

Democratic Watchman

Belleville, Pa., March 11, 1932

THE BUILDER

An old man going a lone highway
Came at evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm deep and dark and wide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream held no fear for him.
But he turned when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting your time to build a bridge here,
Your journey will end with the close of day.
You never again will pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm so dark and wide.
Why build a bridge here at eventide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the way I tread,
There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm which has been as naught to me
To this fair-haired youth a pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

"GIVE ME YESTERDAY"

A grieve came in the King's road, Chelsea, had split and tossed the paving for a hundred yards. Under the direction of the police and arrow-shaped signs with the words "A. A. Loopway to Sloane Square," the traffic was switched up a side street and along devious ways back to the main thoroughfare.

Twelve years had gone by since Conway Farnol was last in the neighborhood of Leaders Grove. Too much of his life was buried there to encourage him to revisit it. There is something morbid about projecting oneself into the past and White Lodge was the scene of memories which ran back to the stereoscopically clear impressions of early childhood.

Had a choice been offered, he would have taken any other route, but the police, the yellow arrows and the procession of traffic ruled out alternatives. He was compelled to go that way, and against his will all manner of memories, safer forgotten, inevitably would arise. Already he could feel them crowding up and jostling one another in his brain.

As a boy of 6 he used to buy Greenage Boudiers at that sweet-stuff shop, with slate pencils and penny packets of stationery in the window, and the "Betsy's Ginger Beer" board leaning against the open door. The old lady who served him wore glasses with strong low halves to the lenses. He recalled the cutting pincers she used for chopping up hardbake and coconut ice.

On that corner was the public house where he had seen his first drunk—a man with a blue birthmark with violent gestures. In Chelsea it is the fashion for slums to be sandwiched between better-class streets. Leaders Grove, with its gardens of pink guelder-rose and acacia, cut through the heart of squalor. Its approach was flanked by the public house and a rag and bone shop, unspeakably base and arrogant, whose posters shrieked aloud for "Fifty Tons of Kitchen Stuff." Bottles and speakeasy wheels littered the pavement before its greasy windows.

As Conway Farnol followed the bus ahead, his heart thumped expectantly. He was being thrown back into the past, and the experience filled him with trepidation. Lifting his eyes in search of landmarks, he saw that many had vanished. The terrace of houses before White Lodge had gone, and where once they stood was a barren acreage of broken ground and tumbled brickwork.

The remorseless hand of progress had closed upon Leaders Grove and was effacing it. Conway Farnol stopped the car and got out. A melancholy sight met his eyes. To right and left the ground looked like a battlefield in which the old house was the one object left standing. Empty and forlorn, it stood, with smashed windowpanes that looked like wounds. The vandals of the neighborhood had been at work and left it sightless and ravished, a mutilated ghost.

Tiles had showered into the front garden and lay bare the timbers of the roof. Like the ribs of a skeleton they leaned against the sky. An urchin poked his head through one of the lower windows and disappeared like a rat. The last head Farnol had seen at that window was Elsa's—his wife's. And that was the last time he had seen her. She had come to the window, doubting the sincerity of his threat to leave the house and walk out of her life forever. But although aware of her presence, he had driven away without a backward glance. It was hard, after so long, to credit the violent emotions that preluded their parting and harder still to credit that the room in which she had stood was then a lovely room, cream white with chintzes, the glowing sweetness of old furniture and the dignity of books.

As he saw it now it was a black and ugly hole, into which the refuse of the neighborhood had been dumped. With the sensations of having unwillingly looked upon a corpse, Conway Farnol crossed the road and pushed at the iron gate of the front garden. The gate was locked, and, although he had no longer the right to enter, he seized and shook it angrily.

A passing workman stopped and addressed him.

"It's padlocked, that gate is, and

the 'ouse is empty."

"I used to live here," said Farnol lamely. He felt some explanation was called for.

The workman sucked a reflective "Must've bin long time ago, then. Lidy 'n' a youngster was livin' 'ere five year back—cos I done a job for 'er—plasterin'."

"Yes. Quite a time ago. I've been abroad since the war."

The answer was mechanical. The word "youngster" had set Farnol thinking of his son now a boy of what? Fourteen. The perambulator used to stand under the syringa bush. It was there when he left the house. There was a net over the perambulator, for it had an adventurous babe, who once had rolled himself out for his first exploration. Dear stars, how the memory of that alarm came sweeping down on him.

