

# THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING

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

By IRVING BACHELLER

Author of "GEN HOLDEN, DMI AND I, DARRYL OF THE BLESSED ISLES, KEEPERS OF WIT LIZZIE, ETC., ETC."

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## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

**CHAPTER I**—Barton Baynes, orphan, is taken to live with his uncle, Peabody, Baynes, and his Aunt Deed on a farm on Bartwood in a neighborhood called Licklypitt, about the year 1828. Barton meets Sally Dunkelberg, about his own age, but socially of a class above the Baynes, and is fascinated by the pretty face and fine clothes.

**CHAPTER II**—Barton meets Hoving Kate, known in the neighborhood as the "Silent Woman." Amos Grimshaw, young son of the richest man in the township, is a visitor at the Baynes home, and Hoving 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.

**CHAPTER VI**—Barton is asked to drive a load to mill, arrives safely, but in a snowstorm, unable to see the road, the horses get into the ditch and a wheel of the wagon is broken. Uncle Peabody manages to get together enough to satisfy Grimshaw and obtain an extension.

It was such a bitter day that we worked only three hours and came back to the house and played Old Sledge by the fireside.

Rodney Barnes came over that after

noon and said that he would lend us a horse for the hauling.

We had good sleighing after that and got our bark and salts to market and earned \$98. But while we got our pay in paper "bank money," we had to pay our debts in wheat, salts or corn, so that our earnings really amounted to only \$25.00, my uncle said. We gave the balance and ten bushels of wheat to Mr. Grimshaw for a spavined horse, after which he agreed to give us at least a year's extension on the principal.

We felt easy then.

## CHAPTER VII.

### My Third Peril.

"Mr. Purvis" took his pay in suits and stayed with us until my first great adventure cut him on. It came one July day when I was in my sixteenth year. He behaved badly, and I, as any normal boy would have done who had had my schooling in the candle light. We had kept Grimshaw from our door by paying interest and the sum of \$50 on the principal. It had been hard work to live comfortably and carry the burden of debt. Again Grimshaw had begun to press us. My uncle wanted to get his paper and learn, if possible, when the senator was expected in Canton.

So he gave me permission to ride with Purvis to the post office—a distance of three miles—to get the mail. Purvis rode in our only saddle and I bareback, on a handsome white filly which my uncle had given me soon after she was foaled. I had fed and petted and groomed her and she had grown so fond of me that my whistled call would bring her galloping from the remotest reaches of the pasture. I had named her Sally because that was the only name which seemed to express my fondness.

"Mr. Purvis" was not an experienced rider. My filly led him at a swift gallop over the hills, and I heard many a muttered complaint behind me, but she liked a free head when we took the road together, and I let her have her way.

Coming back we fell in with another rider who had been resting at Seaver's little tavern through the heat of the



A Gun Went Off in the Edge of the Bushes Close By.

day. He was a traveler on his way to Canton and had missed the right trail and wandered far afield. He had a big military saddle with bags and shiny brass trimmings and a pistol in a holster, all of which appealed to my eye and interest. The filly was a little tired and the stranger and I were riding abreast at a walk while Purvis trailed behind us.

We heard a quick stir in the bushes by the roadside.

"What's that?" Purvis demanded in a half-whisper of excitement. We stopped.

Then promptly a voice—a voice which I did not recognize—broke the silence with these menacing words, sharply spoken:

"Your money or your life?" "Mr. Purvis" whirled his horse and washed him up the hill. Glancing backward, I saw him lose a stirrup and fall and pick himself up and run as if his life depended on it. I saw the stranger draw his pistol. A gun went off in the edge of the bushes close by. The flash of fire from its muzzle leaped at the stranger. The horses reared and plunged and mine threw me in a clump of small popples by the roadside and dashed down the hill.

My fall on the stony siding had stunned me and I lay for three or four seconds, as nearly as I can estimate it, in a strange and peaceful dream. Why did I dream of Amos Grimshaw coming to visit me again, and why, above all, should it have seemed to me that enough things were said and done in that little flash of a dream to fill a whole day—enough of talk and play and going and coming, the whole ending with a talk on the haymow? Again and again I have wondered about that dream. I came to and lifted my head and my consciousness swung back upon the track of memory and took up the thread of the day, the briefest remove from where it had broken.

I peered through the bushes. The light was unchanged. I could see quite clearly. The horses were gone. It was very still. The stranger lay helpless in the road and a figure was bending over him. It was a man with a handkerchief hanging over his face with holes cut opposite his eyes. He had not seen my fall and thought, as I learned later, that I had ridden away.

His gun lay beside him, its stock toward me. I observed that a piece of wood had been split off the lower side of the stock. I jumped to my feet and seized a stone to hurl at him. As I did so the robber fled with gun in hand. If the gun had been loaded I suppose that this little history would never have been written. Quickly I hurled the stone at the robber. I remember it was a smallest stone about the size of a hen's egg. I saw it graze the side of his head. I saw his hand touch the place which the stone had grazed. He reeled and nearly fell and recovered himself and ran on, but the little stone had put the mark of Cain upon him.

The stranger lay still in the road. I lifted his head and dropped it quickly with a strange sickness. The feel of it and the way it fell back upon the ground when I let go scared me, for I knew that he was dead. The dust around him was wet. I ran down the hill a few steps and stopped and whistled to my filly. I could hear her answering whinny far down the dusty road and then her hoofs as she galloped toward me. She came within a few feet of me and stood snorting. I caught and mounted her and rode to the nearest house for help. On the way I saw why she had stopped. A number of horses were feeding on the roadside near the log house where Andrew Crumpton lived. Andrew had just unloaded some hay and was backing out of his barn. I hitched my filly and jumped on the rack saying:

"Drive up the road as quick as you can. A man has been murdered."

