



VOL. I.

GREENSBORO, N. C., FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 1876

NO 30.

Our Ancient Craft.

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Our Ancient Craft. At the front of all thought which this theme suggests, arises the pertinent inquiry, "What is Freemasonry?" Not the Freemasonry of to-day or of a century since; not the Freemasonry of America or of England, or of Judea, or of any time or place; but the grand old science of all time and all space—old as tradition and antedating all history—universal as the sun's light and as humanity's aspirations—so vast and illimitable that the heavens only can be designated as its canopy!

We have heard it defined as a moral science; a system of ethics taught by signs and symbols; the voice of nature as reflected by the highest aspirations of humanity.

In some respects it is indeed but the reflex of nature herself. In the grandeur and magnificence of its proportions—in its beauty, its symmetry, its order, and its strength—in the justice, the immutability, and the administration of its law and government; it is as perfect and as exact as the natural sciences upon which it is founded—geometry, architecture, and mechanics! Yet its chief glory and utility—the nameless charm which binds it to our hearts, arises from the fact that in some of its moral and social aspects it presents the very artipode of nature's law. The law of nature was simple selfishness. The law of nature was that the strong should govern and use the weak, as the falcon tears the dove and the lion feeds on the lamb. Justice, equality, forbearance, and self-sacrifice—the doctrine of equal rights and equal obligations—had no place in nature's code. These were the fruits of the social compact, the reforms which society imposed upon nature; and the chief pride of Freemasonry to-day is, that it has been at once the first and the most potential of the agencies which society has wielded or rather, which has wielded society—for the improvement and amelioration of man's condition. Venerable with age, yet sturdy with the vigor of youth, the same to-day, yesterday, and three thousand years ago, it has come down to us radiant with the glory of its conquests. I say conquests, for it has had its struggles, fierce, frequent, and prolonged. But the human mind has been the arena of these combats; the weapons used have been the moral forces only; and the enemies vanquished have been the vices, the wrongs and the sufferings, of humanity! The fields on which these victories have been won are still blooming and unravaged, and the serene heavens look down with approbation on all that Freemasonry has done!

Those of us who have reached the meridian of life have experienced so much of falsehood and hypocrisy, that we have become distrustful of all pretensions. Where there is much of profession we are apt to expect but little of real merit or

commendable practice. Freemasonry is the grand exception to that hateful rule. Arrayed in all the moral and social qualities which can adorn the human mind and heart, by its works it has established its title to all that it professes, and its practices have been as commendable as its theories.

As a political economist, Freemasonry knows how much better it is to prevent the commission of wrong than to punish the wrong-doer; and that the best preventive of crimes is to undo the bonds and remove the necessities which impel men to commit them. Our necessities are our masters, not our advisers! Freemasonry know this, and knows that it is want and suffering which fill the brothel and the prison house. Freemasonry knows that man cannot live on faith, and that it is a mockery and an insult to stand carping to me about the beauties of holiness, when bread is what I am dying for.

It knows that visions of the spirit-land however gorgeous and enchanting they may be, will not keep off the piercing blasts from homeless childhood, nor heal the sick, nor feed the famished; and it cries out perpetually to the canting reformers of the day—to church and to society—give, oh, give us some practice with your theories, a little homely relief to season your saintly exhortations! It does not tell the famished to be fed and leave them without food! It does not bid the naked to be clad and leave them without raiment! But it stretches out its potent arm, and feeds, and clothes, and heals, and saves.

Some years ago, no matter how many, I was a resident in one of the little mining towns of California. One day there appeared among us a young man whose flushed cheek and nervous movements told the experienced eye that he had come too late in search of health. Deeply cultured, skilled in arts and sciences, and master of literature, he was yet without business education, and had no longer the physical strength for manual labor. In that community there was nothing to do whereby he could earn his bread. Warily and more warily he walked the streets for a few days, and then failed to re-appear. I divined the cause and went myself in search of him. In a narrow, dark and gloomy garret, where his necessities had compelled him to retire, I found him, too weak already to longer wait upon himself, but watching with patient serenity for the outgoing of the tide, which was ebbing now with terrible and accelerating speed. At first he was reticent and distrustful. But a few moments satisfied him that something better than curiosity merely had brought me there, and then he told the story of his life. It was the tale you have often heard before, of a widowed mother and an only son; of days of toil and nights of study, of struggles with poverty and broken health, and how at last, with little left of strength or endurance, but rich in

manly resolution, he had come out here in the double hope of regaining health and rearing a happier home for the mother who had borne and tended him. And then for the first time, and with evident reluctance as if he feared I would regard the disclosure as setting up some claim upon my purse, he told me that on the eve of his departure from the East he had been made a Mason. "I suppose," he said, "that I am what you call an emergent Mason. But I don't know as I ought to be blamed much for it. I always wanted to be a Mason. But I was never able until that night. I shouldn't have been able then, but a friend gave me the money. I wonder," he added inquiringly, after a pause, "if I can be buried by the Masons?"