The shriek of the nurse—the rush from the house—the certainty that kidnappers had been at work, and then a grimy morsel of humanity crawling out of the patch of lilacs on the center bed and crowing with delight. The center bed had been stamped flat, the lilacs were broken or uprooted and not enough cover remained to hide a cat.

"If you want an eyeful of the ole place you could get it by goin' round the back. Garden wall's down in two or three places," said the man. It seemed to Farnol that many walls were down, and it was hard to understand why one of those walls had ever been erected. War nerves, perhaps, but, with the passage of time, what rubbish that phrase sounded. Why should nerves of war or peace persuade a man to demolish what must have been, surely, the best of his possessions?

And now he was crossing these walls for the third time, but the walls were down and only a series of jagged brick courses marked where once they stood. The garden wall of White Lodge had been breached by clumsy and destructive hands, and looked as though some giant had bitten at it twice and spewed out the indigestible mouthfuls.

The greenhouse, with its vines, which had been his mother's transoms and glass. A more pitiable sight could not have been imagined. Even the lily pond was clogged with rubbish. Those friends of his boyhood, the golden carp, had gone. Scooped out, no doubt, by dirty hands and borne away triumphantly in dirty jam jars.

With a feeling of disgust, Farnol turned his back on the house and covered his eyes. This wanton tearing down of so many landmarks dear to memory carried with it a bitterness that was intense. Where he was standing he and Elsa had stood side by side on their wedding day. For theirs had been a garden wedding, and the garden was filled with guests.

With his eyes shut he could imagine them standing by to congratulate. Silk hats, morning coats and the multicolored dresses of women. He remembered the words of an old lady. "A lovely wife and a lovely house, my dear. Long may you live to enjoy them both!"

A wonderful year, and then the war and change—the change that wrought havoc to so many men and women—the war that taught them to smash and abandon in the name of freedom.

And what a freedom! She, that other she, who had driven in a car after he was wounded and given a staff appointment—what was her real worth? At the time he had not troubled to ask that question, for her empty head was a pleasant anesthetic. She had a mouth of geranium red, sweet with the honey of praises and kisses. Little, careless and loving, she used the war as a pleasure hack. Infinitely kind she could be, for the little while a mod of kindness lasted. An ephemeral creature—light and inconsistent and desirable—anybody's woman, if he had had the sense to realize it, but the drumfire of Passchendaele had knocked the sense out of him and left only the senses.

It is easy to judge the value in retrospect and hard to credit the magnitude of one's own self-deception. Elsa may have been less than wise and everready to reproach. War strain and the bringing forth of a child are seldom a lesson in domestic psychology. She could no more understand his craving for excitement than he could endure her falling to take part in it.

"Haven't I earned a good time?" he asked himself.

The question was prevalent in 1919. He and Elsa were out of touch and out of sympathy. Domesticity bore down upon him. The infant son was almost a stranger—a stranger who seemed to be usurping his own place in her thoughts. He had forgotten the mingled terror and wonder of the night when that stranger had come to the house. The French telegram, typewritten slips stuck to a folded blue paper. The special leave—a dash to Boulogne—a car and train—the Channel crossing and himself whipped by spray and cold with apprehension. Finally, the hours spent waiting, here in this garden, with eyes glued to a light streak in a curtained window on the upper floor. The sun was lifting his head over the chimney pots when his son was laid in his arms for the first time.

Was it possible, for the sake of an empty head, idle praises and a sweet red mouth, that he could have forgotten all that? Who was to blame? He—Elsa—the war?

In that year of grace there was no permanence even in most sacred vows. The sweetest memories turned to dust. One lived for the minute—one destroyed and passed on.

No doubt his own son had had lots of fun in that old mulberry tree. It seemed so hard to Conway that he had not been there to witness it. There were tricks and wrinkles he might have taught the boy, if selfish pride had not denied him the right. With the approach of evening the old tree looked ghostly and immense.

An impenetrable desire to climb it just once more itched his imagination. He had remembered so much already, and he wondered if he would still remember the old hand and foot holds. There was no one about and, half ashamed, he picked his way over the trampled lawn and gripped a projecting bough. A mulberry grows slowly, but as a boy his fingers would almost meet round that bough, which now had become more than a man's handful. Drawing himself up, he swung a leg over it, straightened and put a foot into a crotch of the main trunk. Then came the tricky bit, but he managed it easily—too easily—and found himself on what he used to call "the second floor."

It had boasted a floor in those days, the top of a soap box nailed across two boughs. The rusty head of one of those thirty-year-old nails jagged the leather top cap of his shoe.

"Are you still there?" he mused aloud.

