

the careful and laborious discussion which precedes every decision—all this would astonish those who regard Freemasonry as a mere plea for conviviality. It is a simple fact that busy professional men habitually devote a considerable portion of their time to business drudgery; that boards and committees meet to debate and divide; that in no case is remuneration or reward looked for. This voluntary self-absorption is not the least striking part of Freemasonry, for, at the meetings I speak of, neither convivial pleasures nor indirect personal advantage can be hoped for. It is sheer dogged hard work, performed gratuitously and cheerfully by men upon whom the rules and precepts I have hinted at, have made full impression. Let it be borne in mind that ten thousand initiations took place last year; that the income of the craft exceeds that of many a principality; that its members subscribe to their three charitable institutions—the Freemasons' Girls' School, the Freemasons' Boys' School, and the Asylum for Aged Freemasons and their Widows, some twenty thousand pounds annually; that the cares of administration and distribution devolve upon the busy men forming the committees and sub-committees named; and it will be readily seen that, apart from its "secrets," this time-honoured institution has worked, and is working, substantial and undeniable good. Its hold on earnest members is the best proof I can advance of the reality of its tie.

But it is time you saw one of the institutions we are so proud of. Let us take a railway ticket from either Waterloo or Victoria station, and after a twenty minutes' run alight at Clapham junction. A few minutes' bewilderment in the dreary subterranean caverns of that mighty maze; a few abortive ascents up steps which are so ingeniously placed at the sides of the tubular dungeon we traverse as to lure us upon wrong platforms, whence we are sent below again ignominiously; a short game at question and answer with the old crone selling oranges at the corner; and, crossing another railway bridge, we are in front of a spacious red brick building, on the lofty tower of which, besides the clock, are a pair of compasses and a blazing sun. We will not stop to talk further about symbols now. After admiring the spacious well-kept garden of this place, and enjoying the sweet scents rising up from every flower-bed, we make for the front door, when the sharp click of a croquet-mallet reaches us from the right, and, turning a corner, we come upon a thoroughly happy party. Some twenty girls, from twelve to fifteen years old, are laughing merrily at the vigour with which one of their number has just sent the ball rattling through the little croquet hoops. The healthy, happy, laughing group, framed in by foliage, and relieved by the bright green of the velvet turf upon which they play; the frankly modest confidence with which we, as strangers, are received; the courteous offer to accompany us round the grounds and the house; the revelation that, as this is the matron's birthday, every one is making merry in her honour—are all a capital commentary upon the masonic virtues I have vaunted. Next, we learn that some ladies and gentlemen are playing in another portion of the grounds, and in a few paces we are in their midst, being welcomed by house-committeemen, are hearing that our chance visit has happened on a red-letter day, and that other brethren are expected down. The speaker is an exalted Mason who has five capital letters after his name, and, as I have never seen him out of masonic costume before, it does not seem quite natural that he should play croquet without his apron and decorations. This gentleman (who will, I am sure, accept this kindly-meant remembrance in the spirit dictating it) is so pleasantly paternal, his exuberant playfulness and affectionate interest in the games played, and in the pretty little players, is so prominent, that we soon forget his grander attributes, and settle down to a quiet chat on the discipline and rules of the establishment. This is the Freemasons' Girls' School. It clothes, educates, and thoroughly provides for one hundred and three girls, who must be daughters of Freemasons, between eight and sixteen years of age, and who

are elected by the votes of its subscribers. The comfort of its internal arrangements, its spotless cleanliness, the healthiness of its site, the judicious training and considerate kindness of its matron and governesses, are themes we descant upon at length; the rosy faces and unrestrained laughter of the children bearing forcible testimony to us. The committee of management visit this school frequently and regularly, and their deliberations generally terminate in a romp with the school-girls. The little gardens, some with paper notices pinned to the shrubs, with: "Please do not come too near, as we have sown seed near the border—Signed 28 and 22," written in pencil in a girlish hand; the healthy cleanly dormitories, the light and airy glass-covered exercise-hall, where the young people drill and dance; the matron's private sanctum, which is like a fancy fair to-day in the extent and variety of the gay birthday presents laid out; the tea-room, where we all have jam in honour of the matron's nativity; the board-room, hung with the portraits of grand masters and masonic benefactors, and which is placed at our disposal that we may enjoy a quiet chat with the two dear little girls in whom we have a special interest, are all visited in turn. Then a procession is formed, and "We love Miss Smoothetwig dearly, and so say all of us!" is sung, while Brother Buss, P.M. and P.Z., who has just come in, and Brother Putt, G.A.D.C., his fellow house-committeeman who has already welcomed us, beat time joyously to the good old "jolly good fellow" tune. This song is a little surprise prepared every year for the birthdays of governess and matron, and the amiable assumption of delight at an unexpected novelty which beams from the latter's kindly face when the well-worn tune is sung, is not the least pleasing incident of the day.

