

THE CRAFTSMAN

AND

Canadian Masonic Record.

Bro. J. J. MASON,
Publisher.

"The Querc and the Craft."

1.50 per Annum,
in advance.

VOL. VIII.

HAMILTON, ONT., JULY 1, 1874.

No. 7.

LITTLE WINNEFRED.

By Bro. Dr. Morris.

It is probable that not a person is now living in the vicinity of Kingville, who can recall the incidents I am about to relate. So much addicted is our southern and western population to change of location, that I have more than once observed in a membership of a Lodge only ten years of age, not a single one of the charter or earlier members remaining. Yet in the years 1847 and 1848, when these incidents occurred, the Lodge at Kingville possessed a working brotherhood of nearly one hundred members.

Amongst them was a schoolmaster named Francis. He was from some northern State, as nearly all the schoolmasters in the South were at that day; was a distant relative of General Quitman, who, himself, had come as a schoolmaster to the South about twenty years before, and a teacher of fine ability. About the year 1838 his wife had died, leaving to his care an infant daughter. A man very retired in his habits, Mr. Francis had ever declined to enter into society, and upon the death of his wife he became emphatically a lonely man. Too much attached to his school, however, to return northward, he devoted his leisure hours to the child. As she grew old enough to walk the woodpaths with him, he was accustomed to take her to the school-house, and it became a subject of emulation among his female scholars who should sit with little Winnefred. As years rolled by, and the little girl of four years became eight, she was allowed to ride to the Lodge meetings with him, sitting upon the pommel of his saddle, and taking her stand in the school-room below, or, by special invitation, with the genial old Tyler in the ante-room. At refreshment—and the Southern Masons *had* refreshments in those days—the little "sister," as they called her, was the first one invited in and the last one warned out.

The health of Mr. Francis had always been precarious, and by the years 1847 and 1848, when his child was about ten years of age, threatening symptoms of consumption began to appear. A circumstance that occurred at that time greatly aggravated the disease. There came along a family of emigrants going cross-land to Texas, a low, degraded set, and encamped near Mr. Francis' house. They remained there several days, during which various depredations upon a small scale were committed upon the hen-roosts of the neighborhood. This was taken up with so much energy by Mr. Francis as to drive the stragglers out of the neighborhood with threats of vengeance. The next night, one of his out-houses was burnt and his little daughter abducted. Although Winnefred was speedily rescued, for the wretches had not contemplated anything worse than to alarm him, yet the fatigue and anxiety of the search brought on a fever, which aggravated his pulmonary affection and no doubt hastened his end.

The expectation of a speedy death intensified the love the poor lonely student felt for his child. It was painful, it was pitiful, to observe his vigilance over her now. It had come out by questions from his Masonic brethren, that all his relatives were dead, and that little Winny had no one to look after her but himself and them. In regard to pecuniary resources, he begged them, however, to feel no alarm, as he had at interest in a banking-house in a neighboring town, a sufficient sum at least to clothe and support her until she should be grown.