

Carolina Sentinel.

VOL. IX.

NEWBERN, N. C. SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1826.

NO 432.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, BY
WATSON & MAHEN,
At \$3 per annum—half payable in advance

Masonic.

The Anniversary of St. John the Baptist, was celebrated in this place, on the 24th June, A. L. 5826, by the members of St. John's Lodge, No. 3. A procession was formed at the Lodge, and from thence proceeded to the Presbyterian Church, where the following

ORATION

was delivered by one of the Brethren appointed for that purpose.

Worshipful Master, Brethren, and Friends,

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved upon the waters, and God said:—Let there be light and there was light!—or more emphatically and instantaneously—God said—Light come, and light came!—At a word from the Omnipotent Architect, the Grand Master of Creation, the Alpha and Omega, came forth Time the first born of Eternity!—The involving darkness fled to a more congenial abode, and then burst upon the view of wondering cherubim, the sun of this fair world, with myriads of minor orbs, to illuminate the Universe of God; then recoiled the waves of a be-nighted ocean back upon themselves, and from the confusion of collected chaos, came forth, Order and Harmony, and Strength and Beauty! Then arose those sublime pillars that sustain, and shall sustain, a world, until the Everlasting Builder shall declare "that time shall be no longer!"—Then, then, my brethren, the brauteous reign of Masonry began!—When the sublime fabric, perfect in all its parts, appeared to the astonished gaze of Heaven's observing host, is it to be wondered that the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"—Accustomed to their own existence, and ignorant of Almighty design, they looked not for further wonders, but when, with immortal eyes, they viewed the realms of space, and beheld the power of their Maker exercised upon a new born Universe, is it to be wondered, that the calmness of delight broke into ecstasy, and that celestial voices sounded through that Universe, celestial harmony?

Thus, my brethren, commenced the sublime dignity of our order, and since then, have all true Masons, in humble imitation of their divine Master, endeavoured to apply to the heart and mind, what he so wonderfully perfected by the word of his power!

Although Masons acknowledge King Solomon to have been their greatest earthly Grand Master, who reared the holy temple, and upon its completion, 1000 years before the birth of our Lord, assisted by the royal architect of Tyre, and others, held the first Grand Lodge, of Free and Accepted Masons; our auditors may be desirous to know why we keep not a day for him, but commemorate the days of St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist! It is because there is abundant proof that they were masons and the patrons of Masonry, under a new and more beautiful Order, and because he, whose memory we this day celebrate was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!" that he may suddenly come to his temple, and shed abroad the light of truth in the heart!

A long night of ignorance and error succeeded the opening of the brilliant day of time and Masonry—the veil of barbarism gradually enveloped the mind, and the nations soon forgot their Creator!—But still the "Word was with God and the word was God!"—desirous to illuminate those lost in darkness, when the temple should be built in Jerusalem, and a wiser than Solomon should enter into the Hall of All! When a grand high Priest should come up like a lion from the swedings of Jordan, and dissipate the gloom that surrounded a waiting world! He came, he saw, he conquered—he sealed the reality of the light he brought into the world upon the summit of Calvary, and left to all masons the precious—the precious, legacy of love towards God, good will to man, and charity as extensive as Creation! with the delightful hope, through faith, of entering at last, that celestial Lodge, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens!

To this new light again succeeded the reign of darkness, heathen superstition and cruelty, and for a time, nothing was heard;—"out the mingled howls of rage and fear and savage and expiration!"—Yet a remnant still was left, and altho' barbarism, gull in her heart, and fury in her eye, applied the scorpion fang to

those who adored the true light of this world—though gorgeous pride lifted her head to Heaven, and trampled on the votaries of innocence—though the fire blazed—though wild beasts mangled the limbs, and the cross reeked, with the blood of martyr'd thousands, nothing could resist the light of truth, and the sublime mysteries of Masonry, more beautiful from persecution, still kept pace with the progress of true religion in the world!

But, alas! it still has its enemies, yet it is one of the principles, one of the noblest principles of the order, to extend Charity to those who through ignorance may err! It is sufficient to satisfy the mind of conscious rectitude, that he who attempts to censure what he does not comprehend, only degrades himself, and the benevolent heart will always extend charity to the mistakes of ignorant presumption!

We may now, brethren, be permitted to ask, what are some of the objections brought against the institution?—We know them to be weak and puerile; but it may be well to notice them slightly in passing; since, no doubt, they are in many instances, founded upon an honest prejudice, but certainly in all cases, upon the most perfect ignorance of what we hold most dear!

