



REFLECTIONS ON GLENVILLE

By W.S. BLIZZARD

I have been thinking and thinking today,
Of an old town, that lies far, far way,
Just at the base of a tall, sloping hill,
Generally known as the town of Glenville.

The name is suggestive, it lies in a glen,
As to when it was settled, ask older men,
I know not, I cannot give you the date,
The time is too distant, and I am too late.

Who built the first cabin, erected up there,
Chased the Gray Wolf and followed the bear,
Blazed out a path for the brave and the free,
His name is unknown and is hidden from me.

The pioneer came and the town grew and grew,
Rude dwellings rose up in the primeval blue,
And the school house rose up to grace the dell,
And the chapel came too, with its iron bell.

And the roads ran in, and the roads ran out,
And the farm house sprang along each route,
And the village rose where the forest stood,
And the town as then on the map for good.

Now Glenville stands by the river's side,
The people's town, the people's pride,
May it stand 'till river reverses direction,
And none are left to make an inspection.

Once I knew that old town very well,
If an ear you'll lend, the story I'll tell,
It was back in the days of my early youth,
For I shall be candid and tell you the truth.

My father then lived up on Sycamore Creek,
A branch of the same, more correctly to speak,
Then I visited Glenville most any old time,
I must give all the facts to make up this rhyme.

I knew every street, each alley could trace,
And every inhabitant in the good place,
And each country road that ran to and fro,
Whether going above or running below.

I recall now the big, tall water mill,
The site is still there, but all else is nil,
All crumbled to dust, the owners are dead,
Time worketh its changes, is truthfully said.

I used to go there, with a linen sack,
Thrown right across a stout horse's back,
Filled with dry, rich, bright yellow wheat,
To grind into flour, make biscuits to eat.

And then the white corn--full many a load,
I've taken to mill, by the old county road,
And carried it home in the twilight's hush,
Then a supper we'd have of good milk and mush.

The mill was owned by Holt and Westfall,
Each answered the summons, it cometh to all,
Both were good men, yes exceptionally good,
I'd gladly say more, if the Muse only would.

Jake Lorentz owned a tannery up Turkey Run,
Run by Rod Lorentz, his good faithful son,
If you never were there you can't well tell,
I vow by the Hornbook, it had a strange smell.

The rawhides were placed down in a deep vat,
Stretched to full size, then laid down flat,
Then covered clear over with chestnut oak bark,
Then left to tan, down there in the dark.

If eyes haven't seen, you've missed knowledge,
Never obtained from High School or College,
For the business was practical, sensible work,
Never once learned by lazy coxcomb or shirk.

God bless the old tanner, may he live long,
For never a mortal by him suffered wrong,
Toiling long years, for his families welfare,
With a love, a devotion, uncommonly rare.

But just now my fancy hath taken a flop,
And points out to me an old blacksmith shop,
Once run by John Campbell, down by the river,
The bellows are hushed--now, never a quiver.

The owner hath closed his accounts to the last,
The smoke and the sparks are things of the past,
But I yet, well remember that honest old chap,
With the horses' big hoofs taken up in his lap.

There was old Mr. Conrad, Clerk of the Court,
He well deserves a real lengthy report,
But the records are absent, the orders not here,
To tell of his work in his faithful career.

Merit is forgotten by this young generation,
They think of baseball, not men of his station,
And the old musty records, filled with orders,
Scarcely are touched, not even their borders.

The Colonel went down to Richmond one year,
When the sea-green Secession rose up to cheer,
And trampled in dust, the Stripes and the Stars,
And raised above them the Johnnie Reb bars.

He voted against that wrong measure in vain,
Which rent the Virginias' forever twain,
And led to the birth of our own little State,
Queen of the Mountains, so grand and so great.

That honest old man, now sleeps 'neath the sod,
And his spirit hath flown to the City of God,
His memory is cherished with fond recollection,
By the old land-marks, who live in that section.

Milton Norris, then lived up in the Beeches,
To climb up that hill, cost many long reaches,
He owned a good home, his daughters were fair,
But like Queen Cleopatra, each one had red hair.

He was the best informed man in all the town,
He is really deserving of fame and renown,
He brushed old theories clear off the shelf,
Then, adopted a rule of life for himself.

He was a surveyor by profession and trade,
By compass and chain his living he made,
Bequeath to his children his learning and lore,
The scenes of this life, he shall visit no more.

Mr. Peregrine Hays, now comes back to me,
His manners were winning, as all will agree,
His language was matchless, perfect it fell,
Splendid to hear in its roll and its swell.

A real Chesterfield--he was so debonair,
A man of great force, I here now declare,
No one who has heard him will ever regret.
I loved his enchantment, and cherish it yet.

Like Homer renowned, great Grecian sage,
Misfortune frowned down on his old age,
His great eye grew dim--his once eagle sight--
Then deep darkness came on, then endless night.

