

WHAT CAME OUT OF IT?

BY EDWARD P. SLACK.

The stage rattled down the main street of Pocohasset with its usual din and clatter and accompaniment of barking dogs, blessed with a rare exercise of vocal powers, and drew up with a greatly exaggerated display of celerity at the door of the Pocohasset inn. The loungers in the red cane-bottomed chairs gazed interestedly at the only passenger and the only passenger, conscious of his loneliness, awkwardly returned the stare. He had never been stage-struck before and as he sat on the rear seat of the Pocohasset stage, at least in a stage if not upon one, he realized that it was a very unpleasant feeling. He was finding the awkwardness, so suddenly thrust upon him, decidedly embarrassing when one of the occupants of the cane-bottomed chairs, after evidently some effort, rose and approached the stage.

"How-do, stranger," he said, as he rested one foot on the hub of the near hind wheel, "how-do. Going to stop?"

It was only then that his momentary fit of shyness, so unaccountable passed away and he reflected that as he had come a couple of hundred miles for the purpose of stopping it perhaps might be a good idea to begin at once. So he sprang briskly to the verandah.

"Come in, come in," said the man, whom he judged to be Jacob Van Hasset, a gentleman described in the guide book with which he had armed himself, as the sole proprietor of the Pocohasset house, "a first-class hotel, with an unapproachable table, mountain air and fishing. Inside the house there were more red chairs, untenanted, however, a counter, and behind that a show-case filled with cigar boxes, mostly empty. "I wonder," thought the passenger, "if he bought those cigars from a Pilgrim Father drummer." He looked at the box closely. "Columbus brand. They are even older than I thought."

Mr. Van Hasset retired behind the

counter and after some trouble succeeded in finding the hotel register beneath it. When he brought it out, covered with dust, the young man shuddered. All the way up from the railway station in the valley below he had been going into ecstasies over the scenery and as the stage tore down the street he had convinced himself that he had found the very thing he wanted, a perfect idling place, where there would be nothing to concern one but the blue sky, the green fields, the frowning mountains, verdant woods, and, chief of all, a good dinner and a good bed. Nature had abundantly satisfied his demands; would the baser, but much more necessary accessories so amply fill his requirements? Truly, the stage-driver had told him that "the 'commodations to Jake Van Hasset's are nigh on perfect," but he found it hard to reconcile this statement and the condition of the register, which shewed that it was some time since it had last been used. Mr. Van Hasset having removed some of the surplus dust and found the proper page, turned the book around and the stranger, glancing at it, saw that the last name had been written under the date of May 14th, while it was now August 3rd. His heart went down another foot nearer his boots and he felt his expectations slowly oozing away. Mr. Van Hasset was then searching for a pen.

"Haven't you had any arrivals since last May," he queried.

"Well," answered Mr. Van Hasset, cheerfully, "travel has not been over and above good this year. But the register don't tell. We only use it for people we don't know. Most folks that stop with us comes from round abouts and as we known 'em they don't need no book."

"So that it is only an introductory medium to the people not known to you?"

"That is 'bout it. Then the law per