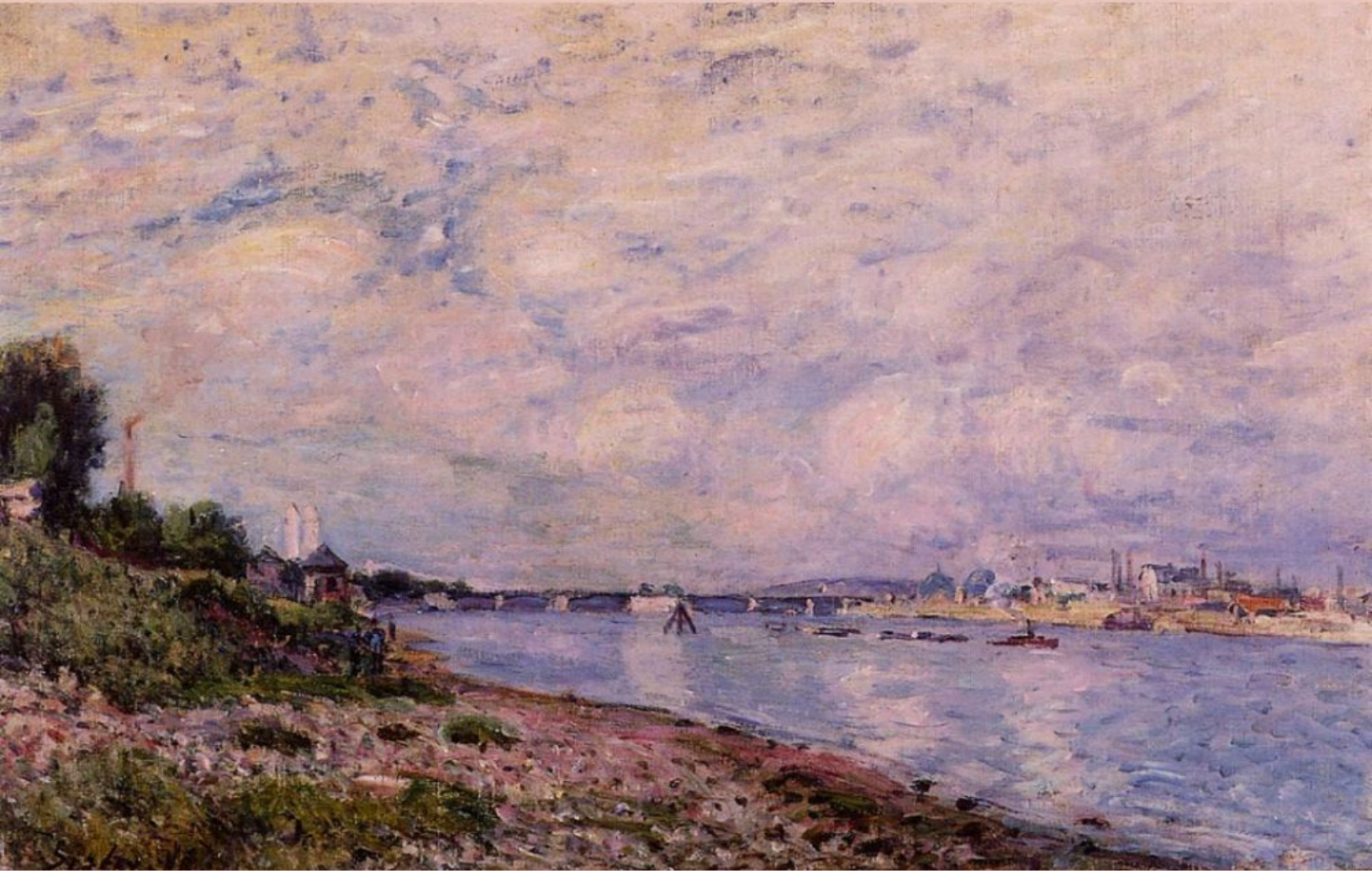


GENE STRATTON-PORTER



A DAUGHTER
OF THE LAND

A Daughter of the Land

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Chapter I - THE WINGS OF MORNING

"TAKE the wings of Morning."

Kate Bates followed the narrow footpath rounding the corner of the small country church, as the old minister raised his voice slowly and impressively to repeat the command he had selected for his text. Fearing that her head would be level with the windows, she bent and walked swiftly past the church; but the words went with her, iterating and reiterating themselves in her brain. Once she paused to glance back toward the church, wondering what the minister would say in expounding that text. She had a fleeting thought of slipping in, taking the back seat and listening to the sermon. The remembrance that she had not dressed for church deterred her; then her face twisted grimly as she again turned to the path, for it occurred to her that she had nothing else to wear if she had started to attend church instead of going to see her brother.

As usual, she had left her bed at four o'clock; for seven hours she had cooked, washed dishes, made beds, swept, dusted, milked, churned, following the usual routine of a big family in the country. Then she had gone upstairs, dressed in clean gingham and confronted her mother.

"I think I have done my share for to-day," she said. "Suppose you call on our lady school-mistress for help with dinner. I'm going to Adam's."

Mrs. Bates lifted her gaunt form to very close six feet of height, looking narrowly at her daughter.

"Well, what the nation are you going to Adam's at this time a-Sunday for?" she demanded.