Stephen L. Ruddell owned hotel and store,
Like others up there, he hath crossed o'er,
Quite wealthy he grew, by business and toil,
Although in his life he never struck oil.

His daughter composed that beautiful song,
Which shall survive as the years roll along,
The mountaineer's heart awakes to its thrill,
As rings the refrain, "The Beautiful Hills."

Stephen now rest off, in a Parkersburg lot,
A monument now marks his last resting spot,
He sleeps undisturbed in his palace below,
While the ages go by, with incessant flow.

Sam Whiting the farmer, King in his line,
A man of good judgment, his fortune was fine,
By a glance of his eye, he took in a steer,
Could tell his weight to the ounce, very near.

He never in life spoke Latin or Greek,
Of this fact I can most assuredly speak,
He drew from the earth a generous bounty,
And was the best farmer in Gilmer County.

Whether Gentile in business or smirking Jew,
No slick buyer, could cheat, trick him nor due,
The grass still grows on the Cedar Creek hill,
But Samuel is gone where all men are still.

Sant Brannon by nature, a political boss,
A one-legged veteran, a Union War horse,
Like Teddy, he carried a political stick,
Would argue politics, in spite of Old Nick.

He was Post Master for years, I am sure,
He had a stronghold, his grip was secure,
His brother and he, had a post office spat,
Sant was the winner, please don't forget that.

But he was of the pure, warmhearted type,
In life's autumn days he grew more ripe,
He had devoted most of his long life,
To welfare of children, welfare of wife.

John M. Holt, erratic, Republican John,
He like some others, alas! now he is gone,
I've said a Republican--clear to the core,
If you ruffled him up--Lord how he swore.

A gentle man, cultured, refined and well bred,
By training a scholar, most everything read,
Could quote all the platforms forty years back,
And name every candidate placed on the track.

Could tell the true vote in every election,
With the utmost precision, down to perfection,
A Patriot pure, sure all now will admit,
No other like John; and so I have writ.

Doctors Eagon and Dotson, gone with the rest,
May the grass verdant grow over each breast,
Each one in his time had set many a bone,
One moved to Wood county, the other to Roane.

But this long story would be incomplete,
If I should now omit or fail to greet,
A good old time friend, I knew so well,
His townsmen all called him Wesley Fell.

I knew him when I was a mere-mere strip,
Without one, one lone hair to grace my lip,
Handing out scarlet, blue, striped calico,
Full forty-five years or more ago.

May his frail bark move onward--glide,
Upon life's far, deep receding tide,
Until he embarks on life's vast, vast sea,
For all men's last great port--Eternity.

There may he meet his good friends of yore,
Who oft gathered around his dry goods store,
And told such rare stories full of rich wit,
They would make a stern stoic take a fit.

Now Wesley had an old chum, Harry Cain,
Whose humor rivaled that of Mark Twain,
His hooks were keen, and set with fresh bait,
And man a poor sucker met his sad fate.

Now Harry wore red-ribbed woolen socks,
And bored near to death poor Philip Cox,
Old Philip whipped often left the ring,
To Harry the sole, victorious King.

While dwelling here, he ne'er knew dearth,
Of humorous stories full of rich mirth,
Now if he yet has his old time store,
He keeps Gods great Kingdom in a roar.

It seems in real truth and in fact to me,
That I should mention now one Newton Kee,
He was a real old time, zealous Democrat,
Who long held office and sure feasted fat.

For thirty-five years or more he stayed,
Up at the old Courthouse in the cool shade,
Recording old wills and recording long deeds,
And looking to the public's general needs.

It can be well said when he hath ducked,
When around his form the shroud is tucked,
That he lies as good and kind a father,
As ever had trouble or domestic bother.

Another odd duck, I very well knew,
Was Colonel Hugh Craddock, Old Uncle Hugh,
'Twas said, he loved money, women, and wine,
He kept a hotel and the eating was fine.

He once ran a grocery on a small scale,
'Twas said he would cheat, if he cast a nail,
A son of the soil, he oft tilled the farm
His speech had a stoppage, which did him no harm.

His big heart was good, give him due credit,
I will not retract, after I have said it,
Hugh hath passed out, the Central House chime.
Hath lost the sweet music, it had in the old time.

Nelson M. Bennett that limb of the law,
Was another good man, whom I frequently saw,
In his youth he wielded the crayon and birch,
But his life was devoted to law and research.

Reared a large family, well clothed and fed,
We speak the plain truth for Nelson is dead,
His fortune was ample, his boat struck the rocks,
He died of disease, the fatal Small-pox.

All remember George Linn, Choate of the Bar,
His fame as a lawyer, long years cannot mar,
He devoted his life to that science so grave,
And toiled to the end like an old slave.

He defended with skill in many a case,
And would look the jury square in the face,
And many a man whose case he conducted,
Acquit by the jury, walked out unobstructed.

