

# Democratic Watchman

Belleville, Pa., June 24, 1932.

## THE BIG PROBLEM

Now Comes the college graduate,  
His sheepskin in his hand,  
To clarify and mitigate  
The evils that contaminate  
This worried land.

He knows the wherefore and the why

Of all the cosmic plan,  
His mind is soaring in the sky,  
Affame with notions far too high  
For mortal man.

Beneath his calm, unruffled brow  
Idyllic visions shroud,  
He dreams of noble conquests now  
But soon he will be wondering how  
To get a job.

## CLAIRE WAS A WONDERFUL GIRL

You don't have to tell me, my dear! I know every tongue in West-brook has been wagging its little wag about Claire and every one else concerned for more than a year. That's why I want to tell you the whole story. I feel that if some one would explain just how it was—well, I suppose it would be too much to hope that even people would understand, but it might stop some of the poisonous stories that have been going around.

They met at school, you know. Claire and Del. Claire was the campus queen. I mean she really was. I think nearly every man in school cherished a more or less hidden yearning to go out with her, and every girl was flattered to be seen with her. Those big, lovely eyes, that pale, blond hair, she was a knockout then, just as she is now. There were few coed cats who said she was spoiled and vain and a few other things. But they didn't know her. I did, and she was wonderful.

We were pledged at the same time. I always will think, and it used to hurt a little but I've got over it, that I just slipped into the house under cover of the luxurious fur coat Claire was wearing. I mean we went there together and the girls were so dazzled by her that I probably tagged along, absolutely unnoticed. And when they voted, some one must have said, "Lucia Franklin? Oh, she's the girl who was with Claire!" and the magic of her name carried me over.

After that, we were good friends. I'll confess I sometimes wondered what she could see in me—don't bother to remonstrate, I know I'm not beautiful and before I was married and "blossomed out," as they say, I was even homelier. But that has nothing to do with Claire except that some of the cats used to say that she went with me because it made her seem better-looking! Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous? I don't think Claire thought much about her beauty. She just accepted it.

By the time she was a junior, Claire was class secretary, a member of every all-campus dance committee, the year's hit in the annual "Vote" and had numerous offers of jeweled hardware from some of the smoothest vests along Fraternity Row.

Then she met Del Long. Until that time, she had never really gone with one man for very long. The campus sometimes said that no one dared annex her permanently, but I think it was just because there was no one good enough for her. I must say that Del was a lot smoother than most of the others. He didn't dash forward and lay heart and hardware immediately at her feet. But I'll always think it wasn't technique—just dumbness. He was awfully unsophisticated for a boy as good-looking and well liked as he was.

He was magnificent looking! Still is, people say. A wonderful profile and big, wide shoulders. Played football, of course. He had an awkward grace about him. Sounds contradictory, I know, but if you've seen some football players you know what I mean. He always looked independent, too, and as though he could tell all the world to go hang, any minute it started pushing him.

Until he met Claire, at the end of their junior year, he hadn't gone out with girls very much. He wasn't any ordinary college boy, you could see that. Maybe that explains things a little.

Claire asked Del to a house dance first. That was a good old custom of the elect. I mean the most popular girls, to ask some one with whom they'd never been out before.

It carried through the summer and next year, our senior, Claire and Del found themselves here and heroine of the school's most picturesque romance. Perhaps when you went to College, there was one big love that seemed to bathe the entire campus in a warm, rosy light. Well, you know how it was then. They were made for each other, or so one decided.

I'll admit Claire was pretty firm about some things as the year rolled along. If Del came late or forgot to telephone often enough, she put her pretty foot down hard. But then he didn't seem to mind, except sometimes at first, for she was so sweet and dear afterward when he'd said how sorry he was and done something nice to make up for it. There was just one troublesome time, I remember the day we were leaving school. Claire and I were going home together and Del had a job to finish up and was going to drive down the next week. About an hour or so before we left, Del came up. His face looked sort of funny, strained and set. And there were black circles under his eyes.

He had a funny old broken-down looking car, you know the kind. Horrible! But on the campus people didn't mind. In fact, they thought

it was wonderful because Del was driving it.

He said he had something to tell Claire and asked us to come out to the car. I backed away with excuses about packing, but he said, "You come, too, Lou."

When we were out there, he turned to Claire and said, "Sweetheart, I can't come to Westbrook for a while—a long while, maybe."

For a second, Claire looked as though some one had slapped her. Then she burst out laughing. "Darling," she said, didn't you get a wink of sleep last night? Your eyes look terrible."

He asked her if she was listening to him.

