

CHAPTER THIRTY

NEXT morning continued the traditions of its calm predecessors. Therefore by daybreak every man was at work. The hatches were opened, and soon between-decks was cumbered with boxes, packing cases, barrels, and crates. In their improvised stalls, the patient horses seemed to catch a hint of shore-going and whinnied. By ten o'clock there loomed against the strange coast line of the Pictured Rocks, a shallow bay and what looked to be a dock distorted by the northern mirage.

"That's her," said the captain.

Two hours later the steamboat swept a wide curve, slid between the yellow waters of two outlying reefs, and, with slackened speed, moved slowly toward the wharf of log cribs filled with stone.

The bay or the dock Thorpe had never seen. He took them on the captain's say-so. He knew very well that the structure had been erected by and belonged to Morrison & Daly, but the young man had had the foresight to purchase the land lying on the deep-water side of the bay. He therefore anticipated no trouble in unloading; for while Morrison & Daly owned the pier itself, the land on which it abutted belonged to him.

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From the arms of the bay he could make out a dozen figures standing near the end of the wharf. When, with propeller reversed, the *Pole Star* bore slowly down toward her moorings, Thorpe recognized Dyer at the head of eight or ten woodsmen. The sight of Radway's old scaler somehow filled him with a quiet but dangerous anger, especially since that official, on whom rested a portion at least of the responsibility of the jobber's failure, was now found in the employ of the very company which had attempted that failure. It looked suspicious.

"Catch this line!" sung out the mate, hurling the coil of a handline on the wharf.

No one moved, and the little rope, after a moment, slid overboard with a splash.

The captain, with a curse, signalled full speed astern.

"Captain Morse!" cried Dyer, stepping forward. "My orders are that you are to land here nothing but M. & D. merchandise."

"I have a right to land," answered Thorpe. "The shore belongs to me."

"This dock doesn't," retorted the other sharply, "and you can't set foot on her."

"You have no legal status. You had no business building in the first place—" began Thorpe, and then stopped with a choke of anger at the futility of arguing legality in such a case.

The men had gathered interestedly in the waist of

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the ship, cool, impartial, severely critical. The vessel, gathering speed astern, but not yet obeying her reversed helm, swung her bow in toward the dock. Thorpe ran swiftly forward, and during the instant of rubbing contact, leaped.

He alighted squarely upon his feet. Without an instant's hesitation, hot with angry energy at finding his enemy within reach of his hand, he rushed on Dyer, and with one full, clean in-blow stretched him stunned on the dock. For a moment there was a pause of astonishment. Then the woodsmen closed upon him.

During that instant Thorpe had become possessed of a weapon. It came hurling through the air from above to fall at his feet. Shearer, with the cool calculation of the pioneer whom no excitement can distract from the main issue, had seen that it would be impossible to follow his chief, and so had done the next best thing—thrown him a heavy iron belaying pin.

Thorpe was active, alert, and strong. The men could come at him only in front. As offset, he could not give ground, even for one step. Still, in the hands of a powerful man, the belaying pin is by no means a despicable weapon. Thorpe hit with all his strength and quickness. He was conscious once of being on the point of defeat. Then he had cleared a little space for himself. Then the men were on him again more savagely than ever. One fellow

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even succeeded in hitting him a glancing blow on the shoulder.

Then came a sudden crash. Thorpe was nearly thrown from his feet. The next instant a score of yelling men leaped behind and all around him. There ensued a moment's scuffle, the sound of dull blows; and the dock was clear of all but Dyer and three others who were, like himself, unconscious. The captain, yielding to the excitement, had run his prow plump against the wharf.

Some of the crew received the mooring lines. All was ready for disembarkation.

Bryan Moloney, a strapping Irish-American of the big-boned, red-cheeked type, threw some water over the four stunned combatants. Slowly they came to life. They were promptly yanked to their feet by the irate rivermen, who commenced at once to bestow sundry vigorous kicks and shakings by way of punishment. Thorpe interposed.

"Quit it!" he commanded. "Let them go!"