"Oh, I have a curiosity to learn if there is one of the eighteen members of this family who gives a cent what

becomes of me!" answered Kate, her eyes meeting and looking clearly into her mother's.

"You are not letting yourself think he would 'give a cent' to send you to that fool normal-thing, are you?"

"I am not! But it wasn't a 'fool thing' when Mary and Nancy Ellen, and the older girls wanted to go. You even let Mary go to college two years."

"Mary had exceptional ability," said Mrs. Bates.

"I wonder how she convinced you of it. None of the rest of us can discover it," said Kate.

"What you need is a good strapping, Miss."

"I know it; but considering the facts that I am larger than you, and was eighteen in September, I shouldn't advise you to attempt it. What is the difference whether I was born in '62 or '42? Give me the chance you gave Mary, and I'll prove to you that I can do anything she has done, without having 'exceptional ability!'"

"The difference is that I am past sixty now. I was stout as an ox when Mary wanted to go to school. It is your duty and your job to stay here and do this work."

"To pay for having been born last? Not a bit more than if I had been born first. Any girl in the family owes you as much for life as I do; it is up to the others to pay back in service, after they are of age, if it is to me. I have done my share. If Father were not the richest farmer in the county, and one of the richest men, it would be different. He can afford to hire help for you, quite as well as he can for himself."

"Hire help! Who would I get to do the work here?"

"You'd have to double your assistants. You could not hire two women who would come here and do so much work as I do in a day. That is why I decline to give up teaching, and stay here to slave at your option, for gingham dresses and cowhide shoes, of your selection. If I were a boy, I'd work three years more and then I would be given two hundred acres of land, have a house and barn built for me, and a

start of stock given me, as every boy in this family has had at twenty-one."

"A man is a man! He founds a family, he runs the Government! It is a different matter," said Mrs. Bates.

"It surely is; in this family. But I think, even with us, a man would have rather a difficult proposition on his hands to found a family without a woman; or to run the Government either."

"All right! Go on to Adam and see what you get."

"I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that Nancy Ellen gets dinner, anyway," said Kate as she passed through the door and followed the long path to the gate, from there walking beside the road in the direction of her brother's home. There were many horses in the pasture and single and double buggies in the barn; but it never occurred to Kate that she might ride: it was Sunday and the horses were resting. So she followed the path beside the fences, rounded the corner of the church and went on her way with the text from which the pastor was preaching, hammering in her brain. She became so absorbed in thought that she scarcely saw the footpath she followed, while June flowered, and perfumed, and sang all around her.

She was so intent upon the words she had heard that her feet unconsciously followed a well-defined branch from the main path leading into the woods, from the bridge, where she sat on a log, and for the unnumbered time, reviewed her problem. She had worked ever since she could remember. Never in her life had she gotten to school before noon on Monday, because of the large washings. After the other work was finished she had spent nights and mornings ironing, when she longed to study, seldom finishing before Saturday. Summer brought an endless round of harvesting, canning, drying; winter brought butchering, heaps of sewing, and postponed summer work. School began late in the fall and closed early in spring, with teachers often inefficient; yet because she was a close student and kept

her books where she could take a peep and memorize and think as she washed dishes and cooked, she had thoroughly mastered all the country school near her home could teach her. With six weeks of a summer Normal course she would be as well prepared to teach as any of her sisters were, with the exception of Mary, who had been able to convince her parents that she possessed two college years' worth of "ability."

Kate laid no claim to "ability," herself; but she knew she was as strong as most men, had an ordinary brain that could be trained, and while she was far from beautiful she was equally as far from being ugly, for her skin was smooth and pink, her eyes large and blue-gray, her teeth even and white. She missed beauty because her cheekbones were high, her mouth large, her nose barely escaping a pug; but she had a real "crown of glory" in her hair, which was silken fine, long and heavy, of sunshine-gold in colour, curling naturally around her face and neck. Given pure blood to paint such a skin with varying emotions, enough wind to ravel out a few locks of such hair, the proportions of a Venus and perfect health, any girl could rest very well assured of being looked at twice, if not oftener.

Kate sat on a log, a most unusual occurrence for her, for she was familiar only with bare, hot houses, furnished with meagre necessities; reeking stables, barnyards and vegetable gardens. She knew less of the woods than the average city girl; but there was a soothing wind, a sweet perfume, a calming silence that quieted her tense mood and enabled her to think clearly; so the review went on over years of work and petty economies, amounting to one grand aggregate that gave to each of seven sons house, stock, and land at twenty-one; and to each of nine daughters a bolt of muslin and a fairly decent dress when she married, as the seven older ones did speedily, for they were fine, large, upstanding girls, some having real beauty, all exceptionally well-trained economists and workers.

Because her mother had the younger daughters to help in the absence of the elder, each girl had been allowed the time and money to prepare herself to teach a country school; all of them had taught until they married. Nancy Ellen, the beauty of the family, the girl next older than Kate, had taken the home school for the second winter. Going to school to Nancy Ellen had been the greatest trial of Kate's life, until the possibility of not going to Normal had confronted her.

Nancy Ellen was almost as large as Kate, quite as pink, her features assembled in a manner that made all the difference, her jet-black hair as curly as Kate's, her eyes big and dark, her lips red. As for looking at Kate twice, no one ever looked at her at all if Nancy Ellen happened to be walking beside her. Kate bore that without protest; it would have wounded her pride to rebel openly; she did Nancy Ellen's share of the work to allow her to study and have her Normal course; she remained at home plainly clothed to loan Nancy Ellen her best dress when she attended Normal; but when she found that she was doomed to finish her last year at school under Nancy Ellen, to work double so that her sister might go to school early and remain late, coming home tired and with lessons to prepare for the morrow, some of the spontaneity left Kate's efforts.

