

(Facsimile of original title page.)

E S S A I
S U R
LES MYSTÈRES
ET LE VÉRITABLE OBJET
DE LA CONFRÉRIÉ
D E S
FRANCS - MAÇONS.
SECONDE ÉDITION,
Revue & corrigée.



A AMSTERDAM.

M. D. C C L X X I V.



AN ESSAY

ON

The Mysteries

AND THE TRUE OBJECT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF

FREE MASONS.



TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

W. H. REECE, F.S.A.,

P.P.S.G.W. Warwickshire, &c., &c., &c.

LONDON:

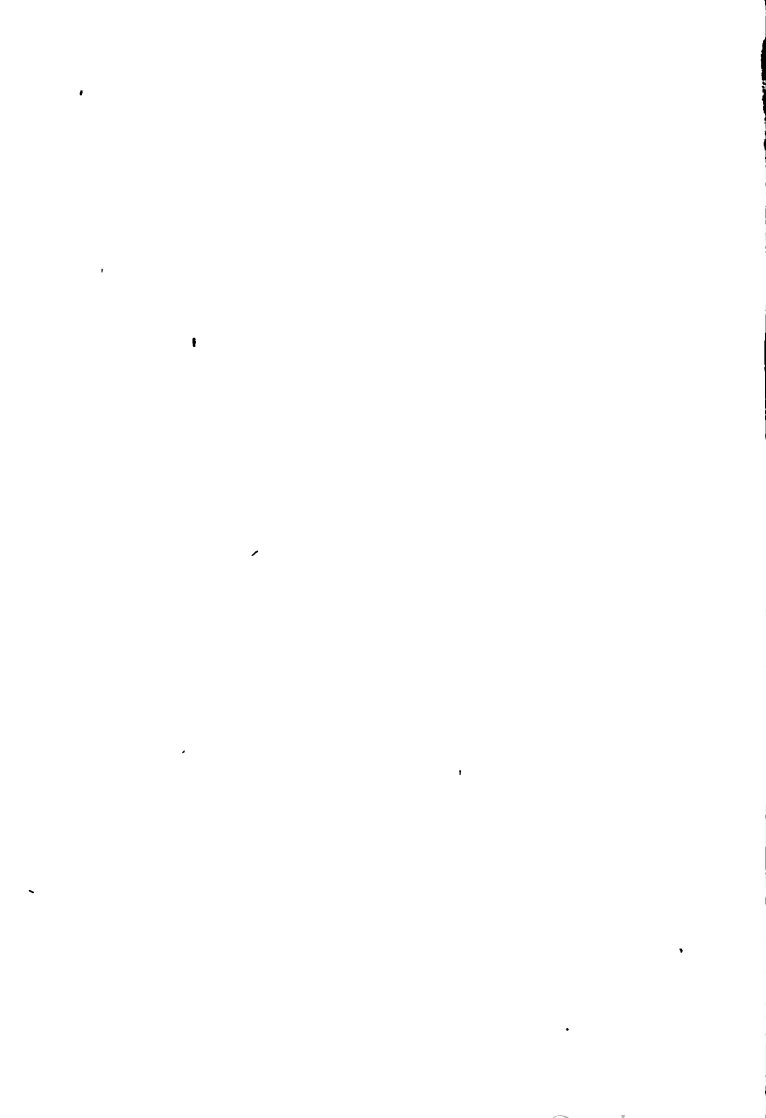
SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL.

