

# 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.

### CHAPTER XVI.

Religion in the "lock-up."—The character of Cambray from a new point of view.

As stated in the preceding chapter, Cambray asked for and received ministers of every religious belief, and for the space of two days appeared to waver between the doctrines of each; at last he determined in favour of Catholicism, and affected to adopt all its rites; he did not, however, cease to hold interviews with the ministers of other churches, for his object, as will appear hereafter, was to interest all in his favour.

The Catholic priest who attended him in his cell, deceived by his false pretences of honesty, had frequently visited him as a friend previous to his arrest.

"Ah well, Cambray," said the young priest with much softness, "how do you do?—doubtless ill at ease and troubled in spirit, I come to offer you as much consolation in your present state as lies in my power. You and I were well known to each other at one time; I never thought it could come have to this. You greatly deceived me. But it would be cruel to reproach you in a moment like the present, far better to lead you on the road to repentance, and to awaken you to the voice of reconciliation with God."

"Ah Heaven," replied Cambray, "with all my heart; I am indeed ill and suffer much, but not to compare with the torments of my soul. I know full well, that for me there is neither help nor the consolation of religion in religion; mankind is now to me as nothing, God can only save me, could I but obtain his pardon, but there is one thing that troubles me greatly. Among so many religions of which I cannot tell one from the other, which is the best—how can a man in my circumstances, decide within an instant upon a matter of such great importance, without fear of mistake."

"Your moments are short and precious," said the young priest, "and you are entirely ignorant in the science of salvation, as Catholic priest and according to my belief, I must tell you in the presence of God and man, whom I take as witness of my sincerity and according to the founders of Christianity, that out of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome there is no salvation. But as I have said your moments are short and precious—I could prove to you each of the doctrines of our religion, but is there time? The Saviour did not tell us to discuss and prove, but to believe and pray, it is not with contentious subtlety that we must walk in the way of truth, but with a humble submissive and trusting heart—faith is a grace to be obtained from Heaven by fervently asking at the sacrifice of passion and of pride. If, therefore, you will throw yourself into the arms of the Catholic

religion, say so, and I will devote myself wholly to your conversion—I will pour into your soul the sweet consolations of holy writ—mayhap the words of the Saviour may move you, and the example of his life inspire you with horror of the sins you are guilty of; do not despair, for the religion of Christ is one of love, of charity and of compassion, it pours forth the balm of consolation alike in the hospital, in the prison, in the cabin of the poor and in the palace of the rich, on the troubles of the virtuous and on the remorse of the contrite. Your crimes are no doubt great, but God is full of mercy—believe, weep and pray, and his heart will open to receive you."

"These words pronounced with deep impressiveness had nearly softened the heart of the condemned, and in accents of grief, he cried out in a fit of passing repentance.

"Truly do I throw myself without delay into the arms of Divine mercy—I deplore my crimes and sincerely ask for pardon, but the time is so short—if people of virtue and influence would only interest themselves on my behalf—but, alas, human justice in condemning does not allow time for repentance. Do you think there would be any use in making the request?"

"Reckon not on that, for you may be deceived, and place yourself in a position of false security—perhaps it might be better for the salvation of your soul were death to remove you while repentance lasted, for the flesh is weak and the spirit strong in a nature as vitiated as thine. However, I will think of it. I will speak of it, and above all, I will regulate my conduct in accordance with the hopes I may entertain of your salvation."

The religion of Christ is touching and sublime, when it reveals to the unfortunate words of love and welcome, the mission of the priest noble and philanthropic, who visits even the cell of the condemned to administer peace and consolation, and the man who causes it, must indeed be devoid of heart, and totally incurable. But why does religion extend pardon when the law withholds it—the former recoils from blood, the latter desires it—the former offers salvation, the latter presides despair and death. The law then that establishes punishment by death is inhuman, or rather, I should say, almost impious; it deprives of existence, yet throws a doubting soul into eternity.

