

Literature, &c.

THE BRITISH MAGAZINES
FOR SEPTEMBER.

From the Metropolitan.

AN ELIGIBLE MATCH,

A TALE OF A COUNTRY HOUSE.

By Mrs. Abdy.

CAPTAIN ORMOND arrived in good time, and proved to be a handsome young man, with easy agreeable manners; but as I was predetermined not to like him, I prepared myself to expect that the week of his stay would pass very unpleasantly. At dinner, after he had answered a hundred most affectionate inquiries after the health of his father, my mother asked him if he had met with a family of the name of Germaine, distantly related to us, who had been staying a short time in Kilkenny the preceding summer.

He replied in the affirmative, and added, looking at me, 'I fancy that I can descry something of a family likeness between Miss Warwick and Miss Germaine.'

'You flatter Eva,' said my mother, 'Miss Germaine is reckoned very handsome: she is particularly celebrated for the beauty of her eyelashes.'

I cast down my eyes at the beginning of this observation of my mother's, hurt at the mock humility of it, for Miss Germaine was not half so well looking as myself. I should not have done so, however, had I been aware of the way in which she meant to conclude her speech: for when I raised my eyes, I met those of Capt. Ormond fixed on me with a half arch, half contemptuous expression, which evidently showed that he suspected me of having affected to be very timid, for the purpose of displaying eyelashes which certainly might have rivalled in length those of Miss Germaine or any other lady.

Capt. Ormond, who seemed to interest himself much about the tenantry of Sir Terence Ormond's estate, now asked several questions of my father concerning schools, and the condition of the poor in his vicinity.

Mr. Warwick was fortunately able, consistently with truth, to give very satisfactory answers, but he rather wandered into the regions of imagination in the share which he ascribed to me of all the good done in the neighbourhood.

'Eva devoted herself to the poor,' he said, 'and is a perfect enthusiast in her love of schools. I do not wish to check in her a feeling so amiable, but must tell her, even before you, Captain Ormond, that she is exceedingly blameable in often exerting herself, against the advice of those older and wiser than herself, to a degree that is prejudicial to health.'

I did not venture to rebut this accusation, although I could have done so with perfect ease; for the fact was, that I had often reproached myself for paying so little attention to the schools and the poor, and resolved to do better in future.

Captain Ormond, evidently tired of my praises, now turned to Arabella, who had hitherto sat in all the appropriate quietness and reserve of a younger sister, and began a conversation with her, by asking the question usually addressed to young ladies—

'Are you musical?'

'I am extremely fond of music,' Arabella replied, 'but I sing and play very little. Eva is such a proficient, that it quite discourages me, because I know every body who hears us will make comparisons to my disadvantage.'

'Probably, then, you prefer drawing,' continued the Captain.

'Greatly,' she replied, 'and I have a very attentive and clever master; but, after all, I derive more benefit from Eva than from him: she takes me with her when she sketches from nature, which she does to perfection, and I hope that in time I may be able to effect something in the same style; at present I am a mere copyist.'

'Having such a source of gratification,' pursued Captain Ormond, 'I dare say you prefer the country to London?'

'Very much,' she replied; 'here I have the constant advantage of Eva's company; in London her time is so much occupied by the claims of society, that, although she wishes to direct my studies, and partake my employments, she is not often able to do so.'

Captain Ormond looked at her for a moment, as much as to say, 'you are all in a family conspiracy,' and then addressed an observation to the party in general, on the tasteful disposition of that portion of the garden which was visible from the French windows of the dining room, and Penelope undertook to

answer him by assuring him that it was all laid out under the superintendence and direction of Eva. I was most happy when my mother proposed an adjournment to the drawing room, for really I felt quite flushed and nervous under the high pressure of the flattery of my relatives.

After tea, Captain Ormond hinted a wish to walk round the grounds, but my mother looked at my crisp curls, crisper blonde trimming, and shining satin slippers, and feared the effect on them of damp air, dewy grass and gravel walks.

