

Abuse of Freemasonry.

We revert to the subject we dealt with under this title in our issue of the 18th ult. We then noticed an attack on Freemasonry, made in the columns of a Belfast journal, by one who was described, in a somewhat elaborate editorial, as "a valued and honourable correspondent." We did not, of course, doubt the said correspondent's value, nor did we for a moment question his being honourable. We pointed out, however, that the series of articles he was then entering upon were likely to prove a very perfect illustration of the class of writing which is commonly known as "twaddle." We even went a little out of our way, and mentioned the only people who, in our opinion, would be likely to appreciate the writer's peculiar style. Since then we have received copies of *The Weekly Examiner* and *Ulster Observer* for the 18th and 25th ult., and the letters they contain from the pen of this ready writer more than confirm the views we gave utterance to a fortnight since.

It will be argued, perhaps, and not without a certain show of reason, that if the letters are of the character we have described, we are honouring them by a second notice, beyond their deserts. We hinted, however, that nervous people are often disconcerted by a false charge again and again repeated. The views they have long held become more and more unsettled, till, at length, reason is overpowered by sheer impudence. This must be our apology for reverting to this attack—this and the evidence the writer has since furnished of his ignorance and profound stupidity.

This "valued and honourable correspondent," who, we are further told in his opening letter, is "talented and respected," announced, with becoming modesty, "that he was tolerant to a fault," yet he is abusive in the last degree. He is "charitable in the fullest and best sense of the word," yet apparently is he nothing if not vindictive. He knows "no distinction of sect or party," yet his best efforts are being directed towards exciting hatred between the Roman Catholic and Protestant inhabitants of Belfast. But the simulation of our antagonist is comparatively of little moment; it is his assertions which concern us most. In the third of the series of letters we are told, that in all probability "there is a great future before our trade." The war in Spain is over. Cuba will soon be pacified. The United States are slowly but surely recovering from the effects of the late Civil war, and the American trade of Ulster "will soon know lively times." There is, again, a magnificent opening for pushing Belfast wares in Japan. Foreign competition, however, is the great thorn in the side of Belfast. Not that foreign competitors have any means or material at their disposal. On the contrary, "foreign flax spinning is not spinning. Foreign yarns are not yarns." Foreign flax spinners "work their machinery till it is decrepid." "They dwarf and demoralize the workers, and buy their flax from ten to twenty per cent dearer." And yet, in the teeth of all these disadvantages, foreign linen finds an excellent market in Belfast or elsewhere. We have already said we are not posted in the fluctuations of trade in Belfast or elsewhere. We are not in a position therefore to examine these statements. We simply note them. And what, think our readers, is the root of all this evil? The flax trade is in the hands of the Protestants, and the Protestants are all Freemasons. Freemasonry "does what it likes with the trade." "It is the corruption and cancer which are consuming the very vitals

