

OUR SICK CONTRIBUTOR'S FELLOW BOARDERS.

No. 7.

THE YOUNG MARRIED COUPLE.

Mr. and Mrs. X—— are, without exception, the greatest nuisances in the house. Perhaps I should modify this sweeping assertion, and allude only to Mrs. X——. X—— is inclined to be rather a decent fellow, if he were not so deplorably henpecked. This pair of turtle-doves have been married just three months. About twelve years ago Mrs. X—— used to sit on my knee, and was violently, but most ineffectually, scolded by mamma when she pulled my whiskers. She is now a woman: and takes great care to assume all the prerogatives of a *married* woman.

Reader, did you ever peruse the humorous Essay of Elia, "A Bachelor's complaint of the Behaviour of Married People." The author, with a cynicism worthy of DIOGENES, observes: "Nothing is to me more distasteful than the entire complacency and satisfaction which beam in the countenances of a new married couple,—in that of the lady particularly: it tells you, that her lot is disposed of in this world: that *you* can have no hopes of her. It is true, I have none: nor wishes either, perhaps; but this is one of those truths which ought to be taken for granted, not expressed."

This species of expression "beams" in this lady's countenance perpetually. It is not so very long ago that the society of bachelors was anything but distasteful to her;—nay, ill-natured people remarked that she sought their company with too much eagerness. She now affects to despise them, and barely treats them with common civility. They are inferior beings, not of her sphere. She has taken, as it were, a new degree in the world. She now belongs to a superior class. She insists strongly on the dignity of wedlock. It is ludicrous to see this matron of three months standing among ladies of her own class. She shows no respect to old age. She rather demands admiration for her own youth and beauty. By the way, she is rather pretty. Nature has made her vain, and beauty has added to her stock of vanity.

Let it not be imagined that she has given up flirtation. She "carries on," as the phrase is, with married men to a scandalous extent. This is simply malice. She delights in making wives jealous. This is her sole object—except one—that of making her husband swallow a piece of the same "green-eyed monster." Her failure in this respect is amusing in the extreme. Mr. X—— is not in the least alarmed. He sees through his wife, and she knows it. Still more funny is the fact that she is intensely jealous of *him*. She cannot bear him out of her sight. She grudges the very time that he spends at his office, (he is a lawyer). Should he dare to be detained on business an hour later than usual, he is welcomed home with *a look*, and a fit of sulks for the rest of the evening. He once brought home a copy of DIOGENES, which he presented to the old lady. He was not even allowed to commence his dinner till he had procured another copy for the wife of his bosom,—who never read it. Except when used as an errand boy, (a very frequent occurrence), X—— is not allowed, in his leisure hours, to set his foot out of doors unaccompanied by her. I firmly believe that the poor fellow is not permitted to have more than a quarter of a dollar in his pocket at one time. X—— loves chess and hates cards. One evening he sat down to a comfortable game of chess with "the scientific boarder." He was interrupted in an interesting phase of the game, and ordered to desist, so as to take a hand in some stupid round game in which his wife was about to join. X—— loves books, but

is never permitted to read now, not even aloud to his wife. The most unreasonable matrimonial demand which she makes on him is this: He is always expected, in some mysterious way, to take her part in her quarrels with her own sex, which are by no means few. How he is to do this baffles both his and our comprehension. He cannot call a lady out for insulting his wife. Mrs. X—— gently insinuates that if *she* were a lawyer, she would serve a *writ* on these ladies. All Mrs. X——'s ideas of law are associated with a *writ*. Her own father was poor and extravagant, and, as a consequence, very familiar with these documents. She is very curious about her husband's business, and pesters him by continual calls at his office. She wants to know all about his clients—especially the female ones. She is always asking her husband what that young Mrs. S—— can be going to law about, and why she is always at his office. I must do X—— the justice to say that on matters connected with his business he is as mute as a fish, and never gives his wife the slightest satisfaction. This irritates her to an incredible extent, and she retorts on the poor fellow in her own way, inflicting torture of the most refined kind. "My dear! I am not curious—never was—I only just wanted to know how it was that ——, &c., &c.—*that's all*."

The artistic manner in which she sharpens her final "that's all," must be heard to be fully appreciated.

She is not a scold,—that is to say, she does not scold at home. She is far too accomplished a tactician for that. She deals in vague little inuendoes and merciless insinuations, which seem to mean little, but are none the less irritating. She is a great proficient in the art of "nagging," or repeating the same accusation over and over again, even long after it had been completely refuted. This fiendish disposition (for what else can I call it?) sometimes breaks out at the dinner-table. On these occasions, this amiable couple only "*fizz*" at table, and explode afterwards up stairs. These explosions, however, usually come from X—— only, for the lady is able to keep her temper in a most exasperating manner. She never stabs with a stiletto, but keeps on sticking moral needles into her husband, until he is irritated to such a degree, that he has been forced, on some occasions, even to swear. At this stage of the proceedings the lady has recourse to tears: tears she can use with great art. She never employs them on ordinary occasions, but keeps them as a sort of reserve force, to be called into special action with killing effect. Mrs. X—— now appeals to all the ladies of the house to sympathise with her hard lot in being united with such a man. The ladies all say they do; but as for me, I do not believe them,—neither does she. This *coup de grace* always succeeds in subduing her husband, who, next day, makes his peace with a new dress, or something of that kind.

The most sickening thing of all is to see these two "billing and cooing" at times, like two turtle-doves. They never play this game before the boarders alone; but, should a stranger appear at the dinner table, their affection is absurdly demonstrative.

What will this couple be like when they are forty years of age? Will

"Baby-fingers,—waxen touches"

have a softening effect on their dispositions? Perhaps so. If not, we may look for another page of the old story, "Incompatibility of Temper," simply owing to their disregard of mutual forbearance in small things.

In any case, the moral is that young married folks have no business in a boarding-house.