

THE ALPINE PATH

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very much the stranger in a strange land. But, as usual, anticipation was discounted by realization. I had a very pleasant time although not, of course, so wildly exhilarating as to endanger life, limb or nerves, which was, no doubt, just as well.

"I had a holiday, the first since coming here, and so was haunted all day by the impression that it was Sunday. I had dinner at the *Halifax* with B. and spent the afternoon with her. In the evening we went to the opera to see 'The Little Minister.' It was good but not nearly so good as the book. I don't care for dramatized novels. They always jar on my preconceptions of the characters. Also, I had to write a criticism of the play and cast for the *Chronicle* and I dislike that very much."

"Saturday, March 29, 1902.

"This week has been a miserable one of rain and fog and neuralgia. But I've lived through it. I've read proofs and dissected headlines and fought with compositors and banded jokes with the marine editor. I have ground out various blameless rhymes for a consideration of filthy lucre, and I've written one real poem out of my heart.

"I hate my 'pot-boiling' stuff. But it gives me the keenest pleasure to write something that is good, a fit and proper incarnation of the art I worship. The news-editor has just been in to give me an assignment for to-morrow, bad 'cess to him. It is Easter Sunday, and I have to write up the 'parade' down Pleasant Street after church, for Monday's *Echo*."

"Palmday, May 3, 1902.

"I spent the afternoon 'expurgating' a novel for the news-editor's use and behoof. When he was away on his vacation his substitute began to run a serial in the *Echo* called 'Under the Shadow.' Instead of getting some A. P. A. stuff as he should have done, he simply bought a sensational novel and used it. It was very long and was only about half done when the news-editor returned. So, as it would run all summer, in its present form, I was bidden to take it and cut mercilessly out all unnecessary stuff. I have followed instructions, cutting out most of the kisses and embraces, two-thirds of the love-making, and all the descriptions, with the happy result that I have reduced it to about a third of its normal length, and all I can say is 'Lord, have mercy on the soul of the compositor who has to set it up in its present mutilated condition.'"

"Saturday, May 31, 1901.

"I had a good internal laugh to-night. I was in a street car and two ladies beside me were discussing the serial that had just ended in the *Echo*. 'You know,' said one, 'it was the strangest story I ever read. It wandered on, chapter after chapter, for weeks, and never seemed to get anywhere; and then it just finished up in eight chapters, *lickety-split*. I can't understand it!'"

"I could have solved the mystery, but I didn't."

I Write "Anne of Green Gables"

In June, 1902, I returned to Cavendish, where I remained unbrokenly for the next nine years. For the first two years after my return I wrote only short stories and serials as before. But I was beginning to think of writing a book. It had always been my hope and ambition to write one. But I never seemed able to make a beginning.

I have always hated beginning a story. When I get the first paragraph written I feel as though it were half done. The rest comes easily. To begin a book, therefore, seemed quite a stupendous task. Besides, I did not see just how I could get time for it. I could not afford to take the time from my regular writing hours. And, in the end, I never deliberately sat down and said "Go to! Here are pens, paper, ink and plot. Let me write a book. It really all just 'happened.'"

I had always kept a notebook in which I jotted down, as they occurred to me, ideas for plots, incidents, characters, and descriptions. In the spring of 1904 I was looking over this notebook in search of some idea for a short serial I wanted to write for a certain Sunday School paper. I found a faded entry, written many years before: "Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent them." I thought this would do. I began to block out the chapters, devise, and select incidents and "brood up" my heroine. Anne—she was not so named of malice aforethought, but flashed into my fancy already christened, even to the all-important "e"—began to expand in such a fashion that she soon seemed very real to me and took possession of me to an unusual extent. She appealed to me, and I thought it rather a shame to waste her

on an ephemeral little serial. Then the thought came, "Write a book. You have the central idea. All you need do is to spread it out over enough chapters to amount to a book."

The result was "Anne of Green Gables." I wrote it in the evenings after my regular day's work was done, wrote most of it at the window of the little gable room which had been mine for many years. I began it, as I have said, in the spring of 1904. I finished it in the October of 1905.

