



Her Father's Daughter

Gene Stratton-Porter

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1921. Stratton-Porter was an American feminist, environmentalist, photographer and one of Indiana's most famous female authors. Many of her writings were moralistic and romantic novels. The popular author seems to have gone awry with this particular novel, which tells the story of two orphaned sisters (who it later turns out are not really sisters). The introductory paragraphs set the tone: What makes you wear such funny shoes? Linda Strong thrust forward a foot and critically examined the narrow vamp, the projecting sole, the broad, low heel of her well-worn brown calfskin shoe. Then her glance lifted to the face of Donald Whiting, one of the most brilliant and popular seniors of the High School. Her eyes narrowed in a manner habitual to her when thinking intently. Never you mind my shoes, she said deliberately. Kindly fix your attention on my head piece. See other titles by this author available from Kessinger Publishing.

Her Father's Daughter Details

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From Reader Review Her Father's Daughter for online ebook

JoyfulK says

This is one of those books that makes me sad. Gene Stratton Porter was an excellent writer and naturalist. I enjoy most of her work. This book, though, reflects some of the worst prejudices of her time in its anti-Asian bias. I didn't enjoy reading it, but I don't want to forget about it either. It's important to remember that these attitudes existed. The prejudice demonstrated in this book, which was published in the early 1900s, foreshadows the attitudes that led to the internment of the Japanese during World War II.

Laura Franke says

I've read most of GSP's books. It's a fun connection to my grandmother, knowing that she loved this author as a girl. The books set in California have been especially interesting to me from an historical perspective, having been born and raised there.

That said, when I first read this book, like most of today's readers, I was shocked and appalled by the anti-Japanese sentiments. This is a book aimed at teens and you can see how "the enemy amongst us" thinking led indirectly to the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII.

How to review a book, filled with hatred for a group, that is pretty well written and has other unrelated story lines? You can see that people go from 1 to 5 stars. I would lean towards giving it one star. However, like the film Birth of a Nation, it gives us real insight into some of the thinking of the time and what led people to believe, say, and act in ways that are incomprehensible to most modern Americans. For that window into the past, it is worth reading if you have the stomach for it and if you go in knowing what to expect.

I wouldn't recommend it for children. Also, I'm glad I didn't read this book early on when I was reading through her titles. It might have discouraged me from reading the gems.

carrie says

Russell and I were watching a thing on National Geographic about white supremacists, and it reminded me of this book. I absolutely loved Girl of the Limberlost and Laddie, so I looked for other stuff by this author. It was mostly the same stuff: nice girl, lots of plants, but there was this sub plot about how we have to keep the white race above all the others. I was horrified, but I couldn't stop reading. What an eye opener to the thoughts of that time period. I also read a short story by L.M. Montgomery that disturbed me in a similar way. So take this as a warning not to pick this one up, and enjoy the other stuff by her.

Anna Fricke says

A person has to know about the hysteria during WWII to understand the prejudice in this book.

Rebekah Morris says

2.5 stars. I liked it, but at the same time, I didn't like it!

What I liked:

I did like Linda even if she was "larger than life" and did have some strong racial prejudices.

I found some of the thoughts the main character talked about interesting seeing when this was written (between the World Wars).

Katy, and Peter, an Donald were all likeable characters.

The story plot kept my interest (though it started to drag by the second "Jane Meredith" installment), and the ending left me feeling satisfied that everything ended "right."

What I didn't like:

The strong racial prejudices that were mentioned many times in the book.

That there was no Bible, or prayer, or anything like that. It was all being good on your own, or a little bit of "saying your beads."

Some of the descriptions (Jane Meredith) got a little old.

I did find it strange that the main character is a high school student who has such amazing talent, everyone, except Eileen, love her, two guys want to marry her, and she is a perfect specimen of womanhood.

I probably won't be reading this book again, but it wasn't bad, if you can get past the prejudices.

Cathy says

Times were indeed different back in the days of Gene Stratton-Porter but this book was far too racist and bigoted for me to be happy with. The book is one long lecture on how white people are superior than any other race, and not only that but other races are low and debased. I would not recommend this book to anyone. Too bad that I tarnished the happy memory of some of the better titles by the same author.

