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wild and picturesque, that his straight and muscular figure moved with a grace quite its own and the woods', that the bronze of his skin contrasted splendidly with the clearness of his eye, that his whole bearing expressed the serene power that comes only from the confidence of battle. The woman in the carriage saw it, however.

"He is magnificent!" she cried. "I thought such men had died with Cooper!"

Thorpe whirled sharp on his heel and returned at once to a boarding-house off Fort Street, where he had "outfitted" three months before. There he reclaimed his valise, shaved, clothed himself in linen and cheviot once more, and sauntered slowly over to the Land Office to await its opening.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

AT nine o'clock neither of the partners had appeared. Thorpe entered the office and approached the desk.

"Is there a telegram here for Harry Thorpe?" he inquired.

The clerk to whom he addressed himself merely motioned with his head toward a young fellow behind the railing in a corner. The latter, without awaiting the question, shifted comfortably and replied:

"No."

At the same instant steps were heard in the corridor, the door opened, and Mr. Morrison appeared on the sill. Then Thorpe showed the stuff of which he was made.

"Is this the desk for buying Government lands?" he asked hurriedly.

"Yes," replied the clerk.

"I have some descriptions I wish to buy in."

"Very well," replied the clerk, "what township?"

Thorpe detailed the figures, which he knew by heart, the clerk took from a cabinet the three books

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containing them, and spread them out on the counter. At this moment the bland voice of Mr. Morrison made itself heard at Thorpe's elbow.

"Good morning, Mr. Smithers," it said with the deliberation of the consciously great man. "I have a few descriptions I would like to buy in the northern peninsula."

"Good morning, Mr. Morrison. Archie there will attend to you. Archie, see what Mr. Morrison wishes."

The lumberman and the other clerk consulted in a low voice, after which the official turned to fumble among the records. Not finding what he wanted, he approached Smithers. A whispered consultation ensued between these two. Then Smithers called:

"Take a seat, Mr. Morrison. This gentleman is looking over these townships, and will have finished in a few minutes."

Morrison's eye suddenly became uneasy.

"I am somewhat busy this morning," he objected with a shade of command in his voice.

"If this gentleman—?" suggested the clerk delicately.

"I am sorry," put in Thorpe with brevity, "my time, too, is valuable."

Morrison looked at him sharply.

"My deal is a big one," he snapped. "I can probably arrange with this gentleman to let him have his farm."

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"I claim precedence," replied Thorpe calmly.

"Well," said Morrison swift as light, "I'll tell you, Smithers. I'll leave my list of descriptions and a check with you. Give me a receipt, and mark my lands off after you've finished with this gentleman."

Now Government and State lands are the property of the man who pays for them. Although the clerk's receipt might not give Morrison a valid claim; nevertheless it would afford basis for a lawsuit. Thorpe saw the trap, and interposed.

"Hold on," he interrupted, "I claim precedence. You can give no receipt for any land in these townships until after my business is transacted. I have reason to believe that this gentleman and myself are both after the same descriptions."

"What!" shouted Morrison, assuming surprise.

"You will have to await your turn, Mr. Morrison," said the clerk, virtuous before so many witnesses.

The business man was in a white rage of excitement.

"I insist on my application being filed at once!" he cried waving his check. "I have the money right here to pay for every acre of it; and if I know the law, the first man to pay takes the land."

He slapped the check down on the rail, and hit it a number of times with the flat of his hand. Thorpe turned and faced him with a steel look in his level eyes.

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"Mr. Morrison," he said, "you are quite right. The first man who pays gets the land; but I have won the first chance to pay. You will kindly step one side until I finish my business with Mr. Smithers here."

"I suppose you have the amount actually with you," said the clerk, quite respectfully, "because if you have not, Mr. Morrison's claim will take precedence."

"I would hardly have any business in a land office, if I did not know that," replied Thorpe, and began his dictation of the description as calmly as though his inside pocket contained the required amount in bank bills.

Thorpe's hopes had sunk to zero. After all, looking at the matter dispassionately, why should he expect Carpenter to trust him, a stranger, with so large a sum? It had been madness. Only the blind confidence of the fighting man led him further into the struggle. Another would have given up, would have stepped aside from the path of this bona-fide purchaser with the money in his hand.

