

SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS.

BY A MARRIED MAN.

Six nights in the week I may consider myself as a martyr to social obligations. I am an Odd Fellow, a Free and Accepted Mason, a member of the Sons of Harmony, a Knight of Pythias, Grand Mogul of the Order for the Mental Improvement of the Chinese, a member of the St. Andrew's Society, as also of the St. George's Society, on account of my wife's father being an Englishman, one of St. Patrick's Society, because I incline to cosmopolitan opinions on this subject, and if there was a Welsh Society I should probably belong to that for the same reason. Besides being a member of all these societies there are numerous smaller ones, on the rolls of which my name is placed as a matter of duty. I am also a married man, which position may also be considered in the light of a social obligation.

Being a married man, I find that relationship extremely irksome in the proper discharge of my duties. The Lodge of Odd Fellows meets on Monday evenings. On Tuesday night the Free and Accepted Masons demand my attention. On Wednesday the inferior mental condition of the Chinese requires investigation. Thursday evening has to be devoted to the Knights of Pythias, the interests of which Order I have sworn to maintain. Friday night is taken up with St. Patrick's and St. George's Societies which meet at eight and nine o'clock respectively, and Saturday evening has special claims upon me at the rooms of the Adelphi Literary Association. Sunday forenoon is taken up at church, and the evening is spent in an excited controversy with my wife, who says, "I may, as well be single for what she sees of me."

My wife has a peculiar contempt for all societies, and secret ones in particular. The Odd Fellows she regards with suspicion, and she hates the Masons with the hatred of a jealous rival. In vain I assert that my duties as "Noble Grand" are a necessity to brotherly love, but she maintains that anything which debars a wife from a proper knowledge of her husband's whereabouts is wrong. I try to reason with her remarks; I try to console her with the thought that in case she should die I should get something like twenty dollars to bury her with and so much a piece for the children. At this juncture she usually bursts into tears and mutters something about "and you'll be only too glad to get rid of me." Indeed, this has come to be so strong a conviction with her that I do not attempt a denial. I dare not approach the subject of Masonry as I value my peace of mind. She is continually reminding me of what Mrs. Jones' experience is in that direction. Mrs. Jones and she exchange sweet sympathy together. Mrs. Jones says "the number of goats the Masons kill is something enormous." "They" (I suppose she means the Masons) "bring Jones home about twelve o'clock at night as far as the door, and leave him there. They have to do it because they swear to support each other, and if it wasn't from them supporting Jones he'd never find his way home at all." I tell her this arises from nervous prostration caused by the heavy responsibilities of office. It is in vain I plead with my wife upon the high position of a "Grand Arch" (which office I hold) and then she hurts my feelings by insinuating that the Fountain in Victoria Square is a worthy sample of Masonry. Then she, in a spirit of sarcasm, asks me if I cannot organize a society for the better protection of rowdies? I quail before this shaft and refer her to the matchless sagacity of our police.

But my troubles are not confined simply to domestic complications. Cases are continually arising in which I have to struggle with my regard for truth. For instance, if I have to return thanks at one of our periodical dinners, it is sure to elicit the expression of my surprise at "being called upon to make a speech upon the occasion." If, on the other hand, I devote a couple of hours to its preparation, it usually occurs that my name is never mentioned. To provide against this embarrassment,—I have made it a rule to hand over my manuscript to those who are unable to write speeches of their own, and it sometimes occurs that Smith or Brown who may have to respond to a certain toast, comes to me and enquires, "Say, old boy, I'm set down to respond to the toast of 'Our Sister Societies': have you got that speech of yours handy? I don't think we shall want you to say anything to-night." So I hand it over and am content to derive what comfort I can from the knowledge that Smith or Brown's brilliant peroration was principally one of my own efforts. I recollect that I lost my best friend from one of the purest of motives, that of a desire to serve him. In a Society to which I formerly belonged there was an attached friend named Peters. Peters was an old and faithful brother, well stricken in years. He was universally esteemed. In consideration of his age he was permitted to read his speeches, which were usually dull and prosy. At an anniversary dinner he came to me, much troubled, and said, "my friend, if you can lend me your speech to-night I shall esteem it a favour. I have left mine at home."

