



Tim slipped over a punch that
dropped Kwaist

Silver Thaw

By FRANK R. PIERCE

*Tim Donovan was fighting
men as well as nature to get
out his Northwest logs—
even his father had turned
against him*

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

"CYCLONE" DONOVAN, Northwest logger, was trapped in a forest fire when he saw a mother cougar making a difficult decision. She had two cubs, and could save only one. The one that snarled defiantly at the flames she left to take care of itself. When Cyclone got out

This story began in the

of the fire he made a similar decision regarding his two sons, Bud and Tim.

Cyclone knew that some day he must turn his valuable holdings over to one of his sons, and he wanted the strongest one to have charge of them. Bud he pampered, Tim was forced to fight for himself.

A silver thaw broke down much of the timber, twenty years later, that had been willed to the boys by their mother. It was Bud's timber that received consideration from Cyclone. Tim started out to log his on his own.

In a saloon fight, Tim knocked out and thought he had killed Chris Nord, Cyclone's woods boss. Suffering from the effects of the fight, Tim was helped away

Argosy for August 24

by old Kentucky Logan, and finally found refuge in the home of the Overtons, traditional enemies of the Donovans, where Ruth Overton nursed him.

CHAPTER VII (*Continued*).

MELLOWED.

THERE followed for Tim Donovan nights of blackness when he groped for moorings and invariably found Ruth Overton's steadying hand. There were days when she bent over him and he endowed her with the attributes of an angel. Once a doctor was brought in, blindfolded, to remain a day. He left at night, blindfolded. He worked hard that day and left them with hope in their hearts.

When Tim's mind finally cleared, the Overtons knew that a supposed clot had properly dissolved and the patient was on the upgrade.

"What's the date?" he asked.

She told him, and he shook his head. "I've lost a lot of valuable time," he complained. "Has the sheriff been prowling around?"

"No. Here's one place he wouldn't look," Ruth said.

"What's the news from Mill City?" Tim inquired.

"None," the girl told him. "Pap and the boys have been burning brush in the down-timber area. It's safe, during the wet season. Next summer it'll be dynamite."

Tim was sitting at the table with the Overtons two days later. The nerves of all were tense, as the boys were slow to swallow their resentment. Ruth smoothed things over and was ably backed by Pap. There was nothing approaching an outburst.

Tim was ready to leave the third day he was up.

"I've imposed on you enough,

Ruth," he said. "I'm now in your debt, plenty."

Pap, passing the porch where they were sitting watching the sunset, signaled the girl to take advantage of this opening. Once out of sight he rounded up the boys.

"He's full of gratitude," he said excitedly, "and if I can just get him full o' that corn likker I made ten years ago he should herd like a sheep."

He brought out a jug and stalked onto the porch. "I've been thinkin', Tim," he said, "if suthin' like this could've happened fifteen years ago, Cyclone and me might've made a deal whereby he'd got his power site and I'd got my logs off. On acquaintance you Donovans ain't so bad.

"I never thought I'd bring myself to drink with a Donovan," Pap shrewdly continued, "but then you ain't old Cyclone." He poured a generous drink into two glasses. "Here's to keepin' two jumps ahead of the sheriff," he suggested.

"Thanks, Mr. Overton," Tim replied, standing up. They gulped down the moonshine. "Ah! That's pretty smooth stuff. Even Kentucky Logan would approve."

"Now you've said the wrong thing, Tim," Ruth exclaimed. "Pap and Kentucky are always quarreling over the proper method of distilling liquor."

"I've offered to learn him the right way; offered to show him the tricks, but he's too danged stubborn. Here's one now to gittin' your logs to somebody's mill pond," Pap offered.

"Down the old hatch!" Tim answered. "Ulp! Very smooth!"

THERE followed a drink to the success of the new still Pap was building; and a fourth drink to Ruth's success as a nurse.

"Bes' li'l nurse a man ever had," Tim said. "Ulp! Say...say...Mr. Overton..."

"Call me Pap, Tim," Overton interrupted.

"Say...say...Pap, you know we Donovans are three-bottle men when it comes...ulp...to drinking. My old man is the best damn drinker in the...ulp...State of Washington," Tim declared.

"Huh!" Pap scowled. "He ain't even deservin' of hon—hon—honorable mention when it comes to . . . two-handed drinkers. I propose a drink to the...ulp...a drink to the drinks Cyclone couldn't handle."

"Pap, as man to man, I ask to be 'scused from this last drink. I don't seem to be...ulp...not ulp, but up to it, since my sickness. One more drink and that timber will log itself."

"Jus' as I said, the Donovans ain't mentioned, even in a low...ulp...breath when drinkin' men are dis—What's the word, Ruthie?" he asked.

"Discussed," she said.

"Discussed," Pap repeated.

Whereupon Tim took one more and sat down in a fog. Pap walked around the house and saw the chopping block. His knees were buckling and the block looked like a cushioned chair. He sat down forthwith. Klone picked up the jug.

"You emptied it! No wonder you're all in, Pap," he said. "Is Tim out?"

"Tim's as meller as a harvest moon," Pap declared.

TIM said nothing for a long time. He was amazed to find how satisfying it was to sit in silence with a girl; particularly when the girl, a former and possibly present enemy, had proved a stout crutch in need. He licked his lips several times, then began

speaking, selecting his words with care. "You sure worked wonders in me, Ruth."

He was proud of the first sentence, as it was free of alcoholic thickness. "You know, Ruth, you Overtons are not a bit like what I thought you would be. Fine, warm-hearted people. You could have made my stay unpleasant. The boys might have busted me one on the jaw for luck."

She smiled. Tim would never realize the difficulty she had experienced in quieting her brothers. She regarded him critically and said, "We're in the same boat, Tim. About the down timber, I mean."

"We're in a tough spot," he agreed. "But I'll get out of it."

"And I suppose we will, too."

"If I can help—" he began, checked himself, then plunged on. "And I can help, but naturally the boys won't throw in with a Donovan."

"Tim!" she exclaimed. "You're unfair. Offering hope this way. You see, Tim, I have so much faith in your ability to win out. And it seemed to me, for a moment—something in your voice included the Overtons in your plans."

Ruth Overton waited breathlessly for his answer. "I included the Overtons, if they want to be included," he said. "You said we're all in the same boat. But you'll have to whip your brothers into line."

"Tim, let's settle this thing right now—if it can be settled."

