

The Story of Waitstill Baxter

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

Copyright, 1913, by Kate Douglas Wiggin

SYNOPSIS

Waitstill Baxter and her sister, Patience (Patty), keep house for their widowed, mean father. Ivory Boynton, whose father disappeared, is interested in Waitstill. He takes care of his daughter.

Mrs. Boynton expects her husband to return. Rodman, a young boy, is a member of the Boynton household.

Ivory's father abandoned his family to follow Jacob Cochran, a mystic. Patience chafes under her father's stern rule.

Patty has two admirers—Mark Wilson, an educated young man, and Cephas Cole, who is unlearned. Mark kisses her.

Waitstill is spending her life in loving care of Patience. Aunt Abby and Uncle Bart Cole are friends of the whole community.

Cephas Cole, tending store for Baxter, proposes to Patty and is rejected. In his agitation he lets the molasses run all over the store floor.

Although they love each other, Waitstill and Ivory suppress their affection because of their household cares.

Patty and Waitstill go to church, although their father is too mean to give them fitting garments. Waitstill sings in the choir.

A strange young woman in the Wilson pew, a visitor from Boston, makes Patty jealous. Haying time arrives.

Waitstill decides to disobey her father by paying a visit to Mrs. Boynton. Uncle Bart discourses to Cephas on woman's ways.

Mrs. Boynton confides in Waitstill, telling the girl she believes Rodman is not her sister's child, but she cannot be sure.

(Continued next week.)

Independence day had passed, with its usual gaieties for the young people, in none of which the Baxter family had joined, and now, at 11 o'clock on this burning July morning, Waitstill was driving the old mare past the Wilson farm on her way to the river field.

Her father was working there, together with the two hired men whom he took on for a fortnight during the height of the season. If mowing, raking, pitching and carting of the precious crop could only have been done at odd times during the year or at night he would not have embittered the month of July by paying out money for labor. But nature was inexorable in the ripening of hay, and Old Foxy was obliged to succumb to the inevitable.

Waitstill had a basket packed with luncheon for three and a great demijohn of cool ginger tea under the wagon seat. Other farmers sometimes served hard cider or rum, but her father's principles were dead against this riotous extravagance. Temperance, in any and all directions, was cheap, and the deacon was a very temperate man, save in language.

The fields on both sides of the road were full of haymakers, and everywhere there was bustle and stir. There would be three or four men—one leading, the others following—slowly swinging their way through a noble piece of grass, and the smell of the mown fields in the sunshine was sweeter than honey in the comb.

There were patches of black eyed Susans in the meadows here and there, while pink and white hardback grew by the road, with day lilies and blossoming milkweed. The bobolinks were flitting from every tree. There were thrushes in the alder bushes and orioles in the tops of the elms, and Waitstill's heart overflowed with joy at being in such a world of midsummer beauty, though life during the great heat and incessant work of haying time was a little more rigorous than usual.

The extra food needed for the hired men always kept her father in a state of mind closely resembling insanity. Coming downstairs to cook breakfast, she would find the coffee or tea measured out for the pot. The increased consumption of milk angered him beyond words, because it lessened the supply of butter for sale.

Everything that could be made with buttermilk was ordered so to be done, and nothing but water could be used in mixing the raised bread. The corn-cake must never have an egg; the pie crust must be shortened only with lard or with a mixture of beef fat and dripping, and so on, and so on, eternally.

When the girls were respectively seventeen and thirteen, Waitstill had begged a small plot of ground for them to use as they liked, and beginning at that time, they had gradually made a little garden, with a couple of fruit trees and a thicket of red, white and black currants, raspberry and black-berry bushes.

For several summers now they had sold enough of their own fruit to buy a pair of shoes or gloves, a scarf or a hat, but even this tiny income was beginning to be menaced. The deacon positively suffered as he looked at that odd corner of earth, not any bigger than his barn floor, and saw what his girls had done with no tools but a spade and a hoe and no help but their own hands. He had no leisure (so he growled) to cultivate and fertilize

ground for small fruits and no money to pay a man to do it, yet here was food grown under his very eye and it did not belong to him!

