



THE OLD MAN OF THE BIG CLOCK TOWER

THE OLD AUCTIONEER

This touching record from rural life was recently broadcast from a Buffalo station and brought many responses from Ontario. The author, James K. Westover, now a resident of Buffalo, lived in Ontario as a child, and the inspiration for the poem came from an auction held in an Elgin County village.

He is standing there now on his box
In the yard where I played long ago,
And each gesture and every unspoken
For each chair, bed or trinket I know,
They were here in my babyhood days;
In my youth's early years they were
Here—

Now they're held up to neighboring gaze
In the hand of the old auctioneer.
For the decades have flown as on wings,
And it seems but a fortnight or two
Since I first knew and revered these
Things—

Which are now being held up to view,
They've removed the old clock from the
wall,
And the picture of old Uncle Nat,
Taken down the deer horns from the
hall,
And they're selling the hooked rug
and mat.

The big corner cupboard is sold,
While the dishes that once were its
bride
Are spread out on the table my old
Granddad gave to his wife as a bride.
The hair comb on which father reclined,
—And his chair that I'll always revere—
Are to-day torn from memory's mind
By the hand of the old auctioneer.

There's the "whatnot" whose treasures
untold
Captured fancy and whim through the
years—
How the sight of them now does unfold
And reduce those sad fancies to tears.
Do the neighbors here gathered around,
With their ears strained to catch every
bid,
Know the heartache so deep and profound
In the breast of this man-grown kid?

Can they see in my face the concern
That employs my long men's to-day?
Can they know how a poor heart will
yearn
To retrace every step of the way?
I wonder if they understand
Why those chairs to me are so dear,
As they follow intently the hand
And the tongue of that old auctioneer.

He is offering for sale not the goods
Nor the things you so eagerly scan,
But he offers the heart and the mood
Of a lad who is grown to a man.
So the bidding goes merrily on,
Mingling triumph with tenderest tear,
You are buying the days that are gone
At the nod of the old auctioneer.

—James K. Westover

OUR OLD AUCTIONEERS
The descriptive touches of Mr. Westover's rather pathetic poem appeals to many of us who have through the years attended auction sales in our own community. Our own old auctioneers, and those of us who have seen or heard them, at the various dispersion sales of the district, have experienced just such feelings as the poet describes.

It is certainly no discredit that the number of auctioneers who have handled the hammer in this vicinity during the past sixty-five years, has not been more than can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Our people have very generally settled down in the community to stay, and there have been rather few calls upon the auctioneer to dispose of late wares or possessions. True, of numbers of farmers to sell their surplus stock by auction, but this is much different to the scenes enacted when the home is denuded of its treasures and penates, which have been accumulated during the family life of half a century or more.

Over sixty years ago George Gibbs, who lived in Acton during his early married life, decided to hang out his stinging as an auctioneer. George married one of the Wilson girls. He lived in the house on Church Street, where Roland Elliott and his family now reside. He was quite a chicken fancier, and like some of our present citizens, failed to

keep his hens and roosters penned, but allowed them to roam at large over neighbors' gardens, to the owners' great annoyance. Edward Moore lived across the street from the Gibbs'. One day Mr. Moore came home at noon from his shingle and stove mill and found Gibbs' flock scratching vigorously in his garden patch of vegetables and flowers. He was greatly enraged and aimed a stone with considerable force at the flock of manured-ers. Unfortunately his aim was unerring and effective, and George Gibbs' favorite rooster was killed as dead as a door nail. Needless to say, Mr. Moore was greatly chagrined at this result. Like the honest man he was, he conceived it to be his duty to go over to his neighbor and apologize for what had occurred, and offer to pay for the damage done. With characteristic good nature George met him smiling, and replied to his neighbor's apologies with: "Now, Edward, never you mind about the rooster. I'd have done the very same as you did, if the tables had been turned. I'll try to keep the pecky hens at home after this."

Mr. Gibbs kept hotel, as well as conducting auction sales, for some time. He was a popular and successful auctioneer. He always had a joke or witty saying or story, more or less relevant. Like many others forty years ago or so, he became enamored of the great new west, and went out there for a few years. What experiences he had out there I do not know. He went out quite a friend of the liquor prohibitionist, but he came back an avowed prohibitionist, and proscribed it vigorously everywhere. He settled in Georgetown and determined to demonstrate there that an hotel business could be successfully conducted without a bar-room. Notwithstanding that the town had already the Clark House, the Bennett House, the Thompson House, Harry Spiera's place and the Royal Exchange out at the O. T. R. station, George built a sixth on Main Street, above the White bridge, and opened the new hotel with great expectations. George did very well for a time while the novelty of the situation lasted, but it soon became manifest that the new hotel was too remote from the business section, and the Gibbs Hotel eventually developed into a boarding house.

George Gibbs lived to a good old age and died with a well-earned reputation as a successful auctioneer and an avowed prohibitionist.

W. W. Roe, Georgetown, was an auctioneer, contemporaneous with George Gibbs. He was of a different type, quiet, sedate and businesslike. He, too, was a success, and the name W. W. Roe, auctioneer, at the tail-end of a sale bill, signified success for the man who was announcing the sale. Mr. Roe lived and died in Georgetown, an esteemed citizen.

