

The Light in the Clearing

A Tale of the North Country in the Time of Silas Wright

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CHAPTER XVI.

The Man With the Scythe.

It was late in June before I was able to disengage myself from the work of the judge's office. Meanwhile there had been blood shed back in the hills. One of the sheriff's posse had been severely wounded by a bullet and had failed to serve the writs. The judge had appealed to the governor. People were talking of "the rent war."

What a joy entered my heart when I was aboard the steamboat, at last, and on my way to all most dear to me! As I entered Lake Champlain I consulted the map and decided to leave the boat at Chimney Point to find Kate Fullerton, who had written to the schoolmaster from Canterbury. My aunt had said in a letter that old Kate was living there and that a great change had come over her. So I went ashore and hired a horse of the ferryman.

I passed through Middlebury and rode into the grounds of the college, where the senator had been educated, and on out to Weybridge to see where he had lived as a boy. I found the Wright homestead—a comfortable white house at the head of a beautiful valley with wooded hills behind it—and rode up to the door. A white-haired old lady in a black lace cap was sitting on its porch looking out at the sunlit fields.

"Is this where Senator Wright lived when he was a boy?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," the old lady answered.

"I am from Canton."

She rose from her chair.

"You from Canton!" she exclaimed.

"Why, of all things! That's where my boy's home is. I'm glad to see you. Go an' put your horse in the barn."

I dismounted and she came near me.

"Silas Wright is my boy," she said.

"What is your name?"

"Barton Baynes," I answered as I hitched my horse.

"Barton Baynes! Why, Silas has told me all about you in his letters. He writes to me every week. Come and sit down."

We sat down together on the porch. "Silas wrote in his last letter that you were going to leave your place in Cobleskill," she continued to my surprise. "He said that he was glad you had decided not to stay."

It was joyful news to me, for the senator's silence had worried me and I had begun to think with alarm of my future.

"I wish that he would take you to Washington to help him. The poor man has too much to do."

"I should think it a great privilege to go," I answered.

"My boy likes you," she went on. "You have been brought up just as he was. I used to read to him every evening when the candles were lit. How hard he worked to make a man of himself! I have known the mother's joy. I can truly say, 'Now let thy servant depart in peace.'"

"For mine eyes have seen thy salvation," I quoted.

"You see I know much about you and much about your aunt and uncle," said Mrs. Wright.

She left me for a moment and soon the whole household was gathered about me on the porch, the men having come up from the fields. They put my horse in the barn and pressed me to stay for dinner, which I did. As I was going the gentle old lady gave me a pair of mittens which her distinguished son had worn during his last winter in college. I remember well how tenderly she handled them!

"I hope that Silas will get you to help him"—those were the last words she said to me when I bade her good-by.

The shadows were long when I got to Canterbury. At the head of its main street I looked down upon a village green and some fine old elms. It was a singularly quiet place. I stopped in front of a big white meeting house. An old man was mowing in its graveyard near the highway. Slowly he swung his scythe.

"Do you know where Kate Fullerton lives?" I asked.

"Well, it's purty likely that I do," he answered as he stood resting on his scath. "I've lived seventy-two years on this hill come the fourteenth day o' June, an' if I didn't know where she lived I'd be 'shamed of it. Do you see that big house down there in the trees?"

I could see the place at which he pointed far back from the village street in the valley below us, the house nearly hidden by tall evergreens.

"Yes," I answered.

"Wal, that's the Squire Fullerton place—he's Kate's father."

"Does the squire live there?"

"No, sir—not ezactly. He's dyin' there—been dyin' there for two year er more. By gosh! It's wonderful how hard 'tis fer some folks to quit breathin'."

"Say, be you any o' his family?"

"No."

"Nor no friend o' his?"

"No!"

"Course not. He never had a friend in his life—too mean! He's too mean to die, mister—too mean fer hell an' I wouldn't wonder—honest, I wouldn't—mebbe that's why God is keepin' him here—jest to meller him up a little. Say, mister, be you in a hurry?"

"No."

"Say, hitch yer hoss an' come in here. I want to show ye suthin'."

