

Have marble records that will not die—
Their primitive Mason-mark.

“Those Craftsmen old had a genial whim,
That nothing could ere destroy;
With a love of their art that naught could dim,
They toiled with a chronic joy,
From Tiber to Danube, from Rhine to Seine,
They need no ‘Letters of marque,’
Their art was their passport in France and Spain,
And in Britain, their Mason-mark.”

—From *Baldwin's Monthly*.

WHAT FREEMASONRY HAS DONE.

AN honest enquirer has asked us, “What has Freemasonry done to establish its claim to the distinguished honor and position which Masons assign to it in the world?” We answer, it has, to a very creditable extent, promoted the work of civilization. The pages of history supply but scanty records of its usefulness. What Freemasonry has done, in this direction, has not been proclaimed to the world. She works not as an organized body, displaying its machinery to the world; but works through its members themselves and through their means. But this is more or less withdrawn from the gaze of the enquirer, as also from the world in general; for “the actual deeds of a Freemason are his secrets.”

Freemasonry has been the conservator of pure and sound religious morals in times of almost universal degeneracy. We do not claim too much for it when we say that, in the Fourteenth Century, more especially in Germany, and in Northern Europe generally, when corruption and licentiousness had invaded the Church of God; when vice in its grossest form, and immorality in its most revolting aspects, were sanctioned by those who ministered at its sacred altars of religious worship, Freemasonry entered its solemn and oft-repeated protests against the corruptions and profligacy of the times. The sturdy operative Masons, moved by these strong and vigorous words, engraved with their own honest hands upon the solid rock which they wrought for building purposes, figures, words, and sentences, that stood out in mute rebuke of the unbridled licentiousness of the very priests themselves, who were the moral and religious instructors of the people! And many of those silent but stern rebukes remain till the present time, in attestation of the high and healthful tone maintained by the Craft in mediæval times. In the meantime, the lives and examples of the fraternity were in exemplification of a higher and purer morality than was found, at the time referred to, in the Church itself.

How far the sterner and more elevated morals of the association of Operative Masons, in these days, went to countervail the corruptions of the Church, and to prepare the way for the great Reformation, then dawning, we are not called on to say; but nothing is hazarded in asserting or affirming, in the light of Masonic history, that Freemasonry, or that which was substantially the same, under a different name, preserved a radius and centre of moral influences, that, but for the fraternity, had not existed in any other organization in Europe. It was a great moral power at work upon that class and portion of society most likely, under ordinary circumstances, to sink deepest in corruption, in times of prevalent licentiousness and irreligion in high places. It was a light shining in a dark place. The value of Freemasonry cannot be over-estimated at that dark period, as a great conservator of good morals. But, at all times, and in all places, if Freemasonry be true to its avowed principles, it must prove a powerful agency in the conservation of sound morals. It is derelict, on the score of duty, if it fails to answer this end and to render this service to the cause of morals in this world. Thousands upon thousands of men at the present day, and all around us, in every-day walks of life, are made better by their Masonic vows than they could be in absence of those restraints. They are better husbands, better fathers, better brothers, better in all the social relations of life, than they would be if they were not Masons.

A Masonic lodge, in any community, if the fraternity be true to its code of morals, and perform with fidelity the moral duties, as enjoined in the lodge, cannot fail to prove a blessing to that community.

The best of institutions are liable to abuse. The Church itself, which stands upon a higher platform than Masonry, whose members are bound by their profession and solemn vows to “walk worthy of their vocation,” often has to mourn over the defections and delinquencies of its members. Many of them bring reproach upon the cause.