

Kate never forgets the effect which the hush of the great landscape has upon her. It cannot still the pain which is like a dagger at her heart, but at least it does not jar it with discordance. She thinks with a shudder of the noisy race-course in Arlingford—of the crowd, the horses, the empty, unmeaning laughter. How much better this hill-side, covered with bright fallen leaves and fragrant pine-needles, the tender sky above, the distant scene melting in hazy softness! Even the children's shouts from the hollow below, where they have found an untouched haw-tree, come in subdued tones to her ears. She is usually a leader among them in such romps, but to-day they accept the fact that she has a headache, and leave her in peace.

So hour after hour goes by. She sits with her back against a tree, her hands clasped idly before her, gazing with absent eyes at the bounding horizon, all sights and sounds merging in the one great, bitter consciousness that she has been trifled with and deceived; that her heart has been made a plaything, to serve the idle amusement of an hour, for a man whose own heart was long ago given to Florida Vaughn. She has not surrendered her trust lightly; she has gone wearily and repeatedly over the whole ground, and summed up the evidence against him, only to find it overwhelming. Warnings were not lacking—she does not forget that—but she put them all aside; and now she must pay the penalty. "I deserve it all!" this is the sad burden of her thoughts. "I heeded no warning, and I let him persuade me that secrecy was not deception. Yes, I deserve it all, and though it seems too bitter, too cruel for belief, yet it is true! I must have had some instinct of it, when, only yesterday, I told Janet that if I was wrong in trusting him, I should suffer enough to atone for my mistake. Well, the suffering has come, and it is worse, a hundred-fold worse, than I ever dreamed that it could be! But, by God's help"—clasping her slender hands together, like one in extremity of pain, and lifting her brave, sorrowful eyes to the blue, remote sky—"I will live it down! One would be made of poor stuff indeed who could not live down such a thing as this! I have always been proud of my courage, and now I shall see what it is worth. I do not think it will fail me—I suppose, at last, I shall conquer this terrible pain—but oh, my love, my love"—she utters the words aloud, like a child's piteous plaint—"to think that you could treat me so!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Merrily skimming in upper air,  
The year's last swallow lingering there  
Catches the slight, the sound of the fray,  
The line, as it mingles in silken array,  
The lightning rush, as they break from slip,  
Thunder of hoof and echo of whip.

The day which passes in this manner with Kate, is, meanwhile, one of unexampled excitement on the Arlingford race-course.

The Wilmer equipage has hardly entered the ground, when Tarleton rides up to it, and is greeted with a storm of salutations and questions from all whom it contains. He answers them very much at random, while his eyes almost incredulously take in the fact that the one person whom he has come to see is absent.

"Where is Miss Kate?" he asks, quickly.

"Kate remained at home," answers Sophy. "She said she had a severe headache—and we felt sure that it must be severe to make her willing to stay away."

"Perhaps, like one of Charles Reade's heroes, you entertain a rooted distrust of women's headaches," says Janet, fixing her keen glance on Tarleton's face, where disappointment is plainly legible.

"A headache is a kind of malady one can't verify, and, therefore, I have no doubt women often make it an excuse for other things," he replies, "but I am sure your cousin would not do so. I am exceedingly sorry that she is not here. The racing to-day will be very good. Apart from the great race in which Cavalier and Orion run, Bonny Kate is to risk her laurels of yesterday against some of the best horses—notably, Hargood's Khedive."

"Do you think she will win? Shall we bet on her?" asks Sophy, eagerly.

"I am afraid to advise you to do so, unless you hedge by betting on Khedive also," answers Tarleton, smiling.

With this he draws back, bows, and canters away across the field.

"How fond I am of him!" says Sophy, looking after him affectionately. "And oh, how I hope Cavalier will win!"

"It will be a very serious matter if he does not," says Will. "Tarleton is not only certain of selling him to Burdock in case he beats Orion, but he has bets laid on him to a very heavy extent."

"Have you laid much on him?" asks Wilmer.

"Not a great deal—but enough to make me sympathize with Tarleton's anxiety."

"He does not look anxious," says Sophy.

"He is too game for that," responds Will, "but you may be sure he wishes it was over."

"He has not long to wait," says Wilmer. "Here come the horses for the first race."