But Thorpe was of the kind that hangs on until the last possible second, not so much in the expectation of winning, as in sheer reluctance to yield. Such men shoot their last cartridge before surrendering, swim the last ounce of strength from their arms before throwing them up to sink, search coolly until the latest moment for a way from the burning build-

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ing — and sometimes come face to face with miracles.

Thorpe's descriptions were contained in the battered little note-book he had carried with him in the woods. For each piece of land first there came the township described by latitude and east-and-west range. After this generic description followed another figure representing the section of that particular district. So 49 — 17 W — 8, meant section 8, of the township on range 49 north, 17 west. If Thorpe wished to purchase the whole section, that description would suffice. On the other hand, if he wished to buy only one forty, he described its position in the quarter-section. Thus SW — NW 49 — 17 — 8, meant the southwest forty of the northwest quarter of section 8 in the township already described.

The clerk marked across each square of his map as Thorpe read them, the date and the purchaser's name.

In his note-book Thorpe had, of course, entered the briefest description possible. Now, in dictating to the clerk, he conceived the idea of specifying each subdivision. This gained some time. Instead of saying simply, "Northwest quarter of section 8," he made of it four separate descriptions, as follows:—Northwest quarter of northwest quarter; northeast of northwest quarter; southwest of northwest quarter; and southeast of northwest quarter.

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He was not so foolish as to read the descriptions in succession, but so scattered them that the clerk, putting down the figures mechanically, had no idea of the amount of unnecessary work he was doing. The minute hands of the clock dragged around. Thorpe droned down the long column. The clerk scratched industriously, repeating in a half voice each description as it was transcribed.

At length the task was finished. It became necessary to type duplicate lists of the descriptions. While the somnolent youth finished this task, Thorpe listened for the messenger boy on the stairs.

A faint slam was heard outside the rickety old building. Hasty steps sounded along the corridor. The landlooker merely stopped the drumming of his fingers on the broad arm of the chair. The door flew open, and Wallace Carpenter walked quickly to him.

Thorpe's face lighted up as he rose to greet his partner. The boy had not forgotten their compact after all.

"Then it's all right?" queried the latter breathlessly.

"Sure," answered Thorpe heartily, "got 'em in good shape."

At the same time he was drawing the youth beyond the vigilant watchfulness of Mr. Morrison.

"You're just in time," he said in an undertone. "Never had so close a squeak. I suppose you have

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cash or a certified check: that's all they'll take here."

"What do you mean?" asked Carpenter blankly.

"Haven't you that money?" returned Thorpe quick as a hawk.

"For Heaven's sake, isn't it here?" cried Wallace in consternation. "I wired Duncan, my banker, here last night, and received a reply from him. He answered that he'd see to it. Haven't you seen him?"

"No," repeated Thorpe in his turn.

"What can we do?"

"Can you get your check certified here near at hand?"

"Yes."

"Well, go do it. And get a move on you. You have precisely until that boy there finishes clicking that machine. Not a second longer."

"Can't you get them to wait a few minutes?"

"Wallace," said Thorpe, "do you see that white-whiskered old lynx in the corner? That's Morrison, the man who wants to get our land. If I fail to plank down the cash the very instant it is demanded, he gets his chance. And he'll take it. Now, go. Don't hurry until you get beyond the door: then *fly!*"

Thorpe sat down again in his broad-armed chair and resumed his drumming. The nearest bank was six blocks away. He counted over in his mind the

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steps of Carpenter's progress; now to the door, now in the next block, now so far beyond. He had just escorted him to the door of the bank, when the clerk's voice broke in on him.

"Now," Smithers was saying, "I'll give you a receipt for the amount, and later will send to your address the title deeds of the descriptions."

Carpenter had yet to find the proper official, to identify himself, to certify the check, and to return. It was hopeless. Thorpe dropped his hands in surrender.

Then he saw the boy lay the two typed lists before his principal, and dimly he perceived that the youth, shamefacedly, was holding something bulky toward himself.

"Wh—what is it?" he stammered, drawing his hand back as though from a red-hot iron.

"You asked me for a telegram," said the boy stubbornly, as though trying to excuse himself, "and I didn't just catch the name, anyway. When I saw it on those lists I had to copy, I thought of this here."

