

earnestly requested to join the Society, which soon flourished in harmony, reputation, and numbers. Noblemen and gentlemen of the highest rank—learned men, merchants, and clergymen, found in the Lodge a safe and pleasant relaxation from intense study, or the hurry of business, without any intermixture of politics and parties. New Lodges were constituted, which the Grand Master and his deputy visited in person, and found in them a peaceful asylum, free from the turmoils and disputes by which all other societies were characterised and deformed.

“But I can assure you, sir, that the opponents of Freemasonry, although at their wit's end, were determined not to die without a struggle. They circulated all manner of ridiculous reports about the practices of Masons in Ty led Lodges, which were thus commented on by a Brother who was member of our Lodge, in an address to the R. W. M., when the subject was mooted in open Lodge. I cannot recollect the whole of his speech; but he said, amongst other acute observations, which excited the unfeigned applause of the members: ‘Though we envy not the prosperity of any society, not meddle with their transactions and characters, we have not met with such fair treatment from others; nay, even those that never had an opportunity of obtaining any certain knowledge of us, have run implicitly with the cry, and, without fear or wit, have vented their spleen in accusing and condemning us unheard, untried; while we, innocent and secure within, laugh only at their gross ignorance and impotent malice. Have not people in former ages, as well as now, alleged that Freemasons in their Lodges raise the devil in a circle, and when they have done with him, that they lay him again with a noise or a hash, as they please? How have some of our maligners diverted themselves with the wild story of an old woman between the rounds of a ladder! Others will swear to the cook's red-hot iron or salamander for marking an indelible character on the new made Mason, in order to give him the faculty of taciturnity. Sure such blades will beware of coming through the fingers of the Freemasons?’”

“Not contented with having circulated these *ritu voce* calumnies,” the Square continued, “pamphlets began to fly about in every form, denouncing the proceedings of Masonry; and several newspapers of the day joined in the cry, for it contributed materially to the sale of the sheet. Are you aware, sir, what very poor productions these Periodicals were? Do not speak! Well, then, I'll tell you. They consisted of two leaves of paper, and were dreadfully stupid, barren, sir, very barren of news; and, therefore, the present popularity of Masonry was a good send; and the writers did not fail to improve the occasion by inventing any sort of nonsense, which they nicknamed ‘the doings of Masonry in secret Lodges;’ and the more ridiculous the imputation, the greater was the demand for the paper. Danvers, a writer in the ‘Craftsman,’ so far exceeded his fellow-journalists in absurdity, as to have written a prosy article for the purpose of proving that those who hanged Capt. Porteous, of Edinburgh, were all Freemasons, because they kept their own secrets; and, therefore, the sapient writer concluded the perpetrators must be Masons, inasmuch as they were never found out.

“The Fraternity were much amused with these abortive attempts to prejudice them in

public opinion; and I have heard them sing the Sword Bearer's Song, as a glee for three voices, and full chorus, with shouts of laughter and applause. But the Brethren took no official notice of them, as they were considered too contemptible to merit their serious attention. Nor did they esteem the philippic of Dean Swift worthy of any reply, as it was evidently written for a satirical purpose.

“At length, however, these attacks assumed a form which it was thought necessary to counteract in some public manner. One gentleman (for they were mostly anonymous) wrote a pamphlet containing a critical review of the History of Masonry; another printed what he called an account of the ceremonies of initiation, which brought out a third, called the Freemason's Accusation and Defence, which, in fact, had already appeared in the ‘Post Boy;’ and in 1726 an oration, in which these attacks were alluded to, was delivered by the Junior Grand Warden of the York Masons, in the presence of Charles Bathurst, Esq., the Grand Master, which was ordered to be printed. A speech was also published as delivered at Carmarthen in 1728; and another writer thus speaks of some objections which were made against the Craft:—‘Others complain that the Masons continue too long in the Lodge, spending their money to the hurt of their families, and come home too late—nay, sometimes intoxicated with liquor! But they have no occasion to drink much in Lodge hours which are not long; and when the Lodge is closed (always in good time) any Brother may go home when he pleases; so that if any stay longer, and become intoxicated, it is at their own cost, not as Masons, but as other imprudent men do, for which the Fraternity is not accountable; and the expense of a Lodge is not so great as that of a private club. Some observing that Masons are not more religious, nor more knowing, than other men, are astonished at what they can be conversant about in Lodge hours! but though a Lodge is not a school of divinity, the Brethren are taught the great lessons of religion, morality, humanity, and friendship; to abhor persecution, and to be peaceable subjects under the civil government wherever they reside; and as for their knowledge, they claim as large a share of it as other men in their situation.’ Beyond these fugitive attempts, I did not hear that anything was done at present to rebut the slanders which were so freely circulated to the prejudice of the Craft.

