

# A Mountain Story.

How the 'Possums Came to Old Zeb White.

By M. QUAD. (Copyright, 1883.)

"Speakin' 'bout 'possums," said old Zeb White one afternoon as we were tramping over the Cumberland mountains, "but I don't reckon there's no varmint like him. I'd been huntin' 'possums fur ten years, and had killed 'em by the hundred, befo' I found out that a 'possum was a squar' critter. I mean that it's his natur' to do the squar' thing, same as the right sort of man."

I replied that if such a trait existed in any wild animal I had never heard of it, and deemed it a curious thing; and he continued:

"You see, folks don't set out to study animals, and so they don't know. Take a b'ar, fur instance—he hain't got no gratitude about him. One summer's day, ten or twelve years ago, I was sittin' on the shady side of the cabin, when a big b'ar come rollin' down the hill out of the bresh. He'd stepped into a trap which Tom Barnes had set in the woods in the spring and forgot all about it. I reckon that b'ar had dragged that trap around fur weeks, and it must hev bin mighty uncomfortable. He stood thar and looked at me, and I sot thar and looked at him. It bein' summer time and fur no good, I didn't want nuthin' of that b'ar. He wanted sunthin' of me, though. Arter he had looked at me fur about five minits the old woman comes to the doah and says:

"Zeb White, thar's a whoopin' big b'ar out thar."

"Yes."

"He's got a steel trap on his foot, and he's wantin' you to take it off."

"That's jest what that b'ar did want," said Zeb to me, "and his actions showed it so plain that I went out to him. The trap had a chain on it about six feet long, and I went that night to the brute. I got a stick and pried open the jaws of the trap, and that b'ar sot thar and licked the hurt for ten minits befo' walkin' off. He 'peared to be mighty pleased, and me'n the old woman decided that he was the sort of a critter to do us a good turn if it ever come his way. It didn't pan out that way, though."

"How did it come out?"

"Why, the blamed, ongrateful varmint got all well of his hurt by October, and he come back one night and carried off the hog from the pen and tipped over my two bee hives. That was the way he repaid me, and I have never helped another b'ar out of a scrape. The very next summer I found one caught in a holler log and starvin' to death and whinin' fur mercy, but I passed on and left him to die. I'm sayin' that any man who sets out to be squar' with a b'ar will shorly get left."

"How is it with coons?" I asked.

"Wall, a coon is better'n a b'ar, but he's not exactly squar'," was the reply. "One sezum it was so hot and dry that



"The Ungrateful Varmint Carried Off the Hog."

all the co'n around yere 'bout my field was burned up. I had three acres under the hills where the ground was moist, and that co'n come along nicely. 'Bout the time the kernels begun to harden m'n the old woman was lookin' over the field when we run agin 27 coons in a heap. They was on their way into the co'n, and they was pore and weak. Didn't 'pear to me as if they had had anything to eat in a week. I could hev killed 'em all with a club, but the old woman stops me and says:

"Zeb, don't you do it. The fur ain't prime yet, and killin' would be all loss. Let them coons feed up for a month and you'll make money out of it."

"It looked that way to me arter a bit, and we stood aside and let them coons into the co'n. Mo' of 'em kept comin', until, in three or fo' days, it wasn't no trouble to count a hundred of the varmints. They was too pore and weak to git out o' the way at fust, but purty soon they begun to fatten up, and I jest counted that I'd hev coonskins 'nuff to buy me a mewl. That co'n was wuth 30 cents a bushel, but I didn't begrudge it to the coons. I was waitin' and hangin' on till the fur got prime, and them coons knowed it and played me low-down. I was goin' to start out on a Monday and begin killin', but Sunday night the hull drove mad off, leavin' only two lame coons behind, and all I got for their pelts was 20 cents apiece. Arter my co'n was gone not a coon was to be found in the hull county."

"But you discovered that 'possums had gratitude?" I observed, as the old man maintained a sulky silence.

