

**HARRY WATSON
OR
THE SECRETS OF FREEMASONRY.**

By
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"And are you going to join the Masons and have secrets you cannot tell your wife?" said Mrs. Watson to her young husband, as he got up from the tea-table and informed her of his purpose to unite with the Lodge that night. The question was put in a pouting way, and loaded with that tone of remonstrance which women know so well how to use, and which is more powerful than the words employed. Let a woman put heart into her speech, and words seem to take on fresh forms as they fall from her ruby lips, and even common ideas are transformed into poetic fancies as they pass through the alembic of her mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Watson had been married but a year, and during this time he had told his wife all his troubles and plans, and entrusted to her keeping everything he knew, or felt, or learned. She, therefore, could not well bear the thought of his coming into possession of facts or principles that he could not disclose to her. Then he had never left her sight after nightfall, but had lingered to listen to her voice translate to his enchanted ear the grand conceptions of the old bards sublime, or to hear her own tuneful measures in song thrill his soul with the sweetest accents. Should he join the Lodge, he would go to its meetings and she would be deprived of her audience and the lonely hours would hang heavy on her hands. Then, too, her pastor was violently opposed to all secret societies, and she feared his saintly frown when it was known that Mr. Watson had plighted faith and entered into covenant with a society deemed by his reverence as sacrilegious. All these things were gently gone over in a trembling tone that seemed to be pathos itself, and each sentence was punctuated with a bright, sparkling tear, while the liquid eyes gazed pleadingly into those of the husband.

Harry Watson felt sorry he had applied for admission, and could he have withdrawn his petition at that moment he would doubtless have done so, but he had been balloted for and elected, and the Craft had congratulated him on the clear ballot he received, and a special meeting had been appointed for his initiation, and an expert in conducting the ritual exercises had been invited from abroad, and to parley then with hesitation seemed to him unworthy of a resolute man, and treachery to those who had honored him with their votes and provided the very best conditions for his introduction to the venerable Order. So, mustering up courage, he engaged in the first argument with his wife, and said

"Darling, my father was a Mason, and for many years engaged in the benevolent labors of this ancient Craft, having a most exalted opinion of the nature, design and work of the institution. Many times have I heard him detail its labors of mercy. When he died he requested that I should take his place in the Lodge. He was borne to burial by his brethren, and from the hour I turned from his grave, I have had a purpose to unite with the Order he loved so well in life, and that had laid him in his grave with such tender fraternal hands, when dead. It is selfish for a man to live for

himself, and exhaust his heart upon his family. It is true that 'Charity begins at home,' but it should not end there. All vital forces work from the centre outward. 'None liveth unto himself and none dieth unto himself.' I feel that I should unite with my fellows in efforts to ennoble manhood and to mitigate human suffering, and as for secrets, I understand the Masons have none except the drama of the Order and passwords, grips and signs, by which its members may know each other and thus be protected from imposture."

Mrs. Watson did not reply, but kissing her husband good-bye, turned with a heavy heart to the cradle of her babe and spent a full hour humming the lullaby

"Hush, my babe, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed;
Heavenly blessings without number
Gently fall upon thy head."

There was a rap at the door, and the servant announced the Rev. John Pecksniff, her pastor. She trembled like a reed shaken in the wind, for she had a presentiment that the venerable clergyman had been made acquainted with the fact of her husband's intention to unite with the Masons, and had come to read the church riot act to the family. He had a very grave visage when his feelings were the brightest, but on this occasion he wore his most funeral expression. His salutation was in a deep, sepulchral tone, suggesting by its coarse, guttural accent:

"Hark! from the tombs, a doleful sound."

His step was measured, befitting the solemn tread that accompanied the dead march in his soul. His very breath seemed reeking with sulphurous fume. Now, while Protestants theoretically ridicule the Roman Catholic confessional, and affect contempt for the papal anathemas, there is a large class of timid people who areas much under the domination of their own preachers as were ever the most priest-ridden people of Southern Europe. Many there are who dare not think or act, without first enquiring what the minister will say.

Mrs. Watson had been brought up a Presbyterian of the strictest sect. Her memory ran not back to the time when she could not answer every question in the shorter catechism. Parson Pecksniff had baptized her, buried her mother, married her to her husband, and baptized her child. No wonder that she held the venerable gospeller in the profoundest esteem, and dreaded to offend him, or to have her husband provoke his ire. He begun to inquire for Mr. Watson, and she, with faltering accent and quailing heart, blundered out, in broken syllables and hysterical sentences, the awful fact that at that very moment he was in the dreadful toils and secret den of the sacreligious Masons. The groan that escaped the thin lips of the clergyman seemed as if it might have been an echo of the sigh which nature gave when at the first she yielded the sign that all was lost. The parson announced his regret and the startling penalty that Harry Watson would have to renounce Masonry or to be expelled the communion of the church. To Mrs. Watson this was equivalent to social degradation and eternal woe, and, so burying her face in her hands, she burst into a flood of grief,

in the midst of which her husband returned from the Lodge. Imagine the *tableau* - a sleeping babe, a weeping woman, a stern old clergyman and an Entered Apprentice Mason looking none the worse for his first goat ride.

