

AUGUSTUS DRELINCOURT'S PUR- PRISE.

FROM ENGLISHWOMAN'S MAGAZINE.

WHEN Augustus Drelincourt came out, he created quite a sensation. Perhaps you have never heard of a man coming out (except he came out strong on some striking emergency), but I assure you there is almost as much interest in bringing a man out as there is in bringing a woman out—I mean to himself. He has the unpleasant consciousness upon him of having been recently a boy; he is not at all certain whether the shade of academic bowers is not still upon him; he sometimes blunders in his grammar through a too accurate knowledge of the English language, and his “department,” like a newly-constructed engine, does not work so easily as it will do when properly rubbed down and thoroughly lubricated with the oil of time. Well, when Augustus Drelincourt came out, he was exceedingly well received. He had not been conspicuous in the University boat-race; it was more than hinted at “Maudlin’s” that a fast “coach” had carried him round the Oxford highway, and saved him from a fall in the “ploughed” field; but still there he was—a presentable young man, with a suspicion of moustache on his upper lip, and in appearance, toilet-wise considered, all that his valet and tailor could make of him.

An impressive young man was Drelincourt. He had read Byron and Shelley, and was unquestionably emotional. To him a woman was an idol to be adored—he was ready to offer up his pulsative heart on the altar of his worship. In this innocent and exposed condition, like a crab—if you will excuse the allusion—that has lately cast its shell and has not sense enough to hide itself in the mud, A. Drelincourt, Esq., came into the world—a victim garlanded with flowers.

And, mind you, the flowers that garlanded Drelincourt were flowers worth plucking. They represented ancient lineage, broad lands, and inexhaustible wealth. To the fragrance of such floral growths matchmakers are not insensible. That class of people have, it must be confessed, a very keen scent. And then as to appetite, do they not love the stalled ox—never mind the pungent nature of the sauce—better than the dinner of herbs? As far as my experience extends, they do.

At the very beginning of the London season Drelincourt was overwhelmed with invitations.

“Will you come into my parlour?
Says the spider to the fly:
‘Tis the prettiest little parlour
That ever you did spy.”

Of course he went, looking for his *ideal*, the being to whom he should tender worship. Did you ever go into a missionary museum? It is astonishing the number of objects there are to worship there, and I have often thought an untutored savage would find it difficult to select his Penates. Drelincourt found it hard, though his deities helped him as far as they could, and gave him much encouragement, as did also their high-priestesses or chaperons. But the man was not satisfied; he yearned for something higher, better, nobler, more poetical than May Fair had on sale. He was disquieted; he wanted some one to love—some one who should love him and wreath his brow with myrtle.

With so many Easy Hints and Short Cuts to connubial felicity—I mean those cradite volumes on Love, Courtship, and Matrimony which benevolent publishers are kind enough to issue—it is somewhat strange that Mr. Drelincourt should not readily have found the woman for a wife. Perhaps he was unacquainted with the amatory literature to which reference has been made. At all events, he was either unsuccessful in finding that for which his heart panted, or he was incapacitated by the novelty of his position from recognising the inestimable treasure when he beheld it. He saw around him beauty in all its varieties—lovable beauty—but he did not love. Why not?

I really do not love Miss Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But only this I know full well
I really do not love Miss Fell.

I think the same sort of thing has been said in an epigrammatic way about her papa the doctor.

It happened that young Drelincourt was invited to “a little dance;” it was, as expressed in the invitation, a mere carpet dance—nothing of a ball—which meant, as everybody knows, that it would be an out-and-out great spread and a crush on the staircase. Mr.

Drelincourt was not so young but that he knew this very well indeed, but this knowledge moved him not to the elaborate toilet which he made before advancing on Philippi’s plans. He had heard that she would be there—*she*, a charming little girl, with such eyes, such hair, and such an irresistible way of shrugging her beautiful shoulders. Margaret Smith Slinsby Warrender was her name. She was certainly very beautiful, and it was rumoured that she was a wealthy heiress. She was rich, at all events, in the wealth of beauty.

Drelincourt’s toilet was elaborate. I saw an anecdote the other day about D’Orsay and Maginn. It happened that the doctor, so says the narrator of the anecdote, had called in at Kensington Gore, and being told that the count was at home and had nearly finished dressing, said he would wait. An hour elapsed, when Maginn conducted to the inner chamber, perceived the count putting the last touches to his toilet. “Not finished yet, count?” said the doctor. “Why, you were nearly dressed an hour ago. I never take more than a quarter of an hour to dress myself.”

“My dear doctor,” replied the count, taking a sly but minute survey of the great wit’s costume from top to toe, and in a tone which Maginn said was unsurpassable for waggish severity and good-tempered contemptuousness at the summary of his toilet—“my dear doctor, you might not.”

Well, Drelincourt did not complete his toilet in a quarter of an hour I can tell you; very far from that. It was a most serious affair, and Bristles—that was my gentleman’s gentleman—exerted himself to the utmost to send forth his knight armed cap-a-pie to the fray. Shall I describe the evening costume of a gentleman of the nineteenth century? It is scarcely necessary; you know the compound—part tavern waiter, part minister of the gospel, part linendraper’s shopman, part undertaker’s man, crush hat, and white kid gloves. It is not elegant, it is not easy, it is not picturesque—a Maori in his war paint would look far more interesting. Never mind: the Grandy world goes in for black broadcloth and a wisp of snowy cambric. Thus saith Grandy the Great, and let all the world fall down and worship.

Margaret Smith Slinsby Warrender was there, and in all her glory—bright, beautiful, gay—the bloom upon fruit, the down upon flowers not lighter or more beautiful than she. There were scores of beautiful beings present—a phantasmagoria of female loveliness and the loftiest achievements of dressmaking and millinery.