She hurried off to find the boys. On the way she slapped Pap in the face with a cold, wet towel.

"We're about to make a deal," she whispered.

The stinging towel and Ruth's words sobered Pap to some extent. "This'll be a great hour for me. I win Cyclone's

son to my side and get my trees took care of at the same time."

Within five minutes a solemn procession of Overtons moved toward the man on the porch.

"What's the proposition, Tim?" Pap demanded.

"We stick together and quit fighting until our timber's logged," Tim offered.

"It's a deal, and we'll put it in writin' if you say so," said Pap.

"We're not Gaspards, Pap, so no writing is necessary," Tim replied. "Here's my hand."

When the handshaking was completed Pap produced another jug. "We'd better seal this here deal with a drink; how about it, Tim?"

"I'll do my best, Pap," Tim answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE NEWS.

"IT'S ag'in' my religious convictions to do hard work," Pap informed Tim the following morning, "but it looks like we'd better start in buckin' that down stuff." He paused, and then suggested hopefully, "Or had we better wait until we learn if the Tracy contract is awarded to us?"

"The timber's got to be logged this year whether we get the contract or not," Tim replied; "but we won't start bucking just yet."

"What'll we do, then?"

"Tonight we'll try to put one over on Cyclone Donovan," Tim answered. "It's a job for all of us. We could use a few CCC men..."

"Hell, them wood ticks ain't no good," Pap grumbled.

"They're plenty good," Tim retorted, "and we'll use a whole company

of them before we're through. Now, here's the plan." Briefly he outlined what was expected of each man. "You be at the Donovan roundhouse at Mill City tonight at ten o'clock," he concluded. "I'll have things arranged."

"If you ain't in jail," Pap suggested.

"I'll keep out of the skookum house," Tim promised.

An hour later he was swinging through the down timber toward Deuce Creek. Once in the lower country, he stuck to game trails and avoided possible man-hunters. Smoke trailed lazily from Kentucky Logan's cabin, but a guarded shout brought no answer.

Tim followed a little-used trail to a stream and came to a stop near a fall. A fair-sized creek plunged fifty feet over a granite cliff. Tim took a deep breath and plunged through the mist at the outer edge. He found himself behind the falls and facing a cave the action of water and boulders had ground out.

The cave entrance had been closed with a concrete wall, studded with boulders. An iron door had been fitted into the wall, and without knocking Tim turned the knob and entered. Water, flowing through a cleverly concealed waterwheel, turned a generator which supplied light and electric heat to the cave.

A FINE still was in operation, and Kentucky Logan, Bible on his lap, was reading, smoking, and keeping a paternal eye on the still.

"I knew it was you, Tim," he said, "because you're the only cuss I've told about this location in recent years. How're you feelin' these days?"

"Okay, but weak," Tim answered.

"What's the situation?"

"I've got the damndest, all-fired

strangest news you ever heard," Kentucky answered. "Nobody's been able to find Nord's body."

"What?"

"I knew that'd curl your hair," Kentucky observed. "But it's the truth."

"But—"

"Go ahead and stutter," Kentucky said. "Everybody else is. In fact, nobody but us two, and the party that spirited off the body, knows Nord's dead. The sheriff and plenty of others *think* you killed him, but they don't *know*."

"He didn't get up and walk off; that's certain," Tim stated, puzzled.

"But it has this advantage," Kentucky shrewdly pointed out. "A man can't be tried for murder until the body's been found. They may hold you on suspicion, but they can't try you."

"What do dad and Bud think about it?"

"The old man is saying nothing, as usual, and I've never been able to figure Bud out," Kentucky replied. "The old man has had his troubles since he lost his bodyguard."

"People with grudges choose him, eh?"

Kentucky grinned. "He ain't been knocked off his feet yet. Offhand he's had to lay out a half dozen. Bud's leavin' Tuesday to bid on that Tracy contract," the mountaineer concluded.

"And I'll leave Thursday on a plane," Tim said. "I've made temporary peace with the Overtons."

"Good! And you pretty near had to," Kentucky added, "if you expected to get anywhere in that country."

"I feel mean about it, though," Tim admitted. "We had a few drinks which mellowed the old man; then Ruth and I got chummy. Of course I'd never fall in love with her. But she's a swell,

scrappy little trick, and I think a lot of her. We kind of got confidential, and I let on I wanted to do something for her—which is God's truth—and..."

"You agreed to get the Overton logs out?" Kentucky interrupted. "You darned fraud." He was grinning.

"That's about the size of it," Tim admitted. "She softened up Pap and the boys, so all's hunky-dory. And I feel sneaking putting one over on them. But...what the hell?"

Tim remained with Kentucky until dusk, then he started for Mill City, pondering on Nord's disappearance. Now that the heat of battle was over, he was sorry for the Swede, though the man had made himself obnoxious from the first.

"But it gives me a lease on life," he concluded as he stopped on the fringe of Mill City and looked down. "Until there's a body there can be no murder trial."

AT the Loggers' Supplies yard Tim found the manager had loaded everything onto two flat cars. The equipment was ready to move. Tim walked a quarter of a mile to the Donovan roundhouse and sized up the situation there. A locomotive had just returned from a brief trip. Steam was up and the engineer was down at the cook house eating.

The Overtons began drifting out of shadows and asking for orders.

"Klone, throw that switch," Tim directed in a low voice; "the others pile onto the tender. And say, Mox, toss on that bundle of pick handles. The Irish in me regards them highly for free-for-alls."

Tim had driven the big locomotive scores of times and it moved out of

the roundhouse puffing contentedly. No one appeared as they picked up the two flat cars and began rolling easily from town.

"This is easier'n shooting fish in a barrel," Klone said.

"Too easy if you ask me," Tim replied. "Keep your eyes open. And say, just for luck, get up steam in that donkey. We may want to snake it off the flat and up Deuce Creek in a hurry. The old man isn't going to take this lying down."

Two miles from Mill City Tim suddenly used the air. Sparks flew from the rails and the train stopped. A tree lay across the rails. The locomotive headlight revealed an expert faller had purposely dropped it there.

"We're blocked!" Tim yelled. "Listen!"

Behind them came the ring of a hammer against a faller's wedge. "They're dropping a tree behind us," Klone bellowed. "We're trapped!"

Tim opened the throttle, hoping to beat the tree and escape the trap, but a leather-lunged, "Timber-r-r-r!" warned that the tree was going. It crashed with a deep boom, then Cyclone's triumphant voice bellowed, "We've got 'em, boys. The next move is theirs."

