

# "BONNY KATE," A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY  
CHRISTIAN REID.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"Ah! why to that which needs it not,  
Methought, should costly things be given?  
How much is wasted, wrecked, forgot,  
On this side heaven!"

Mr. Proctor has no opportunity to make his declaration that night. Kate does not appear again. She is tired, she has a headache, she has gone to bed—this is the report, when he

she shows no sign of her vigil. Apart from this she bears herself so well that even Miss Vaughn, looking at her, thinks, "She has not been very much hurt."

Let us own that courage is a good thing—a thing to be not only highly esteemed, but sedulously cultivated. The soul that weakly cries out under pain, lacks an element of nobility as well as of strength. Even a criminal



Taking a lunch with them, they plunge into the depths of the forest.

finally induces Bessie to see what has become of her. Bessie herself is shrewdly aware that Kate is crying when she finds her in the dark room, cast heedlessly on the outside of the bed; but she is too discreet to mention this fact, and consequently Mr. Proctor's feelings are not lacerated by hearing it. To what depth of despondency it would have cast him, it is difficult to say, for he is already sufficiently despondent. "It really seems as if I shall never have an opportunity to speak to her!" he thinks; and then he registered a solemn vow that the important words shall be spoken to-morrow, let what will interfere.

The next morning is brilliant in cloudless beauty, and the races are the theme of every tongue at the breakfast-table—every tongue, that is, save one, for Kate, who comes in late,



So hour after hour goes by.

has nothing to say regarding them. She looks very much as usual—a trifle paler, perhaps—but, like most brunettes, she is often pale in the morning, so this excites no remark. Her night has been sleepless; but it takes more than one sleepless night to set a mark on healthy youth, and save for the paleness already mentioned, and a slight languor of the eyes,

"But you told me last night that nothing was settled—that you had not accepted Miss Brooke's invitation!"

"I gave you a wrong idea, then. I have accepted it—at least my uncle has accepted it for me. But even if this were not so, I should decline your invitation all the same."

"May I ask why?" says Miss Vaughn, grow-

ing cold in turn, for surely there is a limit to the forbearance of even the most suave of women of the world. "I should not think you would need to ask," replies Kate. "If I accompany you, I should imply—with regard to your brother—what can never be. As for Mr. Ashton, I have not the least desire to know him. He declined to form my acquaintance when my father left me to his care. Now I decline to take any step whatever to form his."

Miss Vaughn looks at her as one might look at some strange phenomenon. "Absurd and impracticable!" are the words that hover on her

lips, but she restrains them. "I think I am safe in predicting that a few years hence you will be sorry for this," she says; "but if you desire me to regard your decision as final, I will do so."

"It is certainly final," Kate answers. A moment after this, Janet's face looks out of one of the drawing-room windows. "Sorry to disturb you both," she says, "but is it not time for us to be thinking of our toilets? Will says we must go into Arlingford early to-day if we want to secure a good place at the races."

Neither Miss Vaughn nor Kate is averse to their conversation being ended. They enter the hall, where the former takes her way up-stairs, while the latter enters the sitting-room in search of Mrs. Lawrence.

"Aunt Margaret," she says, "I have come to tell you that I don't care to go to the races to-day. Bessie or Lucy can have my seat in the carriage."

"Why, what is the matter?" asks Mrs. Lawrence, looking up—for this is something altogether without precedent. "Are you sick?"

"Not much. I have a headache"—which is true enough—"and I would rather stay at home."

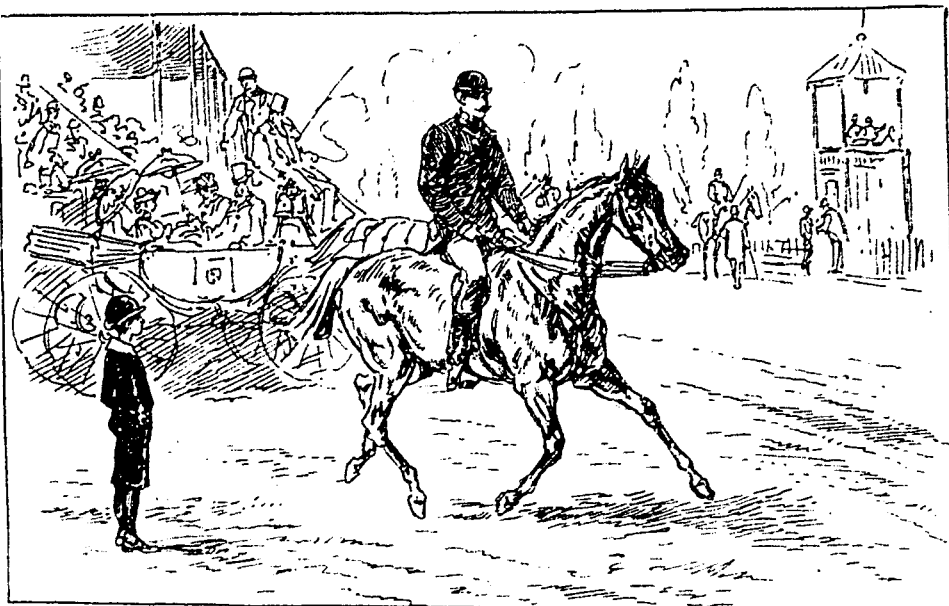
"Very well. Tell Bessie that she can go."

So the matter is settled; but great is Mr. Proctor's concern and dismay when the party assemble for starting and he finds that Kate is not among the number. He would fain go and remonstrate with her, but is informed that she is not to be seen.

"She says her head aches, and she's lying down," Bessie states. "I told her that I wouldn't let a headache keep me from seeing Cavalier run; but she says she don't care anything about Cavalier, and she is tired of races."

"Something serious must be the matter," remarks Sophy, "for Kate to say that."

"Perhaps she over-exerted herself yesterday," says Miss Vaughn, opening her parasol. The rest acquiesce in this view of the matter, and then settle themselves in the different equipages, with much interchange of gay words,



He draws back, bows, and canters away across the field.

and ringing of gay laughter; the horses stamp impatiently; then,

"Low on the sand, and loud on the stoue,  
The last wheel echoes away."

and, with the exception of the children, Kate is left in the house alone.

A very considerable exception these are; and when they presently gather about her, with entreaties to go with them into the woods—where haw-trees are waiting to be rifled and chestnuts to be gathered—she yields without much demur, being herself not averse to doing so.

Taking a lunch with them, they therefore go



"There's something the matter with the horse."

out into the still beautiful woodlands. It is one of those autumn days which seem touched with ineffable melancholy—a melancholy which even the happy must feel, and which, to the sorrowful, is like an echo of their own souls. The Great Spirit is smoking his pipe, say the Indians of such days as this—and to-day he is smoking it with a vehemence which has ob-

scured the distant mountains, and makes the sun like a red ball in the heavens. There is not breeze enough to move the lightest spray, the air is dreamlike in its mellow softness, the hills have drawn a mantle of haze about them as they stand wrapped in silence, and only the babble of the streams is heard in the valleys and glens.

"Why did'nt you come to me at once?"

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