

LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

WILLIAM L. STONE, ESQ.

OF NEW-YORK,

AND TO

BENJAMIN COWELL, ESQ.

OF RHODE-ISLAND,

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

MASONRY AND ANTI-MASONRY.

BY JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A PORTRAIT OF MASONRY.

BY JOHN C. SPENCER.

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LETTERS.

WE insert below the first of a series of four letters, addressed to one of the Editors of this paper several weeks ago, by the late President of the United States, upon the exciting subject of MASONRY and ANTI-MASONRY. Their publication has been thus delayed by the directions of the distinguished author himself.—Apprehending, probably, that their earlier publication might be imputed to a desire to influence the pending Presidential election, he requested that they might be privately retained until the close of the contest. Although the votes of the Electoral Colleges have not been cast, yet the State elections are now over, and the ultimate result can in no way be affected by the perusal of these letters. They are written with the wonted ingenuity, power and spirit of the Ex-President, and will doubtless be read with great interest by the public.—*New-York Commercial Advertiser.*

LETTER I.

Quincy, 25th August, 1832.

Wm. L. STONE, Esq. New-York.

Dear Sir—In my last letter I observed, with the freedom and candor which I thought due to you as the best return I could make for the honor and obligation you had conferred upon me, by addressing to me your letters upon masonry and anti-masonry, that there were many things in the book which I did not see as you did.

Some further explanation is due from me upon the subject. The principal objects of your book were two. First, to vindicate the character of an eminent and illustrious citizen of New York, the late Governor of the State, De Witt Clinton, from the opprobrium cast upon him, of having been personally and deeply concerned in the murder of Morgan; and, secondly, to prove by a fair and impartial statement of the abuses to which the Masonic Institution have been perverted, that they ought to be voluntarily surrendered and abolished.

These objects were just and laudable. They are in your volume faithfully pursued; nor is there in the execution of your plan, any thing in the Letters unsuitable or redundant. You observe in the first Letter, that it is no part of your design to write a vindication of Free Masonry as such,—but to describe Free Masonry as you received, understood, and practised it yourself, and as it has been received, understood and practised by hundreds of virtuous and intelligent men, with whom you have associated in the lodge room. To this the first ten Letters are devoted, and they are in my estimation not less valuable than those which succeed them. But as Bishop Watson wrote an apology for the Bible, I trust you will not consider me as intending any disparagement to that part of your work, if I consider it in the light of an apology for free masonry, as received, understood and practised by yourself and many others. In that light it is exceedingly well adapted to its purpose. It is the only rational *plea* for the institution that I have seen, since this controversy began; for all the other defences of the handmaid which have come to my knowledge, have snatched too much of the obligation to come to the aid of a distressed brother; and extricate him from his difficulties *right or wrong*, to pass for any thing other than aggravations of the Morgan murder crimes.

You have taken all the degrees to, and including that of, the knight templar. The Oaths, Obligations and Penalties, as administered to, and understood by you, contained nothing incompatible with your duties to your country and your kind. Whatever there might be in them, apparently incongruous with the prior and paramount duties of the citizen and christian, was explained and given in charge in such manner as to be made entirely subordinate to them. The obligations as understood by you are all auxiliaries to christian benevolence and patriotism, and so they are undoubtedly understood by great multitudes of masons, in all parts of the United States.— That they are otherwise understood also by multitudes of the worthy brethren of the craft, (worthy according to the masonic meaning of the word,) is apparent in every page of your book.

In your third letter, p. 23, you allude to an opinion which I once expressed to you in the following terms:—'You sir, have assured me that the obligation supposed to be administered in conferring the first degree, is quite enough, in your view, to establish the wicked character of the Institution.'

Whether I did make use of terms so strong in the freedom of unrestrained conversation, or whether your reference to it is by inference of your own, from words not quite so comprehensive, is not material. The sentiment which I do recollect to have expressed, and which is rooted in my conviction was, 'that the entered apprentice's oath, obligation and annexed penalty, was in itself *vicious*,—and such as ought never to be administered by man to man.' That no explanation of it could take away its essentially immoral character—and that the Institution of free masonry requiring absolutely the administration of it to every candidate for admission, necessarily shared in its immorality.

In saying this, I disclaim all intention of censure upon any individual who has ever taken this oath. I consider it according to its own import—stripped of all warrant of authority from the great names of illustrious men who may have taken it.

My objections to it are these:

First: That it is an extra judicial oath, and as such contrary to the laws of the land.

Secondly: That it is a violation of the precept of Jesus Christ—*Swear not at all*.

