

## A Holiday on Dartmoor.

There were three and a-half of us, that's to say Granny, so called on account of her years only, as in heart and mind she is as young as the child, two nurses and a child, all more or less tired out and sorely in need of a rest, except the half; she was as sprightly as only a child of six can be.

As is usual on such occasions, there were two all important questions—where to go and the cost of getting there. The latter precluded long journeys, as cheap trains are not commenced on our lines until June and our month was to be May.

"What do you say to a cottage on the moor?" I suddenly said, and added as an afterthought, "That is, if we can get one cheap, and we ought to in May." I had heard of fabulous prices being asked and given for accommodation on Dartmoor.

The suggestion was warmly received, so the search began. Advertisements were answered, but when the replies came our chances of seeing Dartmoor began to dwindle, but presently rose again when we received information of "a cottage of four rooms, amply and comfortably furnished, one bedroom 25 feet long," etc., etc.

So off two of us went to see it, and after a long drive, and then a steep, rough climb, we saw two tiny grey-stone cottages standing upon a terrace cut in a rocky slope. The cottages commanded lovely views of larch woods to the south, Tors to the north and west, and a wonderfully extensive view away south-east.

It was a perfect day, and the scenery was simply bewitching. The cottage was quickly inspected, but the glamour of sun and scenery was over all, and discomforts seemed almost impossible.

The rent was within our means—that was a most important point. The owner promised everything should be well spring cleaned; she had, in fact, brought a maid up for that purpose. So the decision was made and the cottage was taken for the month of May, with many prayers that the weather would be kind so that we might live out of doors.

The description given at home about it was somewhat Irish. "When you are up there you are out," which interpreted meant the cottage was actually on the moor and not in a moorland village, with possibly much cultivated land about before one could "walk on the grass."

The furniture was described as "so well knocked about it can't be hurt much more, and there is nothing to spoil, and we will take Betsy to do the rough work and we will pic-nic."

Betsy being a country girl, as strong as a horse, and with the appetite of one, but somewhat simple.

The long-looked-for day arrived, and off we started with many boxes and packages, because, owing to the distance from a town, and also the terribly rough approach to the cottage, as much provision as possible was taken.

After many changes and a long, beautiful drive, we arrived at the foot of the hill and called at the big house for the key. Then our troubles began. We humans could all mount that rocky road on foot—but the luggage! What was to be done? Happily the people at the farm which adjoined the

house gave permission for the luggage cart to go through their fields. Our first thought on arriving was tea, so Joe and Betsy instantly raided the kitchen. Then exclamations were heard.

"Oh, the dirt! Do look here; it's disgusting!" etc., etc. And finally the edict went forth: Everything must be thoroughly cleaned before we can possibly do anything; and cleaned things were before we slept that night.

Upstairs the same trouble was encountered. Evidently that spring clean had been mislaid, or possibly packed away in the reserve cupboard, for we saw no traces of it. After tea we all felt cheered, and set to work with a will to get the place fit to sleep in. Even the half trotted up and down, fetching and carrying; helping all she could in her little way.

The beds were made and warmed, the rooms rearranged to our liking, but it was decided that only absolutely necessary unpacking should be done until the place had been cleaned down. Coal had been ordered to arrive the day after ourselves, as the owner said there was enough to go on with. Wood could be had in abundance by gathering and carrying it back; but when our neighbour in the next cottage (which was occupied by a farm labourer and his family) told us that the coal merchant had refused to bring less than a quarter of a ton for the last tenant our hearts fell.

There was not more than a scuttleful in the cottage, and we had only ordered one sack, as we hoped for continued fine weather when we could gather wood.

Fate was against us. The next morning we awoke to a cold grey world, a bitter north wind was blowing a gale down the valley, the world was nearly blotted out by the whirling snow. Horrors! What was to be done now? Very little coal, not a large quantity of wood, no chance of getting out!

A council of war was held, and it was decided that one should dress and get breakfast and the other two and a half should stay in bed to keep warm and save fuel, getting up later in the day. In the meantime Betsy should not only finish cleaning the kitchen, but should turn out the sitting-room so that we could unpack when we did get down.

We had been told that bread, meat, etc., would be taken for us at the "House" if we sent a message or note. The butcher called there once a week, the baker three times a week, but within a week this courtesy was refused and other arrangements had to be made.

About four we all dressed, and later Betsy and I sallied forth to interview the farmeress who supplied the milk. The storm had abated, calmness and sunshine reigned. Of course the people at the nearest farm refused to supply anything to anybody (were there ever such disobliging people anywhere else?).

So off we trudged to the next farm—about 20 minutes' walk; but the sun shone and the world about us was so beautiful that troubles fell away as soon as we crossed the threshold. The "rocky road to Dublin," as the stony road was christened, led us through an exquisite avenue of beeches,

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