

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER, }
Editor and Proprietor.

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IN ADVANCE.

Amy's Engagement.

IT HAD been decided in family council that the Daytons should spend the summer months at the seaside. Which of the fashionable watering-places was to have the honor of receiving them as guests, had not been fully determined upon.

Mrs. Dayton was in favor of Newport, while Miss Belle, with many a toss of the head, declared that Cape May was a hundred times better. The matter was settled at length by a rumor, which Mrs. Dayton brought home one morning, that Mr. Ralph Somerville, having finished his studies at an English university, had arrived in town, and was expected to spend a few weeks at Newport, where his mother and sister had already preceded him.

"Are you quite sure, mamma, that the rumor about Mr. Somerville is true?" queried Belle.

"Certainly, my dear, I heard the story at three different places; you may be sure that Newport now will be the place of the season."

"Well, on the whole, I think we had better go there. But what shall we do with Amy, mamma? A pretty subject she would be for fashionable society. I don't suppose any amount of coaxing or driving could make her change her dress more than once a day, and you know that ladies sometimes change their toilets four or five times a day at Newport."

"I really am quite puzzled about Amy. She is so odd in her notions she would mortify us a hundred times a day, if we took her with us, and if we insisted on leaving her at home, there would be a great outcry of injustice raised against us. The matter is really very perplexing."

Sweet Amy Dayton, with her simple, unaffected manner, her common sense idea of things, and her intense disgust of the absurdities which fashion sometimes imposes upon her victims, was indeed a sad trial to her mamma and sister. She would not be persuaded to pile upon her head a mass of cushions and false hair until it became as large as two heads ought to be; but instead, insisted upon wearing a chignon of moderate dimensions, over which her hair fell in natural curls. If Belle chose to wear a hump upon her back which amounted to a deformity, she wasn't going to burden herself in such a ridiculous way, not she. For this and similar odd notions, she was often severely censured by her mamma, and unmercifully ridiculed by Belle. But there was one inmate of the house who thoroughly appreciated her, and that was her father. In fact, with the selfish occupation of his wife and daughter with their fashionable pursuits, his lot would have been a hard one, if Amy, her father's child truly, had not been always at hand to give him words of sympathy, and those numberless little attentions which a father likes to receive from a daughter's hand.

Mrs. Dayton and Belle were still puzzling over Amy's disposal, when the latter entered the room, with a handkerchief tied over her head, and a duster in her hand.

"What can you be about?" exclaimed Mrs. Dayton. "Judging from your appearance, I should think you were the housemaid of the establishment."

"Only dusting the parlors, mamma. You know that you gave Mr. Dayton permission to go home and see her sick mother to-day, and I am helping her what I can, so that she may go early."

"I do wish, child, that you were not so silly. I keep servants enough without having my daughters obliged to soil their hands with housework."

"I know I'm not obliged to do it, mamma, but I felt just like it this morning. A little soap and water will remove the soil from my hands, and I have really enjoyed the exercise."

"Exercise! as if one wanted to take any more of that than one is obliged to this warm weather. If it continues a few days longer, I shall not wait till the first of July before starting for Newport."

"So you have decided to go there?" said Amy, with a sigh.

"Yes," replied Belle; "one would think, from your forlorn expression of face, that you were looking forward to martyrdom."

"To lead the life that some do there, would be a species of martyrdom to me. Newport is a beautiful place with its splendid drives and magnificent beach, and I should enjoy it if I could do so in a rational manner; but when fashion bids her slaves spend half their waking hours in dressing and undressing, it strikes me as being absurd."

At this characteristic speech of Amy's, Mrs. Dayton and Belle exchanged despairing glances, which plainly said, "It is just as we thought; we never can make anything of her, and what shall we do?"

"Mamma," resumed Amy, "if you are

not very particular about my going with you, I would much rather spend the time at Uncle Raymond's in Shelby. Not having made my entree into society, I shall not be missed, and I know I shall enjoy a visit at Uncle Raymond's very much."

"Well, my dear," graciously replied Mrs. Dayton, "if you had so much rather go to your uncle's than with us, I don't know as I have any objection."

"O, thank you!" exclaimed Amy, at the same time bestowing such an ardent embrace upon her mamma, that it took the latter some moments to re-adjust her head-dress and collar.

