

On either side of a table extending the entire length of an extensive and gorgeously furnished room, were groups of beautiful and elegantly dressed ladies, while the members of the Lodge, slightly retired, formed a picturesque background. The Worshipful Master was stationed at their head, and at the foot of the table and in the doorway, stood Brother Burton with the widow and children, their sombre garments in strange contrast with the gaily-dressed ladies and brilliant surroundings.

For a moment the silence was painful in the extreme, then the Worshipful Master, the most composed of all, said:

"Brother Senior Warden, having announced that you have an important communication to make to this assemblage, proceed with your relation."

S. W. "A Brother now in holy communion within the precincts of the Perfect Lodge above, before his departure bequeathed all the treasures of which he was possessed, as a legacy to this Lodge."

W. M. "Where are these treasures? Present them, that we may be enabled to judge of their value."

S. W. "Behold them! These are *our* jewels; they *were* his treasures!"

Here Brother Burton, whose eyes had been suffused in tears, could say no more; he was entirely broken down. The long-rehearsed programme was at an end, and for some minutes naught could be heard but sympathetic sobs from the ladies, who were entirely carried away by the affecting scene, while strong men bowed themselves. But during this time neither the widow nor her children were forgotten; they were nearly suffocated with kisses from gentle ladies whose hearts had been involuntarily moved.

The original tableau pre-arranged by the lads and lassies failed, for they had not prepared for those emotions engendered by the "cunning of the scene"—that fullness of the heart, swelling almost to bursting, the tightening sensation at the throat, the exquisitely refined sensibility that causes the blood to grow excited and depressed, which the consciousness of a noble and generous act to be performed generates in the soul.

When order was at length restored, the guests of the occasion were conducted to the head of the table. Brother Hope then addressing the widow, said that learning she preferred to engage in the business of keeping boarders, the Lodge had leased the house in which they were assembled, had completely furnished it, engaged servants, and the boarders were already in the parlor, many of whom were Masons. The ladies who remain with you will render all the assistance in their power until you are capable of taking entire charge. And that you may not misconstrue our acts, let me state that this is no act of charity; and that you may be entirely relieved from any embarrassment in that regard, or forfeit your personal independence, it has been arranged that, out of the profits realized from your business, you may pay from time to time such sums as may be convenient toward liquidating the outlay incurred by the Lodge. Whatever we may have done or accomplished was an imperative duty, but in no sense charity."

The sudden change from prospective penury and destitution to comparative affluence, without exertion or solicitation on her part, and to be surrounded and sustained by such friends, was almost too much for the widow—she was overwhelmed.

The company were now invited to partake of the good cheer before them. Mrs. Elkins could not take part with them, but in company with Mrs. Hope, inspected her new domain. At a late hour the company separated with light hearts.

When all had departed, the widow gathered her children around her, and kneeling, poured out her soul in thanksgiving and praise to Him who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," then rising and drying her tears she retired to that rest which for so many weeks had been denied her.

Mrs. Elkins was highly successful in her new business, and in three years was clear of debt. Her son Charles, now fifteen years of age, had, through the influence of friends, entered as a student in the office of an eminent member of the bar, while the two girls, Laura and Ella, remained with her.

Three years passed; Brother Hope had retired from the East, and the gavel was assumed by Brother Burton, who still boarded with the widow. Our whilom friend was now approaching the age of forty, and was a splendidly preserved bachelor, and not unfair. It had been observed for a year past that Bro. Burton had conceived a distaste for his old social habits, spending most of his evenings at home. It was also noticed that those evenings were usually spent with the widow, and many little coquetries were becoming manifest. The widow, in her younger days, had been one of the reigning belles, and at thirty-five her matured charms were very attractive to our good-natured bachelor. Suffice it to say that Mrs. Elkins became Mrs. Burton. Bro. Burton, who had retired from business, purchased an estate in the suburbs, the boarding-house was relinquished, and they determined to pass their days in peace and comfort.

Years passed; the daughters of Elkins had married. Charles, the son, had graduated, was admitted to the bar, and on attaining his majority, became a member of the old