

## FREEMASONRY IN ITS EVERYDAY GARB.

PLACE, a large fashionable Hotel in St. Louis. Time evening. Hero, a well known and distinguished member of the fraternity, just arrived from a long journey by rail, and in that nervous state of irritation easily aroused to anger, which every one has experienced under the same circumstances. To look at him as he emerged from his room on his way to the dinner table, you would have seen a bluff, solid man, rotund but not to grossness, with a red beef-fed face, dressed like a gentleman, and bearing himself with the air of one who knows his rights and "knowing dares maintain them." Such was the man whom for the sake of precision we will, denominate Brother Larkin, George Alexander Larkin.

Such was the man as he appeared to a group of three who looked after him with eyes singularly inquisitive, and when he disappeared in the supper-room exchanged glances with each that said "the very man." One of them, a burly, ruffianly fellow at the same moment rattled something in his pocket that might have been specie, or might have been something else. This group of three, by the way, were standing in the office of the hotel when our friend first entered the house. They divided him amongst them, one glancing over his shoulder as he wrote his name in the 'Travellers' Register, one looking sharply after his valise and following it to the baggage room, and one quietly slipping after him as he went up stairs and preceding him on his way down.

The contrast between a man just in from a long journey by rail, before dinner and after, is evident to the dullest intellect. As Brother Larkin came out from his feed his rosy cheeks were rosier, his rotund figure more rotund and in every respect he looked more kindly upon all around him. This made it easy to fall into conversation with the older of the group of three to whom we have already introduced our readers, and who was standing in readiness to address him as he came out. A sort of recognition followed, that is Brother Larkin admitted having before met the gentleman who called himself Colonel Westcott, although it would have puzzled his brains considerably to specify the when and where. A mutual cigar, a chat over the political situation in which by a pleasant coincidence they found themselves in accord, and the new made friends made an appointment to visit the theatre in company. And all this time the group of three were "reckoning up" our Brother Larkin, whispering to each other covertly, comparing notes preparing for some grand *coup-de-main* to come off in due season. The click of the telegraphic instrument in the corner, had Brother Larkin recognized it, was speaking his name to fellow-operators at St. Joseph, Missouri, and elsewhere, some hundreds of miles away, and cords were tightening around him of which he was altogether unconscious. As he puffed his cigar and chatted benignantly of the pending elections, and digested his good dinner with a beaming countenance, as little was he aware of the interest manifested in him, sometimes by the chief clerk of the house, sometimes by the landlord himself, but most of all by that quiet group of three whose leader was engaging him all the time in a conversation seemingly unimportant, but which had issues of life and death in it.

The day before, a bank had been robbed in Western Missouri by a singularly bold device, gagging and chloroforming being a part of the means employed—means so energetic in fact that when the unfortunate cashier was found and released the next day, the drug and the gag had been too much for him. This addition of murder to the enormous theft, and the extraordinary heavy reward offered, had naturally set the whole body of detectives on the *qui vive*; and at that very hour groups of men like these were inspecting hotel registers and baggage, and new arrivals in all the cities three hundred miles around. The dispatch that came over the wires to St. Louis said: "Principal man short, thick-set, English in appearance, with sharp voice, well dressed, fond of talking politics, slippery as an eel." And that was the flattering appearance attached to our Brother Larkin, who had come that very day from Western Missouri, and was as loquacious on the subject of the robbery as every man is in such a case who has a good listener. So he talked in a gay unrestrained manner, while the man who sat by his side rattled something in his pocket that might be specie, and might be something else.

The theatre that evening presented unusual attractions, and together the two newly-made friends wended their way, purchasing reserved seats of the hotel clerk, and sitting together in the box. At every interval in the play the conversation was renewed, designed on the one part to draw out Brother Larkin from his apparent reserve, on the other, merely to while away the dull evening. It is a serious matter in St. Louis "to arrest the wrong man." Colonel Westcott therefore plied all the arts of social life upon his victim, and when at the close of the play he found himself making no headway in the direction he was pursuing, an invitation to wine and oysters