AS THE TREE FALLS.

In the woods, as elsewhere, time goes on, and Monday morning comes with all its depressing dismaness to such as have spent the leisure hours since Saturday night in recuperating.

For once Frank's appetite failed him. The work on hoeboiled and indigestible flapjack were not to his liking. His muscular neighbor noticed it and said, "Better eat camp's, or you'll never stand it 'till noon." Frank felt grateful for the consideration, but did not act upon the advice, whereupon his friend piled him with the offended saying, "Time then drink some of this to sold out per copper." But neither the price of a sucking bootleg and the desiered stomach were not to be coaxed by sale nose—very much sore and many times warmed up—so Frank gave up and went out.

He seated himself on the bench in front of the cookhouse to wait for the others. The morning air was refreshing, and it enabled him to think coherently of the recent world-cataclysm.

He remembered it all now—the white footed shoes at the forks in the road, the dingy, foul smelling barroom, the cheap mirror and the lines, and the indecorous pictures on the walls; the cart littered floor and the reeking spittoons; the clerk of the pokerfingered the quaint originality of some of the Kaphemy.

Then came the "deal." How he had won at the beginning, and how the savages craned their necks to see how he discarded, and whose he "wend his whole pile" on three jacks, and some one behind remarked, in a low tone, "He's blooded, you bet you!" Some of "southern" cinch ever saw him. "There's a lonesome fellow to be seen right here and now," he had said to himself. But the fates willed it otherwise, for Lucky Dick "called" him, and the "chore down" displayed three queens from the hand of the latter, which sailed the pennant for Frank. But they filled him up with "fryin and" by way of consolation, and he struck out for camp by the light of the moon.

The railroad track, he remembered thinking, must surely be narrower than standard gauge and the ties unusually close together, and there was something wrong with the moon, for she had herself behind a cloud until he neared the high trestle, when suddenly she "unveiled her peerless light," that glittering in the creek below, started and persistent bite. He had set him down to consider all these matters, and there they had found him, schoolgirling, with many pictures and an occasional apostrophe to the innocent moon. He remembered their helping him home and putting him to bed—what he amused in his sleep; a thing by the feeling of the relentless burn.

The retrospect ceased as the cook filed out from breakfast. The foreman stood by the door, and with that strangely reflective memory which many unlettered people possess mentally registered each who went to work. Among the first was old Jack, the Slav, who took his position behind his bench, and with arms folded and unlighted pipe slight waited for the rest to finish a little before beginning his daily task of pointing teeth and sweeping rakes.

The crew, apart from the choppers and peelers, was divided into two gangs. Each gang had its complement of sawyers, chain tenders and swampers, and each had a donkey engine to haul the logs from their beds, where the sawyers left them, into the "skidding roads." The teams took charge of them from there on, hauling from the two engines alternately. Farther back in the forest the choppers and peelers worked collectively for the two "outfits."

For some time these "outfits" Frank served chunks. A chunkworgership is by no means an exalted position in the wood hacker brotherhood; still, it often serves as a stepping stone for something better. The duties are to cut into movable dimensions any windfalls or worthless trees that may be in the way of the machinaters, and to remove the lighter obstructing debris by hand.

He needed a sharpened saw. Jack must be interviewed. With a long drawn sigh, he arose and walking wearily across the track to where the bench stood, made known his wants.

"Here's the country where you're work's now!" asked the old man.

"Sleep," was the brief reply.

"Here's what you want, then," handing down the implement from his sweaty place against a large stump; "a difficulted saw for a sidling country."

Just then the "boss" came and said: "Guess you won't need that today. Big John's partner's in town, sick, or drunk, or sunstruck, so you'd better go an work in his place."

No further instructions were needed. Spontaneity had come at last. To fell a redwood had been Frank's aim ever since he hired out. Dropping the "outfitter" unceremoniously and forgetting all his woes, he hurried off to overtake his big friend of the breakfast table.

It is expedient to assign, for the time being, and for a reasonable extent, the speech and manners of those with whom our lot is cast. Frank had learned this by bitter experience. His "grammar" and "slang" had been subjected to much criticism when first he came. He had long since dispensed with both, and, furthermore, he now found wipe his mouth with the back of his hand after a meal and chew "sawing plug" with the best of them.