The girls worked in their garden chiefly at sunrise in spring and early summer or after supper in the evening. All the same, Waitstill had been told by her father the day before that she was not only using ground, but time that belonged to him, and that he should expect her to provide "ple filling" out of her garden patch during haying to help satisfy the ravenous appetites of that couple of "great, gorming, greedy lubbers" that he was hiring this year. He had stopped the peeling of potatoes before boiling because he disapproved of the thickness of the parings he found in the pig's pail, and he stood over Patty at her work in the kitchen until Waitstill was in daily fear of a tempest of some sort.

Coming in from the shed one morning she met her father just issuing from the kitchen where Patty was standing like a young Fury in front of the sink. "Father's been spying at the eggshells I settled the coffee with and said I'd no business to leave so much good in the shell when I broke an egg. I will not bear it. He makes me feel fairly murderous! You'd better not



"I will not bear it."

leave me alone with him when I'm like this. Oh, I know that I'm wicked, but isn't he wicked too, and who was wicked first?"

Patty's heart had been set on earning and saving enough pennies for a white muslin dress, and every day rendered the prospect more uncertain.

Waitstill's patience was flagging a trifle, too, under the stress of the hot days and the still hotter, breathless nights. The suspicion crossed her mind now and then that her father's mindlessness and fits of temper might be caused by a mental malady over which he now had little or no control, having never mastered himself in all his life. Her power of endurance would be greater, she thought, if only she could be certain that this theory was true, though her slavery would be just as galling.

It would be so easy for her to go away and earn a living. She had never had a day of illness in her life; she who could sew, knit, spin, weave and cook. She could make enough money in Biddeford or Portsmouth to support herself and Patty, too, until the proper work was found for both.

But there would be a truly terrible conflict of wills, and such fierce arraignment of her unfilial conduct, such bitter and caustic argument from her father, such disapproval from the parson and the neighbors, that her very soul shrank from the prospect. If she could go alone and have no responsibility over Patty's future, that would be a little more possible, but she must think wisely for two.

And how could she leave Ivory when there might perhaps come a crisis in his life where she could be useful to him? How could she cut herself off from those Sundays in the choir, those dear, fugitive glimpses of him in the road or at prayer meeting? They were only slips of happiness, where her thirsty heart yearned for long, deep drafts, but they were immeasurably better than nothing.

Freedom from her father's heavy yoke—freedom to work and read and sing and study and grow—oh, how she longed for this! But at what a cost would she gain it if she had to harbor the guilty conscience of an un dutiful and rebellious daughter and at the same time cut herself off from the sight of the one being she loved best in all the world!

She felt drawn toward Ivory's mother today. Three weeks had passed since her talk with Ivory in the churchyard, but there had been no possibility of an hour's escape from home. She was at liberty this afternoon—relatively at liberty, for although her work, as usual, was laid out for her, it could be made up somehow or other before nightfall. She could drive over to the Boynton's place, hitch her horse in the woods near the house, make her visit, yet be in plenty of time to go up to the river field and bring her father home to supper.

Patty was over at Mrs. Abel Day's learning a new crochet stitch and helping her to start a log cabin quilt. Ivory and Rodman she knew were both away in the Wilson hayfield. No time would ever be more favorable. So, instead of driving up Town House hill, when she returned to the village she kept on over the bridge.

CHAPTER XII. Uncle Bart Discourses.

UNCLE BART and Cephas were taking their nooning hour under the Nodhead apple tree as Waitstill passed the joiner's shop and went over the bridge.

"Uncle Bart might somehow guess where I am going," she thought, "but even if he did he would never tell any one."

"Where's Waitstill bound this afternoon, I wonder?" drawled Cephas, rising to his feet and looking after the departing team. "That reminds me I'd better run up to Baxter's and see if anything's wanted before I open the store."

"If it makes any difference," said his father dryly as he filled his pipe, "Patty's over to Mrs. Day's spendin' the afternoon. Don't s'pose you want to call on the pig, do you? He's the only one to home."

Cephas made no remark, but gave his trousers a hitch, picked up a chip, opened his jackknife and, sitting down on the greensward, began idly whittling the bit of wood into shape.

"I kind o' wish you'd let me make the new ell two story, father. 'Twouldn't be much work; take it in slack time after hayin'."