"As for Belle I know she is glad that I am going to set my face towards Shelby, for I might become a dangerous rival of hers at Newport."

Having made this sally, Amy left the room humming a favorite air.

"The idea of her ever being my rival! I declare it is too absurd. But I feel relieved at this new freak of hers, don't you, mamma?"

"Yes, it has taken a great weight off my mind. I wish all her freaks would suit our convenience as well as this one."

"I declare she grows more ridiculous every day of her life. The idea of her wanting to go to that stupid old farmhouse! Dear me, I shouldn't survive there a week," said Belle, deprecatingly.

Next morning at breakfast Mrs. Dayton informed her husband that there were a few more things Belle must have to make her presentable at Newport. Having generously supplied the desired funds, he turned to Amy with the query:

"And how much for you, my dear?"

"A sufficient sum for my travelling expenses, father, is all I require; for my wardrobe is quite fine enough for the quiet town of Shelby."

In two weeks, everything being ready Mrs. Dayton and Belle departed, carrying with them six huge trunks filled with the splendors in which they were to shine at Newport. Amy lingered a day or two to put everything to rights and provide for her father's comfort during the short time he would have to remain in town. One bright sunny morning found her seated in the cars, and whirling rapidly toward Shelby.

A letter informing her friends of her intended visit had been duly received, and sundry preparations had been making in the old farm house ever since.

"I'm glad Amy's coming," said Aunt Ruth; "but I've heard that brother James's daughters have been brought up by their mother in the fine-lady style, and our old-fashioned ways will be such a change for the child. I'm afraid she'll be homesick before she's been here a week."

"Well, we won't borrow trouble about that. I somehow feel she'll brighten up the old place wonderfully," said Uncle Raymond.

There was another inmate of the family who looked forward to Amy's coming with anything but pleasant feelings. Herman Allen who was present helping Uncle Raymond with his haying, had sought this quiet nook to give himself rest after exhausting mental effort, and tone up his system with vigorous out door exercise. As he was walking out one day he chanced to come upon farmer Raymond in his hayfield, and the fancy seizing him, he then and there made a bargain to help the old gentleman get in his hay.

Now the prospect of this delicious quiet being invaded by a city miss was anything but agreeable, and he had half a mind to find a substitute for Mr. Raymond, and take himself off before the young lady's arrival. But thinking this would be rather cowardly on his part, he decided to remain, but resolved to have as little to do with the expected guest as the rules of common politeness would allow. Six miles in the stagecoach brought Amy to the door of the farmhouse, where Aunt Ruth stood waiting for her with open arms.

"I declare," said the good lady after the first greetings were over; "I've been trying to imagine how you would look, ever since I heard you was coming, but I never got wider of the mark. I really shouldn't have known you."

I should have known you, auntie, if I had met you anywhere. You look just as you did that summer I staid here when I was a little girl, and grew so strong and well running in the fields."

"I hope you will have just as good a time now, dear, but come right up to your room. It is only three o'clock now, and you'll have time to lie down and get rested from your journey before tea time."

"Oh nonsense, auntie! I never lie down in the daytime when I am well. All the refreshing I need is a good bath in this delicious spring water, and I shall be as good as new."

Aunt Ruth left Amy to her toilet duties, and went down stairs saying mentally:

"She isn't a bit stuck up, and don't put on any fine airs yet, whatever she may do by-and-by."

Amy, having laid aside her dusty traveling-dress, soon appeared in a cool muslin, in which her aunt said she looked fresh as a rose. Spying her Uncle Raymond coming up from the hayfield, after his day's work, she ran to meet him, and to her great surprise they were joined by Herman Allen, to whom she was formally introduced. He greeted her with a polite bow, and then passed on in advance of them to the house.

"I expected to find Cousin Fred helping you this summer, instead of this stranger; how does it happen, uncle?"

"The fact is, Fred never took kindly to a farmer's life, never liked the monotony, as he called it, and when his Uncle Lewis offered last spring to take him into his machine shop and learn him his trade, I thought I might as well let him go, and follow the natural bent of his mind. He

was always conjuring up machines ever since he could whittle, and the garret is full of his experiments in that line."

"I think you have acted wisely in allowing Fred to learn the kind of business he fancies. It is of no sort of use to make people do what they were never made for, and can never excel in. I am acquainted with a young man whose father insists upon his going to college, with the view of entering a profession. His fancy would lead him to become a merchant, and if he yields to his father's wishes, the chances are that he will fail entirely, and become what I call a misplaced man."