"You thought two jumps ahead, as usual, Cyclone," a logger responded.

"Just a matter of patience," Cyclone replied in a voice so loud it was obviously for Tim's benefit. "He *had* to do this—it's the only way he can get his outfit on the job."

Tim backed to the rear tree. It blocked the road completely. "Get those pick handles," he said, "and follow me!" He threw a heavy block over his shoulder, carried several short lengths of steel rope in his hand, and jumped into the brush. Three Over-

tons remained on guard in the locomotive. Tim reached a convenient tree, threw the wire around it and secured the block before Cyclone realized what he was doing.

"Keep 'em away from that block, boys," he bellowed.

While the loggers rushed the spot, Tim and Klone raced back, got hold of one of the lines on the donkey drum, and ran back. Pick handles and fists were flying. Each paused to get in a few good licks, then Tim rove the line through the block, and with Klone's aid carried it to the obstructing tree. He took several turns around the trunk and then jumped up to the donkey engine. Steam was spurting from the exhaust as he opened the throttle and took up the slack.

"Get a hose, Klone," he yelled, "and hook to a hot water pipe on the locomotive. Be careful you don't scald yourself. Turn it on any man who comes within reach. All right, Pap! Get aboard!"

CYCLONE'S men, running forward with the intention of cutting the line, fell back. Hot water was spraying everything in the vicinity.

"Don't let 'em get away with this," Cyclone roared. "I want that outfit."

Tim's answer was to open the throttle wide. The donkey slowed down until the exhaust became spasmodic bursts, then the tree began to move. "I hope they lashed this yarder's skids to the car plenty tight," Tim muttered.

"She's slippin' some," Pap said.

The entire car was shaking under the pressure, but Tim never let up. He waved the others back out of danger and let the flat car groan.

His father's voice came from a nearby thicket. "He'll break that car's back. The flat ain't built that can stand such a load."

The tree began to move, an inch at a time, across the track. Five feet, then ten. Fifteen. Twenty. Then thirty feet. The butt swung clear and Tim cut the wire, then scrambled over the equipment to the locomotive.

"Keep them off with the hot water, Pap," he yelled. "We're in the clear."

"In the clear, but licked, boy!" Cyclone's voice taunted. "And you'll be licked until you get that outfit on the job."

Tim knew his father and appreciated he was enjoying the situation to the utmost. He returned to Mill City and spotted the cars on the wharf.

"The sheriff's liable to be on my neck any minute, Pap," he said hastily. "To hold me for investigation would be a sweet way of keeping me out of this timber war. This is your job, Pap. Buy a scow, load everything aboard, and lash it down for rough weather. Charter a tug and have it towed to Scow Bay."

"That's on the ocean!" Klone exclaimed.

"Yes. The mouth of the Skookum River," Tim replied. "The only way we can get our equipment on the job is to *line* scow up the river."

"Through Hell-Roaring Canyon!" Seven of the ten Overtons spoke at once. It sounded like a male chorus.

"Through Hell-Roaring Canyon," Tim replied, climbing into the locomotive cab. "I'm returning this to the roundhouse, then taking a bus for Portland. I'll catch a southbound plane there. They might be watching for me in Seattle. S'long. See you at Scow Bay in a week or ten days. And say, better

include a few cases of powder, caps and steel in the equipment. I've got a hunch we're going to do a little hard rock drilling."

He opened the throttle gently and rolled toward the roundhouse.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEXT MOVE.

"A NICE little set-to," Cyclone observed as he returned with his men on a speeder. "I knew he would try to pull something like that sooner or later. It was the only thing he could do. The chump never will know we left that engine in the roundhouse with the steam up so he'd walk right into it. But we shouldn't have let him get away." He shook his head. "Tim's still got his outfit."

When Cyclone arrived at Mill City he noticed a light burning in the office. He looked in and found Bud Donovan humped over a desk. Except for the scars and battered nose, Bud was a duplicate of his father, though somewhat lighter. It was this likeness, some claimed, that influenced Cyclone to give Bud the best of everything. The fact a cougar's choice of her kittens during a fire affected his decision was beginning to be termed a legend.

"I suppose Tim walked into your trap," Bud said, looking up from a sheet of figures.

"In—and out again," Cyclone answered. "Now we've got to plan the next move. Was anybody in while I was gone?"

"Sheriff! He doesn't know what to think about Nord's disappearance. He's searched the bay; questioned at least a hundred men who were in town that night; he spent a day in the CCC camp and got them to comb the woods

for signs of a newly made grave and the net result is nothing" Bud replied.

"Got them figures worked up yet?" Cyclone asked.

"Yes. This is what it'll cost to build a spur to my down timber," Bud answered. "And this is the cost of the same timber laid down on Tracy's wharf in California. The idea, I suppose, is to beat Tim and not try to make any money?"

"Beating Tim out of that contract is going to be easy," Cyclone predicted.

"Yes, but if we under-bid him too much there'll be no profit," Bud argued. "And we don't know what kind of a price he'll make. With him it's any old port in a storm. And he's in a sure enough storm."

"Harken to your old man who's been through the mill," Cyclone answered, "and I'll show you a trick with a hole in it. Tracy's got a secretary so old-fashioned he still argues airplanes will never be successful. His name's Skinner. Skinner still uses a letter press instead of carbons for copies of important letters."

"I know the rest of the set-up," Bud said, grinning. "A high stool, a brass grille through which all documents must be shoved and a safe you could cut open with a knife."

"And Skinner fits right into the picture," Cyclone added. "This is the way he operates: The day bids are received he'll get behind the grille fifteen minutes before the deadline. He'll receive the bids as they come in, pausing to examine the certified check, or count the money accompanying the bid as the case may be."

"Each bid must be accompanied by five per cent of the bid price," Bud said.

"Yep. Now you're settin' there when Tim comes in. You've got a half dozen bids in your pocket," Cyclone

explained. "You watch Skinner count Tim's money. Multiply it by twenty and you've got his figure. Then you take the bid out of your pocket that'll just shade Tim's price and hand it to Skinner." He rubbed his hands gleefully. "We beat Tim, and at the same time we don't have to slash hell out of prices."

"How about Gaspard?"

"He's a buzzard, roostin' around, waitin' to see how this fight comes out so he can pick the bones, if any," Cyclone replied. "He'll bid for the looks of the thing, but it'll be plenty high. Now, turn in and get a good night's sleep. And never forget for a minute when you're fightin' Tim you're fightin' a Donovan."