The men grumbled. One or two were inclined to be openly rebellious.

"If I hear another peep out of you," said Thorpe to these latter, "you can climb right aboard and take the return trip." He looked them in the eye until they muttered, and then went on: "Now, we've got to get unloaded and our goods ashore before those fellows report to camp. Get right moving, and hustle!"

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If the men expected any comment, approval, or familiarity from their leader on account of their little fracas, they were disappointed. This was a good thing. The lumber-jack demands in his boss a certain fundamental unapproachability, whatever surface *bonhomie* he may evince.

So Dyer and his men picked themselves out of the trouble sullenly and departed. The ex-scaler had nothing to say as long as he was within reach, but when he had gained the shore, he turned.

"You won't think this is so funny when you get in the law-courts!" he shouted.

Thorpe made no reply. "I guess we'll keep even," he muttered.

"By the jumping Moses," snarled Scotty Parsons turning in threat.

"Scotty!" said Thorpe sharply.

Scotty turned back to his task, which was to help the blacksmith put together the wagon, the component parts of which the others had trundled out.

With thirty men at the job it does not take a great while to move a small cargo thirty or forty feet. By three o'clock the *Pole Star* was ready to continue her journey. Thorpe climbed aboard, leaving Shearer in charge.

"Keep the men at it, Tim," said he. "Put up the walls of the warehouse good and strong, and move the stuff in. If it rains, you can spread the tent over the roof, and camp in with the provisions.

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If you get through before I return, you might take a scout up the river and fix on a camp site. I'll bring back the lumber for roofs, floors, and trimmings with me, and will try to pick up a few axemen for swamping. Above all things, have a good man or so always in charge. Those fellows won't bother us any more for the present, I think; but it pays to be on deck. So long."

In Marquette, Thorpe arranged for the cashing of his time checks and orders; bought lumber at the mills; talked contract with old Harvey, the mill-owner and prospective buyer of the young man's cut; and engaged four axemen whom he found loafing about, waiting for the season to open.

When he returned to the bay he found the warehouse complete except for the roofs and gables. These, with their reinforcement of tar-paper, were nailed on in short order. Shearer and Andrews, the surveyor, were scouting up the river.

"No trouble from above, boys?" asked Thorpe.

"Nary trouble," they replied.

The warehouse was secured by padlocks, the wagon loaded with the tent and the necessaries of life and work. Early in the morning the little procession—laughing, joking, skylarking with the high spirits of men in the woods—took its way up the river-trail. Late that evening, tired, but still inclined to mischief, they came to the first dam, where Shearer and Andrews met them.

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"How do you like it, Tim?" asked Thorpe that evening.

"She's all right," replied the riverman with emphasis; which, for him, was putting it strong.

At noon of the following day the party arrived at the second dam. Here Shearer had decided to build the permanent camp. Injin Charley was constructing one of his endless series of birch-bark canoes. Later he would paddle the whole string to Marquette, where he would sell them to a hardware dealer for two dollars and a half apiece.

To Thorpe, who had walked on ahead with his foreman, it seemed that he had never been away. There was the knoll; the rude camp with the deer hides; the venison hanging suspended from the pole; the endless broil and tumult of the clear north-country stream; the yellow glow over the hill opposite. Yet he had gone a nearly penniless adventurer; he returned at the head of an enterprise.

Injin Charley looked up and grunted as Thorpe approached.

"How are you, Charley?" greeted Thorpe reticently.

"You gettum pine? Good!" replied Charley in the same tone.

That was all; for strong men never talk freely of what is in their hearts. There is no need; they understand.

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TWO months passed away. Winter set in. The camp was built and inhabited. Routine had established itself, and all was going well.

The first move of the M. & D. Company had been one of conciliation. Thorpe was approached by the walking-boss of the camps up-river. The man made no reference to or excuse for what had occurred, nor did he pretend to any hypocritical friendship for the younger firm. His proposition was entirely one of mutual advantage. The Company had gone to considerable expense in constructing the pier of stone cribs. It would be impossible for the steamer to land at any other point. Thorpe had undisputed possession of the shore, but the Company could as indisputably remove the dock. Let it stay where it was. Both companies could then use it for their mutual convenience.

