

The Blazed Trail

By Stewart F. White

But why not?" she persisted. "You ought to know."

"Who would have done any different? If you had a brother and discovered that he had appropriated—most of all the money of a concern of which you were president, wouldn't you think it your duty to have him arrested?"

"No!" cried Thorpe, suddenly excited. "Never! If he was my brother, I'd help him, even if he'd committed murder!"

"We differ there," replied the girl coldly. "I consider that Uncle Amos was a strong man who did his duty as he saw it, in spite of his feelings. That he had father arrested is nothing against him in my eyes. And his wanting us to come to him, seems to me very generous. I am going to write to him."

"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 anyone 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.

But he did not tell her so. That is not the way of men of his stamp. Rather he cast about to see what he could do.

In Jin Charley had, during the winter just past, occupied odd moments in embroidering with beads and porcupine quills a wonderful suit of soft buckskin gauntlets, a shirt of the same material, and moccasins of moosehide. They were beautifully worked, and Thorpe, on receiving them, had at once conceived the idea of giving them to his sister. To this end he had consulted another Indian near Marquette, to whom he had confided the task of reducing the gloves and the moccasins. The shirt would do as it was, for it was intended to be worn as a sort of belted blouse. As has been said, all were thickly beaded, and represented a vast quantity of work. Probably fifty dollars could not have bought them, even in the north country.

Thorpe tendered this as a peace-offering. Not understanding women in the least, he was surprised to see his gift received by a burst of tears, and a sudden exit from the room. Helen thought he had bought the things; and she was still sore from the pinch of poverty she had touched the evening before. Nothing will exasperate a woman more than to be presented with something expensive for which she does not particularly care, after being denied, on the ground of economy something she wants very much.

Thorpe stared after her in astonishment. Mrs. Renwick sniffed.

That afternoon the latter estimable lady attempted to reproach Miss Helen, and was snubbed; she persisted

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A. W. FRANKLIN.

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years and then—"

She laughed with a hard little note of scorn.

"Helen," said Thorpe with new energy, "I forbid you to have anything to do with Amos Thorpe. I think he is a scoundrel and a sneak."

"I shall do as I please," she replied crossing her hands behind her. Thorpe's eyes darkened.

"We have talked this over a great many times," he warned, "and you've always agreed with me. Remember, you owe something to the family."

"Most of the family seem to owe something," she replied with a flip-pant laugh. "I'm sure I didn't choose the family. If I had I'd picked out a better one!"

The flippancy was only a weapon which she used unconsciously, blindly in her struggle. The man could not know this. His face hardened, and his voice grew cold.

"You may take your choice, Helen," he said formally. "If you go in to the household of Amos Thorpe, if you deliberately prefer your comfort to your honor, we will have nothing more in common."

They faced each other with the cool, deadly glance of the race, so familiar in appearance, but so unlike in nature.

"I, too, offer you a home, such as it is," repeated the man. "Choose."

At the mention of the home for which means were so quickly forthcoming when Thorpe, not she, considered it needed, the girl's eyes flashed. She stopped and dragged violently from beneath the bed a flat steamer trunk, the lid of which she threw open. A dress lay on the bed. With a fine dramatic gesture she folded the garment and laid it in the bottom of the trunk. Then she knelt, and without vouchsafing another glance at her brother standing rigid by the door, she began feverishly to arrange the folds.

The choice was made. He turned and went out.

CHAPTER XXXIV

With Thorpe there could be no half-way measure. He saw that the rupture with his sister had been final, and the trust attained him in one of his few unprotected points. It was not as though he felt either himself or his sister consciously in the wrong. He acquitted her of all fault, except as to the deadly one of misreading and misunderstanding. The fact argued not a perversion but a lack in her character. She was other than he had thought her.

As for himself, he had schemed, worked, lived only for her. He had come to her from the battle expecting rest and refreshment. To the world he had shown the hard, unyielding front of the emotional; he had looked ever keenly outward; he had braced his muscles in the constant tension of endeavor. So much the more reason why, in the hearts of the few he loved, he the man of action should find repose; the man of sternness should discover that absolute peace of the spirit in which not the slightest motion of the will is necessary; the man of repression should be permitted affectionate, care-free expansion of the natural affection, of the full sympathy which will understand and not mistake for weakness. Instead of this, he was forced into refusing where he would rather have given; into denying where he would rather have assented; and finally into commanding where he longed most ardently to lay aside the cloak of authority. His motives were misread; his intentions misjudged; his love

doubted.

But worst of all, Thorpe's mind could see no possibility of an explanation. If she could not see of her own accord how much he loved her surely it was a hopeless task to attempt an explanation through mere words. If, after all, she was capable of mis-conceiving the entire set of his motives during the past two years, expostulation would be futile. In his thoughts of her he fell into a great spiritual dumber. Never, even in this moments of most theoretical imaginings, did he see himself setting before her fully and calmly the hopes and ambitions of which she had been the mainspring. And before a reconciliation, many such rehearsals must take place in the secret recesses of a man's being.

Thorpe did not cry out, nor confide in a friend, nor do anything even so mild as pacing the floor. The only outward and visible sign a close observer might have noted was a certain dumb pain lurking in the depths of his eyes like those of a wounded squirrel. He was hurt, but did not understand. He suffered in utter silence, but without anger. This is at once the noblest and the most pathetic of human suffering.

