

Then, a mile beyond Cartier's, out of the bush they come on to the road. What can that mean? Feller who made the tracks don't want to be seen. No. 8 boots, city made, nails in 'em, rubber heels. Come on."

I will not attempt to describe our journey hour by hour, nor tell how November clung to the trail, following it over areas of hard ground and rock, noticing a scratch here and a broken twig there. The trooper, Hobson, proved to be a good track-reader, but he thought himself a better,



There came to us the sound of his monotonous muttering

and was a little jealous of Joe's, to me, obvious superiority.

We slept that night beside the trail. According to November, the thief was not many hours ahead of us. Everything depended upon whether he could reach Red River and a canoe before we caught up with him. Still, it was not possible to follow a trail in the darkness, so perforce we camped. The next morning November wakened us at daylight and once more we hurried forward.

For some time we followed Atterson's footsteps, and then found that they left the road. The police officer went crashing along till Joe stopped him with a gesture.

"Listen!" he whispered.

We moved on quietly and saw that not fifty yards ahead of us a man was walking excitedly up and down. His face was quite clear in the slanting sunlight, a resolute face with a small dark moustache and a two-days' growth of beard. His head was sunk upon his chest in an attitude of the utmost despair; he waved his hands, and on the still air there came to us the sound of his monotonous muttering.

We crept upon him. As we did so, Hobson leaped forward and snapping his handcuffs on the man's wrists cried:

"Atterson, I've got you!"

ATTERTSON sprang like a man on a wire; his face went dead white. He stood quite still for a moment as if dazed; then he said, in a queer voice: "Got me, have you? Much good may it do you!" "Hand over that packet you're carrying," answered Hobson.

There was another pause.

"By the way, I'd like to hear exactly what I'm charged with," said Atterson.

"Like to hear!" said Hobson. "You know. Theft of one hundred thousand dollars from the Grand Banks. May as well hand them over and put me to no more trouble!"

"You can take all the trouble you like," said the prisoner.

Hobson plunged his hands into Atterson's pockets and searched him thoroughly, but found nothing.

"They are not on him," he cried. "Try his pack."

From the pack November produced a square bottle of whiskey, some bread, salt, a slab of mutton . . . that was all.

"Where have you hidden the stuff?" demanded Hobson.

Suddenly, Atterson laughed.

"So you think I robbed the Bank?" he said. "I've got a grudge against them, and I'm glad to hear they've been hit by some one, though I'm not the man. Any way, I'll have you and them for wrongful arrest with violence." He turned to us. "You two are witnesses."

"Do you deny you're Cecil Atterson?" said Hobson.

"No, I am Atterson right enough."

"Then look here, Atterson, your best chance is to show us where you've hid the stuff. Your counsel can put that in your favor at your trial."

"I'm not taking any advice just now, thank you, I have said I know nothing of the robbery."

Hobson looked him up and down. "You'll sing another tune by-and-bye," he said ironically. "We may as well start in now, Joe, and find where he's cached that packet."

November was fingering over the pack that lay open on the ground, examining it and its contents with concentrated attention. Atterson had sunk down under a tree like a weary man.

Hobson and Joe made a rapid examination of the vicinity. A few yards brought them to the end of Atterson's tracks.

"Here's where he slept," said Hobson. "It's all pretty clear. He was dog-tired and just collapsed. I guess that was last night. It's an old camping-place, this." The policeman pointed to weathered beds of balsam and the scars of several camp-fires.

For upward of an hour Hobson searched every conceivable spot, but not so November Joe, who, after a couple of quick casts down to the river, made a fire, put on the kettle and lit his pipe. Atterson, from under his tree, watched the proceedings with a drowsy lack of interest

that struck me as being particularly well simulated.

At length Hobson ceased his exertions and accepted a cup of the tea Joe had brewed.

"There's nothing cached round here," he said in a voice low enough to escape the prisoner's ear, "and the trail stops right where Atterson slept. He never moved a foot beyond that, nor went down to the river one hundred yards away. I guess what he's done is clear enough."

"Huh!" said Joe. "Think so?"

"Yep! The chap's either cached them on the back trail or handed them to an accomplice."

"That so? And what are you going to do next?"

"I'm thinking he'll confess all right when I get him alone." He stood up as November moved to take a cup of tea over to Atterson.

"No, you don't!" he cried. "Prisoner Atterson neither eats nor drinks between here and Quebec unless he confesses."

"We'd best be going now," he continued as November, shrugging, came back to the fireside. "You two walk on and let me get a private word with the prisoner."

"I'm staying here," said Joe.

"But," expostulated Hobson, "Atterson's trail stops right here where he slept. There are no other tracks, so

no one could have visited him. Do you think he's got the bills and papers hid about here after all?"

"No," said Joe.

Hobson stared, at the answer, then turned to go.

"Well," said he, "you take your way and I'll take mine. I reckon I'll get a confession out of him before we reach Quebec. He's a pretty tired man, and he don't rest nor sleep, no, nor sit down till he's put me wise as to where he's hid the stuff he stole."

"He won't ever put you wise," said Joe definitely. "He don't know himself."

"Bah!" was all Hobson's answer as he turned on his heel.

NOVEMBER JOE did not move as Hobson, his wrist strapped to Atterson's, disappeared down the trail by which we had come.

"Well," I said. "What next?"

"Let's take another look around." Joe leaped to his feet, and we went quickly over the ground.

"What do you make of it?" he said at last.

"Nothing," I answered. "There are no tracks nor other signs, except these two or three places where old logs have been lying that I expect Atterson picked up for his fire. I don't understand what you are getting at any more than Hobson does."

"Huh!" said Joe, and led the way down to the river, which though not much more than fifty yards away was hidden from us by the thick trees.

It was a slow flowing river and in the soft mud of the margin, I saw to my surprise the quite recent traces of a canoe having been beached. Beside the canoe there was also on the mud the faint mark of a paddle having lain at full length.

"How long ago was the canoe here?"

"At first light—maybe between three and four o'clock," replied Joe.

Even if that is so I don't see how it helps you. Its coming can't have anything to do with the Atterson robbery, because the distance from here to the camp is too far to throw a packet, and the absence of tracks makes it clear that Atterson can not have handed the loot over to a confederate in the canoe. Is n't that so?"

"Looks that way," admitted Joe.

"Then the canoe is only a coincidence."

"I would n't go so far as to say that, Mr. Quaritch."

"I wonder if Atterson has confessed to Hobson yet," I said, meaning to draw November.

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I fancied her breath caught for the fraction of a second