To this Thorpe agreed. Baker, the walking-boss, tried to get him to sign a contract to that effect. Thorpe refused.

"Leave your dock where it is and use it when you want to," said he. "I'll agree not to interfere as long as you people behave yourselves."

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The actual logging was opening up well. Both Shearer and Thorpe agreed that it would not do to be too ambitious the first year. They set about clearing their banking ground about a half mile below the first dam; and during the six weeks before snowfall cut three short roads of half a mile each. Approximately two million feet would be put in from these roads—which could be extended in years to come—while another million could be travoyed directly to the landing from its immediate vicinity.

"We won't skid them," said Tim. "We'll haul from the stump to the bank. And we'll tackle only a snow-road proposition: we ain't got time to monkey with buildin' sprinklers and plows this year. We'll make a little stake ahead, and then next year we'll do it right and get in twenty million. That railroad'll get along a ways by then, and men'll be more plenty."

Through the lengthening evenings they sat crouched on wooden boxes either side of the stove, conversing rarely, gazing at one spot with a steady persistency which was only an outward indication of the persistency with which their minds held to the work in hand. Tim, the older at the business, showed this trait more strongly than Thorpe. The old man thought of nothing but logging. From the stump to the bank, from the bank to the camp, from the camp to the stump again, his restless intelligence travelled tirelessly, picking up, turning over,

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examining the littlest details with an ever-fresh curiosity and interest. Nothing was too small to escape this deliberate scrutiny. Nothing was in so perfect a state that it did not bear one more inspection. He played the logging as a chess player his game. One by one he adopted the various possibilities, remote and otherwise, as hypotheses, and thought out to the uttermost copper rivet what would be the best method of procedure in case that possibility should confront him.

Occasionally Thorpe would introduce some other topic of conversation. The old man would listen to his remark with the attention of courtesy; would allow a decent period of silence to intervene; and then, reverting to the old subject without comment on the new, would emit one of his terse practical suggestions, result of a long spell of figuring. That is how success is made.

In the men's camp the crew lounged, smoked, danced, or played cards. In those days no one thought of forbidding gambling. One evening Thorpe, who had been too busy to remember Phil's violin—although he noticed, as he did every other detail of the camp, the cripple's industry, and the precision with which he performed his duties—strolled over and looked through the window. A dance was in progress. The men were waltzing, whirling solemnly round and round, gripping firmly each other's loose sleeves just above the elbow. At

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every third step of the waltz they stamped one foot.

Perched on a cracker box sat Phil. His head was thrust forward almost aggressively over his instrument, and his eyes glared at the dancing men with the old wolf-like gleam. As he played, he drew the bow across with a swift jerk, thrust it back with another, threw his shoulders from one side to the other in abrupt time to the music. And the music! Thorpe unconsciously shuddered; then sighed in pity. It was atrocious. It was not even in tune. Two out of three of the notes were either sharp or flat, not so flagrantly as to produce absolute disharmony, but just enough to set the teeth on edge. And the rendition was as colorless as that of a poor hand-organ.

The performer seemed to grind out his fearful stuff with a fierce delight, in which appeared little of the æsthetic pleasure of the artist. Thorpe was at a loss to define it.

"Poor Phil," he said to himself. "He has the musical soul without even the musical ear!"

Next day, while passing out of the cook camp he addressed one of the men:

"Well, Billy," he inquired, "how do you like your fiddler?"

"All *right!*" replied Billy with emphasis. "She's got some go to her."

