

"BONNY KATE," A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY
CHRISTIAN REID.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Ah, me! why may not love and life be one?
Why walk we thus alone, when, by our side,
Love, like a visible God, might be our guide?
How would the marble grow nobler! and the street,
Worn like a dungeon floor by weary feet,
Seem then a golden court-way of the sun!"

When Kate leaves Arlingford, it is with the firm determination to leave behind the misery of longing, the bitterness of regret, which she is well aware will sap away all the brightness of

They are soon piloted to where a handsome carriage stands, and before Kate has time to recover from the bewilderment into which the untravelled mind is likely to be plunged, they are rattling over the paving-stones.

She sits silent, while Miss Brooke and her nephew talk, gazing out absently on the lines of houses past which they roll, and feeling, to the bottom of her homesick heart, how strange, how utterly strange, it all is! "Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend" rings



"Kate, dear child, this is my nephew."

her youth, if indulged. Not only courage but pride comes to her aid in forming this resolution. To return Miss Brooke's kindness by becoming a lovesick maiden on her hands, is unendurable to the girl's high spirit. Therefore—though no effort of will can bring back the roses to her cheeks, or the starry lustre to her eyes—she constrains herself to an appearance of cheerfulness; and in this, and in many other cases, the effort necessary for the appearance has a wholesome effect in bringing about the reality.

On one of the softest and loveliest autumn days, the train which bears Miss Brooke and herself rushes into the city to which they are bound; and while the maid is gathering shawls and satchels together, a tall, dark gentleman makes his way to them through the crowd, and is greeted by Miss Brooke rapturously.

"My dear Herbert, how delighted I am to see you! Did you think I was never coming? The train missed connection, or we should have been here last night. I telegraphed to you from Arlingford just before we started. Did you get the telegram? Oh!—I am forgetting. Kate, dear child, here is my nephew. Herbert, this is Miss Lawrence."

Kate looks up. She takes little interest in this nephew, whose praises Miss Brooke has been singing incessantly; but she owns to herself that it is a pleasant face, and one well calculated to win liking, which meets her glance. Not a frank, *débonnaire* face, like that which is shined in her heart, but one of a different character altogether—older, graver, more intellectual, with clear eyes that regard her kindly.

"I think I must beg to shake hands with Miss Lawrence," says Mr. Fenwick, extending his hand. "I have heard so much of her that I scarcely feel as if this was our first meeting."

Miss Lawrence puts a gloved hand into his with a smile. "I have heard a great deal of you, too," she says, in her sweet voice. Unconsciously to herself this voice has caught a thrill of pathos since the sorrow which has passed over her like a wave—just as her face, though paler, has gained a fresh charm, and her soft eyes a deeper expression.

"Let me relieve you of some of these bundles," says Mr. Fenwick. "How are you, Emily?" (to the maid.) "Come this way, aunt."

through her mind like the sad refrain of a haunting air. Far, indeed, are they measured—and, for her, when shall they be retraced?

The house at which the carriage finally stops is a very stately one—a large, double house, with imposing portico on the street, and piazzas at the side, overlooking a garden.

"Here we are, my dear," says Miss Brooke. "I hope Herbert has things cozy for us. Emily, are you sure you have all the bundles?"

Mr. Fenwick assists them out, and as they enter a spacious hall, where a trim housemaid meets them, and leads the way up the broad staircase. "What room have you prepared for Miss Lawrence?" asks Miss Brooke. "I will look at it before going to my own."

So she precedes Kate into the pretty chamber, which is a marvel of luxurious comfort, glances round critically, and then turns and kisses the young girl.

"I hope you like it, and that you will be happy here," she says. "Remember, you must do exactly as you please."

"Dear Miss Brooke, how can I help liking such a charming room?" says Kate. "I should be very ungrateful if I could desire anything better, or—if I am not happy."

"Well, lay off your things, but you need not change your dress, and I will call for you in a few minutes to go to dinner."