'I do not doubt,' said she, 'that you are fond of music, Captain Ormond; Eva will be happy to play and sing to you.'

Accordingly I was compelled to execute Grisi's bravura. I sang it very differently, and Captain Ormond uttered no commendation; two or three other Italian airs suggested by my mother, followed with equal success, and I was then on the point of recreating myself by singing 'The Carrier Dove,' when Arabella twitched it away, and substituted a German air in its place. I could not help looking angrily at her for her officiousness; Captain Ormond saw the glance, and I fancied that his countenance expressed the thought—'With all your perfections, you are not endowed with the best of tempers.' At length I left the piano, and Captain Ormond walked to a window, and looked longingly on the garden, although too polite to express his wish for a stroll in it. My mother took advantage of the opportunity to whisper to me—

'You must begin to talk about books Eva; you have not said a word to prove yourself literary, do you not like reading beyond every other occupation, and do I not subscribe six guineas a year for you to Saunders and Otley, and did they not send down to you yesterday a box with twenty volumes?'

'This was all too true to be denied, and fortunately at this moment Captain Ormond approached the table on which lay a variety of books, and said to Miss Penelope—

'I see you are reading one of Miss Somerville's delightful works; do you take much interest in the science of astronomy?'

'Oh no,' she replied, 'I am a mere beginner and Miss Somerville, easy and charming as is her style, would be too abstruse for me, but Eva is so kind as to explain it to me as I read; astronomy is one of Eva's favourite pursuits.'

The Captain was silent, and my father looked rather displeased at Penelope, thinking I suppose, that she had overshot her mark, and that the military visitor had no penchant for a blue; he therefore endeavored to repair the error by saying—

'After all, Eva's taste is so simple that there is nothing in which she so much delights as a natural story of every day life; she greatly preferred Miss Martineau's *Deerbrook* to her political tracts.'

'And Eva has a high opinion of Mrs. Ellis's *Women of England*,' said my mother, she thinks that the authoress so thoroughly understands all that is amiable and excellent in the female character.'

'And Eva takes a deep interest in the *Factory Boy*,' said Penelope; 'she enters with so much deep interest in the cause of the oppressed.'

'And Eva is extremely fond of the poems of Mrs. Hemans,' said Arabella; 'she never values any poetical talent, unless, the principles and sentiments are equally admirable.'

Cruel Captain Ormond! he did not reply a word to all these observations, by which he might give us reason to guess at his own favourite style of reading, although so accommodating were his auditors, that if he had possessed a partiality for nursery traditions, they would one and all have instantly assured him that no description of literature gave me such delight as 'The Yellow Dwarf,' and 'Puss in Boots.'

My portfolio of drawings was then produced with much more success. I certainly drew very well, and Captain Ormond, it appeared, himself sketched from nature; he asked me some questions on the subject, and I was expressing myself with great fluency, and some enthusiasm, when I was suddenly checked by an audible 'aside' of Penelope's on the exceeding beauty of the language I made use of! I was effectually silenced, and Captain Ormond, I am convinced, thought that I had learned a certain set of phrases by rote, and that I had now come to the end of my lesson.

A ring at the gate announced the arrival of my brother, who had driven over early that morning to pass the day with a family at a few miles distance.—Arabella, counterfeiting sisterly impatience,

ran out to meet him; but her real motive was to warn him of the 'eligible match' that was in the drawing-room. In a few minutes she reappeared, leaning upon his arm in affected sullenness.

'I have not met with a very grateful return for my eagerness to welcome John,' she said; 'his salutation was;—"why does not Eva come to meet me?" I really think, she added, "that I must be a most amiable creature; everybody prefers Eva to me, and yet I cannot persuade myself to feel at all maliciously disposed towards her."'