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TO

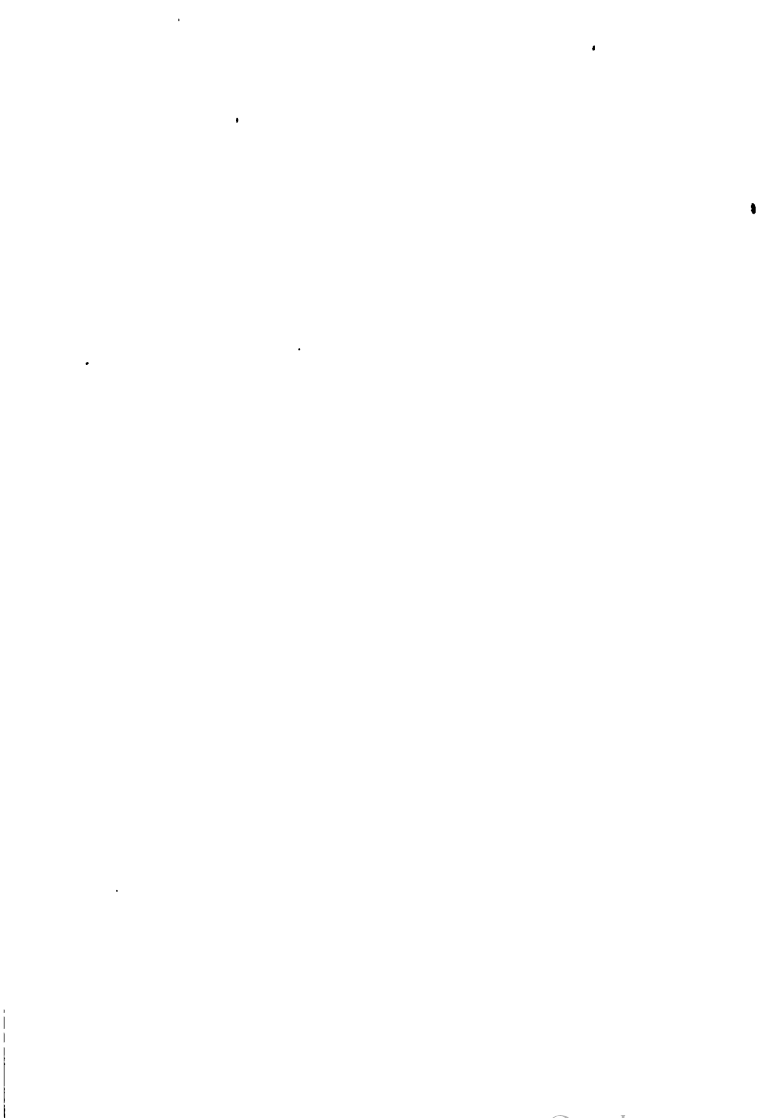
BROTHER *ROBERT FARRANT*,

The Worshipful Master of the Lodge of
St. *Tudno*, No. 1057, and to the Officers
and Members of that Lodge; also to the
Worshipful Masters, Officers, and Members
of St. *Paul's* Lodge, No. 51, and the *Howe*
Lodge, No. 857, the following translation is,
with fraternal regard and esteem, inscribed by

THE TRANSLATOR.

Birmingham,

July, 1862.



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



THE motives which Free Masonry requires shall actuate every candidate for initiation into its mysteries, are "a general desire of knowledge and a sincere wish to render himself more extensively serviceable to his fellow-creatures." One of the objects of the writer of the essay, of which the following is a free translation, appears to have been to show to the uninitiated that the latter of the motives above-mentioned forms truly a fundamental part of the institution of Free Masonry. Never having met with the essay until I recently purchased it at an old-book shop in *London*, it has occurred

to me that it may be altogether unknown to the craft in *England*, and that a translation of it may therefore, not be unacceptable. It gives me at the same time an opportunity of evincing to the brethren that although prevented by professional avocations from that regular attendance in lodge which for some years I prided myself upon, yet still after an experience in Masonry of a quarter of a century,* I take a lively interest in the Order, and that I retain a keen and most agreeable recollection of the many pleasurable hours spent in Masonic society, and of the numerous firm and lasting friend-

* The translator was initiated in *St. Paul's* Lodge, No. 51, on the 30th of May, 1837; served the office of W. M. of that Lodge in the year 1840; and was elected an honorary member of it in the year 1860. He was elected honorary member of the *Howe* Lodge in April, 1851, and was first W. M. of the Lodge of *St. Tudno* in 1858. He held the office of Registrar of the Provincial Grand Lodge of *Warwickshire* in the year 1840, and was P. S. G. W. in the year 1844.

ships I have made by means of it. It enables me also to testify publicly to the great advantages those who join its ranks with a sincere and earnest desire and intention of practising its precepts, may expect to derive from it.

I was tempted at first to add to the translation some notes and comments of my own, but on reconsideration, I thought it better to refrain from doing so. To prevent however, those who have not been "brought to light" from being misled by the editor's note on Lodges of Adoption, I deem it right to remark that such Lodges are not recognised by the Grand Lodge of *England*.

W. H. R. ,



ADVERTISEMENT
OF
THE EDITORS.

THOSE who appreciate the merits of a book from its size will probably not have a very favourable idea of this brochure; but true Masons and other persons who do not look to appearances alone, will find in it more reason and more truth than is contained in a crowd of writings which have been hitherto published for and against the Brotherhood of Free Masons. A fraternity the most numerous, the most united, the most virtuous, the most useful, the most ancient, the most respectable, the most illustrious which has ever existed.

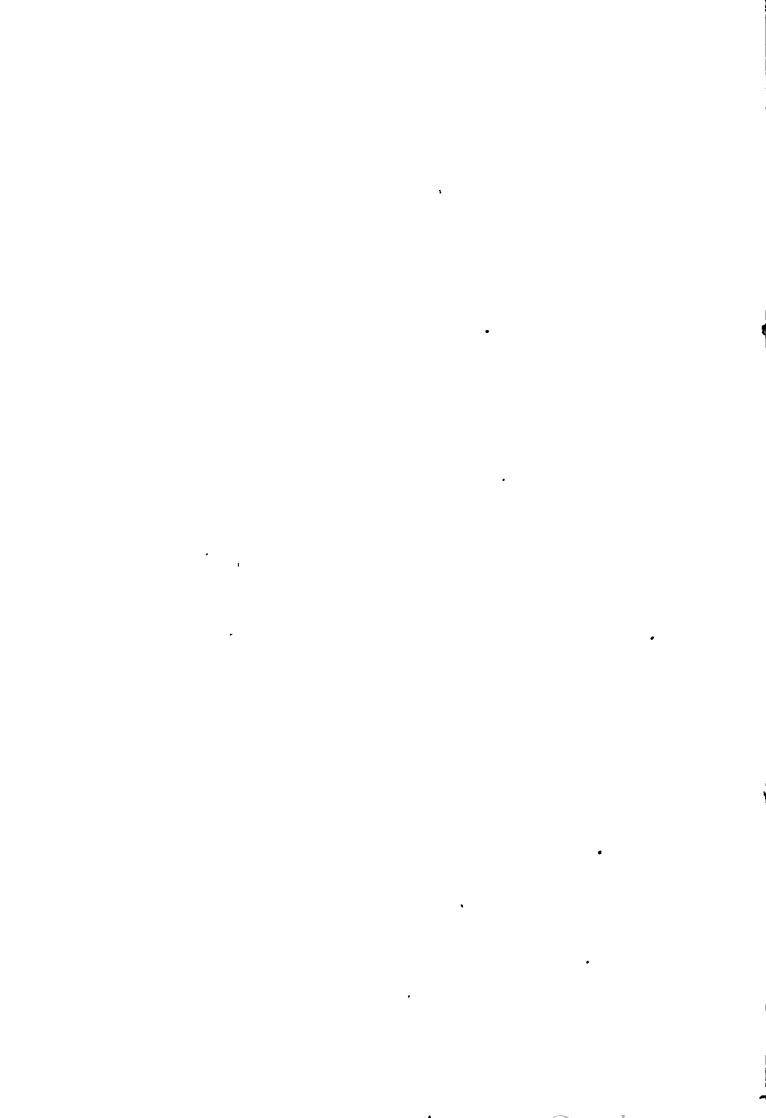
The little work, of which we offer to the public a new edition revised and corrected,

