

KILLING IN THE MOON.

There used to be, when I was a boy—which was once upon a time—a good many men, and women, too, who believed in the moon. It seemed as if some of the women did really believe there was a man in it, who controlled their destinies, to some extent; and the men, too, were just as bad. They couldn't have been worse if they had believed there was a woman in it, too. It would not do to kill pork in the old of the moon, nor to sow onions in the new of the moon; for if they did the first, the pork would shrink in the pot, and if they did the last, the onions would not bottom, or be subject to some disagreeable infirmity or other; and moreover, it wouldn't do to cut the children's hair, unless the moon was just right.

Men and women are growing wiser, we all admit, yet we haven't all outgrown our belief in the moon. A great many believe in it yet to some extent, and to show that their belief may not be ill-founded after all, I will cite the following case:

There lived, in the days of my boyhood, an old—at least they seemed old to me—couple, in the same part of the town that I inhabited. I used to go to see them quite often—Uncle Zack, as we used to call him, being so accommodating, and Aunt Rhody such a good old soul. They were just comfortably to do, and nothing more.

Uncle Zack tilled a little land, kept a cow and pig, and worked out a part of the time for the neighbors who were better off than he, though there were certain odd times in the summer when he himself had to have a hired man. Neither Uncle Zack nor Aunt Rhody were very well read, and Aunt Rhody, in particular, believed most firmly in the moon. Uncle Zack, of course, admitted that it did make a difference, yet there were times when he chose to accept the difference, though it were against him, rather than go out of his way.

Late one fall—only a few days before Thanksgiving—he was already to kill a nice large hog, which was to furnish his year's supply of pork, when both he and Aunt Rhody suddenly remembered that it was in the old of the moon.

"You wouldn't want to kill him in the old of the moon, Zachus," she said, "of course."

"But I'll have to, Rhody, or we won't have no spare rib for Thanksgiving."

"I'd rather go without, Zachus, as fur's I'm concerned. I wouldn't kill him till after the moon changes, any way, if I were you."

"Wall, Rhody, you ain't me; if you was you'd kill him to-morrow mornin'." The Deacon expects the spare rib, ye know, and we want one ourselves for Thanksgiving. I don't s'pose the moon'll make so much difference, arter all. The Deacon says folks are kinder gettin' out of that notion."

"The Deacon's a sensible man, I s'pose, but I guess he don't know everything, arter all. Taint likely, though, Zachus, that he'd kill his hogs in the old of the moon, and I wouldn't mine, if I were you."

"But I tell ye, Rhody, you ain't me. You'n the Deacon can do's you're mind to; but I goin' ter kill him."

"You wouldn't kill the Deacon, would you, Zachus?" and the good woman almost smiled.

"You didn't mean that did you?"

"Taint no matter what I said, I know what I meant, an' I'm goin' ter kill him. You needn't lart at me, Rhody."

"I ain't lartin', Zachus; but the idee of your killin' the Deacon, and in the old of the moon, too?"

"Wall, Rhody, you can lart if you want to; and Zachus laughed himself, now. "I'm goin' ter kill the old hog, anyway."

"I wouldn't call him an old hog, too, Zachus; the Deacon's a real good man, you know."

"Of course, he is, Rhody; but if I don't kill

the old hog, you know, the old hog, you understand, we won't have no spare rib for Thanks-givin'."

"Wall, wall, jest go an' kill him if you want to; I don't s'pose it's any use for me to advise; but if the pork shrinks in the pot, you'll know the reason on't. We ain't none too well off now, Zachus, an' it does seem 'aif we oughter make things go as fur's we can."

"Of course, Rhody, but we've allers had a spare rib for Thanksgiving, ye know, and the moon'll change to-morrow, any way. I guess the pork'll hold out. If it don't we can buy some of the Deacon, and I'll pay him in work or somethin'. It won't make no difference with you."

"That's always the way," murmured the good wife to herself, when the easy-going husband had left her, to make his preparations for killing. "He thinks 'twont make no difference with me, just as if a woman wasn't nobody."

A deep sigh followed, which was succeeded by a half-formed wish that she was a man. But that wish was checked when she thought that, if she were a man she would have to associate with men, so many of whom, she well knew, were not what they ought to be.

"I'm thankful, arter all, that I hain't got only one on 'em," she murmured, "and that he ain't the worst one that ever was, either. But it does seem 'aif I might have done better."

"Wall, he may kill the old hog, for all me; I guess we shall live through it. I wonder just what time the moon does change?" and to find out she took down the almanac from the nail where it hung over the fire-place, and opened it to November. The year 1830, was in large figures on the cover, but the smoke of many fires had somewhat obscured the figures, and of course she knew well enough what the year was without looking at them.

"It would be a little late," she said to herself; "not 'till seven minutes arter seven in the evenin'." Wall, I wouldn't want 'em butcherin' around at that time 'o night, I don't s'pose. It's too bad the moon didn't change to-day; and with another sigh she hung the almanac back on its nail, adding, "but 'wat can't be cured must be endured."