In the woods the work proceeded finely. From

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the travoy sledges and the short roads a constant stream of logs emptied itself on the bank. There long parallel skidways had been laid the whole width of the river valley. Each log as it came was dragged across those monster andirons and rolled to the bank of the river. The cant-hook men dug their implements into the rough bark, leaned, lifted, or clung to the projecting stocks until slowly the log moved, rolling with gradually increasing momentum. Then they attacked it with fury lest the momentum be lost. Whenever it began to deviate from the straight rolling necessary to keep it on the centre of the skids, one of the workers thrust the shoe of his cant-hook under one end of the log. That end promptly stopped; the other, still rolling, soon caught up; and the log moved on evenly, as was fitting.

At the end of the rollway the log collided with other logs and stopped with the impact of one bowling ball against another. The men knew that being caught between the two meant death or crippling for life. Nevertheless they escaped from the narrowing interval at the latest possible moment, for it is easier to keep a log rolling than to start it.

Then other men piled them by means of long steel chains and horses, just as they would have skidded them in the woods. Only now the logs mounted up and up until the skidways were thirty or forty feet high. Eventually the pile of logs would

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fill the banking ground utterly, burying the landing under a nearly continuous carpet of timber as thick as a two-story house is tall. The work is dangerous. A saw log containing six hundred board feet weighs about one ton. This is the weight of an ordinary iron safe. When one of them rolls or falls from even a moderate height, its force is irresistible. But when twenty or thirty cascade down the bold front of a skidway, carrying a man or so with them, the affair becomes a catastrophe.

Thorpe's men, however, were all old-timers, and nothing of the sort occurred. At first it made him catch his breath to see the apparent chances they took; but after a little he perceived that seeming luck was in reality a coolness of judgment and a long experience in the peculiar ways of that most erratic of inanimate cussedness—the pine log. The banks grew daily. Everybody was safe and sound.

The young lumberman had sense enough to know that, while a crew such as his is supremely effective, it requires careful handling to keep it good-humored and willing. He knew every man by his first name, and each day made it a point to talk with him for a moment or so. The subject was invariably some phase of the work. Thorpe never permitted himself the familiarity of introducing any other topic. By this course he preserved the nice balance between too great reserve, which chills the lumber-jack's rather independent enthusiasm, and the too great familiar-

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ity, which loses his respect. He never replied directly to an objection or a request, but listened to it non-committally; and later, without explanation or reasoning, acted as his judgment dictated. Even Shearer, with whom he was in most intimate contact, respected this trait in him. Gradually he came to feel that he was making a way with his men. It was a status, not assured as yet nor even very firm, but a status for all that.

Then one day one of the best men, a teamster, came in to make some objection to the cooking. As a matter of fact, the cooking was perfectly good. It generally is, in a well-conducted camp, but the lumber-jack is a great hand to growl, and he usually begins with his food.

Thorpe listened to his vague objections in silence. "All right," he remarked simply.

Next day he touched the man on the shoulder just as he was starting to work.

"Step into the office and get your time," said he.

"What's the matter?" asked the man.

"I don't need you any longer."

The two entered the little office. Thorpe looked through the ledger and van book, and finally handed the man his slip.

"Where do I get this?" asked the teamster, looking at it uncertainly.

"At the bank in Marquette," replied Thorpe without glancing around.

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"Have I got to go 'way up to Marquette?"

"Certainly," replied Thorpe briefly.

"Who's going to pay my fare south?"

"You are. You can get work at Marquette."

"That ain't a fair shake," cried the man excitedly.

"I'll have no growlers in this camp," said Thorpe with decision.

"By God!" cried the man, "you damned——"

"You get out of here!" cried Thorpe with a concentrated blaze of energetic passion that made the fellow step back.

"I ain't goin' to get on the wrong side of the law by foolin' with this office," cried the other at the door, "but if I had you outside for a minute——"

"Leave this office!" shouted Thorpe.

"S'pose you make me!" challenged the man insolently.

In a moment the defiance had come, endangering the careful structure Thorpe had reared with such pains. The young man was suddenly angry in exactly the same blind, unreasoning manner as when he had leaped single-handed to tackle Dyer's crew.

Without a word he sprang across the shack, seized a two-bladed axe from the pile behind the door, swung it around his head and cast it full at the now frightened teamster. The latter dodged, and the swirling steel buried itself in the snowbank beyond.

