

# **THE DAUGHTER OF A STOIC**

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The Daughter of a Stoic by Cornelia Atwood Pratt

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**CORNELIA ATWOOD PRATT**

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OF A STOIC**



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BY  
CORNELIA ATWOOD PRATT



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## THE DAUGHTER OF A STOIC

### I

WHEN Marion James had drunk from the cup of life her full portion of poverty and illness and anguish of spirit, she died, leaving to the half-brother with whom she had quarrelled on her marriage the doubtfully desirable legacy of her little daughter.

She wrote him on her death-bed a letter which was chiefly remarkable for the things it did not say. He had not heard from her for twelve years.

"Dear Roger," the letter ran, "I am ill, and the doctors tell me that I shall not recover. Will you look after Arria? She is self-willed; there is no reason to

Arria

M N P L

suppose that she will reward your care with any more consideration than I showed. But if, for the sake of the family, you will see that she gets a modern education which will fit her to earn her own living in a few years, it will be a merciful thing to do, and in time she may even be able to repay you. I am leaving her a little more than enough to clothe her." Here the writing wavered and grew faint. The signature was barely legible.

"I should think Marion would have wished to say more to me after being silent for so many years," complained Major Roger Woolsey.

"Perhaps she did not have the strength," suggested his wife gently. "She was a dying woman. This was her last effort."

The Major stretched out his hands to the fire, and his long upper lip trembled.

J G V N



His small eyes and purplish face showed a convulsive agitation.

"My only sister, Elizabeth, my only sister," he said in his expansive after-dinner voice.

Mrs. Woolsey came and stood by her husband's chair, dropping a light, caressing hand upon his shoulder. Beside his portly, somewhat shapeless bulk, her slight figure seemed even more delicate and girlish in outline than its wont. With her translucent skin, pink cheeks and early whitened hair she was still very pretty—the figure of a gentlewoman in Dresden ware.

"But she left you the child, Roger."

"Naturally. There was no one else to leave it to."

"We will do our best to give her the sort of training that your sister would have wished."

"She will want the Higher Education — college and all that sort of thing," said the Major ruefully. The Major was not in sympathy with the ideals of the modern woman, and winced at the thought of having a possible exponent of them in the family.

"Oh!" said his wife dubiously. "But I am sure the way in which I was brought up is the better, the more lady-like, way to educate a girl."

"It is not so financially advantageous if she is to be a worker. The bloom on the grape has no market value."

"I do hope," said Mrs. Woolsey, with an accession of energy, "that Florence will not grow up strong-minded and have erroneous views about things. It would be such grief to me. Perhaps it is just as well that Arria is four or five years younger than Florence. Otherwise

it would seem natural to educate them together. But these new ideas seem to me so mistaken, so subversive of — of everything. I could never consent to train Florence in that way."

"Certainly not," said the Major promptly. "I trust Florence will be such another woman as her mother."

Mrs. Woolsey looked down at the top of her husband's head — which was bare, polished, and pinkish — with an adoring smile. It was the same smile that had fascinated him when she was twenty, and its potency was still immense.

"Sometimes I feel very sorry," she said regretfully, "for the women of to-day. They are bartering their birthright for a mess of pottage, and they do not know what they have lost. They seem indifferent to the finer, more imaginative aspects of their position in the world.