He was not an orator like great Henry Clay,
But he held o'er the jury a very strong sway,
At times he would thunder, blurt, grow calmer,
And then he' come down like a sledge hammer.

Mister Tom Brannon was on the decline,
When we first crossed Gilmer's south line,
Thomas married a Wiant, a sister to Bill,
The Captain was wealthy, I point to his will.

Tom had two sons, in Glenville long tarried
The daughters save one, all early married.
That one was Miss Hallie, she died very young,
With the songs of heart remaining unsung.

Levi Johnson hath gone down to the dust,
His soul lives in glory we truly trust,
Life's duties were never once neglected,
He died in Glenville highly respected.

He was a man of good reason,
And toiled on for many a season,
And when he slackened up on the oar,
His age at least was nearly four score.

Uncle Tom Fell--nearly ninety and hale,
Like an old oak unbowed in the gale.
Swayed by winds, scorched by the thunder,
Still all alone, an object of wonder.

Standing alone looking down on the past,
The wrecks of a century 'round him are cast,
The sand slowly slipping under his tread,
He's with the living--his comrades all dead.

Colonel Wat Warren, dear versatile Wat,
Who with the Pathfinder cast in his lot,
He had a great brain, he had a big heart,
Trained from a boy in the newspaper art.

He was a keen, a strong logical writer,
Few men could say things better or brighter,
His pen dropped gems sweeter than honey,
But he never in life could accumulate money.

The Goddess of Fortune, frowned to the last,
Around his last days a shadow she cast,
When the Death Angel entered his cottage door,
He found Warren humble, and perhaps poor.

Here's to big Bob Kidd, of good renown,
Who oft wears his great parties' purple crown,
And shies his big castor right in the ring,
When he wants to run for most anything.

While traveling to the far distant West,
May love and peace his last days bless,
And may his sun slow, slowly descending,
Mark a peaceful and blessed ending.

Other good friends I would gladly mention,
But space forbids me giving them attention,
I shall cherish their memories in my heart,
While the warm currents instinctively start.

Of all the spots down on this old earth,
Since poor mortal man first had his birth,
Where politics, bitter, threw out white heat,
Old Glenville had all the others beat.

I now recall that fierce, fierce campaign,
Of Grover Cleveland and of James G. Blaine,
Fought, fought way back yonder in eighty-four,
Hushed, now its loud thunders evermore.

Then Glenville watched that bitter fight,
With relish, if not with keen delight,
And neither party would flinch or retreat,
Until Mr. Blaine went down to defeat.

I loved the great man from up in Maine,
My youthful heart was filled with deep pain,
When the cold figures spelled out his doom,
And downward sank his knightly plume.

On the river's south bank, was an old ferry,
To transport travelers, foot-sore and weary,
The charges were but a dime or a nickel,
This was sufficient the boatman to tickle.

The old ferry boat hath sunk in the tide,
No more on its mission it goes forth to ride,
And its rude tackle is scattered and rotten,
And the name of the owner is almost forgotten.

But changes took place on the river's bank,
Where once grew the willows, thickly and rank,
A bridge spans the river from shore to shore,
The great busy world presses onward and o'er.

I also recall an old-time frame dwelling,
The blast's roar in my ears is still swelling,
As I heard it, when I went to that school,
I traveled on foot, for that was the rule.

I refer to the Normal, the old building rude,
Built on the hill out of good native wood,
When the school first opened in seventy-two,
The structure was old, I know this is true.

The school had a library placed on a shelf,
The books were not many, I looked for myself,
Plutarch was one, my mind oft employed,
And the one, which I always richly enjoyed.

Don Quixote was there, to read and admire,
Among the scant number, or truth is a liar,
Aesop another, but I can't name them all,
But in truth and fact the number was small.

But now overlooking the river and town,
Great costly buildings look augustly down,
With volumes of books two thousand or more,
A priceless treasure, there kept in store.

May those buildings stand exempt from decay,
Doubt not that school's mission or dare say nay,
May it stand for ages, shedding its light,
Like a star blazing on the brow of the night.

Inviting the young to early seek knowledge,
Who cannot attend an old costly college,
Inviting each youth to drink for his health,
From a fountain of inexhaustible wealth.

A stately new courthouse can now be seen,
Where stood the old building on the green,
Proudly it rises right up in the deep blue,
Away in the distance it calleth to you.

Temple of Justice it stands there for all,
The rich, the poor, the great, the small,
Rising right up into the clear empty space,
May it shield, protect, not damn a poor race.

My hand is now weary, this story must close,
My mind from its labors is seeking repose,
But the town hath a future, mark what I say,
The finger of Time is pointing that way.

Glenville, I leave you, I bid you adieu,
My heart feels a flutter, a quiver or two,
God Bless you Old Town, God Bless you again,
For I am yours truly, and lay down my pen.

*W.S. Blizzard, December 1, 1923 at Charleston,
West Virginia*