

THE APPLE BEE.

"Did I ever tell you about Rastus marrying Judge Randolph's daughter?" asked grandmother, as I munched an apple and she sat knitting in her high-backed rocker.

"Why, no," said I, fancying I saw a story in her retrospective gaze, "you have told me about Thankful, and your mother, and your own courtship, grandmother, but of Rastus never."

"Well, I'll tell you about it. Seeing you eating that apple reminded me of it, and, besides to-day is the sixteenth of November; Rastus' birthday came on the seventeenth, and I remember it was the day before, and almost exactly such a day as this seventy years ago, that I was visiting them while Alex. tended General Court. Rastus was showing me his freedom suit, he'd be 21 next day, when mother came down from the garret with a tray of apples, looking vexed enough.

"Apples keeping well?" I asked. "No, they must have got a little teched by the frost before they were gathered. There's one whole ben beginning to rot already, and I haven't no time to pare 'em, Mehitable being sick."

Mehitable was on old maid that helped mother about the house.

"Why don't you have a bee?" I asked, for to tell the truth I wanted to see the young folks, my old mates, you know, and show them my baby, for I thought he was the prettiest and smartest child ever was. That was your uncle William, dear. Besides, Squire Doolittle's niece, Mistress Randolph was a visiting them from Virginny while her father was in England, and I thought may-be she would come. I'd heard a great deal about her, but I hadn't seen her, though she had been visiting at the squire's then for six months or so; so I says, have a bee.

"A bee?" spoke up mother, "well now, I never thought of that. I'm glad, Rastus, you spoke of it. What do you say, Rastus? They are rotting dreadful."

"Let 'em rot," said he, throwing down an armful of wood with a crash. He left the room after it, when I first spoke of the bee, and now he straightened up and looked so fierce at mother that I spoke up quick as could be:

"I should think you would be ashamed to speak so to mother."

"Mother don't mind what Rastus says," said he, going up to her and patting her shoulder, and he smiled at her in such a tender way that I wondered, as I always did, he was so changeable; quick, but loving, nobody minded what Rastus said, that's true, but everybody liked him; mother set more by him than all the rest of us children, so we thought, but he said she never knew no difference, only he was baby.

"Let 'em have the bee. I'm 21 to-morrow, so if we have it then we will call it a birthday party. I'll kill a goose and the white turkey that's been shut up so long, and we'll have a real frolic. Shall I invite Miss Randolph, mother?"

"Why, of course, it wouldn't do to slight the squire's folk."

"That's so. She'd feel hurt, no doubt, not to have a chance to soil her pretty hands paring apples," and he went off whistling, but he didn't look so happy as he tried to seem. I could see that he didn't more than half want the party.

"What does he mean, mother? Is Mistress Randolph very proud?"

"Why," says mother, in a doleful way, "they say so, but I took tea at the squire's a spell ago, and she was very helpful and cheery. She didn't seem proud to me, but she ain't like Mandy Smith."

"I should hope not, mother."

"Nor yet like you, Jerusha, nor Thankful, or Keturah. I think it's a way she has."

"Almira Bean rode up just then on her old white horse. She hitched and came in to see me and my baby, and while I was a showing him off, mother spoke of the apple bee, and she mentioned that she calculated to invite as far as Squire Doolittle's.

"The land sake, you don't mean. Waal, now. I never did," says she.

"What's there so dreadful about having an apple paring," said I, "that are common enough."

"Oh, taint that; 'twas inviting that Randolph girl, with her silk gowns and white hands, and her neck just so," and she twisted her head back in a way that made me laugh.

"Mother says she's as pretty behaved as need be," said I, and as to her hands and neck, she can't well leave them at home, but she can her silk gown and I hope she will, I'm sure.

"Rastus wants her to come, don't he?" she asked in her sly way, that I knew meant something; "cordin' to accounts, she don't show none of her pride to him, or he wouldn't go to see her so much."

"Does he go to see her much?"

"Lor', you don't mean to say haint heard? Why, they do say he's waitin' on her."

"Almira," spoke up mother, "won't you just step this way and see this piece of cloth? I took it out of the loom to-day. I calculate there's enough for two full suits."

"Yes, he'll be twenty-one to-morrow, and he's a fine fellow."

row," but mother didn't tell her about broadcloth suit bought in Falmouth.

I took right hold with mother after Almira left, and we got along amazing spry; mother was always a master hand at cooking. I cut up the pumpkins that afternoon and stewed them, and mother let the brick oven. Stoves! Why, there wan't no stoves then; roasting and baking was done in the brick oven that was first let by making in it a rousing fire; then the fire was taken out and the baking put in—further in, you know, go the things that must take the longest.

