

was not known or had not been said before, and which might not have been found in Stone's *Letters*, in Brown's *Narrative*, or in Whittlesley's *Report*.

One thing, however, we do learn from Mr. Weed, the knowledge of which is gratifying to us, although it is difficult to reconcile his views of Freemasonry, as here expressed, with his violent partisanship. Mr. Weed says:

I did not personally know William Morgan, who was for more than two months writing his book in a house adjoining my residence at Rochester. When applied to by Mr. Dyer, my next door neighbor, where Morgan boarded, to print the book purporting to disclose the secrets of Masonry, I declined to do so, *believing that a man who had taken an oath to keep a secret had no right to disclose it.* Although not a Freemason, I had entertained favorable opinions of an Institution to which Washington, Franklin and Lafayette belonged.

The last of the anti-Masons have been heard, and we are no wiser than we were before. The story so often told is here but repeated. We might also apply to this fruitless narrative what Shakespeare makes Pembroke say of King John's second coronation:

"This act is as an ancient tale new told,  
And, in the last repeating, troublesome,  
Being urged at a time unseasonable."

But the truth is that the so-called "murder of Morgan never will be told. The reason is that there is an absence of what the lawyers call the "*corpus delicti*"—the essence of the crime. The body of Morgan was never found, and the effort to substitute that of another man who was drowned in the lake, most signally failed. Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Munroe contended for the corpse which, after two inquests, was given to the latter. All the labor of the anti-Masons, supported by some of the best legal ability of the State of New York, was unable to prove that the alleged murder was ever committed. Everything was enveloped in a deep veil of mystery which has never been yet raised for mortal eyes. It is, therefore, worse than folly to speak of murderers who were never convicted, or of a murder that was never proven. In fact, the truth of the charge of abduction is subject to some grave doubts, for there was evidence elicited on some of the trials that Morgan went away of his own accord, although it is admitted that he may have come to this determination through the mixed influence of threats and promises.

In all this labyrinth of moral and legal perplexity, but one thing is found clear as noonday. That is, that whatever was the fate of Morgan, the great body of the Craft *neither knew of it antecedently nor concurred in it subsequently.* Freemasonry had no more to do with the affair as an organized association, than had the Church or State. If certain Freemasons slew him, or abducted him, or persuaded him to run away, the act was their own, and they were led to the act not in obedience, but in direct opposition to the laws, the principles and the teachings of Freemasonry.

This was the rational view taken by William Wirt, before he accepted the nomination of President of the United States by the anti-Masons. Afterwards, when his respect for candor was somewhat clouded by political ambition, he *professed* to change his opinion. But his first view was the fair one. "I had heard, indeed," he says, "the general rumor that Morgan had been kidnapped and probably murdered, by Masons, for divulging their secrets; but I supposed it to be the act of a few ignorant and ferocious desperadoes, moved by their own impulse, singly, and without the sanction of their lodges."

But, as I have said, there were rumors, conjectures and presumptions, amounting on the whole, only to the suggestion that he was *possibly* murdered, and if so, that he was murdered by Masons; but there never was any such clear and evident demonstration as would amount to judicial proof that there was a murder at all. No man could ever make such a proposition unless he indulged in guess work, and the question so often in the mouths of the anti-Masons from 1826 to 1832—"Where is Morgan?"—might be repeated at this day with as little probability of receiving a satisfactory answer.

The fate of Morgan has, therefore, become in the true sense of the word, a myth. It is a fable in which history and fiction, the probable and the improbable, the reasonable and the absurd, have been so mixed that it has become impossible for any one to say where truth ends and where falsehood begins.

It is not, therefore, surprising that both Masonic and anti-Masonic history have abounded in what may have been called Morgan myths. A few of them may be worth preserving to show in what a state of uncertainty the whole matter rests.

These myths or rumors began at a very early date. In September, 1830, at the anti-Masonic convention held at Philadelphia, Mr. Whittlesley said that "Some fine stories were circulated about the appearance of Morgan at Malta and at Smyrna;" and at the same convention Mr. Todd stated: