

THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING

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

By
IRVING BACHELLER

Author of
**SEEN HOLDEN, DRI AND I, DAREL OF THE BLESSED ISLES,
KEEPING UP WITH LIZZIE, ETC., ETC.**

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

So saying he handed me this letter:
"Canterbury, Vt.,
"June 1.

"Dear Sir.—I am interested in the boy Barton Baynes. Good words about him have been flying around like pigeons. When school is out I would like to hear from you, what is the record? What do you think of the soul in him? What kind of work is best for it? If you will let me maybe I can help the plans of God a little. That is my business and yours. Thanking you for reading this, I am, as ever,
"God's humble servant,
"KATE FULLERTON."

"Why, this is the writing of the Silent Woman," I said before I had read the letter half through.
"Rovin' Kate?"

"Roving Kate; I never knew her other name, but I saw her handwriting long ago."

"But look—this is a neatly written, well-worded letter and the sheet is as white and clean as the new snow. Uncanny woman! They say she carries the power o' God in her right hand. So do all the wronged."

"I wonder why Kate is asking about me," I said.
"Never mind the reason. She is your friend and let us thank God for it. Think how she came to yer help in the old barn an' say a thousand prayers, my lad."

Having come to the first flight of the uplands, he left me with many a kind word—how much they mean to a boy who is choosing his way with a growing sense of loneliness!

I reached the warm welcome of our little home just in time for dinner. They were expecting me and it was a regular company dinner—chicken pie and strawberry shortcake.

How well I remember that hour with the doors open and the sun shining brightly on the blossoming fields and the joy of man and bird and beast in the return of summer and the talk about the late visit of Alma Jones and Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln!

While we were eating I told them about the letter of old Kate.
"Fullerton! Aunt Deel exclaimed. "Are ye sure that was the name, Bart?"

"Yes."
"Goodness gracious sakes alive!" She and Uncle Peabody gave each other looks of surprised inquiry.
"Do you know anybody by that name?" I asked.

"We used to," said Aunt Deel as she resumed her eating. "Can't be she's one o' the Sam Fullertons, can it?"
"Oh, probly not," said Uncle Peabody. "Back East they're more Fullertons than ye could shake a stick at."

A week later we had our raising. Uncle Peabody did not want a public raising, but Aunt Deel had had her way. We had hewed and mortised and bored the timbers for our new home. The neighbors came with pikes and helped to raise and stay and cover them. A great amount of human kindness went into the beams and rafters of that home and of others like it. I knew that The Thing was still alive in the neighborhood, but even that could not paralyze the helpful hands of those people. Indeed, what was said of my Uncle Peabody was nothing more or less than a kind of conversational firewood. I cannot think that any one really believed it.

We had a cheerful day. A barrel of hard cider had been set up in the dooryard, and I remember that some drank it too freely. The ho-o-ee of the men as they lifted on the pikes and the sound of the hammer and beetle rang in the air from morning until night. Mrs. Rodney Barnes and Mrs. Dorothy came to help Aunt Deel with the cooking and a great dinner was served on an improvised table in the dooryard, where the stove was set up. The shingles and sheath and clapboard were on before the day ended.

Uncle Peabody and I put in the floors and stairway and partitions. More than once in the days we were working together I tried to tell him what Sally had told me, but my courage failed.

The day came, shortly, when I had to speak out, and I took the straight way of my duty as the needle of the compass pointed. It was the end of a summer day and we had watched the dusk fill the valley and come creeping up the slant, sinking the bowlders and thorn tops in its flood, one by one. As we sat looking out of the open door that evening I told them what Sally had told me of the evil report which had traveled through the two towns.

"Damn, little souled, narrer contracted—" Uncle Peabody, speaking in a low, sad tone, but with deep feeling, cut off this highly promising opinion before it was half expressed, and rose and went to the water pail and drank.
"As long as we're honest we don't care what they say," he remarked as he returned to his chair.

"If they won't believe us, we ought to show 'em the papers—aye," said Aunt Deel.

"Thunder an' Jehu! I wouldn't go 'round the town tryin' to prove that I ain't a thief," said Uncle Peabody. "It wouldn't make no difference. They've got to have somethin' to play with. If they want to use my name for a bean bag let 'em as long as they do it when I ain't lookin'. I wouldn't wonder if they got sore hands by an' by."