was published at Paris in 1771, but nominally at La Haye. Its rarity, and above all the manner in which it gives an account of the mysteries and the true object of the celebrated Order which is the subject of it, have induced us to reprint it more correctly. It is the only writing in which is given a sufficient and rational idea of Free Masonry; the only one which can destroy the many prejudices and atrocious calumnies with which it has been so unjustly charged; the only one which gives an exact and faithful account of that illustrious Order; finally, it alone merits the attention of those princes by whom the Order is persecuted. Why, is it not possible that all those princes should see the interior of the lodges, assist at the meetings of Free Masons, hear their discussions, be witnesses of their initiations and know perfectly the purity of their intentions, the union which reigns

among them, the essential services which they strive to render daily to society by all kinds of good works? We are persuaded that, if they did, they would soon imitate the example of those sovereigns who protect the society and preside often in person at its meetings. They would no longer offer any obstacle to the propagation of that ancient and illustrious Order. They would support by their authority all the good intentions and the salutary views of Free Masons who have truly no other aim than that of making men virtuous, and by consequence, happy.

These things will happen, without doubt, some day, because it is probable that that which is conformable to reason and happiness will take place sooner or later.

*Can this dear hope be false and vain,
 Last of life's restless dream?
 E'en then the cherish'd thought shall be
 The dying Mason's theme.*



LETTER

TO M. DE LA H * * *



YES, Monsieur, it is true I am a Free Mason, and I thank you for the honour you have done me in requesting my opinion upon that Order, which you wrongly designate by the word Sect. I do not ignore anything which the silly fancy of weak and presumptuous minds has devised on the subject of the gravest and most respectable society which has ever existed upon the earth. Those who know all the underhand dealings of such persons have great reason to reflect on the illusions of the human mind, and upon the judgments which the profane

multitude form. I undertake, with all my heart, to satisfy you, and to withdraw you from error, by giving you an idea, as true as it is rational, of the Order of Free Masons.

The enlightenment of the present age is sufficient to prove to us that man is depraved, and that it is to society alone we must attribute the cause. The corruption of education, the excessive inequality of fortunes, and still more the passion for power and authority, have vitiated in the human heart the primitive sentiments of nature, and have rendered it wretched and unhappy. A certain metaphysical code, filled as much with sophistries and errors as it is considered sublime and rational, has, on the other hand, misled the minds of men. The founders of the Masonic Society proposed to themselves no other end than that of restoring man to his primitive goodness, and of causing a revival in his heart of the laws of nature in their greatest perfection. Religion has had the

same end in view ; and it is likewise that which the municipal laws propose in all the governments of the earth. It is Free Masonry alone which has understood the best means of accomplishing it.

The aim of that society is then to make man humane, rational, virtuous. In order to effect this, it has sought to dissipate his errors, to soften his manners by the innocent pleasures of life, and to assist and comfort him in his wants. The members of that society are all brothers, who are not distinguishable by the language they speak, nor by the garments they wear, by the opinions they hold, nor by the dignities and fortunes they possess. Equality is their primary law. Following this system, the whole world is looked upon by them as a republic, of which each nation is a family and each individual a son. The individuals of that society being all brothers, and brothers who make profession of being rational and virtuous, have an express duty to love and aid each other reciprocally,

to conduct themselves with uprightneſs and honeſty towards other men, and to be good and faithful citizens of the ſtate.⁽¹⁾ This order, deſtitute of all coercive force, has no other ſupport than that of moral force. It is, then, under the neceſſity of making its members ſenſible and virtuous. It is from that its other laws are derived, which have for their object union, order, harmony, decency of manners, tranquillity of mind: to prevent theſe things being altered, they have been obliged to forbid the preſence of women in their meetings, without ceaſing at the ſame time to honour them.⁽²⁾ It is for the ſame reaſon

(1) In all their degrees the Free Maſons ſwear to be faithful to their ſovereigns.

