

THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING

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

By IRVING BACHELLER

AUTHOR OF
EVEN HOLDEN, D'RI AND I, DARREL OF THE BLESSED ISLES,
KEEPING UP WITH LIZZIE, ETC., ETC.

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BART HEARS SOME STARTLING NEWS ABOUT THE SON OF THE MONEY LENDER.

Synopsis.—Barton Baynes, an orphan, goes to live with his uncle, Peabody Baynes, and his Aunt Deel on a farm on Rattleroad, in a neighborhood called Lickitysplit, about the year 1826. He meets Sally Dunkelberg, about his own age, but socially of a class above the Bayneses, and is fascinated by her pretty face and fine clothes. Barton also meets Roving Kate, known in the neighborhood as the "Silent Woman." Amos Grimshaw, a young son of the richest man in the township, is a visitor at the Baynes home and Roving Kate tells the boys' fortunes, predicting a bright future for Barton and death on the gallows for Amos. Barton meets Silas Wright, Jr., a man prominent in public affairs, who evinces much interest in the boy. Barton learns of the power of money when Mr. Grimshaw threatens to take the Baynes farm unless a note which he holds is paid. Now in his sixteenth year, Barton, on his way to the post office at Canton, meets a stranger and they ride together. They encounter a highwayman, who shoots and kills the stranger. Barton's horse throws him and runs away. As the murderer bends over the stranger Barton throws a stone, which he observes wounds the thief, who makes off at once. A few weeks later Bart leaves home to enter Michael Hackett's school at Canton.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

"There comes Colonel Hand," said Mrs. Hackett as she looked out of the window. "The poor lonely Whig! He has nothing to do these days but sit around the tavern."

Colonel Hand was a surly-looking man beyond middle age, with large eyes that showed signs of dissipation. He had a small, dark tuft beneath his lower lip and thin, black, untidy hair.

"What do ye think has happened?" he asked as he looked down upon us with a majestic movement of his hand.

"The son o' that old Bucktail, Ben Grimshaw, has been arrested and brought to jail for murder."

"For murder?" asked Mr. and Mrs. Hackett in one breath.

"For bloody murder, sir," the colonel went on. "It was the shooting of that man in the town o' Ballybeen a few weeks ago. Things have come to a pretty pass in this country, I should say. Talk about law and order; we don't know what it means here and why should we? The party in power is avowedly opposed to it—yes, sir. It has fattened upon bribery and corruption. Do you think that the son o' Ben Grimshaw will receive punishment even if he is proved guilty? Not at all. He will be protected—you mark my words."

He bowed and left us. When the door had closed behind him Mr. Hackett said:

"Another victim horned by the Snagdragon! If a man were to be slain by a bear back in the woods Colonel Hand would look for guilt in the opposition party. Michael Henry, whatever the truth may be regarding the poor boy in jail, we are in no way responsible. Away with sadness! What is that?"

Mr. Hackett inclined his ear and then added: "Michael Henry says that he may be innocent and that we had better go and see if we can help him. Now I hadn't thought o' that. Had you, Mary?"

"No," the girl answered.

"We must be letting Mike go ahead of us always," said her father. "You saw the crime, I believe," turning to me.

I told them all I knew of it.

"Upon my word, I like you, my brave lad," said the schoolmaster. "I heard of all this and decided that you would be a help to Michael Henry and a creditable student. Come, let us go and pay our compliments to the senator."

The schoolmaster and I went over to Mr. Wright's house—a white, frame building which had often been pointed out to me.

Mrs. Wright, a fine-looking lady who met us at the door, said that the senator had gone over to the mill with his wheelbarrow.

"We've plenty of time and we'll wait for him," said the schoolmaster.

"I see him!" said little John as he and Ruth ran to the gate and down the rough plank walk to meet him.

We saw him coming a little way down the street in his shirt-sleeves with his barrow in front of him. He stopped and lifted little John in his arms, and after a moment put him down and embraced Ruth.

"Well, I see ye still love the tender embrace o' the wheelbarrow," said Mr. Hackett as we approached the senator.

"My embrace is the tenderer of the two," the latter laughed with a look at his hands.

He recognized me and seized my two hands and shook them as he said: "Upon my word, here is my friend Bart. I was not looking for you here."

He put his hand on my head, now higher than his shoulder, and said: "I was not looking for you here."

He asked about my aunt and uncle and expressed joy at learning that I was now under Mr. Hackett.

"I shall be here for a number of weeks," he said, "and I shall want to

see you often. Maybe we'll go hunting some Saturday."

We bade him good morning and he went on with his wheelbarrow, which was loaded, I remember, with stout sacks of meal and flour.

