

new camp one bed o' boughs is fresher than the other." The thing seemed so absurdly obvious that I was nettled. "I suppose there are other indications I haven't noticed," I said. "There might be some you haven't mentioned," he answered warily. "What are they?"

"That the man who killed Lyon is thick set and very strong; that he has been a good while in the woods without having gone to a settlement; that he owns a blunt hatchet such as we wood chaps call tomahawk No. 3; that he can read; that he spent the night before the murder in great trouble of mind and that likely he was a religious kind o' chap."

As November reeled off these details in his quiet, low keyed voice I stared at him in amazement. "But how can you have found out all that?" I said at last. "If it's correct it's wonderful!"

"I'll tell you, if you want to hear, when I've got my man—if I ever do get him. One thing more is sure, he is a chap who knew Lyon well. The rest of the job lies in the settlement of St. Amiel, where Lyon lived."

We walked back to Big Tree portage and from there ran down in the canoe to St. Amiel, arriving the following evening. About half a mile short of the settlement November landed and set up our camp. Afterward we went on. I had never before visited the place, and I found it to be a little colony of scattered houses straggling beside the river. It possessed two stores and one of the smallest churches I have ever seen.

"You can help me here if you will," said November as we paused before the larger of the stores. "Of course I will. How?"

"By letting 'em think you've engaged me as your guide, and we've come in to St. Amiel to buy some grub and gear we've run short of."

"All right." And with this arrangement we entered the store.

I will not make any attempt to describe by what roundabout courses of talk November learned all the news of desolate little St. Amiel and of the surrounding countryside. The provincial police had evidently found means to close the mouth of the lumberjack for the time at least, as no hint of Lyon's death had yet drifted back to his native place.

Little by little it came out that only five men were absent from the settlement. Two of these, Fitz and Baxter Gurd, were brothers who had gone on an extended trapping expedition. The other absentees were Highamson, Lyon's father-in-law; Thomas Miller, a professional guide and hunter, and lastly, Henry Lyon himself, who had gone up river to visit his traps, starting on the previous Friday. The other men had all been away three weeks or more, and all had started in canoes, except Lyon, who, having sold his, went on foot.

Next, by imperceptible degrees, the talk slid round to the subject of Lyon's wife. They had been married four years and had no child. She had been the belle of St. Amiel, and there had been no small competition for her hand. Of the absent men both Miller and Fitz Gurd had been her suitors, and the former and Lyon had never been on good terms since the marriage. The younger Gurd was a wild fellow, and only his brother's influence kept him straight.

CHAPTER III.

"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron."

NO sooner were we away than I put my eager question, "What do you think of it?"

Joe shrugged his shoulders. "Do you know any of these men?"

"All of them."

"How about the fellow who is on bad terms with—"

November seized my arm. A man was approaching through the dusk. As he passed my companion hailed him.

"Hello, Baxter! Didn't know you'd come back. Where you been?"

"Right up on the headwaters."

"Fitz come down with you?"

"No; stayed on the line of traps. Did you want 'em, November?"

"Yes, but it can wait. See any moose?"

"Nary one; nothing but red deer."

"Good night."

"So long."

"That settles it," said November. "If he speaks the truth, as I believe he does, it wasn't either of the Gurd's shot Lyon."

"Why not?"

"Didn't you hear him say they hadn't seen any moose? And I told you that the man that shot Lyon had killed a moose quite recent. That leaves just Miller and Highamson—and it weren't Miller."

"You're sure of that?"

"Stark certain. One reason is that Miller's above six foot, and the man as camped with Lyon wasn't as tall by six inches. Another reason. You heard the storekeeper say how Miller and Lyon wasn't on speaking terms. Yet the man who shot Lyon camped with him—sleep beside him—must 'a' talked to him. That weren't Miller."

His clear reasoning rang true. "Highamson lives alone away up above Lyon's," continued November. "He'll make back home soon."

at last a building loomed up in front of us, a faint light showing under the door.

