

## Talk of the Town

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The principal topic of conversation in town this week has been the family troubles of Charles Johnson of the firm of Johnson & Miller, according to an article in the Whitehall Forum dated 27 September 1888. The beginning of the present difficulty dates back to January of this year and the clandestine marriage of Miss Grace Carpenter, daughter of Mrs. Johnson, and one Walter R. Hawley of New York.

Miss Carpenter, who was reared in Whitehall and is well known in society as a bright and promising young lady and musician, though with few advantages to develop her talent, last Fall joined the Lovenberg family of bell-ringers and for the first time left the parental roof to enter professional life.

The Lovenbergs did not use her right and at Denver, Colorado, she left them. After considerable experience at Denver and Kansas City, she returned home where she remained up to the time of the present affair, it being understood that she was engaged to be married to Fred Brown of the Kalamazoo Engraving Co.

Hawley came here with the Union Square Theater Co. and a flirtation arose between him and Miss Carpenter, resulting in several meetings. Hawley was evidently one of those simple, easy-going fellows who adopted the stage out of sheer laziness. He is a fair singer, a cheap actor, and has the oily grace and poetic features that are likely to infatuate a capricious girl. There is no doubt but that through these means the fellow insinuated himself into the good graces of his victim, and arranged for her to meet him at Holland whither the company went.

Miss Carpenter followed to Muskegon, got a friend to accompany her, and joined Hawley at Holland. When the party returned to Muskegon, the couple were married on 18 January 1888. As soon as Grace returned home and confessed the affair, her mother went to Muskegon and had a conference with Hawley. He could give no excuse for secretly enticing the girl from her home but said that he had a rich father to whom he looked for help as the linings of his pockets were all they contained and his miniature brain was completely at a loss to know what to do.

Whether or not the fellow has a rich father is a matter of doubt but he confesses himself that the paternal ancestor has cut him loose. Mrs. Hawley has been at Muskegon with her husband this week and says she will frustrate any designs of his to compel her to go on the stage.

One of the most unfortunate features of the whole affair is the heartless treatment of Mr. Brown. He was here and offered his sympathy to the mother. Although he said nothing to his friends it was plain that he felt keenly the situation. The mantle of charity should be thrown over the whole case and it is to be hoped that Hawley will be manly enough to care for his wife in a proper manner. Should he fail in this, the lesson is worth something as a warning to those capricious girls who persist in flirting with strangers and thus risking their reputation on worthless vagabonds.

The marriage to Hawley was later annulled on the grounds of fraud. After the annulment the wooing between Miss Carpenter and Mr. Brown was renewed. A date was set for their wedding and an elaborate trousseau was arranged for the bride. Mr. Brown came a week or so ago to claim his bride, but at the last moment she refused to wed him and left town for the home of relatives in Indiana. Brown returned to Kalamazoo with a heavy heart.

On Saturday, 22 September 1888, Brown came to visit Mrs. Johnson and her children. Evidently Charles Johnson, the husband, did not like the presence of Brown in his household and on Monday night while somewhat under the influence of liquor ordered him and Mrs. J's son Ray Carpenter out of the house. They refused to leave and Mr. Johnson got his revolver and it is claimed pointed it at Brown. Ray threw up Johnson's hand and Brown took the revolver away. Then Ray assaulted Johnson and beat him severely about the head. After this Carpenter and Brown swore out a warrant against Johnson for carrying concealed weapons, but this has been changed to a complaint for sureties to keep the peace and the case has been set for Saturday morning, 29 September at 10 o'clock before Squire Hedges.

The trouble was renewed again on Tuesday night when Ray Carpenter and Alfred Johnson, Mr. Johnson's son, met on Colby Street. Johnson was under the influence of liquor and the row resulted in his being knocked down and afterwards locked up. In this fracas a revolver and butcher knife figured, but Alfred was released later in the night and went home.

The courts are the proper place to settle these differences, and it is to be hoped there will be no more breaches of the peace. The feeling against Brown was very strong and on Wednesday morning he left town. Everything is now quiet.

Interestingly, it was reported on 10 January 1889 that Mrs. Johnson went to Topeka, Kansas to visit her oldest daughter, Florence Della who was recently married there to Fred Brown of Kalamazoo - the same Fred Brown who was once engaged to Grace. They were married on 7 November 1888 and would later have three children.

On 10 August 1889, Grace Carpenter married Charles E. Park in Whitehall. He was a physician from Connecticut where they went to live. They had a daughter Theo Margherite (1891-1917).

By 1910 Grace and her 19-year-old daughter had returned to Whitehall and were renting a house somewhere on Mears. It appears that her daughter later returned to Connecticut where she died in 1917. She is listed on a tombstone with other Park family members as the daughter of Charles Park but no mention of her mother Grace.

The 1920 census shows Grace as divorced and living in Chicago. By the 1930 census it shows her now living with a cousin in Wisconsin.

The 1940 census indicated that Grace was living in the Muskegon Hotel on Western Avenue and that she was living there in 1935 as well.

Grace died on 28 March 1944 at the age of 74 years in Dornbush Convalescent Home in Norton Shores. According to her death certificate, it looks like she was buried in the County Cemetery.