"Land o' liberty! What do you want to do that for, Cephas? You 'bout pestered the life out o' me gittin' me to build the ell in the first place when we didn't need it no more'n a toad does a pocketbook. Then nothin' would do but you must paint it, though I shan't be able to have the main house painted for another year, so the old wine an' the new bottle side by side looks like the old driver an' makes us a laughin' stock to the village, an' now you want to change the thing into a two story! Never heard such a crazy idee in my life."

"I want to settle down," insisted Cephas doggedly.

"Well, settle—I'm willin'! I told you that afore you painted the ell. Ain't two rooms, 14 by 14, enough for you to settle down in? If they ain't, I guess your mother'd give you one o' the chambers in the main part."

"She would if I married Phoebe Day, but I don't want to marry Phoebe," argued Cephas. "And mother's gone and made a summer kitchen for herself out in the ell already. I bet yer she'll never move out if I should want to move in on a sudden."

"I told you you was takin' the risk when you cut a door through from the main part," said his father genially. "If you hadn't done that your mother would 'a had to gone round outside to git in' the ell, and mebbe she'd 'a stayed to home when it stormed, any-how. Now your wife'll have her troopin' in an' out, in an' out, the whole 'durin' time."

"I only cut the door through to please mother, so't she'd favor my gittin' married, but I guessn't won't do no good. You see, father, what I was thinkin' of is, a girl would mebbe jump at a two story, four roomed ell when she wouldn't look at a smaller place."

"Pends upon whether the girl's the jumpin' kind or not. Hadn't you better git everything fixed up with the one you've picked out afore you take your good savin's and go to buildin' a bigger place for her?"

"I've asked her once already," Cephas allowed with a burning face. "I don't s'pose you know the one I mean?"

"No kind of an idee," responded his father with a quizzical wink that was lost on the young man, as his eyes were fixed upon his whittling. "Does she belong to the village?"

"I ain't goin' to let folks know who I've picked out till I git a little mite forrarder," responded Cephas craftily. "Say, father, it's all right to ask a girl twice, ain't it?"

"Certain it is, my son. I never heard there was any special limit to the number o' times you could ask 'em, and their power o' sayin' 'No' is like the mercy of the Lord—it endureth forever. You wouldn't consider a widder, Cephas? A widder'd be a good comp'ny keeper for your mother."

"I hain't put my good savin's into an ell jest to marry a comp'ny keeper for mother," responded Cephas humbly. "I want to be No. 1 with my girl and start right in on trainin' her up to suit me."

"Well, if trainin' 's your object you'd better take my advice an' keep it dark before marriage, Cephas. It's astonishin' how the female sex despises bein' trained. It don't hardly seem to be in their nature to make any changes in 'emselves after they once gets started."

"How are you goin' to live with 'em, then?" Cephas inquired, looking up with interest coupled with some incredulity.

"Let them do the trainin'," responded his father, peacefully puffing out the words with his pipe between his lips. "Some o' 'em's mild and gentle in discipline, like Parson Boone's wife or Mrs. Timothy Grant, and others is strict and firm like your mother and Mrs. Abel Day. If you happen to git the first kind, why, do as they tell you, and thank the Lord tain't any worse. If you git the second kind jest let 'em put the blinders on you and trot as straight as you know how, without shyn' nor kickin' over the traces, nor bittin' 'cause they've got control o' the bit and tain't no use fightin' ag'in their superior strength. So far as you can judge, in the early stages o' the game, my son—which ain't very fur—which kind have you picked out?"

Cephas whittled on for some moments without a word, but finally, with a sigh drawn from the very toes of his boots, he responded gloomily: "She's awful spunky, the girl is; anybody can see that; but she's a young thing, and I thought bein' married would kind o' tame her down!"

