



X.

ILLUSTRIOUS ELECT OF THE FIFTEEN.

[Elu of the Fifteen.]

THIS Degree is devoted to the same objects as those of the Elu of Nine; and also to the cause of Toleration and Liberality against Fanaticism and Persecution, political and religious; and to that of Education, Instruction, and Enlightenment against Error, Barbarism, and Ignorance. To these objects you have irrevocably and forever devoted your hand, your heart, and your intellect; and whenever in your presence a Chapter of this Degree is opened, you will be most solemnly reminded of your vows here taken at the altar.

Toleration, holding that every other man has the same right to his opinion and faith that we have to ours; and liberality, holding that as no human being can with certainty say, in the clash and conflict of hostile faiths and creeds, what is truth, or that *he* is *surely* in possession of it, so every one should feel that it is quite possible that another equally honest and sincere with himself, and yet holding the contrary opinion, may himself be in possession of the truth, and that whatever one firmly and conscientiously believes, *is* truth, *to him*—these are the mortal enemies of that fanaticism which persecutes for opinion's sake, and initiates crusades against whatever it, in its imaginary holiness, deems to be contrary to the law of God or verity of dogma. And education, instruction, and enlightenment are the most certain means by which fanaticism and intolerance can be rendered powerless.

No true Mason scoffs at honest convictions and an ardent zeal in the cause of what one believes to be truth and justice. But he

does absolutely deny the right of any man to assume the prerogative of Deity, and condemn another's faith and opinions as deserving to be punished because heretical. Nor does he approve the course of those who endanger the peace and quiet of great nations, and the best interest of their own race by indulging in a chimerical and visionary philanthropy—a luxury which chiefly consists in drawing their robes around them to avoid contact with their fellows, and proclaiming themselves holier than they.

For he knows that such follies are often more calamitous than the ambition of kings; and that intolerance and bigotry have been infinitely greater curses to mankind than ignorance and error. Better *any* error than persecution! Better *any* opinion than the thumb-screw, the rack, and the stake! And he knows also how unspeakably absurd it is, for a creature to whom himself and everything around him are mysteries, to torture and slay others, because they cannot think as he does in regard to the profoundest of those mysteries, to understand which is utterly beyond the comprehension of either the persecutor or the persecuted.

Masonry is not a religion. He who makes of it a religious belief, falsifies and denaturalizes it. The Brahmin, the Jew, the Mahometan, the Catholic, the Protestant, each professing his peculiar religion, sanctioned by the laws, by time, and by climate, must needs retain it, and cannot have two religions; for the social and sacred laws adapted to the usages, manners, and prejudices of particular countries, are the work of men.

But Masonry teaches, and has preserved in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundation of all religions. All that ever existed have had a basis of truth; and all have overlaid that truth with errors. The primitive truths taught by the Redeemer were sooner corrupted, and intermingled and alloyed with fictions than when taught to the first of our race. Masonry is the universal morality which is suitable to the inhabitants of every clime, to the man of every creed. It has taught no doctrines, except those truths that tend directly to the well-being of man; and those who have attempted to direct it toward useless vengeance, political ends, and Jesuitism, have merely perverted it to purposes foreign to its pure spirit and real nature.

Mankind outgrows the sacrifices and the mythologies of the childhood of the world. Yet it is easy for human indolence to

linger near these helps, and refuse to pass further on. So the unadventurous Nomad in the Tartarian wild keeps his flock in the same close-cropped circle where they first learned to browse, while the progressive man roves ever forth "to fresh fields and pastures new."

The latter is the true Mason; and the best and indeed the only good Mason is he who with the power of business does the work of life; the upright mechanic, merchant, or farmer, the man with the power of thought, of justice, or of love, he whose whole life is one great act of performance of Masonic duty. The natural use of the strength of a strong man or the wisdom of a wise one, is to do the *work* of a strong man or a wise one. The natural work of Masonry is practical life; the use of all the faculties in their proper spheres, and for their natural function. Love of Truth, justice, and generosity as attributes of God, must appear in a life marked by these qualities; that is the only effectual ordinance of Masonry. A profession of one's convictions, joining the Order, assuming the obligations, assisting at the ceremonies, are of the same value in science as in Masonry; the natural form of Masonry is goodness, morality, living a true, just, affectionate, self-faithful life, from the motive of a good man. It is loyal obedience to God's law.

