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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 starts about ninety years ago in a small village near the town of Little York. Mr. Roland Gray is fleeing for his life as a result of having shot Mr. Ham in a duel caused by the affection each has for Miss Astor who lives with her father. Gray is captured by the chief of the robbers of Markham Swamp. Through one of the captives, Nancy, at one time a beautiful young girl, he learns of all their evil doings. He persuades Nancy to try and escape from the den of sin with him at some convenient time in the future, also The Lifter whose life he has the chance to save in return for The Lifter's word of warning which saved his own. Gray has no fear for any member of the gang and on account of his daring action on different occasions has won the bitter enmity of the old woman. It is only because the chief wants to make use of him in some crime he is already planning for that he doesn't share the same fate as most of the previous victims. Before the captain and his men go out to rob the servant of a certain gentleman who is returning home with a large sum of money they lock Gray in his room. Gray calls to Nancy for her aid but she is prevented from unbolting the door by the old woman. Later he hears a continuous succession of heavy thuds and notices the earth falling from the ceiling. He realizes only too well what the outcome will be and tries to think of a means of escape. He wonders who the participants in the affair are, could it be the old woman and her daughter or had the robbers returned? He begins pounding on the door and calling for Nancy's and The Lifter's aid. Now Read On.

you all about it." When The Lifter reached his room Roland noticed that his arm was in a sling, and the captain was absent from home in pursuit of prey. Joe Murrey who had been in league with the old and Silent Poll, assisted by Rev. Mr. Jonas, had driven in the earth roof with a heavy log made like a pile driver. The conspirators believed that The Lifter and Nancy were sleeping; "and they will never know," concluded The Lifter, with a joyous chuckle how you got out."

In the morning all save Roland had assembled about the breakfast table, and a sound of triumph was in the voice of the hag.

"The living cannot subsist by the dead," murmured the Rev. Mr. Jonas. Even though our poor brother lies ready-tombed we shall begin our repast thankful that our unworthy lives still exercise His care."

"Here's brimstone and blazes to the whelp in hell," shouted Murrey, as he swallowed nigh upon a tumbler of brandy.

"You ruffian!" They all started, and turning, observed Roland standing by the mouth of the tunnel, whence he saw and heard all that had passed. The two leading conspirators were simply speechless with amazement and rage; and then Murrey's eyes fell upon Nancy with a dark look of suspicion. But the girl returned his look with one of such innocent, enquiring wonder that he was at once satisfied she had nothing to do with the thwarting.

The old woman seemed for a time to have lost the use of her faculties and she raved in the most incoherent fashion. Taking little heed of their disappointment, Roland helped himself to many of the good things upon the table, and retiring a little way seated himself at breakfast upon the dry turf. Before doing so he coolly drew from the pocket at his hip one pistol and from that at his breast another, laying both beside him on the ground. With the knife in his girdle he cut his bread and meat and when his meal was ended, sharpened it, most ostentatiously, on a stone near by, now and again giving a glance, in which there was threat as well as defiance, towards Murrey and Rev. Mr. Jonas.

"Mother hag," he went on to say, "I do not think that I can offer you any more grace. The attempt to bury me alive I attribute to your charitable brain. I suppose you think that you have me at your power now that you have deprived me of a sleeping room. Well, these are my terms, dear old lady; unless you give me up your bedroom, which is substantial enough for my needs, I shall shoot you the first slant I get. Then I can hold my own against the precious preacher of the Don here and his confederates. But should the strain of holding my life against these prove too great I shall fall back in good order into the wood, and make my way to the nearest magistrate, where I will render myself up."

"You seem to have forgotten," he went on, with a peculiar voice, "that if I chose to turn King's evidence against you all that the den contains will be unearched while I go free."

Every word of this harangue had been heard by the robber chief, who was returning from his expedition, but whose footsteps were so noiseless that they could not be heard.

CHAPTER XI

Scenes Leading To The Climax.

The robbers soon dispersed and left our hero alone by the bole of a fallen pine. Nancy appeared in a moment, and, as she passed our hero on her way to gather branches for fire kindling, she said;

"They are all afraid. Are holding a consultation now. They will give you the old woman's room."

Then Nancy was gone. Everything was as still as the solitude of the tomb and Roland could hear the partridge "drumming" among the silent aisles of the wood.

He sat upon the tree-bole meditating, and the words of Nancy somehow gave him courage. Presently he heard a rustle in the dry bushes beside him, and, looking he saw a fallow doe making her way with quick but dainty tread toward the lake. He saw that she had not seen him, and that she was coming for the very spot where he sat. So he laid himself noiselessly down in the shelter of the huge trunk and drawing his heavy pistol awaited.

In a dozen seconds the unsuspecting animal was within half a dozen paces of him, when, rising he fired, one, two shots and the pretty creature fell over headlong, dead.

Running over he opened the jugular artery so that the blood might run out of the meat, and cause it to be white, although some of the connoisseurs of game prefer the retention of the blood as the meat, they affirm, becomes "gamey" in a shorter period.

The pistol shot brought the robbers instantly from the lair with alarm in their faces.

"What is this?" demanded the captain.