She said, "Of course, Del, but you're talking such nonsense. You know you're coming. You have to meet mother and father and we're going to have so much fun. Oh, dear, now don't get me all upset, just when I'm leaving," she said, looking so sweet and coaxing. "I wanted this to be a happy day, with us telling each other good-by and knowing we'll meet again in just seven days."

He said something like this: "Well, you see, Claire, to be frank, I haven't nearly enough money. We can't get married just yet, so the best thing for me is to work hard so we can. I've been thinking it all out the last couple of nights."

I don't know exactly what else he said, but he looked intense and serious, as though he wanted more than anything, to be understood.

Claire flared up. "Del, don't make money the excuse," she said. "If you want things to be over—"

"Oh, Claire, I don't at all." That was Del, almost frantically. You could see he didn't. He was crazy about her. As though any one wouldn't be. "But don't you see, don't you understand that I sort of owe it to myself to see what I can do now that school is over?"

"I don't see at all," Claire said. "I suppose the next thing you'll say is that you want to take that coaching and teaching job at Outlands—Outlands!" Her soft voice ridiculed the name and she leaned back her head and laughed. Claire looks marvelous when she laughs.

Del's face looked funny, sort of fierce. "That's exactly what I was going to say," he said. "You've always laughed at Outlands—but after all, it's near home and home's where mom and dad are."

She was looking straight ahead at the row of trees bordering the campus.

He went on: "You see, I want to make—aw, heck—make something of myself, all by myself—only that sounds dumb."

"I'm afraid it does," she said helpfully. But you couldn't blame her for being hurt, could you? "There's this, Del. If you really care about me, you'll come. After that, you could do whatever you wanted."

"It isn't fair to put it that way, Claire," Del said. "I could say if you loved me, you'd come to Outlands."

He winced a little as though he were afraid she would laugh again.

She looked a little mysterious instead. "No, Del, you know I couldn't do that. For many reasons. If you don't want to come, it's all right."

"You mean it would be—the end?" he asked.

"You don't seem to mind letting me go." That was Claire. "Perhaps it's better—"

"Claire, I can't let you go," Del said.

She put her hand on his arm, her head against his shoulder.

"I'll never ask anything of you again," she begged, "only come this time and after that I'll do anything you say."

Oh, he came down all right. I knew he'd keep his word and perhaps that's one reason I was so surprised when—

I must tell you about the day he came. It was funny. There he drove up the main street in that perfectly preposterous old car of his. How it made the trip, I don't know. It rambled along, rattles to the right and to the left. Claire looking like a fairy princess, and I were waiting in Claire's gorgeous big car. The chauffeur looked far more well-turned-out than Del.

But I was glad to see the tramp. There was something about him. At that time I felt, "Well, here's a real man." You see, we'd been playing around with some of Claire's friends and the young men were pretty gosh-awful. The reclining kind, tea-cup on knee. Oh, yes, frightfully good contract players. But you know, don't you?

Del looked as though he wanted to gobble Claire up in one bite. He almost pounced on her, his huge arms reaching out for her. She laughed a little breathlessly and pushed him feebly.

"Del, do be careful," she said.

"You're musing me."

He drew back at that and seemed to take in the car and everything.

"Is it a wedding or a funeral?" he asked.

"We've been luncheon," we explained. Personally, I could sympathize with the slightly alarmed look on his face. I'd lots rather go around in golf clothes than in chiffon and gardenias. But Claire loves dressing up and if I looked the way she did, I would, too.

"Hop in with me and we'll go to a hotel and get me settled," he suggested.

Wasn't that priceless? She looked like something in porcelain and if she had piled in with him in that scrapheap, you would have expected her to break. Of course, she said no, he must leave the car some place and come with us. He did, with just a suggestion of little-boy-aged-6 point, but he recovered his good spirits as we cruised along the Drive. Claire explained that he was to stay with her family.

"But Claire—" Del said and then paused and seemed to give up. I guess he had sense enough not to be disagreeable the very first time they saw each other. Most boys would have been tickled to death to find they had been invited to stay at one of the grandest places in

Westbrook. And to be right there with Claire! It was perfect.

Father Kilbourne took Del under his protecting arm from that moment. He was simply splendid to him. I saw them lurching downtown soon after. Mr. Kilbourne was leaning back cigar in hand, being a little expansive, I could tell, about the good things ahead for Del. You could almost tell by his gestures that he was saying, "My boy, our business needs fine, square young men like you!"

For a young chap in a fair way to be sitting pretty, Del was looking rather harassed. Once I heard him lift his voice and say "But Mr. Kilbourne, I want to tell you—" He was cut off firmly but politely with a wave of the cigar.

I didn't see Claire for several days, although I called her up once or twice. She was terribly busy every time.

