

A YANKEE TALE OF A BAG OF BEANS OR JOE BUNKER'S COURTSHIP.

There was a body met a body

In a bag of beans,
Can a body tell a body

What a body means?—*Old Song.*

Every body in the County of Essex has heard of Joe Bunker, and the quips and cranks by him enacted. In truth he was a famous fellow in his day, so noted for his bushwacking rusticity of breeding that his name has passed into a proverb and made him immortal. Joe Bunker's character is now regarded by all the old cronies and gossipers in the North East corner of Massachusetts in the beau ideal of a genuine unsophisticated Yankee clod-hopper.

His fame for ten miles round the county ran. And all the old ladies called him a queer man.

He was the first mortal in these parts that ever picked his teeth with a wooden shoe. Various other fashions introduced by him are in the remembrance of many, but it is not our purpose now to specify them. The story of his courtship and the bag of beans is not so common, it runs thus.

It was sometime in the month of April or May, or at any rate, just at the time of the planting of beans, of all the days in the year of a Sunday, that Joe being at meeting, spied Colonel Shute's daughter Hannah. It was in prayer time; (they make terrible long prayers in that part of the country) and Joe was hanging over the pew door in about the shape of a figure 5, tired to death and wriggling himself about as in awkward and slouching a fashion as can be well imagined. Joe looked at Hannah, and Hannah looked at Joe. It is pretty certain that the little hedgehog Cupid shot off a pair of his quills at the same instant, for Hannah was struck with a very queer sensation, and as for Joe, he felt something which he could not describe except by saying it was a kind of an all overness like.

This is all we happen to know of the first item in this chapter of accidents. The next morning Joe lay in bed so long that his father began to grumble, and presently his mother came up stairs.

"Come Joe," said she, "get up and go planting your beans."

"I can't," said Joe, "I'm sick."

"Sick. What's the matter with you? What ails you?"

"I don't know what ails me; I don't want to tell."

"Don't want to tell! fiddlestick! let us know what it is." Joe hid his face under the blanket for some time, and at last blubbered out, "I want to go and see the Colonel's Hannah." Down goes the old woman and reports proceedings to her husband. "What," says old Bunker, "he go to see the Colonel's Hannah! tell him to come instantly and plant his beans." The old woman runs back and tells this to Joe.

But Joe was hard to work upon. He was granite; he was adamant, there was no softening him, no moving him. You might as easily have shouldered Oldtown Hill, from its foundation as to planting beans; I will go and see the Colonel's Hannah." This was all she could get out of him, and so she paddled off again to her husband.

"Really, Mr. Bunker, there's no getting Joe to mind; he says he won't go to planting beans nor touch to; and he will go and see the Colonel's Hannah. Now do let the poor boy have his way for once; remember you was once a young man yourself." This was bringing the

matter home, and old Bunker though he was no logician, nor imagined how the thing could be proved in *Barablipton* or *Ferlio*, yet he thought the reasoning so pat to the purpose that he fairly yielded. Well, well, let him take Dobbin and go, but not stay long."

"But," said Joe on hearing this, "I won't go with I go grand, and I won't have Dobbin." Off goes the old woman once more with this intelligence. "Well then," said old Bunker, "he may go grand, and let him take old Bob." "But I won't ride upon old Bob," said Joe, "I'll have Posset." "Then take Posset, says his father, and make haste back."

Hereupon Joe began to bustle about with all speed and bedizen himself out in his Sunday's best. He was a strapping, boney, long-sided fellow. It would do you good to see him dressed in the fashion of that day, astride of his nag.

Joe had just bestowed a hearty kick upon the ribs of his Rozinanti at setting out for the Colonel's, when old Bunker bawled out after him, "Halloo, Joe! stop there, come back again. You are going by Pearson's mill, and you shall take a couple of bags of corn to be ground, while you go the Colonel's; and bring it back with you when you come away, so you can kill two dogs with one stone." Joe was inclined to stick to this plan of mixing business, but hating to waste time in arguing with his father, he assented, and shambling off to the barn brought out his two bags and bestowed them snugly *en croupe*. Thus fairly accoutred he trotted off to the mill.

"Pearson, can ye grind my grist while I go to Colonel Shute's?"

"Yes, Joe, but what are ye going a courting for, so early?"

"Oh, who the dickens told you?"

"Nonsense, Joe! pluck up courage; faint heart never won fair lady." Thank ye for nothing," said Joe. "I shall be back in an hour. Don't let your horse eat out of the hopper." So off he started for the Colonel's.

