

The Blazed Trail

By STEWART EDWARD WHITE

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"Harry," replied Wallace soberly, "I am sorry I made you say that. I do not care for your name, except, perhaps, to put it in the articles of partnership, and I have no concern with your ancestry. I tell you, it is a favor to let me in on this deal. I don't know anything about lumbering, but I've got eyes. I can see that big timber standing up thick and tall, and I know people make profits in the business."

Thorpe considered a few moments in silence. "Wallace," he said gravely at last, "I honestly do think that whoever goes into this deal with me will make money. Of course there's always chances against it, but I am going to do my best."

The man's accustomed aloofness had gone. His eyes flashed, his brow frowned, the muscles of his cheeks contracted under his beard.

Wallace gazed at him with fascinated admiration. "Then you will?" he asked tremulously.

"Wallace," he replied again, "they'll say that you have been the victim of an adventurer, but the result will prove them wrong. If I weren't perfectly sure of this I wouldn't think of it for I like you, and I know you want to go into this more out of friendship for me and because your imagination is touched than from any business sense. But I'll accept gladly, and I'll do my best!"

"Hooray!" cried the boy, throwing his cap up in the air. "We'll do 'em up in the first round."

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER Wallace left them the two men settled again into their customary ways of life.

Up to the present Thorpe had enjoyed a clear field. Now two men came down from above and established a temporary camp in the woods half a mile below the dam. Thorpe soon satisfied himself that they were picking out a route for the logging road.

The two men, of course, did not bother themselves with the timber to be travoyed, but gave their entire attention to that lying farther back. Thorpe was enabled thus to avoid them entirely. He simply transferred his estimating to the forest by the stream. Once he met one of the men, but was fortunately in a country that lent itself to his pose of hunter. The other he did not see at all.

But one day he heard him. The two up river men were following carefully but noisily the bed of a little creek. Thorpe happened to be on the side hill, so he seated himself quietly until they should have moved on down. One of them shouted to the other, who, crashing through a thicket, did not hear. "Ho-o-o, Dyer!" the first repeated. "Here's that infernal comer over here!" "Yon," assented the other, "coming." Thorpe recognized the voice instantly as that of Radway's scaler. His hand gripped in a gesture of disgust. The man had always been obnoxious to him.

Two days later he stumbled on their camp. He paused in wonder at what he saw.

The packs lay open, their contents scattered in every direction. The fire had been hastily extinguished with a bucket of water, and a frying pan lay where it had been overturned. If the thing had been possible, Thorpe would have guessed at a hasty and unpremeditated flight.

He was about to withdraw carefully lest he be discovered when he was startled by a touch on his elbow. "It was Injun Charley."

"Dey go up river," he said. "I come see what de row."

The Indian examined rapidly the condition of the little camp.

"Dey look for somethin'," said he, making his hand revolve as though rummaging and indicating the packs.

"I tink dey see you in de woods," he concluded. "Dey go camp get 'um boss. Boss he gone on river trail two tree hour."

"You're right, Charley," replied Thorpe, who had been drawing his own conclusions. "One of them knows me. They've been looking in their packs for their notebooks with the descriptions of these sections in them. Then they pled out for the boss. If I know anything at all, the boss'll make tracks for Detroit."

"Wot you do?" asked Injun Charley curiously.

"I got to get to Detroit before they do; that's all."

Instantly the Indian became all action.

"You come," he ordered and set out at a rapid pace for camp.

There, with incredible deftness, he packed together about twelve pounds of the jerked venison and a pair of blankets, thrust Thorpe's waterproof

match safe in his pocket and turned eagerly to the young man.

"You come," he repeated. Thorpe hastily uncurled his "descriptions" and wrapped them up. The Indian in silence rearranged the misplaced articles in such a manner as to relieve the camp of its abandoned air.

It was nearly sundown. Without a word the two men struck off into the forest, the Indian in the lead. Their course was southerly, but Thorpe asked no questions. He followed blindly. Soon he found that if he did even that adequately he would have little attention left for anything else. The Indian walked with long, swift strides. His knees always slightly bent, even at the finish of the step, his back bowed, his shoulders and head thrust forward. His gait had a queer sag in it, up and down in a long curve from one rise to the other. After a time Thorpe became fascinated in watching before him this easy, untiring lope, hour after hour, without the variation of a second's fraction in speed or an inch in length.

At first Thorpe followed him with comparative ease, but at the end of three hours he was compelled to put forth decided efforts to keep pace. His walking was no longer mechanical, but conscious. When it becomes so a man soon tires. Thorpe resented the inequalities, the stones, the roots, the patches of soft ground which lay in his way. He felt dully that they were not fair. He could negotiate the distance, but anything else was a gratuitous insult.

Then suddenly he gained his second wind. He felt better and stronger and moved freer.

At midnight Injun Charley called a halt. He spread his blanket, leaned on one elbow long enough to eat a strip of dried meat and fell asleep. Thorpe imitated his example. Three hours later the Indian roused his companion, and the two set out again.