The Freemasons' Boys' School is at Woodlane, Tottenham, and in it from eighty to a hundred sons of Freemasons are clothed, educated, and provided for, with similar comfort and completeness. The institution for the relief of aged Freemasons and their widows, though neither so wealthy nor so liberal as the other two, provides an asylum for, and grants annuities to, the old and infirm.

These are some of the secrets of Freemasonry. The coffins in which, as many of my friends firmly believe, we immature young and tender candidates; the painful brandings which make sitting down impossible; the raw heads, red-hot pokers, and gory bones, with which we heighten the awesomeness of our dreadful oaths; the wild revels and orgies which some ladies believe in,—must be left in obscurity. Having shown the fair fruits of masonry, I must leave you to form your unaided judgment of the tree which brings them forth. Besides, I dare not reveal more. The learned author of many volumes of masonic lore has stated his firm conviction that Adam was a Freemason, and that the order, and its accompanying blessings, extend to other worlds than this. I offer no opinion on any such highly imaginative hypothesis, but confine myself to the stout assertion that Freemasons have a tie which is unknown to the outer world, and that their institution is carefully adapted to the needs, hopes, fears, weaknesses, and aspirations, of human nature. That it has unworthy members is no more an argument against the order, than the bitter sectarianism of the Rev. Pitt Howler, and the fierce uncharitableness of Mrs. Backbite, are arguments against Christianity.

#### SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT.

NO one doubts that the same sentiments may be very differently expressed; that one phraseology may be such a modification of another as to be almost equal to an alteration. When we hear a ruffian on the street shout after some retreating Uriah Heap around the corner, "You are a liar;" we shudder in horror—and very naturally too; yet we can listen with comparative admiration to a polished Mr. Chesterfield, as, gently drawing off his spectacles, maintaining his habitually elegant posture and un-

ruffled countenance, he addresses his vis-à-vis "Sir, I am under the necessity of observing that you deviate materially from the truth." Both the ruffian and gentleman mean exactly the same, and who will venture to say that the blunt spirit of the one, is in reality, worse than the bland spirit of the other? Yet all will agree that the *refined* is preferable to the *rude* vulgarism.

And charming little Dora is not thought to be a tale-bearer, when, with animated flippancies and facetious exaggerations, she relates the same story in the drawing-room, as your ignorant Mrs. Larkins takes such pains to repeat to her gossiping neighbours, coarsely gesticulating, and solemnly nodding the head at the close of every sentence.

After Pope had written some bitter verses on Lady Montagu, he told a friend that he should soon have ample revenge upon her, for he had set her down in black and white, and should soon publish what he had written. "Be so good as to tell the little gentleman," was the quiet reply, "that I am not afraid of him, for I can easily cause him to be set down in black and blue." Not thus did Bridget give vent to the same sentiment regarding a lover who had slighted her, but with all the vehemence of her native brogue, she declared that, "Sure she'd have him baten till he'd be as blue as indigo!"

Instead of repeating the old maxim in the form of "Take care of your thoughts, and your words will take care of themselves," it would be better "Guard your language, let your thoughts be what they may."

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London, C.W.

#### A SUMMER HOLIDAY IN MEXICO.

EVERYONE who has resided in Mexico knows the picturesque little village of San Agustín; and to most Mexicans the mere mention of this name is fraught with sad and painful recollections.

We may be asked if it is a cemetery, if it is there that the inhabitants of the fair capital have buried their friends and relations.

Yes! it is indeed, a gaping sepulchre, where every year many an honest man has buried, not his body indeed, but his immortal soul; many who have gone there radiant with hope and joy, have returned pale and haggard, overcome with sleepless misery, or perhaps in a raging fever which kills.

San Agustín de las Cuevas is one of the Mexican cities that were already populous and full of life and energy, when the Spaniards conquered the country.

It was called, in the language of the ancient Mexicans, "Tlalpam," (meaning "uplands"), and communicated with the capital by means of magnificent causeways, also by lakes and canals, which, in those early days, were navigated by canoes.

Its situation is most picturesque: through luxuriant fields of maize, wheat and barley, a broad and level road, shaded with beautiful trees, leads from the city to the village, which reposes in sweet tranquillity on a gentle slope of the lofty mountain of Ajusco. The ancient part of the village, with its houses of sunburnt brick, its little chapels and orchards (in disorder it is true, but covered with flowers and fruits), exists, with little change, as in the time of Cortez, while at the entrance to the place, in the plaza and principal streets, many modern country-houses have been built, with large and handsome gardens; but whether in the savage and neglected state of nature, or under careful and methodical cultivation, there is a luxuriance and leafy freshness in the vegetation, unequalled perhaps in any portion of the temperate climate in Mexico.

San Agustín is not a suburb of Mexico, like Tacubaya, nor is it a city like Jalapa, but a true country village, simple and solitary, with grass growing between the stones in the streets, which are traversed in all directions by crystal streams of water; and where on one side you find yourself in green lanes, overshadowed by apple, pear and chestnut trees; or on the other you are soon