

## CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

**B**EFORE daylight Injin Charley drifted into the camp to find Thorpe already out. With a curt nod the Indian seated himself by the fire, and, producing a square plug of tobacco and a knife, began leisurely to fill his pipe. Thorpe watched him in silence. Finally Injin Charley spoke in the red man's clear-cut, imitative English, a pause between each sentence.

"I find trail three men," said he. "Both dam, three men. One man go down river. Those men have cork-boot. One man no have cork-boot. He boss."

The Indian suddenly threw his chin out, his head back, half closed his eyes in a cynical squint. As by a flash Dyer, the scaler, leered insolently from behind the Indian's stolid mask.

"How do you know?" said Thorpe.

For answer the Indian threw his shoulders forward in Dyer's nervous fashion.

"He make trail big by the toe, light by the heel. He make trail big on inside."

Charley arose and walked, after Dyer's springy fashion, illustrating his point in the soft wood ashes of the immediate fireside.

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Thorpe looked doubtful. "I believe you are right, Charley," said he. "But it is mighty little to go on. You can't be sure."

"I sure," replied Charley.

He puffed strongly at the heel of his smoke, then arose, and without farewell disappeared in the forest.

Thorpe ranged the camp impatiently, glancing often at the sky. At length he laid fresh logs on the fire and aroused the cook. It was bitter cold in the early morning. After a time the men turned out of their own accord, at first yawning with insufficient rest, and then becoming grimly tense as their returned wits reminded them of the situation.

From that moment began the wonderful struggle against circumstances which has become a by-word among rivermen everywhere. A forty-day drive had to go out in ten. A freshet had to float out thirty million feet of logs. It was tremendous; as even the men most deeply buried in the heavy hours of that time dimly realized. It was epic; as the journalist, by now thoroughly aroused, soon succeeded in convincing his editors and his public. Fourteen, sixteen, sometimes eighteen hours a day, the men of the driving crew worked like demons. Jams had no chance to form. The phenomenal activity of the rear crew reduced by half the inevitable sacking. Of course, under the pressure, the lower dam had gone out. Nothing was to be depended on but sheer



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dogged grit. Far up-river Sadler & Smith had hung their drive for the season. They had stretched heavy booms across the current, and so had resigned themselves to a definite but not extraordinary loss. Thorpe had at least a clear river.

Wallace Carpenter could not understand how human flesh and blood endured. The men themselves had long since reached the point of practical exhaustion, but were carried through by the fire of their leader. Work was dogged until he stormed into sight; then it became frenzied. He seemed to impart to those about him a nervous force and excitability as real as that induced by brandy. When he looked at a man from his cavernous, burning eyes, that man jumped.

It was all willing enough work. Several definite causes, each adequate alone to something extraordinary, focussed to the necessity. His men worshipped Thorpe; the idea of thwarting the purposes of their comrades' murderers retained its strength; the innate pride of caste and craft—the sturdiest virtue of the riverman—was in these picked men increased to the dignity of a passion. The great psychological forces of a successful career gathered and made head against the circumstances which such careers always arouse in polarity.

Impossibilities were puffed aside like thistles. The men went at them headlong. They gave way before the rush. Thorpe always led. Not for a single in-

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stant of the day nor for many at night was he at rest. He was like a man who has taken a deep breath to reach a definite goal, and who cannot exhale until the burst of speed be over. Instinctively he seemed to realize that a let-down would mean collapse.

After the camp had fallen asleep, he would often lie awake half of the few hours of their night, every muscle tense, staring at the sky. His mind saw definitely every detail of the situation as he had last viewed it. In advance his imagination stooped and sweated to the work which his body was to accomplish the next morning. Thus he did everything twice. Then at last the tension would relax. He would fall into uneasy sleep. But twice that did not follow. Through the dissolving iron mist of his striving, a sharp thought cleaved like an arrow. It was that after all he did not care. The religion of Success no longer held him as its devoutest worshipper. He was throwing the fibres of his life into the engine of toil, not because of moral duty, but because of moral pride. He meant to succeed in order to prove to himself that he had not been wrong.

