

## Masonic Philosophy.

But few men fully understand the moral system of Masonry. The masses think it only a secret Order of brotherhood, a sort of fraternal association, gotten up and perpetuated for the purposes of social life, and of fraternal guardianship.

They do not recognize the fact that it is a broad system of liberal and philosophic principles, comprehending in its moral outlines all that is just and true, fraternal or charitable, in any of the religions of the world. This is it, in its spirit, obligations and moral purposes.

True, it has no creed of religious faith, or standard of theological doctrines, but it teaches the being of God, it believes in the doctrine that man is immortal. Aside from these two principles it makes no demand upon the credulity of its membership of faith in anything belonging to speculative philosophy. Its aims are practical and conservative, having more particular reference to personal duties and relative obligations, than to any of the theological theories of ancient or modern times. It knows no church and ignores none. Its members are gathered from all communions, from all religious faiths, and from all grades of men of good report. It constitutionally declares in favor of the most liberal forms of moral government, as well as for the most liberal recognition of man's universal brotherhood.

What it is in faith it aims to be in practice, a society of human reliance, of brotherly love, relief and truth. It knows no nationality, claims no sectionalism, and never for a moment disdains any man on account of his religious or his theological notions.

And yet it always looks at the man, and if he is honorable in life, guarding his integrity, walking in the line of his obligations, and useful among his fellow-men, he is set down as being worthy of the brotherhood, and counted a true Mason.

The fact that he is a Hebrew does not unchristianize him, and the fact that he is a Christian does not in any sense militate against his character. Once made a Mason by the mystic rites of his obligations he is ever afterward the viceroy of his own life, and the obligated brother of every true Mason.

He then belongs to the family of man in a sense he never did before.

A believer in God, he is man's friend as well as the obligated guardian of himself. He knows no divisions in the human family, and no good reasons why he should proscribe any man for his faith, his religion his politics or his nationality.

He worships God by serving his fellow men, and glorifies his maker by being true to his creatures. Honest in life, gentle in spirit, faithful in his relationships, and full of the spirit of toleration and charity, he is the peer of the best, the full equal of all brothers, and the true representative of the ancient and honorable body.

This, and all this, we say of him—not because he has been initiated into the rites of the Fraternity in some Lodge-room—but because he is made acquainted with the true theory of personal and moral government.

That which is his duty he performs, and that which the sectarian too often condemns he tolerates; for he asks no

man his faith, or his religion, or his politics.

Trained in this school, man becomes conservative, liberal and humane. They fear God, as the son fears his father, and they know that they can not do otherwise and be true to themselves or their fellow-men.

Devotion to the Great Father of All, is manifested by them, not in creeds, or in ceremonies, or relationships, but in the exercise of true charity to their fellow-men. They are too well educated to believe that mere songs or prayers or Lodge ceremonies can answer the place of liberality or charity, and they know from the teachings of the simplest Masonic lessons, that God only is worshipped in grace and truth, where man is served in sympathy and love. This, indeed, is the Orders of the divine government, as is plainly made known in the Holy Writings, and it is this that gives to the craft the divine authority to act as the conservators of suffering humanity in every country and clime under the whole heavens.

On this basis its philosophy is built and on it rests its prestige, with all that it proposes for the benefit and blessing of men. It pretends to no moral monopoly, and lays no claims to any superiority over any other institution.

What it has done belongs to the history of our race, and what it is, in its genius, its labors, and humane influences, it leaves without fear or favor to the ultimate judgement of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The divine government is the only rule of its principles, as it is also of its appeals for the right.

With these broad and liberal views it has erected its Lodges among the nations of the earth, and silently worked its way alongside of all other organizations, without jealousy or the spirit of competitiveness, or a single instance of persecution of any cotemporary power. Thus founded, and thus governed, it has kept its march among the melancholy ruins of ages—the grandest mystic body the world has ever known.—*Masonic Advocate.* H.

## On the Square.

We clip the following from the New York *Square* and give it our unqualified endorsement. A few months ago we published an article on the same subject, which then went the rounds of the press and we are proud to see that our New York brother has revived the important subject in his valuable paper:

We think that we will be sustained in asserting that the text we select as the title of this article is full of significance. We find that one feature of the definition of "Speculative Masonry" is that we should "act on the square," the meaning of which is clear and explicit, and the fulfillment is demonstrated in the life of a Mason who ever endeavors to act justly toward all men, doing unto them as he would wish they would do unto him. Though Masonry teaches and inculcates this beautiful lesson yet it is thoroughly applicable to every man's life, whether he be a Mason or profane; and it would certainly prove a difficult task for any man to gain admission among Masons, if it were clearly developed that his life had been antagonistic to the course as above prescribed. But there is another phase pertinent to the declaration of "on the square," to which we fraternally invite

the attention of our readers. The use of the phrase "on the square" is not by any manner of means confined solely to Masons; for we shall find it used very extensively (though perhaps borrowed from our institution) by men who are not now and perhaps never will be Masons. We naturally enquire as to what practical use the adoption of such an expression—so thoroughly applicable to Masonry—can be to men who know nothing of Masonry and therefore are in utter ignorance as to the force and import of "on the square," Masonically considered. They use the expression as the highest means of obtaining confidence between man and man, and it is safe to say that that confidence is less frequently betrayed than among Masons themselves, who know, or at least should know, why the expression "on the square," when applied to the employment of strict confidence between brother and brother, has a Masonic meaning pure and noble in itself, a violation of the confidence reposed subjecting an offender to serious punishment. But we may well ask the question is this confidence ever betrayed? and the answer comes back to us with terrible force, that said betrayal is an every day occurrence; but it might be a difficult task to prove that confidence had been ill bestowed, for as a general rule but two parties are concerned, and one would be just as likely to deny that information was imparted "on the square" as the other would be to assert that it was; but should the confidence be reposed in the presence of a third party and then betrayal should, an important witness could be produced to establish the consummate meanness of the tattler. To our mind a Mason can commit no greater offence than to divulge matter communicated to him "on the square."

A brother Mason perhaps bowed down by adversity, reduced to the lowest depths of poverty and distress, makes, as he supposes, a confidant of a brother, to whom he pours out his trouble and his sorrow. He goes to him for solace and comfort and words of cheer. He has a natural pride that prohibits him from telling his misfortune to every brother he meets. The one he has selected, instead of fulfilling his pledge as a Master Mason, reveals the subject matter of the interview not only to one, but perchance to a score of Masons, until much to the poor brother's surprise, he finds that his impoverished condition is a subject of common comment among the Craft. We hold then that any Mason who receives intelligence upon any subject at the hands of a worthy brother, and "on the square," and afterwards violates his covenant, is unworthy the name of man or Mason and should be hurled from the fraternity as an unfit associate. Perhaps there is little doubt that this confidence is often betrayed unthinkingly; but Masons are bound to think; justice to a deserving brother commands them to think; every Mason knows—and if he don't know it is certainly his own fault—as to what pledges he voluntarily assumed, and he certainly would not be willing to admit his ignorance of the Masonic application of the oft times repeated and oft times abused declaration of "on the square." It is a theme full of thought and meaning, and we direct the attention of the craft to it in the most fraternal spirit.

It is seldom that God sends such calamities upon man as men bring upon themselves and suffer willingly.

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