

# Among the Alps

A Singular Story of the Writing of a Picture Play

By F. A. MITCHEL

I am considered a literary woman, though I am really nothing more than a literary hack. Real literary persons usually go hungry. I have from the first made a fair living and considering that I am a woman, a very good living. The reason for this is that I do my part in supplying that perennial flow of reading matter that is in demand by the masses whose brains are to be kept busy. The readers of the picture play are not the same as the readers of the literary magazine. I have from the first made a fair living and considering that I am a woman, a very good living. The reason for this is that I do my part in supplying that perennial flow of reading matter that is in demand by the masses whose brains are to be kept busy.

My natural instincts are all for art but unfortunately art requires education and when I was thrown on my own resources for a living I had to find the means to obtain an education. There are no schools of literature. Any one who possesses pen, ink and paper may scribble and the product may be of the nature of the production. So I took up my pen and went to work. What I wrote seemed to interest Tom, Dick and Harry, and since Tom, Dick and Harry were in the market for something to read I began at once to make a living.

While these preliminary remarks are perhaps essential to my story, there is one thing I should mention—that the story is intended to be a picture play. I have said that my natural leanings are toward art. I know a thing or two about beauty, and I can conceive a thing of beauty. But never having been educated to produce anything beautiful, I am unable to do so. One more element in which what I am going to tell is essential. I also have dramatic instinct.

Now for the story. One winter, desiring to take a vacation during the following summer, I worked very hard in order to produce the funds for a trip abroad. The result was that my nerves broke down under the strain. I took my vacation but instead of traveling for enjoyment I traveled for my health. Furthermore, instead of improving I grew worse. Feeling that I needed quiet, I went to Interlaken, in Switzerland, hired a room with windows opening on a view of the most magnificent views I have ever beheld, and settled down to recuperate.

I had met during the previous winter a young woman, Ellen Trowbridge, who was trying to make a career of herself. She was on her way to Switzerland for the hot season, after which she was going to the States. Her mother, an American widow, being too lonely to remain in Switzerland, had taken her to Interlaken.

A few days after our arrival there I collapsed. Something seemed to give way somewhere within me, and I lost consciousness. From that time for two months I remained in an abnormal condition. A part of the time I was bed-ridden, a part sitting up in an easy chair, and a part looking out on one of the many views spread out before me. From my bed I looked out upon that beautiful mountain, the Jungfrau, as it is seen from Interlaken, rising out of a valley made by two nearer mountains. For months before my departure from home I had been creating stories, and they were tumbling all in my brain in confusion. After a time they shaped themselves in dialogues. While lying in my bed persons were chatting with me, on their own account for I had no power, at least I was conscious of none to compel them to do my bidding.

And here let me say that in picture plays, which are a form of fiction, a great mistake is made in supposing that the author controls his characters. It is the characters that control the author. He can force them to do his bidding, but he will spoil his story. There are grooves for the emotions as well as other things, and let him drag a character out of its groove and it will balk at once. Then the author must get him back where he belongs, or he will stand out from the naturalness of the play like a sore thumb.

During this abnormal period of mine I was conscious of Ellen Trowbridge being in the room, sometimes ministering to my wants, sometimes sitting at a table writing, sometimes at her easel sketching. These were only glimpses of her which would come and go as fancies in a dream. They were real enough at times for me to have a dim consciousness of the fact that I was fortunate in having an American companion to take an interest in me.

In the early part of my illness I was trying to disentangle the many stories I had written during a long period and keep all sorts of persons from chasing one another through my brain. Later several of my stories that had been favorites with me seemed to drive out the rest, and I found myself linking them together. It was hard work, but better than having so many tumbling about my brain. Look out on its side. Then these spectacles as if drawn nearer by a telescope, be-

came dim figures of certain characters prominent in these favorite stories. Gradually they became more distinct and I was surprised to see that they were disposed to act like reasonable beings. And, more remarkable still, they began to work out a brand new story, composed of the several different stories that had become prominent in my brain.

This thing came from their presenting themselves to me and holding my attention till the end, then beginning at the commencement and going just again. And I noticed that every time they passed they were in a more reasonable shape than the time before. Then when they had ranged their selves and acted like human beings, when there were no more to be seen, I was not so glad that they faded away, and I saw for the first time, at least not together, now and again, one of them would take up a line, but for no purpose that I could discover, and after looking at me languidly, as much as to say, "Do you want any thing of me?" would disappear like the turning off of a light.

