



NOVEMBER JOE

The Detective of the Woods
by Hesketh Prichard.

Copyright, 1913, by Hesketh Prichard

PROLOGUE.

One of the most interesting characters in fiction, November Joe, well deserves to take his place in the hall of fame alongside his more famous prototype, Sherlock Holmes. In the woods Sherlock Holmes no doubt would have been of little value in ferreting out criminals, because woodcraft was not in his line. In the city, too, November Joe would not have compared in merit of achievement with Holmes, but in the woods every leaf and twig, stone and bit of moss where it has been in contact with human beings or animals tells its story to the keen eyes and analytical mind of November Joe.

CHAPTER I.

November Joe.

It happened that in the early autumn of 1908 I, James Quaritch, Quebec, went down to Montreal. I was at the time much engaged in an important business transaction, which after long and complicated negotiations appeared to be nearing a successful issue. A few days after my arrival I dined with Sir Andrew McLerrick, the celebrated nerve specialist and lecturer at McGill university, who had been for many years my friend.

On similar occasions I had usually remained for half an hour after the other guests had departed, so that when he turned from saying his last goodby Sir Andrew found me choosing a fresh cigar.

"I cannot tell to mind, James, that I invited you to help yourself to another smoke," he said.

"Don't mention it, Andrew; I am accustomed to your manners. All the same."

"He watched me light up. 'Make the most of it, for it will be some time before you enjoy another.'"

"I have felt your searching eye upon me more than once tonight. What is it?"

"My dear James, the new mining amalgamation papers are so full of, and of which I understand that you are the leading spirit, will no doubt be a great success, yet is it really worth the sacrifice of your excellent health?"

"But I feel quite as usual."

"Sleep as much as usual?"

"Perhaps not," I admitted unwillingly.

"Appetite as good as usual?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Tush, man, James! Stand up." Thereupon he began an examination which merged into a lecture, and the lecture in due course ended in my decision to take a vacation immediately—a long vacation, to be spent beyond reach of letter or telegram in the woods.

"That's right! That's right!" commented Sir Andrew. "What do the horns of that fellow with the big bell, which you have hanging in your office, measure?"

"Fifty-nine inches."

"Then go and shoot one with a spread of sixty."

"I believe you are right," said I, "but the worst of it is that my guide, Noel Tribonet, is laid up with rheumatism and will certainly not be fit to go with me just now. Indeed, I doubt if he will ever be much good in the woods again."

"But what if I can recommend you a new man?"

"None better. The most capable on this continent, I verily believe. If Joe is free and can go with you, you will get your loose with the sixty inch horns. I understand that he has entered into some sort of contract with the provincial police."

"With the police?" I repeated.

"Yes. He is to help them in such cases as may lie within the scope of his special experience. He is, indeed, the very last person I should like to have upon my trail had I committed a murder. He is a most skilled and minute observer, and you must not forget that the speciality of a Sherlock Holmes is the everyday routine of a woodsman. Observation and deduction are part and parcel of his daily existence. He literally reads as he runs. The floor of the forest is his page. And when a crime is committed in the woods these facts are very fortunate. There nature is the criminal's best ally. She seems to league herself with him in many ways. Often she delays the discovery of his ill doing; she covers his deeds with her leaves and her snow; his track she washes away with her rain, and more than all she provides him with a vast area of refuge, over which she sends the appointed hours of darkness, during which he can travel fast and far."

"All things considered, it is surprising that so many woods crimes are brought home to their perpetrators."

"There you are forgetting one very important point. I have been present at many trials and the most dangerous witnesses that I have ever seen have been men of the November Joe type—that is, practically illiterate woodsmen. Their evidence has a quality of terrible simplicity. They give minute but unanswerable details. All their experiences are first hand. They bring forward naked facts with sledge hammer results. Where a town bred man would see nothing but a series of blurred footprints in the morning dew, an ordinary dweller in the woods could learn something from them, but November Joe can often reconstruct the man who made them, sometimes in a manner and with an exactitude that has struck me as little short of marvelous."

