

# THE ARGOSY.

Vol. XLV.

JULY, 1904.

No. 4.

## A STRANGE TRICK OF FATE.

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An expedition into the wilderness that witnessed a clash of wills and brought forth awkward situations for all its members.

*(Complete in This Issue.)*

### CHAPTER I.

#### OPENING THE MAIL.

SOME years ago, a dozen at the most, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company built a new siding in the wilderness north of the Great Lakes, that vast region where a railroad seems an anachronism, where the white population is limited to the factors at Hudson Bay Company trading posts and the dwellers in widely separated pioneer settlements along the line of the road.

The siding was placed without any regard whatever to present or future population, its purpose being originally nothing more than a convenience to the running of trains upon the single track. As a certain west-bound train was scheduled to halt there and wait on the siding till a certain east-bound train had passed, the place had to have a name for reference in the company's despatches; and as the road crosses the little Pahquatasing a short distance from the siding, the place was called after the river; but no station was erected, not so much as a switchman's hut, for no switchman was condemned to exile there.

It was the business of the engineer of the west-bound train to stop short of the switch, and of one of the trainmen to run forward and throw it.

Even at that time there were a few,

a very few, farms within a half day's wagon journey in both directions from the siding; and there was a rude, generally passable trail, called by courtesy a road, that connected them.

It happened that a restless Yankee, who already had broken into the wilderness as a pioneer three times in as many different States or territories in his own country, went journeying across the continent by short stages, or as much at a time as could be made by daylight, and noted the stationless, all but nameless, stopping place.

He had to ask a brakeman what it was called, for the name was not on the long list of towns in his time-table. Jim Foster, that was the Yankee's name, told the conductor that he would stop over at the next town, whatever it might be, and his ticket was endorsed accordingly.

With the exception of one hour, he spent all of a long day in driving over the trail that connected the farms. That hour was put in at the siding.

The result of his observations may be astonishing to those who do not know the ways of the wilderness. Going back to the settlement where he had hired his horse and wagon, he announced that he wanted to employ men "for a spell."

"If I can't get enough men," said he, "I'll fill in with Indians."

He got both. They hauled a quantity of unseasoned lumber from the mill at the settlement to Pahquatasing, and in short order put up a cubical structure one story in height, but with the front end carried by a sham boarding to the height of a second story.

While this was building, the Indians broke a road from the siding to the trail referred to, about a quarter of a mile north of the railway. The new building was placed a short stone's throw from the switch.

Before it or the road was finished, in fact just as soon as the sham front was up, the Yankee knocked together a ladder, took paint pot and brush, and with his own hand inscribed the following on the front, in letters two feet high:

J. Foster.

#### GENERAL STORE.

The calicoes, canned goods, tools, crockery, overalls, shoes and other miscellany that constitute the stock of a general store arrived before the carpenters' rubbish had been removed.

It was the first call a train had made for any such purpose at Pahquatasing, and the second call was made the day following, when a passenger left the west-bound train that regularly took the siding, and had his trunk put off.

This was one George Bagley, to whom Foster had written on the evening of the day when he decided to found the town of Pahquatasing.

Bagley looked the ground over, saw several farms in the forest surrounding the general store, saw a mill site at the river, saw a railroad station, and immediately arranged to employ Foster's men when he was through with them to put up a hotel across the road from the store.

Within a year from that time Pahquatasing had forty inhabitants.

There was a saw mill and a railroad station with an agent in charge. Several acres of cleared land were turning into farms. Three dwelling houses sheltered a fraction of the population, and the rest lived at the Pahquatasing Hotel, George Bagley proprietor.

All traded and passed the evenings at J. Foster's general store, whither also came the farmers from both directions,

with eggs and butter to exchange for Foster's miscellany and Bagley's whisky.

In due course a post-office was established in the general store, and transient guests were not unknown at the hotel. Now and again a commercial traveler spent the night with Bagley and sold goods to Foster.

Amateur sportsmen from the States often made the place a point of departure for hunting and fishing expeditions, and prospectors of one kind and another were forever straggling along. Bagley entertained them all, and Foster sold them what they lacked in the way of outfit and provisions.

The first summer of the twentieth century found Pahquatasing with eleven dwellings, the general store correspondingly prosperous, and the hotel running full.

There were new pioneers staying there while their acres were clearing, and transients never were so plentiful. Three had been at the house for a week.

"If those fellows hang on much longer," said Bagley to Foster, "I shall have to double the size of the hotel."

The early morning mail had just come in, and Bagley had strolled across the road to get what there might be for him and his people.

"There's your whisky bill," replied Foster, handing over a letter that Bagley took without comment. "Papers for Macdonald and Stewart, and two letters for your transients."

Bagley took the mail and leaned against the counter for a bit of gossip. There was no hurry. Macdonald and Stewart, one an employee at the saw mill, the other a pioneer, had gone to work, and the transients had not yet come down to breakfast.

"Your transients going to stay all summer?" asked Foster, as seriously as if he meant it.

"No," replied Bagley, in the same tone, "they're only waiting for Don Robertson to find 'em guides. Then they're going to start into the bush."

"Oh! that's it, eh? Sportsmen?"

"That don't seem to be their outfit."

"Looking for timber belts, mebbe."

"Yes, mebbe, and that's as far as you can get with 'em, Jim. They're a close-mouthed lot—not that that's anything against 'em. They're good customers for me, and well enough as the run of travelers goes."

"When they first come," said Foster, "I thought that Mr. Mayberry was a rich young feller out in the woods for his health, he was so white and thin; but darned if he ain't the liveliest one of the lot."

"So he is. This is the first morning since he's been here that he hasn't gone for a walk before breakfast. Pleasant sort of man, though quiet. He's no kicker, which p'raps is natural, seeing that he ain't the head of the party."

"Mr. Colburn holds up that end, don't he?"

"Yes; he seems to take some fun out of letting it be known that he runs the outfit, but Stilson pays the bills. Kind of funny combination, but they've got a right to keep their business to themselves, and I don't care."

With this magnanimous admission, Bagley gathered himself up and strolled back to the hotel.

He laid the papers and letters on a table in the office, as he called the one general apartment of the house, and then glanced into the dining-room. The table was freshly laid.

"I'll have to rout those fellows out," he muttered, and started to the stairs, only to see his three guests coming down.

"Good morning, gents," said he; "breakfast's all ready for you."

Mr. Mayberry responded with a cordial "Good morning, Mr. Bagley," Stilson contented himself with an indifferent "Howdy," and Colburn passed with an almost invisible nod. It was all the same to the landlord, though he noted the difference.

"There's letters for you in the office," added Bagley.

Stilson, being nearest the door, was the first in. He glanced at the letters and went on to the dining-room.

"As I've got no girl to write to me," he said, "I don't expect any letters after the day when we should have left this God-forsaken place."

The other two arrived at the table

at the same time, and each took up a letter. Each displayed interest, surprise, and perhaps something else at the very sight of the envelope he held.

Mayberry was quick to hand to the other the letter he had picked up, for it was addressed to "Mr. John A. Colburn" in a strongly characteristic, feminine hand.

Colburn was slower about the exchange. He took his own letter, but held the other, looking at it as if it were necessary that he should read forward and backward the "Mr. Howard Mayberry" that constituted the most important part of the address. Then he looked at his own, and his face flushed.

"This is yours," said he shortly, handing Mayberry's letter across the table.

Mayberry's face flushed, too, when he took it, and the eyes of the two men met in a swift glance of deep and complex significance. Each of the letters bore the same postmark, and were addressed in the same characteristic, feminine hand.

"Thank you," said Mayberry quietly.

He put his letter in a pocket and went to the dining-room.

Colburn stared after him a moment with a puzzled frown, and then hastily tore open the envelope of his letter and read eagerly.

The flush died away from his face and the frown of perplexity lingered. At the end of the letter the frown deepened, and after looking hard at the signature he read again from the beginning.

This time, though no flush returned the frown gradually cleared. He looked toward the door through which Mayberry had gone, put away his letter, and followed with firm tread.

By the time he came to the door there was a broad smile betokening satisfaction on his face. He kept it there all through breakfast with occasional intervals of unwonted jocularity.

Mayberry seemed unaffected by it, but Stilson was moved to comment.

"Great Scott!" quoth he, "if a letter stirs you up so, what would be the result if she were to come on? If her presence would make you steadily

agreeable, by all means telegraph her to take the next train."

Colburn haw-hawed as if this sally amused him to the very depths of his being. Mayberry's attention seemed to be concentrated on his coffee cup.

"A few days' further delay won't matter any," added Stilson discontentedly. "As you've managed to get us stuck here indefinitely, you might as well scare up a parson—there must be one somewhere in the wilderness—put in your honeymoon at Pahquatasing, and let us begin our work next year."

There was allusion in this calculated under ordinary conditions to affect Colburn disagreeably. Indeed, his eyes glinted resentfully, just a flash, but his hilarious humor held sway and he laughed again.

"Cheer up, Stilson," said he: "you may get a letter some day. Many a woman has put up with a worse looking man than you are. There's a chance for you yet."

At this distance of time, and in knowledge of subsequent events, it seems fairly certain that Colburn's confident jocularly was put on for the benefit of the man who had received a letter in the same feminine hand. Let us see if the letter itself justified him.

"Dear Mr. Colburn," it began, "I cannot bring myself to wound your feelings by saying a positive no to the question you asked me just before you went away. Neither can I please you by saying yes. I am in painful doubt, and you would not want me to say yes unless I was sure.

"I esteem you as a friend and want always to be your friend. It seems a dreadful pity that the human heart is such, or shall I limit it and admit that it is a woman's heart that is so prone to indecision? I am trying to say that I am sorry I could not give you a definite answer, and now I fear that I have delayed this word so long that it will not reach you before you return from your perilous journey. If it does reach you, please understand that I shall think of you every day, hoping for your success and safety, and that I shall want to see you when you return. Until then I give you at least this promise, that I will not say yes to any other."

There was more in a pleasant, friendly spirit, and the letter was signed, "Rose Osborne."

"I hope Robertson will come to-day," said Mayberry, at a lull in Colburn's jocularly.

Stilson responded at once with fervent curses on a country where one heard from New York more speedily than from the nearest village.

"Robertson," said he, "may have sunk in a bog or been scalped by Indians. We may stick here all summer, and be none the wiser. He ought to send us some sort of word."

"It never occurs to a man like Robertson," responded Colburn, "that there is such a thing as time, or lack of it. He went away to find us guides. When he gets them he'll come in with them. That will be time enough, as he understands it."

"And meantime his wages run on at so much *per diem*."

"Oh, well——"

"It isn't well!" interrupted Stilson sharply. "We haven't got unlimited money. I'm not here to stand for waste, and a good deal of this is unnecessary expense. You might have made arrangements for guides before leaving Montreal. The C. P. R. people would have fixed it for you."

Mayberry rose and left the room. The conversation had come to its accustomed stage, and he cared neither to take part in it nor listen to it.

He could share Stilson's disappointment at the delay, could admit that there had been blunders in the preparations, but it was now too late to wipe out past errors by anything except fresh endeavor. Moreover, he was inclined, when he faced the impossible, to shrug his shoulders and waste no words about it.

To start without guides was impossible; therefore, why debate the thing acrimoniously?

So he quietly left the room, and perhaps it was more to the point that he had not yet read his own letter. To be free from interruption or observation, he went to his chamber.

His fingers shook a little as he carefully tore off an end of the envelope.

"Dear Mr. Mayberry," his letter be-

gan, "I cannot bring myself to wound your feelings by saying a positive no to the question you asked me just before you went away," and so forth.

Word for word, the letter was an exact duplicate of that addressed to Colburn, with one exception. Miss Rose did not include in her letter to Mayberry that sentence about not saying "yes to any other," but he did not know the difference, and the last thing that would have occurred to him was the fact that the young lady had written a substantially identical letter to her rival lovers.

Mayberry did not smile as he read and reread the sheet.

He derived no profound satisfaction from Miss Rose's manifestly sincere declarations of friendship. There was a painful pleasure in gazing at her handwriting, in realizing that these gracious words were addressed to him; and for such reasons the letter was put carefully away, where it might be referred to readily, and where it would be safe from loss; but there was no stimulus to jocularity in it.

On the contrary, unable to shut his memory to the fact that the other man had received a letter from the same person, he found it difficult to suppress the bitterness he knew to be the breeding place of jealousy and hostility.

## CHAPTER II.

### A BELATED TELEGRAM.

BAGLEY's transients constituted an exploring expedition sent out by a syndicate of Eastern capitalists to hunt for mining locations. It was taken for granted that they would come upon an abundance of copper in that region, possibly silver, and perhaps gold.

They planned to search in hitherto unexplored lands, of which there are large tracts in middle Canada. There is many a lake there that has not yet been seen by a white man.

It was an ill-assorted trio, which may be accounted for by the fact that they had not been brought together by their own wills or inclinations. The idea was Colburn's.

He had roughed it somewhat on the

Western plains of the United States, and this gave him an advantage of at least alleged experience. Colburn never had been a miner, but he had been in mining camps, and was of an adventurous disposition.

Coming to New York from a leisurely railway journey through Canada, he had begun at once to talk mines to such rich men as he knew, telling them with great emphasis and perfect sincerity what he had heard and seen of Canada's mineral resources.

There were fortunes hidden in the woods up there, and he knew it. Persistence usually bears its fruit, and in this instance the fruit was the expedition under his charge.

A number of men put up small sums each to pay the costs of exploration. Stilson went along as their direct representative. He carried the money and paid the bills, and was keenly alive to the responsibilities of his position.

He had never met Colburn until they were introduced in New York by one of the members of the syndicate.

Mayberry was but a year from a post-graduate study of geology at Harvard. During that year he had been instructor in physics at an academy whose pupils included Harry, son of the wealthy William F. Osborne. It had been in Mayberry's way to be of special service to the boy, and a friendship stronger than is usual between teacher and pupil sprang up between them.

So it came about in a perfectly natural manner that Mayberry spent a part of the holidays as a guest of the Osbornes, on which occasion he met Harry's sister Rose. It was all up with him from the first moment, but he did not declare himself till nearly half a year had passed.

Meantime the syndicate had been formed and William F. Osborne had joined it.

He it was who suggested that Mayberry be commissioned to go with the expedition as the scientific member. The young instructor accepted the commission with enthusiasm that was by no means less because it provided for a summer that might otherwise have been decidedly short, financially considered.

Each member of the expedition had a share in the prospective profits of the enterprise.

Colburn, as the originator, was to have a larger share than the others, but the possibilities for Mayberry were so bright, granting that they found locations of value, that he felt that he could properly make his passion known to Rose, and ask her to marry him. He had spoken in a manly way, admitted frankly his dependence upon the results of the expedition for means to set up a home of even the most modest description; and she had said neither yea nor nay, but she had, with apparently equal frankness, assured him that her lover's means, real or prospective, would have nothing to do with her decision.

Circumstances about this time gave him intimation that Colburn, whom he had but recently met, was prospecting matrimonially in the same quarter, and the same circumstances opened Colburn's eyes to a possible rival in the quiet man of science.

Of course nothing passed openly between them on the subject, and the receipt by each of a letter from Miss Rose was the first certain information either had of the other's relation to her.

The trio had arrived imperfectly equipped at Pahquatasung because Colburn had been so certain that there they would find guides and camp-helpers tumbling over each other for opportunity of employment. He had observed several Indians and some apparently idle whites at the station when his train called there months before.

Moreover, he had learned that the village was the point of departure for many amateur sportsmen who were ambitious to push to unknown parts of the wilderness.

He had failed to take into account the shifting nature of the population; the fact that at any time the inauguration of a new enterprise was calculated to empty a dozen villages.

In this instance all the Indians he had seen there were with a surveying party two hundred miles distant, and not a white was left but was up to his neck with work. Even Don Robertson was busy, so Bagley informed Colburn.

This man, Donald Robertson, had

been a Hudson Bay Company factor, and why he was no longer in the employ of that conservative company was to be attributed to nothing more serious than his love of the very wilds wherein his services were wanted.

Scotch by name and by the greater part of his ancestry, he was Indian by nature. There was in his features many a bold suggestion of the Indian strain that was said to be in his blood. He never admitted the faint, but it was undoubtedly there.

A great hunter and wanderer was Don Robertson. Before he was thirty-five he had killed more than a hundred moose, and after that number he stopped counting.

"And not one of them, sir," he would say, "for mere purposes of sport. All for necessity."

He knew the country as well as did any Indian; spoke Ojibway fluently, and could "get along" in any of the numerous Indian dialects of the woods; was as much at home on the water as on the land, and yet never had seen a rowboat.

Such a man could not possibly be content to trade company stuff for the pelts the Indians brought in; to keep himself cooped up in a post, with not more than a county or two to roam in; and so at last the company reluctantly removed itself as an obstacle to his desire for wandering, which is a delicate way of saying that Robertson was dismissed from its employ.

From that time he had hunted, guided hunters, attempted spasmodically to break a farm out of the wilderness, and now was engaged, in the interests of his rather large family, in just that undertaking at Pahquatasung.

The family was temporarily installed in a shack constructed of several poles, a few waste slabs from the mill, a minimum of canvas and a maximum of thatch—the family always had been thus installed since its oldest member could recall—with open air kitchen and mother earth for bedstead; and Robertson was hewing the logs destined to be the foundation of a square house when the Colburn expedition arrived.

Bagley advised Colburn to see Robertson.

"Don's pretty busy," said the landlord; "he's trying to settle down, and probably won't go with you at any price; he's swore that he'll never go out with a party till he's got his folks housed and comfortable, but he can tell you where Indians are to be had. He knows more than all the rest of the town put together about that sort of thing, which might not be saying much, for the rest of us don't know a dummed thing. But Don knows it all, and if you could have the luck to get him as your head guide, you'd have the best man in that line in all Canada."

Colburn sought for Robertson with the fixed intention of making him the head guide; and so successful was Colburn ordinarily in having his way that he had come to regard such an intention as much the same thing as an accomplished fact.

His persistence was untiring when obstacles presented themselves, and he masked the irritation they caused so successfully that he was often referred to as a man of extraordinary patience; but once his purpose was accomplished, and it was merely a matter of administering an undertaking, his subordinates would seldom suspect that he and patience were acquainted.

Robertson desisted hewing and leaned on his ax when Colburn accosted him and began to talk about a trip.

"How many are there?" asked the woodsman.

"Three."

"Ye'll want a man for each."

"Certainly; you and a couple of good Indians."

"And three canoes."

He had an odd way of pronouncing this word with the accent strongly on the first syllable.

"Yes," replied Colburn; "canoes are to be had here, I suppose?"

"No, there's none in the place."

"Except your own, you mean."

"I sold mine to a party that went up to Pahquatasing Lake for fishing."

"Do you mean to say you haven't one for your own use?"

"Yes; I'm done with camping. I've got to build this house."

So saying, Robertson took up his ax.

"Well," said Colburn, with no sign of disappointment, "Bagley says you can tell me where to get guides."

"I dunno"—the ax went down again; "there's an Indian village about twenty miles up from here, and another thirty miles further. Might be a man or two in either place. But they're mostly busy this time of year."

Then Colburn made rather a long speech. Without stating the precise purpose of the expedition, he intimated that it was important for him and his companions to traverse a country not yet explored by whites; that they needed just such a man as Robertson, because none of them had had experience in dealing with Indians; and he hinted that money was no object.

"Of course," Colburn concluded, "if you're out of it, I'm sorry, but I'd like to have you name a man who will be your equal for the purpose. And I'll be glad to pay you well for finding that man and engaging him for us."

Robertson stood listening, with one foot on the ground, the other on the log; he rested an elbow on the bent knee and his fingers unwittingly curved around the handle of an imaginary paddle.

The deep scent of far-away pines filled his greedy nostrils. He seemed to see the eyes of a startled but not frightened stag taking his first look at a human being. Impertinent squirrels chased over his feet, and beneath his boot glowed the soft phosphorescence of a forest centuries dead.

"I'm thinking you do need a good man," said he vacantly.

Colburn's battle was won. It was not the suggestion of pay that interrupted the work on Robertson's house; it was the temptation of the journey itself.

The unknown forest called to this man of the wilds in a tone that he could not resist.

So the ax was flung aside and that very day Robertson set forth to pick up Indians and canoes. He had been gone long, more than a week, and no word had been received from him, but he returned on the day when Colburn and Mayberry received their identical letters.

With him were two Indians, which

was promising of an immediate start; but there were only two canoes.

"Have you made up your mind that we can get along with two?" asked Colburn.

"No," replied Robertson, "we'll have to have another."

"Where can you get it?"

"Make it."

Stilson fell at once to grumbling. More time wasted, doubtless more expense. Certainly the wages of Robertson and the Indians must go on during all the process of manufacture. All of which might have been avoided if Colburn had taken ordinary precautions.

"Well," exclaimed Colburn, exasperated, "why not make the best of it? We've got to have the canoe, and the less words wasted over it the quicker we'll get it. Go ahead, Robertson; slap her together as fast as you can."

"It won't take so very long," said Robertson; "we stopped this morning and stripped a tree for the bark, which we've got with us, and Mukwa brought the caribou thongs with him from home."

Mukwa was one of the Indians. His full name was Gitchemukwa, meaning Great Bear, but it was never used even by his tribes people.

He was a small, slender man, probably about fifty years old, but his age was not to be inferred from his appearance. The whites put him down as somewhere in the thirties until one day he casually mentioned his granddaughter, when they revised their estimate.

The other Indian, Takumegzhik, was certainly younger. His name, signifying Clouded Sky, was promptly abbreviated to Gezhluk. Both spoke English, Mukwa fluently, if incorrectly, Gezhluk slowly, and with considerable uncertainty. Mukwa was forever smoking; Gezhluk sometimes went for an hour without lighting up.

They were industrious fellows in their way, Mukwa toiling steadily, but with a moderation of movement that drove Colburn and Stilson frantic with irritation; but Mukwa was a race horse compared with Gezhluk.

Robertson worked with the Indians at canoe making, and the summer was

but little older when it was ready. So one fine morning the expedition actually started, Colburn and Robertson in one canoe, Stilson and Gezhluk in another, Mayberry and Mukwa bringing up the rear.

Their first objective was Lake Pahquatasung, which they reached by paddling up the river, a short day's journey.

This lake lies upon the height of land and has two outlets. One, the river of the same name that finds its devious way to Lake Superior; the other, a channel connecting with another lake further north, that in its turn connects with another, and so at last pours out by way of a river that empties into Hudson's Bay.

The course described is known to whites, and is a favorite trip for those who seek big game.

It was Colburn's idea that they should portage from Pahquatasung, or the lake beyond, to another river system, and so enter unexplored land, a procedure that Robertson advised him would be the simplest thing in the world.

Two things happened in the town founded by J. Foster when the expedition had been about twelve hours on its way.

One was the arrival of a telegram for Colburn; the other the arrival of a party of Indians with canoes. They came from down the river and went into camp till the summer should bring them employment from sportsmen or tourists.