And a voice above answered, "Didn't think you'd spotted me." From one of the smaller branches hung a pair of not very long gray flannel legs. Peering down between caution and mischief was the face of a boy. It was a dirty face, but without the appearance of being habitually so—the dirt was of surface variety and not ingrained. Its owner wore a clean collar, a school tie, and his shoes bore evidence of parental respectability.

"If you want me to come down I will," said he, and added with a grin, "unless you mean to chase me off the top."

"Chase?" Conway repeated. "I didn't know you were there." "Then what on earth did you shin up the tree for?"

Conway Farnol was not prepared to answer that question. "That's entirely my own affair," he replied loftily, which, in view of his arduous situation, was a depressingly grown-up rejoinder.

However, the boy didn't seem to notice that. "You're a whaler at climbing," said he.

Praise from the young, being rare, is unfailingly welcome. It robbed Conway of the embarrassment he felt in being discovered.

"Thanks," he said.

"The way you tackled that tricky bit was hot. Are you the ground landlord?"

"No."

"No, of course you're not."

"Why of course?" He would like the boy to have believed he had proprietary rights in this place.

"He'd have told me to bunk."

Ah! That sort! said Conway, better men than the ground landlord were to be met.

"You stopping there long, sir?"

"Why?"

"I ought to be getting down."

Conway smiled. "Don't let me stop you—there are two ways."

"No, only one—now."

Conway pointed at a long limb stretching east of the main trunk. The boy shook his head and gave a flick of the hand that was oddly familiar. "No good. I've tried, but the bough's got too strong, or I'm not heavy enough."

"Heavy enough for what?" Conway asked, with a queer note in his voice.

"To make it dip, of course, so you can step off."

There was a hot feeling in Conway's throat. Who told you it would dip like that?

"My mother. She discovered it—oh, ages ago—first time she ever met my father."

Conway said nothing. It was a strange—yet likely—place to meet his own son. For a moment he felt dizzy.

"My mother's Mrs. Farnol. We lived here, you know."

"That's why all this is such a lark."

"Is it?" said Conway, and put a foot into space. From above came a yell.

"Look out, you'll fall. It's jolly easy to fall there."

Conway Farnol embraced the tree trunk, swiveled round it, put his feet into the crotch and lowered himself to the ground. The boy dropped lightly beside him and peered into his face with concern.

"You look awfully queer, sir."

Conway rubbed his forehead with the palm of his hand and smiled.

"You, on the other hand, look pretty good to me."

"Of course—why not?" His eyes fastened on the boy's school tie.

"Canterford," he said. The boy nodded. "My first term."

"I wonder why your mother sent you there."

"Best place to go. We licked Marlborough and Towbridge last year at rugger, you know."

It was a handsome answer, but not the kind Conway had sought. Somehow, it hurt him.

"Do you know the school, sir?"

"Very well. I was there myself."

He hesitated, "with your father."

"Ah, said the boy, indifferently, and then for politeness added, "What sort of a chap was he, then?"

"Pretty average—then."

Followed a moment of mutual awkwardness.

"You see," the boy explained. "I didn't know him, really—that is to remember." He seemed to come to the end of what he had to say.

"Well, if you don't mind, I'll be pushing off now."

"Need you?" said Conway. "It's too late for tea and too early for bed. Besides, I'm liking this talk. What do they call you? Harvey?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"After your grandfather, eh?"

"You seem pretty well up in my family, sir."

"I used to be. Why did you shut up when I said I knew your father?"

Harvey looked at his hands, self-consciously. "Gosh! Aren't I in a muck?"

The question had offended him, but he was too young to say so outright.

"You'd rather talk about your mother, perhaps?"

Harvey shuffled his feet, an operation which seemed to give him courage.

"I don't mind talking about my father. Why should I?"

"Why not?"

"He's done precious little for you, old chap."

Conway saw the color mounting to his son's cheeks—an angry red. For a moment he hesitated, then blurted out truculently: "That's what he said."

"He?"

"The chap who's trying to marry my mother."

"What's that?" said Conway, sharply.

"It's true. He said it at lunch today. Donno why I'm telling you, but somehow one can talk to strangers easier than a person you know."

Conway's nod of assent cost him an effort. There was no earthly reason why Elsa should not marry again, and after all, he was a stranger.

"After all," he said, "my father played for England two seasons running and got a D. S. O. in the war. That's more than he'll ever do."

"S'pose there's no reason why you should be interested," said he and stuffed his hands into his pockets and marched away.