We went to the school at half past eight. What a thrilling place it was with its 78 children and its three rooms. How noisy they were as they waited in the schoolyard for the bell to ring! I stood by the doorside looking, very foolish, I dare say, for I knew not what to do with myself. My legs encased in the tow breeches felt as if they were on fire. I saw that most of the village boys wore boughten clothes and fine boots. I looked down at my own leather and was a tower of shame on a foundation of greased cowhide. Sally Dunkelberg came in with some other girls and pretended not to see me. That was the hardest blow I suffered.

Among the handsome, well-dressed boys of the village was Henry Willis—the boy who had stolen my watermelon. I had never forgiven him for that or for the killing of my little hen. The bell rang and we marched into the big room, while a fat girl with crinkly hair played on a melodeon. Henry and another boy tried to shove me out of line and a big paper wad struck the side of my head as we were marching in and after we were seated a cross-eyed, freckled girl in a red dress made a face at me.

It was, on the whole, the unhappiest day of my life. During recess I slapped a boy's face for calling me a rabbit and the two others who came

to help him went away full of fear and astonishment, for I had the strength of a young moose in me those days. After that they began to make friends with me.

In the noon hour a man came to me in the schoolyard with a subpoena for the examination of Amos Grimshaw and explained its meaning.

While I was talking with this man Sally passed me walking with another girl and said:

"Hello, Bart!"

I observed that Henry Willis joined them and walked down the street at the side of Sally. I got my first pang of jealousy then.

When school was out that afternoon Mr. Hackett said I could have an hour to see the sights of the village, so I set out, feeling much depressed. I walked toward the house of Mr. Wright and saw him digging potatoes in the garden and went in. I knew that he was my friend.

"Well, Bart, how do you like school?" he asked.

"Not very well," I answered.

"Of course not! It's new to you now, and you miss your aunt and uncle. Stick to it. You'll make friends and get interested before long."

"I want to go home," I declared.

"Now let's look at the compass," he suggested. "You're lost for a minute, and like all lost people you're heading the wrong way. Don't be misled by selfishness. Forget what you want to do and think of what we want you to do. We want you to make a man of yourself. You must do it for the sake of those dear people who have done so much for you." The needle points toward the schoolhouse yonder.

He went on with his work, and as I walked away I understood that the needle he referred to was my conscience.

I went about my chores. There was to be no more wavering in my conduct. At the supper table Mr. Hackett kept us laughing with songs and jests and stories. The boy John, having been reproved for rapid eating, hurled his spoon upon the floor.

"Those in favor of his punishment will please say aye!" said the schoolmaster.

I remember that we had a divided house on that important question.

The schoolmaster said: "Michael Henry wishes him to be forgiven on promise of better conduct, but for the next offense he shall ride the badger."

This meant lying for a painful moment across his father's knee.

The promise was given and our merrymaking resumed. The district attorney, whom I had met before, came to see me after supper and asked more questions and advised me to talk with no one about the shooting without his consent. Soon he went away, and after I had learned my lessons Mr. Hackett said:

"Let us walk up to the jail and spend a few minutes with Amos."

"Not very well," I answered.

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"Let us walk up to the jail and spend a few minutes with Amos."

We hurried to the jail. The sheriff, a stout-built, stern-faced man, admitted us.

"Can we see the Grimshaw boy?" Mr. Hackett inquired.

"I guess so," he answered as he lazily rose from his chair and took down a bunch of large keys which had been hanging on the wall. "His father has just left."

He spoke in a low, solemn tone which impressed me deeply as he put a lighted candle in the hand of the schoolmaster. He led us through a door into a narrow corridor. He thrust a big key into the lock of a heavy iron grating and threw it open and bade us step in. We entered an ill-smelling stone-floored room with a number of cells against its rear wall. He locked the door behind us. I saw a face and figure in the dim candle light, behind the grated door of one of these cells. How lonely and dejected and helpless was the expression of that figure! The sheriff went to the door and unlocked it.

"Hello, Grimshaw," he said sternly. "Step out here."

It all went to my heart—the manners of the sheriff so like the cold iron of his keys and doors—the dim candle light, the pale, frightened youth who walked toward us. We shook his hand and he said that he was glad to see us. I saw the scar under his left ear and reaching out upon his cheek, which my stone had made, and knew that he bore the mark of Cain.

He asked if he could see me alone and the sheriff shook his head and said sternly:

"Against the rules."

"Amos, I've a boy o' my own an' I feel for ye," said the schoolmaster. "I'm going to come here, now and then, to cheer ye up and bring ye some books to read. If there's any word of advice I can give ye—let me know. Have ye a lawyer?"

"There's one coming tomorrow."

"Don't say a word about the case, boy, to anyone but your lawyer—mind that."

We left him and went to our home and beds, I to spend half the night thinking of my discovery, since which, for some reason, I had no doubt of the guilt of Amos, but I spoke not of it to anyone and the secret worried me.

