



# The House Looking West

By Frank Bacon ●

I REMEMBER a handsome white house set deep in a blue-green lawn, staring squarely down a mile long avenue of country road toward the dreamy little town. North of the house is a grove of large evergreens. And beyond the grove is the old house—shabby, unprotected, looking coolly into the west. But it does not see the town. The gaze of its wide-set eyes reaches out to that infinite distance where lies the memory of forgotten days. You will notice this at sunset. That gaze will seem to be looking through the brilliant colors into the blurred and indistinct beyond. You may notice it, too, just before a storm, when the sky is lurid grey, and the whole atmosphere seems supercharged, electric, and a wind is just rising out of the west. If you are intent, you may see it other times—any time but in the morning. Our house is in the morning and the noon, but the old house is in the afternoon, the evening and the night.

Behind our house are the barnyard, the meadows, and the pasture and creek. To the south is a field of oats, or maybe it's corn, sloping down toward the creek.

I MAY see all this today if I choose—all except the old house. But I prefer to remember it. In memory it is live and animated with early incidents, pleasures, and delights. And my father is a strong, young man building up the soil, raising good crops, and being very happy.

When I see the place now something seems absent. It is like an empty, dried clamshell. And the father I see is an older man standing behind the varnished oak counter where circumstance forced him. To make it worse, another life entirely apart from ours inhabits it now, a man and his family. It seems a desecration. For him it is simply the nicest place he has lived in. He does not understand. He couldn't. He never looked at blueprints and plans of long spring evenings. He never lived a summer with his bride in the old house up the road and watched the new house grow until finally it was completed, ready to live in. He never moved in and saw three children born there.

I REMEMEBER just one visit after we left that seemed right. It was after we had been away only a few years. The old house was still standing. Dusk had fallen. It was a cool early summer evening. Father was talking over the crops with the farmer. It was a thing which transformed him. He loved to talk crops. I could almost convince myself that they were his crops, that this man, not we, were visiting. Then I looked up through the evergreen grove at the old house. It was just as it had been since I could first remember. Its gaze was stretched out to somewhere in space. The illusion I longed for came. For an instant I was living here again. Then a strange sensation in my stomach and under my chest told me that all was not real. I now felt as one who sees something through a transparent pane of glass. I had a window to something I was cut apart from. I stood a long time watching, until a pitchy darkness fell and my window became opaque. I ran to the car and sat with a lump in my throat. It was a long time before I could speak, and I was glad. I didn't want to.

I must amend an earlier statement. I have seen the place again as it was before, since I began this writing. It happened last night under the oddest circumstances. I can't recall how I went or came, yet I stood there—same spot as before. It must have been in the night sometime between twelve and three, but the sky and the countryside were bathed in a somber greyish light which made every detail of the place visible. And the old house which was razed three years ago was still standing.

The first thing I noticed as I stood there was the old house. Strangely, I was startled by its distant gaze as though it were the first time I had seen it. Then I looked around and saw Mother out feeding the chickens. Father was carrying in two pails of milk, and the big black cat stood on the gate post and miaowed at him as he passed. Under the apple tree in a corner of the backyard were three children in rompers playing in a sand pile. I looked more closely. One of them was myself! The other two were my younger brother and sister.

I watched the scene for some minutes. Then a change took place. The light that bathed the countryside became a shade whiter, and all the moving figures and the old house on the hill vanished. For an instant I felt an oppressive sensation, which quickly fled as I considered the new situation. The place now looked exactly as it must this moment. But there was one new and final change I had never noticed before. The new house, our house, was no longer looking at the town. Its gaze was lifted out into infinity. It appalled me. I was very slow in realizing that the new house was the old house now. I stood for a long time trying to follow that gaze; then slowly darkness fell and my second window became opaque.

## Trees

Edith Blood

*T*WINKLING, laughing, glittering trees;  
Springtime gayety, warring leaves.  
Never a care, they make in the breeze  
Shadowy patterns, as a witch weaves.

Summer and calmness, stifling heat,  
Middle-aged quietness, perfect content.  
Beautifully slim, all the trees compete,  
Battle the elements, remain unbent.

Fall brings frostbite, winds blow keen;  
Trees stand defiant, patiently strong.  
Winter comes puffing to steal all the green.  
Brown leaves flutter, humming a song.