The next morning Zachus rose early and completed his preparations, while Rhody, with calm resignation, prepared a plain breakfast of johnny-cake, pickled-up fish and baked potatoes—not the worst breakfast that ever was, by any means, but not near so good, Zachus said, as the dinner of fried haalet they would have. "It's too bad about the moon, Rhody," said he, full of good nature in the pleasant anticipation, "but the haalet won't have time to shrink much, I guess, specially if Sim stops to eat dinner with us."

Sim was the butcher of the neighborhood, who was coming to help him. His fondness for fried haalet generally led him on such occasion, to stay to dinner.

"Sim would know better than to butcher for himself in the old of the moon, I guess," was Rhody's reply. It was plain enough that she could not look on the matter so lightly as did her husband.

"Wall, Rhody, I ain't goin' ter talk any more about the moon. Taint likely that all our talkin' 'll make it change a minute sooner, and the water to scald him with is bilin' now! That pint's settled. If I'd made the moon myself, of course I'd have fixed it all right; but you see I didn't. I hope you'll feel thankful to-morrow, Rhody, that we had a hog to kill!"

"I'm always thankful for everything the Lord gives us," said Rhody; "but it does seem sometimes, Zachus, as if I married you ag'inat his will."

Zachus had left the table, and was looking into the boiling cauldron when the last words were uttered, and probably they did not come with full force to his ears. It is doubtful, in the steam and the noise of the boiling, he heard them at all. At any rate he made no reply.

"The water's hot," said he to no one in particular, "and Sim oughter be here now."

Even as he spoke, the door was opened, and

Sim was there. "All ready, eh," said Sim, looking into the cauldron. "That's good! That'll start the bristles! But you'll have ter help me grind my knives, Zack. Good mornin' Miss Timmins! Look's if you're goin' to have a spare rib for Thanksgiving."

"Good mornin' Mr. Lufkins! I hope we shall all be thankful for whatever we get; but I'd rather got along without the spare rib, 'fur's I'm concerned."

Mr. Lufkins gave her an inquiring look. "I don't know of anything much better'n a good roast spare rib," said he.

"There ain't nothin' better," said Zachus; "and Rhody likes 'em as well as anybody. We've been eatin' chickens all the fall, an' now I'm goin' ter have a spare rib. We'll have haalet for dinner, too, Sim!"

Sim understood that as an invitation to dine. "I've got to kill a shote for Widow Beaman, arter I've done yours," said he, "but I'll be back by dinner time, I guess."

The look of inquiry was now Rhody's. "Did you say you're goin' to butcher for Widow Beaman to-day?" she asked.

"To-day!" and the look of inquiry seemed reflected back from Lufkins. "What about to-day?" he asked; "ain't it a good day to kill?"

"I thought you'd a sensible man, Mr. Lufkins; don't you know it's in the old of the moon?"

"The old of the moon!—what be you talkin' about, Miss Timmins?—the moon changed yesterday!"

"It don't change till seven minutes past seven to-night," said she; "I should think yew men were all outer yer senses!"

"Wall, then old Bob Thomas has told a lie this time. Where's yer almanac, Zack?—let's see."

Rhody herself took down the almanac and opened it to the very place. "There," said she, showing it to Sim, "what's that say?"

Sim looked at the day, the hour, and then at the top of the page; and then he looked at Rhody and at Zachus with a funny sort of look. "I don't see how I made such a mistake," he said. "Accordin' to your almanac the moon does change to-night, sure."

In silent triumph Rhody hung the almanac again on its nail. "I ain't believin' in the moon so much as I was," said Zachus. "Come, Sim, let's grind the knives."

"It does make a difference, though; there's no doubt about that," said Sim. "But I s'pose the bristles'll have ter come off, now the water's hot."

And off they came within the next half hour; and at noon Sim had also dispatched the widow's shote and was back for dinner. The savory fumes of the fried haalet made Rhody more cheerful than she had been in the morning, and she even expressed a hope that the pork wouldn't shrink in the pot after all.

"I don't hardly believe it will," said Sim. "It's coolin' off nicely and lookin' hard and firm. I shouldn't wonder if it spent jest as well as though you'd killed it in the new of the moon. But I'd no idee the moon didn't change till to-night when I came away from home."

And so the killing was done, and both the Deacon and Zachus had roast spare rib for their Thanksgiving dinners. And in due time Rhody began to use of the salted pork. Then, as Zachus expressed it, he had her, for the pork cooked beautifully.

"We ain't never had no better pork than this, Rhody," said Zachus. "What'd ye think of the moon, now?"

"You wait, Zachus. Don't begin to crow too soon. Wait, an' see how 't holds out."

"All right, Rhody; of course 'twould be too much ter ask ye to give in all 't once. I'm willin' ter wait."

And as they continued to use the pork, Rhody became very serious, very solemn, and Zachus proportionately cheerful and elated. "I hope you ain't goin' to be sick, Rhody, on account of this pork," he said one morning at breakfast.

"You know yourself we never had no better pork than this. I wouldn't blame the moon any longer, if I was you."

"The pork is good enough," said Rhody; "but