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Esty?s Gold

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

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Esty?s father is middleman to Lord Craythorn and runs his estate while the Lord is in England, but even he cannot protect the tenants from the potato famine which strikes Ireland in the late 1840s. He is killed when the bailiffs are called in supported by troops, and suddenly Esty?s comfortable world is shattered and she is sent into service. At 13 she is young but is befriended by May whose bed she shares in the big house. From something she reads in the **Illustrated London News**, she is fired up by the thought of finding her fortune and that of her family in Ballarat, Australia. Rather implausibly Lord Craythorn is persuaded to exchange the passage to America that he has arranged for her mother and grandmother to America, for one to Australia and to include May and John Joe, her boyfriend who is on the run. The excitement of the search for gold in Ballarat in the heat and dust amidst the crowded tent city with rebellion against the high cost of the licence fee is the backdrop for the second half of Esty?s story.

The measured start with its picture of a privileged child who has been taught to read and write, observing the harshness of the world around her, soon turns into a gallop through Esty?s service in the Burgess household, her voyage to Australia, and life in the goldfield.

There are implausible moments such as when Esty goes to Lord Craythorn to change the passages to Australia instead of America, and somehow the danger that the family are in while travelling to the goldfield does not come through because of the pace of the story. But Esty is a spirited heroine and her relationship with her mother who turns out to be very resourceful, setting up a caf e for the gold miners when all their money is stolen, rings true. It is just a pity that Arrigan did not take the story more slowly which would have been more satisfying for the reader.

Running Order:

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