"Where'd you get it?" asked Thorpe breathlessly.

"A fellow came here early and left it for you while I was sweeping out," explained the boy. "Said he had to catch a train. It's yours all right, ain't it?"

"Oh, yes," replied Thorpe.

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He took the envelope and walked uncertainly to the tall window. He looked out at the chimneys. After a moment he tore open the envelope.

"I hope there's no bad news, sir?" said the clerk, startled at the paleness of the face Thorpe turned to the desk.

"No," replied the landlooker. "Give me a receipt. There's a certified check for your money!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

NOW that the strain was over, Thorpe experienced a great weariness. The long journey through the forest, his sleepless night on the train, the mental alertness of playing the game with shrewd foes—all these stretched his fibres out one by one and left them limp. He accepted stupidly the clerk's congratulations on his success, left the name of the little hotel off Fort Street as the address to which to send the deeds, and dragged himself off with infinite fatigue to his bedroom. There he fell at once into profound unconsciousness.

He was awakened late in the afternoon by the sensation of a strong pair of young arms around his shoulders, and the sound of Wallace Carpenter's fresh voice crying in his ears:

"Wake up, wake up! you Indian! You've been asleep all day, and I've been waiting here all that time. I want to hear about it. Wake up, I say!"

Thorpe rolled to a sitting posture on the edge of the bed, and smiled uncertainly. Then as the sleep drained from his brain, he reached out his hand.

"You bet we did 'em, Wallace," said he, "but it looked like a hard proposition for a while."

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"How was it? Tell me about it!" insisted the boy eagerly. "You don't know how impatient I've been. The clerk at the Land Office merely told me it was all right. How did you fix it?"

While Thorpe washed and shaved and leisurely freshened himself, he detailed his experiences of the last week.

"And," he concluded gravely, "there's only one man I know or ever heard of to whom I would have considered it worth while even to think of sending that telegram, and you are he. Somehow I knew you'd come to the scratch."

"It's the most exciting thing I ever heard of," sighed Wallace drawing a full breath, "and I wasn't in it! It's the sort of thing I long for. If I'd only waited another two weeks before coming down!"

"In that case we couldn't have gotten hold of the money, remember," smiled Thorpe.

"That's so." Wallace brightened. "I did count, didn't I?"

"I thought so about ten o'clock this morning," Thorpe replied.

"Suppose you hadn't stumbled on their camp; suppose Injin Charley hadn't seen them go up-river; suppose you hadn't struck that little mill town *just* at the time you did!" marvelled Wallace.

"That's always the way," philosophized Thorpe in reply. "It's the old story of 'if the horseshoe

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nail hadn't been lost,' you know. But we got there; and that's the important thing."

"We did!" cried the boy, his enthusiasm rekindling, "and to-night we'll celebrate with the best dinner we can buy in town!"

Thorpe was tempted, but remembered the thirty dollars in his pocket, and looked doubtful.

Carpenter possessed, as part of his volatile enthusiastic temperament, keen intuitions.

"Don't refuse!" he begged. "I've set my heart on giving my senior partner a dinner. Surely you won't refuse to be my guest here, as I was yours in the woods!"

"Wallace," said Thorpe, "I'll go you. I'd like to dine with you; but moreover, I'll confess, I should like to eat a good dinner again. It's been more than a year since I've seen a salad, or heard of after-dinner coffee."

"Come on then," cried Wallace.

Together they sauntered through the lengthening shadows to a certain small restaurant near Woodward Avenue, then much in vogue among Detroit's epicures. It contained only a half dozen tables, but was spotlessly clean, and its cuisine was unrivalled. A large fireplace near the centre of the room robbed it of half its restaurant air; and a thick carpet on the floor took the rest. The walls were decorated in dark colors after the German style. Several easy chairs grouped before the fireplace, and a light

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wicker table heaped with magazines and papers invited the guests to lounge while their orders were being prepared.

Thorpe was not in the least Sybaritic in his tastes, but he could not stifle a sigh of satisfaction at sinking so naturally into the unobtrusive little comforts which the ornamental life offers to its votaries. They rose up around him and pillowed him, and were grateful to the tired fibres of his being. His remoter past had enjoyed these things as a matter of course. They had framed the background to his daily habit. Now that the background had again slid into place on noiseless grooves, Thorpe for the first time became conscious that his strenuous life had indeed been in the open air, and that the winds of earnest endeavor, while bracing, had chilled. Wallace Carpenter, with the poet's insight and sympathy, saw and understood this feeling.

