

Power And The Glory

By Unknown

PROLOGUE

"I am much discouraged," said the Worshipful Master of the Little Lodge over the Store, sorrowfully. "I can't see that our Lodge amounts to anything. We don't get anywhere. The members don't attend as well as they might. We haven't any power or influence any more. The big city Lodges do a great work, but what can a little country-town Lodge like this do? What does it really amount to?"

THE WIDOW'S TESTIMONY

Mrs. Cecily Evans, adjusting her black hat and patting the white cuffs on her black gown, with some melancholy pleasure that the signs of mourning were spotless as well as inexpensive, walked from her little home on Spring Road towards Higbee's. She went every day to Higbee's, not that she really expected a letter, but because John had so loved to go for the mail and chat with the townsfolk while the letters were being distributed in the boxes. Anything that had to do with John was precious to Cecily . . . poor John! Too young to die, too strong to give up, too fine to lose . . . and yet he had gone.

There was little John, and littler Cecily, to remember him by, . . . but, alas, little John and littler Cecily had mouths to feed and feet to shoe and wants to satisfy. And the little home was only just in the process of being bought. Of course, every one was very kind, but business is business in Littleville as well as in New York. As Mr. Burton, the banker, explained to her, with infinite kindness and patience, and a suspicious mist in his old eyes, strangers had bought the mortgage and they had to be paid. Cecily knew Mr. Burton for a kind and just man, but "Business is Business." And Cecily didn't want charity. She wanted opportunity. She wanted something to do . . . something besides the little vegetable garden and the chickens . . . something besides an occasional boarder, or the section hands whose dinner she was so glad to prepare and sell for so little money because it represented a mite towards that devastating interest which must, somehow be met . . . and those little shoes which wore out, oh, so fast; the small wants which are small only to those who have plenty, so big to sore-beset mothers. "I mustn't Give Up . . . I must be brave. John always said I was brave," she choked back the tears as she entered the little

town. "He wouldn't want his friends to see that I was not brave. But oh, if I can't get some more to do, and the little home has to go ... what shall I do? What shall ... Good afternoon, Mrs. Brown. Yes it is a lovely day, isn't it? Oh, I'm doing pretty well, thank you ... yes, they are both well ... She passed on down the street, Hiram Bent's little garage ... John had the flivver mended there, George Merton's house ... John had sold it for Merton. The Nonparelli Pool Parlor ... John used to play there once in a while. Jessup's ... John had bought the parlor carpet at Jessup's... .

"What will I do? What can I do? If I hadn't the children ... she whispered. Garry's store ... the lodge room over it, the Square and Compasses, dingy with time and the need of paint. "Masonic Temple, A.F. & A.M." was hardly legible on the front. John was so fond of the lodge.

John had found inspiration and courage in the lodge. That time he was sick, and the lodge had settled his note at the bank ... what fun they had saving to pay it back. The time John, Jr., was born and that funny Worshipful Master, with his labored speech of presentation of the little silver spoon ... but what a kind, good speech ... "John would be ashamed of me," cried Cecily to herself.

"Nothing can happen to me! The lodge won't let it happen. The lodge loved John, even as John loved the lodge." She would never ask them for help, praise God, if her strength held out, but oh, wasn't it wonderful to know of that great, strong, silent Ancient Institution that loved men, and taught them to care for the widowed and the fatherless?

THE FATHER'S TESTIMONY

"But can't you do anything about it?" Lawyer Higgins protests vigorously to Frank Mortimer. He spoke in a low tone, because the street was crowded ... crowded for Littleville, that is.

"What can I do?" answered the father. "He's in jail. They won't take bail. He writes me not to come, not to try do anything. He tells me he is entirely innocent, and that the truth will come out, surely. And, Haines, I believe him. He's a good boy. He never stole even candy when he was a little fellow. He's been a real comfort ... writes every week. I know he's not guilty, but a father is so helpless, so many miles away ..." "Have you done nothing?"

"I did everything I could," the father protested. "I wired him he could have all the money he needed; he didn't need any. He wrote that one of the Vice-Presidents in the bank, who believes in him, had gotten him a good lawyer. I tried to think of something else, and then remembered I hadn't done the most important thing. So I wrote to the Master of the Lodge I know in Big-Burg. He went to see the lad right away and he writes me every day. You know, Haines, sometimes I have thought that Freemasonry is too good for human beings, but it's times like these, when all you have and love is in danger and you don't know which way to turn, that you thank God most for it. I can't even pass the old Temple ... what a disgraceful condition that

paint is in ... without taking off my hat. You'll never know what a comfort that old place has been in this darkest hour ..."

THE BLIND BROTHER'S TESTIMONY

"Coming Father! Be there in just a minute. You can hear me if you listen well ... I'm on the last row now. Just one more pitcher and they'll all be watered. Then the best Daddy in the world will have a rose tomorrow!" The brave young voice was cheerful.

"Don't hurry child. I can wait," answered the blind man. He could wait. Daniel Borden had learned to wait. They all learn to wait, those who live in darkness. When the eyes close while life is warm and red in the body, the man inside learns patience in the hardest of schools. Daniel had learned quickly. It was only two years since he went blind. He had no preparation, as do those who suffer from disease, or cataracts, or just old age. Filling the car with gas, a lightning flash, a fire ... and not the best doctor in the biggest of the cities could bring back the seared eye balls.

He rebelled, sometimes. The blind do at times, especially the newly made blind. Those who are old in the Big Black Dark learn to keep their rebellion to themselves. For nature must have compensations, and the high pride of living through the worst of human afflictions with a smile, and a head carried erect, makes them conquer the rebellion, outwardly at least. Besides, there was Rose, his wife, and Emily, his daughter ... pretty Emily! How dainty she was, and how sunny! No man could be wholly blue who had an Emily. But it was hard not to see her face ... never to look forward to seeing it again ...

