

OLD LIGHTY

By Mary Clark Jacobs in St. Anthony Messenger

On the edge of the thriving little town of Ashton, where railroad tracks were numerous, crossing and intersecting in a fashion bewildering to the uninitiated, Old Lighty with his lantern was a familiar figure. His keen, ever-alert eyes that missed nothing during his hours as duty as watchman were young in spite of the three score and ten years that had bent his shoulders and lined his face. Time was when Old Lighty held a far more remunerative and satisfying position. Then he was known by his rightful name, Tom McGrath, and perhaps he occasionally indulged in dreams of the time when his huge, powerful hand held the throttle and sent the mighty engine over the miles of steel rails. But dreams of the pleasant past did not affect his ability as a watchman in the present. Sickness and the grim specter, Death, had taken from him his wife and family as well as the position of engineer, and now as an old, lonely man he guarded the tracks, his lantern ever gleaming its message of warning to motorist and pedestrian.

In the years that Old Lighty guarded the crossing he came to know well the people whose lives were in his keeping. Some he grew to like, and for those he had a smile of welcome as far-reaching as the beams of his lantern; but there were others whom he distrusted, and for them his duty did not relax though the smile was absent from his lips.

The Priests and Brothers from the Seminary on the hillside less than half a mile from the tracks were his particular care as they crossed frequently on their way to the town for supplies. For them Old Lighty ever had a word of greeting as the closed black wagon passed in answer to his signal:

"How was the new building coming on? Surely 'twas a shame they could only complete the main hall now and that the east wing must wait until more funds were available. Ah, well, God was ever good to his children and better times are coming."

Thus he sent them on their way with a word of hope, a smile of encouragement, but when Horace Farning drew near in his high-powered, costly auto, Old Lighty's grim lips closed over set teeth and he swung the lantern with a quick jerk that hinted at deep, suppressed feeling. Horace Farning's magnificent residence was close to the Seminary and his enmity to the Fathers who conducted it was not concealed.

As Old Lighty paced back and forth on this cool May morning his face wore a puzzled frown and often he glanced toward the hill where he could see the walls of the new Seminary rearing promisingly skyward. Why had the work of construction ceased? Why were no workmen clambering over the stone walls this morning? The puzzled frown gave way to a smile of welcome as he sighted the closed black wagon approaching. Now he would learn the cause of the delay.

A shrill whistle and a curl of smoke in the distance announced the coming of No. 5, so the old man flashed his warning, and when the driver drew rein he hastened forward.

"Good morning, Brother John," he greeted him. "'Tis glad I am to see you now. I been wondering and worrying about you all this morning. What is the matter at the new building? Why has the work ceased? Sure, if fine, sunny days like this are wasted, the good young men who are preparing to give their lives in the service of God won't be in the new Seminary by the time the snow falls."

"Mr. Farning has stopped the work," Brother John explained. "We can't understand just how or why he has done it. However, the Reverend Father has sent for legal assistance and we will soon know just what Mr. Farning's interference means."

"Horace Farning has made no secret of his objections to the Seminary. Strange he can not abide in peace close to good and holy men. I can't understand why he should wait until the building is ready to put under roof before he makes trouble."

Brother John shook his head. "He claims to have just discovered that the southwest corner of the building encroaches on his ground several inches. We believe that he can give us but temporary embarrassment. The Father Superior is having the deeds examined today."

Old Lighty sighed. He was not so optimistic. "Horace Farning has money. He can buy the best of legal assistance. Also, he is unscrupulous and determined to make trouble for you."

A rare smile lighted Brother John's face. "Yes, Mr. McGrath, I fear Mr. Farning is all that you say, but we, too, have assistance, such assistance as Mr. Farning with all his wealth cannot buy."

"You are right, Brother John, and 'tis little fear you need have of that man. You need not let him or his counsel worry you. God will answer your prayers and those of the fine young men who are preparing for the Priesthood with help from above—such help as Horace Farning can not purchase."

"Yes, Mr. McGrath, God has blessed our work in the past. We feel confident of His continued help and guidance. The young seminarians started a Novena this morning and we are going on serenely with our daily work, confident that God will heed and answer their prayers."

After No. 6 thundered by, Old Lighty stepped back and the wagon crossed the tracks, and only then did he recognize the occupant of a car that had paused quite close to Brother John's wagon. One glance at the sarcastic smile on Horace Farning's face told the old man that at least part of the conversation had been overheard.

