

# MCCALL'S

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The Twelve Milestones in a Woman's Life  
III — Her First Valentine  
By NEYSA McMEIN

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GENE STRATTON-PORTER'S LATEST NOVEL *In This Issue*



OUR attic is just like other attics, only more so. It is, indeed, like half a dozen other attics combined. Whereas it is the special property of an attic to be a disorderly repository for the accumulated litter of years, whose only reason for existence is a sentimental one, our attic possesses this property to such a remarkable degree that one can point to it with pride as a super-attic, taking easy and complete precedence over all ordinary ones. One could, with a fair feeling of confidence, stand in the doorway and promise to deliver to all comers whatever article they requested from fishing tackle to Elizabethan headgear. If one required a trunk of the late Victorian period, a broad sword of the style used by Richard the Lion-hearted, or a snuff box, he could be satisfied at once. As for the usual mementos like faded clothing and letters yellow with age, things that stab the memory with that nameless sensation that lies half way between pleasure and pain, it is full of them.

Beside all these properties our attic contains the costumes, which Douglas and I have used in all our screen plays for many years. Any fanciful person observing in the dim light of the attic these old costumes might, without much exercise of imagination, people this attic with familiar ghosts and build an amusing fantasy. The coats of D'Artagnan and Pollyanna, for instance, hang side by side, with the sleeves entwined as if the hero of the Three Musketeers were taking the Glad Girl out for a stroll. What they could say to each other, or what language they would say it in is quite beyond me! Robin Hood, judging by the posture of his costume, is bending over Tess of the Storm Country with an air of gallant concern, and Rosita stands by herself in a corner, scorned and neglected by the rest.

I am beginning to wish that I had not ended the last article with a ghost. For I am now under the obligation of explaining it and nothing is less interesting than a mystery that is explained. It always thrills me to see a magician take a white rabbit from a silk hat, but when he explains how he does it, I feel so cheated that I want to go to the box office and demand my money back. However, this ghost has been such an important fixture in our household at Beverly that in any description of our home life he is bound to intrude. He usually chooses the dinner hour to do his promenading in our attic, and the sound of his footsteps is distinctly heard down below.

In the whole wide attic I found nothing capable of planting solid footsteps on our attic floor. These footsteps, by the way, immediately retreated to another part of the house when I opened the attic door, and seemed now to come directly from the kitchen. So I crept down the back stairs and lo! I discovered our family ghost. Our French chef, apparently lost in a dream of bygone days in Paris or in the contemplative creation of some new culinary work of art, was pacing up and down the kitchen like a sentry or a somnambulist. It became clear to me that the sound of his

footsteps was projected upward like the voice of a ventriloquist by some trick of acoustics, so that they seemed to come from the attic. And so the mystery that had been troubling us was explained.

But now I want to go back to the attic, if the reader will allow me. I think sometimes that it is a mistake to cultivate too frequently the spectre of the past. Certainly when a

woman begins to turn fond eyes backward on the person she once was and to live too much in other days, it is a sign that whatever her age may be, she is getting old. I still like dreams of the future better than memories of the past. But since I have denied myself for a long time the indulgence of looking backward, perhaps now it may be allowed me. Over in the far corner of our attic, there is a little trunk, old and dilapidated, which has not been opened for years. I can remember when it took the combined savings of the family for a whole theatrical season to buy that trunk. This trunk has served many purposes. At one time, when it seemed, by the way, a very large and splendid affair, its lid, now almost off its hinges, served as a resting place where my sister used to sleep in between the times when she was wanted on the stage. When we first got this trunk I could lay my few dresses in the bottom of it without folding them.

The top of this ancient family property is filled with a litter of papers and scenarios—scenarios written in the day when a screen play was prepared, produced and edited in the course of three days. They used to bring in the magnificent price of twenty-five dollars and no questions were asked about their originality. One could borrow stories and plots from any source he wanted. Motion pictures were not then taken seriously enough to make anyone worry about the charge of plagiarism. In contrast, it may be interesting to note that I had to pay fifty-five thousand dollars for the screen rights to "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall," and three times as much has been paid to secure the screen rights to other novels and plays.