"Wall, I was comin' to that," he replied. "I reckon it was the next summer arter the coons played me that trick that the woods all round yere took fire. Thar was fire on every side of us fur a week, with the smoke so thick sometimes that you could skally

draw breath. Arter a day or two the wild varmints begun to show up in my clearin'. In one afternoon I saw two deer, three b'ars, two wild cats and I dunno how many coons, woodchucks, squirrels, 'possums and rabbits. Some of 'em jest flew across the clearin' into the woods beyond, and some hung around and didn't 'pear to fear me as much as the fire. Bein' down on b'ars and coons I driv 'em along as fast as they showed up, and likely I might hev done the same by the 'possums but fur the old woman. We was out west of the cabin, fightin' fire in the bushes, when she suddenly calls out to me:

"Befo' the Lawd, Zeb White, but I never dun see sich a sight as that over thar!"

"On the trail leadin' down from the spring was a procession of 'possums, all bound fur the clearin' around the



"Could Hev Killed 'Em All With a Club."

cabin. We stood thar till the last one had passed, and then we went down to find 'em in the mewl shed. They was half choked with the smoke, and we could pick 'em up by hand. I started in to count 'em, but give it up at 250. The number was fully fo' hundred, and most of 'em was full grown. I was fur elmbin' 'em along, but the old woman felt to pity the varmints and carried 'em water by the pailful. Them 'possums was with us till a heavy rain fell and drenched out the fire. It was in the mawnin' that they started off, and anybody but a blind man could hev seen they was grateful. They went off up the same trail, and as they passed us they almost spoke right out and said they'd never forgot the favor. Did you ever hear a 'possum purr?"

"No, I never did."

"It's like a cat, only more noise to it. They went past us purrin' and twistin' their tails, and the last of 'em looked back and put in a few extra purrs and twists. I didn't count much on luck, but the old woman stuck to it that sunthin' good would happen, and it come out as she said. That fall thar didn't 'pear to be a coon in all Tennessee, and the price of 'possum hides went up to fo'ty cents apiece. Jest about time the fur got prime and I was goin' to hustle I went out doahs one mawnin' to see a big 'possum standin' thar. In about a minit he begun purrin' and twistin' his tail and coaxin' me to foller him. I sot out, and he led me to a bit o' woods about two miles away which had escaped the summer fire, and right thar I got my reward."

"Find a big bag of gold?" I asked.

"No, sah, but next to it. That 'possum colony was all thar among the holler trees, and in the co'se of a month I got 378 pelts and had money to live on fur a hull year. They was waitin' to be killed to show their gratitude, and one of 'em had been sent to show me the way. It was the biggest 'possum kill ever known in the world, and folks around yere are still talkin' 'bout it. That was 'possum gratitude, sah, and you jest excuse me if I say that between the general run of folks and the general run of 'possums I'll take 'possums every time."

**Easily Explained.**

Mistress—Bridget, I told you I wanted all the eggs for breakfast soft, and several were quite hard.

Bridget—Sure, mum, they were all in to bile the same length of time. Only some of them felt the heat more than others.—Brooklyn Life.

**Sheer Vanity.**

"Why is it that a pretty woman is most successful as a lobbyist?"

"Well—because when a pretty woman talks to a man he somehow gets the idea that she wouldn't waste time on him unless he was tolerably good-looking himself."—Brooklyn Life.

**Letter Perfect.**

Father—What do you mean, by kissing my daughter, sir?

Suitor—Why—er—we were just rehearsing our amateur theatricals, you know.

Father—Well, you seemed to know your lines pretty well.—N. Y. Journal.

**Cruel.**

Cholly—I sing only faw my own amusement, ye know.

Mabel—And does it really amuse you to see other people suffer?—N. Y. Journal.

**A Beautiful One.**

Jaggles—Did he go to an artist to have his black eye painted?

Waggles—I couldn't say, but there's no doubt the fellow who gave him a black eye was an artist.—N. Y. World.

**Received Their Quietus.**

"Has Henpeck any settled opinions?"

"Oh, yes: His wife settles them."—Puck.

# M QUAD'S VEIN OF HUMOR.

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## LAYING OVER THE MAJOR.

There was to be a new postmaster appointed at Golden Hill, and Major Wellman was put forward by the Big Jack Mining Company and hoped to be sure winner. Uncle Ike Whitlock, the field, however, and then both candidates went about with petitions. Each felt that the ten men working the Red Horse claim would settle themselves whichever way they went; so the major went down to see them and took along a plug of tobacco and a pint bottle of whisky for every man, then he had worked things up to the right point, he said:

"Well, boys, you know I want to be postmaster of Golden Hill, and I like to have you sign my petition. I promise to run the office in good shape, if appointed."

