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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 have frightened 'em. You are to have Granny's bed; and the Capteen swears that he will punish the next attempt upon your life as if it was made upon his own. "If I want him made away with," he said, "I'll tell you, and will make the way known." I think he rather likes your pluck, though he is as mad as blazes that you will not take a hand with us. But I don't think they'll try your life any more, though you must be always on you guard." Although the conversation of this young robber was most sincere, the above words slipped from his lips like dripping oil, and he had in his face a cunning look strange and repellent as of yore. But the cunning was now against his confederates, and active upon Roland's side.

"Suppose," he said, "we take our

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NORMAN J. GLASS

rods up the brook. We may catch something." They went and had extremely good luck; and many a day thereafter till the stream became covered with a thin crust of leaden grey ice did they continue the sport.

In the meantime the robbers went abroad and Roland occupied the room of the hag, who went with Silent Poll. When the first snow drifts came swishing through the bush a large tent was erected near the mouth of the cavern and in this meals were eaten and the household work performed.

This season became very irksome to Roland who at first had no books to read save "Claude Duval," "Dick Turpin," "The Lives of Forty Robbers," and "Sixteen-String Jack." But one day as The Lifter left the lair to go to Muddy York he put a guinea in his hand and a slip of paper containing the titles of certain books that he desired him to bring back. These were "The Abbot," "The Monastery," "Zanoni," and "Anson's Voyages." He likewise put a sealed letter into his hand directed to—

Miss Aster Atwell,
"Oaklands, York County."

This letter has been placed into my hands and it is yellow now, and worn so where folded that it makes eight different pieces when spread out. But the writing is legible, and I transcribe its contents which are as follows:—

"My Own Beloved Aster,
"I do not know how I ought to commence a letter to you, or in what terms to write it. I do not know whether you share in the general horror and detestation of my crime; or whether you look upon it as an act forced upon me, an act unavoidable, in defence of my honor. The blame for the lamentable occurrence I feel after long deliberation, ought to be laid at my door; for I was too precipitate and by my haste no doubt provoked the insult.

"I did not at the unlucky moment know what it was that aroused the evil spirit within me; but oh Aster it was in the depths of the sheltering forest wounded and set upon by bloodhounds of the law, I discovered first the reason. Ah my darling, it was then, and then for the first time only, that I knew how dear you were to me; that above all things on heaven or on earth I loved my own sweet Aster. But how helpless now, how agonizing was that love which my misfortune had fanned into such a sudden flame.

"Well, as you know, my beloved, I escaped from the officers of the law, and the impression is abroad that I am in one of the neighboring states of the Union. I am in Upper Canada and quite near to you, "so near and yet so far." Where my place of hiding is I may not tell you. Yet this much Aster I may say that I am not here by my own choice; I was taken here by force and by force I am detained. Ah, may I hope that the day yet shall come when it will be meet for me to present myself to my own darling, the first and only love of my life.

"Yet, why, Aster, should I address you thus? I am a murderer before the tribunals; and whatever I be I am perhaps only a friend in your eyes. Some other one may now find the place in your favor which once I fondly thought I held.

"Oh Aster if I have done wrong, most bitter has been my punishment. I could not for shame write to my beloved what my lot has been since my painful parting. I may escape the toils set about me or I may perish in them. But oh, my Aster whatever issue fate allots to me, believe this that my love for you shall be my only star to the end.

Roland.

Let nobody be aware that you bear this letter, Roland whispered when an opportunity offered.

The Lifter raised his finger to his lips.

It appears that Murfrey whose eyes were ever on the alert noticed that Roland gave some injunctions to The Lifter and he likewise observed the latter lay his finger upon his lips. Turning to the captain he muttered a few words in a voice that was inaudible, and the chief turned and said:—

"Treachery has been charged against you. I do not know whether the charge is true or false. Murfrey says you are the bearer of some secret correspondence for the duellist.

"I know not whether he speaks the truth or not. But I will make no investigation; for if I did and found

the charge made good, I should shoot you where you stand. I will take your word upon it."

