

The Albany Register.

VOLUME V.

ALBANY, OREGON, FEBRUARY 14, 1873.

NO. 24.

CAPTAIN KATE.

"I am going down to the lake shore where it's cool and quiet; where I needn't work or even think, but do just as I please." That's what I said to Fred Gorman.

Fred looked blank. "Don't go this afternoon," he said. "I wanted you to go to Madame W's to-night, and be presented to Captain Kate, the new belle." "Thank you," I responded; "but no more girls of the period for me, if you please,—I had rather be excused."

"Oh, but you must see 'Captain Kate!'" he went on, "that's what they call her, because of the followers she has; she's worth seeing."

"I know the style," I said with a majestic wave of the hand. "Bold eyes—blue, perhaps, black probably—rather tall, immense chignon, laughs and cracks jokes like a trooper, and never says a word of sense I repeat it, my friend, not any for me!"

"But just wait—" began Fred, and I interrupted, with another wave of the hand.

"My friend, I shall leave town this afternoon for the lake; should like your company, but if you choose to stay, I go alone. I want nothing of this Kate or any other woman."

"Pon my soul!" cried Fred, widening his blue eyes. "What has come over you, the king of male flirts? Been bitten, eh?"

"No, simply disgusted," I answered loftily. "I'm tired of work and women, and am going to leave both. Will you go?"

"Not till next week; then I'll follow."

"All right," I said, and we parted.

King of flirts Fred had called me, and that term needs some explanation, for I should regret having any of my friends think me that most detestible affair, a man but-terfly.

I was thirty, not bad looking, and a well-to-do young lawyer, possessed of a nice little property. I had a due appreciation of woman—liked most of them extremely well, loved none; paid them some harmless compliments, chatted, walked and drove with them. But as flirting—why I spoke no word of love; gave no fair lady any reason for thinking I was in love, and Mrs. Grundy gave me the appellation of "Male Flirt." Well, never mind; I didn't.

I went down to the lake shore that afternoon and engaged rooms at a private dwelling.

"We have three boarders now," the pleasant little lady said, "and expect one more to-morrow afternoon—a young relative from the city—and there are just rooms for one more."

Those I engaged and domiciled myself immediately in my quarters, but not at all pleased with the prospective young lady. There were two already but harmless individuals, I mentally observed at the table; one a studious damsel who wore spectacles and looked at the ceiling; the other an invalid, and wife of the male boarder. But this "comi girl"—who was she, and what did she want to disturb my coveted peace and country quiet for? No doubt she would be a dashing, flashing, janyer and sashed style of girl, who would dare me into making love to her, and give me no peace until I did. Flirtations might be all very well, but a fellow didn't want to be dragged into it, when he was in search of peace and quiet. This was my mental style of soliloquy until the coming girl came. I watched her from my window as the hack set her down. Small, dressed in gray, velvet. That was all I saw, save two moderate sized trunks. All;

until two hours later I saw her at the table, and took a private inventory. Rather below the medium height and slender in figure; fair, with faint color in her cheeks; her hair in dusky brown, curling, or rather waving, not quite to the shoulders, and tied with a blue ribbon from the smooth brow; eyes, a quiet brown and clear as a summer lake. That was all, I think, that a noticed. No; the mouth was very sweet and pretty, and totally devoid of that society smirk and haughty curl, which are so decidedly repulsive in women. I remember thinking of that, and then quite forgetting Miss Whiting until the following day.

"A very quiet, sensible appearing and rather pretty young woman," I have said to myself, "and not one likely to molest me in any way."

I strolled out to a little arbor the next forenoon, with a book in my hand, and found Miss Whiting, with a book in her hand, seated in said arbor.

"I beg pardon," I began; "I did not know the place was occupied." "Make believe that it isn't," she said, "and come in. There is ample room, and I am so much interested in my book, that I shall not even see you."

Feeling decidedly complimented at the closing sentence, I seated myself on the opposite bench and opened my book. But I did not progress rapidly. Miss Whiting was so interesting in repose, made such a pretty good-looking picture, sitting there, that I could not but watch her.

How interested she seemed to be in her book, and how utterly oblivious of my presence? Was I such a nonentity then? I began to feel very uncomfortable. If she would only glance at me! but she wouldn't. Once she picked some crawling thing from her dress, and tossed it at the door, but never glanced at me.

"Miss Whiting," I said at length, "pardon me, but I am tired of making believe, I had rather think the arbor occupied."

Miss Whiting kept on reading, and answered quietly:

"Very well, consider me here."

Not to be worsted in this way, I said boldly. "Well, but I want you to talk to me."

She closed her book, keeping one slender hand between the pages, and lifted her childishly calm eyes to my face.