Thirdly: That this oath pledges the candidate, in the name of God, that he will always hail, forever conceal, and never reveal any of the *secret arts, parts or points of the mysteries of free masonry*, to any person under the canopy of heaven, except it shall be to a true and lawful mason, or within the body of a just and regular lodge of such; and not unto him or them until after due trial, strict examination, or by the lawful information of a brother, I shall have found him or them as justly and lawfully entitled to the same as I am myself.

The arts, parts, points and *mysteries* of masonry, are afterwards in the oath denominated the *secrets of the craft*. These are all general and indefinite terms. The candidate, when he takes the oath, is kept in total ignorance of what these *secrets of the craft* consist. *He knows not the nature nor extent of the oath that he takes*. He is sworn to keep secret, *he knows not what*. The general assurance that it is not to affect his religion or politics, is the mere word of another man. The assurance that it is not to interfere with any of his duties, is but a mockery, when the administration of the oath itself is a violation of law.

He swears to reveal the secrets of the craft to no person under the canopy of Heaven;—*except* to a brother mason or a lodge. The single exception expressed is an exclusion of all others. There is no exception for the authority of law or for the confession enjoined upon the Catholic brethren by their religion. I use this illustration to show, that the intrinsic import of the oath, is incompatible with law, civil and religions.

Now what these secrets of the Craft are, to the keeping of which, the candidate thus ignorant of their import, is sworn, is never defined. They are differently understood, by different masons. The oaths, obligations and penalties themselves have until very recently been understood, I believe, universally to form a part of these secrets. Those of the first three degrees were first revealed by the publica-

tion of Morgan's book; those of the subsequent degrees to that of the thrice illustrious order of the Cross, were divulged by the Convention of the seceding masons at Le Roy, on the 4th of July, 1828. Those in Morgan's book I understand to be admitted on all hands to be correct. But with regard to the obligations of the Red Cross Knights, and the Templars, as disclosed by that Convention, you say that although you have received these degrees, and assisted in conferring them, you know of no such obligations in any degrees. Your impression is that they must have been devised westward of Albany, and imposed upon candidates without the sanction of any governing body. You do not question the correctness of the publication of these degrees by the Convention of seceding masons. You are *authorized to state*, that when the forms of those obligations were received in the city, measures were taken by the Grand Encampment to ascertain whether any encampment under its jurisdiction had in fact ever administered any such obligations, and if so, where, and by whom they had been imposed.

It is earnestly to be hoped that the grand encampment will sincerely and seriously pursue this inquiry, and make known the result of their researches to the world. In the mean time, observe the inferences to be drawn from this extreme diversity of the terms and import of the obligations as administered in different lodges, chapters, and encampments; but *all* under the sanction of this tremendous oath of the entered apprentice—all secured by this soul-shackling pledge, given in advance, and in ignorance of what they are to be; and all rivetted by the penalty to which I shall next advert. Fourthly,

'All this, I promise and swear—binding myself under no less penalty than that of having my throat cut across from ear to ear, my tongue torn out by its roots, and my body buried in the rough sand of the sea, at low-water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty four hours.'

We have been told over and over again that this is understood by masons to be merely an invocation—and the Committee of investigation of the Legislature of Rhode Island, have gravely told the world that the explanation given by masons to this *penalty*, is, 'that I would rather have, or sooner have, my throat cut, than to reveal,' &c. It is unfortunate that this explanation is in direct contradiction to the plain and unequivocal import of the words of the Oath. The Oath incurs the *penalty* for its violation. The explanation promises fidelity, though at the expense of life. The Oath imprecates the death of a traitor, as a *penalty* for treachery.—The explanation claims a crown of martyrdom for constancy. If Benedict Arnold had been taken in the act of treason to his country, he would have suffered no less a *penalty* than death, though not the barbarous and brutal death of the masonic obligation. When Joseph Warren suffered death on Bunker's Hill, is there an explanatory mason who dare tell you that he suffered a *penalty*. Yet so it is, that the masonic Oath, and its explanation, confound all moral distinctions to the degree of considering the death of a martyr and the death of a traitor as one and the same thing.

This *explanation* of the penalty annexed to the entered apprentice's oath, it must be acknowledged, is not ingenuous, it is not even ingenious. It is a grand hailing sign of distress; or it is a masonic Murder of the English Language.