We had a long shovell to pull 'em out with. Yes, and the stewing and boiling was done in pots that hung on the crane in front of the fire-place; biscuits and Johnny cakes we baked in a tin baker before the blaze on the hearth. How was it made? Lor', child, I don't know as I can tell you so you'll understand. It was hoisted up on legs with a slanting roof, but open on the side next the fire. The pan was set in it, and the tin kinder drew the heat. When the side nearest the hearth is baked, the pan was turned around.

"Well, well, where was I! If you ask me to explain so much, I shan't never get to my story's end. Heating the brick oven! Oh, yes. Mother baked beans and brown bread and riz bread, and mince and apple pies in the evening. Then the next day we were up bright and early and got on the corned beef and let the brick oven again for the goose and turkey, the pumpkin pies, gingerbread and seed cakes and election cake. Mother had on hand pickles and preserves and pickled tripe and onions, so we thought we would have enough, as we calculated on passing round apples and butternuts early in the evening.

"You always laugh, dear, when I tell about the cooking. Folks didn't eat more than they do now, but you see people got in the way of cooking a great deal, and of course mother wouldn't be outdone. Father was a good provider, and never stinted her in victuals."

"The long kitchen was cleared out for the paring, and by and by the dancing. The long settee and cane-bottomed chairs were ranged on the side fronting the fire-place; and the round chair table was turned back and set by it for Parson Stillwater when he came. It made a curious looking chair, as you can guess, but it was the seat of honor. The top of the table made the outer part of the chairback."

"And if I do say it no dresser in town held brighter silver than mother's nor handsomer china. Her mother brought it from England. As for the pewter cups, what with the scouring you couldn't tell them from silver."

"The kitchen was low, and ceiled with big rafters. Hooks that were drove into them held long poles, where pumpkins was strung to-day and to-morrow there would be apples. Wooden candlesticks, two or three in a bunch, were nailed to the wall, but the best light of all was made by the big roaring fire on the hearth. Father's and Rastus' guns were slung overhead, and under them hung the crooked necked squashes. The great stone hearth, eight feet long, stretched before it, where lay our old yellow cat and Rastus' dog, whenever they got the chance. It was pretty often too, for when the fire was the hottest, we had to go back to the wall. Oh, how well I remember that fire! It would do my old eyes good to see it burning again as it used to in the old days so long ago. The old room isn't in use now. Where we are sitting now used to be the keeping room. It warn't near so pleasant as the long kitchen, and we seldom used it. I remember exactly how mother's samplers looked hung over the mantle-tree piece. A pair of brass candlesticks stood at each end and silver one in the middle, all with wax candles in them, but they were never lit, and there was a tray with snuffers of bronze, but they were never used either. For we thought everything must be kept just so, and it's no wonder we didn't feel comfortable there. I used, when a child to pity Parson Stillwater because he had always to sit in the keeping room when he went to see his people.

"At early candle lighting everything was ready, and I went out for a moment to stand on the back porch. I remember exactly how it looked out doors. There was a little sprinkling of snow on the ground, and the hills were quite white. The trees were all bare and frozen, and rattled together dolefully in the wind, while up from the little brook came the sound of the cold, muffled waters, so I knew 'twas freezing over. The young cattle were huddled under the shed, and the cosset lamb was bleating to get into the barn. I ran out and let her in."

"Wonder how I remember so well? Wait till you are old, dear, and you will know how we spend our age in remembering scenes that are pictured on our minds. Their faces are turned to the wall in middle age, but when we get old, and are not good for much else, we grope around and bring them to light, and rub and polish them till we can see every line distinct."

"I seem to remember that night particularly, for I was so happy and peaceful like. Baby went to sleep like a lamb and for once didn't have anything the matter with him."

"Alex. that was my husband your grandfather, dear, wrote me by stage that he would be home from General Court to spend Thanksgiving at father's so my mind was at ease, and I was just beginning to feel cold, and so thought I ought to go in, when Rastus came out and put my pelisse over me."

"Cold, Rasha?" he asked. "I know he wanted to talk about something, and I spicioned it was about Mistress Randolph, so I said."

"What is it Rastus? Do you want to tell me anything about the squire's niece? You ought to have heard Almira Bean run on."

"The old meddler! How dare she speak of Portia Randolph at all!"

"Why, is she too good to be spoken of?" I asked, laughing a little.

"She's an angel," he said, and he looked so sad that I said to myself, 'poor Rastus,' for I seemed to see it all. A woman is an angel only to the man that loves her, and his look showed that he thought she didn't love him."

"Tell sister Rasha," I said. "There ain't much to tell, Rasha. She is rich and handsome, and high born and proud, and I am no match for her."

