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### THE LETTER "G."

BY MRS. MARY C. HAZLETT.

From the Mystic Star.

"No, Mary, you shall never be the wife of George Stanford," said old Mr. Carleton, with a lowering brow, and a determined eye.

"And why not, father?" said the gentle Mary, striving to conceal her emotion. "Is he not of a good family; is he not regarded as a high-minded, honorable young man; are not his business prospects flattering, and is not his attachment to me as strong and sincere as you or I would wish?"

"That may all be very true, my child; but he has associated himself with a society which dares not to unfold its secret workings to the world, and which the world has never been able to discover as accomplishing any good. In short, Mary, Stanford is a Freemason.

"And is that your only objection, Father?"

"Is not that a sufficient one?" he said, sternly. "Dare you, a mere child, presume to array your feeble judgment against my age and experience?"

"I do not wish to be disrespectful, my father, but I cannot help thinking you judge Masonry unjustly. I have known, for a long time, that George was a Mason, and this fact has led me to investigate its principles. Elder Williams, who lives next door to us, is a Mason, and he has allowed me to read his Monitor, magazines, and other Masonic works; and if Masonry is what those works describe it to be, it is a good institution, and the world would suffer from its loss."

"You can tell nothing about it by the books they publish. They are only printed for effect, and to conceal the real corruptness of the institution. If there was anything good about it, it would not be kept secret. The Bible commands men not to hide their light under a bushel."

"But, father, the Bible says also, 'let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth,' and I think I have discovered some good deeds by Masons. There is old Mr. Strong, who lives down by the mill, and who has not been able to work for nearly a year. The Masons have taken care of him for a long time. They bring him provisions and every thing else he needs, and every night one or two of them come to stay with him—for he is failing very fast, and it would not be safe to leave him alone."

"Then he is one of their number, and their care of him is owing to a species of honor among thieves," said Mr. Carleton.

"No," said Mary, "he is not and never has been a Mason. He told me so himself, only this morning, when I went to carry him some fruit and flowers, and

he said he should have died of want long ago but for their kindness, and he hoped God would bless and reward them. And then," continued Mary, "there is dear Mattie Dow, whose father belonged to the society, the Masons are sending her to the young ladies' boarding school, and preparing her for a teacher. They are paying all her expenses, and she told me they had cared for her ever since the death of her parents, and that she loved them as much as if they were her own brothers. Oh, father! it cannot be that those who perform such good deeds are bad men, for a tree is known by its fruits."

But old Mr. Carleton was not a man to be turned from his purpose. His prejudice against Masonry had grown stronger and deeper as he had grown older, and the gentle pleading of his beautiful daughter only served to irritate him.

"Mary," he said very sternly, "it is of no use to talk to me about Masonry; and it is worse than folly for you to attempt to gain my consent to your marriage with George Stanford. You were eighteen years of age yesterday, and can, of course, do as you please in this matter; but, if you dare to disobey my wishes, you are no longer my child. I would sooner sink my wealth in the depths of the ocean, or give it to the most miserable beggar in this great city of New York, than bestow it upon a daughter who is so ungrateful as to marry against her father's will. Choose, therefore, between your father's wealth and love, and George Stanford, the Freemason. I shall expect your decision to-morrow morning."

Mary Carleton arose and left her father's presence. With slow, unsteady step, she sought her own room. She felt that the crisis of her life had arrived, and she knew not how to decide. Her father had encouraged the attentions of Stanford until within the last few days. Discovering that he was a Freemason, Mr. Carleton had told him haughtily that he must renounce all connection with the institution or discontinue his visits to his house. The young man had met this unreasonable demand with the proper spirit, and firmly, but respectfully, asserted his determination to be a Freemason while he lived. He had been ordered from the house, and told never to enter it again. Such were the circumstances leading to the above conversation between Mr. Carleton and his daughter.

Mary knelt at her bedside, and implored her God to give her strength and wisdom. She felt that her father was in the wrong, but could she meet his frowns and lasting displeasure? She thought she could not; but there arose before her the vision of her affianced husband, the noble, upright, generous George Stanford, and she realized that his loss would cause her a life of misery.

There came a rap at her door, a servant handed her a sealed note, and departed. She opened it, and found