

# Out of the Whirlpool

*A Story Big With Human Interest, and With the Picturesque Canadian North as a Background*

By SAMUEL ALEXANDER WHITE

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DEPUTY SHERIFF EVIACK'S energy was at low ebb as he made camp at the Falls on the west branch of the Montreal River near where it debouched into Matchewan Lake. The strenuous search and exhaustive work up the west branch, culminating in the raid upon Lavicienne's blind-pig on the shores of Mislinion Lake, had had its effect upon even Drury Eviack's mighty frame. While he upturned his canoe against a tamarack root, he sighed, and that sigh confided to the wilderness in general that this expedition in the interests of law and order was the toughest he had ever undertaken. Such back-breaking portaging, such nerve-fraying awaiting of opportunities, and such hound-nosed ferreting out of clues, Eviack had never known, although for six years he had been marshal of a backwoods county in the wilds of the State of Maine. That was before he had joined the Canadian force and been sent north as a red-light spotter.

A new Brunswickian by birth, straight as a pine and tough as the pine's vital roots, Eviack was eminently fitted for the muscular test imposed by the Montreal River district patrol, and for the nerve strain impending on his peculiar duties. But he found out that he had need of his high-tension point of courage and of his last ounce of sinew. He was of a new, unbitten country, where they played nothing but men's games, and committed only men's crimes. In this new country the deputy sheriff saw that they looked upon life in the strong light of consequence. They drank good fortune or vicissitude at one draught and called it fine. And those who took crime to their bosoms, took it in its entirety. Half-measures were consigned to the devil as weak traits of character. Commandments were not cracked with mathematical exactitude of design, pieced with superb delicacy, and held together with the elastic bands of conscience. Instead, they were smashed with a bang that echoed like the Falls of the Lady Evelyn.

And such a banging had rung in the ears of the law for months in connection with the Lavicienne affair that flannel-shirted and unstarred sleuths had taken the trail that leads by many a secret way to the North Bay courts. Lavicienne's hang-out was a big log cabin on the east shore of Mislinion Lake. It existed under the guise of an independent trading post in competition with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Revillons, and it could be reached by going up the west branch of the Montreal or crossing over from the main Montreal by a matter of three lakes and four portages commencing at the foot of Matchewan. Long ago the cabin had been spotted as a blind-pig and a red-light resort. But spotting is one thing and conviction is another. They are as far removed from each other as the brinks of a broad canyon, and cleverness is the long trestle that bridges the gulf. However, the searchlight of perseverance had finally pierced the veiling maze of baffling and intangible clues. The rumour of a woman's death at Lavicienne's pricked a pin hole for the light. And Deputy Sheriff Drury Eviack was the man to rip away the screen.

FROM the viewpoint of the law, the raid by half a dozen constables was entirely successful. Only one man, Opio Duchabing, had escaped, and there were hopes of his capture. Inspector Caldbeck had congratulated Eviack on the part he played, and hinted at promotion, but from Eviack's personal viewpoint, the raid was not a success. His whole being was sore from the unexpected probing of an old wound. His pride was trampled on. And his conscience was thrown into the discard. For he knew he had shirked his full duty the night of the raid. A sudden impulse, no doubt human enough and merciful enough, had caused him to betray the well-defined principles of law and order, and in the melee which followed the rush upon Lavicienne's cabin he had let a girl go by.

Intermittent flashing of dark lanterns had stabbed the gloom into which the voluntary smashing of lights plunged the hang-out at the raiders' approach. The number of the raiders, six, allotted a man to each door and to each window, and Eviack's lantern glared full upon the girl's face as he kicked in his door. Recognition took place in that flash, recognition that struck the deputy sheriff like a blow. The face was one he had known down on the New Brunswick-Maine border, known too well for

his own peace. For Necra Nevin was fresh-cheeked, blue-eyed, and innocent then, and Eviack knew she had liked him well before their quarrel the day he arrested old Kale Nevin for border smuggling. That was a bitter thing to do, but Eviack had done it, then promptly resigned and came to the Canadian North. That ever Necra Nevin should come into this world again he did not permit himself to imagine even in his wildest hopes and visionings, and the sight of her in Lavicienne's cabin staggered him. He fell back a step in amazement, then, realizing his duty, barred the door again. But recognition had been mutual. The girl was not slow to catch at the chance. Eviack found her eyes pleading with him, liquid eyes full of softness as a fawn's, and with grim resolve he snapped shut his lantern slide lest they might persuade him. But in the dark, as his shoulders filled the doorway, two arms were round his neck and Necra was straining for freedom and beseeching him to stand aside. A second he wavered. Then, with a sound in his throat that was half choke and half curse, he stood aside and let her rush past.