"I don't see that," said I proudly, you are well-born and handsome, with pride enough, I hope, and as to money, you'll have the farm sometime, and for the present you've got youth and strength. A true woman weds a man for what he is, not for what he has."

"Thank you, Rasha," said he, and his face looked brighter. There's Philander Smith a-coming, and Mandy, I know by the way the horses wheezed up the hill. Here they are. How dy'e do, Mandy, your cheeks are as red as a pippin. I've half a mind—no—well, then I won't, as he helped her from her seat behind Philander on the old gray horse.

"What a man you be," said Mandy, giggling at Rastus' nonsense.

"In a little while the room was full a'most. Great baskets of apples stood down in the middle, where each filled a tray. Most every one had fetched a sharp knife and they fell to work right away, so as to get through and go to dancing. Sometimes a spark and his girl would pare from the same tray, and there was a good deal of whispering. It made a pretty sight anyway, so many bright eyes and ribbons, and brass buttons, and one that you don't see now a-days."

"Mother and father were in the keeping room with some of the old people, and Rastus was everywhere, joking and laughing with the girls. You could see he was a favorite, and I didn't wonder for he was handsome, tall and straight, and a way of saying just the right thing always."

"Mistress Randolph hadn't come, but I hoped she would, for I wanted her to see him in his new suit. It was blue broadcloth with brass buttons, cut high in the neck and tight in the sleeves, with a starched cravat and handsome frills edged with real lace at the bosom and wrists. He had silver buckles to his shoes, and, indeed, as I tell you, he was as fine as need be."

"Philander Smith had on a new suit too, but it didn't have the easy set that Rastus' had, and as for his collar, 'twas so stiff that he couldn't turn his head without drawing it down or up. I pitied him before the evening was over, his ears got so red, what with the sawing of his dickie across them."

"At last we heard the Squire driving up over the frozen ground in his new leather convenience. It was the only one in town, so 'twas easy telling him. People mostly rode the old way on horse-back, the woman on a pillion behind the man. The squire was a rich man and usually led the fashion, and now the young men all hustled out to help the squire untangle his horse, so as to see the new convenience."

"Rastus mentioned our names to each other, for Mistress Randolph had come with the squire and his wife, and we both courtseyed, and then I helped her off with her pelisse and bonnet."

"I couldn't tell how it was, but I could see that she wasn't like the other girls and I laid it to her bringing up, but I know it was because she was better born. She was pretty spoken and quiet, but she carried her head so stately and her walk was different."

"I remember her hair was dressed high over a cushion, and across it in little waves were strings of something that Mandy Smith said were glass beads, but I know they were pearls. Her gown was of plum-colored flowered silk, made with a tunic looped over a satin petticoat, and she wore high-heeled shoes different from any I had ever seen."

"Other girls in the room had eyes as bright and cheeks as rosy, but after all she was a great deal handsomer, and I didn't wonder at Rastus, not a mite."

"I could see that Mandy Smith looked vexed that Mistress Randolph should look so grand, for she was as fine as a fiddle herself. She wore a new worsted gown with a waist no longer than your finger, and leg of mutton sleeves that made her look three times as broad as she ought to, but she couldn't compare with the squire's daughter."

"How spriggish she looks!" said Mandy to me. "Linsey-woolsey's good enough for Miss Doolittle, why aint it for her?"

"The squire's wife was right behind her, but she didn't know it. You ought to have seen how Mandy jumped when she spoke up."

"Linsey-woolsey and silk doesn't make the difference, Mandy, between a lady and one that ain't. Portia wanted to wear one like mine, but we hadn't time to make one, and I told her it made no difference what she wore, since she wasn't vain of her apparel."

"So Portia Randolph wanted to wear linsey-woolsey, and Rastus wanted to wear fine broadcloth. I thought from that they might sometime come together, leas'twise I hoped so."

"When Rastus came around, I noticed she always blushed a little, but didn't seem to see him, and he kept out of her way mostly. When she first came he just made her a handsome bow and said: 'Good evening to you, Mistress Randolph,' but after a while he fetched her mother's silver dish, and gave her his new pocket knife to pare with, but he didn't laugh and joke with her as he did with the others."

"How frolicsome they were! When a paring came off whole without breaking they would toss it over their shoulders, and when it fell it a'most always be made to stand for their sweetheart's name. It made a good deal of sport."

"I sat by Mistress Randolph, and I could see how she blundered at her work. It was new to her, you see, but she tried to do well, and was just beginning to be more handy, when all at once she started and screamed a little, and I saw her put an apple into her pocket. Her hand trembled so that her knife slipped and went into her finger, making a large cut that bled dreadful."

