

# 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 chattering 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 Muffrey; 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

"Yes; I was looking at that flaming maple.

"We are not so God-forsaken here as you might imagine, young man. A capital fishing stream runs through the swamp."

"Are there fish in that lake I see gleaming through the bush?"

"Plenty of them. Well, fed too, ha, ha." There was something in the tone of the man's voice that made Roland's blood run cold.

"Oh yes; you will get reconciled to our ways of living sooner than you imagine; and by the time that your wound is healed you will be longing for exercise. But we will give you plenty of it."

"In what manner, may I ask?"

"Now how innocent you seem Mr. Duellist. Why, have I not told you? Have you not heard what the occupation is of the Gang of Markham Swamp? Well, you will assist us in keeping up the reputation of the place. But you will not at first get work which only trained hands can do. I shall be considerate enough not to require you to go abroad while the sun is up; but you will bear a hand at night when no moon is to be seen; and when the storm kindly helps to conceal suspicious noises. Now and again young man, if it must be so plain, I will need you to aid in breaking houses, and gagging noisy fools. Sometimes I shall require you to crack a skull, if easier methods fail in the prosecution of our enterprises. I take a fancy sometimes for carrying folks away to our curious quarters: some of whom it suits my humor to retain for a time, others of whom I allow to sink into the mysterious hollow swamp. We have not carried away a pretty lass for many months now; and it is quite desolate here sometimes when one has not handsome female eyes to look into his and give him cheer.

"But I have my eye upon a girl distant far from here. Over a year ago I saw her in her father's orchard gathering peaches. Looking up her eyes met mine, which were burning upon her through the hedge. She gave a shriek of horror and ran away. Never, young man, had my eyes before rested upon a being so fair as this. I might have gone away and strove to think no more about her, but the look of loathing as well as terror with which my face filled her, decided my course. I resolved to have her. Before the spring buds are on the trees she shall be here; and one of the officers I shall reserve for you is to assist me in bringing her hither. I may be able to use you as a decoy; for your face curse it, seems to find more favor with the women than mine."

"And you brought me here, then, that I might aid you in such works of infamy?"

"Precisely."

"Then hear my answer one for all. Death shall be mine before dishonor. Rather than assist you in carrying out the least of your evil deeds I will give myself up to justice." The robber's face grew dark as a thunder-

cloud, and a devilish light flashed in his eye. For a moment his hand rested upon the haft of his knife; but only for a moment.

"We shall see," he replied. "I have bent more stubborn wills than yours. You will have some time to make choice of my two alternatives. This only have I now to say: If you have any hope of being able to escape hence and get into sheltering territory put it from you. While you stay in this wood watch will always be upon you. Should you manage to escape those who guard you here, I myself shall lead the minions of the law upon your track. Now get these words down into your craven heart."

"I perceive, miscreant," Roland retorted, his eye flashing, "that you understand my code of honor, and take advantage of it. You are aware that falsehood and insolence from such lips as yours convey no insult. But despite your stature, your hungry knife, and your three villainous associates, here, even in this den I would not hesitate to inflict chastisement if I could but do it upon the grounds of honor. Now, ruffian, you know my will. But defend myself save from the arm of lawful authority, I always will." And he faced the robber, who, probably for the first time in his evil life quailed. Turning upon his heel the chief strode away.

"You have my word," is all he said. Roland then perceived that the captain in a stern voice gave certain commands when he joined the group. Muffrey, with a dogged countenance, descended the pit; the respectable Mr. Sykes followed him; and a little later the giant figure of the chief himself disappeared into the hole.

"I was lis'neen. Heard your words to the capteen," The Lifter said to our hero, in a smooth, even whisper.

"It is surprisen he didn't stab you."

Nancy was engaged making for herself a wincy gown; the hag was sewing buttons upon a pair of breeches belonging to one of the highwaymen, and Silent Poll was kneading dough.

"I do not regard it as surprising," our hero replied.

"My but that's strange," quoth the Lifter.

"Two can play at a game of that sort; I do not relish an encounter, but whosoever gets my life will have to strive for it. But that is of little consequence. What is on now?"

"If you will just remain standeen where you are and keep your eyes open you will see."

Presently our hero saw a strange head arise from the cavern; and then the entire figure appeared. The disguise was most complete, and the robber, whichever one he was held a buck-saw in his hand.

"Off buckeen," whispered The Lifter. The fellow wore a very ragged coat, and corresponding breeches; but our hero could not remember having seen him before. He stood close to the mouth of the pit looking first at Nancy and then upon Roland. The jealous glare settled the point in our hero's mind. The disguised ruffian was Muffrey. The next moment out popped a sleek, respectable looking personage carrying a Bible under his arm, and a walking stick in his hand. He was dressed like a dissenting clergyman, wearing at his throat the white bow that characterizes the Wesleyan preacher.

"The fear of God is the beginning of all righteousness. Tread ye in His ways my children," he said, raising his hand above the group. And then pronouncing a benediction, the miscreant departed.

The robber chief next appeared, and him our hero could never have identified. Under his wide-brimmed hat tufts of curly chestnut hair were visible; and his jaws and chin had a huge beard to match in color.

"Cattle dealer," whispered The Lifter. The robber's clothing were such as to harmonize with a man who bought and sold horses, bullocks and flocks of sheep in his hand he carried a heavy knotted stick.

"We return at moonrise," he said to the old woman as he turned away.

"Good luck, good luck to ee," quavered the crone. "A pocket-full o' yellow shiners for yourself, me fine dear."

