

# November Joe, The Detective of the Woods.

## CHAPTER IV.

**The Seven Lumberjacks.**  
**T**HE 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. Amel before Joe succeeded in getting me a fair shot at the large red deer buck of Widdens pond, and it so happened that the killing of this buck brought us news of old Highmason, for we took the bend 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 avenger of Big Tree portage. The two seemed very happy together, but I must 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 nature," said he. "Old Man Highmason 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 his news and has not come very far."

"You're sure?" I said, stooping to examine the trail more closely, but with our result.

"Certain! The Indian moccasins has no raised heel. These have. He's not come far. He's traveling fast—see, he sprays 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 home, 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 hold up, and each time a man in a black mask was the robber. November here was away."

"Up in Wyoming with a Philadelphin 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 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!"

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 facets 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 in some excuse to take me to Camp A 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 clean 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, him 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'll think I only come to carry their 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'd be shy of such a big party."

"Maybe" said November "Will your permission Mr. Close, we can 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 turmoil was about. Learning against the wall of the bunkhouse, the silent November surveyed the clamoring knot of men with grim humor.

"I tell you again, we're being 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 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 was coming along dark when we camped in the old log hut of Tidson's bridge. See! what had happened to Dan, we agreed to keep a watch all down. First watch was Harry's. In an hour and a half he were to wake me. He never did. The sun was 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, Wedding, 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 mind," 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.

**T**HERE 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 one 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."

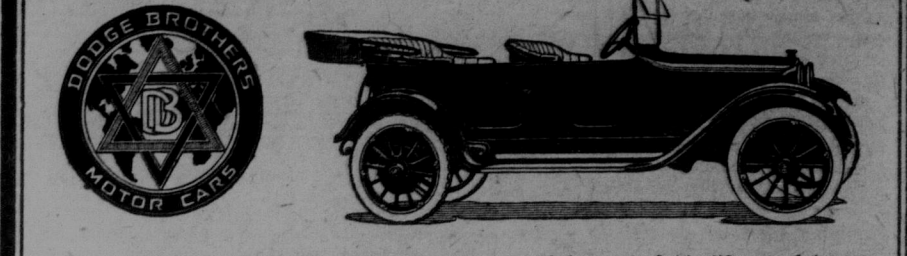
"But we want to catch the robber."

"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 slept 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.



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questions to the disposal by Close, run down to Tidson's house or two. "Do you think the same man that chases?" "Guess so. On ground's fine and get the answer to questions down there." "Thanks to the e known to November destination in adu First of all, went to the b... slept. A few articles hastily made packing pan beside the on its side by t moved round exa his deft light wa up the kettle and "What's in it?" "Nothing," retu "Well, Thompsu filled it." I remi He gave me a "Just so," said he yards or so up th "I've been alon marks of them st unteered. "Now here." "The inspectio trally a somew November had st six men to some he hardly pause den ground, so s he named each he pointed to t we approached t a distinct set of followed to the water. "He's the chap vember. "That's "He is a heavie he walks rather November nodde low the trail, w the stream. He edge examining had been recent ed down into it. "Where was h But November a large flat ston water, and this and over with beckoned to me large, flat-one, s showed me som farther surface, deep and irregu but to me they "They don't lo boat." I venture "They aren't, them all right." "But how or November lau that yet, bu robbery was a clock last nigh "What makes November pol on the nearer l "Those trees, on seeing my lo