"I want you to order this dinner," said he, handing over to Thorpe the card which an impossibly correct waiter presented him. "And I want it a good one. I want you to begin at the beginning and skip nothing. Pretend you are ordering just the dinner you would like to offer your sister," he suggested on a sudden inspiration. "I assure you I'll try to be just as critical and exigent as she would be."

Thorpe took up the card dreamily.

"There are no oysters and clams now," said he,

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"so we'll pass right on to the soup. It seems to me a desecration to pretend to replace them. We'll have a *bisque*," he told the waiter, "rich and creamy. Then planked whitefish, and have them just a light crisp brown. You can bring some celery, too, if you have it fresh and good. And for *entree* tell your cook to make some *macaroni au gratin*, but the inside must be soft and very creamy, and the outside very crisp. I know it's a queer dish for a formal dinner like ours," he addressed Wallace with a little laugh, "but it's very, very good. We'll have roast beef, rare and juicy—if you bring it any way but a *cooked* red, I'll send it back—and potatoes roasted with the meat, and brown gravy. Then the breast of chicken with the salad, in the French fashion. And I'll make the dressing. We'll have an ice and some fruit for dessert. Black coffee."

"Yes, sir," replied the waiter, his pencil poised. "And the wines?"

Thorpe ruminated sleepily.

"A rich red Burgundy," he decided, "for all the dinner. If your cellar contains a very good smooth Beaune, we'll have that."

"Yes, sir," answered the waiter, and departed.

Thorpe sat and gazed moodily into the wood fire. Wallace respected his silence. It was yet too early for the fashionable world, so the two friends had the place to themselves. Gradually the twilight

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fell; strange shadows leaped and died on the wall. A boy dressed all in white turned on the lights. By and by the waiter announced that their repast awaited them.

Thorpe ate, his eyes half closed, in somnolent satisfaction. Occasionally he smiled contentedly across at Wallace, who smiled in response. After the coffee he had the waiter bring cigars. They went back between the tables to a little upholstered smoking-room, where they sank into the depths of leather chairs, and blew the gray clouds of smoke toward the ceiling. About nine o'clock Thorpe spoke the first word.

"I'm stupid this evening, I'm afraid," said he, shaking himself. "Don't think on that account I am not enjoying your dinner. I believe," he asserted earnestly, "that I never had such an altogether comfortable, happy evening before in my life."

"I know," replied Wallace sympathetically.

"It seems just now," went on Thorpe, sinking more luxuriously into his armchair, "that this alone is living—to exist in an environment exquisitely toned; to eat, to drink, to smoke the best, not like a gormand, but delicately as an artist would. It is the flower of our civilization."

Wallace remembered the turmoil of the wilderness brook; the little birch knoll, yellow in the evening glow; the mellow voice of the summer

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night crooning through the pines. But he had the rare tact to say nothing.

"Did it ever occur to you that what you needed, when sort of tired out this way," he said abruptly after a moment, "is a woman to understand and sympathize? Wouldn't it have made this evening perfect to have seen opposite you a being whom you loved, who understood your moments of weariness, as well as your moments of strength?"

"No," replied Thorpe, stretching his arms over his head, "a woman would have talked. It takes a friend and a man to know when to keep silent for three straight hours."

The waiter brought the bill on a tray, and Carpenter paid it.

"Wallace," said Thorpe suddenly after a long interval, "we'll borrow enough by mortgaging our land to supply the working expenses. I suppose capital will have to investigate, and that'll take time; but I can begin to pick up a crew and make arrangements for transportation and supplies. You can let me have a thousand dollars on the new Company's note for initial expenses. We'll draw up articles of partnership to-morrow."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

NEXT day the articles of partnership were drawn; and Carpenter gave his note for the necessary expenses. Then in answer to a pencilled card which Mr. Morrison had evidently left at Thorpe's hotel in person, both young men called at the lumberman's place of business. They were ushered immediately into the private office.