She had a worse grievance when Nancy Ellen hung several new dresses and a wrapper on her side of the closet after her first pay-day, and furnished her end of the bureau with a white hair brush and a brass box filled with pink powder, with a swan's-down puff for its application. For three months Kate had waited and hoped that at least "thank you" would be vouchsafed her; when it failed for that length of time she did two things: she studied so diligently that her father called her into the barn and told her that if before the school, she asked Nancy Ellen another question she could not answer, he would use the buggy whip on her to within an inch of her life. The buggy

whip always had been a familiar implement to Kate, so she stopped asking slippery questions, worked harder than ever, and spent her spare time planning what she would hang in the closet and put on her end of the bureau when she had finished her Normal course, and was teaching her first term of school.

Now she had learned all that Nancy Ellen could teach her, and much that Nancy Ellen never knew: it was time for Kate to be starting away to school. Because it was so self-evident that she should have what the others had had, she said nothing about it until the time came; then she found her father determined that she should remain at home to do the housework, for no compensation other than her board and such clothes as she always had worn, her mother wholly in accord with him, and marvel of all, Nancy Ellen quite enthusiastic on the subject.

Her father always had driven himself and his family like slaves, while her mother had ably seconded his efforts. Money from the sale of chickens, turkeys, butter, eggs, and garden truck that other women of the neighbourhood used for extra clothing for themselves and their daughters and to prettify their homes, Mrs. Bates handed to her husband to increase the amount necessary to purchase the two hundred acres of land for each son when he came of age. The youngest son had farmed his land with comfortable profit and started a bank account, while his parents and two sisters were still saving and working to finish the last payment. Kate thought with bitterness that if this final payment had been made possibly there would have been money to spare for her; but with that thought came the knowledge that her father had numerous investments on which he could have realized and made the payments had he not preferred that they should be a burden on his family.

"Take the wings of morning," repeated Kate, with all the emphasis the old minister had used. "Hummm! I wonder what kind of wings. Those of a peewee would scarcely do

for me; I'd need the wings of an eagle to get me anywhere, and anyway it wasn't the wings of a bird I was to take, it was the wings of morning. I wonder what the wings of morning are, and how I go about taking them. God knows where my wings come in; by the ache in my feet I seem to have walked, mostly. Oh, what ARE the wings of morning?"

Kate stared straight before her, sitting absorbed and motionless. Close in front of her a little white moth fluttered over the twigs and grasses. A kingbird sailed into view and perched on a brush-heap preparatory to darting after the moth. While the bird measured the distance and waited for the moth to rise above the entangling grasses, with a sweep and a snap a smaller bird, very similar in shape and colouring, flashed down, catching the moth and flying high among the branches of a big tree.

"Aha! You missed your opportunity!" said Kate to the kingbird.

She sat straighter suddenly. "Opportunity," she repeated. "Here is where I am threatened with missing mine. Opportunity! I wonder now if that might not be another name for 'the wings of morning.' Morning is winging its way past me, the question is: do I sit still and let it pass, or do I take its wings and fly away?"

Kate brooded on that awhile, then her thought formulated into words again.

"It isn't as if Mother were sick or poor, she is perfectly well and stronger than nine women out of ten of her age; Father can afford to hire all the help she needs; there is nothing cruel or unkind in leaving her; and as for Nancy Ellen, why does the fact that I am a few years younger than she, make me her servant? Why do I cook for her, and make her bed, and wash her clothes, while she earns money to spend on herself? And she is doing everything in her power to keep me at it, because she likes what she is doing and what it brings her, and she doesn't give a tinker whether I like what I am doing or not; or whether I get anything I

want out of it or not; or whether I miss getting off to Normal on time or not. She is blame selfish, that's what she is, so she won't like the jolt she's going to get; but it will benefit her soul, her soul that her pretty face keeps her from developing, so I shall give her a little valuable assistance. Mother will be furious and Father will have the buggy whip convenient; but I am going! I don't know how, or when, but I am GOING.

"Who has a thirst for knowledge, in Helicon may slake it, If he has still, the Roman will, to find a way, or make it."

Kate arose tall and straight and addressed the surrounding woods. "Now you just watch me 'find a way or make it,'" she said. "I am 'taking the wings of morning,' observe my flight! See me cut curves and circles and sail and soar around all the other Bates girls the Lord ever made, one named Nancy Ellen in particular. It must be far past noon, and I've much to do to get ready. I fly!"

Kate walked back to the highway, but instead of going on she turned toward home. When she reached the gate she saw Nancy Ellen, dressed her prettiest, sitting beneath a cherry tree reading a book, in very plain view from the road. As Kate came up the path: "Hello!" said Nancy Ellen. "Wasn't Adam at home?"

"I don't know," answered Kate. "I was not there."

"You weren't? Why, where were you?" asked Nancy Ellen.

"Oh, I just took a walk!" answered Kate.

"Right at dinner time on Sunday? Well, I'll be switched!" cried Nancy Ellen.