In the year 1877 William Hemstreet, of Rockwood, engaged in the auctioneering business. He later returned to Acton, where he lived when first married, and was a very much loved auctioneer for many years. He held a few small sales first about Rockwood, but his first big farm sale was held for the late John Allan, Sr., the grandfather of James Symon, hardware merchant, Acton, in 1878. It was a glorious fall day, and the countryside attended. The sale went with a swing from the outset and was a great success. I remember to this day the bidding. It was fast and brought high prices. My father and I were there as spectators, and we felt that Auctioneer Hemstreet's success was assured as a result of this sale. The future proved this, and Hemstreet had no difficulty thereafter in booking all the sales he could attend to.

This went on for many years, and hundreds of farmers still remember the success of their sales conducted by Wm. Hemstreet. The old gentleman entered into rest in Acton in April, 1916, at the ripe age of ninety years.

The later auctioneers of the vicinity have also been fine men of upright character and good ability.

Ben Petch, of Glen Williams, was an auctioneer of wide reputation and conducted many sales. A successful farmer, he knew stock and farm equipment perfectly and was in demand over a wide area. His sudden death a year or so ago, when in his prime, was greatly regretted. He was an active worker in Union Presbyterian Church, and took a keen interest in municipal and community affairs.

The enterprising and successful auctioneer of the community, covering a zone of twenty miles and more from Acton as a centre, has been Robert J. Kerr. For twenty years he has given the best that is in him to his chosen profession, and with marked success. His fund of sales' stories and witty sayings full equals the vocabulary of the venerable George Gibbs. Of course, if you attend a series of his sales you will probably hear his favorite yarns recounted at each of them. The zenith of Bob Kerr's ambition was reached when he was chosen an auctioneer at the O. A. C. and Winter Fair sales, Quilich. Year after year he is now retained for this service.

Mr. Kerr finds time for citizenship duties outside his regular employment. He is Chairman of Acton's Public Utilities Commission, and is one of the chief moving spirits of Acton Fall Fair, in the capacity of manager.

A younger but successful and popular auctioneer of the community is Roy Hindley, of Springfield. He, too, is an esteemed farmer and takes his share of moral and community responsibilities. His list of sales engagements is growing from year to year. I think Mr. Hindley is also one of the auctioneers engaged at the Winter Fair.

"See the bidding goes merrily on,
Mingling triumph with tenderest tear,
You are buying the days that are gone,
At the nod of the old auctioneer."

The Old Man

MOTHER KNOWS
Nobody knows of the work it takes
To keep the home together.
Nobody knows of the steps it takes—
Nobody knows but mother.

Nobody knows to childhood woes,
Which kisses only another,
Nobody's pained by the mighty blow—
Nobody only mother.

Nobody knows of the sleepless care
Bestowed on baby brother,
Nobody knows of the tender prayer—
Nobody knows but mother.

Nobody knows of the lessons taught,
Of loving one another,
Nobody knows of the patience sought,
Nobody only mother.

Nobody knows of the anxious fears
That delight may not weather
Storms of this life in the coming years,
Nobody knows but mother.

Nobody clings to the wayward child,
The' scorned by every other,
Leads it so gently from pathways wild—
Nobody can but mother.

Nobody knows of the hourly prayer
For him, our erring brother,
Pride of her heart, once so pure and
Nobly only mother.

NO HARD FEELINGS
Lady—"Have you ever been offered
work?"
Tramp—"Only once, madam. Aside
from that, I've met with nothing but
kindness."

A Prime Dressing for Wounds.—In
some factories and workshops carbolic
acid is kept for use in cauterizing wounds
and cuts sustained by the workmen. Far
better to keep on hand a bottle of Dr.
Thomas' Electric Oil. It is just as
quick in action and does not scar the
skin or burn the flesh.

ALL EXPLAINED
"Hear about Jimmie being in the 'hoose-
pital?"
"In the hospital? Why, I saw him last
night dancing with a dizzy blonde."
"Yeah! He did his wife."

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Hardwood frames, fitted with closely woven Black Screen
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PEELING HAVE YOUR
EYES EXAMINED**

The approach of spring is often
blamed for business caused by eye
strain. If you have an indisposi-
tion to buckle down to your work,
it may be the spring-time or it
may be just laziness; but the
chances are that your eyes are not
working properly.

The energy consumed by over-
coming eye-strain is sometimes ap-
palling. If you find it difficult to
work, have your eyes examined
right away.

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The Public Health

**CITIZENS ARE REQUESTED TO
COMPLY WITH THE PUBLIC
HEALTH ACT**

Notice is hereby given that all residents
of Acton are required forthwith to clean
their cellars, drains, yards, pig sties,
water closets, outbuildings and other
premises, and remove therefrom all dirt,
manure, and other substances which may
endanger the public health, and to have
the same cleaned by the ninth day
of May next, on which day the Sanitary
Inspector will commence a general
inspection; and further take notice that
the section of the Public Health Act pro-
hibiting the keeping of hogs between
the 15th of May and the 15th of Novem-
ber, except in pens at least 10 feet from
any dwelling house, and 50 feet from
any street or lane, with floor kept clear
from all standing water and regularly
cleaned, will be strictly enforced.

All citizens are earnestly requested to
keep their premises constantly clear and
thoroughly disinfected.

AMOS MASON,
Reeve of the Municipality,
Acton, April 16, 1931.