

Literature, &c.

Graham's Magazine for June.
LOVE AND PIQUE;

OR, SCENES AT A WATERING PLACE.
By Mrs. Emma C. Embury

THE VENTILATOR.

It was one of the most sultry days of an intensely hot summer, the thermometer stood at eighty five in the shade, everything was parched with fervent heat, and as if to show their powers of endurance, half the world, leaving the quiet comfort of luxurious homes, were inhaling the close and unhealthy atmosphere of a crowded watering-place. Cecil Forrester had mingled with the throng, and bidding adieu to his father's beautiful country seat, where the murmur of a rushing stream mingled its cool refreshing sound with the whisper of the summer breeze, had obtained, for a certain consideration, the privilege of occupying an apartment some eight feet by ten, in the great hotel which stretches its huge length along the sands of ——. But Cecil had other motives than simple obedience to the dictates of fashion. He was in love, deeply and earnestly in love, and the lady on whom he had bestowed his affections, seemed to him one of those exquisite creatures, equally well fitted to be the gem of a ball-room, or the ornament of domestic life. He had met her in the sequestered village of Norwood, whither he repaired every summer to visit a favorite sister, and where the lovely Miss Oriel had come to repair the ravages which a winter's dissipation had made in her fresh complexion. They had enjoyed a flirtation of the most delightful kind, because it had been purely sentimental, and such is, after all, the most agreeable variety of that very common species of amusement. Laura Oriel had laid aside all her usual gaiety of apparel, her dress was the very perfection of elegant simplicity; her raven hair was braided, without a single ringlet, around her well turned head, and in short, nothing could be more attractive than the city belle so suddenly transformed into *la jolie paysanne* of a country village. Many a moonlit walk had Cecil Forrester enjoyed with her, many a beautiful fancy had been pictured out during their rambles in the summer woods, many a noble sentiment had been uttered beneath the deep shadow of the rocky cliff, many a delicate thought had been evolved amid the beauty and sublimity of nature. The time passed like a dream. The genial breezes of flowery June had been exchanged for the fervent heats of July, and these had again been forgotten in the more oppressive sultriness of August before their happiness was disturbed by a single thought of the future. But Miss Oriel was then obliged to accompany her mother to ——.

It was most disagreeable necessity, for she did not love a crowd, and though her fortune and station in society compelled her to appear among the multitude, yet she was only happy in the seclusion of domestic life. But duty to her only parent was the ruling principle of her existence. Her mother's wishes had forced her into society during the past winter, and now the same irresistible power drew her to the turbulent scenes of a fashionable watering place. Poor thing! she was certainly to be pitied, and so thought Cecil Forrester. He was upon the point of expressing his ardent admiration, and offering his heart and hand to her whose tender friendship had made him bankrupt in all that was worthy of her acceptance. But, somehow or other, no opportunity occurred for such explanation. The lady rather avoided these delicious walks which though favourable to the growth of affection, might afford chances for an unreasonable declaration. So Cecil was only able to inform her of his intention to meet her at ——, and contented himself, for the present, with offering her a splendid copy of Rogers' Poems, in which he had inscribed her name in the most delicate of Italian writing, and where she found, on further examination, the words: 'To her who will understand me,' written over the pretty pastoral poem entitled 'The wish.'

Mine be a cot beside the hill;
A Beehive's hum shall soothe my ear,—
A willow brook that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow oft, beneath my thatch,
Shall twitter from her clay built nest,—
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
To share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing,
In rassets grown and apron blue.

The village church amid the trees,
Where first our marriage vows were given,
With merry peals shall swell the breeze
And point, with taper spite, to Heaven.

It was certainly a most appropriate and delicately expressed choice for such a love of natural beauty and quiet happiness as Miss Laura Oriel.

But to return to ——. Mr. Forrester knew that Miss Oriel was expected to arrive there on a certain morning, and, as he had gone down several days previous, he was, of course on the watch for her. Most impassioned admirers would have rushed out to welcome the object of their thoughts at the very first glimpse of her green veil. But Cecil was no vulgar lover, his taste was excessively refined, and for his own sake, no less than out of regard to the lady's feelings, he did not choose to behold her in travelling dishabille after a long and dusty ride. He therefore contented himself with watching from an upper window her descent from the stage coach, and then retired to his apartment until the preparatory dinner bell should summon the *elite* to the saloon. As I said before the day was excessively warm, and all the ventilators (which had been mercifully placed over each door to prevent suffocation) stood wide open, as if the rooms, like their heated occupants, were gasping for breath. Cecil, who had a tolerably correct notion of comfort, had loosed his boot straps, unbraced his stays, and flung himself upon the bed to indulge a pleasant reverie before he commenced his toilet, when he was suddenly recalled to the scenes of actual life by the sound of a well known voice.