"You can see how much marriage has tamed your mother down," observed Uncle Bart dispassionately. "Howsoever, though your mother can't be called tame, she's got her good p'int, for she's always to be counted on. The great thing in life, as I take it, Cephas, is to know exactly what to expect. Your mother's genially credited with an onsartin temper, but folks does her great injustice in so thinkin', for in a long experience I've seidom come across a temper less onsartin than your mother's. You know exactly where to find her every mornin' at sunup and every night at sundown. There ain't nothin' you can do to put her out o' temper, 'cause she's all out aforehand. You can jest go about your regul'ar business 'bout any fear o' disturbin' her any further than she's disturbed already, which is considerable. I don't mind it a mite nowadays, though, after forty years of it. It would kind o' gall me to keep a stiddy watch of a female's disposition day by day, wonderin' when she was goin' to have a tantrum. A tantrum once a year's an awful upsettin' kind of a thing in a family, my son, but a tantrum every twenty-four hours is jest part o' the day's work." There was a moment's silence, during which Uncle Bart puffed his pipe and Cephas whittled, after which the old man continued: "Then if you happen to marry a temper like your mother's, Cephas, look what a pow'ful worker you genially get! Look at the way they sweep an' dust an' scrub an' clean! Watch 'em when they go at the dish washin' an' how they whack the rollin' pin an' maul the eggs an' heave the wood into the stove an' s'lat the flies out o' the house! The mild and gentle ones like you'll be settin' in the kitchen rocker readin' the almanac when there ain't no wood in the kitchen box, no doughnuts in the crock, no pies on the swing shelf in the cellar an' the young ones goin' round without a second shift to their backs!"

Cephas' mind was far away during this philosophical dissertation on the ways of women. He could see only a sunny head fairly rioting with curls, a pair of eyes that held his like magnets, although they never gave him a glance of love; a smile that lighted the world far better than the sun, a dimple into which his heart fell headlong whenever he looked at it.

"You're right, father; tain't no use kickin' ag'in 'em," he said as he rose to his feet preparatory to opening the Baxter store. "When I said that 'bout trainin' up a girl to suit me, I kind o' forgot the one I've picked out. I'm considerin' several, but the one I favor most—well, I believe she'd fire up at the first sight o' trainin', and that's the gospel truth."

"Considerin' several, be you, Cephas?" laughed Uncle Bart. "Well, all I hope is that the one you favor most—the girl you've asked once afore—is considerin' you!"

Cephas went to the pump and, wetting a large handkerchief, put it in the crown of his straw hat and sauntered out into the burning heat of the open road between his father's shop and Deacon Baxter's store.

"I shan't ask her the next time till this hot spell's over," he thought, "and I won't do it in that dogged old store ag'in, neither. I ain't no tongue tied outdoors, an' I kind o' think I'd be more in the spirit of it after sundown some night after supper!"

Waitstill found a cool and shady place in which to hitch the old mare, loosening her checkrein and putting a sprig of alder in her headstall to assist her in brushing off the flies.

One could reach the Boynton house only by going up a long grass grown lane that led from the high road. It was a lonely place and Aaron Boynton had bought it when he moved from Saco simply because he secured it at a remarkable bargain, the owner having lost his wife and gone to live in Massachusetts. Ivory would have sold it long ago had circumstances been different, for it was at too great a distance from the schoolhouse and from Lawyer Wilson's office to be at all convenient, but he dreaded to remove his mother from the environment to which she was accustomed and doubted very much whether she would be able to care for a house to which she had not been wonted before her mind became affected.

Here in this safe, secluded corner, amid familiar and thoroughly known conditions, she moved placidly about her daily tasks, performing them with the same care and precision that she had used from the beginning of her married life. All the heavy work was done for her by Ivory and Rodman; the boy in particular being the fleetest footed, the most willing and the neatest of helpers; washing dishes, sweeping and dusting, laying the table as deftly and quietly as a girl. Mrs. Boynton made her own simple dresses of gray calico in summer, or dark linsley-woolsey in winter by the same pattern that she had used when she first came to Edgewood; in fact, there were positively no external changes anywhere to be seen, tragic and terrible as had been those that had wrought havoc in her mind.

Waitstill's heart beat faster as she neared the Boynton house. She had never so much as seen Ivory's mother for years. How would she be met? Who would begin the conversation and what direction would it take? What if Mrs. Boynton should refuse to talk to her at all? She walked slowly along the lane until she saw a slender, gray clad figure stooping over a flower bed in front of the cottage. The woman raised her head with a fawn-like gesture that had something in it of timidity rather than fear, picked some loose bits of green from the ground, and, quietly turning her back upon the on-

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1)

FROM INDIA.

