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MISCELLANEOUS

MASONIC

The following is an extract from an address pronounced before the Brethren of Union Lodge, in Connecticut, by brother WILSON F. BRADSHAW. We recommend the piece to such of our readers as are capable of appreciating the truths which it contains...

Some tell of the antiquity of masonry; and on occasions like this, they insist upon it with a zeal that implies the point to be essential—thus they say that Enoch was a mason, and Noah was a mason, and Moses was a Mason; and that Solomon was a mason, some insist on as a matter of faith absolutely indisputable.

Whether these things are so, is of no importance whatever. A mere historical fact, unconnected with the evidences of the christian religion, is seldom of much consequence, and the date of such fact is commonly of still less. Who cares for instance, whether Alexander the Great was a real or a fictitious character; what cares the inhabitant of this country, whether it was discovered by Columbus or Vesputius, and whether that discovery was in 1490, or 1492. He knows that there is such a place as America, and that he lives in it. What care the sailor, on his stormy travels, who first found out the magnetism of the needle? it neither lulls the wind, nor shortens the voyage. So whether Moses was a mason, or Pathagoras even, is now of as little moment to determine, as whether they were made in the same Egyptian Lodge; or whether the Magicians of Egypt used the same forms when they made them, that we do now.—These idle enquiries have been so often mistaken for the essentials of masonry, that many sensible men without the Lodge have taken a prejudice against it, from their incredulity on this subject; forgetting that they talked about a trifle. For if the institution be bad, it cannot be canonized by Solomon in all his glory.

What is Masonry now? It is extensive. It is disseminated generally through Europe, through North and South America, in the West and East Indies, and in Asia elsewhere, and in some parts of Africa. It comprises Christians, Jews, Turks, Greeks, Arabians and others. You find the mason on the deep, and in the desert, on the deck of the ship, and on the back of the camel, and making himself known notwithstanding every diversity of tongue; you find him of every opposite and contending faith; of religions endeavoring to make converts of one another; owing allegiance to every different form of government under heaven, and scattered through these governments, from him "that sitteth on the throne" to him that grindeth behind the mill. Yet such is the nature of Masonry, that all these differences of government, language, religion, form no impediment to its progress, and it may become universal notwithstanding them all; for all Lodges are one; the object in them is not only the same; but it is one; and masons may differ, and unfortunately do differ, on all subjects but one.

What is Masonry now? It is powerful. It comprises men of rank, wealth, office and talent, in power and out of power, and that, in almost every place where power is of importance; and it comprises, among the other class of the community, to the lowest, in large numbers, active men, united together and capable of being directed by the efforts of others; so as to have the force of concert through the civilized world. They are distributed too, with the means of knowing one another, and the means of keeping secret, and the means of co-operating; in the desk, in the legislative hall, on the bench, in every gathering of men of business, in every party of pleasure, in every enterprise of government, in every domestic circle, in peace and in war, among enemies and friends, in one place as well as in another.

So powerful is at this time, that it fears nothing from violence, either public or private, for it has every means to learn it in season, to counteract, defeat

and punish it. The power of the Pope has been sometime friendly and sometimes hostile; the government of Spain, with its inquisition, has been hostile; suppose now, that the oppression of either should rouse and excite Masonry to redress its grievances, Spain would bear the note of preparation from every quarter; at home, from all her neighbors, and in her colonies; and the deepest dungeon of the inquisition would thrust out its victim with haste. The Jesuits, with their cunning, might call on the Holy Brotherhood, and the Holy Brotherhood on the Holy Alliance, and they all might come too, and in vain; for it is too late to talk of the propriety of continuing or suppressing Masonry, after the time to do so has gone by—so, good or bad, the world must take it as it is. Think of it, laugh at it, wonder at it, hate it or despise it, as occasionally presenting little meetings, a number of grave, and otherwise sensible men, with aprons on; still, it is not only all that I have told you, but it will continue to be; and the world in arms cannot stop it—a powerful institution.

Whether Masonry be good or bad, is still a question of interest, which is not touched, far less settled, by the proof that it is strong, lasting and extensive.

You expect me, of course, to say something in favor of it instead of which permit me to state to you its object, and the means which it uses to accomplish that object, and then leave you to determine from your own inferences, whether this moderate proposition be true, viz. that Masonry is founded in Wisdom.