He overtook his big friend at the brow of the hill among the lines and rigging. The donkey driver, or "engineer," as he proudly styles himself, was busy getting up steam, and the pinning of the pump contracted strongly with the stillness of the morning—such stillness that the smoke from the little engine went straight up in a height blue chase. Over the divide in the region beyond Jordan, the pers morning light heralded the sunrise.

Out of breath, he began with the self-spoil—

"Say!"

"Say it yerself, me son."

"Sweet Lip says for me to work in place of Alec, who ain't showed up this morning. 'Sweet Lip' was a nickname applied to the foreman, on account of his ability to hire high priced men for less than standard wages.

After an inquiry or, two concerning his absent partner, John said earnestly, "But, me son, did you even chop any?"

"Lookers for skids, stringers, and the like of that."

"There's a big difference between 'lookin' down poles and 'fallin' red woods."

Frank knew, but he said nothing. The conversation became sparse, as they had now to walk in single file along the choppers trail, and all signs of road work were left behind. The way was over fallen trees and around stumps, down one side of a canyon and up the other, ending, at last, in the chopping at the edge of the green timber.

"That yer 'll be the next," said John, pointing to an eight foot tree of surpassing beauty, "when a real slim sell, as the saints is straight—you can tell that by the bark; an slick—scaled as a dollar—the green top shows it."

"Cold, premeditated murder," Frank said to himself. And then aloud, "which way are you goin to wind her?"

"Between them two stumps," pointing across the hill. "There ain't no room to spare; but if she's as straight as I think she is, I can land her safe enough." He took a plumb from his pocket, squinted up along the swing of the tree, as he thought, to satisfy himself, "Get Alec an and superset the inner portion of both them stumps while I fix the bending."

Both were soon busy, John felling a couple of saplings the which he placed and set up into movable wedges to be used in filling up holes the tree in the line of direction, while Frank removed off the stumps as instructed.

The next thing after the bed was made was the construction of the staging or scaffold. They cut sections from drives to drives, the shape beside were placed, and on these the saws now stood. The underwriting began when the big man, with the corner of his ax, had scribed a line on the face of the tree to indicate the height and extent of the notch. The throne, spring back is hard to cut, and been axes will often bounce back without making a visible incision.

"You'll have to hit a more shading fell to get into it," John said. The effort was almost disastrous. Frank made a swipe at the tree, the ax glanced and hit itself between his feet. John stopped. "Now, me son," said he, "yo must hit where you look, an take your time, or you'll cut yer dams feet off."

By noon the undercut was put in and the tree "pinned," a tree drawn across the stump from corner to corner of the undercut notch will be, at its center, at right angles to the point where the top of the tree is intended to fall.

The chopper's geometrical methods are simple. Stripping a fern of its leaves and using the stem as a measure, to find the center of the line aforesaid, and from this point extends a "gun stick" at right angles. The "gun stick" is straight and slender and about four feet long. A square is not used to find the right angle. Fern stalk measurement answers the purpose fully as well. He then sights along the stick, and, if it points exactly in the intended direction, the work on the front of the tree is complete. If not, the notch must be chipped into until it conforms to the mathematical requirements.

After dinner they moved their staging to the back of the tree and began sawing. This work came to Frank naturally. He was as leather as an oak and the swaying motion suited him. They rested occasionally. During one of these spells John said, "If you had as much sleight with the ax as you have with the saw I'd rather have you for a partner, Alec."

When the saw was well buried they drove wedges in the kerf to keep the tree from pinching down, and then worked on until there were but a few inches of timber left between the saw leaf and the water cut. "Now, me son, you kin take off your handle. The wedges 'll do the rest," said John.

