

LETTER.

Zoar, Ohio, Aug. 9, 1838.

"HAVE you ever been to Zoar?" said a gentleman to a lady in our presence the other evening. "Where is Zoar?" said I, and then followed the description which induced us to take the canal boat for this place at four o'clock, Tuesday afternoon. About the same hour, Wednesday, we perceived an enormous edifice, new and beautifully white, contrasting with the green of the woods, built on each side of the canal, and forming a pretty arched bridge over it; this we were told was the new mill at Zoar, the largest to be seen in the country. Here committing our luggage to the barrow of a stout little German boy, we wound our way up the bank, and through shady lanes planted with rows of trees on each side for half a mile, to the inn of the community, which, with its red sloping roof and pretty piazzas shaded with locusts, stands in the midst of the settlement. But I will give some little history of this place, before I describe our visit to it. About twenty years since two hundred individuals, men, women, and children, who had separated themselves sometime before from the Lutheran church, and resemble the Quakers more than any other sect, and who had selected a teacher by the name of Baumler for their teacher and leader, came out to this country to seek a retreat where they might enjoy undisturbed their own faith. They selected this lovely valley on the banks of the Tuscarawas, and side by side with the river the canal now runs. The valley contains some of the most fertile land in the State. It was then uncleared forest. They encamped under a wide spreading oak, whose stump they yesterday showed us, and went to work. Three trustees were appointed to counsel their leader and limit his power, and the little band formed themselves into a society, which should have all things in common, the land to be held in the name of Baumler, and all the responsibility and headwork to devolve upon him.

They were in debt for their land when they began, and now are said to have a capital of three hundred thousand dollars, and the interest of this they do not enroach upon, unless

some great enterprise is to be undertaken, as the building of a mill, &c. They cleared the land, built houses regularly arranged in squares, separated by pretty shady lanes, surrounded by little grass plats and ornamented by vines, and at first adopted the Shaker method of men and women living separately, those who were already married relinquishing their husbands and wives, and the young persons forbidden to form any connexions. This regulation was observed for fourteen years, and then was abolished, each man returning to his former wife, and those who had none selecting them. They also relinquish the use of pork, on account of the evil spirits which they suppose still have possession of the swine, and the exquisite neatness of their lanes and yards may be attributed in great part to the absence of these filthy animals, which overrun every town and village of the western country. The population of Zoar has diminished rather than increased. Fifty inhabitants died of the cholera, and all the young persons, who were bound to them, at the end of their apprenticeship prefer the risk of self-support with independence, to the safe and tranquil but constrained mode of life of the community; and as they are permitted to leave if they choose, are many of them enjoying their flourishing farms in other parts of the State, probably prizing the little word *mein*, more than any in their native tongue. The children of the settlers usually remain, and there are at present in the society about a hundred and forty individuals. They have a justice of the peace who attends to their little legal business, but no physician and no minister. Baumler attends to their few and simple maladies, and preaches to them on Sundays; not, as one of them told us, that the elder ones did not know how to behave and conduct according to the golden rule as well as he, but the young folks need to be taught.

When we had taken possession of the neat and airy parlor of the inn, whose plain white walls were adorned with a few colored engravings, in good taste, imported by B— for the purpose, our landlady was summoned by her husband to welcome us; and a more beautiful face I never saw in her class of life, so kind and benignant in its expression. Her dress was precisely that of every individual of the society on working days. An indigo blue calico, such

as is worn by many of our people, tight sleeves, a white, homespun, twilled cotton shirtee with a square collar, a large long tire coming down to the bottom of the dress white as snow, and a little cap on the back of the head without a frill, of the same material as the dress, and very becoming to old and young, with the hair carried strait back from the forehead. The field hands, who are principally young girls, wear in addition enormous hats of coarse straw, with very low crowns. All have small, colored handkerchiefs round their necks crossed before. These and the calico are purchased and distributed in the society; but everything else is of domestic manufacture. While our gute frau had gone to make ready our room, the guter mann brought us a bottle of the pure juice of the grape, nine years old, made from their own wine garden; this with water was a cool and refreshing beverage for us, who were almost frantic with heat. We were soon shown to our room, a white-washed one, neat as possible, with its snow-white curtains, green blinds, and window looking out upon the piazza, overhung with the branches of the large locust trees, through which a glimpse could be caught of the lovely country at a distance. We were refreshed with the coolest spring water. The bed was of sweet corn husks, covered with home-made check clothes and home-made linen sheets of the purest whiteness.

