

"Better wedge her, Tom," advised Hank.

They paused while, with a heavy sledge, Tom drove a triangle of steel into the crack made by the sawing. This prevented the weight of the tree from pinching the saw, which is a ruin at once to the instrument and the temper of the filer. Then the rhythmical *z-z-z!* again took up its song.

When the trunk was nearly severed, Tom drove another and thicker wedge.

"Timber!" halloed Hank in a long-drawn melodious call that melted through the woods into the distance. The swampers ceased work and withdrew to safety.

But the tree stood obstinately upright. So the saw leaped back and forth a few strokes more.

"Crack!" called the tree.

Hank coolly unhooked his saw handle, and Tom drew the blade through and out the other side.

The tree shivered, then leaned ever so slightly from the perpendicular, then fell, at first gently, afterwards with a crescendo rush, tearing through the branches of other trees, bending the small timber, breaking the smallest, and at last hitting with a tremendous crash and bang which filled the air with a fog of small twigs, needles, and the powder of snow, that settled but slowly. There is nothing more impressive than this rush of a pine top, excepting it be a charge of cavalry or the fall of Niagara. Old woodsmen sometimes shout aloud with the mere excitement into which it lifts them.

Then the swampers, who had by now finished the travoy road, trimmed the prostrate trunk clear of all protuberances. It required fairly skillful ax work. The branches had to be shaved close and clear, and at the same time the trunk must not be gashed. And often a man was forced to wield his instrument from a constrained position.