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TO AGE NINETY - 25% of Americans that reach age 65 will live at least another 25 years to age 90 (source: Social Security Administration).

SURPRISE - 23% of households headed by individuals at least age 75 will experience an “extraordinary” out-of-pocket medical expense of at least 1% of household income this year (source: JP Morgan Chase & Co. Institute).

A FORCE - China has more millennials (400 million) than the population of the United States (328 million). Millennials were born between 1981-97 and are age 21-37 in 2018 (source: Financial Times).

One of Canada’s most beloved authors, Lucy Maud Montgomery, is noted for her writing success because of Anne of Green Gables. Her rise to the top of literary immortality didn’t come easily. Like other iconic authors, whose success we would love to emulate, we frequently see the success without understanding the toil.

Lucy Maud Montgomery first began writing Anne of Green Gables in 1904. After two years she finished and set out to find a publisher. She sent it to a new American firm that had recently come out with a few new bestsellers. She said, “I thought I might stand a better chance with a new firm than with an old established one.” The new firm very promptly returned the manuscript. Then she sent it to one of the “old, established firms,” and they sent it back. Next she sent it to three more firms, and they all sent it back. She received this note: “Our readers report that they find some merit in your story, but not enough to warrant its acceptance.”

At that point Lucy Maud Montgomery had enough. She said, “That finished me. I put Anne away in an old hat-box in the clothes room, resolving that some day when I had time I would take her and reduce her to the original seven chapters of her first incarnation.” At one point she thought she would only get thirty-five to forty dollars for Anne of Green Gables.

Well, the manuscript sat there until she stumbled across it one day. She began reading a little here and a little there. “It didn’t seem so very bad” she said. She tried once more and sent the book to a publishing firm. At long last, the book was accepted. She later wrote in her journal, “The book may or may not succeed. I wrote it for love, not money, but very often such books are the most successful. The dream dreamed years ago at that old brown desk in school has come true at last after years of toil and struggle. And the realization is sweet, almost as sweet as the dream.”

So frequently we look at the finished product, the masterpiece, and fail to fully appreciate the journey and struggle to get there. Lucy said “People envy me these bits of success and say, ‘It’s well to be you,’ and so on. I smile cynically when I hear them. They do not realize how many disappointments come to one success. They see only the successes and think all must be smooth traveling.”

Great things come out of struggle. Anne of Green Gables was written over 100 years ago and continues to be one of the world’s great masterpieces. Lucy Maud Montgomery showed that even in greatness there is struggle. Not one person goes through life without a struggle, but every life has the chance to be great.

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