My brother, after his introduction to the new comer, advanced towards me, imprinted a kiss on my cheek instead of taking my hand in his usual rough manner, and inquired most affectionately after a slight indisposition of which I had complained the preceding evening, and which, in the common course of events would have completely faded from his mind; he then delivered a message, purporting to come from Miss Shelburne, requesting the loan of my last landscape from nature to copy, and hoping that I would not forget to write some lines for her Album. When Captain Ormond retired to his room that night, I am sure it was with a sensation of having been annoyed and beset by a very designing family. The events of the day had been just as unpleasant to me as to himself, and I lay awake restless and uneasy for about two hours, and at length fell asleep, comforting myself with the persuasion that a week, as Dr Johnson says of an hour, 'may be tedious but cannot be long.'

The next morning I was just tying on my straw bonnet to take a short stroll, when my mother entered and insisted on inspecting my morning costume. I have already said she had a taste for elaborate dress, and the consequence was, that when I was arrayed according to her wishes, I looked much more fit for a public breakfast at a villa on the banks of the Thames, than for the quiet morning meal of a family party. My brother occupied the attention of Captain Ormond during a great part of the time of breakfast by lively sketches of half a dozen young men whom he had met at dinner the preceding day who were all passionate admirers of Eva, and full of attention to himself in the hope of conciliating his good offices. Captain Ormond was evidently quite tired of the sameness of the conversation, and I was delighted to escape to the solitude of my boudoir. In about half an hour my mother entered.

'Eva,' said she, 'are you inclined to accompany me to the infant school?'

'Are you going alone?' I asked suspiciously.

She unhesitatingly replied in the affirmative, and we sallied forth. On arriving there, my mother selected seven or eight of the prettiest little ones for the purpose of repeating their lessons to me, and she had just with some care contrived to group them round me, so that I looked the picture of Charity, encircled by children, when the door opened, and Captain Ormond appeared, conducted by Penelope.

'Ah!' exclaimed Penelope with affected surprise; 'I did not know we should find Eva here; but I cannot say I much wonder at it—really her heart is completely in this school, she is so devotedly fond of teaching.'

'It is a desirable thing,' said my mother addressing Captain Ormond, 'when young people show such a taste.'

'I am sure,' said the school mistress who had opened her eyes very wide at these observations, 'I only wish Miss Warwick came here more frequently.'

My mother cast an angry glance at her, and made a remark to Captain Ormond on my excessive love of children, pointing at the same time to a little urchin who, encouraged by a sign from herself, had just detached my bonnet from my head, and ran off with it in triumph to the furthest extremity of the room, leaving my long hair floating down to my waist. Our Celebs, however, gave no indication that his 'search of a wife' would be terminated by the morning display of my useful qualities, any more than by the evening exhibition of my brilliant ones; and after hearing the pence and multiplication tables sung, a recitation of the history of England in verse, a solo parody on 'Home, sweet home,' setting forth the superior delights of school, and a choral declaration by the whole body of scholars of their intention to go into the play ground, set very appositely to the air, 'There's nae luck about the house,' he was suffered to escape into the fresh air. After walking about an hour we returned home, and my mother desired me to fetch down a

pair of screens that I had painted for a charity bazaar, to show Captain Ormond. I contrived to be as long as possible in finding them. When I re-entered the drawing-room no one was there, but Captain Ormond was standing on the lawn just before the window, looking at a beautiful exotic which the gardener had permitted, as a rare indulgence, to enjoy the luxury of the open air. His back was towards me, and he was singing in a low tone. I stood to listen to him, for, as he had declined joining me in a duet the evening before, I was rather surprised to find that he had a melodious voice; the words that he sang were, to my great dismay, from a ballad by Haynes Bayly.

'This is my eldest daughter, sir,
Her mother's only care,
You praise her face—O, sir, she is
As good as she is fair:
My angel Jane is clever too,
Accomplishments I've taught her,
I'll introduce you to her, sir—
This is my eldest daughter!'