I say this with the less hesitation, because in your seventh letter containing your defence of the masonic Obligations, you have disdained to take this preposterous *explanation* of the Rhode Island masons. You know too well the import of words. You candidly avow that the Oaths and Obligations are out of season—out of reason; and ought to be abolished. I will therefore forbear to press upon you the still grosser absurdity, to the pretended Rhode Island explanation, when applied to the master mason's and Royal Arch penalties. The master mason's penalty is to have his body severed in two in the midst, and divided to the North and South, his bowels burnt to ashes, and the ashes scattered before the four winds of Heaven, *that there might not the least track or trace of remembrance remain among man or masons of so vile and perjured a wretch, as I should be*. And this according to

the Rhode Island explanation, is to be the consequence of his dying like Hiram Abiff, rather than betray the masonic secrets.

My fifth objection is to the horrible *idea*, of which the penalty is composed. It is an oath of which a common cannibal should be ashamed. Even in the barbarous ages of antiquity, Homer tells you, that when Achilles dragged the dead body of Hector round the walls of Troy, it was a dishonest deed, and Plato severely censures Homer for even introducing this incident into his poem. A mangled body after death, was a thought disgusting even to the Heathens. From the very thoughts—and still more from the lips of a christian, it should be forever excluded, like indelicacy from the mouth of a female. The Constitution of the United States, and of Massachusetts, prohibit the infliction of cruel or unusual punishments even by the authority of the law. But no butcher would mutilate the carcass of a bullock or a swine, as the masonic candidate swears consent to the mutilation of his own, for the breach of an absurd and senseless secret. I cannot assent to your denomination of these penalties as idle or unmeaning words. They are words of too much meaning—of hideous significance. The masons are bound for their own honor to expunge them from their records forever. Would that they could be expunged from the Language, dishonored by their introduction into its forms of speech.

I remain, very respectfully,

Your friend,

J. Q. ADAMS.

LETTER II.

Quincy, August 29, 1832.

WM. L. STONE, Esq. New-York.

Dear Sir—Long, and I fear, tedious as you have found my last letter, I was compelled by a reluctance at making it longer, to compress the observations in it upon the *intrinsic* nature of the masonic Oaths, Obligations and Penalties, within a compass insufficient to disclose my opinion, and the reasons upon which it is founded.

I had said to you that the Institution of free masonry was vicious, in its first step, the oath, obligation and penalty of the entered apprentice. To sustain this opinion I assigned to you five reasons—Because they were:—

1. Contrary to the Laws of the Land—Extra-judicially taken and administered.
2. In violation of the *positive* precept of Jesus Christ.
3. A pledge to keep undefined Secrets, the Swearer being ignorant of their nature.
4. A pledge to the penalty of death for violation of the oath.
5. A pledge to a mode of death, cruel, unusual, unfit for utterance from human lips.

If in the statement of these five *objections*, upon principles of Law, Religion, and Morals, there be any thing unsound, I invite you to point it out. But if you contest either of my positions, I must intreat you not to *travel out of the record*.

I might ask you, not to consider it a refutation of either of these reasons, to say that you and all other honest and honorable masons, have never so understood or practiced upon this Oath, Obligation, and Penalty. The inquiry is not what your practice, or that of others has been, but what *is* the Obligation, its Oath, and its Penalty.

I must request of you to give me no *explanation*, of this Oath, Obligation and Penalty, directly contrary to their unequivocal import. That you will not explain *black* by saying that it means *white*, or even by alledging that you so understand it. I particularly beg not to be told that honorable, intelligent and virtuous men, George Washington, and Joseph Warren for example, understood that the penalty of death for Treachery, meant the death of martyrdom for fidelity.

I would willingly be spared the necessity of replying to the averment that the patterns of honor and virtue whom I have just named, with a long catalogue of such

men have taken this Oath, and bound themselves to this Obligation, under this penalty. For I might deem it proper to inquire, whether the very act of binding such men by such Oath, to such Obligation, under such penalty, is not among the *sins* of the Institution.

I must ask you to suppose that such an Institution had never existed—that it were now to be formed, and that you were one of ten or twenty, virtuous and intelligent men, about to found a charitable, and convivial secret association. Suppose a Committee of such a meeting appointed to draw up a Constitution for the Society should report the entered apprentice's Oath, Obligation and Penalty, as a form of initiation for the admission of Members. I do not ask you whether you would vote for the acceptance of the Report, but what would you think of the Reporters?

I consider this as the true and only test, of the inherent and essential character of masonry, and it was under this conviction, that I told you that the Entered Apprentice's Oath was sufficient to settle in my mind the immoral character of the Institution.

