

The Saturday Reader.

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CANADIAN BRIGANDS.

A THRILLING NARRATIVE

Of the exploits of the

NOTORIOUS GANG OF ROBBERS

Who infested

QUEBEC

In 1834 and 1835.

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

CAMBRAY AND HIS ACCOMPLICES.

On Easter eve, the two associates carried their silver to the quarries at Caprouge, where they broke into a house used by the workmen, who were then absent. They found the key of the blacksmith's forge, and having kindled the fire, they placed their silver once more in the crucibles they had procured, and again submitted them to the action of the flames, beating and flattening the pieces at times with the heavy mallets they found in the place, in order to quicken the process as much as possible.

Thus they passed Easter Sunday, undisturbed by a single accident, the fire being so ardent as to cause one of the crucibles to crack. As the image of the child, held in the arms of the virgin, was found to resist alike flame and physical force, Cambray, who held it in his hand, turned to Waterworth, and said:

"Just look at this unlucky imp. He will give us as much trouble as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego."

Nevertheless, towards evening, they had reduced all into ingots, which Cambray carried home with him, and which remained in his possession.

The prisoner here cross-questioned the witness as follows:

Prisoner—"Do you believe that you have a soul?"

Witness—"Yes, I believe that I have a soul to save."

Prisoner—"Have you never borne false witness?"

Witness—"No, never."

Prisoner—"What! Did you not swear falsely when you said that Cambray was not present at the murder of Sivrac?"

The Court exempted the witness from answering this question.

Several witnesses were then heard to corroborate the evidence given by the accomplice, as follows:

Mrs. Anderson, to prove the interview held by the accused at her house; Cecilia Connor, George Hall, and Eliza Lapointe, to confirm the transactions which had taken place at Broughton; and René Labbé, blacksmith, to give evidence in connection with the use of his forge on Easter Sunday.

The accused then read the following appeal to the jury, from a paper which he held in his hand.

"Gentlemen of the Jury.—It is with sincere sorrow that I behold myself forced to address you on an occasion like the present, one which will deprive me of my life, if you consider me guilty of the crime whereof I stand accused. My situation is the more pitiable, as I occupy the position of another, whose substitute I am.

"Waterworth, the king's evidence in this case, the only witness who implicates me in the robbery of the Congregational Chapel, has placed me in the position of one of his own relations, Norris, the husband of his sister. To save

him, he destroys me; to screen a relative, he delivers an innocent man over to the sword of justice. I pray of you to reflect upon this, and also upon the character of him who deposes against me. It is the man, who, only a year ago, perjured himself before this very Court, when he said the Cambray was not the author of Sivrac's murder, committed at Lotbinière, and in which he himself was complicated. He swore in the face of God and man, that he had seen him purchase the same silver spoons he, the witness, had assisted him to steal. Had I the means, I could prove this assertion on the oath of no less than eight persons; but, enclosed within the prison for eighteen months, without money, and without protection, what was it possible for me to effect? The subpoenas which I had procured a few days before this term, were taken from me by my fellow prisoners.

"The man who denounces me is he who avowed himself an accomplice in the robbery committed at Mrs. Montgomery's—a being without shame—one who entered even a church, and seized upon the sacred property, to the insult of divinity, and he it was who conducted the various robberies in the Lower Town, and broke open and pillaged the counting-houses. Yes, it is upon this man's conscience, unsupported by other evidence, that I am now accounted his accomplice, whereas it is upon Norris, whom it is his interest to conceal, that the odium ought to attach itself. Such is the man whose testimony you have to consider.

"Remember, that, even in this Court, there have been instances in which the innocent have suffered for the guilty. In the case of a robbery committed against a Mr. Masse, of Point Lévi, the Crown witness accused four persons entirely free from blame, when suddenly another appeared, whose evidence led to the conviction of the real offenders. The man who thus perjured himself was Ross, who was afterwards executed, and whose case created so deep a sensation in this city. Remember, too, there are in Quebec a great number of thieves who have the wit to place their deeds of darkness to the account of old delinquents; men who, having already appeared at the criminal bar, are more likely to be thought guilty. I admit that it is my misfortune to bear an infamous character, and to my disgrace I have already appeared before this tribunal; but if I have been guilty, I have suffered severely for my crime.

