

"Why, sir, Mr. Banks' store and factory, in which all his property was invested, were burned one night, and in less than a week after his dwelling-house burned also, with everything in the way of furniture in it, and the family only escaped with their lives. It was thought to have been the work of an enemy, but no clue as to who it was could ever be found.

"Where are they now?" asked Bunk.

"No one here knows, I believe," was the reply. "The Masons obtained some kind of appointment for Mr. Banks, and he went away somewhere South, taking his daughter with him, and no one has ever heard from them since."

Bunk turned away with a groan, and reeling like a drunken man, walked away to the hotel, called for a room, and shut himself up in it to think, if thinking were possible. Leslie only remained in town two days, and then started for the South, to roam he knew not where or for how long in search of his lost love. His heart was too full for idleness, and every where he went he devoted his time and means to aid the poor and needy. He continued to practice his profession as a physician where ever he went, especially among those who were too poor to pay fees. He learned to love to meet and to battle with disease in its most violent and unyielding forms.

His name was fast becoming a household word throughout the land, for he was a scientific and successful physician. Sometimes he would stop at a small town for a week or two, or so long as he found anything of importance to do in his profession. In some of the larger cities he stopped two or three months. Wherever he went his first and constant inquiry was for the Banks. He found many families of that name, but upon calling was invariably disappointed. He nowhere found his long lost Clara.

Nearly three years thus passed, and Leslie seemed no nearer the object of his search than at the start.

In the summer of 1873 Leslie was staying in New Orleans when the yellow fever broke out and raged so fiercely in the city of Shreveport. Leslie read the account in the daily papers of the ravages of the terrible disease. He learned from them the scarcity of nurses and physicians; he read the appeals of his Masonic brethren for aid, not only for their own sick and suffering members, but for the suffering of that ill-fated city generally. Here was an opportunity for him to do good to humanity generally, and to help, aid and assist his dying and suffering brethren.

Leslie had no personal fear of the disease, and he had become reckless as to any evil consequences that might befall himself. He therefore determined to answer the sign of distress and go to the aid of his brothers in Shreveport. The fever was at its height when he reached the city. He reported immediately to the Masonic relief committee, and was by them assigned to immediate duty. A few days served to spread Leslie's reputation as a successful practitioner throughout the city. He was called and sent for here, there and everywhere, to see and prescribe for the sick. He never declined or refused any call; night or day he was ready and willing. His first attention was to such of his Masonic brethren as were assigned to his care, then to any and all comers for his services. Thus some three weeks passed of constant labor night and day for Bunk, and the great exertion began to tell on him.

One afternoon, when returning from a visit weary and worn, he met a small procession of some ten men clothed in white gloves and aprons following a hearse and a single carriage toward the city burying ground. Recognizing the badge of the mystic brotherhood, he determined to join the procession and aid in paying the last tribute of respect to a departed brother. Not being clothed like the others, Leslie stood back a little while the ceremony was going on. He did not notice the single mourner who descended from the lone carriage and took her place at the foot of the new-made grave. But when the gray-haired Master standing at the head of the grave, with trembling voice and tear-stained cheeks, said, "Our Brother Banks has been called from labor here to rest and refreshment in the Grand Lodge above, and into the peaceful presence of the Grand Master of the Universe; brethren, we hear commit Brother Banks' body to the grave, and his spirit we commend to God"—Leslie stepped forward to the side of the grave, and then for the first time in nine years he stood face to face with Clara Banks. She had come there to see her father laid away in his final resting place.

Although his heart was nearly choking him to speak to her and utter words of comfort and consolation, yet he knew this was neither time nor place, and he held his peace.

He watched her from the graveyard to her home. He hovered around her like a guardian angel for several weeks, yet he never neglected a single professional duty.

At length the fever began to abate, and the people of the scourged city began to breathe freely once more. In the meantime, however, the reputation of the strange doctor had become the talk of the whole city.

Leslie had found out that Clara was still unmarried. Watching his opportunity, one day when he had learned from a servant girl that Clara was alone he called to see her.