

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

**B**Y the end of the winter some four million feet of logs were piled in the bed or upon the banks of the stream. To understand what that means, you must imagine a pile of solid timber a mile in length. This tremendous mass lay directly in the course of the stream. When the winter broke up, it had to be separated and floated piecemeal down the current. The process is an interesting and dangerous one, and one of great delicacy. It requires for its successful completion picked men of skill, and demands as toll its yearly quota of cripples and dead. While on the drive, men work fourteen hours a day, up to their waists in water filled with floating ice.

On the Ossawinamakee, as has been stated, three dams had been erected to simplify the process of driving. When the logs were in right distribution, the gates were raised, and the proper head of water floated them down.

Now the river being navigable, Thorpe was possessed of certain rights on it. Technically he was entitled to a normal head of water, whenever he needed it; or a special head, according to agreement with the parties owning the dam. Early in the drive,

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he found that Morrison & Daly intended to cause him trouble. It began in a narrows of the river between high, rocky banks. Thorpe's drive was floating through close-packed. The situation was ticklish. Men with spiked boots ran here and there from one bobbing log to another, pushing with their peaveys, hurrying one log, retarding another, working like beavers to keep the whole mass straight. The entire surface of the water was practically covered with the floating timbers. A moment's reflection will show the importance of preserving a full head of water. The moment the stream should drop an inch or so, its surface would contract, the logs would then be drawn close together in the narrow space; and, unless an immediate rise should lift them up and apart from each other, a jam would form, behind which the water, rapidly damming, would press to entangle it the more.

This is exactly what happened. In a moment, as though by magic, the loose wooden carpet ground together. A log in the advance up-ended; another thrust under it. The whole mass ground together, stopped, and began rapidly to pile up. The men escaped to the shore in a marvellous manner of their own.

Tim Shearer found that the gate at the dam above had been closed. The man in charge had simply obeyed orders. He supposed M. & D. wished to back up the water for their own logs.

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Tim indulged in some picturesque language.

"You ain't got no right to close off more'n enough to leave us th' nat'ral flow unless by agreement," he concluded, and opened the gates.

Then it was a question of breaking the jam. This had to be done by pulling out or chopping through certain "key" logs which locked the whole mass. Men stood under the face of imminent ruin—over them a frowning sheer wall of bristling logs, behind which pressed the weight of the rising waters—and hacked and tugged calmly until the mass began to stir. Then they escaped. A moment later, with a roar, the jam vomited down on the spot where they had stood. It was dangerous work. Just one half day later it had to be done again, and for the same reason.

This time Thorpe went back with Shearer. No one was at the dam, but the gates were closed. The two opened them again.

That very evening a man rode up on horseback inquiring for Mr. Thorpe.

"I'm he," said the young fellow.

The man thereupon dismounted and served a paper. It proved to be an injunction issued by Judge Sherman enjoining Thorpe against interfering with the property of Morrison & Daly—to wit, certain dams erected at designated points on the Ossa-winamakee. There had not elapsed sufficient time since the commission of the offense for the other firm

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to secure the issuance of this interesting document, so it was at once evident that the whole affair had been prearranged by the up-river firm for the purpose of blocking off Thorpe's drive. After serving the injunction, the official rode away.

Thorpe called his foreman. The latter read the injunction attentively through a pair of steel-bowed spectacles.

"Well, what are you going to do?" he asked.

"Of all the consummate gall!" exploded Thorpe. "Trying to enjoin me from touching a dam when they're refusing me the natural flow! They must have bribed that fool judge. Why, his injunction isn't worth the powder to blow it up!"

"Then you're all right, ain't ye?" inquired Tim.

"It'll be the middle of summer before we get a hearing in court," said he. "Oh, they're a cute lay-out! They expect to hang me up until it's too late to do anything with the season's cut!"

He arose and began to pace back and forth.

"Tim," said he, "is there a man in the crew who's afraid of nothing and will obey orders?"

"A dozen," replied Tim promptly.

"Who's the best?"

"Scotty Parsons."

"Ask him to step here."

