

The Blazed Trail

By STEWART EDWARD WHITE

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CHAPTER XVIII.

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. Now he found himself so impatient that he could hardly wait to get there.

He learned on his arrival that she was not at home. Mrs. Renwick proved not nearly so cordial as the year before, but Thorpe, absorbed in his eagerness, did not notice it. Mrs. Renwick thought Helen had gone over to the Hugheses.

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 on its soft surface. Thorpe, as he approached the light from a tall lamp just inside the hall, hesitated, vainly trying to make out the figures before him.

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

"Oh, 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 career.

A little chilled, Helen turned to introduce him to her friends. 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. He had thought pine and forest and the trail so long that he found these square-shouldered subjects refusing to be jostled aside by any trivialities.

He took Helen back to Mrs. Renwick's about 10 o'clock. They walked slowly beneath the broad leaved maples, whose shadows danced under the tall electric lights, and talked.

"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."

Her heart contracted suddenly. It was all she could do to keep from bursting into tears. 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 you take me away from Mrs. Renwick's?"

"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. I know you've worked hard 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 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 \$1,000 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. 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."

"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.

"Harry," she ventured after a time, "why not write to Uncle Amos? His wanting us to come to him seems to me very generous."

"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.

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.

That night he wrote Wallace Carpenter for \$1,000.

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 letter at once inter-

viewed 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," she replied distinctly.

"What?" asked Thorpe incredulously. For answer she pointed to a letter lying 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 expect you next Tuesday evening on the 4:30 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. A. E. your uncle.

AMOS THORPE.
New York, June 4, 1922.

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

"I am sorry that 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 unbecomingly 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 then when I've come to you for the littlest word of encouragement you have told me I was young and ought to finish my education. 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

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