

# 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

The story opens about forty years ago in a small village near the town of Little York. Mr. Roland Gray is fleeing for his life as the result of having shot Mr. Ham in a duel which arises from hard feelings and insolence caused by the affection each has for a beautiful young lady, called Astor, who lives with her father on a farm. The officers of the law have bloodhounds on Roland's trail.

Roland now thinks that his capture is a surety but the elements seem to be in his favor, with the darkness of the night and the changing of the wind he feels more at ease. Finally he comes upon the road and mounting a horse which one of his pursuers has left tied on the side of the road he hurriedly sped away.

He meets Astor's father but successfully disguises himself and passes on to be met by the captain of the men who have possession of Markham Swamp. He has no choice but to be led to the heart of the swamp where he learns a number of horrible and sickening truths. Behind a huge rock he finds the gang assembled. One, a hideous looking ruffian, Joe Murfrey; another villainous looking person, with greenish skin and flaxen hair, Jud Sykes, plays the part of a minister; the last of the male members of the gang being known as, The Lifter. Two ladies, one very young and at one time beautiful, Nancy, and Silent Poll who seems quite content with her lot, look after the domestic needs. Supper is prepared during which the ruffian Joe begins to harbor a hatred for Roland on account of the attention Nancy gives him. Later on Roland discovers that they are surrounded by a dense forest which hold the dreadful secrets he is about to learn.

## Now Read On

"You wonder, I presume, youngster," the chief observed, "why our good company run the risk of building a fire at night in this wood. Well, such an indiscretion we are not guilty of when the moon is out; but to-night no foot save a practised one could make its way through the underwood. 'But they might carry lanterns?'"

"I grant you; but a light is an object that we as well as they can see. Besides, coming here in the dark is about the last thing the guardians of order would think of doing. Their visits were too fatal in the open day for that."

At the table the liquor circulated freely, and as it was cognac twenty years old, as the robber chief swore, it soon brought up the spirits of the gang. To his great disgust, Roland perceived that the girls drank almost as freely as the men. After Nancy had quaffed a couple of horns, the melancholy which the new-comer had a little while before noticed so plainly in her face, disappeared; and she began to show marked attentions upon the handsome and well-bred stranger. Not an action of hers escaped the eyes of the jealous Murfrey; and as the miserable girl was in the act of passing something to Roland, the robber gave her a violent blow upon the arm.

"You are too d—d ready with your attentions," he growled, and then swore a terrible oath. Nancy turned and looked upon him with flashing eyes; and ferocious and bloody as the man was, she did not fear him. A little later she raised her horn and looking the stranger in the face, said:

"I pledge you welcome, sir; will you drink good-will and long friendship with me?"

Roland as we have seen, had from the first resolved to make the best of the deplorable set, so with easy courtesy and good nature, he raised his horn and said, "I drink with pleasure." But before he had swallowed his sip, Joe had risen from his seat and reached his side; and without word or warning dealt him a severe blow on the head. Roland's blood boiled in his veins and were his life the issues ten times over he would not submit to the indignity. He sprang from his chair, weak though he was from his wound.

"Infamous ruffian," he thundered, "How do you dare?" and striking the desperado one, twice, upon the temple felled him like a beast to the turf. For a moment the villain lay there as if he had received his death-blow; then he moved raised himself, and was upon his feet again. At first he reeled and staggered, though not from brandy; and putting his hand to his hip he drew his knife. Roland saw the reflection of the glittering blade flash upon the sombre front of the sombre forest; but he did not move. The miscreant approached him with his weapon raised; but our hero was prepared. Drawing his pistol he cocked it "One step forward and I blow your brains out,"

Further mishap was prevented by the chief who sprang between the two.

"Enough," he cried, raising his hand "replace your weapons; and reserve them for other uses. You have my congratulations youngster. You are the right stuff; just such metal as we want here. As for you Joe, you got what you deserved richly. Not another word." No other word was spoken; but the robber glared upon the victor like a foiled beast.

