

Masons in this vast Commonwealth, and each one of that hundred feel that he could repose in serene and perfect confidence on the fidelity and truth of the other ninety-nine, than that there should be an hundred thousand, with the distrustful feeling that ten of them, in the hour of trial, might prove false. Let us know where we stand as Masons, and whether the solemn vows which we have uttered are to govern our actions, or whether they are hollow mockeries, imposing no higher duties than those we owed before they were uttered. Let us ascertain whether Masonry is a living reality, demanding some sacrifice as the occasion for it may arise, or a delusion and a sham—a child's rattle, to be toyed with at pleasure, and cast aside whenever a selfish interest may lead us away from the observance of its obligations.

I do not propose to be thus cheated and deluded. I am in earnest in my own devotion to its sublime teachings and principles. If there is one thing in our poor human natures which more than all others tends to redeem us—if there is one thing that makes me feel like bowing down to thank Almighty God for the poor gift of human life, it is this sense and capacity for fidelity to individuals with which he has endowed us. It is the strongest similitude of the divine, and I shall have strangely miscalculated if, in the final summing up, the practice of this virtue is not suffered to cover a multitude of sins. I repeat, it is peculiarly the province and mission of your Fraternity to cultivate that virtue; nay, Freemasonry demands it, and you cease to be Masons when you cease to practice it. And as it is the crowning glory of human character, so the vice which stands opposed to it—treachery, infidelity, betrayal of the confidence and trust you have invited and received,—is the basest and most odious, the most universally detested and despised of all human depravities. Treachery, moreover is never a solitary invader. It brings in its train an army of lesser evils, as if to conceal its own enormity by surrounding itself with gradations of infamy. As treason is the highest crime known to the law of the land, so in the moral and social world, infidelity is the basest, the vilest, of all vices. The one is the jewel which should always glitter resplendent in the Masons crown; the other the hateful word which should find no place in his vocabulary. Next to that of husband and wife, parent and child, no merely human relation is so sacred as that of the Masonic Brotherhood. To be false in any of these connections is to sin against ourselves and descend to the lowest depths of shame and degradation. Yet, we must make the humiliating confession that Masons are sometimes false to one another, and that betrayals of confidence and trust among those who sustain that relation have been of far too frequent occurrence.

I would have you, as you can do if you will, make an end of these humiliating and shameful occurrences. I would imbue you with a nobler conception of the spirit and requirements of your fraternal obligations, with a more complete and unwavering devotion to your vows.

If you have been imposed upon by unworthy Brethren, if you have been betrayed and wronged in the name of Freemasonry, on your own heads the blame must rest, for you hold in your hands the remedy for