"Hey, Old Lighty, you seem very interested in the Seminary on the hillside. Well, perhaps you will be surprised to know that it will never be completed. Mr. Farning seemed to be in no hurry that morning."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Farning, it will be completed, and very soon, I trust. If the men hadn't stopped work this morning, another week would have seen it under roof."

"If? Ha-ha-ha! But, my good man, the workmen did stop this morning and they won't start again. Take that from me, I know."

"Oh, yes, sir, they will start again—some time." He motioned the unwelcome one forward, but the man did not take the hint. "What makes you think so? Are you, too, counting on that Help which the Brother says I, with all my money, cannot buy?"

"I am, indeed!" The man burst into sarcastic laughter. "Old Lighty, I'll make a bet with you."

"I'm not a betting man," the old man interrupted coldly.

"Huh? Afraid? Well, it is quite evident that you have not much confidence in that great Help the Brother boasted of."

The old man's eyes flashed angrily. "What sort of a wager do you wish to make, Mr. Farning? I am not eager to discuss the Seminary with one who has no sympathy with their great work."

"I say that in spite of any help they can get that Seminary will not be under roof this year."

"I'll take you up on that," the old man snapped. "What do you put up?"

"My residence on the hill," he laughed. "See how sure I am of my ground? If that Seminary is under roof this year, you get my house."

"Exactly!" Old Lighty's keen eyes traveled down the track and he motioned a young man, in oil-smeared cap and overalls, to come forward.

"Jimmie, lad, I've just made a bet with Mr. Farning, though I don't approve of betting, as you well know. I want you to draw up the terms of it. Jimmie, to Mr. Farning, 'worked in the yards here while he studied law, and he can fix this little affair for us.'"

"Oh, we don't need a lawyer," Mr. Farning protested. "Old Lighty and I were having a little joke. I bet him my residence that the Seminary wouldn't be under roof this year."

"Ah! What do you offer, Tom?" the young man asked.

"Well, that wasn't mentioned. I haven't much to give away, but if I lose—if Horace Farning wins his wager—I'll work the rest of my days in his employ without pay."

"Old Lighty, you're a queer one!" Horace Farning spoke pityingly to the old fellow. "You are promising to give me the rest of your days."

"If you win!" the old man snapped. "I shall win. I can't lose. Why, poor, foolish old man, don't you know that I'd be sure of myself before I'd have the work stopped on the Seminary?"

"Jimmie will have the paper ready for your signature on your return," calmly.

"Old Lighty, you're a fool!"

"Maybe so—and then maybe not!"

Horace Farning's foot touched the accelerator and the car shot ahead. The man's grin changed to a frown. Why had he wasted words with the old fellow? But was sure that he would wager away his last few days on it! Hum! Just what help could it be that they were coming on?

That afternoon as Mr. Farning was returning to his home, Old Lighty halted him. Jim had drawn up the wager in a very legal-looking document and with a grin of sardonic humor the man attached his name with a flourish to the bottom of it. Beneath Tom McGrath scratched a slow but legible scrawl.

Here, Jimmie, you're both attorney and witness, just take care of this paper. Old Lighty thrust the document into the young man's hand and turned his back on Horace Farning.

Months passed and there was no renewal of work upon the Seminary. The case was in the courts and it looked like much of the money in the building fund must go for litigation. If Old Lighty was worried, he gave no hint of it. After the day of the wager he ignored Horace Farning and his kindness to the Brothers increased.

One day after serving his long hours as watchman he trudged slowly along the country road towards the Seminary. He was not thinking of Horace Farning and the wager he had made with him. It was November, the month of the

Poor Souls in Purgatory, and he was remembering them, and their great need as his well-worn beads slipped through stiff fingers. He turned off the road towards the old building, beside the new, uncompleted structure. Brother Jim met him with a smile of welcome.

"Go into the Chapel," he whispered. "The Scholastics are at prayer. They have redoubled their petitions for help in our great hour of need."

"God will hear their prayers," the old man answered.

"His holy Will be done," was the reply. Just how long Old Lighty remained in the Sacred Presence, the students had departed and the daylight was waning when he came slowly down the steps and started homeward.

Deep in thought, with bent head, he did not heed his surroundings until the honk of a car made him awake from his reverie. At the same minute his eye caught the speeding car, he saw a little white dress flutter in the road.

Lighty was old, stiff and timeworn, with no heroic, blood of agile youth pulsing through his veins to urge his lagging footsteps; but it was the heart of him, so big with love for children, so ready to sacrifice all, even life for the sake of a child, that spurred him into the very front of the oncoming machine—the great, child-loving, child-hungry heart of him that made him grasp the baby, hurl her safely into a soft, grassy spot by the roadside, ere he dropped beneath the impact of the heavy auto.

