

title to public approbation was hypocritically put on, for the purpose of cloaking practices which, if acknowledged, would be sternly rebuked by public opinion. As such an impression for a long time cast Odd Fellowship, in this country, into disrepute and opprobrium, so from the moment of the removal of the cause, was a corresponding opposite disposition evinced towards it by our people. A spirit of enquiry into the principles of the Order at once prevailed, and happily produced the conviction, that it contained within itself elements of great good, and could not fail, when disencumbered of such obnoxious features, to attain to a degree of moral excellence which would crowd to its Lodge-rooms the best and purest citizens of the republic. This, my brethren, so-much-to-be-desired result has been more than realised, and the proud satisfaction is now enjoyed by us in America, of witnessing as the fruit of our efforts in this reform, a spectacle at once imposing and sublime. There scarcely exists in the vastly wide-spreading territorial limits of America, a single state or district where the votaries of Odd Fellowship are not to be found—everywhere, from the extreme north-western boundary, to the southernmost point of the republic, and from the very shores of its Atlantic coast to the furthestmost region of the father of its rivers, the great Mississippi are the temples of our Order rising to the skies, dedicated to the cause of suffering humanity. Such is the picture of Odd Fellowship in the United States, and under its existing auspices it is destined, at no distant day, we fondly anticipate, to afford relief to a greater amount of individual suffering, than any other kindred association of equal resources in this country. Its great moral influence is felt and appreciated by the fraternity in the integrity of character which it inculcates, and the rigid adherence which it exacts in all the relations of life to the practice of those virtues which adorn and dignify man. When such, its highest and holiest motive shall cease to animate the Order in America, its epitaph will have been written as an institution deserving to claim no public consideration or concern whatever. No such fear, however, alarms us; but moving onward in silent and unobtrusive zeal in the promotion of its real purposes, with these cardinal principles ever in review, its future greatness and influence upon man's social and moral condition none can pretend to pourtray. Our career, be it with all deference spoken, affords an example not unworthy your imitation, and by regarding the results accomplished in America, at the simple cost of discarding conviviality, as a feature in Odd Fellowship, utterly at war with the respectability, dignity, and consequent usefulness of the institution, a lesson may be taught, we trust, not entirely unprofitable to the brotherhood in England. These suggestions have been made in no spirit of complaint, but are affectionately submitted to the calm and dispassionate reflection of the Manchester Unity, in the ardent hope that they may lead to a reform in the Order in England, which will tend to give a renewed vigour to its energies, enhance its weight of character, augment its influence, enlarge its sphere of action, and promote, as inseparably blended in one common interest, the welfare of the Order in Europe and America.

Having said thus much in relation to the condition of our Order in this country, and very respectfully commended to your imitation the means employed in producing so gratifying a result, I beg leave to invite your attention to a topic extremely interesting to the brotherhood here, and about which a very considerable degree of solicitude and curiosity prevails;—I refer to the real origin of Odd Fellowship. In the year 1837, pursuant to a resolution adopted with great unanimity by the Grand Lodge of the United States, the undersigned, as Chairman of a Committee, was directed to open a correspondence with the Manchester Unity on this subject. An interchange of communications accordingly took place, and the information conveyed from your Board, being but a literal repetition * * * * * believed to have no foundation in historical truth, greatly disappointed our expectations. Let me again recur to this subject—in doing so, I will premise the application now made, in the same language employed on the former occasion, “by earnestly requesting, however lowly may have been its beginning,” a full, candid, and unvarnished account of the origin and early history of the Order in England. Your archives will doubtless furnish this desirable information. We care not what Odd Fellowship originally was, nor however humble may have been the occupations, or limited the pretensions of they

who first bid it into existence. We know what it now is in America, and the greater the contrast, the more eminently honourable will be our rank among the benevolent Orders of the earth. Many and various have been the traditionary accounts of its rise, derived from time to time from brethren who have arrived among us. In no instance, however, known to the undersigned, has a statement been made sufficiently authentic to entitle it to any reasonable degree of confidence. It is believed by some that the Order has existed certainly more than a century; that the London or Union Order is the great generic, from which the Manchester Unity or Independent Order seceded in 1809, both of which, with probably a third, are now practised in England, under a separate and distinct organization. You will not be surprised, that this subject should be interesting to your brethren across the Atlantic, and we therefore indulge the hope that you will unhesitatingly respond to the enquiry now made. If the Order was originally one and undivided, it would be gratifying to us to know when it became severed, the causes which led to the separation, and whether the reasons of the division are of so grave a character as to shut out all hope of resolving the whole into one great original, animated by one principle, producing one work, one language and universality throughout the globe. Such a result, if attainable, would constitute a jubilee in Odd Fellowship.

In conclusion, it is proper to advise you that in consequence of the changes made in the work in England, there is a great difficulty encountered by your visiting brethren in this country. What necessity, if any, led to such important alterations in Great Britain, we have never had the good fortune to learn; we respectfully ask to be informed the extent of these changes in the work, and the circumstances under which they have been made. It will be obvious, that unless great uniformity is maintained in this particular, our members will be respectively excluded from each other's Lodge-rooms, and one of the brightest characteristics of the Order, to wit, its faculty of succouring a distressed brother in a strange land, will be frequently unexercised by reason of the difficulty of understanding “that peculiar language” by which Odd Fellows should be readily known in every clime throughout the habitable earth.

This letter has proved protractive—the undersigned trusts, however, that the great importance of the topics referred to in so desultory a manner may serve as its apology.

Your Brother, in Friendship, Love and Truth,

JAMES L. RIDGELY.

G. Cor. Sec. of the R. W. G. L., U. S., I. O. O. F.

No direct acknowledgment was ever made of this courteous and conciliatory letter, and the first intimation had of its receipt, was in the printed proceeding of the Annual Moveable Committee, held at the Isle of Man in June, 1841. Among these were found resolutions asserting the great disadvantages under which Brethren of the Manchester Unity laboured, on their arrival in America, and empowering the Board of Directors to *open Lodges in the United States*, or to take such other steps as they might think best calculated to remedy the evil complained of. How the concluding paragraph of the above letter—which seems to have formed the principal, if not the only foundation for these resolutions—could have been considered as affording matter of offence, we are at a loss to suppose; but that such was the interpretation put on it, is evident. We cannot but agree with Brother Ridgely, when, after detailing these facts in his annual Report, he continues:—“The true cause of the whole difficulty, and the fruitful source of much evil to the whole Order, is attributable to the great error committed in England, of altering the work.”

The subject thus brought under the notice of the Grand Lodge, naturally engaged much of the time and