



NOVEMBER JOE

The Detective of the Woods

by Hesketh Prichard.

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Continued

"The police failed to make any arrest, though once they were on the ground within four hours of the hold-up," went on Close. "But all that is ancient history. It is what happened to Dan Michaels last night that brought me here at seven miles an hour. Dan has been working for pretty nigh a three months' stretch, and the day before yesterday he came into the office and told me his mother was dead and he must have leave for the funeral. He had a good big roll of bills due, and I could see he meant to blow them, so I paid him and told him I'd try to keep a job warm for him till he came back from the funeral. I gave him ten days to get through with his spree. Something I'd said annoyed him, and after telling the cook his opinion of me and saying he wouldn't sleep another night in a camp where I was boss he legged out for the settlement."

"By himself?"
"Yes, alone. Next morning, bright and early, he was back again, and this was the yarn he slung me. He'd made about eight miles when it came on darkish, and he decided to camp just beyond where we did the most of our timber cut last year. He slept at once and remembers nothing more until he was started awake by a voice shouting at him. He sat up blinking, but the talk he heard soon fetched his eyes open.

"Hands up and no fooling!"
"Of course he put up his hands. He'd no choice, for he couldn't see any one. Then another man who was in the bushes behind his back ordered him to haul out his bundle of notes and chuck them to the far side of the fire, or take the consequences. Dan saw a revolver barrel gleam in the bush. He cursed a bit, but the thieves had the drop on him, so he just had to put with his wad of notes and leave them over as he was told. A birch log in the fire flared up at the minute, and as the notes touched the ground he saw a chip in a black mask step out and pick them up and then jump back into the dark. Then the voice that spoke first gave him the hint not to move for two hours or he'd be shot like a dog. He sat out the two hours by his watch without hearing a sound and then came back to C.

"When the boys got all the facts the whole camp was nigh as mad as he was. They put up \$50 reward for any one giving information that will lead to catching the robbers, and I added another hundred for the company. So now, Joe, if you can clap your hand on the brutes you'll be doing yourself a good turn and others too."

Close ended his narration, and looked at November, who had listened throughout in his habitual silence.

"Do the boys up at C know you've come to me?" he said.

"No, I thought it wiser they shouldn't."

November remained silent for a moment.

"You'd best get away back, Mr. Close," he said at length. "I'll go down to Perkins' clearing, and have a look at the spot where the robbery took place, and then I'll find some excuse to take me to Camp C, when I can make my report to you."

To this Close agreed, and the two of us set out through the woods to the site of Dan Michaels' bivouac. The ashes of a fire and a few boughs made its scanty furnishings, and in neither did November take much interest. Forth and back he moved, apparently following lines of tracks which the drenching rain of the previous day had almost obliterated, until, indeed, after ten minutes, he gave it up.

"Well, well," said he, in his soft cadenced voice, "he always did have the luck."

"Who?"
"The robber. Look at last year! Got clear every time."

"The robbers," I corrected.

"There's but one," said he.

"Michaels mentioned two voices, and the man in the mask stepped into sight at the same moment as the fire glinted on the revolver of the other man in the bushes."

Without a word November led me to the farther side of the dead fire and parted the boughs of a spruce, which I had previously seen him examine. At a height of less than five feet from the ground one or two twigs were broken, and the bark had been rubbed near the trunk.

"He was a mighty interesting man, sir with the revolver," November threw back his handsome head and laughed. "There was only one chap, and he fixed the revolver here in that fork. It was a good bluff he played on Dan, making him think there was two agin him! The rain's washed out most of the tracks, so we'll go up to Camp C and try our luck there. But first I'd better shoot a deer, and the boys I think I only come to carry them

at the facts. Every minute wasted gives them as robbed you the chance to get off clear."

