

A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST

By GENE STRATTON-PORTER

Copyright, 1905, by Doubleday, Page & Co.

SYNOPSIS

Although a good scholar, Elnora Comstock, entering high school, is abashed by her country dress. She needs \$20 for books and tuition fees. Her mother is unsympathetic, and Elnora tells her troubles to Wesley Sinton, an old neighbor.

Wesley Sinton walked down the road a half mile and turned in at the lane leading to his home. His heart was hot and filled with indignation. He had told Elnora he did not blame her mother, but he did. His wife met him at the door.

"Did you see anything of Elnora, Wesley?" she questioned. "Most too much, Maggie," he answered. "What do you say to going to town? There's a few things has to be got right away."

"Where did you see her, Wesley?" "Along the old Limberlost trail, my girl, torn to pieces sobbing. Her courage always has been fine, but the thing she met today was too much for her. We ought to have known better than to let her go that way. I ought to have gone in and seen about this school business. I'm no man to let a fatherless girl run into such trouble. Don't cry, Maggie. Get me some supper and I'll hitch up and see what we can do now."

"What can we do, Wesley?" "I don't just know. But we've got to do something. Kate Comstock will be a handful, while Elnora will be two, but between us we must see that the girl is not too hard pressed about money and that she is dressed so she is not ridiculous. She's saved us the wages of a woman many a day. Can't you make her some decent dresses, Maggie?"

"Well, I'm not just what you call expert, but I could beat Kate Comstock all to pieces. I know that skirts should be plaited to the band instead of gathered and full enough to sit in and short enough to walk in. I could try. There's patterns for sale. Let's go right away, Wesley."

"Well, set me a bite of supper while I hitch up." They drove toward the city through the beautiful September evening, and as they went they planned for Elnora. The only trouble was not whether they were generous enough to get what she needed, but whether she would accept what they got and what her mother would say.

"They went to a large dry goods store, and when a clerk asked what they wanted to see neither of them knew, so they stepped to one side and held a whispered consultation. "What had we better get, Wesley?" "Blest if I know!" exclaimed Wesley. "I thought you would manage that. I know about some things I'm going to get."

At that instant several schoolgirls came into the store and approached them. "There!" exclaimed Wesley breathlessly. "There, Maggie! Like them! That's what she needs! Buy like they have!"

Before she knew it Margaret was among them. "I beg your pardon, girls, but won't you wait a minute?" she asked. The girls stopped with wondering faces. "It's your clothes," explained Mrs. Sinton. "You look just beautiful to me. You look exactly as I should have wanted to see my girls. They both died of diphtheria when they were little. If they had lived they'd been near your age now, and I'd want them to look like you. I know a girl who would be just as pretty as any of you if she had the clothes, but her mother does not think about her, so I got to mother her some myself."

you want to spend and what you want to buy, and she will know how to get the most for your money." "That's the very thing," agreed Margaret. "But before you go tell me about your hair. Elnora's hair is bright and wavy, but yours is silky as hickled flax. How do you do it?" "Elnora?" asked four girls in concert.

"Yes; Elnora is the name of the girl I want these things for." "Did she come to the high school today?" questioned one of them. "Was she in your classes?" demanded Margaret without reply. Four girls stood silent and thought fast. Had there been a strange girl among them, and had she been overlooked and passed by with indifference because she was so very shabby? If she had appeared as much better than they as she had looked worse would her reception have been the same?

"There was a strange girl from the country in the freshman class today," said Ellen Brownlee, "and her name was Elnora." "That was the girl," said Margaret. "Are her people so very poor?" questioned Ellen.

"No, not poor at all, come to think of it," answered Margaret. "It's a peculiar case. Mrs. Comstock had a great trouble, and she let it change her whole life and make a different woman of her. She used to be lovely, but all she does now is droop all day and walk the edge of the swamp half the night and neglect Elnora. If you girls would make life just a little easier for her it would be the finest thing you ever did."

All of them promised they would. "Now tell me about your hair," persisted Margaret Sinton. So they took her to a toilet counter, and she bought the proper hair soap, also a nail file and cold cream for use after windy days. Then they left her

with the experienced clerk, and when at last Wesley found her she was loaded with bundles, and the glint of other days was in her beautiful eyes. Wesley carried some packages also.

"Come on, now, let's get home," he said.

CHAPTER III

Wherein Elnora Procures Her Books and Finds Means of Earning Money.

ALL the way home Wesley and Margaret Sinton discussed how they should give Elnora their purchases and what Mrs. Comstock would say. "I am afraid she will be awfully mad," said Margaret Sinton tremulously. "She'll just rip," replied Wesley graphically. "But if she wants to leave the raising of her girl to the neighbors she needn't get fractious if they take some pride in doing a good job. From now on I calculate Elnora shall go to school, and she shall have all the clothes and books she needs, if I go around on the back of Kate Comstock's land and cut a tree or drive off a calf to pay for them. Why I know one tree she owns that would put Elnora in heaven for a year. Just think of it, Margaret! It's not fair. One-third of what is there belongs to Elnora by law, and if Kate Comstock raises a row I'll tell her so and see that the girl gets it. You go to see Kate in the morning, and I'll go with you. Tell her you want Elnora's pattern, that you are going to make her a dress for helping us. And sort of hint at a few more things. If Kate balks I'll take a hand and settle her. I'll go to law for Elnora's share of that and then she can take her share."