The Lifter did not wince under the harangue. He did not, indeed, look at his father at all, but kept his eye upon Murfrey.

"And," said he, "before I reply, may I ask what you ought to do to anyone guilty of slandering?" he looked with a full face of hate upon Joe. It will be perceived by this that he was not in the fullest sense converted, for you must pray for them who persecute and calumniate you." I am like The Lifter in this matter I never pray for my calumniator but I pray for guidance as to how I may crush him. My prayer, I may add, has now and again been heard.

"With respect to the charge," resumed The Lifter, "Roland gave me a coin and with it a slip of paper on which were written the names of certain books that he wanted me to buy for him in Muddy York. As I passed him he whispered me not to let anybody know; because I suppose he was afeared that you might object. I put my fingers upon my lips; because I thought 'twas no harm to bring the books. That's all."

The moralist tells us that "no lie can be lawful or innocent." Now I take it that some of the old numskulls who wrote such things in the church catechisms and books of that ilk ought to be drowned in the bottom of a well. A good clever lie of this sort would raise The Lifter more in my estimation than if he were able to repeat the Forty-Nine articles off by heart, or begin in the Vulgate with Pater Noster, qui es in Caelis, and go through without drawing his breath to "Sed libera nos, a malo."

"I accept your explanation," the Captain said and The Lifter hurried away on his errand to town.

The books were little short of a blessing to Roland; and when nothing else was to be done in winter he sat in his sleeping room—which was the one best ventilated among the lot—and read by the light of a candle. How often he laid the book upon his knee and sighed thinking of his beloved Aster, wondering how she had regarded his letter. In this way many a dreary week went on during which he grew pale and weak from pining and incarceration.

When The Lifter's arm became well that repentant and unwilling robber was obliged to make up for lost time. His first most important enterprise was to obtain entrance into the house of a large cattle dealer in York, the testy old person by the way, whose negro servant he had endeavored in vain to rob upon the highway. It became known to the Rev. Mr. Jonas that there was a strongbox in the old gentleman's house and the same was full of "yellow shiners." It was secured the clergyman observed by three padlocks besides an ordinary lock. In the picking of locks The Lifter was an expert by instinct; and when the worthy father discovered this gift he at once sent him to a locksmith in York for a period of six months.

"Make his as expert as you can in his trade by the end of that time, and forty pounds shall be yours."

The honest locksmith looked wondering at this burly cattle dealer who would pay so much money for giving his son a smattering knowledge of the trade. But he consented and at the half year's end The Lifter came out, prepared, as he said with an oily chuckle "to tackle any lock."

Well, as I have said, the scene of operations chosen for The Lifter now was the house of this old man; and the money in the box was the object.

"I am sorry that I have to go stealing again," the fellow said with a sigh to Roland, and then he explained his mission.

"But that is more than stealing. That will be robbery; and if you are obliged to enter the house after night it will be burglary. Do you know that the law provides death for burglary?"

"I am goen to get myself invited in. But I have often burglar'd, an I did not think they could hang me for it."

"They could; because the law presumes that a burglar will commit murder, and comes prepared to commit it, rather than suffer himself to be taken in the act."

"Oh," groaned the poor wretch. "Many a hangeen have I earned. But all the same I must do this. "Say" he cried suddenly turning and laying his hand upon Roland's arm, "when do you think we will be able to escape out of this place? Nancy would like to come too, I know. I am very fond of her; and would like to marry her and live in the States."

"I shall let you know when I think the time is opportune. Meanwhile do

as little evil as possible; and if you can deceive the captain in this present enterprise, do so, and leave the locks alone." Then The Lifter was gone.