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Without an instant's hesitation Thorpe reached back for another. The man took to his heels.

"I don't want to see you around here again!" shouted Thorpe after him.

Then in a moment he returned to the office and sat down overcome with contrition.

"It might have been murder!" he told himself, awe-stricken.

But, as it happened, nothing could have turned out better.

Thorpe had instinctively seized the only method by which these strong men could be impressed. A rough-and-tumble attempt at ejection would have been useless. Now the entire crew looked with vast admiration on their boss as a man who intended to have his own way no matter what difficulties or consequences might tend to deter him. And that is the kind of man they liked. This one deed was more effective in cementing their loyalty than any increase of wages would have been.

Thorpe knew that their restless spirits would soon tire of the monotony of work without ultimate interest. Ordinarily the hope of a big cut is sufficient to keep men of the right sort working for a record. But these men had no such hope—the camp was too small, and they were too few. Thorpe adopted the expedient, now quite common, of posting the results of each day's work in the men's shanty.

Three teams were engaged in travoying, and two

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in skidding the logs, either on the banking ground, or along the road. Thorpe divided his camp into four sections, which he distinguished by the names of the teamsters. Roughly speaking, each of the three hauling teams had its own gang of sawyers and skidders to supply it with logs and to take them from it, for of the skidding teams, one was split;—the horses were big enough so that one of them to a skidway sufficed. Thus three gangs of men were performing each day practically the same work. Thorpe scaled the results, and placed them conspicuously for comparison.

Red Jacket, the teamster of the sorrels, one day was credited with 11,000 feet; while Long Pine Jim and Rollway Charley had put in but 10,500 and 10,250 respectively. That evening all the sawyers, swappers, and skidders belonging to Red Jacket's outfit were considerably elated; while the others said little and prepared for business on the morrow.

Once Long Pine Jim lurked at the bottom for three days. Thorpe happened by the skidway just as Long Pine arrived with a log. The young fellow glanced solicitously at the splendid buckskins, the best horses in camp.

"I'm afraid I didn't give you a very good team, Jimmy," said he, and passed on.

That was all; but men of the rival gangs had heard. In camp Long Pine Jim and his crew received chaffing with balefully red glares. Next day

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they stood at the top by a good margin, and always after were competitors to be feared.

Injin Charley, silent and enigmatical as ever, had constructed a log shack near a little creek over in the hardwood. There he attended diligently to the business of trapping. Thorpe had brought him a deer knife from Detroit; a beautiful instrument made of the best tool steel, in one long piece extending through the buck-horn handle. One could even break bones with it. He had also lent the Indian the assistance of two of his Marquette men in erecting the shanty; and had given him a barrel of flour for the winter. From time to time Injin Charley brought in fresh meat, for which he was paid. This with his trapping, and his manufacture of moccasins, snowshoes and birch canoes, made him a very prosperous Indian indeed. Thorpe rarely found time to visit him, but he often glided into the office, smoked a pipeful of the white man's tobacco in friendly fashion by the stove, and glided out again without having spoken a dozen words.

Wallace made one visit before the big snows came, and was charmed. He ate with gusto of the "salt-horse," baked beans, stewed prunes, mince pie, and cakes. He tramped around gaily in his moccasins or on the fancy snowshoes he promptly purchased of Injin Charley. There was nothing new to report in regard to financial matters. The loan had been negotiated easily on the basis of a

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mortgage guaranteed by Carpenter's personal signature. Nothing had been heard from Morrison & Daly.