It is perhaps too much to ask of you, an explicit assent to these positions, because you may consider it an acknowledgement of error. But this is the first and fundamental consideration from which I draw the conclusion that masonry *ought* forever to be abolished. It is wrong—essentially wrong—a seed of evil, which can never produce any good. It may perish in the ground—it may never rise to bear fruit; but whatever fruit it does bear, must be rank poison—it can never prove a blessing, but by its barrenness.

My objections to this *seminal principle* of masonry, apply in all their force to the single Obligation, the form of which is given in the Appendix to your volume, p. 3, where it is stated to have been the only obligation, taken for all three degrees so late as 1733, when only three degrees of masonry were known. The oath is in fewer words, but more comprehensive, for the obligation is to keep '*the secrets or secrecy of masons or masonry*.' There is indeed a qualification in the promise not to write, print, mark, &c. which seems to keep the obligation within the verge of the law. For the promise is to reveal nothing whereby the Secret might be *unlawfully* obtained. The penalty is also death, not for constancy, but for treachery, 'so that there shall be no resemblance of me among masons.'

This oath, obligation and penalty, the only one taken in all the degrees of masonry known but one century ago, is the prolific Parent of all the degrees and all the Oaths, Obligations and Penalties, since invented, and of the whole progeny of crimes descended from them. The natural and unavoidable tendency of such an obligation, is the multiplication of its kind. This tendency is among the most obvious causes which have led to the interdiction of *all* such oaths and obligations, by the civil, the ecclesiastical, and the moral law. The obligation is to keep *undefined* secrets. As they are undefined in the obligation itself, there is nothing in the constitutions of masonry to define them, or to secure uniformity either of the secrets or of the obligations. Every lodge may vary the secrets, obligations and penalties, and accordingly they have been so varied, that scarcely any two adhering masons give the same account of them. Almost the only defence of masonry, after the publication of the Books of David Bernard and Avery Allyn, consisted in efforts to discredit them, by denying that the Oaths, Obligations and Penalties were truly stated by them. A secret Institution in three degrees; the secret of each degree being withheld from the members of the degrees inferior to it, is a perpetual temptation to the initiated to multiply the secrets and the degrees. Thus it is that the Lodges have grown into Chapters—the Chapters into Encampments—the Encampments into Consistories; and so long ago as December, 1802, the Grand Inspectors of the United States of America, issued at Charleston, South Carolina, a circular, announcing the existence and the names of thirty-three degrees of masonry.

The secrets, to the keeping of which the entered Apprentice is sworn, are *indefinite*. In genuine masonry, when revealed to him, he finds them *frivolous*. You acknowledge that your first feelings upon receiving them was disappointment. So

must it be with every reflecting intelligent man; nor is it conceivable that any such entered Apprentice, on leaving the lodge after his admission, should fail to have observed with pain and mortification, the contrast between the awful solemnity of the oath which he has taken, and the extreme insignificance of the secrets revealed to him. It is to meet this unavoidable impression, that the institution is graduated.—The lure of curiosity is still held out, and its attractive power is sinewed, by the very disappointment which the Apprentice has experienced. He takes the degrees of Fellow Craft and Master Mason, and still finds disappointment—still finds himself bound by tremendous oaths, to keep trifling and frivolous secrets. The practice of the institution is deceptive and fraudulent. It holds out to him a promise which it never performs. Its promise is light—its performance is darkness.

But it introduces him to intimate, confidential, and exclusive relations, with a select and limited circle of other men—and to the same confidential and exclusive relations, with great multitudes of men, belonging to every civilized nation throughout the globe. The entered apprentice's oath, is merely an oath of secrecy—but the candidate who takes it, has pledged himself, by his application for admission, to conform to all the ancient established usages and customs of the fraternity. And the charge of the master, given him upon the Bible, compass and square, presents him with three precious jewels, a *listening ear*—a *silent tongue*—and a *faithful heart*—all, of course exclusively applicable to the secrets revealed to him—and he is told that the listening ear teaches him to listen to the instructions of the Worshipful Master but more especially to the cries of a worthy, distressed brother; and that the faithful heart teaches him to be faithful to the instructions of the Worshipful Master at all times; but more especially to keep and conceal the secrets of masonry, *and those of a brother*, when given to him in charge as such, that they may remain as secure and inviolable in his (the Entered Apprentice's) breast, as in his (the brother's) own. Two check words are also presented to him—*truth* and *union*—the explanation of which concludes that the heart and tongue of free masons join in promoting each other's welfare, and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.

Thus the essential nature of the entered apprentice's oath, preceded by his pledge to conform to all the established usages and customs of the fraternity, and followed by the charge of the Master, is *secret* and *exclusive* favor, assistance and fidelity to the brotherhood and brothers of the craft.

