

an heir to the throne, on the marriage of one of the royal family, they repair to the royal presence in procession. At the coronation of the sovereign one of the most important features in the pageant is a gorgeous and lengthened procession. That procession, let me remind you, sir, wends its way to the house of God, and for the purpose of worship. It enters the abbey. There divine service is performed; in the course of which the sovereign receives the crown and takes an oath to the people. These points are pressed on you as pertinent to the subject. Surely, after considering them, you will hold us blameless, if, as Masons, we wish to 'Go up to the house of God in company'—in other words, 'in procession?'"

"Plausible, but hollow?" was the vicar's comment; then, after a pause, "you have failed to convince me. I object to you strongly, on the score of your processions, and I object to you still more decidedly on the score of your—secret. You are a secret society; are held together by a stringent oath; now I hold that, wherever there is mystery there is iniquity!"

"A harsh conclusion, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Wolford, the wine merchant, who now took part in the discussion; "you cannot be serious in maintaining it? When you assert secrecy to be criminal, you have forgotten its universal agency. It has escaped you how largely it pervades both public and private life. In every department its operation is traceable. The naval commander sails from his country's shores under sealed orders. He has private papers which contain his instructions. These he is to open in a certain latitude and longitude. Meanwhile their import is 'secret' to him, and to those who serve under him. But he accepts his trust unhesitatingly. The 'secrecy' in which his orders are veiled does not indispose him towards their fulfilment, make him suspicious of their origin, doubtful of their necessity, or render their faithful performance one whit less obligatory upon his part. His duty is to obey. Take another instance: The Cabinet Council which deliberates on the interests of this great country, and advises the sovereign in matters of policy, is sworn to secrecy. No member of it is allowed, without distinct permission from the reigning prince, to divulge one syllable of what passes at its sittings. *It is a SECRET conclave.* But no one questions, *on that account*, the legality or propriety of its decisions. In private life secrecy obtains. In a commercial partnership there are secrets—the secrets of the firm. To them each co-partner is privy; but is solemnly bound not to disclose them. In a family there are secrets. In most households there are facts which the heads of that household do not divulge to their servants, children, and dependents. Prudence enjoins secrecy. So that, in public and in private life, in affairs of state, and in affairs of commerce, secrecy, more or less, prevails; why, then, should it be objected to the Freemason, that in his Order there is a secret which is essential to the existence of the fraternity, and which he is bound to hold sacred?"

"Ha! ha! ha! An adroit evasion of a very awkward accusation!" cried the vicar, with an enjoyable chuckle: "who is the General of your Order? There must be Jesuits amongst ye! No argument from Stoneyhurst could be more jesuitically pointed!" And again the vicar laughed heartily.

The deputation did not join him. They looked on in silence. Perhaps they thought the refusal of the church a sufficient annoyance without the addition of the vicar's bantering. His pleasantry was not infectious. Perchance they held with the delinquent negro, in one of our West India colonies, who was first severely reprimanded, and then soundly thrashed by his owner: "Massa, massa; no preachee too and floggee too!"

At length one of them, with great gravity, inquired, "Whether Mr. Gresham had any further objection to urge?"

"Oh dear, yes! I am hostile to you because you combine."

The banker now fired his broadside.

"We do. We are as a city at unity in itself. We form a band of united brethren, bound by one solemn obligation, stringent upon all, from the highest to the lowest; and the object of our combination? boundless charity and untiring benevolence. We must be charitable and kindly affectioned to all; but more especially to our brethren. With them we are ever to sympathize readily, and their necessities to succor cheerfully. Respect we are to have none, either as to color, creed, or country. And yet it is our charity to be neither indiscriminate, wasteful, nor heedless. We are to prefer the worthy brother, and to reject the worthless. And our warrant for so doing is His command who has said, 'Thou shalt open thy hand wide to thy brother, and to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.'"

"The latter remark none can gainsay," said the vicar, coldly: "and thus, I believe, our interview, terminates."

The deputation retired, desperately chagrined.

The church was closed against them. The new lodge was opened; but there was no public procession, and no sermon. To me, lightly and carelessly as I then thought