

## ON THE DRIVE.

THE STORY OF AN OWL, FOR THE CHRISTMAS "OWL."

BY J. R. FORAN, LIT.D.; LL.B.

THE word "drive" as used in the sense given to it by the backwoodsmen has a very peculiar meaning. By the expression they designate the operation of pushing, rolling, dragging, floating and in every way moving the logs and square timber down the creeks into the tributaries of the Ottawa, and down those tributaries until the main stream is reached. "A drive," therefore, means a mass of logs and timber, cut during the winter and laid upon the ice to await the breaking up in spring; it means those products of the year's labor when floating along the rivers: it means the gang of men who, under the direction of the foreman, have gone up to work upon the creeks and river and to *drive* the timber down; it means everything connected with this branch of the operations. We hear the word a countless number of times every day, especially as the spring approaches. "Mr. Booth's *drive* has gone up" meaning the men who are to work on the river; "Mr. Fraser's boats are on the *drive*" - meaning that they are being used by the raftsmen in this special work. So when I entitle this article "On the Drive," I wish to convey the idea that the incidents about to be related took place in the spring time, and during that busy and dangerous period when men's lives are constantly in peril, and when death in a hundred varied and unexpected forms hovers around the camp of the brave toilers on the streams.

It was in the spring of 1884; White's *drive* had just reached the mouth of the Victoria Creek, and the logs and square timber were racing,

as it were, with each other, in their hurry to leap into the broader waters of the Coulonge. Long and weary had been the work upon the creek; day and night the men were knee-deep in the water, rolling and pushing the logs, breaking the jams, clearing the eddies and striving to make use of every drop of water that the reserve-dam could give them. It was only when the last log was safely launched into the river that the hard-working fellows were enabled to draw breath and take a few hours of rest. For several miles below the mouth of Victoria Creek the Coulonge is very rapid and free from shoals, chutes, eddies and islands, so that the men had scarcely anything to do for a couple of days, but sit in their boats and follow the timber. One or two always went ahead in a light canoe, to see that no other drive had formed a jam in advance of them, and to find suitable camping grounds for the night. The cookery boat moved straight ahead and generally reached the place selected about four in the afternoon. This gave the cook time to unload his boat, to set up his tent, prepare a fire-place and to make the tea for supper. When the men reached the camping ground all the boats were drawn up, the tents pitched and the evening meal commenced.

There is scarcely a camping ground on the Coulonge that has not its graves; the raftsmen are very superstitious, and they people those localities with countless spectres, mostly creatures of the imagination. When White's *drive* was a day's journey below the Victoria Creek, a beautiful and most