

Patience Sparhawk and Her Times 5

"Oh, you're pretty," said Patience, sarcastically. "You want to be told so, I suppose—There! you pulled my hair on purpose, you know you did, Rosita Thrailkill."

"I did n't, Patita. Don't fire up so." And Rosita, who was the most amiable of children, tied the end of the braid with a piece of tape, rubbed her blooming cheek against the pale one, and was forgiven.

Patience drew herself into the buggy and braced her back against the seat. Her face had little more beauty than her legs. It was colourless and freckled. The mouth was firm, almost dogged, as if the contest with life had already begun. Her brows and lashes were several shades darker than her hair, but her eyes, wide apart and very bright, were a light, rather cold, grey. The nose alone was a beautiful feature, straight and fine; and the hands, although rough and sunburned, were tapering and slender, and very flexible.

In her red frock, the highly-coloured little Spanish girl glowed like a cactus blossom beside a neglected weed. Her plump face was full of blood; her large dark eyes were indolent and soft. Patience's eyes comprehended everything within their radius in one flashing glance; Rosita's, even at the tender age of fifteen, looked unswerving disapproval of all exertion, mental or physical.

"I wonder if your mother is drunk?" she asked in her slow delicious voice.

"Likely," said Patience, with frowning resignation. "But let's talk of something more agreeable. Isn't this perfume heavenly?"

The dark solemn woods were ravishing with the perfumes of spring, the perfume of wild violet and lilac