

"BONNY KATE." A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY
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CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Pondering this question, she walks absently onward, farther and farther from the voices, the laughter, and the click of the mallets and balls. Presently the sounds die away; she has reached the limit of the garden, and, pausing by the low fence which bounds it, she looks over a fair and wide-spread prospect, to where the sun is going down in glory beyond the western heights; while the atmosphere has the true September charm, that exquisite golden stillness, which is less fervid than summer, yet without the faintest touch of autumn chill.



Tarleton finds an opportunity to speak to Kate.

The scene is so lovely, the stillness so unbroken, that she is not inclined to return quickly to the company she has left. "They will not finish their game until dark," she thinks. So she is still standing, a slender, graceful figure, with the sunset radiance falling over her, and bringing out every delicate line and tint of her face, when a step sounds on the gravel walk, and the man whose presumptive vanity so much exceeds that of other men appears at her side.

denn others beside Mr Proctor—or, at least, one other of whom I know."

The manner in which his voice sinks over the last words brings a glow to her cheeks; but it is a glow of vexation, rather than pleasure. "So," she thinks, "having grown tired of Miss Palmer, he has come to amuse himself with me! I must show him his mistake at once."

Consequently she answers, in a tone of irony:

"You are determined that I shall appreciate your readiness in making pretty speeches, Mr. Tarleton; or is the habit so much second nature with you, that you make them involuntarily?"

"I rarely make them at all," he answers, "and I should not think of making them to you. Why do you suspect me of such a thing?"

"Why should I not?" she asks, carelessly. "The desire to make one's self agreeable is very natural; and I believe the cardinal rule is, to make others pleased with themselves, and then they will be pleased with you."

"Such maxims, like the feelings, are dangerous guides," he says. "People who act on your cardinal rule are more likely to disgust than to please, I think. It is a rule upon which I never act. I wish you would believe that."

"It is, fortunately, not a matter of the least importance whether I believe it or not," she answers, with indifferent lightness.

"But it is a matter of importance," he says, with quick positiveness. "I should like to win your good opinion, if I can; and how am

"Have I been so long?" she asks, turning. "I did not know it; I have been watching the sunset. Is your game ended?"

"Happily, yes; and I am sorry to hear the intelligence that your friend Mr. Proctor was the last to make out."

"I expected as much," she says. "He has no skill whatever; and my directions did not assist him much."

"If you could have seen his strokes, after you left him to his own devices, you would change your mind on that point; but some one remarked that his increased bad playing was probably owing to the fact that his thoughts were following you."

"Some one was very foolish," then. Mr. Proctor is not so silly."

"Do you call that silly?" he asks; and, though he is smiling, there is a tone not of jest in his voice. "Then I am afraid you must con-



"Janet is right," she thinks.

I to win it, if you begin by setting me down as a flatterer—a character which I despise, and which my worst enemy never accused me of being?"

His unexpected vehemence surprises her so much, that she hesitates for an instant before saying:

"You must pardon me, but I had no idea that you would take the charges so seriously. I fancied that a man of the world, like yourself, would support it very easily."

"But now that you see how seriously I do take it, you will surely have the grace to retract it. Don't you see how it strikes at the root of everything? You will not believe one word I utter—and I hope to utter a good many words which I should like you to believe—if you have a settled impression in your mind that I am insincere."

"It is you who are making the matter entirely too serious," she says. "I did not mean to imply that you were insincere, beyond the point where insincerity is esteemed a—what shall I say?—well, a very agreeable accomplishment."

"But you have no right to credit me with any such agreeable accomplishment," he says. "What have you ever heard of me, that has led you to form such an opinion?"

"Nothing, in particular," she answers evasively. "I will retract all that I have said, and credit you with as much sincerity as you like—provided that you make no more complimentary speeches."

"That won't do," he says. "It is the poorest kind of an *amende*. You must believe in my sincerity, even if I do make complimentary speeches."

She shakes her head, but the mutinous corners of her mouth turn into an irrepressible smile.

"The dignity of truth is lost in much protesting," she says. "I cannot stretch my credulity over your complimentary speeches; that is asking too much. But it is quite possible for you to refrain from making them, and I hope you will."

"A long and rather humbling experience of myself has taught me to distrust my own strength in resisting temptation," he replies; "on which account I dare only promise to refrain from them if I can."

They look at each other, and laugh; and when people have once laughed together in such fashion as this, there can be no more constraint between them.

"After all, it does not much matter," says Kate, with gay recklessness, feeling that she has propitiated the proprieties quite long enough. "We need not quarrel about them before they are made. How have you enjoyed the afternoon's amusement? Was it not too bad that I, who am the champion player of the

croquet-club should have had a disabled shoulder?"

"Too bad, indeed! I felt sorry for you, when I heard the excuses you were obliged to make; and Miss Palmer, I think, was of the opinion that you were afraid to risk your laurels by playing against her."

"Quite an example of how accurately we are able to judge each other! But Miss Palmer must be very fond of small distinctions, to think that such a trifle would influence me."

"I fancy that trifles make the sum of her life, and therefore she imagines that they make the sum of yours."

"Trifles make the sum of most of our lives, do they not?"

"Necessarily; but the difference between sensible people and foolish people is, that the former recognize the fact that they are trifles, while the latter esteem them matters of importance."

Understanding that Miss Palmer is included in the latter class, Kate smiles a little, but does not answer, and so, for a minute, silence falls. The sunset-glory has somewhat faded out of the west, but the beauty of the hour holds the world in a spell, and if darkness advances, it is with imperceptible steps. Only the moon brightens to silver in the violet sky, and the distant outlines of the scene melt into purple softness, while a light evening breeze brings all manner of sweet woodland and meadow odours on its wings.

Tarleton breaks the silence.

"It was like this I saw you first," he says; "just at this hour, and with this light—this evening glow—falling on your face."

She looks at him in astonishment. "Are you thinking of what you are saying, Mr. Tarle-



"How could you be so mean?"

"How fortunate I am to find you, Miss Lawrence!" he says, in his pleasant voice. "I saw you come in this direction half an hour ago, but, not knowing what flank movement you might have executed, I was not sure of finding you."

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"Tarleton himself is—a—rather good looking."