

tree and rock, is a personal friend, and requires no humiliating labor in order to keep on visiting terms with it.

Some one would have us believe that "labor is divine." So it is. God spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. When you order a thing done, and it is done, that exemplifies the divinity of labor; but to go and do it yourself, that is—well, you might call it the satanity of labor. In the garden, by the Brook from which I now write, the labor has all been done by the silent forces set at work by the Grand Architect of the Universe. He spake, and it was done. The fountains of the Brook are in the earth and in the skies. The trees feed upon the air of heaven, and the moisture and soil of the ground. They require no cultivation. To dress and keep such a garden is a pleasure, not a labor—but, alas! the toil, and care, and perspiration expended in raising "garden-sass" in a four-cornered lot! I will have none of it.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE.

BY BRO. WM. ROUNSEVILLE.

If there is, as is pretty generally conceded by religious people, a tendency to skepticism in the public mind, and if, as is always acknowledged, a strong bias among those who are just entering manhood, in favor of infidelity, then it must follow, if religion is worth preserving, that any influence that will counteract that tendency and remove that bias, should be fostered and strengthened. To exert such an influence is the great leading object of religious effort. For this, churches are collected and expended. These millions are raised to be directly paid out for the spread of religion.

But there are other influences at work in the same cause, and other millions disbursed indirectly for the same purpose; or, at least, which have a tendency to strengthen the religious element in the community. Among these instrumentalities, we are disposed to class the fraternity of Freemasons. Though we may conclude that this great brotherhood does not specifically claim to be a religious organization, or attempt to indoctrinate its members into the tenets of the Christian faith, or require the assent of its devotees to any formulated creed of any sect, yet we must claim that the influence of the fraternity is favorable to the interests of true religion.

Let us particularize. Freemasonry teaches the existence of a Great First Cause, "the uncaused cause of all causes," and no man can cross its threshold who does not yield assent to this leading fact of all religions. The first ceremony, after he passes the inner door of the sanctuary of the Order, is without meaning, unless the novitiate is a believer in God's existence and supervising power over mankind. It is worse than this—unless the novitiate is a believer, as above stated—the ceremony is an insult to God and a fraud upon the lodge, to prevent which, before his investiture with the degree, he is required to avow, in the most solemn manner, his assent to this first and strongest foundation to all religious creeds.

Then we ought to be willing to admit that, as far as this article and point of faith is concerned, the influence of Masonry is against the spread of the skepticism and infidelity which, it is claimed, are making such sad havoc with sacred things. Those who have the opportunity of noting the effects of that influence, know in what direction it is felt, and need no argument to convince them of any fact connected therewith. And it is within the reasoning power of any cultivated mind, that such a ceremony as that to which we have referred, must of necessity, particularly when administered under such solemn circumstances, upon the threshold of that deep and vast unknown upon which the candidate is entering, must make a deep and lasting impression upon the mind. That it does so, no one who has witnessed an initiation, can doubt.

Then, if the ceremonies of the lodge have this effect upon the individual, and if one part of the ceremony has such strong impression, what must be the consequence of the act upon a whole lodge, and of all the ceremonies, all harmonizing with this lesson, given on the threshold? What but a still stronger impression upon all the minds which come under the influence? And every Mason knows this to be the result.

Now suppose we take a young man who is inclined to go with his associates in the broad road of skepticism. He dwells in an atmosphere of doubt and distrust. He hears the existence of God denied, and sees sacred things treated with levity. He begins to coincide with these sentiments, and has already learned to speak lightly of the most important doctrines of religion. With those with whom he associates, God is a myth: the creation of an enthusiastic brain, and his superintending providence, a wild idea of the monomaniacs. Not many young men in this skeptical age could retain their integrity and faith in the existence of God under such a pressure of untoward influences.

But the lodge exerts a different influence altogether. It is composed of respectable men who have in the most solemn manner avowed their belief in the fact which the other party held up to ridicule. Within the lodge no one speaks lightly of the Divine Being. No one questions his existence. No one disputes his rule over the affairs of