The good Mason does the good thing which comes in his way, and because it comes in his way; from a love of duty, and not merely because a law, enacted by man or God, commands his *will* to do it. He is true to his mind, his conscience, heart, and soul, and feels small temptation to do to others what he would not wish to receive from them. He will deny himself for the sake of his brother near at hand. His *desire* attracts in the line of his *duty*, both being in conjunction. Not in vain does the poor or the oppressed look up to him. You find such men in all Christian sects, Protestant and Catholic, in all the great religious parties of the civilized world, among Buddhists, Mahometans, and Jews. They are kind fathers, generous citizens, unimpeachable in their business, beautiful in their daily lives. You see their Masonry in their work and in their play. It appears in all the forms of their activity, individual, domestic, social, ecclesiastical, or political. True Masonry within must be morality without. It must become *eminent* morality, which is philanthropy. The true Mason loves not only his kindred and his country, but all mankind; not only

the good, but also the evil, among his brethren. He has more goodness than the channels of his daily life will hold. It runs over the banks, to water and to feed a thousand thirsty plants. Not content with the duty that lies along his track, he goes out to seek it; not only *willing*, he has a salient *longing* to do good, to spread his truth, his justice, his generosity, his Masonry over all the world. His daily life is a profession of his Masonry, published in perpetual good-will to men. He *can* not be a persecutor.

Not more naturally does the beaver build or the mocking-bird sing his own wild, gushing melody, than the true Mason lives in this beautiful outward life. So from the perennial spring swells forth the stream, to quicken the meadow with new access of green, and perfect beauty bursting into bloom. Thus Masonry does the work it was meant to do. The Mason does not sigh and weep, and make grimaces. He lives right on. If his life is, as whose is not, marked with errors, and with sins, he ploughs over the barren spot with his remorse, sows with new seed, and the old desert blossoms like a rose. He is not confined to set forms of thought, of action, or of feeling. He accepts what his mind regards as true, what his conscience decides is right, what his heart deems generous and noble; and all else he puts far from him. Though the ancient and the honorable of the Earth bid him bow down to them, his stubborn knees bend only at the bidding of his manly soul. His Masonry is his freedom before God, not his bondage unto men. His mind acts after the universal law of the intellect, his conscience according to the universal moral law, his affections and his soul after the universal law of each, and so he is strong with the strength of God, in this four-fold way communicating with Him.

The old theologies, the philosophies of religion of ancient times, will not suffice us now. The duties of life are to be done; we are to do them, consciously obedient to the law of God, not atheistically, loving only our selfish gain. There are sins of trade to be corrected. Everywhere morality and philanthropy are needed. There are errors to be made way with, and their place supplied with new truths, radiant with the glories of Heaven. There are great wrongs and evils, in Church and State, in domestic, social, and public life, to be righted and outgrown. Masonry cannot in our age forsake the broad way of life. She must journey on in the open street, appear in the crowded square, and teach men by her deeds, her life more eloquent than any lips.

This Degree is chiefly devoted to TOLERATION ; and it inculcates in the strongest manner that great leading idea of the Ancient Art, that a belief in the one True God, and a moral and virtuous life, constitute the only religious requisites needed to enable a man to be a Mason.

Masonry has ever the most vivid remembrance of the terrible and artificial torments that were used to put down new forms of religion or extinguish the old. It sees with the eye of memory the ruthless extermination of all the people of all sexes and ages, because it was their misfortune not to know the God of the Hebrews, or to worship Him under the wrong name, by the savage troops of Moses and Joshua. It sees the thumb-screws and the racks, the whip, the gallows, and the stake, the victims of Diocletian and Alva, the miserable Covenanters, the Non-Conformists, Servetus burned, and the unoffending Quaker hung. It sees Cranmer hold his arm, now no longer erring, in the flame until the hand drops off in the consuming heat. It sees the persecutions of Peter and Paul, the martyrdom of Stephen, the trials of Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, and Irenæus ; and then in turn the sufferings of the wretched Pagans under the Christian Emperors, as of the Papists in Ireland and under Elizabeth and the bloated Henry. The Roman Virgin naked before the hungry lions ; young Margaret Graham tied to a stake at low-water mark, and there left to drown, singing hymns to God until the savage waters broke over her head ; and all that in all ages have suffered by hunger and nakedness, peril and prison, the rack, the stake, and the sword,—it sees them all, and shudders at the long roll of human atrocities. And it sees also the oppression still practised in the name of religion—men shot in a Christian jail in Christian Italy for reading the Christian Bible ; in almost every Christian State, laws forbidding freedom of speech on matters relating to Christianity ; and the gallows reaching its arm over the pulpit.