Pause ye Legislators of our country, is there no means of reforming the fallen, instead of annihilating them. True, executions are rare, but still the law permits them, and if the law is not enforced, it becomes dangerous, a pledge of impunity and an invitation to crime. The reprobate who contemplates a violation of the law, thinks only of the punishment with which his offences are threatened, and if he discovers that there is a means of escape, he easily assures himself of the probability.

"At last," said Cambray, (for we must return to our subject), "I flatter myself that you will think of some means by which my sentence may be commuted, I will see you to-morrow, for I have never been baptised, I believe."

"Yes, I will return to-morrow," said the priest. "Good bye—peace be with you, but remember that in three days you are to appear before the Eternal tribunal." He then left.

"I do not despair," said Cambray to Mathieu, who, during the entire interview described, spoke not a syllable. "If I can only interest the clergy in my favor, we are saved," and a look of satisfaction and hope lit up his countenance, for as yet he was only half repentant and half triumphant.

"It takes a good color," said Mathieu, "it takes a good color."

### CHAPTER XVIII.

A visit to the prison—Charland—The Condemned—Gillan the murderer—Exportation—Departure.

Some days after the Criminal Term 1837, we visited the prison, and the turnkey introduced us to the rooms occupied by the criminals, he was on his rounds to ascertain the safety of his prisoners, this he repeated three times during the night, at eight o'clock, at midnight and at four in the morning. Each storey of the prison is divided by a passage or corridor, on each side of which are the rooms occupied by the prisoners. Each room is about fifteen feet square and contained twelve or fifteen persons; round these rooms which are used in common, are small cells, each of which serve as a sleeping apartment for two or three. As soon as the turnkey opens the door, the inmates range themselves in a semi-circle and answer to their names; those who have any thing to ask or any complaint to make profit by this occasion to lay their requests before the sheriff or jailer.

In the first room we visited, were such criminals as had been condemned to transportation; there were thirteen in number, all in the flower of their age, the youngest being about twelve years of age, the eldest about twenty-five. It is hardly possible to imagine a more thievish and ill looking set than composed this party, nevertheless, they were all full of spirits and buffoonery, and joked gaily with each other on the difference of time each was condemned to endure in exile.

"I don't care," said a young lad of twelve or fifteen years, "I'm only in for seven years, I'm not like Johnny there, who has four times seven. Johnny will be a big boy when he gets back."

"Bah," said another, "there will be several of us, we'll find lots of amusement, never fear—we'll give lots of trouble too."

From this room, we passed into one in which were the old delinquents, the incorrigible vagabonds and permanent boarders of the king, whose lives cling to the prison as those of fishes do to the water or birds to the air. At their head was Charland a witty and lively hunchback, full of chatter, politeness and courtesy, his hair was lank and light in color, his complexion sallow, his figure squat and round, his head in his shoulders, his shoulders in his chest, and his chest in his stomach, just such a figure as Mr. Goulie paints us in his clown Gangronet.

Charland the redoubtable robber of the Plains of Abraham and cherished prisoner of the guardians, Charland sanguine and energetic whilst exercising his craft, but soft, jovial, amiable and full of fun when in jail—lastly, Charland, thief and assassin—for the trade pleased him and he had no desire to change it.

"See here," said he, addressing the turnkey with an air of compassion and pointing out a young man who had nothing to cover him but a pair of torn trousers, and whose bust was completely naked, "look at this poor child, look at him, could you not find him a shirt? Know you not that the air is raw in this apartment?"

"What did he do with the shirt given him yesterday?" said the turnkey.

"I do not know—it was so bad—it came to pieces."

"Well, I'll think of it."

On leaving, we asked the turnkey why Charland appeared to take such an interest in the young man.

"It is," said he, "because Charland is Brigadier, that is to say, the senior of the room, and as such is the spokesman of the others. There is perhaps another reason, it often happens that the prisoners hide their clothes among themselves, in order to get others given them, so that they can change the first for tobacco and rum."