"Pity you weren't oftener, when you most needed it," said Kate, passing up the walk and entering the door. Her mother asked the same questions so Kate answered them.

"Well, I am glad you came home," said Mrs. Bates. "There was no use tagging to Adam with a sorry story, when your father said flatly that you couldn't go."

"But I must go!" urged Kate. "I have as good a right to my chance as the others. If you put your foot down and say so,

Mother, Father will let me go. Why shouldn't I have the same chance as Nancy Ellen? Please Mother, let me go!"

"You stay right where you are. There is an awful summer's work before us," said Mrs. Bates.

"There always is," answered Kate. "But now is just my chance while you have Nancy Ellen here to help you."

"She has some special studying to do, and you very well know that she has to attend the County Institute, and take the summer course of training for teachers."

"So do I," said Kate, stubbornly. "You really will not help me, Mother?"

"I've said my say! Your place is here! Here you stay!" answered her mother.

"All right," said Kate, "I'll cross you off the docket of my hopes, and try Father."

"Well, I warn you, you had better not! He has been nagged until his patience is lost," said Mrs. Bates.

Kate closed her lips and started in search of her father. She found him leaning on the pig pen watching pigs grow into money, one of his most favoured occupations. He scowled at her, drawing his huge frame to full height.

"I don't want to hear a word you have to say," he said. "You are the youngest, and your place is in the kitchen helping your mother. We have got the last installment to pay on Hiram's land this summer. March back to the house and busy yourself with something useful!"

Kate looked at him, from his big-boned, weather-beaten face, to his heavy shoes, then turned without a word and went back toward the house. She went around it to the cherry tree and with no preliminaries said to her sister: "Nancy Ellen, I want you to lend me enough money to fix my clothes a little and pay my way to Normal this summer. I can pay it all back this winter. I'll pay every cent with interest, before I spend any on anything else."

"Why, you must be crazy!" said Nancy Ellen.

"Would I be any crazier than you, when you wanted to go?" asked Kate.

"But you were here to help Mother," said Nancy Ellen.

"And you are here to help her now," persisted Kate.

"But I've got to fix up my clothes for the County Institute," said Nancy Ellen, "I'll be gone most of the summer."

"I have just as much right to go as you had," said Kate.

"Father and Mother both say you shall not go," answered her sister.

"I suppose there is no use to remind you that I did all in my power to help you to your chance."

"You did no more than you should have done," said Nancy Ellen.

"And this is no more than you should do for me, in the circumstances," said Kate.

"You very well know I can't! Father and Mother would turn me out of the house," said Nancy Ellen.

"I'd be only too glad if they would turn me out," said Kate. "You can let me have the money if you like. Mother wouldn't do anything but talk; and Father would not strike you, or make you go, he always favours you."

"He does nothing of the sort! I can't, and I won't, so there!" cried Nancy Ellen.

"'Won't,' is the real answer, 'so there,'" said Kate.

She went into the cellar and ate some cold food from the cupboard and drank a cup of milk. Then she went to her room and looked over all of her scanty stock of clothing, laying in a heap the pieces that needed mending. She took the clothes basket to the wash room, which was the front of the woodhouse, in summer; built a fire, heated water, and while making it appear that she was putting the clothes to soak, as usual, she washed everything she had that was fit to use, hanging the pieces to dry in the building.

"Watch me fly!" muttered Kate. "I don't seem to be cutting those curves so very fast; but I'm moving. I believe

now, having exhausted all home resources, that Adam is my next objective. He is the only one in the family who ever paid the slightest attention to me, maybe he cares a trifle what becomes of me, but Oh, how I dread Agatha! However, watch me take wing! If Adam fails me I have six remaining prospects among my loving brothers, and if none of them has any feeling for me or faith in me there yet remain my seven dear brothers-in-law, before I appeal to the tender mercies of the neighbours; but how I dread Agatha! Yet I fly!"

Chapter II - AN EMBRYO MIND READER

KATE was far from physical flight as she pounded the indignation of her soul into the path with her substantial feet. Baffled and angry, she kept reviewing the situation as she went swiftly on her way, regardless of dust and heat. She could see no justice in being forced into a position that promised to end in further humiliation and defeat of her hopes. If she only could find Adam at the stable, as she passed, and talk with him alone! Secretly, she well knew that the chief source of her dread of meeting her sister-in-law was that to her Agatha was so funny that ridiculing her had been regarded as perfectly legitimate pastime. For Agatha WAS funny; but she had no idea of it, and could no more avoid it than a bee could avoid being buzzy, so the manner in which her sisters-in-law imitated her and laughed at her, none too secretly, was far from kind. While she never guessed what was going on, she realized the antagonism in their attitude and stoutly resented it.

