

Job Turner's Declining Years

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

There were two big preserving kettles on the front of the stove. They bubbled and boiled, and filled the shed kitchen with pungent, spicy odors. Cynthia Turner, stirring them abstractedly, glanced at her husband, who was hanging his coat and hat on the peg by the door.

"I wish we could keep it from father," she said.

Her husband shook his head.

"I wouldn't be no use," he observed. "He'd hear of it sooner or later. Besides, they want him to be one of the bearers."

"It's goin' to be consider'ble of a shock to him," she said. "You remember how it broke him up when Amos Drake died last spring?"

"I know," Ben Turner replied. "Seems to work him all up every time he hears of anyone dyin', specially any of the old folks. But we got to tell him, an' I guess we might as well do it now as any time. You'd better come in with me," he added uneasily.

Cynthia moved the kettles to the back of the stove and wiped her hands on her apron. She followed Ben thru the shed to the kitchen proper, where old Job Turner sat in a low chair by the south window, braiding untopped onions into long, sinuous traces. He looked up as they entered, peering at them sharply over the steel bows of his spectacles.

"Been up to the post office?" he asked.

Ben nodded.

"Here's the paper," he said, passing it to the old man. "Ain't much in it but politics."

Old Job took it eagerly.

"Never is these days," he complained. He promptly laid aside his unfinished

task, and, removing his spectacles, wiped them on his ample red handkerchief. "S'pose I'll have to look it thru," he mumbled apologetically. "What'd ye hear new up along?"

Ben cast an apprehensive glance at his wife.

"You tell him, Cynthy," he said in an undertone.

"Huh?" said old Job, who was a trine deaf.

"Abner Fogg's gone, father," said Cynthia very gently.

The euphemism was lost on old Job. He replaced the spectacles on his nose and stared uncomprehendingly at his daughter-in-law.

"Gone! Gone where?" he demanded.

"He's dead," Ben hastened to explain.

The old man huddled down in his chair. He seemed to shrink as from a blow. For a moment his under lip quivered uncertainly; then he pulled himself together and turned to his son.

"Did ye hear particklerlers?" he asked curly.

"Died last night 'bout ten o'clock," Ben replied. "They say it was heart-trouble. I caltate it was a shock. He'd had one before."

"Like enough 'twas—like enough 'twas," said his father.

He turned his eyes to the window, and sat for a time staring out at the vista of brown autumn fields. Ben and Cynthia watched him in pitying silence.

"They're goin' fast, ain't they?" old Job resumed at length. "Dave Moses, an' Luke Flanders, an' Amos Drake, an' now Ab Fogg—all inside of a year. Yes, they're goin' fast. Ab was—let's see, he was born in '29—

Ab was most a year younger'n I be. It'll be my turn next, most likely."

"Father," Cynthia remonstrated, "you know you hadn't ought to talk like that. You sleep well, an' your appetite's real good. I don't see but what you're well's ever you was, except for your deafness an' a little touch of rheumatiz now an' then."

"There's a good many men younger'n you by ten or fifteen years that ain't nigh so spry as you be," put in Ben Turner encouragingly.

Old Job shook his head sadly.

"I'm failin'," he said. "I feel it year by year. Most of 'em's gone now but me, an' my turn can't be so very fur off. When'd you say the funeral was to be, Ben?"

"Thursday at one o'clock. They want you to be one of the bearers."

"Well, I caltate I ought to do that much for Ab," the old man said. "I got a bil'd shirt, ain't I, Cynthy?" An' I guess I better put on two pair of socks that day. It's likely to be cold standin' on the ground at the cemetery."

He stooped and picked up the paper from the floor beside him. "The old folks is dyin' off fast. Four of 'em all inside of a year! Ab's gone, an' he's a year younger'n I be. I'll be the next, most likely. I'm in my declinin' years, an' I can feel I'm failin'."

He opened the paper, and Cynthia seized the opportunity to slip quietly back to her neglected preserves. Some moments later her husband came out, his lips curving in a grim smile.

"Father's got it all planned out," he announced. "He's made up his mind to have a shock, this time. I guess he'll take to his bed soon after Abner Fogg's funeral."

Cynthia sighed resignedly.

"That won't be quite so bad as the Bright's disease he had after Luke Flanders died," she said. "Well, I'll hurry up an' git my preservin' done before the funeral, so I can tend to him afterward."

II

On the morning after the funeral old Job's place at the breakfast table was vacant. When nine o'clock came, and the old man, usually an early riser, had not put in his appearance, Cynthia tipped to the little bedroom that led from the front room and cautiously pushed open the door.

The old man lay motionless on the bed, his eyes wide open and his thin lips set in an expression of passive resignation. As the door creaked he groaned feebly.

"Ain't you feelin' well this mornin', father?" Cynthia inquired solicitously.

He closed his eyes and moved his head slowly from side to side on the pillow in weak negation.

"I guess you got tuckered out yesterday," she suggested.

"It's wuss than that, Cynthy," he moaned. "Wuss than that! I guess my turn's comin' a little sooner'n I expected. I'm one of them broken reeds the minister spoke about in his prayer yesterday. I don't b'lieve I've shet my eyes all night. My head's a whirlin', round an' my laigs is numb an' my deafness is a good deal wuss. Them's the very symptoms Uncle Bijah had before his first shock."

Cynthia went over to the bed and laid her hand on the old man's forehead.

"Nonsense, father," she declared.