INSIDE the cabin all was uproar, and before the deputy sheriff could block the doorway again, a man's figure bolted through on the heels of the girl.

"Stop!" commanded Eviack, from the door he dared not leave a second time.

Then his Colts' barked, but Opio Duchabing's mocking yell from the tangled spruce growth told that he was unhit.

Eviack fired again, futilely, and jumped into the room. A great wrath at Opio Duchabing's escape surged over him. He manhandled Lavicienne and Lavicienne's guests with savage strength, his huge form towering over all in the place. In five minutes every one was handcuffed, but the sight of these beaten into submission did not cure Eviack's wrath. Duchabing was not one of the sullen row that sat

on the bunks. And Duchabing would have been one of them if he had not let Necra Nevin escape!

Opio Duchabing was a vicious quarter-breed. Cree blood showed in his dark skin and feature casting. He talked bad English with a Scotch burr, and gestured like some ancient French forbear. His record was black, and if the secret places of the wilderness could have spoken, Opio would have paid his reckoning long before. He had the creative brain of a devil, and, according to trappers and rivermen, what villainies stood so scored against him were inventions of atrocious genius. His address for months past had been the wide Northland. He was skilfully keeping beyond the poking fingers of the law, and the persistent forefinger which annoyed him most was the deputy sheriff, Drury Eviack. Duchabing had boasted that he would do for Eviack. The deputy sheriff knew of Opio's boast, and he yearned to meet the quarter-breed. On the night of the raid his chance had come, and he had let it go. It did not soothe Eviack's feelings any to hear the other prisoners brag insolently about Duchabing's escape, nor to hear Inspector Caldbeck lament the one piece of bad luck attendant on the coup. Nobody mentioned the girl. None of the other raiders seemed to know that Lavicienne's crowd lacked a female member. Five other sorrowful-eyed women had been packed off, shackled with the men, and Caldbeck, apparently ignorant of Eviack's double responsibility, lauded his aggressive measures.