Drelincourt was introduced to Miss Warrender. Behold him inviting her to be his partner in the mazy circle—I mean the waltz—and behold her half hesitating, those Hesbbon pools, her eyes, twinkling and rippling with merriment, he—all in a flutter of excitement—waiting her response. There beside her sits the stern guardian of innocence and youth—the dragon chaperon—and round about are fellows all of whom are ready to kneel at the shrine and become the devotees of the pretty star of the night, and are yet hypocritically professing indifference.

Indifference! who could be indifferent? Not the youngest fledgling nor the oldest bird in the yard. She was not a queenly beauty, drawing her slaves at her chariot-wheels, and flashing imperiously upon all mankind; but she was very pretty, and so cheerful and confiding, that to see her was to fall straightway in love with her. You could not help it. The Gorgon head turned those who gazed on it to stone—that is, I think, the story—but stones were melted into men when they faced this charming being. Charming is a right proper expression. Is not a woman when she will an enchantress—a charmer? does not she cast over you a love spell, and by art of divination overwhelm you? For my part, I have no patience with the Decemviri—the chilly ones who won’t be in love, and will talk about the affections of the heart as they would of so much corn or cattle. I saw a man who could not be mesmerised once, and he congratulated himself on his spiritual impotency; but the mesmerist did not compliment—he was of opinion that the higher faculties were wanting.

Drelincourt was not wanting in the higher faculties that are capable of loving and of being beloved. Not once, not twice, but four times did he waltz with Miss Warrender—he was in a whirl. When he reached home that night he hastily dismissed his yawning valet, and opened the window and surveyed the sky, and looked especially at one bright particular star, and thought—just as he might be expected to think.

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,” so

time passes on; bills fall due and quarter-days arrive, and Azrael, at the end of all, holding the ebony door ajar for our convenience. All the to-morrows made young Drelincourt more inextricably bound up in the cords of love—chains of roses and myrtle, but stronger than the Atlantic cable. He saw her often—at the opera, at the play, at the concert, at the ball, at the *fête champêtre*, at old Mrs. Knickerboker’s conversation, where you drank tea and talked literature and fine arts from seven till eleven twice a month. She did not,—I mean Miss Warrender,—it must be owned, encourage him, but she was very kind, and every touch of her hand, and every tone of her voice, increased his delirium. Wooing, and winning, and wedding,—these were the three ideas in his mind; he was fluttering about the golden circle, and everybody knew it. Bristles knew it for certain, and he did not disguise it from Hannah Maria. He did not speak in the most respectful terms, assuming rather the air of a patron, the manners of a man who has seen life—seen it through and through—and was kindly leading his young gentleman forward. And plenty of other people knew it besides Bristles. It was the quiet-chit-chat talk of the ladies’ boudoir, and the men had something to say about it over their billiards.

Drelincourt made up his mind to put the final question. He discussed with himself the question should he say it, should he write it, and resolved to say it. It is prettier to get your answer from a woman’s lips. There was a splendid party at the noble mansion of Sir Horace Fitz Ormond’s; it was the most brilliant affair of the season, for Sir Horace, as is well known, is a man of great taste and of immense resources—he has no compeer; so correct a judgment in all the lighter elegancies of life is not to be found in the baronetage. The *Morning Post* devoted more than three columns of valuable space to a record of the gathering. Everybody was there—everybody who was anybody—chiefly nobility, but a sprinkling of talent to season it; the naturalist, who had baked himself black in the Great Sahara; the artist, who had astonished the world by his seven acres of smoke and horse-flesh; the dashing novelist, who came arm-in-arm with his illustrator, fed on ten lemon ices, and did not say as many words.

Mr. Drelincourt was there—so was Miss Warrender. They danced together, but he could not help remarking that she was very silent, much flurried occasionally, and “not at all herself,” as Mr. Bristles would have said if he had seen her. It was a pleasant relief to quit the crowded rooms, and to steal quietly into the grounds—to feel the cool breath of the evening fanning the burning brow, and to hear the soothing splash of the fountain instead of the crash of Weippert’s band. Mr. Drelincourt found it very agreeable. It enchances the pleasure when a woman’s arm rests on yours—so it is said—and when the tones of her voice fall like the cadence of soft music. The evening was delightful—moon and stars in the deep-blue sky—no bright star—the star of the night—especially to be noted, And a star shone in her coronal, and she was his star, who made the night day by the light of her eyes.

Not to make a short story long, he told her very much of what he felt, and, I dare say, blundered over it a good deal. At all events, she stopped him—stopped him in this singular way—

“Don’t! don’t! don’t!—please—stop!”

She put her hands before her face—not that it was light enough for him to see her face—and wept.

He begged forgiveness, denounced himself as being the worst of men not to have respected her feelings, and she stopped him again—just as she had done before—

“Don’t! don’t! don’t!—please—stop!”

When she quieted a little, she put her hand in his, and said—

“Dear Mr. Drelincourt, please say no more; I want you to be my friend—”

He was about to swear more than friendship, when she checked him again—

“You must not!”

Two days later Mr. Drelincourt—flattered and amazed, and not knowing how to understand Miss Warrender—was presented by Bristles with a note. It was from her, and it called him her dear true friend; it told him that she was married, that she had married a poor gentleman—a tutor in a family—that she had no money, and that he had no money either, but hoped to get a curacy, and with keeping school shut the wolf out of their front garden. A very kind, honest letter, prettily begging pardon for any little flirtation, which she “never, never, never” meant.