

AUNT TABITHA'S JUBILEE.

MY DEAR DIOGENES:

As I anticipated, Aunt Tabitha's jubilee was a grand success. Never was her maiden breast more deeply moved than when she heard the fifty guns thundering forth their power in her praise. But the moment of triumph arrived when, at a luncheon party of select notables, Professor Balderdash proposed her health in a speech that did credit to the college over which he presides. I cannot attempt to tell you all he said, for if I did, you would say that I was filching from Lempriere's Classical Dictionary; nor have you space to contain all the pretty speeches that were made, or the graceful agitation with which they were received by my worthy Aunt,—but you will see all about it in the papers, for the newspaper editors who were present will no doubt show their gratitude by giving glowing descriptions of the great event of the day.

Everything earthly must have an end, and Aunt Tabitha's Jubilee shared the common lot. Strange to say, instead of confirming her in her good resolutions, it has had the very opposite effect; making her anything but amiable in her temper, and apparently slightly restive under the delights of single-blessedness. She begins to feel that, as she has waited patiently for fifty years without any result, a more active policy is now required. The other day, affecting to give me advice, though she was evidently thinking of herself, she told me confidentially that it is our Christian duty to be patient in hope; but we should never forget that "heaven helps those that help themselves." I could see what was on her mind, and have been puzzling my brains ever since to make out how my Aunt Tabitha could help herself; but the more I think of it, the more puzzled I am. One thing is plain: she is going to strike out in a new track, and her motto henceforward is going to be—"Help yourself."

This humour of hers culminated yesterday in a resolution that was highly satisfactory to myself. She told me, with a very solemn air, that I was arriving at an age when I should see something of the world and of society; but as this is, at the best, a desperately sinful world, it would be my ruin here and hereafter if I were to travel alone, and be thrown into the society of the many wicked young men and young women that everywhere abound. She, therefore, had determined to accompany me, and to give me the benefit of her thorough knowledge of the world. Not that she is vain-glorious in her self-confidence. She even distrusts herself, and has not an atom of faith in mankind in general. The most harmless marks of respect and courtesy are invariably scanned by her with the keen eye of a detective; and she often sees the deepest designs against her happiness and peace of mind, when the unconscious object of her suspicions is as innocent as a yearling calf.

Having made up her mind to visit Ottawa, she began to fortify herself in her usual manner, by studying carefully all the notable examples in point in Jewish history. After I had been compelled to read over twice to her the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, my Aunt triumphantly exclaimed, "If the Queen of Sheba had stayed at home as quietly as I have, she never would have seen Solomon. When the mountain won't come to Mahommed, the next best thing is for Mahommed to go to the mountain." As the Queen of Sheba and her travels were not likely to help us much on our way to Ottawa, I cut the conversation short by hunting up Appleton's Railway Guide, and arranging the details of our tour with my Aunt.

Her heart has been opened,—at least her purse has been,—for she has given me enough pocket money to last me for several months to come. We leave in a week for Ottawa, where my aunt intends to visit her three cousins, the Misses Canuck,—Johanna, Matilda and Rosa,—whom

she always calls cousins Joan, Tilley, and Rose. They are a little ancient; but they were not always so, as they were once well known as "The Three Graces." Once they were very gay,—at least Joan, the youngest was. My Aunt was once awfully shocked at hearing that Joan had been flirting outrageously with two married gentlemen—Mr. Brown and Mr. McDeil,—both of whom got into great trouble and disgrace through her, and were cut by many of their old friends. When my Aunt, with tears in her eyes, told all this gossip to Joan, she only laughed at her in a very hardened way, telling her that it was no fault of hers if she was so fascinating that half the married women were dying of jealousy. She didn't care a straw what they might say. "What's the odds, so long as you're happy." She boasted that she had drunk more champagne, had seen more of the world, and had had more flirtations and fun, than a whole army of stupid proprieties, like my Aunt!

Aunt Tabitha was speechless, and rushed off, in her distress, to an old friend who was generally known as Miss Snap-Dragon, and who took a peculiar interest in Mr. Brown, from her having, unsuccessfully, laid siege to his heart when he was a bachelor. She is a somewhat censorious old lady, who has a peculiar knack of casting a dismal, ghastly light over every one and every thing near her. The prettiest woman looks pale and lifeless under her influence, and the most innocent acts are made to assume a most diabolical hue. So far as professions and pressing invitations go, she is a perfect paragon of generous hospitality; but you find, in the long run, that you seldom get anything from her without burning your fingers—to the great amusement of your amiable hostess! In this case she was in her element. She drove Aunt Tabitha half distracted by convincing her, in a few minutes, that Brown and McDeil were very handsome dangerous men, and notorious rakes; that Joan was on the high road to ruin; and that my Aunt would be sacrificing Joan's temporal and spiritual welfare, and would have a great deal to answer for in the next world, if she did not act the good Samaritan, by applying at once to the Mayor to have Joan sent to the House of Refuge!

I, fortunately, was able to dissuade my Aunt from this doubtful piece of philanthropy. I told her she should not listen to these scandal-mongers, who, very likely, might slander her next, and might end by sending her to keep Joan company; and that she would be establishing a very dangerous precedent. This slightly-horrible picture made a deep impression on my Aunt, and settled the matter; but I'm afraid that it gave her the nightmare: for several times we were alarmed at hearing her in her sleep screaming out at the top of her voice that "she wouldn't be locked up; that she was a virtuous, religious woman, and she could prove it!"

It was a great relief to my Aunt when she heard that Joan, at the age of forty-four, had gone in for matrimony with a distant relative of ours—Mr. Adam Blewnoshe; but when Joan came off with flying colours as the happy mother of "our baby"—as the young hopeful is called by the Three Graces and by everybody else, though it was christened "Union," and is addressed always in the mother tongue as "little Oony"—my Aunt began to look up to her with profound admiration and respect. "Only think of Cousin Joan, at her age; why she is nearly as old as I am. I always thought she was a woman of great ability."

I can plainly see that Joan's happiness has unsettled my Aunt greatly, and made her ambitious and discontented; and I feel sure she's going to Ottawa to find out how Joan managed to secure a husband, and how—confound it! There's my Aunt calling me! I must be off to attend on her,—so good-bye for the present. When we get to Ottawa I shall write to you all about the journey, "The Three Graces," and "our baby."

Yours truly, in haste,

AUNT TABITHA'S NEPHEW.

H. M. S. "Fudge," Halifax, (N.S.) July 1, 1869.