he commented, putting the man's name and the amount in a little book. Thorpe went out, after leaving his name for the time book, enlightened as to the method of obtaining supplies. He promised himself some warm clothing from the van, when he should have worked out the necessary credit.

At supper he learned something else—that he must not talk at table. A moment's reflection taught him the common sense of the rule. For one thing, supper was a much briefer affair than it would have been had every man felt privileged to take his will in conversation; not to speak of the absence of noise and the presence of peace. Each man asked for what he wanted.

"Please pass the beans," he said with the deliberate intonation of a man who does not expect that his request will be granted.

Besides the beans were fried salt pork, boiled potatoes, canned corn, mince pie, a variety of cookies and doughnuts, and strong green tea. Thorpe found himself eating ravenously of the crude fare.

That evening he underwent a catechism, a few practical jokes, which he took good-naturedly, and a vast deal of chaffing. At nine the lights were all out. By daylight he and a dozen other men were at work, hewing a road that had to be as smooth and level as a New York boulevard.

CHAPTER SIX

THORPE and four others were set to work on this road, which was to be cut through a creek bottom leading, he was told, to "seventeen." The figures meant nothing to him. Later, each number came to possess an individuality of its own. He learned to use a double-bitted axe.

Thorpe's intelligence was of the practical sort that wonderfully helps experience. He watched closely one of the older men, and analyzed the relation borne by each one of his movements to the object in view. In a short time he perceived that one hand and arm are mere continuations of the helve, attaching the blade of the axe to the shoulder of the wielder; and that the other hand directs the stroke. He acquired the knack thus of throwing the bit of steel into the gash as though it were a baseball on the end of a string; and so accomplished power. By experiment he learned just when to slide the guiding hand down the helve; and so gained accuracy. He suffered none of those accidents so common to new choppers. His axe did not twist itself from his hands, nor glance to cut his foot. He attained the method of the double bit, and how to knock roots

by alternate employment of the edge and flat. In a few days his hands became hard and used to the cold.

From shortly after daylight he worked. Four other men bore him company, and twice Radway himself came by, watched their operations for a moment, and moved on without comment. After Thorpe had caught his second wind, he enjoyed his task, proving a certain pleasure in the ease with which he handled his tool.

At the end of an interminable period, a faint, musical halloo swelled, echoed, and died through the forest, beautiful as a spirit. It was taken up by another voice and repeated. Then by another. Now near at hand, now far away it rang as hollow as a bell. The sawyers, the swampers, the skidders, and the team men turned and put on their heavy blanket coats.

Down on the road Thorpe heard it too, and wondered what it might be.

"Come on, Bub! she means chew!" explained old man Heath kindly. Old man Heath was a veteran woodsman who had come to swamping in his old age. He knew the game thoroughly, but could never save his "stake" when Pat McGinnis, the saloon man, enticed him in. Throughout the morning he had kept an eye on the newcomer, and was secretly pleased in his heart of the professional at the readiness with which the young fellow learned.

Thorpe resumed his coat, and fell in behind the little procession. After a short time he came upon a horse and sledge. Beyond it the cookee had built a little camp fire, around and over which he had grouped big fifty-pound lard-tins, half full of hot things to eat. Each man, as he approached, picked up a tin plate and cup from a pile near at hand.

The cookee was plainly master of the situation. He issued peremptory orders. When Erickson, the blonde Swede, attempted surreptitiously to appropriate a doughnut, the youth turned on him savagely.

"Get out of that, you big tow-head!" he cried with an oath.

A dozen Canada jays, fluffy, impatient, perched near by or made little short circles over and back. They awaited the remains of the dinner. Bob Stratton and a devil-may-care giant by the name of Nolan constructed a joke wherewith to amuse the interim. They cut a long pole, and placed it across a log and through a bush, so that one extremity projected beyond the bush. Then diplomacy won a piece of meat from the cookee. This they nailed to the end of the pole by means of a pine sliver. The Canada jays gazed on the morsel with covetous eyes. When the men had retired, they swooped. One big fellow arrived first, and lit in defiance of the rest.

"Give it to 'im!" whispered Nolan, who had been watching.

Bob hit the other end of the pole a mighty whack

with his ax. The astonished jay, projected straight upward by the shock, gave a startled squawk and cut a hole through the air for the tall timber. Stratton and Nolan went into convulsions of laughter.