The pain of the arrow-wound always aroused him from his doze with a start. He grimly laughed the thought out of court. To his waking moments his religion was sincere, was real. But deep down in his subconsciousness, below his recognition, the



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other influence was growing like a weed. Perhaps the vision, not the waking, had been right. Perhaps that far-off beautiful dream of a girl which Thorpe's idealism had constructed from the reactionary necessities of Thorpe's harsh life had been more real than his forest temples of his ruthless god! Perhaps there were greater things than to succeed, greater things than success. Perhaps, after all, the Power that put us here demands more that we cleave one to the other in loving-kindness than that we learn to blow the penny whistles it has tossed us. And then the keen, poignant memory of the dream girl stole into the young man's mind, and in agony was immediately thrust forth. He would not think of her. He had given her up. He had cast the die. For success he had bartered her, in the noblest, the loftiest spirit of devotion. He refused to believe that devotion fanatical; he refused to believe that he had been wrong. In the still darkness of the night he would rise and steal to the edge of the dully roaring stream. There, his eyes blinded and his throat choked with a longing more manly than tears, he would reach out and smooth the round rough coats of the great logs.

"We'll do it!" he whispered to them—and to himself. "We'll do it! We can't be wrong. God would not have let us!"

## CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

**W**ALLACE CARPENTER'S search expedition had proved a failure, as Thorpe had foreseen, but at the end of the week, when the water began to recede, the little beagles ran upon a mass of flesh and bones. The man was unrecognizable, either as an individual or as a human being. The remains were wrapped in canvas and sent for interment in the cemetery at Marquette. Three of the others were never found. The last did not come to light until after the drive had quite finished.

Down at the booms the jam crew received the drive as fast as it came down. From one crib to another across the broad extent of the river's mouth, heavy booms were chained end to end effectually to close the exit to Lake Superior. Against these the logs caromed softly in the slackened current, and stopped. The cribs were very heavy with slanting, instead of square, tops, in order that the pressure might be downward instead of sidewise. This guaranteed their permanency. In a short time the surface of the lagoon was covered by a brown carpet of logs running in strange patterns like windrows of fallen grain. Finally, across the straight middle



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distance of the river, appeared little agitated specks leaping back and forth. Thus the rear came in sight and the drive was all but over.

Up till now the weather had been clear but oppressively hot for this time of year. The heat had come suddenly and maintained itself well. It had searched out with fierce directness all the patches of snow lying under the thick firs and balsams of the swamp edge, it had shaken loose the anchor ice of the marsh bottoms, and so had materially aided the success of the drive by increase of water. The men had worked for the most part in undershirts. They were as much in the water as out of it, for the icy bath had become almost grateful. Hamilton, the journalist, who had attached himself definitely to the drive, distributed bunches of papers, in which the men read that the unseasonable condition prevailed all over the country.

At length, however, it gave signs of breaking. The sky, which had been of a steel blue, harbored great piled thunder-heads. Occasionally athwart the heat shot a streak of cold air. Toward evening the thunder-heads shifted and finally dissipated, to be sure, but the portent was there.

Hamilton's papers began to tell of disturbances in the South and West. A washout in Arkansas derailed a train; a cloudburst in Texas wiped out a camp; the cities along the Ohio River were enjoying their annual flood with the usual con-

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comitants of floating houses and boats in the streets. The men wished they had some of that water here.

So finally the drive approached its end and all concerned began in anticipation to taste the weariness that awaited them. They had hurried their powers. The few remaining tasks still confronting them all at once seemed more formidable than what they had accomplished. They could not contemplate further exertion. The work for the first time became dogged, distasteful. Even Thorpe was infected. He, too, wanted more than anything else to drop on the bed in Mrs. Hathaway's boarding-house, there to sponge from his mind all colors but the dead gray of rest. There remained but a few things to do. A mile of sacking would carry the drive beyond the influence of freshet water. After that there would be no hurry.

He looked around at the hard, fatigue-worn faces of the men about him, and in the obsession of his wearied mood he suddenly felt a great rush of affection for these comrades who had so unreservedly spent themselves for his affair. Their features showed exhaustion, it is true, but their eyes gleamed still with the steady half-humorous purpose of the pioneer. When they caught his glance they grinned good-humoredly.

All at once Thorpe turned and started for the bank.