(2) They are accuſtomed to give in the lodge to every newly initiated brother a pair of woman's gloves, for him to make a preſent of to that one of all the ladies whom he moſt eſteems and honours. They have even for ſome time paſt initiated, by adoption, women into the myſteries of Free Maſonry. Theſe myſteries are, however, not the ſame as thoſe into which men are initiated. The degrees of women are extracted from *Geneſis*, the ſymbols and figures are the emblems of the virtues of their ſex, and

expressly forbidden to discuss in lodge any point of theology or of politics, or even to speak of them; or to use obscene and indecent words. Truth, justice, prudence, moderation, good faith, charity, are the virtues which ought to reign in the heart of a Free Mason. Without saying anything more, you can easily understand that the institution and the end of this respectable society is to improve man and perfect his morality.

In the best regulated civilized society you will not find any law which supports in a similar manner its individuals, and assists them in their wants. We see often that the virtuous man, full of merit, groans

the lodge represents, at the initiations, the garden of Eden. The object of this order is to show that woman has been created by God to be the companion of man. That that union, as a gift from his beneficent hand, ought to be the asylum of pleasure, tranquillity, and innocence; but that curiosity in the one and the delight of fascination in the other occasioned the loss of all mankind. They exhort, then, women to repair that disgrace by their virtues, which alone can strengthen the union, and cause us to taste in life pure and solid pleasures.

under the weight of oppression and unhappiness. But the constitution of the Order of Free Masons is such that each of its members ought to find a sure and efficacious support in the society of which he forms part, and in the authority of the brethren who compose it. An unfortunate man who is oppressed by power, by calumny, and by hatred, is often lost for want of succour. Is he a Free Mason? It will be easy for him to find in every nation a country, brethren, protectors, and sometimes even a fortune. Humanity, that fine and noble virtue which embraces all others, which is the object of sound philosophy and which is the support of the Christian religion, is the soul of Free Masonry.

Divine and tranquil friendship, lovely passion of the wise and virtuous, in which is to be found the true happiness of life, is a masque for all men, whilst it is a duty (3)

(3) This should be understood with some restriction. The friendship of Free Masons is but a sentiment directed entirely towards the noble end of forming and establishing

among Free Mafons. It unites them by the eafy ties of beneficence and decent pleasures; and we muft only regard as a permitted relief thofe moments which they take to withdraw themfelves from the affairs of bufinefs and the malice of mankind in paffing fome hours of the night in innocent labours, and in merry repafts in company with honeft and joyous friends. We muft not judge the fociety of Free Mafons folety from its myfteries, its language, its cuftoms, its emblems. Men are fenfible beings who conduct themfelves more by the lively impulfue of fancy than by the cold calculations of reafon. Reasonings are only good for thofe among them who are very rational, and when they do not nourifh the imagination they are more often arid and devoid of attraction. One among them peace, concord, and benevolence, to arrive at laft at happinefs---the only end of Free Mafonry. It appears to me that that friendship which ought to have for its foundation confidence, franknefs, joined to a perfect and fincere openness of heart, fhould not be a virtue of Free Mafons only.

is sometimes obliged to have resource to these wholesome prejudices, which in the human heart have so much strength that they supply the place of law and virtue. The ancient priests of Isis and of Eleusinian Ceres made use of symbols, figures, and superstitious ceremonies, to correct vices and abuses. A society which has but moral force ought then by a wise prudence to make use of those symbols and mysteries which, better than anything else, can produce in the heart and mind of its members sentiments capable of making them love their labours and their duties; in effect, these symbols and mysteries are the principal nourishment of the human mind. The fool is dazzled by them; the inquisitive man is lost and confounded: it is the philosopher alone who perceives with an internal satisfaction the expression of his principles and his ideas. If these mysteries make sometimes fanatical enthusiasts, the skilful and judicious man enjoys in silence

the advantages Free Masonry procures for him.

The aim of the Masonic mysteries is, then, to refresh the mind, to preserve harmony, and to form the heart. The allegory of this society is ingenious and well sustained. It is proposed to build a temple, and it is the temple of virtue that is to be erected. The instruments of this building are symbols of the architecture of the heart. The square, the triangle, the compass represent equity, justice, honesty. The light alludes to virtue. Man, before being introduced to work in this august temple, that is to say before entering into the path of virtue, is a wretch who wanders in darkness. If he wishes to be admitted into this temple he must cleanse himself from his vices by giving sufficient proofs of his constancy and good faith. The gloves and the white aprons with which they clothe the newly-initiated brother, represent the candour and purity of manners which ought to distinguish a good Free Mason.

The Masons do not admit of any other distinction than that of virtue; (4) they place on a level birth, rank, fortune, when they bestow the first degree. Each of the degrees has a mystic meaning, but all Free Masons are not capable of developing its allegory.