Wisdom consists in selecting a good object, and in adopting appropriate means to accomplish it; and the proof of both consists in this, that such end is actually accomplished. The object in the first place must be practicable. Masonry, therefore, has nothing to do with very many good things, for there are many good things besides Masonry.—It has nothing to do with any mere principle. It has nothing to do with benevolence, or mere good will; with any exercise of mind, or emotion of heart; because, it attempts only what it can do, and promises only what it can perform; and therefore confines itself to a single object, the extending and multiplying of good works. Some say they have kind hearts, tender hearts, good hearts; but how are you to know it, much more to make it so? The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it? Of the intelligences with which the universe is filled, there may be millions that know your conduct; there is but one that searches the heart—a correct faith is indispensable, but masonry has nothing to do with that. Some say they have it, some think they have it, and some actually have it. 'Tis the evidence of things not seen; we cannot ascertain it, much less enforce it; and we limit our exertions to our means. Nor is masonry at all connected with the display of intellect.—Men may have 'the gift of tongues, and all knowledge,' they may invent, contrive, and benefit mankind in a thousand ways, but we have no more control over the understanding, than over the faith. As many folks will tell us that they are great men, as that they are good men, and with equal sincerity—they may be deceived, but we can never be, for we enter into no such inquiry. Therefore it is, that Masonry hates professions which rest there—slippery promises of what you will do, and boastings of what you have done, and your own word for what you are. Even among boasters, many are so weak as to mistake what they should boast of, they tell of casting out devils and doing many wonderful works, but no good ones.

As I may be understood, I mean explicitly to state, that masonry has only one object. It leaves out all others, however good; because if it tried to accomplish them it would fail in the attempt, for want of means; and would destroy the universality of the institution besides. If any system of belief was insisted on, we should be confined first, to christian nations, then to protestant nations, and then to some one denomination of protestants, and this great institution of a universal charity would be destroyed, and that without necessity, for there is no limit to good works. The only religious test is this, that men should have a sense of their immortal accountability, so that their obligation can be confided in.—Hence it is, that among masons, there is neither inquiry nor discussion about religion or politics; for the word of a mason is not, I will believe this, and disbelieve that—but it is, I will do this, and I will not do that. At the door of the lodge his claim for admittance cannot be refused, whether he come from across the street or across the ocean—in robes, or in rags. He may wear the turban or the crown, the tiara, the mitre, or the black

cap of Geneva; the military hat with lace and feathers, or the broad brim of drab color; if a mason, he is admitted; and when he has entered the door, it is too late for him to find fault with his company. As he shall not be molested himself, so he shall not disturb others. There the Greek and the Turk must lay aside their quarrel, and sit together with the Jew, the Christian, the Indian, and the Missionary, where the sword, the sceptre and the crozier submit to the mystic influence of the trowel. Like the great fabric of human society, this too must contain the poor, the weak, and the wicked; for to do good it is an necessary there should be those to whom it is to be done, as that there should be others able to do it; therefore we have the poor always with us." Among individual Masons, one may confer an obligation and another may receive it, the beneficence of the one; and the gratitude of the other; are acts both of them graceful, and equally contribute to ornament the lodge—but the collected lodge is always a giver and never a receiver. On the admission of a member of the highest rank, an honor is bestowed and a favor conferred on him, and not by him. The Monarch himself accepts it, not with a profession of thanks or by an equivalent in value that cancels the debt, but by an act of unequivocal humility; for one great landmark of Masonry is, that it is free. It solicits no aid, and asks for no converts, but is anxious rather that the inexperienced and thoughtless, who may be actuated by curiosity, or operated on by sympathy, or outward show, should be well advised, that there are some whom we cannot take, many that we will not have, and none that we can urge; for the design is not to benefit those who join us, in any other way than by enabling them to benefit others, and they may do this without being masons. There is, therefore, no urgency for proselytes that we can do without, nor any other exhortation than that you should co-operate with us in the work that we are about.

That the single object of the lodge is to extend and multiply acts of beneficence, in the strict sense of the words, is plain from this, that it has never been known to interfere in any other. The instruments that it uses are food and clothing, the life-boat, the apparatus of the humane society, and the personal exertions of man to relieve the distress and come to the rescue of his fellow man. These are the working tools of our profession, and such is its object. I promised you the liberty of drawing your own inferences; is the object a good one?

