

# The Saturday Reader.

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## CANADIAN BRIGANDS.

A THRILLING NARRATIVE  
Of the exploits of the  
NOTORIOUS GANG OF ROBBERS  
Who infested  
Q U E B E C  
In 1834 and 1835.

Translated for the SATURDAY READER from a  
French pamphlet published in 1837.

## CAMBRAY AND HIS ACCOMPLICES.

### CHAPTER XI.

The Montmorency murders—Cambray at the parsonage—A chattering housekeeper—The Sexton accused—The two Griffiths

One evening, as the rain was falling in torrents and the darkness was so great that at the distance of three paces nothing could be seen, two farmers, from the Parish of Chateau Richer, on their return from market, arrived at a small ford a little above the Falls of Montmorency, when suddenly five bandits, armed with clubs and daggers, presented themselves, and, seizing them by their coat collars, accosted them with the terrible sentence: "Your money or your life."

"You must take our lives then, for we have no money," said one of them.

"Liar! I saw you receive fifty dollars on the market place not four hours ago. our boat has good sails, and we got here before you. Now do you understand—come out with it—out with it, or we'll take the sweat out of our sticks; we'll knock the blood out of you."

The two farmers, trembling with fear, and far from any house where they could have obtained help, surrendered their purses. As one of them handed his to the man who held him, he leant forward with a movement of surprise, and exclaimed: "Why, Polette, is it you, and are you hard-hearted enough to assassinate the companion of your infancy, he with whom your younger days were spent, he who has saved your life twenty times by keeping your pranks secret?"

In truth he had recognised Mathieu among the brigands. Mathieu was a native of the Beupré Hills, a redoubtable thief known by the name of Polette; but ten years had elapsed since he had left his birthplace, and entered upon the more extended sphere of city life. He had become proud since then, was ashamed of his early plebeian life just as the clerk of a tavern in town looks down upon his brethren of the village.

"Ah, you know me," said Mathieu; "ill luck be-tide you, 'tis your sentence of death. Had not your memory been so bright, you might have got away with only the loss of your money; but now, if you live I shall be hung; it must be your life or mine."

At that moment the five robbers drew the unfortunate men from their carts, threw them on the ground, and, dragging them into the water held them there until drowned. As soon as they were dead, they untackled their horses, pushed the carts into the stream, and threw the bodies in after them, in order that, when found, people would think they had missed the ford and fallen a prey to the accident. This accomplished, they went back to their boats, a distance of two leagues.

An hour later, about six o'clock in the evening, a man respectfully clad, but drenched with rain, presented himself at the house of the Curate of Beupré, asking whether he could have lodgings

for the night. On his admission, his host cried out in accents of friendship:

"How, is it you, Cambray, and where are you going at such a rate? Come, you must have supper with me, and then I've an excellent bed for you."

"Oh, I'm not going far, only a shooting party to St. Au's. But I shan't refuse your supper, for I've a splendid appetite."

Thus did they engage in conversation, laughing friendly and familiar, while a delicious and bountiful supper was being laid upon a little round table hard by, and in a few minutes the two friends were attacking it.

"Look there," said the curate, "look, there's a fire on the beach; more vagabonds I suppose, come to steal our sheep to-night."

"Pardon me, sir," said Cambray, "they are the sailors who brought me here; they will leave with the turn of the tide."

The two friends supped heartily, after which the curate took up his breviary, and Cambray went into the kitchen to dry his clothes at the chimney fire.

The curate had a housekeeper, and, like all curate's and bachelor's housekeepers, the woman had more tongue than discretion. Cambray soon got chattering with her, and in less than ten minutes he knew all the curate's affairs—how many sheep he had, how much money—where the keys were, where the sacred vases and papers of consequence, together with a goodly stock of village scandal and gossip. All this was told with an air of great importance, the old woman always speaking in the plural *we*. We did this—we did that, we desire that this shall be done so—we are of this opinion, myself and the curate.

And when every mystery had been ventilated, she conducted Cambray to his room, took her broth à la reine, and retired for the night.

Next morning terrible excitement reigned in the parsonage—people crying—running hither and thither, coming in, going out.

