

Lady Horsingham's ball. Lady Horsingham is my poor uncle's widow; and as Aunt Deborah is extremely punctilious on all matters relating to family connections, we invariably attend these solemnities with a gravity befitting the occasion.

Now I may be singular in my ideas; but I confess that it does appear to me a strange way of enjoying one's self in the dog-days, to make one's toilette at eleven p.m., for the purpose of sitting in a carriage till twelve, and struggling on a staircase amongst a mob of one's fellow-creatures till half-past. After fighting one's way literally step by step, and gaining a landing by assault, one looks round and takes breath, and what does one see? Panting girls looking in vain for the right partner, who is probably not ten yards from them, but wedged in between substantial dowagers, whom he is cursing in his heart, but from whom there is no escape, or perhaps philosophically and perfidiously making the best of his unavoidable situation, and flirting shamefully with the one he likes next best to the imprisoned maiden on the staircase; or, the tables turned, young fledglings pining madly for their respective enslavers, and picturing to themselves how she may be even now wheeling round to that peevish waltz in the arms of some former admirer or delightfully new acquaintance, little heeding him who is languishing in his white neckcloth, actually within speaking distance, but separated as effectually as if he were in another country. By-the-bye, it's fatal when people begin to think of each other as he's and she's; the softest proper name that ever was whispered is not half so dangerous as those demonstrative pronouns. In one corner is a stout old gentleman, wedged against the wall, wiping the drops from his bald head, and wondering what Jane and Julia can see in these gatherings to make them wild about going to every ball for which they can get an invitation. Dejected father! both Jane and Julia have the best reasons in this very house. You grudge not to spend a broiling September day in the pursuit of your game; each of your four daughters, sir, flatters herself that she, too, has wings like a bird.

Swaying backwards and forwards in the mass, like some goodly merchantman at anchor, pitching and rolling to a groundswell, behold the chaperone fulfilling her destiny, and skilfully playing that game which to her is the business of life. Flushed and hot in person, she is cool and composed in mind. Prudence makes perfect; and the chaperone is as much at home here as the stockbroker on 'Change, or the betting-man in the ring, or the fisherman amidst the turmoil of the waves. With lynx eyes she notes how Lady Carmine's eldest girl is carrying on with young Thrifless, and how Lord Loozy's eye-glass is fixed on her own youngest daughter; yet for all this, she is not absent or pre-occupied, but can whisper to stupid Lady Dairwich the very latest intelligence of a marriage, or listen, all attention, to the freshest bit of scandal from Mrs. General Gabbit. But perhaps by this time you have floated with the tide into the doorway, and received from your hostess the original shake of the hand or formal bow which makes you free of the place. So with patience and perseverance you work your way to the dancing-room, and you see that the people come here for dancing, of course; each performer has about eight inches of standing-room, and that he is to be conducted in pantomime to the intricate evolutions of the quadrille, or the rotatory shuffles of the waltz. Sliding and sliding, and edging and edging, the concertina players try to fulfil their duties, and much coughing and begging of pardons are the natural result.

However, it's a rare place for love-making. What with the music, and the crowd, and the confusion, the difficulty is more to make

Christmas, when we was all at Dangerfield! and I says to the steward, "Mr. Musty," says I, "a handsomer couple than them two I never clapped eyes on. Master John, he looks so fresh, and so healthy and portly, as becomes a gentleman." And he says, "No doubt," says he; "and Miss Kate, she steps away like a real good one, with her merry eyes and her trim waist, as blooming," says he, "as a bean field, and as saucy as

"There, that will do, Gertrude; now say pocket-handkerchief and some scent, and my gloves and my fan. Good night, Gertrude."

"Good night, miss; I do humbly hope you'll enjoy your ball."

Enjoy my ball, indeed! How little does the girl know what I enjoy, and what I don't enjoy! Lady Horsingham will be as stiff as the poker, and about as communicative. Cousin Amelia will look at everything I've got on, and say the most disgraceful things she can think of, because she never can forgive me for being born two years later than herself. I shall know very few people and those I do know I shall not like. I shall have a headache before I have been half an hour in the room. If I dance I shall be hot, and if I don't dance I shall be bored. Enjoy my ball, indeed! I'd much rather be going hay-making.