"Why, Wesley Sinton, you're perfectly wild." "I'm not! Did you ever stop to think that such cases are so frequent there have been laws made to provide for them? I can bring it up in court and force Kate to educate Elnora and board and clothe her till she's of age, and then she can take her own share."

"Wesley, Kate would go crazy!" "She's crazy now. The idea of any mother living with as sweet a girl as Elnora and letting her suffer till I find her crying like a funeral! It makes me fighting mad!"

When Wesley came from the barn Margaret had four pieces of crisp gingham, a pale blue, a pink, a gray with green stripes and a rich brown and blue plaid. On each of them lay a yard and a half of wide ribbon to match. There were handkerchiefs and a brown leather belt. In her hands she held a wide brimmed tan straw hat having a high crown banded with velvet strips, each of which fastened with a tiny gold buckle.

"It looks kind of bare now," she explained. "It had three quills on it here. The price was two and a half for the hat, and those things were a dollar and a dollar and a half apiece. I couldn't pay that."

"It does seem considerable," admitted Wesley, "but will it look right without them?" "No, it won't!" said Margaret. "It's going to have quills on it. Do you remember those beautiful peacock wing feathers that Phoebe Simms gave me? Three of them go on just where those came off, and nobody will ever know the difference. They match the hat to a moral, and they are just a little longer and richer than the ones that I had taken off. I was wondering whether I better sew them on tonight while I remember how they set or wait till morning."

"Well, sir," said Wesley. "I saw something today. You told me about Kate getting that tin pail for Elnora to carry to high school, and you said you told her it was a shame. So I just inquired around till I found this, and I think it's about the ticket. Decent looking and handy as you please. See here, now!"

Wesley opened the package and laid a brown leather lunch box on the table. Inside was a space for sandwiches, a little porcelain box for cold meat or fried chicken, another for salad, a glass with a lid which screwed on, held by a ring in a corner, for custard or jelly, a flask for tea or milk, a beautiful little knife, fork and spoon fastened in holders and a place for a napkin. Margaret was almost crying over it. "How I'd love to fill it!" she exclaimed.

"Do it the first time just to show Kate Comstock what love is!" said Wesley. "Get up early in the morning and make one of those dresses tomorrow. Can't you make a plain gingham dress in a day? I'll pick a chicken, and you fry it and fix a little custard for the cup, and do it up brown. Go on, Maggie, you do it!"

"I never can," said Margaret. "I am slow as the itch about sewing, and these are not going to be plain dresses when it comes to making them. There are going to be edgings of plain green, pink and brown to the bias strips and tucks and pleats about the hips, fancy belts and collars, and all of it takes time."

"Then Kate Comstock's got to help," said Wesley. "Can the two of you make one and get that lunch tomorrow?" "Easy, but she'll never do it!" "You see if she doesn't!" said Wesley. "You get up and cut it out, and soon as Elnora is gone I'll go after Kate myself. She'll take what I'll say better alone. But she'll come, and she'll help make the dress. These other things

are our Christmas gifts to Elnora. She'll no doubt need them more now than she will then, and we can give them just as well. That's yours, and this is mine, or whichever way you choose."

Wesley untied a good brown umbrella and shook out the folds of a long brown raincoat. Margaret dropped the hat, arose and took the coat. She tried it on, felt it, cooed over it and watched it with the umbrella.

"Did it look anything like rain tonight?" she inquired so anxiously that Wesley laughed. "And this last bundle?" she said, dropping back in her chair, the coat still over her shoulders. "I couldn't buy this much stuff for any other woman and nothing for my own," said Wesley. "It's Christmas for you, too, Margaret!" He shook out fold after fold of soft gray satiny goods that would look lovely against Margaret's pink cheeks and whitening hair.

"Oh, you old darling!" she exclaimed and fed sobbing into his arms. At 4 o'clock next morning Elnora was shelling beans. At 6 she fed chickens and pigs, swept two of the rooms of the cabin, built a fire and put on the kettle for breakfast. Then she climbed the narrow stairs to the attic she had occupied since a very small child and dressed in the hated shoes and brown calico, plastered down her crisp curls, ate what breakfast she could and, pinning on her hat, started for town.

"There is no sense in your going for an hour yet," said her mother. "I must try to discover some way to earn those books," replied Elnora. "I am perfectly positive I shall not find them lying along the road wrapped in tissue paper and tagged with my name."

She went toward the city as on yesterday. Her perplexity as to where tuition and books were to come from was worse, but she did not feel quite so badly. She never again would have to face all of it for the first time. She had been through it once and was yet living. There had been times yesterday when she had prayed to be hidden or to drop dead, and neither had happened. "I guess the best way to get an answer to prayer is to work for it," muttered Elnora grimly.

