

"MASONRY AND WOMAN"

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MASONRY occupies a peculiarly interesting position with regard to woman. From time immemorial the Craft have been opposed to her reception within the portals of their lodge-rooms. The ancient regulations, charges, and obligations, one and all, exclude her from a participation in the ceremonies. This has been seized upon by the opponents of Freemasonry as an excuse for wanton attacks upon, and gross insults to, our beloved Institution. "We must be performing some mystic ceremonies of a peculiarly immoral character, since woman cannot share our secrets and unite with us in the performance of our mysteries," or "we must be indulging in nocturnal revelry and midnight debauchery." Such insinuations have been thrown out, and such statements have been made, time and again, by Blanchard and his narrow-minded allies.

Now, what connection has Masonry with woman? Its principles inculcate the highest code of honor and respect for every daughter of Eve. "Masonry is a peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." It is the purest and holiest system of morality ever taught by man and approved of by GOD. It is not the sniveling, sneaking morality of the Pharisee or the deceitful morality of the hypocrite, but a morality that teaches every follower of the martyred Hiram to regard woman as pure and holy; as a being created by an All-Wise Father to be the helpmate of man; his friend and ally in the time of trouble; his guiding star in his earthly career, and his guardian angel during the dark hour of temptation, and when the shadow of the winged messenger of death is hovering by his bedside in the chamber of mourning and lamentation.

Those who dare to insinuate that Masonry does not respect woman, because she is not permitted to participate in Masonic ceremonies, know naught of the character of the Masonic Institution. One of its great objects is to teach men to appreciate the exalted character of woman, and all who have passed through its mystic ceremonies know how solemnly it regards, supports, and upholds the honor of a brother and the virtue of those near and dear to him. The Mason's wife, the Mason's widow, the Mason's mother, the Mason's sister, and the Mason's daughter, are sacred in the eyes of the Hiramite. And, as we render them especially sacred, so do we teach every neophyte that, unless he is a truly moral man, he is unworthy of the name of a Mason. The licentious libertine and the obscene jester are alike objects of pity and disgust to the Craft. They oppose blasphemy, obscenity, drunkenness, and all things that tend to render the mind of man coarse, his morals impure, and his thoughts unholy. On the other hand, do they not inculcate honesty of purpose, uprightness of intention, and purity of thought? Do they not teach the neophyte a blessed faith in the goodness and greatness of GOD, a hope in immortality, more grand than the mind of man can conceive, and a charity more boundless than that of any creed, sect, or church, because it is a charity that embraces a liberality of thought that permits man to view the errors of others from a kindly and

liberal point of view? Now, we ask our opponents, in all fairness, if these are a few of our principles, can we fail to honor and respect woman; to regard her virtue as sacred, and to uphold her whenever her name is aspersed, or her character maligned? It is one of the glories of our society that we respect woman, and, whilst true and faithful to her we love, we are equally willing to guard over and protect the name and character of any when falsely accused, or should one fall under the alluring tongue and damnable promises of the seducer, we are bound to rescue such an one, if within our power. Woman, in the eyes of the true Freemason, is the holiest gift of GOD to man. We exclude her from our lodge-rooms because our esoteric ceremonies are not suitable for her, and because our ancient landmarks are opposed to her admission, but above all things because we believe home is the place for woman, by the fireside with her sisters or children. We do not wish to see woman emasculate herself and forget her sex in the performance of the duty of man. We love to find her gentle, and kind, and good, a holy being, as it were, sent from GOD to render home happy and man pure. We desire not to see her assuming duties that fall to our coarser natures; she can help us as Masons in our deeds of love and charity; she can go with us to the bedside of sickness and smooth the pillow, and moisten the lips, and sit with patience by the side of the suffering and the dying, and "administer relief to their afflictions, and comfort to their distresses." This, then, is the true connection that Masonry has with woman. To the Mason she is a pure, holy, exalted being, his friend in trouble, his helpmate in joy, his guardian angel when the dark shadow of temptation surrounds him; and, in a word, the grandest gift that the Creator has bestowed upon man.

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