From 3 o'clock until 8 they walked continually without a pause, without an instant's breathing spell. Then they rested half an hour, ate a little venison and smoked a pipe.

An hour after noon they repeated the rest. Thorpe rose with a certain physical reluctance. The Indian seemed as fresh as when he started. At sunset they took an hour, then forward again by the dim intermittent light of the moon and stars through the ghostly haunts of forest until Thorpe thought he would drop with weariness and was mentally incapable of contemplating more than a hundred steps in advance.

"When I get to that square patch of light I'll quit," he would say to himself and struggle painfully the required twenty yards.

"No, I won't quit here," he would continue. "I'll make it that black. Then I'll lie down and die."

And so on. To the actual physical exhaustion of Thorpe's muscles was added that immense mental weariness which uncertainty of time and distance inflicts on a man. The journey might last a week for all he knew. In the presence of an emergency these men of action had actually not exchanged a dozen words. The Indian led; Thorpe followed.

When the halt was called Thorpe fell into his blanket too weary even to eat. Next morning sharp, shooting pains, like the stabs of swords, ran through his groin.

"You come," repeated the Indian, stolid as ever.

Then the sun was an hour high. The travelers suddenly ran into a trail, which as suddenly diverged into a spruce thicket. On the other side of it Thorpe unexpectedly found himself in an extensive clearing dotted with the blackened stumps of pines. Athwart the distance he could perceive the wide blue horizon of Lake Michigan. He had crossed the upper peninsula on foot.

"Boat come by today," said Injun Charley, indicating the tall stacks of a mill. "Him no stop. You mak' him stop take you with him. You get train Mackinaw City tonight. Dose men, dey on dat train."

Thorpe calculated rapidly. The enemy would require even with their teams a day to cover the thirty miles to the fishing village of Munising, whence the stage ran each morning to Seney, the present terminal of the South Shore railroad. He, Thorpe, on foot and three hours behind, could never have caught the stage. But from Seney only one train a day was dispatched to connect at Mackinaw City with the Michigan Central, and on that one train, due to leave this very morning, the up river man was just about pulling out. He would arrive at Mackinaw City at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, where he would be forced to wait until 8 in the evening. By catching a boat at the mill to which Injun Charley had led

him Thorpe could still make the same train. Thus the start in the race for Detroit's office would be fair.

"All right," he cried, all his energy returning to him. "Here goes! We'll beat him out yet!"

"You come back?" inquired the Indian, peering with a certain anxiety into his companion's eyes.

"Come back!" cried Thorpe. "You bet your hat!"

"I wait," replied the Indian, and was gone.

Thorpe saw over the headland to the east a dense trail of black smoke. He set off on a stumbling run toward the mill.

CHAPTER XIII.

HE arrived out of breath at a typical little mill town consisting of the usual unpainted houses, the saloons, mill, office and general store. To the latter he addressed himself for information.

The proprietor, still sleepy, was mopping out the place.

"Does that boat stop here?" shouted Thorpe across the suds.

"Sometimes," replied the man somnolently.

"Not always?"

"Only when there's freight for her."

"Doesn't she stop for passengers?"

"Nope."

"How does she know when there's freight?"

"Oh, they signal her from the mill."

But Thorpe was gone.

At the mill Thorpe dove for the engine room. He knew that elsewhere the clang of machinery and the hurry of business would leave scant attention for him; and, besides, from the engine room the signals would be given. He found, as is often the case in north country sawmills, a Scotchman in charge.

"Does the boat stop here this morning?" he inquired.

"Weel," replied the engineer, with fearful deliberation, "I canna say. But I have received no orders to that effect."

"Can't you whistle her in for me?" asked Thorpe.

"I canna," answered the engineer, promptly enough this time.

"Why not?"

"Ye're na what a body might call freight."

"No other way out of it?"

"Na."

Thorpe was seized with an idea.

"Here!" he cried. "See that bowlder over there? I want to ship that to Mackinaw City by freight on this boat."

The Scotchman's eyes twinkled appreciatively.

"I'm dootin' ye hae th' freight bill from the office," he objected simply.

"See here," replied Thorpe. "I've got to set that boat. It's worth \$20 to me, and I'll square it with the captain. There's your twenty."

The Scotchman deliberated, looking aghast at the ground and thoughtfully oiling a cylinder with a greasy rag.

"It'll na be a matter of life and death?" he asked hopefully. "She aye stops for life and death."

"No," replied Thorpe reluctantly. Then, with an explosion: "Yes, by heaven, it is! If I don't make that boat I'll kill you!"

The Scotchman chuckled and pocketed the money.

"I'm dootin' that's in order," he replied. "I'll be no party to any such proceedin'. I'm goin' noo for a fresh pail of water," he remarked, pausing at the door, "but as a wee item of information yander's th' wheastle rope, and a mon wheastles one short and one long for th' boat."