It was done, and the saw with groans and cursing sailed away, and in a trice the woods were ringing with the industrious sound that steel delight make when harmonizing their edges into the body of a tree to break its heart. Frank was getting a little nervous, and his blows were uncertain and poorly directed, and the big man remarked, "Guess there's been a good many wedges you've never drove," and, to atone for his sarcasm and encourage the lad, he stopped to "fix your lines, me son. Make every lick count one, and don't try to hit too hard. Eye know that little blows 'll kill the devil! We've caused her some already. See you kin stuff your fingers in the gap now." A wind had sprung up, and was gently swaying the green top. "Now, watch when the wind swings her from this side to me and tap the wedges in lively. She must have leaned back a little, or she would have gone before now. And say, when she does go ready to go, don't get spooked, but just stand your ground and take along that fallen tree yonder, and don't look behind until you're inside the shelter of the big stub. I'll look out for myself." Then he made a trumpet of his hands and shouted:

"Ma dancers—scatter—the—hill! Watch—out—he's—a—a—a!"

Two pecker heard the warning, dropped their bars and made off out of reach of limbs.

The sledging went on and there was a few snapping cracks, each of which made Frank's heart jump, but he stuck until the last had touching boom, when they both jumped from the staging and ran to the stub.

Slowly the beams to sail, making a wider gap for the sky to be seen through; quickening by degrees, her top made a rushing sound as it parted the air lower and lower, pause and recover, pausing the stump, but now nearly out of the sphere of limbs. But she fell at length, with a crash that shook the earth, into the bed they had made for her, and at the same time the lion dropped off the stump.

"Good lick! from butt to broomstick! Frank, you kin work by the great Mazaway!" exclaimed the big man, when the commotion of swaying trees and falling limbs had subsided, and he was pacing back and forth on the trunk. "See how pretty she rests between the stumps. There ain't a lick of room on either side."

Track was picked, and upshot that the absent partner would stay in town, "sick or drunk or sunstruck," for the remainder of the week. Perhaps what followed was a judgement upon him for the sickness of the week—but I digress; I must tell the story.

In a week Alec had come back and Frank was learning the great majority. They had moved to a steep country, where the timber was small and scattering. They felled some of the trees "up hill," that is, the trees pointed up the hill and the butts rested on the upland side. Hitching a team on to the stump, "is the way John expressed it when the butts rested on the stump.

They "tongue" several, and Frank had asked how

"Do they ever take a season to slip down hill?"

"Yes, sometimes," was the reply.

"What's a fellar goin to do to get out of the way? They might roll over or flip up and come clear back over the stump."

"That's so, but you've got to take chances, as to all the work in these bloody woods."

They had dwelled the warning, for the tree was beginning to topple over. Both men jumped. Frank ran to the right and John to the left. The tree, but a small one, fell; its top broke off above knee-thicks up and the bole of the trunk balanced—it seemed to balance—upon a knoll above them. Then a strange thing happened. She swung to the right, her back dropped off, and in breathless, like a yellow snake, she slid down the hill. John shouted, but it was too late. He saw the extended arms and he heard the clicking green, and the thought of it all made the strong man sick.

That evening there held a meeting in the hall pen to talk the matter over. Jesse was appointed admiral trance. He fortified himself with an immoderate liquor chew of tobacco and "hitched his specs" on very carefully, and then reverently examined the boy's effects. He found a photograph of the girl at home, of course, and a few letters. He read the letters—to himself, and then addressed the assemblage. His voice trembled a little.

"Boys, boys, fellers," said he, "this poor boy wasn't no ordinary sport. He may have been foolish, and reckless and God knows what all, but, by the Eternal, he was a white! Now, fellers, those yer letters, which I hev read to myself, are too sacred to be handed around or even read aloud. Some of them's from his mother—a widow, I reckon—an some's from his sweetheart—an if you'll agree to let me take care of 'em, I'll see that his folks get the news as gently as possible." He paused and looked around.

There were no dissenting voices, so he resumed. "The next thing to do is raise funds for a bangup funeral." The old man, with his spectacles dimmed, picked up a battered hat from one of the bunks, dropped a five dollar piece in it by way of a "starter" and then passed the hat around.

The next issue of the local weekly briefly recorded the event under the headline, "Shooting Death of Rocky Gulch." The woods claim their victims so often that but little attention is paid to an occurrence of this kind. But Josh could tell an eloquent story.

Lady O'Brien, the wife of the governor of Newfoundland, is most interested in the arrest and conviction of the men engaged in the seal fishery in Behring sea, and has formed a small society to work up material into suitable clothing for her protegees.

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