

source of alienation, and debate, and strife and hatred. The angel song of peace on earth, good-will among men, has been scarcely heard above the din of arms of religious combatants. The charge is continually reiterated to the dishonor of Masonry, that fifty years ago one man disappeared from among men, and was supposed to have been murdered by Masons; but those who never grow weary in reiterating the charge, choose to forget the millions of men who have been murdered in the sacred name of religion.

Masonry is a handmaid, not an enemy of true religion. Its sublime office is to call it away from its perversions, back to the primitive ideal of its Divine Founder—a Universal Brotherhood on a simple creed. And when at last the Kingdom of God shall come, and the grand forces which have brought the victory shall be gathered home for final review, we believe Masonry will not be without its crown of honor.

And yet, from many professed advocates of religion, Masonry is one of the best abused institutions in the world. I lately read in a Chicago religious paper an article by a minister, in which Masonry was styled "the wickedest institution in the world." An advertisement of an itinerant lecturer recently appeared, in which he offered, at fifty cents a head, and the aid of a magic lantern, to hold up to a horrified world, what he styled, "the moral monster of the Nineteenth Century." The itinerant showman came to speedy grief, as the interest of the public in "the moral monster" was too languid to pay fifty cents.

Part of this anti-Masonic bigotry arises from a very dense ignorance. Some of the minor sects have traded on this small capital, making anti-Masonry a trap for catching converts. We need not envy them their small stock in trade, for they do at best a very small business.

But another part comes from what the ungodly newspapers call "pure cussedness." Masonry is so large, so grand, so generous a thing, that those whose trade or whose habits of thought make them obscurantists, fearful of the light, become as it were natural opposers. Especially is this the case with that hoary institution whose commander-in-chief resides at Rome, and issues infallible orders which must be obeyed. Not only do they load Masonry with anathemas; not only consign their souls to the lowest pit of perdition, but as in the case of Guibord, deny their bones the rest of the grave-yard, lest they should contaminate the ashes of the saints.

I read the other day an anecdote of this source of opposition, which is not without its moral, and which may serve to spice the dullness of my speech. An American gentleman, a Southerner and a Mason, was traveling in Europe, accompanied by his wife, who was an invalid, and a negro servant. On Saturday they stopped to rest in a mountain town of Central Europe, far from usual routes of travel. At the hotel he learned that the parish priest had given notice that on the next Sunday he would denounce Masonry. Being well acquainted with the language of the country, which was German, he concluded to go and hear what he had to say.

In due season, the priest began his tirade, and scarcely found language—though few excel the German in copiousness, and force of words of denunciation—strong enough for his purpose.

The Masons were assassins, infidels, conspirators and atheists. Well, it happened while he was at the very heat, and so to say the fury and torrent of his passion, that the negro servant of the American gentleman came to the church door. Now such a thing as a negro had never been seen there—the priest had never seen one, and this negro was a typical one, with ebony face, and eyes flashing like black diamonds, and teeth like alabaster. His mistress had been seized with a fainting spell, and had sent him for her husband. As he stood at the church door rolling his eyes around for his master, the priest thought he was the Devil come to seize him for his violence, and forthwith he began to apologize: "Brethren," said he, "though the Masons are so bad, there may be some good men among them."

The negro, not seeing his master near the door, began slowly to advance toward the pulpit, when the priest concluded he must discount a little more.

"Brethren," said he, "I have no doubt there are a good many good people among the Masons." Just then the negro, catching sight of his master, began advancing rapidly towards his minister. He could stand it no longer; with teeth chattering and knees knocking together, he exclaimed: "May the Devil take me if the Masons are not better men than we are!" And there are a good many other fanatical slanderers of our noble Fraternity, who when the Old Boy does get after them may find it necessary to apologize!

But amidst all opposition, Masonry will move on its majestic way. It is too great to be afraid: too noble to mind the buzzing or the stinging of every fugitive gnat. Let it go on spreading the cement of brotherly love and truth until the whole world shall become a temple fit for Jehovah. Let me conclude with a sentiment in rhyme:

When Solomon the king his temple reared on high,
The Masons stand as we now stand beneath the Master's eye,