WITH several bids in a brief case, Bud Donovan boarded a plane at Boeing Field in Seattle and in due time found himself in Tracy's Los Angeles office. Three or four men Bud knew by reputation, as well as Gaspard, were waiting. A clock on the wall indicated quarter to ten. Promptly Skinner, a gaunt individual who had taken on the color of parchment, appeared.

He smiled mirthlessly, and said, "Good morning, gentlemen. We—ah—extended the time of delivery, as you know, that certain other bidders might have an equal opportunity of supplying the lumber."

"In other words, Tim Donovan," Gaspard said bluntly.

Skinner did not appear to hear.

"We—ah—hope this extension will be reflected in the bids," he concluded, then turned and opened the safe.

A stenographer, all of sixty years old, was thumping away on a blind Remington. The clock ticked solemnly, and Mr. Skinner glanced at it often.

At five minutes of ten Tim came into the office, bringing a gust of fresh air with him. The stenographer's papers stirred violently. She paused in her typing and gave Tim a brief stare of disapproval.

"Gentlemen!" Tim said, with a careless salute that included everyone. Then, "Hello, Bud!" Bud reddened slightly and Tim slid along a bench to his side. "No reason why we can't be friends," he suggested in a whisper.

"None at all," Bud replied. "Personally I'd prefer peace."

"Better not let the old man hear that," Tim warned. He glanced about and shuddered. "What a dreary place. If I stayed here an hour I'd be off in a corner, muttering. Did you see the look the museum piece at the typewriter gave me when I came in?"

"Yeah," Bud replied. "And still—"

"And still you've got to admit not one of Tracy's enterprises skipped a dividend the last few years," Tim added. "And his bonds are selling at par. That's something you can't laugh at."

Gaspard and the others slid their bids under the grille one by one. At three minutes to ten Tim submitted his.

"Cash, eh?" Skinner observed. He began counting, and his lips formed the numbers, "One, two, three, four," as he counted the hundred-dollar bills. He continued through the stack, counted them again and slipped a rubber band about them, reverently placed the roll in the safe.

Mentally Bud was calculating the amount of his brother's bid. He opened the brief case and selected an envelope with care. With steady fingers he slid it through the grille.

"Bid of the Donovan Logging Company," he said.

"Accompanied by a certified check," Skinner intoned. "Ten o'clock. No more bids will be accepted. You gentlemen will be notified of the result, and the unsuccessful bidders' deposits will be returned."

When Bud summoned sufficient courage to look Tim in the eyes, he found him grinning.

"Are you sure you gave him the right envelope?" Tim drawled.

"Absolutely," Bud retorted.

CHAPTER X.

WOOD TICKS.

AS Tim and Bud Donovan left Tracy's office after submitting their bids on the lumber contract, the latter growled, "What the hell are you laughing at, Tim?"

"You sitting there watching Skinner's lips while he counted the cash accompanying my bid," Tim replied. "I suppose you figure you know the exact amount of my bid?"

Bud Donovan's face got red.

"Aw, lay off," he protested.

"Now, listen, Bud," Tim said quietly; "you go back and tell the old man you followed his orders—and walked into something. I knew all about Skinner's trick of counting bid money. I had a hunch you'd try to cash in on it and horse me out of the deal. When you didn't put in your bid, my hunch was confirmed."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah!" Tim concluded. "So instead of accompanying my bid with five per cent of the price, I added enough to make it five and a half per cent. Figuring that I'd put up only five per cent, you shaded your price accordingly. But I've got a hunch I nosed you out."

"I've got a hunch you have, Tim," Bud admitted. "But it's pretty early to cheer. You can't win. The old man's got you sewed up. You can't get your logs out. And if you don't, then Tracy will forfeit the bid money for failure to perform the contract. You must be leaning on Donovan luck."

"I can use a little Donovan luck," Tim answered, "but I'm not leaning on it. S'long. I've got another little deal on. I'm buying an old mill for a song."

"Buying an old mill down here when you can pick up a dozen at home?" The astounded Bud's voice caused people to turn and stare. Cyclone Donovan in his most turbulent mood couldn't have touched Bud. "Now I know you're crazy," he muttered in something like a normal tone.

"Yep!" Tim conceded and, grinning, hurried off.

By night Tim had concluded terms for the mill's purchase, subject to his receiving the Tracy contract. Early the following morning Tracy sent for him.

"You are low," he informed Tim. "You just sneaked under your father's figure. You should make some money under normal conditions. I am familiar with the situation up there and I entertain grave doubts of your ability to deliver lumber on time. Unless you can convince me your plans are sound, I shall have to reject your bid, and award the contract to your father."

"The old man has me sewed up. My only outlet is down Skookum River to the sea. I can't tow the logs around to the sound and put them through the mill because the rough water would break up the average raft," Tim explained.

"Go on!"

"I'm topping the trees and floating them, full-length, down the Skookum

to Scow Bay. I'll make them up into cigar shaped, sea-going rafts and tow the rafts to a mill I've just bought and which will be moved to tidewater within a few miles of your building project," Tim concluded.

"But can you take a great log raft across the Scow Bay bar, through the rough water to the open sea?" Tracy asked. His eyes expressed serious doubts.

"It's never been done, but it's got to be put over this once," Tim answered. "Most sea-going rafts are made up in the Sound. But, I've had it tough ever since I can remember. I wouldn't know how to handle a soft job. So why not gamble with me? If I win you've got a mill that can deliver, on short notice, most anything you want."

Tracy turned to his secretary. "Skinner, bring that Donovan contract. We're going to sign it."

WITH the contract in his pocket, Tim boarded a northbound plane that night. The stewardess reclined his chair, tucked a pillow under his head and gave him a blanket, but he found sleep impossible. The lights of Sacramento found him mentally lining the scow up the Skookum. The lights of Medford and Eugene found him breaking a logging record with the help of the rough and ready Overtons and picked men from the CCC. When the plane landed at Swan Island in Portland the raft was mentally completed.

On the last leg of the flight to Tacoma the peaks of Rainier, Adams, St. Helens and Hood were snowy islands in a sea of white clouds, but Tim hardly noticed them. He was too busy taking the great raft through the surf. In all logging history no man had taken

a greater gamble. And the dice he rolled would be eight million feet of logs, worth a hundred thousand dollars.