When we went below our supper was ready in the neat back parlor, and we found it the perfection of rural fare, the richest of milk and butter, the best of cheese, the whitest and lightest of bread, and simple cake, with dried beef. After tea the gentlemen of our party sent to see if Baumler was disengaged, for he receives visits like a king, and it is evidently his policy to keep at a dignified distance both from his own people and strangers; but he was occupied with his three trustees, who meet him every evening to make arrangements and plan work for the community for the next day. The only carriage and horses in the village, though nominally belonging to the community, are kept in Baumler's barn. The people choose their leader should have the best house in the place; accordingly the palace opposite the inn is the best built dwelling we have seen in the country, spacious, and in thorough order. After our

breakfast, at which we found a few more guests than the night before, Mr. — went over to pay his respects to B., whom he found rather advanced in years, dressed in a plain blue sailor's jacket and trousers, with a straw hat, which he doffs for no one. His address was polite, but very distant. No compliments were offered by him, and no interest expressed in what was going on abroad. His countenance is striking, decided but calm, with a full grey eye, very mild in its expression. He evidently is nothing of a philanthropist, and this lessens our interest in the community. His business talents are great, and he bears lightly the responsibility of all the pecuniary transactions of the society, which are extensive. He loves influence, and has consummate skill in the exercise of it, and we could see oppression nowhere, abundance every where, but the most rigid discipline connected with it. The punishments are very simple. If persons conduct ill, they are sometimes sent to the opposite side of the river, to reside for a few months on probation, and if they are found incorrigible, they are banished entirely from the society. Intemperance is unknown, strong drink being forbidden, and idleness quite unheard of. No one is hurried or busy, though all are employed.

After Mr. — returned from his visit, we went to see the garden which was very near, intending to extend our walk farther, if the extreme heat of the day was not too overpowering; but our interest was so great, and the places where we stopped so exquisitely neat and cool, that we seemed to feel the heat less and less as we advanced, and we were out the whole morning, without suffering from it. First we went through the garden of two acres with its turfed walks, grape-vine arbors, with seats under the shade, and came to the green-house, surrounded with large lemon and orange trees. The collection of plants is small, but in high order; and as it is the only establishment of the kind in the vicinity, persons come a hundred miles, to purchase flowers and seeds from it. A few shillings repaid the gardener for our pleasant walk and cool seat in the shade, and induced him cheerfully to show us some of the most interesting parts of the establishment. We passed down a shady lane to the cool baking house (which seems a contradiction in terms) where two single wo-

men, in their picturesque dress, do all the baking for the community; each family sending morning and night for its allowance, which consists of five loaves, or one according to its size. After this we went to the dairy, where all the butter and cheese are made, cool as an ice house, with running water passing through it. Pots of milk, with the cream rising, were ranged around. Small new cheeses were piled on the shelves, and large tubs of butter in the centre. The gardener's introduction, and the information that we had come "eighty mile" to see their settlement, and were from "Boston tausend mile off" on a "lust-reise," filled them with wonder and delight, and was a sure passport to their good graces. So many smiling, benevolent, and intelligent faces I never saw in so short a time; and it was amazing to find how our German vocabulary expanded under the influence of the kind reception we met with, and by the effort to repay these words of kindness by intelligible language; for there is hardly any English spoken here, particularly among the women.

