

"BONNY KATE," A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY
CHRISTIAN REID.

CHAPTER XVI.

"For not a sun o'er earth o'er rose or set.
But traced some furrow set by sin or sorrow;
The past's pale ghost still haunts the coming morrow.
The shortest life hath something to forget."

Tarleton does not see Kate again until he looks at her across the dinner-table, as she sits radiant and lovely by Mr. Vaughn's side, listening to him, talking to him, laughing with



"I did not mean to be rude," she says.

him, altogether seeming to enjoy his society in a manner very seriously annoying to the man watching her—for watch her he does, despite the fact that Florida Vaughn's beautiful face is by his side, and her silvery voice is sounding in his ear.

"Have I lost her?" he is thinking. "Have I waited too long? There is a flood in all tides—have I waited until mine is past? And yet—



"Torment me," he repeats.

and yet I must wait longer. I dare not speak now. Will she come to me when I do speak? Ah, God grant it! for, unworthy though I am,



"Will you come and play a game of billiards?"

no hero could love her better—and love is the best thing, after all!"

A strange meditation for the place in which he is, for the conversation flowing around him, for the words he is himself uttering; but, happily, there is no Asmodeus to betray our secret thoughts, else they would often be found in startling discord with our surroundings and our utterances.

Dinner over, Kate has gone up-stairs on an errand for Mrs. Lawrence, and is coming down again, lightly singing, for she is sternly determined to ignore any heaviness in the region of her heart, when, to her surprise, she finds Tarleton waiting at the foot of the staircase.

"Forgive me for waylaying you," he says, looking at her with an appealing smile, "but from the dining-room I saw you go up-stairs, and I thought I would wait here for your return. Do you know that you treated me very badly



"Oh how good you are," cries Kate.

this afternoon! Why did you go away when I came to see you? And you did not tell me that you will ride Mignon to-morrow morning?"

Now, most girls in this position would have elevated their eyebrows with fine hypocrisy, and replied, "Did I not tell you that I would not do so? I really fancied I had," but Kate is too frank for any such subterfuge. The clear eyes look at him steadily, and the soft yet resolute lips answer quietly:

"I was interrupted, so that I could not answer then; but I am glad of an opportunity to tell you now that I do not care to ride Mignon. I shall not go to-morrow morning."

"But why not?" he asks, eagerly. He feels the subtle change in her, and knows, or thinks she knows, the cause of it; but he does not know how to clear away the mist between them, except by uttering words which burn on his tongue, yet which he dares not speak. "I am sure you would enjoy it," he goes on, "and need I say that I pledge myself to see that no accident again befalls you?"

"You surely do not think that I am afraid of an accident?" asks Kate, with a pretty air of disdain. "I do not care to go; that is all."

"It must be all, if you say so," he replies; "but I am sorry—very sorry. I fancied we might have a pleasant chase together. I rode Mignon this morning" and she went so well.

"Then it is fortunate that I shall not deprive you of her," says Kate, who feels that she must, for her own peace of mind, for her own safety and self-respect, be firm in declining this pleasure, even while she longs to cry out, "I will go! I will go!"

He looks at her with honest reproach—not that which a man affects as a trick of flirtation.

"That does not sound like you," he says; "you are usually so frank, and you must know that it would give me a great deal more pleasure to see you on Mignon than to ride her myself."

"How should I know it?" she asks. Then, flushing, she adds, quickly: "You are very kind; but please don't tempt me any further, for I—I cannot go."

Whether, after this, Tarleton would press the point any further, it is impossible to say, for before he can reply, the principal part of the

company issue in a body from the drawing-room.

"We are going to have a dance," says Will. "If it had been suggested in time, I would have sent for a fiddler, but Janet offers to play some quadrilles and waltzes on the piano. Tarleton, I have been requested by Miss Vaughn to send you to her."

"Will you dance?" asks Tarleton, addressing Kate, with a complete disregard of this message.

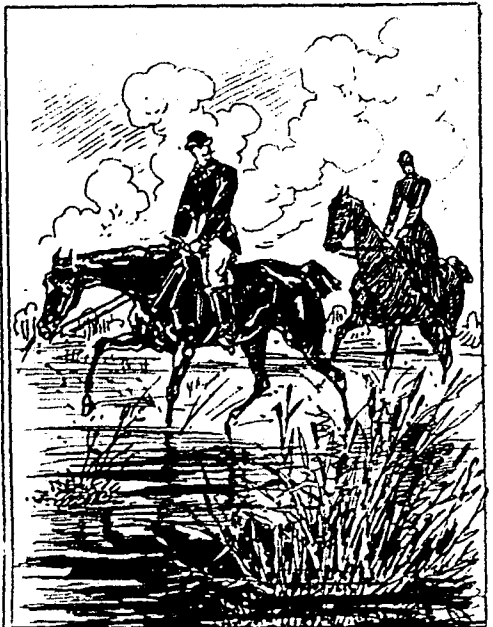
"No, thanks," she answers. "I could not think of keeping you from Miss Vaughn. Here comes Mr. Braxton; probably he will ask me."

Yes, Mr. Braxton asks her, and is pleased by an immediate assent. That Tarleton has a right to consider himself ill-treated by this proceeding, no one can deny, and his temper gives forth a spark in consequence.

"I don't think I have deserved this from you," he says, in a low voice. Then, without waiting for a reply, he turns and crosses the hall to the drawing-room—the carriage of his head as well as the expression of his face showing the ruffled state of his feelings.

Kate looks after him remorsefully. "I did not mean to be rude," she says; "I thought he had rather go to Miss Vaughn."

"Oh, he'll soon come right!" says Mr. Braxton, consolingly. "Quick-tempered, but soon over with it—that's Tarleton! I've seen him



"I am sorry I brought you to this place," he says to Kate.

Mr. Braxton; and Mr. Braxton replies gallantly to the effect that she always is right.

The only light in the sitting-room comes from an argand lamp turned low, and diffusing through its white shade a glow like moonlight. At some distance from this, near the fire, Miss Vaughn sinks into a low chair, and motions Tarleton to another.

Tarleton is not averse to obeying the motion. It is a very fair woman who gives the invitation, and she looks even more than ordinarily fair in the subdued light, which reveals the shimmer of her dress, the gleam of her ornaments, the beauty of her face, yet lends the charm of uncertainty to all these things. That the amusement which she desires at present is to

"Sit to the shade of soft lamps and be wooed for a while."



"How is you, Miss Kate," says aunt Rachel.

he is thoroughly aware. No woman ever liked the incense of adulation better than this woman does, whose life has been so full of it that it might almost have palled upon her—if such a thing can pall upon a woman of her type. But, although he knows what she desires, Tarleton has no idea of acting on the knowledge. He is fully content with admiring the picture before him simply as a picture.

"So you mean to take issue with me on the question of unkindness?" he says, breaking the silence. "Is that wise? I don't intend to complain of my wrongs; but if I did desire to do such a thing, you know whether or not I have proof on my side. You turned me adrift remorselessly—for which I don't blame you. No doubt I was a nuisance—a man in love always



The door opens and an ebony face appears.

she rises and takes his arm. "Let us go to some quiet place and talk the matter over," she says. "I think I can prove that you are wrong."

The quiet place which she desires is easily found. Across the hall, the sitting-room is entirely deserted, and thither they take their way. Randal, who is dancing with the air of a martyr, sees them cross the hall, and sends a perturbed glance after them. Kate also perceives them, and feels justified in her act of apparent rudeness. "You see, I was right!" she says to



"You come this way."