

## The Blazed Trail

By STEWART EDWARD WHITE  
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CHAPTER IX.  
"RADWAY," said he suddenly, "I need money, and I need it bad. I think you ought to get something out of this job of the M. & D.—not much, but something. Will you give me a share of what I can collect from them?"

"Sure!" agreed the jobber readily, with a laugh. "Sure! But you won't get anything. I'll give you 10 per cent quick!"

"Good enough!" cried Thorpe. "Now, when we get to town I want your power of attorney and a few figures, after which I will not bother you again."

The next day the young man called for the second time at the little red painted office under the shadow of the mill and for the second time stood before the bulky power of the junior member of the firm.

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?" asked the latter.

"I have been informed," said Thorpe without preliminaries, "that you intend to pay John Radway nothing for the work done in the Cass branch this winter. Is that true?"

Daly studied his antagonist meditatively. "If it is true what is it to you?" he asked at length.

"I am acting in Mr. Radway's interest."

"You are one of Radway's men?"

"Yes."

"In what capacity have you been working for him?"

"Can't look man," replied Thorpe briefly.

"I see," said Daly slowly. Then suddenly, with an intensity of energy that startled Thorpe, he cried: "Now, you get out of here! Right off! Quick!"

The young man recognized the compelling and authoritative boss addressing a member of the crew.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" he replied, with a flash of fire.

The mill owner leaped to his feet. Thorpe did not wish to bring about an actual scene of violence. He had attained his object, which was to fluster the other.

"I have Radway's power of attorney," he added.

Daly sat down, controlled himself with an effort and growled out, "Why didn't you say so?"

"Now, I would like to know your position," went on Thorpe. "I am not here to make trouble, but as an associate of Mr. Radway I have a right to understand the case. Of course I have his side of the story," he suggested, as though convinced that a detailing of the other side might change his views.

Daly considered carefully, fixing his flint blue eyes unswervingly on Thorpe's face. Evidently his scrutiny advised him that the young man was a force to be reckoned with.

"It's like this," he said abruptly. "We contracted last fall with this man Radway to put in 5,000,000 feet of our



The mill owner leaped to his feet, timber, delivered to the main drive at the mouth of the Cass branch. In this he was to act independently, except as to the matter of provisions. Those he drew from our van and was debited with the amount of the same. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly," replied Thorpe.

"In return we were to pay him, merchantable scale, \$4 a thousand. If, however, he failed to put in the whole job the contract was void."

"That's how I understand it," commented Thorpe. "Well?"

"Well, he didn't get in the 5,000,000

There's a million and a half hung up in the woods."

"But you have in your hands three million and a half, which under the present arrangement you get free of any charge whatever."

"And we ought to get it," cried Daly. "Great guns! Here we intend to saw this summer and quit. We want to get in every stick of timber we own so as to be able to clear out of here for good and all at the close of the season, and now this condigned jobber ties us up for a million and a half."

"It is exceedingly annoying," conceded Thorpe, "and it is a good deal of Radway's fault, I am willing to admit, but it's your fault too."

"To be sure," replied Daly, with the accent of sarcasm.

"You had no business entering into any such contract. It gave him no show."

"I suppose that was mainly his lookout, wasn't it? And, as I already told you, we had to protect ourselves."

"You should have demanded security for the completion of the work. Under your present agreement, if Radway got in the timber, you were to pay him a fair price. If he didn't, you appropriated everything he had already done. In other words, you made him a bet."

"I don't care what you call it," answered Daly, who had recovered his good humor in contemplation of the security of his position. "The fact stands all right."

"It does," said Thorpe unexpectedly, "and I'm glad of it. Now, let's examine a few figures. You owned 5,000,000 feet of timber, which at the price of stumpage" (standing trees) "was worth \$10,000."

"Well?"

"You come out at the end of the season with three million and a half of saw logs, which with the \$4 worth of logging added are worth \$21,000."

"Hold on!" cried Daly. "We paid Radway \$4. We could have done it ourselves for less."

"You could not have done it for one cent less than four-twenty in that country," replied Thorpe, "as an expert will testify."

"Why did we give it to Radway at four then?"

"You saved the expense of a salaried overseer and yourselves some bother," replied Thorpe. "Radway could do it for less because, for some strange reason which you yourself do not understand, a jobber can always log for less than a company."

"We could have done it for four," insisted Daly stubbornly. "But get on. What are you driving at? My time's valuable."

"Well, put her at four, then," agreed Thorpe. "That makes your saw logs worth over \$20,000. Of this value Radway added \$12,000. You have appropriated that much of his without paying him one cent."