The telegram was brought to the hotel by the station agent after supper.

"Of course you know he's gone," said Bagley.

"Yes, but he ought to have this message," replied the agent.

"Important, is it?"

"Well, I'm only saying he'd be better off if he had it. I've no right to tell what's in it."

"And I've no right to open it. Don't see as I can do anything about it."

"Might send it after him by one of the Indians. Plenty of 'em here now."

"Who's to pay the Indian? You?"

"That ain't my business."

"And it ain't mine. From the way that fellow Stilson kicked about charges

I'm not thinking of running up any bill that I may have to meet myself. If it was for Mr. Mayberry, now, I'd take the chance of sending an Indian on with it, for he'd settle like a gentleman. But Colburn—that's the same as Stilson, so far as the bills go—I reckon it ain't my business."

### CHAPTER III.

#### AN INDIAN CRISIS.

DURING the making of the canoe, the three men who comprised the expedition had had the precaution to practise handling the graceful craft.

Not one of them had had a paddle in his hands before, and the trick of using it had to be learned; for not one could go as a passenger.

Colburn took his lessons with Robertson in the stern, the head guide finding many occasions when he could leave the Indians to go on with the work without him; and under his instruction Colburn speedily became an adept—in his own estimation.

It looked simple enough to the other two who watched Colburn and the woodsman gliding over the river above the mill, and presently they ventured to embark in the other canoe and try it. When it turned bottom upwards in mid-stream they waded to the shore, yelling to the Indians, who ran down and caught the canoe just as it was about to go pounding over the dam.

Mayberry laughed till his sides ached at his blunder, accepting without a protest Stilson's crestfallen assurance that if Mayberry had sat still the thing would have gone along all right; and perhaps that was so, but the probability is that the upset might have been delayed if each had dug his paddle into the water with less violence.

They changed their clothes and tried again, consenting now to take some second-hand advice from Colburn, and accomplished a hundred yards and turn without catastrophe.

"I think I shall like this when I get the hang of it," Stilson said. "The thing slips along so easy that travel in it will be like play," and the Indians who heard said nothing.

Before the first half of that first day's journey was covered, Stilson was protesting that the current of the Pah-quatasung ran swifter with every rod they advanced against it. He shifted his paddle frequently, and now and again took it from the water altogether and laid it across the gunwales.

Colburn, a man of powerful physique and no end of grit, was getting on with fewer shifts and no rests at all; with him in plain sight as an example, Stilson was spurred to steadier endeavor than might have been the case otherwise, and the novelty of the scene and the exhilaration of being at last on the real exploration kept his spirits up till the midday rest.

With Mayberry, more accustomed than Stilson to physical exercise, the first half of the day passed more easily. His arms ached with the unusual strain, and often he longed for the sweep of oars to which he was accustomed, but his Indian was considerate.

"Take-um easy," suggested Mukwa, shifting his pipe to the remotest corner of his mouth. "Bimeby you got used to it."

"And bimeby the river'll flow the other way, won't it?"

"Not this river," replied the Indian, with perfect gravity; "some other river, mebbe. Ask Don."

Mayberry did not ask Don, but smiled at the red man's answer and toiled away. He did, however, take advantage of the advice offered, and much of his paddling was a matter of form; by which he gained facility in handling the paddle, and was hardly conscious that he had been at work when a halt was made for refreshments.

Even with Stilson there was little sense of fatigue after he had been on shore a few minutes. His arms ceased to ache almost as soon as he ceased to use them, but he looked at the palms of his hands ruefully.

"I'm afraid I ought to use gloves," he said.

"Got blisters?" asked Mayberry.

"Not yet, but they're coming."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Colburn. "a man who can't stand a half day's paddling has no business in the woods."

Up to this Stilson had kept a good

temper, actually finding enough to enjoy in the experience to compensate for the exertion; but Colburn's sneer upset him.

"I've got business in these woods," he retorted, "and I know how to look after it."

Colburn laughed insolently, and there the matter ended for the time, though the scowl on Stilson's brow showed that it rankled deep.

Mayberry indulged in silent regret that the expedition could not have been composed of men congenial to each other, and gave his attention to the Indians, who were opening up the grub pack under the oversight of Robertson.

The party's outfit had been put into three packs: One for provisions, another for articles of clothing and camp utensils, and the third for shelter tents. Each canoe had one pack as its freight, but not always the same pack.

As time went on it was sometimes Colburn's canoe that bore the provisions, and sometimes Mayberry's or Stilson's.

Dinner was not hurried and the men smoked long before making a new start, for according to Robertson the head of the lake was the proper place for the first night's halt, and that could be reached easily under five hours. Thus far his word was law in such matters, though he never failed to express himself very deferentially.

"I think you'll find it better not to try to go beyond the head of the lake to-day," he had said, and Colburn had assented without a question.

The afternoon waned without other incident than the passing of Stilson's canoe by Mayberry's. Stilson could not keep the pace, and Gezlik was not inclined evidently to put out any extra strength.

For that matter, Gezlik may have reasoned that there was no need of it, for he knew where the camp was to be pitched.

So it happened that the others were waiting for him when Stilson's canoe at last brought up alongside the bank at the foot of a stretch of swift water that hardly amounted to rapids, but that did justify a short portage to the lake just above.

The delay gave the others a chance to rest, if they needed it, and, like most men in similar circumstances, they had small consideration for the need of him who had caused the delay by his fatigue; which is to say that they promptly began to prepare for the portage when he arrived.

"What's up now?" Stilson demanded, as he saw Robertson lifting his canoe from the water, the pack that had been in it having already been removed.

"Your canoe will be up in a second," replied Colburn, with a heartiness that seemed to imply not only that he was not conscious of a day's exertion, but that this manner of thing was wholly familiar to him, "and the pack in it will be up, too, on your stalwart shoulders, my boy."

As he spoke, Colburn swung the pack that had been in his canoe to his back, while Robertson lifted the canoe and put it over his head like an immense hood. Mukwa was making ready to lift his canoe in the same way, and Mayberry had the corresponding pack ready to carry.

"What have we got Indians for, I'd like to know?" Stilson asked petulantly. "I thought we were hiring men to do the hard work."

"You could have had an extra man for yourself," responded Colburn, grinning contemptuously, "but if I'd suggested it you'd have drawn the string so tight the purse never would have opened again."

Mayberry tried to prevent an altercation.

"It's the custom when traveling this way," said he, "for one man to carry the pack and one the canoe. Robertson says this isn't a long portage. You can see for yourself; it's hardly more than a hundred yards."

"That's all right," returned Stilson, somewhat mollified, "but no custom or emergency will make me do what I know I'm physically unfitted for. You can sneer all you like, Colburn. I'm no ox, neither am I a jackass. If I happen to have weak lungs, it's no fault of mine, but it would be my fault decidedly if I permitted myself to overstrain."

"Weak lungs!" exclaimed Mayberry,

in genuine sympathy and some alarm, for a man of that type was bound to be a serious handicap to the expedition.

"I wasn't aware of it before," said Stilson, "but I fear it now. I've got a sharp pain here," placing his hand low on his thorax, "just as it is when a fellow has a severe cold. I suppose I caught cold by paddling all the forenoon, and then sitting inactive so long. I tell you, I don't like the symptom."

Robertson spoke from the recesses of the canoe.

"It's the paddle," said he calmly. "You've no reason to fear, sir. That's the way it most always affects beginners. Ye've got no more cold than that pine tree, and ye'll be as strong in three or four days if ye keep yer heart up."

"Do you feel that way?" Stilson asked of Mayberry.

"Now that you speak of it," was the reply, "I do notice a soreness there."

He meant this to be encouraging, and doubtless it might have been so if it had not been that Colburn felt called upon the comment, and, as usual, he managed to say something that irritated the purchaser exceedingly.

"Pity we didn't bring along some old woman to nurse you," he said.

Stilson gave way to imprecations of great violence and considerable variety. The sunburn on his face was over-spread with the pallor of rage, and he advanced threateningly, but Mayberry stepped in his way.

"Don't mind it," he suggested lightly. "It wasn't a nice thing to say, but it's hardly worth a fuss. We've got to pull together somehow, you know."

Meantime Robertson had stalked away under his canoe, and Mukwa, whose ears apparently were deaf, had followed. Colburn wheeled into line and marched off with his pack, leaving Stilson to fume it out by himself.

"I don't want to butt in where I've no business," said Mayberry, catching up with Colburn. "but don't you think it might be just as well to touch a little lighter on Stilson's sore spots? If he can't take a joke, what's the use in rubbing it in? Doesn't do any good, does it?"

"No," growled Colburn. "I don't

suppose it does, but he makes me so darned tired with his everlasting kicking and whining! I'll let him alone, though, if I can."

Mayberry breathed more freely, for he had feared that his intercession might prove to be ill-advised. Colburn seemed to take the suggestion in good part, and there was hope, therefore, for at least one peaceful evening.

Meantime Gezhik had unloaded his canoe and lifted it from the water.

"You take-um paddle," said he; "I come back for pack."

"That's as it should be," responded Stilson shortly, and thus it was.

The Indian made two trips to the camping-place, while the white walked up and threw himself upon the ground without a thought apparently of preparations for the night.

Colburn looked at him, idle when the others were at least trying to be busy, and his lips parted to utter a characteristic sarcasm, but he remembered, and contented himself with curling them disdainfully; and as Stilson did not see that, no harm was done.

There was no outbreak during supper, nor afterwards, so far as the whites were concerned in their relations with each other.

Robertson chatted in a slow, but for him enthusiastic way, about the route to be pursued during the next few days. Colburn listened and asked questions with all the keen interest that should properly be manifested by a leader, and Mayberry drank in the woodsman's words with the eagerness of a boy.

He had had his little view of wild nature during his student days, but none to compare with what seemed now in store, none really that compared with the exhilarating experience of this first day. His eyes could not tire of the somber beauties of the forest through which they had glided for hours, and it could not tire now of the placid serenity of the lake that stretched before them to hills that had the first blue tinge of distance to soften their green masses.

"What's the matter with Mukwa?" asked Colburn, rather suddenly.

The Indians had sat down for their pipes at a little distance, and close by

the lake shore where the canoes lay. Stilson was sound asleep.

It was really well along in the evening, but in that northern latitude daylight lingers to a late hour.

Colburn had noticed that Mukwa withdrew frequently out of sight, and that his demeanor when he returned was crafty and suggestive of trouble; that is, so it seemed to Colburn, who had the average white man's regard for the Indian generally.

At the moment when his companions turned in response to his question, Mukwa was on his knees beside Gezhik, haranguing him earnestly, though not loudly, and with a multitude of gestures. Gezhik smoked away tranquilly, hands clasped about his knees, apparently wholly unmoved by his fellow tribesman's eloquence.

Mayberry was conscious of just one slight thrill as many a scene in Cooper recurred to him, and then he smiled, for the days when travelers might be in danger from the so-called treachery of the red man were far distant.

"I'm thinking," said Robertson, with an indulgent smile, "that Mukwa has brought along a load of Bagley's whisky. It's his one weakness."

"It is, is it?" exclaimed Colburn wrathfully. "Why the devil didn't you mention it? What business has a guzzling redskin in a party like this?"

"He's as good a man as there is in the woods when he's sober," Robertson was responding in his slow, tolerant way, but he spoke to Mayberry only, for Colburn had jumped up and was striding to where the Indians sat.

Neither of them noticed his approach till he was in front of them.

"Mukwa," said he sternly, "what are you doing?"

"Huh?" replied the Indian, surprised and getting to his feet. "Excuse me, I was talking to my friend here, *nizhi*, understand? Do you know Ojibway? *Nizhi* means friend. I'll tell you all about it. I'm an ignorant man, but I know some things. You say *bojo nizhi* when you meet——"

While he was speaking, his whisky-laden breath filled Colburn's nostrils.

"You're drunk," Colburn interrupted.

The Indian looked a bit startled, drew himself back a pace, and answered gravely, "Yes, sir; you've hit the nail on the head. I am."

He looked his employer straight in the eyes, and proudly for an instant; then the undermining influence of fire-water was manifested in an abrupt change of demeanor.

"Colburn," said he, taking a partly-emptied flask from his pocket, "have a drink!"

The white man, originally outraged by the fact that his red subordinate was drunk, was foolishly incensed because the Indian addressed him familiarly.

To say nothing of the unwisdom of paying serious heed to what any intoxicated man says, Colburn might have known if he had had more experience that the Ojibway never means any familiarity or disrespect by omitting the "Mister." Men like Mukwa learn readily to use it, and other terms of respect, like "sir," which is frequently on their lips when talking with whites; but in his incipient intoxication Mukwa merely reverted to the characteristic manner of his tribe.

Unmindful of any of these considerations, and others that prudence should have dictated, Colburn took the extended flask and threw it upon the ground so hard that it broke in a hundred pieces.

"Get to your shake-down," he ordered, pointing authoritatively.

The Indian stood stock still, looking at the white steadily.

"That was my bottle," said he, not in anger, but with gravity worthy of entire sobriety.

Colburn struck him.

"Get to your shake-down," he repeated.

Robertson came lumbering up rapidly. It was not a graceful gait, and it did not seem to be fast, but whether on portage or unencumbered, Robertson, when he was in a hurry, could "get there" with amazing swiftness.

"Excuse me, sir," said he, and there was earnest agitation in his tone, "I wouldn't do that."

He put his hand on Colburn's arm.

"Well, I would," retorted Colburn,

shaking him off, "and that's the difference."

"Excuse——"

"I won't have a drunken redskin in my camp!"

"Mr. Colburn," said Robertson, "if you want to go on to-morrow, you'd better let Mukwa alone. I'll attend to him."

The warning was so seriously given that Colburn swallowed the hot words that were upon the verge of his lips, but he stood with both fists clenched, quivering with anger.

Gezhik, who had sat in stolid immobility through the altercation, began to get up. Robertson spoke to both Indians briefly in their own language, and then turned with the idea of leading Colburn away from the scene.

Mukwa had been dislodged a bit by the blow, but he had neither run nor retaliated. He stood much as he had when accused of drunkenness, head up, eyes fixed upon Colburn.

His lips were pressed together, and only the fierce glow in his eyes told of the sudden sobriety that had come upon him, and the deep wrath that had taken the place of intoxication.

As Robertson turned, Mukwa turned also. He walked slowly to one of the canoes and prepared to pick it up.

"I'm afraid there's more trouble coming," said Mayberry in a low tone.

He had followed Robertson and had been a distressed observer of the whole scene.

Robertson turned again.

"I'll manage this if I can," he said with evident anxiety, and he went to Mukwa, asking Gezhik to go with him.

The conversation was in Ojibway, and while it progressed Colburn reluctantly went back to the place where he had been sitting.

"What are you going to do, Mukwa?" asked Robertson.

"I'm going home."

"But I need your canoe."

"It's mine."

"Yes, but I need it. You know me. You never have trouble with me. Are we not friends these many years?"

"Don," replied the Indian, pausing for the first time in his preparations, "since so many summers that I have

forgotten to count them you have been my friend. I have many friends among the pale faces. I have my enemies, too, but I never think of them unless I have had the firewater. Then I fight.

"Usually it is I who strike first, but I strike as against one who is my enemy. I do not despise him. If he is stronger, he beats me, and I go home to let the bruises heal and get new strength. Then the firewater leaves me and I never mind. That man did not strike me as he would strike an enemy. It was with contempt for the red man. I could throw him into the lake, but he is your friend, and I will not. He has made me ashamed, and I am going home."

Then followed a long and patient argument. The Indian was still hazy with the fumes of alcohol, for after the shock of the blow, which had sobered him momentarily, they returned to confuse him, but his logic held good, and no contrary reason affected him in the least.

Robertson pleaded that the white man was hasty and would not be offensive again, to no avail. Gezhik stood by, and from time to time put in a softly-voiced suggestion that the matter was not worth the sacrifice of a summer's job. It was all to no avail.

At last Robertson returned to his first ground, urging his own need.

"It's my own job I'm thinking of, Mukwa," said he. "I can't keep it without all the canoes, and if I lose you I don't know where we'll get another man of any kind. You know as well as I do that I can't get such a good guide as you in all the wilderness."

Flattery and the personal appeal did their appointed work, and at the end of a half hour of palaver, Mukwa put the canoe as it had been, shook hands with Robertson, and promised to stay.

Robertson took Gezhik aside on the pretense of giving him some instructions about the camp.

"Has he got any more liquor?" he asked.

Gezhik was quite sure that one flask was all he had had money to pay for.

"Bagley might have trusted him," Robertson suggested, and Gezhik, who

was a total abstainer, not an altogether unknown being among the Ojibways, promised to keep an eye out and remove the dangerous stuff if he found any.

Satisfied that the emergency was passed safely, Robertson returned to the fire in front of the tents used by the whites.

"Well," said Colburn glumly, "has the noble red man taken a tumble to himself?"

Some seconds passed before Robertson answered. He sat down slowly, and slowly filled his pipe. Then said he:

"He'll stay with us. It would have been all right if he'd been left alone. He'd have had his bit of a spree this night and to-morrow he'd have felt so sorry that you couldn't ask for a better man. Mukwa's all right when he's sober. None better in all the woods."

"He'd better keep sober, then," was Colburn's reply.

Robertson puffed in silence for a time, so long that Colburn had actually made a remark on another subject.

"It would be bad for us," he said at length, "to lose any man, Mukwa, or any other."

"But," Colburn insisted, "we *could* get along with one gone."

"Yes, we *could*, but I wouldn't guarantee how far."

"Well, I'll take the responsibility. I won't be annoyed by a drunken redskin. I don't care how important he is."

Another long silence followed. Mayberry would have liked to start the conversation in its former channel, but he felt apprehensive.

It was tolerably plain that the end of this one was not yet. And so it seemed when presently Robertson took his pipe from his mouth and said gravely. "Mr. Colburn, if you'll excuse me, sir, I think it would be a little better if you would leave the handling of the Indians to me. I know them, and they know me. There's ways to get along with them, and ways not to —"

"I'll see that you have all the work and responsibility that you ought to have," Colburn interrupted, "but while this party is under my charge I'll run it."

The woodsman looked at him, took several puffs and eventually knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Very well, sir," said he, and turned in with no further comment.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### COLBURN SUSPECTS TREACHERY.

MAYBERRY lay down that night with many misgivings as to the success of the expedition. It even seemed to him that its very continuance was threatened by Colburn's injudicious (to put it mildly) conduct towards all connected with it.

"Not only has he incurred the hostility of one, and perhaps both the Indians," he mused, "but he has given deep offense to Robertson. How unnecessary! As if he couldn't assert his leadership without insult. I should suppose it would be the part of a good leader to encourage his men to do their utmost and not despise their suggestions. We'd be in a pretty mess if Robertson should take it into his head to go home."

There was a good deal less danger of that calamity than Mayberry fancied.

He could not realize how deeply Robertson's heart was in this journey, now that he had overcome his resolution to stay at home; but more than that, there was to reckon with and rely on in his character not only the dogged pertinacity of the woodsman, but the habit of obedience that had come with long years in the Hudson Bay service.

Nowhere, not even in the army of a despot, can there be found men more readily subservient to authority than those who are or have been in the employ of the famous company.

They are deferential to a degree of politeness that is not surpassed by the traditional Frenchman, though their manner may be uncouth. And faithfulness follows these acquired qualities as surely as sunset follows morning.

No, there was small danger as yet that Robertson would leave the expedition in the lurch.

But it was not unreasonable in Mayberry to fear disaster of this and other kinds, in view of the leader's unrea-

sonable outbursts of tyrannical temper and his bludgeon-like sarcasm. A man less after his own pattern could not be imagined, and it was without conceit that he held Colburn up in his own mind to no small measure of condemnation.

There were traits of character revealed since the trio left the city that he could tolerate only in silent disgust.

With wakeful musings of this sort it was natural that his thoughts should turn to Rose Osborne, and a great tenderness swept over him. Was it possible that she had been so deceived by Colburn as to give up her heart?

It was impossible. No, equally impossible not to be so, for there was Colburn's evidence of satisfaction after the reading of the letter that came from her.

No ingenious flattery of hope could make Mayberry really doubt that she had given him the encouragement he sought. It was a depressing, despairing conviction that forced itself upon him, try as he would to shut his eyes to it and forget it.

There was no forgetting it, no forgetting Rose Osborne; and in saying that to himself, Mayberry fell sound asleep, such being the penalty that sentiment pays to perfect health.

The camp was astir at an early hour on the following morning.

Robertson arose first and roused the Indians. Mukwa had not had enough liquor to give him more than a stimulating fit of remorse, and the preparation of breakfast progressed rapidly. Mayberry was awakened by the noise they made.

He looked from the tent with the honest joy of youth in the clear sunlight, the placid lake, the forest-clad hills beyond. The lake tempted him and he yielded.

Slipping out quietly, so as not to attract the attention of the guides, he ran to a spot he had noticed the evening before where a rock dropped straight down into ten feet of water. There he cast off his garment and plunged in.

Ah, the exhilaration of that cool shock! Never had Mayberry been in

water so cold, save once when a boy he went through the ice, and then he was too frightened to observe the temperature.

Now he tingled with the cold even while he was splashing vigorously with only his head above the surface. Discretion told him that a plunge must be all, if he would benefit and not suffer from it, and he struck out for the rock from which he had jumped.

Then he saw Robertson running toward it with a paddle in his hand, followed more slowly and yet with some suggestion of speed by the tranquil Gezhik. The woodsman's face was furrowed by anxiety.

"Are ye thinking of suicide, sir?" he asked, his arrows remaining, but the expression changing into one of bewilderment as he saw Mayberry swimming toward the shore.

"Suicide!" echoed Mayberry, in bewilderment of his own, and then a rapid dip, dip attracted his attention in another direction.

Turning, he saw Mukwa in one of the canoes paddling toward him with all the speed and power his dark frame could put forth.

"What the mischief is the matter?" asked Mayberry, hardly able to believe that his question was justified; "did you men think I was trying to drown myself?"

"What should you jump into the water for?" retorted Robertson.

Mayberry's reply was a hearty laugh as he pulled himself out upon the rock.

"Gezhik," said he, "run to the tent and get my clothes, will you, please?"

Gezhik silently complied—that is, he got the clothes, but he did not run.

"I made certain ye'd drown, sir," said Robertson, "and we was coming to help. Mukwa jumped into the canoe at the first splash, and I hoped to reach ye with a paddle."

Mayberry laughed again as he thrashed himself violently with his arms and turned his back to the sun.

"Isn't the water fearfully cold, sir?" asked the woodsman.

"Very; but you didn't think it was attempted suicide, did you? I should hate to think you believed me that sort of a man."

"Well, no sir, not exactly. I thought you didn't realize how cold these northern lakes are, and that you'd be paralyzed with it. I've heard of such things."

"It isn't too cold for a quick bath. Don't you ever try it?"

