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### THE WIDOW'S STORY.

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"How I do despise that old man!" said Mrs. Wheeler, addressing Mrs. Wilson, and looking after Judge Withrow, who had just passed along the sidewalk under the window.

"Despise him!" said Mrs. Wilson, giving a peculiar emphasis to the pronoun *him*.

"Yes, *him*. Why not?"

"Rather let me ask why, Mrs. Wheeler."

"Well," returned Mrs. Wheeler, "I can scarcely say why; but the other day, when the sewing circle was held at my house, he became the subject of conversation, by passing along the sidewalk, as he has just this minute done, with that same straight, haughty dignity, and unbending self-pride so peculiar to him, and we all agreed that he was a gouty, proud old aristocrat, and that he cared for no one but himself."

"Of course you could read his thoughts and tell who he cared for, and for whom he did not," said Mrs. Wilson, ironically. "But pray tell me," continued she, "did any one know a single thing that could detract from his character as a moral, a noble-minded, and a humane man?"

"Well, yes," replied Mrs. Wheeler, "Harriet Smith said she had called upon him one day, last winter, with a subscription list soliciting a little aid to our sewing circle, and he evasively told her that when he wished to dispense benefits he would prefer not to sound a trumpet before him. Now, *don't* you think that was very impudent, to say the least of it?"

"I wish," replied Mrs. Wilson, her voice trembling with emotion, "I had been there to defend the good old man."

"Why, what do you mean?" inquired Mrs. Wheeler in surprise.

"I mean to give honor where honor is due, and to rebuke such injustice to one of the best and noblest of men. I can well bear witness that he does not sound a trumpet before him when he goes to do good."

"You surprise me still more. He is not certainly in any way connected with your husband's family?" Mrs. Wheeler said, dropping her *crotchet-work* in her lap, and looking inquiringly into Mrs. Wilson's face.

"No, he is no family connection of his, nor mine."

"When or where, then, did you become acquainted with him? I did not suppose that you had even spoken to him, much less did I suppose he was an intimate personal friend."

"Nor is he. He has never spoken to me, nor I to him."

"Do you know that he is a Freemason, Mrs. Wilson?"

"Yes, I do."

"How is it possible, then, that you can speak well of him, knowing him to be a Freemason? Why defend a black-hearted Mason?"

"Mrs. Wheeler, I will tell you why, and after I have told you, if you do not love the dear old man, you are not as good a woman as I have always given you credit for being."

"Love *him*! Mrs. Wilson? No, I sha never respect a Freemason, much less love one."