



SUMMER IN THE COUNTRY.

WHAT should we do without our vacations? How could we endure the monotony of professional labors, or of city occupations, if the summer-months every year did not secede us into the fields and the mountains, to the lakes or the seashore, where we can make a holiday, and row, and sail, and walk, and angle, and picnic, and croquet, to our delicious part's content? Our sports are mainly only excuses to enjoy it-of-doors. Croquet, for instance, excites in us a mild satisfaction, no doubt, but, we derive our greatest pleasure from the it-of-door conditions that pertain to it. The sunshine and the grass, and the flowers and the soft, refreshing airs, and the peaceful quiet, all possess and fill us with Arcadian content, and it is these that render croquet, and all forms of out-door employment, so much appreciated. It has, indeed, been wickedly insinuated that the real popularity of croquet is derived from another cause. There is more or less flirtation connected with the game, it is believed, and the admirable opportunities it offers for little coquetish comedies are supposed to have largely to do with the favor the sport enjoys. Acquaintance opens readily under its auspices; there are the side-whispers, the banterings, the numberless coquetries, the rivalry on the one hand, and the copartnership on the other, the merry-making that youth and good spirits call up; and hence young men and women find the sport highly conducive to that keener and subtler game that youth and beauty are always eager to play. At Mr. Winslow Homer, in his sketch, has drawn only women players. It is pure liking for the game, or love of out-of-doors, that has brought these ladies into the field. No deeper purpose is suggested. Croquet is entitled to our earnest benedictions in this, that it has been, and is, the means of tempting young women into the air and sun. We may guard our fair ones so tenderly that the winds of heaven shall not visit their cheeks too rarely; but we will like them all the better if the

sun kiss their cheeks into ruddiness and glow, even if a little tan, or a freckle or two, prove the compensating price.

It is delightful to know how the charms of out-of-doors increase in favor with women. The summer vacations, so much more prolonged than they were in former years, do not mean, with every one, the watering-places; a ball at night, a late sleep in the morning, and a drive at twilight. It means with many a whole-souled, hearty embrace of Nature. It means the walk, the mountain-ascend, the sail, the row, the free scamper on sure-footed nags; it means berrying, fishing, riding, romping, and merry-making in fields and woods. It is a surrender of the heart to the sweet influences of Nature. It is a keen zest for the beauties of woodland and river—a longing to gather strength, soul, and courage, Antæus-like, from the earth. It is a going back, behind all that art and over-civilization have done for us for these thousands of centuries, to those nomadic tastes and longings that underlie the most artificial natures. It is important that sometimes the sun should shine upon us, the rains beat upon us, the winds get at us. All forms of sports and pastimes that carry us out upon the turf, that permit us to fill ourselves with draughts of pure air, that give us physical exhilaration, are supremely good. There are better things for these purposes than croquet, even for young women. Croquet is a sort of compromise with the refinements of civilization. It permits us to be elegant and fastidious. It is vastly better than cosy siestas on the piazzas, or novel-reading in the arbor, or flirtations in the parlor, but not nearly so good as a row on the lake, a picnic on the mountains, a search for the picturesque in the wooded valleys, or other forms of vigorous out-of-door amusement. But there is no doubt that croquet has, during the last few years, done more than any thing else to promote with young ladies a liking for open-air games, and this is a service in the cause of health and beauty that surpasses our unnumbered recreations.

# Basic Detail Report

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