The fires of Moloch in Syria, the harsh mutilations in the name of Astarte, Cybele, Jehovah ; the barbarities of imperial Pagan Torturers ; the still grosser torments which Roman-Gothic Christians in Italy and Spain heaped on their brother-men ; the fiendish cruelties to which Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Ireland, America, have been witnesses, are none too powerful to warn man of the unspeakable evils which follow from mistakes and errors in the matter of religion, and especially from

investing the God of Love with the cruel and vindictive passions of erring humanity, and making blood to have a sweet savor in his nostrils, and groans of agony to be delicious to his ears.

Man never had the right to usurp the unexercised prerogative of God, and condemn and punish another for his belief. Born in a Protestant land, we are of that faith. If we had opened our eyes to the light under the shadows of St. Peter's at Rome, we should have been devout Catholics; born in the Jewish quarter of Aleppo, we should have contemned Christ as an imposter; in Constantinople, we should have cried "*Allah il Allah*, God is great and Mahomet is his prophet!" Birth, place, and education give us our faith. Few believe in any religion because they have examined the evidences of its authenticity, and made up a formal judgment, upon weighing the testimony. Not one man in ten thousand knows anything about the *proofs* of his faith. We believe what we are taught; and those are most fanatical who know least of the evidences on which their creed is based. Facts and testimony are not, except in very rare instances, the ground-work of faith. It is an imperative law of God's Economy, unyielding and inflexible as Himself, that man shall accept without question the belief of those among whom he is born and reared; the faith so made a part of his nature resists all evidence to the contrary; and he will disbelieve even the evidence of his own senses, rather than yield up the religious belief which has grown up in him, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

What is truth to *me* is not truth to *another*. The same arguments and evidences that convince one mind make no impression on another. This difference is in men at their birth. No man is entitled positively to assert that *he* is right, where other men, equally intelligent and equally well-informed, hold directly the opposite opinion. Each thinks it impossible for the other to be sincere, and each, as to that, is equally in error. "*What is truth?*" was a profound question, the most suggestive one ever put to man. Many beliefs of former and present times seem incomprehensible. They startle us with a new glimpse into the human soul, that mysterious thing, more mysterious the more we note its workings. Here is a man superior to myself in intellect and learning; and yet he sincerely believes what seems to me too absurd to merit confutation; and I cannot conceive, and sincerely do not believe,

that he is both sane and honest. *And yet he is both.* His reason is as perfect as mine, and he is as honest as I.

The fancies of a lunatic are realities, *to him.* Our dreams are realities *while they last*; and, in the Past, no more *unreal* than what we have acted in our waking hours. No man can say that he hath as sure possession of the truth as of a chattel. When men entertain opinions diametrically opposed to each other, and each is honest, who shall decide which hath the Truth; and how can either say with certainty that *he* hath it? We know not what *is* the truth. That we ourselves believe and feel absolutely certain that our own belief is true, is in reality not the slightest proof of the fact, seem it never so certain and incapable of doubt to us. No man is responsible for the rightness of his faith; but only for the *uprightness* of it.

Therefore no man hath or ever had a right to persecute another for his belief; for there cannot be two antagonistic rights; and if one can persecute another, because he himself is satisfied that the belief of that other is erroneous, the other has, for the same reason, equally as certain a right to persecute him.

The truth comes to us tinged and colored with our prejudices and our preconceptions, which are as old as ourselves, and strong with a divine force. It comes to us as the image of a rod comes to us through the water, bent and distorted. An argument sinks into and convinces the mind of one man, while from that of another it rebounds like a ball of ivory dropped on marble. It is no merit in a man to have a particular faith, excellent and sound and philosophic as it may be, when he imbibed it with his mother's milk. It is no more a merit than his prejudices and his passions.

The sincere Moslem has as much right to persecute us, as we to persecute him; and therefore Masonry wisely requires no more than a belief in One Great All-Powerful Deity, the Father and Preserver of the Universe. Therefore it is she teaches her votaries that toleration is one of the chief duties of every good Mason, a component part of that charity without which we are mere hollow images of true Masons, mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

No evil hath so afflicted the world as intolerance of religious opinion. The human beings it has slain in various ways, if once and together brought to life, would make a nation of people; left to live and increase, would have doubled the population of the civilized portion of the globe; among which civilized portion it

chiefly is that religious wars are waged. The treasure and the human labor thus lost would have made the earth a garden, in which, but for his evil passions, man might now be as happy as in Eden.