As for the robber himself whose appearance I have not sought to describe so far, his stature was certainly a splendid one. He stood not less than six feet two inches high; his chest was full, and his neck and limbs such as a sculptor might make as a model for a Hercules. His face was not unhandsome, but it was marred by an all-prevailing expression of cruelty. In his eye there was no room for pity or remorse; nor was there a feature in his face that could harbor a generous or kindly impulse; or one of honor. His hair was dark, but tinged with grey; and the cruelties of the man's career had left wide and horrible furrows extending from the corners of his mouth into his cheek. It would be too generous to say that the man had been born under an evil star that some great cross had come to him and turned his being to evil. For there was no trace of any good; the face, the voice the tout ensemble of the man were evil. Roland simply shuddered as he looked at him; and he shuddered too when he reflected that the monster had set his heart to turning him into a highwayman.

The gang lighted their pipes when the supper was ended, and the girls cleared the board. Poor Roland, with the cold heavy hand of Despair squeezing his heart, walked a few paces away from the camp fire, and sat upon a tree bole. In a little while the fire had grown so low that no light came from it save the scarlet glow from the smouldering embers. A deep gloom was everywhere; but it was not darker than the shadow that had fallen upon his life. Suddenly the gates of the dusk seemed to open and a flood of silver light filled the world. Looking, he perceived that the clouds were breaking, and through a rift in the pall the moonlight flood had been sluiced upon the darksome swamp. With the light came the stirring of hope at his heart; and for a minute he surrendered himself to the sweet thought that a time might come when he, with honor untarnished,

could issue from the toils, and take his place in the world from which crime had banished him.

"It will be forgotten in two or three years at most," he mused, and at the end of that time she may still remember. And then divers avenues of escape from the hideous toils were open to his imagination. Why could he not after the lapse of a few months, disguise himself, go boldly out of the wood and cross the frontier? In a republican city he could engage in some honorable occupation; and perhaps his beloved might care to hear something of his fortunes. His dreams had become very rosy when he heard the voice of the chief asking him if he did not want to 'go to bed to-night.'

He saw no camps, no blankets, no dwelling, and he marvelled as to where they slept or found shelter from the storm. One by one his companions seemed to sink into the bowels of the earth, as the robber before supper seemed to have done, till at last nobody remained but The Lifter.

"I am waiten to show you to your bed," the fellow said in a voice as soft as the ripple of an oily stream.

"Why where on earth does your company sleep?"

"Nowhere on earth," returned the soft-voiced Lifter.

"Come; we go under the earth," and taking our hero's hand he led him to what seemed like the mouth of a pit. A faint light beneath revealed a sort of step-ladder, and by this Roland following his guide, descended into what seemed a cavern. The air was not foul, as one might suppose, but there was an earthy smell which at first was disagreeable to the nostrils of our hero. Taking a taper, which was left burning below, The Lifter led the way for a considerable distance, and then turning to the right entered a sort of aperture or pocket in the clayey wall to his right. The flickering of the light here revealed a small bed; and setting down the candle the Lifter said:

"This is to be your room while you stay with us; good night." In spite of the sickening sensation that came over Roland as he entered this underground lair, and the feeling of pain and shame at the part he was compelled to act he was soon asleep, and dreaming once again of the days

that held no evil.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Ways of Robber Life

During the night a violent gale blew, rain fell in torrents, and many a proud tree received its death blow when lightning sprang from the low-brooding cloud.

But the face of nature was as bright next morning as a child's face after its own little tempest and its tears have passed, and joy takes possession again. The sky seemed so clearly blue, that one might think, as I myself often when a child imagined, that in some unaccountable way the rain in falling had washed the sky and hence it looked upon the morrow cleaner.

White clouds, like frail, wide tangles of thistle-down, drove across the sky and helped to form a vast congregation to leeward.

Overhead and for a considerable way upon their journey, these clouds are white, but when they begin to form away beyond the reach of the wind, they immediately turn to a pearl gray. Sometimes you will notice a flush of rose, and often little patches of violet; and if to these hues be added no other save the semi-universal cumulus or neutral you have little fear that the tempest will renew itself. But beware of the purple and the sulky indigo. The purple sometimes clears up and dissolves itself in joyous crimson, or fair-weather pink. I have hardly ever known indigo to relent. When it rolls or steals into the heavens its purpose is tumult; and if you miss its fury be sure that someone else, some other where will not.

Roland's heart awoke as he stood once more under the pure honest heavens, the wholesome air filling his lungs, and the sunshine, despite his lot creeping into his heart.

