

"BONNY KATE," A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY
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CHAPTER XXX.

"Pure with all faithful passion, fair
With tender smiles that come and go,
And comforting as April air
After the snow."

There is everything to aid Kate in the resolution wherewith she has girded herself. The days which rapidly follow one another are filled to the brim with engagements, visits, occupation, and excitement—to herself she seems plunged into a whirl which hardly leaves her time to think. It is not according to the nature of healthy youth to brood over sorrow—especially when that sorrow is medicined by pride—and so, though she does not forget, she finds that she has not lost the power of enjoyment. Pretty dresses, pleasant friends, and many admirers, all conspire to bring back the light to her eyes, the pomegranate flush to her cheeks, the smile to her lips.

"How charming Miss Lawrence is!" people say one to another. Astute ladies add that it is very evident Miss Brooke means to make a match between her nephew and this charming girl. Gentlemen say that Fenwick is a lucky dog, and if there is a sense of disappointment in a few hearts—for Fenwick has been counted one of the best matrimonial chances afloat—such disappointment is not uttered aloud.

It is not necessary to enter into the details of Kate's life for several weeks. She wears lovely toilets which enhance her beauty a hundredfold, she receives, and pays visits by the scores, she attends parties, she rides, and drives, and walks—in short, she has pleasure and admiration enough to turn an older and wiser head.

That hers is not turned is owing simply to the fact that her heart is still loyal to the friends and home she has left. A letter from Fairfields—though Tarleton's name is now studiously omitted—is more to her than all the compliments which can be paid, all the incense which can be offered. The faithful, affectionate nature clings steadfastly to things old and familiar.

The girl in question is, meanwhile, trying sedulously to put this lover out of her heart and her thoughts, and she succeeds in a measure in doing so. No one could live the life into which she is plunged, without finding the absent in a manner jostled aside. But the memory, the heart, whatever is most concerned in such affairs is often very deceptive. People flatter themselves that they have "lived down" some recollection or sentiment, which a trivial accident sometimes startles into vivid life. So it is with Kate. Making her toilet one evening, for an informal gathering at a house noted for its social charm, she has occasion to open a box which she brought from Fairfields, and there, among sashes, and ribbons, and frills, she finds a faded wreath, formed of a woodland vine, which Tarleton gathered for her the day they went to Rocky Mount.

The sight of it brings everything back in a flood; the soft September afternoon, the rich landscape spread far and fair below the pinnacle on which Tarleton and herself were enthroned, the moonlight ride, the dance in the old hall that evening, when she wore this wreath in her hair. Ah, what blithe hours they

all that they should be, she detects at once the traces of tears, but refrains from comment.

"You look exceedingly well," she says, bringing her eyeglass to bear on the pretty costume of delicate silk and filmy white crape. "You are dressed enough for the occasion, and not too much—coral ornaments! Yes, they are very becoming; but you look a little pale. Can't you rub some color into your cheeks? And perhaps you had better bathe your eyes. They show the effect of your ride in the wind to-day."

Kate feels too guilty to say that there was no wind. She bathes her eyes, takes a last glance in the mirror, and, with her wrap thrown over her arm, goes downstairs.

tion, quotes those French lines, which Leigh Hunt thus prettily translated:

"Yes, that fair neck, too beautiful by half,
Those eyes, that voice, that bloom, all do her honor;
Yet, after all, that little giddy laugh
Is what, in my mind, sits the best upon her.
Good God! 'twould make the very streets and ways
Through which she passes burst into a pleasure!"

Did melancholy come to mar my days,
And kill me in the lap of too much leisure,
No spell were wanting from the dead to raise me,
But only that sweet laugh, wherewith she slays me."

"How like a child in her varying moods she is!" he thinks, as he watches her after they have entered the rooms, which are filled with people, and where she is quickly taken from his charge.



"I hate to go home, don't you?"

Fenwick is in the drawing-room when his aunt enters, attended by this graceful figure. Kate is so much in demand that he is usually not her escort; but to-night he is to be, and she thinks how very refined he looks in evening dress—that most trying of all costumes to an under-bred man. He is never handsome, but most women feel that appearance is a very subordinate attraction in a man, and he has an air of distinction which many a handsome man lacks.

He, too, sees the signs of tears, and wonders over their cause—wonders so much that, unlike Miss Brooke, he is determined to satisfy himself on the point. By this time Kate and himself are very good friends, and when they leave the house—the night is beautiful, and the distance short, so they have declined the carriage—he draws her hand within his arm, and begins:

"I hope you will pardon me when I say that I see you have been distressed about something. Tell me, pray—is it anything that I can help?" "Nothing whatever," answers Kate, her voice trembling a little. "I—I am ashamed of myself. You must not think that anything has happened here to distress me. It was only my own folly. I chanced to find a faded wreath that—that we gathered at Fairfields, last September—and the sight of it made me cry!"