No man truly obeys the Masonic law who *merely* tolerates those whose religious opinions are opposed to his own. Every man's opinions are his own private property, and the rights of all men to maintain each his own are perfectly equal. Merely to *tolerate*, to *bear with* an opposing opinion, is to assume it to be heretical; and assert the *right* to persecute, if we would; and claim our *toleration* of it as a merit. The Mason's creed goes farther than that. No man, it holds, has any right in any way to interfere with the religious belief of another. It holds that each man is absolutely sovereign as to his own belief, and that belief is a matter absolutely foreign to all who do not entertain the same belief; and that, if there were any right of persecution at all, it would in all cases be a mutual right; because one party has the same right as the other to sit as judge in his own case; and God is the only magistrate that can rightfully decide between them. To that great Judge, Masonry refers the matter; and opening wide its portals, it invites to enter there and live in peace and harmony, the Protestant, the Catholic, the Jew, the Moslem; every man who will lead a truly virtuous and moral life, love his brethren, minister to the sick and distressed, and believe in the ONE, *All-Powerful, All-Wise, everywhere-Present GOD, Architect, Creator, and Preserver of all things*, by whose universal law of Harmony ever rolls on this universe, the great, vast, infinite circle of successive Death and Life:—to whose INEFFABLE NAME let all true Masons pay profoundest homage! for whose thousand blessings poured upon us, let us feel the sincerest gratitude, now, henceforth, and forever!

We may well be tolerant of each other's creed; for in every faith there are excellent moral precepts. Far in the South of Asia, Zoroaster taught this doctrine: "On commencing a journey, the Faithful should turn his thoughts toward Ormuzd, and confess him, in the purity of his heart, to be King of the World; he should love him, do him homage, and serve him. He must be upright and charitable, despise the pleasures of the body, and avoid pride and haughtiness, and vice in all its forms, and especially falsehood, one of the basest sins of which man can be guilty. He

must forget injuries and not avenge himself. He must honor the memory of his parents and relatives. At night, before retiring to sleep, he should rigorously examine his conscience, and repent of the faults which weakness or ill-fortune had caused him to commit." He was required to pray for strength to persevere in the Good, and to obtain forgiveness for his errors. It was his duty to confess his faults to a Magus, or to a layman renowned for his virtues, or to the Sun. Fasting and maceration were prohibited; and, on the contrary, it was his duty suitably to nourish the body and to maintain its vigor, that his soul might be strong to resist the Genius of Darkness; that he might more attentively read the Divine Word, and have more courage to perform noble deeds.

And in the North of Europe the Druids taught devotion to friends, indulgence for reciprocal wrongs, love of deserved praise, prudence, humanity, hospitality, respect for old age, disregard of the future, temperance, contempt of death, and a chivalrous deference to woman. Listen to these maxims from the Hava Maal, or Sublime Book of Odin:

"If thou hast a friend, visit him often; the path will grow over with grass, and the trees soon cover it, if thou dost not constantly walk upon it. He is a faithful friend, who, having but two loaves, gives his friend one. Be never first to break with thy friend; sorrow wrings the heart of him who has no one save himself with whom to take counsel. There is no virtuous man who has not some vice, no bad man who has not some virtue. Happy he who obtains the praise and good-will of men; for all that depends on the will of another is hazardous and uncertain. Riches flit away in the twinkling of an eye; they are the most inconstant of friends; flocks and herds perish, parents die, friends are not immortal, thou thyself diest; I know but one thing that doth not die, the judgment that is passed upon the dead. Be humane toward those whom thou meetest on the road. If the guest that cometh to thy house is a-cold, give him fire; the man who has journeyed over the mountains needs food and dry garments. Mock not at the aged; for words full of sense come often from the wrinkles of age. Be moderately wise, and not over-prudent. Let no one seek to know his destiny, if he would sleep tranquilly. There is no malady more cruel than to be discontented with our lot. The glutton eats his own death; and the wise man laughs at the fool's greediness. Nothing is more injurious to the young than

excessive drinking; the more one drinks the more he loses his reason; the bird of forgetfulness sings before those who intoxicate themselves, and wiles away their souls. Man devoid of sense believes he will live always if he avoids war; but, if the lances spare him, old age will give him no quarter. Better live well than live long. When a man lights a fire in his house, death comes before it goes out."