He disappeared. Thorpe seized the cord and gave the signal. Then he ran hastily to the end of the long lumber docks and peered with great eagerness in the direction of the black smoke.

The steamer was as yet concealed behind a low spit of land which ran out from the west to form one side of the harbor. In a moment, however, her bows appeared, headed directly down toward the strait of Mackinaw. When opposite the little bay, with a grand, free sweep she turned and headed directly for him.

He negotiated briefly with the captain, paid \$20 more for speed and the privilege of landing at Mackinaw City. Then he slept for eight hours on end and was awakened in time to drop into a small boat, which deposited him on the broad sand beach of the lower peninsula.

The train was just leisurely making up for departure. Thorpe, dressed as he was in old "pepper and salt" garments patched with buckskin, his hat a flopping travesty on his head, his moccasins worn and dirty, his face bearded and bronzed, tried as much as possible to avoid attention. He sent an instant telegram to Wallace Carpenter conceived as follows:

Wire thirty thousand my order care land office, Detroit, before 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. Do it if you have to rustle all night. Important.

Then he took a seat in the baggage car on a pile of boxes and philosophically waited for the train to start. He knew that sooner or later the man, provided he were on the train, would stroll through the car, and he wanted to be out of the way. The baggage man proved friendly, so Thorpe chatted with him till after bedtime. Then he entered the smoking car and waited patiently for morning.

At the last thought Thorpe decided to send a second message from the

next station. He did so. It read:

Another buyer of timber on same train with me. Must have money at 9 o'clock or lose land.

He paid day rates on it to insure immediate delivery. Suppose the boy should be away from home!

Everything depended on Wallace Carpenter, and Thorpe could not but confess the chance slender. One other thought made the night seem long. Thorpe had but \$30 left.

Morning came at last, and the train drew in and stopped. Thorpe, being in the smoking car, dropped off first and stationed himself near the exit where he could look over the passengers without being seen. They filed past. To two only he could accord the role of master lumbermen, and in these two Thorpe recognized Daly and Morrison themselves. They passed within ten feet of him, talking earnestly together. At the curb they hailed a cab and drove away. Thorpe with satisfaction heard them call the name of a hotel.

It was still two hours before the land office would be open.

Thorpe repaired at once to a boarding house off Fort street, where he had "outfitted" three months before. There he reclaimed his valise, shaved, cleaned himself in linen and chevot once more and sauntered slowly to the land office to await its opening.

At 9 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 shifted comfortably and replied "No."

At the same instant steps were heard in the corridor, the door opened, and

nevertheless it would arouse cause 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 wait your turn, Mr. Morrison," said the clerk, virtuously 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 steely look in his level eyes.

"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 farther into the struggle.

Thorpe's descriptions were contained in the battered little notebook 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 40-17 W-8 meant section 8 of the township on range 40 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 40-17-8 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 notebook Thorpe had of course entered the briefest description possible. Now, indicating to the clerk, he conceived the idea of specifying each subdivision. This gained some time. Instead of saying simple, "Northwest corner 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.

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 from 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 his 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 land looker 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 cash or a certified check. That's all they'll take here."

"What do you mean?" asked Carpenter blankly.

"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 ticking 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 plunk 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 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 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 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 did 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.

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, started at the paleness of the face Thorpe turned to the desk.

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

(To be Continued)

The Composition of a Rocket.

The ordinary skyrocket is made of various compositions packed in tubes rolled tightly round a cylindrical core. The match by which the rocket is exploded is placed in a cavity at the bottom. The movement of the rocket would be irregular if it were not for the guide stick, which is made very light, so that it does not retard the flight of the rocket when the gases come out and hit the ground with all their might and send the rocket up into the air for all that it is worth.

Oddities About Alphabets.

When the Portuguese first explored Brazil they made great fun of the natives of that country because they had in their alphabet no f, s or i, a people, the invaders declared, without f, l, y or r, without faith, law or king. The Mohawks, again, have no letters and vowed it was absurd when the missionaries tried to teach them to pronounce p and b, "for who," said they, "can speak with his mouth shut?"—Blackwood's Magazine.

Too Considerate.

Mistress (returning from holiday)—Why, Bridget, whatever has become of the parrot?

Bridget—Well, you see, mumm, after you left it looked a bit pining like and didn't talk much, so the cook and I put it out of its misery, poor thing, and I had it stuffed for my new 'at.—Judy.

Cynical.

"I think it's absurd to say kissing is dangerous," gushed Miss Rosbuck. "What possible disease could be spread by kissing?"

"Marriage, madam," grinned Grubb.

Sold Himself.

First Citizen (indignantly)—I am surprised that young Longhead would lend himself to any such scheme.

Second Citizen—Lend himself? Why, man, he was bought.—



"You're just in time."



"I'm doin' noo for a fresh pail of water."

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."

"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 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 clerks 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 moments."

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."

"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 transacted 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,