

otherwise they would have to meet the iron scoffs and scowls of every bigot they met with.

Forty or fifty years ago Freemasonry especially was looked upon by many as being "the man of sin" of the Bible, and thousands who held high memberships in the churches were warned against the institution as being one of great wickedness and full of secret conspiracies. In those days it was but seldom that a gospel minister was found knocking at the door of a Masonic Lodge room for admission. The attempt even, if made known, would in many places raise such a hub-bub over the heads of clerical opponents that many were made to fear the mystical association as one that bore kinderredship with that of Satan.

We sat, a few nights ago, at the fire-side of one of those old pioneer preachers, and heard him tell the story of his becoming a Mason, when, as he said, Masonry was looked upon as being the very worst form of systematized infidelity the world had ever known.

"When I joined the Masons," said he, "the great masses of the people, with most of the churches, were down on it. They thought it was a secret institution which was dangerous to both Church and State, and the great excitement which had been kicked up over the supposed murder of William Morgan, had led many to believe that the whole thing was full of blood and thunder. I had read a good deal on the subject of Masonry and much that was against it. But I had read what Washington said of it, that the grand object of Masonry is to promote the happiness of the human race, and also what Lafayette had declared it, viz: 'An Order whose leading star is philanthropy,' and knowing them to be good men, as well as true patriots, I believed the Order to be a good one, and one worthy of the respect and confidence of all intelligent and good men. I was in charge of a congregation in the city of L., Kentucky, at the time, and I soon found there would probably be an open door for me to know for myself and not another what Masonry was in its mysteries as well as in its duties.

"But the mischief was my wife was opposed to the Order, and this with some men is often considered a great barrier, and indeed I so considered it myself, for I did not like to violate any of her wishes. She, I knew, was honest in her prejudices, and though I thought them wholly unreasonable, my love for her and my high regard for her feelings made her opposition the greatest barrier to my becoming a Mason. What my congregation would do about it, I did not know, but as quite a number of them were already Masons, I did not apprehend any serious opposition from this quarter. My wife's opposition was my chief obstacle. But an evening spent with the family of a venerable Master Mason about this time served the good purpose of her conversion.

"Knowing that I had already taken two degrees in the Mystic Order—a fact which had not yet been fully communicated to my 'better half'—he said to her after tea: "Sister H., I want you to make Bro. H. join the Masons."

"Why, Brother D., she asked, "What good would that do him?"

"Why it will make him a wiser and better man, and I have no doubt a more successful minister."

"If it would do all that," said she, "I wouldn't object a moment."

"As I was sitting by the table in the same room, apparently reading a book, I could but blush right there, for I felt the tender sensibility that Mrs. H. perhaps thought there was some good chance for improvement in me."

"Why," said Judge P., "don't you know, Sister H., that the best men of this nation have been Masons?"

"Is that so?" she exclaimed.

"It is," said the Judge. "Washington and Jackson, Warren and Montgomery, Franklin and Lafayette, and hundreds of others of our best and greatest men were Masons, and in these days we have them by the thousand, and in this city," said he, "we have as members of our two Lodges the very best men of the place."

"Well, but Judge," said Mrs. H., "I do not like for my husband to have any secrets of any kind that he won't tell me."

"Ha, ha," the Judge responded with a hearty laugh, "I thought it was only a little freak of jealousy in your making opposition to brother H. becoming a Mason. Do you know, Sister H.," the Judge asked, "what sermon Bro. H. is going to preach next Sunday?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know what books he reads?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know how many families he visits in his parish?"

"No, sir."

"Well, now, I see," said the Judge, laughing, "that you don't know half the secrets he now has."

"But, Judge," said the good woman, "I am told that you brand them when you take them into your Lodges. Is this so?" she asked.