It is a circumstance that must create astonishment to the reflecting mind, that an institution should be the subject of animadversion, which numbers, and has numbered, amongst its most ardent and illustrious supporters, the best and greatest men that ever lived!—Kings, heroes, statesmen, sages and the most pious promulgators of Divine Revelation!—Clergymen whose lives are, and have been devoted to the service of their Master, and the regeneration of a guilty world! Is it to be supposed that such men would sacrifice those duties, which have been their solace in a stormy world, and their hope of a blissful hereafter, to a mere name?—Nay worse—to be classed with men, who, in many cases, are represented as vile and unprincipled?—Would a Washington, a Franklin, a Newton, a Howard, or a Milnor, cloud the proud radiance of their names, by uniting with man whose deliberations were impious or immoral? Friends that surround me, your candid minds will, I am satisfied, answer—No! the belief is absurd to every argument of reason, to every principle of self estimation!

Is it not strange, brethren, that the objection most loudly urged against us is, that our proceedings are a secret? We can ascribe to this puerile objection but one cause—curiosity ungratified!—Because we impart not our secrets to those who do not seek them properly, we cannot come to good!—We do not let the world obtain a knowledge of our privileges, and therefore our deeds are evil!—I need not urge to you, brethren, the utility of such an objection, but I may be suffered to ask the world, what society among men permits others than its member to assist in its various duties?—But we have secrets, which is radically wrong! as if Masons alone had no authority to use means for detecting fraud or preventing imposition! Because the curious, but unenlightened, know not our regulations, they seem disposed to deny us the rights which all enjoy! rights sanctioned by the example of the virtuous and good of revolving ages!

It has been observed against the order, that its good deeds, if it can boast of any, are confined to Masons!—If this were true in the extent, again we have the example of the very world that condemns us! But Masons must not have the same privilege.—The charge, however, is only partially true, for Masonry, however its precepts may be neglected by its professors, inculcates benevolence to all in distress, only more especially a brother!—Let those then who feel disposed to condemn us, look through the world, the world of which countless Masons have been the ornaments and benefactors, and then say, if there are no orphans clothed by our beneficence, no tears assuaged by our cares! Yes, my brethren, numerous are the living monuments of the excellence of our institutions, in every corner of the civilized earth, particularly where the glorious sun of Christianity has diffused the radiance of his benignant rays! These things are done without the wish of earthly recompense, except the rich remuneration of an approving conscience.

Again, say our antagonists—Many debauched and wicked men are admitted into the Masonic Order, and if the society were a moral compact, this could not be the case! Oh! most enlightened judges! Oh! most unprejudiced jury! who without knowing aught of the testimony, have sealed the verdict of our condemnation! If some Masons transgress the laws of our government, will any reflecting mind thence argue against the institution itself? Will it condemn a whole

fraternity, for the errors of a misguided few?—Were the wicked lives of men admitted as arguments against the principles they profess, the most illustrious establishments might be exposed to censure. We confidently aver, that whatever imperfections may be discerned in any of its members, Masonry countenances no deviation from moral rectitude, and holds in the deepest abhorrence all that tends to debase the mind or vitiate the heart!

We are ready to allow—alas! that it should be so!—that in despite of every effort, many bad men have been, many bad men still become Masons; but what institution, even the most sacred, whose hallowed shrine we would suppose would blush to look on, is free, entirely free, from the pollution of hypocrisy? What society of men, of whatever nature, can boldly stand up and say to Masonry—"I can, with perfect impunity, heave the first stone?"—There is none, no not one!—In all, there are those who are not sincere, in all these are some who only wear the external garb, while within, they are like a sepulchre, "full of rottenness and dead men's bones!"—Such are hypocrites and nothing more.—This has been the case always—it always will be the case, until the imperfections of Time shall be lost in the purity of eternity, and Masons dare not claim exemption from the frailties of man!—When our opponents can say that justice, integrity, benevolence and virtue, are unlovely and ought not to be practiced, by men, then they may object to the principles of Masonry; but not till then!

But even hypocrisy, however we may detest her, and our deepest detestation cannot do her wrong, has still some merit in the deceit she may practice upon our sublime mysteries: She admits the worth for which she wears the mask, and thus gives the virtue of our order an indirect applause! She is compelled to acknowledge the loveliness of what she imitates with outward show, and labours to seem what truly she can never be!

Does not the purity of Religion remain untarnished, although hypocrisy may profane her altar?—and shall the beauties of Masonry, every principle and regulation of which, is drawn from some immortal design laid down in this sacred volume—shall these beauties be vituperated, because, in some instances, bad men have stolen into their sanctuary?—As well might the sun be struck into original darkness, because clouds sometimes obscure the brilliancy of his rays! As well might this fair globe, the mighty work of an almighty master, be commanded back into chaos, because the tremblings of a tempest have passed between its pillars!

