

ANCIENT ACCEPTED RITE.

AS IT WAS A SCORE OF YEARS AGONE.

In the spring of 1853, a large concourse collected in front of a prominent warehouse in Baltimore, denoted some unusual excitement. A gentleman who had succeeded in reaching the doorway, giving one look at the object before him, turned deadly pale, and exclaimed: "Great heavens! it is Charley Elkins!" A surgeon kneeling by the body, said: "If you know this man, communicate immediately with his family, for he is dead." In the meantime the Coroner arrived, whose jury rendered a verdict of "accidental death." James Burton, 32°, the gentleman before mentioned, obtained permission to take charge of the remains.

Charles Elkins had been a prosperous merchant, but, unfortunately, the demon of speculation caused him to loose all. Depressed as he was by ill-fortune, and with a wife and three children dependent on him, it was necessary to commence anew. He obtained employment in a manufacturing establishment, and was sent to superintend the removal of goods from the warehouse. As the cases descended the hoistway, he attempted to seize the fall rope, missing which, he fell, and was killed.

In prosperous days, Elkins connected himself with the Masonic Fraternity, attained the Grade of Rose Croix, 18°, and became Worshipful Master of his symbolic Lodge, which office he continued to hold until secular misfortune assailed him, when he declined a re-election, and was subsequently stricken from the roll of membership for non-payment of dues. Bro. Burton, at that time being Senior Warden of his Lodge, went in quest of the Master, William Hope, 32°. Brother Burton met that gentleman and his lady starting from their residence for the opera. The Senior Warden related what he knew of poor Elkins, and the course he had pursued. The great difficulty was, how to break the painful news to Mrs. Elkins. Mrs. Hope suggested that if the gentleman would accompany her, she would undertake the delicate mission. Notwithstanding the cautious manner in which that lady executed her trust, the truth dawned upon the bereaved wife; she anticipated all, and swooned.

"Go say to the raging sea, be still!
Bid the wild, lawless waves obey thy will;
Preach to the winds, and reason with despair,
But tell not Misery's child this world is fair!"

After the stricken one revived the gentlemen left her to the tender care of Mrs. Hope, who remained with her during the night, and in the silent watches ascertained the condition of the widow's pecuniary affairs, and discovered that she was in fact penniless.

The Lodge made immediate arrangements for the obsequies, and the beautiful and solemn ceremonies were performed in accordance with ancient usage.

The next day a committee waited upon the widow, to arrange for the future, learned what occupation would be suitable to her feelings, and placed in her hands a sum of money. The widow's heart was too full to thank them, but tearfully grasped each by the hand, thus mutely testifying her deep obligation, and the strong men, feeling their emotions hurriedly left the scene.

The wives of the members visited the widow and succeeded in dispelling her deep gloom—they would not permit her to be alone to think of her desolation, while the bachelors diverted the children by frequent promenades, from which they never returned empty-handed.

After a short time the widow received a note from Mrs. Hope, stating that her husband and herself would call that evening, and desiring that Mrs. Elkins and the children should accompany them on a visit to some friends. All being in readiness at the designated time, they were soon on their way, and after a short time the party halted in front of a large mansion, brilliantly lighted. They passed up the steps, through the broad hall, to an extensive room in the rear, and asking Mrs. Elkins to be seated, Mr. and Mrs. Hope excused themselves and retired. During all this time no one was visible to the widow.

Brother Burton entered the extension-room, and stated in brief terms that the members of the Lodge desired to be presented, if it was pleasing to her to receive them. She assented, he took her hand, and that of the elder boy, and placing the other children in front, proceeded to the doors leading from the extension-room, and gave three raps. A voice from within demanded:

"Who are you, and what is your desire?"

"I, James Burton, Senior Warden of this Lodge, desire to enter, having in my possession important information to communicate."

The sliding doors were thrown back. The dazzling blaze emitted from innumerable gas-jets, for the moment bewildered the spectators, but, recovering, a magnificent tableau was presented to their view.