Daly seemed amused. "How about the million and a half feet of ours he appropriated?" he asked quietly.

"I'm coming to that. Now for your losses. At the stumpage rate your million and a half which Radway 'appropriated' would be only three thousand. But for the sake of argument we'll take the actual sum you'd have received for saw logs. Even then the million and a half would only have been worth between eight and nine thousand. Deducting this purely theoretical loss Radway has occasioned you from the amount he has gained for you, you are still some four or five thousand ahead of the game. For that you paid him nothing."

"That's Radway's lookout."

"In justice you should pay him that amount. He is a poor man. He has sunk all he owned in this venture, some \$12,000, and he has nothing to live on. Even if you pay him five thousand, he has lost considerable, while you have gained."

"How have we gained by this bit of philanthropy?"

"Because you originally paid in cash for all that timber on the stump just \$10,000, and you get from Radway saw logs to the value of \$20,000," replied Thorpe sharply. "Besides, you still own the million and a half which, if you do not care to put them in your self, you can sell for something on the skids."

"Don't you know, young man that white pine logs on skids will spoil utterly in a summer? Worms get into 'em."

"I do," replied Thorpe, "unless you bark them, which process will cost you about \$1 a thousand. You can find any amount of small purchasers at reduced price. You can sell them easily at \$3. That nets you for your million

and a half a little over \$4,000 more. Under the circumstances I do not think that my request for five thousand is at all exorbitant."

Daly laughed. "You are a shrewd figurer, and your remarks are interesting," said he.

"Will you give \$5,000?" asked Thorpe.

"I will not," replied Daly; then, with a sudden change of humor: "And now I'll do a little talking. I've listened to you just about as long as I'm going to. I have Radway's contract in that safe, and I live up to it. I'll thank you to go plumb to blazes!"

"That's your last word, is it?" asked Thorpe, rising.

"It is."

"Then," said he slowly and distinctly, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I intend to collect in full the \$4 a thousand for the three millions and a half Mr. Radway has delivered to you. In return Mr. Radway will purchase of you at the stumpage rates of \$2 a thousand the million and a half he failed to put in. That makes a bill against you. If my figuring is correct, of just \$11,000. You will pay that bill, and I will tell you why. Your contract will be classed in any court as a gambling contract for lack of consideration. You have no legal standing in the world. I call your bluff, Mr. Daly, and I'll fight you from the drop of the hat through every court in Christendom."

"Fight ahead," advised Daly sweetly, who knew perfectly well that Thorpe's law was faulty. As a matter of fact the young man could have collected on other grounds, but neither was aware of that.

"Furthermore," pursued Thorpe in addition, "I'll repeat my offer before witnesses, and if I win the first suit I'll sue you for the money we could have made by purchasing the extra million and a half before it had a chance to spoil."

This statement had its effect, for it forced an immediate settlement before the pie on the skids should deteriorate. Daly lounged back with a little more deadly carelessness.

"And, lastly," concluded Thorpe, playing his trump card, "the suit from start to finish will be published in every important paper in this country. If you do not believe I have the influence to do this you are at liberty to doubt the fact."

Daly was cogitating many things. He knew that publicity was the last thing to be desired. Thorpe's statement had been made in view of the fact that much of the business of a lumber firm is done on credit. He thought that perhaps a rumor of a big suit going against the firm might weaken confidence. As a matter of fact, this consideration had no weight whatever with the older man, although the threat of publicity actually gained for Thorpe what he demanded. The lumberman feared the noise of an investigation solely and simply because his firm, like so many others, was en-

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gaged at the time in stealing government timber in the upper peninsula. He did not call it stealing, but that was what it amounted to. Thorpe shot in the air hit full.

"I think we can arrange a basis of settlement," he said finally. "Be here tomorrow morning at 10 with Radway."

"Very well," said Thorpe.

"By the way," remarked Daly, "I don't believe I know your name."

"Thorpe," was the reply.

"Well, Mr. Thorpe," said the lumberman, with cold anger, "at any time there is anything within my power or influence that you want I'll see that you don't get it."

The whole affair was finally compromised for \$9,000. Radway, grateful beyond expression, insisted on Thorpe's acceptance of an even thousand, and with this money in hand the latter felt justified in taking a vacation for the purpose of visiting his sister.

For the purposes he had in view \$500 would be none too much. The remaining \$850 he had resolved to invest in his sister's comfort and happiness. He had thought the matter over and had gradually evolved what seemed to him an excellent plan. He had already perfected it by correspondence with Mrs. Renwick. It was, briefly, this: He, Thorpe, would at once hire a servant girl, who would make anything but supervision unnecessary in so small a household. The remainder of the money he had already paid for a year's tuition in the seminary of the town. Thus Helen gained her leisure and an opportunity for study and still retained her home in case of reverse.