Ever since my first book was published I have been persecuted by the question "Was so-and-so the original of such-and-such in your book?" And behind my back they don't put it in the interrogative form, but in the affirmative. I know many people who have asserted that they are well acquainted with the "originals" of my characters. Now, for my own part, I have never, during all the years I have studied human nature, met one human being who could, as a whole, be put into a book without injuring it. Any artist knows that to paint *exactly* from life is to give a false impression of the subject. Study from life he must, copying suitable heads or arms, appropriating bits of character, personal or mental idiosyncracies, "making use of the real to perfect the ideal."

But the ideal, his ideal, must be behind and beyond it all. The writer must *create* his characters, or they will not be life-like.

With but one exception I have never drawn any of my book people from life. That exception was *Peg Bowen* in "The Story Girl." And even then I painted the lily very freely. I have used real places in my books and many real incidents. But hitherto I have depended wholly on the creative power of my own imagination for my characters.

Cavendish was "Avonlea" to a certain extent. "Lover's Lane" was a very beautiful lane through the woods on a neighbour's farm. It was a beloved haunt of mine from my earliest days. The "Shore Road" has a real existence, between Cavendish and Rustico. But the "White Way of Delight," "Wiltonmere," and "Violet Vale" were transplanted from the estates of my castles in Spain. "The Lake of Shining Waters" is generally supposed to be Cavendish Pond. This is not so. The pond I had in mind is the one at Park Corner, below Uncle John Campbell's house. But I suppose that a good many of the effects of light and shadow I had seen on the Cavendish pond figured unconsciously in my descriptions. Anne's habit of naming places was an old one of my own. I named all the pretty nooks and corners about the old farm. I had, I remember, a "Fairylane," a "Dreamland," a "Pussy-Willow Palace," a "No-Man's-Land," a "Queen's Bower," and many others. The "Dryads Bubble" was purely imaginary, but the "Old Log Bridge," was a real thing. It was formed by a single large tree that had blown down and lay across the brook. It had served as a bridge to the generation before my time, and was hollowed out like a shell by the tread of hundreds of passing feet. Earth had blown into the crevices, and ferns and grasses had found root and fringed it luxuriantly. Velvet moss covered its sides and below was a deep, clear, sun-flecked stream.

Anne's *Katie Maurice* was mine. In our sitting-room there had always stood a big book-case used as a china cabinet. In each door was a large oval glass, dimly reflecting the room. When I was very small each of my reflections in these glass doors were "real folk" to my imagination. The one in the left-hand door was *Katie Maurice*, the one in the right, *Lucy Gray*. Why I named them thus I cannot say. Wordsworth's ballad had no connection with the latter, for I had never read it at that time. Indeed, I have no recollection of deliberately naming them at all. As far back as consciousness runs, *Katie Maurice* and *Lucy Gray* lived in the fairy room behind the bookcase. *Katie Maurice* was a little girl like myself, and I loved her dearly. I would stand before that door and prattle to Katie for hours, giving and receiving confidences. In especial, I liked to do this at twilight, when the fire had been lit and the room and its reflections were a glamour of light and shadow.

Lucy Gray was grown-up and a widow! I did not like her as well as *Katie*. She was always sad, and always had dismal stories of her troubles to relate to me; nevertheless, I visited her scrupulously in turn, lest her feelings should be hurt, because she was jealous of *Katie*, who also disliked her. All this sounds like the veriest nonsense, but I cannot describe how real it was to me. I never passed through the room without a wave of my hand to Katie in the glass door at the other end. (To be continued.)

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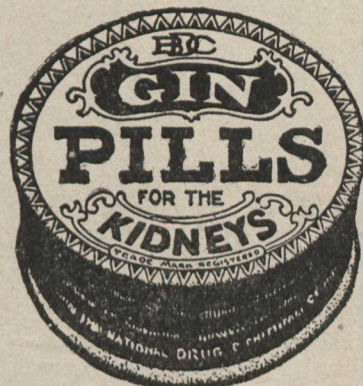
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