

not distinctly visible many yards off—the party was coming along at a slow pace talking and laughing and every one appearing to enjoy the affair. Rivers was rather behind the rest of the party, his horse on a slow walk, suddenly he heard the bark of a dog close behind him. His horse started; the same instant he heard the report of a gun and felt something pass through his hair. The person who had fired at him had evidently been in the bushes. He spurred his horse into them rapidly, and the same instant a horseman emerged and galloped down the old road. The man had a large cloak thrown over him which entirely covered and concealed his figure so that it was impossible to make out his identity. Rivers pressed his horse to his utmost speed in pursuit. For a moment he seemed to gain on the strange horseman but only for a moment. The stranger gave his horse the spur and in a few seconds left Rivers hopelessly behind so that nothing remained for him to do but to give up the pursuit.

He returned to where he had left the ladies, and found them half speechless with astonishment and horror. Such an occurrence was an unheard of thing in Nova Scotia. It seemed like bringing the customs of the Comanche Indians among civilized men.

"Could you not catch him?" asked Ellen as soon as she could speak.

"Catch him—no; his horse went like the wind. I could not ride to within gun shot of him."

"Was he so fast—"

"Fast,—I know of only one horse in the country that can gallop as he did."

"Which is he?"

"Dr. Bland's Rambler. Nothing but a locomotive can overhaul the long legg'd rascal; and it's my belief that the fellow who shot at me to-night was either mounted on him or the devil."

"Nonsense, Charlie."

"Of course it must be nonsense; but this fellow galloped in Rambler's style, with that infernal grinding of his hoofs in the gravel as he went, and throwing it back behind him a hundred feet or more, besides making as much noise as a mail coach."

"Can you form no idea who the man was?"

"Not the slightest; his cloak hid him effectually."

Thus conversing on the astounding occurrence, they went homeward. Alice had nearly fainted with terror for Charles' safety, and Ellen was not by any means easy in mind.

The astonishment and alarm which this event produced in both families can be more easily imagined than told. So closely had the bullet grazed Charles Rivers' head; that the skin was even slightly touched. Nothing but the starting of his horse saved him, for he had evidently been fired at by an accomplished marksman, and the aim taken with murderous accuracy. The tidings soon spread over the country, every person was alarmed for their own safety. Charles

Rivers was the last person, people thought, who should become the victim. Such a daring plot,—for he was universally liked and admired. He had not, it was thought, a single enemy in the country; but the design of the miscreant who fired at him was evidently murder. He had no doubt waited his arrival, concealing himself in the screen of bushes between the two roads, until the moment arrived when he might slay him with impunity.

The magistrates talked about holding an investigation, but it was not so easy to investigate a matter where there was nothing to work upon, no clue to seize hold of which might lead to the detection of the offender.

Dr. Bland was inexpressibly shocked when he heard of the danger to which his friend had been exposed.

"It was horrible," he said, "shocking, lamentable, to think that man should attempt the life of his fellow man."

He offered his aid to discover the assassin, and next morning in company with Charles, started for the spot where the fellow had been concealed. He was mounted on a small, low set Canadian horse which he sometimes used when Rambler was used up with hard driving. Charles rode his iron grey, "Wolf," the same he had used the evening before.

They reached the place, tied their horses to a tree, and went in to make an examination. The ground was soft among the spruce bushes, and they could see plainly the track of the horse's feet where he had been reined with his side to the road in the most favorable position for a sudden start as soon as the gun was fired.

The track was a large one, evidently that of a large and powerful horse, and they could trace his course out to the old road which was some yards distant, and from thence over the sod which now covered the old road, some two hundred yards, until it joined the new one. They could see the track of every bound he had made as he galloped along; and such bounds—full sixteen feet every jump.

"By heavens!" cried Charles, suddenly, after regarding one of those tremendous tracks attentively for some moments, "the horse the fellow rode had legs galloped excessively like your Rambler. Just such a track as he'd make too. Is it not, doctor? By the by, where is Rambler,—you don't ride him to-day?"

"I've had him for some days in my back pasture. I used him up badly that last ride I took to Nappan, and am giving him a rest. But as you remarked, that certainly does look like his track. It would be rather curious, would it not, if some villain had been stealing the horse of one friend to aid him in his attempt to murder the other."

"Curious, indeed. Wolf can gallop some, but that horse ran away from him, just as if I had been standing still, when his rider put him out a little."

They had not ridden far down the new road,