

THE
Bright Eye of the Settlement.

THE

RIGHTS OF THE BARRISTER

THE BRIGHT EYE OF THE SETTLEMENT.

“WHEN?”

“At seven o'clock, on Thursday morning. We start at eight.”

“All right. You can depend on me.”

These words were exchanged by two young men in the shaded streets of a quiet New England village.

They had been schoolmates, and were intimate friends. One was about to take leave of the associations of his youth, and of his early manhood—the other had been invited to witness a ceremony which would unite to his friend, through sickness and health, through prosperity and adversity, one who had been to both of them a playmate in youth, but who had been more than a playmate to the elder in manhood. For a few days there had been wide-spread excitement in the little town. A colony for emigration had been organized. The bride and groom of Thursday morning were to join the band of emigrants. They would be the youngest married people in it.

The morn was propitious. There was a joyful wedding—then there were prayerful good wishes, and sad partings.

The honeymoon had passed, and autumn succeeded summer; when, in the midst of a prairie, whose regular undulations reminded the settlers of the ocean, from whose shores they had come, nearly a score of pleasant cottages surrounded a small, white church, and a white school-house.

Remote from other settlements, rarely having society other than that which they found among themselves, being congenial in tastes and opinions, the New England settlers were more cordial—much more closely interested in each other's prosperity or adversity than they had been in the village from which they emigrated.

From gardens around their dwellings they had gathered one rich crop; and a second time flowers had bloomed for them in the apparently boundless field, which stretched away in beautiful lines toward the distant horizon—when the census of their colony numbered one more than it did on the morning their white church was dedicated. There had not been a death—and the youngest bride was a mother.

The little immigrant was what all the maids and all the matrons called a sweet babe. He was a large, fair child, with light, curling hair, and expressive countenance, and clear, blue eyes.

When he grew large enough to run out of doors, and the men met him, as they went to or came from their labors, they called him Bright Eyes. The women often talked of him as

a promising child, and all were proud of him as the first-born of the settlement.

Remarkable for beauty, intelligence, and goodness, when he was two years old the settlers were, toward him, as one family. The women were hard workers; the men had rough hands and bronzed faces, but they had tender hearts. Frequently, pains were taken to save nice presents of cake or pie for Bright Eyes, and sometimes a settler took many steps out of his way to carry him a flower, or a handful of berries.

Recognizing a bond of union in love for a little child, the colonists were happier than men often are where honors and riches command the choicest and rarest of the peculiar privileges of refined society.

Whether over all the prairie the fresh beauty of spring, the maturing glory of summer, or the pensive loveliness of autumn attracted attention—whether deep snow reflected the winter sun, or cutting wind swept dark clouds over the settlement, the colonists had time for, and took pleasure in, cheerful, social gatherings, singing-schools, and prayer-meetings.

Often, old and young meeting together, social visiting, singing lessons, and concert of prayer blended their attractions, their enjoyments, and their consolations.

On a dark night, in the last winter month, at one of those reunions, a few words, whispered from ear to ear, saddened every heart, and put a new fervor into the closing prayer.

Bright Eyes, the child around which the pride and affection of the settlement clustered, had been suddenly taken ill.

In childish enterprise and glee he clambered after some pictures on a book-shelf, and had fallen. He did not, at first, appear to be much hurt, and his father joined the win-

ter-evening party. But before the hour at which the settlers were expected to seek their homes, a violent fever disturbed his brain, and filled his mother's heart with grievous apprehensions.

Though the succeeding morning was severely cold, and a fierce wind filled the air with drifting snow, scarcely had the day broken, ere the sad news was known at every fireside, that the hope of the settlement was dangerously ill with fever—in a brain unusually developed. There, around a neat cottage, near the church, centered the entire interest of all the settlers. Little Bright Eyes knew no rest. Soon he did not know his father or his mother. Violent spasms seized him, and irregular moans expressed a most painful struggle between firm disease and a strong frame.

At length, while his father held him in his arms, and his mother kneeled by his side, watching for a last look of recognition, he sank into a deep stupor, from which death took him peacefully.

It was Sabbath morning. Little children in their classes at Sunday-school were told that Bright Eyes had gone to heaven.

In the white church, that day, a sermon from this text, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," moved the sternest men, as well as the tenderest women. The head of the household from which Bright Eyes had been taken was the preacher.

Every settler felt then that affliction hath bonds of union closer than the ripest pleasure can furnish. To each other they renewed those vows, the keeping of which would enable their beloved pastor to lead them the way Bright Eyes had gone.

On the following evening, when the first-born of the prairie was laid in his little grave, every man, woman and child able to brave piercing cold, heard the clods fall on his coffin. Their hearts bled in sympathy. The pastor knew that the shadow which had fallen over his threshold, crossed also every threshold in the settlement.

At his saddened home he took leave of his people in only these words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. The Lord chasteneth whom he loveth. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Whoever visits now the village of _____, in _____ county, Iowa, may witness mutual respect and forbearance among all the people, from children in the street to men at their business, and women in their homes, which will puzzle his understanding as much as it will challenge his admiration, unless, spending a Sabbath there, he hears the village pastor preach the Gospel, and, affected by his pensive countenance, learns the story, I have poorly told, of The Bright Eye of the Settlement.

The features of this story, as true to real occurrence as my pen can make them, furnish a striking contrast to the features of a story, which faithfully depicts pioneer life, as it was in the west fifty years ago.

