

# DIGBY GRAND.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHARM OF THE COLONIES.

Even this peep behind the curtain of the Horse-shoe Fall is fading from my mind; but the moonlit nights, the gleaming waters and the sighing fir-trees, all of beauty in the sky and fragrance in the breeze, all these impressed with Zoe's gentle, mournful image, steal back upon a world-hardened heart, that gleams for some other, higher, purer, better state of existence.

And we parted in the fairyland, parted as those who dare hardly hope to meet again. That mourning brow, that eager face, so when it looked at last farewell, how it has haunted me in the dark night-watches of many an after year—how have I been startled by that well-remembered countenance, thrusting itself upon me, with its calm, pleading expression, in many a scene of revelry and riot in the brilliant castle hall, as on the solitary mountain top, still grieving and still forgiving! The idol may be shattered in the dust, but the infatuation of the worshiper shall outlive his faith. The lake of the thousand islands glittered again before me, but oh! how changed, as I steamed back to rejoin my regiment, and a lock of raven hair, a plain jet bracelet that had encircled her dear wrist, were all that remained to me of Zoe de Grand-Martigny!

Other scenes were opening before me, almost another world, for no two seasons can present such a striking contrast—nothing can be so different as summer and winter in Lower Canada. Soon that mellow autumn fortnight of fine weather, which is called 'the Indian summer,' glided by.

It came, like the last red beams of the parting sun, to remind us of the glorious climate we had lost, and then the snow-flakes fell noiselessly, unceasingly, till the altered world was white with a covering from three to four feet deep over the plain. Then began the delights of sleigh-driving, and the winter gaieties with which Canadians while away that long and dreary season. Capital fun we had with our driving clubs and in-door pic-nics, our snow-shoeing parties and ice-mountains, to say nothing of continual dinners and everlasting balls, but my ambition had been excited to hunt and slay the mighty elk in his native forests, extending as they do uninterruptedly from Labrador to within fifty miles of Quebec, and now that balls had lost their charm, I longed ardently to be off and taste the wild delights of a life in the woods with the Indian.

Oh! the hush of those primordial forests, where silence reigns supreme and unbroken, till the very noiselessness seems to smite upon the ear. No hum of insects, no song of birds, not even the sighing of the breeze, breaks the peaceful charm in those deep endless woodlands; and then the wildness of the idea that not a living soul besides your own party, not a hut or cabin, not an acre of cultivated land, exists within hundreds of miles; and that the very spot on which you stand has, in all probability, never before been trodden by mortal foot—the magic scene on which you gaze has been hitherto veiled to mortal eye; for in those vast solitudes, there are as many nooks and corners unknown even to the few Indians who lead their roving hunter's life by lake and forest; and then, over this world of novelty, the ice-queen throws her glittering mantle, with its pure and diamond-sprinkled folds—the fir-tree, feathered to its stem, bends beneath its load of snow—the cataract, caught in its leap, hangs suspended in an icy chain, forming column upon column of the brightest crystal, and the broad bosom of the lake spreads away in level beauty, without a spot to soil its glistening surface, save where the track of 'caribou' or 'moose-deer,' sole denizens of these winter solitudes, betrays the course of our gigantic game, or the impression of his snow-shoe marks the pursuit of the untiring Indian.

A merry, joyful party were we, as we burrowed in the snow, at our anticipated hunting ground, a hundred miles and more from the out-lying log-house of the very last 'habitant': nor would we have exchanged our unsheltered bivouac, with its enormous fire, absolutely indispensable in such a climate, and not likely to get low when miles of forests were to be had for the cutting, our sea-biscuit and pea-soup, those most palatable of provisions, and the sparkling cold water, to which health and hard work gave an unspeakable flavor—for turtle and turkey in the saloons of a palace.

Our party consisted of Cartouch, ever fore-

household furniture; the whites every man armed with his rifle over his shoulder, his axe, knife, and tin cup hanging to his belt, and his blanket—a greatcoat by day, a couch and coverlet by night—strapped securely to his back; the chief himself in advance, directing our course, and appearing to find his way through that labyrinth of woods by some intuitive knowledge, some instinct of locality, possessed only by the Indian.