He left the plane at Tacoma, on the chance the sheriff might be waiting for him in Seattle. A stage carried him to the Peninsula, but several miles short of Mill City he signaled the driver to stop.

"I'm getting off here, Joe," he said. "You can guess why."

"A warrant's all made out charging second degree murder," the driver answered, "but I don't think the sheriff will serve it until Nord's body's found. Whoever spirited it away done a swell job. Sheriff can't find a trace."

"And he should be smart enough to know I won't skip the country with a big contract on my hands," Tim suggested. "But I can't take a chance."

The excuse he gave the driver was only part, and a very small part, of his reasons for quitting the journey short of Mill City. A trail a hundred yards away led to the Civilian Conservation Corps camp at Indian River. Tim expected this camp to supply him with a crew and he was ready to make his selection.

Comfortable barracks built in a clearing marked the camp. Beyond towered the snow-capped Olympics. Indian River brawled within a few yards of the entrance. On the flat above the stream stood the local ranger's cabin.

During working hours the men were under his direction. The remainder of the time, three Army officers and a hard boiled top sergeant had charge of the several hundred men. A Navy doctor looked after the camp's health.

Two squads were lined up, Tim noticed. One was bronzed, self-reliant, clear-eyed and well fed. Its members were dressed in uniforms that had seen

hard service. Banter ran through the ranks. The other squad, in new uniforms, was composed of pale and frequently undernourished youths. Tim saw doubt, and often fear of the future, in their eyes. The great trees, the forest silence, appalled them.

"Before and after taking," Tim reflected.

TIM approached the ranger. "Hello, Dave," he said. "I suppose you heard I got the contract. Have you picked out some men for a crew?"

"I've got a bunch in mind," the ranger answered. "Ready for them?"

"Sure. What's the crowd over there?" He nodded towards a group conspicuous because of its restlessness. The different members were young, intelligent and the fires of revolt against all things burned brightly in their eyes. A product of the times, they made no attempt to conceal their contempt for their steadier fellows.

"They're a tough lot, Tim," the ranger answered. "They've been through the mill; learned everything I could teach them, and made trouble all the time. Other camps have weeded out their bad apples and shipped them here. The whole works will be fired home in a few days."

"Dave," Tim said after a moment's reflection, "I want that gang."

"Yeah," the ranger grumbled, "and if you were a wild animal trainer you'd try to work lions and tigers in the same cage. What do you suppose will happen when you try to mix that crowd with your Overton hill billies?"

"Nothing. A brawl or two, then—logging," Tim replied.

"It reminds me of the Irishman who went to the priest and asked to have Judgment Day explained. 'Do you

mean to tell me all the different faiths will be up for judgment at the same time?" he asked. The priest said, "Yes, Mike. They'll all be there!" "Then," said Mike, "there'll be darned little judgin' the first day!" And there'll be darned little logging, Tim."

"Just the same, there's power in that bunch I'd like to harness." He walked over and met their mocking stares with a scowl. "They tell me you're tough," he drawled. "How tough?"

They exchanged glances. "Too tough for the CCC and the cops and marshals in any town in the Puget Sound country," one of them retorted.

"Not tough enough," Tim said. He removed his coat and doubled up his fists. "Pick the best man you've got, and we'll find out just how tough you are. Or any three men and I'll take 'em one at a time—rough and tumble fighting. Anything goes."

There was no answer. They merely exchanged surprised glances. Each waited for the other to speak.

"You've just been kiddin' yourselves, boys," Tim scoffed. "You're not tough at all. As a matter of fact you're a bunch of tin horns, playing a few ten year old tricks on your betters and thinking that's being tough. You're being kicked out because you're a bunch of damned nuisances."

Under his steady gaze and stinging words they reddened.

"We don't want any of your game, Donovan," one of them said at last. "Some of us saw you fight Chris Nord."

"The CCC's through with you. What do you want to do, go home and play at being tough, or hop into a real fight, and find out just how good you are? Now get this straight, I'm talking to the boys with brains, not the short sports that have been kidding

themselves about their toughness," Tim said, walking closer. "You'll get twenty-five bucks a month to send home. You'll get ten, instead of the five you've been getting to spend on yourselves. And if I win, you'll share in the cut I take above expenses. There'll be steady jobs for those that want them."

THE Army and Forest Service men within the sound of Tim's voice expected a jeer for the answer. But it never came. These boys respected brute force and they had seen him fight the mighty Nord. And Nord was dead. That was something they could not laugh off. Tim's words put them on the defensive; stung them for the first time in their lives.

He challenged them and each found himself smouldering with repressed fury and anxious to prove his toughness. "I'll go with you, Donovan," one answered sullenly.

The others followed and Tim found himself surrounded by men whose emotions towards him were an odd mixture of admiration and downright hate. The camp was glad to ship them to Scow Bay, and while their equipment was being loaded into trucks the ranger talked with Tim.

"You attract trouble, you crazy Irishman, like honey does flies," he said. "Now I can pick a hundred good, steady men who—"

"This is a job for bad men, Dave," Tim interrupted.

Tim followed his crew to Scow Bay, where he found the Overtons. He lined them up.

"This is Pap," he said, introducing the head of the clan. "The bearded fellow is Enoch. Kentucky Logan has named the others Mox, Klone, Lakit, Kwin-num, Togh-um, Sin-a-mox, Sto-

te-kin and Kwaist. He's number nine of the boys, and the last."

"Hill billies," one of the CCC boys sneered.

"Wood ticks," Kwaist Overton retorted.

"Hold on, you," Tim cut in sharply. "Keep your shirts on."

The Overtons seemed eager to put the arrivals in their place; while the latter, longing to clean up on something in human form, jumped the mountaineers.

Tim's yells were ignored. He picked up a pick handle. "The first one who uses a stone or club gets this," he warned. He lighted a cigarette and perched himself on a stump.

Someone hung a haymaker on Pap's jaw and he stretched out on the sod.

"The birds must be singing to him," Tim reflected, "it's the first time I've seen a pleasant expression on his face, except the day we had that drinking bout."

TIM walked over, helped Pap to his feet and led him to the stump.

"Let's watch 'em, Pap," he suggested. "It'll teach 'em respect for one another and clear the atmosphere."

"I don't seem to be able to take 'em like I used to," Pap complained. "Damn it, I wished the law would stand for settlin' fights with a long bar'l squirrel gun."

A half dozen slug-fests were going at once. One Overton was writhing on the ground; and a CCC boy was moving about in a daze.

