

## A NIGHT AT OLD MAN YORK'S.

Talk about tough times, you will not know what tough times are until you spend a night at old man York's. He lives about midway between Paris and Versailles and consequently a great many are compelled to stay all night with him. It was just sundown as we drove up in front of the house. Tom said he guessed it was a grand case, we could stay, or else drive all night and so he said we might as well get out and make the best of it. So we had our team put up and went in and took seats on the porch. The house stood in a clearing and a very woody garden flanked it on one side and a tough looking wood pile on the other. The house was built on blocks and stood two or three feet from the ground, leaving a very roomy space underneath. The soil around the York place was of the white sand variety and looked too bare to raise sand bars. Six or eight tow headed children were playing around in the sand and the moment they saw us, they one and all left off play and came and stood in a half circle around us, and with fingers in mouth and eyes wide stretched they subjected us to a cold critical examination. Their ages ranged all the way from three or four up to thirteen or fourteen, and they seemed to regard us nearly as good as a circus. One of the smaller ones said, "you Bun, quit crowdin me or I'll tell Ma, make Dad quit crowdin me he wants to keep me from lookin at the strangers." Ma was compelled to make a demonstration with a pine shiver before this outbreak could be quelled. We noticed an unusual number of hogs and sheats in and about the house but we paid no attention at the time. A little later on we were very forcibly reminded of them. Several lean, hungry looking does of the half cur, half hound variety were stretched around on the porch, and regarded us with anything but amiable looks. Mr. York came out and shook hands all around and invited us into supper, which consisted of an abundance of apple butter, pumpkin pies, peach preserves, fried chicken, sweet milk and coffee. We done ample justice to everything and after the dishes were nearly all empty, we strolled out on the porch and lit a couple of cigars. Tom handed one to Mr. York, which filled that gentleman with gratification, and after he had puffed away awhile with undisguised relish he became very talkative and proposed to give us a history of all the country about and especially of some of his neighbors. "Now there's them Yates's if there ain't sompin done with 'em, they are going to take the country," here Mr. York paused and discharged a volley of tobacco juice at one of the dogs, with merriment. "These Old Mell Yates when he come to this strip of timber he said there's nothin and no prospects of pitting it. He pitched in and got married and raised a whole pack of children and now he thinks he's got a mortgage on the whole strip of creation and has a derned big notion to foreclose. You'll see an aridan round over the country on his little, old pony and to look at 'em a body would think he owned more than God Almighty himself. Yes, if there ain't sompin done with them Yates they are going to take the country show. They are settin up all the way in the country an buyin up all the land, an a tryin to drive a cryin' cry out into the woods. A body just naturally have to rise up some night an massacre the whole blooded match of 'em," to emphasize this remark he brought his foot down with a resounding thump and happened to strike one of the dogs, whereupon it set up a dismal howl and jumping up in a rage Mr. York seized a club and roused the whole squadron of dogs. We seized this opportunity to plead fatigue and requested Mr. York to show us to our room for the night. Mr. York showed us into a room just back of the porch. The floor was what we called a punchon floor being rough pine slabs split out the length of the room and fastened down with big spike nails. The furniture consisted of a big wide rough bedstead, a couple of chairs and a clothes press. Mr. York set the candle down on the press and said "Well here you are gentlemen its you and the bugs for it from now 'til day light, if they get the best of you, why just holler and I'll come in and take a hand," with that he left us and went out on the porch. Tom and I un-dressed and blowing out the light crawled under the cover and prepared to go to sleep. The bed tick had been stuffed with corn shucks and every time we turned over the corn shucks rattled loud enough to be heard a hundred yards. It had been growing colder and colder as the evening closed in and the chilling November wind swept round the house mournfully. Mr. York, Mrs. York and the children gathered around and scraps of the conversation reached us from time to time. All we could hear was, "Old Yates," "sompin another done with 'em," "goin to take the country," etc. Bye and bye the candles began dropping off to bed, and Mr. and Mrs. York were finally left alone. At last they too retired for the night and Mr. York continued the conversation about Old Yates in a horse whisper.