And thus said the Indian books: "Honor thy father and mother. Never forget the benefits thou hast received. Learn while thou art young. Be submissive to the laws of thy country. Seek the company of virtuous men. Speak not of God but with respect. Live on good terms with thy fellow-citizens. Remain in thy proper place. Speak ill of no one. Mock at the bodily infirmities of none. Pursue not unrelentingly a conquered enemy. Strive to acquire a good reputation. The best bread is that for which one is indebted to his own labor. Take counsel with wise men. The more one learns, the more he acquires the faculty of learning. Knowledge is the most permanent wealth. As well be dumb as ignorant. The true use of knowledge is to distinguish good from evil. Be not a subject of shame to thy parents. What one learns in youth endures like the engraving upon a rock. He is wise who knows himself. Let thy books be thy best friends. When thou attainest an hundred years, cease to learn. Wisdom is solidly planted, even on the shifting ocean. Deceive no one, not even thine enemy. Wisdom is a treasure that everywhere commands its value. Speak mildly, even to the poor. It is sweeter to forgive than to take vengeance. Gaming and quarrels lead to misery. There is no true merit without the practice of virtue. To honor our mother is the most fitting homage we can pay the Divinity. There is no tranquil sleep without a clear conscience. He badly understands his interest who breaks his word."

Twenty-four centuries ago these were the Chinese Ethics:

"The Philosopher [Confucius] said, 'SAN! my doctrine is simple, and easy to be understood.' THSENG-TSEU replied, 'that is certain.' The Philosopher having gone out, the disciples asked what their master had meant to say. THSENG-TSEU responded, 'The doctrine of our Master consists solely in being upright of heart, and loving our neighbor as we love ourself.'"

About a century later, the Hebrew law said, "If any man hate his neighbor . . . then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to

do unto his brother . . . Better is a neighbor that is near, than a brother afar off . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

In the same fifth century before Christ, SOCRATES the Grecian said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Three generations earlier, ZOROASTER had said to the Persians: "Offer up thy grateful prayers to the Lord, the most just and pure Ormuzd, the supreme and adorable God, who thus declared to his Prophet Zerdusht: 'Hold it not meet to do unto others what thou wouldst not desire done unto thyself; do that unto the people, which, when done to thyself, is not disagreeable unto thee.'"

The same doctrine had been long taught in the schools of Babylon, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. A Pagan declared to the Pharisee HILLEL that he was ready to embrace the Jewish religion, if he could make known to him in a few words a summary of the whole law of Moses. "That which thou likest not done to thyself," said Hillel, "do it not unto thy neighbor. Therein is all the law: the rest is nothing but the commentary upon it."

"Nothing is more natural," said CONFUCIUS, "nothing more simple, than the principles of that morality which I endeavor, by salutary maxims, to inculcate in you . . . It is humanity; which is to say, that universal charity among all of our species, without distinction. It is uprightness; that is, that rectitude of spirit and of heart, which makes one seek for truth in everything, and desire it, without deceiving one's self or others. It is, finally, sincerity or good faith; which is to say, that frankness, that openness of heart, tempered by self-reliance, which excludes all feints and all disguising, as much in speech as in action."

To diffuse useful information, to further intellectual refinement, sure forerunner of moral improvement, to hasten the coming of the great day, when the dawn of general knowledge shall chase away the lazy, lingering mists of ignorance and error, even from the base of the great social pyramid, is indeed a high calling, in which the most splendid talents and consummate virtue may well press onward, eager to bear a part. From the Masonic ranks ought to go forth those whose genius and not their ancestry ennoble them, to open to all ranks the temple of science, and by their own example to make the humblest men emulous to climb steps no longer inaccessible, and enter the unfolded gates burning in the sun.

The highest intellectual cultivation is perfectly compatible with

the daily cares and toils of working-men. A keen relish for the most sublime truths of science belongs alike to every class of mankind. And, as philosophy was taught in the sacred groves of Athens, and under the Portico, and in the old Temples of Egypt and India, so in our Lodges ought Knowledge to be dispensed, the Sciences taught, and the Lectures become like the teachings of Socrates and Plato, of Agassiz and Cousin.

