

# THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING

A TALE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY  
IN THE TIME OF SILAS WRIGHT

By  
**IRVING BACHELLER**

AUTHOR OF  
"BEN HOLDEN, D'OH AND I, DANIEL OF THE BLESSED ISLES,  
KEEPING UP WITH LIZZIE, ETC., ETC.

## WHAT HAS GON BEFORE

**CHAPTER I**—Barton Baynes, orphan, is taken to live with his uncle, Peabody Baynes, and his Aunt Deel on a farm on Rattleroad in a neighborhood called Lick-styppil, about the year 1838. Barton meets Bally Dunkelberg, about his own age, but socially a class above the Bayneses, and is fascinated by the pretty face and fine clothes.

**CHAPTER II**—Barton meets Roving Kate, known in the neighborhood as the "Bluest Woman." Amos Grimshaw, young son of the richest man in the township, is a visitor at the Baynes home, and Roving Kate tells the fortunes of the two boys, predicting a bright future for Barton and death on the gallows for Amos. Approved for an act of boyish mischief Barton runs away, intending to make his home with the Dunkelbergs. He reaches the village of Canton and falls into a sleep of exhaustion on a porch. There he is found by Silas Wright, Jr., prominent man in public affairs, who, knowing Peabody Baynes, takes Barton home after buying him new clothes.

**CHAPTER III**—Barton and his uncle and aunt visit Canton and hear Silas Wright read a sermon.

**CHAPTER IV**—Silas Wright evinces much interest in Barton, and sends a box of books and magazines to the Baynes home. The election of Silas Wright to the United States senate is announced.

**CHAPTER V**—When Barton is twelve years old he becomes aware of the existence of a wonderful and mysterious power known as "Money," and learns how, through his possession of that wonderful thing Grimshaw is the most powerful and greatly dreaded man in the community, most of the settlers being in his debt. After a visit to the Baynes home Mr. Wright leaves a note in a sealed envelope, which Barton is to read on the first night when he leaves home to attend school.

We unhitched and went in to supper. I was hoping that Aunt Deel would speak of my work but she seemed not to think of it.

I went out on the porch and stood looking down with a sad countenance. Aunt Deel followed me.

"W'y, Bart!" she exclaimed, "you're too tired to eat—yes! Be ye sick?" I shook my head.

"Peabody," she called, "this boy has

worked like a beaver every minute since you left—yes he has! I never see anything to beat it—never! I want you to come right out into the wood-shed an' see what he's done—this minute—yes!"

I followed them into the shed. "W'y of all things!" my uncle exclaimed. "He's worked like a naffer, ain't he?"

There were tears in his eyes when he took my hand in his rough palm and squeezed it and said:

"Sometimes I wish ye was little again so I could take ye up in my arms an' kiss ye just as I used to. Horace Dunkelberg says that you're the best-lookin' boy he ever see."

I repeated the rules I had learned as we went to the table.

"I'm gon' to be like Silas Wright if I can," I added.

"That's the idee!" said Uncle Peabody. "You keep on as you've started an' everybody'll milk into your pail."

I kept on—not with the vigor of that first day with its new inspiration—but with growing strength and effectiveness. Nights and mornings and Saturdays I worked with a will and my book in my pocket or at the side of the field and was, I know, a help of some value on the farm. My scholarship improved rapidly and that year I went about as far as I could hope to go in the little school at Leonard's Corners.

"I wouldn't wonder if ol' Kate was right about our boy," said Aunt Deel one day when she saw me with my book in the field.

I began to know that that ol' Kate had somehow been at work in my soul—subconsciously as I would now put it. I was trying to put truth into the prophecy. As I look at the whole matter these days I can see that Mr. Grimshaw himself was a

help no less important to me, for it was a sharp spur with which he continued to prod us.

## CHAPTER VI.

### My Second Peril.

One day Mr. Grimshaw came out in the field to see my uncle. They



One Day Mr. Grimshaw Came Out in the Field to See My Uncle.

walked away to the shade of a tree while the hired man and I went on with the hoeing. I could hear the harsh voice of the money-lender speaking in loud and angry tones and presently he went away.

"What's the rip?" I asked as my uncle returned looking very sober.

"We won't talk about it now," he answered.

In the candle-light of the evening Uncle Peabody said:

"Grimshaw has demanded his mortgage money an' he wants it in gold coin. We'll have to get it some way, I dunno how."

"W'y of all things!" my aunt exclaimed. "How are we goin' to get all that money—these hard times?—yes! I'd like to know?"

"Well, I can't tell ye," said Uncle Peabody. "I guess he can't forgive us for savin' Rodney Barnes."

"What did he say?" I asked.

"Why, he says we hadn't no business to hire a man to help us. He says you an' me ought to do all the work here. He thinks I ought to took you out o' school long ago."

"I can stay out o' school and keep on with my lessons," I said.

"Not an' please him. He was mad when he see ye with a book in yer hand out there in the corn-field."

What were we to do now? I spent the first sad night of my life undoing the plans which had been so dear to me but not so dear as my aunt and uncle. I decided to give all my life and strength to the saving of the farm. I would still try to be great, but not as great as the Senator.

One day in December of that year, I had my first trial in the full responsibility of man's work. I was allowed to load and harness and hitch up and go to the mill without assistance. My uncle and Purvis, our hired man, were busy with the chopping and we were out of flour and meal. It took a lot of them to keep the axes going. So I filled two sacks with corn and two with wheat and put them into the box wagon, for the ground was bare, and hitched up my horses and set out.