By One on Medical Duty in that Far Eastern Country. Little Things that Attract One's Attention. Cooking a Breakfast on the Highway. Changing Dress in Public. Big Birds Without Voices, Etc.

JHANSI, JULY 3rd, 1913.

Dear Home Folk:

Having taken a cup of strong tea about four o'clock, in order that I might keep awake long enough to write a decent letter to you, here I am starting it with both eyes propped open with matches, and all my wits are wrapped in wool. But it's Thursday, and tomorrow might find me too busy to send you a letter.

Speaking of my buying some brilliant green or blue silk; I want to tell you that India don't grow such fashionable things as new shades. I tried to get some satin today, in a pretty yellow brown shade, but was told by a big fat Hindu store-keeper, who surely knows how to charge, that "only silk was being used so I must take silk or do without." I won't do either, but don't know just yet what I will do.

Tomorrow is the "grand and glorious Fourth" and I am invited to take dinner with some native people at the nurse's home. When I first came I did enjoy those dinners but like most things in this work-a-day world, they are becoming a bore, yet, to show one's good will one must put on their "glad rags" and smile.

Today I was given two beautiful silver toe-rings; now I guess I'll take off my socks and go bare-footed to show my jewelry. I put one on to see how it felt and I didn't like the sensation even for a few minutes, so guess I'll find some other use for them after displaying them to you.

I do wish I could send you a record of a man's song, as he is going up the road past our bungalow; I know very well you would say he was fit only for an insane house. The quivers and the turns and the accidentals—truly I never knew the human voice was capable of so many.

This morning I was standing on the porch of the hospital and Mrs. R. called my attention to a man out in the yard—naked to the waist line, his "dhoti," (cloth about his middle) his only covering, squatting before a tiny stove made of three bricks, his frying pan ("tava") on the top, full of "ghi" (clarified butter) getting hot and at his side a small pan full of batter made of flour, water, salt and "ghi," which he was mixing with his hands and then taking up a ball worked it out flat and fairly thin and round, then dropped it into the hot fat and let it cook while he fashioned another; and then taking the first one out he stood it on edge on the ground, leaning it against the primitive stove to drain and dry while number two cooked. After a little time, having cooked his rice first, and the "chapati's" being ready, his wife, who was a convalescent in the hospital, arrived with a "lota" (brass bowl) of water, having been to a near-by well, after which they squatted down and ate their "khana" (food) from their hands.

While his wife was straightening the two or three pans which had been used, into a heap so as to be easily carried, he picked up a cloth about three yards long and one wide, which had evidently been washed and was lying stretched on the yellow sand just behind him drying. He caught it by the edges and drew it around his body, then loosening his under cloth dropped it to the ground; he tied the points of the edges which he held, into a tight knot, leaving two ends trailing he took one end and putting some plaits into it first tucked it into this natural belt and then carrying the end between his legs tucked the rest of it into the belt at the back. One leg finished, he did the same with the other leg and lo! he was dressed in clean clothes, and under my very nose, but without mirror or pins or buttons. He then donned a black satteen coat, peculiarly made, and all joinings made by tying with tapes—again no buttons. Then came the "pugra," but here my descriptive powers fail, for their head-dress is surely fearfully and wonderfully put on, and although it looks easy, I know I would never be able to make the first twist in one, much less weave into place that whole ten yards and have it look at last much like last winter's toques at home.

But my man is now ready for the journey home, and his wife having the things packed up, he takes them all and ties them in his discarded clothing and a "tonga" having stopped, the kitchen utensils and the laundry combinations are placed in front and the two, sitting on their hunkers on the seat, backs to the driver, start off. The last I see of them she has her face covered and he is nearly asleep, and so they have passed out of my life. My lamp is dying out so I will write more tomorrow.

Six o'clock, Friday morning.—By this time, unless "Young America" is to have a "sane" Fourth, he or she will be making your life at least a noisy one, if nothing else, and you will know what day it is, without calendars. Here, only the bugler and the cooing doves are celebrating—neither very liable to disturb one's peace.