"I'm taking Del out to the club today," she'd say. Or "Del hasn't met the Alexanders yet and mother and I are having them over."

The lucky egg! Why he was getting places and doing things that it would have taken other boys simply years to get and do. Not that the Kilbourns move in the very highest circles, but they are just as exclusive. And they're up in the heavy money, too.

Del telephoned one afternoon a week or so later and asked if he could see me. I was tickled to death, not having had a glimpse of him for several days, and told him to rush over.

He drove up in a shiny new roadster, dark green with nickel trimmings.

"Hi, fella," I said. "Struck oil?" He laughed. "I'm trying to figure out whether it's oil—or just soft soap."

We sat down on our porch. "Claire said she couldn't be seen in Bouncing Bertha, the campus chariot," he told me. "And I said I'd be eternally sizzled if I'd let a guy named Horace barge me around. Mr. Kilbourne heard us arguing and he bought me this in a nice, paper sack. I didn't want to take it, Loth, honest, I didn't. But he just there-there-my-boy'd me and—well, what could I do?"

"You shouldn't do anything. It's a grand car," I said.

"Isn't it though?" he asked me. His eyes lighted up. "A lotta fun to drive, too. But I'd like it better if I'd bought it myself."

I said he would buy plenty of things himself when he started working.

"You're thundering right I will," he agreed. "But, way Lou, this worry me, it's going to take barrels of gold to get Claire as much as she has now. I don't see how I ever had the nerve to ask her to start me poor. Why didn't some one tell me she was rich?"

I asked him if he thought those fur coats and snakeskin slippers and imported evening gowns came from the 5-and-10.

"Oh, I knew she always looked wonderful," he said, "but I never realized how much it cost. You know, she seems different down here. At school, she was a beautiful girl. Here, she's a grown woman with a whole world of her own. Aw, Lou, do you mind if I tell you how I feel about things?"

I didn't. But as it happened, he didn't tell me very much. He seemed always on the verge of making some explosive declaration and then he'd tighten his lips and look out at the green car. He talked around and around things but never reached a point. I thought what a fortunate man he was to have a girl like Claire, a chance to work for Mr. Kilbourne at what I imagined would be good money and—well, all the things most people work ten or twenty years for. But he didn't look very happy.

He said things like this: "You know, I really didn't plan to get married so soon. But Claire thinks—"

And: "Damn it, Lou, who do you think ought to be boss of a family? Or should there be a boss?"

And, finally: "Oh, Claire is so wonderful, Lou. And beautiful! Did you ever know a woman so beautiful?"

Rather ridiculous things, you know. Not making any sense. I told him I thought I understood, although I didn't altogether, but he liked that.

"I believe you do," he said and looked at me a long time. "You're swell, you know," he said. "Just—"

"You're swell," even after saying how beautiful and wonderful Claire was, I don't think I was ever jealous of Claire when people raved about her. She was born to have men mad about her and I wasn't. Some of us are like that and the quicker we find it out the better.

Del went on talking after a while. He told me he'd been looking for a job and hadn't found anything that offered even one-third the salary that Mr. Kilbourne's did. And he'd almost decided to go back to Outlands, only that he couldn't bear to disappoint Claire.

"You really love Claire," I said seriously.

He frowned instead of agreeing as promptly as I expected.

"Yes, I think I do," he said. "I'm crazy about her. I think she's the most fascinating, lovely creature in the world. And sometimes I'd like to break her neck."

I knew what, as a friend of Claire's, I wanted to say. I said it. "Do you want my best advice? Just figure out to yourself that Claire is worth anything in the world and that all this preliminary fuss is something that has to be put up with. And figure out also that this job will make money and money's what you need."

"In other words," he broke in, "do exactly what Claire wants me to do and keep on doing it the rest of my life!"

He left. And I hadn't mentioned that Claire had telephoned me earli-

er in the day, telling me the wedding day was set.

The announcement of the date was in the papers a few days later. I think Claire probably decided the best way for them both was to get everything over as soon as possible, so they could settle down by themselves and be happy. I know she was thinking of Del just as much as herself.

There was a gorgeous picture of Claire with the story, a full-length view of her standing by a window hung in black velvet. She wore a white satin evening gown and looked like an angel. The story had quite a lot in it about the charming and popular Miss Kilbourne and all the things she'd done in town and on the campus. At the foot of the column it was mentioned that Mr. Delbert James Long had also attended the university.

Of course, for the next two or three weeks every one in town was giving Claire a whirl. There were tea parties and bridge luncheons and evening functions. And she seemed to live on it; to look more and more radiant all the time, instead of a little bored or fatigued, as you might have expected. And Del, though I saw him less often, as so many of the parties were the all-women kind, looked more and more strange. I couldn't understand him and it worried me.