"That's enough of it," Tim said suddenly. "You've let off steam. Save your punches for Cyclone's loggers. You'll need them. Save 'em, I said."

The CCC boys eased up, but Kwaist Overton, being young and hot-headed, whirled and savagely retorted, "You

licked Chris Nord, but you haven't taken on me yet. I'm choosing you right now!"

Tim would have preferred to avoid trouble with the Overtons. Their hate for the Donovans was so close to the surface a little thing might start a blaze. But the CCC boys' eyes were on him.

Kwaist possessed courage, hot blood and a murderous right hand which Tim took good care to avoid. He fought off the younger fellow several minutes, then slipped over a punch to the jaw that dropped him. Kwaist was lifted to his feet by two of his bothers.

"I hate your guts, Tim," he said thickly.

"We all do, kid," Klone said. "But there's a job to be done. When it's finished we'll settle the old account."

"You put up a good fight," Tim said, hoping to smooth matters somewhat.

Kwaist's face was white and the muscles about his jaw were trembling with fury. "Go to hell, Donovan," he answered.

Pap Overton joined them. "Tim, what's your plan? The sooner we start to work, the better," he said.

CHAPTER XI.

HELL-ROARING CANYON.

SUPPOSE you and the boys build a camp at the headwaters of Deuce Creek," Tim said. "Barracks and cookhouse will be log cabins and you can handle a double-bitted ax better than the CCC boys. We'll get the scow load of equipment up there."

The mountaineers approved of this suggestion, as it gave them an opportunity to work together. Tim led his crew to the scow. A tug had brought

it over the bar to Scow Bay. There was evidence it had shipped a sea or two in the process. The yarder was rusty in spots; and the spools of wire rope were beginning to rust. The scow leaked slightly, but it rode well enough in spite of its load.

Tim sent a party up the river to cut fuel and pile it along the bank. "You will have to do your own cooking," he said, "and if you get tired of tinned grub, there's salmon running in the river."

Tim lined up the others and contemplated them with studied shakes of the head. In another day, he decided, they would hate him. Under his skeptical expression they flushed. "Remembering again," he said, "that you're a tough outfit, which one of you is the toughest?"

"Donnybrook McDuff can lick any man in the outfit," one of them answered.

"All right, McDuff, step forward," Tim directed. "Why do they call you Donnybrook?"

"The Donnybrook Fairs were pretty rough," McDuff answered haltingly, "and in my town..."

"I see, and your town thought you were pretty rough, and nicknamed you Donnybrook," Tim fairly purred.

"Damn you," Donnybrook flared, "I didn't win that name playing with daisies."

"Keep your shirt on," Tim admonished. "I'm just getting information."

"And you'll get a bust on the jaw when I harden up," Donnybrook promised. He was six feet tall, with wide shoulders, jet black hair and blue eyes. He had a handsome, sullen face, and rarely smiled. His hands were large, but lacked the thickness that comes from hard work.

"Save that bust on the jaw until later," Tim said. "I've got a job that needs a tough man. We're taking a canoe load of dynamite up to Hell-Roaring Canyon."

"Dynamite!" Donnybrook's eyes widened. He entertained the city man's respect and fear of high explosives. "It's going to be in the canoe with us?"

"That's the only way we can get it there, unless we pack it on our backs. There won't be much," Tim assured him. "Just a few hundred pounds." He pointed to a small cabin back in the woods. "It's stored there. You can begin by packing the cases down to the river bank."

Tim turned to the others. "I'll get you started on the scow," he said.

One gang was sent upstream, dragging the wire rope from the yarder drums. This was secured to a tree and Tim opened the throttle, winding the rope up slowly. And as slowly the scow began bucking the stream.

"You see how it's done," he said.

A man detailed to handle the levers nodded.

"Take it easy and watch out for rocks," Tim warned. "There'll be times when you'll need two cables pulling at different angles to get around the tough spots. If you get stuck, let me know."

SCOW BAY had once been the site of a thriving native village. Differing some from the Sound Indians, the Scow Bay tribe often went great distances to sea fishing, whaling, and sealing. In their war canoes they had fought the fierce natives that came on raiding expeditions from the North.

A few canoes remained, and Tim bought one of the smaller craft, designed for river work. Like the war

canoes, it was hollowed from a cedar log, fashioned along graceful lines and carried a high bow for breasting heavy seas.

He lashed a timber well astern, running it beyond the port and starboard beams. On either side he fastened a small outboard motor. Tests proved the craft capable of amazing speed. With Donnybrook McDuff's grudging assistance the canoe was loaded. Drill steel and hammers were stowed on the bottom for ballast, and the powder cases distributed over them.

"Donnybrook, you'll ride in the bow, and keep a sharp lookout for submerged boulders," Tim said. "Sing out if it looks as if we'd crash."

"Sure." Donnybrook wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "I'll only have one guess, I suppose."

"Small craft loaded with dynamite have been known to crash without a blast," Tim replied, "but it's rare. I wouldn't depend on it if I were you."

The first mile was not difficult, as the stream moved slowly through a deep, wide channel. It was here they passed the scow. Presently they were in white water. The craft slowed as it bucked the current. Donnybrook's eyes bulged in his efforts to detect rocks that did not exist. Once he looked back and growled, with a trace of admiration, "Donovan, you're a cool customer. You could hang a man without batting an eye."

"Are you still worrying over this powder?" Tim countered. "Hell, I'd sooner set you ashore than—"

"Who said anything about going ashore?" Donnybrook demanded. "I'm stringing with you until the job's done, then I'm going to clean up on you. No logger's going to make a sucker out of me."

Tim grinned. He was positive he

had made no mistake in his selections.

They camped at dusk. Tim cooked a meal, and the two ate like horses. The dull boom of the stream rolling over a boulder-strewn bed was constantly in their ears.

"Hell-Roaring Canyon," Tim said. "We'll be there, first thing in the morning."

They bucked some swift water before the walls narrowed to the canyon proper. Donnybrook McDuff almost forgot his job as he gazed ahead. High above, a tree eight feet thick at the butt spanned the gorge, which at that point was a hundred and twenty-five feet across.

"How'd that get there?" he asked in a hushed voice. "It must weigh tons."

"It does. Skookum means strong, in Chinook," Tim explained. "Probably a Chinook, or warm wind, ran the snow off the mountains in a hurry. The stream overflowed its banks, tore out that big fur, and started it down the canyon. Sections of the top snapped off until the trunk was too thick to snap. Backed by the weight of the trunk and the momentum, plus the force of the current, it stuck and wedged. When the water went down, it was left there."