There is also a small packet of fan letters addressed to the "Biograph Girl" as I was known in these early days before the names of actors were given on the screen. These were the first letters of appreciation I ever received and they mean fully as much to me as the thousands of letters I receive every week now. They gave me, I remember, my first feeling that screen acting was worth while, for when I deserted the stage for the screen, I felt for some time that I had sunk to a lower level. On top of this litter of papers, there is a pair of very old, faded, long

blue kid gloves, which I remember buying for a party which never happened. It was my first act of extravagance, but I recall it not so much as an act of extravagance as one of rebellion. I think I stood the daily grind of the theatrical profession from the age of five upwards with a fair amount of patience, and accepted its hardships—as one learns to do—without very bitter protest. But now and then the spirit of youth, clamoring for a hearing, demanded parties and candy and clothes, and all the pastimes and pleasures other children had. In this mood of revolt which I think became uncontrollable only once, I hesitated between buying a five-pound box of candy and this pair of remarkable gloves. Either one of them represented a perfect climax of extravagance and therefore properly expressed my spirit of rebellion. I finally paid four dollars for the

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And so, today, I am very happy

Drawn by JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

# Today and Yesterday

BY MARY PICKFORD

*THE world's best loved screen actress, in this fascinating confession, tells why she believes in the fairies that have never deserted her since the dark days when she faced the world with only \$12—and her ambition. This is another article in the series being written by Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks for McCall's.*

*The first series they have ever jointly signed as husband and wife.*



Today and Yesterday

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gloves, at a time when four dollars was an incredibly large sum of money. In reading some of my "fan" mail the other day, I came upon a letter quite characteristic of a large part of it. "I do so love to read about the dark moments in the lives of great actresses."

This battered trunk contains memories of enough "dark moments" to satisfy the most voracious appetite for the misfortunes of others. Among its littered contents, there are some badly scrawled notes written during one bad summer in New York, long before I ever met Mr. Griffith who introduced me into motion pictures. It is apparently a verbal outlet for one of my blackest days in New York. I gather from my fragmentary notes that on this day, my total wealth had shrunk to twelve dollars. I was alone in New York, for my mother, sister and brother had stayed in Toronto, when I decided to put fortune to the test and either live or die in New York. Since I could pick any producer I wanted, I chose Belasco, but I found that getting him to pick me was quite another matter. I completely wore out one pair of shoes in walking to his office, for I could not afford car-fare, before it began to dawn upon me that I must settle upon a more remunerative occupation than calling upon a man who never received me. Somehow getting my courage up, I decided to make one last desperate attempt to see Mr. Belasco. I walked over to the old Belasco theatre on Forty-second Street where they were playing "The Rose of the Rancho." If I failed to see Mr. Belasco this time, I had already decided to take a job as a dressmaker's assistant at five dollars a week.

I succeeded! How inadequate and colorless a way this is to express one of the most thrilling moments in a life time! He consented to see me and with great fear and trembling, but with deadly earnestness, I acted before him on the empty stage the part of Patsy Poor from my last play with the road company which I deserted. As my frightened voice rang out in this empty theatre with the cheap, melodramatic lines I had to speak, I found myself listening to it with horror and wondering why Mr. Belasco didn't have me

thrown out of the theatre at once. My performance must have been so terrible that it was fascinating. Things swam before me . . . I was engaged to play the part of Betty in *The Warrens of Virginia* before a Broadway audience! For an enormous salary! Twenty-five dollars a week! The world was mine.

Now let me leave this record of early days and skip a few years to today as I sit quite happy in my attic, growing sentimental over my dead past, as its ghosts creep out of this old theatrical trunk.

Today marks another vivid moment which I shall never forget, one of those mile stones that make the tedious traveling in between bearable. I have just taken the last scene in "*Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*," after more difficulties than have ever attended the making of any one of my previous pictures.

On that other day I wrote about, I would have run out on the street with open arms to welcome a visitor. Today so many came that it was impossible to see them all. Among others a sculptor and a portrait painter came to study me. A publisher wanted me to write the story of my life. I was asked to speak over the radio, received an invitation from a foreign government to pay a visit to their country.

I am not sure that the reader will not laugh at me when I say quite solemnly that I have succeeded because I believe in fairies. I believe in miracles and magic and the land of make-believe. The people whom I have studied so intently on the streets of New York and other large cities may have their feet planted solidly upon the earth, but their heads are in the clouds. Beneath all their gestures of being hard, and worldly and sophisticated and grown up, there is one flaming desire—the priceless inheritance youth leaves to age—the desire to play, to escape from the stifling facts of life to a land of fancy and freedom. We all, if we care to admit it, believe in fairies. It is on this sacred ground—this ground of fancy, of freedom from the depressing actualities, and therefore, perhaps, of happiness, that I have tried to strike. I have not yet hit it very firmly perhaps, but I shall go on trying.

Harold Bell Wright

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love his heroes because they are tender, brave, chivalrous.