This race—a mile and a quarter dash—does not occupy much time, or excite a great deal of interest. Then follows the great event of the day—the race, in two-mile heats, for which Cavalier and Orion are entered. When the horses appear and the blankets are removed, there can

be no question that Cavalier stands without a peer in beauty, but neither can there be a doubt that he will find a formidable rival in Orion. The latter is a dark-brown horse, in appearance and movement less graceful than Cavalier, but with every indication of the remarkable powers of speed and endurance which all turfmen know him to possess. So well are the horses thought to be matched, that the private betting is even on them, though Cavalier is selling ahead in the pools.

Presently the bell rings the horses to the post, and, without delay, the flag falls and they are off—Cavalier leading for the first quarter. Then Orion comes up to him, and, by the time the half mile is made, has taken the lead. As they come round the turn and enter the home-stretch, he is three lengths ahead; but it is not until they pass the stand—Orion leading by four or five lengths, and Cavalier not more than as much again in front of the other horses, of whom nobody except their owners made much account—that murmurs of astonishment are heard, and Cavalier's name is tossed from lip to lip in the swaying crowd. In truth, matters begin to look very serious for him. He is plainly running laboredly, and it is only the urging of his rider that keeps him in his present position in the race. The distance between the horses increases, and, by the time the third half-mile is made, astonishment has reached the point of dismay in the minds of Cavalier's backers. Orion still leads, and now—what is this? The other horses pass Cavalier, who—falling farther and farther behind—brings up the rear.

"By Heaven, he will be distanced!" cried more than one excited voice in the crowd.

The horses are coming down the home-stretch at this moment—Orion still leading triumphantly, following him the varied colors of the field, and last Cavalier, whose rider is making a frantic effort to escape the threatened disgrace. In vain. A cry of amazement, rather than a shout of triumph, goes up, as Orion sweeps by—with the favorite hopelessly distanced!

Never has anything like the excitement that follows been seen on the Arlingford race-course. A hundred throats vociferate that the race has not been a fair one, and men throng on the track as Cavalier comes up, to ply his rider with a host of questions. The jockey himself is in such a white heat of excitement, that he can hardly answer—but he finds his voice when Tarleton breaks through the crowd and comes to his side.

"There's something the matter with the horse," he says. "I've done the best I could. I hope you don't think it's my fault, Mr. Tarleton."

"Not the fault of your riding," Tarleton answers; "but there is something very serious the matter with the horse. Before he ran the first half-mile, I saw that he would lose the race. Take him off," he says, addressing one of the stablemen.

His manner is so quiet, his tone so authoritative, that the crowd involuntarily falls back—nobody caring to question him; for, quiet as he is, there are certain lines about his face, and an unmistakable gleam in his eyes, which show that he is in no mood to be trifled with.

Hence it is that Will Lawrence is the only man who accompanies him as he follows the defeated horse from the track.

"In the name of all that is unfortunate, what do you think is the matter?" Will inquires, after several minutes' silence.

"I think that he has been tampered with," Tarleton replies—still speaking with a calmness very foreign to his usual manner.

"I thought of that myself. But how has it been done—and by whom?"

"That I cannot tell; but I shall discover. Where is Pierce?" he asks, speaking to the groom who has gone to work on the horse.

"Here I am, Mr. Tarleton," answers the voice of the person inquired for, who comes up at this moment, looking the most pale and crest-fallen of the group. "Bad spot of work, sir," he goes on. "The horse must be sick—yet he seemed all right when we brought him out."

"If he is sick, it is because he has been made so," Tarleton says. "I believe there has been foul play of some kind with him, and if it is so, you, who are accountable for his safety, should know of it."

"There can't be anything of the kind, Mr. Tarleton," answers the man steadily—but it is only Will's fancy that he grows a shade paler. "I should know of it if it had been, for I've watched him as close as could be. No horse was ever better watched, and he hasn't shown any signs of being out of condition before to-day."

"He has not been out of condition," says Tarleton, with stern decision. "I have never seen him in better condition for a race. I have not a doubt that he has been tampered with, and shall not rest until I discover what has been done, and who did it. When I have discovered this—"

He says no more; but if his speech breaks off abruptly, the flash of his eye, and the hand that involuntarily tightens its grasp on the riding-cane which he carries, express significantly all that is left unsaid.

Again Will asks himself if it is his imagination that Pierce changes color. He, certainly turns without speaking, to the horse, and begins to examine him. While they discuss his condition, a shout goes up from the crowd around the course, which tells that Orion has won the second heat, and the race is at an end. It is impossible to describe the consternation

which has fallen over the Lawrence party, at the crushing defeat of the horse on which their bets were laid, and—as they well know—Tarleton's hope of retrieving his fortune was staked. When the cry goes up that tells of Orion's triumph, Sophy fairly bursts into tears.

