

COUNTRY LODGINGS.*

By Miss Mitford.

Between two and three years ago, the following pithy advertisement appeared in several of the London papers:—

"Country Lodgings.—Apartments to be let in a large farm-house, situate in a cheap and pleasant village, about forty miles from London. Apply (if by letter, post-paid) to A. B., No. 7, Salisbury-street, Strand."

Little did I think, whilst admiring in the broad page of the "Morning Chronicle" the compendious brevity of this announcement, that the pleasant village referred to was our own dear Aberleigh; and that the first tenant of those apartments should be a lady whose family I had long known, and in whose fortunes and destiny I took a more than common interest!

Upton Court was a manor-house of considerable extent, which had in former times been the residence of a distinguished Catholic family, but which, in the changes of property incident to our fluctuating neighbourhood, was "fallen from its high estate," and degraded into the homestead of a farm so small, that the tenant, a yeoman of the poorest class, was fain to eke out his rent by entering into an agreement with a speculating Belford upholsterer, and letting off a part of the fine old mansion in the shape of furnished lodgings.

Mrs. Cameron was a young widow. Her father, a Scotch officer, well born, sickly, and poor, had been but too happy to bestow the hand of his only child upon an old friend and fellow-countryman, the principal clerk in a government office whose respectable station, easy fortune, excellent sense, and super-excellent character, were, as he thought, and as fathers, right or wrong, are apt to think, advantages more than sufficient to counterbalance a disparity of years and appearance, which some daughters might have thought startling,—the bride being a beautiful girl of seventeen, the bridegroom a plain man of seven-and-fifty. In this case, at least, the father was right. He lived long enough to see that the young wife was unusually attached to her kind and indulgent husband, and died, about a twelvemonth after the marriage, with the fullest confidence in her respectability and happiness. Mr. Cameron did not long survive him. Before she was nineteen the fair Helen Cameron was a widow and an orphan, with one beautiful boy, to whom she was left sole guardian, an income being secured to her ample for her rank in life, but clogged with the one condition of her not marrying again.

Such was the tenant, who came in the budding spring time, the showery, flowery month of April, to spend the ensuing summer at Upton Court.

We, on our part, regarded her arrival with no common interest. It appeared but yesterday since Helen Graham was herself a child; and here she was, within two miles of us, a widow and a mother.

We soon found that her mind was as charming as her person. Indeed, her face, lovely as it was, derived the best part of its loveliness from her sunny temper, her frank and ardent spirit, her affectionate and generous heart. It was the every-varying expression, an expression which could not deceive, that lent such matchless charms to her glowing and animated countenance, and to the round and musical voice, sweet as the spoken voice of Malibran, or the still fuller and more exquisite tones of Mrs. Jordan, which, true to the feeling of the moment, vibrated alike to the wildest gaiety and the deepest pathos. In a word, the chief beauty of Helen Cameron was her sensibility. It was the perfume to the rose. Her little boy, born, just before his father's death, and upon whom she doted, was a magnificent piece of still life.

We met almost every day. Mrs. Cameron was never weary of driving about our beautiful lanes in her little pony-carriage, and unsually called upon us in her way home, we being not merely her oldest, but almost her only friends; for, lively and social as was her temper, there was a little touch of shyness about her, which in-

duced her rather to shun than to covet the company of strangers.

Late one evening the fair Helen arrived at our cottage with a face of unwonted gravity. Mrs. Davis (her landlady) had used her very ill. She had taken the west wing in total ignorance of their being other apartments to let at the Court, or she would have secured them. And now a new lodger had arrived, had actually taken possession of two rooms in the centre of the house; and Martha, who had seen him, said he was a young man, and a handsome man—and she herself a young woman unprotected and alone!—It was awkward, very awkward! Was it not very awkward? What was she to do?

Nothing could be done that night; so far was clear; but we praised her prudence, promised to call at Upton the next day, and if necessary, to speak to this new lodger, who might, after all, be no very formidable person; and quite relieved by the vent which she had given to her scruples, she departed in her usual good spirits.

Early the next morning she re-appeared "She would not have the new lodger disturbed for the world! He was a Pole. One doubtless of those unfortunate exiles. He had told Mrs. Davies that he was a Polish gentleman, desirous chiefly of good air, cheapness, and retirement. Beyond a doubt he was one of those unhappy fugitives. He looked grave, and pale, and thoughtful, quite like a hero of romance. Besides, he was the very person who, a week before, had caught hold of the reins when that little, restive pony had taken fright at the baker's cart, and nearly backed Bill and herself into the great gravel-pit on Lanton Common. Bill had entirely lost all command over the pony, and but for the strangers's presence of mind, she did not know what would have become of them. Surely I must remember her telling me the circumstance? Besides, he was unfortunate! He was poor! He was an exile! She would not be the means of driving him from the asylum which he had chosen, for all the world!—No! not for all my geraniums!"—an expression which is by no means the anti-climax that it seems, for in the eyes of a florist, and that florist an enthusiast and a woman, what is this rusty, fusty, dusty, musty bit of earth, called the world, compared to a stand of bright flowers?

