



NOVEMBER JOE

The Detective of the Woods

by Hesketh Prichard.

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SYNOPSIS.

James Quaritch engages November Joe as his guide. Joe and he go to Big Tree portage to investigate the murder of a trapper named Lyon.

Joe decides that the murderer followed Lyon to his camp and shot him from a canoe.

By studying woodland evidence and making clever deductions Joe discovers the murderer, Highamson. Lumberman Close reports that Blackmask, a highwayman, is robbing his men.

CHAPTER IV.

The Seven Lumberjacks.

THE more I saw of Joe in the days which followed, the more I appreciated the man and the more I became convinced of his remarkable gifts. It was not long after our return from St. Amiel before Joe succeeded in getting me a fair shot at the large red deer buck of Widdenee pond, and it so happened that the killing of this buck brought us news of old Highamson, for we took the head down to him to set up.

Joe and I walked over and found him living with his daughter, Janey Lyon, for the police had never been successful in discovering the identity of the sender of Big Tree portage. The two of us were very happy together, but I had to acknowledge that I feared from what I saw that the beautiful Janey would not continue to bear the name of Lyon much longer. I said as much to November Joe as we were walking back.

"That's sure," said he. "Old Man Highamson told me that neither Baxter Gurd nor Miller don't give her no peace. Well, I guess a woman's better married anyway."

It was drawing on toward evening and had begun to rain when we turned from the woods into the mile long trail that led to November's shack. His quick glance fell at once upon the ground and, following his eye, I saw the impression of fresh tracks.

"What do they tell you?" I asked, for it was always a matter of interest to me to put November's skill to the little daily tests that came in my way.

"Try yourself," said he.

"A man in moccasins—probably an Indian—has passed along. Isn't that right?" I asked.

November Joe smiled grimly.

"Not just quite. The man isn't an Indian; he's a white man, and he carries big news and has not come very far."

"You're sure?" I said, stooping to examine the trail more closely, but without result.

"Certain! The Indian moccasins has no raised heel. These have. He's not come far. He's traveling fast—see, he springs from the ball of the foot, and when a man finishes a journey on the run you may be sure he thinks he's got a good reason for getting to the end of it. This trail leads nowhere but to my shack, and we'll sure find our man there."

Ten minutes later, when we came in sight of November's house, we were aware of a big man sitting on a log smoking his pipe beside the door. He was middle aged, with a hard face, and there was more gray in his russet beard than his age warranted. As soon as we appeared he leaped up and came across the open to meet us.

"Blackmask is at it again!" he cried. I saw a gleam of anticipation, if not of pleasure, cross November's face. He turned to me.

"This is Mr. Close, manager of the River Star Pulp company's Camp C," he said. "I'd like to make you known to Mr. Quaritch, Mr. Close." This courtesy concluded, he added in his deliberate tones, "What's Blackmask done now?"

"He's at his old tricks! But this year we'll lay him by the heels, or my name's not Joshua Close." The speaker looked up, and, seeing my puzzled expression, addressed himself to me.

"Last year there were five separate robberies committed on the road between Camp C and the settlement," he explained. "Each time it was just a single lumberjack who got held up, and each time a man in a black mask was the robber. November here was away."

"Up in Wyoming with a Philadelphia lawyer after elk," supplemented the tall young woodsman.

"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

some meat as I often do when I kill anywhere nigh the camp." As we made our way toward C. November found the tracks of a young buck which had crossed the tote road since the rain, and while I waited he slipped away like a shadow into the wild raspberry growth, returning twenty minutes later with the buck upon his shoulders.

On reaching Camp C November sold his deer to the cook, and then we went to the office. The men were all away at work, but we found the manager, to 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're 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 he, 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 turmoil 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's 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 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 Tidson's bridge. Seem' 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,



"Hands up and no fooling!"

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Wedding Charlie and last 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 nails in the heel of the right boot and fifteen in the other. How's that for tracking?"

CHAPTER V.

The Guilty Man.

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

"How many bottles of whisky had you?" said he.

"Nary one," answered Thompson. "There isn't no nearer than Lavalotte, as you well know. We wasn't drunk, we was drugged. We must 'a' been, though how it was done beats me, for we had nothing but bread and bacon and tea, and I made the tea myself."

"Where's the kettle?"

"We left that and the frying pan back at the hut, for we're going to hunt the country for the thief. You'll come along, Nov?"

"On my own condition, or I'll have nothing to do with it."

"What's it?"

"That nary a man of you goes back to Tidson's bridge but till I give you leave."

"But we want to catch the robber."

"Very well. Go and try if you think you can do it."

An outburst of argument arose, but soon one and another began to say: "We'll leave it to you, Nov." "Mind you fetch my \$100 back for me, Nov." "Leave Nov alone." "Go on, Nov."

November laughed. "I suppose you all sleep with your money on you?"

It appeared they all had, and Lars and Chris, who possessed pocketbooks, and found them flung, empty, in a corner of the hut.

"Well, Mr. Quaritch and me'll be getting along, boys. I'll let you know if I've any luck." Then suddenly November turned to the big spokesman and said, "By the way, Thompson, did you fill that kettle at the brook before you found you'd lost your cash?"

"No, I run right back."

"That's lucky," said November, and we walked away in a roar of shouted questions to the canoe placed at our disposal by Close. By water we could run down to Tidson's bridge in an hour or two.

"Do you think this is the work of the same man that held up Dan Michaels?"

"Guess so. Can't be sure. The ground's fine and soft, and we ought to get the answer to a good many questions down there."

