

He was a man of about five feet six inches high, very lame, and short on one leg, which required the sustentation of a hand-crutch. His outward man was clad in a rich Highland costume, bedizened with Masonic emblems, which strangely contrasted with his ungraceful gait. But his head—and such a head—was inexpressibly ludicrous. He had lost the sight of one eye, the sightless orb protruding far beyond the socket, which ever and anon rolled about as he addressed his guests; but to complete the picture, on his head he wore a 42d Highland bonnet, with a huge plume of black feathers, on one side of which was stuck a colossal red feather, which, towering over the whole, was constantly waving to and fro; and when he walked its undulations resembled those of a pendulum.

However, "Dickey Simpson," as he was familiarly called, was, with all his oddity, a kind-hearted, well-meaning creature, for he seemed not to notice, or else not to care for the mirth which his presence created; and he was, moreover, an enthusiastic Mason. Although out of place, I may here mention that the Celtic Lodge was then in its infancy, and has since been presided over by several eminent brethren, it being now one of the most respectable lodges in Edinburgh. But to my tale. The ball went off gallantly, many reels, dances, and strathspeys were tripped either to the band or the bagpipe, and, as the saying is, the company did not "go home till morning."

Some days after this fete, I asked my elder brother if he would advise me to become a Mason. He told me, what I then thought a strange reply, that he could not possibly advise me; I was at liberty to follow my own free will and accord. However, as he made no objections, I went to the Celtic fraternity, and, next lodge-night, received the first degree.

After work, the brethren adjourned for refreshment, the same Brother Simpson being in the chair, with his ponderous head-gear waving proudly from the throne. All the Celtic brethren were also covered, according to the custom of the country. The repast consisted of a cold collation of sandwiches, which we washed down with porter and ale. After supper, quart bottles of wine-negus and whiskey-toddy were placed before the respective brethren, which had been brewed for the occasion. The harmony of the evening then commenced, and was kept up till twelve o'clock, at which hour we separated. I afterwards received the other degrees; and as I was some time at home, I spent much of my leisure in visiting all the lodges round about, until my returning health enabled me to join my ship.

From that time I became enamored of Freemasonry, and while on board ship I gave my mind up to that study, and frequently, on our cruising excursions, dropped ashore to visit some lodge on the coast. It was a common remark on board, that if sailors had sweethearts at every port, I had *brothers* in every harbor. On one occasion I went ashore at Greenock, when a remarkable circumstance occurred, worthy of record. On entering a lodge, to my great surprise I found one of my superior officers there before me. Till that moment I was not aware of his being a brother; for on board ship he was rather austere and repulsive in his manner to all beneath him in command—a deportment which, I believe, many of our commanders assume, from a notion that it is best calculated to secure obedience and respect. On this occasion our eyes met, and we were now, for the first time, on an *equality*; and I shall never forget the hearty manner with which he saluted me—not in the voice which thundered terrors to the crew, but in the bland tones of a brother. Thou heaven-descended beam of light, beauty, and perfection! how often has the endearing epithet of brother reconciled the most conflicting interests, and united the firmest friends!

While I remained in his Majesty's service, and it was not long, I experienced many acts of kindness and civility from my gallant superior, who often conversed with me on Masonic topics. Obligated to return home in bad health, I was only in part enabled to resume my Masonic friendships; but during that period I enjoyed much tranquility, when, with book in hand, I visited the classic caves of Gorteen and Hawthornden, or scanned the rich entablature on Roslin's ruined college, or sought the mouldering castle of the lordly St. Clair—

"Lifting o'er blooming groves its head,  
In the wan beauty of the dead,"

and gazing from the loopholed retreat on the varied tints of a sylvan paradise—

"A lovely scene, but sadly sweet,  
Like smiles and tears on beauty's face;  
Far may we wander ere we meet  
So dear a dwelling place,  
That, formed by hand of Nature, seems  
For lover's sights and poet's dreams!"

Amidst scenes like these I found quiet and repose; and ere summer clothed the hawthorn tree with bloom, my spirits, with my health, began to rally; but I yearned for