And although the bush that clad the swamp was hateful as woods could be, it revealed here and there to our hero's ken a touch of beauty; for among the evergreens several maple, beech, and oak trees had thrust their roots. The dull bronze of the oak, the pale gold of the beech, and the flushed crimson of the maple contrasted richly and often gorgeously with the myrtle of the evergreens.

"Smitten by the beauty of our woods aye?" the robber enquired.

(To Be Continued)

## Unionville

(Special to the Liberal)

In St. Phillip's Anglican Church Sunday last the services were of an unusual nature, the occasion being the annual harvest festival, the sacred edifice being beautifully decorated for the event by a lavish profusion of the products of the farm and garden. The service was conducted by the rector, Rev. J. J. Robbins, with Miss Ila Weighill the organist in charge of the musical program.

There was a good attendance at the monthly meeting of the Unionville Branch of the Women's Institute, held at the home of Mrs. R. L. Stiver on the 5th Concession. Following the ordinary business of the institute an interesting address was given by Brigadier Bloss of the Salvation Army, on the great work done by the Army in prison life. At the conclusion of the Brigadier's address tea was served, the hostesses for the afternoon being Mrs. R. J. Cunningham, Mrs. John Hood, Mrs. R. L. Stiver and Mrs. John Young.

**A Case for Spanking**—School-teacher (absent-mindedly to her young man)—"You did not turn up last night. Have you a written excuse from your mother?"

**ASpecter to the Good**—Assistant—"The seance is going pretty good." Medium—"Yes, just a shade more and it'll be a success."

## The Richmond Hill Furnishing Store

Men's black and brown Oxfords, regular \$5.50 value, a special at \$4.50.

Also some in first grade calf at \$5.50 and \$6.00.

Ladies' Summer Pumps in patent, gray kid, and satin, at \$4.00, \$4.50 and \$5.00.

We carry the special Goodrich Bi-Press athletic shoes for Men, Women and Children.

**NORMAN J. GLASS**

## Markham

(Special to the Liberal)

The Annual Markham fair will be officially opened on Friday by Hon. J. S. Martin, Minister of Agriculture for the Province of Ontario. An attractive program has been arranged by the directors and all that is needed now is fine weather and President Davidson has intimated to The Liberal that he has ordered that.

From reports received by the directors, and entries received the show as a whole will surpass the best hitherto held. G. A. M. Davidson, of Unionville is president, and Roy Crosby, secretary.

No Agility—"How's Smith in the high jump? Any good?" "Naw, he can hardly clear his throat."

## What Will Your Pullets Be Doing Three Months from To-day?

WE KNOW THEY WILL LAY AND PAY IF YOU FEED THEM THE STERLING WAY

STERLING STARTER

STERLING EGG MASH

The perfect food for chicks, should be fed the first six weeks. Follow feeding directions in every package or bag.

Follows the chick starter, combined with Sterling scratch feed for a perfect balance.

Will assure you of Healthy and Vigorous stock and a full Egg Basket

FOR SALE BY ALL DEALERS

Manufactured By

TORONTO HEIGHTS POULTRY SUPPLY CO., Limited.

Toronto,

Ontario.

## We Will Never Be Satisfied Until You Are Satisfied

If you are needing anything in the line of Job Printing we are equipped to do your work and solicit your patronage.