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The Mail Bag

FOR THIRD PARTY

Editor, Guide:—I notice that my subscription to The Guide is nearly out. You will please find enclosed two dollars to cover my subscription for three years.

I must say that I am well satisfied with The Guide. Your editorials on all the leading questions, as dealt with by our different legislative bodies, are splendid. You are surely giving to the readers of The Guide a true statement of how our interests are looked after by our representatives, who seem to forget their promises when once they get to Ottawa. So many of our members going from the West seem to think that they should not put up too much of a fight against the East. They seem to think that we are easy and will stand for any and everything that the Eastern members may wish to ask for. I know that our people here in the West are getting heartily sick of such gross misrepresentation of our interests, but such is government by either of our two political parties. The Sifters, Larties and others in the Laurier government whose sympathies were never with the farmer, made it easy for the rich man to get a hundred times richer and easy for the poor man to become poorer. Then we have the Rogers, Whites, Hughes, Fosters, and a lot of others that I could name, doing exactly the same thing—giving more money to Mackenzie and Mann, more protection to the manufacturing interests and thinking, no doubt, because they have reduced the duty on binders and mowers five per cent, that it covers the whole thing. It surely shows what "easy" people they must think we in the West are; the reduction means a saving of about \$1.50 per year to Mr. Farmer, and in turn he will be expected to pay back into the Dominion treasury, or into the pockets of the manufacturer, easily \$10 in extra duties that will be added on in so many other ways that they are saying nothing

about, while they are all the time shouting about the five per cent. off binders and mowers! Such is party politics.

I am a firm believer in the formation of a third party, and would like to see it carried out to the fullest extent here in Manitoba. I feel that our experience in Mountain with a Progressive candidate in the field would indicate that our people are ready for just such a move all over the Province.

Just think of the things our premier has said about different ones who happened not to fall in with his views—calling them by such names as "Jelly-bag," and of the comment of Mr. Rogers, when he was a member of the Manitoba Government, with regard to the president of the Grain Growers' Association and also Roderick McKenzie, that "the dogs and crows despised them in the district in which they lived." How long will the people in Manitoba stand for the like of that?

That is one side, then take the other: With all their promises, what kind of a fight did Mr. Norris and his followers make for the "Banish the Bar" measure? If what he would do if he came into power is to be gauged by what he and his supporters did in that case, I don't think that Mr. Norris will be very much improvement on what we have been getting.

So, I say, let us have a try for a third party. It can do no harm. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Mr. John Kennedy said in his article of April 22, that he did not favor the idea of our pledging our candidate. I wish to put Mr. Kennedy right. We do not need to pledge our candidate, because the acting and organizing committee of thirteen that Mr. Kennedy makes mention of holds the candidate's signed resignation in hand. If he should fail to vote the will of the people at any time, our constitution provides that fifteen per cent. of the candidate's signed supporters can ask

that a convention be called and a majority of the convention ask that the member resign. He will then have to come back and place his resignation of seat in the House in the hands of the committee. The whole idea is to have the candidate and the people close together all the time. This is "Direct Legislation" as near as you can get it at present.

R. M. WILSON.
Marrinhurst, Man.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN FARM AND CITY

Editor, Guide:—I would like to advance a few of my opinions on co-operation between the producers on the farm, and the consumers in the cities. In all the articles I have read on co-operation, it seems to me that it is left to the farmers to take the initiative in establishing co-operative institutions. The consumers in the cities seem to lose sight of the fact that they reap half or more of the benefits. I am a farmer in the Winnipeg district and I have sold dressed chickens to a certain firm in Winnipeg for 24 cents per lb., and the same firm was selling them out for 28 cents per lb. I have also sold potatoes for 60 cents per bushel when they were retailing out for 90 cents to one dollar per bushel.

Now practically all the tradesmen have their respective unions, why could they not all unite and form a Consumers' League and the farmers within a short haul radius unite and form a Producers' League, and each league have a secretary? It would be the duty of members of the Consumers' League to inform their secretary what they would require one week in advance, and he in turn would inform the Producers' secretary of what was needed. This would enable the farmer to bring in just what was required. It would also cut down prices to the consumer and raise them to the farmer. If a working man cuts down his living expenses \$2 per

week, it is better than going out on strike for a \$2 a week raise in salary. I once worked in a large city where the employees of a large biscuit works went out on strike for an increase of wages. They got the increase, but had to pay more for their biscuits. What is true of biscuits is also true of boots and shoes, clothing, ice cream, and building material. Consumers in the city will increase their salaries most by going out on strike against the middleman, and the producers in the country will increase their income more by going out on strike against the same fellow. I have been in the city and negotiated to sell hogs for 11 cents per lb., but when I have brought them in dressed I could only get 9 cents a lb., simply because when I was negotiating the sale the hogs were alive and I could keep them, and when they were butchered I could not. Let the consumers figure out the difference between what they pay for their necessities of food and what the farmers get for their produce and see if their time would be wasted in forming some kind of an association which would come in direct association with the farmers.

SAM E. JUNKIN.
Elm Grove, Man.

CONDITIONS IN WINNIPEG

Editor, Guide:—In your issue of May 13 you have an article on the condition of the unemployed in Winnipeg. Considering the number of these will you kindly explain why it is we have to pay from \$35 to \$40 per month for inexperienced foreigners who can barely understand a word of English, and for domestic help from \$18 to \$22. We do not consider this high wages for competent help, but it must also be taken into consideration that these men can do nothing without being shown, which takes up a great deal of time that

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