

The Blazed Trail

By STEWART EDWARD WHITE

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CHAPTER XXV.

WINTER set in early and continued late, which in the end was a good thing for the year's cut. The season was capricious, hanging for days at a time at the brink of a thaw, only to stiffen again into severe weather. This was trying on the nerves, for at each of these false alarms the six camps fell into a feverish haste to get the job finished before the breakup. It was really quite extraordinary how much was accomplished under the nagging spur of weather conditions and the cruel howling of Thorpe.

The latter had now no thought beyond his work, and that was the thought of a madman: no western and unyielding enough before, goodness knows, but now he was terrible. Not for an instant was there a resting spell. The veriest chore boy talked, thought, dreamed, of nothing but saw logs. Men whispered vaguely of a record cut. The difficulties of snow, accident, topography, were swept aside like straws. Little time was wasted and no opportunities. It did not matter how smoothly affairs happened to be running for the moment; every advantage, even the smallest, was eagerly seized to advance the work. A drop of five degrees during the frequent warm spells brought out the sprinklers even in the dead of night. At night the men fell into their bunks like sand bags, and their last conscious thought, if indeed they had any at all, was of eagerness for the morrow. It was madness, but it was the madness these men loved.

For now to his old religion Thorpe had added a fanaticism, and over the fanaticism was gradually creeping a film of doubt. To the conscientious energy which a sense of duty supplied was added the tremendous kinetic force of a love turned into other channels. And in the wild nights while the other men slept Thorpe's half crazed brain was revolving over and over again the words of the sentence he had heard from Elida's lips, "There can be nothing better than love."

His actions, his mind, his very soul, vehemently denied the proposition. He clung as ever to his high Puritanic idea of man's purpose. But down deep in a very tiny, sacred corner of his heart a very small voice sometimes made itself heard when other more militant voices were still: "It may be, it may be."

The last month of hauling was also one of snow. Each day a little fell. By and by the accumulation amounted to much. In the woods where the wind could not get at it lay deep and soft above the tops of bushes. On either side of the logging roads the snow piled so high as to form a kind of rampart. When all this water in suspense should begin to flow and to seek its level in the water courses of the district the logs would have plenty to float them at least.

So late did the cold weather last that, even with the added plowing to do, the six camps beat all records. On the banks at Camp One were 9,000,000 feet. The totals of all five amounted to 33,000,000. About 10,000,000 of this was on French creek, the remainder on the main bank of the Ossawimakee. Besides this, the firm up river, Sadler & Smith, had put up some 12,000,000 more. The drive promised to be quite an affair.

About the 15th of April attention became strained. Every day the mountain made heavy attacks on the snow; every night the temperature dropped below the freezing point. The river began to show more air holes, occasional open places. About the center the ice looked worn and soggy. Some one saw a flock of geese high in the air. Then came rain.

One morning early Long Jim Pine came into the men's camp bearing a huge chunk of tallow. This he held against the hot stove until its surface had softened, when he began to swab liberal quantities of grease on his spiked river shoes, which he fished out from under his bunk.

"She's comin', boys," he said.

He donned a pair of woolen trousers that had been chopped off at the knee, thick woolen stockings and the river shoes. Then he tightened his broad leather belt about his heavy shirt, cocked his little hat over his ear and walked over in the corner to select a peavy from the lot the blacksmith had just put in shape. A peavy is like a cant hook except that it is pointed at the end. Thus it can be used either as a hook or a pike. At the same moment Shearer, similarly attired and equipped, appeared in the doorway. The opening of the portal admitted a roar of sound. The river was rising.

"Come on, boys, she's on!" said he sharply.

"Lively, boys, lively!" shouted Thorpe. "She'll be down on us before we know it!"

Above the creaking of dead branches in the wind sounded a steady roar like the howling of a wild beast lashing itself to fury. The frochet was abroad. The men heard it, and their eyes brightened with the lust of battle. They cheered.

At the banks of the river Thorpe issued his directions. The affair had been all prearranged. Immediately above the first rollways was the

three, with its two wide sluices through which a veritable flood could be loosened at will; then four miles farther lay the rollway of Sadler & Smith, the up river firm, and above them tumbled over a forty-five foot ledge the beautiful Sascoe falls. These first rollways of Thorpe's, spread in the broad marsh flat below the dam, contained about 8,000,000. The rest of the season's cut was scattered for thirty miles along the bed of the river.

Already the ice cementing the logs together had begun to weaken. The ice had wrenched and tugged savagely at the locked timbers until they had, with a mighty effort, snapped asunder the bonds of their hibernation. Now a narrow lane of black rushing water pierced the rollways to boil and eddy in the consequent jam three miles below.

To the foremen Thorpe assigned their tasks.

"Moloney," said he to the big Irishman, "take your crew and break that jam. Then scatter your men down to within a mile of the pond at Dam Two and see that the river runs clear. You can tent for a day or so at West Bend or some other point about half way

down, and after that you had better camp at the dam. Just as soon as you get logs enough in the pond start to sluicing them through the dam. You won't need more than four men there if you keep a good head. You can keep your gates open five or six hours. And, Moloney?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to be careful not to sluice too long. There is a bar just below the dam, and if you try to sluice with the water too low you'll center and jam there as sure as shooting."