I never heard him speak of it again. Indeed, although I knew the topic was often in our thoughts it was never mentioned in our home but once after that, to my knowledge.

We sat for a long time thinking as the night came on.
That week a letter came to me from the senator, announcing the day of Mrs. Wright's arrival in Canton and asking me to meet and assist her in getting the house to rights. I did so. She was a pleasant-faced, amiable woman and a most enterprising house cleaner. I remember that my first task was mending the wheelbarrow.

"I don't know what Silas would do if he were to get home and find his wheelbarrow broken," said she. "It is almost an inseparable companion of his."

The schoolmaster and his family were fishing and camping upon the river, and so I lived at the senator's house with Mrs. Wright and her mother until he arrived. What a wonderful house it was, in my view! I was awed by its size and splendor, its soft carpets and shiny brass and mahogany. Yet it was very simple.

I hoed the garden and cleaned its paths and mowed the dooryard and did some painting in the house.

The senator returned to Canton that evening on the Watertown stage. He greeted me with a fatherly warmth. Again I felt that strong appeal to my eye in his broadcloth and fine linen and beaver hat and in the splendid dignity and courtesy of his manners.

"I've had good reports of you, Bart, and I'm very glad to see you," he said.
"I believe your own marks have been excellent in the last year," I ventured.

"Poorer than I could wish. The teacher has been very kind to me," he laughed. "What have you been studying?"

"Latin (I always mentioned the Latin first), algebra, arithmetic, grammar, geography and history."

He asked about my aunt and uncle and I told him of all that had befallen us, save the one thing of which I had spoken only with him and Sally.
"I shall go up to see them soon," he said.

The people of the little village had learned that he preferred to be let alone when he had just returned over the long, wearisome way from the scene of his labors. So we had the evening to ourselves.

Mrs. Wright, being weary after the day's work, went to bed early and, at his request, I sat with the senator by

What a serious matter it seemed to me then! I remember that it gave me a rather slow foot. I wrote the words very neatly and plainly on a sheet of paper and mailed it to Mrs. Dunkelberg. I wondered if Sally would stand firm, and longed to know the secrets of the future. More than ever I was resolved to be the principal witness in some great matter, as my friend in Ashery lane had put it.

I was eight months with Wright & Baldwin when I was offered a clerkship in the office of Judge Westbrook, at Cobleskill, in Schoharie county, at two hundred a year and my board. I knew not then just how the offer had come, but knew that the senator must have recommended me. I know now that he wanted a reliable witness of the rent troubles which were growing acute in Schoharie, Delaware and Columbia counties.

It was a trial to go so far from home, as Aunt Deel put it, but both my aunt and uncle agreed that it was "for the best."

How it wrung my heart, when Mr. Purvis and I got into the stage at Canton, to see my aunt and uncle standing by the front wheel looking up at me. How old and lonely and forlorn they looked! Aunt Deel had her purse in her hand. I remember how she took a dollar out of it—I suppose it was the only dollar she had—and looked at it a moment and then handed it up to me.

"You better take it," she said. "I'm afraid you won't have enough."

How her hand and lips trembled! I have always kept that dollar.

I couldn't see them as we drove away. The judge received me kindly and gave Purvis a job in his garden. I was able to take his dictation in shorthand and spent most of my time in taking down contracts and correspondence and drafting them into proper form, which I had the knack of doing rather neatly. I was impressed by the immensity of certain towns in the neighborhood, and there were some temptations in my way. Many people, and especially the prominent men, indulged in ardent spirits.

We had near us there a little section of the old world which was trying, in a half-hearted fashion, to maintain itself in the midst of a democracy. It was the manorial life of the patroons—a relic of ancient feudalism which had its beginning in 1629, when the West Indies company issued its charter of privileges and exemptions. That

and make up a statement of all the time you have given me?"
I made out the statement very neatly and carefully and put it in his hands.
"That is well done," said he. "I shall wish you to stay until the day after tomorrow, if you will. So you will please add another day."

I amended the statement and he paid me the handsome sum of seven dollars. I remember that after I went to my room that night I stitched up the opening in my jacket pocket, which contained my wealth, with the needle and thread which Aunt Deel had put in my bundle, and slept with the jacket under my mattress.