In the meantime we had become aware of other lodgers about the house. As the winds grew colder and colder the hogs began to accumulate under the house for protection from the cold. The bottom of the house had been boarded up on three sides leaving the back part open, and the hogs had commenced gathering by tens and twenties and crowding up towards the front end near the fire place. The first arrivals got the best places and those that came later commenced crowding and then the trouble began. An old timer would start out to root her way up to the fire place and the squeals, grunts and whoof, whoofs became deafening. The music ranged all the way from the shrill tenor of the six weeks old pig to the hoarse bass of the veteran of five or six years. The uproar finally became deafening and the dust commenced rising through the floor in clouds. Finally Old York jumped out of bed and shouted "Blast them hogs, here Bose, here Tigz take 'em," and catching up a red hot poker from the fire place he opened the door and sallied out. The dogs seemed to be well trained and dashing under the house they made a furious attack on the hogs. Each dog seized a sheat and backed out with him and then went back for another while Old York stood in front of the opening and each hog that came out a resounding whack with the poker, accompanying each blow with a scathing malediction. The hogs all tried to get out at once and the uproar shook the whole house. As soon as they were all out Mr. York and the dogs came back in the house and quiet reigned once more. We were just dosing on to sleep when the hogs commenced coming back again, in a short time they were all back and the music was in full blast. Some old porker would get his back up against the floor and

the floor would be raised several inches while the crowding and fighting made everything tremble. "Blast them hogs," said Old York, jumping out of bed and seizing the poker, "I'll fix 'em," and throwing open the door and calling the dogs he sallied out and started in on the hogs. In a few minutes he had routed the whole outfit, and peace reigned once more. The old man had no sooner got back in the house and in bed than the hogs were back with heavy reinforcements. What had been before was nothing to the uproar that now followed. "They're coming through sure this time," said Tom, and indeed it did seem as though they were by the way the floor cracked. The old man stood it as long as he could, but finally it became unbearable and he made another sally with the dogs. The fleas now began to bite and gathered in flocks. Every few minutes Tom would run his hand down under the cover and deliver several resounding slaps. "Just stick your head under the cover a minute, Marrens," said Tom, "and listen to the fleas, it sounds like a swarm of bees." And sure enough it did. By this time the hogs had to be driven out again and so on all right. Sleep was out of the question, and a more miserable night I never spent. Mr. York and the dogs took cat naps between sallies and the fleas kept up active operations all during the night. At day break we could stand it no longer and making a hasty toilet we beat a retreat to the front room. Mr. York had built up a roaring fire in the fire place and Mrs. York was bustling round in the kitchen getting breakfast. The hogs had all dispersed and the dogs were stretched around the hearth enjoying a much needed rest after the troubles of the night before. The sizzling and frying in the kitchen denoted that the breakfast was progressing, and the clatter of dishes and rattlings of knives and forks grew louder and louder as time passed.

Mrs. York, finally, concluded that she needed help and shouted, "You Jody, O; Jody" get up an help your mother git breakfast." A sound as if some one turning over in the next room was the only result of this call and after waiting a few minutes Mrs. York made another demonstration, "You Jody air you a comin? or shall I have to come in there an hit you?" still no answer. "I'll hev to come in there I'll fetch you, I'll assure you." No results. By this time Mrs. York's patience was evidently failing and jerking open the kitchen door she passed through the sitting room like a cyclone. She had her shirts tucked up and a pine shiver in her hand and opening a back room door she passed in and closed the door. Tom was delighted beyond expression at this little episode and we both listened intently in order to hear what passed. As the door closed behind Mrs. York we heard several resounding whacks and a loud thump announced the arrival of some body's bare feet on the floor. Pretty soon Mrs. York came back looking a little flurid as though she had been making violent exertion. We expected to see a big chunk of a boy come out of the bed room, but judge of our astonishment when instead of a boy a strapping big girl eighteen or nineteen years old came out, carrying her shoes in her hand. Giving us a sheepish, "Howdy strangers," she walked out on the porch and took a heavy dip of snuff. This operation was somewhat prolonged and Mrs. York finally made her entrance in the kitchen door again, and inquired in a shrill

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