

On quiet summer afternoons she would lie down with the tall grass all around her, and look up into the sky, with its flocks of fleecy clouds. In the distance there was a hill over which a coach occasionally passed. Every cloud that drifted by seemed to bear the form of some definite object — a tree, a giant, a city, hills and valleys — whatever she had heard or read about. Against these clouds as a background she built her castles in the air.

She had heard of America, and how Columbus and his companions went there in search of gold, and found treasure in abundance; and she planned to go to California, and there heap up fortunes to bring back with her for the serfs. She would buy vast tracts of land — there they were, in the clouds, mostly islands — and there the peasants should live and cultivate the fertile soil. As she gazed into the many-colored clouds, she saw the very world that she hoped to create.

Katya talked freely of her plans about California, and when her family made fun of them, she answered naively, "But many people have brought gold from that land!"