CHAPTER XV.

I Use My Own Compass at a Fork in the Road.

Swiftly now I move across the border into manhood—a serious, eager, restless manhood. It was the fashion of the young those days.

Mr. Wright came up for a day's fishing in July. My uncle and I took him up the river.

While we ate our luncheon he described Jackson and spoke of the famous cheese which he had kept on a table in the vestibule of the White House for his callers. He described his fellow senators—Webster, Clay, Rives, Calhoun and Benton. I remember that Webster was, in his view, the least of them, although at his best the greatest orator. We had a delightful day, and when I drove back to the village with him that night he told me that I could go into the office of Wright & Baldwin after harvesting.

"It will do for a start," he said. "A little later I shall try to find a better place for you."

My life went on with little in it worth recording until the letter came. I speak of it as "the letter," because of its effect upon my career. It was from Sally, and it said:

"Dear Bart: It's all over for a long time, perhaps forever—that will depend on you. I shall be true to you, if you really love me, even if I have to wait many, many years. Mother and father saw and read your letter. They say we are too young to be thinking about love and that we have got to stop it. How can I stop it? I guess I would have to stop living. But we shall have to depend upon our memories now. I hope that yours is as good as mine. Father says no more letters without his permission, and he stamped his foot so hard that I think he must have made a dent in the floor. Talk about slavery—what do you think of that? Mother says that we must wait—that it would make father a great deal of trouble if it were known that I allowed you to write. I guess the soul of old Grimshaw is still following you. Well, we must stretch out that lovely day as far as we can. On the third of June, 1844, we shall both be twenty-one—and I suppose that we can do as we please then. The day is a long way off, but I will agree to meet you that day at eleven in the morning under the old pines on the river where I met you that day and you told me that you loved me. If either or both should die our souls will know where to find each other. If you will solemnly promise, write these words and only these to my mother—Amour omnia vincit, but do not sign your name."

"SALLY."

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charter offered to any member of the company who should, within four years, bring fifty adults to the New Netherlands and establish them along the Hudson, a liberal grant of land, to be called a manor, of which the owner or patroon should be full proprietor and chief magistrate. The settlers were to be exempt from taxation for ten years, but under bond to stay in one place and develop it. In the beginning the patroon built houses and barns and furnished cattle, seed and tools. The tenants for themselves and their heirs agreed to pay him a fixed rent forever in stock and produce and, further, to grind at the owner's mill and neither to hunt nor fish.

Judge Westbrook, in whose office I worked, was counsel and collector for the patroons, notably for the manors of Livingston and Van Rensselaer—two little kingdoms in the heart of the great republic.

Mr. Louis Latour of Jefferson county, whom I had met in the company of Mr. Dunkelberg, came during my last year there to study law in the office of the judge, a privilege for which he was indebted to the influence of Senator Wright, I understood. He was a gay Lothario, always boasting of his love affairs, and I had little to do with him.

One day in May near the end of two years in Cobleskill Judge Westbrook gave me two writs to serve on settlers in the neighborhood of Baldwin Heights for nonpayment of rent. He told me what I knew, that there

was bitter feeling against the patroons in that vicinity and that I might encounter opposition to the service of the writs. If so I was not to press the matter, but bring them back and he would give them to the sheriff.

"I do not insist on your vaking this task upon you," he added. "I want a man of tact to go and talk with these people and get their point of view. If you don't care to undertake it I'll send another man."

"I think I would enjoy the task," I said in ignorance of that hornet's nest back in the hills.

"Take Purvis with you," he said. "He can take care of the horses, and as those back-country folk are a little lawless it will be just as well to have a witness with you. They tell me that Purvis is a man of nerve and vigor."

I had drafted my letters for the day and was about to close my desk and start on my journey when Louis Latour came in and announced that he had brought the writs from the judge and was going with me.

"I wouldn't miss it for a thousand dollars," he remarked. "By Jove! I think we'll have a bully time."

"I don't object to your going but you must remember that I am in command," I said, a little taken back, for I had no good opinion either of his prudence or his company.

"The judge told me that I could go but that I should be under your orders," he answered. "I'm not going to be a fool. I'm trying to establish a reputation for good sense myself."