At first the spring of his life seemed broken. He did not care for money; and at present disappointment had numbed his interest in the game. It seemed hardly worth the candle.

Then in a few days, after his thoughts had ceased to dwell constantly on the one subject, he began to look about him mentally. Beneath his other interests he still felt constantly a dull ache, something unpleasant, uncomfortable. Strangely enough it was almost identical in quality with the uneasiness that always underlay his surface-thoughts when he was worried about some detail of his business. Unconsciously,—again as in his business—the combative instinct aroused. In lack of other object on which to expend itself, Thorpe's fighting spirit turned with energy to the subject of the lawsuit.

Under the unwanted stress of the psychological condition just described, he thought at white heat. His ideas were clear, and followed each other quickly almost feverishly.

After his sister left the Renwick's, Thorpe himself went to Detroit, where he interviewed at once Northrop the brilliant young lawyer, whom the firm had engaged to defend its case.

"I'm afraid we have no show," he replied to Thorpe's question. "You see you fellows were on the wrong side of the fence in trying to enforce the law yourselves. Of course you may well say that justice was all on your side. That does not count. The only recourse recognized for injustice lies in the law courts. I'm afraid you are due to lose your case."

"Well," said Thorpe, "they can't prove much damage."

"I don't expect that they will be able to procure a very heavy judgement," replied Northrop. "The facts I shall be able to adduce will cut down damages. But the costs will be very heavy."

"Yes," agreed Thorpe.

"And," then pursued Northrop with a dry smile, "they practically own Sherman. You may be in for contempt of court—at their instigation. As I understand it, they are trying rather to injure you than get anything out of it themselves."

"That's it," nodded Thorpe.

"In other words, it's a case for compromise."

"Just what I wanted to get at," said Thorpe with satisfaction. "Now answer me a question. Suppose a man injures Government or State land by trespass. The land is afterwards bought by another party. Has the latter any claim for damage against the trespasser? Understand me, the purchaser bought after the trespass was committed."

"Certainly," answered Northrop without hesitation. "Provided suit is brought within six years of time the trespass was committed."

"Good! Now see here. These M. &



One of the greatest of present-day productions, terrific in its intensity—mighty in its scope—the woman's play, "The Unloved Wife," a new play in three acts, comes to the Aylmer Opera House, Thursday, January 5th., 1922, presented by Dan Conrad.

D. people stole about a section of the Government pine upon that river, and I don't believe they've ever bought the land it stood on. In fact I don't believe they suspect that anyone knows they've been stealing. How would it do, if I were to buy that section at the Land Office and threaten to sue them for the value of the pine that originally stood on it?"

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the Estate of Amos J. Herrick, late of the Town of Aylmer, in the County of Elgin, Gentleman, Deceased.

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1914, Chap. 121 and amending acts that all persons having any claim against the estate of the said Amos J. Herrick, deceased, who died on or about the 11th day of October, A. D. 1921, at the said Town of Aylmer, are required to send by post prepaid or deliver to the undersigned Solicitor for the Administrator of the estate of said deceased, on or before the 24th day of December A. D. 1921, their names, addresses and descriptions with full particulars of their claims duly verified and the nature of the security if any, held by them.

And further take notice that immediately after the fifteenth day of December 1921 the said Administrator will proceed to distribute the estate of the deceased among the parties entitled thereto, having regard only to claims of which he shall then have notice, and that he will not be liable for the said estate or any portion thereof so distributed, to any person or whose claim he shall not have received notice at the time of distribution.

Dated this 24th day of November A. D. 1921.

WILLIAM CAVAN BROWN, Solicitor for Administrator, Tillsonburg, Ontario.
RYERSON FREDRICK MINERS, Administrator, Tillsonburg, Ont.
12-1-8-15-22

The lawyer's eyes glimmered behind the lenses of his pince-nez; but, with the caution of the professional man he made no other sign of satisfaction.

"It would do very well indeed," he replied, "but you'd have to prove they did the cutting, and you'll have to pay experts to estimate the probable amount of the timber. Have you the description of the section?"

"No," responded Thorpe, "but I can get it; and I can pick up witnesses from the woodsman as to the cutting." "The more the better. It is rather easy to discredit the testimony of one or two. How much, on a broad guess would you estimate the timber to come to?"

"There ought to be about eight or ten million," guessed Thorpe, after an instant's silence, "worth in the stump anywhere from sixteen to twenty thousand dollars. It would cost me only eight hundred to buy it."

"Do so, by all means. Get your documents and evidence all in shape, and let me have them. I'll see that the suit is discontinued then. Will you sue them?"

"No, I think not," replied Thorpe. "I'll just hold it back as sort of club to keep them in line."

The next day he took the train north. He had something definite and urgent to do, and, as always with practical affairs demanding attention and resource, he threw himself whole-souled into the accomplishment of it. By the time he had bought the sixteen fifties constituting the section searched out a dozen witnesses to the theft, and spent a week with the Marquette expert in looking over the ground, he had fallen into the swing of work again. His experience still ached; but dully.

Only now he possessed no interests outside of those in the new country; no affections save the half-protecting good-natured comradeship with Wallace, the mutual self-reliant respect that subsisted between Tim Shearer and himself, and the dumb, unreasoning dogliking he shared with Jin Charley. His eye became clearer and steadier; his methods more simple

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