I had been so fond of Del and now he seemed to be like a different man. He wore a set, humorless smile when he was at a dinner or a dance, and when I saw him on the street he looked dazed and queer. His eyes were bloodshot most of the time. I thought if he were taking to drinking heavy, Claire ought to be told, and yet I didn't want to meddle.

As yet he hadn't gone to work for Mr. Kilbourne. I asked Claire about it and she confided to me that he was drawing a salary, but that she and her father thought it better for him to wait until after their honeymoon before actually keeping office hours. It relieved me about his drawing a salary. He probably didn't feel dependent any more.

Four days before the wedding Claire had a Trousseau party just for her most intimate friends. There were eight or ten of us, with her mother fluttering in the background.

Her things were simply gorgeous. She had about twenty-five pajama sets, including some mandarin outfit and a black velvet arrangement that simply wilted you, it was so divine. And lounging robes. And piles of the most beautiful handkerchiefs you ever saw!

Del came. He looked a little strange, but he was pleasant enough, and said "Hello," to every one, and even let himself be teased by some of the more coy guests. Everyone but Claire and Del and me went out and I turned to tell Claire good night. Del had gone over to her.

"Did you telephone that woman today and tell her we wouldn't take the house?" he asked. "She says you did."

"Yes, I did," she said sweetly, lifting her long-fringed eyes to his. "You see, darling, I couldn't live in that place—sweet as it is. The flowers are lovely and those old trees. But it's too far from where things are doing. So, after I thought it over, I knew you wouldn't mind. I called the other place where that divine big apartment is and they said we could have it if we decided today. So I rushed down and made a deposit."

"Oh, Del, I'm sorry if I've been too impulsive. But I like it so much. There's everything there and it's near the club and a lot of the girls. That other house, well, it wasn't really modern, you know. A breakfast nook instead of a room. And an upstairs. And it's miles from a soul, I know."

"I suppose the fact that I would be there wouldn't make it any more attractive," Del said that.

"But, darling, you wouldn't be there during the day," Claire said.

"And the fact that the apartment is just twice as much didn't make any difference, either?" he asked in a queer voice.

Claire said she was tired, and please, not to scold her, she'd had such a lovely evening. "Let's talk things over later," she said.

"You've been saying that to me for three months, Claire," he said. "And I think the sometime later had better be right now. You agreed with me, or at least you let me think you did, that we were to have a small wedding. And I understand now you're having eight bridesmaids. Eight! And a lot of fuss before and after. I would have let that go. The wedding is the girl's business. I'm only the man that's getting married. But after the wedding, where we're to live and what we're to do—well, that's at least half mine!"

Claire looked nervously around to see if her mother was in the office, and then she turned to me. I suppose it was terrible of me, but somehow I just couldn't leave, and I had the feeling they didn't want me to; that they didn't want to be alone together, even then.

"Don't make a scene in front of Lucia, please, Del," Claire said. "Let's don't quarrel. You're just tired."

There had been rumblings before, but this was the first time he really blew up.

"Damn it, I'm not tired!" He simply roared at her. "Am I a man or am I a paper doll you've cut out of a magazine?" Lucia must know all about it or she's blind! I'm going to settle things right now. I'm going to have something to say about what we do."

Claire looked at me appealingly and I rushed to her. I couldn't imagine a man turning such a brute all of a sudden.

"Del, for heaven's sake, let her alone," I begged him. "I don't know what's come over you the last few weeks. Claire has been so wonderfully happy and you seem like a different man. This ought to be the most thrilling time of a girl's life."

"Oh, my God!" cried Del, and

rushed toward the door. He turned for a moment as his mouth was twisted. "Claire," he said, and you could tell he was trying to keep calm, "will you consider taking the house and letting the apartment go if I promise to try very, very hard to do everything I can to make you happy there?"

"Oh, Del," she said, tears in her eyes, "don't ask me to, Del. Let's take the apartment and then I'll do anything you want me to."

He went out.

Claire sobbed for a little while, leaning against me. And then she looked up with a shaky half smile. "He'll come back," she said. "I know he will—"

I said good night and left. Outside the house I saw the dark-green roadster run into the driveway. I tiptoed over and peeped my head inside, but it was empty. I thought perhaps he had gone to his room at the Kilbourns' by the side entrance, but there was no light in his window. I got in my own little car and drove toward home.

"Claire has the most marvelous self-control," I told myself. "If any one had roared and shouted at you that way, Lucia Franklin, you would have started throwing things. Oh, I do hope they'll be happy."