Thus we journeyed on, from sunrise till towards the close of the afternoon, when approaching dusk warned us to look out for some suitable spot to form our cabane, as the hole was called in which we passed the night. A good spring of water was the primary object, and that found, we set to with a will, and with one or two shovels and all the available snow-shoes, we soon scooped out a large oblong hole, a sort of grave, capable of containing eight persons, taking care to get quite down to the surface of the earth. Oh! the disappointment when, as would sometimes happen, that surface proved to be too marshy and unsound; another place must be selected, and the whole labor begun again. This accomplished, a large fire was kindled in the centre of our cabane, dividing it into two compartments, and Squirt duly attended to the commissariat, 'the pot was put on to boil.' Meantime, one was busied in felling trees, for an ample store of fuel; another in cutting young and tender fir-branches to form couches for the weary travellers; another, in fetching a copious supply of fresh spring-water; Thomas and the Doctor were getting on with the supper, and by the time it was cooked, the fire had blazed up into a species of furnace, whose effect was soon visible on the walls of our habitation, crystallising the snow into every sort of fantastic shape, our fir-branches were dry, our blankets spread, our appetites whetted sharply as our knives, and we were completely settled in our temporary home.

Hunger is the best sauce, and we enjoyed our simple repast with a zest unknown to aldermen and common-council dignitaries. Then the delight of a sedative pipe, and the quiet drowsy conversation that preceded an early turn-in, good night and a roll in our blankets, were the substitutes for wine-and-water, wax candles, and dressing-rooms; and deep was the repose that followed, unbroken, save by an occasional shiver when the fire got low, and the cold forced some awakened sleeper unwillingly to rise and throw fresh logs upon the flame. Such was often my case, and, as I gazed upwards at the branches of the forest twining above my head, and standing out in the glare of the fire-light, and through them at the open sky beyond, glittering with its myriads of stars, I rejoiced in the wild freedom of a hunter's life—and a thrill of delight came over me, that convinced me how little removed in his inner nature is the polished denizen of civilization, from the wild savage who roams houseless o'er the forest or the plain.

Behold us at length arrived where the giant-elk are plentiful, and settled in a home of the same description as our temporary resting-places, but as being a more permanent abode, much improved in its interior arrangements and outward decorations. Here we have screens of fir-branches erected to create a draught that shall carry off the smoke from the wood-fire, so trying to the eyes and irritating to the lungs: 'Lacrimoso non sine fumo,' sings Horace, in his description of an uncomfortable halting-place; and truly the Epicurean bard, who knew so well how to take care of Number One, must have suffered severely from this annoyance, with his inflamed eyelids and luxurious temperament. But cleared of boucan, as the Canadian calls it, and embellished with sundry little fittings up from the creative axe of the Indian, our hunting cabane was a perfect palace by comparison; and as we smoked our pipes round the enormous fire on the first night of our arrival, we laid our plans for the morrow, with all that anticipative delight which gives their greatest zest to the sports of the field. Two Indians had been sent forward by forced marches to reconnoitre the ground, and ascertain the locality of the moose, and as they dropped in separately with their reports, Cartouch, who took the management of the party, arranged for us our next day's beat. 'The Algonquin has tracked a good herd nearly to the lake, about two leagues from here,' said he; 'Squirt and I, with the double-barrelled rifle, might, I think, manage the whole of them; but the Huron is full of an enormous moose, whose ravage (the place trodden and bruised where the animal has been browsing); he has discovered on the hill beyond what he calls the Riviere Blanc; only he thinks he disturbed him, for his footmarks are away down the river pointing for the Batiscou. It will be a devilish long stalk, Grand; but you are the lightest weight, a great pull on snow-shoes, and the keenest,' he added, with a half-melancholy smile: 'so

