

# NOVEMBER JOE: WOODSMAN DETECTIVE

## THE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR ROBBERY

BY HESKETH PRICHARD

Illustrations by Percy E. Cowen.



WANT THE WHOLE affair kept unofficial and secret," said Harris, the Bank Manager.

November Joe nodded. He was seated on the extreme edge of a chair in the Manager's private office, looking curiously out of place in that prim, richly furnished room.

"The truth is," continued Harris, "we bankers can not afford to have our customers' minds unsettled. There are, as you know, Joe, numbers of small depositors, especially in the rural districts, who would be scared out of their seven senses if they knew that this infernal Cecil James Atterson had made off with one hundred thousand dollars. They'd never trust us again."

"A hundred thousand dollars is a wonderful lot of money," agreed Joe.

"Our reserve is over twenty millions—two hundred times a hundred thousand," replied Harris grandiloquently.

Joe smiled in his pensive manner. That so? Then I guess the Bank won't be hurt if Atterson escapes," said he.

"I shall be bitterly disappointed if you permit him to do so," returned Harris. "But here, let's get down to business."

On the previous night, Harris, the Manager of the Quebec Branch of the Grand Banks of Canada, had rung me up to borrow November Joe, who was at the time building a log camp for me on one of my properties. I sent Joe a telegram, with the result that within five hours he had walked the twenty miles into Quebec and was now with me at the bank ready to hear Harris's account of the robbery.

The Manager cleared his throat and began with a question.

"Have you ever seen Atterson?"

"No."

"I THOUGHT you might have. He always spends his vacations in the woods—fishing, usually. The last two years he has fished in Red River. This is what happened: On Saturday I told him to go down to the strong room to fetch up a fresh batch of dollar and five-dollar bills, as we were short. It happened that in the same safe there were a number of bearer securities. Atterson soon brought me the notes I had sent him for with the keys. That was about noon on Saturday. We closed at one o'clock. Yesterday, Monday, Atterson did not turn up. At first I thought nothing of it, but when it came to afternoon, and he had neither come nor sent any reason for his absence, I began to smell a rat. I went down to the strong room and found that over one hundred thousand dollars in notes and bearer securities were missing.

I communicated at once with the police and they started in to make inquiries. I must tell you that Atterson lived in a boarding house behind the Frontenac. No one had seen him on Sunday, but on Saturday night a fellow boarder called Collings, reports Atterson as going up to his room about 10:30. This Collings was the last person who saw him. Atterson spoke to him and said he was off to spend Sunday on the south shore. From that moment, Atterson has vanished."

"Did n't the police find out anything further?" inquired Joe.

"Well, we could n't trace him at any of the railway stations."

"I s'pose they wired to every other police station within a hundred miles?"

"They did, and that is what brought you into it."

"Why?"

"The constable at Roberville replied that a man answering to the description of Atterson was seen by a farmer walking along the Stoneham road and heading north on Sunday morning, early."

"No more facts?"

"No."

"Then, let's get back to the robbery. Why are you so plum sure Atterson done it?"

"The notes and securities were there on Saturday morning."

"How do you know?"

"It's my business to know. I saw them myself."

"Huh! . . ."

And no one else went down to the strong room?"

"Only Atterson."

"Who keeps the key?"

"I do. It was never out of my possession."

November was silent for a few moments.



"We bankers can not afford to have our customers' minds unsettled."

"How long has Atterson been with the Bank?"

"Two years, odd. There was never anything against him before."

At this point a clerk knocked at the door, and entering brought in some letters. Harris stiffened as he noticed the writing on one of them. He cut it open and when the clerk was gone out, he read aloud the following note from Atterson:

"I hereby resign my splendid and lucrative position in the Grand Banks of Canada. It is a dog's dirty life; any way, it is so for a man of spirit. You can give the week's pay that's owing to me to buy milk and buns for the next meeting of Directors."

"What's the postmark?" asked Joe.

"Rimouski. Sunday, 9:30 a. m."

"It looks like Atterson's the thief," remarked Joe.

"I've always been sure of it!" cried Harris.

"I was n't," said Joe.

"Are you sure of it now?"

"I'm inclined that way, because Atterson had that letter posted by a confederate. He was seen here in town on Saturday at 10:30 and he could n't have posted no letter in Rimouski in time for the 9:30 a. m. on Sunday unless he'd gone there on the 7 o'clock express on Saturday evening. "Yes, Atterson's the thief, all right. And if that really was him they saw Stoneham ways, he's had time to get thirty mile of bush between us and him, and he can go right on till he's in Labrador. I doubt you'll see your hundred thousand dollars again, Mr. Harris."

"Bah! You can trail him easily enough!"

Joe shook his head. "If you was to put me on his tracks, I could," said he; "but up there in the Laurentides he'll sure pinch a canoe and make along a waterway."

"H'm!" coughed Harris. "My Directors won't want to pay you two dollars a day for nothing."

"Two dollars a day?" said Joe in his gentle voice. "I should n't a' thought that one hundred times one thousand dollars could stand a strain like that!"

I laughed. "Look here, November, I think I'd like to make this bargain for you."

"Yes, sure," said the young woodsman.

"Then I'll sell your services to Harris here for five dollars a day if you fail; and twenty per cent of the sum you recover if you succeed," I went on.

Joe looked at me with wide eyes; but he said nothing. "Well, Harris, is it on or off?" I asked.

"Oh, on, I suppose, confound you!" said Harris.

November looked at both of us with a broad smile.

TWENTY hours later, Joe, a police trooper named Hobson, and I were deep in the woods. We had hardly paused to interview the farmer at Roberville, and then had passed on down the old deserted roads until at last we entered the forest, or as it is locally called, the "bush."

"Where are you heading for?" Hobson asked Joe.

"Red River, because if it was really Atterson the farmer saw, I guess he'll have gone up there."

"Why do you think that?"

"Red River's the overflow of Snow Lake and several trappers have canoes on Snow Lake. There's none of them trappers there now in July, so he can steal a canoe easy. Besides, a man who fears pursuit always likes to get into a country he knows, and you heard Mr. Harris say how Atterson had fished Red River two vacations. Besides . . ." here Joe stopped and pointed to the ground. . . . "them's Atterson's tracks. Leastways, it's a black fox to a lynx pell they are his."

"But you've never seen him. What reason have you . . ." demanded Hobson.

"When first we came on them about four hours back, while you was lightin' your pipe," replied Joe, "they come out of the bush and when we come near Cartier's place they went back into the bush again."