

The Robbers of Markham Swamp

The following story is founded on fact and as the author aptly said "everyone in this part of the country who is not deaf has heard of the gang at Markham Swamp." The story was first published in 1886. It will run as a continued story in The Liberal.

"I use them, of course, most liberally. And now sir, that you raised the question of the worthiness of my friend to meet you in a combat of honor, you must first permit me to state in denying that fitness, every statement that you have made is a falsehood. First, as to his blood: he is a gentleman. And I know that in proving he is your equal in this respect, you will pardon me for asking certain questions of you as you will my making certain statements of fact respecting him. Pray sir, who was your father?"

"A gentleman. He was the owner of this property; and held the position of magistrate in this county as I do." Mr. Harland bowed.

"And who, then, sir, was his father?" Mr. Ham winced; turned red; and then stood up, glaring at his interrogator the picture of wild but impotent rage.

"I will not press the question, Mr. Ham; I will answer it. He was what we describe as a "common person." That is, he was not a gentleman. Mr. Ham's face was dark with rage; but it soon began to assume its ashen color.

"Now, sir, Mr. Gray's father is a younger son of a fifth earl in the British peerage. He is therefore by blood fit to meet in the field of honor the grandson of a—Nobody. Then, sir, as to the undefined charges against his character, they are gratuitous falsehoods. If, with these facts before you, a refusal of satisfaction is still made, I have only this to say: the unpleasant task of horsewhipping you remains to my friend; while the duty of proclaiming your cowardice remains to me. What is your answer?"

"Your language has been never believed that anyone ever dare to use in my presence. I am constrained to be silent respecting your statements to meet me on the spot." Then as a spasm of convulsion seized him, he suddenly fell upon the ground.

"What does he propose?" "No; I have not during my practice seen such remedies for colds," the doctor replied, with a humorous twinkle in his eye. The high-bred Mr. Ham was a most pitiable object to look upon as his friend proceeded to divest him of a horse blanket.

"As a real guarantee against added chill, Mr. Ham should have provided himself with a buffalo robe, Mr. Drummond, Harland observed—"skinny side out and woolly side in," you know. We would not have objected so much to that!"

"What!" gasped out the brave Mr. Ham, while a gleam of hope shone through his eyes like a sunbeam, "Mr. Drummond could ride away and get one in fifteen minutes!"

"Mr. Drummond," replied Harland, "will all be over in three minutes." "But it would keep me warm going home."

"For only three minutes longer, however," Harland again replied, addressing the second. "Besides it might be—and here stopped short with the manifest intention of torturing the cowardly wretch. It was noticed by Roland that Ham was constantly casting his eyes up the hollow, as if expecting somebody. At last a thought flashed upon him."

"Mr. Harland, I believe that craven has notified the officers of justice, and that he expects them to come and break up the affair. Let us therefore proceed. He may keep on the remainder of his wraps. No delay; measure off the ground." The two seconds then measured off fifteen paces and stopped.

"Why I thought your friend never fired except with a shot gun at crows?" Harland observed. "But it appears that he is a crack shot. And so generous, too; since the greater distance no doubt is intended for the safety of Mr. Gray." This was said in a tone just loud enough to be heard by all the rest.

CHAPTER III The Duel

On the following morning, Gray, accompanied by his second, rode away towards the place of meeting. The sun had not risen, but the eastern arc of the horizon was suffused with deep crimson which terminated in a rosy pink. A small hollow running at right angles to the Don, and known at that time as Sleepy Gulch, was the place chosen for the encounter. As the two men reached the mouth of this gulch they perceived the opposite party upon the brow of the hill. A second or two later another horseman appeared. This was the medical gentleman.

The combatants met and Roland bowed haughtily to Mr. Ham. To Drummond he said simply:

"Good morning, sir." Harland took his friend aside for a moment. There was a look of mingled disgust and

merriment in his face. "Merciful heaven," he said, "look at the size of our friend Ham."

"I have noticed it," replied our hero, with a contemptuous curl of his lip.

"I firmly believe he has half the bedclothes of his establishment wrapped about him," Roland interrupted.

"Proceed with business, Mr. Harland." That gentleman walking up to Mr. Drummond, said:

"I wish a word with you—Is your master indisposed?" "He declares he took a violent cold, and has been suffering of shivers all night."

"I am very sorry; at the same time I must point out to you the propriety of at once requesting him to unwrap that we may proceed. You are aware I presume of the quantity and denomination of the apparel for such an occasion." Drummond joined the bulky Mr. Ham; and it was noticed as he conversed that that gentleman turned from his morning pallor to a positive yellow. He at first seemed to refuse; but at last, with a cry much like the low whine of a terrified animal, he began to take off his wraps. In doing this he turned his back upon the other party.

