

## THE FREEMASONRY OF SENTIMENT

He was a man of ardent affections and bitter prejudices. He was quick to judge harshly but equally quick to revise his opinion. He was sojourning in a western city. He visited a church whose creed was not his and whose preacher, from the first, stirred his prejudices. He seemed determined not to be satisfied with anything this preacher did, and when the sermon had been delivered he had satisfied himself that it was one of the poorest to which he had ever listened. But a change came over the spirit of his dreams; and a little child was the central figure in the scene which made this man conclude that, after all, he had listened to one of the grandest sermons that had ever been preached and had participated in one of the sweetest services that had ever been rendered.

At the conclusion of the sermon the preacher said:

"You will all remember how one bleak morning last winter we carried from this church all that was mortal of a woman who was loved because her whole life showed that she knew she was serving God best when she rendered service to God's needy creatures. The poor and the sick of this neighborhood outside of the membership of this church have missed her every day since her death, but today we are to have a reminder of her noble life. Most of us remember that ten days prior to her death a little child was born unto her, and although she was well prepared to die, she was more than ever anxious to live because of her longing for a little one upon whom she could lavish some of the boundless affection she had given freely to the needy. Today that little child is to be baptized, and I call your attention to these facts by way of tribute to its mother's precious memory and in the hope that her fine example will be ever before us."

It was not difficult to see that the stranger in that church was, as the boys would say, "sitting up and taking notice" just at this stage of the proceedings. And he was one of the most deeply interested spectators as the aunt of the motherless child carried the little one to the altar. Holding the child in his arms the preacher went through the baptismal service; and then before handing it back to the aunt he held it at arms length and took a long, earnest and, we may say, a loving look into its happy face. Then pressing the little one to his breast he kissed it passionately while the tears coursing down his furrowed cheeks gave to the motherless child another baptism—not the baptism provided in the service books—but the outpouring of human love and human sympathy which, after all, is the substance of the form provided in our creeds.

By this time the tears were rolling down the stranger's cheeks. The hostility within his heart for that old preacher was entirely gone. The love, the sympathy, the tenderness which he had failed to detect in the sermon of the day he had observed in the kisses which the preacher gave to the motherless child, and in the tears which rained upon the baby's face. He knew that that preacher was his "kind of people." He had recognized the freemasonry of sentiment. He saw clearly the tie that binds men of deep feeling, and he felt as though he would be glad to grasp that preacher's hand. Certainly he was a better man because hostility had been banished from his heart; and perhaps, after all, he was a stronger man because of the necessity for the readjustment of his opinion.

Several years ago a newspaper man wrote a simple little article that had small literary merit but depended for public approval solely upon its tender sentiments. A man who was generally believed to be hardhearted wrote to this newspaper man a personal letter thanking him for the article referred to, and saying: "I have frequently found these kind of sentiments cherished where one would least expect them to be, and I am frank enough to say that I am surprised in this instance." The newspaper man was just as much surprised to learn that his article had met favor at the hands of his correspondent.

We don't know all that is going on in the hearts of our neighbors. Of course the cynic would say that if we did we would more regularly lock up our hen-roosts at night. But everyone knows some man upon whom he has passed erroneous judgment. Everyone knows some man whom he at one time regarded as cruel and

heartless, but later found to be tender and true. While some of our greatest writers would give us the impression that most men are bad, if we will but examine our own experiences with the majority of our acquaintances, we will discover that these writers, famous though they are, merely skimmed the surface in the "proper study of mankind."

Some of us prefer the opinion of that writer who said "he only fears men who does not know them, and he who avoids them will soon misjudge them." Too often we mistake thoughtlessness for meanness. Some have pointed to the eagerness with which men will push one another in order to secure a seat on a crowded street car or train, or to purchase a ticket at a crowded box office. They forget the many instances where men have calmly submitted to death in order that the lives of women and children might be saved. They forget the great heroism, the patient labor and the tender sympathy shown at every railroad wreck where men in large numbers have gathered. They forget the prompt response made in the average American neighborhood in cases of sickness and distress. They forget the many little and yet important services rendered by one man when it comes to burying another man's dead. They forget that every appeal made upon the sympathy of men for help for the afflicted has been promptly and fully responded to, whether the calls came to the men of a nation, to the men of a state, to the men of a county or to the men of a small community. They forget the hospitals that have been erected and maintained—not in most cases by the liberal contributions of rich men, but by the small and regular donations of poor men. They forget the Houses of the Good Shepherd and similar institutions whose doors are ever open to fallen women. They forget the ready response to alms that may be counted on in any street in any city of the land where the beggar's necessity is apparent. They forget the support given and the respect shown for the Volunteers, the Salvation Army and kindred organizations—support given in most cases by those who make no profession of religion. They forget the constant, steady tendency toward good manifested in our public sentiment, if not at all times in our laws—a public sentiment constantly striving to advance the best interests of society, constantly struggling to overcome the evils incident to society.