The apartments to which Miss Oriel and her mother had been conducted (the privilege of selection would be a most unheard of innovation of the rights of hotel keepers at such a season) happened to be immediately opposite to the one already occupied by Mr. Forrester. The ventilators of both were open, and as he heard her voice, he felt a sweet satisfaction in the thought, and the soft southern breeze which was cooling his brow also fanned the ringlets of his beautiful mistress. But really there was no excuse for his listening to her conversation; it most ungentlemanlike, but at the same time, I am sorry to say, most natural; and though heartily ashamed of him for so doing, I am obliged to confess that he paid the closest attention to every word of their discourse.

'How long do you want to stay here, Laura?' said the mother, in that wheezing sort of voice which belongs to fat, puffy old ladies when over fatigued.

'That will depend upon circumstances,' was the short and rather crusty reply.

'Do you know they charge twelve dollars a week, and every bath is an extra expense?'

'What of that? We must risk something in all speculations, and mine is a pretty safe venture.'

'I wish we had left Ellen Grey at home.'

'I don't agree with you; we owe her some return for staying nearly three months with her at Norwood, and I cannot bear to be under an obligation to such mighty good sort of people, for they never forget it.'

'But her board will be expensive, and I do not see why it would not be as well to invite her to our house in the winter.'

'You don't seem to understand my plans, Mamma. Ellen Grey is pretty, and modest, and sentimental, and all that; she is just the kind of person to be very attractive to gentlemen when seen in domestic life, but she is too timid to appear well in a place like this place. She will scarcely dare to raise her eyes in such a crowd, and therefore there can be no rivalry between us. Besides, she has a great deal of taste, and her assistance at my toilet enables me to dispense with a dressing maid.'

'I cannot see much force in your argument.'

'Perhaps not: what would you say if I tell you I want her as a foil?'

'She is 'oo pretty to serve such a purpose.'

'You are greatly mistaken; any body would look well besides an ugly girl, but one must be exceedingly beautiful to bear a comparison with as pretty a creature as Ellen Grey. Her delicate complexion, which is continually suffused with blushes, her fair hair and blue eyes will appear lovelier any where else than they will beside me.'

'Such beauty as yours requires no foil, Laura.'

'I choose to employ one, notwithstanding; I have come here for the ex-

press purpose of attracting Fitzroy Beauchamp, and I mean to neglect nothing, however trifling, to compass my schemes.'

'What will Cecil Forrester say?'

'If I succeed, he may say what he pleases. I mean to pay off my present lover against the future one; and Cecil will be of use in exciting the jealousy of Beauchamp.'

'I declare you are too bad, Laura.'

'I only mean to study your interest and my own, Mamma. Cecil Forrester was a delightful companion in the country, his enthusiasm was so well adapted to the time and place, that it seemed to give charms to the dull and stupid village, which it could not otherwise have possessed. I certainly played my part in perfection, indeed, I almost began to fancy that there really was some feelings in my acting: at any rate he has the most implicit faith in my sensibility. How often I have laughed over the love-sick youth's rural wish! I think I see myself as ——'

'Lucy at her spinning-wheel,
In russet gown and apron blue.'

'I wonder how you kept up the farce so long, Laura; even Ellen thinks you a most exemplary sentimentalist.'

'Oh, it was a pleasant mode of getting rid of time; nothing sharpens one's wits like a flirtation with a real lover—I have learned twenty new stratagems from my 'country practice.'

'Are you sure Mr Beauchamp is rich?'

'He drives blood horses, sports a tiger in livery, lives at the Astor, drinks wine at \$8 a bottle, and what is more, pays his bills.'

'How did you learn this?'

'From very good authority. he is said to have \$200,000 in bank stocks besides a sugar plantation worth 12,000 per annum, and slaves enough to stock a colony: so you see he is a prize worth winning. As for Cecil Forrester, I am sorry he is here, but I must manage to turn him over to the unsophisticated little rustic for the present. I do not wish to give him a downright dismissal at once, because if I should fail to secure the millionaire, it would be as well to fall back upon Forrester's \$30,000. The game will be a difficult one, but the glory of success will be greater.'

'I hope you will reap some of the spoils of victory, Laura, for our legacy is rapidly diminishing, and when it is gone, you know there will be no other chance.'

'Never fear, mamma, my stock in trade is very good—beauty, tact, and five thousand dollars form a very good capital, and I think I can afford to speculate rather largely.'

'But more than half of the most essential part of your capital is already gone, and you have not as yet succeeded.'

'You forget that I have gained a footing in society by its expenditure: leave everything to me, and if I am not married before next season, then write me down a fool.'