"Me, sir?" and Robertson smiled pityingly at the mere suggestion. "Not I, sir. I can't swim."

"Great Scott! what do you do when your canoe upsets?"

"It don't upset, sir."

"Oh! but suppose an accident happened? Suppose your bow paddle was a fool and tipped it over. What would you do then?"

"Ask Mukwa, sir."

The Indian who had come to the rescue in a canoe was holding the craft near the shore, looking gravely at the venturesome young white man.

"Well, Mukwa," said Mayberry, "suppose you tipped over in your canoe in the middle of the lake; what would you do?"

"Drown," he answered, and began to paddle back.

Mayberry was so struck with this that he had no comment to make.

"Can Gezhik swim?" he asked.

"I don't think it," replied Robertson. "You'll find some of the Indians along Huron who are like ducks in the water, but along Superior and in these inland lakes the water is too cold for them to learn. Leastways, I suppose that's the reason. It's always kept me out of it."

He went back to his work and Mayberry finished dressing. When he returned to his tent Stilson was sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Wow!" he yawned, "I feel as stiff as a log. Honest, Mayberry, I'm afraid I wasn't cut out for this sort of thing."

"Nonsense! You'll limber up in no time. I can tell you just how if you can swim."

"Of course I can."

"Take a plunge, then. I've just come out, and I feel like a good deal better man than I know I am."

"So? I mean, have you been in?"

"Yes, indeed. Look at my hair. Jump in right there," and he pointed to the rock.

Stilson thought well of it and walked gingerly down to the shore, holding his blanket about him. Arrived at the edge, he looked down at the water doubtfully, and then thrust one foot in an inch or two.

"Br-r-r!" he shivered, drawing it out hastily. "Not for me! I'm no fool," and he went back.

Colburn, fully dressed, was standing in the doorway of his tent. His sneer of contempt was deep as he saw Stilson back out, and impulsively he began to unbutton his jacket.

Mayberry, observing at a little distance, was disappointed, for it was only too clear that he had it in mind to show off at Stilson's expense.

"Too bad," thought Mayberry. "If I could only have got Stilson into the water it would have brightened him up for at least half a day. Now he'll get a sarcastic browbeating from Colburn, the brute, that will sour him for hours!"

Antipathy to Colburn surged through his blood at that moment with a malignant force little short of hatred. But for once the leader of the expedition either mastered his impulse or decided that weightier matters demanded his attention, for he buttoned his jacket again, and strode across the camp to the canoes which Robertson was pitching for the days trip.

The Indians were at the moment taking down and packing up the tents.

"Don," said Colburn, "what do you think Mukwa was talking to Gezhik about last night?"

"When he was drunk, sir?"

"Certainly. I didn't know that he talked to him at any other time. Did he?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Well, what was it about?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir. I wasn't listening."

"Didn't you catch any word that might be a clue?"

"No, sir. It was probably nothing at all."

"I don't believe it. I don't like the looks of that Mukwa. He's got a sour, suspicious face. I've never heard him laugh. Gezhik, on the other hand,

though he doesn't say much, is grinning half the time."

"Well, that's their different ways, sir."

"Ha! I don't like Mukwa's way. I admit he's the better workman, so far as a redskin can be called a workman, but if he should poison Gezhik's shadow of a mind, it wouldn't be well for us. I've no faith in these redskins. They're treacherous devils."

Robertson's dark face was darker than usual with resentment that his habitual deference to authority led him to repress.

Quite in his characteristic way he mulled the thing over to himself before he ventured to speak, and when he did speak it was soberly and without apparent rancor.

"Excuse me, sir," said he, "but that's a mistake that many a white man makes. These Indians are not treacherous——"

"Oh, you've got some exceptions, eh?" and the interruption was accompanied by a lofty sneer.

"They're straight men," Robertson went on, unheeding either sneer or interruption. "I guarantee them. If you're not satisfied, or if you have any fear of treachery, now's the time to make a change. With the current to help it's a short day's paddle back to Pahquatasing, where you can wait for other Indians to come, and take your choice."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of anything so bad as that. We're four white men, and though one is no good, we should be able to keep the redskins under discipline. I was only thinking that you may be too easy with them. That's about all, though I should feel better if I knew what sort of an argument that drunken devil was putting up with Gezhik."

The muscles around the woodsman's lips were working suggestively, but Colburn failed to note the symptom.

"Mukwa was drunk," said Robertson, the usual pause having intervened, "and I don't excuse that, but in his wildest drunk he never does anything worse than maul his best friend. I've had a tussel or two with him myself. Once he hit into me before I was looking

for it and closed my right eye. That got my mad up, I'll admit, and I banged him so hard that he didn't work for four days afterwards."

"Good!" exclaimed Colburn, his eyes blazing.

"I was sorry for it as soon as I'd done it," continued Robertson, "but Mukwa knew he'd deserved it, and we've been good friends ever since. He'll take anything from me because he knows I'll only give him what's right."

"As to what he was saying last night I could give a good guess, as the men from the States say. Mukwa is a crank on one subject. You can start him on it when he's sober, and he'll talk by the hour. With the first dose of firewater off he goes of himself, and there's no stopping him till he gets fighting drunk."

"Give us the guess, then. What's his favorite doctrine?"

Colburn expected to hear an exposition of the redman's view of Socialism, or some other ism equally pernicious from the point of view of the prospective capitalist.

"Language," said Robertson simply.

"Language? What the devil——"

"Mukwa was born and passed his boyhood near Sault Sainte Marie, which is the ancestral home of the Ojibways, or Chippewas, as you men from the States call them. The Indians thereabout think mighty well of themselves on that account, and hold that only there is their language spoken correctly. I'm thinking that they're about right, sir, but that doesn't matter."

"I've noticed that Mukwa, who has traveled all over Canada, is very fond of correcting the pronunciation of the Indians he meets. He never has trouble with them when he's sober, for he doesn't offend them, though maybe they think he takes a good deal upon himself. Now, Gezhik never has lived at the lake shore, and I presume Mukwa——"

Here Robertson desisted to call to Gezhik, who was passing. The Indian approached, his face smiling as was his habit.

"What was Mukwa talking about last night?" asked Robertson.

"He tell me I no talk Ojibway good,"

Gezhik replied, smiling more broadly than before.

Robertson looked gravely up at Colburn, but he saw only the leader's back. Colburn was stalking to the fire, where breakfast awaited him. He did not refer to his suspicions again, and Robertson was discreet enough not to ask him if he was satisfied.

## CHAPTER V.

### AN ACCIDENT.

THE progress of the expedition for the second and third days may be passed without detailed description. No episode of significance occurred.

They paddled from end to end of Pahquatasing, through the connecting channel to the lake beyond, and half its length to a noon landing on the western bank. Thence there was a portage over a low ridge to a river that flowed toward the north. Camp for the second night was on the bank of this river.

Next day they journeyed down stream with but the shortest halt for dinner and went into camp only when darkness began to fall.

It was a long day's work, and the men were too tired to express any irritation that may have been upon them. Till now their eyes had rested on nothing that white men had not seen before them, but on the morrow, after a long portage, they would enter a district where they could claim to be the first comers.

This thought aided to still such discontent as existed on account of Colburn's arbitrary and ill-advised methods of leadership.

It would be vain to set down here the several petty incidents that served little other purpose than to keep Mayberry on edge, Stilson in a state of chronic grumbling, and that closed Robertson's lips to all conversation save that which the business of the moment demanded.

As yet Mayberry had done no prospecting of any serious character, except that all his observations of the country they passed were serious. Now and again, as the canoes glided close to a ledge, his keen eyes discerned the

scar made by some previous prospector; and though there was much in the rock formation to interest him as a geologist, he was content to leave the results of investigation as they had been found by his predecessors. His heart longed for the unknown wilderness where he could feel the thrill of original search.

It was Mukwa who chose the site for the camp that third evening. He had traversed the country beyond, and Robertson yielded to his judgment without a question. Not even Colburn made any objection, though he asked the question "Why?" unceasingly.

This was a proper enough inquiry, coming from the leader, as were many others that he asked about the route, the kind of country to be expected, its water courses, and so forth. To all of these the Indian made no reply; he had not spoken a word to Colburn since the quarrel at the first camp.

Robertson hovered near whenever Colburn sought information from the red-skinned guides, and in his deliberate, inoffensive manner made the answers, after first conversing with Mukwa in Ojibway.

A persistent rain was falling when the party landed. The travelers were already soaked with it, and the whites went to work in self-defense, occupying themselves with setting up the shelters.

Mukwa attacked a fallen tree with an ax, Gezhik wandered inland after pine knots, and Robertson stripped bark from a birch that grew near. The bark was dripping with water when he laid some strips underneath Gezhik's knots and Mukwa's wood, but when he touched a match to it, a crackling flame instantly arose.

It seemed as if the rain drops themselves were on fire, so readily did the bark burn.

Mayberry watched this procedure with eager interest, and Robertson, observing this, said, "Many's the time I've packed a handful of birch bark across the snows where birch might not be found. It might lie in the bottom of the lake for a month, but it would kindle a fire as soon as it was brought to the surface."

The knots caught, and then the wood, and in short order there was a fire that

defied the weather and banished the discomfort of wet clothes.

Stilson himself was moved to cheerful remarks, and fortunately Colburn was so absorbed in thoughts of his own that he made none of his biting retorts. So the brief waking period of the evening passed without friction.

In the morning an early start was made over the long portage, in the hope of arriving at a spot Mukwa had described to Robertson as desirable for the next camp.

The route involved a long tramp through the woods and over the shoulder of a mountain to a river, down which they could float to a lake; across this to its outlet, where the canoes would shoot a series of rapids to the camp site some miles below.

There was no trail. The instinct, to say nothing of the knowledge, of the Indian was depended on for the finding of the way.

Stilson had wholly overcome his objection to carrying one of the packs. Whether willingly or not, he had adapted himself to the necessities of the situation, and borne his share of the undertaking without protest.

But Colburn thought fit to remind him of his obligations before the day's march began.

"No double duty for your Indian to-day, Stilson," said he. "We haven't time to allow a man to cover this route twice. You'll have to tote your own pack."

"I've no idea of doing anything else," Stilson replied.

"See that you keep the pace, then."

Of course it was the manner rather than the words that stirred the purse-bearer's wrath. He cursed his leader fervently, and Colburn's cheeks flushed.

"There's a limit to the bullying I'll stand," was the non-profane substance of Stilson's protest, "and you've just about reached it, Mr. John Colburn."

"I guess you'll stand what comes just as the rest of us do," retorted Colburn with an oath of his own. "If it's going to take a licking to bring you into line I'll not hesitate to give it, and it might better be now than later."

Mukwa stood beside his canoe, pipe in his mouth, looking and listening with

unmoved countenance; but his eyes were mainly upon Colburn. Gezhik folded his arms, and his habitual smile disappeared. Robertson pretended not to observe the dispute.

"Oh, come along," said Mayberry, shouldering his pack. "This isn't progress. Let's get a move on."

"You give your advice when it's asked for," snapped Colburn.

Mayberry set down his pack. There was a limit for him, too, it seemed, and he shut his jaws hard to repress any senseless retort that might spring from his anger; but his impulse was not so much to quarrel on his own account as to defend Stilson if necessary.

The purse-bearer would have been but a fragile twig in the hands of the leader, and Mayberry perhaps could have done no more than even up the forces, but that he would have done.

Stilson was far from showing the coward. He stood his ground with clenched fists, looking quite as much at Mayberry as at the leader.

For a moment there was a pause. Mayberry's intercession had created a diversion in Colburn's mind, to speak in military terms, and it may be that it had actually prevented hostilities of the fiercer sort; but Mayberry found that he could not suppress his own resentment wholly.

"You must not speak to me like that, Mr. Colburn," he said, bending once again to his pack.

"Must not!" cried Colburn, in a fury. "Must not? What the devil would you——" He choked and looked around at the group.

Seeing Mukwa coldly regarding him, he finished his question by directing it, or another, at the Indian. "What are you doing, you lazy red beggar? Stand there and rubber at me as if I was a free show, would you? It's your business to march. Start!"

Mukwa turned his head toward Robertson, who looked up with an expression of long-tried patience. The Indian asked a question in Ojibway, to which the woodsman answered "Geget," (yes) wearily, whereupon Mukwa promptly lifted the canoe.

With no more words the march began.

Mukwa strode ahead, followed closely by Mayberry. Then came Robertson under a canoe, with Colburn behind. Stilson was next, his eyes fixed all but immovably on Colburn's back, and Gezhik with the third canoe brought up the rear.

It was a long, hard journey. Many times they halted to rest, and at one such halt they had dinner. It was after midday when they began to climb a steep slope that not even the Indian guide knew how to circumvent in any easier way.

"Will we ever get to that river?" Colburn demanded. "It certainly won't be found running up hill."

"We'll come to it on the other side of this," Robertson answered from beneath his birchen hood.

"It wouldn't surprise me at all," grumbled Colburn, "if it proved that the sneaking redskin was fooling us."

"He knows the country, sir. Would he be doing all this work for nothing?"

"No. He has his object."

"What is that, sir?"

"Revenge."

"Don't think it, Mr. Colburn. You don't know Mukwa as I do. He is now under my orders and he is obeying."

The leader's eyes snapped resentfully at this quiet assertion of a certain authority, but he refrained from rasping the woodsman by insult directed at him.

"He'd better obey," he said, and let the matter drop.

When they arrived at the summit of the ridge Colburn strained his eyes to distinguish the water-course at the bottom. He saw nothing but the interminable forest that confined the view to a small radius.

Even Mukwa and his canoe were disappearing in the foliage far down the slope, for having arrived first at the summit, he and Mayberry had gained on the followers by having a minute or two of easier march.

"Ask the beggar," said Colburn, "how far it is to the river."

Robertson called in Ojibway, and when the answer came back to them he translated. "He says he'll holler when he sees it."

"That doesn't answer the question," exclaimed Colburn.

"Aye, it doesn't, but it's all ye're likely to get from the Indian."

Colburn was silent, but that was no indication that he was satisfied.

Shortly after this the way took them beside what appeared to be a dried-up rivulet, or a small landslide of some past springtime, for at their right was an irregular bare line covered with loose stones.

A shout came from below.

"Does he see it?" asked Colburn eagerly.

"I think so," replied Robertson, stepping along as rapidly as was safe to himself and the precious burden he carried.

Colburn again strained his eyes, but could see no gleam of water. In his eagerness he attempted to pass his guide, turning into the dry watercourse to do so.

The way was narrow at best, and care for the fragile canoe should have made him restrain his curiosity, but with that headlong, inconsiderate way that his companions had come to see was characteristic of all he undertook, he edged past with his pack.

A stone in the watercourse rolled under his foot, and he staggered. The pack bumped against the canoe just forward of where Robertson had his hold. It swayed aside and the forward end collided with a tree.

"Look out!" gasped Robertson, keenly alive to the danger.

He staggered on his own account, and tried to bring himself to an abrupt halt. Colburn also perceiving the danger, attempted to slip his pack from his shoulders and save the canoe.

The catastrophe came almost simultaneously with Robertson's warning cry.

Colburn slipped again, the pack lurched again against the canoe, Robertson was pushed wholly from his footing on the steep hillside, and both men and their burdens went down together.

Robertson threw the canoe from him to avoid crushing in its frail side. He lay with one arm under him glaring up at Colburn, who scrambled hastily to his feet.

"Ye dommed fool!" groaned the woodsman.

Colburn was so thoroughly startled by the possibilities of irremediable disaster involved in the accident that he made no show of temper; probably he felt none.

"I hope nothin's broken," he stammered.

The woodsman turned his head to look the canoe over.

"There's nothing there," he muttered between gritted teeth, "that Mukwa can't pitch in an hour. I'm not so sure about my arm."

The leader's heart stood still. He saw now the position in which Robertson lay, and it dawned upon him that the woodsman had made no effort to get up.

"Mayberry," shouted Colburn, "come back here!"

Stilson and Gezhik were appearing over the summit of the ridge. They arrived at the same time with Mayberry, who took in the situation at a single shocked glance. He stooped over Robertson.

"Can't you stir?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Robertson, "I think so. My head was whirling at first. I think I shall be all right by the time the canoe is patched up."

With the help of Colburn and Mayberry he got to his feet, his strong features twisting with a spasm of pain when he tried to step.

"There's something wrong with my leg, too," said he, "but it will pass soon. Nothing broken, I think."

Mayberry knelt to make an examination.

"I'm no surgeon," he said presently, "but I should say that you've got nothing worse than a sprained ankle."

"That'll soon mend."

"How about your arm? Can you move it?"

Robertson tried. His face turned sallow, but the arm moved.

"Don't try again," said Mayberry. "I've got some stuff in one of the packs that is said to be good for bruises and sprains. You'd best lie down as comfortably as you can until I can open the pack——"

Robertson interrupted with a shake of his head.

"No, sir, thankee," said he, in his usual slow way. "We musn't halt here.

It's no place for a camp, sir. You can help me down to the river, perhaps. It's just below there, I suppose."

"Yes; Mukwa must be there by this time."

At that moment Mukwa came toiling up the slope to see for himself what had caused the delay. He expressed his surprise and concern by taking his pipe from his mouth and putting it in a pocket.

"Gentlemen," said Robertson, with a faint smile, "let these boys do the work. They know how."

He spoke to the Indians in their own tongue. Gezhik, who had already set down his canoe, came to one side of the injured man and Mukwa to the other. They lifted him in their arms and bore him down the hill to the river bank, laying him with his back to a giant pine.

Without waiting for orders, they ascended the hill again and brought down the canoes.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LEADER ASSERTS HIS AUTHORITY.

DURING the first few minutes after the alarming calamity, Colburn was as quiet as a lamb and apparently as meek.

He carried his own pack to the river bank, set it down, and watched the others caring for Robertson, offering no suggestions, giving no commands, content to let the men do in their own way what the emergency called for.

While the Indians were bringing down the other canoes, Stilson opened a pack and searched it until he found the remedy Mayberry had spoken of, and which he applied to Robertson's bare arm and ankle. This took but little time, and the Indians were still on the slope with the canoes when Stilson found himself idle, for there was nothing he could do to assist Mayberry.

Then it appeared to Colburn time to reassert his leadership. It was as if he feared that presently his subordinates would discover that they had been getting on quite well without his direction, and that they would be lacking in deference thereafter.

As Stilson was the only one unoccupied it was to him that the leader gave his tyrannical attention.

"Come on, Stilson," said he, "we mustn't lose time. That lazy beggar of an Indian didn't launch this canoe. Help me put it in the water."

"Why," said Stilson, surprised, "it won't be possible to go on to-day, will it?"

"That remains to be seen," replied Colburn shortly. "We'll save time by getting the canoe in and having it ready."

He stooped at one side with his hands on the gunwale, and Stilson slowly went around to the other.

Stilson moved and looked as if he were dazed by the calamity that had befallen the expedition. He was too cast down by it to utter, or even to feel, resentment for Colburn's dictatorial manner. They lifted the canoe and moved toward the water a few yards distant.

"Mr. Colburn," called Robertson, and his voice was suggestively husky, "excuse me, sir, but likely Mukwa will want to overhaul that canoe before she goes in after such a long portage."

Promptly at the suggestion, Stilson began to lower his side.

"Go ahead with it!" exclaimed Colburn under his breath, but sharply. "If the redskin wants to overhaul it he can have the trouble of taking it out of the water."

If it occurred to him that a canoe needs to be out of the water for a long time before the pitch is applied to its seams or cracks, he dismissed that consideration in favor of one that appealed to him as more important—the assertion of his own authority.

Stilson had not as yet knowledge enough of travel in the wilds to perceive the reason behind Robertson's protest, but he did feel that the woodsman's suggestion should be adopted. So for a moment he stopped, hesitating.

It was by no means rebellion against his leader. He took it as a matter of course that Robertson's voice should be heeded, and he could not understand why Colburn insisted on the procedure that had been begun.

But Stilson could not forthwith drop his side of the canoe. He did know enough to avoid that, for if he had done so the fragile bark in all probability would have cracked, and then there

might be hours of delay while Mukwa worked with his pitch pot.

In the brief pause Robertson spoke again.

"Mukwa's just back in the bush there, Mr. Colburn. He can tell at a glance if anything's to be done to it."

"Put it in, I tell you!" whispered Colburn angrily. "I won't be faced down like that in the presence of the treacherous reds. Can't you see that with Robertson laid up I've got to exert my authority undisputed? I'll give Robertson himself a hint of that before long."

The argument had some force with Stilson, although he was far from sharing the leader's distrust of the Indians. On the contrary he had found Gezhik not a bad sort of fellow, and he had been influenced by some things that Mayberry had said about the natives in the course of conversations incidental to the journey.

But Stilson was in no mood to resist, and if he had been the inevitable result would have been a row, and the canoe went in.

They made the ends fast to saplings, and Colburn energetically put the provision pack aboard.

"Doesn't leak a drop, you see," said he.

"How did it happen?" Stilson asked, jerking his head toward the tree where Robertson lay.

"Oh," replied Colburn, "it was just one of those accidents that may happen any time in the woods. The most experienced man will lose his footing at times. I don't think any the less of Don for it. He did his best to save the canoe. We'll see now if it was damaged."

The Indians had been in view since Robertson last spoke. Mukwa ahead with the doubtful canoe over him. He set the canoe down with the utmost care and took his pipe from his pocket.

"Is she badly damaged?" asked Colburn.

For answer, the Indian lit a match and applied it to his pipe.

Robertson said something in Ojibway, whereupon Mukwa, without deigning so much as a glance at Colburn, turned the canoe bottom up and proceeded to make a minute examination. Gezhik,

having set down his canoe, came and joined him.

Colburn ground his teeth in his rage, but beyond this manifestation, which Stilson noticed curiously, he kept his wrath to himself.

Presently Mukwa put his finger on a spot and muttered. It was Ojibway, and Colburn fretted again in his ignorance. Gezhik responded with a grunt.

"Is she cracked there, or weak?" asked Colburn.

Mukwa went on stolidly pressing the bark with his finger tips, but Gezhik looked up with his simple smile and answered, "Broke; got to get-um pitch."

"I didn't speak to you!" snapped the leader.

Gezhik had turned away, but at this he faced about slowly. His smile was in evidence as before.

"Yes, sir," said he tranquilly.

The leader was utterly nonplussed. What to make of such a response under the circumstances was utterly beyond him, as it would be beyond any man who had had no contact with the Ojibways.

Colburn could not classify it as contempt or misunderstanding, but it certainly was not the servile respect he craved, and that was enough to stimulate his wrath. His fist clenched spasmodically, and if Gezhik had been on his side of the canoe there undoubtedly would have been a blow.

"Get the pitch ready, then," bellowed Colburn, red in the face.

For a moment it seemed as if neither Indian had heard him. Mukwa kept prodding the bark sides of the canoe, Gezhik stood looking steadily at the leader, his smile changing by imperceptible degrees to a graver expression.

