

MASONRY AND CIVIL OBLIGATIONS.

"For he embarketh himself to set sail with a west-north-west wind, every one in heaps did cast into the ship gold, silver, rings, jewels, spices, clonza, and aromatical perfumes, parrots, pelicans, monkeys, olvet cats, black-spotted weazels, porcupine &c. He was accounted no good mother's son who did not cast in all the rare and precious things he had."—RABELAIS, *Gargantua Book*, i. 50.

It might seem strange to the reader to see at the head of this paper a quotation from an author who shares with Lucian, Aristophanes, and a few others a rare reputation for whimsicality joined with wisdom. But to the Mason, the writer is disposed to think, the words will be found applicable. Indeed it is more than likely that Rabelais, who wrote his inimitable budget of fun and satire at a very solemn crisis of the world's history, was himself a Mason. Perhaps, among his wide experience, this honourable body had claimed him; for there are other important allusions in his works to the necessity of charity and prudence. In a very cautious way he, in the directions given for the erection of the Abbey of Theleme, symbolizes many important truths of the Order. Monks are stigmatised as being *mal-nez* (of ill-bred disposition; or with bad noses), whereas those admitted to the androgyne establishment of Theleme were to be *bien naturez*, *benè nati*, well-born, the reverse of *mal-nez*, ill-born or disfigured in person. See the fifty-third chapter of the first book of *Gargantua*.

At the time when Rabelais wrote, the whole of society was in the throes of emergence from the thralldom of the letter arriving at the better condition of the spirit. It was his object, therefore, as it should be that of every good citizen, to promote throughout the world what is to be found in a lodge "just, perfect, and regular,"

It is well known in the annals of Masonry that the wandering guilds who travelled from country to country, and built the sacred structures in which the exoteric communities adored the G.A.O.T.U., in defiance and grim mockery of priestly rule, mingled sarcastic emblems indicative of their solemn protests against priestly arrogance and evil-doing with those symbols enjoined by tradition and consecrated by faith. From this time forward a deadly animosity has reigned in the hearts of Roman Catholic authorities against the Order. Hence the various fulminations of the Vatican directed against Freemasons.

The superstitious priests who held up the sacred branch, unintelligible to them from their crass ignorance, did not dare to remove these evidences of Masonic playfulness from the edifices raised for them by their opponents; therefore they remained in grim parabolic manner on the walls of the cathedrals, abbeys, and churches. Let those who can read, read, and be certified of this important truth.

But henceforward there arose a cry that Freemasons desired to subvert that society which in truth, by precept and example, they only sought to remodel. A charge, therefore, was easily instituted by the