Now combine together the disappointment which every intelligent accepted mason must feel, at the puerility of the secrets revealed to him, compared with the appalling solemnity of the oath exacted from him for the purchase of his lamb skin apron, and the secret ties with which he has linked himself, with multitudes of other men, exclusively to favor, assist and be faithful to each other, and acknowledge that the temptation to make the secrets more important, and to turn them to better account to the craft, must be irresistible. Judge this system a priori, without reference to any of the consequences which it has produced, and say if human ingenuity could invent an engine better suited to conspiracy of any kind. The Entered Apprentice returns from the Lodge, with his curiosity stimulated, his imagination bewildered, and his reason disappointed. The mixture of Religion and Morality, blended with falsehood and imposture, which pervade all the ceremonies of initiation, is like arsenic mingled up with balm.

‘Most dangerous
Is that Temptation, which doth lead us on
To Sin, in loving Virtue.’

If the candidate has been educated to a sincere and heartfelt reverence for Religion and the Bible, and if he exercises his reason, he *knows* that all the tales of Jachin and Boaz, of Solomon's Temple, of Hiram Abiff and Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelau, are impostures—poison poured into the perennial fountain of truth—traditions exactly resembling those reprobated by Jesus Christ, as making the Word of God of none effect. If, as in this age but too often happens, he enters the lodge a skeptic, the use of the Bible there, if it have any effect upon him, will turn him out

a confirmed infidel. The sincere and rational believer in the Gospel, can find no confirmation of his faith in the unwarrantable uses made of the Holy Scriptures to shed an unction of their sanctity around the fabulous fabric of free masonry, while the reprobate miscreant will be taught the uses to which fraud and secrecy may turn the lessons of piety and virtue, inculcated in the sublimest effusions of divine inspiration. In those scriptures we are told, that when ‘the children of Israel did SECRETLY those things that were not right against the Lord their God,’ they became idolaters, and were carried into captivity. Their cities then were soon filled with a mongrel race of Babylonians and Assyrians, who perverted the Word of God with the imposture of Paganism; burnt their children in fire, to the Gods of Sepharvaim, and ‘feared the Lord, and served their graven images’—an emblem of free masonry, far more illustrative of its character, than the Tragedy of Hiram Abiff.

The entered Apprentice's oath is, therefore, in its own nature, a seminal principle of conspiracy—and this objection applies to the only oath originally taken in all the degrees of free masonry at the first institution. The *ostensible* primitive purposes of free masonry, were all comprised in *good-fellowship*. But to good-fellowship, whether of labor or refreshment, neither secrecy, nor oath, nor penalties are necessary or congenial. In the original institution of free masonry, there was then an ostensible and a secret object, and by the graduation of the order, the means were supplied of converting it to any *evil* purpose of associated power, screened from the danger of detection. Hence all the bitter fruits which the institution has borne in Germany, in France, in Mexico, and lastly in this our beloved country. Nor could they have failed to be produced in Great Britain, but that by sharp and biting statutes, they have been confined within the limits of the ostensible object of the brotherhood—good fellowship.

I am, with much respect, dear sir,
Your friend and servant,
J. Q. ADAMS.

LETTER III.

Quincy, 6th September, 1832.

WM. L. STONE, Esq. New York.

Dear Sir—In my two preceding letters you have seen my objections, drawn from the fountains of Law, Religion and Morals, against the first step of free masonry, the *Oath*, with its obligation and penalty, administered to the Entered Apprentice at his initiation. You will certainly understand, that in this denunciation of the *thing*, it is not my intention to include a charge against any individual who has ever taken the oath—as on the other hand I exclude all palliation or justification of it upon the mere authority of the great names of men by whom it has been taken.

It is a pledge of faith from man to man, solemnized by an appeal to God, and fortified by the express assent of the swearer to undergo the penalty of death and mutilation, at, or after death, for its violation. Such it is in itself, and no explanation can, without doing violence to the natural connexion between thought and language, take away this its essential and unequivocal import.

The objections are:—1. To the oath. 2. To the promise. 3. To the penalty.

1. *To the oath*—as a double violation of the law of the Land, and of the law of God. Upon this there appears by your seventh letter to be very little, if any, difference of opinion between you and me. The principles assumed and admitted in the introduction to your seventh letter, are unquestionably correct with reference to law, to religion, and morals—and it is equally clear that they are all disregarded in the administration of the masonic oaths. It is a vice of the institution, which no example can justify, and which no sophistry can extenuate. Your acknowledgment is magnanimous—your argument is unanswerable.