Up went the steps, bang went the door, and ere long we were safely consigned to the 'string' of carriages bound for the same destination as ourselves. After much cutting-in and shaving of wheels, and lashing of coach-horses, with not a little blasphemy, 'Miss Horsingham' and 'Miss Coventry' were announced in a stentorian voice, and we were struggling in a mass of silks and satins, blonde and bloodcloth, up the swarming staircase. Everything happened exactly as I had predicted; Lady Horsingham accosted Aunt Deborah with the most affectionate cordiality, and lent me two fingers of her left hand, to be returned without delay. Cousin Amelia looked me well over from head to foot, and asked after my own health and Brilliant's with a supercilious smile. How that girl hates me! and I honestly confess to returning the feeling with some cordiality. As far as appearance goes, I think without vanity I may say I have the best of it, Cousin Amelia being very short and pale, with a 'turn-up' nose and long ringlets. Why does a little woman with a turn-up nose always wear her hair in ringlets? It is that she wishes to resemble a King Charles' spaniel! And why are our sex so apt to cherish feelings of animosity towards those who are younger and better looking than themselves? While I asked myself these questions, I was suddenly accosted by a lady who had been for some time in conversation with my chaperone, and from whom, I saw, by Aunt Deborah's countenance, she was anxious to make her escape. Poor old soul! What could she do? a double-rank of dowagers hemmed her in in front; on one side of her was her unwelcome acquaintance and the bannisters,—on the other, myself and three demure young ladies (sisters), who looked frightened and uncomfortable,—whilst her rear was guarded by a tall cavalry officer with enormous moustaches, heading an impervious column of dancers worse than himself. Aunt Deborah was like a needle in a bottle of hay. Taking advantage of her position, the lady before-mentioned seized me by both hands, and would she would have known me anywhere by my likeness to my poor mamma. 'I must make your acquaintance, my dear Miss Coventry—your uncle, Sir Harry, was one of my oldest friends. I see you often in the park, and you ride the nicest horse in London, a bay with a white star.' Of course I bowed my affirmative, and shook my new friend by the hand with a cordiality equal to her own. A conversation begun in so promising a man-

nered up, and we were separated from Mrs. Lumley and her attractions.

'My aunt, sir,' I replied, demurely, telling a white one for the sake of teasing him. 'Why? Have you any objections?'

'Oh, of course, if my aunt did, it's all right,' replied he. 'I don't know a great deal of her, and what I do know I don't much like. But, Kate, there's a friend of mine wishes to be presented to you. You've often heard me mention Frank Lovell—well, there he is: do you see him?—turning round now to speak to Lady Scapegrace.'

Good heavens! it was the man I had seen in the park so often, if possible, better-looking with hat off than I had thought him in his morning costume, with the eternal cigar in his mouth. I have a sort of dim recollection of his making his bow to my aunt, who received him as she does all good-looking young men, with a patronizing smile, and a vision of John doing the polite, and laughing as he ceremoniously introduced Captain Lovell and Miss Coventry, and something said about the honor of the next waltz; and, although I am not easily discomposed, I confess I felt a little shy and uncomfortable till I found myself hanging on Captain Lovell's arm, and elbowing our way to a place amongst the dancers.

I must say he wasn't the least what I expected,—not at all forward, and never alluded to our previous meeting, or to Brilliant, till we went to have an ice in the tea-room, when Captain Lovell began to enlarge upon the charm of those morning rides, and the fresh air, and the beautiful scenery of Hyde Park; and though I never told him exactly, he managed to find out that I rode every day at the same early hour, even after a ball, and that I was as likely to be there to-morrow as any day in the week; and so we had another turn at the Colombetta waltz, and he took me back to my aunt, half-inclined to be pleased with him, and more than half-inclined to be angry with myself. I am afraid I couldn't help watching him as he loitered about amongst the crowd, now deep in conversation with Lady Scapegrace, now laughing with my new friend, Mrs. Lumley. He looked so like a gentleman, even amongst all the high-bred men there, and though so handsome, he didn't appear the least conceited. I began to wonder whether all could be true that I had heard of him, and to think that a man who liked such early walks could not possibly be the rone and good-for-nothing they made him out. I was roused out of a brown study by Cousin John's voice in my ear,—'Now then, Kate, for our waltz. The room's a little clearer, so we can go the pace if you like.' And away we went to the Odalisque faster than any other couple in the room. Somehow it wasn't half such a pretty air as the Colombetta, and John, though he has a very good ear, didn't seem to waltz quite so well as usual. Perhaps I was getting a little tired. I know I wasn't at all sorry when my aunt ordered the carriage, and I thought the dawn never looked so beautiful as it did when we emerged from those hot, lighted rooms into the pure fragrant summer air. I confess I do love the dawn, even in London. I like to see the gates of morning open with that clear light-green tinge that art has never yet been able to imitate; and if I could do as I liked, when none of us can, I should always be up and dressed by sunrise.

As we drove down Grosvenor Place, I saw Captain Lovell walking home, smoking a cigar. I think he caught a glimpse of my face at the carriage-window, for I am almost sure he bowed, but I shrunk back into the corner, and pretended to go to sleep; and when we arrived in Lowndes Street, I was not at all sorry to wish Aunt Deborah good-night, and go up-stairs to bed.

brocaded, with an extremely natural wig. The eldest daughter, Mary, with whom I had afterwards reason to be better acquainted, pale, languid, very quiet, and low-toned, with fine eyes, and soft dark hair, and what people call an interesting look. She took the sentimental line—was all feeling and poetry, and milk and water, and as easily frightened as she was reassured again.

(To be Continued.)

DIGBY GRAND.

CHAPTER XXVI.
SETTLED AT LAST.

And with these words, she swept out of the room with a calm dignity seldom assumed by that gentlest of women; but with which, when she chose, for all her pale face, and soft, sweet eyes, she could have looked a lion down.