Mr. Morrison was a smart little man with an ingratiating manner and a fishy eye. He greeted Thorpe with marked geniality.

"My opponent of yesterday!" he cried jocularly. "Sit down, Mr. Thorpe! Although you did me out of some land I had made every preparation to purchase, I can't but admire your grit and resourcefulness. How did you get here ahead of us?"

"I walked across the upper peninsula, and caught a boat," replied Thorpe briefly.

"Indeed, *indeed!*" replied Mr. Morrison, placing the tips of his fingers together. "Extraordinary! Well, Mr. Thorpe, you overreached us nicely; and I suppose we must pay for our carelessness. We must have that pine, even though we pay stumpage

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on it. Now what would you consider a fair price for it?"

"It is not for sale," answered Thorpe.

"We'll waive all that. Of course it is to your interest to make difficulties and run the price up as high as you can. But my time is somewhat occupied just at present, so I would be very glad to hear your top price—we will come to an agreement afterward."

"You do not understand me, Mr. Morrison. I told you the pine is not for sale, and I mean it."

"But surely— What did you buy it for, then?" cried Mr. Morrison, with evidences of a growing excitement.

"We intend to manufacture it."

Mr. Morrison's fishy eyes nearly popped out of his head. He controlled himself with an effort.

"Mr. Thorpe," said he, "let us try to be reasonable. Our case stands this way. We have gone to a great deal of expense on the Ossawinamakee in expectation of undertaking very extensive operations there. To that end we have cleared the stream, built three dams, and have laid the foundations of a harbor and boom. This has been very expensive. Now your purchase includes most of what we had meant to log. You have, roughly speaking, about three hundred millions in your holding, in addition to which there are several millions scattering near it, which would pay nobody but yourself to get in.

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Our holdings are further up stream, and comprise only about the equal of yours."

"Three hundred millions are not to be sneezed at," replied Thorpe.

"Certainly not," agreed Morrison, suavely, gaining confidence from the sound of his own voice. "Not in this country. But you must remember that a man goes into the northern peninsula only because he can get something better there than here. When the firm of Morrison & Daly establishes itself now, it must be for the last time. We want enough timber to do us for the rest of the time we are in business."

"In that case, you will have to hunt up another locality," replied Thorpe calmly.

Morrison's eyes flashed. But he retained his appearance of geniality, and appealed to Wallace Carpenter.

"Then you will retain the advantage of our dams and improvements," said he. "Is that fair?"

"No, not on the face of it," admitted Thorpe. "But you did your work in a navigable stream for private purposes, without the consent of the Board of Control. Your presence on the river is illegal. You should have taken out a charter as an Improvement Company. Then, as long as you 'tended to business and kept the concern in repair, we'd have paid you a toll per thousand feet. As soon as you let it slide, however, the works would revert to the

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State. I won't hinder your doing that yet; although I might. Take out your charter and fix your rate of toll."

"In other words, you force us to stay there and run a little two-by-four Improvement Company for your benefit, or else lose the value of our improvements?"

"Suit yourself," answered Thorpe carelessly. "You can always log your present holdings."

"Very well," cried Morrison, so suddenly in a passion that Wallace started back. "It's war! And let me tell you this, young man; you're a new concern and we're an old one. We'll crush you like *that!*" He crisped an envelope vindictively, and threw it in the waste-basket.

"Crush ahead," replied Thorpe with great good humor. "Good-day, Mr. Morrison," and the two went out.

Wallace was sputtering and trembling with nervous excitement. His was one of those temperaments which require action to relieve the stress of a stormy interview. He was brave enough, but he would always tremble in the presence of danger until the moment for striking arrived. He wanted to do something at once.

"Hadn't we better see a lawyer?" he asked. "Oughtn't we to look out that they don't take some of our pine? Oughtn't we——"

"You just leave all that to me," replied Thorpe.

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"The first thing we want to do is to rustle some money."

"And you can leave *that to me,*" echoed Wallace. "I know a little of such things, and I have business connections who know more. You just get the camp running."

"I'll start for Bay City to-night," submitted Thorpe. "There ought to be a good lot of lumberjacks lying around idle at this time of year; and it's a good place to outfit from because we can probably get freight rates direct by boat. We'll be a little late in starting, but we'll get in *some* logs this winter, anyway."