

THE CHURCH AND THE LODGE.

Many years ago, in a neighboring city (then a town), we had a young but growing lodge of Freemasons, hated by some with a bitter hatred born of early prejudice, and loved as strongly by others in our community. Near by we had erected a neat and tasteful church edifice, and our pulpit was filled with an able minister from the anti-Masonic "region round and about" one of the mountain streams of the old Keystone commonwealth. This minister was quite popular in the town, and a "rising man" in his noble calling. We were a member and an officer in both the church and lodge, and sought to "rightly divide the word of truth between them." Our efforts were quite successful till, in a fatal hour, one of our associate elders (for, though a young man in years, we were made an elder among those of our own age), "joined the lodge." Then our minister opened the "vials of his wrath" upon *him*, letting us go "scot free" upon the pretence (how easy do men invent excuses when they want one) that we had been a member of the lodge before our going into church, while our Brother had gone last into the lodge. The sequel of the result was that we were at last forced to side with the elder as against the minister, and by "withholding the supplies" force him to resign and seek another field of labor more congenial, if he could find such, to his contracted views of men's rights and line of duty.

Before this occurred, however, an event happened, affording us the opportunity of testing the relative powers of church and lodge, of minister and Master, in their respective duties as alms givers in the practise of that "heaven-born charity" which finds a lodgment in the heart of every good man, Christian or otherwise.

There was in our community an aged couple of more than three-score years and ten. They were both honored and loved members of our church, while he was a member equally beloved to our

lodge. They were poor, and with the weight of years, and the loss of the companion of her early youth and more prosperous years, the aged widow became the object around which clustered the heartstrings of every man, and the lodge ministered to her wants with a Christian spirit, which might well have provoked, as it did, the commendation of the church and the people. We were officially the chairman of the committee to see that this "Mother in Israel" should want for nothing necessary to smooth her declining years toward the grave, in which she must ere long follow him with whom she had journeyed through many a long and eventful year of wedded life.

The widow loved the lodge for her dear husband's sake, and the members for their deeds of unostentatious benevolence. She loved her church as the ordained instrument of heaven to do the Lord's work on earth. She loved her minister because he was not only the "man of God" in her eyes, but a type, as she believed, of the true minister of the Word for the comfort and relief of the sorrowing of earth.

The thought, happy or otherwise, occurred to us to test our minister's faith and practice in charitable ways and duties. So, upon our suggestion, the lodge, at the next stated meeting, withheld, for a season, the monthly stipend wherewith we had made glad the heart of the aged widow of our deceased Brother, and we were commissioned to inform her of the action of the lodge, and to commend her to the charitable and religious faith of her Christian teacher, who would, no doubt, minister to her wants as well, if not better, than we worldly-minded people had or could do. To her pastor then she went and made known to him not only this condition of affairs, but her wants and needs. The church had not only no funds for poor widows or others in the church needing aid (though with coffers well filled with sympathy, but bankrupt in funds). Kind words, or prayers even, will furnish no bread for the hungry, or fuel for the cold, and winter was at