And she waved her withered arm after the robber many times. Seventy-two years I've lived in this bush, girl an' woman, an' he's the finest one that ever came into it; barrin my other son the Slugger that the p'lice bagged when he was drunk. But not apeach would he, even when they put the rope around his neck. He's the sort of a man for you to pattern by my young one," the old woman said, turning to Roland and addressing him for the first time.

"Why, old dame, ought I be anxious to have myself hanged in the end, as I understand this Slugger was?"

"Bah! you haven't courage enough

to earn your hanging. I do not know what the captain wants to bring such coves as you here for," she said darting a malignant glance at our hero. "I would be ashamed to eat other people's bread and accept their shelter, without trying to make myself useful."

Roland was in one of his irritating moods so he said:

"I perceive that you are a very wicked old lady; and I am quite sure that if the officers could lay hands upon you they would give the birds some thing to peck at. Do you know what they do with bad old ladies like you? Why they hang them up to trees that stand alone upon a bleak common; that the boys may pelt and the crows may feed."

The rage of the old gentlewoman was now so great that she was unable to articulate; and when her fury reached the most impotent stage, Roland arose and walked away.

"Do you wish to take a turn with the rod?" Nancy asked.

"Yes, I would like to get out of sight of your uncharitable grandmother here."

"Hush! I would advise you not to provoke her too far. If you knew what her career of crime has been you would shudder to bring her ill-will upon you. I am afraid you have brought a great danger upon your head." Our hero and Nancy emerged from the wood and there lay spread before them a lake of shining water, though dark as soot. Its area was probably about twenty acres; and although its depth seemed to be great, a black stump rose here and there from the surface. The two had not walked far when the shrill voice of the old woman was heard calling.

"Nancy, Nancy!"

"I must leave you; but I will return as soon as I can. I have many things to tell you and many warnings to give. The Lifter, I think, has taken a great fancy to your ways; and I, think you will be able to credit what he says to you. I will join you up the brook and we will have a fish together. Good-bye, dearie;" and the girl flung a kiss to him from her finger tips and was away.

A minute later The Lifter came whiffing along and joined our hero. "Well stranger, what do you think of the parseen?"

"I think that he is a blasphemous villain; and I wonder that God Almighty does not send a bolt from heaven upon such a wretch."

"But it is said that they have a good deal of patience in heaven. Well I think they must or they never would suffer the Rev. Mr. Jonas to walk the earth. I often sit a think-eeh of him; and always come to the conclusion that he is not sincere."

"Cease your knavery fellow. What purpose can it serve to talk in this fashion to me?"

"Well, I will. I like you, because you knocked down the bully. I have a great likeen for the fellow's gal; but till you came she cared best for Joe, I'd like to tell you summat of my brethren. But say, are you here hard and fast?"

"I fear, alas, I am."

"What did you do; kill your man in a duel?" Roland sighed and bowed his head.

"Then you cannot go away and peach; so I'll give you a bit of our indoor history. You saw these as went out to-day. Wall, they are off spotteden (spotting). Joe will go to some comfortable farm house and ask for a job saween wood. He can be very good natured and obligeen; and pretty soon he gets the run of the house. If there is a silver spoon or a watch in the house he seldom leaves—though he often returns day in and day out to the same house—without bringeen it away. Sometimes he hears of a man who has a lot of shiners, and if he can be stre that he keep it in the house, he makes himself at home for a few days about the place doeen chores cheap. His next visit is when they are asleep; when there is no moon and the storm makes much clatter. He escaped from New-eeh in the ould country; came to muddy York and got jugged. He broke bars and was picked up one evening as you were on the edge of this swamp. He was the very man they needed here."

(To Be Continued)

**SAND and GRAVEL**  
FOR ROAD OR CEMENT WORK  
At Our Pit  
**CEMENT BRICKS AND BLOCKS**  
Get Our Prices Before Placing Your Order.  
**G. S. REAMAN**  
Phone 849  
CEMENT MIXERS FOR RENT  
MAPLE ONTARIO

## Carrville Cider Mill

OPEN FOR BUSINESS  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 4th**  
A. WILSON, Proprietor

## 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

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

### STERLING EGG MASH

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.



Get them play by play with a King Radio

# Don't Miss the Big Football Games

Ask for King Model 61, Six Tubes, Three Dial Control In Beautiful Two-Tone Cabinet

THERE'S nothing more thrilling on the air than the breathless broadcasting of this fall's football games—from across the field the stirring music of college bands led by haughty drum majors in high hats—the stirring roar of cheering thousands—then—"Signals!"—and off they go!

You can get it all—in your own home—if you have a King Radio. A King will give you the station you want in daylight—bring it in clear and loud and strong so that you need never miss a single play that is broadcast.

The King Radio shown here is the 61. It's a six-tube set, built to give you distance and volume and quality.

It's in a beautiful cabinet. You'll always be proud of it. And the price is so reasonable it will amaze you.

### Small Down Payment Gets This Radio

Best of all, you can get it for a small down payment, the balance to be taken care of in small monthly amounts as you enjoy the set. We will install the set all ready to tune in and show you how to use it.

Come in today and see this King Radio. We have others up to \$210.00 from which to choose. If you can't come, phone us and we will have the set in before tomorrow night. But don't delay—and miss the big football events. Come in today!

HALL'S SERVICE STATION  
RICHMOND HILL, ONT.

# KING RADIO

"Most Radio Per Dollar"