...n, Lady Scapegrace, Cousin John, Captain Lovell, and I. We went down in Lady Scapegrace's barouche, and walked in Greenwich Park, and adjourned to a nice room with a bay window, and such a look out over the river, blushing rose colour in the evening sun. And the whitebait was so good, and the champagne cup so nice; and we were all in such spirits, and Frank was so kind, and attentive, and agreeable, I couldn't find it in my heart to be cross to him, so it ended in our making up any little imaginary differences we may have had, and becoming better friends than ever. As we sat in the balcony over the river—the two gentlemen smoking their after-dinner cigars, and we ladies sipping our coffee—I thought I had never enjoyed an evening so much; and even John, who was generally dreadfully afraid of Lady Scapegrace, became quite lively and gallant (for him), and they laughed and talked, and joked about all sorts of things, while Frank leant over my shoulder, and conversed more gravely than was his habit, and I listened, and thought him pleasanter even than usual. By the way, that blue bonnet never quite lost the odour of tobacco afterwards.

'How quick the time passes!' said Frank, with almost a sigh. 'Can't we do anything to put off horrid London, and home, and bed? Let's all go to Vauxhall.'

'What do you say, Mr. Jones?' inquired Lady Scapegrace, who was always ready for a lark. 'You're our *chaperon*, you know; do you think you can be responsible?'

'Oh yes, John,' I exclaimed. 'You promised to take me one before the end of the season, we shall never have such another chance.'

'This is a capital night to go,' remarked Frank, 'because there is a new riding-woman, and you can take a lesson, Miss Coventry, in case you should wish to perform in public.' Cousin John could not possibly hold out against all three; and although I think in his heart he did not entirely approve, the carriage was ordered, the bill paid, and we were rolling along through the cool summer night *en route* for Vauxhall.

'My dear,' said Lady Scapegrace to me, as we sidled through the entrance of that place of amusement, and the gentlemen remained behind to pay, 'you are doing anything but what I told you; scarcely three words have you spoken to your cousin, who, by the way, is very pleasant—I think I shall take him up, and improve him on my own account; but as for you, my dear, I can see plainly it's all over with you!'

'And you really leave town to-morrow?' said Frank, as we walked arm-in-arm up one of those shaded alleys, which lead to the 'Hermit,' or the 'Gipsy,' or some other excuse for a *tete-a-tete* not too much under the lamps. By the way, how is it that a party never can keep together at Vauxhall? Lady Scapegrace and I had particularly stipulated that we were not to separate under any circumstances. 'Whatever happens, do let us keep together,' we mutually implored at least ten times during the first five minutes, and yet no sooner did we pair off arm in arm, than the distance began gradually to increase, till we found ourselves in couples, totally independent of each other's proceedings. In this manner we saw the [illegible] mansion, and the acrobats, and the man who [illegible] the globe, and all the other [illegible] the circus. I really think I could have ridden [illegible] as nicely as Madame Rose [illegible] and I [illegible] mounted on an equally well-[illegible] animal with the one which [illegible] and caracoled under that much [illegible] wildly smiling dame. They [illegible] at a little distance, [illegible] traps [illegible] and the costume of [illegible] people really [illegible] entirely regardless of [illegible] the days of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. From [illegible] manship we went to see the people dance, which they did with a degree of vigor and hilarity such as might be introduced in a Coventry?' said Frank, and I thought his voice shook a little whilst he spoke. 'I shall ride down Lowndes Street every day, and think how deserted it looks! No more walks in the morning for me—no more pleasant rides in the afternoons: I shall send my hacks home and sulk by myself, for I shall be miserable when my friends are gone. Do you know, Miss Coventry,'—(I listened, all attention; how could I tell what he might not be going to say?)—'do you know that I have never had courage to ask you something till to-night?'—(Goodness! I thought, now it's coming, and my heart beat as it does when I'm going out hunting)—'I want you to give me'—(a lock of my hair, thinks I; well! I don't know—perhaps I may)—'I want you to give me—Miss Horsingham's receipt for making barley-water; but I know it's a long business to write out, and I'm afraid of being troublesome.' So that was all I was it? I felt half inclined to laugh, and more than half-inclined to cry; but turning round, I was somewhat consoled to find Lady Scapegrace and her cavalier close behind us; and I do confess, I rather attributed Frank's extremely moderate request to their immediate vicinity: there was no opportunity, however, of renewing the subject. John had said all he had to say to his companion; John soon gets high and dry with these smart ladies, and they seem mutually tired of each other; so we got the carriage, and took our departure. Frank pressing my hand as he bade me farewell, and whispering 'Au revoir, Miss Coventry; something tells me it won't be very long before we meet again.' What could he mean?

