

Though she had resisted offers of marriage from several men in Richmond, Mittie happily became Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller in May of 1878. The couple then moved to the Hawk's Nest area of Fayette County, West Virginia, in the heart of the mountains that were home to Alex Miller.

Mittie found life in one of the wildest spots in West Virginia, surrounded by the rugged mountain scenery of the New River canyon, to be a far cry from the life she had led in Richmond. Living in a tiny cabin on a bank near the river, she found herself burdened with household chores to which she was completely unaccustomed and which she never learned to enjoy. She readily gave up many of these duties when Alex decided the two should move back to his family's homestead in Nicholas County.

The Miller family's farm was located some eighteen miles from the nearest rail station, and Mittie quickly found the isolation depressing. With Alex frequently gone to town, leaving her alone with his parents and siblings, she longed for a home of her own. She decided to try writing again, both to earn money and as a distraction from the loneliness she often felt. Her efforts yielded poetry, including an ode to the beauty of Hawk's Nest, which was published in the *Greenbrier Independent* newspaper, and the beginnings of a novel she called *Only a Mountain Girl*.

After discovering that they were about to become parents, Mittie and Alex began building their own home on ten acres given them by the Miller family. But construction halted when Alex's meager savings from his work as a country schoolmaster were exhausted, leaving carpenter bills unpaid. Finding herself in dire need of money once again, Mittie determined to pull herself out of her poverty-stricken condition. "I did pull myself and the others out," she later recalled, "And I did it with *The Bride of the Tomb*."

In her unpublished autobiography, Mittie described her invention of the "sensational" style for which she would soon become well known:

I simply had an urgent need for money and made the most of the resources at my command to obtain it. I had previously scorned writing for the sensational weekly story papers, published in New York. I had aimed higher, but now I was ready to commit almost any literary heresy.

Immersing herself in the romantic tales appearing in weekly story papers like the *Fireside Companion* and *Family Story Paper*, Mittie committed herself to writing the most sensational story ever written. The result of her efforts, *The Bride of the Tomb*, proved to be not only her first, but also one of her best-selling novels. A melodramatic story that kept its readers enthralled, the tale was published in the *Family Story Paper* for \$20.00 per installment. Receiving the first \$20.00 in cash, Mittie financed the completion of her much-desired home, and spent the remaining payments more quickly than she had imagined possible.

The overwhelming success of Mittie's "sensational" story rapidly led