Robertson watched helplessly, and Mayberry glanced over his shoulder at the tableau with a sickening heart. It was not wholly the fortune of the expedition that worried him at the moment.

"And this is the man Rose Osborne has chosen!" was his despairing, resentful reflection.

The tableau endured but a moment, long enough to set Colburn quivering in the effort he made to control his anger.

Then Gezhik turned again, went

slowly to a tree against which he had laid the third canoe, and sat down on the ground, clasping his knees with his hands and gazing a sullen defiance at the leader.

Mukwa went on prodding. Some grains of sense seemed to be mingled with Colburn's makeup, for he did not stride across the ground and assault the mild-mannered Indian who so manifestly disregarded him. To that extent he held himself in check.

Stilson strolled up to the tree where Robertson lay, and remarked profanely that Colburn was several kinds of a fool.

Robertson's eyes were almost closed, but he kept their gaze on the leader, and his lips trembled.

The woodsman's brain was not a quick one. The strain in his blood, or long habits of the wilderness, or both, ill-fitted him to cope with this manner of emergency.

Put him in a canoe on the rapids, with life dependent upon swift and certain strokes of the paddle; or let him face a startled moose, or a maddened grizzly, and none could be quicker than he to do the right thing promptly and in the right way. In this situation he found it easier to address himself first to one of his own order of intelligence.

"Gezhik," he called, "the pitch pot is in the pack here. Come and get it and set a fire."

The words were in Ojibway, but their purport was plain to all in the prompt, though characteristically slow demeanor of the Indian. He arose, shambled across the intervening space, and went to work as directed.

Then Colburn strode up to the giant pine.

"Don," said he, "it's all right for you to talk to those lazy beggars in a gibberish I can't understand, especially if it's the only way to get them to work; but I'm the head of this expedition, I believe, and I want you to tell the blame fools that what I say goes. When I give an order, they're to obey it and not wait for you to speak, understand? And when I ask a question, I want it answered. Tell them that, too."

"Mr. Colburn," responded the woodsman with extraordinary coolness, "you may go straight to hell."

Colburn started as if he had been stung.

"You defy me?" he hissed inquiringly. "Why, you ignorant clodhopper, I hired you. You're to do my work. You take a coward's advantage of an occasion when you know I can't punch you as you deserve. You never dared talk that way when you were up and able to defend yourself."

The leader's back was turned to the Indians; he did not see, therefore, that for the first time since the altercation began they were both standing still and regarding him, their countenances utterly expressionless.

Mukwa's pipe stuck as usual from his mouth, and the shadow of his smile hovered about Gezhik's lips. The latter had the pitch pot in his hand. Mukwa stood with folded arms. Both were waiting to see if Colburn would venture to assault their ancient friend, and they waited thus to the end.

"I chose to speak now," said Robertson, "because now is the time when you ask me to do what I won't do. You never asked it before. As for punching me, you'll have all the chance you want before we can get back to Pahquatasing. When this gentleman has got my arm fixed, I'll stand up and break your back for you with one hand if you like."

Till this, Mayberry had kept his head bent over his task, which in reality was finished. Now he raised his head, still kneeling and sitting back on his heels.

Indignation, apprehension for the success of the expedition which meant so much to him, humiliation at being concerned in such a senseless wrangle—all these emotions were surging in conflict within him. He tried to speak with the gravity befitting a man of science.

"Robertson," he said, "don't talk of going back to Pahquatasing. All this trouble is little short of insanity. We must endure it. The expedition needs you——"

Colburn tapped him none too gently on the shoulder.

"Professor," he sneered, "suppose you let *me* talk this out. Stick to your ologies and leave direction to a grown man."

There was in that first remark a sub-

tle sting that added its trifling irritation to the heat of the moment.

Early in their acquaintance Mayberry had politely requested Colburn not to address him a "professor." It was a title that Mayberry, as a college man, respected highly, and one to which as yet he had no academic right, and it jarred upon his perhaps too sensitive nature to be addressed by it—just as no right thinking captain likes to be called "Colonel."

But it was not this deliberate insult—for till this occasion Colburn had respected the request—that caused Mayberry's blood to boil. It was the intolerable tone and manner which had exasperated him earlier in the day.

He stood up quickly, but before he could make a retort, Stilson had cut in.

"Pity," he said, "we didn't bring a strait-jacket along."

So the row was general.

Stilson's interjection served a double purpose: it gave Mayberry a momentary reaction to the end that he kept his dignity; and it turned the current of Colburn's wrath in a new direction, for his temper, like that of all bullies, took the line of least resistance.

"You shut up!" he snapped, and his hand was raised to strike.

Stilson stepped back hastily.

"Mr. Colburn," said Robertson sharply, and the leader turned to him, "it is not my mind to desert your expedition. You're my boss, and if you want me along you can have me. I'm not one to go back on an undertaking; but I'm done with hearing my friends called lazy beggars and other bad names. Sick or well, I'll see that your work is done for you as it should be. You can have it in your own way if that's your mind, but you'll have to talk to the Indians through me.

"You can fret as much as you like; butt your head against this pine if you want to. There's no law in the bush to prevent you, and there's no law to make me do a fool thing. If you don't like what I'm telling you, you can call it up when I'm well, or any other time. I stand by it from now till we see Pahquatasing again."

Colburn wheeled suddenly about and saw the Indians standing like statues a

few paces distant. Some impression of ominous possibilities must have been forced in upon him, for he turned to Robertson again, and addressed him in a tone that showed mighty effort at control.

"How long," he asked, "will it take to mend the canoes?"

"Not less than an hour," was the reply; "possibly more."

Without another word Colburn strode away, and they heard the sounds of his crashing through the bush along the river bank till they died away in the distance.

Stilson drew a long breath.

"If only he'd never come back!" said he fervently.

Mayberry was too mortified at having been involved in what, to him, was a disgraceful scene, to make any comment. He silently repacked the articles that had been taken out for Robertson's benefit, and the Indians methodically gave their attention to the mending of the canoes.

## CHAPTER VII.

### GEZHIK'S CROOKED KNIFE.

THERE was nothing further that Mayberry could do for Robertson, and he was useless to the Indians; hammer in hand, therefore, he sought to distract his mind by an examination of the ledges in the vicinity.

He was not very successful. The rocks offered no indications to arouse more than academic interest, and his spirit rankled with the scene in which he had borne so unwilling and, as he feared, so unseemly a part.

He thought of the scholarly seclusion of the university where thousands of young men, and old, too, struggled with more or less intensity and earnestness for the prizes of learning, and where all was dignity and peace. He was homesick for a certain alcove in Gore Hall, where he had done so many a grateful grind preliminary to an examination.

And he thought of Rose Osborne.

When he returned to Robertson he assumed a nonchalance that was far from sincere, and asked, "How goes it?"

"Do you think we'd better go into camp here?"

"No, sir," replied the woodsman. "Every mile gained to-day is so much progress, and there need be no great delay for me. I allow that I've got to mend, for I'm bunged worse than the canoe, but I can mend while traveling."

"But you can't think of swinging a paddle any more than you can think of walking. Arm and ankle both must have time to mend."

"I know, sir. It gives me a groutch to sit here and do nothing, and I never but once before was a passenger in a canoe, and then it was because I was fool enough to work before I was ready for it. But we can go on. The boys will soon have the canoes in the water."

"We've got it all arranged," said Stilson, who lay on his back near by, "and we're only waiting for the Czar to come back and upset everything."

"Speaking of that," Mayberry interrupted, "don't you think it will be a good plan for us three to adopt the Ojibway method of argument? I don't know when I've seen anything more impressive than their non-resisting attitude. There's nothing to be done about it."

Robertson smiled.

"You're quite right, sir," said he. "When an Indian strikes, he's done. No argument, threat, loss of job, or even promise of more pay will move him. He's done and that's all there is to it. I really feared the other night that we'd have to get on without Mukwa."

"Thank goodness you saved us that loss!" exclaimed Mayberry. "But how about my suggestion? These incessant rows are dreadfully disagreeable. It does seem as if we ought to avoid them somehow."

"There's only one way," said Stilson.

"Well?"

"Rap Colburn on the head and bury him before he begins to talk."

Mayberry could not smile at this, though Stilson seemed to regard it as a high grade witticism.

"Seriously," Mayberry began, when Stilson cut in:

"The man's impossible. We whites can't take the same attitude that the reds do because we're white—which

isn't meaning any disrespect to your friends, Don; I think they're bully fellows. But you understand me."

Robertson made no response. He was now the former Hudson Bay factor; it was no part of his business to discuss the peculiarities of his superior officer. Stilson went on:

"You'll have to admit it, Mayberry. You've been hot under the collar yourself twice to-day."

"Yes, I am ashamed to say I have."

"Rot! There's no shame about it. If it wasn't for the business that brought us here, I'd have cut loose long ago."

"We're not out for a picnic!"

The discussion might have gone further, and it is not impossible that it might have led to some plan of conduct; for Mayberry found a grateful relief in Stilson's talk in that it was more amicable and free from petty snarling than usual; but at this moment Colburn came stalking from the forest.

With portentous solemnity he went to the canoe that Mukwa was smearing with hot pitch and looked it over.

No need to wonder how he was going to behave. He had been defeated in the altercation, but he was still the leader. His every movement and attitude were calculated to proclaim as much.

Mayberry felt his gorge rising, and turned away, occupying himself with carrying a pack to the margin of the river.

"Think you'll be able to stand the rest of to-day's journey?" Colburn asked of Robertson.

"Yes, sir," replied the woodsman, "but I shall have to go as a passenger. It won't make any great difference, sir, for it'll be all down stream to the lake and a short paddle then to the outlet, so Mukwa tells me."

It was quite evident that Colburn had foreseen some contingency of this kind, and that he had decided upon his course, for, without allowing time for any of the others to make a suggestion, he said:

"All right, I'll take Gezhik in the canoe with me and you can have Mukwa. Mayberry and Stilson are expert enough now to get along together, if there isn't any portage."

"I think so, sir. There's no more portage necessary to-day."

Inasmuch as this arrangement was precisely the one planned by Robertson and Stilson, there was not only no objection, but a general sense of relief. It seemed to promise a more agreeable conduct of the expedition thereafter.

Stilson ventured the opinion to Mayberry that Colburn had "taken a tumble to himself," to which Mayberry responded that he hoped so. In fact, he was little encouraged for the future, though he shared the present relief to the full.

When the injured canoe had been patched, the Indians examined the one that Gezhik had carried over the portage. It needed no attention and both were launched.

Packs were put aboard and Robertson was assisted to a place in the bow of Mukwa's canoe. The start was made immediately, Colburn, of course, in the lead.

It was a grateful contrast to the first part of the day's journey, the more so that the current of the river was swift enough to reduce paddling to little more effort than was required to steer, but Colburn, with his characteristic energy, made hard work of it, and, under his insistence, Gezhik more than dipped his paddle in the water. Consequently the others lost sight of the forward canoe within a half mile of the starting place.

Not long afterward, however, they caught up with and passed it, for the voyagers had stopped at an open place on the bank, thrown out the pack and fastened the canoe.

Robertson, who came along first, was for turning aside also, but Mukwa had no sooner begun to direct his canoe to shore than Colburn called, "Go ahead, I'll overhaul you in a few minutes."

Mukwa and Robertson went on without asking the cause of the delay. They didn't need to; but Mayberry, following shortly after, wanted to know if anything was wrong.

"Nothing serious," replied Colburn indifferently. "We'll be all right in a few minutes."

He would not have them come to shore, and, accordingly, they went on also.

Colburn's canoe was aleak, to the imminent danger of spoiling the provisions.

A seam had parted at the bow so far above the water-line that not a drop entered as long as only the pack was on board; but when the two men were in—Colburn at the bow—the added weight was sufficient to bring the leak in evidence. Colburn was first aware of it when he found his knees soaking.

What regrets may have passed through his mind that he did not have the canoe examined, as Robertson had suggested, cannot be set down here, for we have only Gezhik's testimony as to what happened.

It might be supposed that Colburn, in his hot-headed way, would proceed to take it out of the Indian for having permitted a start to be made without examination; but it can be seen that, if he did that, he would have laid himself open to conviction for carelessness in not having the examination made at the proper time; and that, furthermore, he might have been compelled to acknowledge his error to Robertson.

Be that as it may, what happened, according to Gezhik's subsequent brief report, was a turning to the land at the first convenient spot, and a caution from Colburn to the Indian not to speak to Mukwa when Robertson's canoe should come by.

It was out of the question to use the pitch pot unless a great deal of time was to be lost. So the canoe was hauled out and emptied, and Colburn cut sticks from the bushes near to lay on the bottom, under the pack, in order to keep it above the water.

By this device, and an occasional brief halt to pour out the water, he reckoned that the rest of the day's trip could be covered without mending.

He found it necessary to pause for emptying the canoe before he had caught up with Mayberry, and when he went on again he had Gezhik take the bow place, for the Indian was the lighter by at least fifty pounds.

The canoe filled more slowly after that, but it filled, and there had to be another halt for pouring the water out, and this before either of the other canoes had been brought into view.

Shortly after this pause the river ended in the lake of which Mukwa had spoken.

It was by no means a small lake. The hills back of the western shore were miles away, but it appeared that the outlet was at the eastern end, and, as the Indian had said, but a short distance from the inlet.

Colburn presently saw the other canoes drawn out of the water and lying on the edge of a broad expanse of flat rock. Mukwa and the whites were sitting or standing near, evidently waiting for him to catch up. He turned the canoe toward them.

"What are you stopping for?" he asked.

Mayberry answered: "Partly for you and partly because the rapids at the outlet appear to be swifter and more dangerous than Robertson had supposed from Mukwa's description."

"Oh," snarled Colburn, "then Mukwa doesn't know it all, eh?"

"Robertson says," said Mayberry, ignoring the interruption, "that to shoot the rapids safely it would require that each man in the canoe should be well enough to take his paddle and look out for himself if anything went wrong."

"Then the main reason for delay is that Robertson is laid up."

"We can portage past the rapids, which would mean the carrying of Robertson, or we can shoot them by taking a man in the canoe with the Indians and sending them back each trip for another man, or we can go into camp here for a time. Of course we look to you for a decision."

"Oh!"

That was all Colburn said for a moment, and it was a decidedly noncommittal monosyllable.

He looked at Mayberry as if to determine whether the deference of the party, as expressed through him, was sincere or if there was a veiled sarcasm. Mayberry had stated the situation dispassionately and without recommendation; and Stilson kept his promise, and did not open his mouth.

"I'll take a look at the rapids and see for myself," said Colburn, which, perhaps, was just what should have been expected of him.

It was certainly better than ordering further advance without investigation.

He turned the canoe about and paddled slowly toward the place where plainly the outlet was to be found. Even at the flat rock the roar of the rapids could be heard faintly.

"I wouldn't go too close, sir," called Robertson.

Robertson should have known better. All previous experience should have taught him that the one thing to make Colburn run into peril was just this kind of a warning.

Of course Gezhik said nothing until it was too late. He was there to obey orders, and he obeyed them, though, when the placid lake began to snarl, he did put his paddle hard into the water in the attempt to turn the front end toward shore.

A canoe is such a deceitful article, in a way; it is so easy to push along, it responds so readily to the slightest swish of the paddle.

But the canoe is one thing and the calm surface of the lake is another; quite different is the water that begins suddenly to pour and tumble over a steep declivity. And it may be added that experience at such a time is still another thing.

Colburn found the graceful craft rushing toward a gully between the hills whence came a roaring, and where he caught a glimpse of foam.

It was enough to decide him. The flat rock appeared at that moment to be a most desirable camping place.

He thought even then that he had perceived the emergency in ample time, but as he dug his paddle into the swift water, he saw only too surely that the canoe did not respond with its accustomed readiness.

"Pull, you red beggar!" he cried.

The Indian took the command without the slightest offense, but it meant nothing to him. He was not in a row-boat and wouldn't have known what to do if he had been.

"What do you want?" he asked, turning his head.

He tried to infer Colburn's desire from a glance at his paddle, but he learned little. The leader was experimenting, which is natural for an inex-

perienced man but not exactly commendable.

"Back her!" bawled Colburn; "turn her to the shore! Anything to keep from going down the rapids."

Aye, Gezhik may have thought—he never said what he thought at the moment—but it is generally a good plan for a canoe crew to be united in endeavor.

Gezhik tried to back-paddle, but the current was running too powerfully to make that successful. It was possible to run diagonally to shore.

"I do it," said Gezhik. "You let-um 'lone."

A most injudicious manner of advising Colburn at any time, but it can hardly be said that the Indian should have known better. Colburn continued to paddle, and, in spite of his efforts, the Indian brought the canoe close to the shore.

At just the right moment he gave the paddle the necessary impulse to cause the canoe to lie alongside the bank without injuring its fragile side. Colburn, thinking to assist in this delicate operation, reached for an overhanging bush, caught it and held on.

The canoe, like an animate being, shocked at this disturbance, immediately turned over.

Gezhik uttered no cry. With a celerity that would have astonished Colburn had that energetic individual not been giving his undivided attention to saving his own carcass, the Indian flung his paddle to the shore, caught at the grass with one hand and the gunwale with the other.

He held to both till he had pulled himself out, when, with a display of muscular force that also should have called for astonished and favorable comment from the leader, he lifted the canoe, filled though it was, and turned it bottom upward.

And at this interesting moment, when Colburn at last had scrambled out and could give his attention to things generally, the provision pack was bobbing cheerfully down the rapids.

"You infernal fool!" howled Colburn. "Why did you let that happen?"

He leaped for the Indian, both fists doubled.

An acute attack of speediness had seized upon Gezhik that evening. Before Colburn had advanced half the few paces necessary to bring them into collision the Indian had set down the canoe and whipped a crooked knife from a pocket.

The blade dripped water, but it gleamed suggestively. Gezhik's lips apparently had not had time to change from their smiling appearance, but Colburn must have noted that the irregular teeth behind them were more in evidence now than usual.

The leader halted abruptly.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Get-um grub," replied the Indian.

Immediately, but with more of his customary moderation, he put the crooked knife away, picked up the canoe, set it in the water, grasped his paddle and leaped aboard.

The impetus of the leap sent the canoe from shore. Gezhik squatted at once in the middle and began to paddle, pointing the craft straight down the turbulent current.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN APPALLING DISCOVERY.

COLBURN's jaw dropped as he watched the canoe leap over the increasing waves of the rapids. A moment and the canoe seemed to spring clear from the water.

It shot past the foam-flecked spot he had seen shortly before, veered sharply to one side and disappeared around a bend in the river.

Then the madness with which he had started to assault the guide gave way to choking apprehension—not for Gezhik, but for what he had gone to save. What would become of the expedition and its all-important purpose without that pack?

Down deep in his heart the leader knew that he was to blame. His dripping clothes began to feel chilly. He wrung the water from his wristbands. What would the other fellows say?

He turned his head toward the expanse of flat rock.

It was plainly visible; hence the ca-

tastrophe must have been seen by the men. Only one was in sight now—Robertson, sitting, but leaning forward on his sound arm, looking intently, as if his wilderness-trained eyes could see beyond the beginning of the rapids, beyond the bend in the river.

Colburn shivered and his heart felt sick.

There was a sound of steps in the bush. They approached rapidly, and as he looked that way Mukwa appeared, pipe in mouth, parting the branches before him with both hands.

Instinctively Colburn put his hand to the pocket where he carried a revolver.

Mukwa passed him without so much as a glance at him, dashed into the next thicket and disappeared.

A moment later Mayberry and Stilson came panting to the spot.

They were too breathless to ask questions at first, and, moreover, it seemed to them unnecessary to do so. It was clearly up to Colburn to explain.

With an appearance of entire self-mastery he removed his coat and began to wring it.

"I'm glad the clothing pack is dry," said he. "You fellows might make yourselves useful by getting wood for a fire back there. We shall camp there to-night."

"Oh," said Stilson, "you've made up your mind, have you? We are ever so much obliged. Perhaps you won't mind getting supper for us."

Colburn's eyes blazed, but he maintained his assumed composure.

"The redskin will recover the grub," said he.

"Good!" retorted Stilson; "he'll find the flour all in a batter ready for baking. Let's get the oven heated for him, Mayberry."

"Don't make a bad matter worse," Mayberry suggested. "Do you really think, Mr. Colburn, that the Indian will be able to recover the provisions?"

"Why shouldn't I? The noble red man seems to know how to do everything in this country. This sort of thing, doubtless, has happened a score of times in their experience."

"Huh!" interjected Stilson irrepressibly.

Colburn shot a hateful glance at him

and went on, for he seemed to think that his only salvation lay in minimizing the disaster and his own responsibility for it.

"If the lazy beggar had only begun to work when I told him to, nothing would have happened."

"Hell!" snorted Stilson, "do you suppose we didn't see it? What do you suppose Robertson said?"

Colburn declared forcibly that he didn't care several curses what Robertson said. But Stilson insisted on telling him.

"The fool!" said he, when you began to toy with the current, 'he'll lose the canoe and grub both!' And when you grabbed that bush, 'Oh, the dommed fool!' said Robertson, with a groan. 'Now we're done for sure!' And we were done for, Colburn, before he'd finished speaking."

Robertson, in Colburn's expressed opinion, was several kinds of a calamity howler. If he'd had anything like his vaunted skill as a woodsman he wouldn't have missed his footing and come to grief. Then there would have been no upset——

"Because," jawed Stilson, "Robertson would have been managing the canoe. You'd better go back and captain a ball nine in the kindergarten. Hi, don't you hit me! There'll be trouble if you do, so help me!"

Colburn's grip on himself had weakened at last. Sneering taunts were as difficult for him to endure as it was easy for him to utter them.

Moreover, there was not the slightly restraining influence of Mayberry's presence, for the geologist had gone on in Mukwa's track.

There followed a race back to the bare rock where Robertson sat, his heart boiling in his helplessness. Stilson won quite as much by reason of the fear that lent him speed as by the fact that Colburn was impeded by his wet garments.

Temper on both sides was somewhat exhausted by the exercise. Stilson seated himself, panting, near Robertson, but he had a stone in his hand and was prepared to spring up and defend himself if he had to.

But Colburn merely glanced savagely

at him and went to the clothing pack, which he opened, and he gave the following several minutes to effecting a change of clothes.

Then, without demanding Stilson's assistance, he unpacked the tents and began the work of setting one up.

Robertson was watching him between half-closed eyes, the lines of his mouth drawn deeply down. He felt his unfitness to cope with a new emergency that was plainly at hand.

"That's no place for a tent," said he, in a low tone, to Stilson.

"Tell him so, then."

"There's wind in the clouds over yonder, and there isn't slant enough on the rock any way. The camp should be a bit back, just under the trees there."

"Why don't you tell him?"

"Tell him?" and Robertson looked almost appealingly at his companion; "haven't I been telling him ever since we left Pahquatasig? What good does it do? Ah, if I had the use of my arm and leg!"

