

**COUNTESS KATE**

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Countess Kate by Charlotte Mary Yonge

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**CHARLOTTE MARY YONGE**

# **COUNTESS KATE**





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BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE."

"But whether it were ill or well  
That Katy did, not one will tell  
To either me or you.  
Still, Katy did, she did, — is yet  
The only answer we can get  
To — What did Katy do?  
Though all who marked that hurried lay,  
And quersous emphatic way  
In which they say or said it,  
Might think (if fame had not forbid  
Such evil thought) what Katy did  
Was not to Katy's credit."

M. HOWITT.

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## CHAPTER I.

“THERE, I’ve done every bit I can do! I’m going to see what o’clock it is.”

“I heard it strike eleven just now.”

“Sylvia, you’ll tip up! what a tremendous stretch!”

“Oh dear! We shan’t get one moment before dinner! Oh, horrible! oh, horrible! most horrible!”

“Sylvia, you know I hate hearing Hamlet profaned.”

“You can’t hate it more than having no one to hear our lessons.”

“What on earth can Mary be about?”

“Some tiresome woman to speak to her, I suppose.”

“I’m sure it can’t be as much her business as it is to mind her poor little sisters. Oh dear! if papa could only afford us a governess!”

“I am sure I should not like it at all; besides, it is wrong to wish to be richer than we are.”

“I don’t wish; I am only thinking how nice it would be, if some one would give us a famous quantity of money. Then papa should have a pretty parsonage, and we would make the church beautiful, and get another pony or two, to ride with Charlie.”



“ Yes, and have a garden with a hothouse ! ”

“ Oh yes ; and a governess to teach us to draw. But best of all — Sylvia ! wouldn't it be nice not to have to mind one's clothes always ? Yes, you laugh ; but it comes easier to you ; and, oh dear, dear ! it is so horrid to be always having to see one does not tear one's self. ”

“ I don't think you do see, ” said Sylvia, laughing.

“ My frocks always *will* get upon the thorns. It is very odd. ”

“ Only do please, Katie dear, let me finish this sum ; and then if Mary is not come, she can't scold, if we are amusing ourselves. ”

“ I know ! ” cried Kate. “ I 'll draw such a picture, and tell you all about it when your sum is over. ”

Then silence ensued in the little room, half parlor, half study, nearly filled with books and piano ; and the furniture, though carefully protected with brown holland, looking the worse for wear, and as if danced over by a good many young folks.

The two little girls, who sat on the opposite sides of a little square table in the bay window, were both between ten and eleven years old, but could not have been taken for twins, nor even for sisters, so unlike were their features and complexion ; though their dress was exactly the same, except that Sylvia's was enlivened by scarlet braid, Kate's darkened by black, — and moreover, Kate's apron was soiled, and the frock bore traces of a great darn. In fact, new frocks for the pair were generally made necessary by Kate's tattered state, when Sylvia's garments were still available for little Lily, or for some school child.

Sylvia's brown hair was smooth as satin ; Kate's net did not succeed in confining the loose rough waves

of dark chestnut, on the road to blackness. Sylvia was the shorter, firmer, and stronger, with round white limbs; Kate was tall, skinny, and brown, though perfectly healthful. The face of the one was round and rosy, of the other thin and dark; and one pair of eyes were of honest gray, while the others were large and hazel, with blue whites. Kate's little hand was so slight, that Sylvia's strong fingers could almost crush it together, but it was far less effective in any sort of handiwork; and her slim neatly made foot always was a reproach to her for making such boisterous steps, and wearing out her shoes so much faster than the quieter movements of her companion did, — her sister, the children would have said, for nothing but the difference of surnames reminded Katharine Umfraville that she was not the sister of Sylvia Wardour.

Her father, a young clergyman, had died before she could remember anything, and her mother had not survived him three months. Little Kate had then become the charge of her mother's sister, Mrs. Wardour, and had grown up in the little parsonage, belonging to the district church of St. James's, Oldburgh, amongst her cousins, calling Mr. and Mrs. Wardour papa and mamma, and feeling no difference between their love to their own five children and to her.

Mrs. Wardour had been dead for about four years, and the little girls were taught by the eldest sister, Mary, who had been at a boarding-school to fit her for educating them. Mr. Wardour too taught them a good deal himself, and had the more time for them since Charlie, the youngest boy, had gone every day to the grammar-school in the town.

Armyn, the eldest of the family, was with Mr.

Brown, a very old solicitor, who, besides his office in Oldburgh, had a very pretty house and grounds two miles beyond St. James's, where the children were delighted to spend an afternoon now and then.

Little did they know that it was the taking the little niece as a daughter that had made it needful to make Armyn enter on a profession at once, instead of going to the university and becoming a clergyman like his father; nor how cheerfully Armyn had agreed to do whatever would best lighten his father's cares and troubles. They were a very happy family; above all, on the Saturday evenings and Sundays that the good-natured elder brother spent at home.

"There!" cried Sylvia, laying down her slate-pencil, and indulging in another tremendous yawn; "we can't do a thing more till Mary comes! What can she be about?"

"Oh, but look, Sylvia!" cried Kate, quite forgetting everything in the interest of her drawing on a large sheet of paper. "Do you see what it is?"

"I don't know," said Sylvia, "unless — let me see — That's a very rich little girl, isn't it?" pointing to an outline of a young lady, whose wealth was denoted by the flounces on her frock, the bracelets on her arms, and the necklace on her neck.

"Yes; she is a very rich and grand — Lady Ethelinda; isn't that a pretty name? I do wish I was Lady Katharine."

"And what is she giving? I wish you would not draw men and boys, Kate; their legs always look so funny, as you do them."

"They never will come right; but never mind, I must have them. That is Lady Ethelinda's dear