

AUNT RANDY.

BY ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON.*

WE were on the Landaff Valley road, only a mile or two out from Franconia village. Nathan was driving, while Pirate and Corsair (Nathan would always call the latter Horsehair), in defiance of their reckless names, lounged lazily along the road. Again and again were the horses made to stop while I jumped out to secure some tall stalk of baneberry flowers, or to gather a fragrant bunch of white violets.

Just as I had returned to the carriage after one of these raids I saw an odd sight. In the small garden back of a house past which we were flying was a woman who conducted herself in the strangest manner. Though apparently rather elderly, she was dashing frantically about, her wide cap-border flapping around her face, her limp calico gown twisted about her ankles by the breeze, and her long arms waving in the air. In one hand she held what looked to me, as I was hurried by, like a banner of dingy white on a long pole, and with this she performed the wildest antics. Now it was waved aloft, while its bearer stood on tiptoe, and even sprang into the air, head bent backward and face upturned; then it sank to the ground, or was trailed over the vegetable beds. Standing up in the carriage and looking back eagerly, I could see this wild dance continue, until suddenly the flag was quickly lowered or dashed to the ground, and the strange standard-bearer threw herself down beside it in a crouching attitude, and seemed to clasp its folds in her skinny hands.

"Nathan! Nathan!" I cried, breathless. "What is it? Oh, who is she?"

"Aunt Randy."

"But what is the matter with her? Is she crazy?"

"Guess not; no more'n most women."

"But what is she doing?"

"Ketchin' butterflies."

"Oh!" cried I, drawing a long breath, expressive of both disappointment and relief. "I see; that was a net she was holding, and she is a collector."

I am a woman of hobbies myself, and had lately taken up entomology with some ardour, so I felt at once interested in this congenial being, and questioned Nathan with new zeal. I soon knew all he had to tell, which was but little. The woman had come to Franconia a few years before from North Woodstock. She was dressed in black, looked pale and wretched, and seemed

*Many of our readers will remember the exquisite story of "Fishin' Jimmy." They will read with delight this pathetic sketch from the same graceful pen, abridged from "The Seven Sleepers." Published by the well-known house of Harper & Brothers, New York.