The cynics would have us accept the methods of the insurance ringsters as a fair sample of the disposition of men; but they forget that whenever such crimes as these have been exposed the condemnation by public opinion has been overwhelming. They forget that it is the very goodness of men which, slow to see evil in others, has, in part, made it possible for a coterie of men to impose upon their fellows. The cynics would have us believe that the instances of corruption in public life fairly reflect the character of men generally. They forget that, while the people are sometimes slow in learning the truth, when faithful prosecuting attorneys have uncovered wrongdoing and honest governors have set themselves squarely against the encroachments of powerful interests men of all political parties and of all creeds, and men of no political party and no creed, have rushed to the support of good government.

Man's struggle for light does not terminate with the delivery of his college diploma. With most of us it is a constant and a desperate struggle; not only a struggle for existence, but a struggle against passions, a struggle to do the right thing at the right time.

A show made its appearance in a frontier town. There was no orchestra, but an old organ was secured and finally one thoughtful and observing citizen who had learned to play the organ, was persuaded to act as the "orchestra." The rough frontiersmen gathered in large numbers, most of them with great pistols buckled to their waists, and when the "orchestra man" took his place at the organ it was noticed that he had taken the precaution to pin upon his back a large placard bearing the words: "Don't shoot the organist. He's doing the best he knows how." Some of us yet believe that most of us are doing the best we "know how." One great trouble is that "men's evil manners live in brass; their virtues we write in water." If men would get closer to one another there would be less cynicism in the world, and, all important, less cynicism in the world's literature.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world

kin," or rather reminds us that we are all kin, just as brothers long-time estranged have later been reconciled at the knee of the mother or at the mother's grave, or perhaps by some touching reminder that they are brothers and that sympathy, kindness and the forgiving spirit are part and parcel in their duty.

Some of those eminently practical men are wont to laugh at their fellows who deal in that sentiment which Lowell describes as "intellectualized emotion, emotion precipitated, as it were, in pretty crystals by the fancy." But these "pretty crystals" never hurt any one. There are a few men who have habitually repressed this "intellectualized emotion," and some in whom it was never developed. Robert G. Ingersoll, riding on a train one evening noticed the beautiful sunset, and touching his seat-neighbor on the arm, pointed across the field, saying: "Isn't that simply beautiful?" His neighbor looked out of the car window, but his vision reached no farther than a bunch of cattle, and he replied: "Sure it is. Them's the finest bunch of steers I've seen in many a day."

A leading western lawyer was once asked whether he had even known a man who was wholly bad. He replied: "I thought I did at one time, but I found that, after all, I was mistaken. For many years I had as a client a rich man in whom I had not been able to discover a good impulse. In the course of years this man came to be an invalid and he lost his fortune. During his better days he had secured a large sum of life insurance. His family was in distress and one day he went out and committed suicide in order that those dependent upon him might obtain the necessities of life. I made up my mind then that there is some good in every man."

It doesn't do to judge our fellows harshly. The cultivation of kind thoughts is such a delightful pastime that it is idle for men to undertake to keep up hostilities. It would be better for every one of us to get through the world without having enemies, but if we must have them for a time, it would be well if we could know them better when we might discover that that fine old lover of men knew what he was talking about when he said: "If we could read the secret lives of our enemies we would find there enough sorrow and suffering to make us love them."

In some of the simplest of verses we find the greatest of morals. In a book compiled for the children there is a verse that was doubtless written for the grown folks: "Do you wish for kindness? Be kind. Do you wish for truth? Be true. What you give of yourself, you find; your world is a reflex of you." And long ago a man, pleading for the kinder impulse, gave to the world a valuable reminder when in homely verse he wrote: "You dare not chain the lion; you must not chain the dove; and every gate you bar to hate will open wide to love."

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## "OUTRAGEOUS CORRUPTION"

Referring to "life insurance abuses" the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, a republican paper, says:

Every dollar of life insurance profits improperly turned into the pockets of individuals, or secretly placed to influence selfish legislation, is a species of outrageous corruption, a robbery of the many for the rapacious few. The time to apply the remedy is at the moment of detection, and no one has a right to complain if the cure is stern in its nature.

That being true what will the Globe-Democrat say with respect to the suggestion that the republican national committee "put it back?"

The insurance inquiry disclosed that one insurance company has contributed \$150,000 to the republican national campaign fund during the last three presidential campaigns. This money belonged to the policyholders, and was contributed without their consent. According to the Globe-Democrat, these contributions to the republican campaign fund amount to "a species of outrageous corruption, a robbery of the many for the rapacious few." Of course, putting it back would be a cure "stern in its nature" but, in the language of the Globe-Democrat "the time to apply the remedy is at the moment of detection." One remedy is to provide publicity for all contributions to political funds, and the prohibition of such contributions by corporations. But "at the moment of detection" the first remedy is "put it back."