"Goin' to put on any style over things?" asked the leader of the boys.

"Not a bit. I shall always be glad to see any of you."

"And free drinks?"

"Well, now and then."

"Won't think you are better'n anybody else if you git the office?"

"Certainly not. You'll find me just as I am now."

The men were almost ready to sign, but thought it would be only fair to hear what Uncle Ike had to say for himself first. A day or two later he came down to see them, and when he heard what the major had done and promised, he said:

"Boys, I didn't bring nuthin' to drink and no terbacker. I was afraid you might think I was tryin' to buy you. As I understand it, Major Wellman says he won't put on no pettishler style if elected."

"That's his promise."

"And he'll treat the crowd over in awhile?"

"He says he will."

"And he won't feel puffed up no more?"

"No."

"Wall, boys, the major is a good man, and I ain't sayin' a word agin' him. I jest want to put a case to you. 'Sposed you ten fellers was up and wanted to put in three or four hours? 'Sposed you was standin' in front of the postoffice, and Major Wellman was lookin' at you? I ain't sayin' he wouldn't step out and ask you to drink with him, but I'm sayin' I'd go a heap further than that myself. Boys, you know my reputation for these parts."

"Of being the biggest liar in the territory?"

"That's it, and right here is the point counts. The major would give you a drink and a hand-shake, but I'd show that door wide open, yell out to the gang to come in, and when I see you all in your chairs, with a pipe in every mouth and a jug on the table, I'd begin to lie about b'ars and wolves and wild-cats and keep it up till every man's b'ar stood up and pushed his hat off. It ain't the postoffice you want to look out for, but for the lyn, and for the bewful evenin's you'll pass with the biggest kind of a liar. Is Major Wellman a liar? Did any man ever hear him lie? Could he cook up a b'ar story to make anybody shiver? Think of these things and make no mistake."

Uncle Ike got the ten names on his list and was duly appointed.

## ONE ON THE CLERK.

Just after the night clerk had come on at the hotel and curled his mustache to his liking, his attention was called to business.

"Kerosene lamp for 237," requested the bell boy.

"Kerosene lamp?" echoed the clerk, as he whirled the register about. "Let me see. Bondly and wife, of Plunkerville, in 237. I thought so. Never been in a first-class hotel before. Go back and show them how to use the electric light. Wonder they didn't send for a tallow candle," and the clerk took several of the corridor loungers into his confidence.

"Lady says if this hotel can't afford a lamp to send up a gas stove, and send it quick," said the bell boy, who had made the round trip in phenomenal time. "She acts pretty hot."

"Pretty cold, I should think. Go back there and open the register, show the lady how to use the water faucets and how to turn off the electricity. Thank the Lord she can't blow it out."

The next word from 237 came with a rush. It was brought by a vision of loveliness, dressed in bewitching style, her face flushed and her blue eyes throwing off sparks. "Make out our bill and receipt it at once," she said, as her dainty foot beat time on the marble tiling.

"But Mrs. Bondly—"

"Attend to my order, sir. Include in your bill a carriage and an express wagon to transfer us and our things, and tell Mr. Bondly when he comes in that he will find us at the other house, where we will spend the rest of the season. Understand, we must go at once. I want to go to a hotel where it will be possible to warm some milk for baby before the little angel starves to death."

Then the loungers had fun with the clerk, and the best he could muster was a sickly grin.

## An Extended Examination.

He—Are you sure I am the only man you ever really and truly loved?

She—Perfectly sure. I went over the whole list only yesterday.—N. Y. Weekly.

## Excellent Advice.

"My boy," said a musician to his son, "don't be too sharp nor be too flat. Just be natural."—Tit-Bits.

# HOME VERSUS HOTEL.

## Dr. Talmage Speaks of the Blessings of the Former.

### Points Out Disadvantages of a Life Spent in Hotels and Boarding Houses—Wholesome Influences of Home.

(Copyright, 1883, by Louis Klopfch.)