of the trade." "For a dozen years or more you (*i. e.*, Freemasonry) have held the trade in your viper clasp, and now you have it as nearly strangled as it was when the incompetents, your forerunners, had it almost garrotted (*sic*) in '38." Here we pause for a moment, partly in order to recover our equanimity, partly to trace the argument, which is apparently as follows: The Belfast linen trade is in a bad way, but has a fine future before it, only foreign competition is a thorn in its side. Foreign linen is worthless, yet it finds a market in Belfast in preference to the linen of native manufacturers, because the Belfast manufacturers are Protestants, and the Protestants are Freemasons. Ergo, Freemasonry has ruined the trade of Belfast. We cannot say we by any means see the force of this so called argument. We imagine there must be an "undistributed middle" somewhere, that the major and minor premises, if there be any, must have gone off at a tangent, and consequently that the conclusion is a little out of joint. This, however, is all we have been able to make out of the first two columns of the third letter. The Belfast trade is in a bad way. It might be better. But the manufacturers are all Protestants, and the Protestants all Freemasons. Verily this is logic gone mad. But there is more yet to come. The higher mill employes are Protestants and soon become Freemasons and Orangemen. Thus "they are a happy family of mill employes, all of one caste and colour, all moulded in the one matrix—the matrix of Freemasonry; all reduced to the one dull, dead, soulless level of debased Freemason uniformity." True they were born with certain individualities, but in the crucible of Freemasonry the heterogeneous individualities are fused into a homogeneous whole." This last sentence reads very prettily. "Freemasonry is the Rarey which tames them all down to the Lodge level." They are loyal, in the first instance, to the Lodge, and then any superfluous loyalty that may remain is exhibited towards the mill and its master. This is Masonic Trades Unionism. It excludes Catholics that "the Lodge may reign aristocratically." And the mill employe may do as he likes. He may go out on a "bender" in the evening, and the overseer—we beg pardon, his "surveillant"—will take no heed of his incapacity for work the next day. He need not, or he does not study the moral economy of flax-growing countries, or the geographical distribution of flax. He has no time, in fact. He must attend his Freemason and Orange lodges. He must frequent bars, chaff barmails, play billiards, and go in for bicycling, hundred yard spurts, betting, and other weaknesses of human nature. Moreover, he draws his salary without study, and even without work. Thus it is the flax trade is depressed, and foreign competitors have it all their own way in the market of Belfast." So, at least, says our "talented and respected correspondent" of *The Weekly Examiner* and *Ulster Observer* in his third letter, and he is an "honourable" man.

Our amiable correspondent in his fourth letter is not more illogical, for that were impossible, but he is a wee bit more violent in the language he uses. This perhaps is due to his exaltation, in the interval between writing the two letters, to the degree of R.A.M., for he is at the pains to introduce us to the "Royal Arch Confraternity." But, as "whoso exalteth himself shall be abased," we have hardly had time to realize the new status when we rapidly descend below the level of the drunkard. "An incurable drunkard is not an efficient employe. But a hardened, confirmed, inveterate Freema-

son is worse." The drunkard is "said to be 'nobody's enemy but his own.'" But the Freemason "is the friend of his brother of the craft, and of none other." It will be seen that we are advancing in our argument—slowly, it is true. Yet is it a comfort to know that we are advancing, and, accordingly, we pause for a moment to sum up the case as it now stands. Belfast trade is in a bad way. It may be better if foreign competition will cease to be a thorn in its side. Foreign linen is worthless, but it finds a market in Belfast, because the Belfast manufacturers are Protestants and Freemasons. The mill employes are Protestant Freemason Orangemen who play billiards, chaff barmails, &c. &c., to the exclusion of study and often also of work. Though members of the Royal Arch Confraternity, they are worse than incurable drunkards. Thus it is that Freemasonry is ruining the Belfast linen trade. We ought to be getting a little nervous at finding ourselves below the level of incurable drunkards, but, strange to say, we feel quite lively. The damnation—(N. B. We are not swearing)—of Freemasonry by this "talented and respected" correspondent is producing quite an exhilarating effect. And thus animated, we plunge incontinently into his fifth letter. Happily, our summary of it need be but brief. The writer begins by lamenting the hard fate of Belfast Catholics, who are excluded from all employment in mills, and have only the arts, the professions, the Civil Service, to fall back upon. For this, by some wonderful hanky-panky we do not pretend to understand, Freemasonry is made responsible. "God knows the struggle for existence with many Catholic families is often sore, hard, trying; when to that is added the penalties and disabilities which Freemasonry imposes on them it becomes almost intolerable, almost unendurable." Intolerable and unendurable have much the same meaning, but when a man is writing for effect the multiplication of adjectives often stands in good stead. Then follows a picture of the striking contrast between the flax trade as it was in the good old days and as it is under the domination of Freemasonry. Before the American civil war the Catholic flax trade flourished. When that struggle began it gave a great impetus to the linen trade, and the Protestant Freemason Orangemen started new mills, and we presume we are to infer they have continued ever since to work with such a will that now, it seems, they have the whole linen trade in their hands. Then came the riots of 1864, which "was another of the break necks of the Catholic employes." Since then the P. F. O. brotherhood have gone from bad to worse, and have ended by usurping the despotic regulation of the trade in general. And then the writer asks, "And what has this weakly-strong, strongly-weak despotism done for the trade? It has led it from blunder to blunder, from disaster to disaster. And what has it done for the mills it directs? The share list will tell that. It has filled every post in its gift with incompetency like itself." Then follows a sentence which we are sorry to say we do not understand. This may be owing to a certain dulness on our part, or to the obscurity of the writer's language. Whatever the cause, we simply quote it; our readers must interpret for themselves. "Being incompetent, it knows not what is competent, and if what was competent came across it, it would clash with its incompetency, and to differ from the despot means decapitation—otherwise discharge. If these men had any moral sense they would go and commit 'happy despatch.'" We frankly admit this sen-

