

THE BEST COW IN PERIL.

Old Farmer B. is a stingy man;
He keeps all he gets, and he gets all he can!
By all his friends he is said to be
As tight as the bark on a young birch tree,
He goes to church, and he rents a pew,
But the dimes that he gives to the Lord are few
If he gets to heaven with the good and great
He will be let in at the smallest gate.

Now, farmer B., besides drags and plows,
Keeps a number of very fine calves and cows;
He makes no butter, but sends by express
The milk to the city's thirstiness.

"What do the city folks know about milk?
They are better judges of cloth and silk;
Not a man who buys, I'd vow, can tell
If I water it not, or water it well.
If they do not know, then where's the sin?
I will put the sparkling water in."
Thus talked to himself old farmer B;
How mean he is young and old can see.

One night it was dark, oh, fearfully dark;
The watch dog never came out to bark;
Old farmer B. in his bed did snore,
When rap, rap, rap, nearly shattered his door,
And a voice cried out in a hasty breath,
"Your best cow, neighbor, is choking to death!"

Clipping off the end of a rousing snore,
Farmer B. bounded out on the bedroom floor;
And the midnight voice was heard no more.
He pulled on his pants, he knew not how,
For his thoughts were all on the choking cow;
He flew to the yard like a frightened deer,
For his stingy soul was filled with fear;
Looking around, by his lantern's light,
He found that the cows were there all right.

"I will give a dime," cried farmer B.,
"To know who played that trick on me;
May the hand be stiff and the knuckle be sore
That knocked to-night on my farm house door."

With a scowl on his face and a shaking head,
Farmer B. again sought his nice, warm bed;
No good thoughts came, they were all o'er-
powered;
The little good nature he had, had soured.

When he went to water his milk next day,
The midnight voice seemed again to say,
As he pumped away with panting breath:
"Your best cow, neighbor is choking to death."
The meaning of this he soon found out,
For a stone was driven in the old pump's spout.

Old farmer B., when he drives to town,
Now meets his neighbors with a savage frown
They smile, and ask, as they kindly bow,
"How getteth along the best cow now?"

THE WOES OF A WOOLER.

"When a man marries, his troubles begin." Yes, and sometimes before he marries, as I learned by rough experience. And thereby hangs a tale. Inasmuch as I am the hero of my story, I may be allowed a few words concerning myself, by way of introduction. Briefly, then, my dear reader. I am a type of the "real, live Yankee," born away down in Maine, and there, in that delightful land of fish and sawlogs, during the first nineteen years of my eventful life, I lived, worked and had my being upon my father's farm, situated on the noble Kennebec, about midway between the capital, Augusta, and the beautiful Moosehead Lake, near the town of Skowhegan.

About half a mile from our "estate" there lived a family by the name of Millburn; and as the members of this family played an important part in the events I am about to narrate, and of which I was the central figure, the reader will allow me a few words respecting them. The family consisted of the father, John Millburn, a widower, his brother Nathan, familiarly known in that region as "Uncle Nathan," a spinster of a certain age, and last, but by no means least, his daughter Milly, a charming creature of sweet sixteen. Milly and I had grown up from babyhood together, had been playmates, schoolmates and boon companions all our lives. In Summer we chased the wild butterfly over the meadows, or baked our mutual mud-pies by the clear, running brook; and in Winter, slid down hill together on our sled. As might have been foreseen by any anxious mamma, as we grew older, there grew up a feeling in our hearts deeper than respect, deeper than mere friendship. We had learned to love each other. True, there had never been any formal engagement between us, but the understanding was mutual. At that time, all my worldly effects consisted of a yoke of steers, a pair of cowhide boots and a mammoth jack-knife. These, we both considered quite inadequate to begin house-keeping with, and it had been agreed that I should start that Fall to seek my fortune, and carve out a home in the wilderness of the great West.

It was in the Fall of 1840, during the pendency of the famous "Hard Cider"

campaign between Harrison and Van Buren, and the country rang with the praises of "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too." Milburn was an ardent partisan of General Harrison, and, as fate would have it, my father was an equally earnest Democrat, and at that particular time was a candidate for the State Legislature on that ticket. From these circumstances an ill will had grown up between the two, which came near proving fatal to my prospects matrimonial. My father threatened to disown and disinherit me, if I married "that girl," and Milburn was just as much opposed to the match on his part. He gave a decided negative to my proposal for his daughter's hand, and intimated that my visits could very resignedly be dispensed with. Furthermore, Milly was privately instructed to discourage and repel my attentions to her in every way—in a word, she was to "turn the cold shoulder" on me, an injunction which was scrupulously disregarded and broken at every convenient opportunity. Nor were such opportunities few; for love, which laughs at locksmiths, is not apt to be thwarted by a couple of testy old papas; and many were the stolen meetings which we continued to secure, notwithstanding their vigilance. If they had been as wise as the poet when he wrote,

"Will love be controlled by fathers?
"Will Cupid our mothers obey?"

They would have foreseen all this; but they were not.