We got our dinners and set out soon after one o'clock. I had read the deeds of the men we were to visit. They were brothers and lived on adjoining farms with leases which covered three hundred and fifty acres of land. Their great-grandfather had agreed to pay a yearly rent forever of sixty-two bushels of good, sweet, merchantable, winter wheat, eight yearling cattle and four sheep in good flesh and sixteen fat hens, all to be delivered in the city of Albany on the first day of January of each year. So, feeling that I was engaged in a just cause, I bravely determined to serve the writs if possible.

I rode in silence, thinking of Sally and of those beautiful days now receding into the past and of my aunt and uncle. I had written a letter to them every week and one or the other had answered it. Between the lines I had detected the note of loneliness. They had told me the small news of the countryside. How narrow and monotonous it all seemed to me then! Rodney Barnes had bought a new farm; John Axtell had been hurt in a runaway; my white mare had got a spavin!

"Hello, mister!"
I started out of my reveries with a little jump of surprise. A big, rough-dressed, bearded man stood in the middle of the road with a gun on his shoulder.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Even a homely man may have handsome men in the barber shop.

Louise's Lodger

By **IZOLA FORRESTER**

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Louise watched the ambulance out of sight from the corner windows, her handkerchief pressed closely against her lips, her blue eyes filled with anxious yearning.

It did seem as if they might have permitted her to go to the hospital, at least with her mother, if only to see that she was comfortable after her arrival. The whole thing had come down upon them so suddenly she could hardly realize she was alone.

Only two days of illness, then the doctor's verdict of pneumonia and that she must be sent where she could be given the best treatment possible.

If she had been conscious, Louise knew how her mother would have rebelled against leaving her, but somehow she did not have the courage to tell this strange city doctor their personal story. City people seemed different from those up home at Glen Falls.

Not even in their apartment house, where they had lived for nearly four months, had any of their neighbors said as much as good morning to them. There really was only the new lodger to whom she would speak now, excepting the janitor's two kiddies on the basement steps.

The lodger was another problem. He had been so welcome the previous week, when he called in answer to their advertisement. They had moved into the college section on University Heights in New York, hoping to secure some of the students, and the

rooms were furnished in three tiny suites of two rooms each, study and bedroom, having two rooms for them.

It had been such fun fixing up their rooms, camouflaging them by daylight so as to make them do in turn for living room and sleeping room, kitchen and dining room.

Louise concealed a row of hangers behind the portieres, and by standing the piano crosswise there was a hidden recess for shirtwaist boxes and shoe trees.

The kitchen cabinet was curtained closely in sheer crossbar voile, the same as the windows, and a tall mission screen hid the sink from curious eyes.

Mission shelves swung on chains from the molding, with Mrs. Condell's wedding china on them, and Louise had found some tall wall candle holders of mission wood that matched the shelves.

With all the rooms rented they could easily live until some of the engagements came true. Choir or concert singing, that was all, but at a reputable agency they had assured Louise after hearing her clear, vibrant young soprano voice, that she could accept a few professional dates, too, if she wished to.

As she turned away from the window a latchkey sounded in the outer lock, and Mr. Bancroft came in. She thought he would go down the hall to his rooms, but instead he came to the threshold of the living room, his face serious with sympathetic concern.

"Excuse me, Miss Condell, but I happened to be in the drug store just now when your mother was so ill. Can I help you any way?"

Louise thought quietly. It was no time to stand on ceremony.

"Indeed you can," she told him eagerly. "Don't you know somebody who would rent the other rooms? You don't know how it would help me just now, and keep me from being lonesome, too?"

He came into the room and sat down by the piano. She had not noticed before how boyish he was.

"You need girls or women," he said sagely. "Some one to keep you company. I know two mighty nice girls from my state who are studying here. They might come, and I'll talk to a lot of the fellows, too, and I've got an aunt in town, who's been living at a hotel, and she can't bear it. Maybe she'd come."

From that day the star boarder became almost a partner in the establishment. The first result of his efforts was his aunt's occupancy of the sunny suite. She was not at all the type Louise had expected and rather dreaded, but a keen-eyed young woman in business who thoroughly approved of Burton's choice of a home.