The first impulse of Harry Watson was to sternly rebuke the old divine who had intruded his unwelcome presence upon his wife at this unusual hour, and added to her disquietude of mind by informing her of the dire penalty to be visited on him for having joined the Masons, but an imploring look from his wife, who seemed intuitively to read his heart, enabled him to restrain his purpose and choke back the words that had nearly reached and became vocal on his lips. After Mr. Pecksniff had expressed his disapprobation and his purpose to inflict a severe ecclesiastical punishment, Harry told him at an early stage of the initiation he had been assured, by men of the strictest probity of character, whose truthfulness and honor were well known to him, that nothing would be imposed upon him as a matter of either faith or practice that would in anywise conflict with his relations or duties to God, his country his neighbor or his family, and that, should he find anything which his conscience protested, he could at any stage withdraw. Thus assured, he had completed the first step in Masonry. He had not seen or heard anything but what was calculated to refine thought, sublimate feeling, ennoble affection, and, indeed, broaden both a man's mind and heart. He had seen present only men of the strictest morality, and whom he was accustomed to respect in all the relations of life, and all the miscellaneous subjects heard talked of were in connection with the relief of the poor, the education of the orphaned the watching of the sick, and the comfort of the widowed. He had met men of the opposite party to himself in politics, representatives of all the churches, for whom he had always had kindly feelings, and was glad to meet on some common, fraternal platform, where relationship would not be disturbed by the rivalries of business, the rancor of partizan strife, and the hostility engendered of sectarian bigotry. He said:

"I revere the Church as Christ instituted it. Masonry is neither a rival nor a substitute for it. All she asks of the Church is a kindly recognition of her works of mercy, and an humble seat upon her foot-stool. But rather than yield to the dictation of unreasoning prejudice, or the passion of bigotry, and thus surrender my private right of judgment, I will adhere to Masonry . and be expelled from your congregation. Understand, however, that I draw a clear distinction between Christ's free Church and *your* narrow Church. Besides, Presbyterianism is too liberal to propose to measure all men with a two foot rule. Her's is no Procrestean policy. Your individual hostility to Masonry, the product of ignorance of the characteristics and ends of the Order, is not regarded by me as an exponent of the great catholic Presbyterian Church - many of whose ablest and most pious ministers are ardent supporters and active members of our Institution. I would appeal from your dictation and the session's action to the Presbytery."

The old parson was surprised at the vigorous response of his young parishioner, and, as he was a promising young lawyer, and bade fair to achieve distinction in his profession, and ere long to become a pillar of the Church, he concluded to let the matter drop.

In due time Harry was passed to a Fellow Craft, and raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. He passed the Junior and Senior Warden's Chairs, and was Master of his Lodge. He studied the work and became expert in the conferring of degrees and well versed in Masonic history, usages and jurisprudence. At a celebration of the anniversary of St. John - the 24th of June - he delivered a Masonic oration, much to the delight of the Craft and of his wife, who was proud of the effort of her gifted husband. The proceeds were for the benefit of the Widows' and Orphans' Home, and at night there was a fair and concert given under the auspices of the ladies, and among those who participated none were more busy than the wife of Harry Watson. She had seen her husband's interest in the Lodge, while the husbands of her neighbors were spending their evenings at the club and in the bar-rooms. She always knew when he was absent that he was breathing the pure atmosphere and mingling in the refined and chaste associations of the Lodge-room, and that the matters which were engaging his attention were those related to an alleviation of the wretchedness of a smitten, suffering humanity.

In the meantime the old clergyman, by frequent intercourse with Harry, who kept him informed as to the benevolent works of the Order, had abandoned his hostility to Masonry, and, of his own free will and accord had knocked at the door as a poor, blind candidate seeking light, the scales had dropped from his eyes and he saw the Order as a handmaiden of religion, and on the very anniversary day had opened the public exercises with prayer, which ran, as we can remember, thus

