

**FLORIDA
ALEXANDER, A
KENTUCKY GIRL**

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Florida Alexander, a Kentucky Girl by Eleanor Talbot Kinkead

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A KENTUCKY GIRL

BY

ELEANOR TALBOT KINKEAD

AUTHOR OF "GADSDY WIND AND TIDE," "YOUNG GREEN
OF KENTUCKY," ETC.



CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1898

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"To Elizabeth"

Florida Alexander

I

Upon the fragrant April morning a voice rang out—the voice of a woman singing in French a tender, pensive little strain, but throwing into the song a fervor, a profound sadness of interpretation such as the simple words and music were never intended to evoke.

And such a voice! A warm contralto, sonorous as the tones of a violoncello; a voice to stir the blood and rouse into instant quickening old memories that have slept so long one almost fancies they will never wake; a voice to tease, and startle, and bewilder, until the brain seems all a-whirl, and the world grows dim and distant and lost in a mist of tears. But though it had been artistic-

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ally trained, it possessed only drawing-room capabilities, after all is said; and, in a way, St. John had often heard far better singers, even among amateurs, and forgotten their very names. Yet something in that passionate protest caught his ear, just as the ear is always caught at the first signs of genuine emotion. Is it because of a vague but ever-present consciousness of the universal heritage of sorrow that the heart so quickly responds to a cry of pain? He paused involuntarily beside the iron railing and looked intently toward the stately, white-pillared mansion beyond.

It was one of the houses he was accustomed to pass daily on the way to his collegiate duties. Being contemplative, he was inclined to make the most of his opportunities to observe the beautiful things of life, and he needed the opportunity only to perceive what a great many other people are apt to overlook. To go down that street, under the maples, implied nothing circuitous, but

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he would have been willing to take a considerable number of extra steps, on the days when he was not especially pressed for time, merely for the sake of the generous sense of latitude afforded by the sight of the picturesque old domicile, and for the pleasure of passing the wide, well-kept lawn, whereon the bluegrass flourished in such luxuriant growth. For this same bluegrass, as well as the denizens of the famous region of its perfection, had become a subject of interesting study to the young Bostonian during his eight months' sojourn in Kentucky; and he had found that there was no bluegrass, nor any person, more worthy of regard than the sward his eyes now rested upon and the gentleman to whom it belonged.

He appeared a reserved, polished young man of studious aspect and courteous but formal bearing. Of mere physical good looks he possessed, perhaps, rather more than most; but the charm of his countenance was not revealed until he smiled or spoke. Then his face took on

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a certain brilliancy in the flash of white, even teeth against the swart but clear tone of his complexion. Slenderly and athletically built, he was tall, even among Kentuckians; and there was an agreeable contrast between his very black hair and deep blue eyes fringed with thick lashes. They were intensely earnest eyes, holding a rare purity in their depths. Perhaps there was about him a hint of austerity also. Above all, added to the marks of a more than ordinarily vigorous mentality, he bore the look of a man that holds always a firm grasp upon himself, the higher ideals of life being kept constantly in view.

It was the moral significance of this selfmastery, joined with a superior scholarship, that so strongly recommended him to the trustees of the State College at Lexington, who had offered him the chair of English Literature. Furthermore, it was thought that he would confer additional luster upon their institution,