

"BONNY KATE," A TALE OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY
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CHAPTER X.

"He looked at her as a lover can.
She looked at him as one who awakes.
The past was a sleep, and her life began."

Before the party at Oakdale separate, it is determined that the excursion to Rocky Mount on

"I did think so," replies Kate; "but, of course, contrast strengthens everything."

With this, she takes her whip and runs down stairs. In the hall below, Tarleton and Wilmer are standing; and the former, advancing quickly, meets her at the foot of the staircase.



"Do you often angle for compliments."

the following day shall take the form of a gypsy tea, a view of the sunset, and a return by moonlight.

The weather proving propitious to this plan, the next afternoon finds a party, "on pleasure bent," assembled before the entrance to Fairfield. Horses stamping, gay voices talking, soft air, and golden sunshine streaming, the prospect of a joyous afternoon in the fair greenwood—is it any wonder that Kate's heart is beating high with delightful excitement, as she stands before her mirror with the sounds from below coming to her through the open window, and puts on her hat? It is a slight drawback to her enjoyment that Janet, who is putting on her hat at another mirror, is setting forth her grievance at having Mr. Proctor thrown upon her as an escort; but, in Kate's present mood, it would take a great deal to mar her beatitude in any serious degree.

"It is not that I have any objections to the man—there is no harm in him that I know of," Janet is saying; "but it is very provoking to have your admirer thrust upon me whenever you don't want him."



"Ah, Kate, if I had known you earlier."

"It is not my fault," says Kate. "I wish he would go home. I am sure it is very foolish of him to stay here, and—and make things disagreeable."

"You did not think that he made things disagreeable before Frank Tarleton came," remarks Janet.

"Come and see the mount I have brought for you," he says; "I hope you will like her."

"I am sure I shall," Kate answers. "I have already had a glimpse of her from my window, and— Oh, what a beauty!"

She utters the last words as they emerge on the piazza; and, among the group of horses, her eye at once singles out the one intended for herself—a graceful bay mare, who exhibits in her arching neck, and full, glancing eye, all the pride which belongs by right to blood and beauty.

"I am requested to address the company on a matter of importance."



"She is full of spirit, but not at all vicious," says Tarleton, as his groom leads her up.

"Who could suspect her of such a thing?" says Kate. "She is too high-bred to be vicious."

"She is a beautiful creature," says Mr. Lawrence, "but rather slight for you, Frank."

"She is exactly suited for a lady's horse," says Tarleton; "and now, I think, she has found a proper rider."

"No woman and horse ever accorded better," says General Murray, lifting his hat in salute to Kate, who is by this time seated in the saddle.

"Thanks, General," she says, with a smile. "I hope the horse would appreciate the compliment as highly as I do, if she could understand it. By-the-by, what is her name, Mr. Tarleton?"

"The horses I ride are all like friends to me, and I always want to know their names."

"She has had several," answers Tarleton, "but none of them are worth repeating. I shall be glad if you call her anything you like."

"What—no name worth repeating? Why, that is shameful! You must have one, must you not, *mignon*?"

"There is the name!" says General Murray. "Call her *Mignon*."

"Do you think it will do?" asks Kate of Tarleton.

"It will do excellently," he replies, promptly. "Mignon from henceforth she is, by the grace, and sworn to the service, of Miss Lawrence. Shall we ride on?"

They ride on; down the avenue, out of the gate, into the world beyond—a world which seems a very paradise in the radiant loveliness of the September afternoon. In all the years of



"Such a good steady fellow as George Proctor."

life that may come to her, will Kate ever forget this ride? The valley spreads far and fair in pastoral softness; the amber sunshine lies like a mantle of gold over level fields and swelling heights; the river sweeps with glancing brightness along its vine-draped banks; the distant hills lie in azure softness on the far horizon.



When the Fairfield party arrive.

When they enter the woods, what beautiful, tremulous lights and shadows meet them! The summer sits enthroned in all her glory for a few more days; only a scarlet or golden leaf appears

All pleasant things end quickly, and so they are not long in reaching their destination. As they approach the bold hill which takes its name from the massive boulders of granite that, in great variety of shape, and many of them piled fantastically one upon another, strew its crest, as well as from the shining cliff which it lifts over the valley, Tarleton looks up, and perceives figures on the top of this cliff.

"Some of the party are in advance of us," he remarked. "Must we dismount?"

"Oh, no," Kate answers. "Have you forgotten that there is a very good road to the summit? We go a little farther, and then turn in between the hills."

They skirt along the foot of the cliff, and enter a wild and beautiful gorge, through which an eager stream is singing a song sweeter than that of the syrens. It is a place of soft lights and dusky shadows, of luxuriant forest growth, and sweet, wild forest odors. The road which they follow makes a sweeping curve around the



hill, and by an easy grade leads upwards, until they find themselves on level ground, amid the branching trees and Titan rocks of the summit.

There they are met by the Norton party, who announce that they have been waiting half an hour.

"Then you have had time to show all the points of view to Miss Palmer," says Kate. "I hope she has admired them."



"How delightful it is to be so high!"

Miss Palmer, from behind a double tissue veil, replies that she thinks the view very sweet, indeed, but that she has not seen a great deal of it. "The sun is so dreadfully warm on the place where they took me," she adds.

"She would not stay five minutes," says Grace, aside to Kate. "I think she is afraid for her complexion."

"I suppose one must pay a penalty for being 'queen-lily and rose in one,'" says Kate. "I am glad Nature made me a good cream-colour, warranted to endure wind and weather.—Since you have not been admiring the view, what have you been doing?" she adds, addressing the company. "Climbing the rocks!"

"We have waited for you to take the initiative in that amusement," replies one of the young men. "To the best of my knowledge, you are the only lady who has ever climbed to the top of the Pinnacle."

"Oh, but that was long ago, when I was much more of a hoyden than I am now!" she laughs. "You should not tell such things to my discredit. If we can do nothing else, let us make a fire and set the kettle to boiling."

"But nobody has brought a kettle!" cries the company, in consternation.



"Why you are a perfect Sylph."