"But you don't talk with your arm and leg, Don. Go ahead. You can't make matters any worse, and it's possible you may save him from some new blunder."

"Where's Mr. Mayberry? He has a better way of talking——"

"No, he hasn't. He's gone with Mukwa, to help recover the grub. Go ahead, Don!"

Thus persuaded, the woodsman spoke aloud.

"Excuse me, Mr. Colburn, but there's a big wind coming out of those clouds in the west."

"So?" Colburn responded, without interrupting his work.

"Aye."

"What of it?"

"It'll make this a very unpleasant, not to say risky, place to camp in, sir."

"Where would you have the camp, then?"

"In the shelter of the trees at the back, sir. That's the natural place for——"

"But I supposed a camp site was always chosen with a view to the proximity of fresh water. There's nothing better than this lake water, is there? And there's no stream in the woods."

"The water's all right, sir——"

"Well, then, we'll camp near it."

"But it's not a long carry to the trees for what little water we shall need."

(It was no more than a hundred feet.)

"The Indians always choose a spot sheltered by the trees, sir."

Colburn desisted working to make his answer.

"You're wrong, Don," said he, with an assumption of the impressively quiet manner, "you don't know anything about the Indians. When I was crossing the plains of the United States I saw a hundred Indians for every one I've seen in Canada, and those Indians always camped in the open. They avoided the trees as if they were poisonous, and I don't know but they are. I've an idea, any way, that it's healthier to camp in the open and so I shall put up my tent here."

Colburn was in deeper water in this discussion than he realized. The Ojibways are forest Indians and naturally seek the shelter of the trees; the plains Indians as naturally camp in the open.

He cared nothing for the customs of the country, nothing for Robertson's warning about the wind. Opposition merely stimulated him to obstinacy, and he kept at work.

"He'll have to get another tent mate, then," Robertson muttered. "I'll sleep under the trees if I have nothing more than a blanket over me, which has been the case often enough before, so I shan't care."

Stilson sniffed his contempt and discontent with the arrangements, but wisely held his tongue in check.

One tent was up and infirmly held by stones laid upon the guy ropes when Mayberry and the Indians returned. Gezhik was carrying the canoe and each of the others had his hands full of small articles.

"Well," said Mayberry cheerfully, "the lake and streams are full of fish and there are deer in the woods. I've saved the salt. It's pretty thoroughly soaked, but I suppose it will dry if exposed to the air and sun for a day."

"Is that all you saved?" asked Colburn, and his tone was not only serious, but free, for the moment, from the twang of fault-finding.

"Not quite, but the salt is the most important article, I think. The pack went to pieces against the rocks. We waded in and got what we could. Some of the tinned stuff is apparently all right, but we shall have to get on without flour. The tea is missing, too, but we found two cans of condensed milk."

"Much good that'll do!" exclaimed Stilson.

Mayberry laughed.

"Got to make the best of it," said he. "I believe the fish hooks and lines were in that pack, weren't they?"

"Yes," Colburn replied.

"They're gone, too, but Mukwa says he can replace them—Indian-fashion—if he can shoot a caribou. Make a bone hook, you know, and a line from the hide. We shall get on, I think."

Colburn went over the salvage, while the others looked on and tried to anticipate the pleasures and effects of a steady meat diet. The situation was too blue for expression. Even Stilson found his tongue tied.

"Is that all you fellows could find?" Colburn asked.

There was his familiar complaint in the tone and Mayberry was set on edge by it. He tried to conceal all signs of resentment, but the best he could say was, "I suppose there's more in the river below the rapids."

"Why didn't you bring it, then?"

The demand came with the sharpness of a pistol shot, but, while it served to anger the geologist, it also aroused in him to the full a conviction that now, of all times, a quarrel must be avoided; and he felt his own responsibility to that end.

"Mr. Colburn," said he mildly, "we have done our best, and I believe that if we had all been searching no more could have been saved. You can go down and see for yourself what the conditions are. The river is a mad torrent at the spot where the pack got stranded against the rocks and was pounded to pieces. The situation is as you see it. We're not going to starve—not if we can get game and fish. Meantime the Indians might be sent back to Pah-quatasing to bring down a fresh supply. I can put in a few days of exploration here to advantage, I think."

Colburn listened with his head down. He was looking over the scant stock that had been saved as if he might see more than was plainly before him. The more he looked the worse it seemed, and thus it was to the others also.

Much of the stuff was, like the condensed milk, of little service without other articles that were missing. There was a food supply in sight equal to about one day's demands.

"Well," said Colburn at last, "I'll think it over. I'll sleep on it."

He stood up as he spoke and his eyes fell upon the Indians. Then his wrath burst all bounds and he let forth a torrent of abuse that included everything—whites, reds, and circumstances—all save himself.

It was so violent as to be absurd, but it was, none the less, exasperating to hear.

"For Heaven's sake," said Mayberry to Stilson, "let him rave it out. He may feel better for it and we shan't be any the worse off," and Stilson so far complied as to lie on his back with his knees crossed, the very picture of indifference, which was nearly as irritating to Colburn as a direct retort.

Mayberry thought again of Rose Osborne with a feeling of profound pity while the tirade endured. It was over at length, and without coming to a climax of physical violence. Nobody was assaulted and nobody defended himself from the abuse.

"Set up the tents," the leader concluded, and the Indians looked, as usual, inquiringly at Robertson. Before the woodsman could speak, Colburn added, "You fellows can pitch your camp where you blame please. My tent is going to be where I have put it."

Directions accordingly were given to have the guy ropes of the leader's tent weighted with more stones, and to set up the others in the shelter of the trees.

When it came to building a fire, the alarming discovery was made that all the matches in the outfit had been swept down the river, save what few were carried in the men's pockets.

There were enough for the present, but none was used that night, for Mukwa resorted to the ancient device of

striking fire from flint and using punk found near by as kindling. By nightfall two fires were blazing.

Robertson could be as obstinate in his inoffensive way as Colburn, and when it developed that he purposed to sleep on the bare ground rather than share the leader's tent with him, a readjustment of tent mates was necessary; for Mayberry would not countenance Robertson's plan.

"It would be all right," he said, "if you were well; but it is highly important that you should be up and about as soon as possible, and we mustn't risk you to unnecessary exposure. Turn in with Stilson for to-night and I'll roll up in Colburn's tent."

The leader assented to this arrangement without comment, and all turned in soon after eating their first meal of meat diet—canned goods that tasted well enough but that bade fair to be exhausted by the next day noon.

Colburn said little during the evening. The others planned a hunt with a caribou in view.

"Give an Indian a caribou," said Robertson, "and he can be depended on to supply his party with food for a long time. While the animal itself is being eaten he'll make lines and hooks from the skin and bones. Let somebody bring in a caribou and we shan't starve."

The wind he had foretold began to blow with the setting of the sun. At dusk the lake was crinkled with it, and by dark the waves were pounding against the flat expanse of rock and drenching Colburn's camp-fire with spray.

Colburn pretended to be perfectly satisfied. Perhaps he was. There is no knowing except from what he said, and he did not utter a word to suggest that he had any misgivings about pitching his camp where he had.

As for Mayberry, it was all one to him. He would not turn the Indians out of their shelter for his own sake, he wouldn't permit Robertson to run the risk of exposure, and he knew that it would be folly to ask Stilson to sleep in the same tent with the leader.

He turned in early and was sound asleep before Colburn rolled himself in his blanket and lay down beside him.

The storm was a howler. It roared through the tree-tops, lashed the lake to a fury and by midnight brought along a deluge of rain.

There was such a tow-row in the foliage and such a racket of rain on the tent that Stilson was awakened. He lay listening for a moment, rather solemnly impressed by the tumult, reflecting on his surroundings and wondering if he could really stand it till food of the conventional kind could be brought to them.

He was inclined to despair of it as he thought of Colburn's blundering leadership.

"Give him rope enough," thought Stilson, "and he'll hang us all. There's mighty little hope for the expedition as long as he's at the head of it."

Then it occurred to him to wonder why five men, counting the Indians, should deem it proper to yield so abjectly to the leadership of any man?

Colburn had the authority merely by appointment. Up to date he had come as near wrecking the expedition as he possibly could.

"Better call it wrecked already," said Stilson silently, "and wrecked beyond hope of salvage unless we mutiny. Why not?"

It was an alluring thought. He could not but contemplate himself in the position of leader, the natural position for him, inasmuch as he controlled the purse.

As for Mayberry, he was, doubtless, content with his peculiar position of scientist to the party. The others were merely employees.

Stilson wondered if Mayberry would come into a scheme for mutiny? There would have to be a grand row, but with a combination of two members of the expedition and three faithful employees, the outcome could not long remain in doubt.

As this manner of dreaming possessed his mind, the desire to see Colburn subordinated grew apace and aroused with it the fresh memories of insults and abuse till Stilson was aglow with hate.

Meantime the tempest seemed to be increasing in fury. The lake roared in a way that reminded him of the ocean,

and now and again he heard a sound that suggested that a tree had been blown down.

He chilled a little at the possibility of some tree near by falling and crushing in the tent.

Under the influence of this direful thought he sat up, undid the cords of the tent flap and looked out. A dash of rain full in the face caused him to draw back hurriedly, but it was only to look out more cautiously and with a fresh thrill, for he was sure he had seen somebody moving through the murky darkness toward the tent.

Yes, somebody was coming slowly, picking his way, it seemed, and burdened somehow.

Stilson had a vague sense of trouble—not quite fear, but he did see a vision of Indian atrocities, and he was half-minded to arouse the helpless Robertson, who seemed to be sleeping as peacefully through the storm as if he were a babe in a cradle.

But Stilson did not awake the woodsman. Instead, he braved the rain, with his face thrust out between the flaps, and called:

"Hello, there! What's going on?"

The figure then turned more towards the tent and came close, when Stilson perceived that it was Mayberry.

"Our tent has blown down," said Mayberry.

"Huh! If it was only Colburn I wouldn't care."

"He doesn't seem to care. He won't help put it up, and, for that matter, it couldn't be put up out there while this wind blows. I'm going to see if I can make a lean-to of it against the rock just behind here."

"What with? The tent."

"Yes; I've got it."

That was the burden that made Mayberry's figure bulge so oddly in the obscurity before Stilson knew who he was.

"What does Colburn say?" asked Stilson.

"Not a word. I called to him and even shook him, but he won't pay any attention. So I let him lie."

"Of course."

"He can't be any worse off by morning than he is now—nor I, either, I guess. I'm soaked."

"Won't you come in here?"

"No, thanks. No sense in adding discomfort to you and Robertson. I'll shelter myself somehow with this and sleep the night out. I don't mind, really. I'm so sleepy that I didn't know when the tent blew over our heads. I waked with the wetting I was getting."

"Squeeze in here if you want to."

"It would be no more comfortable to me than to be outside, and I should be sure to moisten you and Robertson. That might not do for him. Never mind me, Stilson. I noticed that rock while we were making camp and thought how an Indian without a tent would undoubtedly make a lean-to there. I've got the poles to which the guy ropes were fastened and I'm sure I can fix up something that I can crawl under."

"Want any help?"

"Oh, no! Don't disturb yourself."

Mayberry went on and Stilson remained for the moment peering into the darkness toward the lake, trying to see Colburn's recumbent form, and chuckling somewhat as he thought of the infinite soaking the leader would get.

Then he closed the flaps and lay down again, but he was long in getting to sleep, thinking of his projected mutiny. He wondered how he had talked so long with Mayberry without suggesting it.

High wind and rain seldom keep company for long. In this instance they not only parted, but disappeared before morning.

The sun rose in a clear sky, and just as the full light of day was come, Gez hik shook the flap of Robertson's tent and called in Ojibway. Stilson was not aroused by the summons, but Robertson responded at once.

"What is it, Gez hik?"

"Only one man there."

"Where?"

"On the rock. No tent, only one man, and he won't wake up."

At this moment Mayberry crawled from under the shelter he had made when the storm was at its height.

"Good-morning, Gez hik," said he, and at the same time Gez hik said: "Here's the other."

"Then there's nothing the matter, eh?" queried Robertson.

"Yes. Come out and see."

Robertson reached over and shook Stilson.

"Better get up," said he, "and see what Gez hik wants. I can tell from the sound of his voice that something's gone wrong."

"Has Colburn blundered again?" asked Stilson, yawning.

Mayberry was at the door.

"I think," said Robertson, "that if you gentlemen will help me I'll go out. Gez hik will have it so. I don't know what ails him."

Accordingly the two whites supported the woodsman from the tent. They had no sooner issued than their eyes fell on Colburn lying in his blanket on the bare rock a short hundred feet away.

Mukwa stood with folded arms looking down at him. It was a suggestive tableau, and it suggested what proved to be the tragic reality.

Colburn was dead.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "ONE OF US THREE."

THE five men who lived exchanged startled glances. In every eye was inquiry, and to each man of them there seemed to be suspicion also in the glances of the others.

Hastily they looked away from each other and fixed their eyes upon the mute object on the ground that had until so recently been a torment to every one of them.

Stilson gaped, and his knees shook while he looked. He was ghastly pale.

Mayberry was the first to speak. His sunburned cheeks were bloodless, too.

"Who found him this way?" he asked.

That was an easy question, so much easier than what would have seemed to be the more natural one, "Who did this?" for if ever murder was manifest in the appearance of the dead, it was doubly manifest here.

Colburn was rolled in his blanket, both arms close to his body. He was on his side, as he might be in sleep, and both knees were slightly bent as if the shock of death had been so instant that

the convulsion of resisting nature was the briefest possible.

Robertson undertook to answer the question.

"It must be plain enough," said he hoarsely, "that I didn't find him. Gez-hik called me just now. I was asleep when he first spoke."

He broke off here and addressed Gez-hik in Ojibway. The response, uttered in a low, and, it seemed, sullen tone, was in the same tongue.

"He says," Robertson translated, "that he went to the lake for water while Mukwa attended to the fire, and found him as you see him now."

Mayberry, overcame the horror of the situation sufficiently to kneel by the dead man and make a closer examination of the conditions. This was not done in any hope of finding a lingering spark of life, for the first glance had shown that Colburn was beyond recall.

His head was smashed in. There was a dent at the temple so deep that no doubt could exist as to the breaking of the bones there.

The skin was broken also, and blood had streamed forth. It had coagulated, such drops as had not been washed away by the rain.

"The body is cold," said Mayberry. "I know very little about such things, but I should say that he must have been dead some hours."

"Since the middle of the night?" asked Stilson.

The question was more suggestive than the manner of asking it. Mayberry seemed to feel the implication, for he started, and, for a moment, kept his eyes down.

Then he looked up, meeting Stilson's eyes squarely, and replied:

"Yes, I should say so. I take it for granted he was alive when he turned in."

Stilson started at this, and the reason for his special agitation was manifest in the remark that followed:

"You mean to call attention to the fact that I was the last man to see him alive."

"I meant nothing of the kind," said Mayberry. "I don't know who last saw him alive."

"Well, so far as last evening is con-

cerned, I did. I'm not denying anything." Stilson was regaining his self-possession rapidly. "The Indians had turned in. I was passing on my way from the lake when he went into his tent and rolled himself up. You seemed to be asleep at the moment."

There was an emphasis on the word "seemed" that was unmistakable. Mayberry's cheeks became paler still.

"Stilson," said he, "nobody has asked you to deny anything. I was asleep when Colburn turned in. I did not hear him."

"You waked when the tent blew over."

"Afterwards."

"Well, afterwards. Was he alive then?"

"I don't know."

"And yet the man who struck that blow must have been certain that it would cause instant death."

Mayberry stood up.

"I should be a fool," he said coldly, "to pretend that I do not understand you. You charge me with murder. Don't interrupt. You will charge me with it before the proper authorities if you believe what you say. If that is what you believe, and if that is what you mean to do, speak plainly now, like a man, and I'll give you my answer—like a man!"

They eyed each other for a moment, Mayberry pale and stern, Stilson pale and quivering.

"I won't say anything rash," said Stilson presently. "I was only thinking out loud. Of course there are others," and he made an almost imperceptible gesture toward the Indians.

"It seems to me," said Mayberry, "that before we go to casting accusations right and left, before we even harbor suspicions, we'd better see if this could not have been the result of accident."

"Aye," responded Robertson, "look to that, gentlemen. Ye say the tent blew down? I'm not surprised. I saw the wind coming, and I know the winds hereabouts."

Mayberry gave him the same account of the midnight disaster that he had given to Stilson, making it a little more detailed.

"It may have been the blowing over of the tent that aroused me," he said. "I certainly had an idea that I heard a noise of something falling, which might well have been the poles, for, of course, they must have been yanked up from the stones. The tent evidently was lifted into the air and collapsed, falling about twenty feet behind us.

"I spoke to Colburn as soon as I realized that we had no cover and that we were getting wet. His failure to answer, even when I shook him, did not surprise me, for I remembered his obstinacy and regarded it as equal to soaking there the rest of the night rather than acknowledge that he'd made a mistake."

"The tent pole couldn't have made that wound," said Robertson.

"No; but perhaps one of the stones that held the guy ropes might have been lifted——"

"And dropped with all that force?" interrupted Stilson; "I guess not! It's impossible."

"So I think, too," responded Mayberry, "and there's another thing I think of: if Colburn had been dead at the time I shook him I should have known it—that is—no—I'm not so sure."

Mayberry stopped in some confusion. His speech for once had run ahead of his thoughts. Stilson noted the fact with blazing eyes, but he pressed his thin lips together and was silent.

"What I had in mind," Mayberry resumed after a moment, "is the fact that the body now is wholly unresponsive to the touch and cold. It doesn't yield readily as a live man does. But time has to pass after death before the limbs stiffen. He might have been dead an hour when I shook him, and, in the darkness, I would not have noticed."

Stilson looked askance at the Indians. Both stood motionless at a little distance, in the characteristic attitude of the red man—arms folded, head slightly bent forward.

"We'd best study the possibility of accident thoroughly," Mayberry went on, bending again over the body.

A moment later he reached across it to the irregular line of stones that had

been laid upon the pole to which the guy ropes on that side had been fastened, picked up one.

It was wedge-shape, about ten inches long, and three and a half inches across the larger end, which was not flat but rounded and rough.

He looked steadfastly at this for many seconds and then held it up to the others.

"Well?" said Stilson faintly.

For answer, Mayberry placed the larger end of the wedge upon the wound in Colburn's brow and turned it around a bit.

"Do you see?" he asked.

They did. The stone fitted the wound perfectly.

"Here, then, is the implement," said Mayberry, in a musing tone. "It should not be very difficult to determine whether it was wielded by the hand of man, or whether the storm did the work. You see this side of it? The color of the stone is not the same along this side as on the others. That shows that the stone was recently detached from some larger, or, at all events, from some other stone. We may be able to find the other fragment here. Let's look for it, as anything of this sort may throw light on the matter."

He proceeded to lift, one after another, the stones that had been used to weight the guy ropes on that side, and Stilson fell to the same work on the other. Robertson sat down and joined in the search as well as he could.

For some minutes no word was spoken. Every stone that had been used in securing the tent was many times larger and heavier than the fragment that fitted the wound. Not one was found that showed the recent loss of so much as a grain.

"This proves just one thing," said Stilson, after all the stones had been examined; "the implement, as you call it, was brought here by the person who did the deed."

"Did he wrench it from some other stone, or ledge?" asked Mayberry.

"How can I tell?" demanded Stilson resentfully. "The theory of a fragment is yours, not mine."

"I meant nothing unpleasant by my question," said Mayberry. "As for my

theory, it appears to prove itself, though it is probably utterly unimportant."

"Why have we worked so long to prove it then?"

"I had an idea that if we could find that this had been broken from some stone near by, it might suggest directly that a man killed Colburn; that is, that he broke a stone to pieces for the sake of getting a fragment that could be used as a weapon."

"In which case he would hardly have smashed a stone so near the spot where the intended victim was sleeping."

"That sounds reasonable."

"So, to prove that part of the theory, we should have to hunt at a distance from the scene of the murder."

Stilson's voice was at a whisper when he came to the last word. It was hardly audible.

He cleared his throat and added: "But it seems to me that it's not worth proving. What conceivable accident could have lifted this stone high enough to fall with the force sufficient to make that wound? How far would it have to fall, Mayberry?"

"I don't know."

"And you a scientist?"

"I am not specially informed in statistics."

"Mr. Mayberry," said Robertson, "I understand you're a sharp on rocks. Is that so?"

"I am a geologist."

"Does this piece seem to be the same as the rest of the rocks in sight hereabouts?"

"I've been thinking of that. It does not."

Stilson shuddered.

"And so we've been wasting time hunting around here," he said. "We've got to do something, that's clear; but what it is, I confess I hardly know, though I suppose I ought to, for I take it that the leadership of the party now falls to me."

He looked at the others as if he expected assent or dissent, and his heart was anxious.

Neither of his companions replied. Mayberry's eyes had a far-away look, and Robertson was silent, probably because it could not appear to him that he

had any right to a voice in the matter.

"Is there any question about it, Mayberry?" asked Stilson.

"About what?"

"The leadership—command of the expedition—you know."

"Not that I am aware of. Do you want to take command? You're welcome to."

It was clear enough even to Stilson's not over analytical mind that Mayberry regarded the leadership as of the least consequence, and Stilson almost felt nettled at his indifference.

But he was more troubled by the fact that, in his own mind, there was a doubt as to whether he wanted the coveted position. It had heavy responsibilities now.

This doubt endured but a moment, however. He had a lively memory of some of his recent remarks about Colburn.

Had he not actually suggested killing the man? Of course nobody took him seriously, but what dreadful tangle might not those hasty, foolish words get him into if he did not take the reins now and control his destiny hereafter?

He therefore attempted to rise to the occasion.

"The first thing," said he, "is to show proper respect for the dead. None of us liked him living, but we should have no grudge against him now."

This manifestation of magnanimity was prefatory to a request to Mayberry to help him cover Colburn's face. They did so with the dead man's blanket, and then Stilson asked the others to step aside for a moment.

"I can't talk about this thing so near him," said he, "and I want to get out of ear-shot of the Indians. Can't you set them at some work, Don?"

Robertson spoke to the Indians at some length.

"I have told them," said he, "to go on getting breakfast. We've got to eat."

"As long as the food lasts," added Stilson.

He walked down to the margin of the lake and along it to a spot where several large stones lay scattered about. There he sat down and waited for the

others, who came slowly, on account of Robertson's lameness.

The woodsman leaned on Mayberry, but did not open his lips during the walk. Mayberry carried the fatal fragment of rock in his hand.

"I say!" exclaimed Stilson, when the others were seated in front of him, "here's a new theory! Could it have been an aerolite?"

The geologist smiled faintly and looked at the fragment.

"No," he replied. "Dismiss that theory, Stilson."

"Is that a shooting star?" asked Robertson.

"Yes, but this piece of stone isn't."