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a melancholy work to glide out of London by the last train, and to think that one's gaities were over for that summer, and that there was nothing to look forward to, till the hunting season, but Dangerfield, and Lady Horsingham, and the wearisome monotony of a regular country-house life. Aunt Deborah and I settled ourselves comfortably in a roomy first-class carriage, she with her knitting and I with the last Punch—in which, by the way, was a portrait of a dandy, the very image of Frank Lovell—and prepared for our journey, as ladies generally do, by arranging multifarious outworks of smelling-bottles, shawls, reticules, parasols, etc., without which paraphernalia no well-bred woman can possibly travel a hundred yards. I confess I dreaded the trip. I was too well aware, by experience, that a railway always makes Aunt Deborah very cross, and me very sleepy; so I knew what was coming, and I was not disappointed. Before we had fairly left the outskirts of London, I saw, by the way in which my aunt laid down her knitting, and the ominous cough or two in which she indulged, that I was in for a lecture; and sure enough, just as we emerged on the open fields, and began to smell the fresh country air, it began.

'Kate,' said my aunt, 'as we are going to a very regular and well-conducted establishment, I think it is a good opportunity for me to say a few words to you as regards your past conduct.'

'Good gracious, aunt!' I replied, quite frightened, 'what have I done?'

'My dear, said my aunt, 'I have seen a great deal going on lately that I have taken no notice of, but it don't follow that I should approve of it, any more than John.'

'And what has John got to do with it, I should like to know?' I rejoined, firing up in an instant, for such a chance of carrying the war into the enemy's country was not to be neglected,—'John, indeed! I'm sure, aunt, John encourages me in all my unfeminine pursuits, as you call them, and if he has been telling tales or setting you against me, I'll soon let him know what I think of such conduct—I'll soon tell him that I'm not going to be accountable to him; indeed, that I'm going to'——

suit in which the owner was engaged at the time. But even independent of these tell-tales, the stranger's social position was easily enough discerned by the deference with which he was treated 'along the line,' and the title of 'Squire,' which greeted him from guards, porters, and book-keepers at every station we passed.

So humane a master of dumb animals, or one so fidgety as to their welfare, I never came across; and this, I confess, prepossessed me in his favour. Every time the train stopped, out jumped our fellow-traveller, and off he went to a certain van containing his treasures, from which he emerged with a very red face, and a constantly repeated apology for disturbing me on his return to his seat. Despite of thick shoes and his freckles, I could see the man was a gentleman; but, dear me! what a contrast to the smart gentlemen I had lately been accustomed to meet! 'Beyond a 'Beg your pardon, I fear I'm very much in your way,' accompanied by such a vivid blush as can be performed only by a red-haired man, the Squire did not venture on any communication either with me or my aunt; and with the latter's lecture fresh in my mind, I did not, as may be supposed, dare to take the initiative by dropping my gloves, or pretending I couldn't pull up the window, or any other little ladylike manœuvre which lays the foundation of a *temporary* intimacy, and often furnishes one with an agreeable hour's conversation. I cannot see why one should sit 'mum' opposite the same persons for miles, merely because one has never been introduced.

