

Chapter Seven: Katharine Lee Bates_England, 1880s

In the chapter titled "Katharine Lee Bates," set in England during the 1880s, Katie embarks on a difficult voyage aboard the *State of Nebraska*, arriving bruised and melancholy after parting from her loved ones. Despite her challenging journey, she finds solace in exploring English libraries and the picturesque countryside, discovering a room in the British Museum bearing her surname, where her own book, *Rose and Thorn*, brings her delight. As she wanders through Gothic cathedrals, she grapples with her faith, feeling unsure of her beliefs and wary of those who adhere to traditional theology.

Meanwhile, the United States is undergoing dramatic changes due to new waves of immigration, which spur fears about job competition and expose many workers to perilous conditions. Viewing America from her privileged position in England, Katie perceives the fragility of the American democratic ideal.

Returning home after a transformative year abroad, Katie emerges with renewed determination. She secures a master's degree from Wellesley, stepping into her role as the head of her department. However, she remains constrained by societal expectations, lamenting the dual burdens faced by women. Despite her academic achievements, she finds herself tethered to domestic responsibilities, unlike her male coworkers.

At Wellesley, an institution characterized by its talented, educated women, Katie forms deep bonds with her colleagues. It is here she meets Professor Katharine Coman, with whom she shares over two decades of companionship. Their correspondence reflects a profound emotional connection that some scholars interpret as romantic, while others remain uncertain due to the nature of female friendships of their time.

During her time in England, Katie's letters express her longing for Coman, declaring her emotional attachment even across the ocean. Coman, a pioneering historian focused on labor rights, possesses the steadfast faith that Katie yearns for, leading Katie to desire a similar conviction in her beliefs, which often elude her grasp. In this chapter, the interplay between personal and professional, as well as faith and doubt, is poignantly explored through Katie's experiences and relationships.