One evening, while the political excitement was at its height, a mass meeting was held in town, and, of course, Milburn and Uncle Nathan attended. Besides, Aunt Hetty wanted to do some shopping that evening, and "If Milly wasn't afeard to stay at home alone," she'd like to go alone.

"Bose'll be here," added she encouragingly, "and he's worth a dozen men. He won't let nothin' come around to hurt ye, an' there'll be nothin' to fear."

Of course Milly wasn't afraid, and readily consented to stay at home and keep house. But she didn't stay alone—not exactly. This was an opportunity that could not be allowed to go unimproved, and as soon as the family had got off to a safe distance a certain young gentleman called at a certain farm-house, where a certain young lady had been left to keep house, and easily circumventing "Bose," aforesaid readily gained admission. Strange as it may appear, and incredible withal, the unprotected young female did not manifest any fear or uneasiness at this event. So far from it that a close observer would have thought she was pleased with the call, and had been expecting it. The reader may believe, if he chooses, that this was all accidental; but I didn't, and never shall. In fact, looking back upon the circumstances through the lapse of years, I am firmly persuaded that it was an understood thing between them, and being one of the parties, I was in a condition to know. The evening passed pleasantly, happily, and the young lady was not the least bit lonesome. In fact, so happily engaged were we that the flight of time was entirely unnoticed. Nevertheless, the hours flew on apace, and nine, ten, struck the old clock on the mantle ut we heeded not its voice, so entirely were we absorbed in our sweet selves and oblivious of all else.

But a change came o'er the scene. Alas! that I should have it to say, the spell was broken. As the dream had been blissful, so the awakening was rude and painful. In the midst of our whispered nothings, we were suddenly startled by a loud clear voice at the gate, ringing upon the frosty night air, to us like the trumpet calling to judgment, "Whoop! whoa!" There could be no mistaking that voice of Uncle Nathan's, and directly we heard other voices coming from the porch which we both knew only too well. A consternation overspread our faces; fear and trembling took hold upon us, and each blankly asked the other at the same moment: "O, what shall we do?" Alas! what could we do? Retreat was cut off, and I saw no way but to put on a bold front and face the situation; but Milly, fearful of the consequences and the expected parental displeasure, would not consent to this. Her woman's wit, however, proved equal to the emergency.

In one corner of the room stood an antiquated closet which was used as a receptacle for old clothes and rubbish. Into the closet aforesaid, in the room aforesaid, I was hustled, much against my will—as I then and there said. I had just got safely ensconced, and Milly was sitting demurely at the table sewing, when the party entered, and distributing themselves around the fire, began to talk over the events of the evening,

Now, I am a person of rather "superfluous length," as Saxe expresses it, and that closet being one of rather superfluous smallness, my position was far from comfortable. My limbs were cramped, and the odor of the place was musty and disagreeable. But I bore it like a martyr, not daring to move a muscle least even the faint rustling among the old clothes should reach the ears of my unconscious besiegers, and lead to unpleasant developments.

I never knew how long I endured this living misery, but it seemed an age to me. Every bone and muscle in my body ached with insupportable anguish, and the perspiration ran streaming down my agonized brow. At length I could endure it no longer, and I ventured to move very cautiously to one side, when something moved at my feet, and I experienced a sharp, stinging sensation on my leg. My first thought was of snakes; but that was dissipated in a twinkling. Heavens! What a squalling and spitting! I comprehended the situation at once. The old cat had made this her dormitory, with her feline brood, and in moving about, I had unwittingly set my foot right into the midst of her family circle. Curse the cats! I never did like 'em.

"Well, I never! What on airth ails the cats?" exclaimed Aunt Hetty.

"I heard something in that closet," said Uncle Nathan, who was sleepily removing his boots, preparatory to going to bed.

"Never mind, Aunt, I'll go and see what it is," volunteered Milly; but Milburn stopped her, and decided to investigate for himself, remarking that "it might be something serious."

I had no doubt of that, myself; but what was I to do? To be discovered and recognized would be "something serious," for what reasonable explanation could I give of my presence in that closet? None, whatever.

In that moment of supreme peril and perplexity, one thought was clear to me—for Milly's sake, for the sake of my own reputation, and perhaps my personal comfort, I must not be recognized. Moreover, I resolved that I would not be recognized. Pulling my hat down over my face, and drawing back into the corner, I awaited the old gentleman's approach, and as he opened the door and peered cautiously in, I sprang upon him with a most appalling yell, that would have been creditable to a Comanche brave.

"Thunder an' sawlogs!" ejaculated Uncle Nathan, turning pale, while Aunt Hetty screamed hysterically, and then, woman-like, fainted.

"Burglars!" shrieked Milly, in well-affected alarm, rushing to the aid of her "Aunt."

My impetuous onset had completely overthrown the portly old gentleman, and he now lay rolling on the floor in a maze of fear and bewilderment. Now my way seemed clear, and, without waiting to excuse myself, or to apologize for my hasty intrusion, I set out at once to make my exit through the open door. As I was passing, Uncle Nathan threw the boot jack full at my head; but for once luck was on my side. Just at the right moment I ran square into a sea of patch-work which Aunt Hetty was making into a quilt, and had on the frames in the middle of the room, and which, in my haste I had not noticed. I stumbled and fell, bringing the whole fabric in a total wreck to the floor, and the missile passed over my head, striking Milburn, who was just recovering his feet, in the pit of his stupendous stomach, doubling him all up in a heap.