When we arrived at length at the Dangerfield Station, where Lady Horsingham's emblazoned coach and fat horses were in waiting for us, 'The Squire,' who was here treated with a deference bordering on idolatry, got out too. He made an involuntary motion with his hand, and wished us 'good morning;' but his shyness got the better of him and he disappeared from the platform, entangled amongst his dumb favorites, with a blush that was visible even at the back of his head, where the tips of his ears met the rim of his hat. As we toiled up the sandy lane leading from Dangerfield Station to Dangerfield Park, we were overe ov rtaken by a smart, high dog-cart, drawn by a clever raking-looking bay mare, and driven by the owner of the freckles, the pointers, and the white hat.

'Bachelor, my dear,' said Aunt Deborah, as he whisked by; 'and not at all a bad-looking man either.'

'How do you know he's a bachelor, aunt?' I naturally inquired.

'Common-sense, my dear,' replied Aunt Deborah, sententiously. 'I judge of people by their belongings; no lady could get into that dog-cart without dirtying her dress against the wheel; and if he had a wife, that handsome bay horse would go with another in her carriage, instead of his. Besides, he wouldn't be so fond of his pointers if he had anything else to care for; and above all, Kate,' added my aunt, conclusively, 'his silk handkerchief wasn't hemmed, and he'd a button wanting in the front of his shirt.'

All my life I have had a sinking at my heart when I have heard the ring at that great Dangerfield front door-bell. It was better in my poor uncle's time, for he would have made any place lively, but since his death, the Park has relapsed into its natural solemnity, and I am quite sure that if ever I do go into a convent, my sensations will be exactly like those which I have always experienced when visiting Aunt Horsingham. The house alone is enough to give one the 'blues,' but, in addition to that, the thick horse-chestnuts grow up to the very windows, and dark Scotch firs shed a gloom all over the Park. Dangerfield is one of those places that seem always to be in the shade. How the strawberries ever ripen, or the flowers ever bloom, or the birds ever sing there, is to me a mystery. Outside there are dark walks, and yew hedges, and cypresses, and here and there a copper beech, with lawns that are never mown, and

cility.' She shook hands with me in her provokingly patronizing manner—'hoped I had brought my horses with me' (as if I was coming to spend months at Dangerfield without Brilliant !); 'supposed I had my side-saddle in the cap-box;' and showed me my room, without so much as a single kind word of welcome or a cousinly caress. It was quite a relief to help dear Aunt Deborah to unpack her dressing-case and kiss her pleasant face, and give the warm cup of tea, without which Aunt Deborah never dreams of dressing for dinner.

Oh! those solemn, heavy, stupid dinners, with the massive plate, and the dark oak wainscoting and the servants gliding about like ghosts at a festival in Acheron—what a relief it would have been even to have had a clownish footman spill soup over one's dress, or ice-cream down one's back, or anything to break the monony of the entertainment. But no! there we sat, Aunt Horsingham remarking that the weather was dull, and the crops looking very unpromising; Aunt Deborah with her eyes fixed on a portrait of the late Mr. David Jones, as a boy, opposite which she invariably took her place, and on which, though representing an insignificant urchin in a high frill and a blue jacket, she gazed intently during the whole repast; Cousin Amelia looking at herself in the silver dish-covers, and when those were removed relapsing into a state of irritable torpor; and as for poor me—all I could do was to think over the pleasures of the past season, and dwell more than I should otherwise have done on the image of Frank Lovell, and the very agreeable acquisition he would have been to such a party. And then the evenings were, if possible, worse than the dinners—work, work, work—mum, mum, mum—till tea; and after tea Aunt Horsingham would read to us, in her dry harsh voice, long passages from the Spectator, very excellent articles from the Rambler, highly interesting in their day, no doubt, but which lose some of their point after an interval of nearly a century; or, worse than all, Pope's Homer, or Cowper's Task, running the lines into each other, so as to avoid what she called the sing sing-song of the rhymes, till the poet's effusions sounded like the most extraordinary prose, cut into lengths, as we ladies should say, for no earthly purpose but to make nonsense of the whole thing. Her ladyship never went to bed till eleven; so there, having dined at half-past six to a minute, we were forced to sit three mortal hours and a half, swallowing yarns, and repressing that inexplicable disorder termed the fidgets, till the welcome bed candles arrived. No wonder men drink and smoke, and commit all sorts of enormities, to fill up those dreadful hours after dinner! I think if I ever take to tobacco, it will be at Dangerfield.