"I see he has interested you," said I, half smiling.

"I confess he has. Looked at from a scientific standpoint I consider him the perfect product of his environment. There are few things I would enjoy more than to watch November using his experience and his super-normal senses in the unraveling of some crime of the woods."

"I threw the stump of my cigar into the fire."

"You have persuaded me," I said. "I will try to make a start by the end of the week. Where is Joe to be found?"

"As to that, I believe you might get into touch with him at Harding's farm, Silent Water, Beauce."

"I'll write to him."

"Not much use. He only calls for letters when he feels inclined."

"Then I'll go to Harding's and arrange the trip by word of mouth."

"That would certainly be the best plan, and, anyhow, the sooner you get into the woods the better. Besides, you will be more likely to secure Joe by doing that, as he is inclined to be shy of strangers."

I rose and shook hands with my host.

"Remember me to Joe," said he. "I like that young man. Goodby and good luck."

Along the borders of Beauce and Maine, between the United States and Canada, lies a land of spruce forest and of hardwood ridges. Here little farms stand on the edge of the big timber, and far beyond them, in the depths of the woodlands, lie lumber camps and the wide stung paths of trappers and peat hunters.

I left the cars at Silent Water and rode off at once to Harding's, the house of the Beauce farmer where I meant to put up for the night. Mrs. Harding received me genially and placed an excellent supper before me. While I was eating it a squall blew up with the fall of darkness, and I was glad enough to find myself in safe shelter.

Outside the wind was swishing among the pines which inclosed the farmhouse, when inside the telephone bell rang, which connected us with St. George, forty miles distant, rang suddenly and inconspicuously high above the clamor of the forest noises.

Mrs. Harding took up the receiver, and this is what I heard.

"My husband won't be home tonight; he's gone into St. George. No, I have no one to send. But how can I? There is no one here but me and the children. Well, there's Mr. Quaritch, a sport, staying the night. No, I couldn't ask him."

"Why not?" I inquired.

Mrs. Harding shook her head as she stood still holding the receiver. She was a matron of distinct comeliness, and she looked amazingly well.

"You can ask me anything," I urged.

"They want some one to carry a message to November Joe," she explained. "It's the provincial police on the phone."

"I'll go."

"Joe made me promise not to send any sports after him," she said doubtfully. "They all want him now he's famous."

"But November Joe is rather a friend of mine. I hunted with him years ago when he lived on the Montmorency."

"Is that so?" Her face relaxed a little. "Well, perhaps"—she conceded "Of course I'll carry the message."

"It's quite a way to his place. November doesn't care about strangers. He's a solitary man. You must follow the tote road you were on today fifteen miles, turn west at the deserted lumber camp, cross Charley's brook. Joe lives about two acres up the far bank." She lifted the receiver. "Shall I say you'll go?"

"By all means."

A few seconds later I was at the phone taking my instructions. It appeared that the speaker was the chief of police in Quebec, who was of course well known to me. I will let you have his own words.

"Very good of you, I'm sure, Mr. Quaritch. Yes, we want November Joe to be told that a man named Henry Lyon has been shot in his camp down at Big Tree portage, on Depot river. The news came in just now, telephoned through by a lumberjack who found the body. Tell Joe, please, success means \$50 to him. Yes, that's all. Much obliged. Yes, the sooner he hears about it the better. Good night."

I hung up the receiver, turned to Mrs. Harding and told her the facts.

"So November is connected with police work now?"

"Didn't you read in the newspapers about the 'Long Island Murder'?"

I remembered the case at once; it had been a nine days' wonder of headline and comment, and now I wondered how it was that I missed the mention of Joe's name.

"November was the man who put together that puzzle for them down in

Quebec."

