

parallel. Religion is insensibly imbibed by children according to the accident of birth and situation, while it is, with half the world, mechanically retained by manhood as convenient, respectable, and popular. Masonry is deliberately adopted in maturity. Besides, Charles IX, Torquemada, Mary, Elizabeth, James, in their worst tortures believed, or affected to believe, that they were truly serving their cause. You will not make the excuse of masonic fanaticism for the blackfellow who stews his grandmother. Nor can you set isolated acts of civilised cruelty against a whole national ethics of loathsome bestiality. The fact remains, as you will have it, eternally to our shame. The wretches are the most degraded of God's creatures and—Masons."

"Stay! Words not unfrequently deceive us. There are Masons and Masons. There are men, who are not black, acquainted with the outward symbols of our profession and trading on them through the world, who have never given a thought to the truths those symbols represent, or to the grand lessons to which they give the key. Upon such men the right to wear an apron confers no safeguard against degradation nor claim to be counted of the Chosen. Acquaintance with the alphabet never yet taught a child philosophy, nor the knowledge of notation made a schoolboy an astronomer. The mere fact that these savages preserved sufficient dull tradition to recognize a brother, in no degree impugns the power of the inner light whereof they need. But it shows, pretty conclusively, to what humiliating a level it is possible for the mere formalist to subside, and, if for nothing else, is worthy of the record it has won."

There seemed something in this—a view not occurring to me before. Still there was an obvious difficulty and I stated it.

"Individuals misusing their opportunities are plentiful on all sides. But the unanimous perversion of the education of a community is another matter. Among ourselves you can point easily to exceptional false Masons. Among these blackfellows indicate only one exceptional true one, and I promise a modified scepticism."

"The unanimous misuse of opportunity and perversion of education has plenty of national precedent. 'Ye have the Pyrrhic dances yet, Where has the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?' asks the poet of the degenerate sons of Pelopidas and Lysander. What Greek living moulds as did Phidias or colours as Apelles? What Roman patrician, languidly airing himself on the Corso, emulates the leap of Curtius or the defiance of Horatius Cocles? Which Khedive of Cairo shall erect a novel pyramid, or at whose bidding again shall flow the harmony from Memnon's lyre? And is there any greater decadence from such vital Masonry as we most honour to such poor shadow of it as we have been discussing, than from the splendour of King David's matchless chivalry and the glory of his son's imperial sceptre to Fagin's kitchen in Whitechapel, or his