

tion from any authority outside of himself, there is yet a permissible middle course—any brother may become a non-affiliate. In other words, he may, if he will, sever his active connection with the fraternity; he may retire from official service; he may be a Freemason at large, paying nothing into the treasury of the Craft, and resigning thereby certain related privileges, but he cannot surrender the Light he received once for all, nor blot out his knowledge of secrets imparted in good faith, and in like good faith accepted, to be kept sacred and inviolate for ever. True, no brother will become a non-affiliate except a half-hearted, a miserly spirited, an intellectually blinded, or a daft Freemason; but if for any reason one becomes reduced to such a condition, he has the optional resort of non-affiliation. More than this he cannot do. The indelibility of Freemasonry is like the indelibility of orders in the Church—it cannot be forgotten, cancelled or effaced.

So much for the bond; now for the brotherhood to which it introduces. The candidate for Freemasonry seeks it because he feels that he needs the impartation of its Truth, and the boundless sympathy and aid which distinguish its membership. Rugged Carlyle, a man of all men who most stood alone, least mingling with his fellows, was yet so conscious in his inmost soul of the power of human sympathy, that he said, "Infinite is the help that man can yield to man." The truth of this assertion is intensified if we say, Infinite is the help that a Freemason can yield to a Freemason. Not merely help of the grosser kind, although all of that, but also that finer, deeper, purer help, which grows out of the Masonic fellowship of kindred minds. No man better than a Freemason realizes this fact, and no Freemason ever stated it more pointedly than Bro. Sir Walter Scott, when he wrote:—"From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that

some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help." To the most fortunately circumstanced, friendship and brotherly love are grateful, while to the unfortunate they are indispensable. We cannot have too many friends, and no friend sticketh closer than a Masonic brother. All may be well with us now, but what of the future? Who can read it, who can foretell it? Our Brother Bulwer, Lord Lytton, was right:—"Whatever the number of a man's friends, there may be times in his life when he has one too few." Cultivate your friends. Cherish them. Make them, if possible, doubly yours—once in the bonds of brotherhood, and again by personal sympathy and fellowship.

There are other bonds of so-called brotherhood? Oh, yes, but how frail! Distress overtakes you, and their disciples pass you by on the other side. Calumny assails you, and they at once believe in the foul aspersion. Not so the true Freemason; not so Freemasonry itself, in its essence and spirit. It is for sunshine and storm, for weal and woe, for happiness and distress. A joy to the joyful, it is no less a helping hand to the sorrowful and distressed. Its compass is wonderful, covering in its diapason the note of highest felicity and the wail of deepest distress.

Do any despise the bond? Alas, a few do. But then we are all human, and the greatest of Popes—the poet, has told us, too true, that "no err is human." Freemasonry assumes to work no miracles. It can improve the man, but it cannot renew him. It may be deceived in accepting him, and if so he is a dead branch. But it is rarely deceived. The scrutiny is close, the tests are numerous, the chances to impose upon it are few. The Bond of Brotherhood is only for the elect, and he who is approved by the fraternity as a fit ashlar to go into its spiritual Temple, proves, in very large majority of instances, to be