sentence is worthy in every respect of the "talented and respected correspondent" whose fifth letter appears in *The Ulster Observer* and *Northern Star*.

It is a great pity this "talented and respected," this "valued and honourable" correspondent of the Belfast journals should have written so much to so little purpose. The gist of his so-called argument appears to be—Before the American war the flax trade was in the hands of the Catholics, and Belfast flourished. Since then Protestantism has established a despotism over the trade of Belfast and everything has gone or is going to the bad. Protestants are Freemasons, and thus it is that Freemasonry is the root of the whole evil. We need hardly trouble ourselves to analyze this miserable abortion of an argument. There are other places in the world besides Belfast where Freemasonry largely prevails and trade flourishes. If it is to be permitted to this correspondent to associate the depression of trade in Belfast with the baneful influence of Freemasonry, we may fairly connect the prosperity of trade in other places with the benign influence of our Order. In the United States there are over half a Million of Masons, and we have yet to learn that the United States are unprosperous. Masonry is powerful both in England and Scotland, in Germany and in France, but we never yet heard it associated with the fluctuations of trade. It is true that trade exercises a certain influence for good or for evil over Freemasonry, in this respect at least—if trade is prosperous, the large body of tradesmen who are Freemasons get their share of the prosperity; if trade is depressed, the Freemason tradesmen suffer in proportion. But the principles of Freemasonry have nothing in common with trade. Freemasonry is a kind of universal religion, and whoso believes in it and acts up to its principles will make an upright man and a good citizen. This our correspondent, if he be a Mason, must know; if he is not a Mason, this long-winded tirade of his is worthless.

As we said in our previous article, why has not this valued and honourable correspondent the manliness to come forward and say boldly—I am a Roman Catholic; the Romish Priesthood tell me to hate Freemasonry, and I hate it accordingly. This would not be a logical hatred, or consistent with the true principles of Christianity, which is the religion of love but the world would understand all about it. That this is the real motive for his attack on our Order is evident enough. He may say that he is tolerant to a fault, that he is charitable, that he knows no distinction of sect or party. But those who read between the lines will see that it is the deadly hatred of Roman Catholicism for Freemasonry which is at the bottom of this furious onslaught. If the writer is wise, as well as talented and respected, he will pull up sharp and write no more nonsense. The more he writes the more ridiculous he makes himself. For ourselves, we may fairly pray, "Oh that mine enemy would write a book!" The more we have of these letters the higher shall we rise in the estimation of the public. Therefore, if the five that have already appeared become fifty, or even five hundred, so much the better will it be for Freemasonry. Whether the readers of these two Belfast journals will rejoice in this rignarole if it be continued much longer is a matter that concerns us not.—London *Freemason's Chronicle*.

A tablespoonful of molasses taken at bed time will relieve constipation.

Chickweed boiled in sweet milk and drank freely will cure the dysentery.