"It is a very pleasant day Mr. Lester," she said, with perfect gravity.

"Decidedly," I responded.

"Much cooler since the shower," she observed.

"It is," I assented.

"Looks like rain in the east," she remarked.

"It does," I said, and then we both laughed.

"Now," she said, "I hope you will let me go on with my book. It is Dickens' Great Expectations, and if you have ever read it, you can understand my interest."

"Do you like Dickens?" I asked.

"No," she said, "I love him."

From the opening page to the 'Finis,' his books are gardens of delight to me. He interests you in his meanest character, and endows your sympathies, not with one, but with all. He is inimitable—he is incomparable. Others may, in their style, be as interesting, to me there is none like him."

A deeper flush had come into her cheeks and her eyes grew wider and darker.

"Decidedly pretty now," I informed myself, "and really an intelligent little person."

After that, Miss Whiting and I were quite sociable. I sought her society; she did not avoid me, but treated me precisely as she would a

younger brother. Not just that either, for she was a little more reserved; and yet we had some very pleasant chats, together. She could talk sense, and I prided myself on my abilities in that line, and so almost a week slipped by before I knew it.

"I think I should find it very dull here but for you," I said to her one day. "Odd, too, when I dreaded your coming so."

She looked up wonderingly. "Dreaded my coming?"

"Yes; I feared you would be one of the slashing kind, and would dress to kill, and talk me wild, and give me no peace."

"What gave you that idea?"

"I don't know, unless it was being bored to death by my chum, Fred Gorman, about a 'Captain Kate,' the belle of the season, and thought you might be her style."

"And did you ever see this Captain Kate?" asked Miss Whiting, lifting her calm lakes of eyes to mine.

"No; but I can imagine her," I answered.

"And what do you imagine her like?"

Thereupon I gave her a description very much as I had given Fred, and closed by saying:

"Now, that style of girl I cannot tolerate and fearing that you were one of them, no wonder I dreaded you."

"Then you did not consider me at all like Captain Kate?" she queried, archly.

"Not at all," I said decidedly. "As I told you in the beginning, but for you I should feel stupid and dull. Your society renders it very pleasant, and you are in all things the opposite to my fears."

"Oh, thank you!"

She said it so dryly, that I looked up to catch the hidden meaning of the words, but she was reading and her face was as calm as usual.

The next day Fred came. I was standing at the gate, when he came up from the hotel, and, after the greetings, Fred brought his hand down on my shoulder.

"So, Ben, my boy, you jumped from the frying pan into the fire, didn't you? Ha! Ha! good joke. How did you like her?"

I turned in astonishment. "Like who?—what do you mean?"

"Why, Captain Kate, of course."

"I haven't seen Captain Kate, thank you," I replied with dignity.

"What, don't Miss Catherine Whiting board here with her step aunt, Mrs. Dearborne?"

I jumped three feet into the air. "You don't mean—" I began, while Fred interrupted coolly.

"As a jumpist, you are a successist. As a stupid blockhead you also excel. Yes, Miss Whiting is Captain Kate."

"But Fred," I said, helplessly, "she is so innocent and childlike, and rarely pretty and so sweet and quiet."

"All put on," said Fred, shaking his head, gravely. "She's a regular flirt, and those are her arts. She's weaving her nets around you, I see, successfully."

The emotions of my heart I should find it difficult to explain. But I found Miss Whiting in the arbor, half an hour later, after Fred had left, and I lifted my hat with a flourish, and knelt at her feet.

"All honor to Captain Kate," I said in mock humility.

She closed her book with a most a yawn.

"You've found out," she said, "who told you?"

"Fred. And I shall ask pardon for remarks I made yesterday?"

"Certainly not," she said sweetly. "You had never seen me then."

"And now I have a proposition to make," I began. "We're to spend several week together here,

and report calls you a terrible flirt—"

"So it does you," she interrupted. "I heard of you before I left town."

"Very well," I continued, "the more need of my proposition. It is this. Let us enter into a league to have a grand flirtation; each knowing there is no danger of a broken heart on either side. Thus we have nothing to fear, nothing to guard, and can be very happy."

"But what is the need?" she asked. "We hain't flirted before—why need we now?"

"Because we couldn't help it; and it is better to go about it with a full understanding than to sly about it in the old way. Thinking you harmless, Miss Whiting, I could have gone on all Summer and never dreamed of flirting; knowing you to be Captain Kate, I shall suspect you of malicious intentions every move you make. Therefore let us agree to a flirtation and all will be well."

"I agree," she said archly, "and here is my hand on it." She gave me her hand—I remember thinking how soft and shapely it was—and I raised it to my lips.

"Would your heart come with it?" I said, and she laughed merrily.