And finding, upon inquiry, that M. Choynowski (so he called himself,) had brought a letter of recommendation from a respectable London tradesman, and that there was every appearance of his being, as our fair young friend had conjectured, a foreigner in distress, my father not only agreed that it would be a cruel attempt to drive him from his new home, (a piece of tyranny which, even in this land of freedom might I suspect, have been managed in the form of an offer of double rent, by that grand despot, money,) but resolved to offer the few attentions in our poor power, to one whom every look and word proclaimed to be, in the largest sense of the word a gentleman.

My father had seen him, not on his visit of inquiry, but on a few days after, bill-hook in hand, hacking away manfully at the briars and brambles of the garden. My first view of him was in a position even less romantic, assisting a Belford tradesman to put up a stove in the nursery.

One of Mrs. Cameron's few causes of complaint in her country lodgings had been the tendency to smoke in that important apartment. We all know that when those two subtle essences, smoke and wind, once come to do battle in a wide, open chimney, the invisible agent is pretty sure to have the best of the day, and to drive his vapoury enemy at full speed before him. M. Choynowski, who by this time had established a gardening acquaintance, not merely with Bill and Martha, but with their fair mistress, happening to see her, one windy evening, in a paroxysm of smoky distress, not merely recommended a stove after the fashion of the northern nations' notions, but immediately walked into Belford to give his own orders to a respectable ironmonger; and they were in the very act of erecting this admirable accessory to warmth and comfort (really these words are synonymous) when I happened to call.

I could hardly have seen him under circumstances better calculated to display his intelligence, his delicacy, or his good breeding. The patience, gentleness, and kind feeling, with which he contrived at once to excuse and to remedy certain blunders made by the workmen in the execution of his orders, and the clearness with which in perfectly correct and idiomatic English, slightly tinged with a foreign accent, he explained the mechanical and scientific reasons for the construction he had suggested gave evidence at once of no common talent, and of a considerateness and good nature in its exercise more valuable than all the talent in the world.

In person, he was tall and graceful, and very noble-looking. His head was particularly intellectual, and there was a calm sweetness about the mouth that was singularly prepossessing. Helen had likened him to a hero of romance. In my eyes he bore much more plainly the stamp of a man of fashion—of that very highest fashion which is too refined for finery, too full of self-respect for affectation. Somewhat of that reserve continued even after our acquaintance had ripened into intimacy. He never spoke of his own past history, or future prospects, shunned all political discourse, and was with difficulty drawn into conversation upon the scenery and manners of the North of Europe. He seemed afraid of the subject. I have never met with any person whose mind was more richly cultivated, or who was more calculated to adorn the highest station. And here he was wasting life in a secluded village in a foreign country! What would become of him after his present apparently slender resources should be exhausted, was painful to imagine. The more painful; that the accidental discovery of the direction of a letter had disclosed his former rank. It was part of an envelope addressed "A Monsieur Monsieur le Comte Choynowski," and left as a mark in a book, all except the name being torn off.

It was but too evident that another calamity was impending over the unfortunate exile. Although most discreet in word and guarded in manner, every action bespoke his devotion to his lovely fellow-inmate. Her wishes were his law. His attentions to her little boy were such as young men rarely show to infants except in love of the mother; and the garden, that garden abandoned since the memory of man, (for the Court, previous to the arrival of the present tenant, had been for years uninhabited,) was under his exertions and superintendence, rapidly assuming an aspect of luxuriance and order.

(To be concluded in our next.)

TOO LATE AT CHURCH.—I had a servant with a very deceptive name, Samuel Moral who, as if merely to belie it, was in one respect the most immoral, for he was much given to intoxication. This of course brought on other careless habits; and as I wished to reclaim him, if possible I long bore with him, and many a lecture I gave him. "Oh, Samuel, Samuel!" said I to him very frequently—"what will become of you?" On one occasion I told him he was making himself a brute, and then only was he roused to reply angrily.—"Brute, sir—no brute at all, sir—was bred and born at T——." But the incident which would inevitably have upset the equilibrium of your gravity, was this. I had given him many a lecture for being too late at church, but still I could not make him punctual. One Sunday, as I was reading the first lesson, which happened to be the third chapter, first book of Samuel, I saw him run in at the church-door, ducking down his head that he should not be noticed. He made as much haste as he could up into the gallery, and he had no sooner appeared in the front, thinking of nothing but that he might escape observation, than I came to these words, "Samuel, Samuel." I never can forget his attitude, directly facing me. He stood up in an instant, leaned over the railing, with his mouth wide open, and if some one had not pulled him down instantly by the skirt of his coat, I have no doubt he would have publicly made his excuse.—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

*Quoted in the Metropolitan, from a delightful work by Miss Mitford, which is on the eve of appearing.