Adam was his father's favourite son, a stalwart, fine-appearing, big man, silent, honest, and forceful; the son most after the desires of the father's heart, yet Adam was the one son of the seven who had ignored his father's law that all of his boys were to marry strong, healthy young women, poor women, working women. Each of the others at coming of age had contracted this prescribed marriage as speedily as possible, first asking father Bates, the girl afterward. If father Bates disapproved, the girl was never asked at all. And the reason for this docility on the part of these big, matured men, lay wholly in the methods of father Bates. He gave those two hundred acres of land to each of them on coming of age, and the same sum to each for the

building of a house and barn and the purchase of stock; gave it to them in words, and with the fullest assurance that it was theirs to improve, to live on, to add to. Each of them had seen and handled his deed, each had to admit he never had known his father to tell a lie or deviate the least from fairness in a deal of any kind, each had been compelled to go in the way indicated by his father for years; but not a man of them held his own deed. These precious bits of paper remained locked in the big wooden chest beside the father's bed, while the land stood on the records in his name; the taxes they paid him each year he, himself, carried to the county clerk; so that he was the largest landholder in the county and one of the very richest men. It must have been extreme unction to his soul to enter the county office and ask for the assessment on those "little parcels of land of mine." Men treated him very deferentially, and so did his sons. Those documents carefully locked away had the effect of obtaining ever-ready help to harvest his hay and wheat whenever he desired, to make his least wish quickly deferred to, to give him authority and the power for which he lived and worked earlier, later, and harder than any other man of his day and locality.

Adam was like him as possible up to the time he married, yet Adam was the only one of his sons who disobeyed him; but there was a redeeming feature. Adam married a slender tall slip of a woman, four years his senior, who had been teaching in the Hartley schools when he began courting her. She was a prim, fussy woman, born of a prim father and a fussy mother, so what was to be expected? Her face was narrow and set, her body and her movements almost rigid, her hair, always parted, lifted from each side and tied on the crown, fell in stiff little curls, the back part hanging free. Her speech, as precise as her movements, was formed into set habit through long study of the dictionary. She was born antagonistic to whatever existed,

no matter what it was. So surely as every other woman agreed on a dress, a recipe, a house, anything whatever, so surely Agatha thought out and followed a different method, the disconcerting thing about her being that she usually finished any undertaking with less exertion, ahead of time, and having saved considerable money.

She could have written a fine book of synonyms, for as certainly as any one said anything in her presence that she had occasion to repeat, she changed the wording to six-syllabled mouthfuls, delivered with ponderous circumlocution. She subscribed to papers and magazines, which she read and remembered. And she danced! When other women thought even a waltz immoral and shocking; perfectly stiff, her curls exactly in place, Agatha could be seen, and frequently was seen, waltzing on the front porch in the arms of, and to a tune whistled by young Adam, whose full name was Adam Alcibiades Bates. In his younger days, when discipline had been required, Kate once had heard her say to the little fellow: "Adam Alcibiades ascend these steps and proceed immediately to your maternal ancestor."

Kate thought of this with a dry smile as she plodded on toward Agatha's home hoping she could see her brother at the barn, but she knew that most probably she would "ascend the steps and proceed to the maternal ancestor," of Adam Bates 3d. Then she would be forced to explain her visit and combat both Adam and his wife; for Agatha was not a nonentity like her collection of healthful, hard-working sisters-in-law. Agatha worked if she chose, and she did not work if she did not choose. Mostly she worked and worked harder than any one ever thought. She had a habit of keeping her house always immaculate, finishing her cleaning very early and then reading in a conspicuous spot on the veranda when other women were busy with their most tiresome tasks. Such was Agatha, whom Kate dreaded meeting, with every reason, for Agatha, despite curls, bony

structure, language, and dance, was the most powerful factor in the whole Bates family with her father-in-law; and all because when he purchased the original two hundred acres for Adam, and made the first allowance for buildings and stock, Agatha slipped the money from Adam's fingers in some inexplicable way, and spent it all for stock; because forsooth! Agatha was an only child, and her prim father endowed her, she said so herself, with three hundred acres of land, better in location and more fertile than that given to Adam, land having on it a roomy and comfortable brick house, completely furnished, a large barn and also stock; so that her place could be used to live on and farm, while Adam's could be given over to grazing herds of cattle which he bought cheaply, fattened and sold at the top of the market.

If each had brought such a farm into the family with her, father Bates could have endured six more prim, angular, becurled daughters-in-law, very well indeed, for land was his one and only God. His respect for Agatha was markedly very high, for in addition to her farm he secretly admired her independence of thought and action, and was amazed by the fact that she was about her work when several of the blooming girls he had selected for wives for his sons were confined to the sofa with a pain, while not one of them schemed, planned, connived with her husband and piled up the money as Agatha did, therefore she stood at the head of the women of the Bates family; while she was considered to have worked miracles in the heart of Adam Bates, for with his exception no man of the family ever had been seen to touch a woman, either publicly or privately, to offer the slightest form of endearment, assistance or courtesy. "Women are to work and to bear children," said the elder Bates. "Put them at the first job when they are born, and at the second at eighteen, and keep them hard at it."

At their rate of progression several of the Bates sons and daughters would produce families that, with a couple of

pairs of twins, would equal the sixteen of the elder Bates; but not so Agatha. She had one son of fifteen and one daughter of ten, and she said that was all she intended to have, certainly it was all she did have; but she further aggravated matters by announcing that she had had them because she wanted them; at such times as she intended to; and that she had the boy first and five years the older, so that he could look after his sister when they went into company. Also she walked up and sat upon Adam's lap whenever she chose, ruffled his hair, pulled his ears, and kissed him squarely on the mouth, with every appearance of having help, while the dance on the front porch with her son or daughter was of daily occurrence. And anything funnier than Agatha, prim and angular with never a hair out of place, stiffly hopping "Money Musk" and "Turkey In The Straw," or the "Blue Danube" waltz, anything funnier than that, never happened. But the two Adams, Jr. and 3d, watched with reverent and adoring eyes, for she was MOTHER, and no one else on earth rested so high in their respect as the inflexible woman they lived with. That she was different from all the other women of her time and location was hard on the other women. Had they been exactly right, they would have been exactly like her.