Next morning on my way to school I passed a scene more strange and memorable than any in my long experience. I saw the shabby figure of old Benjamin Grimshaw walking in the side path. His hands were in his pockets, his eyes bent upon the ground, his lips moving as if he were in deep thought. Roving Kate, the ragged, silent woman who, for the fortune of Amos, had drawn a gibbet, the shadow of which was now upon him, walked slowly behind the money lender pointing at him with her bony forefinger. Her stern eyes watched him as the cat watches when its prey is near it. She did not notice me. Silently, her feet wrapped in rags, she walked behind the man, always pointing at him. When he stopped she stopped. When he resumed his slow progress she followed. It thrilled me, partly because I had begun to believe in the weird, mysterious power of the Silent Woman. I had twenty minutes to spare and so I turned into the main street behind and close by them. I saw him stop and buy some crackers and an apple and a piece of cheese. Meanwhile she stood pointing at him. He saw, but gave no heed to her. He walked along the street in front of the stores, she following as before. How patiently she followed!

I started for the big schoolhouse and a number of boys joined me with pleasant words.

Sally ran past us with that low-lived Willis boy, who carried her books for her. His father had gone into the grocery business and Henry was

bought ten clothes. I couldn't tell Sally how mean he was. I was angry and decided not to speak to her until she spoke to me. I got along better in school, altho' there was some fitting when I recited, probably because I had a broader dialect and bigger boots than the boys in the village.

CHAPTER IX.

I Meet President Van Buren and Am Cross-Examined by Mr. Grimshaw.

The days went easier after that. The boys took me into their play and some of them were most friendly. I had a swift foot and a good eye as well as a strong arm, and could hold my own at three old cat—a kind of baseball which we played in the schoolyard. Saturday came. As we were sitting down at the table that morning the younger children clung to the knees of Mr. Hackett and begged him to take them up the river in a boat.

"Good Lord! What wilt thou give me when I grow childless?" he exclaimed with his arms around them. "That was the question of Abraham, and it often comes to me. Of course we shall go. But hark! Let us hear what the green chair has to say."

There was a moment of silence and then he went on with a merry laugh. "Right ye are, Michael Henry! You are always right, my boy—God bless your soul! We shall take Bart with us an' doughnuts an' cheese an' cookies an' dried meat for all."

From that moment I date the beginning of my love for the occupant of the green chair in the home of Michael Hackett. Those good people were Catholics and I a Protestant and yet this Michael Henry always insisted upon the most delicate consideration for my faith and feelings.

"I promised to spend the morning in the field with Mr. Wright, if I may have your consent, sir," I said.

"Then we shall console ourselves, knowing that you are in better company," said Mr. Hackett.

Mr. Dunkelberg called at the house in Ashery lane to see me after breakfast.

"Bart, if you will come with me I should like to order some store clothes and boots for you," he said in his squeaky voice.

For a moment I knew not how to answer him. Nettled as I had been by Sally's treatment of me, the offer was like rubbing ashes on the soreness of my spirit.

I blushed and surveyed my garments and said:

"I guess I look pretty bad, don't I?"

"You look all right, but I thought maybe you would feel better in softer raiment, especially if you care to go around much with the young people. I am an old friend of the family and I guess it would be proper for me to buy the clothes for you. When you are older you can buy a suit for me, some time, if you care to."

It should be understood that well-to-do people in the towns were more particular about their dress those days than now.

"I'll ask my aunt and uncle about it," I proposed.

"That's all right," he answered. "I'm going to drive to your house this afternoon and your uncle wishes you to go with me. We are all to have a talk with Mr. Grimshaw."

He left me and I went over to Mr. Wright's.

They told me that he was cutting corn in the back lot, where I found him.

"Mr. Dunkelberg came this morning and wanted to buy me some new clothes and boots," I said.

The senator stopped work and stood looking at me with his hands upon his hips.

"I wouldn't let him do it if I were you," he said thoughtfully.

Just then I saw a young man come running toward us in the distant field. Mr. Wright took out his compass.

"Look here," he said, "you see the needle points due north."

He took a lodestone out of his pocket, and holding it near the compass moved it back and forth. The needle followed it.

The young man came up to us breathing deeply. Perspiration was rolling off his face. He was much excited and spoke with some difficulty.

"Senator Wright," he gasped, "Mrs. Wright sent me down to tell you that President Van Buren is at the house."

I remember vividly the look of mild amusement in the senator's face and the serene calmness with which he looked at the young man and said to him:

"Tell Mrs. Wright to make him comfortable in our easiest chair and to say to the president that I shall be directly."

Grimshaw seeks by an offer of a bribe to Uncle Peabody to prevent Bart from telling what he knows about the guilt of Amos. How Uncle Peabody and Bart received this offer is told in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Buoyed by Glorious Faith. What a world were this; how unendurable its weight, if they whom death had sundered did not meet again!—Sonthey.

