

"May be you would not care to hear an old woman's story, if you think of buying it."

The stranger insisted on hearing it.

"Well," she replied, "if you'll just walk down to the house, I'll tell it."

Accordingly they wended their way to the house.

Neither fences or gate impeded their way to the door, which creaked on its hinges as they entered.

The house was well built, and covered considerable ground, but low, like most of the farm houses in the "Granite State." It was not destroyed, but seemed suffering much from neglect. The old woman seated herself on the steps of the door, and motioned the stranger to be seated on a chopping-block beside her. Then drawing a long breath, and wrapping her cloak closely about her, commenced:

"Well, as I was saying, I was a woman grown when this house was built. I lived in the house over the hill there,"—pointing with her finger to one half hid by the trees in front. "There were no houses nearer than Squire Flint's,—the old Squire I mean,—and his was about two miles up the road. He kept tavern, and a rummy old thing it was, I tell you. Well, as I was saying, I had no neighbors, and felt proper lonesome at times, when Joe was at work in the field.

"I had been married about two years, and my Ben was three months old, when one day my husband came running into the house almost out of breath: 'Susy,' says he, 'I have got some news to tell you. A smart chap from down below has bought the hundred acre lot, and is going to build a house right away. He says as soon as he gets it done, he is going to get married to a real pretty girl in Massachusetts, and coming here to live. I am so glad! I shall have some one near me when I am in the field, and you w^l have a neighbor to chat with now and then.' I was almost as glad as he was, only a little afraid that she would think herself above me; but in a few days, young Squire Flint came with a young man to our house and introduced him as Mr. Baily, the man who had bought the hundred-acre lot of him. (Squire Flint owned it.)

"As soon as I had clapped my eyes upon him, I knew I should like him—so sociable, and not a mite proud. And he laughed and played with little Ben, and said he was glad to find such pleasant neighbours as Squire Flint and us for Fanny when she should come. The next day he went into the woods to cut timber for his house. Husband said he would go and help him, for he would not know good from bad; but he came home laughing, and said Baily could teach him his A, B, C, in timber. Baily told him his father had a saw-mill, and he was acquainted with all kinds of timber. Well, his house was built as soon as the timber was dry. Baily boarded with us. He worked like a dog. I thought my Joe was a smart one, but I think he beat him sometimes. Well, his house was done, and partly furnished. The best furniture came from down below. When he brought his wife he wanted me to have the fire made, and be there to receive him when he came.—I told him I would, but I did not tell all I would do. Just as soon as he was gone I came right over to the house, scrubbed the floor and sanded it, then put up green boughs in the corner, and burnt out the oven. Then I went home. The next day I told Joe I thought I would bake something nice for them. He said he would if he was me. So he brought me in one of the best pumpkins; I took the top of the milk, and a better batch of pies you never saw. Then I fried a pot of dough-nuts, made of sugar and cream, and Joe helped me carry them over.

"The next day he was coming home. So I put on little Ben's best frock and my Sunday gown, and Joe had on his Sunday suit, too, and while he went out to water Baily's cattle, (he had stocked his farm pretty well,) I kindled the first fire on the hearth. About four in the afternoon they arrived. I was all in a tremble for fear he had brought a fine lady when I saw how finely she was dressed, but I got over it in a minute, for he brought her right to me and introduced her. She shook my hand in real earnest, and said she felt almost acquainted, she had heard James tell so much of me. I took her to the closet and showed her the things I had cooked. She seemed chuck-full, and could not speak, but burst right out crying. Jam. tried to pacify her, said she had never left her mother before and hoped she would not be homesick.

"'I am not thinking of home yet,' she replied, 'but I did not think of finding such kind friends among strangers.'