No, my brethren, in institutions the most excellent, there will be those who disgrace their avocation, and make those institutions a cover for the greatest depravity! Our opposers should show that Masonry gives a license to such conduct, or that the order is bound to obtain exemption from the common nature of man! One thing is certain, that the worst of men, whose hypocrisy has obtained their admittance into the mysteries of Masonry, in the midst of all their deviations, have still clung to one of our fundamental duties—Charity!—When all the other virtuous feelings of the bosom have "faded into the air"—when the reign of love has yielded to the dominion of hatred—when the beauties of truth have been exchanged for the deformities of falsehood—when honourable courage has degenerated into brutal ferocity—for alas! such things happen even among Masons!—the recollection of Masonic benevolence, not in its confined and selfish sense, but in its broadest and its noblest attribute, has stayed the uplifted dagger, and dashed to earth the ruin of the poisoned bowl! Death has shrunk aghast from the amulet of Masonry, and the uninitiated have received safety under the shadow of the Temple! If for deeds like these, we deserve reproaches, let them be showered upon us, for they will pass by us like the idle winds which we respect not!

One circumstance, I may be permitted to mention, among thousands, and we would think that one circumstance sufficient to cast all reproach from us as a body!

A venerable brother of our order, who now rests from his labours, during the disturbances of our government with the French Directory, when lawless violence was wonted on the bosom of the ocean, and our commerce was the prey of the hungry vultures of the deep, was attacked in the night by a piratical corsair under the Republican flag, and after a determined resistance, was compelled to submit to superior power!—The enemy ran him on board, with the bloody flag, the signal of no quarter, nailed to the head of his mast! The storm raged, the billows heaved their foamy caps towards Heaven—the thunder roared—and ever and anon, the red lightning in awful flashes,

gleamed upon the sabres of an exasperated foe! the shrieks of rapine and the war of passion, mingled with the war of elements, in terrible confusion!—God of mercy! what a night was this?—Pardon the expression—amidst the darkness of thy Providences, we believe thee to be the God of mercy still!—

Already the wounded were expecting butchery, and the unwounded waiting in awful silence, an untimely fate!—Amidst the direst execrations the weapons of blood were raised, and one general massacre commanded in a voice of thunder!—But there was a voice on board which checked that thunder, in its loudest peal!—He who had discarded almost the semblance of humanity, obeyed the sacred impulse—the weapons of carnage were forborne—and one Mason saved a whole crew from indiscriminate slaughter!

While such, brethren, are the effects of our institution, let the votaries of the Inquisition threaten the torture and the stake—let the tyrants of the eastern world pour forth their anathemas—blessed with the fortitude and mercy of benevolence, satisfied that ours is the labour of love, we shall have courage to sustain the shock, and uphold the excellence of Masonry, "amidst the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds!"

The Emblems of our Order, are, by some saluted with the sneers of illiberal sarcasm, as frivolous and contemptible; but were the use of them explained as beautifully illustrative of their moral significance, it would fester the tongue of censure, and call forth the praises of the candid mind! For the objections raised against us, this shall suffice!

My hearers generally must not conclude for a moment, that this picture is exhibited for the unmasonic purpose of inducing any one to join our order, for we disdain to offer inducements, contrary to the sacred tenets of the craft; the picture is drawn from us, by unadvised views which we do not merit, and reproaches which it is our duty to repel!

What shall a Mason now say, after an attempt to elucidate the excellence of the craft, what shall he now say of that excellence which resides in the female bosom?—Will he be pardoned for venturing to approach that innate modesty which ever recoils from the promulgation of its own praises?—It is true—the purposes of our order necessarily exclude females from a participation in its honours; but from nature they possess its virtues in an eminent degree! For where shall we seek for softness of disposition and purity of principle, if not in the female mind?—Who have exhibited nobler examples of love, constancy, friendship and benevolence, than the softer sex?—Who have displayed more heroic fortitude, under the frowns of adversity, and amid the storms of trouble, than those whom nature moulded to be the support of man, when his native resolution should be struck down by accumulated distress?—"Oh! woman! woman! nature made thee to temper man, we had been brutes without thee;" and never dost thou appear more lovely, than when warmed by native benevolence, thine eye

"Like the dewy star of evening,
Shines in tears."