The means devised for the attainment of this end, are the secrecy, the language, and the government of the lodge; and these means will be pronounced wise or not, as they may be found to answer the purpose, or fall short of it. Secrecy is wisely adapted to begin and continue Masonry, because it is necessary. If the lodge should work in public, who in a short time would be its members? How would it exclude unworthy and harmful ones; where would be its means of doing good, where its government, its order, its responsibility? If it was to let out, it would be like the breaking out of water, and mingled with the world's whole population, so that it would have no other existence than the existence of man. It would float in broken masses, dissipated and weak, in the deluge of selfishness, corruption, and depravity. The silver cord would be loosed, and the three fold cord would be broken, and the Masons of this age would be blasted like the builders of Babel when they were too many to keep together.

Besides, secrecy is of itself a virtue, and is taught as such in the lodge, and taught effectually; men should be able to keep their own secrets, and should never violate the confidence of others, nor can they without a sense of meanness, that renders them too despicable to be talked about. So highly was this virtue esteemed among the Ancients, that our old friend Pythagoras taught it as a useful part of his science, and condemned his new disciples to a dead silence, of from two to five years, varying as he found them more or less worthy of his confidence. Some stupid writers have said if masonry be good, tell us, and extend the good; we do extend the good, but if we tell you, minutely, the means by which we do it, we should fail of communicating the power to you, and should lose it ourselves. If you wish to know, and are worthy, there is one way of entering in, that is by the door; and we know the difference between him that entereth in by the door, and him that climbeth up some other way.

I said that secrecy was taught in the lodge as a virtue, and taught effectually—is it not so? Masonic secrecy is, I acknowledge, a mysterious thing; but to

the fact. The most wily man, if he is a mason, keeps this one secret, there is no risk of him. Enrage, discipline, expel, he never tells. Mad, drunk, or crazy he never tells. Does he talk, it is not about Masonry. Bribe him in his wants, tempt him in his pleasures, threaten him, or torture him, he is a martyr here, he never tells. Thus secrecy is one of the means essential and essential.

Major W. Gray has lately published in London, "Travels in Western Africa, in the years 1819, 20 and 21." This volume treats of the countries adjacent to the Gambia and Senegal rivers, viz. Bondoo, Galam, Wooli, &c. The journal of Major Gray presents a succession of distresses and privations. The kings and princes of those countries, proved to be barbarians and plunderers. They opposed the progress of the expedition, and finally disappointed its objects.

The following extracts relating to the customs of the inhabitants of Bondoo, &c. are taken from the London Literary Gazette:

Getting Wives.—An instance of the manner in which the young men of the country obtain wives, also came under our observation. One of the inhabitants of the neighboring villages, having placed his affections, or rather desires, on a young girl at Kayaya, made the usual present of a few colas to her mother, who without giving her daughter any intimation of the affair, consented to his obtaining her any way he could. Accordingly when the poor girl was employed preparing some rice for supper, she was seized on by her intended husband, assisted by three or four of his companions, and carried off by force. She made much resistance, by biting, scratching, kicking, and roaring most bitterly. Many, both men and women, some of them her own relations, who witnessed the affair only laughed at the farce, and consoled her by saying that she would soon be reconciled to her situation.

Flogging Married Women.—We observed hanging on a stake, outside the walls of the town, a dress, composed of the bark of a tree, torn into small shreds, and formed so as to cover the whole body of the person wearing it, who is a sort of beggar, called Mumbo Jumbo, that occasionally visits all the Mandingo towns, for the purpose of keeping the married women in order. I have been told that the husband who has occasion to find fault with one of his wives, (for here every man has as many as his circumstances will admit) either puts on this dress himself, or gets one of his friends to do it, and having made known his intended visit to the town, by shrieking and howling in the woods near it, arrives after sunset at the assembly place, where all the inhabitants are obliged to meet him, with music, singing, and dancing, which continues for some hours and terminates by his seizing the unfortunate woman, and flogging her most unmercifully in presence of the whole assembly, who only laugh at this horrid performance.

