

SOBER SAM AND HIS CANOE 21

as glass, by the time the two had finished their breakfast. The sky was pale blue and without a single cloud. Billy Blunt led the horses from the shack, preparatory to his departure along the back trail. Dick remained seated by the fire, gazing around at the wealth of dark green forests that hemmed him in. Suddenly, a strange figure appeared at the top of the bank — a squat figure with bowed legs, clothed in shapeless garments of no particular colour, and gripping a long, white, spruce pole in one hand.

"Howdy, brother," said the stranger, without removing his short, powerful-looking pipe from his mouth. Dick was too greatly astonished by the stranger's sudden and remarkable appearance to answer; but Blunt turned at the sound of the voice and hurried forward. "Howdy, Sober Sam," he cried. "Thought you'd turn up afore long. How's tricks, old boy?"

Sober Sam removed his pipe from his mouth and grinned broadly. "Good! Heap good," said he. "Plenty water in Little Beaver, yes. Too much, maybe. Dat a'right."

He and Billy shook hands like old and valued friends. Then Billy turned to Dick. "Here's the youngster I sent you word about," he said.