Before two weeks were passed all of the suites were occupied, and Miss Bancroft had pleaded to have her breakfast also, with Burton to make a third, at the tiny round table in the camouflaged kitchen.

"I don't know what I would ever have done without you," Louise exclaimed gratefully as the day came when she was to relinquish her place to her mother. "It has really helped mother get well faster, too, I know, that, and the beautiful flowers you have sent up every day."

They had walked through the university to the library and paused under the sentinel rows of Lombard poplars. Burton was on his way to look up some data, but he forgot political economy looking down into the blue eyes of his landlady.

He wished he could have told her of the fight he had been putting up the past two weeks, how he had written to his father that he might be engaged any day, just as soon as he could gain her consent, and the answer had come back ordering him home if he dared think of such a thing before he completed his college course.

It had been Aunt Irene with her clear, new ideas of fairness to youth and to the ideals of first love, that had made the faulty change its mind. Perhaps his own letter, too, where he had written he would rather quit and go to work, like other men, if he had to give up hope of winning Louise.

"And the comical part of it is that your dear mother was dreading a Bancroft marrying his landlady's daughter, when, as a matter of fact, Burt, the Condells are quite as old a family and as well connected. I find that Louise's father's branch is descended from the Chevalier Adrien de la Condell, who was a friend of Lafayette's," his aunt had smiled over at him across the restaurant dinner table the previous night, and the smile had given Burton courage for today.

"I'll have to send them to you now that she is well," he blurted out boyishly. "Would you mind very much? I'd love to. It wouldn't be a bit of trouble, you know."

"Oh, but you couldn't do that. It's getting late, isn't it?" She glanced at the clock just visible through the trees. "I have to order things for dinner. 'Til never be able to thank you enough for your help."

"Yes, you will, too," he persisted hurriedly. "Gee, Louise, can't you help a fellow a little bit? I never tried to propose to a girl before, and I don't know what to say. Can I write out to dad and the mater and tell them I'm all right? You know what I mean."

He stood before her, his gray eyes in his hand, his face red, his eyes filled with pleading, and Louise laughed, an unsteady, happy laugh, as she gave him her hand.

"I think you do it very well," she said. "I hope you'll never try again with any other girl, Burt."

And merely as a matter of business courtesy, her lodger walked on farther with her, settling the question of a permanent occupancy.

Golf Under Protest.
In an article in the London Daily Mail, R. E. Howard, an eminent golf authority, touching on the wonderful outlook for golf and the probable growth in its ranks, wrote as follows: "An Australian officer told me a few days ago he had become a golfer under protest, as part of his course of treatment for shell shock, and had succeeded so completely to the tune of the links as to reduce his handicap to 4. He was convinced that by the time he received his discharge he would be a plus player—and then let voluntary enthusiasts beware!"

This same critic has figured out that more than a hundred amateurs rated from scratch to plus have been killed in the war. The most prominent were Capt. John Graham and Norman F. Hunter and Sergt. L. A. Phillips.

How Population is Divided.
By the last census there were in the United States 2,405 incorporated cities and towns, of which 1,175 had a population of between 2,500 and 5,000 each; 629 had between 5,000 and 10,000 each; 329 had between 10,000 and 25,000 each; 120 had between 25,000 and 50,000 each; 50 had between 50,000 and 100,000 each, and 50 had more than 100,000 each. The inhabitants of these 2,405 incorporated cities and towns constituted 38 per cent of the entire population of the United States, while the village and farm population was 62 per cent.

Wheat Yields of Nations.
The average wheat production per acre in the 15 years before the world war (1890-1913) was 42.5 bushels in Denmark, 35.4 bushels in Ireland, 33.1 bushels in Belgium, 31.5 bushels in Great Britain, 27.7 bushels in Germany, 20.2 bushels in France, 19.1 bushels in Austria, 18.1 in Hungary, 16.7 bushels in Roumania, and 14.1 bushels in the United States.

Pains.
Sally's near cynic: "Nowadays the first thing after growing pains, with the average kid, is growing a mustache. The trouble is that in growing the kid has all the pains, but with the mustache, he gives 'em to his family and his friends."



A Big, Rough Dressed, Bearded Man Stood in the Middle of the Road With a Gun on His Shoulder.



He Forgot Political Economy.



I Remember My First Task Was Mending the Wheelbarrow.