"Poor Frank!" she says. "Oh, this is too hard!"

"I should like to murder that jockey!" cries Janet, passionately. "It must be his fault! He has been bribed to let the horse be beaten! Everybody says that such things are done!"

"But it would be carrying the matter too far to let him be distanced," says Wilmer. "No, the jockey is not to blame. I saw that the horse would lose the race before he made the first mile."

"What on earth can be the matter with him?" says Mr. Proctor. "Why did Tarleton bring him out if he was no more able to run than this?"

Nobody can answer—in fact, nobody makes the faintest attempt to do so. There is a hubbub of voices on all sides, everybody talks at once, and nobody listens to anybody else.

"Tarleton is tremendously hard hit, I know," says Wilmer presently; "and I am afraid that Will has a good deal more on Cavalier than he can afford to lose. He had better put as much on Bonny Kate, and try to make things even at any rate. Her name ought to make her bring him good luck."

"For Heaven's sake, don't such a thing to him," says Janet. "He would be foolish enough to do it. But I am ready to stake anything on Bonny Kate. Mr. Proctor, will you invest for me in the—pools, do you call them? And you mean to back her yourself, do you not?"

Mr. Proctor looks dubious over this; but he proceeds to the stand where the pools are sold for the next race, and buys one for Janet. Here he learns that Khedive is the favorite for the race, and being eminently cautious, and not inclined to trust his own judgment outside of agricultural matters, he thinks it wisest to purchase a ticket on that horse, also.

It is to be supposed that strokes of inspiration sometimes occur to sympathetic minds at the same time; and, if this be the case, it is not surprising that the idea of making Bonny Kate retrieve his losses on Cavalier should have occurred to Will as well as to Wilmer. He hesitates over it, for the odds are heavy against the filly's winning, and if she loses, affairs will unquestionably be rather desperate with him. "I'll play a bold game at any cost," he finally says to himself—and then he tells Tarleton what he intends doing.

"I've backed her heavily myself," Tarleton answers, "but I cannot advise you to do the same. Luck has turned against me, I think. Nevertheless, I'll go and see her brought out, to be certain that no trick has been played on her."

That Bonny Kate is greeted with enthusiasm when she makes her appearance on the track, is owing not only to the name she bears, and to her success of the day before, but also to the popular sympathy with Tarleton in his late misfortune. The rumor of foul play with Cavalier has got abroad, and been generally credited, so that public indignation is in consequence deeply stirred. Khedive also belongs to the owner of Orion. Hence, looking at the matter from every point of view, the good wishes of the multitude are with Bonny Kate.

When the bell rings to mount, the temper of the latter, now, as on the day before, is displayed to her great disadvantage. There are several false starts, which worry her to an almost ungovernable pitch, and in one of which she gets her head and bolts almost as far as the quarter, before her jockey can bring her to order. At last, however, they are off—the pretty willful creature leading like a greyhound.

The three horses behind her are all good ones, however, and Khedive's rider soon begins to press the running, knowing that the bottom as well as the speed of his horse is to be depended upon. The pace becomes tremendous, a cloud of dust envelops the horses, but through it anxious eyes strain to see now a purple, now a green, now a scarlet jacket first of the field. When they sweep round the track opposite the stand, Khedive is leading, with Vigilant second, and Bonny Kate third; but when they enter the home-stretch, Vigilant has fallen back, Khedive has taken the second place, and Bonny Kate is leading triumphantly. A moment later she has swept like a meteor by the grand stand, while men cheer, and women wave handkerchiefs like flags, from all directions.

"By Jove, she is a splendid creature!" says Mr. Burdock, watching her with enthusiasm.

"She has remarkable speed," says Mr. Vaughn's voice at his side, "but she lacks bottom. She has won the first heat, but she'll win no other, depend upon it."

As if to justify his opinion, Khedive wins the second heat; but Bonny Kate proves that she has bottom as well as swiftness. The race is a close one, and she comes in second.

This result exceeds the hopes of her most sanguine supporters, and now follows the winning heat, for which only two start. After the usual interval, they are once more off. For the first half-mile Khedive holds the lead, but Bonny Kate presses him to his utmost speed, and, on the third quarter, the space between the two steadily diminishes. "She is gaining!—she is gaining!" eager voices cry. She is certainly gaining. Her pace grows faster—she reaches the saddle-girths—now they are neck-and-neck!