Real knowledge never permitted either turbulence or unbelief; but its progress is the forerunner of liberality and enlightened toleration. Whoso dreads these may well tremble; for he may be well assured that their day is at length come, and must put to speedy flight the evil spirits of tyranny and persecution, which haunted the long night now gone down the sky. And it is to be hoped that the time will soon arrive, when, as men will no longer suffer themselves to be led blindfold in ignorance, so will they no more yield to the vile principle of judging and treating their fellow-creatures, not according to the intrinsic merit of their *actions*, but according to the accidental and involuntary coincidence of their *opinions*.

Whenever we come to treat with entire respect those who conscientiously differ from ourselves, the only practical effect of a difference will be, to make us enlighten the ignorance on one side or the other, from which it springs, by instructing them, if it be theirs; ourselves, if it be our own; to the end that the only kind of unanimity may be produced which is desirable among rational beings,—the agreement proceeding from full conviction after the freest discussion.

The Elu of Fifteen ought therefore to take the lead of his fellow-citizens, not in frivolous amusements, not in the degrading pursuits of the ambitious vulgar; but in the truly noble task of enlightening the mass of his countrymen, and of leaving his own name encircled, not with barbaric splendor, or attached to courtly gewgaws, but illustrated by the honors most worthy of our rational nature; coupled with the diffusion of knowledge, and gratefully pronounced by a few, at least, whom his wise beneficence has rescued from ignorance and vice.

We say to him, in the words of the great Roman: "Men in no respect so nearly approach to the Deity, as when they confer benefits on men. To serve and do good to as many as possible,—there is nothing greater in your fortune than that you should be able,

and nothing finer in your nature, than that you should be desirous to do this." This is the true mark for the aim of every man and Mason who either prizes the enjoyment of pure happiness, or sets a right value upon a high and unsullied renown. And if the benefactors of mankind, when they rest from their noble labors, shall be permitted to enjoy hereafter, as an appropriate reward of their virtue, the privilege of looking down upon the blessings with which their exertions and charities, and perhaps their toils and sufferings have clothed the scene of their former existence, it will not, in a state of exalted purity and wisdom, be the founders of mighty dynasties, the conquerors of new empires, the Cæsars, Alexanders, and Tamerlanes; nor the mere Kings and Counselors, Presidents and Senators, who have lived for their party chiefly, and for their country only incidentally, often sacrificing to their own aggrandizement or that of their faction the good of their fellow-creatures;—it will not be they who will be gratified by contemplating the monuments of their inglorious fame; but those will enjoy that delight and march in that triumph, who can trace the remote effects of their enlightened benevolence in the improved condition of their species, and exult in the reflection, that the change which they at last, perhaps after many years, survey, with eyes that age and sorrow can make dim no more,—of Knowledge become Power,—Virtue sharing that Empire,—Superstition dethroned, and Tyranny exiled, is, if even only in some small and very slight degree, yet still in *some* degree, the fruit, precious if costly, and though late repaid yet long enduring, of their own self-denial and strenuous exertion, of their own mite of charity and aid to education wisely bestowed, and of the hardships and hazards which they encountered here below.

Masonry requires of its Initiates and votaries nothing that is impracticable. It does not demand that they should undertake to climb to those lofty and sublime peaks of a theoretical and imaginary unpractical virtue, high and cold and remote as the eternal snows that wrap the shoulders of Chimborazo, and at least as inaccessible as they. It asks that alone to be done which is easy to be done. It overtasks no one's strength, and asks no one to go beyond his means and capacities. It does not expect one whose business or profession yields him little more than the wants of himself and his family require, and whose time is necessarily occupied by his daily vocations, to abandon or neglect the business

by which he and his children live, and devote himself and his means to the diffusion of knowledge among men. It does not expect him to publish books for the people, or to lecture, to the ruin of his private affairs, or to found academies and colleges, build up libraries, and entitle himself to statues.

But it does require and expect every man of us to do something, within and according to his means; and there is no Mason who *cannot* do *some* thing, if not alone, then by combination and association.

If a Lodge cannot aid in founding a school or an academy it can still do something. It can educate one boy or girl, at least, the child of some poor or departed brother. And it should never be forgotten, that in the poorest unregarded child that seems abandoned to ignorance and vice *may* slumber the virtues of a Socrates, the intellect of a Bacon or a Bossuet, the genius of a Shakespeare, the capacity to benefit mankind of a Washington; and that in rescuing him from the mire in which he is plunged, and giving him the means of education and development, the Lodge that does it may be the direct and immediate means of conferring upon the world as great a boon as that given it by John Faust the boy of Mentz; may perpetuate the liberties of a country and change the destinies of nations, and write a new chapter in the history of the world.