"Here I am Daddy!" his daughter touched him on the arm. "All ready? You don't mind if we walk down town do you? I have some shopping I want to do."

"Of course not, child. What does it matter where I walk ... as long as I am walking with you?" he added in a gallant effort to take the bitter sting from the words. "I want a cigar too."

"There's Mrs. Saunders, driving two pigs down the road," Emily chattered. "There are a couple of sparrows fighting on a wire, hear 'em? Oh, Daddy, I heard an airplane this morning. I couldn't locate it at all. Must have been too high up. If you had been with me, you'd have told me just which way to look. Good morning, Mr. Sellers . . . yes, always in the afternoon. I need the exercise, so Daddy makes me walk. Daddy, I do believe Tom King has a new car. Listen, you can tell by the sound of the motor ...

She was always like that. Trying so hard to make ears important instead of eyes! Any man ought to be glad ... but, oh, what can man do without eyes? Supposed anything happened to him, before he got enough together? He could still practice law, but slowly ... how long would he have? And neither wife nor daughter were strong, and they were newcomers to the town; they

had friends, in the common sense of the word, but how many real friends? To whom could they turn for real help if ... if ...

"Daddy, if you don't get up on your hind feet and tell that old lodge of yours to paint the front of that hall over the store, I'm coming down some day and paint it myself!" cried Emily. "The idea! Why, you'd hardly know it was the same Fraternity you belonged to back home! I ... "

"Masonry isn't expressible in paint, little daughter," smiled Daniel. "I can't explain to you, but ... that's a wonderful lodge to me." "Is it? How Come?" she asked.

"I am in it," Daniel answered simply. "I belong to it. It belongs to me. No lodge takes Freemasonry from a man who has once seen the Light, merely because he loses his sight. And when I go there, I still see the Light, though I cannot see the lights. You don't understand, do you? But it's a great comfort ... a great comfort. And I can't see whether it needs paint or not! I'm glad . . . Oh, I'm very glad for the little lodge, paint or no paint. It means a lot to a fellow who doesn't know just what would happen . . . I'll wait right in the middle of the door there, if you want, while you do your shopping ... "

THE SECRETARY'S TESTIMONY

Thomas Morrow had been Secretary of the Little Lodge over the store for thirty-nine years. He looked just as a Secretary of the age and experience always does look. He had a kindly face, shrewd blue eyes, wore gold-rim spectacles, was rather thin and a little stooped and was very patient ... he who bears with many Worshipful Master of many minds must be so.

Brother Morrow had two of the several Masonic virtues developed to the n'th power. He knew how to keep silent, and he understood the helping hand, whether it reached for a quarter for a beggar, a check for a charity, or support for the faltering. Which was why he knew something that no one else in Littleville knew, except the Minister; he knew that Jed Parsons, whose farm was six miles away, came to Littleville regularly once a week, got the key of the old Temple from the Secretary, and spent an hour in the deserted Lodge Room. Jed couldn't have told, if you asked him, why he did it. Jed was one of the world's inarticulate; one of the men who cannot say what they feel. "Its like this," explained the Secretary to the Minister.

"You know Jed's wife didn't get along with him ... city girl, she was. I don't know whose fault it was. Maybe it was Jed's fault. But I do know it broke his heart when she ran away with another man. That's why he comes to the Lodge Room. It comforts him, somehow ... he just goes in there and sits, and sits ... maybe he prays, I dunno."

THE OLD BROTHER'S TESTIMONY

Squire Bently passed down Main Street. He was an old man, now, almost eighty. He had walked down Main Street every fair day for ten years, on his way to the burying ground. Mrs. Bently

and two sons were there; the Squire was alone in the world. Most of Littleville didn't quite understand why its leading citizen was so happy. There were so many reasons why he shouldn't be ... the much-loved wife, the two adored boys, gone ... the lonely house, the great big house which had been so lively for so many years, now so silent and empty ...

But Squire Bently was happy. It was a quiet happiness, and a kindly one. There were some who understood part of it ... the Minister knew that it was a strong faith and a hope which kept the old face smiling. But none connected the strength which could win through a devastating grief with the walk down Main Street. It was a little longer walk to get to the burying ground that way. But, of course, Main Street was lively and interesting. Doubtless that was the reason.

Like many who are old, Squire Bently talked often to himself. Never where he could be overheard, of course. Had there been any to overhear, they would have heard nothing worth reporting.

"There it is. It does need paint," he said slowly to himself. "The Old Lodge doesn't grow very much. But it's all Masonic, and ... what would I have done without Masonry? Of course, the Church teaches it, and the Great Light tells of it, but Masonry makes it a part of you. In the Grand Lodge Above, the boys are standing at the door, waiting. Milly is waiting there, too. Wonder if the Great Architect of the Universe lets women into the Grand Lodge Above, or if He has an Eastern Star Chapter for them?" Squire Bently smiled at the thought. "Sprig of Acacia ... merits of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah ... I don't know how men who lose everything ... get through without their lodge to think about, the touch of the Brethren's hands to help them on, the certainty of the hereafter that Freemasonry teaches ... I must put something in my will to give them a start for a new coat of paint. It won't be long now ... dear old lodge ... "

EPILOGUE

Maybe it is a part of the Great Plan, that Brethren cannot see, as sees the All Seeing Eye, the use, the influence, the Power and the Glory, of the littlest, poorest, and most insignificant of Lodges!

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