

FOUR CANADIAN HIGHWAYMEN;

—OR—

THE ROBBERS OF MARGRAM SWAMP.

A STORY OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

WRITTEN FOR "TRUTH" BY EDMUND COLLINS.

Author of "Annette, the Metis Spy," "The Story of Louis Riel," "Nancy, the Light Keeper's Daughter," &c.

CHAPTER VI.—(CONTINUED.)

THE WAYS OF ROBBER LIFE.

"Why should that make any difference?"

"O, he is deadly jealous of you; because he thinks that I prefer you to him!" I fear him on your account as well as upon my own. Be assured that he will never forgive you for last evening. But," she exclaimed starting up, "we had better try for some fish, or grandmother will suspect that I have been blabbing."

"Why should we not go to the pond? The captain says that there are plenty of fishes there."

"Do not speak of it," she said with a shudder. "Ah, those dark waters have many secrets. I am afraid to tell you; the very bushes about us seem to have ears."

CHAPTER VII.

ROBBERS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

"Do not be afraid," Roland replied. "I am certain that there is nobody within ear-shot."

"Ah well these dark waters have closed over many an unhappy head, even since my entry into this hell of crime."

"The Lifter told me of the minister's fate."

"I am thinking now of a young girl who was once like myself. She was the daughter of a wealthy farmer, beautiful and gifted. The horrible chief saw her one day riding past the swamp, and the sight of her filled him with a hideous desire. When next she rode that way he sprang out of the bush and seized her; and then dragged her almost lifeless to his lair. Ah, my God, how my heart went out in pity for the sweet young creature; but what could I do. The villain had his way; and all night long his victim wallowed in a way to melt a heart of stone. They became alarmed at their constant crying; and one dreary night the old woman and Silent Pell dragged her to the edge of the pond. Tying a stone to her neck they threw her in. She lies there, pointing to a spot about twenty yards distant near a steep t of the bank; "and the water is three foms deep."

But she is not the only victim. At a class ader's house Jud Sykes made the acquaintance of a beautiful girl of eighteen. On a Saturday afternoon Marguerite, for that is her name, set out, on foot, with her father, to pass the Sunday with her Rev. Mr. Jones, who had spent the evening at her father's house, and he was posted in the road-side as the girl

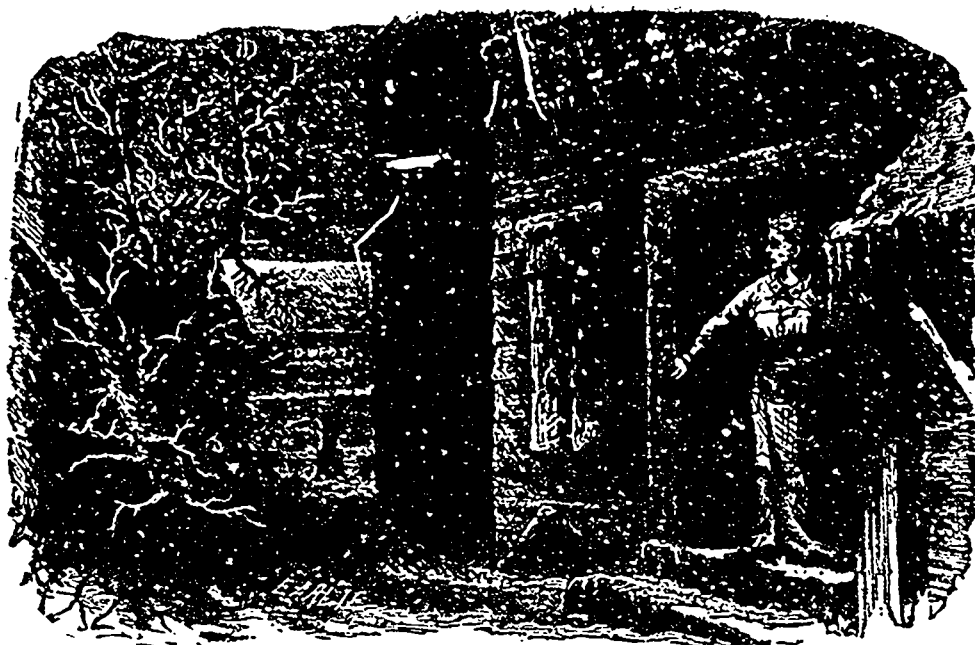
Marguerite, he was beautiful. Guess surprise, beautiful will be my dear, even as from which one those with only

always looked ad- of inland. it's a very un- able hand. But sombre weed—you

is not explained.

have a full hour to spare—and we shall find a bouquet for your good aunt. Give her my blessing when you see her. This way, my dear Marguerite; this way. If we could reach a beautiful lake, which lies about a mile distant through this weed, I think that I could find you some lilies there—some sisters for you. When first I saw you, my dear Marguerite, you reminded me of a lily."

"The poor girl blushed. By at these



A WELL-KNOWN ACCOMPLICE OF THE GANG.

compliments, and she thought that it was so good of this gifted man to bestow them upon a poor, simple girl like herself.

"But this is the horrid swamp, Mr. Jones, where they say the robbers live. Lots of men have come in here, and never came out again. Do you not feel afraid?"