"I had hoped to have a hunt with you, November," said I. "Indeed, that is what I came for, and there's nothing I'd like better than to try for your red deer buck tonight, but while I was at Harding's there was a ringup on the phone, and the provincial police sent through a message for you. It appears that a man named Henry Lyon has been shot in his camp at Big Tree portage. A lumberman found him and phoned the news into Quebec. The chief of police wants you to take on the case. He told me to say that success would mean \$50."

"That's too bad," said Joe. "I'd sooner hunt a deer than a man any day. Makes a fellow feel less badlike when he comes up with him. Well, Mr. Quaritch, I must be getting off, but you'll be wanting another guide. There's Charley Paul, down to St. Amel."

"Look here, November, I don't want Charley Paul or any other guide but you. The fact of the matter is that Sir Andrew McLerrick, the great doctor who was out with you last fall, has told me that I have been overdoing it and must come into the woods for rest. I've three months to put in, and from all I hear of you you won't take three months finding out who murdered Lyon."

Joe looked grave. "I may take more than that," said he, "for maybe I'll never find out at all. But I'm right pleased, Mr. Quaritch, to hear you can stay so long. There's plenty of grub in my shack, and I dare say that I shan't be many days gone."

"How far is it to Big Tree portage?"

"Five miles to the river and eight up it."

"I'd like to go with you."

"He gave me one of his quick smiles. 'Then I guess you'll have to wait for your breakfast till we are in the canoe. Turn the mare loose. She'll make Harding's by afternoon.'"

Joe entered the shack and came out again with one or two articles. In five minutes he had put together a tent, my sleeping things, food, ammunition and all necessities. The whole bundle he secured with his packing strap, lifted it and set out through the woods.

(To be Continued)

old Tom was overtaken by one of his habitual fits of talking big. Once when Tom spoke by the camp fire of some lake to which he desired to guide me and of never been stated that the shores had never been trodden by white man's foot Joe had to cover his mouth with his hand. When we were alone, Todd having departed to make some necessary repairs to the canoe, I asked Joe what he meant by laughing at his elders.

"I suppose a boy's foot ain't a man's anyways," remarked Joe innocently, and more he would not say.

The sun was showing over the tree tops when I drew rein by the door of the shack, and at the same moment came in view of the slum but powerful figure of a young man who was busy rolling some gear into a pack. He raised himself and, just as I was about to speak, drawled out:

"My! Mr. Quaritch, you! Who'd a' thought it?"

The young woodsman came forward with a lazy grin and gave me welcome with a curious gentleness that was one of his characteristics, but which left me in doubt as to its genuineness.

I feel that I shall never be able to describe November. Suffice it to say that the loose knit boy I remembered had developed into one of the finest specimens of manhood that ever grew up among the balsam trees; near six feet tall, lithe and powerful, with a neck like a column and a straight featured face, the sheer good looks of this son of the woods were disturbing. He was clearly also not only the product but the master of his environment.

"Well, well, Mr. Quaritch, many's the time I've been thinking of the days we had with old Tom way up on the Roustik."

"They were good days, Joe, weren't they?"

"Sure, sure, they were!"

"I hope we shall have some more together."

"If it's hunting you want, I'm glad you're here, Mr. Quaritch. There's a fine buck using around by Widdeneys pond. Maybe we will get a look at him come sunset, for he's most always moves out of the thick bush about dark."

Then humor lit a spark in his splendid gray eyes as he looked up at me. "But we'll have a cup of tea first."

November Joe's by the way, I ought to mention that his birth in the month of November had given him his name, as I say, November Joe's weakness for tea had in the old days been a target upon which I had often exercised my faculty for irony and banter. The weakness was evidently still alive.

"I had hoped to have a hunt with you, November," said I. "Indeed, that is what I came for, and there's nothing I'd like better than to try for your red deer buck tonight, but while I was at Harding's there was a ringup on the phone, and the provincial police sent through a message for you. It appears that a man named Henry Lyon has been shot in his camp at Big Tree portage. A lumberman found him and phoned the news into Quebec. The chief of police wants you to take on the case. He told me to say that success would mean \$50."