"Get at it!" cried the cookee, as though setting a pack of dogs on their prey.

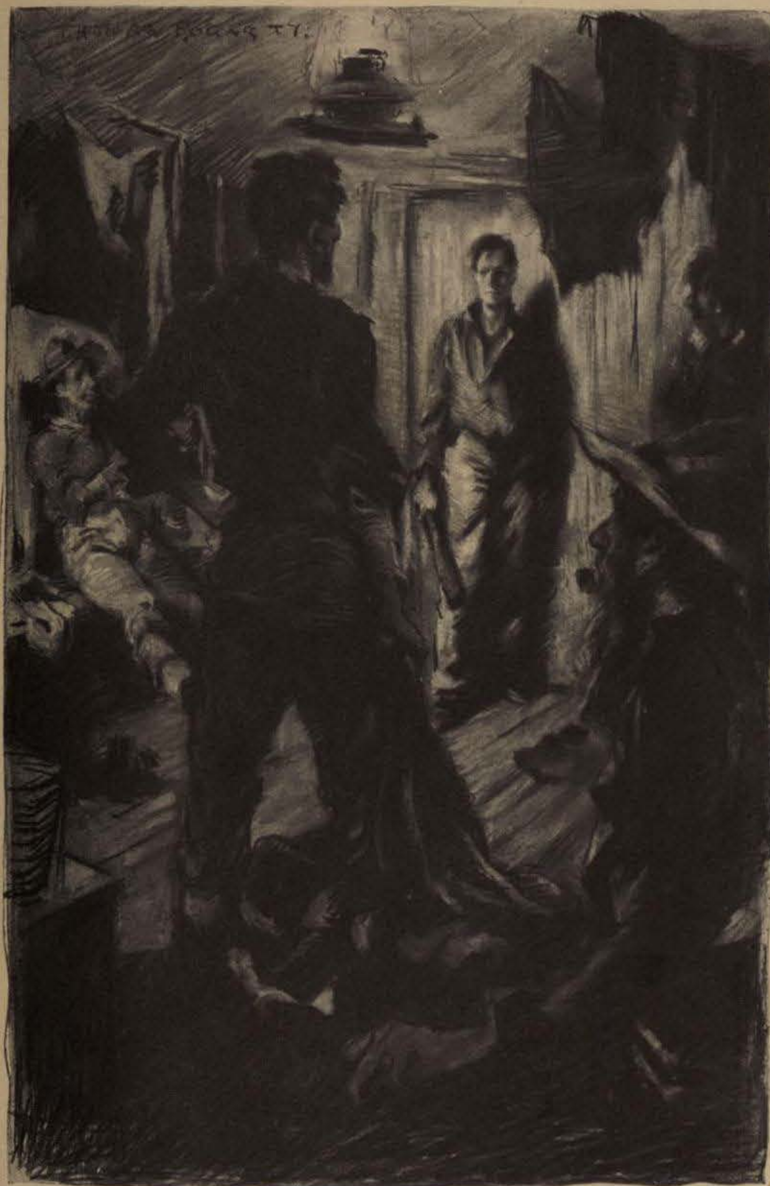
The men ate, perched in various attitudes and places. Thorpe found it difficult to keep warm. The violent exercise had heated him through, and now the north country cold penetrated to his bones. He huddled close to the fire, and drank hot tea, but it did not do him very much good. In his secret mind he resolved to buy one of the blanket mackinaws that very evening. He began to see that the costumes of each country have their origin in practicality.

That evening he picked out one of the best. As he was about to inquire the price, Radway drew the van book toward him, inquiring:

"Let's see; what's the name?"

In an instant Thorpe was charged on the book with three dollars and a half, although his work that day had earned him less than a dollar. On his way back to the men's shanty he could not help thinking how easy it would be for him to leave the next morning two dollars and a half ahead. He wondered if this method of procedure obtained in all the camps.

The newcomer's first day of hard work had tired



Thorpe at the first hostile movement sprang back to the door

him completely. He was ready for nothing so much as his bunk. But he had forgotten that it was Saturday night. His status was still to assure.