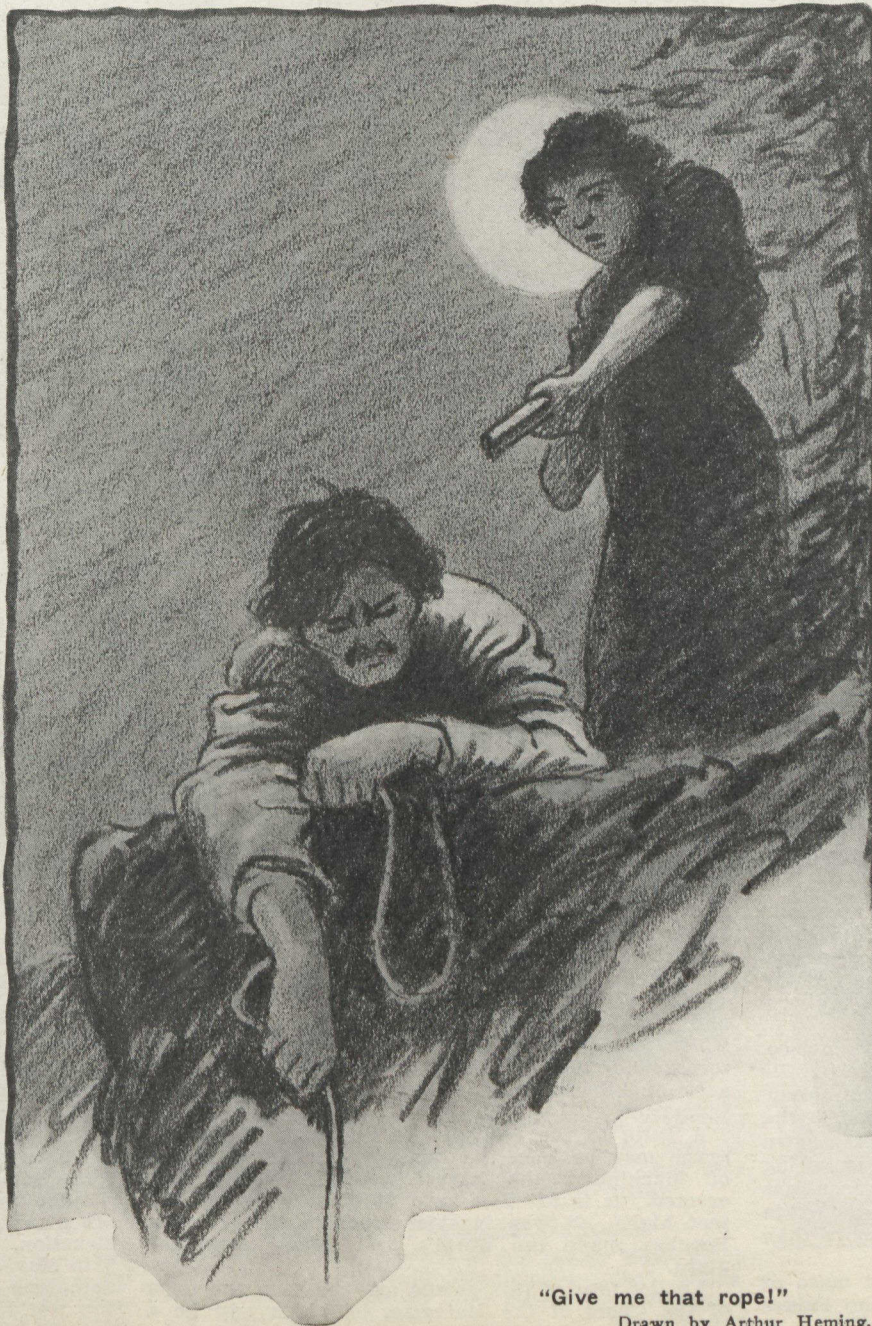
Because a whisper connected Opio Duchabing with the death of the woman at Lavicienne's, the deputy sheriff felt his failure more deeply. So he asked the Inspector's permission to take up the quarter-breed's trail while the other constables went down to North Bay with the prisoners. From Mislinion Lake he traced Duchabing up the west branch to the forking of Pigeon and Duncan Lakes, but Duchabing was crafty. He went up Duncan Lake to Duncan Creek, took the cut-across to the Montreal again and escaped down-river. Where the quarter-breed would head from there Eviack could not guess, but he himself was out of supplies, and he was making for Fort Matchewan. The Fort lay some distance below the mouth of the west branch, and the deputy sheriff went into camp at the Falls with the intention of indulging in a much-needed sleep and reaching Matchewan next day. Of late he hadn't been able to sleep much. Two disturbing elements filled his mind and kept it working overtime. The apparition of Necra Nevin flying from Lavicienne's hang-out had knocked his brain all askew, and the erratic canoe flights he had taken during the ensuing weeks, coupled with the failure to get Opio Duchabing, did not make for mental order. For Eviack was wilderness born, and nothing irritates the wilderness born more than to face a problem which seems insoluble.

## II.

ON the rock wall above the Falls Eviack wedged two sticks in the tamarack root to keep his canoe from being upset by the wind which had a disconcerting habit of springing from the river pools at midnight, taking liberties with one's blankets, and rolling cooking utensils about the rocks like merry tambourines. When he had spread his blankets underneath his canoe, he stood looking at them undecidedly. Finally he kicked them aside with the toe of a worn cruiser and walked off to a balsam clump, returning with an armful of springy bough ends which he proceeded to lay in rows overlapping each other for a couch on the granite. He felt too sore from the shoulders down to essay sleeping as he always did, on the hard rock with a duck jacket under his head. A little of his feeling was muscle soreness, but more of it was something inside, something which ached dully and remorsefully.

The blaze of his camp fire in a measure relieved his discouragement, so that he began to hum an old river song he had not sung since leaving Maine. Its rhythm had a soothing effect, and he continued to hum the song as he clambered down the rocks to fill his bail-handled coffee pot with river water.

Beneath him the great whirlpool above the Falls writhed and circled with serpentine twists of surge and ripple. Owing to Eviack's nearness to it, the spot which he formerly looked upon as a portage-maker took on a different and more deadly aspect. It seemed as if an immense mine shaft had been sunk across the river's course by a



"Give me that rope!"

Drawn by Arthur Heming.