ing over us, and ere this I have been over the scenery of a dream. Never did I see such a view as burst upon me when I gained the summit of that laborious ascent. Far as the eye could reach, an expanse of hill and dale, mountain, lake and river, all glittering in the morning beams, as though sprinkled with an infinity of diamonds: woods, feathered with their snow-coverings in every sort of fantastic shape, clothed the land; a broad, un sullied garment of driven snow wrapped the frozen waters. Far before me, cleaving the deep blue sky, rose the clear white peak of the hills beyond the Batiscou—also of the few rivers in these solitudes that can bear of a name, and which forms a kind of landmark to the Indians. It was a vision of enchantment—a peep into fairyland; and made me doubt whether Nature might not be more beautiful in these wintry robes of state, than when clothed with all the luxuriant verdure of leafy June.'

What a curious thing is the association of ideas! I began to think of Zoe, and the bracelet, and the lock of hair, when I was startled from my reverie by the abrupt halt of the chief, who, wheeling rapidly round, confronted me with a startling look of almost fierce triumph. Not a word had he said, good or bad, since we started—not once had he condescended to look back and ascertain how his patting white friend was getting on; but now he marked my gaze wandering over the panorama spread out before me; he felt my admiration, and was flattered by it, and drawing up his spare sinewy frame to its loftiest proportions, he waved his outstretched arm towards the four points of the compass, then smiling his expanded chest, and stamping with his foot once upon the snow, while his eye kindled, and his nostril like that of some roused thorough-bred horse, he exclaimed with a dark flush of pride I shall never forget, 'C'est ma chasse!'—then turning away, dived like a hound stopping to the scent into a tangled ravine, where first began to appear signs of the presence of our game.

Enormous footmarks, as though some cloven-footed elephant had been trampling the snow; branches bent and broken, tender saplings gnawed and braised, disclosed the ravage of the moose; but he had been alarmed the previous day, and he was off. Like a very bloodhound, the wily Indian slotted him through the perfect labyrinth of his footmarks, as he had strayed hither and thither over his feeding-ground before he was disturbed, till even as a skein is unravelled, he hit upon the true course by which the sacred giant had made away. Once, and once only, the shrill war-cry of his tribe rang from his lips, and bending with redoubled ardor to his task, he strode on in pursuit at a pace which gave me little breath for the 'tally-ho!' with which I astonished those venerable woods. On and on we went; the chase had commenced in right earnest, and a keen excited Indian on snow-shoes takes a deal of catching. I was young, I was light, and above all my blood was up, as that mysterious fluid will rise at nineteen only, and I held my own as best I might. Small leisure had I for the wonders through which we passed; boughs discharged their frozen showers in my face, concealed roots caught the toes of my snow-shoes, and over I went—arms instinctively thrust forward to save, struck shoulder deep into the treacherous surface, and my face buried itself in the blinding snow. Up and at it again. The Indian is forward, and the elk is before the Indian—this is what I have dreamt of for months. An Englishman must never say die; and panting, weary, and dishevelled, I toil on in the footsteps of the hurrying chief down another hill, and on to the firer surface of Riviere Blanc. Here the wind sweeping up the course of the stream has cleared it of snow for many a long mile; and taking off our snow-shoes, to our unspeakable relief, we follow the scarcely visible footmarks at an increased pace. There is little time to spare, but at a winding of the river my steps are forcibly arrested by a scene of startling magnificence. A bluff, perpendicular crag rears its broad front before me, adorned like the facade of some magic palace, with long glittering columns of the clearest crystal. The volume of a cataract leaping from its brow has been arrested in mid-air, as though by some icy charm; and there it hangs spell-bound, the gigantic icicles forming each a natural shaft that art might strive to imitate in vain.

But short the pause of wonder and delight, for the chief is still before me, and the sun is high in the cloudless heavens. I am getting really beat, and a half-suspicion crossed my mind that it is possible we may lose our quarry after all. Hark! infusing new life into my veins, the Indian's war-cry strikes once more upon my soul, and Toka, with bristles erect and eyes flashing, bounds to the front. The tracks of the moose have turned off the wind-swept river into the deep

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Open he strikes out at the dog, who long fore-legs, but he is too much blown and exhausted to reach the little aggressor, who remains at a cautious distance.