I dismounted and hitched my horse to the fence and followed him into the old churchyard, between weather-stained mossy headstones and graves overgrown with wild roses. Near the far end of these thick-sown acres he stopped.

"Here's where the buryin' begun," said my guide. "The first hole in the hill was dug for a Fullerton."

There were many small monuments and slabs of marble—some spotted with lichens and all in commemoration of departed Fullertons.

"Say, look a' that," said my guide as he pulled aside the stem of a leafy brier red with roses. "Jest read that, mister."

My keen eyes slowly spelled out the time-worn words on a slab of stained marble:

Sacred to the memory of
 Katherine Fullerton
 1817-1866

"Proclaim his Word in every place
 That they are dead who fall from grace."

A dark shadow fell upon the house of my soul and I heard a loud rapping at its door which confused me until, looking out, I saw the strange truth of the matter. Rose leaves and blossoms seemed to be trying to hide it with their beauty, but in vain.

"I understand," I said.

"No ye don't. Leastways I don't believe ye do—not correct. Squire Fullerton dug a grave here an' had an empty coffin put into it away back in 1800. It means that he wanted everybody to understand that his girl was jest the same as dead to him an' to God. Say, he knew all about God's wishes—that man. Gosh! He has sent more folks to hell than there are in it, I guess. Say, mister, do ye know why he sent her there?"

I shook my head.

"Tis ye do, too. It's the same ol' thing that's been sendin' women to hell ever since the world begun. Ye know hell must 'a' been the invention of a man—that's sartin—an' it was mostly fer women an' children—that's

sartin—an' ter an' the men that didn't agree with him. Set down here an' I'll tell ye the hull story. My day's work is done."

We sat down together and he went on as follows:

"Did ye ever see Kate Fullerton?"

"Yes."

"No ye didn't, nuther. Yer too young. Mebbe ye seen her when she was old an' broke down, but that wa'n't Kate—no more'n I'm Bill Tweedy, which I ain't. Kate was as handsome as a golden robin. Hair yeller as his breast an' feet as spry as his wings an' a voice as sweet as his song, an' eyes as bright as his'n—ye, sir—ye couldn't beat her fer looks. That was years and years ago. Her mother died when Kate was ten year old—there's her grave in there with the sickle an' the sheaf an' the porty on it. That was unfort'nit an' no mistake. Course the squire married ag'in but the new wife wa'n't no kind of a mother to the girl, an' you know, mister, there was a young scoundrel here by the name o' Grimshaw. His father was a rich man—owned the cooper shop an' the saw-mill an' the tannery an' a lot o' cleared land down in the valley. He kep' company with her fer two or three year. Then all of a sudden folks began to talk—the women in particular. Ye know men invented hell an' women keep up the fire. Kate didn't look right to 'em. Fust ye knew, young Grimshaw had dropped her an' was keepin' company with another gal—ye, sir. Do ye know why?"

Before I could answer he went on:

"No ye don't—leastways I don't believe ye do. It was 'cause her father was richer'n the squire an' had promised his gal ten thousand dollars the day she was married. All of a sudden Kate disappeared. We didn't know what had happened fer a long time."

"One day the ol' squire got me to dig this grave an' put up the headstone an' then he tol' me the story. He turned the poor gal out o' doors. God o' Israel! It was in the night—ye, sir—it was in the night that he sent her away. Goldarn him! He didn't have no more heart than a grasshopper—no, sir—not a bit. I could 'a' brained him with my shovel, but I didn't."

"I found out where the gal had gone an' I follered her—ye, sir—I did—found her in the poorhouse way over on Pussley Hill—uh huh! She jes' put her arms 'round my neck an' cried an' cried. I guess 'twas 'cause I looked kind o' friendly—uh huh! I tol' her she should come right over to our house an' stay jest as long as she wanted to as soon as she got well—ye, sir, I did."