Caroline says

Set in the bucolic rurality of Los Angeles County, circa 1920, *Her Father's Daughter* is the tale of Linda Strong, a high school junior who struggles to get from under the thumb of her scheming, shallow sister Eileen. The author uses the conflict as a frame from which to wax poetic on the wonder of California nature, joy of automobiles and locally-grown foods, silliness of fashionable society... and – most unfortunately – the superiority of white people.

I could have brushed aside the lecturing on nature – she really does love her subject and it shows. I could have forgiven her tedious sermonizing about shallow, fashionable females – it's genuinely meant, even at its most self-righteous.

I could even overlook her perfect heroine, so natural, so pure, so strong. She is already a published author, skilled artist, impeccable scholar, dedicated naturalist and wise philosophizer at the tender of age of seventeen. Just talking to Linda makes the other characters nobler, smarter, more unselfish and more moral than before. All the men folk adore her. It's annoying, but Mary Sue heroines used to be the style.

I cannot, however, overlook the appalling racism. Among her other virtues, Linda likes to pontificate on the superiority of white races and the dangers of everyone else. Had such convictions been mentioned once or twice, merely in passing, I could have ignored it. But no, Linda NEVER STOPS HARPING on it. When events throughout the story "prove" her right, I was ready to throw her through the window.

Even without this glaring, insurmountable flaw, *Her Father's Daughter* would have been a dull, unremarkable, mediocre, eye-rolling story. Added dollops of racism make it infuriating. I found it a most disappointing offering from an author I had previously enjoyed.

Carrie Robinson says

If only Gene Stratton-Porter could have developed this story properly, without using it as a vehicle for racist ideas. I understand that WWI was devastating and the time after the war was shaky and uncertain--a whole way of life was gone--and if she had only expressed her fear of being taken over by another country, we maybe could cut her some slack. She does express fear that verges on hysteria. But she goes much further and states that all 'colored' people are inferior to the white races who have been the ruling race so far. Um, what about the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans? (Are Greeks and Romans white or persons of color?) Then there's ancient China and India. She also implies that only whites are made in God's image. And then to kill a 'Jap' with no remorse on the part of the killer and accomplice? The worst part about it is that this was a children's book and who knows how many children have read it from the 1920's on. Strangely, toward the end of the book she makes a speech praising Native Americans and the damage our civilization did to them. Oh, well, whoever said racism was rational?

But, if you can somehow ignore all that (or, well, at least be prepared for it), the story is typical GSP but not quite fleshed out as it should be: well written, engaging, with a lovable heroine and beautiful descriptions of nature. I enjoyed the recipes using native plants. Just don't let your children read it.

Rachel says

Could be summed up, almost, by a line from *The Scarlet Pimpernel*--"Look how they buzz round her, like bees to honey".

The world of *Lilac Valley* revolves, entirely on its axis, around the heroine, who is a socially conscious, top scholar, a published author/illustrator, a locally renowned chef, a sports car enthusiast, a nature expert, --oh, and a junior in high school! Of course she is wholly unspoiled by the world and completely undiscovered by it until one day a boy happens to notice her practical shoes, starting a turn of events that explodes into a many faceted jewel of opportunities. Suddenly, she has the vision and independence to fight for justice on many different levels, and at least three men, of different ages, are swooning at her feet, which, with her wide eyed naivete, she is oblivious to. That would be acceptable to many Stratton-Porter readers (myself included) who have learned to appreciate the bright dreams of Utopian characterization (though I will admit, in my hypocritical heart, that while I love the "perfection" of her male characters I am often annoyed by the interpretation of it in her heroine's.) It would be dramatically acceptable if not for the eye opening racism that had an appalling, underlying theme. Here is the answer for those of us too young to have lived through the events leading up to the internment of the Japanese, who have ever wondered, "What were they

thinking?!" This is no, "To Kill a Mockingbird" where the prejudices are portrayed as the enemy, this is a full-bodied embrace of what is referred to often, as "the Yellow Menace" and which ultimately emerges as a white supremacist conceit. It was hard to read, but studied in the time period that it was written, through the hindsight lens of history, it could be an important reminder to us of how far we can stray when we are fearful and ignorant. So, in that light, it was a usefully alarming lesson to me.