When Old Lighty opened his eyes, he was stretched on a cot in the Seminary, his bruised, broken body pain-racked. A Brother held a glass of water to his parched lips. He sipped it slowly, then gasped:

"Is she hurt?" "You are badly injured. The doctor will soon be here." A sob reached his ears and he glanced wonderingly at the tall form at his feet. It was Horace Farning and in his arms was a baby in a white dress. The child! Ah, yes, he remembered it all!

"The little angel!" he gasped. "Is she hurt?" "The man swallowed that, as though a lump in his throat prevented speech." Old Lighty, who risked your life to save my grandson. How can I ever repay you?"

The old man's eyes went past him, through the open window to the new Seminary that was unfinished because this man had delayed its completion. Then a smile played around his lips for a minute ere he closed his eyes wearily as though he had forgotten Horace Farning's presence. But the man was not to be ignored.

"Old Lighty, I'll make no more trouble for the Reverend Father. I'll settle matters so that work may be started on the Seminary at once. Will that suit you?" But the old man had drifted into unconsciousness.

Weeks passed while Old Lighty hovered very close to the portals of death, yet seeming to hesitate ere he entered eternal rest. On Christmas morning he raised weary eyelids and looking through the window his tired eyes noted the roof of the new building just completed. Horace Farning entered at that minute.

"Old Lighty, thank God, you've lived to see that building. I didn't want you to die without knowing that I've seen the evil of my ways. I've repented. The Reverend Father need fear no more interference from me."

"The new Seminary is under roof?" he asked with difficulty.

"Yes, yes," the man answered eagerly. "And the year is not completed? What day is this?"

"Christmas Day, the twenty-fifth of December."

"Christmas! Ah, the dear Babe in Bethlehem has been good to an old man on His blessed feast." His voice faltered with emotion. "Send Jimmie to me. 'Tis high time I made my will."

"Your will?" Brother John soothed him, thinking his mind wandering. "You have little earthly possessions, Mr. McGrath."

"Some time ago I bet a man that the Seminary would be completed before the end of the year. It is under roof. I've won that bet."

"You've won, Old Lighty. You've won!" Horace Farning agreed. "My residence is yours!"

"Well, Horace Farning, I'd hold you to that—only the Reverend Father wouldn't have it that way."

"Oh, no, Mr. McGrath, 'twas foolish to make such a wager."

"It was safe—for me!" the old man insisted. "Safe!"

"Tell me," Horace Farning bent over him, "how could you be so sure, so very sure, that building would be under roof this year?"

With an effort the old man opened his eyes and tried to answer.

"Because—because in all the seventy years—of my life—I've never asked anything—anything of God—through the prayers of Seminarians—and been refused. Never! The young men—soon to offer their lives in service—on God's Altar—were praying with me!"

The old rare smile lit up his face and his eyelids fluttered and closed. In sleep, they who prayed thought, but it was that last sleep that knows no awakening this side of Heaven.

In the east wing of the Seminary is a beautiful Chapel erected and furnished by Horace Farning in memory of and gratitude to one whose faith never faltered, Old Lighty, who died that Christmas morn.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE COUNCIL

AIMS, PURPOSES AND RESULTS EXPLAINED BY ARCHBISHOP CURLEY

"Opposition to the Catholic Church is opposition to a church that never has existed and that never could exist under the name Catholic. It has grown out of ignorance of matters of faith," declared the Most Rev. Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore, who spoke on the work of the National Catholic Welfare Council, and who devoted considerable attention to the wave of hostility to the Church now evidenced in America.

The occasion was the first reception given His Grace by the Washington District Council of the National Council of Catholic men and the prelate took occasion to re-views of a situation which made necessary the formation of the Welfare Council and to emphasize its substantial achievements in the few years of its existence.

Admiral William S. Benson, national president of the National Council of Catholic Men, addressed the meeting, which was presided over by Thomas J. Donovan, president of the District Council. In his opening remarks, Archbishop Curley paid his respects to Admiral Benson and spoke of the high regard in which he held him.

"As you know, the Admiral was not born of the faith," he said. "He came up to us from the far away State of Georgia. That is his native State."

