

Caleb's Courtship, and What Came of it.



I HADN'T no time for courtin' when I was young an' spry, For what with workin' an' savin', I let the years go by; Then I was buyin' an' buildin',—an' farm work never gits done, Till at last I counted my birth-days, an' found I was fifty-one. "High time," sez I, "to be choosin' a suitable pardner fer life." So I jest sot down an' considered where I'd better look fer a wife.

I wanted her young an' harnsome—of course—an' stiddy an' neat, Smart at bakin' an' churnin', quick with her hands an' feet, But slow with her tongue (fer talkin' jest wastes a woman's time), An' as savin' with every penny as ef 'twas a silver dime; An' ef she was good at mendin' an' scrubbin' an' oleanin' house, I made up my mind to take her, ef she was poor as a mouse.

Waal, it cost some time an' trouble to diskivir a gal to my mind—

There was lots of 'em to choose from, but the best was hard to find.

At last, after lookin' an' thinkin', I settled on Eunice Stout, The deacon's youngest darter—nineteen or thereabout. Pretty—yes, as a picter; made the best butter, too, That ever was sent to market. Sez I, "I guess she'll do. Whenever I've stopped to the deacon's she's as busy as a bee—Allus a-workin' an' doin'—yes! that's the wife fer me!"



But now that I'd done my choosin', I sez to myself, "What next?"

I didn't know much 'bout wimmen, an' I'll own I was some perplexed;

So I asked advice of a neighbor—that was the biggest mistake—

Things mightn't hev gone so crooked ef I'd never said nothin' to Jake;

But he was twenty year younger, an' the gals all liked him, ye see,

So I asked his advice about Eunice—jest like a fool, as I be!

Sez he: "Why, man, it's as easy! You must take her out to ride

You must bring her home from meetin', an' stick close to her beside;

You must go to see her of evenin's; you must buy her some pretty things—

A book or a breastpin, mebbe, some ribbons, or some rings;

Tell her her cheeks is rosy, tell her her eyes is bright;

Tell her you love her dearly, an' dream of her at night;

Tell her—" But here I stopped him. "It's easy talkin'," sez I,

"But I never did no courtin', an' I'm half afeard to try. I'll make ye an offer, Jacob: ef you'll go with me to-night, Kinder keep up my courage, an' see that things goes right, Tackle the deacon, mebbe, an' show me how to begin, I'll give y' a yearlin' calf—I will, as sure as sin is sin!"



Waal, the bargain was struck. Me an' Jacob went to see Eunice together.

Jake, he talked to the deacon 'bout crops an' cattle an' weather;

Eunice, she kep' very quiet—jest sot an' knitted away, An' I sot close beside her, a-thinkin' of somethin' to say. Many an' evenin' I noticed, when she went fer apples an' cake

Inter the pantry, 'twas allus, "Come hold the candle, Jake, As if she counted *him* nobody; then she'd give me a smile, Soon's I offered to help her, an' say 'twarn't worth my while, I'll own 'twas quite surprisin' how long they'd hev ter stay A-pickin' out them apples, but Jacob told me one day They was tryin' to find the best ones, so's she could give 'em to me,

An' surely *that* was flatterin', as any one could see! Once I bought her a ribbin—Jake said it oughter be blue, But a brown one's far more lastin', an' this one was cheaper too.

An' once I took her a-ridin', but that wasted half a day, An' I made up my mind that walkin' was pleasanter anyway.

Waal, I'd been six months a-courtin', when I sez to Jake, sez I:

"It's time that we was married; here's Thanksgivin' drawin' nigh—



A first-rate day fer a weddin'; an' besides, to say the least, I can make that Thanksgivin' turkey do fer part of the weddin' feast."

So that night I screwed up my courage to the very stickin' p'int

(You wouldn't never mistrusted that I shook in ev'ry j'int). We was comin' along from meetin'. Sez I, "I'd like ye to say

That ye hain't no objections, Eunice, to be married Thanksgivin' Day."

She turned an' looked at me, smilin' an' blushin', an' jest as sweet

(I skursely knew fer a minnit ef I stood on my head or my feet);

Then—"I hev'n't the least objection," sez she, as I opened the gate;

But she didn't ask me to stop; she sez only, "It's ruther late." I looked all around fer Jacob, but he'd kinder slipped out of sight,

So I figured the cost of a weddin' as I went along home that night.

Waal, I got my house all ready, an' spoke to the pa'son beside, An' 'arly Thanksgivin' mornin' I started to hev the knot tied. But before I come to the deacon's—I was walkin' along quite spry,

All rigged in my Sunday best, of course—a sleigh come dashin' by;

Thar was that Jacob a-drivin', an' Eunice sot at his side, An' he stops an' sez, "Allow me to interduce my bride!"



"I sez to Jake, sez I."

So that was the end of my courtship. You see, I started wrong, Askin' advice of Jacob, an' takin' him along; Fer a team may be better fer ploughin' an' hayin' an' all the rest,

But when it comes to courtin'—why, a single hoss is best!

—Harper's Monthly



Little Things.

What little things can fix our fate! A sigh too soon or a smile too late, A word forgotten, a look unseen, And then we must mourn the "might have been!"

A thought that we did not dare to express, A tardy tear or a crushed caress, And life creeps into the shadow of pain, While the grim old years roll on again!