Let us all, brethren, often ask our hearts what is the foundation, the vital foundation, upon which our superstructure is so beautifully reared!—That foundation is Charity!—Not that cold inanimate Charity, which resides entirely at home, and says to every distressed fellow creature—"Come not near me, and contaminate me not, for I am better than thou art!"—Not that lukewarm feeling, which can conveniently mount to the eye, without extending the hand to succour—nor yet that outward display, which can coldly censure, while it extends a miserable pittance!—But that fairer emanation of the heart, which while judging of the purity of others, forgets not that it is itself impure!—that heavenly sensation which beareth all things and which hopeth all things!—In short, that Charity of St. Paul's, which Prior has so sweetly paraphrased in these lines:—

Did sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue,
Than ever man pronounced, or angel sung;
Had I all knowledge human and divine,
That thought can reach or science can define;
And had I power to give that knowledge birth,
In all the speeches of the babbling earth;
Did Shadrach's zeal my glowing breast inspire
To weary tortures and rejoice in fire!
Or had I faith like that which Israel saw,
When Moses gave them miracles and law;
Yet gracious Charity, indulgent guest,
Were not thy power exerted in my breast,
Those speeches would send up unheeded pray!
That scorn of life would be but wild despair!
A cymbal's sound were better than my voice,
My faith were form, my eloquence mere noise!
When constant Faith and holy Hope shall die,
One lost in certainty, and one in joy;
Then thou, more happy power, fair Charity,
Triumphant sister! greatest of the three!
Thine office, and thy nature still the same,
Lasting thy lamp, and unconsumed thy flame!
Shall stand before the host of Heaven confest,
Forever blessing, and forever blest!

Such is the Charity which constitutes the foundation of the moral temple of Masonry, and unites us in the bonds of friendship with all mankind! This is that sacred principle which softens the unbending mind, and elevates the abject heart!

Oh! glorious flame, kindled at the altar of Omnipotent love!—Oh! sacred privilege of enlightened minds! Oh! beautiful offspring of an Eternal Father! touch every heart with a living coal from thy fervent shrine, that each may experience the delight which flows from the practice of thy duties!—From thee proceed the sensations which teach the heart to feel another's sorrows! By thy influence the hand of the cheerful bestower is held out to succour and protect the wretched!—Thou promptest the heart to feel and the arm to defend, and in thy enjoyments the beneficent soul obtains the only recompense desired!

How grateful, brethren, should mankind be to divine Wisdom, for giving them those passions upon which the virtues of Charity so delightfully operate? And even upon the principle of self gratification, how anxious should they be to drive sorrow from the hearts of the afflicted, and famine from the threshold of the poor!—These reflections apply more forcibly to all true Masons, than to the world in general, because their privileges should induce them to more energetic exertion!

Let us consider, then, that the eyes of the world are upon us, already too willing to censure and condemn, and, therefore, let us be peculiarly careful to prevent the introduction of any one into our privileges, whose conduct is likely to cast the shade of reproach upon the Order, and let us by all possible circumstances, cause our "light so to shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Grand Master, who is in Heaven!"

Let us reflect, that even at this season, when the robes of summer cloathe the landscape—when beauty and harmony display their most attractive charms—when nature appears dressed in the smiles which delight the mind, and elevate the heart:—Let us reflect,

"How many feel, this very moment, death,
And all the sad variety of pain!
How many pine in want and dungeon glooms,
Shut from the common air, and common use
Of their own limbs! How many drink the cup
Of baleful grief; or eat the bitter bread
Of misery—Sore pierced by cruel pangs,
How many sink into the sordid hut
Of cheerless poverty! How many stand
Around the death bed of their dearest friends,
And point the parting anguish!"

Many an unsheltered head, at this moment, "abates the pelting of the pitiless storms" of life, and calls us to exertion! Many an aged father—many a widowed mother, stretch forth their palsied hands for succour!—many a helpless being thrown parentless upon a cold, unfeeling world, casts around the tearful eye, and appeals to our compassion! The war worn soldier, whose head is silvered with the frosts of seventy winters—some of them winters of toil, of suffering and of strife in our behalf, and whose fading form bears honourable marks of courage and fidelity, looks for some recompense from the sons of patriotic sires!—The sick, the blind, and the wretched in every shape that misery can wear, call loudly for our sympathy!

Upon these things all should reflect—but it is more immediately our duty, our privilege. If we should duly consider the miseries of our fellow creatures, while we enjoy comparative felicity, "the conscious heart of charity would warm, and her wide wish benevolence dilate!"—These things are not only our duty, but we are urged to them by every motive that can influence even selfishness, and by every tie that can sanctify humanity!

While, therefore, we acknowledge that Masons are but men—weak feeble men—subject to all the fluctuations of human passion—and all the "frailties that flesh is heir to," let us always endeavour to deal upon the square, to keep our passions within compass, and act upon the level, in all our intercourse with mankind and each other!

These are powerful appeals, and how delightful to our minds it would be, if each of us could say with ancient Job:—"Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity!"—Was not my soul grieved for the poor? Did I not grieve for him that was in trouble?—When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;—when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried and him that had none to help him!—The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy!"

Should motives like these fail, let us be influenced by the soul cheering hope of future reward! Remember the words of that high Priest who was Truth itself— "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat—I was thirsty and ye gave me