In a moment the man entered the office.

"Scotty," said Thorpe, "I want you to under-

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stand that I stand responsible for whatever I order you to do."

"All right, sir," replied the man.

"In the morning," said Thorpe, "you take two men and build some sort of a shack right over the sluice-gate of that second dam—nothing very fancy, but good enough to camp in. I want you to live there day and night. Never leave it, not even for a minute. The cookee will bring you grub. Take this Winchester. If any of the men from up-river try to go out on the dam, you warn them off. If they persist, you shoot near them. If they keep coming, you shoot *at* them. Understand?"

"You bet," answered Scotty with enthusiasm.

"All right," concluded Thorpe.

Next day Scotty established himself, as had been agreed. He did not need to shoot anybody. Daly himself came down to investigate the state of affairs, when his men reported to him the occupancy of the dam. He attempted to parley, but Scotty would have none of it.

"Get out!" was his first and last word.

Daly knew men. He was at the wrong end of the whip. Thorpe's game was desperate, but so was his need, and this was a backwoods country a long ways from the little technicalities of the law. It was one thing to serve an injunction; another to enforce it. Thorpe finished his drive with no more of the difficulties than ordinarily bother a riverman.

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At the mouth of the river, booms of logs chained together at the ends had been prepared. Into the enclosure the drive was floated and stopped. Then a raft was formed by passing new manila ropes over the logs, to each one of which the line was fastened by a hardwood forked pin driven astride of it. A tug dragged the raft to Marquette.

Now Thorpe was summoned legally on two counts. First, Judge Sherman cited him for contempt of court. Second, Morrison & Daly sued him for alleged damages in obstructing their drive by holding open the dam-sluice beyond the legal head of water.

Such is a brief but true account of the *coup-de-force* actually carried out by Thorpe's lumbering firm in northern Michigan. It is better known to the craft than to the public at large, because eventually the affair was compromised. The manner of that compromise is to follow.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

PENDING the call of trial, Thorpe took a three weeks' vacation to visit his sister. Time, filled with excitement and responsibility, had erased from his mind the bitterness of their parting. He had before been too busy, too grimly in earnest, to allow himself the luxury of anticipation. Now he found himself so impatient that he could hardly wait to get there. He pictured their meeting, the things they would say to each other.

As formerly, he learned on his arrival that she was not at home. It was the penalty of an attempted surprise. Mrs. Renwick proved not nearly so cordial as the year before; but Thorpe, absorbed in his eagerness, did not notice it. If he had, he might have guessed the truth: that the long proximity of the fine and the commonplace, however safe at first from the insulation of breeding and natural kindness, was at last beginning to generate sparks.

No, Mrs. Renwick did not know where Helen was: thought she had gone over to the Hughes's. The Hughes live two blocks down the street and

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three to the right, in a brown house back from the street. Very well, then; she would expect Mr. Thorpe to spend the night.

The latter wandered slowly down the charming driveways of the little western town. The broad dusty street was brown with sprinkling from numberless garden hose. A double row of big soft maples met over it, and shaded the sidewalk and part of the wide lawns. The grass was fresh and green. Houses with capacious verandas on which were glimpsed easy chairs and hammocks, sent forth a mild glow from a silk-shaded lamp or two. Across the evening air floated the sounds of light conversation and laughter from these verandas, the tinkle of a banjo, the thrum of a guitar. Automatic sprinklers whirled and hummed here and there. Their delicious artificial coolness struck refreshingly against the cheek.

Thorpe found the Hughes residence without difficulty, and turned up the straight walk to the veranda. On the steps of the latter a rug had been spread. A dozen youths and maidens lounged in well-bred ease on its soft surface. The gleam of white summer dresses, of variegated outing clothes, the rustle of frocks, the tinkle of low, well-bred laughter confused Thorpe, so that, as he approached the light from a tall lamp just inside the hall, he hesitated, vainly trying to make out the figures before him.

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So it was that Helen Thorpe saw him first, and came fluttering to meet him.