Milly rushed to the assistance of her father, and while pretending to help him up, managed to impede his efforts considerably, and as Uncle Nathan was gouty and by no means fleet of foot, I got a good start before they were fairly in pursuit. But another and greater source of trouble was in store for me. As I was rushing down the walk towards the gate, "Bose," the old family watch-dog, who had been aroused by the unusual commotion in-doors, and was on the alert, espied my fleeing form and rushed savagely after me, with savage growls and gleaming teeth. By the most herculean efforts, I succeeded in reaching the gate, and slamming it to, shut him in and myself out, leaving a portion of my coat-tail in his rapacious jaws, as a memento. It was a close shave, and—I judge from feeling alone, not by sight—he must have left the impress of his teeth upon my person. I was well aware, however, that I had only temporarily evaded pursuit, and so struck out down the road at my "best licks," fully impressed with the importance of widening my distance from the house as rapidly as possible.

I was surprised at my powers of locomotion at that time, and I certainly de-

veloped considerable speed. I had everything at stake, and—yes, I acknowledge it—fear lent wings to my heels, and I fairly flew over the ground at a rate, I am firmly persuaded, to distance John Gilpin or Tam O'Shanter and all the pursuing witches.

Millburn soon recovered himself, and he and the avenging canine were speedily upon my track in full pursuit. At the rate I was going I knew I could easily distance the man, but with the dog the case was different. He was rapidly coming up to me, and I knew that in a few moments, despite my best efforts, he would be upon me.

Happily, in this emergency, I bethought me of a brilliant expedient. In my pocket I had a bottle of Cayenne pepper, among other things, which I had that evening bought at the store for use at home. Therein lay my salvation! Hastily breaking off the neck of the bottle, and emptying a part of its contents into my hand, I breathlessly awaited the approach of my canine pursuer. In a moment he came up, his jaws distended, and his eyes flashing in a manner that boded me ill. As he bounded at me, by a dexterous movement I cast the fiery powder squarely into his mouth and eyes. The next moment he was howling and rolling in agony on the snow, and I, taking advantage of the diversion in my favor, started off again at the top of my speed. All Milburn's efforts to persuade "Bose" into a renewal of the pursuit were unavailing, and I proceeded to the village without further molestation.

Now, common prudence should have taught me better; but I was excited, (as who would not have been under such circumstances?) and I sped on into the village without in the slightest abating my speed. I had lost my hat in my flight, and as I rushed along uncovered, my hair streaming in the wind, and the remnant of my coat-tail flapping in the rear, it is no wonder that I was mistaken for a madman broken loose. My appearance was quite out of the usual run of things, and I soon succeeded in attracting the attention of a group of young scapegraces, who were, at that late hour, playing "hide and seek" at one of the street corners, and the whole motley crew set off at my heels, with yells and exclamations of juvenile delight. As I sped along, others hearing the noise and noting my strange appearance, took up the chase, and the whole town was soon in a hub-bub over the pursuit of the supposed madman. By dint of muscle, and much dodging and strategy, I finally succeeded in eluding pursuit, and was walking quietly along, flattering myself that I saw my way out of the scrape, when suddenly a rude hand seized me with a firm grip by the shoulder, and a determined, authoritative voice sounded in my ear: "Hold! I arrest you."

Oh! relentless fate! It was our worthy Sheriff, who had been aroused by the commotion, and thinking me either crazy or criminal, had concluded to take me into custody. It was all in vain that I protested my innocence of anything criminal; in vain I urged that I was not demented. With a wise shake of the head and a knowing smile, he remarked: "Can't fool me; that's what they all say," and with that the relentless "minion of the law" proceeded to inform me that I might go along peaceably if I chose, or he would iron me if I resisted.

I decided to go without the irons, mentally resolving to make use of my free limbs before we reached our destination. Clearly, I was in a dilemma. If I did not escape, I should be recognized on the morrow, my connection with the inglorious affair at Millburn's would be traced out, and I should be placed in an embarrassing light before the neighbors, to say the least. These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind as I walked along, and I resolved to embrace the first opportunity to escape.

We had not as yet been noticed, and affecting a fear of violence from the people, if seen, I piteously begged him to take me through an unfrequented way instead of along the open street. The worthy official wanted the whole credit of the arrest for himself, and doubtless, thinking what a brilliant exploit it would be for him, and how it would enhance his chances for reelection if he could only get me safely into jail, alone and unaided, readily acceded to the request. This was an important point gained. Recollecting my successful use of the pepper on old Bose, I resolved to try it on old Official. I felt in my pocket, and too my great joy found that I had still a good handful left. My captor, seeing that I offered no resistance, and thinking, doubtless, that I was awed into submission by the majesty of the law represented in his person,