"I have lived near Georgia for seventeen years and the laymen of Georgia, with a diocese of twenty thousand people or so, the laymen and women of Georgia have done more for their laymen's organization than the laity of New York, Baltimore and Boston combined. I am talking, as you understand, from the standpoint of proportion in numbers. I came up from the State of Georgia last week, and I know what they have done in eradicating prejudice. They have set an example for every other diocese in the country. Georgians are honest. The American public, my friends, the great mass of our population, of our one hundred million people, is honest. They may be opposed to us, they may be prejudiced, but as Americans I like to believe, and I think I am right, that their opposition is not a vicious opposition. It is an opposition that has grown out of ignorance regarding the matters of faith. Their opposition is to a church that never existed and never could exist under the name Catholic, and if you and I were raised in the surroundings in which many of our enemies of the faith have been raised we might be much worse enemies of the Catholic Church. There is great work, therefore, to be done by the priests and people in America who have received the gift of faith. That is to place it before the public, to place it before Americans who are anxious to know. There is a groping after the supernatural. There is no man who does not realize that his heart's desires can never be filled by the things of earth."

REASONS FOR WELFARE COUNCIL

"Now I think it would be a good thing to place before you briefly the story of the Bishops' meeting and the works which the Bishops undertook. In 1918 (the golden jubilee of the Ecclesiastical Head of the Hierarchy of America) came together to do honor to their Chief. In planning that event, a feeling was aroused among them that the time had come when all should get together and endeavor by organized methods to bring our people more closely together and to organize for the purpose of handling in a national way what were for us national problems. There were problems that had to be handled in a national way if we were to perform our duty to our country. There was work that we had to perform if we were to do our duty to our God and to the sacred trust given to our care. Individual Bishops realized that they could not do that work with no point of contact with their brothers in the episcopate. Up to that time I belonged to this province of Baltimore, of which the head was the Cardinal of Baltimore. During those five years, up to our first coming together, we, the Bishops of this province, never met together. I had never in my life seen more than a dozen or a dozen of the Bishops of America, and I remember very distinctly in far away Florida how lonesome I was. Not for Washington, or Baltimore, but lonesome because I felt that I had not that backing that would come to me from a union with my brothers in the Hierarchy. And I felt that loneliness not only for myself, but for my people. They were alone and isolated, too, and the feeling I had might be expressed in this way—'who cares about us?'"

"Now I remember that in Florida we passed through four years of frightful regime. Some of you heard of it. The very day after my consecration I had to begin a fight for the right to bless myself—a fight for myself and for my people. I want to remind you, my dear

friends in Washington, that Florida is in the United States, and that the Stars and Stripes, our glorious flag, floats over it. But, in spite of that, we were attacked on the basis of our faith, not for any other reason. They arrested sisters for teaching little colored children in the city of St. Augustine. They deprived our Catholic men and women of their positions because of their religion. They elected a Governor on this platform: 'I will make all priests marry. I will abolish confession, I will have State troops open up convents, and I will never let the Pope live in Palm Beach.'

"We had no practical sympathy from our fellow-Catholics of America. When our sisters were arrested for teaching colored children in the schools, we tested the law from the standpoint of its constitutionality. Of course one of the sisters had to be arrested—technically. The judge designated the convent a jail and made the vicar general of the diocese a sheriff. And after a long fight and one that cost a great deal of money, the law was declared unconstitutional. When the fight was won, Catholics from all over the United States wired us congratulations. There were 'whereases' and 'whereases' and resolutions and resolutions. But financial assistance, money to help us for what that fight had cost us? Yes, I think I received \$1—from Alabama."

"The Bishops, therefore, as I said, thought that it was time for them to have an annual meeting, to come together so that they might take advice one with the other upon the great questions of the hour. Many questions remained after the War: questions of reconstruction, and questions in which the Church was forced to take action for the welfare of America, for the welfare of God's Church."

"We felt that the most important question of the hour in America was the question of education. It is important from the standpoint of the country, because education without religion is not the education that would fit our people for the best citizenship. They must be taught religion and morality. It was Washington himself who said that the future of the country depended on religion and morality."

A FUNDAMENTAL NATURAL RIGHT

"From one end of the nation to the other there is a force, nationally organized, attempting today to deprive us Catholics of the right to educate our children as we want to educate them. We recognize, as every American does, the State's right to demand education in its children. We recognize the State's rights or right to make education compulsory. But the States never had a right, and the State has no right, to take your children from you and to determine that they must be educated in one narrow groove and in no other. That is depriving parents of their fundamental natural right, that is simply a case of our country going into Socialism. Such is the movement of today."