"A fallow doe was passing down toward the lake and I fired"

"And missed it," sneered Murrey. "It is a fine fat one, captain," Roland said, taking no notice of the ruffian; "come and feel it."

"It is more than you could do with a pistol, Joe," the captain replied, turning to the hang-dog robber, who, with a very disconcerted air hulked away from the scene, probably in search of Nancy.

It may be objected here that the robbers would not be likely to give their captive the opportunity of escaping which he must have had by being alone. I have to reply for the sake of the small critics who read my book and to whom the publishers are glad to sell it, that there was only one means of escape for Roland and that was along the lakeward side of the tunnel. But the passage here was commanded by the eyes of the gang, who had been underground in consultation.

After the doe had been quartered, The Lifter, taking Roland aside, said: (To Be Continued)

JINGLES

Albert Dahl was an educated Swede elderly, deaf and a patient in Kearney State Hospital for Tuberculosis. He used to knit socks for the soldiers overseas. After the war was over he knit stockings for children, booties for babies and made bead purses for ladies. He was very fond of composing what he called "Jingles." Below is a sample. Mr. Dahl died last spring.

Hang up the good big stockings, be they old or be they new. The bigger are the stockings, the more they will hold for you. Men's socks they are so very short, they don't amount to much. So get a good big stocking and hang it up as such.

Santa doesn't like a sock—so the story goes. They hold so little don't you see, e'en stuffed clear to the toes. For when he goes to fill 'em up or stuff 'em as it were, He just can't get the things half in they stick way up in the air. Men's socks are surely all right, if they're always used in place, But stockings are what Santa likes you can see it in his face. So hang a good sized stocking, whether old or whether new, And let Santa fill it full of things—fill it full for you.

WHITCHURCH COUNCIL

Whitchurch Township council met for last regular meeting 1926 at Vandorf December 15th at 10 o'clock a.m. with all members in attendance.

Communications presented:—

Ernest Weeks requiring financial assistance, S. C. Snively regarding claim for sheep killed by dogs; T. F. Doyle, re account W. A. Brunton & Co., for groceries supplied for family Mrs. O'Leary.

Reports Presented:—

M. O. H. and Local Board of Health; Townline East expenditure, by Whitchurch and Uxbridge, showing balance due Township of Whitchurch, to be \$17.00.

Sheep claims were presented by C. J. Brodie and Geo. Anthony on behalf of S. C. Snively, with reports of valuers.

The Treasurer was instructed to pay the following accounts etc. as presented.

T. Moorehead, hauling culverts, and placing one of same on T. L. E., \$6.00 Geo. Collard, hauling gravel and other work on T. L. south, \$158.00; Kennedy and Hartford, balance due bldg. culvert opposite Lot 26, Con. 2, 136.42 John Thompson, moving Mrs. Weisner to Toronto Hospital, \$8.00; Banner Press, printing parking notice cards, \$2.75; W. A. Brunton & Co., groceries and etc. for O'Leary family \$13.59; Everett Barnes, services as truant officer \$5.50; Stouffville corporation, one years rent of Clerk's office, \$50.00; W. H. Clark, stamps 1/2 office phone rent, L. D. calls etc., \$31.69; F. W. Playter, valuing R. Lundy's sheep, \$2.00; J. A. Mabley, Valuing S. C. Snively's sheep, \$2.00; Wm. Botham, error in account, \$1.24; J. A. Clarke, for 2 valuations sheep killed by dogs, \$4.00; Wm. Pettit, caretaking hall for council meetings, \$9.00; C. W. Bostwick, road maintenance Div. 15, \$89.80; A. N. Widdifield, dragging and road maintenance, div. 22, \$18.37; Thorton Sloan, grading and cleaning ditches, div. 37, \$9.75; H. Bishop, dragging roads div 21, \$7.00; E. Madill, repairing culvert, div. 9 \$2.70; J. T. Empringham, dragging road Div. 17, \$4.80; Geo. E. Cook dragging and road maintenance, \$14.42; Walter Hall dragging 6th Con. line, div 28, \$4.80; Geo. Drury, digging out cement tile between lots 30 and 31, con 2, \$3.00 A. M. Vernon dragging road T. L. N. \$16.10; T. Moorhead, 1500 feet road plank, \$60.00; Robt. Ratcliff, 595 ft. road plank, \$23.80; H. Widdifield road superintendent 30 days 1 1/2 hours, \$180.90; Geo. Preston, services school attendance officer, \$10.00; S. C. Snively per Geo. Anthony, sheep claim and bonus for killing dog, \$100.00; C. J. Brodie sheep claim, \$100.00.

Other resolutions passed instructed the treasurer to accept for credit of the township the sum of four dollars returned by P. Murphy, received for lamb included in former sheep claim, and to pay to W. J. Oldham the sum of seventy-five dollars formerly granted toward culvert and filling in front of Hartman cemetery on Townline north, also to pay to Dr. Stuart Scott five dollars for one visit to Mrs. O'Leary as authorized by the reeve.

The Road Superintendent was instructed to gravel the 5th Con. line opposite lots 23 to 28, at a cost exceeding four hundred dollars.

Council adjourned sine die.

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