Thorpe found his sister already a young lady. After the first delight of meeting had passed they sat side by side on the haircloth sofa and took stock of each other.

Helen had developed from the school child to the woman. She was a handsome girl, possessed of a slender well rounded form and deep hazel eyes, with the level gaze of her brother, although a figure rather aloof, a face rather impassive, but with the possibility of passion and emotion and a will to back them.

"Oh, but you're tanned and—and big!" she cried, kissing her brother.

"You've had such a strange winter, haven't you?"

"Yes," he replied absently. "Things came a little better than I thought they were going to toward the last, and I made a little money."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she cried. "Was it much?"

"No, not much," he answered. "The actual figures would have been so much better. I've made arrangements with Mrs. Renwick to hire a servant girl, so you will have all your time free, and I've paid a year's tuition for you in the seminary."

"Oh," said the girl, and felt silent.

After a time, "Thank you very much, Harry dear," then, after another inter-

val, "I think I'll go get ready for supper."

Instead of getting ready for supper she paced excitedly up and down her room.

"Oh, why didn't he say what he was about?" she cried to herself. "Why didn't he? Why didn't he?"

The days, however, passed in the main pleasantly for them both. They were fond of one another. The barrier slowly rising between them was not yet cemented by lack of affection on either side, but rather by lack of belief in the other's affection. Helen imagined Thorpe's interest in her becoming daily more perfumatory. Thorpe fancied his sister cold, unreasoning and ungrateful. And yet this was but the vague dust of a cloud. They could not forget that but for each other they were alone in the world. Thorpe delayed his departure from day to day, making all the preparations he possibly could at home.

Finally Helen came on him busily unpacking a box which a dray had left at the door. He unwound and laid one side a Winchester rifle, a variety of fishing tackle and some other miscellaneous of the woodsman. Helen was struck by the beauty of the sporting implements.

"Oh, Harry!" she cried. "Aren't they fine? What are you going to do with them?"

"Going camping," replied Thorpe, with his head in exultation.

"When?"

"This summer."

Helen's eyes lit up with a fire of delight. "How nice! May I go with you?" she cried.

Thorpe shook his head.

"I'm afraid not, little girl. It's going to be a hard trip a long ways from anywhere. You couldn't stand it."

"No, sure I could. Try me."

"No," replied Thorpe. "I know you couldn't. We'll be sleeping on the ground and going on foot through much extremely difficult country."

"I wish you'd take me somewhere," pursued Helen. "I can't get away this summer unless you do. Why don't you camp somewhere nearer home, so I can go?"

Thorpe arose and kissed her tenderly. "I can't, little girl, that's all. We've got our way to make."

She understood that he considered the trip too expensive for them both. At this moment a paper fluttered from the excelsior. She picked it up. A glance showed her a total of figures that made her gasp.

"Here is your bill," she said, with a strange choke in her voice, and left the room.

"He can spend \$50 on his old guns, but he can't afford to let me leave this hateful house," she complained to the apple tree. "He can go way off camping somewhere to have a good time, but he leaves me sweltering in this miserable little town all summer. I

don't care if he is supporting me, he ought to. He's my brother. Oh, I wish I were a man! I wish I were dead!"

Three days later Thorpe left for the north.



"Oh, but you're tanned and—and big!" don't care if he is supporting me, he ought to. He's my brother. Oh, I wish I were a man! I wish I were dead!"

CHAPTER X.  
FOR more than a week Thorpe had journeyed through the forest. His equipment was simple in the extreme. Attached to a heavy leather belt of cartridges hung a two pound ax and a sheath knife. In his pocket reposed a compass, an air tight tin of matches and a map drawn on oiled paper of a district divided into sections. Some few of the sections were colored, which indicated that they belonged to private parties. All the rest was state or government land. He carried in his hand a repeating rifle. The pack, if opened, would have been found to contain a woolen and rubber blanket, fishing tackle, twenty pounds or so of flour, a package of tea, sugar, a slab of bacon carefully wrapped in oiled cloth, salt, a suit of underwear and several extra pairs of thick stockings. To the outside of the pack had been strapped a frying pan, a tin pail and a cup.

He had not met a human being or seen any indications of man excepting always the old blaze of the government survey. Many years before, officials had run careless lines through the country along the section boundaries. These latter started always the section, the township and the range

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