For we never know the importance of the act we do. The daughter of Pharaoh little thought what she was doing for the human race, and the vast unimaginable consequences that depended on her charitable act, when she drew the little child of a Hebrew woman from among the rushes that grew along the bank of the Nile, and determined to rear it as if it were her own.

How often has an act of charity, costing the doer little, given to the world a great painter, a great musician, a great inventor! How often has such an act developed the ragged boy into the benefactor of his race! On what small and apparently unimportant circumstances have turned and hinged the fates of the world's great conquerors. There is no law that limits the returns that shall be reaped from a single good deed. The widow's mite may not only be as acceptable to God, but may produce as great results as the rich man's costly offering. The poorest boy, helped by benevolence, may come to lead armies, to control senates, to decide on peace and war, to dictate to cabinets; and his magnificent

thoughts and noble words may be law many years hereafter to millions of men yet unborn.

But the opportunity to effect a great good does not often occur to any one. It is worse than folly for one to lie idle and inert, and expect the accident to befall him, by which his influences shall live forever. He can expect that to happen, only in consequence of one or many or all of a long series of acts. He can expect to benefit the world only as men attain other results; by continuance, by persistence, by a steady and uniform habit of laboring for the enlightenment of the world, to the extent of his means and capacity.

For it is, in all instances, by steady labor, by giving enough of application to our work, and having enough of time for the doing of it, by regular pains-taking, and the plying of constant assiduities, and not by any process of legerdemain, that we secure the strength and the staple of real excellence. It was thus that Demosthenes, clause after clause, and sentence after sentence, elaborated to the uttermost his immortal orations. It was thus that Newton pioneered his way, by the steps of an ascending geometry, to the mechanism of the Heavens, and Le Verrier added a planet to our Solar System.

It is a most erroneous opinion that those who have left the most stupendous monuments of intellect behind them, were not differently exercised from the rest of the species, but only differently gifted; that they signalized themselves only by their talent, and hardly ever by their industry; for it is in truth to the most strenuous application of those commonplace faculties which are diffused among all, that they are indebted for the glories which now encircle their remembrance and their name.

We must not imagine it to be a vulgarizing of genius, that it should be lighted up in any other way than by a direct inspiration from Heaven; nor overlook the steadfastness of purpose, the devotion to some single but great object, the unweariedness of labor that is given, not in convulsive and preternatural throes, but by little and little as the strength of the mind may bear it; the accumulation of many small efforts, instead of a few grand and gigantic, but perhaps irregular movements, on the part of energies that are marvellous; by which former alone the great results are brought out that write their enduring records on the face of the earth and in the history of nations and of man.

We must not overlook these elements, to which genius owes the best and proudest of her achievements; nor imagine that qualities so generally possessed as patience and pains-taking, and resolute industry, have no share in upholding a distinction so illustrious as that of the benefactor of his kind.

We must not forget that great results are most ordinarily produced by an aggregate of many contributions and exertions; as it is the invisible particles of vapor, each separate and distinct from the other, that, rising from the oceans and their bays and gulfs, from lakes and rivers, and wide morasses and overflowed plains, float away as clouds, and distill upon the earth in dews, and fall in showers and rain and snows upon the broad plains and rude mountains, and make the great navigable streams that are the arteries along which flows the life-blood of a country.

And so Masonry can do much, if each Mason be content to do his share, and if their united efforts are directed by wise counsels to a common purpose. "It is for God and for Omnipotency to do mighty things in a moment; but by degrees to grow to greatness is the course that He hath left for man."

If Masonry will but be true to her mission, and Masons to their promises and obligations—if, re-entering vigorously upon a career of beneficence, she and they will but pursue it earnestly and unfalteringly, remembering that our contributions to the cause of charity and education then deserve the greatest credit when it costs us something, the curtailing of a comfort or the relinquishment of a luxury, to make them—if we will but give aid to what were once Masonry's great schemes for human improvement, not fitfully and spasmodically, but regularly and incessantly, as the vapors rise and the springs run, and as the sun rises and the stars come up into the heavens, then we may be sure that great results will be attained and a great work done. And then it will most surely be seen that Masonry is not effete or impotent, nor degenerated nor drooping to a fatal decay.