Just then I saw a little way down the boulevard a big, hulking figure striding along, shoulders hunched over, the pale night lights shining on his hatless head.

It was Del. I drove slowly, wanting to stop, and yet feeling that perhaps he would rather be alone. I didn't know what I could have said to him, either.

That night I didn't sleep very well. I tried to think about Claire and how sorry I was for her, having to marry a man that could turn in to such a tyrant for so little a reason. But I thought about Del instead.

Well, of course, you know the rest. Only perhaps you didn't know that I saw him early the next morning. I think I must have been hoping that I might because I went downtown before 9 and drove around the streets in an absurd way. Finally I remembered my appointment with the dressmaker and parked the car. Just as I was getting out, I saw Del bumping along in Bouncing Bertha, that horrible old car of his. He looked wilder than ever, one elbow slouched over the sagging door, his dark hair standing on end. He hadn't shaved and his clothes looked as though he'd slept in them. When he saw me he stopped his car alongside mine.

"Hello," I said, trusting he was over his bad humor.

"Goodby," he said. "You might tell Claire you saw me, though I wrote her a note. I wanted to tell her good-by but I was afraid if I saw her, she'd cry, and then I would have weakened again. You remember I said not long ago that she was worth anything in the world? Well, I found out she wasn't. There are some things—"

He looked at me a long moment or so, as though he wanted to say something else, but he just said: "So long, Lou," and stepped on the starter. The car, with a sigh and a jerk and a quiver, rolled forward, picking up speed as it moved down the street. I stood on the curb, gazing after him, simply numb.

What surprised me most of all was the look I'd seen on Del's face. He was radiant. There were dark circles under his eyes and he looked as though he hadn't eaten or slept for weeks, but—well, he looked like a man that has just escaped death and found out how wonderful it is to be alive. He looked gloriously happy; as though he wanted to yell and sing!

Claire was wonderful about it. She cried in my arms a little, but she was awfully brave. My heart ached for her. And now, she's married, I hear. I don't know much about the man except that he was lucky to get such a wonderful girl.

That's all, really. Claire was right about one detail, wasn't she? Del did come back, only it was nearly a year later.

Oh, my dear, you mustn't leave so soon. You don't know how grand it is to have some one from Westbrook here in Outlands. Besides, Del will be home in just a few minutes and I know he'll want to see you.—By Mary Stanley.

## WORRY—THE DRIVER'S BANE

Mental lapses are a far more important cause of automobile accidents than is commonly believed. While the reports of accidents may give physical causes, such as reckless driving, wrong side of the road, cutting in, etc., those may only be symptoms of a disturbed mental state, asserts Dr. H. J. Stack of the National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters, who says:

"Extreme hurry or worry causing intense preoccupation, fatigue, elation or excitement, or slowed down reaction as a result of the indulgence in alcohol or other narcotics may be behind an accident. Many of these mental conditions are within our control." He suggests the following precautions as preventative measures:

1. Take a short rest or let someone else drive the car when you have been driving for a long period at night.

2. Be especially alert when hurrying to work so that you can keep your mind on your driving.

3. The best place for the confirmed back-seat driver is at home.

4. Don't day dream driving in a car or crossing the street. If the traffic cop calls you down, probably you deserve it.

5. If you have a superiority complex, forget it when you get behind the wheel.

6. Don't become a speed maniac. This mental disorder is serious and contagious. A serious accident seems to be the only cure for its victims.

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## FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

### DAILY THOUGHT

Lord let me see the hidden beauty  
In the commonplace;  
And let me catch the melody  
Above the day's turmoil;  
Give me a vision of the love  
Behind the sin-scarred face,  
And let me know the blessedness  
Of dull, soul-testing toil.

Paris.—The small town woman who wants to be smart will spell her summer chic with color.

Scores of gay little frocks, scarfs, jackets and caps have been produced by designers to brighten suburban wardrobes.

Polka-dotted silks, smart flowered prints, stripes and plaids are used for both costumes and accessories for the woman who lives outside the urban crush.

A simple dark wool coat should be the basis of her wardrobe, designers say, since with one frock it is suitable for more occasions than a tailored suit.

It may be navy blue, brown, dark gray or black, but the frock which goes with it should be gay.

"Prints" is Paris' favorite advice for an all around Main St. frock. A dark blue foulard spattered with jagged dots of crimson, green and beige may be worn with a dark blue coat, a red chip straw hat and a red bag, and a brown and green shawl plaid frock may accompany a plain brown coat.

Many of these little print frocks have elbow length sleeves so that they are ready for wear at both bridges and teas.

Little frocks and suits of washable silk such as shantung