The caps are not quite firm on the nipples of my rifle, and as I press them carefully down, I keep advancing to within a few feet of the infuriated animal. All this time he has been regaining his wind, and with a desperate rush he makes for me as his most tangible enemy. Luckily the snow is deep, and a friendly tree is near: the next bound would have brought him upon me, but I step aside behind the sheltering trunk, and as he passes within three feet of me, I let drive at him with both barrels: the bullets crash through his heart, and he rolls over on the snow, never to rise again. Game to the last, he dies rearing his head into the air, whilst his frame is stretched quivering in the death-struggle, and strange concord in an English who-whoop rings mingled with an Indian war-cry through those Canadian solitudes. From hoof to shoulder the giant measures an honest seven feet, and proportionate to his bulk are my triumph and delight.

Never shall I follow the moose through those glorious solitudes again—never more shall I associate with the true, unpolished, and noble-spirited Indian, savage though he be, the man of unstained faith and indomitable energy, the eagle eye, the ready hand, and the undaunted heart. But often in the trammels which accompany the comforts and luxuries of civilization, doth my spirit long for the hush of the uninhabited forest, for the wild fresh breeze of the trackless prairies, and fain would I re-enter once again the red man's lodge, far live once more the free inartificial life of the Children in the Woods.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GUARDS.

Of all sorts of soldiering, from the dashing light dragoon to the scientific sapper and miner—from the staid and steady infantryman to the 'flying bombardier,' as our distinguished horse artillery are somewhat irreverently nicknamed by their brethren of the sword—of all these accomplished practitioners in the science of manslaughter, commend me to the Guards. Their discipline, though yielding to none in the exactitude with which it is carried out, weighs more lightly on officer and soldier than that of any other corps; their services it is unnecessary to mention, as it is well known that wherever glory is to be gained, wherever hard knocks are to be taken, and distinction to be won, the privilege of the Guards has ever been to woo honour in the thick of it. Their officers are perfect gentlemen, and thorough bons camarades; their stalwart privates are smart and steady in the field, as, considering the temptations of London, they are well conducted in barracks; and their non-commissioned officers, that vital third estate in the well-being of a regiment, are beyond all praise. When we combine with these essentials the advantages of being quartered in the metropolis of the world, in the very centre of civilization and refinement, we cannot wonder that a commission in the Guards in the grand desideratum to a young man wishing to enter life and service through the same portal—is an object of emulation (not envy) to his brother warriors in the rest of the British army.

But there are two sides to every question. Even a sovereign, unless it be one of those skillful deceptions with which unprincipled jokers toss for the score of a Greenwich dinner—even a sovereign has its reverse; and great as are the advantages of a London life—manifest as are the benefits of what is emphatically called 'good society'; yet on the other hand pleasure in the metropolis assumes her most alluring garb. Youth is seldom skilled in resistance to temptation. Money melts like snow before the sunbeam; debts accumulate like drifts in the storm; and we all know how soon a man involved becomes reckless—how soon recklessness merges in despair. Ambition, when restrained by principle, is a fine thing;—ambition, in all matters of usefulness, is a fine thing. To the constant upward tendency of mankind we owe the multiplying discoveries of science, the increasing prosperity of a nation. But all this may be carried too far. And who that watches with impartial eye the struggl'd going on around him—who that looks calmly on at his neighbor caring too much for those things, will deny that society, in all its ranks, is irritated with the fevered desire of coping with that which is immediately above it—that the nobleman must imitate the sovereign, the gentry vie with the noble; the tradesman and the farmer ape the gentry; whilst the lower classes divided by two wide a gulf to