You will not find a good Free Mason, that is to say, a man sensible and honest, who will reveal to you the mysteries of the society. It has been frequently observed that men the most indiscreet on other subjects show themselves impenetrable on this. Those who calumniate this society because the secret is so religiously observed, do but criticise in the edifice the regularity of its design. Mysteries of this kind can only be kept respectable by keeping them secret under the obligation of an oath. They cease to be mysteries as soon as they are

(4) In the system of Free Masonry, all those who are not members of the Order are counted profane; but honest and virtuous men are the friends of Free Masons, and the only persons they esteem worthy to be their brethren, that is to say, members of their society.

revealed. In the early ages the Christian religion was much practised in nocturnal mysteries. Those who were initiated were accused of a thousand turpitudes and of the most frightful infamy, and it was the inviolable secret which they kept that furnished matter for these atrocious calumnies. But Christians are still taught that it is only unlawful and bad things that are kept concealed, because those which are good and useful appear in the full light of day. Yes, the fate of all mysterious assemblies has ever been to be calumniated by the public voice and then to be persecuted, but if the guilt of keeping a secret is a necessary virtue in domestic life, would not the best school of morality be, without a doubt, that in which men are taught to be silent?

Persons who understand everything literally imagine that Free Masonry is pernicious to the state, because its system is based upon equality and liberty. They understand by equality a perfect equality of rank, orders, and conditions. It would certainly be very

useful if all those of the noble and rich who rule in society would find their true value by frequenting the lodges of Free Masons; but nothing is more absurd nor more chimerical than equality, in the sense which is generally attached to that word. Men are not equal either by strength, by talents, or by stature. Each has, beyond that, the terrible and natural desire to domineer over others, and it would be impossible to make all these individuals perfectly equal. The equality of Free Masons consists in regarding themselves all as brothers, and in rendering to each other the duties of benevolence and charity. Good morals are based upon that equality, and Christian charity has that same principle for its foundation.⁽⁵⁾ Every good political government is a moral system, based more upon subordination than is commonly believed.

The judgment we bring to bear upon

(5) *St. Matthew*, xx. The proof of that equality was that the Christians called themselves "brethren."

liberty is equally unjust. It is generally thought that the doctrine of Free Masons has independence of the law for its aim, and that it regards civil subordination as a yoke which dishonours humanity. Never has a word been so much abused as that of liberty. Metaphysicians still dispute upon the different ideas which should be attached to it. It is folly in them to pretend that all actions are the work of an overpowering reason. There are always some little circumstances which influence those actions which are called indifferent. Philosophers, in carrying these principles too far, have destroyed all kinds of liberty. In ethics they pretend to give another idea of liberty. Man is born subject to the laws of nature: he ought, then, to obey in society those which have been made for the common interest—every one finding his safety, his personal advantage, his happiness in that dependence. The man truly free is he who is rational and virtuous, that is to say, he who obeys the laws and fulfils his duty.

And it is clear that equality and liberty are in the moral sense equivalent expressions. Every just and moderate government is based upon liberty, since its true end is to guarantee to each citizen the free and tranquil exercise of his faculties; and, in that sense, liberty is a right which all men have received from nature with their existence, so that it ought to be permitted for each to use freely his right in fulfilling all the duties of civilised society. Even in love the sentiment cannot be perfect or real, if it be not free. The system of Free Masonry is entirely opposed to irregularity and licentiousness, and admits of no other liberty than moral liberty. The lodges are called free in consideration that virtue ought to be encompassed by love, and that it cannot be either solid or true if it be not practised with a free will and with freedom. It is precisely for this that the workmen of the temple of virtue are called in Italy "*liberi muratori*." We have adopted in France the word "*franchise*," a term much

more proper to express the liberty of the heart; and it is from it that the epithets of *Franche-Maçonnerie* and *Franc-Maçon* are derived. In order to form a just idea of Free Masons, we should regard them as a society of symbolic philosophers. If you have any knowledge of the character of those who cultivate their minds you will know they cannot in any sense be dangerous men. It is possible that they may occupy themselves in speculations, that they may reason uselessly upon useful projects, that they may dispute about things which they are ignorant of and which they do not understand; but at the same time they are wise—they cultivate the pleasures of society and the delights of friendship. The general character of philosophers is simplicity, moderation, gentleness, tranquillity. You have seen, often enough, men who have had a taste for philosophy, abandon the most brilliant offices of the state to cultivate literature in the silence of retirement. Neither the reasonings nor the enlightenment of modest

and tranquil philosophy are the spring of human actions. It is the passions only which put all in motion. The experience of all ages shows us that the state ought not to distrust those who profess to be learned. Dangerous people are those who excite the foolish and fatal passions of the multitude. Now far from the lodges of Free Masons being able to give birth to these dangerous practices, they form, on the contrary, a most useful and effective school for correcting vice and forming good citizens. The constitution of their Order tends solely to the happiness of its members, but, as it has no other support than moral sentiment, it can only fulfil that praiseworthy end by virtue and the perfection of manners. All the secret of Free Masons consists in teaching by symbols, that the true science is morality, and that the true virtues are the social virtues.(6)

(6) If we reflect on the doctrine of the Gospel, we shall find that the Christian religion proposes these two articles.