After luncheon, my brother proposed a ride to Captain Ormond, and I felt reconciled to a circumstance which two days before I had thought a great trouble—the temporary lameness of my horse, which prevented me from using it. About half an hour after the departure of the equestrians, we were all assembled in the drawing-room, when a country neighbour, Mr. Burrows, was announced.

'I have just met your son, Mrs. Warwick,' said he, 'riding with a very handsome young man, whom he introduced to me as Captain Ormond; I know him very well by report—his father, Sir Terence, has just come into a fine fortune.'

'He has,' replied my mother, 'and this young man appears well deserving of his prospects; he is remarkably well bred and amiable.'

'I am glad to hear it,' said Mr. Burrows, 'for I have a very high opinion of the young lady whom he is engaged to marry.'

'Engaged to be married!' exclaimed Arabella; 'it is impossible.'

'I do not know what private reasons you may have, Miss Arabella, for believing it impossible,' said Mr. Burrows; 'but I know it to be a positive fact. I dare say,' he continued, addressing my mother, 'you are acquainted with the family by name—the Mapletons of Hilbury—they live about twenty miles from hence.'

My mother too much overcame to answer, could only bow her head.

'Well,' pursued Mr. Burrows, 'he is recently engaged to Julia, the third daughter, a very pretty girl, with auburn ringlets, and a most delightful voice; she has no money, but Captain Ormond's father has sufficient for both.'

'And are you quite certain that there is no mistake about this engagement?' asked Penelope.

'I cannot tell what makes you fair ladies so incredulous,' replied Mr. Burrows, 'but I have a letter from the young lady's father in my pocket informing me of the engagement, so I think you will allow I am entitled to speak confidently on the subject.'

Mr. Burrows shortly took his leave, and the smothered tide of family indignation then burst forth.

'I could not have believed it possible,' exclaimed Penelope.

'He has quite insinuated himself into our house under false pretences,' said Arabella.

'I suppose he must stay till the end of the week,' said my mother; 'but I shall be very distant and cool in my manner towards him.'

'Let us view the subject dispassionately,' said my father; 'I am just as vexed as any of you, but after all, I do not know that we have much cause to consider ourselves aggrieved; we have only been acquainted with Captain Ormond one day, and it is not very surprising that he should not feel sufficiently intimate with us to confide to us an engagement which has been so very recently formed.'

'He ought to have made it known to us the very first hour of his arrival,' interrupted my mother.

'I do not think so,' said my father, 'I remember I was once staying at a country house, and a young man arrived who immediately entreated the lady of the house to make known to her guests that he was engaged to be married, in order that no false hopes might be excited in the minds of the young ladies by any courteous attentions that he might pay them. She did so, and he was quite sent to Coventry; everybody said he must be an affected coxcomb, who entertained an overweening opinion of his own fascinations, and expected all the world to do the same. We have no one to blame for our wrong impression concerning Capt.

Ormond; tentions to self could been endo coming in been don must be p receive ci gaged one 'At all suppose y her hair, a fatigue b songs wh 'Certa only exp ber of good bree terised the is married wife a pl acquainta 'And p nuated Pe the rumo ed.'

'This is ther; 'M any addic tation; be heard him intimacy and you k in his poe We dis tions. W was infor ing, whic ment prop old maid immediat of the fam I do not coldness change; g alike forl pointment and come seemed to me or not alted on a mily, he casual a the daug mily is li on one o which he him, and less, and wrong. carriage me that unpunctu brother a for the n that her great de was agai saucy yo useful, w cousin, a may see much ha of his vis great de convers with me, accusatio with me, perform sed my f

He hol opinion; eligible engagi had arri visit; it was ove grounds white m I had no therefor breezeze monition Captu dered to the fami the gate He offe and mad of the w Ormond 'To- leave th unhapp and Mr asked to taken: end.' 'A w oined, common what ar would b 'It is, respects nables ns, wh ay; an live m