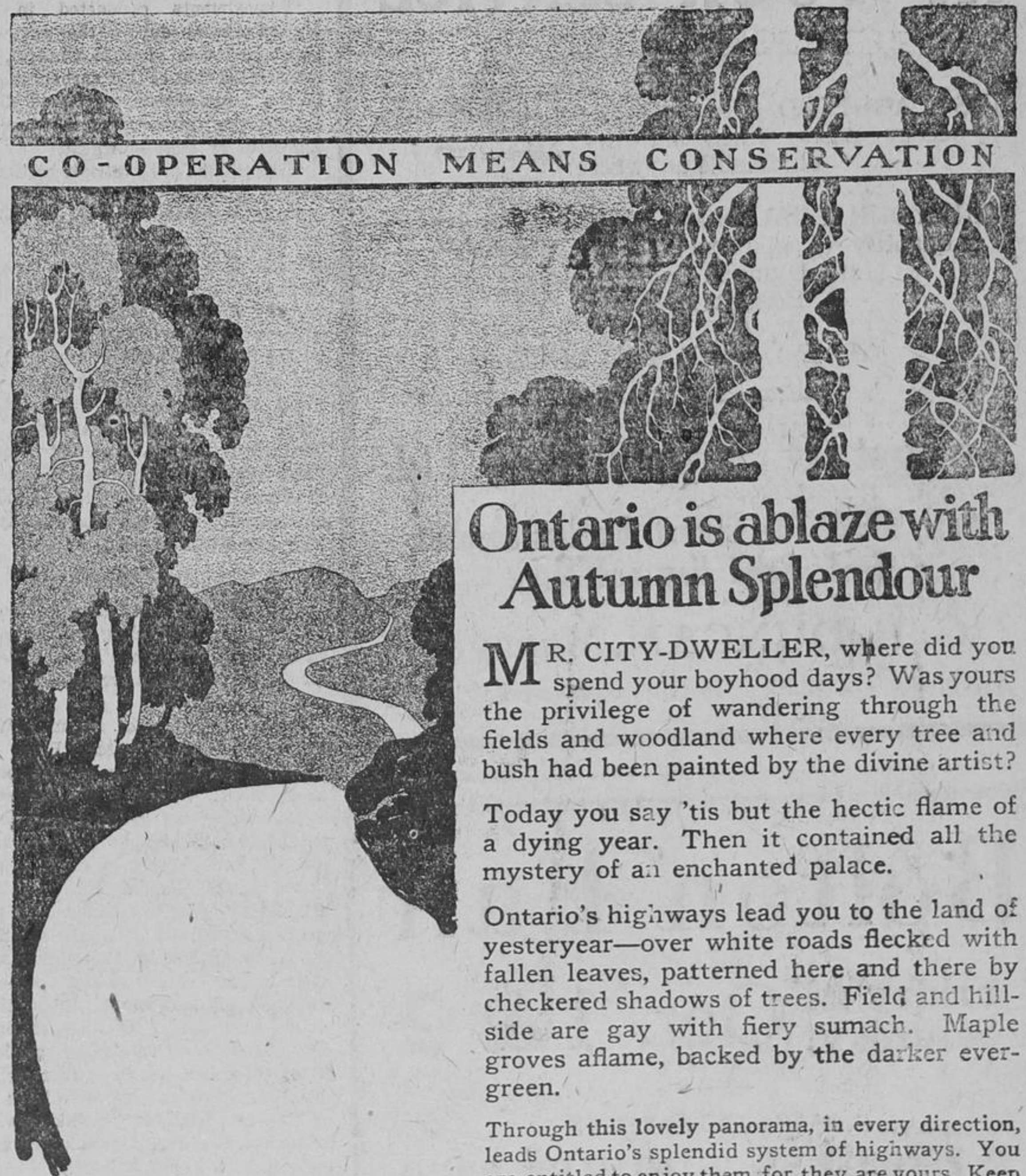
"OUR AIM IS A SATISFIED CUSTOMER"

## THE "LIBERAL"

RICHMOND HILL, ONTARIO

Telephone 9.

FOR EXCELLENCE IN ALL MANNER OF PRINTING.



## CO-OPERATION MEANS CONSERVATION

### Ontario is ablaze with Autumn Splendour

MR. CITY-DWELLER, where did you spend your boyhood days? Was yours the privilege of wandering through the fields and woodland where every tree and bush had been painted by the divine artist?

Today you say 'tis but the hectic flame of a dying year. Then it contained all the mystery of an enchanted palace.

Ontario's highways lead you to the land of yesteryear—over white roads flecked with fallen leaves, patterned here and there by checkered shadows of trees. Field and hillside are gay with fiery sumach. Maple groves aflame, backed by the darker evergreen.

Through this lovely panorama, in every direction, leads Ontario's splendid system of highways. You are entitled to enjoy them, for they are yours. Keep in mind, however, that upon you will come the expense of maintaining them in proper condition.

Speeding cats away road surfaces. It "milks" your pocket-book for both motor and road upkeep. Moderate driving is far more economical and pleasurable.

By so doing you will greatly assist the traffic patrol who operate for everyone's safety—who have instructions to enforce the law rigorously.

Issued by the Ontario Department of Highways to secure the co-operation of motorists in abating the abuse of the roads of the Province.

THE HON. G. S. HENRY,  
Minister of Highways.

S. L. SQUIRE,  
Deputy Minister.