What a fearful word it was that I had spoken! What a panic it made in the little dooryard! The man gasped and jerked the reins and shouted to his horses and began swearing. The woman uttered a little scream and the

children ran crying to her side.

The physical facts which are further related to this tragedy are of little moment to me now. The stranger was dead and we took his body to our home and my uncle set out for the constable. Over and over again that night I told the story of the shooting. We went to the scene of the tragedy with lanterns and fenced it off and put some men on guard there.

In the morning they found the robber's footprints in the damp dirt of the road and measured them. The whole countryside was afire with excitement and searching the woods and fields for the highwayman.

The stranger was buried. There was nothing upon him to indicate his name or residence. Weeks passed with no news of the man who had slain him. I had told of the gun with a piece of wood broken out of its stock, but no one knew of any such weapon in or near Licklypitt.

One day Uncle Peabody and I drove up to Grimshaw's to make a payment of money. I remember it was gold and silver which we carried in a little sack. I asked where Amos was and Mrs. Grimshaw—a timid, tired-looking, bony little woman who was never seen outside of her own house—said that he was working out on the farm of a Mr. Beekman near Plattsburg. He had gone over on the stage late in June to hire out for the haying. I observed that my uncle looked very thoughtful as we rode back home and had little to say.

"You never had any idea who that robber was, did ye?" he asked by and by.

"No—I could not see plain—it was so dark," I said.

The swift words, "Your money or your life," came out of my memory and rang in it. I felt its likeness to the scolding demands of Mr. Grimshaw, who was forever saying in effect:

"Your money or your home!"

That was like demanding our lives, because we couldn't live without our home. Our all was in it. Mr. Grimshaw's gun was the power he had over us, and what a terrible weapon it was! I credit him with never realizing how terrible.

We came to the sandhills and then Uncle Peabody broke the silence by saying:

"I wouldn't give fifty cents for as much of this land as a bird could fly around in a day."

Then for a long time I heard only the sound of feet and wheels muffled in the sand, while my uncle sat looking thoughtfully at the siding. When I spoke to him he seemed not to hear me.

Before we reached home I knew what was in his mind, but neither

dared speak of it.

People came from Canton and all the neighboring villages to see and talk with me, and among them were the Dunkelbergs. Unfounded tales of my bravery had gone abroad.

Sally seemed to be very glad to see me. We walked down to the brook and up into the maple grove and back through the meadows.

The beauty of that perfect day was upon her. I remember that her dress was like the color of its frewied blossoms and that the blue of its sky was in her eyes and the yellow of the sunlight in her hair and the red of its clover in her cheeks. I remember how the August breezes played with her hair, flinging its golden curving strands about her neck and shoulders so that it touched my face, now and then, as we walked! Somehow the rustle of her dress started a strange vibration in my spirit. I put my arm around her waist and she put her arm around mine as we ran along. A curious feeling came over me. I stopped and loosed my arm.

"It's very warm!" I said as I picked a stalk of fireweed.

What was there about the girl which so thrilled me with happiness? She turned away and felt the ribbon by which her hair was gathered at the back of her head.

After a moment of silence I ventured:

"I guess you've never fallen in love."

"Yes, I have."

"Who with?"

"I don't think I dare tell you," she answered, slowly, looking down as she walked.

"I'll tell you who I love if you wish," I said.

Continued next week

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Meets the Second Saturday in Each Month at 10:30 A. M.

Public Program at 2:30 p. m. to which visitors are welcome.

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Leaves Monmouth	Leaves Independence
6:50 a. m. North Bound	7:30 a. m.
1:50 p. m. " "	2:25 p. m.
5:15 " " "	5:48 " "
10:00 a. m. South Bound	10:34 a. m.
3:15 p. m. " "	3:51 p. m.
6:30 " " "	7:12 " "

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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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Wednesday evening meeting, 8.00 p. m.

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PETER CONKLIN, PASTOR

Sunday School, 10.00 a. m.  
Preaching Service, 11.00 a. m.  
Y. P. A. Meeting, 6.15 p. m.  
Prayer Meeting Wednesday, 7.30 p. m.

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E. B. PACE, Pastor

Sunday School, 10.00 a. m.  
Preaching Service, 11.00 a. m.  
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- RATCHET WRENCH**: A handy, reversible ratchet wrench furnished free with every silo.
- DOUBLE-CABLE ANCHORS**: Four double-cable with all silos over 26 ft. high. (Single cables with smaller ones.) Notice this silo is anchored at top, middle and bottom. Can't blow down or collapse when properly put up.
- PATENT CABLE-TIGHTENERS**: Tightens both cables at the same time with even tension. Nine inches of thread on anchor rod. Cables tightened by simply turning nut above tightener.
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- EXTRA HEAVY STEEL STAPLES**: Heavy steel staples four inches long fasten staves to both inner and outer hoops. Note that staves are also stapled to bottom hoop, a construction that cannot collapse from shrinkage of staves.
- STEEL HOOPS**: High grade steel hoops, 5/8-in. in diameter. Nine inches of machine-cut thread at each end. Best quality closed malleable iron lugs for connecting sections.
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In other words, you pay as "extras" for necessary conveniences without which your silo is incomplete. Notwithstanding our lower price, we include more and better fixtures than many who ask more for their silos. In some cases we supply more of a given item than others, as in anchorage cable. In others, our fixtures are stronger or better in whatever vital point determines their value. Keep this ad and check our fixtures as described above, with those offered by other silos. Don't pay more and get less, or buy half a silo when you can get a complete one.

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