"Certainly, my dear fellow. Glad to oblige you."

The time came for the toast, "Our Past Noble Grand, coupled with the name of brother Peters."

Brother Peters rose amidst the plaudits of the company:—

"Noble Grand" Brethren and Ladies.—(Here he pulled out the manuscript.) I rise upon this occasion to express my surprise that you should have honored me in associating my name with this toast. (Cheers.) I may truly say that I shall look back upon the occasion as one of the proudest of my life. (Loud cheers.) Occupying a position for so many years in connection with this body, I may say, without egotism, that I have a deep interest in its welfare." (Hear, hear.) When we reflect for a moment upon the benefits this organization has conferred upon humanity we may well be proud of the part we have taken in its noble objects." (Loud applause.) The people whose wants we endeavour to alleviate are a people who have special claims upon our attention. The Chinese, gentlemen, are a nation remarkable for their originality and antiquity." (Laughter.)

Here Mr. Peters looked somewhat surprised.

"From the days of Confucius—why what the deuce is this?" A roar of laughter followed the remark.

Mr. Peters became more confused and sat down. It is needless to say I had given him the wrong speech—one which I had delivered the night before at the dinner of the Society for the Mental Improvement of the Chinese. Brother Peters never forgave me for my unintentional error.

Before concluding I may mention that upon the dissolution of a Society to which I once belonged, it was ascertained that there was a balance of something like two hundred and fifty dollars in the treasurer's hands. A supper was got up and the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer were each presented with a testimonial as a mark of respect and esteem, in consideration of their services in that organization. The Mutual Admiration principle was a gigantic success, as a handsome clock which stands in my parlor bears witness.

The only thing I regret is, that there are not two Sundays in the week, instead of one, if only for my wife's sake and my domestic welfare.

IMMORTAL SHAKESPERE.

The following lines were read by Mr. NIEL WARNER on Tuesday evening (Shakespeare's) birthday, at the Synod Hall. They were compiled in honor of the greatest poet the world has ever known, and read as only a true disciple of Shakespeare could read them. Each line contains a quotation from the great author's writings and the whole form an unconscious tribute to his inspired genius. It is a subject for much regret that the Canadian nation knows so little of Shakesperian literature, and as an illustration we have yet to see in any other Canadian journal the first allusion to the poet's natal day. Ed.

Naturá ipsá valere et mentis viribus excitari et quasi quodam divino spiritu afflari.—Cicero.

Peace to this meeting,

Joy and fair time, health and good wishes,
Now, worthy friends, the cause why we are met,
Is in celebration of the day that gave
Immortal Shakspeare to this favored isle;
The most replenished sweet work of nature,
Which from the prime creation e'er she framed.
O thou divinest nature! how thyself thou blazon'st
In this thy Son! form'd in thy prodigality,
To hold thy mirror up, and give the time
Its very form and pressure: when he speaks
Each aged ear plays truant at his tales,
And younger hearings are quite ravished;
So voluble is his discourse. Gentle
As zephyr blowing underneath the violet,
Not wagging its sweet head. Yet as rough,
(His noble blood enchain'd) as the rude wind,
That by the top doth take the mountain pine
And make him stoop to th' vale. 'Tis wonderful
That an indivisible instinct should fame him
To loyalty; unlearn'd; honor untaught;
Civility not seen in other; knowledge
That wildly grows in him, but yields a crop
As if it had been sown. What a piece of work!
How noble in faculty! Infinite in reason!
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every God did seem to set his seal.
Heav'n has him now. Yet let our idolatrous fancy
Still sanctify his relics; and this day
Stand aye distinguish'd in the calendar
To the last syllable of recorded time;
For if we take him but for all in all
We ne'er shall look upon his like again.