"O Harry! What a surprise!" she cried, and flung her arms about his neck to kiss him.

"How do you do, Helen," he replied sedately.

This was the meeting he had anticipated so long. The presence of others brought out in him, irresistibly, the repression of public display which was so strong an element of his character.

A little chilled, Helen turned to introduce him to her friends. In the cold light of her commonplace reception she noticed what in a warmer effusion of feelings she would never have seen—that her brother's clothes were out of date and worn; and that, though his carriage was notably strong and graceful, the trifling constraint and dignity of his younger days had become almost an awkwardness after two years among uncultivated men. It occurred to Helen to be just a little ashamed of him.

He took a place on the steps and sat without saying a word all the evening. There was nothing for him to say. These young people talked thoughtlessly, as young people do, of the affairs belonging to their own little circle. Thorpe knew nothing of the cotillion, or the brake ride, or of the girl who visited Alice Southerland; all of which gave occasion for so much lively comment. Nor was the situation improved when some of them, in a noble effort at politeness turned the conversation into

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more general channels. The topics of the day's light talk were absolutely unknown to him. The plays, the new books, the latest popular songs, jokes depending for their point on an intimate knowledge of the prevailing vaudeville mode, were as unfamiliar to him as Miss Alice Southerland's guest. He had thought pine and forest and the trail so long, that he found these square-elbowed subjects refusing to be jostled aside by any trivialities.

So he sat there silent in the semi-darkness. This man, whose lightest experience would have aroused the eager attention of the entire party, held his peace because he thought he had nothing to say.

He took Helen back to Mrs. Renwick's about ten o'clock. They walked slowly beneath the broad-leaved maples, whose shadows danced under the tall electric lights—and talked.

Helen was an affectionate, warm-hearted girl. Ordinarily she would have been blind to everything except the delight of having her brother once more with her. But his apparently cold reception had first chilled, then thrown her violently into a critical mood. His subsequent social inadequacy had settled her into the common-sense level of everyday life.

"How have you done, Harry?" she inquired anxiously. "Your letters have been so vague."

"Pretty well," he replied. "If things go right, I hope some day to have a better place for you than this."

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Her heart contracted suddenly. It was all she could do to keep from bursting into tears. One would have to realize perfectly her youth, the life to which she had been accustomed, the lack of encouragement she had labored under, the distastefulness of her surroundings, the pent-up dogged patience she had displayed during the last two years, the hopeless feeling of battering against a brick wall she always experienced when she received the replies to her attempts on Harry's confidence, to appreciate how the indefiniteness of his answer exasperated her and filled her with sullen despair. She said nothing for twenty steps. Then:

"Harry," she said quietly, "can't you take me away from Mrs. Renwick's this year?"

"I don't know, Helen. I can't tell yet. Not just now, at any rate."

"Harry," she cried, "you don't know what you're doing. I tell you I can't *stand* Mrs. Renwick any longer." She calmed herself with an effort, and went on more quietly. "Really, Harry, she's awfully disagreeable. If you can't afford to keep me anywhere else—" she glanced timidly at his face and for the first time saw the strong lines about the jaw and the tiny furrows between the eyebrows. "I know you've worked hard, Harry dear," she said with a sudden sympathy, "and that you'd give me more, if you could. But so have I worked hard. Now we ought to change this in some way. I can

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get a position as teacher, or some other work somewhere. Won't you let me do that?"

Thorpe was thinking that it would be easy enough to obtain Wallace Carpenter's consent to his taking a thousand dollars from the profits of the year. But he knew also that the struggle in the courts might need every cent the new company could spare. It would look much better were he to wait until after the verdict. If favorable, there would be no difficulty about sparing the money. If adverse, there would be no money to spare. The latter contingency he did not seriously anticipate, but still it had to be considered. And so, until the thing was absolutely certain, he hesitated to explain the situation to Helen for fear of disappointing her!

"I think you'd better wait, Helen," said he. "There'll be time enough for all that later when it becomes necessary. You are very young yet, and it will not hurt you a bit to continue your education for a little while longer."