The dairy women treated us to a clean mug of buttermilk, and we went to the weavers, where we found the good-man and his wife, who supply the society with woollen cloth, working in their pleasant airy rooms, while a child of twelve tended the baby. The women here are as much at leisure, so far as household affairs and tending children is concerned, as the most fashionable lady could desire; for the cooking is done at one large establishment, where they go to eat, and have every variety of country fare, but are allowed meat only twice a week, and their children are taken from them at three, and put under the care of matrons, the boys in one house, and the girls in another, till they are old enough to be of use, when they tend cattle, mow, reap, or do any other kind of field work. They have no task set, at least among the older members; but each does the most he can out of doors and in. The gardener consigned us to the care of the weaver, who devoted the whole morning to us. We found him a very intelligent man, who spoke English well, and gave us all the information we desired. He first took us to the boys' dwelling, where we found fifteen or twenty healthy, happy little urchins braiding coarse straw hats; for they have no

school in summer, and I rather think receive very little education at any season. We went up to their sleeping apartment, a large airy room with clean beds, and a furnace by which it can be heated in winter. By the time we came down, some of the field hands had come to the piazza to take their lunch of bread and home-made beer, of which we felt no reluctance to partake. We then went to the house for little girls, where there seemed to be more play going on than work, and where I was particularly charmed with their clean and abundant wardrobes, arranged in partitions against the walls of their sleeping room, with a closet full of little colored muslin, and white linen caps, with white frills for their Sunday wear.

Their church is a simple apartment, where they assemble on Sunday, carefully dressed, and commence with music, which is said to be remarkably good. They have no devotional exercises but those of the heart. After a short period of silence, Baumler addresses a discourse to them, and music closes the service. He plays on the piano, and others on the flute and bass viol. Attendance on worship among the elder people is entirely voluntary. They have no ceremony at their weddings but assembling two or three witnesses, who sign a paper, that they have been present at this union; and their funerals are without any form whatever, except that the family follows the body of their friend to the grave. We next visited the carding room, where we found machinery similar to that in our manufactories, tended by old people and children. We visited the mill used by the community, after we had examined the landscapes and flowerpieces of the head man at the last place, a very old person and self-taught, whose devotion of his leisure hours to the fine arts, and the triumphant exhibition of them by our guide, were productive of more pleasure to us, as indicating some love of culture, amid all the toil of their active lives, than we could obtain from the works themselves. We next visited the cabinet maker, who, like all the other persons we saw, was laboring tranquilly and leisurely without any appearance of task work. From the cabinet maker's we ascended half way a beautifully wooded hill with the orchard on top, passing through a wicket gate and up a little winding path among the trees, we came to the cottage of Katrina and

her old assistant, who take care of the poultry. A large hen barn, duck and turkey house comprise this establishment, and we found the mistress of it with her big hat on supplying their little troughs with fresh water. After looking at her poultry, she took us to the room where she keeps the pottery made in the community, which is of the plainest and neatest kind, and out of one of her little mugs she fed us, as she does her poultry, with a cool draught of spring water. We returned to our inn to dinner, where we found a large company from the neighboring towns. At four P. M., after a delightful shower, that made all nature radiant, though it did not diminish the intense heat, we took *the carriage*, and drove through a romantic country to Bolivar, to visit the furnace and iron works which belong to the settlement, though out of it, and carried on by hired persons not of the community. Returning we stopped at the wine garden. It covers the slope of a sunny hill, half a mile from the village. The vines are trained on short poles like hops, and bear the fruit principally on the lower part. We rode home by the way of the extensive hop garden, luxuriant and fragrant, and more graceful and beautiful than all the vineyards in the world.

After tea we went out to see the milking, the most interesting scene of the place. Down a lane, just opposite the inn, is an immense barn-yard and barn, with a house at one end for the cow girls and another at the other for cow boys. There are three houses. At early morning they go out to their milking, and after it they may be seen with their leathern wallets containing their food for the day, slung under one arm, sallying forth, some with their detachments of cows and sheep, and others with the young cattle, to their respective grazing spots; while you meet women with large tubs of milk on their heads taking it to the village dairy. About seven in the evening the whole herd is back again; you hear the cow bells far off in the distance, and then commences the evening milking. After this the horn is blown, and one may see the lads and lasses, each by themselves, collecting in the piazzas of their houses for their evening meal. Our trunks are packed, and in a few minutes we are to leave this lovely spot, probably never to realize the wish, that we might pass a season in the midst of its rural pleasures and country fare. We may see fine

scenery, but nowhere in our country such easy countenances, free from care, and so picturesque a population. Every individual gives a smiling greeting, and even the young girl driving her team speaks in a gentle musical tone.