Conway Farnol made no effort to follow. There was a sugar box beneath the mulberry tree, and feeling old and lonely, he sat down and fumbled for a cigarette.

Across the melancholy train of his thoughts came a woman's voice calling, "Harvey, Harvey."

The pink evening glow illuminated Elsa as she stepped through the gap in the broken wall. She was accompanied by a man with whom Conway was unacquainted but whose identity it was easy to guess.

He put out a hand to prevent her stumbling, but Elsa either failed to see or had no need of the hand, for, ignoring it, she walked into the garden and looked about.

"Harvey," she repeated, but there was no answer.

"I wouldn't worry about him," said the man. "That little brush we had at lunch didn't amount to anything."

"No—I dare say." But there was little conversation in her voice.

"You seem to have been in a stew ever since it happened."

"Do I? I'm sorry."

"Is there any reason to suppose he would be here?"

"He was fond of the place."

The man gave a short laugh. "Not much left to be fond of now," said he.

Conway wondered if the voice sounded as out of tune to her as it did to him. Her words, however, pointed the belief that she had not been listening—or sought to change the subject. Moving to the lily pond she looked down at the trash and rubbish that now filled it and said inconsequently, "Captain used to live in this pond."

"Captain?"

"A very old goldfish—almost white."

Conway had forgotten Captain. Her words brought him back to life, like a miracle. It was all he could do to prevent himself stepping from the shadows that enveloped him and crying aloud, "I remember Captain!"

And because of one poor fish, remembering other things—thousands of them. Surely that mind of hers would be fertile ground to explore for some kindly thoughts out of a buried past. In the half light she seemed to have changed scarcely at all from the girl he had wooed in the garden, ages and ages ago.

Elsa's ruminations about Captain found little favor with her companion. Conway noticed the irritability he dug at the soil with the ferule of his cane.

"Let's get out of here," he suggested. "You've been morbid all day and this place is like a graveyard."

"It is a graveyard, Len."

"Then let's get out of it."

But Elsa only shook her head and, moving to a broken seat beside the wreckage of the greenhouse, she sat and rested her chin in the palms of her hands. It was some time before she spoke and that was to say: "Sorry to be a bore, Len, but—let me stay a bit. I'll find my own way home."

"You won't. You'll come with me and you'll come now. What's the point in trying to make yourself miserable this way?"

LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE.—Letters testamentary having been granted to the undersigned upon the estate of Mary Wilberta Meek, late of Ferguson township, deceased, all persons knowing themselves indebted to said estate are requested to make prompt payment, and those having claims against said estate must present them, duly authenticated for settlement.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK
of State College,
W. Harrison Walker,
Attorney.
77-76

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE.—Letters testamentary upon the estate of Oscar L. Fetzer, late of Boggs township, deceased, having been granted to the undersigned, all persons knowing themselves indebted to said estate are requested to make prompt payment, and those having claims against the same, must present them, duly authenticated, or settlement.

ROSS C. FETZER, Executor,
W. Harrison Walker, Howard R. D. 3,
Attorney.
77-66

SHERIFF'S SALE.—By virtue of a writ of Alias Fieri Facias issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Centre County, to me directed, I am directed to sell all the real estate in the Borough of Belleville, Centre County, State of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows, to-wit:

On the East by lot of W. J. Musser; on the North by Lamb Street; on the West by lot of A. Landis; on the South by an Alley.

The lot having a frontage of about 47 feet between the corner of said alley and extending back from Lamb Street to an Alley, 150 feet, to a uniform width.

Being the same premises which James C. Fust, Executor of the last will and Testament of John P. Harris Sr., deceased by his deed dated the 8th day of April, 1925, and recorded in Centre County in Deed Book 134, at page 22, granted and conveyed the same unto Harry Ward and Rosa Ward, his wife, Seized, taken in execution and to be sold as property of Harry Ward and Rosa Ward.

Sale to commence at 10:00 o'clock A. M. of said day.

Terms Cash. JOHN M. BOOB, Sheriff.
Sheriff's Office, Belleville, Pa.,
March 1, 1932. 77-70-3t

SHERIFF'S SALE.—By virtue of a writ of Alias Fieri Facias issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Centre County, to me directed, I am directed to public sale at the Court House in Borough of Belleville on

FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 1932.