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"That'll do, boys," he said quietly to the nearest group. "She's down!"

It was noon. The sackers looked up in surprise. Behind them, to their very feet, rushed the soft smooth slope of Hemlock Rapids. Below them flowed a broad, peaceful river. The drive had passed its last obstruction. To all intents and purposes it was over.

Calmly, with matter-of-fact directness, as though they had not achieved the impossible; as though they, a handful, had not cheated nature and powerful enemies, they shouldered their peaveys and struck into the broad wagon road. In the middle distance loomed the tall stacks of the mill with the little board town about it. Across the eye spun the thread of the railroad. Far away gleamed the broad expanses of Lake Superior.

The cook had, early that morning, moored the wanigan to the bank. One of the teamsters from town had loaded the men's "turkeys" on his heavy wagon. The wanigan's crew had thereupon trudged into town.

The men paired off naturally and fell into a dragging, dogged walk. Thorpe found himself unexpectedly with Big Junko. For a time they plodded on without conversation. Then the big man ventured a remark.

"I'm glad she's over," said he. "I got a good stake comin'."

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"Yes," replied Thorpe indifferently.

"I got most six hundred dollars comin'," persisted Junko.

"Might as well be six hundred cents," commented Thorpe, "it'd make you just as drunk."

Big Junko laughed self-consciously but without the slightest resentment.

"That's all right," said he, "but you betcher life I don't blow this stake."

"I've heard that talk before," shrugged Thorpe.

"Yes, but this is different. I'm goin' to git married on this. How's *that*?"

Thorpe, his attention struck at last, stared at his companion. He noted the man's little twinkling animal eyes, his high cheek-bones, his flat nose, his thick and slobbery lips, his straggling, fierce mustache and eyebrows, his grotesque long-tailed cut-away coat. So to him, too, this primitive man reaching dully from primordial chaos, the great moment had yielded its vision.

"Who is she?" he asked abruptly.

"She used to wash at Camp Four."

Thorpe dimly remembered the woman now—an overweighted creature with a certain attraction of elfishly blowing hair, with a certain pleasing full-cheeked, full-bosomed health.

The two walked on in re-established silence. Finally the giant, unable to contain himself longer, broke out again.



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"I do like that woman," said he with a quaintly deliberate seriousness. "That's the finest woman in this district."

Thorpe felt the quick moisture rush to his eyes. There was something inexpressibly touching in those simple words as Big Junko uttered them.

"And when you are married," he asked, "what are you going to do? Are you going to stay on the river?"

"No, I'm goin' to clear a farm. The woman she says that's the thing to do. I like the river, too. But you bet when Carrie says a thing, that's plenty good enough for Big Junko."

"Suppose," suggested Thorpe, irresistibly impelled toward the attempt, "suppose I should offer you two hundred dollars a month to stay on the river. Would you stay?"

"Carrie don't like it," replied Junko.

"Two hundred dollars is big wages," persisted Thorpe. "It's twice what I give Radway."

"I'd like to ask Carrie."

"No, take it or leave it now."

"Well, Carrie says she don't like it," answered the riverman with a sigh.

Thorpe looked at his companion fixedly. Somehow the bestial countenance had taken on an attraction of its own. He remembered Big Junko as a wild beast when his passions were aroused, as a man whose honesty had been doubted.

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"You've changed, Junko," said he.

"I know," said the big man. "I been a scalawag all right. I quit it. I don't know much, but Carrie she's smart, and I'm goin' to do what she says. When you get stuck on a good woman like Carrie, Mr. Thorpe, you don't give much of a damn for anything else. Sure! That's right! It's the biggest thing top o' earth!"

Here it was again, the opposing creed. And from such a source. Thorpe's iron will contracted again.

"A woman is no excuse for a man's neglecting his work," he snapped.

"Shorely not," agreed Junko serenely. "I aim to finish out my time all right, Mr. Thorpe. Don't you worry none about that. I done my best for you. And," went on the riverman in the expansion of this unwonted confidence with his employer, "I'd like to rise to remark that you're the best boss I ever had, and we boys wants to stay with her till there's skating in hell!"

"All right," murmured Thorpe indifferently.

His momentary interest had left him. Again the reactionary weariness dragged at his feet. Suddenly the remaining half mile to town seemed very long indeed.



## CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

**W**ALLACE CARPENTER and Hamilton, the journalist, seated against the sun-warmed bench of Mrs. Hathaway's boarding-house, commented on the band as it stumbled into the wash-room.

"Those men don't know how big they are," remarked the journalist. "That's the way with most big men. And that man Thorpe belongs to another age. I'd like to get him to telling his experiences; he'd be a gold mine to me."

"And would require about as much trouble to 'work,'" laughed Wallace. "He won't talk."

"That's generally the trouble, confound 'em," sighed Hamilton. "The fellows who *can* talk haven't anything to say; and those who have something to tell are dumb as oysters. I've got him in though." He spread one of a roll of papers on his knees. "I got a set of duplicates for you. Thought you might like to keep them. The office tells me," he concluded modestly, "that they are attracting lots of attention, but are looked upon as being a rather clever sort of fiction."

Wallace picked up the sheet. His eye was at once met by the heading, "'So long, boys,'" in let-

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ters a half inch in height, and immediately underneath in smaller type, "said Jimmy Powers, and threw his hat in the face of death."

"It's all there," explained the journalist, "—the jam and the break, and all this magnificent struggle afterward. It makes a great yarn. I feel tempted sometimes to help it out a little—artistically, you know—but of course that wouldn't do. She'd make a ripping yarn, though, if I could get up some motive outside mere trade rivalry for the blowing up of those dams. That would just round it off."

Wallace Carpenter was about to reply that such a motive actually existed, when the conversation was interrupted by the approach of Thorpe and Big Junko. The former looked twenty years older after his winter. His eye was dull, his shoulders drooped, his gait was inelastic. The whole bearing of the man was that of one weary to the bone.

"I've got something here to show you, Harry," cried Wallace Carpenter, waving one of the papers. "It was a great drive and here's something to remember it by."

"All right, Wallace, by and by," replied Thorpe dully. "I'm dead. I'm going to turn in for a while. I need sleep more than anything else. I can't think now."

He passed through the little passage into the "parlor bedroom," which Mrs. Hathaway always kept in readiness for members of the firm. There



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he fell heavily asleep almost before his body had met the bed.

In the long dining-room the rivermen consumed a belated dinner. They had no comments to make. It was over.

The two on the veranda smoked. To the right, at the end of the sawdust street, the mill sang its varying and lulling keys. The odor of fresh-sawed pine perfumed the air. Not a hundred yards away the river slipped silently to the distant blue Superior, escaping between the slanting stone-filled cribs which held back the logs. Down the south and west the huge thunder-heads gathered and flashed and grumbled, as they had done every afternoon for days previous.

"Queer thing," commented Hamilton finally, "these cold streaks in the air. They are just as distinct as though they had partitions around them."

"Queer climate anyway," agreed Carpenter.

Excepting always for the mill, the little settlement appeared asleep. The main booms were quite deserted. Not a single figure, armed with its picturesque pike-pole, loomed athwart the distance. After a while Hamilton noticed something.

"Look here, Carpenter," said he, "what's happening out there? Have some of your confounded logs *sunk*, or what? There don't seem to be near so many of them somehow."

"No, it isn't that," proffered Carpenter after a

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moment's scrutiny, "there are just as many logs, but they are getting separated a little so you can see the open water between them."

"Guess you're right. Say, look here, I believe that the river is rising!"

"Nonsense, we haven't had any rain."

"She's rising just the same. I'll tell you how I know; you see that spile over there near the left-hand crib? Well, I sat on the boom this morning watching the crew, and I whittled the spile with my knife—you can see the marks from here. I cut the thing about two feet above the water. Look at it now."

"She's pretty near the water line, that's right," admitted Carpenter.

"I should think that might make the boys *hot*," commented Hamilton. "If they'd known this was coming, they needn't have hustled so to get the drive down."

"That's so," Wallace agreed.

About an hour later the younger man in his turn made a discovery.

"She's been rising right along," he submitted. "Your marks are nearer the water, and, do you know, I believe the logs are beginning to feel it. See, they've closed up the little openings between them, and they are beginning to crowd down to the lower end of the pond."

