Queer Mr. Woods.

The hamlet of Spring Hill is situated about a mile and one half from one of the small manufacturing towns of Massachusetts, and its population resembles probably that of a hundred other similar places. The people are mostly good Methodists, who have a strong leaning toward revivals and other meetings of the amen type. During the summer months the place is a most pleasant one in which to reside; a winding brook, which begins and terminates in two small ponds, flows through it, while the hill, after which it is named, shelters it from the northeast storms; on the farther side of the hill, between it and the blue bay, lies the salt-marsh, whose creeks in summer are a veritable paradise for the small boy, and whose hay, fed in the winter to the farmer's cows, gives their milk a most "ancient and fish-like" taste.

Not long ago this quiet country neighborhood was much awakened from its usual condition of torpor and peacefulness, by the arrival and settlement of a strange family. At first sight they seemed a respectable, unassuming couple, who would soon accustom themselves to the society of Spring Hill, and take an active part in its winter round of prayer-meetings and candy-pulls, cultivating their small plot of ground in the summer, in order to gain sufficient sustenance when old John Frost kept the watermelon patch covered with snow. Such was everybody's opinion; and when things turned out quite differently, it was a much-surprised group of gossips who talked them over.

This new family, whose name was Woods, consisted of two members, Mr. Woods and his wife. We could not, as yet, judge which of them was the more important. They were not a bridal couple in appearance, though they were very much devoted to one another. They seemed to be of middle age, as their hair was quite gray, and Mr. Woods wore a long moustache of the same color. He was of medium height, well proportioned, and always dressed in the same scrupulously neat manner in a style pre-eminently his own. His features were irregular, and rather odd looking, as his nose was long and inclined to be pointed, his ears somewhat large, and two of his front teeth projected forward from the others, as if their society was not congenial to them. He was a person of methodical and temperate habits, but evidently not social in his disposition, for he made no advances toward acquaintanceship with the neighboring farmers. If he chanced to meet them on the street he would avoid them as though they and he had nothing in common. This, of course, brought down upon the gray head of Mr. Woods the enmity of his neighbors,—for people do not like those in their company who attend too strictly to their own affairs. His wife bore an astonishing resemblance to himself, and it would appear that they married out of similarity of looks and temperaments, rather than by the attraction of opposites.

Old as they were they possessed no children, though it was rumored that they had had a large family of boys, who, having grown up, were well-to-do in a distant part of the country.

In the first place, Mr. and Mrs. Woods located in a somewhat strange manner. They did not buy a house, but decided to build; so, in a convenient field, Mr. Woods began to dig his cellar without employing any outside labor. This cellar was dug into a hillside, instead of down into the level ground, and its floor had a gentle outward slope, which, we afterward concluded, was to give it good drainage. He completed this task, when, strange to say, whether from lack of means or from sheer laziness, he went no further. He simply moved in with his wife to his underground home, and seemed perfectly contented. He seldom went out during the daytime, but often might be seen taking an evening walk. My uncle, at that time, had two large Newfoundland puppies, of which Mr. Woods appeared much frightened, and would not cross our