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Memoirs of Harriett F Switzer - 06 March, 1884

Harriet F. Switzer

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Chickens & Snakes. September 184 -

When I was a wee child the thrilling tale of Clucky
Lucky, Henry penny & Cocky Locky gave me a
great longing to own some of the dear, fluffy
things & I was sure I would dare for them very
tenderly so that they would not be so afraid
that the sky was going to fall upon them -
but since becoming more intimately acquainted
with their descendants, I find they arouse my
ine more than my love. I have just been having
a session with a hen that wants to set, of all
perverse mortals the most perverse - She of all
evening I caught her twice at the risk of breaking
my head, dashing under perches in the chicken house,
back of barrels knocking myself generally upon
projecting boards that in my haste I did not
notice. After all this programme had been gone
through & she shut in a barrel with several good
sticks over the top, she was on the nest again in the
morning & greeted me with an insulting "chuck chuck"
she had two more struggles but I think I now
have her where she can't escape. She little knows
how nearly she has been turned into a roast
on account of her perverseness. Our chicken
house has solid back & sides but the front
is open, made of uprights about an inch
& a half apart. A few evenings ago
Richard reported having seen a large
moccasin which he had tried to get, but it
had slipped under the hen house. The "Boss"
said "Keep a sharp look out for him & shoot
him, I don't like those things up here" Alas!
he was not caught that evening & when I went
to the chicken house next morning, a sad
sight met my eyes. On the floor lay nearly
a dozen of my beautiful young broilers &
near by, the disgusting snake, so corpulent
from swallowing two or three chicks that -
altho' he had been able to enter between

the bars, he was too large after his meal to get out. He was comatose & was easily dispatched. My poor little bewiters had been on a lower perch and being frightened, fluttered about & were struck at by the snake. That evening when roosting time came, the rooster went as far as the door, looked in, gave a warning sound, & all the fowls turned & made for the trees, afraid to go into the house. It took three of us at least an hour of patient work to corral them & this had to be repeated for several nights. They seemed not to be able to forget their Irish visitor.

To the colored boy, "Taylor" I said one day "Chickens" "Yasson" Taylor reappeared, "Well, did you count them?" "Yassin, I count em wey one cef the other while hee & she done flew round so yas, couldn't count hee."

Celia is apt to stutter if she is much excited. I heard her one day about sun set, making a peculiar noise, & going to investigate, found her with head out of the kitchen window, pointing her finger towards the grove at West of house, & struggling to say something. Woods were unnecessary however, for coming towards us was a large Rattlesnake. - I ran for the gun & Russell shot at it. It coiled like a lash, shooting out its venomous tongue, then turned away a little towards the path; two more shots were fired but we could not tell whether any of them had taken effect. I followed him at a very respectful distance down the pathway at the side of which was a large

penish heap. Just as he neared his goal, he fell
dearly rose straight in the air on the tip of his tail,
as stiff as a beam rod, balanced a moment
& then fell over without a quiver. I must con-
fess that I fled as soon as I saw him rise, he
looked so enormous, & or I was sure he was going
to turn & come after me, so I sought the refuge
of the house. When Richard came in we found
that Russell had hit him such fine, pretty good
for a man who had been ill! ^{I have 7 volumes of beautiful}
and I am a little worried about the weather.
People tell us that there is going to be a Florida
Storm, & if so, it would be good bye to all the little
chiefs, the rains come in such a deluge. Five
years have passed say the wisacres, & a storm
is due. It rains & blows they say, as if heaven
& earth were coming together & lasts about three
days & nights. All one can do is just to take up
rugs, take down shades, shut the shutters & submit
to circumstances, as the rain gets in where ever
there is the slightest possibility. The wind, I believe
has never done any serious damage to houses, but
throws off new shoots & young fruit & in that way
causes great loss. The wind has gone down a
good deal, & I don't believe the predicted storm is
coming this time.

We have had another letter from that old
peck, dame Russell, in which she says the place
can be had by putting the money in the bank.
My poor boy has spent every day up to Thursday
going to Orlando to see the lawyer & the friend
of the dame, to whom she gave the deed, & it turns
out now that Major Russell only willed the place
to her & the lawyer thinks it would be not be

safe to buy on that security, but to have a quit
claim deed made & signed by all the six heirs,
making all sure & preventing any legal quibble
that might arise, so the old woman will have
plenty of time to change her mind again -

The doctor & woman has upset Russell, & he
has been very miserable for some days. My
mind though be set at rest by the comforting
remarks of a young Cracker who came in
this morning - "Now, don't yer worry none
this' Switzer. The trouble for Switzer is sufferin'
from is a kind an bilious fever that will
work off. It begins in the head & kind in
works down, when it gets to the back its plumb
bad, but it'll go on down & out of his feet."
I sincerely hope it will go out of his feet soon!