"Ah!"—an interjection of thorough appreciation, as he draws the hand nestling against his arm a little closer against his side. "Such things often have a capability of rousing emotion, principally from their unexpectedness. Do you know—with a kindly, almost tender, cadence in his voice—"I am afraid you suffer a good deal from homesickness! I notice that a chance allusion to Fairfields often fills your eyes with tears."

"I am afraid I am very childish," says Kate. "Indeed, I enjoy this pleasant life, but—but I cannot prevent my heart from clinging to Fairfields. And I would not prevent it if I could," she adds.

Her companion looks with a smile at the face framed in a soft mass of white, netted drapery. The name by which he has heard his aunt address her, rises to his lips. "Bonny Kate!" he almost utters—but stops in time. "What a loyal heart you have!" he says instead. "But do you know that it is a good thing, and a very necessary thing, in this world, to know how to forget?"

To his surprise, she glances up, frankly as a child might. "Yes, I know it," she says, "and I am trying to forget—not Fairfields, but—other things. Only"—a strain of pathos comes into her tone—"it is so hard to do."

It is safe to say that Fenwick was never in his life more touched—there is something in this confession so different from the obstinacy that clings at all cost to "an undesirable attachment," or the fickleness that lightly forgets. Thinking this, he does not answer for a moment; the next their short walk is at an end, and they have reached their destination.

When Kate comes down from the dressing-room and joins him at the foot of the staircase, all signs of sadness have left her face. Such scenes as these she enjoys with all her mercurial spirit—her eyes shine, her color glows, her sweet laugh rings out like music. It is of this laugh that Fenwick one day, to his aunt's gratifica-

Who could fancy that those bright eyes had lately been weeping, or those smiling lips exhaling sighs? Since his widowhood Fenwick had never danced, and to-night, for the first time, he is sorry for this, as he follows Kate's movements with his eyes. His hostess, to whom he is talking, smiles as she observes the direction of his glance.

"What a delightful girl Miss Lawrence is!" she says. "And so pretty! I think we owe Miss Brooke a vote of thanks for bringing her among us, and it will be no fault of some of our young gentlemen if she does not remain for good."

"My aunt is very much attached to her," says Fenwick, "and desires nothing more than to keep her with her altogether. As for the young gentlemen, they must take their chances. I am afraid they are more likely to lose their hearts than Miss Lawrence is to lose her liberty."

"Are you able to speak so positively for Miss Lawrence?" asks the lady.

Meanwhile, Kate, who is standing on the other side of the room, with half a dozen young men around her, is very much surprised when Fenwick comes up presently and asks if she will dance with him.

"Yet I almost feel as if I had imposed upon you," he says, when she assents readily, "for I have not danced in several years."

"Oh, you will soon catch the step," she answers. "I should think that any one who had never danced before could dance to the Strauss waltz-music. Now—yes, you have it!"

"Who could fail to have it with you?" he asks, smiling. "How well you dance!"

"I have been told so often before," she answers.

And as she speaks, the hall at Fairfields, with its much-worn oil-cloth under foot, its tall clock in the corner, its antlers hanging on the wall, its rack, covered with miscellaneous hats, whips, and gloves, the black fiddler, the gay dancers, rises before her. The polished floor over which her feet are now gliding is smooth as glass, the German musicians send forth the sweet Strauss music like strains of enchantment, the chandeliers shower their light down on fair women and graceful men, silken dresses, and eyes brighter than the jewels that sparkle here and there; but even while the light, the perfume, the whole festive scene, charms Kate's pleasure-loving nature, the faithful heart still sighs

"For the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still."

With an interlude of supper at eleven o'clock, the entertainment lasts until one or two. Then Kate comes down again wrapped in her bur-noose, exchanges a few last smiling words and adieux with various acquaintances, takes Fenwick's arm, and goes out into the soft, starlit night.

"What a pleasant evening it has been, has it not?" she says. "I think our hostess entertains so well."

"Very well indeed. And so you enjoyed the evening, notwithstanding its untoward beginning?"

"Yes, I enjoyed it," she answers. "Do you think me very—very light, to be able to do so? I like pleasure, and yet I don't forget a great



She finds a faded wreath of a woodland vine, which Tarleton gathered for her.

Fenwick is pleased to perceive this, for his aunt's experiment interests him. He is curious to see what the result will be, how long Kate will hold her own against the influences brought to bear upon her. "Constancy is so rare a thing," he says to himself, "that I shall respect the girl if she is loyal enough to stand by her lover—but it is not likely that she will be."

were!—how much more blithe than any she has known since, or is likely to know again! With a reckless disregard of her appearance, she bursts into tears. All the old bitterness of grief comes back. "Oh, my dear, how could you treat me so cruelly!" she sobs like a child.

When Miss Brooke comes in some time later, to see that the finishing touches of her toilet are