"Well, then," declared Stilson, "accident and nature are out of it. It comes down to this, and we might as well look the thing squarely in the face. This was done by human agency. Now we are alone in this immense wilderness——"

"Are we?" interrupted Robertson. "I wasn't aware of it."

"I meant our party. I was simply coming to the Indians. Both of them had as much reason as any of us to hate Colburn. We have no business to be suspicious of each other. One or both of our red guides did the thing."

He paused impressively, and after a bit Robertson made an answer that was little short of extraordinary.

"No, sir," said he slowly, and in his usually respectful manner, "Mukwa and Gezhik are innocent. It was one of us three."

## CHAPTER X.

### ROBERTSON'S WAY OUT.

NOTHING could have brought the situation home more impressively to the two whom Robertson accused; for that was what his remark amounted to.

It was more effective in making each face the bald truth that he was under suspicion and that circumstantial evidence was against him than would have been the entrance of an officer with a warrant for his arrest.

The two were too shocked for a moment to make any response. Both stared at the woodsman, whose eyes were nearly closed, though they roved

from one to the other steadily. It was only too plain that Robertson spoke from deep conviction.

Presently Stilson drew a long breath and assumed a bitter jocularity of manner.

"Well, Don," said he, "as you couldn't have limped out of the tent last night and back again without help, you're out of it, aren't you?"

"I am," Robertson replied seriously, "and I mean to keep out of it."

His voice vibrated with a significance that the others failed to understand.

"And yet," said Stilson, "it won't do to say that it was impossible for you to do it. Stranger things have happened, and, when it comes to motive, you had no more reason to love Colburn than we did."

"Aye, aye"—and Robertson struck his fist upon his knee—"that's the kind of talk that is possible anywhere when we get out of the woods. I never said Colburn had better be killed, I never opened my lips in violent threats against him, I had no jealousy of him. But it can be said that he made me mad, as he did. It can be said that I didn't like him, which is true. It can be said that I hired my Indian boys to do what I couldn't do."

"A great many things can be said, gentlemen, to put me in a bad light in this matter, and I don't mean that they shall be said. The sooner you two gentlemen understand that, the better it will be for both of you."

The threat implied in the woodsman's words was emphasized in his tone, but neither of the others understood him yet.

Said Mayberry: "This is the strangest situation imaginable. Here we three men sit, talking in the friendliest manner, although very seriously, and we are debating which of us is guilty of murder. I want to say for myself, without delay, that I do not share Robertson's view. I do not believe that it was one of us three, but——"

"Nor I," Stilson interrupted. "I stand by——"

"Pardon me, please; let me finish just this thought," and Mayberry addressed himself to Robertson. "You

say the guilt lies with us, and you count yourself out of it very properly, because, in your own case, you know yourself to be innocent. Now let me suggest that, if your theory is correct, you cannot expect the guilty man to confess his crime. I shall count myself out of it—Stilson will do the same.”

“Mr. Mayberry, sir, that was just what I was driving at. You can talk much better than I can, and you’ve said it for me.”

“You can talk well enough, Robertson. Have no fear on that score, and you’ve got a good deal to say; a good deal that I insist on hearing. You have uttered some vague threats against us. I want to understand them.”

“There’s just one word wrong in what you say, Mr. Mayberry. ‘Threats against us,’ says you. That’s not so. Threats, if you like, but not against both of you. I threaten only the guilty man, unless you’re both guilty, which is quite possible.”

Mayberry could not repress a start of surprise. It was not so much at the possibility suggested by the woodsman as at the fact that he, unlettered Donald Robertson, suggested it.

And it was said so calmly, dispassionately, almost as if the esteem in which he held the guilty man would not be modified by the fact of his guilt.

“Do explain yourself,” said Mayberry in the same way.

“I’ll try to, sir. Mr. Stilson says we’re here alone in the woods, which may be so and it may not be so. I’m not sure, but, let that pass; we will imagine, sir, that we’re out of the woods and that we take back to the settlements news that one of the party was killed by human hands during the trip. When that’s said, you know better than I do what will happen. Questions will be asked that we will have to answer. The facts of the trip will have to be told; and they’ll be told straight, sir, for whichever of you is innocent will agree with my story, for I shall tell the truth. I want to make it clear that the guilty man can’t put up a story that isn’t so.”

“Unless we’re both guilty,” put in Stilson. “Then we might agree upon a yarn that would put Don Robertson in the hole.”

“You’re quite wrong, Mr. Stilson—quite wrong. You forget, or perhaps you don’t know, that an Indian’s word goes in the courts of Canada. Do I need say anything more on that point?”

“No, I guess you don’t,” said Stilson, with a glance at the red-skinned guides near the tents.

“Then,” the woodsman went on, “I think you understand what Mr. Mayberry called my threats. If you’re both guilty——”

“Oh, this is horrible!” exclaimed Mayberry, adding immediately, “But, go on. Better have it all out.”

“Aye, much better. If you’re both guilty, you can cook up any story you please; the evidence of one white man and two Indians, well known for their honesty, will be against you.”

“That is to say,” said Stilson, “you and the Indians will put up a yarn that will bring us both to the gallows.”

“I don’t go so far as to prophecy that,” replied Robertson coolly. “I mean that the Indians and I will tell the facts as we know them, and I advise you young men to think a minute or two on what those facts will seem to show.”

He paused, and Mayberry said, “Better tell us what you think they show, Robertson.”

“I’ve told you that. I think they show that one or both of you is guilty.”

“Reason it out, please.”

“Well, take Mr. Stilson. He’s rowed with Colburn from the time we started—aye, from before that. Colburn bullied him, insulted him, and tormented him so that, on more than one occasion, Mr. Stilson spoke of putting Mr. Colburn out of the way. That would sound bad when told in court. It would sound worse when I told of the row yesterday, after it was known that the grub was lost; how Colburn chased Stilson into camp, and Stilson sat beside me with a stone in his hand to use as a weapon.

“I’ve been to three or four murder trials, gentlemen, and I remember well what the lawyers said. They first tried to show that the prisoner had a motive for the crime. Then they showed that he had opportunity for it.

There's more motive for Mr. Stilson in this case than in any of the cases I heard, and in each one of them, gentlemen, the prisoner was found guilty and was sent to the gallows."

Stilson's brow was glistening with sweat. He nestled about in intense discomfort. But, "Go on," said he hoarsely.

"The opportunity is too plain, gentlemen. I slept well last night. When Mr. Mayberry called at the tent I waked just enough to hear the voices, but I recognized them and dropped off to sleep again before I caught a word. Mr. Mayberry had explained how Colburn was sound asleep out there in the storm. What easier for Stilson, a little later, than to get up carefully, commit murder, and come back again? The weapon was already in his mind, and he knew that he was fairly safe, for suspicion would fall on Mr. Mayberry also, and, if that failed, he imagined that the deed could be shouldered off on the Indians."

"Stop!" cried Stilson, almost beside himself at this cool analysis. "I won't have it. I am innocent, so help me God! I won't be tortured——"

"Let him go on," urged Mayberry. "It's my turn, Robertson, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. I think it is, because I have managed to show Mr. Stilson how his case would look in court. As for you, Mr. Mayberry, you bore Colburn's abuse better than Stilson did, but you lost your temper more than once, and any man, with half an eye, could see that you despised him. I think you hated Colburn more deeply than Mr. Stilson did, especially as you had a groutch against him that was different and deeper than any Mr. Stilson had. You knew that he'd got your girl away from you."

"What!" cried Mayberry, springing up.

"You see what it is to be roasted over a slow fire," muttered Stilson.

"He told me about it," said Robertson, with the same impenetrable calmness that had characterized his talk from the beginning. "It was during the first day's journey on the Pahquata-sing river. Mr. Colburn was feeling fine that day and he talked most of the

time. He talked about the expedition, what it was for, about the men in it; he gave me your histories, and said he felt sorry for Mr. Mayberry because the girl you loved had favored him. This would have to come out in court with the rest of it——"

Mayberry was much paler than he had yet been. He looked positively ill.

"Take it for granted," he interposed, "that you have established the motive in my case. Go on with the opportunity."

"The opportunity is too plain. You slept in the tent with him. By your own account you awoke with the rain beating on you. That wouldn't be calculated to make a man feel very pleasant. I think it would rouse all his mad. He'd think how Colburn was to blame for all the trouble that had come upon the expedition, and there was Colburn helpless within reach!

"No need to go into all that. The facts are too plain. But it might be well to consider the opportunity for both to plot the deed. It would be as easy for both as for one. There would be double the motive and a division of the risks, with the mistaken but natural idea on the part of both that the blame could be shouldered off on the red men, to say nothing of shunting it on Don Robertson."

"And when it came to court you'd both tell the facts that show motive on Don Robertson's part, and—I know what juries are, gentlemen—you might make some impression with your yarn."

"Then," said Stilson, for Mayberry was too overwhelmed to speak, "you admit that the case might look bad for you, too."

"I admitted that in the beginning, sir, and you'll remember I said I wouldn't let such things be said. I'm not looking for trouble. I'm going to avoid it. There's a way out of this that doesn't seem to have occurred to you gentlemen at all."

"For Heaven's sake, what is it?" demanded Stilson.

"Simply leave out one part of the story we will have to tell. We've got to say that Mr. Colburn died on the trip, but we don't need to say that he was murdered."

"Well, by Jove!"

The exclamation was Stilson's. Mayberry knitted his brows and stared at Robertson.

Quick-witted though he was, the geologist was not quite equal to grasping this solution of the difficulty at once.

"I will say that I can't believe I understand you," said Mayberry, after a pause, as if a question had been put to him.

"Seems to me it's easy," responded Robertson, as unperturbed as before. "Like enough we're alone here in the woods. I'm not sure, but, any way, there's neither prying reporters of newspapers nor officers of the law within hundreds of miles. There's nobody to say there was murder except ourselves.

"What's the good of saying it? I've nothing against you gentlemen, and I don't suppose you've got anything against me. Why should we get each other into trouble? It won't restore Mr. Colburn's life to convict anybody of killing him. No good will come of it. You gentlemen are not hardened criminals, so there's no danger to the rest of the world in letting you go free. We can say that Mr. Colburn died of an accident, and there will be nobody to deny it. Nobody will dream of asking suspicious questions."

The suggestion gave Stilson such a sense of relief that he actually laughed.

"I squirm at your reasoning, Don," said he, "but it goes. It gets there. I certainly don't see why we should boil hot water for ourselves. Let's let the matter drop. You seem willing to go on just as if it really was an accident, Don."

"I haven't said anything about going on," returned the woodsman cautiously. "I've been speaking about what will happen when we go back."

"But you say you've got nothing against us."

"Aye, but it don't follow that I'd care to travel with you further than back to Pahquatasung."

"This is a useless argument," said Mayberry suddenly. "I'll tell why after asking a question. You have hinted that we may not be alone in the woods. What do you mean by that?"

"Mean? Nothing at all, except that there may be others round about here. The brush is free. I seldom have made a journey without coming upon roving Indians. We haven't seen any yet, but that's no sign they're not near us now."

"Then," exclaimed Stilson, "there's another theory for the deed. An Indian who does not belong to the party——"

"Nay, nay! What motive would he have?"

"Robbery. He might think that Colburn carried the purse."

"Is there any sign that the victim's body was searched for valuables?"

Stilson staggered for a moment.

"But," said he, "we could suggest that in our account of what has happened. If it was a prowling redskin he would be the last to take to the settlements any account of the affair that would differ from ours."

Robertson had no opportunity to comment on this suggestion, for Mayberry spoke up decidedly.

"We've talked long enough on this strain. I think I understand the proposition now, and I reject it."

"Reject it!" echoed Stilson. "Why?"

"I shouldn't suppose it would be necessary to explain why. I have some sense of honor, some pride, and I don't mean to go from this wilderness with a suspicion of murder against me in the minds of any persons, no matter how few they are, and not try to discover the truth. I will not be a party to covering up this dreadful matter with a lie, be the consequences what they may."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I'm going at once," was the reply, "to write the necessary report to the syndicate. One of the Indians must take it to the nearest telegraph office."

## CHAPTER XI.

### STILSON'S NEW THEORY.

It was an occasion for Stilson to manifest his capacity for leadership. He knew it, and deep in his soul he knew that he was not equal to it.

For one instant he longed for the dead leader's domineering disposition.

"Colburn would have cuffed everybody to his way of thinking," said Stilson silently, and with the very forming of the thought came a doubt as to whether anybody could cuff Mayberry in his present mood and not suffer for it.

There was unaffected determination in the geologist's mien that boded failure for any attempt to dissuade him from his course; and Stilson had just brains enough to perceive as much. So, "Don't do anything rash," was the best the new leader could offer.

"My ideas," responded Mayberry, "may be old-fashioned, but it seems to me it would be the height of rashness to attempt to conceal any portion of the facts. I think we should send a joint telegram, followed by a joint letter. I will prepare both and submit them to you."

"Well, that's better. As long as you don't go off at half-cock on your own hook we may be able to avoid a serious mistake."

Mayberry shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"I've said my say," Robertson remarked. "Whatever you gentlemen do, you can't say that I didn't tell you how I look at it."

"But what about sending an Indian," said Stilson doubtfully. "Here we've hardly provisions enough to last the day out. Whoever makes the trip must have grub. How can that be managed, Robertson?"

"That's the easiest part of it, sir. An Indian traveling on such an errand will sleep two hours out of the twenty-four and he will live on next to nothing. We can give the messenger all he'll need, and the rest of us will manage to take care of ourselves. Who do you think of sending?"

The question was addressed to Mayberry, who replied, "Mukwa seems to be the speedier of the two, and yet, as he's undoubtedly the cleverer, perhaps we ought to retain him here."

"Will you take my advice, gentlemen?"

"Certainly," said Mayberry, and Stilson nodded.

"Then send Gezhik. He's slow when there's no need of hurry, but he's got all

the persistence of the ancient Indian, and that's what you need most. And perhaps you noticed that Gezhik didn't lose any time yesterday when the provision pack went down the rapids. He's your messenger, gentlemen."

A brief discussion followed as to the advisability of sending a message to Foster, the Pahquatasung storekeeper, with a request that he forward fresh supplies, and as to the possibility of getting them transported.

They remembered the difficulty there had been in getting men to go with the expedition, but Robertson was inclined to think that Foster himself would come out with the supplies for the sake of the trip and a view of new country.

"He's got a man to help at the store," said Robertson, "and I know from what he's told me that it wouldn't take much to induce him to make a run into the unknown bush. And any way, when he understands that we're short of rations, and in some danger, he'll hustle."

They talked this over as amicably as if there were no suspicion of murder in the air, and presently, when the Indians announced that breakfast was ready, the two persons most under suspicion helped the man who accused them back to the tents.

Breakfast was rather a thing of form than of substance that morning for all in the party. As soon as he had eaten the little that he believed to be necessary to sustain him, Mayberry withdrew to write his messages, and presently he called Stilson to vicé his telegram.

It was simply this:

"Colburn mysteriously killed. Letter follows."

"Well," said Stilson, "that's all right. That leaves the way open to an explanation of the kind that Robertson suggested."

"The letter won't leave any such way open."

"Are you wholly determined on that?"

"Wholly."

"But, see here, Mayberry; don't you fathom Robertson's policy. He's anything but the simple woodsman we supposed when we first met him."

"Right. He has all the native shrewdness and power of reasoning that go with Indian blood. What he sees he sees with both eyes. As to his policy, I see nothing in it beyond what he openly expresses. Robertson is a singular mixture of common honesty and moral dullness. His sense of moral obligations hasn't been brought to a fine point."

"Nonsense! He has not only the power of reasoning that you say goes with his Indian blood, but he's got all the treachery of the traditional Indian, and don't you forget it. See here: Robertson is shielding Mukwa, or both of them. That's what he's doing. Now, I don't suppose for a moment that you are guilty."

"Thanks," said Mayberry dryly.

"I've noticed that you haven't denied the accusation."

"I don't intend to. When it's made directly against me I shall answer it. Meantime I shall do everything I can think of to clear up the mystery, and, if I succeed, nobody will accuse me."

"What can you do?"

"I don't know. I simply feel this: that here, where Colburn's death occurred, there is an explanation to be found. What it is, I don't profess to know."

"Can it be anything but murder?"

"I can only say that it looks more like murder than anything else."

"Then why not agree with me that it was the work of one or both the Indians?"

Mayberry knitted his brows in silence, and before he responded Stilson exclaimed:

"I see how it is! You suspect me. You believe I did it."

"No," said Mayberry, and yet, without any emphasis, "I don't believe that."

"Why can't you volunteer something, then, as I did, to show that you believed me innocent?"

"You seem to forget, Stilson, that, almost as soon as we knew that Colburn was dead, you were insinuating suspicions against me. I shall try not to let that influence what I do and think, but I can't forget it. Let me say frankly that I see only too clearly that

the circumstances point straight to me. As long as that is the case I must work to find out the truth. We waste time in this sort of discussion. I am going to write a letter to Mr. Osborne. You'd better do the same and we'll send them together."

Stilson chafed inwardly but he yielded.

In his weak way he was conscious of his weakness. He had been ambitious to pose as leader of the expedition, and now, with nobody denying him the position, he found himself swayed this way and that by his subordinate.

In truth, he was not a little terrified by the black emergency that confronted him. He yielded, therefore, with comparative ease to Mayberry's quiet domination, because he felt the necessity of leaning upon somebody.

While the two were preparing their letters, Robertson talked long and earnestly with the Ojibways. The conversation was conducted wholly in their language, and though their voices never rose to a pitch suggestive of excitement, there was unmistakable bitterness in the tones.

This was especially the case with Robertson. Whereas his voice had been at a dispassionate dead level in his talk with the whites, now it twanged with feeling, while lips and eyes gave free expression to his argument, whatever it was.

The Indians listened with characteristic respect, and when they responded, sometimes at considerable length, their tones were deep, their faces grave, their gestures sweeping.

Sitting where he could see them while he wrote, Stilson was badly affected by all this. He desisted from his writing and went over to where Mayberry sat.

"Say," said he, "do you notice how those fellows are talking?"

"Yes," Mayberry answered. "They seem to be very much in earnest."

"I should say so! What do you suppose they're talking about?"

"The death of Colburn, of course."

"Well, yes; but doesn't it strike you that there may be something more in it? Confound it, Mayberry, I won't confess to being a coward, but I can't help remembering that we're two whites in this

God-forsaken wilderness, surrounded, for anything we know, by treacherous redskins. Seems to me everything I've read of Indian massacres has been coming back to me this morning."

"I can't believe that we're in any danger," said Mayberry, but there was no indifference in his tone.

He, too, had been struck with the intense feeling manifested by Robertson and the Ojibways.

"You're lucky, then, or too trustful. I've got a new theory as to this thing, and it don't make me a bit comfortable. Will you hear it?"

"Go ahead."

"The Indians are after our money. I carry most of it and they know it. Now, whatever else you may say of Colburn, he was a fighter. They knew that if they killed and robbed me first, he would be after them and that he'd ransack the whole Canadian forest to catch them. So they got him out of the way first. Blamed if I don't believe it'll be my turn next, or yours, for they won't do things by halves. The traditional Indian never does."

Mayberry listened attentively, meantime watching Robertson and the Indians. He was again impressed with the singularity of the situation.

In his own heart he could not doubt Robertson's sincerity, and yet Stilson's view was reasonable, and it was impressive to reflect that those men, hardly a hundred feet distant, might be plotting his life and he none the wiser.

"The only thing we can do, Stilson," he responded, "is to be watchful."

"You think as I do, then."

"Not quite. I don't know what to think. The mystery deepens every minute, but I keep saying to myself that it was some sort of accident."

"You'll keep saying that to your destruction, if you don't look out."

Stilson was disappointed. He had hoped that Mayberry would emphatically condemn the new theory, and that he did not do so made Stilson the more alarmed of it, and by so much the more alarmed.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," he went on. "We must have food. I'll take the rifle and go on a hunt as soon as I get this letter done. That'll give

me an excuse to keep the rifle with me. Have you got a revolver?"

"No."

"Colburn had one. You'd better get hold of it."

Mayberry nodded, as if he agreed, and they went at their writing again.

In a few minutes the letters were ready. Each read what the other had written.

Stilson briefly expressed his conviction that the expedition was threatened with hostile Indians, with whom the guides were in league. Mayberry frankly stated that all the evidence pointed to himself as a murderer, but held to his feeling that Colburn had met death as a result of accident.

A short letter was also written to Foster, asking him to send up supplies.

"I've told Gezvik," said Robertson, when they went to him with the letters, "that he must get to Pahquatasing as soon as possible. He understands just what he is to do, and in five days, at the most, he can be back."

Gezvik had already launched his canoe and put a scant supply of meat in his pocket. He took the letters and, without a word of farewell, set forth, his face wearing the customary smile.

Mukwa, pipe in mouth, stood with folded arms, watching him. Mayberry helped Robertson back to the tents, the woodsman complaining bitterly of his helplessness.

Stilson, rifle in the hollow of his arm, looked about him irresolutely. At length he went up to the Indian.

"Mukwa," said he, "we've got to have food."

"Yes," the Indian replied; "let me take the rifle and I'll get it for you."

"But I'm thinking of hunting myself. Where do you think I should go?"

The Indian's face was expressionless. What contempt he felt for the white man's ignorance can only be guessed. After a long pause he answered:

"If you stay here long enough you will see deer swimming across the lake."

"Which means, I suppose, that I might as well go one way as another."

"I think it won't make any difference."

"But can't you suggest something? When you were here before didn't you see deer runways, or something of that sort?"

"I didn't camp here. Let me take the rifle and I'll bring in a deer or a caribou, or something before the day is over."

He actually held out his hand. Stilson drew back hastily.

"No," he said. "I'll do the shooting."

"Huh!" Mukwa retorted, "you don't dare."

"What's that?" and Stilson nerved himself for an attack.

"I'll tell you," said Mukwa. "I say what I think. You're afraid to let me take the rifle. You believe I killed him. You think I'd kill you. Now I'll tell you something more. You give me the rifle and let me go for game, or I'll leave."

"You don't mean it!"

"I say what I think."

Stilson's blood ran cold. The Indian's attitude, tones, words, the steady gaze of his eyes, all combined to strengthen the latest theory concerning the tragedy.

The white man wondered a little at the nerve of the Indian in demanding the rifle.

"Why should you leave?" Stilson asked.

"You think I like to stay and be thought a murderer? Huh! If I stay I want food. You won't get any. Are you going to give me the rifle?"

"No, I am not."

"Then you've seen the last of me."

With this, Mukwa turned on his heel and walked away, pausing as he was about to enter the forest to add, "When Robertson gets well he will need my canoe. He can use it and he will bring it back to me."

Then he was gone before Stilson could recover from his amazement.

If that isn't good evidence of his guilt, I'd like to know what is."

"Mukwa gone?" queried Robertson.

