

THE FAIR REBEKAHS.

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THE REBEKAH DEGREE.

Oddfellowship, we are told, is progressive in its character. An instance of this truth is the fact that this great brotherhood was the first of the great fraternities to assign a place for women in its work of benevolence and fraternity. In doing this there was, as there always has been, a battle between the progressive and conservative elements, and the question was discussed for many years in the Grand Lodge of the United States, or what is now the Sovereign Grand Lodge. At the session of 1850 Schuyler Colfax, who afterward became Vice-President of the United States, was appointed on a committee to report on the propriety of instituting a Degree for the wives of Odd Fellows. Two of this committee reported unfavorably on the proposition, and Bro. Colfax submitted a minority report, and after long discussion this minority report was adopted by the Grand Lodge of 1850, and Bro. Colfax appointed chairman of a committee to prepare the Degree. He reported the work of this Degree at the session of 1851, and it was adopted and is to-day substantially as reported by him. Such was the inauguration of the Rebekah Degree and is an addition to the literature of Oddfellowship of which the Order may well feel proud; it is, in fact, an epitome of Oddfellowship in all its parts, and the ladies who receive and appreciate it can form a very good opinion of what Oddfellowship is.

The Degree is named after the wife of one of the Patriarchs. She is introduced to us in the inspired writings in a particularly impressive act of courteous hospitality, symbolical of the teachings of Oddfellowship. Abraham had reached the advanced age of 140 years. Sarah, his wife, had died, and the Patriarch, trusting in God's promise, desired to see his son Isaac married, not to one of the daughters of the land where he dwelt, but to one of his own people. So he called his faithful servant Eleazer and bids him go to Mesopotamia, where his kindred

dwelt, and from there bring the future wife of Isaac. Eleazer starts, and after many days' travel reaches his journey's end, travel-stained and tired, and while resting at the well of Nahor there came out to the well a young woman bearing a pitcher. Eleazer asked her the privilege of drinking from her pitcher. The woman saw that he was wearied and fatigued with a long journey, a stranger in a strange land, and with the true courtesy that springs from the promptings of a kind heart, she let down the pitcher, drew the water, and presenting it to him said, "Drink, my lord and I will also draw water for the camels." Eleazer explained to her who he was and on what errand he had come. She invited him to tarry that night at her father's house; he accepted the hospitality, and during the evening he put in so strong a plea for Rebekah to become the wife of Isaac that she consented, and her relations agreed to the marriage. Rebekah accompanied Eleazer the next morning on his return journey, and in due time arrived at the tent of Abraham, was married to Isaac, and he loved her. She became the honored mother of Esau and Jacob, each the head of a mighty nation. Such is the short and simple story of Rebekah as presented by the inspired writer.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE WAR.

Bad as was the condition of some Southern negroes before the war, there were thousands of kind masters who were served by their slaves through love rather than by fear, slaves who had received kindly treatment preferred to remain "marse's nigger" rather than be free men, and many touching examples of fidelity are related. One William L. Williams reports the following incident:

I saw a pathetic instance at Greensboro of a negro's fidelity. About ten miles from the town I saw a grave with a marble slab at its head. Seated near it was an old negro with a bunch of flowers, which he was placing upon the mound. I stopped my horse and spoke to him:

"Whose grave is that, uncle?" I asked.

"Marse Tom's, boss. I'm his nigger."

"Oh, no, you are no man's nigger now. Didn't you ever know that you were free?"

"Dunno duffin' 'bout dat sah. I see Marse Tom's nigger, sah, an' he's waitin' foh me suah up dar. Dese han's done tote him frum dat place dey call Shiloh, an' he died while I wah a totin' 'im; jest closed his eyes an' went to sleep, an' when I comes ter cross de ribber ob Johdan he jest hol' out his han's and he tells de angel at de gate who I be, an' he let me in. I dreamed 'bout it las' night, boss."

I was interested in the old fellow, and wanted to hear his story. The slab at

the grave told me it was that of "Col. Tom Winn, killed at the battle of Shiloh," and I questioned the faithful old negro further:

"How old are you, uncle?"

"Mos' a hundred, I reckon, sah."

"Were you in the war?"

"Went wif Marse Tom, sah, I see his nigger, an' he's in heaben. I see jest a waitin' till dese old bones, weary wid trabellin' ober the road, 'll take me to de ribber, where Marse Tom'll help his ole nigger ober."

"Were you with him when he was killed?"

I was right dar, boss. Done pick 'im up an' toted 'im to that place dey call Corinth; den I foun' a train got to de place dey call Chattanooga; de nex' day we wah in Atlanta. Marse Tom den in glory. Dis heah nigger lef' to ten' to his body. Dey buried 'im when I got 'im heah, an' dis nigger jes' lef' to ten' his grave an' keep de flowers hyah."

I found upon inquiry that the story was true. For a quarter of a century the faithful negro has done nothing but attend the grave of his young master, whose body he brought from northern Mississippi to central Georgia.

The foregoing narrative affords one of the most striking instances of friendship, fidelity and unwavering faith that has ever come under our notice. It equals the story of David and Jonathan, so familiar to all Odd Fellows. May we not profit by it?—Joseph Kidder.

HIS CHURCH AFFILIATIONS.

This story is told by a minister of the Episcopal church, travelling south, who met a citizen who claimed that he also was an Episcopalian.

"To what parish do you belong?" I inquired.

"There ain't nuthin' of that sort in this part of the country that I ever heard of," he replied.

"But who confirmed you?" said I.

"Nobody," he said.

"But didn't you tell me you were an Episcopalian?" I asked in astonishment.

"Oh, yes," said the old man: "I'll tell ye how it is. Last spring I went down to New Orleans visitin', and while I was there I went to church, and it happened to be an Episcopalian one, and among other things I heard 'em say that they'd left undone them things they'd oughter done; and done them things they hadn't oughter done; and I said to myself, 'That's just my fix' too,' and since then I've always considered myself an Episcopalian."

"Well," said I, as I shook the old man's hand, "If your ideas of an Episcopalian are correct, we are the largest denomination in the world."