"You will pardon me, gentlemen," Harland said, as he stepped to the front; "but I believe I have the right under such extraordinary circumstances to obtrude myself here."

"What do you mean, sir? How dare you come here?" cried Mr. Ham in his fear and rage.

"To see that you are disrobed properly, Mr. Ham. If you will permit it, the medical gentleman here will decide whether upon such a windless, sunny morning, you require all this raiment. At least you will not require all this leather," he exclaimed, as he drew out a huge piece which had been fitted so as to cover the entire front of the hero's body down to the hips. "You don't consider wraps of this sort necessary for a man with a cold, do you, doctor?" Harland asked, turning to the medical gentleman.

"No; I have not during my practice seen such remedies for colds," the doctor replied, with a humorous twinkle in his eye. The high-bred Mr. Ham was a most pitiable object to look upon as his friend proceeded to divest him of a horse blanket.

"As a real guarantee against added chill, Mr. Ham should have provided himself with a buffalo robe, Mr. Drummond, Harland observed—"skinny side out and woolly side in," you know. We would not have objected so much to that!"

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"Ask Mr. Ham what distance he would propose—I have no objection to the inquiry."

"What distance would you propose, Mr. Ham?" inquired the second.

"My pistol will carry at least a hundred yards; I drove a ball through an inch board with her yesterday. Why not make it, say eighty paces?" "Because, Mr. Drummond," Harland replied, "over fifteen paces is 'poltroon distance,' and, besides, our pistols do not carry effectively more than twenty paces. We will not, however, under any circumstances, fight on 'poltroon distance.'"

"I agree," replied Mr. Drummond.

"Now then, gentlemen, take your places."

The doctor whispered to Roland: "Is it fair, quite, to fight him when he says that you are a crack shot,

Canada Marches Forward During Past Five Years

By OBSERVER

ARTICLE I.
Canada is marching forward under Liberal rule.

Even the Conservative leaders and press reluctantly admit it.

Canada has been steadily marching forward during the past five years—a period of time that synchronizes with the Mackenzie King administration.

It is the success of a government is to be measured by the degree of national prosperity—and the two go together for a considerable distance—then the Mackenzie King government and administration may "point with pride" to the satisfactory existing conditions even though party advocates may claim too much credit for improved economic or industrial conditions. Nature and providence have a share in prosperity.

There are innumerable proofs of this forward march of the dominion in almost every department of national development and national expansion. Practically every checking-up report makes a record or an advance over previous years, emphasizing the claim that it is pre-eminently a going concern. This fact is recognized by all who have their eye on present-day conditions—Canadian, American, British and foreign—as I shall hope to prove in this series of articles.

I trust too that they will strengthen the faith and inspire the confidence of all Canadians, regardless of their political impact or effect upon an election campaign. I hope they will prove that Canada is on the up-grade in that comes under the name of prosperity, and that the best days are yet to be.

I am especially hopeful that some of our esteemed editors of great journals espousing the Conservative faith may be cheered up by reading these facts. Specially the Ottawa Journal (Con.) which says editorially: "For five years we had uninterrupted instability in our fiscal and trade policies while the King government held office," and yet in the same editorial the colored glasses of the writer were exchanged for clearer ones and he redeemed himself by writing: "At the present moment in Canada all three indices that reveal the trend of a nation's business—viz. railway traffic, the volume of checks cashed at banks, and building operations, are pointing upward." And still again, in the very same double-headed leader, the editor rejoices, as well he may and as all Canadians do, that "Canada has turned the corner and is now forging ahead." That's what I'm trying to write and prove.

Two Points of View, Which is the Right One?

But to our task, and a most agreeable one it is, only hoping that the Montreal Gazette will compliment me with a perusal of these sentences when they appear in print so that they may be cured of this depression as he writes that a voice of "shiftlessness and uncertainty, of restlessness and storm and shipwreck"—as bad as that—is heard in the land, and in the editorial sanctum of the Gazette although it is 700 miles from the stormy and restless sea. Or perhaps it will listen to its neighbor and contemporary, the Montreal Witness, which says: "As all prosperity in Canada is dependent on the condition of the great basic industries of the field, forest and mine, it is encouraging to note that all of these are better off than for years, while there is general improvement in manufacturing. I agree with the Witness man that we are far removed from the 'dreags of depression'—despite the existence of a Liberal government of recent years."

