

he ate he thought that if he had had the ordering of his retreat he would have failed, apparently, to excel Pocohasset. He glanced admiringly at the scenery, gazed in delight about the room, at the oak panellings darkened with age, at the enormous fire-place with its quaintly fashioned and brightly polished brass and irons; the tinkling of a cow-bell came stealing up from the valley below, while the air seemed filled with comfort and rest. He found Phyllis even more pleasing than the scenery and discovered that she had more than a superficial knowledge of some subjects he was interested in. That meal occupied a very long time; in fact he felt he should apologize for having delayed her so long, urging as an excuse that he had enjoyed himself so much that he had taken but little account of the time and was secretly pleased when she told him, without the slightest sign of coquetry, that she was in a similar predicament herself.

Then he strolled out on to the verandah and took possession of one of the big chairs. All the loungers, who had formed such an interested audience upon his arrival, had departed and Mr. Van Hasset, gazing languidly into the distance, was the only occupant.

"Sit down, young tellar," was the cordial greeting he gave Delancy. "I suppose you smoke, all you city tellars do," and he produced a cigar which Delancy accepted and found, to his surprise, that it was better than his own. As Pocohasset was the most natural subject for conversation, Delancy availed himself of it and remarked that it was a very pretty place. Mr. Van Hasset assented to this and plunged at once into the natural advantages of Pocohasset as compared with those of Blinksville, Sandytown and Melissa, from which Delancy inferred that either Pocohasset was a very fortunate village or that the inhabitants of the other places were more accustomed to the sackcloth and ashes of life than to the olive garments.

"I tell you what," said Mr. Van Hasset, giving his chair a hitch nearer Delancy's, "this is a place that could be made the finest summer resort in America."

"There are some nice farms around here, are there not?" enquired Delancy.

"There are;" answered Mr. Van Hasset. "We've some of the best farming land in the country right about Pocohasset. There's the 'Undivided farm,' just as good a bit of land as there is in this state or any other state."

"'Undivided farm,'" repeated Delancy, "that is a queer name!"

"Tain't no queerer than its history," replied Mr. Van Hasset. "I'll tell it to you if you like."

"I would like to hear it."

Mr. Van Hasset flicked the ashes from his cigar and straightened himself into a more comfortable position. "It has a history," he began, "and it ain't a common one either. It was about 1830 when my grandfather settled in these parts and built his log cabin right where this house stands. He was accompanied by another settler named Caleb Polk, whose house stands half a mile up the road. Both of them had large grants of land from the Government and they had each bought several hundred acres more. The country then was nothing but one big forest. Grandfather's claim ran straight back a mile and a half from the town line road, a facing on it, and Polk's was also supposed to be a mile and a half deep but facing on another road that runs through the town. In this way, you see, the two grants were located back to back. They'd been living longside each other for a good many years before they thought of getting the line surveyed between them. They got a surveyor and he went to work and measured and measured. When he had finished he made out a plan and handed it to them. One side of the plan was painted yellow—that was grandfather's—and the other was painted green—that was Polk's. But right in the middle there was a red strip that reached right across the two claims, probably one hundred and twenty acres in all.

'What's that red piece?' asked grandfather, and old Polk he wanted to know too.

'Well, gentlemen,' says the surveyor, 'I will explain it to you. The land which you see marked red is common property and belongs to both of you; at least you have both got deeds that give it to you.'