DESTROY THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

"Here in our land there is a movement to so secularize the bringing up of our little ones that they shall not hear the name of God mentioned from Monday to Friday. Men are thinking that they are doing well for the children when they are doing that. They are blind, they are blind. They have not the interest of America at heart. They are determined to fight the Church that during all the years of its existence has been bringing up its children worthy to be good citizens of the Nation and State. I have on my desk in my home in Baltimore a copy of a well-known Masonic magazine, one of the organs of the Scottish Rite Masons, and it is devoted to this one issue—'destroy the Catholic School. Wake up men. That is the issue today. The very center of that force, where is it? Right here in Washington. You live in Washington. Wake up."

"I want to tell you, friends, that in every republic, even in a republic that has the best and finest form of government, the price that you pay for liberty is eternal vigilance. You will understand, therefore, why the Bishops of the country appointed one man as the head of a department to study out the problems of education, and to bring before the people our views in the matter of education."

Archbishop Curley then referred to the Department of Social Action stressing the work it was doing in behalf of immigration and then described the work of the Department of Legislation.

LEGISLATIVE WORK

"I want it understood," he said, "that the Legislative Department was not established for the purpose of having new laws passed, but for the purpose of presenting the Catholic viewpoint and Catholic rights before legislatures when legislators are intent on passing laws that are inimical to the Catholic faith."

"During the past twelve months in the city of Washington some fifteen or twenty bills came up in which we of the faith should be intensely interested, and these bills, it passed, would have worked great injustice to us of the faith."

"When the legislators understood that the bills were unjust, unfair, and un-American, they were perfectly willing to say: 'We

didn't understand, we are glad you came and explained.'

"Can that be done without some organization that would speak for the national body—one that can say: 'We represent the National Catholic Welfare Council, which means 104 members of the Hierarchy and 20,000,000 men and women.'"

PRESS DEPARTMENT

"Then there is the Department of Press and Literature. I speak with a certain amount of fear about what the press ought to be. I hate to destroy a pleasant thing by an unpleasant thing. Take our press of today. Does it educate the American people along the lines of faith, morality? Does it, for example, print things that are serious and uplifting, does it give much space to questions that touch the heart of men and the mind of men, such as religion? Not much. Perhaps the people don't read it, but it does give enormous space to some New York divorce scandal. What is it we people read of in New Jersey? That is an awful murder. I saw today a long account of a dancing fete in the city of Boston. That's the kind of stuff they give much space to. The papers will tell you that the public demand it."

BENEFIT OF PRESS SERVICE

"We felt that the Catholic press of the country was a need to our people. The press, as I have said, has a great influence on public opinion for good or evil. It is the most powerful agency on earth. We, therefore, established a Department of Press and of Literature in order to push the work of the Catholic press and Catholic literature. In three short years we have done noble service for our Catholic papers, and we have today a press service going out from the city of Washington, which, from the standpoint of real up-to-date press service is perhaps second to none. You can see the need of that. I would say as a result of that department our own little paper The Baltimore Catholic Review which had from 3,000 to 4,000 subscribers, now has 34,000."

NEED OF LAYMEN AND WOMEN

"Now, the last, and by no means the least, department was the Department of Lay Organizations. I mention this last purely. If we have not the men and the women of the Catholic Church in America in some kind of an organization through which we can give national expression when called upon to do so; if we do not have them back of the Legislative Department, the Social Action Department and the Press Department, how can we carry on the work? Every feature of our national life, from the standpoint of the faith, depends upon the organization of our men and our women. Now, the purpose of the organization was simply to get together this great separated mass of men and women professing the faith in our country. Up to a few years ago, there was no way by which we could reach the men of the country, or by which they could give expression to their views upon great national questions that have to do with the welfare of America and with the welfare of our faith. There never was any danger of interfering with any other organization. Why, not at all. In Maryland, for example, we have a couple of thousand Catholic men who are Knights of Columbus. We have, thank God, splendid ones who are members of the Holy Name, but we have a great body of men who are not affiliated with any organization and who are not grouped together into any Catholic body. We want some kind of an organization that will bind our men together from shore to shore, from Great Lakes to Key West, and at the same time will bring our Catholic men into touch, one with the other."

"The purpose of the Bishops, therefore, was to ask the laymen of the parishes to band together that they be of service in their parish, that they take up among themselves the great questions of the hour, and when there is an opportunity for them to express themselves on these questions, to do so. But the first purpose of the organization is to be good men, good Catholic men, Catholic men interested in their own parish. But I do want action. I do want life. I remember the jellyfish on the coast of Florida. They are alive, but you would never know it. You people must do your share, and to do your share you must have some kind of organization that will take in every man in the parish, and that is what I call a Laymen's Organization."

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