

**KATE LESLIE, IN
TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Kate Leslie, in Two Volumes, Vol. I by Thomas Haynes Bayly

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BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1838.

M. S. S.

KATE LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

Just like childhood's sunny mirth
When it looks on nature first,
Thy gay fountain gushes forth
From the grot where it was nursed;
And as like to man's career
Thy maturity is made;
Now a smile, and now a tear,
Now in sunshine, now in shade.
Rapid river! rapid river!
I could moralise for ever,
Yes for ever, and for ever,
I could moralise on thee!

"I WILL go to my mamma's room," cried little George Hanson, struggling with the maid who endeavoured to detain him, and kicking with all his might at the closed door of his nursery: "I will go, Biggin; if you don't let me go, I'll break myself to bits."

So said, or rather shrieked, the only child of the widowed Lady William Hanson; but, instead of evincing any inclination to do violence to his own person, the whole energies of his little mind and body seemed concentrated in a passionate endeavour to intimidate, maim, or destroy his gentle and long-suffering attendant, Mrs. Biggin.

Mrs. Biggin indeed seemed gentle, but her gentleness was the result of her mistress's mandate: "Biggin," said her ladyship, "never thwart my boy in any thing; premature severity spoils the temper, and breaks the spirit." The servant therefore defended her shins from kicks, and her arms from pinches, as best she could; and Master George, knowing by experience that sooner or later his dear mamma, alarmed at his vehemence, would send for him and soothe him, screamed and kicked more lustily than ever.

In a lower apartment of the same mansion sat Lady William Hanson, before a mirror which stood upon an ample toilet-table, stored with essences and cosmetics. The lady's face was buried in a cambric pocket-handkerchief; and behind her stood Mistress Fane, her own maid, who spoke in a bland and soothing tone of voice while she removed from the table that extremely unbecoming article of dress, a widow's cap.

"Don't take on so, my lady," said the hand-maid; "sure, there's a time for all things; and, seeing that you've worn these here caps for twelve long calendar months, this being the day——"

"I know it, don't speak to me," cried Lady William; "it's the melancholy anniversary!"

"I'm sure, my lady," said the abigail, "I'd not presume to intrude for the world; but what can't be cured, you know——"

"True, Fane, true—you are right; but——" and the lady paused and shook her head.

"I know by experience what you suffers, my lady; not that I'd presume to draw caparisons between my poor dear dead John and——and——"

An impatient gesture of the widow interrupted the attendant; but, adroitly skipping the name of her deceased master, she immediately continued:

"But it was better, my lady, that John should die, than live to be a cumbrance with age and 'firmities: you are still young, my lady, and I'm sure you look no age at all like; and though I'd be the last person to 'sinuate that you'd form *at present* any second—hem!"

Another gesture here cut short her sentence; but again she skipped the offensive expression, and again addressed her lady.

"It would be a sin to bury your persingal advantages any longer."

"I believe you are right, Fane," replied Lady William, glancing complacently at her mirror, which reflected a countenance comely enough considering that its fair proprietor had numbered forty years. "Yes, you are right; and I ought not to give way to regrets which are unavailing."

"Then I may remove the cap?" inquired Fane; and, not waiting for a reply, she placed artificial flowers before her mistress, and threw the *weds* aside.

"I cannot wear these to-day, Fane," said Lady William. "They are old and tumbled; to-morrow, if I *must* again wear colours, you may summon my milliner and dress-maker. But, hark! what can be the matter; don't you hear that noise?"

"Oh yes, my lady," said Fane; "it is only Master George a-skirmishing to come and kiss his mamma; but now you're a-going to enter society again, it won't do for the child never to be happy without your ladyship."

"Very true, Fane, if I *must* go out; (and I suppose my spirits will require change of scene;) Georgy can't be *always* with me, as he has been during my year of mourning."

"He's been your plaything like, my lady; but, oh the powers, listen to that!"

And the whole house resounded with the screams of the child, who, accompanied by Mrs. Biggin, approached the apartment of Lady William. The door flew open, and in rushed the infuriated little urchin, who ran to take refuge with his mamma; while Biggin meekly followed, and, dropping a courtesy, said, "I comes to make a complaint, if you please, my lady; for Master George is so headstrong there's no guiding him."

Master George Hanson was, at the period at which our tale commences, eight years of age. His lady-mother had been the only daughter of an apothecary, who, in the neighbouring town of Danesford, had realised a competency, having been for many years before his death an alderman, and once a mayor. Danesford was a watering-place; and Alderman Gubbins and his lady, when their daughter Fanny grew up, left the old house with the dispensary attached, and took a residence in a more fashionable street. Fanny Gubbins was a handsome girl, and she had acquired a smattering of accomplishments quite sufficient to put her on a par with most of the Danesford belles. Mr. and Mrs. Gubbins never could contrive to enrol themselves among the best resident society of Danesford: many a struggle was made, expenses far from prudent were entered into, but in vain; for in the town where he had practised, his performances had made a lasting

impression on his patients,—he was considered *physically* objectionable, and *apothecary's weight* kept him down far below the grade of society at which he aimed. There is nothing so aristocratic as the "best set" of residents in a watering-place; and Mrs. A. B. C. or D., though unknown beyond the precincts of the provincial town in which they take the lead, are *in* that town as consequential and exclusive as if admission to their *soirees* could alone render an individual presentable and unexceptionable in society.

Fanny Gubbins was, therefore, rarely visible, except at the public balls and the theatre of Danesford; and several seasons passed away without, as old Gubbins expressed it, "any good having come of their finery." Fanny was twenty-nine, when, to the infinite delight of herself and her mother, at a very crowded public assembly, the master of the ceremonies walked up to them, presenting a very ordinary-looking middle-aged man, and, at the very moment when they were beginning to express by their looks their disapprobation of the proffered partner, introduced him as Lord William Hanson. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the exultation of mother and daughter: innumerable were the "your lordships" uttered by the former; and the handsome Fanny exerted all her powers of pleasing, and at length succeeded in winning what the Right Honourable Lord William Hanson was pleased to call "*his heart*."

This same *heart* had seen a deal of service; but it is not our business to develop the past amours of this "scion of a noble house," particularly as the research could prove neither pleasurable nor profitable. At forty-five he led the blushing Fanny to the hyme-

neal altar: his own income was exceedingly small; but the moderate settlements of the alderman on his only child were accepted, as mines of wealth were expected at his death. The new-married pair spent some time on the Continent; and though Fanny was mortified at not being noticed by the Duke and Duchess of Canterton, still she was "*my lady*," and that made amends for all!

Mr. and Mrs. Gubbins did not long survive their daughter's elevation; and when Lord and Lady William Hanson returned to Danesford, on account of the shattered health of his lordship, the apothecary and his lady were at peace in the chancel of the church. On the death of the alderman, it appeared that he had lived beyond his means; and though Lord William continued to enjoy the income settled upon him at his marriage, the anticipated large fortune which was to come to him at the death of his father-in-law never was realised. He was encumbered with debt and difficulties; his health had been undermined by the excesses of his youth; and after grumbling on for a few years, at a cottage residence near Danesford, he died exactly one year before the date of the commencement of our story, leaving Lady William a disconsolate widow, with one little boy, then seven years of age.

Master George, until his father's death, was a neglected child; during his mother's year of mourning he was a spoiled one. For the first seven years of his life his parents were too dissipated to attend to him; and, during the year which followed, Lady William having no other amusement, made him her pet and her plaything.

"I cannot have you here, Georgy, just now," said