"Bravo, a good beginning! I see you are no amateur!" she cried; and we launched into a sea of flirtation.

I told Fred of our arrangement the following day. I thought he looked pleased.

"All right, old fellow," he said, shaking my hand heartily. "I'm glad to know you are not my rival, for I am in earnest. I want to marry Miss Whiting, if I can, and I didn't like to think I was fighting against you. You are quite sure you are in earnest?"

"Quite sure," I answered. "Go on, my dear boy, with my blessing; but don't marry her until I leave, and so spoil our flirtation."

"Oh, no! I shouldn't think of it under a year. My business won't permit, and I suppose she is willing to wait," and Fred looked as grave and thoughtful as if it were settled.

"No doubt she will wait any length of time you suggest," I said, so dryly that he looked up quizzically. Seeing me perfectly serious, he continued:

"And, Ben, couldn't you—seeing you have no intention there yourself—couldn't you speak a good word for my prospects? Speak about that uncle of mine, that went to India twenty years ago, and has never been heard of since. You couldn't put that in though; just say he went there, and I am the only heir."

I assured Fred that I would do so. "Just as well as not," I said. "Will bring your perfections all to light, and say nothing of your failings." Fred thanked me warmly, and we parted.

Captain Kate was in the garden when I returned. She was dressed in blue, thin gauze stuff, and a trill of lace at her throat and wrists. She looked exceedingly pretty and I told her so.

"Good," she cried, bringing her shapely hands together. "I dressed purposely to make you pay compliments, and have succeeded. I am really, truly pretty?"

"Really, and truly," I echoed.

"And my eyes are not bold," and I do not seem like a trooper?"

"Your eyes are the sweetest in the world, and you seem like an angel."

She breathed a long breath. "How nice! Now, where have you been?"

"To see Fred—the finest fellow alive. Got a rich uncle in India, somewhere, and is the only heir."

"Does this constitute fineness?" she said a little scornfully.

"According to a woman's idea, yes. But that is not all. He's a splendid fellow, good, intelligent and steady."

"Rather a pleasant fellow," she acknowledged, "and waltzes like an angel."

"Are angels proficient in that accomplishment?" I laughed.

"Well, I suppose so," she retorted. "You call me an angel, and I waltz beautifully."

I should never have recognized Miss Whiting for the girl I had known before. She dropped her quiet, calm, child-like self and assumed the gay, dazzling mask of Captain Kate.

She dressed becoming and elegantly, yet with no show or glare of colors, else it would not have been becoming. She studied my taste in all things, and fairly dazzled me with her wit and beauty. Yet I think I missed Miss Whiting sorely, for a few days after departure and Kate's advent. We walked, we sat, we drove, we talked together. Fred occupied all the spare moments, and, few as they were, he seemed very hopeful about all things, though he never succeeded in anything. He had paid his undivided attention to three young ladies, at different times, and had been certain of success, and each time failed. He was not cast down, however, but he was looking confidently forward to his union with Captain Kate.

"You have helped me a great deal, Ben," he would say, "and I thank you heartily for your kind words. When I am settled, consider my home yours."

"Certainly," I would respond, "I will, Fred."

So three weeks slipped by, and in two more I should depart. Our flirtation continued unabated. Kate was bewildering, I sometimes trembled for my own safety. Once, when standing near to her, my lips somehow came in contact with hers, and I had never felt quite safe since that day. "Kissing provoketh love," I said, "and I will avoid that hereafter."

So I did, and we sailed, and rode, and flirted deliciously through the remaining two weeks, and one morning I awoke with the uncomfortable feeling on me that it had all come to an end, and I was to leave on the forenoon train. I also arose with another knowledge—that I was very much in love with Captain Kate; yes, decidedly irrecoverably in love. I had an odd feeling, too, that it was just what Captain Kate intended, and I determined to keep my secret locked up in my breast. So I complimented her in the old mock way, through the morning, and was conscious that under all her gayety, there was lurking disappointment. And then I nerved myself for it and went to the arbor to say the last farewell.

"With my most heart-felt thanks for the pleasant flirtation you have kindly indulged me in, and wishing you all happiness in the future, I will say good-by."

"And who will I dress for now, and who will pay me pretty compliments, and admire me?"

"Fred will serve as a substitute, won't he?" I asked, but she shook her head, gravely.

"Thanks for the compliment," I laughed. "And now may the fates provide for you, until you return to town."

So I left her, with a greater pain in my heart than I ever had before; a pain that grew deeper and deeper every step that I took, till at the foot of the hill it became unendurable, and I turned around and walked defiantly back to the arbor. Captain Kate's face was in her hands, and tears were falling upon her dress.