"That's too bad," said Joe. "I'd sooner hunt a deer than a man any day. Makes a fellow feel less badlike when he comes up with him. Well, Mr. Quaritch, I must be getting off, but you'll be wanting another guide. There's Charley Paul, down to St. Amel."

"Look here, November, I don't want Charley Paul or any other guide but you. The fact of the matter is that Sir Andrew McLerrick, the great doctor who was out with you last fall, has told me that I have been overdoing it and must come into the woods for rest. I've three months to put in, and from all I hear of you you won't take three months finding out who murdered Lyon."

Joe looked grave. "I may take more than that," said he, "for maybe I'll never find out at all. But I'm right pleased, Mr. Quaritch, to hear you can stay so long. There's plenty of grub in my shack, and I dare say that I shan't be many days gone."

"How far is it to Big Tree portage?"

"Five miles to the river and eight up it."

"I'd like to go with you."

"He gave me one of his quick smiles. 'Then I guess you'll have to wait for your breakfast till we are in the canoe. Turn the mare loose. She'll make Harding's by afternoon.'"

Joe entered the shack and came out again with one or two articles. In five minutes he had put together a tent, my sleeping things, food, ammunition and all necessities. The whole bundle he secured with his packing strap, lifted it and set out through the woods.

(To be Continued)

DEAD LETTER LIST.

Jacob Francis, C. G. Gates, Dalin Hostetler, Emel Liphart.

Cards—Miss Iva Lottig, J. P. Sheek, Wm. Van Holt.

Nov. 21, 1914, Meyersdale, Pa. J. F. NAUGLE, P. M.

Gore, Ga., P. A. Morgan had occasion recently to use a liver medicine and says of Foley Cathartic Tablets: "They thoroughly cleansed my system and I felt like a new man—light and free. They are the best medicine I have ever taken for constipation. They keep the stomach sweet, liver active, bowels regular. Sold by all Dealers Everywhere. ad

CASTORIA

For Infants and Children.

The Kind You Have Always Bought

Bears the Signature of

In Use For Over Thirty Years

CASTORIA

THE BEAUTY ROOM

That is the proper name for the bathroom, for there is where beauty is aided and acquired.

Beauty is largely an indication of good health and without health, no beauty.

Bathe for health in a "Standard" modern bathroom such as we install—always with the customer's satisfaction in mind. We know how to do satisfactory work. Confirm our statement by calling on us.

Standard "Schwartz" Lavatory

BAER & CO.

WAVERLY GASOLINE

are the products of more than 30 years' experience. Four brands—76—Special—Motor—Auto

Power Without Carbon

Waverly gasolines are all distilled and refined from Pennsylvania Crude Oil. Clean, Uniform. More miles per gallon. Contain no crude compressed natural gas product.

Waverly Oil Works Co., Pittsburgh, Pa. Independent Refiners

Illuminants—Lubricants—Paraffine Wax

Waverly Products Sold by

BITTNER MACHINE WORKS - D. H. WEINEL - P. J. COVER & SON - Meyersdale

JOSEPH L. TRESSLER

Funeral Director and Embalmer

Meyersdale, Somerset Co., Penn'a

Residence: 309 North Street Economy Phone. Office: 229 Center Street Both Phones.

Start Your Holiday Buying Today

There are hundreds of useful gifts that you can buy for men at a man's store; things that men and young men use and would be glad to have any day in the year.

Here are many nice little necessities and right now our stocks are unusually complete. Better make your choice while the buying is best.

Should sizes be incorrect or gifts duplicated, we'll be glad to make things right—that's a part of our service.

Plentiful stocks of HART, SCHAFFNER & MARX clothes. Striking things in suits and overcoats; full lines of shirts, neckwear, hosiery;—everything for a man.

Make Him a Useful Christmas.

HARTLEY & BALDWIN,

The Home of Hart, Schaffner & Marx Clothes

MEYERSDALE, PA.