They began with a few mild tricks. Shuffle the Brogan followed Hot Back. Thorpe took all of it good-naturedly. Finally a tall individual with a thin white face, a reptilian forehead, reddish hair, and long baboon arms, suggested tossing in a blanket. Thorpe looked at the low ceiling, and declined.

"I'm with the game as long as you say, boys," said he, "and I'll have as much fun as anybody, but that's going too far for a tired man."

The reptilian gentleman let out a string of oaths whose meaning might be translated, "We'll see about that!"

Thorpe was a good boxer, but he knew by now the lumber-jack's method of fighting—anything to hurt the other fellow. And in a genuine old-fashioned knock-down-and-drag-out rough-and-tumble your woodsman is about the toughest customer to handle you will be likely to meet. He is brought up on fighting. Nothing pleases him better than to get drunk and, with a few companions, to embark on an earnest effort to "clean out" a rival town. And he will accept cheerfully punishment enough to kill three ordinary men. It takes one of his kind really to hurt him.

Thorpe, at the first hostile movement, sprang back to the door, seized one of the three-foot billets of

hardwood intended for the stove, and faced his opponents.

"I don't know which of you boys is coming first," said he quietly, "but he's going to get it good and plenty."

If the affair had been serious, these men would never have recoiled before the mere danger of a stick of hardwood. The American woodsman is afraid of nothing human. But this was a good-natured bit of foolery, a test of nerve, and there was no object in getting a broken head for that. The reptilian gentleman alone grumbled at the abandonment of the attack, mumbling something profane.

"If you hanker for trouble so much," drawled the unexpected voice of old Jackson from the corner, "mebbe you could put on th' gloves."

The idea was acclaimed. Somebody tossed out a dirty torn old set of buckskin boxing gloves.

The rest was farce. Thorpe was built on the true athletic lines, broad, straight shoulders, narrow flanks, long, clean, smooth muscles. He possessed, besides, that hereditary toughness and bulk which no gymnasium training will ever quite supply. The other man, while powerful and ugly in his rushes, was clumsy and did not use his head. Thorpe planted his hard straight blows at will. In this game he was as manifestly superior as his opponent would probably have been had the rules permitted kicking, gouging, and wrestling. Finally he saw his

opening and let out with a swinging pivot blow. The other picked himself out of a corner, and drew off the gloves. Thorpe's status was assured.

A Frenchman took down his fiddle and began to squeak. In the course of the dance old Jackson and old Heath found themselves together, smoking their pipes of Peerless.

"The young feller's all right," observed Heath; "he cuffed Ben up to a peak all right."

"Went down like a peck of wet fish-nets," replied Jackson tranquilly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IN the office shanty one evening about a week later, Radway and his scaler happened to be talking over the situation. The scaler, whose name was Dyer, slouched back in the shadow, watching his great honest superior as a crafty, dainty cat might watch the blunderings of a St. Bernard. When he spoke, it was with a mockery so subtle as quite to escape the perceptions of the lumberman. Dyer had a precise little black mustache whose ends he was constantly twisting into points, black eyebrows, and long effeminate black lashes. You would have expected his dress in the city to be just a trifle flashy, not enough so to be loud, but sinning as to the trifles of good taste. The two men conversed in short elliptical sentences, using many technical terms.

"That 'seventeen' white pine is going to underrun," said Dyer. "It won't skid over three hundred thousand."

"It's small stuff," agreed Radway, "and so much the worse for us; but the Company'll stand in on it because small stuff like that always over-runs on the mill-cut."

The scaler nodded comprehension.

"When you going to dray-haul that Norway across Pike Lake?"

"To-morrow. She's springy, but the books say five inches of ice will hold a team, and there's more than that. How much are we putting in a day, now?"

"About forty thousand."

Radway fell silent.

"That's mighty little for such a crew," he observed at last, doubtfully.

"I always said you were too easy with them. You got to drive them more."

"Well, it's a rough country," apologized Radway, trying, as was his custom, to find excuses for the other party as soon as he was agreed with in his blame, "there's any amount of potholes; and, then, we've had so much snow the ground ain't really froze underneath. It gets pretty soft in some of them swamps. Can't figure on putting up as much in this country as we used to down on the Muskegon."

