

THE UNKNOWN GRAVE.

A STORY OF THE PRAIRIE.

In December, 1886, I was "making" the towns along the Elkhorn road in Nebraska. From Atkinson west the passenger was a night train and it fell to my lot to ride over most of that country on a freight. Seated in the look-out of the way-car, I had an excellent opportunity to see this beautiful country. One afternoon as we were on the down grade leading from the divide into the Niobrara valley we passed through the first pine trees we had encountered on the trip. About half way down is a bench of ground, numbering some forty or fifty acres, and part of it looked as though it had once been cultivated. In a clump of pine trees at the next to the road stood the ruins of an old log cabin, with the stick chimney still standing as it had been built, with here and there a reddened stone that had seen service in the hearth place that had been used to warm the house. A few steps in front of these ruins was a little hillock, resembling a grave, with here and there a tuft of bright green grass peeping out through the white covering of snow.

These little tufts of grass that could be seen along the top of what seemed to be a grave, were engaged in a hand to hand encounter with the fierce elements of a Nebraska winter's day, but the bright sun took compassion and lent ray after ray of golden sunshine down through the branches of the pine trees to assist in this unequal struggle. The breaks of the Niobrara river form the most romantic and picturesque scenery in Nebraska, and no where along its whole length is the view more strikingly beautiful than at that point. The white covering of snow, the rugged and precipitous bluffs together with the old ruins and the lonely grave, with no signs of civilization in sight, save the big,

lumbering freight train, made a scene which would impress itself indelibly on the mind of the beholder, if he were at all an admirer of nature in its wild romantic state.

The train sped on, and this sylvan dell was soon left behind. But the memory of that lonely grave could not be so easily effaced. It stayed, in spite of persistent efforts to banish it. A grave is always an object of interest, awakening the tenderest of memories, but one amidst such surroundings excited my curiosity and interest to such a degree that when I had finished my work in Valentine, which was the next station, I secured a horse at the livery stable and rode back to take a more careful view of the grave, the ruins and their picturesque surroundings. There was neither headstone nor mark of any kind to tell who it was that was sleeping so peacefully beneath that sod, and after spending a half hour in musing on the probabilities, I was about to mount my horse and ride back to town, when I was greeted by a pleasant "Good evening" from an intelligent looking old gentleman, who said that he lived some miles down the valley, but was out looking for quail on that afternoon.

My evident curiosity concerning the ruins and the lonely grave attracted his attention, and he said:

"Meyne Jackson is buried there, and a sweeter girl never lived than she. Her history? Yes, I knew her well, and if you like, I will give it to you."

"It was several years ago when John Jackson settled, or rather squatted, at this place. He did not mean to locate, and had no thought of making it his home. Jackson was born and reared in Nelson county, Kentucky, but had gone to Parke county, Indiana, with