Then, of course, the hall was haunted; and, of course, my passage was the one which the ghost particularly affected. It was a sad story that of the Dangerfield ghost. I have got it out of Aunt Deborah at different times; and though I don't exactly believe in the spectre, I can't help sometimes crying over the incidents. The fact is, the Horsinghams were quite as proud of their ghost as they were of their lands; and although not a very creditable tale to any of the family, Aunt Deborah would never forgive me if I were not to relate the *tragedy* which conferred on Dangerfield the honour of being a haunted house.

In the reign of George II., the head of the house, Sir Hugh Horsingham, married a young wife, and brought her home to Dangerfield, with the usual demonstrations and rejoicings peculiar to such an event. Sir Hugh was a dark, morose man, considerably older than his bride—stern and forbidding in his manners, but possessing deep feelings under a reserved exterior, and a courage and determination not to be daunted or subdued. Such a man was capable of great things, for good or for evil; and such was the very nature on which a woman's

have choked her, and so for that time she conquered.

Lucy had a great idea of duty; hers was no high-principled love of duty from the noblest motives, but a morbid dread of self-reproach. She had not character enough to do anything out of her own notions of the beaten track. She had *promised her* father she would marry Sir Hugh Horsingham—not that he had the slightest right to exact such a promise,—and she felt bound to fulfil it. She never remembered the injury she was doing 'Cousin Edward,' the right *which such devotion as his ought to* have given him. She knew she loved him better than any one in the world; she knew she was about to commit an act of the greatest injustice towards Sir Hugh; but she had 'promised papa,' and though she would have *given worlds to avoid fulfilling her* compact, she had not strength of mind to break the chain and be free.

'Cousin Edward! Cousin Edward! you should have carried her off then and there; she would have been truly grateful for the rest of her life, but she would have died sooner than open her lips. He was hurt—reckless—almost savage. He thought her sullen: 'Once more, Lucy,' he said, and his eye glared fiercely in the waning light—'once more, will you give me one word, or never set eyes on me again?' Her lip never moved. 'I give you till we pass that tree,'—he looked dangerous now—and then—he swore a great oath—'I leave you for ever!' Lucy thought the tree looked strange and ghastly in the rising moon; she even remarked a knot upon its smooth white stem; but she held out whilst one might have counted ten; and when she turned round, poor girl! Cousin Edward was gone.

CHATER IX.

So the *bells rung merrily* at *Dangerfield*, and the rustics huzzaed for their landlord, and the comely village maidens envied the bride, and Lucy was Lady Horsingham now, with new duties and a high position, and a large, fine, gloomy house, and jewels in her *hair, and an aching heart in her bosom.* Nevertheless, she determined to do her duty as a wife; and every hour of the day she resolved not to think of Cousin Edward.

Years elapsed, and pretty Lucy became a gentle, handsome woman—kindly, courteous and beloved by all, timid and shrinking only from Sir Hugh. Her husband, wearied and discontented, mixed himself fiercely in all the intrigues of the day—became a staunch partisan of the house of Stuart, and sought for excitement abroad in proportion as he missed congeniality of feeling at home. It was an unhappy household. Their one child was the mother's sole consolation; she scarcely ever let it out of her presence. They were a pretty sight, that loving couple, as they basked in the sun of a fine summer's morning, on the terrace in front of the manor-house—the boy, with his mother's blue eyes and his own golden curls, and the same merry smile that he never got from Sir Hugh; and the fair, graceful woman, with her low white brow, and her soft brown hair, and her quiet gestures, and gentle sorrowing face—that faceshat haunts poor Cousin Edward still.

'Mamma!' says the urchin, pouting his rosy lips, 'why don't you play with me?—what are you thinking of?' and a shade passes over that kind face, and she blushes, though there is no one with her but her child, and catches him up and smothers him in kisses, and says 'You, my darling,' but, nevertheless, I do not think at that moment she was thinking either of her boy or Sir Hugh.

(To be continued.)