Her Happiest Days. The other day a lady confided to us that the happiest days of her life were spent during the three years that she was eighteen.—Boston Transcript.

Sooner or later the weak man finds himself up to his neck in the snare of despair.

STRAIGHT COAT AND NARROW SKIRT MODELS



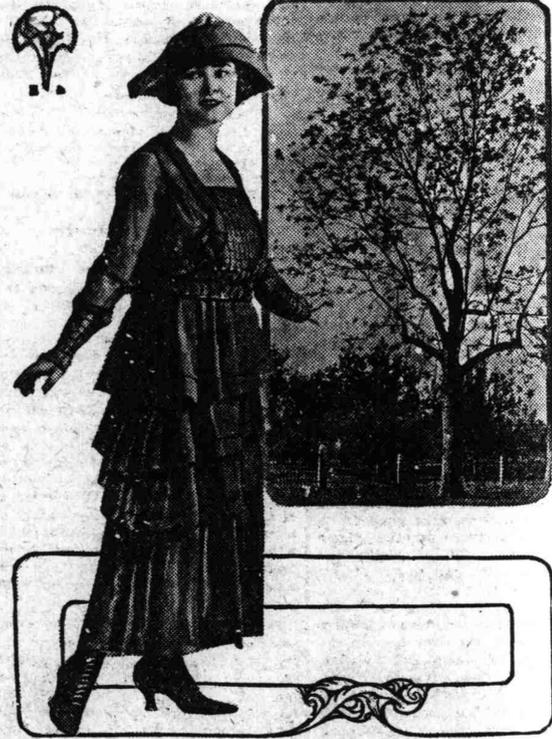
There are several styles in suits that have almost equal chances for popularity this spring and the only way to determine which is the best choice is to try them on. Straight, short coats, opening over vestees, with narrow plain skirts, are universally admired, but they are not universally becoming. If they were there is no doubt but that this type of suit would soon lead all the rest. The test of becomingness must settle the question of choice; no other consideration is so important. But there is quite a wide range in styles to choose from, so that every woman may be confident of finding the particular one that suits her best.

One of the straight-coat-and-narrow-skirt models is shown in the picture and it is an extreme example of this mode, with a skirt rather too narrow to be practical. But to the woman who aspires to look slender it will certainly make a strong appeal, for the skirt is long as well as narrow. The very thin woman cannot consider it.

The coat is a pretty model with three wide tucks at the bottom and it opens over a waistcoat of plain tricolette that is very smart. It has a wide turnover collar and a row of large bone buttons down the left side.

Braid and buttons decorate the pretty skirt that is shown built on entirely different lines from its companion in the picture. It has a plain skirt wide enough to be comfortable for walking. The coat is made with long side bodies and a short panel at the center of the back to which a gathered skirt portion is added. Three groups of braid, with three rows in each group ending in bone buttons, dispose of the braid and button decoration in neat, tailored fashion on the panel. The same decoration on the skirt portion ends in buttons on the side pieces and this plan is followed out on the front. For those who do not like braid or want a change from it the styles offer cross-bar and other arrangements of pin tucks and groups of wider tucks in the material.

OF VOILE AND SILK



Advance showing of pretty afternoon frocks for summer, reveal many lovely models made of sheer, plain voile. Besides these, there are striped and figured voiles and among them some fine, imported weaves, that are to be reckoned with. The latter are high priced, in fact considerably more expensive than plain georgette. They appear in patterns and color combinations that are very beautiful. But even so, the dress of plain voile or georgette rarely suffers by comparison with a rival made of the figured patterns. The home dress maker will succeed oftener with a plain fabric, especially if she makes a little excursion in designing on her own account.

The frock of plain voile shown in the picture, bespeaks the work of a professional designer who is trained to make the most of fabrics—that is to adapt them to styles in the best way. In this case nothing is used with the voile but a little silk piping, but these simple means proved equal to making a dress of smart distinction and one that is easy enough to copy.

All the sheer fabrics are made up over silk or satin and this frock has a underskirt and bodice of silk. A de flounce of the voile is set on the underskirt and above it a tunic is accomplished by three beamed flounces set one above another. These are all narrower at the right than at the left side, so that the tunic is longer at the left side.

The bodice is made in the effect of a little jacket of the voile, bordered with a band of it, set on with a piping of silk. The jacket reveals a vestee, also made of the voile and decorated with cross-bar tucks and the sleeves are set into deep cuffs of the tucked voile. For a girle a ribbon woven in checkerboard pattern proves an effective bit of craftsmanship with little pendent balls of silk set on the bodice just above it at each side.

Julia B. B. B.

Navy Still Leads. Navy leads all other colors for both suits and street dresses of the tailored type for spring, although a great deal of brown is shown in the dress lineup, and beige, tan and several shades of gray, especially a blue gray called "mouse," are very popular.