"There is more truth than poetry in what you say, Amy; I have seen many instances of such mismanagement myself."

This part of the conversation between Amy and her uncle was held after they entered the house, and Herman Allen who was an involuntary listener, could not help admitting to himself that this city girl was more sensible than he gave her credit for, and perhaps, after all, she might not be such a bore in the house as he feared.

In a few days Amy became accustomed to the routine of the farmhouse, and, she enjoyed, with a keen relish, the simplicity of her life. Attired in a neat calico dress, which she brought expressly for the purpose, she liked nothing better than to help her aunt about the morning work, and then to save the men a warm walk to the house, she would take every day a pail of luncheon and a pitcher of cool drink to the hayfield. Uncle Raymond blessed her in his heart for this loving service, and Herman thought that not the least of the pleasures of his quiet stay at Shelby was the daily companionship of this sweet girl, who although brought up in the midst of fashion and folly, was sensible and true-hearted.

"The weather looks so threatening," said Uncle Raymond, one Saturday morning. "I don't intend to cut any hay to-day. I never care to risk any hay out over the Sabbath, so I guess we'll take a holiday."

"Is it likely to rain this forenoon, uncle?"

"I don't believe it will, but if I am any judge, we shall have heavy showers this afternoon."

"I'm going then to pick some berries before the rain comes to wash them off."

"I think I will go, too, Miss Amy, if you have no objection."

"Not in the least, Mr. Allen; I should be very glad of an escort, for, to tell the truth, I never feel quite at ease in a berry pasture, I'm so afraid of snakes."

"I'll endeavor to shield you from all attacks of creeping things and fowls of the air also. I hear an eagle has been seen in the neighborhood lately, and I fancy you wouldn't care to have him swoop down upon your hat, or fly off with your basket of berries."

"Indeed I wouldn't, but I should really like to see a live eagle."

Amy was an adept at picking berries, and Herman tried in vain to keep his basket as full as hers. They were so plenty that before long their baskets and pails were all full, and they sat down under an oak tree to rest.

"By the way, Miss Amy," said Herman, "did your aunt tell you of your invitation to a picnic next Wednesday?"

"No, this is the first I heard of it.— Where is it to be?"

"Over in your uncle's fine grove; and Mary Somers, our next neighbor, is the prime mover of the affair. She has some young lady friends from New York visiting her, and I believe this picnic is in their honor."

"O, dear, I wonder if I must go! The prospect of meeting so many strangers is not a pleasant one to contemplate."

"I am quite sure your company will be much desired, but of course there will be no compulsion. I would do as I pleased, however, about accepting the invitation, for if I recollect rightly, you are the young lady who doesn't believe in making people do what is not congenial to them."

"That I don't, within certain limits. Of course there are a great many things in life, that we must and ought to do, whether they are distasteful to us or not. But to be made to choose a business we don't like, or follow fashions and customs that we detest, is what I rebel against."

"Have you had any experience in the matter, pray?"

"I should think I had," replied Amy, laughing merrily. "My mamma and sister Belle have been trying ever since I was born to make me a lady of fashion. I believe, though, they have about given me up as incorrigible, for mamma said not a word against my coming here this summer, instead of going to Newport with them. I spent one season there, and such a fearful amount of dressing as they imposed upon me makes me sigh with weariness even now."

"I believe most young ladies would be quite resigned to such a fate as that."

"I presume they would, but I don't like it. Indeed I think I have a chronic distaste for anything of the kind. I like to dress becomingly and according to my station, but to wear a monstrous mass of head-gear and such a pile of ruffles and puffs, that I hardly look like a human being I won't submit to if I can help it."

"I am glad you are so independent, Miss Amy, and I must say, the simple way you dress your hair has been the delight of my eyes ever since I have been here."

"It suits me, and if it pleases any one else I am glad. But, dear me, Mr. Allen, we must rest here any longer if we want any of Aunt Ruth's delicious berry pies for to-morrow."