Of course we can't finish a Gene Stratton-Porter book without the Dickens-like alter ego. No worries on that point—it is portrayed here in its finest china doll coolness and fragility by the worldly sister and her presumably weak and duped dandy.

Alicia says

I'm between a 3 and a 4 on this one ... I really enjoyed Linda as a smart accomplished tomboy character who is polar opposites with her sister. The story has a fairy-tale quality to it; Linda is the put-upon, neglected orphan. Her fashionable older sister hoards all the money for her own use and is a real two-faced conniver when it comes to men and friendships. It was super entertaining and I really enjoyed that and how Linda is an accomplished naturalist. It's not realistic--the characters are a bit too good, a bit too evil, and a bit too silly at times. The plot is far-fetched overall.

But I was okay with those things. My big problem with this story is that it is extremely racist. To the point of being laughable, except it's in earnest. WOW, I cannot believe certain claims that are made throughout the entire story about white supremacy and the supposed inferiority of people of non-white races. I know part of that was the time period, but it was really disappointing from Gene. And it was central to the overall plot. So I would not recommend this book necessarily, although I would love to re-write it and tell a better story.

Ruth says

How can I rate this? As a kid I read it over and over. Read again 40 years later I realized how racist it was. Horrors!

Rachel M says

Girl of the Limberlost was one of my favorite childhood books, but this one just finally drove me nuts. The author seemed too fond of Linda, and way too eager to show her off. Linda apparently gets the shorter end of the stick - she and her sister Eileen are orphaned four years before the plot, and because Eileen is older, she assumes the majority of their income as her own and leaves Linda in rags. It is easy to feel angry at this injustice, and proud of Linda for stepping up and asking for what is hers in a very assertive, non-manipulative manner. But then you hear the inner thoughts of the other characters, and they all think, "wow, Linda is so brainy/such a hard worker/so beautiful", and they all make this very clear. But the author says so many times how unfair Eileen is, and how Eileen gets everything. Then, in the next scene, Linda is making another friend, or another man is falling in love with her, or she is having another big break. Linda sails through the plot with so much confidence and pride that you figure she's doing well enough on her own, and there is no use feeling too sorry for her. But the last straw is Linda's numerous diatribes about how the white race is superior to every other one, and how any non-white race is only capable of copying the ingenious

creativity of white people. That was the end of it for me. And these men, who seem more like decorative butterflies, just flutter around Linda saying, "You know, I think you must be right."

Yuck. In many ways, Linda just seemed like a version of Teddy Roosevelt, dressed up as a girl. (This is not to imply that Teddy Roosevelt had white supremacist leanings). But, her whole charm, as Porter presented her, seemed to be in this upper class, white American pride of hard work, brains, and natural giftedness overcoming all obstacles. While hard work and brains do accomplish a lot, I had a hard time trusting the message, probably because it struck me as so blatantly arrogant.

DeAnna says

As someone who loves, loves, loves A Girl of the Limberlost, it hurt me to read this racist piece of trash from the same author.

Danielle says

When you read early 20th century fiction you have to be prepared for some level of racism. Most of the time it's limited to stereotypical portrayals of minor characters or the occasional "N" word - things that are easily ignored and don't affect your overall enjoyment of the story. "Her Father's Daughter," however, belongs in an entirely different category. From the first pages to the climax the racist themes are preached by the 17 year old heroine. There's nothing subtle about it - pages and pages of warnings against the "yellow peril" and the dangers of all the other non-white races. Blech.

Other than that it's just your typical overly perfect, gifted, rich and beautiful heroine whom everybody loves struggling to make her way in the world.

Meredith says

Pros - Nature descriptions

Cons- Racism (apparently endemic to the time period) ; unbelievably faultless protagonist