"If my reputation is bad, the more open is it to suspicion. Pay, then, no attention to the career of my past life—deign only to consider the state of my present position.

"On the evening of the 10th April, on which the crime was committed, I passed the whole night at Mrs. Anderson's, as also a girl who could give her evidence to this effect, but that she is now in the State of Maine. Another girl called Doren could, if alive, have confessed this; but Waterworth, quarrelling with her, beat her so violently, that on the following day she was found dead on St. Louis street. I can, however, produce a woman named Catherine Rocque, who slept at Mrs. Anderson's on the same night.

"Having now submitted my defence, I desire not that you sacrifice conscience for my sake. All I ask is that you will render me justice. May God assist you in your verdict."

The prisoner had but one witness, the girl, Catherine Rocque, whom we have already mentioned, and who happened at that time to be in prison. She was, however, brought before the prisoner with the following result:

Prisoner—"I ask you, Miss Rocque, do you know me?"

Witness—"Yes."

Prisoner—"Were you not at Mrs. Anderson's on the 9th April, two years ago?"

Witness—"Yes."

Prisoner—"Did not I sleep there that night?"

Witness—"Yes; I believe you did. That was two years ago, was it not?"

Prisoner—"Did not I remain there the whole night? Was not I tipsy?"

Witness—"I do not know whether you remained all night, for I was a little mellow myself. I went to bed at six in the morning, and did not get up till the following day."

Prisoner—"Enough; I have nothing further to ask."

In the course of the trial, Mr. O. Stewart, counsel for Cambray, took exception to one of the heads of the accusation, namely: that of sacrilege—raising the question whether the Congregational Chapel ought to rank with churches, the robbery of which the law designates sacrilege, and the Court took this question *en délibéré*.

The Honorable Judge Bowen then addressed the jury. He recapitulated the evidence furnished by the trial, he dwelt at some length on the various points necessary to be taken into consideration before rendering a verdict, the principal one being doubtless the caution with which they ought to receive the testimony of the Crown witness, observing that it ought to be accepted or rejected only so far as it agreed with the statements of other witnesses. "The jurors," he added, "had before them a question of a very delicate nature—one that touched directly on the conscience of each individual, the dictates of which would doubtless tell them whether he had spoken the truth, or whether he had disguised it.

The jury then retired, and shortly after returned their verdict, namely: "That Pierre Gagnon was guilty of sacrilege, or grand larceny, to the value of £20."

Such was the decision of the Court on the objection taken by Mr. Stewart.

CHAPTER VII.

Suspicious—Conspiracy against Waterworth—Another Expedition to the Island of Orleans.

Waterworth here resumes the thread of his narrative:

The sacrilegious robbery of the Congregational Chapel gave us so much trouble, and was the cause of so much research on the part of the police, who all but discovered our tracks, that for some time afterwards we were obliged to remain inactive. We began at that time to feel a little distrustful of our security, and it was the following incident that gave birth to our suspicions:

One hundred pounds having been offered by the Governor for the discovery of the guilty, a sum sufficiently great to tempt the cupidity of most people, a woman being at Mrs. Anderson's on the evening of the robbery, and having observed us leaving the place, imagined that possibly we might be connected with the affair. Accordingly she found Carrier, the constable, and proposed to communicate her suspicions to him, on the condition that if they led to the conviction of the offenders, she was to obtain half the sum advertised.

Carrier, on his part, mentioned the circumstance to certain friends of ours, from whom it came to our ears, and it was upon me that the accusers had fastened as their victim. For this reason were my journeys to Broughton undertaken. As for Cambray, his name as yet remained untouched.

Great was the discomfiture of these greedy beings, when they found that their efforts had terminated in naught; but Carrier may thank