"She was sick all summer long—kind o' out o' her head, ye know, an' I used to go over hossback an' take things fer her to eat. An' one day when I was over there they was wonderin' what they was goin' to do with

her little baby. I took it in my arms



I Took It in My Arms.

an' I'll be gol dummed if it didn't grab hold o' my nose an' hang on like a puppy to a root. When they tried to take it away it grabbed its fingers into my whiskers an' hollered like a panther—ye, sir. Wal, ye know I jes' fetched that little baby boy home in my arms, ay uh! My wife scooted me like Sam Hill—ye, sir—she had five of her own. I tol' her (I was goin' to take it back in a day or two but after it had been in the house three days ye couldn't 'a' pulled it away from her with a windlass."

"We brought him up an' he was always a good boy. We called him Enoch—Enoch Rome—did ye ever hear the name?"

"No."

"I didn't think 'twas likely but I'm always hopin'."

"Early that fall Kate got better an' left the poorhouse afoot. Went away somewheres—nobody knew where. Some said she'd crossed the lake an' gone away over into York state, some said she'd drowned herself. By'm by we heard that she'd gone way over into St. Lawrence county where Silas Wright lives an' where young Grimshaw had settled down after he got married."

"Wal, 'bout five year ago the squire buried his second wife—there 'tis over in there back o' Kate's with the little speckled angel on it. Nobody had seen the squire outside o' his house fer years until the funeral—he was crippled

so with rheumatiz. After that he lived all 'lone in the big house with ol' Tom Linney an' his wife, who've worked there for 'bout forty year, I guess."

"Wal, sir, fust we knew Kate was there in the house livin' with her father. We wouldn't 'a' knowed it, then, if it hadn't been that Tom Linney some over one day an' said he guessed the ol' squire wanted to see me—no, sir, we wouldn't 'a' guessed the squire ain't sociable an' the neighbors never darken his door. She must 'a' come in the night. Jest as she went—nobody see her go an' nobody see her come, an' that's a fact. Wal, one day las' fall after the leaves was off an' they could see a corner o' my house through the bushes, Tom was walkin' the ol' man round the room. All to once he stopped an' p'inted at my house through the winder an' kep' p'intin'. Tom come over an' said he cal'lated the squire wanted to see me. So I went there. Kate met me at the door. Josh! How old an' kind o' broke down she looked! But I knew her the minute I set my eyes on her—uh huh—an' she knew me—ye, sir—she smiled an' her ears come to her eyes an' she putted up her hand like she wanted to tell me but she hadn't forgot, but she never said a word—not a word. The ol' squire had the palsy, so 't he couldn't see his hands an' his throat was paralyzed—couldn't speak nor nothin'. Where do ye suppose he was when I 'ound him?"

"In bed?" I asked.

"No, sir—no, s'ree! He was in hell—that's where he was—reg'lar ol' fan-oned, down-east hell, burnin' with fire an' brimston, that he'd had the agency or an' had recommended to every sinner in the neighborhood. He was set 'in his room. God o' Israel! You orto 'a' seen the motions he made with his hands an' the way he tried to speak when I went in there, but all I could hear was jest a long yell an' a kind of a rattle in his throat. Heavens an' earth! how desperit he tried to spit out the thing that was gnawin' his vitals. Ag'in an' ag'in he'd try to tell me. Lord God! how he did work!"

"All to once it come across me what he wanted—quick as ye could say scot. He wanted to have Kate's headstun took down an' put away—that's what he wanted. The stun was kind o' layin' on his stumlick an' painin' of him day an' night. He couldn't stan' it. He knew that he was goin' to die purty soon an' that Kate would come here an' see it an' that everybody would see her standin' here by her own grave, an' it worried him. It was kind o' like a fire in his belly."

"I guess, too, he couldn't bear the e of layin' down fer his las' sleep de that hell hole he'd dug fer Kate

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Continued next week

Chautauqua Days Are Coming Soon

Chautauqua brings the world to your door. It is a week of splendid constructive lectures, of exceptionally fine music and of the best entertainment the country affords. The seven days will mean much to you and your community. Attend on the season ticket plan—26 events for \$2.50—less than 10c apiece. After 6 p. m. of the opening day tickets advance to \$3.00. BUY YOURS TODAY.

Private Peat

The famous little Canadian author and lecturer is coming on the sixth night. It is one of the most notable lecture engagements of the year. "Two Years in Hell and Back With a Smile" is the greatest story of the war.