Perhaps no author will live whose works are not leavened with humor. From his first volume to his latest, Mr. Wright employs a subdued yet pungent irony that points up his characters through their own acts or speeches. Who can read of the ministerial gatherings in "That Printer" without chuckling over the pettiness of Wilks, the slyness of Cockrell, the pomposity of Hartzel? These gentlemen have not the remotest consciousness that they turn the spotlight on themselves. So Horace P. Blanton, unaware of the humorous figure he cuts, boasts "our store," "our hotel," "our Bank"—ignorant that Jefferson Worth could have given him pointers about all. So does Dogberry write himself down a fool! Humor is also provided through homely speaking, gnomish philosophers, given to wise saws, acute observations.

Finally, Mr. Wright meets the needs of the average man and woman. True religion is the work man can do best; a man serves divinely if he serves for the good of his fellow-men. "Our teachers," says Hope, "our legal and professional men, our public officers, our mechanics and laborers, must all know and understand their work." John Ward recognized that "as surely as work is health and strength and honor and happiness and life, so surely is idleness disease and weakness and shame and misery and death." Man must realize the salvation of individual labor; he must esteem its oneness. "And it shall come," declares the Interpreter, "that every forge and furnace and anvil and machine shall be an organ to praise—that every suit of over-

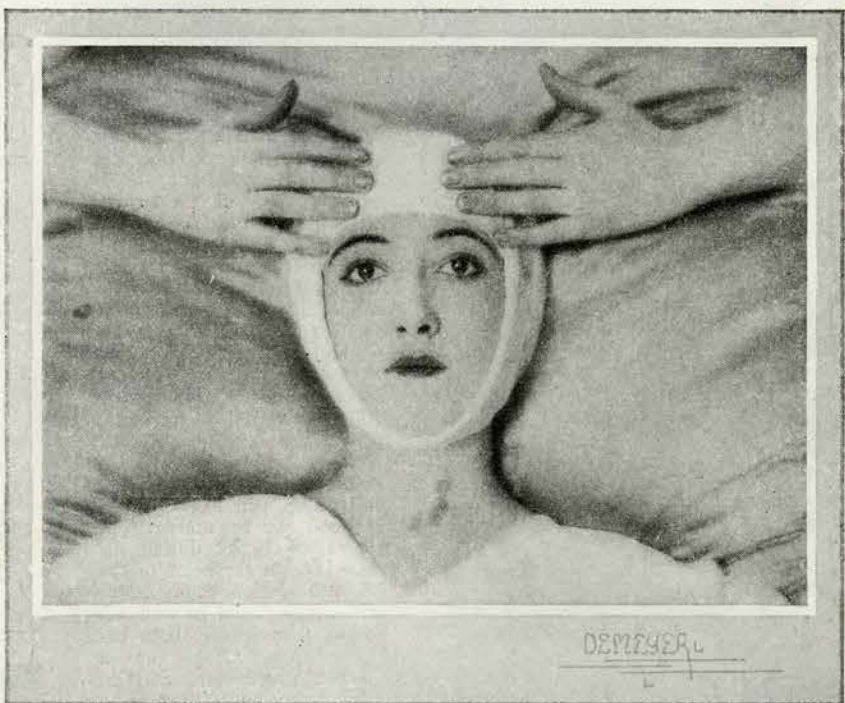
alls shall be a priestly robe of ministering service. And this God that you banished from the Mill and that is to be by your son restored to His throne and served by a priesthood of united employers and employees, shall bear a new name, and that name shall be WORK."

The author has not changed his concept of the ministry of labor since Dan left off preaching and took up mining as the particular divine work to which he was called. Yet the end of work is not a great work but a great life, for in the exaltation of life is the remedy for all evils that threaten the race. Religion is not a creed; it is service. Every man who accepts this view will accept the spirit of Mr. Wright's books.

If the great creative writer shows apotheosis of the common man's day dreams, the popular creative writer will show that apotheosis in a way the common man understands. Mr. Wright does so both in story and thesis.

As I suggested at the beginning of this inquiry into his popularity, the final secret eludes analysis. Other writers make romantic the search for health or wealth or love by living men and women; others develop these fables around important themes; others may reveal in fiction the poetry of things as they are; they may temper philosophy with humor, may base on the deep substratum of religion their towers of aspiration, and may venture visions. But no other so reconciles romantic story, poetry, philosophy, religion and vision in a single volume to meet the demand of millions. Yet he wins by something more—the unique personality expressed through his books, harmonizing each and harmonizing all in a steadily growing achievement.

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Says ELIZABETH ARDEN

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