

compensation, but because they wish the world to participate in the fruits of their labors.

It is, we repeat, fortunate for the world it is so. If Milton, indignant at the pittance offered by the printer for his *Paradise Lost*, had thrown the manuscript into the fire, England and America would have lost forever, the noblest poem of their common language.

Years may yet elapse before Masonic scholars will begin to find it irksome to write for a brotherhood who will not read. The literary history of Masonry will continue to record the rise and fall of Masonic magazines. Printers will publish and lose their money. Editors will write and lose their time and labor. But there must at last come an end to all this.

And the end will be thus. Either the intellectual character of the Craft will be elevated, and Masons will all recognize the fact that they should know something of the history and the philosophy of the Institution—or Masonic books and Masonic magazines will cease to be produced.

Then will come the dark age of Masonry to be speedily followed by its extinction. Masonic clubs still called lodges, in deference to the past times, may continue to exist; but Masonry as a history to be investigated, and as a philosophy to be studied, will no longer have its place. The scholars who are now engaged in the effort to cultivate and diffuse a highly elevated tone to the Institution, will, in sheer disgust, direct their studies to other and more congenial fields. Masonic literature being thus abandoned, Masonry must speedily degenerate.

The question forcibly suggests itself: Has Freemasonry a literature peculiar to itself? If it has, then certainly it is worthy of cultivation. If it has not, then just as certainly, its claim to be anything more than a social and beneficial club, is a sham and a delusion.

But there can be no doubt that Freemasonry has such a literature—a literature extensive, interesting and worthy of cultivation. Forty years ago, the venerable Oliver said:

“Speculative Masonry embraces a wide range of human science; but its elements are circumscribed within a compass which is attainable by every brother who possesses moderate abilities and common industry. Its evidences, doctrines and traditions are within his reach; and without a competent knowledge of these leading principles—which form the horn book of Masonry—he will stumble at the threshold, and never attain a right understanding of the design or utility of the Order; although his initiation may have been regular and the landmarks carefully and correctly communicated.”

In this brief paragraph the learned author—himself one of the most distinguished fathers of Masonic literature—has placed the whole question within the compass of a nutshell.

Freemasonry, or as it is more scientifically called, Speculative Masonry, has an extensive literature—extensive because it “embraces a wide range of human science.”

And yet, the elements of this literature are of such a nature that any intelligent Mason can master them. They do not require, like a learned profession, an exclusive and devoted study. “Moderate abilities and common industry” are sufficient for their attainment.

These elements consist, we are told, of “the evidences, doctrines and traditions” of the Order. What Mason is there who would not desire to know something of these important subjects? The evidences furnish the material for the defence of the Order from the attacks and calumnies of its opponents—the doctrines supply a knowledge of its ethics and its philosophy as a humanitarian association—while the traditions contain an ample store of all the interesting myths and legends on which its ritual is founded, as well as much historical information on the origin and progress of the Institution.

Now all this information may be obtained from the works on Freemasonry that have been published in the last one hundred and fifty years in the languages of England, of France and of Germany. But few Masons have the time or the means, if they have the inclination, to amass Masonic libraries and to devote themselves to an exhaustive study of the volumes which have issued from the Masonic press.

There are some few scholars who have done this, and they have been rewarded for their labors, less by the patronage of many readers than by the internal satisfaction which is always derived from the acquisition of knowledge. The great body of the Fraternity cannot be expected to be scholars.

Yet they should know something of the Order of which they are members—something more than its mere methods of recognition. They should be familiar, at least, with what Oliver calls “the horn book of Masonry.”

Now, this general and elementary familiarity with the character, the object and the