"And in the meantime stay with Mrs. Renwick?" flashed Helen.

"Yes. I hope it will not have to be for very long."

"How long do you think, Harry?" pleaded the girl.

"That depends on circumstances," replied Thorpe.

"Oh!" she cried indignantly.

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"Harry," she ventured after a time, "why not write to Uncle Amos?"

Thorpe stopped and looked at her searchingly.

"You can't mean that, Helen," he said, drawing a long breath.

"But why not?" she persisted.

"You ought to know."

"Who would have done any different? If you had a brother and discovered that he had—appropriated—most all the money of a concern of which you were president, wouldn't you think it your duty to have him arrested?"

"No!" cried Thorpe suddenly excited. "Never! If he was my brother, I'd help him, even if he'd committed murder!"

"We differ there," replied the girl coldly. "I consider that Uncle Amos was a strong man who did his duty as he saw it, in spite of his feelings. That he had father arrested is nothing against him in my eyes. And his wanting us to come to him since seems to me very generous. I am going to write to him."

"You will do nothing of the kind," commanded Thorpe sternly. "Amos Thorpe is an unscrupulous man who became unscrupulously rich. He deliberately used our father as a tool, and then destroyed him. I consider that any one of our family who would have anything to do with him is a traitor!"

The girl did not reply.

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Next morning Thorpe felt uneasily repentant for his strong language. After all, the girl did lead a monotonous life, and he could not blame her for rebelling against it from time to time. Her remarks had been born of the rebellion; they had meant nothing in themselves. He could not doubt for a moment her loyalty to the family.

But he did not tell her so. That is not the way of men of his stamp. Rather he cast about to see what he could do.

Injin Charley had, during the winter just past, occupied odd moments in embroidering with beads and porcupine quills a wonderful outfit of soft buckskin gauntlets, a shirt of the same material, and moccasins of moose-hide. They were beautifully worked, and Thorpe, on receiving them, had at once conceived the idea of giving them to his sister. To this end he had consulted another Indian near Marquette, to whom he had confided the task of reducing the gloves and moccasins. The shirt would do as it was, for it was intended to be worn as a sort of belted blouse. As has been said, all were thickly beaded, and represented a vast quantity of work. Probably fifty dollars could not have bought them, even in the north country.

Thorpe tendered this as a peace offering. Not understanding women in the least, he was surprised to see his gift received by a burst of tears and a sudden exit from the room. Helen thought he had

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bought the things; and she was still sore from the pinch of the poverty she had touched the evening before. Nothing will exasperate a woman more than to be presented with something expensive for which she does not particularly care, after being denied, on the ground of economy, something she wants very much.

Thorpe stared after her in hurt astonishment. Mrs. Renwick sniffed.

That afternoon the latter estimable lady attempted to reprove Miss Helen, and was snubbed; she persisted, and an open quarrel ensued.

"I will not be dictated to by you, Mrs. Renwick," said Helen, "and I don't intend to have you interfere in any way with my family affairs."

"They won't stand *much* investigation," replied Mrs. Renwick, goaded out of her placidity.

Thorpe entered to hear the last two speeches. He said nothing, but that night he wrote to Wallace Carpenter for a thousand dollars. Every stroke of the pen hurt him. But of course Helen could not stay here now.

"And to think, just to *think* that he let that woman insult me so, and didn't say a word!" cried Helen to herself.

Her method would have been to have acted irrevocably on the spot, and sought ways and means afterward. Thorpe's, however, was to perfect all his plans before making the first step.

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Wallace Carpenter was not in town. Before the letter had followed him to his new address, and the answer had returned, a week had passed. Of course the money was gladly put at Thorpe's disposal. The latter at once interviewed his sister.

"Helen," he said, "I have made arrangements for some money. What would you like to do this year?"

She raised her head and looked at him with clear bright gaze. If he could so easily raise the money, why had he not done so before? He knew how much she wanted it. Her happiness did not count. Only when his quixotic ideas of family honor were attacked did he bestir himself.

"I am going to Uncle Amos's," she replied distinctly.

"What?" asked Thorpe incredulously.

For answer she pointed to a letter lying open on the table. Thorpe took it and read:

"My dear Niece:

"Both Mrs. Thorpe and myself more than rejoice that time and reflection have removed that, I must confess, natural prejudice which the unfortunate family affair, to which I will not allude, raised in your mind against us. As we said long ago, our home is yours when you may wish to make it so. You state your present readiness to come immediately. Unless you wire to the contrary, we shall



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expect you next Tuesday evening on the four:forty train. I shall be at the Central Station myself to meet you. If your brother is now with you, I should be pleased to see him also, and will be most happy to give him a position with the firm.

"Aff. your uncle,

" AMOS THORPE.

"New York, June 6, 1883."

On finishing the last paragraph the reader crumpled the letter and threw it into the grate.

"I am sorry you did that, Helen," said he, "but I don't blame you, and it can't be helped. We won't need to take advantage of his 'kind offer' now."

"I intend to do so, however," replied the girl coldly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," she cried, "that I am sick of waiting on your good pleasure. I waited, and slaved, and stood unbearable things for two years. I did it cheerfully. And in return I don't get a civil word, not a decent explanation, not even a—caress," she fairly sobbed out the last word. "I can't stand it any longer. I have tried and tried and tried, and then when I've come to you for the littlest word of encouragement, you have pecked at me with those stingy little kisses, and have told me I was young and ought to finish my education! You put me in uncongenial surroundings, and go off into the woods

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camping yourself. You refuse me money enough to live in a three-dollar boarding-house, and you buy expensive rifles and fishing tackle for yourself. You can't afford to send me away somewhere for the summer, but you bring me back gee-gaws you have happened to fancy, worth a month's board in the country. You haven't a cent when it is a question of what I want; but you raise money quick enough when your old family is insulted. Isn't it my family too? And then you blame me because, after waiting in vain two years for you to do something, I start out to do the best I can for myself. I'm not of age; but you're not my guardian!"

During this long speech Thorpe had stood motionless, growing paler and paler. Like most noble natures, when absolutely in the right, he was incapable of defending himself against misunderstandings. He was too wounded; he was hurt to the soul.

"You know that is not true, Helen," he replied, almost sternly.

"It *is* true!" she asseverated, "and I'm *through*!"

"It's a little hard," said Thorpe, passing his hand wearily before his eyes, "to work hard this way for years, and then——"

She laughed with a hard little note of scorn.

"Helen," said Thorpe with new energy, "I forbid you to have anything to do with Amos Thorpe. I think he is a scoundrel and a sneak."

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"What grounds have you to think so?"

"None," he confessed, "that is, nothing definite. But I know men; and I know his type. Some day I shall be able to prove something. I do not wish you to have anything to do with him."

"I shall do as I please," she replied, crossing her hands behind her.

Thorpe's eyes darkened.

"We have talked this over a great many times," he warned, "and you've always agreed with me. Remember, you owe something to the family."

"Most of the family seem to owe something," she replied with a flippant laugh. "I'm sure I didn't choose the family. If I had, I'd have picked out a better one!"

The flippancy was only a weapon which she used unconsciously, blindly, in her struggle. The man could not know this. His face hardened, and his voice grew cold.

"You may take your choice, Helen," he said formally. "If you go into the household of Amos Thorpe, if you deliberately prefer your comfort to your honor, we will have nothing more in common."

They faced each other with the cool, deadly glance of the race, so similar in appearance but so unlike in nature.

"I, too, offer you a home, such as it is," repeated the man. "Choose!"

At the mention of the home for which means were

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so quickly forthcoming when Thorpe, not she, considered it needful, the girl's eyes flashed. She stooped and dragged violently from beneath the bed a flat steamer trunk, the lid of which she threw open. A dress lay on the bed. With a fine dramatic gesture she folded the garment and laid it in the bottom of the trunk. Then she knelt, and without vouchsafing another glance at her brother standing rigid by the door, she began feverishly to arrange the folds.

The choice was made. He turned and went out.