

COUNTRY COUSINS AND CITY HOSPITALITY.

I wonder what's come between Mandy Soule and her folks? She didn't have any of them this summer, and her hired man told the deacon that she's sent five barrels winter apples to the hospital instead of to her nieces.

"Guess her visit to them didn't pan out very well last winter. She came home kind of hurried and was as dumb as an oyster about her trip," nodded Mrs. Harkins, as the boy poured her molasses. "Laws me! I should think they'd make everything of her, if she went to them. She's had 'em several summers, and those children were a sight of care last summer," replied Mrs. Deacon Timms going out.

I smiled grimly; my worthy neighbors thought I had gone, but I had to wait a few moments near the store window and couldn't help hearing their remarks.

I'm "Mandy Soule" to every one in Skilton and "dear Aunt Amanda" to my three nieces; or rather I was. I don't think they regard me as affectionately now.

My nieces are all married and live in Boston. They have been spending their vacations with me each summer, thereby saving hotel expenses. When they were about to go home, each insisted on having me visit her.

"Come to us surely this winter, dear Aunt Amanda. We shall not think of making company of you. You will enjoy the city so much," said Mrs. Dean, my niece, who is "in society," as she bade me a tearful farewell.

"As for us, dear Auntie, we are tired of pleading with you to come. The girls often say, during the concert season, 'How much Aunt Amanda would enjoy being here.' Just come any time. You needn't let us know, as you will be welcome at any time," called out my nervous rheumatic niece, as the train started.

"Good-by, dear, dear Aunt Amanda. We have had such a lovely summer. I wish we could stay with you. Now do come to me this winter. You will enjoy the trip, and it will be a real pleasure to entertain you. Paul will be delighted, and you know how the children love you. Good-by again, my dear. Do not forget us," and I half believed that my youngest niece would be really glad to have me.

Her husband is a banker, and she has a beautiful home. Her three children had kept me at my wits' end all summer, but I missed them when they were gone. The house seemed strangely quiet.

"Cynthy, I'm going to Boston. I haven't felt real chipper for a month. I guess I'm getting tired of the sameness of my life up here. I'll go to Martha Dean's first, and then I'll go and visit my other nieces," I said one day to my maid of all work.

"I wouldn't marm," volunteered Cynthy, as she hung up the dish towel, "It's a long jaunt, and the

weather's cold and raw, and you'll be liable to get more neuralgy."

"I'll risk it, Cynthy. I guess it's the dreary weather that's making me feel out of sorts. You and Hiram can manage the farm, and I'll have Hall's boy come over and help. I packed the few things I really needed into my valise, I didn't want to take a trunk until I decided whether or not I should make a long stay. When I arrived in Boston I was tired and cold. Being a stranger I was rather timid about the street cars, and hired a cab to take me to Mrs. Dean's.

As I walked up the marble steps and rang the bell I began to feel nervous. A daintily attired maid ushered me into the reception room, and said respectfully, "Who shall I say it is, marm?"

"Tell Mrs. Dean it's her aunt," I replied, untying my bonnet. I waited and waited until I had grown tired of everything in the room. Finally Martha rustled in.

"Why, Aunt Amanda! I am so glad to see you. Give me your wraps and do try and make yourself at home. Please excuse me for a while, I have a few notes to answer. You will find all the new magazines on the table," and she left me. I looked at the books and papers until lunch was announced. "Claud," said Martha, in a stage whisper to her husband in the hall, "Aunt Amanda is here. The Dawson's are coming to dinner. What shall I do with her?"

I didn't hear Claud's reply as Martha fluttered in to me. "Come to lunch, auntie, and do please pardon my seeming neglect. I had so many things to do."

"I don't want you to make company of me. I'm accustomed to amusing myself. I'm going to Polly's this afternoon," I answered slowly.

"Must you go? I was anticipating a long, delightful visit. You will surely come to me again before you go home."

I started for Polly's. She is a widow with two grown daughters. She lives in a shabby, genteel neighborhood, and seems to have a hard time trying to make a good appearance on a small income.

She received me effusively. The girls were in their morning wrappers, and had their hair in crimping pins, although it was four o'clock. I pleaded to be allowed to rest a little while, and Polly arranged some pillows on the sofa in her room. I was soon asleep. While dreaming of my well-filled tea table at home, I was awakened by voices in the next room.

"You must keep her up here tonight, ma, when the boys come. I'll be disgraced if she tells about our summers in Skilton. The Dunburs think we were at the springs."

"Yes, do, ma. That brown dress is a fright. She might at least come to us more stylishly clad," and the younger girl giggled.

Rising, I brushed my hair and looked at the clock. It was almost tea time, and I decided to go to Mrs. Paul Smith's. Polly expressed great sorrow at my departure.

"Do stay, Aunt Amanda. The

girls are going to have company to-night, and you and I can sit up here and have a good comfortable chat."

Gathering my belongings I started for Mrs. Smith's, fully determined that Polly and her girls had spent their last vacation at Skilton. Mrs. Smith's family were at tea, and a childish voice called out as I waited in the hall, "Ma, here's a funny old woman."

"Why, Harry dear, it's our auntie, who let you play with the chickens. I am glad to see you, dear Aunt Amanda," and Minnie embraced me. "We have just got back from mother's, and the house is awfully upset. I'm sorry I didn't know you were coming. However, I'll try and make you comfortable. Paul has gone to New York, and my cook has left me, so we have a picked-up supper. Sit here near Harry and I will tell Annette to make fresh tea," and Minnie tried to look pleased. I spent a wretched night. My room was small, close and near the nursery. The baby fretted all night, and kept me awake. Minnie endeavored to entertain me next day by reciting her husband's business losses and the hardship she was undergoing in not being able to do as she pleased about having company. The children were rude and noisy, and I decided that there was no place like home, and started next morning.

"Hullo, Mandy!" called out Deacon Timms, as I got off the train. "Homesick?"

"Yes," I answered shortly.

"That's right, Mandy. No place like home. Feels like snow, don't it?"

I hired Harkins' team and the boy drove me to my house. Cynthy welcomed me heartily. "I declare if you ain't just in time to miss getting caught in a snowstorm," she said tearfully, as she brushed a few flakes from my coat.

"Build a fire in the sitting-room, Cynthy, and we'll have our tea in there. I'm glad I'm home. I've got enough of gallivanting."

Resting by my open fire with a good cupful of tea beside me, I had an interview with myself. The result of that interview was that I had no company this summer, except two young girls from a working girls' home, and I've invited them to come up next Summer.—Good Housekeeping.

The smallest woman on earth lives in Holland. She is Mlle Pauline, is eighteen years old, weighs 10 pounds and is 1 foot 9 inches tall. Her parents and all her numerous brothers and sister are tall and well developed. The midget of the family is kept at home and, unlike most little people of mature years, will not be exhibited in museums.

Cremation is successful in Boston. The society whose crematory is near the Forest Hills Cemetery reports forty incinerations in the first five months, the number increasing monthly. All classes were represented, and all ages, from five years to ninety-four. Time occupied in reducing the body to ashes about ninety minutes.

It is better to be an old maid than to marry somebody you don't want, just for the sake of being married.

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