Observe, I pray you, monsieur, that all men, even the most corrupt, love morality. Unquestionably the great and useful truths are actually become common, by means of philosophy, printing, and religion; but that does not prevent, when they are reduced to symbols and figures, their impressing themselves more indelibly on the mind, and delighting the imagination. The innocent and chaste pleasures of life, the sweetness and equality of friendship, unity, decorum, tranquillity, a loveable and virtuous liberty, are things which satisfy the taste of everybody, and produce lively and real pleasure. They are at the same time so many secret causes which make the society of Free Masons to subsist and flourish. The most shameful of all calumnies is to say that Free Masonry teaches atheism and irreligion. All is piety and decorum in its innocent mysteries. Free Masons invoke *God* as the Grand Architect of the Universe; and that expression is noble and sublime. They who believe it possible to have a society which

should teach irreligion and cultivate evil practices for any length of time, know very little of the human heart. Whenever you hear a *permanent* society spoken of, you may confidently infer that it has rendered itself respectable by its morality.

It is, at the same time, vile and unjust to concur in opinion with ignorant and foolish people concerning the lodges of Free Masons, which are, in fact, no other than temples of virtue and sanctuaries consecrated to friendship and humanity.(7) Men who are better informed and more correct in their ideas will never confound these mysterious assemblies with unlawful meetings, and sects suspected or hateful to the state. So M. le Baron *de Bielfeld*, in his

(7) Some ignorant calumniators have compared the innocent assemblies of Free Masons to the society of the Jesuits: the peaceful virtues of friendship and of charity are the institution of Free Masons---intrigue and ambition form those of the Jesuits. The former seek only to be ignorant of other people's business---the obligation of the latter is to govern the world under the mask of religion.

Institutions Politiques,⁽⁸⁾ says expressly, in speaking of unlawful assemblies as being always heretofore forbidden in a well governed state, that the government ought to make a general exception in favour of the society of Free Masons.

An evident and well-demonstrated proof that the Masonic assemblies have nothing which can affect the tranquillity of the state is, that that society, which for many centuries has been spread over all the kingdoms

(8) Vol. i, chap. 7, sec. xxxi. The police ought not to permit meetings of companies or associations of which they are ignorant of the object, the principles, the statutes, and the conventions, because they may plot in similar dark congregations a thousand treasons, a thousand projects dangerous or even fatal to the state. They should not, however, include under this rule the lodges of Free Masons. That Order is spread over all the earth; it has subsisted for ages in the best governed countries; it never meddles in the affairs of state; it has never done anything but good to the republic and to its citizens; there are so many sovereigns, so many nobles, so many magistrates, so many ecclesiastics, who are members of that society, that the state can have no fear of its assemblies, but, on the contrary, many persons, and, above all, many of the poor, have nothing but good to expect from it.

of *Europe*, over several countries of *Asia*, and over nearly the whole of *European America*, has not only not produced any disorder, but is always distinguished by works of beneficence and charity. Although there may be states which, upon frivolous grounds, have not tolerated it, it cannot be denied that many others have, on the contrary, protected and encouraged it.(9)

Observe again, monsieur, that the chief characteristic of pernicious assemblies is to withdraw from the eyes of honest men, and above all from those of the magistrates. Free Masons' lodges, on the contrary, have no reserve, except towards the people. If they close their doors to the foolish, to the wicked, and to the vicious, they

(9) In the states of the King of *Prussia*, in *Sweden*, in *Holland*, in *Courland*, and in *England*, the governments have openly protected the Order of Free Masons. In *London* and in *Stockholm* public processions of Free Masons, clothed with their aprons, their ornaments, and their emblems, are frequently seen. In almost all *Germany* the society is held in great consideration, and the provinces of *France* are full of Masonic lodges which are not ignored by the government.

open them without distinction to all men of merit and quality, and above all to virtuous men. It is even one of their fundamental maxims to endeavour to admit among them magistrates, ministers of state, and even sovereigns; and, truly, how many sovereign princes, how many ecclesiastical dignitaries, how many men respectable by their office, by their eminent qualities, and by the purity of their manners, are there not counted by the Free Masons in the number of their brethren? (10)

(10) We read in the *Lettres Familieres de M. le Baron de Bielfeld* (vol. i, letter 4) that on the night of the 15th of August, 1738, the King of Prussia, being then Prince Royal, was received into Free Masonry at Brunswick, conjointly with the Captain of the King's Regiment, and that he was initiated in good and due form. The same Mr. Bielfeld says in his 13th letter, of the 20th of June, 1740, while he was occupied with the funeral of the late king, "The king has declared publicly that he is a Free Mason, and his majesty held a very illustrious lodge some time since. I prepared everything for it, and I assisted in the capacity of *Premier Surveillant*; his majesty himself occupying the chair. The curiosity of all the court was much excited. We initiated Prince William, the Margrave Charles, and the Duke of Holstein, who were delighted at having been admitted into the Order."

