

## 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.

### Synopsis of Story Thus Far:

Forty years ago, in a small village near the town of Little York lived the heroine of our story with her father. It is the intention of Miss Aster's father to have her marry their next door neighbor, Mr. Ham, a vulgar sort of person, in order to unite the two farms. However, a refined college bred young gentleman from the city Mr. Roland Gray, visits Miss Aster's home and accidentally meets Mr. Ham. The two become enemies from the time of the first meeting, due of course to the attentions of the other towards Miss Aster. Mr. Ham as well as Aster's father treat Mr. Gray in a very insolent manner, and as a result he leaves the house determined to make Ham pay for his behaviour. Gray immediately seeks an old Eton school fellow, Frank Harland, and asks his aid in the matter. On the following morning Harland visits Mr. Ham at his farm at Otlands and informs him that Mr. Gray wishes to meet in a duel either by sword or pistol, and to make terms for such. To hide his cowardice Ham makes all kinds of excuses why he can't enter a combat of honor with one such as Mr. Gray but when Harland proves to him Gray's decency from an earl in the British peerage, he gives his consent for the meeting reluctantly.

Ham chooses Jabez Drummond, a friend, for his second and on the following morning all four meet at Sleafy Gulch, a small hollow running at right angles to the Don. They find necessary to relieve Mr. Ham of great deal of clothing which he had donned as a means of protection; and after much forcible persuasion the two men take their ground. At the count of three the pistol shots begin and resulting in the severe wounding of Mr. Ham. While the medical man is attending to him Mr. Gray has to flee from the office. The two are just approaching the horseback. They fire but do not go until his horse is shot underneath him. Then he disappears in a dense dark wood and is sure he is quite safe from the robbers he dressed his own wound. Sheer exhaustion falls upon him when he awakens it is not a sweet voice, which he had heard in his dreams, that comes to him but the baying of blood-thirsty dogs. Now Read On:—

'Strange to say,' the robber went on, 'the good people of York took the matter tamely enough, and many declared their belief that those men who never came back must have fallen into shaking bogs or hollow swamps. Ha, ha!' the fellow chuckled, 'they were not far astray! the "hollow swamp" was almost like an inspiration. Well, youngster we have been frequently visited by posess since, but for the greater part we permit them to roam our labyrinths unmolested. Now and again, however, one or two, or three intruders are missing; but considering what a wonderful man-trap the swamp is, these small matters do not make very much commotion in the outside world. But we are almost at our journey's end.' As he spoke the ruddy glare of a fire could be seen a short way off.

A huge rock lifted itself in the wood, and behind this the gang had assembled. Their manner at once became changed upon the approach of the captain; but they could not conceal their astonishment at the sight of our hero; for they had read in their leader's eyes that he was not destined for harm.

'I bring a friend, lads, who is henceforth a member of our family. He pinked his man to-day in a duel, and was clearing off in a devil of a hurry when I offered him our hospitalities.'

'Pinked his man, ay?' exclaimed one of the gang, a hideous looking ruffian with small eyes, bushy eyebrows, and dragged red hair. 'He seems better cut out to pink toads.'

'If we want your opinion on such matters we will ask for it,' the captain observed, looking sternly upon the insulting ruffian.

'We are to live together, so we may as well commence by getting acquainted with one another,' youngster,' the captain said. 'This fellow, whose tongue has just wagged, is Joe Murrey a famous blackguard in his own particular line. You flaxen gentleman, pointing to a villainous looking person with a greenish skin of flaxen hair, and an unsteady, treacherous eye, 'gives moral tone to our little household. He, on occasion, devotes himself with much ardor to religious exercises. For the sake of being familiar we call him Jud Sykes.'

The hateful looking scoundrel bowed and said:

'I am happy to welcome you to our

poor abode.' And as he drew near: 'Ah, so young and so fair, to stain his soul with the blood of a fellow-creature! Oh, my poor young man, repentance, repentance with us here in nature's sanctuary, where the grandeur of God's works, without any of the disfigurements of man, is all that remains to you. I welcome you my poor fallen son,' and he stretched out his hand. But our hero simply gave the blasphemous yagabond a look of scorn and turned away.

'There is one other, the fourth and last of the male members of our humble dwelling, to whom let me also present you. This is a young gentleman of a very meek and unobtrusive disposition. He never raises his voice to a high pitch, or makes a noise when performing any little job that requires skill. It would seem as if his good parents were inspired in bestowing a name upon him. They called him Lifter. We have slightly varied the name, took a slight grammatical liberty with it, so to speak. We call him The Lifter. Let me, Mr. Gray, introduce you to The Lifter.' Roland bowed with the same air of haughtiness and disgust. But now that he was among the unholy crew he felt that he must make the best of the situation, comfortably, of course, with his sense of honor. The description given of this miscreant by the robber chief indicates his appearance. He was somewhat below medium height, and though not stoutly built, revealed strongly knit shoulders, and muscles enduring as twisted steel. He had a fawning air, a dark rolling eye and most villainous brows.

'These young women attend to the domestic portion of our labors,' the chief said, 'this is our Nancy and this is Silent Poll.'