Amy was induced to go to the picnic, and also to sundry drives and moonlight walks, in which Mr. Allen was her constant escort, during the season he remained at the farmhouse. But like all things else, the haying

season had an end, and at its close Mr. Allen took his departure. Amy missed him more than she cared to acknowledge, and made such extra exertions to be cheerful, that Aunt Ruth, who had for some time suspected an affection of the heart between the young people, was quite reassured, and decided that a girl who could revel in such a flow of spirits all the time, could not possibly be pining for an absent lover.

Amy received now and then a letter from her sister Belle, which was mostly filled with commiseration for her lonely lot at the farmhouse, and the delights which she herself experienced at Newport. In her last letter she wrote:

"Mr. Ralph Somerville has at length arrived and created a great sensation, for he is perfectly splendid, so handsome, and such a perfect gentleman. He is estimated to be worth half a million at least, and only think what a splendid establishment he could give a wife! He shows me a great deal of attention, and you cannot think how much envy it excites. He pays mamma more deference than any other of the ladies who have marriageable daughters, and she is confident that she shall soon welcome him into her family as her son-in-law. She thinks his attentions to her are quite proper under the circumstances, and a proof of his serious intentions in regard to herself, so you must not be surprised if I return home engaged to Mr. Somerville."

Amy sighed as she closed the letter, at the thought that if such an event as a fashionable engagement for her sister should take place, how much extra discipline she would have to submit to, and what a tiresome routine of ceremonies would follow in its train. This prospect, that, in Belle's view, seemed now to be among the possibilities of the future, made Amy enjoy with more zest the remainder of her stay at Shelby. She had decided to remain a week longer than she at first intended, but a casual remark in one of Belle's letters, "that her father had returned home, and had complained of not feeling very well of late," quite altered her plans and she immediately left for home.

Mr. Dayton was suffering from a nervous attack, and his lowness of spirits was not improved in the elegant but lonely house, where he missed so much the presence of his wife and daughter. He was sitting in the library, with a dejected look upon his usually cheerful face, when Amy burst like a sun beam into the room.

"O papa!" she exclaimed; "I'm so glad I found you at home. I thought perhaps you might be at the office." "But, papa, what makes you look so sad? has anything happened?"

"Nothing, dear, that need to cause me any sadness; I cannot deny that I feel low-spirited, but I'm quite at a loss myself to find the cause."

"I know what it is, papa. You have quite worn yourself out delving in that old office, and all you need is rest. I don't believe you found much at Newport, did you, papa?"

"O dear, no; such hurry and bustle, and so many going and coming, it was impossible to get any rest worth the name there."

"Well, papa, I am going to be your physician and prescribe for you, and I think I can insure you a complete recovery of your health and spirits."

"I think, my dear, that your presence has already made me feel better, so I shall place myself under your charge without any hesitation."

Amy proved a skillful physician for the quiet drives and sails they took together and the cheerful days passed at home, soon dispelled the nervousness which was only caused by mental fatigue; and long before his wife and eldest daughter returned, Mr. Dayton had regained his elastic step and cheerful looks.

The six huge trunks, with their owners at length arrived, and for a week at least the house was in a state of confusion incident to the return of a fashionable party from a summer campaign.

Amy waited in vain for the announcement of Belle's engagement, and at length asked how matters were progressing between her and Mr. Somerville.

"O, we are the best of friends," she replied, "and he hinted in a very significant manner to mamma that he should take an early opportunity of calling, upon his return to the city."

Belle was in a flutter of excitement every day during calling hours, and although a number of gentlemen called, and among them a French Count, yet the one she most wished to see failed to make his appearance. The girls were sitting with their mother one morning in the library, when a servant entered, and handing Amy a card, said a gentleman was waiting to see her in the parlor.

Amy blushed very red as she glanced at the card and quickly left the room.

"Who in the world can it be, mamma?" said Belle.

"I really haven't the slightest idea. I hope it is no clownish acquaintance she has picked up in Shelby."

Amy was not superior to the common weakness of her sex, and it must be confessed that she gave an extra brush to her hair, and lingered long enough to quell a little the beating of her heart before she descended to meet her caller.

It was Herman Allen as she already knew, and save that his noble face and form were the same, she would have hardly known him. He was splendidly dressed, and had such a gentlemanly bearing that Amy wondered if even Belle's paragon could equal him. He made a long call, and before he left, the blush upon Amy's cheeks had grown brighter, and a new light beamed from her blue eyes. She retired immediately to her room, and did not again make her appearance until just before dinner. Belle was about to question her with regard to her caller, when her father entered the dining-room with such a look of importance upon his face that she waited for him to speak first.