Now for the evidences.

Let a start be made with a few samples by way of appetizers, leaving their amplification for later record and treatment. They are picked at random from an overflowing pigeon-hole of copy and clippings. That Canada has stepped ahead of the United States in flour exportation; that the gross agricultural wealth of the country increased by

over \$200,000,000 in 1925 over 1924; that the export value of wheat during the ten months ending May, 1926, showed an increase of \$143,639,548 over the same period in 1925; that the yield of Canada's farm produce in 1925 was equal in value to the yield of all the coal mines in Great Britain; that the western farmer is the richest per capita in all Canada, or in fact in any other country; that the average income of the Canadian farmer of \$1,500 (according to the federal deputy minister of agriculture) represents a distribution of 1,500 million dollars of valuation among the million farmers of the country; that the Canadian auto industry is forging steadily ahead, despite some recent prophecies of calamity when a beneficial tariff adjustment was made; that Canada's chartered banks are handling more checks than at any time since 1920; that the scale of living in 1926 is far in advance of that which people found more or less satisfactory in 1901; that the dairy industry now exceeds mineral production, with a value of \$300,000,000 in 1925; that canal traffic is steadily increasing—1,979,623 tons more in 1925 than in 1924; that Canada stands high in per capita exports, and that the revenue of the prairie provinces in 1925—estimated by the Financial Post—of \$1,050,000,000, showed an increase of nearly 200 millions over the previous year.

More Evidences of Prosperity

That the last dominion fiscal year showed a surplus of nearly \$34,000,000, a \$22,300,000 reduction in the net public debt and marked increases of revenue and production in many lines; that Canada's gold production rose from \$21,500,000 in 1924 to \$35,800,000 in 1925; that the Canadian west had, in 1925, from the point of view of income the most successful financial year in its history—per the estimate of Hon. T. A. Crerar, who ought to know; that our trade with the Orient is steadily increasing; that our total trade has jumped from \$1,501,731,341 in 1921-2 to \$2,255,860 in 1925-26.

The Testimony of the Customs

Still more evidences of "the staggering load of depression": The dominion customs report for June, 1926, stated that Canada's trade continues to increase and the balance of exports over imports is favorable.

That the number of Canadian cars moved by Canadian railways has been increasing since the end of November, 1925; that the operating profits of the Canadian National Railways show a marked increase, with an operating deficit of \$11,500,000 converted into an operating surplus of \$34,000,000; that both railways are spending millions on equipment, extensions, etc., that British Columbia's industrial payroll increased from \$130,000,000 in 1922 to \$160,000,000 in 1925; that a successful year, in 1926, is anticipated for the Canadian steel industry;

That newsprint exports continue to increase, totaling \$102,000,000 in 1925-26, along with nearly \$50,000,000 worth of wood pulp and \$13,056,000 of pulpwood;

That Canada's investment in forest industries has reached \$650,000,000; that there are steady increases in scores of other directions, such as shipments of grain from Canadian ports; that the unemployment situation in June last was better than in any month since 1920;

That live stock values are climbing, from \$511,144,000 in 1924 to \$704,287,000 in 1925, together with corresponding increases of cattle exports to Great Britain.

So much for a few samples of forward marching, with more to follow and with fuller details in later instalments. The Royal Bank of Canada says "there is a more encouraging outlook for Canadian business in 1926 than at any time within the last five years."

And these are "dreags of depression." Then give us more of them! Watch for article No. 2.

and that he has never fired?" "He lies, doctor; it is the other way. I learn that from childhood he has been firing at all sorts of things with pistols; and I have never fired a pistol shot in my life."

"Your places, gentlemen," cried Drummond. Roland was already at his post; but his opponent was not yet upon his ground.

"Why this unseemly haste?" he gasped. "I am so unsteady by my illness, that I am really not in a position yet to take my ground." Harland spoke a word or two to Drummond, and then said in a voice distinct and audible to all:

"If after I call three Mr. Ham is not upon his ground the affair will be declared off. My other alternative will then be in order. One, two—"

"Hold, hold, I'm coming," groaned the coward, as he took his place.

"Now then, gentlemen, your backs to each other," said Harland. "I shall count one, two, three, and at the end of the last count each man shall wheel and fire."

"If I fall I shall have you proceeded against, Drummond—you are in a conspiracy to murder a sick man."

"I did not know that Mr. Ham was

an Irishman," chimed in Harland.

"One!"

"Oh!" groaned the respectable Mr. Ham.

Continued Next Week

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