"You there, Highamson?" called out November.

As there was no answer, my companion pushed it open and we entered the small wooden room, where on a simple table a lamp burned dimly. He turned it up and looked around. A pack lay on the floor unopened, and a gun leaned up in a corner.

"Just got in," commented November. "Hasn't loosed up his pack yet."

He turned it over. A hatchet was thrust through the wide things which bound it. November drew it out.

"Put your thumb along that edge," he said. "Blunt? Yes? Yet he drove that old hatchet as deep in the wood as Lyon drove his sharp one. He's a strong man."

As he spoke he was busying himself with the pack, examining its contents with deft fingers. It held little save a few clothes, a little tea and salt and other fragments of provisions and a Bible. The finding of the last was, I could see, no surprise to November, though the reason why he should have suspected its presence remained hidden from me. But I had begun to realize that much was plain to him which to the ordinary man was invisible.

Having satisfied himself as to every article in the pack, he rapidly re-



And the Next Instant He and November Were Struggling Together.

placed them and tied it up as he had found it, when I, glancing out of the small window, saw a light moving low among the trees, to which I called November Joe's attention.

"It's likely Highamson," he said, "coming home with a lantern. Get you into that dark corner."

I did so, while November stood in the shadow at the back of the closed door. From my position I could see the lantern slowly approaching until it flung a gleam of light through the window into the hut. The next moment the door was thrust open, and the heavy breathing of a man became audible.

It happened that at first Highamson saw neither of us, so that the first intimation that he had of our presence was November's "Hello!"

Down crashed the lantern, and its bearer started back with a quick hoarse gasp.

"Who's there?" he cried. "Who?"

"Them as is sent by Hal Lyon."

Never have I seen words produce so tremendous an effect.

Highamson gave a bellow of fury, and the next instant he and November were struggling together.

I sprang to my companion's aid, and even then it was no easy task for the two of us to master the powerful old man. As we held him down I caught my first sight of his ash gray face. His mouth grinned open, and there was a terrible intention in his staring eyes. But all changed as he recognized his visitor.

"November! November Joe!" cried he. "Get up!" And as Highamson rose to his feet, "Whatever for did you do it?" asked November in his quiet voice. But now its quietness carried a menace.

"Do what? I didn't—I— Highamson paused, and there was something unquestionably fine about the old man as he added: "No, I won't lie. It's true I shot Hal Lyon. And what's more if it was to do again I'd do it again. It's the best deed I ever done. Yes, I say that, though I know it's written in the book. 'Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'"

"Why did you do it?" repeated November.

Highamson gave him a look.

"I'll tell you I did it for my little Janey's sake. He was her husband. See here! I'll tell you why I shot Hal Lyon. Along of the first week of last month I went away back into the woods trapping muskrats. I was gone more'n the month, and the day I come back I went over to see Janey. Hal Lyon weren't there. If he had been I shouldn't never 'a' needed to travel so far to get even with him. But that's neither here nor there. He'd gone to his bear traps above Big Tree. But the night before he left he'd got in one of

his quarrels with my Janey. Hit her, he did. There was one tooth gone where his fist fell."

Never have I seen such fury as burned in the old man's eyes as he groaned out the last words.

"Janey, that had the prettiest face for fifty miles around. She tried to hide it from me—she didn't want me to know. But there was her poor face all swole and black and blue and the gap among her white teeth. Bit by bit it all came out. It weren't the first time Lyon'd took his hands to her, no nor the third nor the fourth. There on the spot as I looked at her I made up my mind I'd go after him, and I'd make him promise me, eye, swear to me on the Holy Book, never to lay hand on her again. If he wouldn't swear I'd put him where his hands couldn't reach her. I found him camped away up alongside a backwater near his traps, and I told him I'd seen Janey and that he must swear. He wouldn't. He said he'd learn her to tell on him. He'd smash her in the mouth again. Then he lay down and sleep. I wonder now he weren't afraid of me, but I suppose that was along of me being a quiet, God fearing chap. Hour by hour I lay awake, and then I couldn't stand it no more, and I got up and pulled a bit of candle I had from my pack, fixed up a candlestick and looked in my Bible for guidance. And the words I lit on were 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. That was the gun clear enough. Then I blew out the light, and I think I sleep, for I dreamed."