"My dear," said he, addressing Mrs. Dayton, "I have just had the pleasure of betrothing one of my daughters to Mr. Ralph Somerville, and he is now awaiting to make this announcement to you, in the parlor. I have heard you speak so highly of him that I think this engagement meets your entire approval."

"Certainly, of course it does."

"O papa," simpered Belle, "I was quite sure he would propose, but how odd that he should do so without consulting me first."

"You mistake, my dear, it was Amy for whom he proposed, and I believe they settled the matter between them before appealing to me."

"Amy!" exclaimed Mrs. Dayton and Belle; "how did she become acquainted with him?"

"She can tell you, I presume," replied Mr. Dayton, with a smile.

Both looked at Amy for an explanation, and she quietly remarked:

"He was Uncle Raymond's hired man this summer, and this was where I formed his acquaintance."

"Mr. Somerville Uncle Raymond's hired man! I don't believe a word of such a preposterous story. I tell you, papa, there is some ridiculous mistake about this affair," indignantly replied Belle.

"Well, in that case the gentleman must speak for himself." And before Belle could make her escape she found herself in the presence of Mr. Somerville whom her father had invited to the room.

"I think," said Mr. Dayton, "that you will have to give the same account of yourself to my wife and Belle that you did to me, for they are quite incredulous about your being Mr. Raymond's hired man."

"I really do not wonder," replied Ralph stepping to the side of Amy; "and I can say with truth it was the first piece of deception I ever practised. The fact was, on my return from Europe, I was mentally tired out and felt that I couldn't meet my mother and sister at Newport, and become involved in the whirl and bustle there, without a previous rest and change. I bought me a substantial suit of working clothes, and stepping into the cars, thought I would ride till I came to a place I fancied, and there sojourn for a while. As I chanced to hear Shelby spoken of as a delightful place by a fellow-traveller, I decided to go there. In one of my morning strolls I encountered Mr. Raymond, who was just commencing haying, and was bemoaning the scarcity of help. The thought at once struck me that haying would give me bodily exercise as well as mental rest, and obeying a sudden impulse, I engaged to help him through the haying season, and gave my name as Herman Allen, the former being my middle name, and the latter the maiden name of my mother. Of course upon Amy's arrival I soon made her acquaintance, and I need not say here, what you have of course inferred from a recent transaction, that I learned to love her with all my heart. She has already pardoned me for winning her under a false name, and I trust you will also be as lenient."

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Dayton, with her most gracious manner; "we entirely forgive you, and cordially welcome you in the new relation you stand to the family."

Belle, now that the field was lost, made the best of her disappointment, which after all, was not one of the heart; and congratulating herself that the French count was still available, she gave her hand to Mr. Somerville, and murmured some words of welcome. The glitter of Amy's engagement ring, which was a magnificent diamond, made her resolve to accept the Count when he proposed, for she had heard that he was possessed of family jewels of untold value.

"Only think!" she exclaimed to her mamma, the first time they were alone, "that Amy should mew herself up in that old farmhouse and catch the greatest lion of the season. It is really past my finding out."

"Never mind, dear, we shall have him in the family, and we really ought to rejoice that such an unpromising candidate for high life should have made out so well. I am sure I had no idea of it, and even now I tremble lest she should shock our fashionable friends with some of her odd notions."

Mrs. Dayton insisted upon a fashionable wedding of the most ultra kind, for Mrs. Ralph Somerville was destined for the highest round upon the social ladder, and must be introduced to that position with all due ceremony.

Amy was glad when it was all over, and attired in her rich yet simple traveling dress, she was speeding away upon her bridal tour, the first stopping-place of which was dear Uncle Raymond's. As they neared the farmhouse, Ralph exclaimed, "that spot shall always be the dearest one on earth to me, and Uncle Raymond shall never want for anything to help him along in his haying."

He kept his word, and not only paid the mortgage on the old farm, and provided all the improved machines for its cultivation, but always came every summer, with Amy, to get rest and health working among the fragrant hay.

Three heavy golden vases were lately found in Pompeii in the middle of a street only a few feet under the ground. It is believed they were carried by priests in a procession to propitiate the gods, and that the bearers were killed while moving through the streets.