It appears the curate, on entering the church, previous to saying mass, noticed that the sacred vases had been stolen during the night. Camb-ray, awakened by the noise of the housekeeper, the servants, the singers and the sexton, dressed himself quickly and hastened to join in the bustle.

In the midst of this din he approached the curate and whispered softly in his ear, "By whom the church has been robbed I can't say—but I have seen a rather suspicious looking character in your kitchen; the man is fearfully agitated—I must confess, I don't like his appearance—there he is."

"Eh, oh. Why, 'hat's the sexton?"

"The sexton, oh then, it can't be he. I suppose he does not keep the keys."

"No, but it is he who shuts the doors, returned the curate—still I think he's an honest man, its true though, it's true, he seems greatly agitated, who can say?"

That day the sexton was arrested and thrown into prison. The old housekeeper told all her neighbours how for a length of time she had had her suspicions of who the thief was—meantime, Cambray had joined his party in the boat.

"I've hooked the church plate," said he on arriving, "and more than that" they've got the sexton in the brig (prison) for the job.

The robbers then went to "Isle aux Oies" where they assassinated the two unfortunate Griffiths, but why they did so, remains a mystery to the present hour. Three months later the poor sexton was tried for the church robbery and acquitted—he was innocent.

### CHAPTER XII.

Murder of Cap<sup>t</sup> in Sivrac—Effrontery and temerity—The Skimming—A reverse of fortune—Arrest of Cambray and Waterworth—The veil torn aside.

"These," said Waterworth, resuming the recital, we have interrupted for a moment by another form of narrative; "these are the crimes in which I have taken part, and which continued without interruption from the month of November to the month of July, 1835.

I know there is another charge placed to our account, one on which Cambray was tried and acquitted before the Criminal Court, namely, the murder of Captain Sivrac.

Though Captain Sivrac gave the names of his assassins on his death bed, and though Camb-ray, since his conviction stated that he, I, and others were present at his murder, probably with the view of revenging himself on me and getting me into difficulty, I solemnly declare that I have never been at Lotbiniere, and that I never imagined there was money to be found in the miserable hut occupied by Sivrac.

I have often, whilst in prison, heard the details of this affair, and know them to have been of a most revolting nature. A solitary and defenceless old man attacked upon an inhospitable island, severely beaten—forced by the most inhuman treatment to give up all he possessed, and to crown the barbarity after having beaten him almost to death, to throw him into a cellar full of water, and lock the door upon him, were acts the most frightful, the most diabolical that the imagination can invent; it was doing harm for harm's sake, a pure delight in acts of brutality. This was altogether opposed to our plan of working. When people submitted with good grace, and did not seek to oppose us, we never ill-treated them, persuaded that it was more to our safety; that it would abate the rigour of pursuit and the danger of coming into contact with justice. It is an adopted opinion among robbers that the murderer never escapes death, and if such sentence was never pronounced but in such cases, I firmly believe that it would in a great measure do away with violence in burglarious attempts.

By this time we had quite forgotten the suspicions that had reached even our very doors, and we lived in the greatest possible certainty. Little did we think that the first rumor was as a snowball started from a mountain top, destined to gather size with every movement, till at last it descended with crushing violence upon its unsuspecting victims; but Cambray in his assurance thought to quell any storm that might arise by his effrontery and bravado.

The day after the robbery of the Congregational Chapel he visited the place for the mere purpose of gratifying his vanity and audacious curiosity, and, passing by the Chapel with a friend, as though by accident, he got him to recount all the details known concerning the matter.

"Robbed the Chapel," said he, "and how did they get in? What, by this window! what audacity, what atrocity—to rob a church in the face of God himself, as one may say! It's horrible, horrible! it makes one's blood curdle to hear of it. They carried away the silver; but what will they do—what will become of them—it seems so incredible, but they have been some miserable prison birds, I suppose."

In making these edifying remarks he had entered the chapel with the guardian, and at each new revelation of pillage, he affected the utmost surprise and astonishment.

He did not hesitate to follow a like course with regard to all subsequent expeditions, and it must be allowed that, aided by this false semblance of honesty and his babblings of morality, for a length of time, he succeeded in escaping the suspicions of the blind goddess of Justice.