So Kate, thinking all these things over, her own problem acutely "advanced and proceeded." She advanced past the closed barn, and stock in the pasture, past the garden flaming June, past the dooryard, up the steps, down the hall, into the screened back porch dining room and "proceeded" to take a chair, while the family finished the Sunday night supper, at which they were seated. Kate was not hungry and she did not wish to trouble her sister-in-law to set another place, so she took the remaining chair, against the wall, behind Agatha, facing Adam, 3d, across the table, and with Adam Jr., in profile at the head, and little Susan at the foot. Then she waited her chance. Being tired and aggressive she did not wait long.

"I might as well tell you why I came," she said bluntly. "Father won't give me money to go to Normal, as he has all the others. He says I have got to stay at home and help Mother."

"Well, Mother is getting so old she needs help," said Adam, Jr., as he continued his supper.

"Of course she is," said Kate. "We all know that. But what is the matter with Nancy Ellen helping her, while I take my turn at Normal? There wasn't a thing I could do last summer to help her off that I didn't do, even to lending her my best dress and staying at home for six Sundays because I had nothing else fit to wear where I'd be seen."

No one said a word. Kate continued: "Then Father secured our home school for her and I had to spend the winter going to school to her, when you very well know that I always studied harder, and was ahead of her, even after she'd been to Normal. And I got up early and worked late, and cooked, and washed, and waited on her, while she got her lessons and reports ready, and fixed up her nice new clothes, and now she won't touch the work, and she is doing all she can to help Father keep me from going."

"I never knew Father to need much help on anything he made up his mind to," said Adam.

Kate sat very tense. She looked steadily at her brother, but he looked quite as steadily at his plate. The back of her sister-in-law was fully as expressive as her face. Her head was very erect, her shoulders stiff and still, not a curl moved as she poured Adam's tea and Susan's milk. Only Adam, 3d, looked at Kate with companionable eyes, as if he might feel a slight degree of interest or sympathy, so she found herself explaining directly to him.

"Things are blame unfair in our family, anyway!" she said, bitterly. "You have got to be born a boy to have any chance worth while; if you are a girl it is mighty small, and if you are the youngest, by any mischance, you have none at all. I don't want to harp things over; but I wish you would

explain to me why having been born a few years after Nancy Ellen makes me her slave, and cuts me out of my chance to teach, and to have some freedom and clothes. They might as well have told Hiram he was not to have any land and stay at home and help Father because he was the youngest boy; it would have been quite as fair; but nothing like that happens to the boys of this family, it is always the girls who get left. I have worked for years, knowing every cent I saved and earned above barely enough to cover me, would go to help pay for Hiram's land and house and stock; but he wouldn't turn a hand to help me, neither will any of the rest of you."

"Then what are you here for?" asked Adam.

"Because I am going to give you, and every other brother and sister I have, the chance to REFUSE to loan me enough to buy a few clothes and pay my way to Normal, so I can pass the examinations, and teach this fall. And when you have all refused, I am going to the neighbours, until I find someone who will loan me the money I need. A hundred dollars would be plenty. I could pay it back with two months' teaching, with any interest you say."

Kate paused, short of breath, her eyes blazing, her cheeks red. Adam went steadily on with his supper. Agatha appeared stiffer and more uncompromising in the back than before, which Kate had not thought possible. But the same dull red on the girl's cheeks had begun to burn on the face of young Adam. Suddenly he broke into a clear laugh.

"Oh, Ma, you're too funny!" he cried. "I can read your face like a book. I bet you ten dollars I can tell you just word for word what you are going to say. I dare you let me! You know I can!" Still laughing, his eyes dancing, a picture to see, he stretched his arm across the table toward her, and his mother adored him, however she strove to conceal the fact from him.

"Ten dollars!" she scoffed. "When did we become so wealthy? I'll give you one dollar if you tell me exactly what I

was going to say."

The boy glanced at his father. "Oh this is too easy!" he cried. "It's like robbing the baby's bank!" And then to his mother: "You were just opening your lips to say: 'Give it to her! If you don't, I will!' And you are even a little bit more of a brick than usual to do it. It's a darned shame the way all of them impose on Kate."

There was a complete change in Agatha's back. Adam, Jr., laid down his fork and stared at his wife in deep amazement. Adam, 3d, stretched his hand farther toward his mother. "Give me that dollar!" he cajoled.

"Well, I am not concealing it in the sleeve of my garments," she said. "If I have one, it is reposing in my purse, in juxtaposition to the other articles that belong there, and if you receive it, it will be bestowed upon you when I deem the occasion suitable."

Young Adam's fist came down with a smash. "I get the dollar!" he triumphed. "I TOLD you so! I KNEW she was going to say it! Ain't I a dandy mind reader though? But it is bully for you, Father, because of course, if Mother wouldn't let Kate have it, you'd HAVE to; but if you DID it might make trouble with your paternal land-grabber, and endanger your precious deed that you hope to get in the sweet by-and-by. But if Mother loans the money, Grandfather can't say a word, because it is her very own, and didn't cost him anything, and he always agrees with her anyway! Hurrah for hurrah, Kate! Nancy Ellen may wash her own petticoat in the morning, while I take you to the train. You'll let me, Father? You did let me go to Hartley alone, once. I'll be careful! I won't let a thing happen. I'll come straight home. And oh, my dollar, you and me; I'll put you in the bank and let you grow to three!"