"November's right," said a huge lumberman called Thompson. "Here's what happened. We six got our time yesterday morning, and after dinner we started off together. It were coming along dark when we camped in the old log hut of Tideson's bridge. Seen what had happened to Dan, we agreed to keep a watch till dawn. First watch was Harry's. In an hour and a half he were to wake me. He never did. The sun were up before I woke, and there was all the others sleeping round me. I was wonderful surprised, but I took the kettle and was going down to fill her at the brook. It was then that I noticed my roll of bills was gone from my belt. I came running back. Harry woke, and when I told him he clutches at his belt and finds his money gone too. Then Chris, Bill Maver, Welding Charlie and last of all Long Lars they wakes up, and danged if the lot of them hadn't been robbed same as us."

A unanimous groan verified the statement.

"We was tearing mad," went on the spokesman. "Then out we goes to search for the tracks of the thieves."

A look of despair crossed November's face. I knew he was thinking of the invaluable information the feet of the six victims must have blotted out forever.

"You found them?" inquired November.

"We did. They was plain enough," replied the big lumberman. "One man done it. He come up from the brook, did his business and went back to the water. He was a big, heavy chap with large feet, and he wore tanned cowhide boots patched on the right foot. There were seventeen miles in the heel of the right boot and fifteen in the other. How's that for tracking?"

CHAPTER V. The Guilty Man.

HERE was no doubt about the fact that November was surprised. He said nothing for a full minute, then he looked up sharply.

To Be Continued.

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HAWK AND MAN BATTLE

Bird Struggles Furiously Against Bare Hands But Loses

Lewistown, Nov. 9.—With bare hands, Fred Hayes, a section laborer, captured a hawk measuring four feet six inches from tip to tip, but he did not escape unscathed from the battle. Seeing a large bird descend in a strip of woodland, Hayes crept upon the bird while a companion attracted his attention in another direction and got a grip on one leg. But the big bird resisted and fastening one talon in the young man's hair, beat a tattoo in his face with its wings, pecking viciously with bill and talon. Young Hayes' face is a sight but he has the hawk mounted as a trophy of the encounter.



"Hands up and no fooling!"

whom November told his news. I noticed, however, he said nothing of his idea that there had been but one robber.

"That just spells total failure," remarked Close when he had finished.

November assented. "Guess we'll have to wait till another chap is held up," said he.

"You think they'll try their hand at it again?"

"Sure. Who'd stop after such success?"

"I'd be inclined to agree with you if it wasn't for the fact that the men won't leave singly now. They're scared to. A party of six started this afternoon. They were hoping they'd have the luck to meet the scoundrels and bucking how they'd let daylight into them if they did. But of course they won't turn up—they'd be shy of such a big party."

"Maybe," said November. "With your permission, Mr. Close, me and Quaritch'll sleep here tonight."

"All right. But I can't attend to you. I'm behind with my accounts, and I must even them up if it takes all night."

"And there's one question I'd like to have an answer to. It's just this: How did the robber know that Dan Michaels was worth holding up? Or that he was going off on the spree? He must have been told by some one. Blackmask has got a friend in Camp C all right. That is, unless..."

"Aye, unless?" repeated the manager. But November would say no more. An idea had come into his mind, but Close could not draw it from him; yet I could see he had entire trust in the taciturn young woodsman.

Next morning November seemed in no hurry to go, and shortly before the midday meal a party of half a dozen men rushed into the camp. They were all shouting at once, and it was impossible for a time to discover what the tumult was about. Leaning against the wall of the bunkhouse, the silent November surveyed the clamoring knot of men with grim humor.

"I tell you again, we've been held up, robbed, cleaned out, the whole six of us!" yelled a short man with a sandy beard.

"That is true!" cried a fair haired Swede.

On this they all began shouting again, waving their arms and explaining. November advanced. "Look, boys, that's an easy, comfortable log over there!"

"The Swede answered him with a snarl, but, meeting November's eyes, thought better of it. Joe was the last person upon whom any one would choose to fix a quarrel.

"I was suggesting, boys," continued November, "that there's the log handy,

and if you'd each choose a soft spot

and leave one to speak and the others listen till he's through with it we'd get



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