Peaceable and humane men have in all times formed small societies, in order to live far from the discord, the factions, and the calamities which desolate their country. Such have been the Gymnosophists in the *Indies*, the Essenes among the *Hebrews*, the Pythagorians in *Italy*, and the sects of philosophers in *Greece*. Concealment was common to all these societies, and they were united by bonds of brotherhood, of disinterestedness, of rigid morality, and works of benevolence and charity. Although their principles were sometimes extravagant and ridiculous, their virtues did not the less merit for them the respect and admiration of the rest of mankind. One might almost believe that it is an instinct natural to honest men to render themselves distinct, and to separate themselves from the vicious and depraved men of the age. But among these sects there are some wiser than others; they are those who have employed all their efforts, by symbolic and figurative works, to recal

others to reason and good morals. The mysteries of the Eleusinian *Ceres* merit in that respect particular attention over all other institutions. These mysteries, so much sung of and revered in the most remote antiquity,⁽¹¹⁾ so much praised by *Plato*, *Cicero*, and *Plutarch*, were similar to the mysteries of our Free Masons. It is supposed that *Osiris* instituted them in *Egypt*, *Zoroaster* in *Persia*, *Orpheus* in *Thrace*, *Minos* in *Crete*, *Cadmus*, or according to others, *Erectheus* in *Greece*.⁽¹²⁾ We know for a certainty that they were held in very great veneration over half of the then known world. It is true we are ignorant of what those mysterious assemblies precisely consisted, and that the ancients

(11) These mysteries existed in *Greece* for nearly two thousand years, even to the time of the Christian emperors. They were abolished by *Valentinian*.

(12) The Emperor *Claudius* sought to draw them from *Attica* to *Rome*. *Suetonius in Claudium*, cap. 25. *Sacra Eleusinia etiam transferre ex Attica Romani conatus est*. They were established at *Rome* by *Adrian* after the manner of the *Athenians*. *V. Aur. Vita Hadriani*.

have taught us scarcely anything concerning them, but it must nevertheless be admitted, according to the uniform opinion of the most respectable authors of antiquity, that it was those mysteries which brought social life to perfection, and which, more than anything else, contributed to soften the barbarous manners of the first inhabitants of *Europe*, and to spread the light of truth.⁽¹³⁾

They only sought in these mysteries to reform manners, to soften the miseries of existence, and to enlighten the mind, which was wandering in the midst of the most foolish and puerile superstitions in which all mankind was then plunged. They atoned for the offences and pardoned the faults,

(13) The following is the noble and unique eulogy which Cicero made concerning those mysteries: "*Nam milli cum multa eximia, divinaque videntur Athenæ tuæ peperisse, atque in vitâ hominum attulisse, tum nihil melius istis mysteriis, quibus ex agresti immanique vitâ, exculti ad humanitatem, et mitigate sumus: initiaque ut appellantur, ita revera principia vitæ cognovimus: neque solum cum lætitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi.*"—*De Legibus*, lib. ii, cap. 14. See also *Verr*, v, cap. 72 et quest; *tuscul*, i, cap. 13. Read also *Arrien sur l'Épictète*, lib. iii, cap. 21.

after having compelled the guilty to perform some penances, and bound them by the most solemn oaths to lead a better life. They communicated, in a symbolic manner, the great truths of the unity of *God*, of the immortality of the soul, and of punishments and rewards hereafter ;⁽¹⁴⁾ and every one of the mysteries included all that the religion of the ancients had which was most noble and sublime. Such dogmas being entirely different from the vulgar belief of those times, the founders took the precaution to represent them to the initiated under figures and symbols, and only communicated them by degrees as they perceived they became more rational and moderate: for it is usually dangerous to attempt to reclaim hastily any one from his errors.

If you seriously reflect, monsieur, upon those famous mysteries which have caused so much good to humanity and to society,

(14) We know from *Josephus (Antiquitat. Judaicæ, lib. 13)* that in his country the society of the Essenes alone believed the human soul immortal.

you will find that they have more connexion with those of Free Masons than is commonly supposed. As far as the ancients have enabled us to judge, it appears that they concealed all the mysteries under the veil of the most profound secrecy; and for that object, and in order to inspire the initiated with a greater veneration for the mysteries, they agreed only to celebrate them in the holy shades of night; they religiously kept the most profound silence; the spectacle was grand and noble—and we know from *Maximus of Tyre*⁽¹⁵⁾ that it was of a nature to afford a new and delicious pleasure.

Admission to participation in those mysteries was called by the *Greeks* τελειή, which signifies perfection; and the *Latins* called it *initia*, because the mysteries contained the principles of a tranquil and happy life. It was necessary to pay a certain sum for these initiations, and the candidates were submitted to some rigorous examinations;

(15) *Maximi Tyrii*: dissertat. xxxiii.

they were proved by three perilous journeys; they purified them by water, by blood, and by fire; they caused them to catch a glimpse of a thousand confusing and frightful objects, and to hear extraordinary voices; from the most horrible darkness they passed into places light and agreeable to the sight—light being the symbol of truth. The initiated had first signs and then words by which they recognised each other, and the *Greeks* called them symbols; they took an oath of silence and, above everything, of keeping these mysteries inviolably secret: he who had had the indiscretion to reveal them was looked upon as a sacrilegious person, a traitor, and a monster; he was banished from society, and sometimes punished with death.⁽¹⁶⁾ They admitted to

(16) *Cornelius Nepos*, in *Alcibiadem*, cap. 3, relates that *Alcibiades* lost his reputation on the report that he had profaned the mysteries. They were accustomed to punish with death not only those who divulged the mysteries, but also those who had heard them, not desiring to have any more communication with them.---See *Meursii Eleusinia et Boulanger Antiquité, dévoilée par ses usages*, tome ii, livre 3, chap. 1 et 2.