By this time I was too full of something besides censure, to think that the boy could be blamed for anything; and I presume I told him so.

But be that as it may, there was a basty change in that apartment. We did not leave him long with his cheerless and uncomfortable surroundings. Gently and tenderly as ever young mother lifted and pressed her first-born to her heart, we lifted him up and bore him away from the gloom and desolation of his garret. The hand of death was indeed all ready upon him, and we could not unloose its inexorable grip. But we could at least cheer and solace his descent to the tomb. We could open the shutters and let God's genial sunshine in to gild with mellow radiance his few remaining days. We could stand by his bedside and anticipate and minister to every want. We could receive his benedictions and his thanks, and that last look of ineffable gratitude, which transformed his face to heavenly beauty, when his lips could no longer utter what was in his heart.

And when the struggle was over, with reverent steps and slow we bore the stranger Brother away to his resting-place, and dropped upon his coffin with fraternal regard the grateful evergreen—emblem of eternal life and love.

And then it seemed to me that I too was translated. I seemed to stand for a moment far away across the continent. A down the sloping mead I saw the humble home he had described to me, and by its porch at eventide the aged mother gazing toward the setting sun, where faint and fainter fell his last receding steps, as if she deemed the very longing of her heart might call her boy back again! And I said, Strengthen thy heart now, oh, bereaved and desolate one! Thy boy indeed is dead. But though a stranger in that distant land, he found kind friends, whose hearts were faithful to him as a mother's!

How many times the sun has risen and set since then! The days have gathered into months, and months have ripened into nearly a score of years! But morn and evening still, on bended knee, one grateful heart sends up the fervent prayer—"Bless, oh God! bless that noble Brotherhood!"

George Washington.

In these days of political and almost National degradation it is pleasant to turn our eyes towards the great and good men of the past—to those days when honor and manhood and great moral natures were tested, and not found wanting. There have been long discussions about the likenesses, and the appearances of the great men of the past, most notably that of Shakespeare and Washington—and, strange as it may seem to many, the artist, who has, in all probability, got nearest to the likeness of the great bard, is an American artist—Bro. William Page. After a long consultation over the numerous likenesses of Shakespeare, both in this country and Europe, Bro. P. began with the German Mask, as it is called, and from it—the Chandos Portrait and the Deshout Print, he has produced a form and face that all lovers of Shakespeare must ever be thankful for.

Since the discovery of the original mask of Washington, which is now conceded by good judges to be the only real correct likeness of Washington known, Bro. Wilson McDonald, the eminent sculptor of this city, who has the mask, and has done so much for the adornment of native art in the United States, has begun a heroic bust of Washington, from this new material, assisted by a photograph from Stuart's picture; by combining the two, he hopes to produce such a Washington as has not been attained up to this time. It is well known that there were but three other busts of Washington said to be modeled from life, two of these have long since been discarded, and the Houdon bust is admitted to be the standard—that is the statue at Richmond has been taken as the standard; and now it occurs that the statue was *not modeled from the original head*. The original head is much smaller than the head of the statue—this important fact has only been discovered by late measurements—from the original head, and the Stuart portraits, the artist is now at work. It may be well to state, that this material combined, has never yet been used. The head of the Houdon statue has often been used by eminent American sculptors, but all efforts heretofore have been more or less objectionable, on account of the treatment of the hair. The original head was made in the moulds cast from Washington's head. This process had the effect of smoothing the hair.

We think that by making a perfect copy of the original mask, and then putting on the Stuart hair, we will have a better Washington than we have yet obtained. We hope to be able to chronicle the success of Bro. McDonald's effort.

He has a patriotic design in this connection, intending to offer copies of his bust to the public schools of the Nation, to the end that the rising generations will have the constant lesson of the life and services of Washington always before them. We know of nothing so good at this particular time, when our youth see nothing but corruption around them, to call them back to the early days of the Republic—to Washington and his compatriots, and the Craft throughout the world will be enabled to point to a correct representation of him, who was always proud of his connection with the Fraternity.—*N. Y. Dispatch.*