But if the administration of the oath is of itself a violation of the laws both of God and man, as well by him who administers, as by him who takes it, is it not a further mockery of both, for the master, in the very act of transgressing the laws, and of suborning the candidate to transgress them with him, to say to him 'this obligation is not intended to interfere with your duty to yourself, your neighbor, your country, or your God.' Is there not falsehood and hypocrisy, superadded to the breach of law, and profanation of the name of God, in the injunction and exhortation itself? He calls upon the candidate to perform an unlawful act—and he tells him that it is not to interfere with his religion or politics—or, with deeper duplicity, that it is to interfere with none of his civil, moral, or religious duties—This self contradiction of word and deed, is the very essence of all sanguinary religious fanaticism. It is the vital spark of the spirit which armed with daggers the hands of Ravalliac and Palthassar Girard. Under the excruciating pangs of the torture, Ravalliac to his last gasp protested that he thought he was serving God by the assassination of a King who was about to declare war against the Pope—and he signed his name to one of the interrogatories at his trial—Francis Ravalliac—

Que toujours dans mon cœur

Jesus soit le vainqueur.

'In my heart, forever may
'Jesus hold conquering sway.'

If the murder of Henry the Fourth of France had been concerted in a Masonic Lodge Room, and the Master had administered to the perpetrator, as a part of his oath, the obligation to commit that deed, he might with just as much reason and consistency, have assured him that this oath would not interfere with his religion or politics, or with his duty to himself, his neighbor, his country, or his God, as the Master of a Masonic Lodge can now give such an assurance to a candidate for admission, before administering to him the oath of an Entered Apprentice,

2. To the Promise.

The promise is to keep the secrets of masonry; and never to reveal them to any human being not already initiated. I have already objected that this promise is indefinite. The promiser knows not the nature of the secrets which he is sworn to keep. Nor are they ever explained to him. In your 7th letter, page 71, you have explicitly stated your own understanding of what the secrets were, and that you have always found your intelligent brethren ready to concur in that opinion. Your definition of them is so clear and satisfactory, that if it were in its very terms so explained by the Master, before administering the oath, this objection would be removed.

The essential secrets of masonry (you say) consisted in nothing more than the signs, grips, pass-words, and tokens essential to the preservation of the Society, from the inroads of imposters, together with certain symbolical emblems, the technical terms appertaining to which served as a sort of universal language, by which the members of the fraternity could distinguish each other in all places and countries where lodges were instituted, and conducted like those of the United States.

IN NOTHING MORE. But no such explanation is ever given to the candidates for admission, when the oath is administered to him, or ever afterwards—and you very candidly admit that this is not the understanding entertained of the secrets of Masonry, by 'foolish brethren.' Now herein consists my objection to the promise. It is to keep secret, he knows not what—he never knows—and this indefiniteness is essential to preserve the graduation of the Order. It is essential to keep alive the curiosity of the candidate, who at each degree that he attains, is always comforted in his disappointment, by the assurance that there is in the next degree, a secret worth knowing.

If it be said that the exaction of a promise to keep a secret must necessarily precede the communication of the secret itself, and that therefore no promiser can know in advance what it is that he pledges himself to keep secret: I reply that my objection is to the indefiniteness, not only of the secret itself, but of the promise.

Jurors in courts of law are sworn to keep secret the councils of their fellows, and their own. The Juror to be sure knows not what the councils of his fellows will be; when he swears to keep them secret, but he knows that they cannot extend beyond the line of their duty to decide the matter committed to them—and there is nothing indefinite in the obligation from the moment when it becomes binding upon him. The masonic swearer, is ignorant of the extent both of his oath and of his promise—and after his admission, he still is never informed what are the secrets which he has been sworn to keep.

In your enumeration of the essential secrets of the Order, you do not include the Oaths themselves, as administered to the candidates for admission. These, therefore, are not secrets which any mason is bound to keep. But has this been the understanding of intelligent masons heretofore? Why then have the forms of the oaths never been made public in the masonic books, published by authority, or without objection from the order? Why have they become so different in different places? Why in all the trials which have arisen from the murder of Morgan, and in which evidence of the forms of those oaths, obligations and penalties was essential to the issue, have not authenticated copies of them been produced in court by masonic witnesses themselves? In Massachusetts, Vermont, in Rhode Island, there have been numerous defences of masonry, by individual masons and masonic lodges, very indignantly denying, that they ever took or administered the obligations with the words 'Murder and Treason not excepted,' and generally denying that they were under any obligations contrary to the laws of God, or of their country; but anxious as they have all been to fix the charge of slander upon Avery Allen and David Bernard, and to make the world believe that the forms of masonic oaths, obligations and penalties, disclosed in their books were fabrications of their own, never used by any masonic body—still in no single instance have they ever produced or certified to the oaths, obligations and penalties, as used or administered by themselves, until the investigation instituted last winter, by the Legislature of Rhode Island, and conducted in a spirit so friendly to masonry, and so adverse to antimasonry, that it could scarcely have been more so, had every member of the investigating committee but one, been himself an adhering mason. In that investigation, the committee, like yourself, considered the secrets of masonry consisted of the signs, grips, pass-words and emblematical figures of speech—and no more—and with regard to these, they indulged the brotherhood, by not inquiring into them by interrogation of adhering masons—giving notice, that they should take all these profound mysteries, to have been correctly set forth in the books of Allyn and Bernard, unless positive testimony to the contrary should be voluntarily offered by adhering masons.

