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Men of the Camp

By F. W. Waters

IT was back in one of British Columbia's logging camps. A drizzling rain had been falling all day, and when the men turned in at six, their drenched condition did not encourage a very jocular mood. Charlie Hammond's crew had been working down in the bog all day, and had the appearance of having been dragged through the mud. As Charlie tossed his limp old felt into his bunk and went outside to wash in the "chuck," he was grumbling against the fates that had influenced him to come to such a forsaken wilderness and follow the life of a logger. When he came into bunk-house number three an hour after supper, he was still grumbling: "Nothin' to do but wait for it to git dark, crawl in between the blankets for a few hours until daylight, then git up and go at it for another day. What's there in it, anyway?" And he busied himself with his pipe.

Though Young, Charlie's experience and ability gave him considerable prestige among the men of the camp. He was undoubtedly the best hook-tender on the chain. He liked to see the logs going in, and there seldom came a day when his crew had to take second place in the number of logs taken out.

He never spared himself, never stood around giving orders and leaving the boys

under him to do all the work; he was on the jump from seven in the morning until six at night "packing" blocks and pulling line. The boys liked him for it, and always stood by him. But not less did his good-natured disposition place him high in the esteem of the men. He was a perfect type of the proverbial rough, but kind-hearted logger. Though he could be excelled in vocabulary no more than in logging ability, few could recall ever having seen him in a temper, and it was likewise rare to see him "down in the mouth."

Accordingly, when Charlie came into the bunk-house after supper in the mood just described, the boys took notice. He had been going rather steady, it was true, ever since his last trip to town. He had taken with him on that occasion a large stake, the result of a lucky hand at poker, and had blown in the whole amount in a few days. When he came back he told the boys he had resolved (as many another resolves on an empty purse and a sore head, and as he himself had resolved many times before) to "cut it out" and save his money. He had stayed by his resolve thus far, but it was generally predicted that it would soon wear off. Here was the first symptoms.

It would have required no popularity to find sympathizers with such a mood on that night. The day's work in the rain and the