

general rush of the populace to get the best seats.

"Wal, now, this beats all!" said Hiel Jones the stage driver, who had secured one of the best perches in the little gallery.

Hiel Jones, in virtue of his place on the high seat of the daily stage that drove through Poganuc Center on the Boston turnpike, felt himself invested with a sort of grandeur as occupying a predominant position in society from whence he could look down on all its movements and interests. Everybody bowed to Hiel. Every housekeeper charged him with her bundle or commissioned him with her errand. Bright-eyed damsels smiled at him from windows as he drove up to house-doors, and of all that was going on in Poganuc Center, or any of the villages for twenty miles around, Hiel considered himself as a competent judge and critic. Therefore he came at an early hour and assumed a seat where he could not only survey the gathering congregation but throw out from time to time a few suggestions on the lighting up and arrangements.

"Putty wal got up, this 'ere, for Poganuc Center," he said to Job Peters, a rather heavy lad who had secured the place beside him.

"Putty wal, considerin'! Take care there, Siah Beers, ye'll set them air spruce boughs afire ef you ain't careful lightin' your candles; spruce