To her own apartment she marched, with measured, unflinching step; and there, we may be sure, her dignity gave way; and thither, we may be equally sure, Julia followed; and the two women wept in one another's arms, and, doubtless, administered sal volatile and other remedies, and bathed their eyelids, and smoothed their hair; and made the Reverend Amos very uncomfortable at luncheon, and thoroughly ashamed of himself at dinner; and the skirmish ended, as usual, in the total rout and discomfiture of the masier of the house; but yet to many such annoyances was Flora subjected, and still she remained faithful, unforgetting and uncomplaining, to the end.

Well, it is over now, I hope. Soon she shall again have a home—may it be a happy one! And, in the meantime, I people the little room in London with thick-coming fantasies and hopeful visions, in which a comfortable independence, a picturesque villa, and a smiling, happy wife, form no unimportant items; whilst, looming in the far horizon, I trace an indistinct prospect of a fortune, acquired by diligence and self-denial, and an ancestral home repurchased by a vigorous old man, who has devoted a lifetime to the endeavor of repairing the errors of the youth. Castles in the air these may be; but such aerial edifices have at least the advantage of an unlimited liberality of estimate, and a boundless range of plan.

It is pleasanter, though perhaps less profitable, to look forward than to look back. The reader has probably had quite enough of Digby Grand and his autobiography; but to some amongst those who may have glanced over these pages, he may say, *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur*. How many a noble intellect and gallant spirit is at this moment wasting its energies on the most unworthy and unsatisfactory of all employments—the pursuit of pleasure!—gaining nothing, hoping nothing, leading to nothing, copying with the one word 'society' an excuse for the neglect of all that is most dignified in humanity, all that is most important to mankind; wearing out the body and corrupting the soul with labors that are worse than futile, pleasures far more injurious than pain.

'Push on, keep moving'—such is the motto of this world of ours: and in this world nothing can remain stationary. Look at your farm, dejected landowner; should you omit to sow that corn which you have discovered to be so unremunerative an outlay, think you that mother earth will not bestow a supply of weeds in choking profusion on the surface of your neglected soil? Strip the favorite, noble sportsman, as you select him from your costly string of race-horses, and

ful should the bracing effects of adversity, the pressure of necessity, recall you to that career of toil, that laborious destiny which is the normal condition of man.

Exertion is the salt of our existence. Without it the blood thickens, the frame droops, the mind stagnates. Happier is the peasant, home-returning from his daily task—weary, indeed, in limb, but fresh and glad-some in heart—than his lord, tossing restless and discontented on his bed of roses—a palled voluptuary, who has exhausted pleasure after pleasure, till his sated spirit yearns even for the languor of fatigue, vainly striving to deaden the aspiring impulse within—vainly hoping to escape from his accusing self—seeking rest and finding none. I cannot but believe that there are moments during which the men that we see about us every day—the thrifty bees that gather, and the careless drones that spend—must reflect and speculate on the ulterior object with which this immortal soul of ours is imprisoned for some threescore years and ten in its imperfect tenement of clay. It is not self-indulgence, for her votaries are most of all sick and weary of their engrossing task; it is not self-aggrandisement, for the slaves of ambition have never yet reached the top-most round of the ladder, and the draught of glory but irritates their fever, gasping still for more.

In all times, the wisest of mankind have deemed our present condition to be one of preparation, of training—severe it may be, but necessary, for a loftier and less material state of existence; and shall we, of all ages, virtually reject this noble prospect, and groveling here below, in sensual indulgences or idle pleasures, forget the birthright of our race, the privileges of our station, only a little lower than the angels? We shall each and all of us see this clearly some day, when darkened rooms, and hushed whispers, and a wistful sympathy on the old familiar faces, warn our shrinking senses that for us there will be no to-morrow. Who would put off the preparation for his journey till the eve of departure? Let us make up the accounts and strike the balance ere it be too late.

The farce is over; the long-suffering audience impatient to retire; ladies are shawing in the dark recesses of the boxes, and attentive admirers picking their way on dandy boots too look for the carriage in the slopy streets; the coachman lashes his unoffending horses, the footman is torn from his porter, and the performers are summoned to the footlights to give an account of themselves, ere the public take their departure.

The companions of my youth, the friends of my manhood, are scattered far and wide upon the surface of the earth. Is it not so with us all?

For some are in a far countree,
And some are restlessly at home,
But never more, oh, never we
Shall meet to revel or to roam.

Mrs. Man-trap thinks Bath will restore her charms. St. H-hers votes Buxcon the only place for his gout; the fashionable beauty looks forward to the visit of her doctor as the gayest hour in the twenty-four; the brilliant nobleman, the delight of clubs, the charm of dinner-parties, the vigorous bon-vivant, the athletic sportsman, is now a helpless cripple, wheeled about in a garden-chair. I don't think either of theirs is a satisfactory old age.

Of my earlier comrades, some are still daily attending parade, some have disappeared altogether from the Army List. Spooner has married a widow with five children—they say she bullies him. Levanter is a convict at Norfolk Island. Of Fanny Jones' fate, I shudder to inquire. Colonel, now General Grandison, may be seen at any of her Majesty's Drawing-rooms, covered with orders, the beau ideal of an officer and a gentleman.

(To be continued.)