They find Mr. Fenwick awaiting them in the dining-room when they go down. It is a handsome room, with lofty ceiling, oak-toned walls,



Mr. Fenwick lights a cigar and takes himself off.

and the two large windows overlooking the garden. The dinner is excellent, but Kate has no appetite. Despite her most valiant efforts, homesickness grows upon her. She almost chokes as she thinks of the familiar scene at Fairfields—knowing exactly where they all are, and what they are doing, and how they are saying to one another that Kate has by this time reached her journey's end. So vivid is the fancy, that she is startled when Mr. Fenwick (to whose conversation with his aunt she has not been paying any heed) suddenly says:

"By-the-by, I see in the papers that quite a sensational event occurred near Arlingford not long ago. Frank Tarleton was shot down by a man—a traiber, or groom, or something of the kind—whom he had thrashed about a racing matter. I suppose, of course, you know all about it?"

"Yes," says Miss Brooke—she touches his foot under the table as she speaks—"it was an unfortunate affair, but when we left Fairfields it was thought that Mr. Tarleton would certainly recover."

"I am glad to hear it," says Mr. Fenwick. He is uncertain what the warning touch may signify; so, judging it most discreet to ask no more questions, he turns and addresses Kate:

"I have an excellent saddle-horse which I shall be happy to place at your service," says Fenwick to Kate.

"Thanks," she answers, smiling faintly—it is hard to do other than smile faintly when one's heart is sore and sick—"but I do not know—I am not sure that I care to ride *here*." Then, as they rise from table, she turns, and says to Miss Brooke, "May I go into the garden? It looks very pleasant there."

"Of course you may," answers that lady, "and I will join you in a little while. Herbert, light your cigar—I insist upon it."

"If you insist, I must obey," says Fenwick, producing his cigar-case with no great reluctance. "Do you mean to spoil me as badly as ever? It is a pleasant process, whatever the moral effect may be."

"I mean to make myself comfortable," she replies, "and I could not be that if I knew you were longing for me to be gone, in order to smoke. What are you smiling about? I have not meant to be amusing."

"People are often amusing when they don't mean to be so. I was only smiling because your good nature with regard to the cigar is so very transparent. You will put me in the amiable frame of mind of a man who is enjoying a good Habana after dinner—and then you will artfully ask me a question."

"About what?" inquires Miss Brooke, smiling and coloring a little.

"About the young lady who has just gone out. My dear aunt, do you take me for a mole? Ever since I met you on the train I have seen in your eyes, and known that hovering on your lips were the words, 'My dear Herbert, what do you think of her?'"

"Well, why should I not ask what you think of her? There is no harm in the question."

"Not the least; and to show what an excellent effect the cigar has, I will answer it without your asking. I think she is very pretty—remarkably pretty, in fact—with the sweetest voice I have heard in an age; but she reminds me of the opening lines of the old song,

"Why so sad and pale, young lover?
Prithce, why so pale?"

"It is all very well for you to jest," says Miss Brooke, a trifle vexed. "But Kate has been very ill—I wrote you that—and in great trouble besides. It is no wonder that she looks a little sad and pale. I think she bears herself with great cheerfulness—considering all things."

"Very likely—everything is comparative. But one can't judge of the proportion of effect to cause, when one does not know what the cause may be."

There is a minute's pause, while Miss Brooke's glance follows Kate's graceful figure as it moves along the garden paths. She is in doubt how much to tell her nephew, and how much to leave untold. That gentleman, meanwhile, leans back in his chair and watches her with a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"Pray understand that I am not curious about Miss Lawrence's affairs," he says, breaking the silence with his pleasant voice. "I will take it for granted that she has a very good reason for looking pale and sad; but may I be allowed to ask why the Tarleton affair is interdicted as a topic of conversation. The papers hinted something about an impending duel be-



"Good morning, Miss Lawrence, this is an unexpected pleasure."

"I am sorry to perceive that you have no appetite, Miss Lawrence. You must let me prescribe for you—I am something of a physician in an amateur way."

"A very amateur way," says Miss Brooke. "The best prescription you can make for Kate will be a ride as soon as she feels equal to it. She lived on horseback at Fairfields."