In an Onabasha book store she asked the prices of the list of books that she needed and learned that \$8 would not quite supply them. She anxiously inquired for second hand books, but was told that the only way to secure them was from the last year's freshmen.

"Do you wish these?" asked the clerk hurriedly, for the store was rapidly filling with school children wanting anything from a dictionary to a pen. "Yes," gasped Elnora, "oh, yes! But I cannot pay for them just now. Please let me take them, and I will pay for them on Friday or return them as perfect as they are. Please trust me for them a few days."

The clerk looked at her doubtfully and took her name. "I'll ask the proprietor," he said. When he came back Elnora knew the answer before he spoke. "I'm sorry," he said, "but Mr. Hann doesn't recognize your name. You are not a customer of ours, and he feels that he can't take the risk. You'll have to bring the money."

Elnora caught the wicket at the cashier's desk with both hands to brace herself against disappointment. "Who is it wants to buy cocoons, butterflies and moths?" she panted. "The Bird Woman," answered the cashier. "Have you some for sale?" "I have some, but I do not know if they are what she would want."

"Well, you had better see her," said the cashier. "Do you know where she lives?" "Yes," said Elnora. "Would you tell me the time?" "Twenty-one after 8," was the answer.

She had nine minutes to reach the auditorium or be late. Should she go to school or to the Bird Woman? Several girls passed her walking swiftly and she remembered their faces. They were hurrying to school. Elnora caught the infection. She would see the Bird Woman at noon. Algebra came first and that professor was kind. Perhaps she could slip to the superintendent and ask him for a book for the next lesson.

As she went down the long hall she noticed the professor of mathematics standing in the door of his recitation room. When she came up to him he smiled and spoke to her. "I have been watching for you," he said, and Elnora stopped, bewildered. "For me?" she questioned. "Yes," said Professor Henley. "Step inside."

Elnora followed him into the room, and he swung the door behind them. "At teachers' meeting last evening one of the professors mentioned that a pupil had betrayed in class that she had expected her books to be furnished by the city. I thought possibly it was you. Was it?" "Yes," breathed Elnora. "That being the case," said Professor Henley, "it just occurred to me as you had expected that you might require a little time to secure them,

and you are too fine a mathematician to fall behind for want of supplies. So I telephoned one of our sophomores to bring her last year's books this morning. I am sorry to say they are somewhat abused, but the text is all here. You can have them for \$2 and pay when you get ready. Would you care to take them?"

Elnora sat suddenly, because she could not stand another instant. She reached both hands for the books and said never a word. The professor was silent also. "At last Elnora arose, hugging those books to her heart as a mother grasps a lost baby. "One thing more," said the professor. "You can pay your tuition quarterly. You need not bother about the first installment this month. Any time in October will do."

So Elnora entered the auditorium a second time. Her face was like the brightest dawn that ever broke over the Limberlost. No matter about the [Continued on page 7, Col. 1.]

Hood's Sarsaparilla. Rheumatism. WILL LET GO OF YOU. When you correct the acid condition of your blood on which it depends, it only loosens its hold for a while when you apply lotions or liniments to your aching joints or stiff muscles.

Waverly Oils. Next to Sunlight. the never flickering, bright lamp flame from the best Triple-Refined Pennsylvania Crude Oil.

Family Favorite Oil. Your dealer gets it in barrels direct from our refineries. FREE—320 page book—all about oil. WAVERLY OIL WORKS CO. Pittsburgh, Pa.

Magazines. POPULAR MECHANICS.

Popular Mechanics Magazine. "WRITTEN SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND IT" A GREAT Continued Story of the World's Progress which you may begin reading at any time, and which will hold your interest forever.

Dry Goods, Etc.

LYON & COMPANY.

LA VOGUE

Coats and Suits

We just received another large shipment of Coats and Suits. La Vogue garments have made our Coat and Suit Department very popular. The finest cloths, the best styles, designs and tailoring are embodied in La Vogue garments without extra charge.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

You will find our store a great help for your Christmas buying. Select your gifts now and we will keep them until you want them.

LINENS.

Humidor Table Linens in all the new designs—satin stripe and plain centre, with the new floral borders; very heavy cloth two yards wide, with Napkins to match. Special Low Prices to Holiday Shoppers.

STAMPED LINENS.

A complete line of Stamped Linens in white and ecru, including Pillow Tops, Scarfs, Centre-pieces, Collar and Cuff Sets, Guest Towels, Ladies' Combinations and Corset Covers in the new designs, with the flosses to match in all colors.

A Big Neckwear Display.

New Ruffings, Jabots, Frills, Bows, Collar and Cuff sets and Robespierre Collars. Everything new and up-to-date in FURS and the prices are very low for the early Christmas shoppers.

Lyon & Co. Bellefonte

Shoes. Shoes.

Yeager's Shoe Store

The Ladies' Shoe

Fitzezy

that Cures Corns

Sold only at

Yeager's Shoe Store,

Bush Arcade Building, BELLEFONTE, PA.

Wanted.—Caterpillars, cocoons, chrysalides, pupae cases, butterflies, moths, Indian relics of all kinds. Highest scale of prices paid in cash.

57-47-3