

EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY BY H.E. SMITH

A TRANSACTION IN STOCKS

In answer to his questions the Judge always talked learnedly about the geological formation, the various strata to be gone through, and would describe with great minuteness the machinery used, until his bewildered listener thought digging oil wells a very deep business. So it was. Altogether too deep for Silas.

One day in the early autumn Silas came home with a new idea in his head. He had been talking with the Judge, and that great man had told him the company were on the eve of striking oil – a story Silas had frequently heard before, but this time a sudden thought came to him. He would go to Pennsylvania and look for himself. He mentioned the project to Maria, and, to his surprise, she agreed with him.

“I don’t know what made me do it either,” she said afterward, talking to a neighbor when Silas had gone. “It is only throwing good money after the bad.”

Nevertheless she did so agree, and went hard to work to get her husband in trim for the journey. He, the mean-while, worked steadily to secure money for the purpose, and then, resplendent in blue brass-buttoned swallow-tail, drab trousers and tall hat, with the certificates snugly placed inside a breast-pocket, departed. The exact locality of the well he did not know. He understood it was somewhere near the city of P-----, and thitherward he journey, feeling confident that the “Great Union Petroleum Oil Company” could easily be found.

Silas reached P----- the next evening and found it a lively place, made up chiefly of refineries, derricks, barrels and speculators; and, like a wise man, he went immediately to a hotel and ate a hearty supper and then went to bed. On the following morning he was ready for business; and on that morning, too, came the tide that led him on to fortune.

When he passed out into the street after breakfast he found everybody talking about “the great strike” of the preceding night. It seemed that a new company, composed of Eastern men, had been boring for oil for some time past, and with no prospect of success.

Just as they were about giving up, and considering the money invested as money lost, then it was fortune smiled upon them.

**Register of Deeds
Judy Lambert
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