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## A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

Miss Kate Dalrymple was the most unconventional of young ladies. She did and said the most outrageous things; she rode about all over the country entirely unattended; she talked slang and called her male friends by their Christian names; she dressed in a manner that was almost fast; she flirted and, worst of all, she often got into conversation with people in train or boat to whom she had never been introduced, nor had ever seen before, and probable never would again.

Yet there was something so attractive in the sweet, saucy face, the truth-ful blue eyes and winning ways that was impossible to resist.

Her father, Colonel Dalrymple, a gentleman in every sense of the word, often lectured her sternly on her improper conduct; and her aristocratic mamma expostulated and nearly went into hysterics over some of her escapades.

In vain! Pretty Kate pouted and shrugged her shoulders and vowed she could not help it. It was of no use trying to be prim and ladylike and proper as her sisters, Maude and Violet, were, so they had better make up their minds to give her up as a bad job.

One day, when she had been staying in London with some rich relatives—people who belonged to the very cream of society—she was escorted to Victoria Station by two maiden aunts, and put into the train to return home to her father's beautiful house in Kent.

"I hate first-class," grumbled Kate, arranging her papers, handbag, &c., on the opposite seat.

"There is seldom anyone to share one's captivity, and one has to sit in solitary state, and think of one's sins for hours."

"My dear Kate," replied Aunt Evelyn, with her stiff smile, "so much the better. Meditation may lead to improvement."

"Oh, dear, no," was the saucy return. "It is much more probable I shall give my mind up to the hatching of fresh mischief," and she laughed wickedly. "For two pins I would jump out now and go and get a third-class carriage—just for company."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said her other aunt, sternly; and Kate made a grimace and was silent.

Just then the last bell rang, and with many farewells, admonitions and messages to her parents the ladies took their leave of Kate, and watched the train steam out of the station.

Then Kate put up her little feet on the cushions of the opposite seat and, leaning back contentedly, heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Horrid old cats!" murmured that ungrateful and disrespectful young woman.

For half-an hour she amused herself by reading the comic papers or looking out of the window, then she began to get tired of her own society and long for some one to exchange a few remarks with, if only on such common-place topics as the weather and the agricultural outlook, and at last, in desperation, when the train drew up to a little primitive station, she collected her belongings, sprang out and established herself in a second-class carriage which was occupied by a jolly old farmer and his wife, and a tall, handsome young man with a golden moustache and a pair of magnificent blue eyes.

This gentleman stared at Kate for some time with undisguised admiration, and Kate, far from resenting his rudeness, smiled to herself and indulged in covert peeps at him from behind her copy of *Punch*.

She saw he was dressed in well-cut and fashionable clothes—wore a large handsome ring and elegant boots, and had the softest and whitest of hands possible—unmistakeably the hands of a gentleman.

She set her busy mind to work to decide who and what he was, determining, if possible, to find out before the end of the journey.

She wondered how far he was going on the line, and whether it was anywhere near her home.

A few stations further on the old couple got out, wishing her a pleasant "good morning," and then the train started off at full speed through fields, meadows and hop-gardens, such as only beautiful Kent can boast.

Kate's companion drew out a large gold watch, glanced at it, and made some casual remark about the time flying, and so of course they got into conversation at once.

It was highly improper, of course, and terribly unconventional; but Kate never could see why two people should sit opposite each other for hours on a long journey and never exchange a word, just because some third person had not said; "Miss Dalrymple—Mr. So-and-so," and therefore she chatted merrily and unrestrainedly with her new acquaintance.

She found him charming—well read—travelled, and intelligent—in fact, "the nicest man she had ever met," she decided.

He told her all about his travels on the continent—such amusing stories and funny anecdotes, and then to crown all she discovered he had actually done the grand tour with her brother's greatest chum, Sir Reginald Ferrars.

She was delighted. After that she thought there couldn't be the least harm in her making friends with him. Sir Reginald was—well, a favoured suitor of her own, one she had more than a slight regard for.

Presently in the course of conversation it came out that the stranger was bound for H—, the very place where Kate lived.

"Oh, how glorious!" cried impulsive Kate. "That is my home. I hope we shall see something of you!"

Her companion thought it highly probable, and should be only too happy to meet her again, &c., &c., which sentiment Kate, it is needless to say, more than reciprocated.

They were getting towards the end of their journey then.

"But if I may ask," ventured Kate, aglow with pleasurable anticipations of long walks and rides in the company of her new found friend, "are you