One day there came a breeze. I was conscious of everything about me. A "shining" perspiration on my face. I was very weak. I did not see Ellen Trowbridge, but a young woman in a white dress was standing before me, and making a call to be answered, and I saw that she came to me. I asked her what had been the matter with me.

Instead of replying she ran away and called the woman of whom I mentioned my room. As soon as she came I asked for my American traveling companion. I was informed that she had left Interlaken a week before. I asked where she had gone and was told that she had directed her letters forwarded to America. Had she left any word for me? None except that she had been suddenly called home.

I passed a period of convalescence in sight of the beautiful Jungfrau. I remembered perfectly the characters of the stories I had composed during my illness, moving about on the mountain side, but the combination of the story they had enacted I could not recall. However, I made no effort at anything either mental or physical. I simply lay waiting for strength. This came at last and since the hot season was over, I went down to Spezia in Italy, where I remained more strength from the sea air. From there I made a brief visit to Florence and Rome and sailed from Naples to America. By the time I reached port I was perfectly restored to health.

Soon after my return I became convinced of the picture plays. These plays, I refer to those of dramatic and artistic merit called out all of appreciation for the drama and art there was in me. One day I saw an announcement of a picture play, the scene of which was laid among the Alps. I went to see it.

What was my astonishment to see the same views I had looked upon from my windows at Interlaken. Their effect on me was just as it had appeared to me while ill. There were the mountains on the side, and when a breeze blew was given that he had resolved into human beings.

Here and there was included the play I had dreamed. The characters did not look like those in my dreams, but they did the things I had dreamed. The play was as it appeared to me, just before it passed out of my mind that I had dreamed.

To say that I was wonder-stricken is to express feebly what I felt. I was frightened. Was this my senses? Was not my illness returning to me? I was about to leave the theater when I was snatched by curiosity. I must see the play to the end.

When the end came I was near collapse. That night I did not sleep a wink. How had a play which had involved itself in my brain been transferred through films to a screen in America? No solution occurred to me that had any element of probability. I went to see my physician and told him what had occurred. He looked at me scrutinizingly and despite his efforts at concealment anxiously after some thought he gave me his theory as to the cause of what I had told him. He said that there was nothing unusual in the character of my previously written stories, changing one another through my brain. A drug could do that. But when he came to account for the formation of a picture in my brain he was stumped. As to the transference of this play to a screen in America, he could only account for it on the ground that when I went to the theater I had a temporary relapse of my illness and saw what was not on the screen. He forbade me to do any literary work and to live as quietly as possible.

The true solution came in time. One day I was surprised by a call from Ellen Trowbridge. She came to make a confession. She told me that while I was lying ill at Interlaken I was much of the time delirious. While delirious I was constructing a picture play, going over and over it time and again. Presently it occurred to her to make note of what I was saying, and she then secured an outline for the play. Then it occurred to her to paint the scenes for the play, some of which were before her, others she selected. She had been deeply impressed with the play and yielded to a temptation to do a dishonorable act. Being suddenly called home, she took her notes and pictures with her and sold them to a film company. The result was the play that I had seen on the screen. She handed me \$500, which she had received for her stolen property. The scientific moral of this story is that my dramatic and artistic proclivities came out while I was in delirium. But how I was enabled to construct a play under such abnormal physical conditions is a problem for more analytical minds than mine to solve.

## Eyes of the Gun.

This is called the telescope and is used by all artists in some shape or other. The telescope is really a tube with two objective lenses, one on each end. The "objectives" of the two lenses are placed inside the instrument and toward the end of the tube. Prisms with five faces act as reflectors, so that the person looking through the telescope spread his eyes to the two ends of the tube with a tremendous range of vision.

Of course the ends are so arranged that they may be directed at a single object at the same time, thus making it possible for the observer to see what would otherwise be beyond the power of the human eye and to know by the angle at which it is viewed the distance away.

It requires a little practice to use this wonderful instrument, but in a few days the operator acquires how easily he can determine the precise distance he is from the object he is looking at, and by a quick calculation he directs the pointing of the gun so that it cannot fail to strike at the desired spot. Pearson's Weekly.

**Power Propelled Vehicles.** Experiments in power propelled vehicles date back to 1770 when Joseph Goodyear built a steam engine. The first motor car was built in 1821. The first motor car was built in 1821. The first motor car was built in 1821.

