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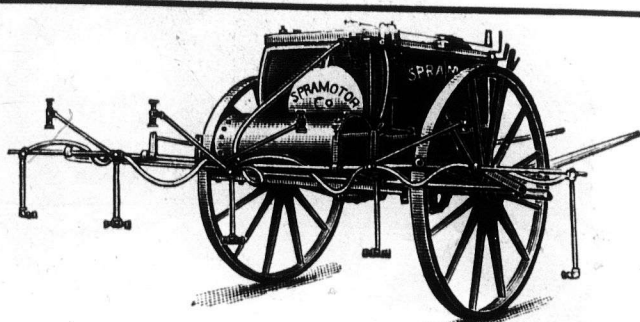
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The Old Spooner Place.

By Harriet Whitney Durbin.

Priscilla Mills, traveling afoot down the country road, wondered, as she rounded the elbow of the lane, what was going on at the Gunn place. Several riding nags were hitched to the rail fence in front of the house, and Aunt Filinda Toadybush was walking slowly up the footpath, dabbing her broad, warm face with a blue-edged cotton handkerchief, while Uncle Billy loitered under an apple tree, lighting his cob pipe.

"What's happening, Uncle Billy?" Priscilla called out. "Tisn't a funeral?"

"Nao."

"Wedding?"

"Nao."

"Auction?"

"Nao."

Uncle Billy strolled forward, a tag of smoke veering from his pipe. He looked as gray and wiry as a dried sage plant.

in las' spring---reckon he gave an old shot gun or a couple o' coon skins for it---haw, haw! Couple months back, just 'fore Uncle Zim died, he makes out a will leavin' his beloved sister, Abigail Craggitt Roper, the old Spooner place, durin' her life. Then he tacks on another p'int, mentionin' that whichever one of the kin folks Aunt Nabby 'lects to live with, it's his wish should have the place when she's through with it---haw, haw! Uncle Zim always was a curious old 'clam, the kin's been hard guessin' whether he was jokin' or not. Anyway, ain't any of 'em falling over themselves to git the old Spooner place. Then Aunt Nabby has rheumatiz every dark-o'-the-moon, tarrible, and has to be rubbed middles of nights with hot vinegar and one truck-another, and Kizzy Gunn, she 'lows she did her share o' rubbin' and she'll jest natchally gather up the other kin folks and see which is keenest to fall heir to Aunt



"See here, Priscill, I reckon I'm consid'able of a pickle, but if you'll say the word and take me, slap-dab--"

"Whar you goin', Priscilly---a-hoofin' it so brisk and arly?" he asked, curiously.

"Oh---me! I've been boiling gruel and steeping pennyrile tea for Granny Packard a month back; Lindy's home, now, and Granny don't need me, so I'm going back to brother Ike and Sue Tildy and the seven little Ikes and Sue Tildies!"

"Lord have pity on ye!" said the old man, fervently.

Priscilla laughed. "I'm strong," she said, cheerily.

"What's going on here, Uncle Billy?"

"Well," Uncle Billy's dry face wrinkled itself with the humor of a projected witticism, "it's a-comin' round to housecleanin' time; Kizzy Gunn wants to cler out the rubbage; she's goin' to begin with Aunt Nabby! She's got a meetin' of the kinfolks called to see which of 'em'll tote her off and give her house room---for the sake of gettin' the Spooner place when Aunt Nabby's gone---haw, haw!"

"Well, I say! That's a scand'lous shame," Priscilla's voice was clear and strongly pitched. "Aunt Nabby's a good soul. What about the Spooner place, Uncle Billy? I don't know a thing---been buried at Brush Center over a month."

"She!" said Uncle Billy. "Wull, old Zimri Craggitt---Filindy's uncle, you know---bought old man Spooner's cab-

Nabby and the old Spooner place."

"And ain't the place any account?" Priscilla asked interestedly.

"Oh, yas---yas," Uncle Billy assured her, humorously, "cabin's got a room and a lean-to kitchen that's plumb elegant 'commodations--- for mud-dobber wasps and squorp'ons. Ain't many clapboards left on the roof, but you kin set pans and kittles under the places the rain comes in. There's nigh an acre o' ground, too, slantin' up the glade; it's mostly sowed to flint rocks and mullein, but a feller might raise a middlin' crop o' cockle burrs, if he'd be right spry---haw, haw!"

Uncle Billy went into quite a fit of mirth, in which he was not joined by Priscilla.

"Don't any of the kin want to keep Aunt Nabby?" she asked.

"Oh, shore!" Uncle Billy twinkled comically. "My old woman; now, she want's her the worst way she's been a-tellin' me, but she jest can't take her, 'cuz her brother Jed's visitin' us and got the unly spare room the' is; and beside that, she's so skeered that Jeff and Jinny would worrit the pore old lady! And Phoebe Seliny Todd she's in there now. I'll bet a shillin', sheddin' more tears than her apren'll sop up, cuz she'd so love to have Aunt Nabby but her husband's ma is comin' and she's so cranky she'd make Aunt Nabby uncomfortable, and, 'sides, makes