"Yes. He had the nerve to ask for my rifle. I wouldn't let him have it and he skipped. Said it was the last I'd see of him."

"Then it is."

"Is what?"

"The last you'll see of him. I feared it. These Indians are no fools, Mr. Stilson. They saw that you suspected them and they didn't like it."

"Well, I suppose they say I'm guilty, don't they?" blurted Stilson in an aggrieved tone.

"Yes, sir," replied Robertson calmly, "that's just what they say."

"And they let Mayberry out of it?"

"They do."

"Mayberry, you're to be congratulated. I'm glad the beggar's gone. One less mouth to feed, one less traitor in camp."

"And the only hunter gone," added Robertson. "Well, I can go without food for two days. I've done it before. By then I'll be able to get about."

"You needn't be so anxious," retorted Stilson. "I've never shot big game, but if there is any to be had in these woods I'll get it. Mukwa wouldn't give me a pointer as to where to go. If you can, Don, you'd better."

"I never was here before, sir. The only advice I can give is that you blaze your trail."

"Eh?"

"We've got no Indian to hunt for you now if you get lost."

"I'll look out for that," said Stilson confidently, and away he started, going in the direction opposite to that taken by Mukwa.

Mayberry had been talking with Robertson about another necessary and gruesome feature of the situation—the disposition of Colburn's body. The possibility of taking it back to civilization was not discussed.

Mayberry shrank from an immediate burial, but, as Robertson said, "the ways of town life are not the ways of the bush," and he furthermore pointed out the entire probability that self-defence would soon require Mayberry to exert himself without interruption.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A BIG SURPRISE.

"WHAT do you think now?" said Stilson, a moment later, striding up to the tents. "Mukwa has cleared out.

"I've little faith," said Robertson, "that your friend Stilson will be able to supply us with food. By the time you have to try for it you must have all other duties out of the way. There is only one thing to do, and that is to bury the body as quickly as possible."

"And as decently as possible," put in Mayberry.

"Aye, but you can't dig a deep grave. You've naught to dig with except your knife."

At the very edge of the flat expanse of rock on which Colburn had pitched his tent was a small area of broken stone. It was there that he and the Indians had procured the stones with which his guy ropes had been weighted. Mayberry made a suggestion with this spot in view, to which Robertson assented, and accordingly he worked all the forenoon clearing a narrow space and piling the stones up on both sides of it.

He insisted that Robertson should look on while he searched Colburn's clothing for such articles as ought to be preserved.

There was a little money, pipe and tobacco, a knife, watch, revolver, and a number of letters. Among the latter Mayberry recognized the one addressed in Rose Osborne's hand that had been received in Pahquatasing.

His heart beat strangely hard when he saw it again, but he laid it with the others and included all the articles except the revolver in one bundle.

"We'll take these things back and send them to his people," said Mayberry, "if we can find who and where they are. At that time I will include the revolver. For the present I think I'd better keep it, as I have none of my own."

"Aye," said Robertson, "that's right. You ought to have somebody to help you now."

There was nobody to help and Mayberry carried the body to the place of little stones, laying it upon the section of ledge that he had made bare. Then he cut many branches from the bushes roundabout and covered the remains with great care.

All the afternoon he was at work piling the stones over the dead leader,

anxious not only that the tomb should be secure from disturbance by wild beasts, but that it should manifest regard for decency in its appearance.

Robertson had declined to eat at noon, and Mayberry had limited his refreshment to a spoonful of condensed milk stirred into a cup of water. At the end of his solemn labor he was faint with hunger and the unusual exercise.

"You've a right to anything there is, sir," said Robertson. "I'm doing nothing and can stand it. Besides, I'm used to it."

"Stilson may bring in something soon."

"Don't depend on it. If he does, then his supper is taken care of and you can have more. You must take a mouthful or two, sir."

"There's just about enough cold meat left to give each of us three half a lunch. I'll take one-third, and I won't eat again till we have fresh food."

Mayberry offered Robertson his share, but the woodsman again declined, saying that he would wait till morning.

"I'll take steak from the caribou that Stilson is going to bring in," said he, with a grim smile.

Perhaps Robertson thought that Stilson would not come upon any game. Certain it is that he would not have done so if success depended on his knowledge of their haunts and habits.

He walked the forest for two hours without hearing anything more promising than the chatter of squirrels and chipmunks.

He would not waste his powder on them, but looked hopefully for the tracks or spoor of larger animals. Meantime he kept discreetly near the river, for he had taken seriously Robertson's warning about getting lost.

It was along toward noon that some odd freak of fortune brought him within thirty yards of a red deer. Stilson could not have said whether it was deer or caribou, but he knew that it was not a moose and that it would provide the party against starvation for many days.

He had halted, as he had often done before, to look around and listen. Nothing was to be seen beyond the interminable forest, nothing heard save

its rustling and the ripple of the river near.

For five minutes or more he had stood motionless, almost minded to return to camp and take his share of what there might be left there to eat.

Then came the deer, a sizable beast with antlers.

Where he was going, where he came from, what possessed him to walk straight into a man with a gun, are no concern of ours. Neither was it any concern of Stilson's to ask why, as to the amiable beast's wandering.

He was not at all disposed to do so, but, on the contrary, made ready to receive Mr. Deer with cordiality.

What little breeze there was blew from the deer toward the man. Stilson wot not of this, but he did perceive that the animal was coming directly at him, quite as if he recognized that it was necessary that his life should be sacrificed to human need.

So Stilson held his breath and waited till there could be no possible question of his hitting the target.

He kept his rifle half raised, and his imagination leaped forward to the time when he should throw the deer down in front of the skeptical Robertson. Presently he raised the hammer, and the deer, probably hearing the faint click, stopped at once and looked at him.

Until then the beast evidently had not seen the man. There it stood, waiting to be shot, as one might say, across the street. Hunter never had better opportunity.

Stilson looked along the barrel and his heart grew sick. He saw not one barrel but several, and they were pointing in as many different ways.

Reason told him that there was only one barrel, but it also told him that he must speedily differentiate that one from the several imitations and hold it steady if he hoped for venison.

Strenuously he tried to control his trembling arms, but in vain. The rifle kept on vibrating, while the deer sniffed at him in an interested way.

How long this agony endured he had no means of knowing, and he never found out, but at last the deer came to the conclusion that his course lay in

another direction, and he trotted gracefully away, presenting a clean-cut side target as he turned.

Stilson, or, perhaps, it was fate, pulled the trigger.

Ah! What a speed the deer developed then! Like a flash of light in the gloom of the forest it darted away, untouched, but alarmed enough to run miles without stopping.

The mortified hunter tried to get in another shot. The mind, acting with comprehensive swiftness, which is a way minds have under such circumstances, saw an immediate abatement of the "buck fever" and a perfectly steady hand thenceforth; but, alas, before the hands could get ready for a second shot there was no target.

Stilson threw the rifle upon the ground and cursed himself and the situation with great fervency.

It was dusk when he returned to camp. Even the chipmunks had avoided him on the way back.

"I'm nearly dead," said he. "Is there anything left? No, I saw no game whatever. I presume an Indian might have found some, but I didn't."

Not till long afterward did he confess to the loss of a remarkable opportunity to supply the camp, and at this time his companions felt sincere pity for him. He was so worn, so evidently exhausted both physically and mentally. Mayberry hastened to give him the share that belonged to him, and when the geologist was absent for a moment, Robertson gave him the rest.

It should be said to Stilson's credit that he did not know that he was eating the last morsel in the stock excepting the condensed milk.

Before sunrise the next morning Mayberry arose without waking the others and went down through the woods to the foot of the rapids, where he cut and trimmed a light pole.

To this he fastened probably the most original fish-line ever made. It consisted of a shirt cut into strips and tied together.

He had not found so much as one pin in the entire outfit at camp. There had been a paper, he was sure, and that probably had been mixed up with the provision pack and so lost. But Mayberry

was somewhat of a Yankee, and, while waiting for Stilson to come in the evening before, he had fashioned an apology for a hook out of the cover of a corned-beef can.

This he baited, or, rather, disguised with a fragment of flannel shirt that he hoped would impress a fish as a new and inviting kind of gaudy insect.

"I can only hope," he thought, "that the fish of this neighborhood are as hungry as I am, and that they are uncommonly ignorant."

Sheepishly he cast his ridiculous line toward what his experienced eye knew to be a promising pool. He could hardly refrain from a glance around to see whether anybody were looking, and if a deer had strolled curiously up, it is ten to one that he would have been too ashamed to continue.

To his unutterable amazement, to say nothing of excitement, the rag had no sooner touched the water than a fish rose to it.

This was no occasion for sportsman-like dallying with the game. If there ever was an artless pot hunter it was J. Howard Mayberry, geologist, at that moment. It was simply a question of getting that fish to land by hook or by—main strength—or any old way, and the pole cut a swath in the air sideways like a flail.

Wonder of wonders, the fish followed it! Of course it had let go the absurd hook, which by no possibility could have penetrated the flesh.

Mayberry had hoped that luck might make it slip through the gills, but no matter; the fish had gulped hard and the yank had been synchronous, so that now the fish was dropping, and it did look as if he would drop back again into the stream.

Mayberry dropped the pole and jumped. He struck the mossy bank at just about the time the fish did and fell upon him with fierce enthusiasm.

The man stumbled and slipped and the fish flopped and wriggled. One foot of the man dipped into the stream, but the fish had no such luck.

A pair of hands that no slime could elude gripped that misguided fish and would have held on even if the whole of the man had slid into the water.

On his knees and elbows Mayberry edged away from the brink until he felt that he could rise with safety. Then he ran not less than a hundred feet into the forest before he dared stop to cut a twig and hang his prize upon it.

A prize indeed! He looked upon it with such joy that he all but cried over it. What he had caught, or buncoed might be the better word, was a speckled trout of not less than two pounds.

That he tried again might go without saying. Two pounds of fresh trout will do very well for a breakfast for three starving men, but the early morning is the time for the pot hunter and the hunger of later hours had to be considered.

It will not do to detail his adventures. There was no difficulty in getting a rise from pool after pool, but in few instances did his clumsy hook suffice to bring the victim landward.

In every instance where that did happen it was a race like the first to see whether the greedy man could pounce on the trout before it had flopped back into the stream.

After an hour or so he had a string of five good specimens, and with this he went back to camp, arriving before the others had crawled out, though both were awake.

Robertson grinned all over his face at the sight, and Stilson manifested more light-heartedness than at any time since the expedition started from New York.

"Why didn't you say you were going fishing?" he cried; "I'd have had a fire ready."

He ran to the tripod that the Indians had set up with a view to cooking that not yet had been done for lack of things to cook, and stopped short, both hands thrown involuntarily aloft.

"For Heaven's sake!" he gasped, and turned around excitedly. "Come here, Mayberry! What do you make of this?"

Mayberry went to the spot, and he, too, gasped his surprise.

Lying on the rocks beside the fireplace were several freshly caught trout, a bag of flour, a big hunk of venison, a tin of coffee, a parcel of bacon, and several other edible articles that made his famished mouth water.

The first wild thought that occurred to him was that all this was a part of the stock that had been lost in the river—he overlooked the venison—and that, somehow, it had been recovered and brought back.

"It can't be our stuff," he said vacantly, stooping to examine the wrappers. "This wasn't the brand of coffee we carried——"

"Good Lord!" interrupted Stilson, "it's ours now, isn't it? You're not going to decline to eat it, are you? Why, man alive, it's manna, that's what it is, manna in the wilderness!"

He fairly whooped in his joy. Robertson hobbled out unaided to see what was the matter. He scratched his head and grinned with delight.

"Well now," said he, "that was worth waiting for. You didn't find that along the banks of the river below, did you, sir?"

"I find it?" cried Mayberry. "Stilson found it. Haven't you any idea where it came from?"

"Oh, yes, that's easy. There's a *cache* somewhere round here, and it's been opened for our benefit."

"A *cache*! Then white men have been here before us."

"Not necessarily."

"But who could have opened it and brought the stuff here?"

"Well, sir, I should guess it was Mukwa, but I don't know. I'm as surprised as you are, and I think I'm hungrier. If you gentlemen will bring up some wood, I think I can help a bit about the fire."

He looked around as he spoke and then suddenly pointed out to the lake.

"And what do you make of that?" he asked.

Following the direction of his gesture they saw three canoes approaching.

Mayberry's heart gave a great bound, for the canoes were so near that he recognized their occupants. Among them was Miss Rose Osborne.

the excitement of finding a mysterious supply of food had further exhausted him. The added bewilderment of this vision made it all seem like a dream.

He went with Stilson down to the margin of the lake, and Robertson stumped along after them. The parties in the canoes saw them and turned promptly to shore.

"By Jove," exclaimed Stilson, who had not before recognized the newcomers, "it's Mr. Osborne! This way, sir! Here's your best place for landing."

With one exception Indians were at the paddles, the exception being Mr. J. Foster, of the Pahquatasing general store.

Each canoe carried a passenger. In the first was Mr. Osborne. His son Harry was in the next, and in the last sat Miss Rose. She waved her hand and called cheerily:

"How do you do, Mr. Mayberry? Aren't you going to ask us to breakfast?"

"Don't mind her, Mr. Mayberry," shouted Harry; "we've had breakfast and Rose ate more'n all the Indians together."

Whereupon Miss Rose said "Harry!" reprovingly, and the boy insisted that it was "so, any way."

A terrible embarrassment came upon the geologist.

The explanation of this utterly unexpected visitation would soon be made, and that troubled him not at all. They were here, would soon be on shore, and that was the worst of it.

A flood of emotions, badly mixed, was upon him. How easy it would have been to respond to their jolly salutations if Colburn were alive! What a terrible shock was in store for her! How could he soften it? How prepare her for it? Had not Gezjik met——

Mr. Osborne was speaking.

"We expected," he said, "to catch up with you by night. The Indians had no idea you would go into camp here. We took a tremendously early start, you see, thinking we should have a long journey before finding you. I suppose our camp, last night, couldn't have been more than two miles away. We would have come further if we'd known."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ROSE OSBORNE'S VIEW OF IT.

THE geologist felt dizzy for a moment. He was faint with hunger, and

"Yes," Rose added, "I think you ought to have telephoned."

"How are things?" asked Foster genially, but there was no need of attempting to answer just then, for the paddlers deftly brought the canoes alongside the landing-place and the passengers began to get out.

Mayberry gave his hand to Mr. Osborne, leaving to Stilson the privilege of helping Rose. Harry, as a matter of course, clambered out unaided and nearly upset his canoe in so doing.

"We camped here," said Mayberry hurriedly to the capitalist, "because our head guide met with an accident and couldn't travel. He's nearly well, now."

"I'm almost glad for the accident," responded Mr. Osborne, "for I've been bamboozled and bullied and wheedled into getting several degrees further into the wilderness than I had any intention of getting when we left New York. We got your letter explaining your necessary delay at Pahquatasing, and telegraphed you to wait a bit longer for us, as Harry was eager to join the expedition. But it seems you had got a day away when the telegram arrived. So there was nothing to do but organize an expedition of our own and follow your trail."

During this explanation Miss Rose had effected a landing. She was piqued that Mayberry had not run to greet her, and this may have been partly responsible for the first question she asked.

"What makes you men so fearfully solemn?" was the query. "You look as if camp life didn't agree with you."

To this Stilson replied, with more tact than Mayberry would have expected from him:

"We're hungry, Miss Osborne. Our breakfast is not even started yet."

"What laggards!" she cried, and then advanced to Mayberry, holding out her hand.

"I hope you'll condescend at least to shake hands with me," she said demurely. "Where's Mr. Colburn?"

"He's not here at present," replied Mayberry, barely touching her hand.

His heart stood still as he wondered if she would jump to the conclusion that he had murdered her favored lover!

Her surprise at his coldness was not well masked.

"I shall be very glad to see him," said she, in which was the direct implication that she observed that Mayberry was not glad to see her.

Indeed, he was not. He never regretted the sight of anybody so much as he did that of the young woman for whom he would gladly have laid down his life.

The immediate embarrassment was relieved by Harry, who was clamoring for a chance to shake hands with his teacher.

"I was just bound I'd join you, sir," said he. "Pop and Rose never meant to go beyond Pahquatasing, but Rose was on my side when we got there and found you'd been gone less than a day and a half. There was a jolly lot of Indians there, and so we made up a party in a hurry. Where are your Indians?"

This gave Mayberry his opportunity to lead away from the gay talk to that of appalling seriousness, which could not forever be postponed. He managed to give his pupil a smile, and answered: "You ought to have met one of our Indians. We sent him back early yesterday morning with a message for your father."

"We've met nobody," said Mr. Osborne, to whom Mayberry turned inquiringly.

"Then he must have taken another trail. It's a matter of very great importance, Mr. Osborne. I must ask you to give it your attention at once."

"Certainly," was the wondering response. "Rose, you and Harry can inspect the camp for a few minutes. I've got to talk business with Mr. Mayberry."

"And Mr. Stilson," added the geologist.

Stilson joined them hastily. He was in a torment of doubt as to what to say to the young lady. Robertson had hobbled back and was making the fire.

Mayberry led the other two to the spot where the woodsman had announced his convictions as to the cause of Colburn's death.

"Isn't Mr. Colburn to join in the discussion?" added the capitalist.

"Unfortunately, no," replied Mayberry. "Do you see that little pile of stones?"

He pointed to the rude mausoleum which was but a few yards from them.

"Mr. Colburn," he added, without waiting for a reply, "is under there."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Osborne. "Dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why, this is shocking—dreadful! How did it happen? He seemed such a robust man, and inured to the hardships of camp life."

"He was a robust man, Mr. Osborne—the strongest in the party. What brought about his death is more than I can say, except that I have the implement with which it was done. I will show it to you presently. If you should ask that man up there who is at work over the fire, he would tell you with his rugged honesty that Mr. Colburn was killed by myself or Stilson, or both of us."

Mr. Osborne was too startled to respond.

"Our Indians believe us guilty," continued Mayberry desperately, "and one of them deserted us on that account. The other we sent with a message to you."

"All this is simply incredible," said Mr. Osborne.

"But it's true," put in Stilson, who took courage from Mayberry's wholesale statement of the distressing facts. "Mr. Mayberry has merely eased up on my part of it. I understand that the Indians think I did it. I believe they were guilty, one or both of them—"

"Let me have the facts from the beginning."

They told him, Mayberry taking the burden of the narration, mincing matters not at all, showing how each of them had lost his temper with Colburn, how Colburn's blunders had delayed progress and finally brought the party to the verge of starvation.

"And not the least mysterious part of it," Mayberry concluded, "is that, this morning, when, as we supposed, we had nothing to eat except some fish that I caught, we found a considerable supply of provisions—flour, tinned goods and venison—near our fireplace."

Mr. Osborne's eyes lighted a bit at this last item in the account, but they were grave again instantly, and he turned them towards the tents where his son and daughter were talking with Robertson.

Foster also stood by. Mayberry was extremely apprehensive as to what might be the result of the conversation there, and yet "the disclosure cannot long be delayed," he thought.

"This is a strange trick of fate," said Mr. Osborne. "My daughter—" here he broke off abruptly, glancing in a troubled way at Stilson, and then went on: "As to your mysterious supply of food, I think I can account for it."

"It came from your stock?" asked Stilson.

"Probably. While we were at breakfast Mr. Foster spoke to me about a matter that the Indians had reported to him earlier in the morning. It seems that some time in the night one of our guides was awakened by a strange Indian, who asked him to leave the camp for a few minutes. Our Indian did so, finding that he knew the visitor, who explained that he and some friends had lost their provisions and were in danger of serious suffering. He wanted to know if we could spare some of ours."

"That must have been Mukwa," said Mayberry.

"One of your Indians? I didn't learn his name, but I was struck with his honesty. He could have stolen what he wanted with no difficulty whatever. He told our man that he had no money to buy with, but that he would pledge his canoe for what it was worth, and our man promptly and properly accommodated him. Later he reported the matter to Foster, who told me. We were glad to be of service to anybody in difficulty, but we supposed it was a party of Indians who were in need. We never dreamed that it was you."

A pause followed, filled with agony for Mayberry.

"This is a dreadful affair," said Mr. Osborne presently. "You gentlemen must be nearly dead with hunger and you must go to breakfast. I think your cook is ready for you. I must manage somehow to tell my daughter what has happened."

They arose and started slowly toward the tents. Almost at the same moment Miss Rose gave a startled cry and hurried toward them.

"Father! Mr. Mayberry!" she cried. "Is it true? What has happened? What does the backwoodsman mean? Where is Mr. Colburn?"

Mayberry unconsciously bared his head and looked at the ground. He could not meet her eyes.

"Rose," said her father, "Mr. Colburn is dead. He was killed mysteriously. I will tell you what I can about it."

"Dead! Killed!" she echoed, aghast, and Mayberry, looking still at the ground, did not see the impulsive start she made towards him.

He did not see that her father took her gently by the arm and led her back to the spot where he himself had learned of the tragedy, did not see that she kept looking at him over her shoulder, her eyes filled with wonderment, anxiety, and a sentiment that seemed very like compassion.

Stilson put his hand on Mayberry's shoulder.

"Come, old man," said he, "the worst is over."

"No," groaned Mayberry, "there is worse to follow. What will she say to the circumstantial evidence? What can she think?"

"Trust the woman in her," Stilson responded gravely, "not to see what you know to be false."

Mayberry was profoundly surprised. He would not have looked to Stilson for any such delicacy of feeling.

Impulsively he put out his hand and Stilson grasped it firmly.

"I think we understand each other better," said Mayberry. "If it will comfort you at all, you may know that I do not believe that you had anything to do with Colburn's death."

"I'm glad enough to have you say that flat-footed," returned Stilson bitterly, "but Miss Osborne won't say so. She'll think I did it. Meantime, I'm convinced that the murderer is on his way to Pahquatasing with letters."

"Gezhik?" and Mayberry smiled faintly. "You've made the rounds of possibilities, haven't you, Stilson? I'm

afraid we shall never know which of your guesses is correct."

Stilson shrugged his shoulders and they went on to the camp-fire, where Robertson was busy satisfying his long hunger.

"You gentlemen stand starvation pretty well," said he. "Grub has been ready for you these ten minutes."

"Why couldn't you have kept back the facts from that young lady?" Mayberry demanded, as he helped himself to coffee and biscuit.

"Keep 'em back!" exclaimed the woodsman. "I tried my best, but what with Foster hinting around and guessing at the truth like the Yankee that he is, and what with the young lady's questions, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't lie in two different ways at the same time. Besides, she had to know."

Mayberry said nothing further on the matter, for, from his habitual point of view, it would have been a waste of breath, and Stilson was altogether too engrossed with his meal to talk. Foster strolled up and looked at them a moment in silence.

"Be'n having trouble, hey?" he ventured.

Mayberry nodded.

"Colburn got killed, hey? Murdered?"

"Ask Robertson."