The suspense is intense in the excited crowd,

and Tarleton's eyes follow the straining horses with an anxiety that almost brings a mist before his sight.

When they enter the home-stretch, they are running side by side, and as they approach the stand it is impossible to tell which will come in first. Then Bonny Kate startles every one by a headlong burst of speed, and, passing Khedive, comes in winner.

When the hurdle-race, which closes the day's programme, is over, Will Lawrence, who has not seen anything of Tarleton for some time, goes in search of him. According to the tendency of human nature to look at events of all kinds through a personal medium, Will, whose own prospects are brighter since he retrieved part of his losses on Bonny Kate, regards Tarleton's affairs with a cheerful philosophy which he did not feel before.

"After all, what is one race?" he thinks. "Frank may have lost heavily on it—I've no doubt he has—but to a man as much involved as he is, a little loss, more or less, hardly matters. Whether Cavalier was tampered with, or whether he's merely out of condition, he'll come all right and be as valuable as ever, while, on my soul, I believe there is a fortune in Bonny Kate. Hallo, Frank!" he adds aloud; "I was just looking for you."

It is in turning a corner of the club-house that he comes upon Tarleton, who stands near to one of the stablemen—a youthful person of shrewd countenance. He looks up as Will draws near, and the latter reads at once on his face and in his eyes that something has occurred to rouse all the indignant wrath of which his nature is capable. Yet—as one who holds a firm leash on passion which else might wholly escape control—he speaks coolly:

"You are exactly in time, Will. Here is the first development in the case. This boy swears that Pierce himself drugged Cavalier. He looked through a crack in the back of the stable, and saw the scoundrel give the horse a dose. Why didn't you come to me at once?" he breaks off, peremptorily addressing the boy.

To which the latter replies that he could not credit the idea of any injury being intended to the horse, until he lost the race. "Then I think that dose must have had something to do with it, and I better tell what I see," he adds. "Since I was with him all the time, you might think I had some share in it; but I'd a cut off my hand before I'd let any harm happen to him."

"You have done perfectly right in coming to me," says Tarleton. "And this is not all," he goes on, turning to Will. "Pierce has been seen several times with Ashton Vaughn. Only yesterday they were together."

"Tarleton!" Will recoils a step. "You had better take care what you say. You are excited now, you know."

"I never was cooler in my life," Tarleton asserts; "and as for taking care, you may be sure I shall do nothing rashly. But you know me well enough to be also sure that I will make this villainy recoil on the heads of all who, directly or indirectly, have had a hand in it."

"I know you well enough to be sure that you will be absolutely reckless of consequences," says Will. "This is too grave a charge to make without the best possible proof."

"I shall not take a step without proof," Tarleton answers, "and I am going after it now."

He turns as he speaks, and, followed by the groom, walks away, while Will stands like a statue of perplexity—uncertain whether to follow and endeavor to prevent serious mischief, or to act upon the safer and altogether easier policy of minding his own business.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

It was thine oath that first did fail,  
It was thy love proved false and frail.

The crimson evening light is on the hills, when Kate and her retinue take their way homeward. The day has been one of infinite satisfaction to the children. They have enjoyed themselves to the top of their bent, devoured haws and persimmons in enormous quantities, filled their basket with chestnuts, romped, and quarrelled, and "made up," all with undiminished spirits. Having a mile or two to walk, it chances that they reach Fairfields at much the same time that the party from Arlingford do. The carriage is just drawing up before the entrance, when they approach from the side of the grounds.

"O mamma," they cry in chorus, "we've been out in the woods all day, and had a splendid time!"

"O Kate, you don't know what you missed!" cries Bessie in breathless haste, lest some one shall anticipate her in telling the news. "Cavalier was beaten!—and they say he was drugged! But Bonny Kate won a splendid race. She beat Khedive—oh, if you could have heard the people shout when she came in!"

Kate stands amazed. She thought she had lost all interest in any possible result of the race, but this unexpected news proves to her that she was mistaken.

"Are you in earnest?" she asks. "Was Cavalier really beaten? Did Orion win the race? I am very sorry."

"Yes, Orion won the race," says Mrs. Lawrence, "and Cavalier was not only beaten, but distanced. There was some talk of his having been drugged; but nobody seemed to know whether it was true or not."

"Bonny Kate's triumph made amends for his defeat, however," says Miss Brooke. She turns as she speaks, and laying her hand on