Home life versus hotel life is the theme of Dr. Talmage's sermon for today, the disadvantages of a life spent at more or less temporary stopping places being sharply contrasted with the blessings that are found in the real home, however humble. The text is Luke 19:34, 35: "And brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host and said unto him: 'Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more when I come again I will repay thee.'"

This is the good Samaritan paying the hotel bill of a man who had been robbed and almost killed by bandits. The good Samaritan had found the unfortunate on a lonely, rocky road, where to this very day depredations are sometimes committed upon travelers, and had put the injured man into the saddle, while this merciful and well-to-do man had walked till they got to the hotel, and the wounded man was put to bed and cared for. It must have been a very superior hotel in its accommodations, for, though in the country, the landlord was paid at the rate of what in our country would be four or five dollars a day, a penny being then a day's wages, and the two pennies paid in this case about two days' wages. Moreover, it was one of those kind-hearted landlords who are wrapped up in the happiness of their guests, because the good Samaritan leaves the poor wounded fellow to his entire care, promising that when he came that way again he would pay all the bills until the invalid got well.

Hotels and boarding houses are necessities. In very ancient times they were unknown, because the world had comparatively few inhabitants, and those were not much given to travel, and private hospitality met all the wants of sojourners, as when Abraham rushed out at Mamre to invite the three men to sit down to a dinner of veal; as when the people were positively commanded to be given to hospitality; as in many of the places in the east these ancient customs are practiced to-day. But we have now hotels presided over by good landlords, and boarding houses presided over by excellent host or hostess in all neighborhoods, villages and cities, and it is our congratulation that those of our land surpass all other lands. They rightly become the permanent residence of many people, such as those who are without families, such as those whose business keeps them migratory, such as those who ought not for various reasons of health or peculiarity of circumstances to take upon themselves the cares of housekeeping.

Many a man falling sick in one of these boarding houses or hotels has been kindly watched and nursed; and by the memory of her own sufferings and losses the lady at the head of such a house has done all that a mother could do for a sick child, and the slumberless eye of God sees and appreciates her sacrifices in behalf of the stranger. Among the most marvelous cases of patience and Christian fidelity are many of those who keep boarding houses, enduring without resentment the unreasonable demands of their guests for expensive food and attentions for which they are not willing to pay an equivalent—a lot of cranky men and women who are not worthy to tie the shoe of their queeny caterer. The outrageous way in which boarders sometimes act to their landlords and landladies shows that these critical guests had bad early rearing and that in the making up of their natures all that constitutes the gentleman and lady was left out. Some of the most princely men and some of the most elegant women that I know of to-day keep hotels and boarding houses.

But one of the great evils of this day is found in the fact that a large population of our towns and cities are giving up and have given up their homes and taken apartments, that they may have more freedom from domestic duties and more time for social life, and because they like the whirl of publicity better than the quiet and privacy of a residence they can call their own. The lawful use of these hotels and boarding houses is for most people while they are in transitu, but as a terminus they are in many cases demoralization, utter and complete. That is the point at which families innumerable have begun to disintegrate. There never has been a time when so many families, healthy and abundantly able to support and direct homes of their own, have struck tent and taken permanent abode in these public establishments. It is an evil wide as Christendom, and by voice and through the newspaper press I utter warning and burning protest and ask Almighty God to bless the word, whether in the hearing or reading.

In these public caravansaries the demon of gossip is apt to get full sway. All the boarders run daily the gantlet of general inspection—how they look when they come down in the morning and when they get in at night, and what they do for a living, and who they receive as guests in their rooms, and what they wear and what they do not wear, and how they eat, and what they eat, and how much they eat, and how little they eat. If a man proposes in such a place to be isolated and reticent and alone, they will begin to guess about him: Who is he? Where did he come from? How long is he going to stay? Has he paid his board? How much does he pay? Perhaps he has committed

some crime and does not want to be known. There must be something wrong about him, or he would speak. The whole house goes into the detective business. They must find out about him. They must find out about him right away. If he leaves his door unlooked by accident he will find that his rooms have been inspected, his trunk explored, his letters folded differently from the way they were folded when he put them away. Who is he? is the question asked with intense interest until the subject has become a monomania. The simple fact is that he is nobody in particular, but minds his own business.