"Oh, I've asked him. I know what Don thinks," and the keeper of the general store strolled away again, joining the Indians at the shore.

Stilson and Mayberry exchanged glances.

"You've begun your campaign, I see," Stilson remarked.

"There's no complaint due from you, gentlemen," Robertson retorted sullenly. "I told you I wouldn't have certain things said if I could help it. I won't have Don Robertson or his red friends under suspicion of this crime. You've brought it on yourselves. If you'd agreed to say accident, or fever, or a fight with a mad moose, I'd have stood by ye. As it is, you'll have to clear yourselves if you can."

Stilson looked angry, but Mayberry was unmoved. His eyes and thoughts were on the group—father, son and daughter—near the rude mausoleum.

"How her heart must ache!" he was thinking. "Not knowing Colburn as we did, she idealizes him, sees only the best side of him, loves that, and suffers now the worst of tragedies—a broken heart."

Father and son arose and came to the fire-place.

"Mr. Mayberry," said the elder, "when you have finished breakfast will you speak to my daughter?"

"At once, sir," and Mayberry went down across the expanse of flat rock much as a condemned man marches to the scaffold.

There were tears in her eyes when she looked up at him, and his heart bled for her.

"Mr. Mayberry," she said, "how can you take food with that dreadful man who accuses you?"

The question was the farthest possible removed from what he had anticipated; so far that he could not quickly discern the feeling that lay behind it. All he caught at the moment was a rebuke.

"Miss Osborne," he responded, "this expedition has brought about strange companionships. The man who accuses me is perfectly sincere——"

"I don't believe it!"

Then he looked at her with something like an apprehension of her attitude.

"Is it possible," he stammered, "that you have no suspicion of me? Has your father told you all the dreadfully suggestive facts?"

"He has told me all he knows. Sit down, please, Mr. Mayberry. Don't stand as if I were a judge. How can you think that you would have anything to fear from me? I want to tell you something."

"I cannot say," he said, as he seated himself on the stone in front of her, to which she pointed, "how great a weight you have lifted from me."

"Wait," said she. "It is my turn to speak, and it will not be easy; but, under these dreadful circumstances, duty compels me to volunteer what, under other circumstances, it would be my duty to withhold until asked for."

She hesitated, and a rosy color mounted to her brow.

"Did you receive a letter from me?" she asked.

"Yes, at Pahquatasig, shortly before we started."

"I wrote one also to Mr. Colburn."

"He received it. I can get it for you if you like. I found it yesterday among his effects."

"You have not read it?"

"Oh, no, no! I recognized the handwriting. The letter made him very happy at the time it came."

"Indeed!" and Miss Osborne seemed too surprised for a moment to speak; but she added presently: "I cannot see why it should have had that result. Mr. Mayberry, he had asked me the same question that you did. I wrote to him exactly as I did to you—word for word—with one exception. Some freak in my nature—call it womanish whim if you like—certainly it was unworthy of a sincere woman, led me to say in my letter to him that I would not say yes to any other until he had had his opportunity to renew the question after his return. Why I did not say as much in the letter to you I cannot understand, except—except——" here she looked down at the ground, "that I wanted to say yes to you unequivocally."

The words were hardly audible, but Mayberry heard them.

"Miss Osborne! Rose!" he whispered eagerly.

"I haven't quite finished," she interposed hastily. "As soon as those letters were beyond recall I regretted them bitterly. I knew then that I ought to have written plainly to each; 'no' to one, 'yes' to the other. I was very unhappy about it."

"Then my brother took it into his head that he would like to join the expedition, and father regretted that Harry had not spoken sooner, for, with you along, he knew that the experience would be fine for the boy. Father learned of your unavoidable delay at Pahquatasig, and Harry learned of it, too. Harry teased and I joined forces with him."

"I wanted to see you, Mr. Mayberry, and I wanted to see Mr. Colburn. I thought that if we all met at Pahquatasig the problem of our lives that I had tangled so wilfully might be solved."

I confided my trouble to my father. The result was a telegram asking you all to postpone departure till our arrival. When we found you had gone on, Harry and I insisted on pursuit, knowing that you would pause somewhere for prospecting and that thus we would be able to catch up with you.

"So, here we are, and I am glad that we came. I am grieved, as any friend should be, over Mr. Colburn's death, but I fear that that sentiment is wholly overshadowed by my sympathy for you. Ah, how this suspicion, so cruel and wicked, must have made you suffer!"

They were in plain sight of all, and, indeed, all eyes were, at the moment, directed toward them, but not because anybody save Mr. Osborne suspected that a declaration of love was in progress.

Another reason had arisen to set them all looking toward Mayberry, and he, unconscious of it, merely realized that this was no time and place for that exchange of words and tokens that would have been normal and irrepressible under other conditions.

He was telling her as best he could in a low, choking voice, how much her confession and support meant to him, when they were interrupted by Mr Osborne.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### HOW THE BEAR GOT HIS MONEY.

"Excuse me, Mayberry," said Rose's father, "there's a red man here asking for you. I presume you'd better see him at once. It may be something of importance to us all. He won't say anything to the rest of us."

Mayberry turned and looked toward the camp.

He saw an Indian whose garments of fringed buckskin suggested the aboriginal savage, inexpressibly dirty though they were, and topped off with a ludicrously shabby derby hat. He had a rifle in the hollow of his arm and was coming slowly across the rock.

"Do you want to see me?" asked Mayberry, approaching the man.

"Uh! You Mayb'y?"

"Yes, Mayberry is my name. What is yours?"

"Me Wabeeno. You like-um know how your friend gettum dead?"

"Yes, indeed, Wabeeno. Tell me!"

The Indian jerked elbow and head in the direction of the forest.

"Come," said he.

Mayberry promptly complied and they started together toward the trees. Mr. Osborne ran after them.

"Are you going to be gone long?" he asked anxiously.

"How is that, Wabeeno?" said Mayberry. "Will it take a long time?"

"Yes."

"Will you let this gentleman come with us?"

"No. You 'lone."

"But he wants to know all this as much as I do."

"You tell-um."

Mayberry turned to Mr. Osborne, saying, "He has, or thinks he has, information about this matter. I shall have to go alone. When an Indian says 'no,' that settles it."

"Yes," added Wabeeno tranquilly.

"I am afraid we ought not to let you go," said Mr. Osborne. "We shall be horribly anxious. Has my daughter explained herself fully?"

"Thank God! Yes, sir. I would not needlessly risk her future happiness and mine, but she herself would say better such risk as there is than this horrible uncertainty."

Miss Rose had come up to them.

"I can't overcome a suspicion of these fellows," said her father in a whisper. "They are so treacherous, Mayberry. He may be leading you into an ambush."

"I think you are mistaken as to Indian character, sir; but what do you say?" and he briefly explained the situation to Miss Rose.

She looked startled and doubtful for an instant. Then she stepped up to the Indian.

"You will take care of my friend, will you not?" she asked.

"Uh," he grunted, and, tapping his rifle barrel, "heap bears. Kill-um. Him no gettum hurt."

"You must go with him," she said firmly to Mayberry, and, with a bow of assent, he fell in beside Wabeeno. They presently disappeared among the trees.

Wabeeno led him, without a word, for some half mile into the forest. They came at length to a bark lodge, built partly against a cliff. Seated before the door, pipe in his mouth, was Mukwa.

"I'm glad to see you," said Mayberry, suppressing the slight surprise he felt, and he offered his hand.

Mukwa took it, and responded, "I say what I think. You have not said that I killed Colburn."

"No, I have not."

"And you no said Gezhik killed him."

"I have not said so; I have not thought so."

"Uh; it is good. I tell you now what I did think. Your friend Stilson, he kill-um."

"I am sure you're wrong, Mukwa."

"I know it, but I thought so. We all wrong, unless mebbe you. Robertson wrong, Stilson wrong, Gezhik and me wrong. I know now. What you think when I go away?"

"I never expected to see you again."

"Uh; I go for food. You get-tum?"

"Yes, thank you. This morning."

"I know Wabeeno, my friend here; he live somewhere round and I hunt for him. He give me venison and trout. Then I gettun tinned stuff from other travelers. You see-um?"

"They are at our camp now."

"Well, Wabeeno; he great hunter and trapper. You want to know what kill Colburn?"

"Of course I do, Mukwa, and all the others do."

"Don't care for others. Stilson mean man. He thinkum I done it. No show him."

"But there's a traveler who came this morning who needs to know as much as I do. And his daughter is with him, Mukwa. She want's to know, too. You saw her, Wabeeno."

"Uh," assented Wabeeno; "heep fine lady."

He spoke to Mukwa in their own language, Mukwa listening with apparent stolidity. At length, some time after Wabeeno had ceased speaking, he asked, "Who is this traveler?"

"He is my boss," replied Mayberry; "he was Colburn's boss, too, and, of course, he wants to know. I'd rather have you tell him than tell him myself."

"I no tell anybody," said Mukwa, and Mayberry's heart sank. "You bring your boss here and I show-um."

"All right. Shall we come to this spot?"

"No, I show you."

Mukwa arose and led the way back through the forest until they were about three hundred yards from the camp. Then he sat upon the ground and said, "Here."

Wabeeno had accompanied them and he, too, sat down.

Mayberry, looking around to get his bearings, saw that nearby was a ledge with a considerable outcropping of quartz that rose in one spot sheer to a height of about thirty feet. Thinking how such a ledge might be worth studying, with the expedition's purpose in view, he hastened back to the camp and apprised Mr. Osborne of what had happened.

"I have no idea," said Mayberry, "what the Indians will do, but I have abundant faith that it will prove final. I want other eyes than mine to see the proof."

"That is right," responded the capitalist; "I will go with you gladly. Had we better take lunch along?"

"Yes. I didn't ask again how long it will take, but I understand the Indians a bit now, and have learned that they mean what they say. We may be gone for hours."

They supplied themselves with provisions, declining, meantime, to answer the inquisitive Foster's questions, and hurried back to the ledge, where Mayberry introduced Mr. Osborne to the Indians.

After the handshaking, Mukwa had them go to the base of the ledge, where he halted, and pointed up.

"Could you climb up there?" he asked.

"Yes, I think I could, if it was necessary," Mayberry replied. "There are so many little projections from the surface, like so many handles——"

"Uh! You see-um. Good. Now watch."

He nodded to Wabeeno, who promptly began to climb a sapling that grew some twenty feet forward of the ledge. There were no larger trees be-

tween it and the little cliff, and in the other direction—that is, toward the camp—there was a considerable space occupied by young growth only.

The sapling began to sway and bend when Wabeeno was half way to the top. He shinned a little higher and then laid hold of the slender trunk with both hands and let go with his feet. The tree bent over toward the ledge and the Indian worked his way along nearer to the top by shifting his hands an inch at a time. At last his feet touched the ground, whereupon Mukwa stepped forward and added his weight to prevent the tree from springing up again.

"When Wabeeno work alone," said Mukwa, "he use cords and take more time. I help now to show you quick."

Wabeeno took a number of thongs from his pocket and proceeded to tie the tree in its bent position. One thong extended from near the top to the base of the trunk. Another was made fast to one of the projections on the ledge that Mayberry had likened to handles.

This done, the Indian hunter proceeded to suspend other thongs from near the top of the tree in the form of a noose, the bottom of which lay along the ground. He scraped leaves and twigs over this part of the noose and then took a comb of wild honey from a cavernous pocket of his buckskin jacket and fastened it to the thong that ran from the bent tree top to the handle on the ledge.

"All right," said he, backing away.

Mayberry, whose eyes were bulging with growing light on the tragedy, stepped close to the ledge and examined the knot by which the thong was fastened there.

"I can see," he said, drawing a deep breath; "it might happen—did it happen, Mukwa?"

"You see," was the ambiguous reply.

The knot was adjusted with considerable delicacy over the projecting nub of rock, and the intent was clear—a sufficient disturbance would release the knot, and the tree, held down by the strain of only the thong that was fastened to its base, would rise suddenly, thus drawing up the noose and holding whatever might be in it at the time.

"Indian," remarked Mukwa, "sometimes make mistake in tying knot. Tie-un too hard; sometimes too loose. Indian smart, but sometimes he find Mukwa smarter than him."

The vague significance of this assertion depended upon knowledge of the meaning of Mukwa's name—"bear."

Mayberry's heart was beating high, for he thought he understood. He longed to have the explanation set forth in words, but he knew the Indians would be adverse to that, so he simply said: "Well, what next?"

For reply the Indians led them by a roundabout, easy way to the top of the cliff, whence they could look straight down at the trap. All four lay flat, with their hands at the very edge of the cliff.

"Mebbe wait long time," whispered Mukwa. "Bear gone 'bout two hours. Not come back till night, mebbe. But he come, sure, and he like honey. You see."

It was indeed a long wait. Noon came, and yet no bear or other animal to disturb the trap. Mr. Osborne sighed wearily.

"If you were in my place, sir," said Mayberry, "you'd find no wait too long for what I think will be demonstrated."

"I understand," replied the capitalist. "I'm tired of this, but you couldn't drag me away with a yoke of oxen."

The whites shared their provisions with the Indians and more time passed.

At length, around two o'clock, the Indians touched their white companions warningly. Neither Mayberry nor Mr. Osborne had heard any suggestive sound, but the Indians had, and, sure enough, a moment later a black bear came waddling leisurely from the growth of larger trees toward the north.

He seemed at peace with all the world, as if he might be reflecting tranquilly after a heavy dinner. But as he was passing the base of the cliff he paused and sniffed the air inquiringly.

Presently he located the honey and took a cautious step toward it. Then suddenly he drew back and squatted on his haunches, waving his head from side to side. There could be no doubt as to what was the process of his thought;

he was considering the uncommon and abnormal shape of the sapling.

If Mayberry had not been so tense with excitement he would have had to laugh at the grotesquely human suggestions in the bear's attitude and movements.

For a full minute at least the bear kept wagging his head; his small eyes blinking curiously at the tree and greedily at the honey. Finally he hitched backward till he was well beyond the base of the sapling, when he ventured once more to use his fore paws in locomotion.

He walked in gradually narrowing semicircles around the sapling until he brushed against it. Then he squatted again and sniffed at the thong attached to its base.

Decision seemed to come upon him suddenly, for, with a good deal of vigor, he hitched forward till he could grasp the thong in his fore paws, whereupon he began to yank and bite it. In a few seconds he had severed the thong.

Instantly the tree sprang with a noisy rush, as it fanned the air, to its normal position. The thong around the "handle" of the ledge had been snapped in two, and the honey attached to it had been shaken to the ground.

Up in the tree top now the noose meant for the bear's neck, or body, rather, was dangling harmlessly.

The bear squatted again and proceeded to gorge himself with the honey. It seemed to Mayberry too bad, but Indian nature had to have its way; and, the exhibition of brute sagacity having been ended, Wabeeno's rifle spoke once, and the bear rolled backward, a bullet in his heart.

"He deserved to get away!" exclaimed Mayberry, rising.

Both Indians grunted their indifference to this fine feeling, and Mr. Osborne said, "There is but one thing left to do to show how poor Colburn came to his death. You said you had the implement with which the deed was done."

"Yes," Mayberry responded, "it's in my tent—a wedge-shaped piece of rock. It was one of the 'handles' of this cliff."

"Undoubtedly; but, to make abso-

lutely sure, you must get it and find the spot from which it was wrenched off."

"I will do so, but, first, I think we can find where it was."

"Wabeeno show you," said Mukwa.

They hurried down to the base of the cliff and Wabeeno pointed to a fresh scar on its face and spoke in Ojibway.

"He says," translated Mukwa, "that this bear is the wisest of all the bears in the woods. Wabeeno has been after him a long time, but this bear very smart and always get away."

"Two days ago, just before the big storm, Wabeeno found lot of honey. He know the bear walk this way every day. So he make a trap, as you see. He think bear get caught in noose and hang till Indian come and kill-um. So, next day, 'cause Wabeeno no like to be out in storm, he come to find bear. Honey gone, tree straight again, and Wabeeno think hard. Then he see mark on rock and know what happen. He tell me yesterday when I find him. Then I know all about it."

"It's clear enough now," said Mayberry. "When the bear sprang the trap the first time, the knot happened to be tied to a nub of the ledge that had been partly disintegrated by the elements. So it yielded when the sudden strain came and the knot happened to be so tied that it carried the stone up into the air. Once get the knot upside down, as would, of course, be the case when the tree had risen to its full height, and the stone would slip out; but by that time it had gained a tremendous impetus. The tree and thong, you see, Mr. Osborne, were like a giant arm wielding a sling, and the fragment of stone was hurled a great distance."

"By what you rightly called a strange trick of fate, the stone fell upon Colburn's head. It must have happened just after our tent blew down. The final proof will be made when I fit the fragment over the scar that Wabeeno has shown us."

He was about to start back to the camp when all observed that men were approaching. Stilson led, with his rifle, and Harry Osborne, similarly armed, pressed close behind. Then came the Indian guides, and, last, Mr. J. Foster, of Pahquatasing, escorting Miss Rose.

"It's all right," called Mayberry, comprehending the situation. "The shot you heard announced the death of Colburn's murderer; but it was not a human being."

The others ran up hurriedly. They had been growing more and more anxious over the prolonged absence of Mr. Osborne and Mayberry, and when they heard Wabeceno's rifle, they were morally certain that one or both of them were in peril. Hence the march to the rescue, the whites dreading ambuscades, the Indian guides stolidly certain that nothing had gone amiss.

Explanations followed swiftly, and Mayberry left Mr. Osborne to finish them while he hurried back to camp for the fatal fragment of rock. He gave Robertson an idea of the circumstance, to which the woodsman calmly responded, "I told ye it was none of my Indians' work. I did think it was Stilson, and I'm glad to find that I was wrong."

Returning to the cliff, Mayberry applied the fragment to the scar. It fitted to a hair, and his expert eye distinguished the traces of disintegration that had made the occurrence possible. He saw much more at the same time, but he made no mention of it until near evening. By then the general jubilation had subsided.

Miss Rose had long since dried her tears of happiness, Stilson had ceased to prance and hooray like a boy, and Mr. Osborne had given over pacing the flat rock to work off his excitement. Mukwa had resumed his place in the expedition, and at last talk began as to what should become of it.

"In our joy at the relief of all men from horrible suspicion," said Mr. Osborne, "we do not forget, I am sure, to mourn the untimely end of a man who was energetic and faithful according to his lights. I quite understand that Colburn had a sad gift of making trouble for those with whom he was associated, but all that is past now, and I have no doubt that none of us harbors ill feeling for the dead. How is that, my friend?" and he turned to Mukwa.

The Indian took his pipe from his mouth and a quaint smile drifted slowly over the swarthy features.

"All right, now," he said. "Indian no like Colburn, but Colburn he no like Indian. That even, uh? All right now."

Mr. Osborne could not repress a smile at his partial failure to surprise the red man into an expression of unanimity.

"I think," said Robertson gravely, "that I can speak for the Indians. They are not revengeful and they are anything but deceitful. They don't say much, but when they do talk you know exactly what they mean. When Mukwa says it's all right, he means that he has no ill will to the memory of Mr. Colburn, for that would be a waste of feeling. It's all over, and that's all there is to it."

"That right," assented Mukwa, and he went on smoking again.

"Well, then," continued Mr. Osborne, "we must consider the future of the expedition——"

"Concerning which," interrupted Mayberry, "I would like a private word with you."

They walked a little way from the others, and Mayberry announced that the ledge where the bear trap had been set presented remarkable promise of mineral wealth.

"There's gold in sight there," said he. "For the present, at least, the expedition should go no farther."

In brief, thus it was decided. The further work of the expedition having passed without misunderstandings or serious adventures, may be summarized in a few lines.

At Mayberry's advice, after some days of prospecting, the syndicate, through Mr. Osborne, bought a large tract of land in the vicinity of the spot where Colburn met his death, and the mine, which has been under successful operation for two years, was called the "Gitchemukwa," after the faithful Indian who led the way to its discovery.

Mr. Osborne and his daughter remained at the camp until no further doubt existed as to the advisability of securing the property, and when they departed it was with the understanding, since carried out, that Miss Rose should become Mrs. Mayberry before the holidays. All that summer, however, May-

berry and his favorite pupil remained with their Indian guides in the woods.

In course of time the relatives of the unfortunate Colburn were hunted up, and to them was given such share in the mining property as would have been his had he lived. This was largely at the insistence of Mayberry, his wife heartily seconding his efforts in the matter.

Stilson, too, has his share in the prosperous company and holds the office of treasurer. His offices are in New York, where he is content to stay, one

trip into the wilds having been enough for him.

Pahquatasung is, as before, an unfinished pioneer town, and the most unfinished part of it is Donald Robertson's house; but a school has been started there, and his children are attending it; and Don says that, next season, he certainly will refuse any and all offers to guide parties into the woods, and give his undivided attention to putting a civilized roof over his flock.

And when J. Foster and G. Bagley hear this, they exchange winks.

THE END.

## ROSSVILLE'S FOURTH.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

A midsummer happening that made the station-master think quick and take big chances.

THE busy little telegraph sounder on the table beneath the wide-shaded oil lamp had clicked itself to a standstill. From its perch on the wall of Rossville's railroad station the big clock chimed the hour of eleven. Kenton stretched out his legs, lighted his pipe, and yawned contentedly.

Work was over for another day—active work, at any rate, although he would have remain until the midnight express had roared through Rossville on its way westward.

But that last hour of the day was always easy and, on this occasion, promised to be even pleasant, for across the table sat young Finley, cashier of Rossville's diminutive bank and Kenton's particular chum.

Before him lay a couple of telegraph blanks, well scribbled with figures, and as Kenton leaned back he pushed them away and grinned across the table.

"Jim," he remarked, "the people of this benighted town showed remarkable astuteness, didn't they?"

"How?"

"In appointing you and me the committee of two to arrange their Fourth of July celebration, of course."

"Eh? Oh, to be sure they did," laughed Kenton.

"If I do say it, we've fixed up a dis-

play for them that can't be touched for the money this side of Chicago! Why, Jim, when they started that subscription movement to buy fireworks, and requested us to engineer the thing, I imagined that we'd have about six dollars to spend, all told. Do you know just what they did chip in?"

"Not to the penny."

"Then listen! Rossville," said Finley, with mock impressiveness, "has placed in our hands the sum of two hundred and forty-one dollars and sixty-five cents! Think of it! This borough has actually wrung nearly two hundred and fifty dollars out of itself—just for fireworks! There's your unquenchable patriotism, fast enough. Two hundred and one dollars have gone for fireworks; Stanley's going to charge us forty dollars for his band, afternoon and evening. I think we'll pocket the odd sixty-five cents for our trouble."

"Put it into lemons and distribute free lemonade," chuckled the telegraph operator from behind his cloud of smoke.

"Seriously, however, we've done nobly, Jim. By George! We had to do nobly! Every little kid in town—and most of the grown-up ones—is on edge to see that display, and it's only five days off now. To-morrow or next