But the committee did require testimony from the adhering masons, of the oaths, obligations and penalties, as taken in the lodges, chapters and encampments in Rhode Island, and it was given. The appendix to the report of the committee contains this evidence, and authenticates upon full, adhering masonic authority, the oaths, obligations, and penalties, as taken and administered in Rhode Island, of eleven degrees, from the entered apprentice to the royal master.

It is therefore to the indefiniteness of the promise in this authenticated obligation of the entered apprentice, that I take my first objection—and this indefiniteness is not only intrinsic in the terms of the obligation itself, but is aggravated by the previous pledge of the candidate to conform to the established usages and customs of the order, and by the charge given by the master who administers the oath which charge enjoins it upon the candidate as a duty to obey the instructions of the master of the lodge, and to keep the secrets of a brother mason, committed to him as such. The obligation includes also the pledge to keep secret the transactions of the lodge—without exception.

There are thus, according to the understanding of the Rhode Island masons, and to your's, three distinct classes of secrets, to which every accepted mason was bound—first to the secrets of masonry, consisting only of the signals of communication,

and tokens of mutual recognition between the members of the fraternity. Secondly, the secrets of brother masons communicated as such—and thirdly, the transactions in the lodge. And of these, you and they consider the first class only as essential to the order. But what is the principle of this distinction? None such is found in the oaths themselves, nor in any of the masonic Books, nor in the charges given by the master to the candidate for admission. Does the promise of secrecy given by the entered Apprentice extend to the *transactions of the lodge*? It does not in the terms of the oath. It does not by the practice of the Rhode Island lodges; for they enjoin this portion of the secrets by their by-laws upon the penalty of *expulsion*, but those same by-laws contain no provision whatever for the violation of the essential secrets. In all the oaths and obligations *subsequent* to the degree of the entered apprentice, the promise includes the secrets of a brother mason, communicated as such, but not the transactions of the lodge, chapter or Encampment. These are deemed binding only by virtue of the other promise of the candidate, that he will conform to the usage, customs and regulations of the fraternity. But this distinction itself proves that in masonic contemplation, the obligation to keep secret the transactions of the lodge, is not the obligation, with oath and penalty, to keep the essential secrets of the craft. For disclosing the transactions of the lodge, the penalty is expulsion. But the by-laws contain no such penalty for disclosing the secrets of the craft. What is this but a recognition that the penalty for divulging the secrets of the craft, is different from the penalty for revealing the transactions of the lodge;—that is a crime of much higher order, sanctioned by the oath with its penalty, and for which it would be alike inconsistent and absurd to provide by a by-law or regulation of the lodge.

My first objection to the *promise* of the entered apprentice's obligations, is its *indefiniteness*—and this objection extends to all the obligations of the subsequent degrees, and to the Institution itself, which is no where limited to any number of degrees, and is thereby rendered a ready Engine of conspiracy for any evil purpose.

A second objection to the *promise*, is its *universality*. It is to keep the secrets of the craft, and never to reveal them to *any person under the Canopy of Heaven*. The single exception has no other effect than to exclude all other exceptions. It is confined to initiated brothers and regular lodges, to whom the entered apprentice can of course, reveal nothing, they being already in possession of secrets which he promises to keep. The promise therefore, is never to reveal the secrets of masonry to *any person under the Canopy of Heaven*.

I shall pursue this subject in another letter.

J. Q. ADAMS.

LETTER IV.

Quincy, September, 1832.

WM. L. STONE, Esq. New-York.