"I feel no alarm, my timid child. I have wandered many a day through the aisles of this sombre wood. The boughs grow so heavy and the trees so close as you advance, that you will find that 'dim religious light' whereof the gifted poet writes."

"O, if you are not afraid, Mr. Jones, why should I be? and this poor unsuspecting dove followed the monster toward the snare."

"I will not harrow your feelings by describing the bewilderment, horror and despair that fell upon that beautiful maid when the naked, odious, hellish truth was put before her. The Reverend Mr. Jones, of course, claimed her as his prey; and no one gainsaid his right. Ah, it was very horrible. A week later, through some means or another the poor girl made her escape from the den, but the old woman and Silent Pell speedily followed. A short way from the road they overtook her; and when the fugitive saw the wretches she screamed murder, and appealed for help. But her cries were soon ended; for the old woman knocked her senseless with a club; and the two together accomplished the murder. That night she was buried beneath the roots of a great pine tree; and I often go there and sit and think; and watch the violets that I planted upon her grave."

When the girl ended there was a speechless horror in our hearts; and two or three times tears glistened in the eyes of Nancy as she hurried through with the horrible recollection.

"I do not see," Why he should be the hatred against orphan child is not explained.

chief could have had this morning in tolerating your rebellious attitude. Nobody has ever dared to cross him except Jud, who once or twice while intoxicated forgot himself. But he is too good a man to put aside. I am sure that the chief must have made up his mind that you shall aid him in some desperate enterprise which he has in mind. He speaks much of some beautiful girl whom he is bent on capturing. I believe that he expects your assistance in the enterprise."

"He and his hellish crew shall rob me of my last drop of life-blood before I will so much as raise a finger to aid either him or them in any work of infamy or crime. He knows that; and I do not think that he will try any more persuasion."

"Do not be too certain. If he did not expect to make use of you, you would have been put to death this morning as coolly as if you had been a dog."

"Well, to make that matter easy, more than the chief would have been needed at the killing."

"Ah, you knew not his giant, brutal strength. I fear that he could crush you like an infant."

"I have no such fear. I dread him not either with or without arms; and I rather

impossible for you to preserve yourself unscathed, as you say you have done."

Here the poor girl blushed again. "I grant that appearances are much against me; but I have told the truth. Seldom since coming here have I indulged so freely as you saw me do last night. But even last night I had full control of my reason."

"Ah, brandy is accursed stuff, my poor girl. Shun it as you would a deadly poison. I perceive by your face that your drinking habit is a stronger one than you yourself suppose. I have therefore a favor to ask. It is this; that whatever comes, you drink no more spirits."

She looked into his face, and the tears started to her eyes.

"O this indeed is something that I had never expected. It is like a voice speaking out of the tomb of Hope. But what would be the use of this unless you have some hope for my future. I have none. Have you, O have you any hope for me?" Her voice was piteous, passionate, pleading.

"And why should I not hope for you? I cannot see that you have been an accomplice in the crimes of these horrible people. A victim you are, and naught else that I can see. Of course it can not but seem strange, inexplicable indeed, that you should so mutely accept your doom; that you have never made any attempt at escape."

"Because I was afraid. They have often told me that voluntary residence among them makes me criminal equally with themselves. And oh, I was afraid to face the world's pure and honest face. How could I; to think what I have lived through, all that I have seen, these fearful years!" And she put her hands upon her beating temples. "That is the talk of despair; and it is utterly unworthy of any man or woman. As to your guilt because of 'voluntary residence,' that is not true. Besides, it would be difficult to show that it is voluntary; especially when they found it necessary to raise these fears in your mind in order to retain you here."

Now I have hope; and why should you despair. Suppose we seal a compact between us to have as our highest aim our escape from this den? Think you not that in good time we could accomplish it?"

"Oh, do not raise these hopes in me. Should they grow in my heart and then be crushed again, I know not what should become of me. I could not live."

"Well this is my programme: To tarry here as best I may until the spring. It would not be safe for me to venture away any sooner, for the sleuth-hounds are on my track. But the law's ire will have cooled by that time; and together we should be able to make our way to the American Republic." The girl threw herself upon her knees and turned her streaming eyes to heaven. Never before did more hearty prayer of gratitude ascend before the throne of God. In making our hero's hand she kissed it; even arose and became calm. They spoke no more about the matter; but their escape was henceforth the great aim of their lives. A minute later The Lifter joined them.

"I suppose you have been having a jaw together," he said. "I hope she told you about the lake and why the Captain won't eat the fish there. They're too fat for his likeness."

Nancy's air was so serious, for she had within the past hour become a changed girl, that The Lifter could not help noticing it. "I suppose you are lamenting because your sweetheart is away to-day?"

"I am not, Lifter. I feel just as happy with you as with him. But mind do not tell him that I said so."

"Oh, you need not trouble about that. I am too cunning to run risks with Joe."

Then the party ascended the stream, and found several still pools of water varying from myrtle to coffee brown in color. Each such pool of still water had a congregation of foam bubbles; and no sooner was it cast made than the float went down like a stone.

In the delightful excitement Roland frequently forgot the perils that surrounded

"And why were you indiscreet? Why did you drink so much of that fiery spirit?" "I hardly knew that I drank it was the pleasure that I felt in seeing such a face as yours, so noble, frank, and honorable, as the table."

"But drinking in that way, it becomes