



# A Girl Of The Limberlost

*Gene Stratton Porter*

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## **A Girl Of The Limberlost** Gene Stratton Porter

A sequel to her earlier novel *Freckles* and her best work, *A Girl of the Limberlost*, by American writer and naturalist Gene Stratton-Porter (August 17, 1863 – December 6, 1924), was published in August, 1909. A top seller classic of Indiana literature, *A Girl of the Limberlost* was adapted four times for film including in 1945 (by Columbia Pictures). A made-for-TV version was produced in 1990. The novel's main character, Elnora Comstock, is an impoverished young woman who lives with her widowed mother, Katharine Comstock, on the edge of the Limberlost. Elnora faces cold neglect by her mother, a woman who feels ruined by the death of her husband, Robert Comstock, who drowned in quicksand in the swamp. Katharine blames Elnora for his death, because her husband died while she gave birth to their daughter and could not come to his rescue. Patricia Raub, in a survey of women in novels during that decade, said, "Stratton-Porter established the pattern for her heroines with her depiction of Elnora Comstock in *A Girl of the Limberlost*, published in 1909 and the characterization of her protagonists remained virtually unchanged thereafter. Wholesome, sensible, and beautiful, Elnora is also compassionate, self-reliant, and intelligent: 'There was no form of suffering with which the girl could not sympathize, no work she was afraid to attempt, no subject she had investigated she did not understand.' When the handsome young hero arrives on the scene, he is immediately captivated by Elnora, even though he is already claimed by a physically attractive but selfish society girl. Elnora's virtue wins her the hero. Association with Elnora prompts the society girl to reform: she vows to be more like Elnora in the future." Gene Stratton-Porter (Geneva Grace Stratton) was born in Wabash County, Indiana near Lagro on August 17, 1863. She was the twelfth and last child of Mary and Mark Stratton. Gene was an American author, amateur naturalist, wildlife photographer, and one of the earliest women to form a movie studio and production company. She wrote some best-selling novels and well-received columns in national magazines, such as *McCalls*. Her works were translated into several languages, including Braille, and Stratton-Porter was estimated to have had 50 million readers around the world. She used her position and income as a well-known author to support conservation of Limberlost Swamp and other wetlands in the state of Indiana. Her novel *A Girl of the Limberlost* was adapted four times as a film, most recently in 1990 in a made-for-TV version. Gene Stratton-Porter's novel *Laddie* corresponds in many particulars with her early life, and several details from the novel suggest that it is semi-autobiographical in nature. Gene Stratton-Porter became a wildlife photographer, specializing in the birds and moths in the Limberlost Swamp, one of the last of the wetlands of the lower Great Lakes Basin. Her first attributed novel, *The Song of the Cardinal*, met with great commercial success. Her novels *Freckles* and *A Girl of the Limberlost* are set in the wooded wetlands and swamps of the disappearing central Indiana ecosystems. She knew and loved these, and documented them extensively. Stratton-Porter wrote more than 20 books, both novels and natural history. One of Stratton-Porter's last novels, *Her Father's Daughter* (1921), was set outside Los Angeles. She had moved about 1920 for health reasons and to expand her business ventures into the movie industry. This novel presented a unique window into Stratton-Porter's feelings about World War I-era racism and nativism, especially relating to immigrants of Asian descent. Stratton-Porter died in Los Angeles on December 6, 1924 when her limousine was struck by a streetcar.

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