these mysteries persons of all grades and of both sexes. The greatest men of antiquity were initiated in them.⁽¹⁷⁾ They cried with a loud voice to warn off the profane: *Uscite O profani!* which was the general formula of all the mysteries.⁽¹⁸⁾ Vagrants, homicides, and generally all the impious and wicked were excluded from them.⁽¹⁹⁾

(17) *Hercules, Bacchus, Dioscurius, Esculapius, Hippocrates, Cicero, Atticus, Cæsar Augustus*, and many others. The famous *Anacharsis* the *Scythian* even wished to be initiated. Among the *Greeks* and *Romans* it was a general custom to be initiated, and the *Athenians* hastened to initiate their children. Consult upon this *Meursius* in the place cited above. *Diog. Laert.* (lib. vi, n. 39) relates of *Diogenes* the cynic that *rogantibus Atheniensibus, ut initiaretur, atque dicentibus, quod apud inferos hi qui initiati sunt præfident "Peridiculum inquit est, si quidem Agesilaus et Epaminondas in cæno degent, viles autem quique, quod initiati sunt, in beatorum insulis erunt."* How many times might one not in other respects say the same thing of our *Masons* when we give them a similar invitation?

(18) The herald cried "*Procul, procul, quisque nefarius. Procul, procul, este profani.*" We read in *Horace*, book i, ode 3: *Odi profanum vulgus et arce.* And in *Claudius: Gressus removete profani.*

(19) Observe what *Suetonius* relates to us of *Nero*. (Chap. 34-) *Peregrinatione quidem Græciæ, Eleusiniis sacris,*

They did not admit the Epicureans, and from that example Free Masons interdicted atheists from entrance into their lodges. The mysteries were communicated by degrees: each degree had its peculiar ceremonies, and it was not till after many proofs of morals and of conduct that they admitted any one to perfect initiation. They sang various hymns, which it is generally understood did not contain any allusion to their mysteries or their symbols. We see clearly enough that the general spirit of that wholesome institution was to discipline mankind, to console man in his misery, to help him by its benefits and to teach him the arts necessary for his subsistence.(20)

quorum initiatione impii et scelerati, voce præconis, submouerentur, interesse non ausus est.

(20) *S. Augustinus de civitate Dei*, lib. xvii, cap. 20, teaches us that one of the mysteries had reference to the search which *Ceres* made for *Proserpine*. That signified the gratitude which the people of *Attica* felt for her who had taught them agriculture. We may conjecture with reason that the mythology of the ancients was partly the effect of the emblems and allegories of these mysteries. At least, it is certain that they had one object in view for the people

The lodges of Free Masons may then, like the ancient mysteries, be very useful and salutary. They may become a noble school of learning and morals, to aid, more than is supposed, the laws and religion. But it is in the nature of all things human that institutions the most advantageous are not always exempt from disorder and abuse. It has not always been possible to prevent some men, whose conduct was not the wisest nor the best regulated, being admitted into the Order of Free Masons. From this it has happened that the temple of virtue has been sometimes profaned by false brethren ;⁽²¹⁾ but if this has caused disorder and abuse in the society, it has only pro-

and another for the initiated, and that they made a great difference between the theology of the learned and the errors of the people, between the secret worship and the public ceremonies. How many discoveries might we not make upon the religion of the ancients if we could procure an exact knowledge of their mysteries!

(21) It must be observed that all the edicts of the sovereigns of *Europe* which have forbidden Free Masons to assemble, have ordinarily had their abuse in view, and in that respect they have been just and proper.

duced in the minds of wiser brethren derision and contempt. Institutions which may be prejudicial to civilised society demand always very serious animadversion. As for the institution of Free Masonry, which may be the most useful and consoling for mankind, it is desirable that it should be protected in every country by the authorities, and that, under the direction of a wise chief, many of its formalities and ceremonies might be corrected and its mode of government in some respects reformed.

I have the honour to be,
&c., &c.

We have thought it our duty to add to the foregoing letter two hymns which Free Masons sing at their banquets, and which have reference to what has been read above.

I.

Through *Athens* (though the sun be high)
 Thy lantern thou dost burn,
 Thou seek'st a kind, a noble man,
Diogenes the stern.
 Visit the homes of all,
 Wherever we may be,
 And if thou find'st thy man,
 A Mason sure is he!

II.

And still at all our feasts
 There ever doth preside
 Fair liberty, the glorious,
 With pleasure at her side.
 Nature, with lavish hand,
 To divine *Plato's* reason,
 Joins *Epicurus'* charms,
 And thus she forms a Mason.

I.

Vainly against our Order
Argues the unlearned man,
And seeks to solve a mystery
Above his power to scan ;
His censure does not harm us,
We smile at his vain fears—
To make sage wisdom joyous
The Mason's work appears.

II.

'T is said that in the science
Of gramarye we 're wise,
And in the black-arts mysteries
Our minds we exercise ;
But our science is in silence
Our blessings to enjoy :
Thou needest light ere thou canst grasp
The Mason's mystery.

III.

In all his ways to deal
With truth and equity;
To love and aid his brother
In his adversity;
To flee from all mean motives;
To learn in reason's school;
Nor weary in well doing—
This is the Mason's rule.

FINIS.

Birmingham:

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