The scaler smiled a thin smile all to himself behind the stove. Big John Radway depended so much on the moral effect of approval or disapproval by those with whom he lived. It amused Dyer to withhold the timely word, so leaving the jobber to flounder between his easy nature and his sense of what should be done.

Dyer knew perfectly well that the work was behind, and he knew the reason. For some time the men had been relaxing their efforts. They had worked honestly enough, but a certain snap and vim had lacked. This was because Radway had been too easy on them.

Your true lumber-jack adores of all things in creation a man whom he feels to be stronger than himself. If his employer is big enough to drive him, then he is willing to be driven to the last ounce of his strength. But once he gets the notion that his "boss" is afraid of, or for, him or his feelings or his health, he loses interest in working for that man. So a little effort to lighten or expedite his work, a little leniency in excusing the dilatory finishing of a job, a little easing-up under stress of weather, are taken as so many indications of a desire to conciliate. And conciliation means weakness every time. Your lumber-jack likes to be met front to front, one strong man to another. As you value your authority, the love of your men, and the completion of your work, keep a bluff brow and an unbending singleness of purpose.

Radway's peculiar temperament rendered him liable to just this mistake. It was so much easier for him to do the thing himself than to be harsh to the point of forcing another to it, that he was inclined to take the line of least resistance when it came to a question of even ordinary diligence. He sought

often in his own mind excuses for dereliction in favor of a man who would not have dreamed of seeking them for himself. A good many people would call this kindness of heart. Perhaps it was; the question is a little puzzling. But the facts were as stated.

Thorpe had already commented on the feeling among the men, though, owing to his inexperience, he was not able to estimate its full value. The men were inclined to a semi-apologetic air when they spoke of their connection with the camp. Instead of being honored as one of a series of jobs, this seemed to be considered as merely a temporary halting-place in which they took no pride, and from which they looked forward in anticipation or back in memory to better things.

"Old Shearer, he's the bully boy," said Bob Stratton. "I remember when he was foreman for M. & D. at Camp O. Say, we did hustle them saw-logs in! I should rise to remark! Out in th' woods by first streak o' day. I recall one mornin' she was pretty cold, an' the boys grumbled some about turnin' out. 'Cold,' says Tim, 'you sons of guns! You got your ch'ice. It may be too cold for you in the woods, but it's a damm sight too hot fer you in hell, an' you're going to one or the other!' And he meant it too. Them was great days! Forty million a year, and not a hitch."

One man said nothing in the general discussion.

It was his first winter in the woods, and plainly in the eyes of the veterans this experience did not count. It was a *faute de mieux*, in which one would give an honest day's work, and no more.

As has been hinted, even the inexperienced newcomer noticed the lack of enthusiasm, of unity. Had he known the loyalty, devotion, and adoration that a thoroughly competent man wins from his "hands," the state of affairs would have seemed even more surprising. The lumber-jack will work sixteen, eighteen hours a day, sometimes up to the waist in water full of floating ice; sleep wet on the ground by a little fire; and then next morning will spring to work at daylight with an "Oh, no, not tired; just a little stiff, sir!" in cheerful reply to his master's inquiry—for the right man! Only it must be a strong man—with the strength of the wilderness in his eye.

The next morning Radway transferred Molly and Jenny, with little Fabian Laveque and two of the younger men, to Pike Lake. There, earlier in the season, a number of pines had been felled out on the ice, cut in logs, and left in expectation of ice thick enough to bear the travoy "dray." Owing to the fact that the shores of Pike Lake were extremely precipitous, it had been impossible to travoy the logs up over the hill.

Radway had sounded carefully the thickness of the ice with an ax. Although the weather had of

late been sufficiently cold for the time of year, the snow, as often happens, had fallen before the temperature. Under the warm white blanket, the actual freezing had been slight. However, there seemed to be at least eight inches of clear ice, which would suffice.

Some of the logs in question were found to be half imbedded in the ice. It became necessary first of all to free them. Young Henrys cut a strong bar six or eight feet long, while Pat McGuire chopped a hole alongside the log. Then one end of the bar was thrust into the hole, the logging chain fastened to the other; and, behold, a monster lever, whose fulcrum was the ice and whose power was applied by Molly, hitched to the end of the chain. In this simple manner a task was accomplished in five minutes which would have taken a dozen men an hour. When the log had been cat-a-cornered from its bed, the chain was fastened around one end by means of the ever-useful steel swamp-hook, and it was yanked across the dray. Then the travoy took its careful way across the ice to where a dip in the shore gave access to a skidway.

