

of this ancient Fraternity; provided always that the old landmarks be carefully preserved, and that such alterations and new regulations be proposed and agreed to at the Quarterly Communication preceding the annual Grand Feast; and that they be offered also to the perusal of all the brethren before dinner, in writing, even of the youngest apprentice, the approbation and consent of the majority of all the brethren present being absolutely necessary to make the same binding and obligatory. These constitutions were signed by Philip, Duke of Wharton, G. M.; Theophilus Desaguliers, M. D., and F. R. S., the Deputy Grand Master, with the rest of the Grand Officers and the Masters and Wardens, as well as many other Brethren then present, to the number of more than a hundred.—*Rev. of a Squ're.*

REASONS FOR HAVING BECOME A FREEMASON, CONTAINED IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

By BARON BIELFIELD, *Secretary of Legation, to one of the late Kings of Prussia, Preceptor to Prince Ferdinand, Chancellor of the Universities of Prussia, &c.*

"So you are quite alarmed, Madam, very seriously angry! My reason tells me you are wrong, but my passion tells me you can never do wrong; for it makes me perceive that I love you more, if it be possible, since I have been a Freemason, and since you have been angry with me for so being, than I ever did before. Permit me, therefore, by this opportunity, to employ my rhetoric to dissipate your discontent; that you may approve the motives which have induced me to take this step, that you may restore me to your favour, and that I may be enabled to reconcile my reason with my passion.

You know I am naturally curious, and that I have made great efforts to discover the secrets of Freemasonry, but without the least effect. I have found men that have been the most indiscreet in other respects, the most impenetrable in this matter. There was, therefore, no other way for me to take but to get admission into their society; and I do solemnly assure you, Madam, that I do not in the least repent it.

"That a man may be very honest and very happy without being a Freemason. I readily allow; but this argument is equally applicable to every object that excites our curiosity, and even to many of the most pleasing parts of learning. If we banish curiosity (the desire of increasing our knowledge) from the world, there is at once an end of all improvement in science; the most ingenious, the most pleasing inventions and discoveries would be lost in darkness. And who can say how far the knowledge of those objects, of whose essence, whose principles, we are absolutely ignorant, may lead us? That which at first appears frivolous, frequently becomes, in the hands of a skilful man, highly useful. I do not pride myself in being of the number of these, but I am fully satisfied that I shall have a better claim to it by being a Freemason.

"You will not require, I am persuaded, that I should explain to you our mysteries; you are much too prudent. You would entertain a passion for a man of honor, and not for a traitor, a monster. It is my interest to convince you of my discretion, and

to make you sensible that a man who can keep a secret from the woman he adores, ought to be esteemed by her as worthy to have other secrets to keep. You must, therefore, commend my discretion, and nourish my virtue. I shall not, at the same time, keep from you any information concerning our society that it is in my power to give; but for its mysteries, they are sacred.

"One reflection that dissipated my scruples, and hastened my reception, was that I knew this Order to be composed of a great number of very worthy men; men who I was sure would never have twice entered a lodge if anything had passed there that was in the least incompatible with a character of the strictest virtue. It is true that in this sanctuary of virtue there sometimes steal unworthy brethren, men whose morals and conduct are not such as could be wished; but such is the condition of things in this world, that the good and the bad are inevitably mixed with each other; for even the small number of twelve Apostles was not exempt from one unworthy member. I did not expect, by becoming a Freemason, to be introduced to a society of angels, but of worthy men; and I have not been disappointed.

"I readily confess that what is called Freemasonry may be made a disgrace as well as an ornament to society. If a company of young fellows, destitute of sense and merit, assemble in the form of a lodge, and after performing certain ridiculous mummeries, proceed to scenes of disorder, certainly nothing can be more detestable than such an assembly. But if you consider our society as the most solemn and perfect fraternity that ever existed upon the earth, in which there is no distinction of men by the language they speak, by the dress they wear, by the rank to which they were born, or the dignities they possess, who regard the whole world but as one commonwealth, of which each nation forms a family, and each individual a member! who endeavour by these means to revive the primitive maxims of mankind in the greatest perfection; to unite under their banner, men of knowledge, virtue and urbanity; whose members mutually defend each other by their authority, and enlighten each other by their knowledge; who sacrifice all personal resentment; who banish from their lodges all that can disturb the tranquillity of mind or the purity of manners; and who, in the intervals of their delightful labors, enjoy the innocent pleasures of life; if, I say, you regard Masonry in this light, you must agree that the interest of this society must be that of the whole race of mankind, and that it must operate on the human heart in a manner that religion itself cannot effect without great difficulty.

"It is not, therefore, wonderful that this Order has been sometimes persecuted by the ruling powers in a State; they who commend and they who blame, may have their reasons; but nothing can be more unjust or ridiculous than to imagine that the secret assemblies of the Freemasons can tend to disturb the security or tranquillity of a State; for although our doors are shut against the profane vulgar, they are at all times open to sovereigns and magistrates; and how many illustrious princes and statesmen do we count among our brethren? If aught passed in our lodges that was dangerous or criminal, must they not have been long since abolished? But the experience of many ages, during which this order has never been known to perform