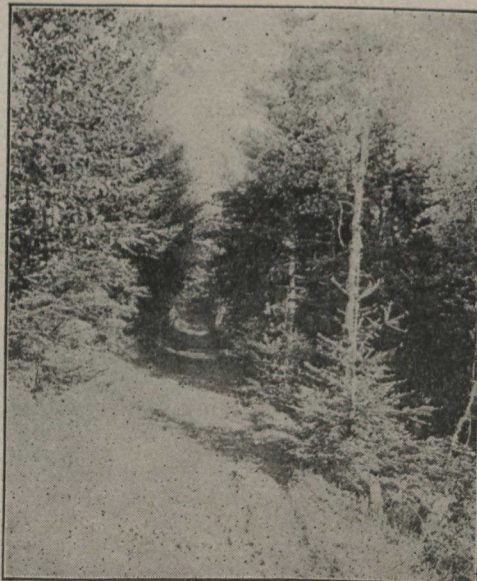
"So poor Miss Montgomery goes meekly to work, and concocts an introductory paragraph or so about 'autumn leaves' and 'mellow days' and 'October frosts,' or any old stuff like that to suit the season. Then I go carefully over the columns of the weekly, clip out all the available personals and news items, about weddings, and engagements, and teas, etc., hash them up in epistolary style,



This is my great aunt, Mrs. Lawson, who told me many of the tales that I subsequently wrote into my stories. I often wished that I had her fund of story material.

"November 18, 1901.

"Have had a difficult time trying to arrange for enough spare minutes to do some writing. I could not write in the evenings, I was always too tired. Besides, I had to keep my buttons sewed on and my stockings darned.



A view of Lover's Lane, which I have written about in one of my books. It was a beautiful lane through the woods on a neighbour's farm.

Then I reverted to my old practice, and tried getting up at six in the morning. But it did not work, as of yore. I could never get to bed as early as I could when I was a country 'schoolma'am' and I found it impossible to do without a certain amount of sleep.

"There was only one alternative.

"Hitherto, I had thought that undisturbed solitude was necessary that the fire of genius might burn and even the fire for pot-boiling. I must be alone, and the room must be quiet. I could never have even imagined that I could possibly write anything in a newspaper office, with rolls of proof shooting down every ten minutes, people coming and conversing, telephones ringing, and machines being thumped and dragged overhead. I would have laughed at the idea, yea, I would have laughed it to scorn. But the impossible has happened. I am of one mind with the Irishman who said you could get used to anything, even to being hanged!

"All my spare time here I write, and not such bad stuff either, since the *Delineator*, the *Smart Set* and *Ainslies'* have taken some of it. I have grown accustomed to stopping in the middle of a paragraph to interview a prowling caller, and to pausing in full career after an elusive rhyme, to read a lot of proof, and snarled-up copy."

"Saturday, December 8, 1901.

"Of late I've been busy with a capital B. 'Tending to office work, writing pot-boilers, making Christmas presents, etc., mostly etc.

"One of the 'etc's' is a job I heartily detest. It makes my soul cringe. It is bad enough to have your flesh spiritual nerves terribly. We are giving all the firms who advertise with us a free 'write-up' of their holiday goods, and I have to visit all the stores, interview the proprietors, and crystallize my information into two 'sticks' of copy. From three to five every afternoon I potter around the business blocks until my nose is purple with the cold and my fingers numb from much scribbling of notes."

"Wednesday, December 12, 1901.

"It is an ill wind that blows no good and my disagreeable assignment has blown me some. The other evening I went in to write up the *Bon Marche*, which sets up to be the millinery establishment of Halifax, and I found the proprietor very genial. He said he was delighted that the *Echo* had sent a lady, and by way of encouraging it not to weary in well doing he would send me up one of the new walking hats if I gave the *Bon Marche* a good write-up. I rather thought he was only joking, but sure enough, when the write-up came out yesterday, up came the hat, and a very pretty one it is too."

"Thursday, December 20, 1901.

"All the odd jobs that go a-begging in this office are handed over to the present scribe. The very queerest one up to date came yesterday.

"The compositors were setting up, for the weekly edition, a story called 'A Royal Betrothal,' taken from an English paper, and when about half through they lost the copy. Whereupon the news-editor requested me to go to and write an 'end' for the story. At first I did not think I could. What was set up of the story was not enough to give me any insight into the solution of the plot. More over, my knowledge of royal love affairs is limited, and I have not been accustomed to write with flippant levity of kings and queens.

"However, I fell to work and somehow got it done. Today it came out, and as yet nobody has guessed where the 'seam' comes in. If the original author ever beholds it, I wonder what he will think."

I may remark, in passing, that more than ten years afterward I came across a copy of the original story in an old scrapbook, and was much amused to discover that the author's development of the plot was about as different from mine as anything could possibly be.

"Christmas is over. Thursday, December 27th, 1901. I had been expecting to feel I had been rather dreading it, for
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