TIM drove the canoe to a point above the log and made fast to a boulder. Here the walls were damp and mossy, but a strong man could climb them. With a coil of rope about his waist, Tim worked his way to an overhanging cliff. He lowered the rope and hauled up the first case of powder, then stored it in a natural cave.

The second case followed, and after an hour of it McDuff came up and

spelled him. By sundown they had powder and steel stored, as well as several days' supply of grub.

"Tomorrow," Tim announced, "I'll make a hard-rock driller out of you."

Early the following morning Donnybrook found himself sitting on a grain sack, a short length of steel between his legs, with Tim swinging a hammer dangerously close to his head. After each blow he twisted the drill slightly. His hands played out before Tim's arms, then the latter began single jacking—twisting the drill with his left hand and swinging a lighter hammer with his right. Donnybrook did the camp work, then inspected his surroundings.

From a point a half mile above the canyon the ridge above the Skookum River was a scene of desolation—a forest laid flat. Climbing the ridge, he looked towards the straits of Juan de Fuca, miles away, and saw the scene of the fire of twenty years ago. New trees had grown from natural seeding, presenting a bright green belt through the vast stand of older trees. It ran straight to the Salmon River and ended abruptly.

"And that fire made Cyclone do things that's changed the course of a lot of lives, including mine," Donnybrook reflected. "I wonder how it's all going to turn out." He rubbed his wrists and forearm thoughtfully. The muscles were beginning to cramp from the long period of drilling.

Those same muscles gave him pain for about an hour the next day, but by ten o'clock they had loosened up. He managed to stand the gaff a little longer.

"Want to swing the hammer a while?" Tim asked.

"No, I'm afraid I'd hit you," Donnybrook answered.

A 4—3J

So Tim went it alone. It was a slow business, and the job was but half done when the scow came in sight. The crew snubbed the wallowing craft to a rock and came up for instructions.

"We'll never get her through those rocks in the canyon," one of them said. "It took us a day to get by one spot down the river."

"Have any of you ever swung a hammer?" Tim asked.

"I have," one answered after some hesitation. "I served six months on a chain gang once. Drunken driving."

"Take this hammer and start drilling," Tim directed. "Some of you bring up the hand forge and a sack of blacksmith coal and the anvil. This steel is dull. The others clear the trail along the river. We'll be using it a lot."

HE sent the canoe down to Scow Bay for a load of fresh provisions, and instructions to tow a second loaded canoe behind it.

"There's power enough in the two outboards to put you through the fast water," he assured the two men he had detailed to serve as crew.

"What do you want me to do?" Donnybrook asked with a trace of bitterness in his voice. "Do a hand-stand on a log while it floats through the canyon? It couldn't be any worse than bringing a load of powder through white water."

Tim ignored the barb. "Can you top a tree?" he asked.

"Sure!" Donnybrook replied. "There isn't a damned job in the woods that I can't do."

"See that fir?" Tim indicated the only big tree growing near the river bank on the south side. Its scant top explained how it had survived the sil-

ver thaw. "Lop off that top, a hundred and fifty feet from the ground. I'll have a look at the tree on the other side. They're going to serve as gin poles for a high lead set-up."

Tim tossed an ax and climbing irons over one shoulder, picked up a short saw, and crossed the stream on the jammed log.

Donnybrook scowled at his tree and a surge of fear passed through him. "And he stung me into saying I could top a tree," he growled. "I never topped one in my life."

He directed a string of oaths at Tim Donovan, then strapped on the climbing irons.

"Hey, McDuff," a companion warned, "you ain't goin' up that tree? You ain't a high climber."

"That crazy Irishman has sounded off too many times about us being tough. Even when he calls me Donnybrook, there's a kind of sneer in his voice. I'm getting so I hate the name. I used to be proud of it. I don't know how you feel about it, but he isn't going to make me back down. I've gone a hundred feet up a tree. Well, I can go a hundred and fifty feet," McDuff declared. "Topping can't be any more than sawing and hanging on."

Tim, across the gorge, glanced towards Donnybrook several times, and saw that he was climbing slowly upward, cutting off the branches as he climbed.

He dug in his own irons, flipped the rope with its wire core upward, and when it caught in the rough bark, climbed up and repeated the act. Cutting limbs required expert ax work. The rope, girding the tree, naturally stopped immediately under the limb that was to be cut. A slip of the ax might well sever the rope and send the climber plunging earthward.

The speed with which Tim swung the ax might have appeared careless, but it was speed born of long practice. The limbs dropped, and the man himself moved higher. Presently he stopped, made a neat undercut, then began to saw.

There is no job exactly like it in all the world. The top itself weighs several tons. And those tons, when the cut is complete, fall from a platform a few inches in diameter, a hundred and fifty feet in the air.

The kick-back as the weight leaves is tremendous, and the high-climber is in the relative position of a monkey on the end of a limber stick.

JUST as Tim's top started to go he kicked his spurs free, and in the same movement freed the rope. He dropped several feet, dug in with his spurs, and held on. The top kicked back and rushed downward, the tree vibrated, then steadied—no longer a tree, but a gin pole.

Tim climbed up to examine the job. The cut was clean, and the wood was not splintered. Here a ring would be fitted, from which would radiate a web of supporting wires, and the heavy steel blocks that were to handle the running wire rope.

Tim looked at Donnybrook. The man's back was turned, and he was sawing hard.

"He should have had that topped by now," Tim mused, then something to the southwest caught his interest. Plumes of steam were shooting above the forest crown. The white vapor would linger a moment against the dark green, then dissipate.

Jacques Gaspard owned that timber, which was remote from his main logging road. Yet a donkey was at work. Why? It gave Tim some concern. Gas-

pard invariably did the unexpected; and the man, naturally, had not forgotten, and certainly not forgiven, that open-handed slap Tim had administered.

With his father on one side and Gaspard on the other, he was in the position of a nut about to be cracked. But some nuts are hard and slip from the cracker if the pressure is improperly applied.

To the northward other plumes marked the location of the Cyclone Donovan skidders, working on the first of Bud Donovan's down timber.

"It looks as if they'd take Bud's stuff out by extending the Strawberry Bench spur," Tim reflected. "Hello! Here's Kentucky Logan in person."