Four logs had thus been safely hauled. The fifth was on its journey across the lake. Suddenly without warning, and with scarcely a sound, both horses sank through the ice, which bubbled up around them and over their backs in irregular rotted pieces. Little Fabian Laveque shouted, and jumped down from

his log. Pat McGuire and young Henrys came running.

The horses had broken through an air-hole, about which the ice was strong. Fabian had already seized Molly by the bit, and was holding her head easily above water.

"Kitch Jenny by dat he't!" he cried to Pat.

Thus the two men, without exertion, sustained the noses of the team above the surface. The position demanded absolutely no haste, for it could have been maintained for a good half hour. Molly and Jenny, their soft eyes full of the intelligence of the situation, rested easily in full confidence. But Pat and Henrys, new to this sort of emergency, were badly frightened and excited. To them the affair had come to a deadlock.

"Oh, Lord!" cried Pat, clinging desperately to Jenny's headpiece. "What will we'z be doin'? We can't niver haul them two horses on the ice."

"Tak' de log chain," said Fabian to Henrys, "an' tie him around de nec' of Jenny."

Henrys, after much difficulty and nervous fumbling, managed to loosen the swamp-hook; and after much more difficulty and nervous fumbling succeeded in making it fast about the gray mare's neck. Fabian intended with this to choke the animal to that peculiar state when she would float like a balloon on the water, and two men could with ease

draw her over the edge of the ice. Then the unexpected happened.

The instant Henrys had passed the end of the chain through the knot, Pat, possessed by some Hibernian notion that now all was fast, let go of the bit. Jenny's head at once went under, and the end of the logging chain glided over the ice and fell plump in the hole.

Immediately all was confusion. Jenny kicked and struggled, churning the water, throwing it about, kicking out in every direction. Once a horse's head dips strongly, the game is over. No animal drowns more quickly. The two young boys scrambled away, and French oaths could not induce them to approach. Molly, still upheld by Fabian, looked at him piteously with her strange intelligent eyes, holding herself motionless and rigid with complete confidence in this master who had never failed her before. Fabian dug his heels into the ice, but could not hang on. The drowning horse was more than a dead weight. Presently it became a question of letting go or being dragged into the lake on top of the animals. With a sob the little Frenchman relinquished his hold. The water seemed slowly to rise and over-film the troubled look of pleading in Molly's eyes.

"Assassins!" hissed Laveque at the two unfortunate youths. That was all.

When the surface of the waters had again mir-

rored the clouds, they hauled the carcasses out on the ice and stripped the harness. Then they rolled the log from the dray, piled the tools on it, and took their way to camp. In the blue of the winter's sky was a single speck.

The speck grew. Soon it swooped. With a hoarse croak it lit on the snow at a wary distance, and began to strut back and forth. Presently, its suspicions at rest, the raven advanced, and with eager beak began its dreadful meal. By this time another, which had seen the first one's swoop, was in view through the ether; then another; then another. In an hour the brotherhood of ravens, thus telegraphically notified, was at feast.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FABIAN LAVEQUE elaborated the details of the catastrophe with volubility.

"Hee's not fonny dat she bre'ks t'rough," he said. "I 'ave see dem bre'k t'rough two, t'ree tam in de day, but nevaire dat she get drown! W'en dose dam-fool can't t'ink wit' hees haid—*sacrè Dieu!* eet is so easy, to chok' dat *cheval*—she make me cry wit' de eye!"

"I suppose it was a good deal my fault," commented Radway, doubtfully shaking his head, after Laveque had left the office. "I ought to have been surer about the ice."

"Eight inches is a little light, with so much snow atop," remarked the scaler carelessly.

By virtue of that same careless remark, however, Radway was so confirmed in his belief as to his own culpability that he quite overlooked Fabian's just contention—that the mere thinness of the ice was in reality no excuse for the losing of the horses. So Pat and Henrys were not discharged—were not instructed to "get their time." Fabian Laveque promptly demanded his.

"*Sacrè bleu!*" said he to old Jackson. "I no work wid dat dam-fool dat no t'ink wit' hees haid."