When he departed, he left behind him four little long-eared, short-legged beagle hounds. They were solemn animals, who took life seriously. Never a smile appeared in their questioning eyes. Wherever one went, the others followed, pattering gravely along in serried ranks. Soon they discovered that the swamp over the knoll contained big white hares. Their mission in life was evident. Thereafter from the earliest peep of daylight until the men quit work at night they chased rabbits. The quest was hopeless, but they kept obstinately at it, wallowing with contained excitement over a hundred paces of snow before they would get near enough to scare their quarry to another jump. It used to amuse the hares. All day long the mellow bell-tones echoed over the knoll. It came in time to be part of the color of the camp, just as were the pines and birches, or the cold northern sky. At the fall of night, exhausted, trailing their long ears almost to the ground, they returned to the cook, who fed them and made much of them. Next morning they were at it as hard as ever. To them it was the quest for the Grail—hopeless, but glorious.

Little Phil, entrusted with the alarm clock, was the first up in the morning. In the fearful biting cold of an extinct camp, he lighted his lantern and

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with numb hands raked the ashes from the stove. A few sticks of dried pine topped by split wood of birch or maple, all well dashed with kerosene, took the flame eagerly. Then he awakened the cook, and stole silently into the office, where Thorpe and Shearer and Andrews, the surveyor, lay asleep. There quietly he built another fire, and filled the water-pail afresh. By the time this task was finished, the cook sounded many times a conch, and the sleeping camp awoke.

Later Phil drew water for the other shanties, swept out all three, split wood and carried it in to the cook and to the living-camps, filled and trimmed the lamps, perhaps helped the cook. About half the remainder of the day he wielded an axe, saw and wedge in the hardwood, collecting painfully—for his strength was not great—material for the constant fires it was his duty to maintain. Often he would stand motionless in the vast frozen, creaking forest, listening with awe to the voices which spoke to him alone. There was something uncanny in the misshapen dwarf with the fixed marble-white face and the expressive changing eyes—something uncanny, and something indefinably beautiful.

He seemed to possess an instinct which warned him of the approach of wild animals. Long before a white man, or even an Indian, would have suspected the presence of game, little Phil would lift his head with a peculiar listening toss. Soon, step-

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ping daintily through the snow near the swamp edge, would come a deer; or pat-apat-patting on his broad hairy paws, a lynx would steal by. Except Injin Charley, Phil was the only man in that country who ever saw a beaver in the open daylight.

At camp sometimes when all the men were away and his own work was done, he would crouch like a raccoon in the far corner of his deep square bunk with the board ends that made of it a sort of little cabin, and play to himself softly on his violin. No one ever heard him. After supper he was docilely ready to fiddle to the men's dancing. Always then he gradually worked himself to a certain pitch of excitement. His eyes glared with the wolf-gleam, and the music was vulgarly atrocious and out of tune.

As Christmas drew near, the weather increased in severity. Blinding snow-squalls swept whirling from the northeast, accompanied by a high wind. The air was full of it—fine, dry, powdery, like the dust of glass. The men worked covered with it as a tree is covered after a sleet. Sometimes it was impossible to work at all for hours at a time; but Thorpe did not allow a bad morning to spoil a good afternoon. The instant a lull fell on the storm, he was out with his scaling rule, and he expected the men to give him something to scale. He grappled the fierce winter by the throat, and shook from it the price of success.

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Then came a succession of bright cold days and clear cold nights. The aurora gleamed so brilliantly that the forest was as bright as by moonlight. In the strange weird shadow cast by its waverings the wolves stole silently, or broke into wild ululations as they struck the trail of game. Except for these weird invaders, the silence of death fell on the wilderness. Deer left the country. Partridges crouched trailing under the snow. All the weak and timid creatures of the woods shrank into concealment and silence before these fierce woods-marauders with the glaring famine-struck eyes.

Injin Charley found his traps robbed. In return he constructed deadfalls, and dried several scalps. When spring came, he would send them out for the bounty. In the night, from time to time, the horses would awake trembling at an unknown terror. Then the long weird howl would shiver across the starlight near at hand, and the chattering man who rose hastily to quiet the horses' frantic kicking would catch a glimpse of gaunt forms skirting the edge of the forest.

And the little beagles were disconsolate, for their quarry had fled. In place of the fan-shaped triangular trail for which they sought, they came upon dog-like prints. These they sniffed at curiously, and then departed growling, the hair on their backbones erect and stiff.