Next morning Lyon was up early. He had two or three green skins that he'd took off the day before, and he said he was going straight home to smash Janey. I lay there, and I said nothing, black nor white. His judgment was set. I knew he couldn't make all the distance in one day, and I was pretty sure he'd camp at Big Tree. I arrived there just after him, as I could travel faster by canoe than him walking, and so kept near him all day. It was high sunset, and I bent down under the bank so he couldn't see me. He went into the old shack. I called out his name. I heard him cursing at my voice, and when he showed his face I shot him dead. I never landed; I never left no tracks. I thought I was safe, sure. You've took me; yet only for Janey's sake I wouldn't care. I did right, but she won't like them to say her father's a murderer. That's all."

November sat on the edge of the table. His handsome face was grave. Nothing more was said for a good while. Then Highamson stood up.

"I'm ready, November, but you'll let me see Janey again before you give me over to the police."

November looked him in the eyes. "Expect you'll see a good deal of Janey yet. She'll be lonesome over there now that her brute husband's gone. She'll want you to live with her," he said.

"D'ye mean?"

November nodded. "If the police can catch you for themselves, let 'em, and you'd lessen the chance of that a wonderful deal if you was to burn them moose shank moccasins you're wearing. When did you kill your moose?"

"Tuesday's a week. And my moccasins was wore out, so I fixed 'em up woods fashion."

"I know. The hair on 'em is slipping. I found some of it in your tracks in the camp, away above Big Tree. That's how I knew you'd killed a moose. I found your candlestick too. Here it is." He took from his pocket the little piece of spruce stick, which had puzzled me so much, and turned toward me.

"This end's sharp to stick into the earth; that end's silt, and you fix the candle in with a bit o' birch bark. Now it can go into the stove along o' the moccasins." He opened the stove door and thrust in the articles.

"Only three know your secret, Highamson, and if I was you I wouldn't make it four, not even by adding a woman to it."

Highamson held out his hand. "You always was a white man. Nov," said he.

Hours later, as we sat drinking a final cup of tea at the campfire, I said: "After you examined Lyon's upper camp you told me seven things about the murderer. You've explained how you knew them, all but three."

"What are the three?"

"First, how did you know that Highamson had been a long time in the woods without visiting a settlement?"

"His moccasins was wore out and patched with raw moose hide. The tracks of them was plain," replied November.

I nodded. "And how could you tell that he was religious and spent the night in great trouble of mind?"

November paused in filling his pipe. "He couldn't sleep," said he, "and so he got up and cut that candlestick. What'd he want to light a candle for but to read by? And why should he want to read in the middle of the night if he was not in trouble? And if he was in trouble, what book would he want to read? Besides, not one trapper in a hundred carries any book but the Bible."

"I see. But how did you know it was in the middle of the night?"

"Did you notice where he cut his candlestick?"

"No," said I.

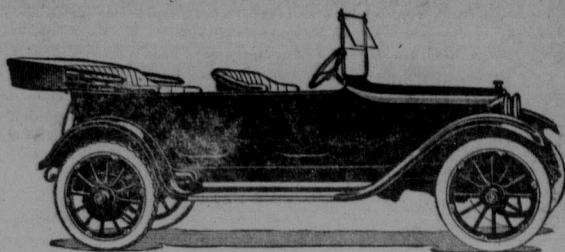
"I did, and he made two false cuts where his knife slipped in the dark. You're wonderful at questions."

"And you at answers."

November stirred the embers under the kettle, and the firelight lit up his fine face as he turned with a yawn.

"My," said he, "but I'm glad Highamson had his reasons. I'd a hated to think of that old man shut in where he couldn't see the sun rise. Wouldn't you?"

To be continued.



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