

### MASONIC TOLERATION.

Masonry is not a religion. He who makes of it a religious belief falsifies and denaturalizes it. The Brahmin, the Jew, the Mahometan, the Catholic, the Protestant, each professing his peculiar creed, sanctioned by the laws, and by time and custom, must needs retain it, and can not have two religions; for the social and the sacred laws adapted to the usages, manners, and prejudices of different countries are the work of men.

But Masonry teaches, and has preserved in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundations of all religions. All that ever existed have had a basis of truth, and all have overlaid that truth with errors. The primitive truths taught by the Redeemer were sooner corrupted, and intermingled and alloyed with fictions, than when taught to the first of our race. Masonry is that universal morality which is suitable to the inhabitants of every clime—to the men of every creed. It has taught no doctrines, except those truths that tend directly to the well-being of man, and those who have attempted to direct it toward useless vengeance, political ends, alchemy, Templarism, and Jesuitism, have merely perverted it to purposes foreign to its pure spirit and real nature.

Mankind outgrows the sacrifices and mythologies of the childhood of the world. Yet it is easy for human indolence to linger near these helps and refuse to pass further on. So the unadventurous Nomad, in the Tartarian wild, keeps his flocks in the same close-cropped circle, where they first learned to browse, while his progressive brother roams ever forth and onward to "fresh fields and pastures new." It is the latter who is the true mason; and the best, and, indeed, the only good mason he it is who, with the power of business, does the work of life. The upright merchant, mechanic, or farmer, the man with the power of thought, of justice, or of love—he whose whole life is one great act of performance of duty—this is the true Mason, although, possibly, he never may have entered a Masonic Lodge, or heard a Masonic lecture.

The natural use of the strength of a strong man, or the wisdom of a wise one, is to do the work of a strong man or a wise one. The natural work of Masonry is practical life—the use of all the faculties in their proper spheres, and for their natural functions. Love of truth, justice, and generosity, as attributes of God, must appear in a life marked by these qualities; and that is the only effectual ordinance of Masonry. A profession of one's convictions, joining the Fraternity, assuming the obligations, assisting at the ceremonies, are of the same value in Masonry as in science; while the natural form of Masonry is goodness, morality, living a true, just, affectionate, self-faithful life, from the motive of a good man. It is loyal obedience to God's law.

The good Mason does the thing which comes in his way, and because it comes in his way, from a love of duty, and not merely because a law, enacted by man or ordained by God, commands his will to do it. He is true to his mind, his conscience, heart, and soul, and feels small temptation to do to others what he would not wish to receive from them. He will deny himself for the sake of his brother near at hand. His desire attracts in the line of his

duty, both being in conjunction. Not in vain does the poor or the oppressed look up to him. You find such men in all Christian sects, Protestant and Catholic—in all the great religious parties of the civilized world—among Buddhists, Mahometans and Jews. They are kind fathers, generous citizens, unimpeachable in their business, beautiful in their daily lives. You see their Masonry in their work and in their play. It appears in all the forms of their activity, individual, domestic, social, ecclesiastical, or political, for true Masonry within must be morality without; and that which is philanthropy must become eminent morality. The true Mason loves not only his kindred and his country, but all mankind; not only the good, but also the evil among his brethren. He has more goodness than the channels of his daily life will hold. It runs over its banks, to water and to feed a thousand thirsty plants. Not content with the duty that lies along his track, he goes out to seek it, because not only willing, but he has a longing to do good, and to spread his justice, generosity and morality over all the world. His daily life is a profession of his Masonry, published in perpetual good-will to men.

The old theologies, the philosophies of religion of ancient times, will not suffice us now. The duties of life are to be done, and we are to do them. There are sins of trade to be corrected. Every-where philanthropy and a quickened morality are needed. There are errors to be supplanted with truth radiant with the brightness of heaven; there are great wrongs and evils in church, in state, in domestic, social, and public life to be righted and outgrown. Masonry, in our age, can not forsake the broad way of life; she must journey on in the open street, appear in the crowded square, and teach men by her deeds, her life—more eloquent than any lips.

Belief in one true God, and a moral and virtuous life, constitute to-day, as they did on the first day that a man became a Mason, the only religious requisites required of him. And this the more to-day, perhaps, than then, inasmuch as Masonry has the most vivid remembrance of the terrible and artificial torments that were used to put down new forms of religion or extinguish the old. It sees with the eye of memory the ruthless extermination of people of all sexes and ages because it was their misfortune not to know the God of the Hebrews, or to worship him under the wrong name, by the savage troops of Moses and Joshua; it sees the thumb-screws and the rack, the whip, the gallows, and the stake, the victims of Diocletian and Claverhouse, the miserable Covenanters and Non-conformists, Servetus burned, and the unoffending Quakers hung; it sees the persecutions of Peter and Paul, the martyrdom of Stephen, the trials of Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, and Irenaeus, and, in their turn, the sufferings of the wretched Pagans under the Christian emperors, as of the Papists of Ireland, under Elizabeth and her father, the bloated Henry. The Roman virgin, naked before the hungry lions; young Margaret Graham tied to a stake, at low-water mark, and there left to drown, singing hymns to God until the savage waters broke over her head, while the more savage Claverhouse looked on; and all that in all ages have suffered by hunger and nakedness, peril and prison, the rack, the stake, and the sword—it sees them all, and shudders at the long roll of human atrocities; and it sees also the oppression still practiced, in the name of religion, in