Cecil Forrester heard every word of this dialogue. At its commencement he had started to his feet, and if any one could have witnessed his gestures and contortions he would have been deemed a madman. His face flushed and paled, his eyes dilated with anger and flashed with contempt, his lip curled in bitter scorn, and narrowly escaped being bitten through as he gnashed his teeth in impotent rage; he clenched his hands, he tore off the turquoise ring which he had hitherto worn on his little finger as a *gage d'amitie* from the false beauty, and finally, after exhausting his angry emotions, he flung himself into a seat, with a calm and determined expression of countenance which augured ill for some of the schemes of Miss Laura Oriel.

THE DINING-ROOM.

Is there anything more musical to the ear of the time sick loungee at a fashionable watering place, than the dinner bell? Talk of the melody of running streams, the sighing of summer winds, the carol of forest birds! they may be all very pleasant sounds in certain moods of the mind, but for a music which never fails to please, a sound which never falls wearily upon the senses, a voice which is never uttered to a listless ear, commend me to that dinner bell. The dullest face brightens into something like intelligence, the most confirmed valetudinarian forgets all elegant debility, the most intellectual remember the pressing claims of the physical man, and the most refined of women venture to look somewhat interested in the vulgar duty of dining. The saloon was crowded with company all eager for the summons which

was to transform them into eating animals.

'Pray why,' said a gentleman who was somewhat famous for puns, conundrums and such little witticisms, preferring as it seemed to shoot the 'rats and mice and such small deer' of literature, because he could draw a *long* rather than a *strong* bow; 'Pray,' said he in that half suppressed voice which like a theatrical aside, is sure to be distinctly heard in a crowd, 'why is this saloon like the President's levee? do ye give it up? why is it filled with a crowd of hungry expectants, ha, ha, ha.'

The joke would have been excellent as an after dinner speech, but the audacity of uttering an idle jest while so many persons were keenly alive to one of the sufferings of frail humanity, was very properly punished. No body laughed, and to his infinite regret, the great Mr —— saw that he had wasted his wit. The first stroke of the second bell brought all to their feet, as suddenly as if they had been subjected to the power of a galvanic battery. Cecil Forrester, attired with unusual care, all the dandyism of his character fully but not offensively displayed, had been one of the first in the saloon, determined to give Miss Oriel a lesson in indifference. But she did not appear, and as the band struck up a march, the usual signal for deploying into the dining room, he took the hand of his neighbour, who happened to be a very pretty woman, and followed the somewhat rapid pace of the procession.

The important business of the dinner table was half finished; the soup, the fish, even the joints had disappeared, and the voracity of the *élegants* had given place to fastidiousness as they amused themselves with a bit of *vis de veau glacé* or a *petit pâté de Périgord*, when a slight bustle at the door attracted universal attention. A dumpy, overdressed old lady, leaning on the arm of a delicate fair haired girl, entered with that fussy manner so characteristic of an out of place feeling, while immediately following her, with a complexion as cool and fresh as marble, if any one could only imagine marble tinged with the rose tint of youth and health—a complexion such as nothing but a morning bath can give—came the elegant Miss Oriel. There was the very perfection of art in her whole appearance. She had chosen for her entrance the moment when the fierce appetites of those who eat to kill time (and sometimes end by killing themselves) were sufficiently appeased to enable them to admire something else beside the reeking dishes. Among the heated and flushed beauties who sat around the table, with relaxed ringlets and moistened brows, she appeared like some fairy of the fountain, some waterymph fresh from her sub-marine grotto, diffusing about her a cool and refreshing atmosphere as she moved gracefully onward. Her dress was white transparent muslin, which displayed rather than veiled the fine form of her arms, while her neck and shoulders, actually dazzling in their snowy hue and polish, were only shadowed by a single jet black ringlet, which seemed accidentally to have fallen from the clustering mass gathered at the back of her head. A pale, pearl like japonica was her only ornament. As she slowly paced the length of the hall to a seat near the head of the table, reserved for her by a well-bribed waiter, a murmur of admiration ran through the apartment.

All eyes were fixed upon her, and she knew better than to break the spell of her fascinations by condescending to the vulgar taste for eating; (a brace of woodcock had been sent to her room only an hour previous.) Mrs. Oriel, who seemed determined to make amends for past delay by present haste, sent her plate to be filled and re-filled; but her daughter only trifled with some delicate French combination of order and tastelessness, and finished the meal by a morsel of *Coarlotte au russe* and *Vinalla cream*. A glass of iced *eau sacre* was her only beverage, and she was thus enabled to retain her cool fresh tint even in the heated atmosphere so redolent of spices, and gravies, and vinous distillations.

It was not until just before quitting the table that Miss Oriel allowed herself to see any one in the room. She raised her large soft eyes languidly and beheld, what she had for some time known, that her young friend Ellen was familiarly chatting with Cecil Forrester. A graceful bend of her fair neck and a most lovely smile marked her consciousness of his presence, while Cecil, with a polite but rather careless bow continued his conversation with Miss Grey, being incited to show her peculiar attention by his consciousness that she, as well