The Following Property:

ALL those certain messuages, tenements, and lots of ground situate in Patton Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows, to-wit:

THE FIRST THEREOF: BEGINNING at a corner of the lot of Thomas Miller; thence along the land of John Jones South thirty and one half (30½) degrees East 107 perches to corner of said land of Moses Thompson Estate North 51 degrees East 55 perches to corner on line of Watson heirs; thence along Watson heirs North 29½ degrees West 51.7 perches to corner of said Clark; thence along said Clark South 51 degrees West 30 perches to corner; thence along said Clark North 29½ degrees West 26.7 perches to corner; thence along same South 51 degrees West 8 perches to corner; thence along same North 31½ degrees West 24 perches to corner of Thomas Miller; thence along said Miller South 74 degrees West 34.1 perches to corner; thence South 15 degrees West 7.5 perches to the place of beginning. Containing 25 acres and 86 perches be the same more or less. This being part of a Boregess West 80 rods which became vested in Moses Thompson and known as the Centre Furnace land. The above described tract of land is conveyed subject to reservation of the estate of Moses Thompson of all iron ore and other minerals with rights of mining, egress and regress etc. as appears in the chain of title.

THE SECOND THEREOF: ALL that certain messuage, tenement and parcel of land situate in Patton Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a stone corner of George W. Markle; thence along the line of Moses Thompson South 22 degrees East 21 perches to stones; thence South 48 degrees East 10 perches to stones; thence North 32 degrees West 24 perches to stones; thence along lands of Susan Miller North 70 degrees East 25 perches to stones; the place of beginning. Containing one acre and 12 perches more or less.

THE THIRD THEREOF: ALL that certain messuage, tenement and tract of land situate in Patton Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a stone corner of George W. Markle; thence along the line of Moses Thompson South 22 degrees East 21 perches to stones; thence South 48 degrees East 10 perches to stones; thence North 32 degrees West 24 perches to stones; thence along lands of Susan Miller North 70 degrees East 25 perches to stones; the place of beginning. Containing one acre and 12 perches more or less.

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THE FIFTH THEREOF: ALL that certain messuage, tenement and tract of land situate in the Township of Patton, Centre County, and State of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a post at corner of Moses Thompson heirs; thence along land of Moses Thompson heirs North 50 degrees East 150 perches to stones; thence along lands of John Biddell North 22 degrees East 50 perches to stones; thence along lands of Hale's heirs South 50½ degrees West 150 perches to White Oak; thence along lands of the said Elmer Clark South 22½ degrees East 38.3 perches to stones; thence along same North 86½ degrees West 15 perches to post; thence along same North 86½ degrees West 15 perches to the place of beginning. Containing 147 acres and 10½ acres. This property is conveyed subject to the exceptions and reservations as they may appear in the chain of title particularly the iron and mining rights reserved to the Moses Thompson estate conveying, however to the party of the second part hereto all rights of royalty etc. as appears more fully set forth in the said reservations.

THE SIXTH THEREOF: ALL that certain messuage, tenement and tract of land situate in the Township of Patton, Centre County, and State of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a post at corner of Moses Thompson heirs; thence along land of Moses Thompson heirs North 50 degrees East 150 perches to stones; thence along lands of John Biddell North 22 degrees East 50 perches to stones; thence along lands of Hale's heirs South 50½ degrees West 150 perches to White Oak; thence along lands of the said Elmer Clark South 22½ degrees East 38.3 perches to stones; thence along same North 86½ degrees West 15 perches to post; thence along same North 86½ degrees West 15 perches to the place of beginning. Containing 147 acres and 10½ acres. This property is conveyed subject to the exceptions and reservations as they may appear in the chain of title particularly the iron and mining rights reserved to the Moses Thompson estate conveying, however to the party of the second part hereto all rights of royalty etc. as appears more fully set forth in the said reservations.

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THE TENTH THEREOF: ALL that certain messuage, tenement and tract of land situate in the Township of Patton, Centre County, and State of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a post at corner of Moses Thompson heirs; thence along land of Moses Thompson heirs North 50 degrees East 150 perches to stones; thence along lands of John Biddell North 22 degrees East 50 perches to stones; thence along lands of Hale's heirs South 50½ degrees West 150 perches to White Oak; thence along lands of the said Elmer Clark South 22½ degrees East 38.3 perches to stones; thence along same North 86½ degrees West 15 perches to post; thence along same North 86½ degrees West 15 perches to the place of beginning. Containing 147 acres and 10½ acres. This property is conveyed subject to the exceptions and reservations as they may appear in the chain of title particularly the iron and mining rights reserved to the Moses Thompson estate conveying, however to the party of the second part hereto all rights of royalty etc. as appears more fully set forth in the said reservations.

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