"You may go," said his father, promptly.

"You shall proceed according to your Aunt Katherine's instructions," said his mother, at the same time.

"Katie, get your carpet-sack! When do we start?" demanded young Adam.

"Morning will be all right with me, you blessed youngun," said Kate, "but I don't own a telescope or anything to put what little I have in, and Nancy Ellen never would spare hers; she will want to go to County Institute before I get back."

"You may have mine," said Agatha. "You are perfectly welcome to take it wherever your peregrinations lead you, and return it when you please. I shall proceed to my chamber and formulate your check immediately. You are also welcome to my best hat and cape, and any of my clothing or personal adornments you can use to advantage."

"Oh, Agatha, I wish you were as big as a house, like me," said Kate, joyfully. "I couldn't possibly crowd into anything you wear, but it would almost tickle me to death to have Nancy Ellen know you let me take your things, when she won't even offer me a dud of her old stuff; I never remotely hoped for any of the new."

"You shall have my cape and hat, anyway. The cape is new and very fashionable. Come upstairs and try the hat," said Agatha.

The cape was new and fashionable as Agatha had said; it would not fasten at the neck, but there would be no necessity that it should during July and August, while it would improve any dress it was worn with on a cool evening. The hat Kate could not possibly use with her large, broad face and mass of hair, but she was almost as pleased with the offer as if the hat had been most becoming. Then Agatha brought out her telescope, in which Kate laid the cape while Agatha wrote her a check for one hundred and twenty dollars, and told her where and how to cash it. The extra twenty was to buy a pair of new walking shoes, some hose, and a hat, before she went to her train. When they went downstairs Adam, Jr., had a horse hitched and Adam,

3d, drove her to her home, where, at the foot of the garden, they took one long survey of the landscape and hid the telescope behind the privet bush. Then Adam drove away quietly, Kate entered the dooryard from the garden, and soon afterward went to the wash room and hastily ironed her clothing.

Nancy Ellen had gone to visit a neighbour girl, so Kate risked her remaining until after church in the evening. She hurried to their room and mended all her own clothing she had laid out. Then she deliberately went over Nancy Ellen's and helped herself to a pair of pretty nightdresses, such as she had never owned, a white embroidered petticoat, the second best white dress, and a most becoming sailor hat. These she made into a parcel and carried to the wash room, brought in the telescope and packed it, hiding it under a workbench and covering it with shavings. After that she went to her room and wrote a note, and then slept deeply until the morning call. She arose at once and went to the wash room but instead of washing the family clothing, she took a bath in the largest tub, and washed her hair to a state resembling spun gold. During breakfast she kept sharp watch down the road. When she saw Adam, 3d, coming she stuck her note under the hook on which she had seen her father hang his hat all her life, and carrying the telescope in the clothes basket covered with a rumpled sheet, she passed across the yard and handed it over the fence to Adam, climbed that same fence, and they started toward Hartley.

Kate put the sailor hat on her head, and sat very straight, an anxious line crossing her forehead. She was running away, and if discovered, there was the barest chance that her father might follow, and make a most disagreeable scene, before the train pulled out. He had gone to a far field to plow corn and Kate fervently hoped he would plow until noon, which he did. Nancy Ellen washed the dishes, and went into the front room to study, while Mrs. Bates put

on her sunbonnet and began hoeing the potatoes. Not one of the family noticed that Monday's wash was not on the clothes line as usual. Kate and Adam drove as fast as they dared, and on reaching town, cashed the check, decided that Nancy Ellen's hat would serve, thus saving the price of a new one for emergencies that might arise, bought the shoes, and went to the depot, where they had an anxious hour to wait.

"I expect Grandpa will be pretty mad," said Adam.

"I am sure there is not the slightest chance but that he will be," said Kate.

"Dare you go back home when school is over?" he asked.

"Probably not," she answered.

"What will you do?" he questioned.

"When I investigated sister Nancy Ellen's bureau I found a list of the School Supervisors of the county, so I am going to put in my spare time writing them about my qualifications to teach their schools this winter. All the other girls did well and taught first-class schools, I shall also. I am not a bit afraid but that I may take my choice of several. When I finish it will be only a few days until school begins, so I can go hunt my boarding place and stay there."

"Mother would let you stay at our house," said Adam.

"Yes, I think she would, after yesterday; but I don't want to make trouble that might extend to Father and your father. I had better keep away."

"Yes, I guess you had," said Adam. "If Grandfather rows, he raises a racket. But maybe he won't!"

"Maybe! Wouldn't you like to see what happens when Mother come in from the potatoes and Nancy Ellen comes out from the living room, and Father comes to dinner, all about the same time?"

Adam laughed appreciatively.

"Wouldn't I just!" he cried. "Kate, you like my mother, don't you?"

"I certainly do! She has been splendid. I never dreamed of such a thing as getting the money from her."

"I didn't either," said Adam, "until—I became a mind reader."

Kate looked straight into his eyes.

"How about that, Adam?" she asked.