Bryan Moloney turned on his heel and began to pick his way down stream over the solidly banked logs. Without waiting the command a dozen men followed him. The little group bobbed away irregularly into the distance, springing lightly from one timber to the other, holding their quaintly fashioned peaveys in the manner of a ropedancer's balancing pole. At the lowermost limit of the rollways each man pried a log into the water and, standing gracefully erect on this unstable craft, floated out down the current to the scene of his dangerous labor.

"Kerlie," went on Thorpe, "your crew can break rollways with the rest until we get the river fairly filled, and then you can move on down stream as fast as you are needed. Scotty, you will have the rear. Tim and I will boss the river."

At once the signal was given to Elida, the dam watcher. Elida and his assistants thereupon began to pry with long iron bars at the ratchets of the heavy gates. The chore boy bent attentively over the ratchet pin, lifting it delicately to permit another inch of raise, dropping it accurately to enable the men at the bars to seize a fresh purchase. The river's roar deepened. Through the wide sluiceways a torrent foamed and tumbled. Immediately it spread through the brush on either side to the limits of the freshet banks and then gathered for its leap against the uneasy rollways. Along the edge of the dark channel the face of the logs seemed to crumble away. Farther in toward the banks where the weight of timber still outbalanced the weight of the food the tiers grumbled and stirred. Far down the river, where Bryan Moloney and his crew were picking at the jam, the water in eager streamlets sought the interstices between the logs, gurgling excitedly.

The jam creaked and groaned in response to the pressure. From its face a hundred jets of water spouted into the lower stream. Logs up-ended here and there, rising from the bristling surface slowly like so many arms from the rollways, paused at the slack eddied back foaming. Logs shot down from the rollways, paused at the slack water and finally hit with a hollow and resounding boom against the tail of the jam. A moment later they, too, up-ended.

The crew were working desperately. Down in the heap somewhere two logs were crossed in such a manner as to clog the whole. They sought those logs. Thirty feet above the bed of the river six men clamped their peaveys into the soft pine, jerking, pulling, lifting, sliding the great logs from their places. Thirty feet below, under the threatening face, six other men coolly picked up and set adrift, one by one, the timbers not inextricably imbedded. From time to time the mass creaked, settled, perhaps even moved a foot or two, but always the practiced river men after a glance bent more eagerly to their



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Outlined against the sky, big Bryan Moloney stood directing the work. He knew by the tenseness of the log he stood on that behind the jam power had gathered sufficient to push the whole tangle down stream. Now he was offering it the chance.

Suddenly the six men below the jam scattered. Four of them jumped lightly from one floating log to another in the zigzag to shore. The other two ran the length of their footing and, over-leaping an open of water, landed heavily and firmly on the very ends of two small floating logs. In this manner the force of the jump rushed the little timbers end-on through the water. The two men, maintaining marvelously their balance, were thus ferried to within leaping distance of the other shore.

In the meantime a barely perceptible motion was communicating itself from one particle to another through the center of the jam. The men redoubled their exertions. A sharp crack exploded immediately underneath. There came no longer exist any doubt as to the motion, although it was as yet sluggish, glacial. Then in silence a log shifted—in silence and slowly, but with irresistible force. Jimmy Powers quietly stepped over it just as it menaced his leg. Other logs in all directions up-ended. The jam crew were forced continually to alter their positions, riding the changing timbers bent knee, as a circus rider treads his four galloping horses.

Then all at once down by the face something crashed. The entire stream became alive. It hissed and roared; it shrieked and grumbled. At first slowly, then more rapidly, the very forefront of the center melted inward and forward and downward until it caught the fierce rush of the freshet and shot out from under the jam. Far up stream, bristling and formidable, the tons of logs, grinding savagely together, swept forward.

The six men and Bryan Moloney, who, it will be remembered, were on top, worked until the last moment. When the logs began to cave under them so rapidly that even the expert river men found difficulty in "staying on top" the foreman set the example of hunting safety.

"She 'pulls,' boys!" he yelled.

Then in a manner wonderful to behold, through the smother of foam and spray, through the crash and yell of timbers, through the leap of destruction, the drivers zigzagged calmly and surely to the shore.

All but Jimmy Powers. He poised tense and eager on the crumbling face of the jam. Almost immediately he saw what he wanted and without pause sprang boldly and confidently ten feet straight downward, to alight with accuracy on a single log floating free in the current. And then in the very glory and chaos of the jam itself he was swept down stream.

After a moment the constant acceleration in speed checked, then commenced perceptibly to slacken. At once the rest of the crew began to ride down stream. Each struck the calks of his river boots strongly into a log and on such unstable vehicles floated miles with the current. From time to time, as Bryan Moloney indicated, one of them went ashore. There, usually at a bend of the stream where the likelihood of jamming was great, they took their stands. When necessary they ran out over the face of the river to separate a congestion likely to cause trouble. The rest of the time they smoked their pipes.

