

going to jump into Munford and mix it then and there; but instead, with a short laugh, he turned and walked to the other side of the room, sat down on the edge of his bunk and pulled out his pipe. He cut some tobacco from his plug, rolled it between his palms, packed his pipe slowly and lighted it. It was five minutes before he broke the silence; Munford was beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"I don't suppose throwing a few timbers across Twin Bear Creek means much of anything to you, Munford, eh?" he asked quietly.

"Not so much," replied Munford carelessly, a little puzzled at the question.

"No? Well, it means a lot to me, a whole lot! Until that trestle is up, we can't shove material over to the other side, ties and rails and heavy stuff. Progress on the Hill Division depends just at this minute on Bridge Gang No. 3, and concretely on me. I don't propose to have it interfered with by the men going down to Big Cloud and getting their heads broke, understand?"

"Oh, I guess we can take care of *our* heads, if that's all that bothers you," drawled Munford. "And I furthermore guess your bloomin' little bridge you seem so stuck on won't take any hurt by lettin' the boys have their fling. Anyway, whether it will or not, what's the use of you shootin' off all your talk? You can't stop 'em! If they want to go, they'll go. And say, Burton"—an inspiration coming to Munford—"come on down with us. I'll promise you the time of your life."