Roland bowed to each of the girls in turn; and he perceived that while both were handsome, they had that bold, free stare, which must repel a man of refined or proper feeling. The handsomer of the two was Nancy, and Roland imagined that he perceived behind the forwardness of her manner a kind of reckless despair; that indescribable sort of vivacity which arises when hope, and honor, and everything that is dear are dead, and only what is worse remains to live for. This girl had evidently at some time moved in society different by far from this; for her speech was somewhat refined, and her bearing that of a woman more or less well-bred.

From the moment of Roland's arrival she seemed to be more thoughtful; and the melancholy in her eyes became more pronounced. He seemed—if one could judge of the varying expressions in her face—to call back within her a thousand memories long dead; to bring before her mind again a world she had forgotten. Her eyes were almost constantly upon him; and when he spoke she listened to every syllable that he uttered.

One of the first to notice this was Joe; and a hideous light gleamed in dull and sunken eye.

As for silent Poll; not one word could be said in her favor. What she once might have been God alone can tell; but she seemed well content with the vile lot to which she had fallen. Indeed, when Roland saw her flaming eyes and heard her speech, he doubted if companionship different from this had ever been vouchsafed her.

Preparations for supper had been progressing for some time before the captain's arrival. In front of the bluff of rock blazed a fire made of birch and maple, and on a spit before this a huge piece of venison was roasting. A hideous old woman, with eyes like a rattlesnake, and dragged hair like the moss upon an aged fir, stood by the spit, which every few moments she turned. Silent Poll had some lard in a cup, and a small quantity of this she put upon the meat each time that the hag turned the spit. Nancy extended a sort of camp-table and upon it placed the drinking vessels; and Roland perceived that these lawless persons lived in a very sumptuous manner. Nor can it be said that the white bread, the butter, the large mealy potatoes, and other vegetables, together with the juicy haunch before the fire were indifferent to his stomach after the long ride.

'I'll get the grog,' growled Murrey; and turning he disappeared, seeming to sink directly into the earth. In a few seconds he returned with a small keg which he placed beside the table.

The rays of the fire enabled our hero to get an indistinct view around; and he observed that they were surrounded by dense tangled forest, with the face of the rock forming an immediate screen from outside intrusion.

(To Be Continued)

## "Way Back in Liberal Files"

Twenty-five Years Ago  
From Our Issue of Sept. 19, 1901.

Mr. and Mrs. Ira Fleury of Temperanceville celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of their wedding on Saturday last.

Monday evening of last week about 6 o'clock the barn of Mr. Geo. Murphy on the second concession of Whitchurch was burned to the ground. The season's crop, the threshing separator of Mr. Thos. Cannon, eleven sheep, a number of pigs and a quantity of implements were destroyed.

At the regular meeting of the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist church a life membership and complimentary address were presented to Mrs. W. R. Proctor.

Hogs were quoted at \$7.25 per cwt. lambs at \$3.75 each, and choice butcher cattle at \$4.00 per cwt.

Thirty Years Ago  
From Our Issue of Sept. 24, 1896.

Maple civic holiday was duly observed on Thursday Sept. 17. It was a very successful event and over 500 people were in attendance.

The annual harvest festival of All Saint's church, King City was held on Thursday night. The church was decorated with emblems of the harvest and interesting addresses were given by visiting clergymen.

Fourteen pounds rolled oats for 25 cents, 5 pounds currants 25 cents, 5 pounds starch 25c, 2 pounds first class baking powder, 25 cents were some of the specials offered by Atkinson and Switzer.

Twenty Years Ago  
From Our Issue of Sept. 20, 1906.

Mr. A. J. Hume of Richmond Hill acted as judge in the band competition at the Newmarket fair on Wednesday.

The annual Harvest Thanksgiving service was held in St. Mary's church last evening. Rev. John Gibson preached an eloquent sermon and special music was rendered by the choir. Mr. Earl Newton and Miss Kerswill presided at the organ.

Mr. K. Hall of Berlin has purchased the Winger Coal sheds at Thornhill station.

The proprietor of the Summit house at Oak Ridges was up before the magistrate in Newmarket last week and was fined \$100 and costs for selling liquor in local option district.

In view of the possibility of Toronto Junction being supplied with water from artesian wells at Lemonville a Liberal reporter and another citizen paid a visit to the wells last

Friday. The water from many pipes flows continually as clear as crystal, and many millions go to waste every day. The wells are on the Cook farm Lot 6 and 7, Con. 6 Whitchurch. Some of the pipes are 2 inches, 3 inches, 6 inches in diameter. The water from some of these wells ascends with great force, and it is said will raise 25 feet above the surface. On the Cook farm alone there are 21 wells. Some of the wells were plugged as the neighbors to the south complained that the overflow of water was a nuisance. The first well in that locality was bored 6½ years ago and the proprietor of the farm says the water comes with as much force now as when the well was first sunk. It is claimed that from one pipe alone 1000,000 gallons of water flows every 24 hours. Mr. Neighorn has an option on the wells and if he is granted a charter by the Ontario Government his intention is to commence piping the distance to Toronto Junction, about 28 miles, next spring, by way of Yonge Street. The height of the artesian wells above Toronto is about 650 feet.

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