

seeing some of his friends similarly outraged. No man in his senses can for a moment think that such motives could hold together so vast and far-reaching a Brotherhood for the space of nearly two centuries, if we go back no farther in its history than the revival of Masonry that took place in London in 1717. In all other concerns of life, men would employ a different mode of reasoning. It is when they form opinions about Freemasonry that they seem to leave their common-sense behind them.

If I were to write of the origin of Freemasonry, I should attempt to show that it dates from a very remote antiquity; that it was hoary with age long before Solomon or his father David ever dreamed of building a Temple to the Most High God at Jerusalem. But I am now to consider the *nature* of the Institution, and so far as that purpose is concerned, it matters but little whether its origin can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians or to more modern authors; whether it is as old as Egypt's great pyramids and her unsolved sphinx, or whether it is no older than those modern monuments, whose meaning is well understood. In this practical and busy age, it matters little what may be the antiquity of a thing; the main question is, *What is it, and what is it good for?* Every tub must rest on its own bottom, and Freemasonry should form no exception in this regard. For myself, as I have already intimated, I believe Freemasonry in its *essential nature* to be as old as civilized man, and I further believe that it will ever be perpetuated as the one great Institution which meets an urgent demand in every human soul.

But I must not dwell on this point; I must address myself to answering the question, *What is Freemasonry?* And in attempting to answer this question, I shall at the same time try to say what it is not.

First of all, it is not a proselyting society. It asks no man to become

a participant in its mysteries. There can be no act more un-Masonic than for a Mason to ask a man to apply for admission, or to offer any inducements whatever for such an application. The first question asked of every candidate is this: "Do you seriously declare upon your honor, before these witnesses, that, unbiassed by friends, and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself a candidate for the mysteries of Masonry?" and the second is like unto it: "Do you seriously declare upon your honor, before these witnesses, that you are prompted to solicit the privileges of Masonry by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish to be serviceable to your fellow-creatures?" Unequivocal answers to these questions must be given before the candidate can approach even the threshold of our mystic temple. Masonry, then, is a voluntary association of men who profess to be actuated by a desire to help their fellow-creatures, rather than to be helped by them.

Freemasonry is *not* a mutual insurance company, with a few forms and ceremonies attached to entice the outsider to its ranks, however useful such associations may be. Freemasonry is a *charitable* Institution (see 1st Corinthians, 13th chapter), an Institution in which a man does not pay in a certain amount of money, with the hope of getting back more. It affords the most excellent opportunity for men of large hearts and generous impulses to do good to their fellow men without the hope of any other reward than that which comes from an approving conscience. It teaches and exemplifies that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Love for others, self-abnegation, lack of selfishness, is its grand cornerstone. Freemasonry is not a benefit association which pays to sick or disabled members a stated amount of money weekly. But let it not be understood that Masonry makes no