" O, thou Supreme Architect of the Universe, we are persuaded that an Institution that has survived the criticism of centuries of inquiring thought, survived the hostility of crowned and mitred heads,, grown grander as it grew older, and which has secured the fealty of the sages, the philanthropists, the patriots, whose faith is a continued tracery of mercy, which has dried the tear of orphanage, hushed the wail of widowhood, and helped the stranger to friends, and the poor to benefactors, must command Thy fatherly approbation. Had it not been worthy of its long and prosperous career the good would have been turned from its altars and the wicked long since have profaned them. Had it not been designed by Thee as an agent for promoting Thy glory among men and the good of suffering humanity, it would, long ere this, been dashed into remediless ruin by the rod of Thy avenging power and providence. We thank Thee for an institution that binds men in a common brotherhood. and translates into practical life the anthem: 'Glory to God in the Highest: peace on earth, and good will to men.' O, Thou who hast promised to be a husband to the widow and a Father to the fatherless, bless this Order which takes to its ward and protection the bereaved and dependent. Command Thy blessing on the `Home' this great brotherhood is building. Open the hearts of our Fraternity, and of a sympathizing world that abundant means may be afforded for the completion of the noble plans drawn by the hands of master spirits upon our trestle-boards. Enable us so to live as to meet Thy approval when we come to die, and to secure a welcome to the hospitalities of Heaven-we ask in Thy Great Name. Amen."

From more than two hundred reverent hearts and lips there went up the response; *so mote it be.*

Then was sung those tender lines of Pope:

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see ;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

At the close of W. M. Watson's oration, he said: "If Providence shall spare my life and health a term of years, and continue to bless me in the future as in the past few years of my professional career, I will be able to provide for my family while living and bequeathe to them a competency when dead. It is not, therefore, from any selfish motive that I make the plea I utter to-day in behalf of our `Masonic Home.' I desire to *do* good, and to those who apprehend aright, *doing* good is quite as joy-yielding as *getting* good. Indeed, the Great Father has said, `It is more blessed to give than to receive.' The work of beneficence promotes our happiness. It places us in harmony with nature. The plan of nature is that of *giving*. The sun gives his rays constantly, generously, joyously; the ocean gives its vapors to the skies; the skies gives their rains to the earth; the earth warms and waters each seed within her bosom, and sends it up in greenness and richness, and nourishes and cherishes it that it may give bread to the eater. The animals give their strength and swiftness to man, or lay down their lives for his sake. There is no chest for hoarding in all God's works ; no magazine for saving sunbeams or air or rain drops or fountains. If the sun, or old ocean, or mother earth should turn miser, we would soon have universal death. He who is a self-centred, self-contained ego is, in the nature of the case, wretched.

The sun must shine and warm and light on their way a brotherhood of planets or be consumed by its own ardors. He who shuts up his bowels of compassion - how dwelleth the love of God in him' The grandest heart would be choked with aneurism did it not send the crimson tide to the remotest artery of the body.

`That man may last but never lives,
Who much receives but nothing gives;
Who none can love, none can thank,
Creation's blot, creation's blank.'

"If then, for no other purpose, I engage in this Masonic charity, I am compensated by being blessed in the deed. And though I have congratulated myself on the prospect of competency while living, and independence for my family when dead, I'm not insensible to the fact that the fickle goddess of fortune may snake my 'expectation vain, and disappoint my trust.' No man has a lease of life. We cannot tell what a day may bring forth. The spark of accident, the brand of the incendiary may light to destruction our dwellings; the worm, the cheat, the rust, may destroy our crops; the most trusted of financiers may fail and involve us in ruin. Riches can, in various ways, take to themselves wings and fly away; a breath of mephitic air, a grain of feculent pus, a moment of exposure, may plant the seeds of sure and speedy death, and ere a year the most prosperous and vigorous among us may be bankrupt of wealth, or low 'in the grave Already in our `Home' are those whose ancestors were clad in purple, and who feasted on the fat of the earth. There are those under its

hospitable shelter who bear historic names. I know not in doing this work for others but that I may be providing a 'Home' for my own loved. I glory in belonging to an Order as widely diffused as the race - a brotherhood of philanthropic men -a fraternal band who will encourage me in the right, gently admonish me when wrong, protect my fair name from foul breath of evil calumny, who will watch by my pillow when my head is aching with fatal pains, who will tenderly close my eyes when death shall put out their light, who will gently bear me to burial, plant the emblematic Acacia in the enfolding turf that over-wraps my throbbless breast, and take to their ward and protection the dear ones that I might otherwise leave in this cold and unfriendly world, uncared for and alone."

The speaker knew not he spoke prefiguring words. Called east, in an important case of litigation, he was returning to his home on the fatal train that went down in the death-gorge of Ashtabula. The charred remains were received and committed to the earth with Masonic Rites, and in the bright morn of manhood, when beginning to reap the first fruits of a professional career, he was cut down, leaving a wife and two children dependent. In a short time they were sheltered beneath the roof of the "Home," and the young widow nightly thanks God as she gathers her two fatherless boys, to her knee, that her loved and lost Harry was led by a love of "the true, the beautiful, and the good " to the altars of Masonry. -- *Kentucky Freemason*.

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