Thanks to the canoe and a short cut known to November, we arrived at our destination in admirable time.

First of all, skirting the path, we went to the hut where the six had slept. A few articles dropped from the hastily made packs lay about, the frying pan beside the stove and the kettle on its side by the door. November moved round examining everything in his deft, light way. Lastly, he picked up the kettle and peered inside.

"What's in it?" said I.

"Nothing," returned November. "Well, Thompson told you he hadn't filled it," I reminded him.

He gave me a queer little smile. "Just so," said he and strolled for fifty yards or so up the tote road.

"I've been along looking at the footmarks of them six mossbacks," he volunteered. "Now we'll look around here."

The inspection of the tracks was naturally a somewhat lengthy business. November had studied the trail of the six men to some purpose, for, though he hardly paused as he ranged the trodden ground, so swift were his eyes that he named each of the men to me as he pointed to their several tracks. As we approached the bank he indicated a distinct set of footsteps, which we followed to the hut and back again to the water.

"He's the chap that did it," said November. "That's pretty plain."

"He's a heavier man than I am, and he walks rather on his heels."

November nodded, and began to follow the trail, which went down into the stream. He stood at the water's edge examining some stones which had been recently displaced, then waded down into it.

"Where was his boat?" I asked.

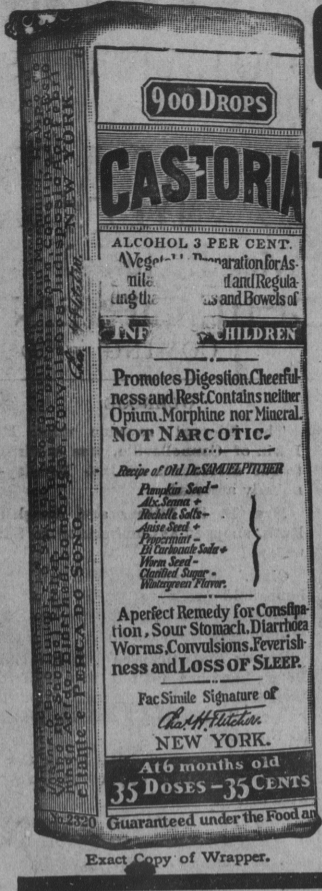
But November had by now reached a large flat piece some feet out in the water, and this he was looking round and over with great care. Then he beckoned to me. The stone was a large, flat one, as I have said, and he showed me some scratches upon its farther surface. The scratches were deep and irregular. I stared at them, but to me they conveyed nothing.

"They don't look like the mark of a boat," I ventured.

"They aren't. But that chap made them all right," he said.

"But how or why?"

November laughed. "I can't answer that yet, but I'll tell you this, the robbery was done between 2 and 3 o'clock last night."



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November pointed to a grove of birch on the nearer bank.

"Those trees," he answered; then, on seeing my look of bewilderment, he



November Had Reached a Large Flat Stone.

added, "and he wasn't a 200 pound man any heavier than you, but a little thin chap, and he hadn't a boat."

"Then how did he get away—by wading?"

"Maybe he waded."

"If he did he must have left the stream somewhere," I exclaimed.

"Sure."

"Then you'll be able to find his tracks where he landed."

"No need to."

"Why?"

"Because I'm sure of my man."

"Is it the same who held up Dan Michaels?"

"Yes."

With that I had to be satisfied. It was late at night when we approached Camp C. We jumped ashore and went silently straight to the office, where the manager lived. A crowd stood round, and two men were holding the door; one was the burly Thompson.

"Hello! You needn't bother no more, Nov," he shouted. "We've got him."

"Who've you got?"

"The blackguard that robbed us."

"Good!" said November. "Who is it?"

"Look at him!" Thompson banged open the office door and showed us the manager, Close, sitting on a chair by the fire, looking a good deal disheveled.

"Mr. Close?" exclaimed November. "Yes, the boss—no other!"

"Got evidence?" inquired November, staring at Close.

"Tiptop! No one seen him from dark to dawn. And we got the boots. Found 'em in a biscuit tin on a shelf in the shanty just behind here where he sleeps."

(To be Continued)

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Hannah More's Strictness.

For real Sabbatarianism we must go back a little. There was Hannah More, for instance, who refused to dine out on the Sabbath and retired to her own room on the very hint of music on that day. And more. Expressions like "christening" a ship, the "salvation" of a country or the "ascension" of a balloon were quite against her idea of the fitness of the use of words which had been exalted by their religious associations.—London Chronicle.

Psalms Not Barred.

The other evening Miss Y., a maiden lady of uncertain years, suspecting the cook was entertaining her beau downstairs, called Martha and inquired whether she did not hear some one talking with her.

"Oh, no, ma'am" cried the quick witted Martha. "It was only me singing a psalm."

"Very good," returned Miss Y. significantly. "You may amuse yourself with psalms, but let's have no hims."—Exchange.

Her Awful Sin.

A little girl of six once went in great distress to her mother, saying that she had committed a sin which could never be forgiven and which was too bad to be repeated. By dint of a little coaxing she was induced to make a full confession, which was poured forth in this wise:

"I felt so sorry for poor Satan and wanted to give him a little comfort. So I got a glass of cold water and poured it down a little hole in the kitchen floor."

Equine Evolution.

Agos ago the horse was an animal no larger than a fox terrier. Today the species has gone so far ahead that the elephantine horses seen on the Liverpool docks are the wonder of everybody who has seen them, and one of these horses is able to do as much pulling as three ordinary horses which have not been bred in a similar manner.—London Answers.

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