

of its annual gathering for business, and inviting the public to come together and hear what is said about it, should decidedly nullify the objection. Secrecy is one of the land-marks of the Order, and these words are constantly addressed to every candidate for its mysteries: "Keep sacred and inviolable the mysteries of the Order, as these distinguish you from the rest of the community and mark your consequence among Masons."

There is a certain amount of knowledge as to methods of recognition, signs and words; of legendary and traditional learning, which is given only to those who rightly pass the degrees; and this veil of mystery, this "awful secrecy," as some choose to term it, has invariably, from the beginning, been a distinctive mark and characteristic of the institution: and to-day, as of old, the first duty of a Mason is the promise of secrecy, and this principle has remained intact through all the changes and chances that have swept over the world, carrying in their train the destruction of kingdoms, of empires, and even of whole nations. It is absolutely necessary for any society which intends to be permanent—which intends to accept some and reject others who ask admission within its doors—to have a secret mode of initiation and of recognition, and a secrecy in other things necessary to the maintenance of the Order.

But the designs, the grand object, the principles, the requirements in those asking admission to our Order, are all loudly proclaimed to the world, and they are invited to ask of, and to know her upon these lines. Everybody knows who are her members, and those who are once admitted are proud of the honor, and glad to have it known that they are Freemasons, and so I contend that in the sense of a secret society, in the true sense in which that term should be used, the Masonic fraternity is not a secret society. Compare for a moment this organization with those rightly and justly called secret societies, and you will at once see how unjust is the accusation. Look, for example, at the Nihilists. This society declares that it has no belief in God, and then inconsistently declares Him to be the personification of all tyranny. It respects no laws of justice, morality, or of property; it endeavors to overthrow all institutions, political, social, military, and religious; its members are joined together by oaths to carry out these destructive principles; and they dare not let it be known that they are members of this Satanic body. Look at the Socialists. Look at the Klu-Klux-Klan, organized to uphold slavery. Look at the Fenians, and look at "Young Ireland," having the most complete system of oaths and of secret work, fearing the public eye, keeping hid from all eyes their terrible designs till by their direful effects of rapine, fraud, bloodshed and misery, they become known. Compare, I say, with these, this honorable body, which is glad to have the world know its designs, its teachings, its membership, making God and right, with the advancement of every social and moral virtue its leading principles, and then say can Freemasonry be justly charged with being a secret society? For her secrecy, such as it is, honorable, laudable, commendable, we love her; yea, we love the brotherhood for these things.