The best landlords and landladies cannot sometimes hinder their places from becoming a pandemonium of whisperers, and reputations are torn to tatters, and evil suspicions are aroused, and scandals started, and the parliament of the family is blown to atoms by some Guy Fawkes who was not caught in time, as was his English predecessor of gunpowder reputation. The reason is that while in private homes families have so much to keep them busy, in these promiscuous and multitudinous residences there are so many who have nothing to do, and that always makes mischief. They gather in each other's rooms and spend hours in consultation about others. If they had to walk a half mile before they got to the willing ear of some listener to detraction they would be out of breath before reaching there and not feel in full glow of animosity or slander, or might, because of the distance, not go at all. But rooms 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 are on the same corridor, and when one carriage crow goes "Caw! Caw!" all the other crows hear it and flock together over the same carcass. "Oh, I have heard something rich! Sit down and let me tell you all about it." And the first guff-increases the gathering, and it has to be told all over again, and as they separate each carries a spark from the altar of Gub to some other circle until, from the coal heaver in the cellar to the maid in the top room of the garret, all are aware of the defamations, and that evening all who leave the house will bear it to other houses until autumnal fires sweeping across Illinois prairies are less raging and swift than that flame of consuming reputation blazing across the village or city.

Those of us who were brought up in the country know that the old-fashioned hatching of eggs in the haymow required four or five weeks of brooding, but these are new modes of hatching by machinery, which takes less time and do the work by wholesale. So, while the private home may brood into life an occasional falsity, and take a long time to do it, many of the boarding houses and family hotels afford a swifter and more multitudinous style of moral incubation, and one old gossip will get off the nest after one hour's brooding, clucking a flock of 20 lies after her, each one picking up its little worm of juicy regalement. It is no advantage to hear too much about your neighbors, for your time will be so much occupied in taking care of their faults that you will have no time to look after your own. And while you are pulling the chickweed out of their garden, yours will get all overgrown with horse sorrel and mullen stalks.

One of the worst damages that come from the herding of so many people into boarding houses and family hotels is inflicted upon children. It is only another way of bringing them up on the commons. While you have your own private house you can, for the most part, control their companionship and their whereabouts, but by 12 years of age in these public resorts they will have picked up all the bad things that can be furnished by the prurient minds of dozens of people. They will overhear hissophemias and see quarrels and get precocious in sin, and what the bartender does not tell them the porter or hostler or bell boy will.

Besides that, the children will go out into this world without the restraining, anchoring, steady and all controlling memory of a home. From that none of us who have been blessed of such memory have escaped. It grips a man for 80 years, if he lives so long. It pulls him back from doors into which he otherwise would enter. It smites him with contrition in the very midst of his dissipations. As the fish already surrounded by the long wide net swim out to sea, thinking they can go as far as they please, and with gay toss of silvery scale they defy the sportsman on the beach, and after awhile the fishermen begin to draw in the net hand over hand and hand over hand, and it is a long while before the captured fins begin to feel the net, and then they dart this way and that, hoping to get out, but find themselves approaching the shore and are brought up to the very feet of the captors, so the memory of an early home sometimes seems to relax and let men out farther and farther from God and farther and farther from shore—five years, ten years, 20 years, 30 years—but some day they find an irresistible mesh drawing them back, and they are compelled to retreat from their prodigality and wandering, and, though they make desperate effort to escape the impression and try to dive deeper down in sin, afterwards are brought clear back and held upon the Rock of Ages.

If it be possible, oh, father and mother! let your sons and daughters go out into the world under the semi-omnipotent memory of a good, pure home. About your two or three rooms in a boarding house or a family hotel you can cast no such glorious sanctity. They will think of these public caravansaries as an early stopping place, malodorous with old victuals, coffees perpetually steaming and meats in everlasting stew or broil, the air surcharged with carbonic acid and corridors along which drunken boarders come staggering at one o'clock in the morning, rapping at the door till the affrighted wife lets them in. Do not be guilty of the sacrilege or blasphemy of calling such a place a home.

A home is four walls enclosing one family with identity of interest and a privacy from outside inspection so complete that it is a world in itself, no one entering except by permission—bolted and barred and chained against all outside inquisitiveness. The phrase so often used in law books and legal circles is mightily suggestive—every man's house is his castle. As much as though it had drawbridge, portcullis, redoubt, bastion and armed turret. Even the officer of the law may not enter to serve a writ except the door be voluntarily opened unto him. Burglary or the invasion of it is a crime so offensive that the law slashes its iron jaws on anyone who attempts it. Unless it be necessary to stay for longer or shorter time in family hotel or boarding house—and there are thousands of instances in which it is necessary, as I showed you at the beginning—unless this exceptional case, let neither wife nor husband consent to such permanent residence.

The probability is that the wife will have to divide her husband's time with public smoking or reading-room or with some coquetish spider in search of unwary flies, and if you do not entirely lose your husband it will be because he is divinely protected from the disasters that whelmed thousands of husbands with as good intentions as yours. Neither should the husband without imperative reason consent to such a life unless he is sure his wife can withstand the temptation of social dissipation which sweeps across such places with the force of the Atlantic ocean when driven by a September equinox. Many wives give up their homes for these public residences so that they may give their entire time to operas, theaters, balls, receptions and levees, and they are in a perpetual whirl, like a whiptop spinning round and round and round very prettily, until it loses its equipoise and shoots off into a tangent. But the difference is, in one case it is a top and in the other a soul.

Besides this there is an assiduous accumulation of little things around the private home, which in the aggregate make a great attraction, while the denizen of one of these public residences is apt to say: "What is the use? I have no place to keep them if I should take them." Mementos, bric-a-brac, curiosities, quaint chair or cozy lounge, upholsteries, pictures and a thousand things that accrete in a home are discarded or neglected because there is no homestead in which to arrange them. And yet they are the case in which the pearl of domestic happiness is set. You can never become as attached to the appointments of a boarding house or family hotel as to those things that you can call your own and are associated with the different members of your household or with scenes of thrilling import in your domestic history. Blessed is that home in which for a whole lifetime they have been gathered until every figure in the carpet and every panel of the door and every easement of the window has a biography of its own, speaking out something about father or mother or son or daughter or friend that was with us awhile. What a sacred place it becomes when one can say: "In that room such a one was born; in that bed such a one died; in that chair I sat on the night I heard such a one had received a great public honor; by that stool my child knelt for her last evening prayer; here I sat to greet my son as he came back from sea voyage; that was father's cane; that was mother's rocking chair." What a joyful and pathetic congress of reminiscences!

The public residence of hotel and boarding house abolishes the grace of hospitality. Your guest does not want to come to such a table. No one wants to run such a gambit of acute and merciless hypercriticism. Unless you have a home of your own you will not be able to exercise the best rewarded of all the graces. For exercise of this grace what blessing came to the Shunammite in the restoration of her son to life because she entertained Elisha, and to the widow of Zarephath in the perpetual oil well of the miraculous cruse because she fed a hungry prophet, and to Rahab in the preservation of her life at the demolition of Jericho because of his entertainment of Jacob, and to Lot in his rescue from the destroyed city because of his entertainment of the angels, and to Mary and Martha and Zacharias in spiritual blessing because they entertained Christ, and to Publius in the island of Melita in the healing of his father because of the entertainment of Paul, drenched from the shipwreck, and of innumerable houses throughout Christendom upon which have come blessings from generation to generation because their doors swung easily open in the enlarging, ennobling, irradiating and divine grace of hospitality. I do not know what your experience has been, but I have had men and women visiting at my home who left a benediction on every room—in the blessing they asked at the table, in the prayer they offered at the family altar, in the good advice they gave the children, in the gentleness that looked out from every lineament of their countenances, and their departure was the sword of bereavement. The queen of Norway, Sweden and Denmark had a royal cup of ten curves, or lips, each one having on it the name of the distinguished person who had drunk from it. And that cup which we offer to others in Christian hospitality, though it be of the plainest earthenware, is a royal cup, and God can read on all sides the names of those who have taken from it refreshment, but all this is impossible unless you have a home of your own.

It is the delusion as to what is necessary for a home that hinders so many from establishing one. Thirty rooms are not necessary, nor 20, nor 15, nor ten, nor five, nor three. In the right way plant a table, and couch, and knife, and fork, and a cup, and a chair, and you can raise a young paradise. Just start a home on however small a scale, and it will grow.