

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH A. ARMSTRONG;

BY HIMSELF.

I was born in Springfield, Columbia County, State of Pennsylvania, on the 27th of January, 1835. My parents emigrated to Canada in 1837. I do not remember ever having seen my father, for the same year that we came to Canada he enlisted as a soldier. My mother had me and a younger brother to take care of; but father gave me to a gentleman in Lockport to raise. Some time after, the gentleman took me to the Poor House, where I remained until my mother heard of it, and came, in company with my step-father, and took me away to St. Catherines, where I lived for three years, when we moved to a place called "the 'Queen's Bush;" there we worked hard to get a home. It was nothing but a wilderness, when we went there. I was only eight years old, and could do nothing but pile brush. When we had the place nearly paid for, my step-father fell sick and died. When he died, my mother was not able to get out a crop. There was a hard time for us you may think, for I was only nine years old, and I was the oldest; but we done the best we could. When I was nearly ten years old my mother married again. As soon as she got married everything went to rack; the farm, horse, cows, and everything that we had were sold. We then moved to the Township of Arthur, on Owen Sound Line. But little more of interest transpired until I was about fifteen, when my step-father drove me away from home, and I had to leave my kind mother, and go among strangers I never saw before. I knew very little of the world—to use a common expression, I was "very green." I hired to one Groate, for \$2.50 per month, to chop cord-wood. I stayed with him for two months, when I hired to a man named Buckenham, a black man, for \$5 per month. I remained with him for only one month, and then hired to a farmer named Wm. Hood, with whom I lived for six months. I done well while with him; but I unfortunately hired to a man named Moses Giles, to burn coal. Here I got into a real devil's nest; for he was a drunken sot, and kept the very worst and lowest class of people—both men and women—about him. I, being young, dancing, fiddling, card-playing, and whiskey-drinking all pleased me very well, and I thought it was all the heaven I wanted. I there got in with one Solomon Tillman, who led me into all the rascality in the world. At length he proposed that we should go sailing, and I at once agreed to it; but it was not long before he got in jail. I sailed on board the *May Flower*, from Hamilton to Kingston. I sailed for three months, when I was caught in a house of ill-fame in Hamilton, and was sent to gaol for one month. I then went home and remained there all summer; but as soon as winter came on, and my step-father had nothing more for me to do, I was obliged to leave again. I then went, with a couple of robbers, to Buffalo, where we made some "city strikes," as we called them. There were three of us, but I will not tell the names of my partners. We were hard boys—