All night long the logs slipped down the moonlit current, silently, swiftly, yet without haste. From the whole length of the river rang the hollow boom, boom, of timbers striking one against the other.

The drive was on.

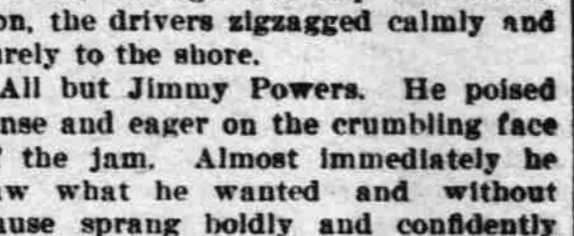
TO BE CONTINUED.

Habits of Russell Sage.

"Great fun is being made of the way in which Russell Sage celebrated his eighty-eighth birthday—treating himself to a drive on the Riverside boulevard. One writer declares that in piling up his fortune of \$70,000,000 or \$80,000,000 the old man has turned himself into a human cash register. He travels on a pass every day to save 5 cents; never fails to attend a directors' meeting for the gold piece he receives on each occasion; wears a suit of clothes ten years; buys one hat every year; never pays to have his shoes shined; eats 10 cents worth of crackers and milk for his luncheon; and when away from his office, as he was on his eighty-eighth birthday, compels his clerks to pay for the whole quartet of the party. That's the way he does it."—Courier Journal

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Army Cut In Twain.

St. Petersburg, Aug. 28.—A dispatch from Liao Yang under date of August 25, says the Japanese eastern forces began a forward movement August 24, eight companies going, on the main Liao Yang road, in the direction of Liandlausian. The Russian outposts held their positions, the fight continuing yesterday. The result is not stated but it is understood the Second and Twelfth Japanese guards divisions are participating.

Liao Yang, Aug. 24.—(Delayed)—A big battle commenced today twenty miles east of Liao Yang. The Russian front from the Taitse river south was engaged.

Liao Yang, Aug. 25.—The fighting which began yesterday continues today at Liandlausian, twenty three miles east of Liao Yang. The Japanese are attacking.

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DEC. 15, 1893, 37,708.93.	139,367.29
DEC. 15, 1895, 39,184.73.	369,026.17
DEC. 15, 1897, 327,859.44.	469,751.16
DEC. 15, 1899, 781,018.11.	937,156.47
DEC. 15, 1901, 1,043,292.04.	1,180,285.70
DEC. 15, 1903, 2,237,075.14.	2,833,997.16
April 14, 1904, \$2,924,698.14	\$3,589,276.46

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Charlotte.....	36.10	30.10	24.65
Statesville.....	34.10	28.40	23.30
Marion.....	34.10	28.40	23.30
Asheville.....	32.25	26.90	22.25
Hendersonville..	33.35	27.85	22.95

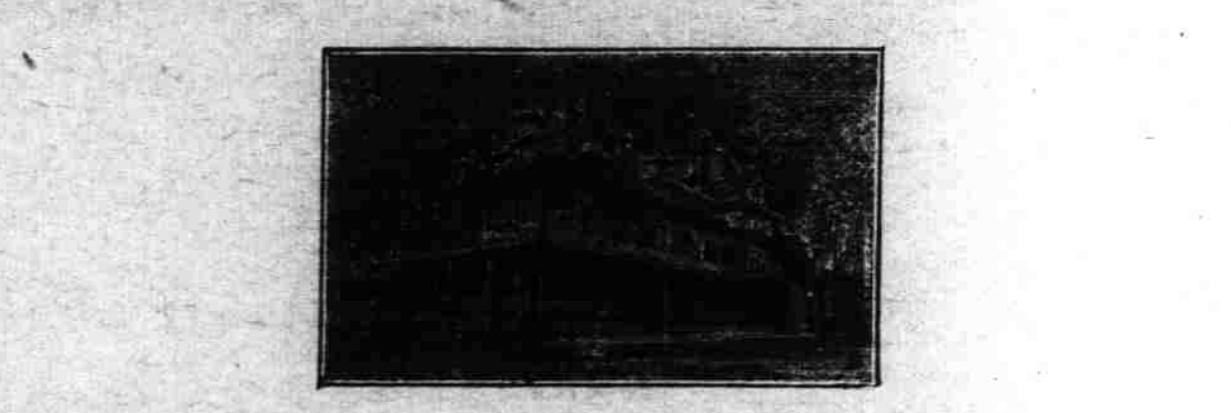
Southern Railway operates Through Pullman Sleeping Car between Greensboro, N. C., and St. Louis, Mo., via Salisbury, Asheville, Knoxville, Lexington and Louisville, leaving Greensboro daily at 7:20 p. m.

For full information as to rates from all points, Sleeping-Car reservations, schedules, illustrated literature, etc., address ANY AGENT, or

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