Lewis Military Quartet

Four big voices from Camp Lewis. This quartet was the pride of the great northwest cantonment—every member a soloist who has achieved distinction in the musical world. Two concerts on the third day which you will remember pleaurably for months.

26—BIG EVENTS—26

Mary Adel Hays

The noted New York coloratura soprano, Mary Adel Hays comes on the fourth night assisted by her company of Recital Artists. This recital is an event of cardinal importance to all lovers of the best in music

Apollo Concert Company

The Apollos, five genuine musical artists, close Chautauqua with two great programs. They feature the big Apollophone, concert instrument extraordinary. One of the best known musical companies before the public.

THE WEEK'S PROGRAM

Tuesday evening—Opening Exercises and announcements.
Musical Fun Program—McDonough-Eggleston Co.
Lecture—The Riddle of the Russian Revolution—Dr. Joseph Clare.
Wednesday morning—Lecture—Chautauqua Director.
Prelude—Fillion Concert Party.
Lecture—Worlds in the Making—Dr. A. D. Carpenter
Junior Chautauqua
Evening—Prelude—Fillion Concert Party
Lecture—And Now—What—Edward F. Trefz
Thursday morning, Lecture—American Girls Americanism—Mrs. Robert C. McCredie
Afternoon, Prelude—Lewis Military Quartette
Inspirational Lecture—The Advantages of a Handicap—Dr. Elliott A. Boyl
Junior Chautauqua
Evening, Concert Prelude—Lewis Military Quartette.
Dramatic Reading—Turn to the Right—Edwin Whitney
Friday morning, Lecture—Madam France—Miss R. Louise Fitch
Afternoon, Prelude—Recital Artists
Entertainment—Elsie May Gordon, Impersonator
Junior Chautauqua
Evening, Musicals—Mary Adel Hays, Colored Soprano, Assisted by Recital Artists.
Lecture—The United States at the Peace Conference—Ida M. Tarbell
Saturday afternoon, Concert—Cimera's Czecho-Slovak Band
Junior Chautauqua
Evening—(a) Grand Concert—Cimera's Czecho-Slovak Band.
(b) Bohemian Folk Songs—Madam Cafarelli, Assisted by Czecho-Slovak Band
Sunday afternoon, Prelude—The Regneirs
Lecture—Misunderstood Mexico—W. L. Mellinger
Junior Chautauqua
Evening, Prelude—The Regneirs
Lecture—Two Years in Hell and Back with a Smile—Private Pete
Monday afternoon, Entertainment—Apollo Concert Co.
Pageant—"Uncle Sam's Experiment"—Junior Chautauquans
Evening, Concert—Apollo Concert Co.
Illustrated Lecture—Closing Days of the War—Henry Warren Poore
On Sunday the concert is in every way consistent with the character of the day.

Czecho-Slovak Band

From Bohemia, land of the Czecho-Slovaks, comes this splendid musical organization headed by Jaroslav Cimera, one of the great band directors of his native land. In the East they have achieved notable successes. Madame He'en Cafarelli, soloist, presenting Bohemian songs.

Edward F. Trefz

Edward F. Trefz, formerly assistant to Hoover in Food Administration work, and member of the American Food Mission sent to Europe in 1918, comes with a remarkable lecture on reconstruction problems. Second night only. Hear Trefz by all means.

26—BIG EVENTS—26

"Turn to the Right"

The big metropolitan success, "Turn to the Right" will be presented at Chautauquus by Edwin M. Whitney, America's greatest interpreters of plays. Mr. Whitney has won a distinct place on the platform and his coming is one of the "high lights" of the week.

War Pictures

Henry Warren Poore brings an intensely interesting lecture on the closing days of the war and the dawn of peace. Illustrated with the latest Underwood and Underwood photos in addition to his own splendid collection secured during two trips over seas.

Season Ticket Prices: Adults \$2.50, Students \$1.50, Children \$1.00
Single admissions amount to more than \$7.00
War Tax not included.

DALLAS, OREGON, JULY 15-21