You should see one of the big black birds that has just alighted on a bush outside my door. He is a big, big bird, tail almost like a fan, and I know eight inches or more long; but his beauty lies in his wings which are most gloriously copper colored and just now are glistening in the morning sunlight like pure

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1)

me. I don't know what his song is like as I have never heard him sing, and I find that these biggest birds out here have the smallest, squeakiest voices, can't connect him with any of the brilliant whistlers that are just now singing their morning praise.

Miss McC. comes back today or tomorrow and so my pleasant time of being alone is over and I must say I am sorry for I have liked the not having plenty of people around to have to make my time suit theirs; many evenings I don't want dinner until 8:30, and the girls always eat at 7:30 and it makes the evening so very long.

I don't remember whether I told you that the servants have prayer each morning and, could you hear them just now singing a hymn, you would grin a merry grin for no two voices are on the same key, and there are six or eight of them. You can imagine six or eight with singing abilities like a child, and you know what I am hearing just at this minute. I have had a good smile each day when the prayers were in session. I must confess song of this sort does not appeal to me in the least. The blind man will pray and read to them later from his Bible. It is nearly seven by the clock and I am going to work.

(Continued next week.)

"Forcible Feeding" Not New.

The principal of a large public school recently invited one of his teachers to read the Scriptures at the opening exercises. The latter, glancing through the unfamiliar volume, found the first case of forcible feeding recorded. It was in the Book of Samuel, and Saul is shown as scared to the point of not eating when his seance with the Witch of Endor is ended. That good lady, together with the king's attendants, finally constrains him to eat good things she offers. The Doual version uses "force" in its description.

Do Not Inhale Dust.

It is safe to say that if a sample of dust be taken at random from any office, warehouse, shop, factory and this sample properly tested for germs the tubercle bacillus, or the germ of consumption, will invariably be found to be present in large numbers. Now, it is the inhalation of dry, germ-laden dust that is the commonest cause of consumption, so that anything that tends to stir up this dust and convey it to the mouth is literally "tempting Providence," especially in weak and anemic persons with consumptive tendencies.

Mysteries of the Sea.

One of the mysteries of the sea, says Shipping Illustrated, has been solved by the finding of a bottle message describing the loss of the British steamer Nutfield, which disappeared eight years ago on a voyage from Mobile to Havre. The loss of the vessel is ascribed to the carrying of a deck load of timber. This dangerous practice, which makes a ship unstable in bad weather, should be prohibited by international agreement, say the journal quoted.

"Q. S. T. S. S. Aquitania."

"Q. S. T. S. S." These initials have a very simple meaning; they signify quadruple screw turbine steamship, and appear in front of the name of the Aquitania, the new Cunarder. The coming of the turbine engine has for some time effected an alteration in steamship designation, and the term "T.S.S." is now in general use to distinguish a turbine steamer from one fitted with ordinary engines.—London Globe.

Venerate Bread.

Bread is held in special veneration by Russian sailors, who often seek to appease "the angry spirit that troubles the waters" by casting loaves into the sea. Greek sailors, too, carry with them small loaves, called St. Nicholas bread, which they throw into the sea in times of storm. Seafarers of all nations have an idea that it is unlucky to turn a loaf upside down, the idea being that for every loaf so turned a ship will be wrecked.

A Novel Pendulum.

In the show window of a typewriter concern stands a clock over six feet high. What attracts the attention of those who look at it to ascertain the time is the pendulum bob. The bob is a typewriter. The suspended typewriter swings to and fro all day long, and, judging from the clock, it does its novel duty faithfully and well.

All He Knew.

An eastern college once conferred a degree upon the late Dr. Robert Collyer. The text of the manuscript was written entirely in Latin. Turning to a friend who stood beside him, the old clergyman said: "It must be all right, but all the Latin I know is 'et cetera.'"—Judge.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit neither can an evil tree bring good fruit." That is the law of generation. As is the parent shoot, so will be the branches. As is the mother so will be the child. A healthy mother will have healthy children. A weak, nervous mother will have weak, nervous children. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription is a blessing to every prospective mother. It gives her strength, and with it confidence and courage. It practically does away with the pain which usually attends the baby's advent. The little one comes into the world like a sunbeam, healthful and beautiful, and the happy mother enjoys to the full the privilege of the child's care and nurture. "Favorite Prescription" makes weak women strong and sick women well.

—For high class Job Work come to the WATCHMAN Office.