I reached the mill safely and before the grain was ground the earth and the sky above were white with snow drifting down in a cold, stiff wind out of the northwest. I loaded my grists and covered them with a blanket and hurried away. The snow came so fast that it almost blinded me. There were times when I could scarcely see the road or the horses. The wind came colder and soon it was hard work to hold the reins and keep my hands from freezing.

Suddenly the wheels began jumping over rocks. The horses were in the ditch. I knew what was the matter, for my eyes had been filling with snow and I had had to brush them often. Of course the team had suffered in a like manner. Before I could stop I heard the crack of a felly and a front wheel dropped to its hub. I checked the horses and jumped out and went to their heads and cleared their eyes. The snow was up to my knees then.

How the thought of that broken wheel snote me! It was our only heavy wagon, and we having to pay the mortgage! What would my uncle say? The query brought tears to my eyes.

I unhitched and led my horses up into the cover of the pines. How grateful it seemed, for the wind was slack below but howling in the treetops! I knew that I was four miles from home and knew not how I was to get there. Chilled to the bone, I gathered some pitch pine and soon had a fire going with my flint and tinder. I knew that I could mount one of the horses and lead the other and reach home probably. But there was the grist. We needed that; I knew that we should have to go hungry without the grist. It would get wet from above and below if I tried to carry it on the back of a horse. I warmed myself by the fire and hitched my team near it so as to thaw the frost out of their forelocks and eyebrows. I felt in my coat pockets and found a handful of nails—everybody carried nails in one pocket in those days—and I remember that my uncle's pockets were a museum of

bolts and nuts and screws and washers.

The idea occurred to me that I would make a kind of sled which was called a jumper.

So I got my ax out of the wagon and soon found a couple of small trees with the right crook for the forward end of a runner, and cut them and hewed their bottoms as smoothly as I could. Then I made notches in them near the top of their crooks and fitted a stout stick into the notches and secured it with nails driven by the ax-head. Thus I got a hold for my evener. That done, I chopped and hewed an arch to cross the middle of the runners and hold them apart and used all my nails to secure and brace it. I got the two boards which were fastened together and constituted my wagon seat and laid them over the arch and front brace. How to make them fast was my worst problem. I succeeded in splitting a green stick to hold the bolt of the evener just under its head while I heaved its lower end in the fire and kept its head cool with snow. With this I burnt a hole in the end of each board and fastened them to the front brace with wilches of moosewood.

It was late in the day and there was no time for the slow process of burning more holes, so I notched the other ends of the boards and lashed them to the rear brace with a length of my reins. Then I retempered my bolt and brought up the grist and chain and fastened the latter between the boards in the middle of the front brace, hitched my team to the chain and set out again, sitting on the bags.

It was pitch dark and the horses wading to their bellies and the snow coming faster when we turned into Rattleroad. Soon I heard a loud halloo and knew that it was the voice of Uncle Peabody. He had started out to meet me in the storm and I was with him.

"Thank God I've found ye!" he shouted. "I'm blind and tired out and I couldn't keep a lantern goin' to save me. Are ye froze?"

"E'n' 21' right, but these horses are awful dired. Had to let 'em rest every few minutes."

I told him about the wagon—and how it relieved me to hear him say:

"As long as you're all right, boy, I ain't gon' to worry 'bout the ol' wagon—not a bit. Where'd ye git yer jumper?"

"Made it with the ax and some nails," I answered.

After we got to the barn door at last he went to the house and lighted his lantern and came back with it wrapped in a blanket and Aunt Deel came with him.

How proud it made me to hear him say:

"Deed, our boy is a man now—made this jumper all 'lone by himself an' has got through all right."

She came and held the lantern up to my face and looked at my hands.

"Well, my stars, Bart!" she exclaimed in a moment. "I thought ye would freeze up solid—yes—poor boy!"

We carried the grist in and Aunt Deel made some pudding. How good it was to feel the warmth of the fire and of the hearts of those who loved me! How I enjoyed the pudding and milk and bread and butter!

"I guess you've gone through the second peril that ol' Kate spoke of," said Aunt Deel as I went upstairs.

Uncle Peabody went out to look at the horses.

When I awoke in the morning I observed that Uncle Peabody's bed had not been slept in. I hurried down and heard that our off horse had died in the night of colic. Aunt Deel was crying. As he saw me Uncle Peabody began to dance a jig in the middle of the floor.

"Balance yer partners!" he shouted. "You an' I ain't gon' to be discouraged if all the horses die—be we, Bart?"

"Never," I answered. "That's the talk! If necessary we'll hitch Purvis up with 'tuther hoss an' git our haulin' done."

He and Purvis roared with laughter and the strength of the current swept me along with them.

"We're the luckiest folks in the world, anyway," Uncle Peabody went on. "Bart's alive an' there's three feet o' snow on the level an' more comin' an' it's colder'n Greenland!"

Continued next week

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5:15 " " "	5:48 " "
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3:15 p. m. " "	3:51 p. m.
6:30 " " "	7:12 " "

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Prayer Meeting Wednesday 7.30 p. m.

Prayer Meeting Wednesday 7.30 p. m.

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SOCIETY

In Odd Fellows Hall

Services, - - - 11.00 a. m.

Subject:

Substance

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PETER CONKLIN, PASTOR

Sunday School, - - - 10.00 a. m.

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Prayer Meeting Wednesday, 7.30 p. m.

Prayer Meeting Wednesday, 7.30 p. m.

## BAPTIST CHURCH

E. B. PACE, Pastor

Sunday School, - - - 10.00 a. m.

Preaching Service, - - 11.00 a. m.

C. U. E. Meeting, - - - 6.30 p. m.

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Prayer Meeting Wednesday, 7.30 p. m.

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