Adam chuckled. "She didn't intend to say a word. She was going to let the Bateses fight it out among themselves. Her mouth was shut so tight it didn't look as if she could open it if she wanted to. I thought it would be better for you to borrow the money from her, so Father wouldn't get into a mess, and I knew how fine she was, so I just SUGGESTED it to her. That's all!"

"Adam, you're a dandy!" cried Kate.

"I am having a whole buggy load of fun, and you ought to go," said he. "It's all right! Don't you worry! I'll take care of you."

"Why, thank you, Adam!" said Kate. "That is the first time any one ever offered to take care of me in my life. With me it always has been pretty much of a 'go-it-alone' proposition."

"What of Nancy Ellen's did you take?" he asked. "Why didn't you get some gloves? Your hands are so red and work-worn. Mother's never look that way."

"Your mother never has done the rough field work I do, and I haven't taken time to be careful. They do look badly. I wish I had taken a pair of the lady's gloves; but I doubt if she would have survived that. I understand that one of the unpardonable sins is putting on gloves belonging to any one else."

Then the train came and Kate climbed aboard with Adam's parting injunction in her ears: "Sit beside an open window on this side!"

So she looked for and found the window and as she seated herself she saw Adam on the outside and leaned to speak to him again. Just as the train started he thrust his

hand inside, dropped his dollar on her lap, and in a tense whisper commanded her: "Get yourself some gloves!" Then he ran.

Kate picked up the dollar, while her eyes dimmed with tears.

"Why, the fine youngster!" she said. "The Jim-dandy fine youngster!"

Adam could not remember when he ever had been so happy as he was driving home. He found his mother singing, his father in a genial mood, so he concluded that the greatest thing in the world to make a whole family happy was to do something kind for someone else. But he reflected that there would be far from a happy family at his grandfather's; and he was right. Grandmother Bates came in from her hoeing at eleven o'clock tired and hungry, expecting to find the wash dry and dinner almost ready. There was no wash and no odour of food. She went to the wood-shed and stared unbelievably at the cold stove, the tubs of soaking clothes.

She turned and went into the kitchen, where she saw no signs of Kate or of dinner, then she lifted up her voice and shouted: "Nancy Ellen!"

Nancy Ellen came in a hurry. "Why, Mother, what is the matter?" she cried.

"Matter, yourself!" exclaimed Mrs. Bates. "Look in the wash room! Why aren't the clothes on the line? Where is that good-for-nothing Kate?"

Nancy Ellen went to the wash room and looked. She came back pale and amazed. "Maybe she is sick," she ventured. "She never has been; but she might be! Maybe she has lain down."

"On Monday morning! And the wash not out! You simpleton!" cried Mrs. Bates.

Nancy Ellen hurried upstairs and came back with bulging eyes.

"Every scrap of her clothing is gone, and half of mine!"

"She's gone to that fool Normal-thing! Where did she get the money?" cried Mrs. Bates.

"I don't know!" said Nancy Ellen. "She asked me yesterday, but of course I told her that so long as you and Father decided she was not to go, I couldn't possibly lend her the money."

"Did you look if she had taken it?"

Nancy Ellen straightened. "Mother! I didn't need do that!"

"You said she took your clothes," said Mrs. Bates.

"I had hers this time last year. She'll bring back clothes."

"Not here, she won't! Father will see that she never darkens these doors again. This is the first time in his life that a child of his has disobeyed him."

"Except Adam, when he married Agatha; and he strutted like a fighting cock about that."

"Well, he won't 'strut' about this, and you won't either, even if you are showing signs of standing up for her. Go at that wash, while I get dinner."

Dinner was on the table when Adam Bates hung his hat on its hook and saw the note for him. He took it down and read:

FATHER: I have gone to Normal. I borrowed the money of a woman who was willing to trust me to pay it back as soon as I earned it. Not Nancy Ellen, of course. She would not even loan me a pocket handkerchief, though you remember I stayed at home six weeks last summer to let her take what she wanted of mine. Mother: I think you can get Sally Whistler to help you as cheaply as any one and that she will do very well. Nancy Ellen: I have taken your second best hat and a few of your things, but not half so many as I loaned you. I hope it makes you mad enough to burst. I hope you get as mad and stay as mad as I have been most of this year while you taught me things you didn't know

yourself; and I cooked and washed for you so you could wear fine clothes and play the lady. KATE

Adam Bates read that note to himself, stretching every inch of his six feet six, his face a dull red, his eyes glaring. Then he turned to his wife and daughter.

"Is Kate gone? Without proper clothing and on borrowed money," he demanded.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Bates. "I was hoeing potatoes all forenoon."

"Listen to this," he thundered. Then he slowly read the note aloud. But somehow the spoken words did not have the same effect as when he read them mentally in the first shock of anger. When he heard his own voice read off the line, "I hope it makes you mad enough to burst," there was a catch and a queer gurgle in his throat. Mrs. Bates gazed at him anxiously. Was he so surprised and angry he was choking? Might it be a stroke? It was! It was a master stroke. He got no farther than "taught me things you didn't know yourself," when he lowered the sheet, threw back his head and laughed as none of his family ever had seen him laugh in his life; laughed and laughed until his frame was shaken and the tears rolled. Finally he looked at the dazed Nancy Ellen. "Get Sally Whistler, nothing!" he said. "You hustle your stumps and do for your mother what Kate did while you were away last summer. And if you have any common decency send your sister as many of your best things as you had of hers, at least. Do you hear me?"