

TO OBEY THE MORAL LAW,

and if he rightly understands the art he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious libertine." I appeal to all thoughtful men, and I ask them is not this quotation from the ancient charges sufficiently explicit? The craft does not permit any discussion on this landmark, and if any one within the portals of the masonic temple is foolish enough to imagine that this is an open question, he errs very seriously, and has *per se* ceased to be a Mason. "As a Mason," so runs the charge to the newly initiated, "I would first recommend to your most serious contemplation the volume of the sacred law, charging you to consider it the unerring standard of truth and justice, and to regulate your actions by the Divine precepts which it contains. Therein you will be taught the important duties you owe to God, to your neighbour and to yourself. To God, by never mentioning His name but with that awe and reverence which are due from the creature to his Creator, by imploring His aid on all your lawful undertakings, and by looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support." Now, it would not, be difficult to show that the above statement contains all essential elements of religious life, but the Mason wisely stops short at the line of creed and dogmatism, for his object is to unite men on certain common and fundamental truths which, if honestly accepted, can hardly fail to produce among them a fraternal moderation on questions where conflicting opinion is almost inevitable, and the clearly expressed aim of the order is that Masonry may become "a centre of union, and the means of conciliating true friendship among persons that must have remained at a perpetual distance." (*Old Charges*, 1,722.) It appears, therefore, that both charges preferred against masonry are conclusively answered by the above and other similar quotations from our accepted standards. But we are living in

DAYS OF RIGID HISTORICAL ENQUIRY,

and I make free to say that if we would see the craft progress on its all-inclusive mission it must pursue its course on the old and well recognized landmarks, and pronounce without hesitation, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind in favor of FAITH and REVELATION. To permit Freemasonry to fall under the guidance of the shallow minds that retail second-hand infidelity would be to seal its doom for all time. These men, where they exist, are not half as wise as they think themselves to be, and they are not by any means the reliable guides in the domain of morals and ethics which their admirers try to make out. The "Ancient Charges" look upon the man capable of reasoning God out of His created works as a "stupid atheist," and a charge more ancient still has written him in larger characters—A FOOL.

I have heard some well-intentioned masons talk about the beauty of the craft as a non-religious organization, but these excellent brethren can hardly be accused of any very intimate acquaintance with our history or any undue familiarity with the teachings of the craft. When they say "non-religious" they simply mean non-denominational." But this loose method of speaking frequently creates a wrong impression on the masonic as well as the non-masonic hearer, and helps to give countenance to some of the calumnies which have been uttered against us. To be non-religious would require us first of all to extinguish one of our three great