"I don't know anything about this business,"



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hazarded the journalist, "but by the mere look of the thing I should think there was a good deal of pressure on that same lower end. By Jove, look there! See those logs up-end? I believe you're going to have a jam right here in your own booms!"

"I don't know," hesitated Wallace, "I never heard of its happening."

"You'd better let some one know."

"I hate to bother Harry or any of the rivermen. I'll just step down to the mill. Mason—he's our mill foreman—he'll know."

Mason came to the edge of the high trestle and took one look.

"Jumpin' fish-hooks!" he cried. "Why, the river's up six inches and still a comin'! Here you, Tom!" he called to one of the yard hands, "you tell Solly to get steam on that tug double quick, and have Dave hustle together his driver crew."

"What you going to do?" asked Wallace.

"I got to strengthen the booms," explained the mill foreman. "We'll drive some piles across between the cribs."

"Is there any danger?"

"Oh, no, the river would have to rise a good deal higher than she is now to make current enough to hurt. They've had a hard rain up above. This will go down in a few hours."

After a time the tug puffed up to the booms, escorting the pile driver. The latter towed a little

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raft of long sharpened piles, which it at once began to drive in such positions as would most effectually strengthen the booms. In the meantime the thunder-heads had slyly climbed the heavens, so that a sudden deluge of rain surprised the workmen. For an hour it poured down in torrents; then settled to a steady gray beat. Immediately the aspect had changed. The distant rise of land was veiled; the brown expanse of logs became slippery and glistening; the river below the booms was picked into staccato points by the drops; distant Superior turned lead color and seemed to tumble strangely athwart the horizon.

Solly, the tug captain, looked at his mooring hawsers and then at the nearest crib.

"She's riz two inches in th' las' two hours," he announced, "and she's runnin' like a mill race." Solly was a typical north-country tug captain, short and broad, with a brown, clear face, and the steadiest and calmest of steel-blue eyes. "When she begins to feel th' pressure behind," he went on, "there's goin' to be trouble."

Toward dusk she began to feel that pressure. Through the rainy twilight the logs could be seen raising their ghostly arms of protest. Slowly, without tumult, the jam formed. In the van the logs crossed silently; in the rear they pressed in, were sucked under in the swift water, and came to rest at the bottom of the river. The current of the river



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began to protest, pressing its hydraulics through the narrowing crevices. The situation demanded attention.

A breeze began to pull off shore in the body of rain. Little by little it increased, sending the water by in gusts, ruffling the already hurrying river into greater haste, raising far from the shore dimly perceived white-caps. Between the roaring of the wind, the dash of rain, and the rush of the stream, men had to shout to make themselves heard.

"Guess you'd better rout out the boss," screamed Solly to Wallace Carpenter; "this damn water's comin' up an inch an hour right along. When she backs up once, she'll push this jam out sure."

Wallace ran to the boarding-house and roused his partner from a heavy sleep. The latter understood the situation at a word. While dressing, he explained to the younger man wherein lay the danger.

"If the jam breaks once," said he, "nothing top of earth can prevent it from going out into the Lake, and there it'll scatter, Heaven knows where. Once scattered, it is practically a total loss. The salvage wouldn't pay the price of the lumber."

They felt blindly through the rain in the direction of the lights on the tug and pile-driver. Shearer, the water dripping from his flaxen mustache, joined them like a shadow.

"I heard you come in," he explained to Carpenter. At the river he announced his opinion. "We

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can hold her all right," he assured them. "It'll take a few more piles, but by morning the storm'll be over, and she'll begin to go down again."

The three picked their way over the creaking, swaying timber. But when they reached the pile-driver, they found trouble afoot. The crew had mutinied, and refused longer to drive piles under the face of the jam.

"If she breaks loose, she's going to bury us," said they.

"She won't break," snapped Shearer, "get to work."

"It's dangerous," they objected sullenly.

"By God, you get off this driver," shouted Solly. "Go over and lie down in a ten-acre lot, and see if you feel safe there!"

He drove them ashore with a storm of profanity and a multitude of kicks, his steel-blue eyes blazing.

"There's nothing for it but to get the boys out again," said Tim; "I kinder hate to do it."

