

The Bridge Builder

By Will Allen Dromgoole 1860 - 1934

This poem speaks of each generation's responsibilities to its successors. Her poem "The Bridge Builder" is often reprinted and remains quite popular. It has even graced plaques on real bridges such as the Bellows Falls, Vermont Vilas Bridge in New Hampshire. It continues to be quoted frequently, usually in a religious context or in writings stressing a moral lesson. It is also a favorite of motivational speakers.

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide –
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth, whose feet must pass this way.
This Chasm, that has been naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for *him*."