

It was better than a feast with a prince to have seen that sweet girl as she entered, the brethren all rising to receive her, forming a bower of hands over her as we do when we take "The Perfect Square," and she walking up so stately, though all alone, under that living bower up to the east. She had written out and committed to memory the prettiest little "good-bye," you ever heard. There was prose in it, and there was poetry in it.

About the middle of it a little song was to be introduced, all about

"I'll come again ;

"I'll come again ;

"I'm sure, dear friends, I'll come again."

But, bless your soul, she only got half through the first line, which was something about "the swelling surges of the tempestuous main," when she broke clear down. She threw her hands around George Hildebrand's neck, smashing up his new hat irrecoverably, then threw herself in his official lay, cracking the embroidery on his new fine apron beyond repair, and finally declaring, with all the earnestness of childhood, that "she did not want to go." Then there was a general snivel went up and down those parallel lines. The hands that had just been clasped together to form the human bower were unclasped to use, as Adam used his, before handkerchiefs were invented. The scene became positively ridiculous.

However, that is nothing. Little Winnefred went north to the boarding-school and turned in to hard study. Once a month she wrote a long, long letter to the Lodge. It was read in open Lodge. It was voted on by the Lodge. It was entered on record by the Lodge ; and I, who write this Masonic tale, have read those records, as Job says, "with mine own eyes."

The eighth letter hinted at ill health. The ninth letter was short and sad—"My cough hurts me so, I cannot write any more to-day." The tenth letter was dictated by an amanuensis, and was accompanied by a physician's opinion, that "unless she improved very speedily, she had better be removed south." Not improving speedily, nor, in fact, at all, the eleventh was a short but earnest epistle in her own hand-writing, but written from her sick-bed, to the tenor "that she hoped some brother would come after her, for she wanted to be buried beside her father." When *that* letter was read in the Lodge, so many of the brethren "asked for leave to retire," that the Lodge had to be closed prematurely, although there was a "trial" on hand, and the "third" to be conferred that same night.

Yes, the cold winter of Pennsylvania had been too much for dear Winnie, and she was coming home to die. George Hildebrand left his business, and went in person to bring her. In person he bore her in her easy chair, no heavy weight now, wrapped up in her old cloak, down to the steamboat, waited on her almost as her poor father used to, and so brought her home.

Did I mention that, about a year before, a strolling painter, of course poor and a brother Mason, had strolled into that neighborhood, got in debt for board, wanted to "make a little raise," and offered to paint a portrait of little Winnefred for the Lodge.

By good fortune he "hit" a capital likeness. Sir Thomas Lawrence couldn't have done it better. The Lodge paid him enough to shove him on a hundred miles or so, and hung up the picture in their hall, where the Man of Wisdom ought to hang. It happened that, shortly after Winnefred's return, the regular Lodge meeting occurred on a clear and beautiful day, and Winnefred insisted on being taken to the hall "just once more." There was no denial. And so, in the rich dark cloak and with the little watch hanging like a locket to her neck, she was placed by George Hildebrand's side in the East (the Lodge being at refreshment), and for an hour exchanged affectionate sentiments with her "brothers." While engaged in this—I have been assured of the truth of the story by one who saw the occurrence—the portrait, of its own accord, detached itself off the hook from which it was suspended and fell to the floor. Probably it was a mere accident, but the fact made a great story through the neighborhood for a long time afterwards, and is told yet.

Why prolong my tale? The young creature has been eighteen years sleeping by her father's side. And, as I said at the opening, probably not a person is now living in that vicinity who will recall the incidents I have related. But a whisper went out among the Masons families, that *the shadow of this girl* was still seen at the Lodge meetings. Hackett Jinks, who was afterwards elected Tyler, never would go into the Lodge room after the rest came out, not even to put by the Volume of the Sacred Law, and he used to tell his wife that there were "sperrits" about in that ante-room. But that strong-minded woman replied in words good enough in their sententiousness to be made axiomatic :

"Hackett, you jes let whiskey alone ; them's the only sperrits 'll trouble you."