But when the Fighting Forty, half asleep but dauntless, took charge of the driver, a catastrophe made itself known. One of the ejected men had tripped the lifting chain of the hammer after another had knocked away the heavy preventing block, and so the hammer had fallen into the river and was lost. None other was to be had. The pile-driver was useless.

A dozen men were at once despatched for cables,



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chains, and wire ropes from the supply at the warehouse.

"I'd like to have those whelps here," cried Shearer, "I'd throw them under the jam."

"It's part of the same trick," said Thorpe grimly; "those fellows have their men everywhere among us. I don't know whom to trust."

"You think it's Morrison & Daly?" queried Carpenter astonished.

"Think? I know it. They know as well as you or I that if we save these logs, we'll win out in the stock exchange; and they're not such fools as to let us save them if it can be helped. I have a score to settle with those fellows; and when I get through with this thing I'll settle it all right."

"What are you going to do now?"

"The only thing there is to be done. We'll string heavy booms, chained together, between the cribs, and then trust to heaven they'll hold. I think we can hold the jam. The water will begin to flow over the bank before long, so there won't be much increase of pressure over what we have now; and as there won't be any shock to withstand, I think our heavy booms will do the business."

He turned to direct the boring of some long boom logs in preparation for the chains. Suddenly he whirled again to Wallace with so strange an expression in his face that the young man almost cried out. The uncertain light of the lanterns showed dimly

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the streaks of rain across his countenance, and his eye flared with a look almost of panic.

"I never thought of it!" he said in a low voice. "Fool that I am! I don't see how I missed it. Wallace, don't you see what those devils will do next?"

"No, what do you mean?" gasped the younger man.

"There are twelve million feet of logs up river in Sadler & Smith's drive. Don't you see what they'll do?"

"No, I don't believe——"

"Just as soon as they find out that the river is booming, and that we are going to have a hard time to hold our jam, they'll let loose those twelve million on us. They'll break the jam, or dynamite it, or something. And let me tell you that a very few logs hitting the tail of our jam will start the whole shooting match so that no power on earth can stop it."

"I don't imagine they'd think of doing that——" began Wallace by way of assurance.

"Think of it! You don't know them. They've thought of everything. You don't know that man Daly. Ask Tim, he'll tell you."

"Well, the ——"

"I've got to send a man up there right away. Perhaps we can get there in time to head them off. They have to send their man over— By the way,"



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he queried, struck with a new idea, "how long have you been driving piles?"

"Since about three o'clock."

"Six hours," computed Thorpe. "I wish you'd come for me sooner."

He cast his eye rapidly over the men.

"I don't know just who to send. There isn't a good enough woodsman in the lot to make Siscoe Falls through the woods a night like this. The river trail is too long; and a cut through the woods is blind. Andrews is the only man I know of who could do it, but I think Billy Mason said Andrews had gone up on the Gunther track to run lines. Come on; we'll see."

With infinite difficulty and caution, they reached the shore. Across the gleaming logs shone dimly the lanterns at the scene of work, ghostly through the rain. Beyond, on either side, lay impenetrable drenched darkness, racked by the wind.

"I wouldn't want to tackle it," panted Thorpe. "If it wasn't for that cursed tote road between Sadler's and Daly's, I wouldn't worry. It's just too easy for *them*."

Behind them the jam cracked and shrieked and groaned. Occasionally was heard, beneath the sharper noises, a dull *boom*, as one of the heavy timbers, forced by the pressure from its resting-place, shot into the air, and fell back on the bristling surface.

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Andrews had left that morning.

"Tim Shearer might do it," suggested Thorpe, "but I hate to spare him."

He picked his rifle from its rack and thrust the magazine full of cartridges.

"Come on, Wallace," said he, "we'll hunt him up."

They stepped again into the shriek and roar of the storm, bending their heads to its power, but indifferent, in the already drenched condition of their clothing, to the rain. The sawdust street was saturated like a sponge. They could feel the quick water rise about the pressure at their feet. From the invisible houses they heard a steady monotone of flowing from the roofs. Far ahead, dim in the mist, sprayed the light of lanterns.

Suddenly Thorpe felt a touch on his arm. Faintly he perceived at his elbow the high lights of a face from which the water streamed.

"Injin Charley!" he cried, "the very man!"