Females.—The people of Bondoo are of the middle size, well made and very active, their skin of a light copper color, and their faces of a form approaching nearer to those of Europe than any of the other tribes of Western Africa, the Moors excepted. The women might vie, in point of figure, with those of the most exquisitely fine forms in Europe. They are extremely neat in their persons and dress, and very fond of amber, coral, and glass beads, of different colors, with which they adorn or bedeck their heads, necks, wrists, and ankles, profusely; gold and silver, too, are often formed into small buttons, which are intermixed with the former on the head, and into rings and chains worn on the wrists and ankles. They always wear a veil thrown loosely over the head; this is manufactured by themselves from cotton, and is intended to imitate thin muslin, at which they have not by any means made a bad attempt. The other parts of their dress, with few exceptions of silk and printed cotton, which they obtain from the coast, are entirely of their own manufacture. They are exceedingly fond of perfumes of every kind, particularly musk, ottof roses, or lavender, but they can seldom procure these, and therefore substitute cloves, which they pound into powder, and mix up with the kernel, having something the flavor of a Tonquin bean, which they likewise reduce to powder, and with a little gum-water, form it into beads about the size of a common garden pea. These they string and hang round the neck; they sometimes string the cloves themselves, and wear them in the same manner; but the way in which they prefer wearing them is sewed up in small bags made of rich colored silk, a number of which are hung

round the neck. The hair, which is neatly braided into a profusion of small plaits, hangs down nearly to the shoulders, and is confined together with the strings of amber, coral, and beads which decorate it round the forehead with a few strings of small beads, by the young girls, and by the married, with a narrow strip of silk, or fine cotton cloth, twisted into a string about as thick as a finger. To complete their dress, a pair of large gold earrings dangle almost to touch the shoulders, and in consequence of their great weight would tend to draw down their ears, were they not supported by a little strap of thin red leather, which is fastened to one ear-ring by a button, and passes over the top of the other. The walk of these ladies is peculiarly majestic and graceful, and their whole appearance, although strange to a European observer, is far from being inelegant.

Retreat of the Expedition.—The Almany, or King of Bondoo, died while our countrymen were there. His successor was however still more hostile, and at length Major Gray was forced, on the 22d May to attempt a retreat. This undertaking was attended with peril, and ended by his being taken prisoner in Footo Toro. While being carried prisoners, at one place, it is stated, "We were met by the women and children, who came forth in hundreds to welcome the return of their husbands, fathers, brothers, &c. Many of the young men and boys, who had never apparently seen a white man before, approached me, and after examining my face with evident surprise and fear, favored me with the epithets of "unbeliever," "son of a hog," "hater of God," and "offspring of an unlawful connexion." One old woman apparently very short-sighted, and no doubt mistaking me for one of the people of the village, approached my horse's side, and was in the act of giving me her hand, when she perceived mine to be white, and shrieking she almost fell to the ground with fright."

War in Africa.—Sanguinary and bloody contests often occur among the hostile tribes of Africa, waged frequently from no other motive than to make captives, which the victorious party sell to the slave traders on the coast. We find it stated in the Sierra Leone Gazette of the 25th June, that an engagement had taken place between a considerable force of the Sherbro Bulloms, and a strong party of Kussos, who had entrenched themselves on an island in the Deong River, called Peypurra, near a small town of the same name. It appears that the Sherbro Chiefs, with the Caulkers at their head, have been a long time mustering their forces for this attack, while the Kussos have latterly contented themselves in fortifying their post at Peypurra, with the determination of making a stand there during the rainy season. The Bulloms, who were sanguine of success, were repulsed with great slaughter, having failed in their attempt to break through the barricade, while the inhabitants of a town in their rear, upon whom they depended for assistance, turned against them, and cut off a great number of their party. Some hundreds of lives have been lost, and a large supply of victims for the slave market have thus been obtained. The former is the natural consequence of such a sanguinary warfare, but the latter is the primary cause and grand stimulus to those avaricious and designing Chiefs, who, by their immediate intercourse with Europeans, and superior cunning, are enabled to protract the war for the sake of the vile gain which accrues to them; while the inhabitants of the whole country, together with its legitimate commerce, are involved in one common ruin.—Boston Patriot.

Subsidence of the Baltic.—A singular and interesting fact has been ascertained respecting the level of the Baltic. It was suspected that the waters of this sea were gradually sinking; but a memoir in the Swedish Transactions for 1823, has put the change beyond doubt. From latitude 56 to 65 degrees, the observations show a mean fall of one foot and a half in 40 years, or 4-10ths of an inch annually, or 5 feet 10 inches in a century. The Baltic is very shallow at present, and if the waters continue to sink as they have done, Revel, Abu, and a hundred other ports will, by and by, become inland towns; the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland, and ultimately the Baltic itself, will be changed into dry land.

Glasgow Mechanics' Mag.—Admonition to Servants.—A late English print mentions that two servant maids had been dismissed by the lady of a British Admiral, "because they allowed two potatoes to boil in pieces, there being but three in the same pan." This was affirmed in a trial for wages, and was not denied.—Nat. Journal.