

present of the full assemblage of the Lodge kissed her and called her "his little sister," and promised to be a brother to her.

And so they proved, every one of them. It soon became necessary, of course, instead of letting her board around, to assign her a *regular home*, for she would soon have become a vagabond among all that large grasp of families, who petted and spoiled their little guest, and would have brought her up on sponge cake and honey. It soon became necessary, of course, to have systematic arrangements as to *her clothing*, for on her birthday, seventeen bonnets, fifty-eight pairs of socks, and over two score aprons, were sent in to her as presents, and no other articles of costume. But she was made to know that this was only for her own good, and she readily acquiesced, under the proviso that she was to be allowed to make frequent and regular visits to the others.

Upon one thing she insisted from the beginning, viz: that she should be allowed to attend *all* the Masonic meetings. This she would in no wise be denied. To secure this favor, she had requested leave to board with the genial old Tyler, Brother Peg, the poorest man I believe in the Lodge, and the one who had the hardest time to get along in the world. Regardless of the poor fare, she chose this as her permanent home, doubtless moved partly by the knowledge that the payment of her board would in a small degree benefit the old man, but mostly from his contiguity to the Lodge room.

Never before had Kingville Lodge been so thoroughly swept and garnished. The weekly school holiday was mainly devoted to sweeping the room, washing it, airing it, decorating it with evergreens, washing the instruments, polishing the jewels, putting things to rights. On the days of meeting (for like very many Southern Lodges twenty years ago, Kingville Lodge held its meetings in the afternoon,) she had each station profusely glowing with flowers, in the season of flowers. She was first in the ante-room. Had a hand-shake and a loving word, and a kiss for every "brother." Strangers who saw her sprightly little form there for the first time, went away with new ideas upon the "beauty" of the Masonic system.

In 1850 she was twelve years of age. It was the cholera season, and many fled, and many sickened, and some died. Then the merits of this precious little woman began to appear. From house to house she went fearless. At the bedside of the sick, at the grave of the dead, she stood, ever fearless. Her cheery look was medicine, her cheery voice better than medicine. She paid with interest now every debt she had incurred; and he who had invested the most in her support, her clothing, her board, her education, her little trinkets of jewelry, for which she had a woman's taste, felt the most in arrears to her. Never had that little watch which the Lodge gave her on her last birthday been put to its proper use, till she used it at the weary bedsides, to tell the weary, groaning patients, how pleasantly the night was passing on, and how surely they would be well by the morning. Never had the elegant cloth cloak sent her by General Quitman "as a special mark of pleasure at hearing of the good conduct of his dear little sister;" never, I say, had the elegant cloth cloak made by Past Grand Master Stevens, at Vicksburg, and gorgeously adorned—never, I say, had that beautiful cloak which she had always refused to wear to the Lodge meetings for fear of soiling it, been so appropriately used as when she walked with it in the driving rain at the funeral of the genial old Tyler, who was the first to succumb to the terrible epidemic.

Cholera times over and forgotten, who so popular as Sister Winniefred! Money was now no object in her raising. She had learned all she could learn of that country; she must go north to a first-class boarding school. This cost something, but General Quitman sent another hundred dollars, with a letter to the President of the Northern School, and the Lodge agreed to contribute enough by subscription to make up the remainder, and so with many a tear the little woman almost grown, though only thirteen years of age, said good-bye. That day it was positively declared, that the Lodge was not even "called off," when she was invited in. Brother George Hildebrand, the Worshipful Master, being brought to the tortures for this by somebody (in a jocular sense, of course,) declared he *forgot*, and then he made the matter worse, yea, quite unpardonable, by saying, "it makes no difference anyhow; if *she* isn't a good Mason, there are not any made," which shows how miserably Freemasonry had degenerated at Kingville Lodge; and proves all that the *Cynosure* had ever said about the rottenness and unrighteousness, and esoteric licentiousness, etc., etc., of the Masonic institutions in general.

Yes, in she came, the Lodge not even being "called off." Did she experience the terrors of a Mehitabel Byrde? Was that chair "made of human bones?" Was anybody about to sink in a "fiery hole?" Did anybody thrust up there "a pair of paws," and "seize the unhappy candidate," as the poet hath it? Probably not. If so, the maiden had got accustomed to those things during the long afternoons, she had sat in the ante-room of that Lodge, before the genial old Tyler went to his rest, and had peeped through the door and familiarized herself with every step in the congregating, purging, tiling, lecturing and opening of the three degrees.