Joe bolted in at the Colonel's door without knocking. (Indeed it is affirmed he never was known to be guilty of making such a superfluous noise in all his life.) "Ah Mrs. Shute, the top of the morning to ye; where's Hannah? the devil take Joe Bunker for that yet," says Hannah? why she's up stairs a spinning. At this Joe stomped off up stairs without any further idle palaver.

Hannah's wheel was humming right merrily when Joe entered. She blushed like a blue cat upon seeing him.—"How'd ye do Hannah," said Joe, and shambling up toward the window he slouched himself into a marvellously uncomfortable skewing position on the corner of a chair.

"Well, now was Joe fairly seated alongside of his Dulcinea; but how to begin conversation; all there was the difficulty. What was he to say? Indeed he never thought of that. However he looked out of the window and saw a flock of sheep; there is nothing like taking a hint from the first thing that offers.—

"Are these your father's sheep, Hannah?"

"Yes, Joe."

Joe gave a hem and tried to think of something else to say about the sheep, such as how much wool they gave, and whether they were of the Bysfeld breed; but he could not make it fade. Presently he espied some cows—

"Are these your cows?"

"Yes."

"How many have you got?"

"Twenty."

"Twenty! that's a tarnation lot of 'em."

Here was another pause in the conversation, and Joe felt more awkwardly than ever.

As for Hannah, she kept her wheel going, so she did not feel altogether quite so sheepish. Joe looked out of the window again, but could see nothing to talk of. He looked round the room and up to the ceiling, but there was nought except a seed cucumber, three red peppers, and a crooknecked squash. They would not suit. He drummed with his fingers upon the table, and began unconsciously to whistle the stave of "The Tongs and The Bones." This quavered away in Yankee Doodle, and finally he found himself humming a mixture of the Old Hundred and little Malborough.

At last he was struck with an idea, and out it came—

"Did you ever see a crow?"

"Yes."

"How black they are! a'nt they?"

"Yes."

Another pause. Joe began to wipe his forehead with his coat sleeve. Presently the appearance of another idea dawned upon him.

"Did you ever see an owl?"

"Yes."

"What great eyes they've got! ha'nt they?"

"Yes."

"Do you love maple sugar, Hannah?"

"Yes."

"Next time I come, I'll bring a great gob."

Joe fairly made a *hit* in this remark, for he touched upon a sweet subject and this completely broke the ice. Remembering the advice of the miller, he plucked up courage and stood bolt upright; then making a sidelong blundering sort of a hitch a little nearer, "Hannah," says he "I loves you." Hannah let go her wheel from pure awkwardness, and Joe growing still bolder, made a sudden grapple with both paws and bestowed upon her a smacking buzz that made the very windows rattle. How long it lasted never was known, but Hannah's mother not heaving the wheel, he buzzed hawled out below. "Hannah! what are you doing up there with Joe Bunker?" This interruption gave them a rouse like an electric shock. Joe clawed off in a terrible fright, thinking it was time to cut and run. "Hannah," says he, "I must clear out; but I'll come again next Sunday night. So saying he made the best of his way off, hardly looking behind him.

"Well Pearson, have you ground my corn?"

"Yes, Joe, and your beans too.—Beans! what'd ye mean?"

"What do I mean! why was not one bag of corn and 'other a bag of beans?"

"No it wasn't.—Yes it was though."

"Bugs and tarnation! was it? then I'm ruined! I've made a mistake and took the wrong bag. I snaggers! Father'll kill me; 'twas all the beans we'd got for seed! What the dickens shall I do? Oh murder and white-oak cheese!"

In a terrible peck of troubles, Joe got upon Posset with his bags, now thinking of Hannah and now of his unfortunate grist. Half way home he met his father upon old Bob; he was labouring his sides with might and main, hoping to get to the mill in time to save his beans, for he had discovered Joe's blunder on going out to plant. "Oh Joe, Joe, you chowderhead, you blundering numskull! you've carried the beans to the mill! and I've come on a canter to save them from being ground." "It's too late father, for the are all ground to smash!"

How the old man stormed and vowed Joe should pay for them, and how Joe attempted to clear himself by telling lies about the finding the bags in the wrong place, we have not time to state. The old man laid an embargo on Joe's courting expeditions, and spoke to the Colonel about keeping Hannah snug at home, but Joe stole a march upon the old ones, and struck