**The Widow's Mite.** Lord John Russell's dimwit status earned him other nicknames besides the "Inevitable" and "Lambton." The nearest is the one perpetuated by George, which was bestowed by some one upon him when he married the sister of the second Lord Russell.

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## Hetty Green's Confession.

During one of the "booms" of her second-act living stage, Mrs. Hetty Green was staying at a "moderate priced" boarding house, where a jobless young stenographer came to know her. The girl finally secured a position for \$12 a week and told Mrs. Green of it. "You've got to leave here," said the old woman emphatically. "You are not earning enough to pay so much for your keep. I'll tell you where to go. There's a hotel for working girls. I know. I lent the man the money to build it. There are washrooms there and sewing rooms. Make your own clothes and care for them, get a room-mate. It will cost you only \$4. Save \$7 out of your \$12. Do not go out nights. Watch your company. Do what I tell you and you'll get on. Anybody can. The trouble is most people don't know the value of 5 cents. You be advised. Don't figure in dollars; figure in pennies, and save them."—New York World.

**Coat of the Porcupine.** Mother Nature surely must have set out to make something different the day she invented the porcupine. Her way an animal with a pathetically mild disposition without cunning or courage and almost as slow and ungainly as a turtle. It would have been absurd to give him weapons of defense. He would never have the energy to attack anything so he was given a coat of mail in which he might walk abroad among his enemies and yet be as safe as though he were behind a wall of steel. His upper parts, from his nose to the tip of his thick, muscular tail are covered with a mass of sharp pointed quills intermixed with coarse hair. Each quill is provided with a number of minute barbs pointing backward, so that when it is once inserted in the flesh of any animal the mere movement of the muscles will cause it to work deeper and deeper. Exchange.

**Roadless Russia.** It seems almost inconceivable to the foreign visitor who has ever left the beaten track of the railway in Russia. How a great empire you have witnessed so long and so successfully without even a pretense at roads. The six great lines in the fact that for five or six months in the year, nature herself provides roads over the greater part of Russia—admirable, smooth, glassy roadways over hard worn snow. The traffic is further cheapened over these roads by the substitution of a sledge runner for the wheel and axle. This brings the cost of land carriage as near the cheapness of water borne freight as possible, and it is the principal reason why Russia in the twentieth century is still a roadless land.

**Hard Words For the High Hat.** The case against the "topper" was summed up many years ago by the famous Punch editor, Mark Lemon. "It is hot in summer," he said, "it is not warm in winter. It does not shade us from the sun, it does not shelter us from the rain. It is ugly and expensive. You cannot wear it in a railway carriage. It is always in your way in a drawing room. If you sit on it you crush it, yet it will not save your skull in a fall. It will not make a portmanteau; it is too hard to roll up, too soft to stand upon. It rusts with the sun, it spots with the rain. If it is good you are sure to lament it taken by mistake at a soiree. If it is bad you are set down for a swindler."—London Spectator.

**Patriarch of Prophets.** A man approached a "stand-up" upon which some questionable looking fowls were offered for sale. "What will you sell them for?" he asked of a shrewd, gray-haired farmer. "I sell them for profit," answered the individual. "Is that so?" answered the customer in feigned surprise. "I'm glad to know, they are prophets. I look them for patriarchy."—Exchange.

**Musical Spanish.** In extent the Spanish vocabulary is far inferior to the English, though in richness of form or expression the Spanish is ahead of the English language. It is claimed that the pure Castilian is the most musical of languages, the Italian not excepted.

**All Business.** "Then I can be one of your pupils?" "Assuredly, sir, for 10 rows a lesson," said the great artist. "And a favorite pupil for 2 rows extra."—Puck.

**PRACTICAL HEALTH HINT.** Force Yourself to Be Well. Plant your feet firmly and squarely on the ground, throw back your shoulders, fold your arms and affirm in most emphatic terms, that you are strong, healthy and well. Do this for a few minutes every evening and, even if this is not how you actually feel, maintain by your physical and mental attitude that it is your condition, and you will soon find that it becomes so and that you are not really telling lies. This was the advice given by Dr. J. Stenson Hooker in a lecture in London on "Posturing and Posing For Health." "It is wonderful to what extent our state of health can be altered in this way." Dr. Hooker added, "It struts up the currents of feeling which act on the nerves, and these act on the blood vessels, and thus the whole system is improved, and we become different beings."—Exchange.

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