"Rastus jumped, and they all did, when they heard her scream out, and when they saw the cut, they thought that was the reason, but I knew better. I knew she cut her finger afterwards, and I wondered greatly about that apple and if it had anything to do about it."

"She said it was a small hurt and of no consequence, but she wouldn't pare any more; for at best she was clumsy, so if they would tell her something that she could do, she would try to do better. 'It's little she can do, I'm thinking,' said Mandy Smith, and she spoke loud enough for anyone to hear almost."

"The squire said he had fetched the harp unbeknown, and now if Rastus would go out to the conveyance and bring it in, maybe Portia would play if she could with her cut finger."

"She said that it wasn't a finger that she needed to use, and they all said that it would be a rare treat. So Rastus fetched in her harp and threw the blue ribbon over her neck and she began."

"It was a ballad, all about a lady of high degree and a poor lad that loved each other, but she was forced to marry a lord or something, and how she pined away and died, and the lad came home from the wars and titled and grand, but he came too late; for she he loved had married and was now dead. He went crazy in his mind from that moment. It was a sad song and so sweetly sung that everyone stopped work to listen."

"Most of us had never heard a harp before, and it was a rare treat, for Mistress Randolph was called a very fine singer, and I knew she had a way of touching the heart that few have, for even Mandy Smith wiped her eyes on her large sleeves, and some of the young men blubbered out, only they pretended afterwards they were coughing. As for the squire and father, they didn't care if anyone did see the tears they shed."

"She sung one or two other songs, and then the apples were cleared away, and Hiram Duesticks brought out his fiddle. Poor old Jack was dead, the one that used to fiddle on training days and general muster, and now Hiram did it mostly as well at the kitchen junkets. He sat on a bench at the further end, and while he tuned his fiddle and roined his bow, the sparks and their girls faced each other down the room. They danced money musk, four-hand reel, the Campbells are coming, and by-and-by Virginia reel. Rastus danced that with Portia Randolph and somehow when I saw how grand and handsome they looked together I was glad that he put on broadcloth instead of his wearing linsey-woolsey. I was foolish, I dare say."

"Well, they all went home, and the next day mother and I strung the apples they had pared. There were a number of bushels, I seem to forget just how many. But that was not the best of the bee. I could see that Rastus felt better in his mind, and so I wasn't a mite surprised that he should dress up in his freedom suit and go over to the squire's."

"Rastus told me that he was to be married on Thanksgiving day; that judge Randolph came unexpected the night of the apple bee, and that Portia had coaxed him into letting her marry Rastus though he was much loth, she being an only daughter, and so fond and proud of her, but that, perhaps, made him more yielding."

"Did she say anything about an apple?" I asked Rastus.

"Why, yes," said he, "how did you know? It was one that had my name on it. She said she was just thinking how silly they were trying to make out their sweetheart's name by throwing

apple paring over their shoulders, when all at once she saw my name as plain as print. It seemed like witchcraft, and she was so startled that she cut her finger."

"How did it happen? That's strange enough."

"Yes, unless you happen to know the reason as I did," said Rastus. "Alex. told me how the college boys had a trick of cutting out names and pinning them on to an apple just when it was beginning to turn red, so I tried it and forgot all about it, and Portia got that apple, you see."

"I told you before dear, that Portia was an only child. Well, the Judge could not bear to be parted from her, so nothing would do but Rastus must go to Virginia with him. Father wouldn't let him go empty handed, but of course 'twas little he could do with the Judge's wealth. They went a week after Thanksgiving, and mother cried herself sick, that her baby, as she called him, must leave her."

"Well, 'twas a happy marriage. Neither regretted, I'm thinking the way it turned out, but Portia told me afterwards that only for that apple she would not have sung that song, and only for that would Rastus not have dared to hope; so you see an apple brought happiness to one couple, if it brought misery into the world."—[Portland Transcript.]

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Oldest House in the County, and Largest Stock this side of London! PARLOR SUITES, BED-ROOM SUITES, SIDE-BOARDS, EASY CHAIRS, LOUNGES, ETC., ETC. Cash Buyers will find it to their advantage to see my stock if they need a good article at close price. D. GORDON, West Street, near Post Office, Goderich.

NOTICE.

Owing to the state of his health, the undersigned has decided to give up his present business, and now offers to dispose of the same on

LIBERAL TERMS.

Application can be made to himself personally. The stock consists, besides good staple Dr goods, imported direct, of a complete and well selected assortment of GROCERIES, NEW, FRESH AND GOOD; and the stand being on Kingston St., and only one lot from the Square is one of the VERY BEST in the town of Goderich for a good