for Lady Overbearing had voted me good-looking, and said I made a capital bow. Well-whiskered, portly rouses nodded good-humoredly to me from the bay-window of White's, and the murky morning-room at Crockford's; for it was allowed that 'young Grand was a nice gentlemanlike boy'; and that point being established, and his intention of ruining himself and family clearly ascertained, he might have committed all the crimes in the calendar, levanted and robbed the mail, without suffering any diminution in the good opinion of these arbiters of their own world. Already had I been elected a member of Crockford's—already criticised the unpaid dinners, for which, on the principle of indirect taxation, the 'round room' up-stairs compensated so handsomely. Ay, and more than this, I was in the fair road to become one of the elite 'over the way.' Two kind friends—a yachting marquis and a dropical dandy—had persuaded me to face the dread ordeal of 'the ballot: and had offered their services as 'proposer and seconder'—good offices that, by the way, I have known filled by those who were themselves the very first so blackball the unsuspecting novice.

'Grand, why weren't you at the Opera last night? Rivalte was capital, and looking so pretty.'

'Why, I dined with old St. Heliers to meet Grandison, as I was to go on guard with him to-day. What a nice fellow he seems!—but not so fast as his brother, who might be his brother to all appearance.'

'Yes, Grandison is a fresh-looking fellow of his age; but then he was campaigning when his elder brother was playing the devil; and sitting up all night, and every night, with claret, whist, hot suppers, large cigars, and continual hazard takes it out of a fellow more than all the fighting in Alison's "History" or the Duke's "Despatches." I dare say you had a cheery party there yesterday?'

'Very. And my Lord would not let me go, but kept me to play whist in what he calls his boudoir. I had a very good night, for there was a light-haired fellow there whose name I did not catch, that was innocent of the game as a new-born babe; and he would play so high, that I won a cool hundred of him. St. Heliers wanted to have "lansquent" after that, but the room was so full of cigar-smoke, my unknown friend could not stand it, so I got home by three o'clock.'

'Well, I wish I had had your luck. I swore I would not go to Crocky's, so I dropped in upon that brute Meadows for some supper after the Opera, and lost three hundred. There was a fellow in some line regiment there, who kept backing out, and won enormously. I think Meadows said his name was Levanter.'

'I know him,' said I, as a crowd of recollections came rushing upon me; and Hillingdon not caring to press the subject, the matter here dropped, and the conversation took some other turn. 'The relief is ready, sir,' said a tall soldier-like corporal, as, with military respect, he entered the small dingy apartment at St. James', in which the above discourse was carried on. And I may take the opportunity of Hillingdon's absence in the performance of his duty as lieutenant of the Queen's Guard, to describe the other officers with whom I was associated in the pleasant task of keeping watch and ward at St. James's.

In the first place, then, to begin with the captain of the guard, who, it is hardly necessary to remark, holds the rank of a lieutenant-colonel in the army. The Hon. D'Arcy Grandison was the beau-ideal, the very type of a thorough guardman. Of noble birth and aristocratic bearing, the Colonel was as distinguished for his high unalloyed sense of honor in the world, as for his daring gallantry in the field. Respected at the Horse Guards, he was yet beloved by the ensigns, and many a young man owes his preservation from vice and ruin to Grandison's friendly admonitions and bright example. Heir to Lord St. Heliers—and verily it might have been a strict entail that could preserve any reversion from that grasping rascal—Grandison's portion as a younger child had received no addition from his spendthrift brother, and he had risen by his own exertions and military success to the position which he now held. He had made a love-match with a lady of his own rank, but of no larger fortune; yet, with an increasing family, everything seemed to prosper with him. It was a noble sight to see that fine soldier-like man, with his Waterloo medal on his breast, walk into the Court, accompanied by his lovely wife, and two or three beautiful children, to hear the band of the regiment, of which she was as proud as the Colonel himself. The officers liked him, the men adored him; and if there was any person in the world for whom his selfish brother cared one snap of his fingers, I do believe it was D'Arcy. Such was the officer to whom I had been introduced the previous evening at Lord St. Heliers' table,