

## What is the Practical Worth of Freemasonry.

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The question has been and is often asked, by those not members of the Fraternity, What is its practical worth and of what practical use is it to its members? It is not meant, practical worth in the light of dollars and cents, but in a moral, intellectual and religious point of view.

I am only too well aware that it is a question that is difficult to answer in a language that the uninitiated can understand. Perhaps the same remark may apply to many who are members of the Institution, or who call themselves so.

Masonry, as every one of its followers fully understands, is something more than an idealism—a creation of the imagination—a mere farce which means nothing, and is productive of no good results. It is a stern, strict, undeniable reality, based upon facts, founded upon principles fraught with all that pertains to truth and justice, which are inculcated at every step forward that a Mason takes in every grade of membership.

Those anti-Masons whose chief aim in life is to vilify and traduce our good name, base their ideas of facts upon a mistaken view of the Institution. It is not that reality which they would have others believe; as, for instance, they would have it that one Mason is bound to support another whether right or wrong, through weal or woe, good or evil, that we must stand by and protect a brother Mason in every instance, even if he flagrantly violates the laws of morality as well as the laws of the land in which he lives. Such is not a fact of Masonry; it is but the creature of the diseased imagination and bigoted brain of those who promulgate such ideas. In the majority of instances, such views are promulgated by malice backed by ignorance.

The Masonic Order has ever proved

itself to be a law abiding, peaceful, God fearing institution. It obeys, as a body, strictly the laws of the country in which its followers reside. It ever endeavors to enforce upon its members the full intent and purposes of the moral law. It is not bound by any of its covenants to shield the wrong-doer because he is a Mason; on the contrary, it plainly condemns him. It first endeavors to "whisper good counsel in the ear of an erring brother," and to "assist in his reformation" by pointing out to him the error of his ways; if that fail—if he will not listen to the good counsels of his brethren, then the full sentence of the Masonic law is imposed upon him, and he is deprived of his membership amongst us, and is debarred from all the benefits that Masonry has to bestow. Neither is the Masonic Fraternity known to conspire against the laws of the country, or to promulgate sedition or conspiracy in any form. Our opponents wrongfully accuse us of being such an institution, but it is as false as the hearts and lives of those who so accuse us. Its mission is one of peace and good will to all men; it is not the promulgator of envy and discord; it bears malice towards none; it meets the attacks of its fanatic supporters with contempt and scorn, resting secure in its own professions.

Its absolute refusal to recognize sectarianism only proves that it gives its members perfect freedom of thought and action in all matters pertaining to the worship of the Supreme Power above. But it does most emphatically stipulate that its followers shall profess faith in an All-Wise Power, which rules all things, and decidedly and firmly insist that all who apply for admission shall assert their belief in Deity before they can enter even the outer doors of Masonry; but it leaves the manner and form of his worship of the Deity to the individual's own choice. It is enough that it insists on a recognition of the existence of Deity, without prescribing