That same evening towards the set of the sun as "Old Snarleyow," as the miserly old farmer was called was limping in from the out-houses to his residence he saw approaching his gate a lad with a pale and dejected face. His hair was flaxen and his skin had in it just the slightest tinges of apple green. Imagine wasting such an exquisite color on the complexion of a robber! He hobbled towards the gate of the stately old mansion towards which Snarleyow was also hobbling; and he called in a feeble voice in which you could catch a note of pain;—

"Good sir, I pray you to give me the shelter of your house for the night. Please, sir, do. Snow is driving out of the east, and the wind is bitter cold. I cannot live this night if you do not take me in; for, I am ill and lame."

(To Be Continued)

King Council

The above council held their thirteenth regular meeting at Smith's Hotel, Schomberg, on Wednesday the 15th day of December 1926, all members present, Reeve MacMurdy in the chair, the minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed and the communications noted after which the Treasurer was authorized to pay the following accounts:—Luke Gibbons, reps to culvert, \$5.00; George Williams, hauling tile, \$9.00; Michael McGinnis, culvert, \$7.50; Harry Proctor, hauling tile, \$29.75; Allen Gellatly, maint., and culvert \$100.00; John Anning, brush \$6.00; J. P. Jefferson, maint., \$6.20; Aubrey Stewart, reps. to road, \$23.50; Jacob Gould, maint., \$3.00; Frank annon, maint., \$13.75; Aaron Haines, services re schools, \$2.43; Township of Vaughan, town-line account, \$322.06; Municipal World supplies \$91.60; S. Hollingshead, services P. V. S., \$9.00; Burnel Graham, lumber P. V. S., \$1.23; W. H. Thompson, street lighting, P. V. S., \$25.50; Gordon Brown, supplies re Wm. Rolling \$13.15; J. Alfred Lloyd, lumber and posts, \$381.80; Basil Deacon, reps to culverts and gravel, \$22.50; Clarence Boves, dragging road, \$2.50; John A. Lynn, gravelling, \$102.55; John A. Lynn, Reps to culvert, \$7.85; Ed. ooney, 81 yards of gravel \$16.50.

Resolutions

Egan-T. MacMurdy:—That this Council confirm the appointment of Aaron Haines as school attendance officer to King Municipality.

T. MacMurdy-Egan:—That this council pay to M. K. Dillane the sum of \$8.00 services re Williams family.

Egan-Duggan:—That this council pay to J. A. Farquhar (constable) the following fees. Arrest \$4.00, conveyance to jail farm \$6.00, board and service for guard \$8.00, badge \$1.25, total \$19.25.

Egan-T. MacMurdy—that the treasurer be authorized to pay to the Hydro Power Commission the sum of \$345.00, bill for lighting Police Village of Schomberg.

T. MacMurdy-Armstrong—That this council doth hereby confirm the action of the Treasurer in advancing \$100.00 to each of the collectors, Chas. Ross and L. H. Hollingshead on account of salary.

Egan-MacMurdy:—That this council pay the following sheep claims as per valuator's sworn statement, Hiram Potter, \$12.00; Rolph Burns, \$176.00.

Armstrong Duggan:—that the following sheep valuator's be paid the sums set opposite their respective names, Norman Hill, \$4.00; Wm. T. Shaw, \$3.00; T. M. Blackburn, \$4.00; Joseph Webster, \$4.00; Oliver Sturday \$2.00; E. Marchant, \$2.00.

T. MacMurdy-Egan:—That the treasurer be authorized to accept the sum of \$100.00 from the Township of North York for rent of stone crusher and place the same to the credit of the township.

Egan-T. MacMurdy—That the following named persons be refunded dog tax—Lusta Yaskari, lot 17, Con. 4, \$4.00; Herman McBride, \$4.00; Albert Barr, \$4.00; W. A. Benson \$4. Elmer McLean, \$2.00; James Sloan, \$6.00, Robert McLean, \$2.00, Jacob Gould, \$2.00, E. J. Smith, \$4.00.

On motion council adjourned to meet at Schomberg on Monday the 27th day of December to confirm the minutes.

The Thirst For Vengeance

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"To wash Mother's ears!"

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NOTICE

There will be two deliveries on Friday, Dec. 31st, morning and evening, and no delivery on New Year's Day

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