

**KATE THURSTON'S
CHAUTAUQUA
CIRCLES**

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Kate Thurston's Chautauqua circles by Mary H. Field

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MARY H. FIELD

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BY
MRS. MARY H. FIELD

SECOND EDITION.



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KATE THURSTON'S CHAUTAUQUA CIRCLES.

CHAPTER I.

NEW ENTERPRISES.

THE new schoolhouse at San Benito was done at last. The carpenters had been gone a month and the painters were putting on their last strokes. The Chinaman who had cleared away the debris from around the building was engaged to give the interior as faithful a putting to rights. The new school furniture was already in the freight room at the railway station; and now the trustees held a meeting. There was a new trustee as well as a new schoolhouse; indeed the new trustee was the cause of the new schoolhouse, and at the meeting the new trustee, as his custom was, made himself distinctly felt.

Old Colonel Dobson, who had ruled San Benito's educational interests for years, reluctantly now passed over the scepter to young Dr. Hall, who was evidently the coming man of San Benito, and who had recently received its unanimous

vote for school trustee. At this meeting to which allusion had been made, the question as to what teacher should preside in the new schoolhouse was to be decided. Colonel Dobson said he "reckoned that Sally Parker, who had taught the school for nigh on to five years and would work cheap," was the proper person to employ, but Dr. Hall was strongly in favor of a new teacher with later methods and better education, a Normal School graduate with modern ideas. As to salary he was heartily opposed to cheap teachers, and thought San Benito could afford to let the new teacher's wages match the requirements of the day. "If San Benito is going to hold up its head with other towns its children must be well taught," he said, "and no good teacher can be had for a pittance."

Dr. Hall had a way of carrying his points, and thus it came to pass that Miss Kate Thurston brought her Normal School diploma, her new trunk, her bright pleasing face, her thoughtful young head, and her two years of successful teaching experience, to the little California town of San Benito. She found her new home very

picturesque and charming, nestling among the foothills of the coast range of mountains which separated it from the great Pacific, and her boarding place in the town to which she went on recommendation of the trustees, proved all that she could desire. The family was made up of a widowed mother with a gentle, patient face, two slender daughters who worked at dress-making, and two boarders, one, a young man, was a clerk in the largest dry goods store of San Benito, the other a youth of brawny mold and vigorous appetite, was a blacksmith's apprentice. Mrs. Brooks, the housekeeper, had a look and way like Kate's own mother, with much native refinement and kindness.

So Kate settled down with scarcely a homesick pang, in her pleasant little gable-windowed room in Mrs. Brooks' cottage. She unpacked her trunk, arranged her simple wardrobe in a convenient closet and in a chest of drawers, and then with a sort of cheerful zeal began to take out from their wrappings her beloved books. There was no special book-case in the room, but this lack she seemed to have anticipated, for

from the bottom of her trunk she brought out a set of hanging book-shelves and a little rack which could stand on a table and hold a dozen volumes. Then she went down stairs for permission to put a couple of screws into the wall, and coming back in a moment went to work in a brisk fashion to put up the shelves. In a little while she had her books all in order on them and stood back with her hands behind her and her head a little on one side taking a survey of her accomplished work. First, of course, came a well worn array of schoolbooks ; then there was Hammerton's "Intellectual Life"; a volume of selections from Ruskin ; a "History of Art" ; half a dozen volumes of Rolfe's Shakespeare ; half a dozen or more "Little Classics" ; "Bits of Talk," by H. H. ; a volume of Mrs. Browning's Poems ; a Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, Longfellow, and Tennyson, in standard editions ; in a row by themselves some capital children's books evidently for schoolroom reading : Hawthorne's "Tanglewood Tales and Wonder Book" ; Hans Andersen's Tales ; "William Henry's Letters to His Grandmother" ; "Hans Brinker's