“At length, in 1730, a man of the name of Prichard, an unprincipled and needy Brother, concocted a book which contained a great deal of plausible matter, mingled with a few grains of truth, which he published under the name of ‘Masonry Dissected,’ and impudently proclaimed in his dedication that it was intended for the information of the Craft. And to show his learning, he asserted in his preface that ‘from the accepted Masons sprang the real Masons, from both sprang the Gormagons, whose Grand Master, the Polgi, deduces his original from the Chinese, whose writings, if to be credited, maintained the hypothesis of the Pre-Adamites, and consequently must be more antique than Masonry!’ The most free and open society is that of the Grand Kaiheber, which consists of a select company of responsible people, whose chief discourse is concerning trade and business, and promoting mutual friendship without compulsion or restriction.’”

“What do you think of this, sir? Was not this information truly wonderful? The public

thought so. They said—‘It must be this—it can be nothing else; it is, as we always supposed, a whimsical cheat, supported by great names to seduce fools, who, once gulled out of their money, keep the fraud secret to draw in others.’ And accordingly the book had an enormous and rapid sale, for four editions were called for in the first year of its publication, so open is poor John Bull to imposition. Its success stimulated others to follow in the same track, and three or four pretended revelations of Masonic secrets issued from the press simultaneously.

“It was now considered necessary to disabuse the public mind; and for this purpose Dr. Anderson was directed by the Grand Lodge in 1738 to prepare a defence of the Order against the calumnies which had been so indistinctly circulated to its prejudice. Several pamphlets had already appeared, as the Oration of the celebrated Martin Clare, J. G. W., in 1735, before the Grand Lodge; the ‘Freemason's Pocket Companion,’ by Dr. Smith; and the ‘Freemason's Vade Mecum;’ but this latter book was condemned by the Grand Lodge as ‘a piratical silly production, done without leave,’ and the Brethren were warned not to use it, nor encourage the sale thereof.

“In the meanwhile, Dr. Anderson wrote his celebrated Defence of Masonry, in which he treated the work of Prichard with great consideration. He took his stand on high ground—gave his adversary every fair and reasonable advantage, by assuming that if all he had advanced were correct, still Masonry would be an admirable institution, and answered his book *seriatim* like a gentleman and a scholar. When the Defence came out, and the subject was canvassed in the Lodge, some thought he had conducted the dispute with greater mildness than the fellow deserved; but Brother Anderson contended—and truly, as I thought at the time—that ‘it would be giving our opponents too serious an advantage to treat their productions, how absurd soever they might be, either with flippancy or severity.’”

“He commenced the Defence by conceding certain points which were thought to be discredit to the Order. ‘Let,’ says he, ‘for once, this dissection contain all the secrets of Freemasonry; admit that every word of it is genuine and literally true, yet, under all these concessions—under all disadvantages and prejudices whatever, I cannot but still believe there have been impostures upon mankind more ridiculous, and that many have been drawn into a society more pernicious.’ He then proceeded step by step to prove its manifold advantages; and admitting that although Masonry has in some circumstances declined from its original purity, by running in muddy streams, and as it were under ground, yet notwithstanding the great rust it may have contracted, and the forbidding light in which it is placed by the Dissector, there is still much of the old fabric remaining; the essential pillars of the building may be discovered through the rubbish, though the superstructure be over-run with moss and ivy, and the stones by length of time disjointed. And, therefore, as the bust of an old hero is of great value among the curious, though it has lost an eye, the nose, or the right hand, so Masonry, with all its blemishes and misfortunes, instead of appearing ridiculous, ought, in my humble opinion, to be received with some candour and esteem, from the veneration to its antiquity.’”

(To be Continued.)