The mountaineer was swinging up the Skookum River trail, each stride eating up better than three feet of ground. A sudden yell, audible above the boom of the rapids, diverted Tim's attention from his old friend. Donnybrook McDuff's top was plunging earthward, but the man dangled head downward, held in some manner by a spur that had caught in his fouled rope.

Tim signaled to the startled crew that he was coming, then descended in a series of breathless spirals that left deep grooves in the bark. He jumped to the wedged log, raced across and crawled to the brink. Several men dragged him to his feet, and one flared, "You don't care about other men's lives as long as you get your damned logs out, do you? McDuff had never topped a tree before."

"I didn't know that," Tim answered.

He went up the tree and found McDuff shaken and bleeding where his arms and face had scraped against the rough bark. The blood had rushed to

his head until his face was purple, otherwise he would have been ashen. There was stark fear in the depths of his eyes.

"When the top left I was shook loose," he said.

"Don't move!"

Tim dug in his spikes and securely knotted the rope to the rings in his heavy leather belt. This drew him fairly close to the tree. He then fastened a line to the other's belt and rove it through a small block which he had carried up with him. Securing the block to the tree, he tossed the running end of the rope to the ground.

"Tighten up, easy!" he ordered.

THREE men took up the slack, and Donnybrook kicked himself free.

Slowly he was lowered to the ground. As Tim joined him, Kentucky Logan ran up, breathing hard.

"I saw him slip, Tim," he panted, "and—"

Donnybrook wiped the blood from his face. There was no friendship in his eyes as he scowled at Tim.

"Where's the next tree you want topped?" he demanded.

"We've done enough for today," Tim answered. "Knock off!"

Donnybrook was shaking from head to foot.

"I've got to top a tree right now," he said.

"Take it easy, Donnybrook—" Tim began.

"Damn it to hell," McDuff belatedly, "don't call me Donnybrook. I know what you think of me and my nickname. Gimme a tree! Can't you see this is getting me? That I'm turning yellow? I've got to beat this thing and do it alone."

"Get hold of yourself," Tim said sharply.

The next instant McDuff's hand had lashed out, and Tim crashed to the ground.

He tried to draw his knees under him as he shook his head, then he collapsed.

McDuff gathered up his ax, saw, and wire-cored rope.

"I'm topping the first tree that looks as if it might be needed," he said thickly, "and I'm prepared to kill the first so and so who tries to stop me, or—help me."

From the shaking creature they called Donnybrook the others looked to Tim Donovan stretched out on the soft rot of the forest floor.

"Yellow," one of them jeered. "You could've got up and didn't. Your eyes were clear all the time."

Kentucky Logan placed a restraining hand on the hothead's arm.

"Would you have him get up and hit a man trying to regain his courage?" he asked softly.

Tim got up. He understood McDuff's reasoning. It was the same sound logic which sends an aviator aloft after a crash.

Work stopped, and they stood

around in small knots, watching the trees bordering the Skookum River.

Nothing happened. Fifteen minutes of silence were broken by a girl's quick step.

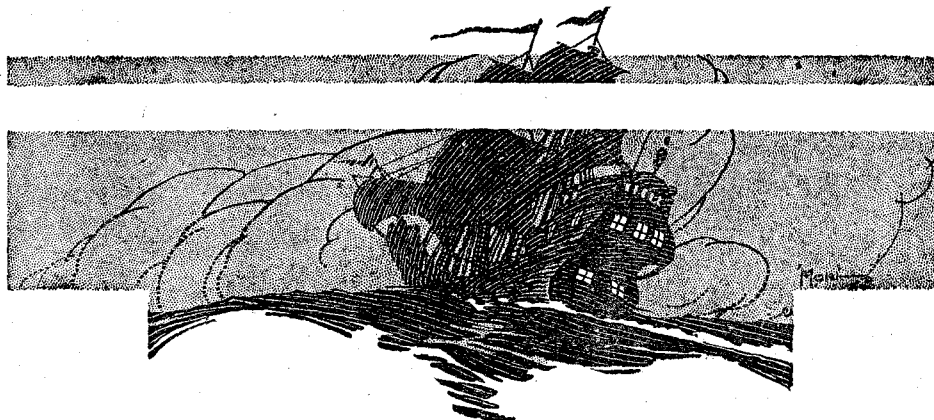
They turned and saw Ruth Overton running towards them. For a moment Tim forgot Donnybrook McDuff in his delight at seeing the girl. He had never seen her quite so radiant. Running had brought a delicate flush to her cheeks and a sparkle to her black eyes. Something came into Tim's eyes that only Kentucky noticed.

The mountaineer shook his head.

"When a man looks at a girl like that, it means complications," he muttered. "And yet, if it wasn't for the feud between Cyclone and Pap, which the young'uns naturally inherit along with cussedness and ailments of the flesh, it'd be a good thing."

It struck Kentucky, also, a rather fine light came to Ruth's eyes when she looked at Tim. Or was that merely a feminine trick? For reasons of her own, was she trying to win the big logger and then lead him around by the nose for the revenge and glory of the Overtons?

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.





"Those two are dicks," said the thin man.

The Killers

By FRANKLIN H. MARTIN

A FINE, drizzling rain was falling and the long single file of drab looking men hugged the side of the building. Battered hat brims pulled down, shabby coat collars turned up. Tall men and short, lean men and lumpy, but all with a certain look in common—acknowledged defeat. The bread line.

One step forward, drag the other foot, then wait, another step forward. A regular, shuffling sound, like a march cadence in slow motion. The human caterpillar edged up. Toward a tin cup of soup and a chunk of bread. A tall man, thin and stooped, mumbled half-aloud, "Just like

in the army. Standing in line again . . ."

The man in front of him turned his head. Clothes hung in scarecrow limpness from his wide frame. "Yah. Just like the army." There was a decided Teutonic tone in his voice.

"I mean the army, over in France," the tall, stooped man said. "The rain soaking in all the time, and standing in line for chow. That's the army I mean, mister."

"Yah, sure," the other agreed. "Like the army in France. Stand in line in the rain . . . Yah."

Silence for a while, step and shuffle. Wait, step and shuffle again. After a little the tall man asked in a flat, toneless voice, "What outfit?"

"Three Hundred and One Bavarian Light Infantry. I was a corporal."

"Oh!" The stooped man grunted. "You were a Kraut—a Jerry?"

Once they had sought to kill each other on the battle-fields of France—now they faced a different kind of death together