

THE CRAFTSMAN

AND

Canadian Masonic Record.

Bro J. J. MASON, }
Publisher. }

"The Queen and the Craft."

{ 1.50 per Annum,
in advance. }

VOL. IX. HAMILTON, ONT., MARCH 1, 1875. No. 2.

RELIEF.

By Mrs. C. W. Towle.

How cold, how dreary the day was! The wind sounded hoarsely as it moaned among the bare branches of the trees, and died away in distant murmurs. A white frost had fallen the night before, and nipped leaf and floweret. The sky looked like lead, and now and then a cloud, fleecy and white, as if laden with snows, drifted in mid air. Blue-lipped, shivering little children, with satchels and books, hurried by to school, or stopped for a few moments at the street corners.

I had taken my drawing pencils and portfolio, and seated myself before the blazing fire. When the wind rattled the casement, I drew my vizette closer about me, and thanked God for a comfortable shelter from the inclemency of the northern blast. A piece of bristol board was beneath my pencil. Scene after scene grew beneath its touches. But all was dreary. A frozen mill, an ice-bound tree, a snow storm, a man striving to hold his cloak on in the blast, these were the prominent features in my pencil sketches. I could not be cheerful, do what I might. I could not forget the drear aspect of nature without.

I threw aside the pencil, and wheeled my chair nearer the fire. The coals glowed almost fiercely in the grate, and I began tracing pictures and images among them.

The door opened, and a strong blast swept through. I looked up and saw a cloaked figure,—a tall, noble, and commanding person. He threw aside his travelling cap, unclasped the steel buckles confining his mantle in front, and Uncle Roger sat down beside me, to thaw out before the genial blaze his stiffened fingers.

As he sat there, his deep olive complexion became almost scarlet in hue. His keen black eye rested musingly upon the coals. Was he too tracing imagery among them? It might be, but it was not probable. My uncle had little imagination, and was never to my knowledge, fanciful. It was more probable that he was weighing in his mind some East India speculation, for all his latter life had been spent there. It was to its torrid clime that he owed his olive complexion, quick flashing eye, and susceptibility to cold. The fire was peculiarly agreeable to him. When he went into the frigid atmosphere without, his broad stout person shook like an aspen, and he clasped and drew his cloak closer and still closer about him. He was a bachelor, one nearly fifty years old. His hair was sprinkled with grey, but it looked handsome, nevertheless; indeed, all who looked upon my uncle called him, even at that age, a fine-looking man. I had oftentimes puzzled my brain to discover why he had all his life remained matchless; why one, with his love of social life, affectionate disposition, and domestic tastes, had lived without enjoying life's great charm—a home.

But mysteries are curious things, and this fact remained a mystery in spite of all my speculations. I could not fathom it; but now a stronger desire than ever before I had, seized me to know why he had never married. As he sat in the light of the grate, he looked so stately, genial, and handsome, that the mystery grew greater to my mind than ever, and I determined, by direct questioning, to find out the secret.

"A cold day, uncle," I said, by way of introduction; "a cold day, and I imagine you feel it sensibly; it is not much like the East India climate."

"No," said he abruptly, and relapsed back into the dreamy state he had sat in before.