Dear Sir—The second objection to the promise of the Entered Apprentice's obligation, is its universality. The candidate swears that he will never reveal any of the undefined 'arts, parts or points of the mysteries of free masonry, to *any person under the canopy of Heaven*. This promise, like the administration of the oath, is, in its terms, contrary to the law of the land. The laws of this, and of every civilized country, make it the duty of every citizen to testify the whole truth of facts, deemed by legislative bodies, or judicial tribunals, material to the issue of the investigation before them. It is also the duty of a good citizen to denounce and reveal to the authorities established to execute the laws against criminals, any secret crimes of which he has in any manner acquired the knowledge. Now there is nothing in the arts, parts or points of the mysteries of free masonry, which, in the trial of a judicial cause, or in an investigation of a Legislative Assembly, may not be justly deemed material to the issue before the court or legislature. Of its

materiality, the judges or the legislators, have the exclusive right to decide. No witness, called before a court of justice, or an authorized committee of a legislature, can refuse to answer any question put to him by the court or the committee, on the ground that *he* deems it immaterial to the trial before them. This principle becomes more glaringly obvious, when applied to the promise never to reveal the secret of a brother mason, communicated as such contained in a master mason's oath. But the principle is identically the same. The entered apprentice promises never to reveal to any person under the canopy of Heaven, *that* which the laws of his country *may*, the next day after he makes the promise, make it his duty to reveal to any court of justice before which he may be summoned to appear, or to any committee of the legislature of the state in which he resides, or of the Union. The promise is therefore unlawful, by its universality.

You will remember that I am maintaining the position that the obligation, under oath, and penalty, administered to and taken by the entered apprentice, is in itself essentially vicious. I now state the promise in the words universally admitted to be used in that ceremony. Do you deny that they contain an unlawful promise? Yes, say you, because the candidate is told by the master who administers the oath, that he is expressly to understand that nothing therein contained is to interfere with his political or religious principle; with his duty to God, or the laws of his country.—And you, and all honest and worthy masons, take and administer the oath with this understanding. Well then—the promise is in its terms contrary to the law of the land, but you take and administer it with a *tacit* reservation, furnished to you not by the action of your own understanding, but by the previous notification of the master who administers the oath to you. So, and so only you say, the terms of the promise are to be construed. But in the first place, this is not a question of construction, but a question of mental reservation. The words are plain and unequivocal; but you pronounce them with a reservation, that the promise shall bind you to nothing contrary to law. Now what possible reason or justification can there be for exacting a promise under oath, the real meaning of which is totally different from that of the terms in which it is couched. You swear a man to one thing, and you tell him it means another. But, secondly, how far does your exception extend?—You say the promise extends only to the essential secrets of masonry, and to the lawful transactions in the lodges, and to the secrets of masons not criminal—the former of which you consider of not the least consequence to the world, but essential for the preservation of the society. The secrecy of transactions in the lodges you believed to be merely conventional; and the promise of keeping the secrets of a brother mason, are cancelled, when the secret confided to you by him is of a crime committed by himself.

Now all these exceptions resolve themselves into the tacit reservation, authorized by the declaration of the master, before administering the oath, that it contains nothing contrary to law. If the oath is taken with that reservation, it applies equally to the promise to keep the *essential* secrets of the order, and to all the others. And therefore a freemason, summoned before the Committee of a Legislature, or a Court of Justice, is bound not less to disclose the grips, signs, due guards, and tokens, than he is to divulge the crimes of a brother mason, known to him.

The simple question I take to be this—I suppose a freemason to be summoned before a legislative committee or assembly or judicial tribunal, to testify. Is he or is he not bound to answer any interrogatory put to him by their authority, and which they require of him to answer, respecting the *essential secrets of the craft*?

If he is, how can these secrets be kept, and of what avail are all the oaths, administered to masonic candidates whether with or without penalty? If he is not, then the obligation of the masonic oath supersedes the obligations of the law of the land. And if the masonic oath of secrecy is paramount to the law of the land, with regard to *mysteries of the craft*, where is the principle which restores the supremacy of the law, to require the disclosure of masonic crimes? The masonic oath makes no discrimination between the secrets—the promise is to keep them all.—

The declaration of the master that there is nothing *unlawful* in the oath, makes no discrimination—it applies to all or it applies to none.

With this view of the subject, you will perceive that I deem it altogether immaterial to the argument, whether the words 'murder and treason not excepted,' are or are not included in the Royal Arch mason's promise of secrecy—whether he promises to espouse the cause of a brother mason, right or wrong, or not—and whether the words, 'and they left to my own election,' are or are not an innovation in the master mason's oath. But when you ask me, as an act of 'justice, to believe that should a brother mason tell you as a secret that he had robbed a store, you would very speedily make the matter public in the police office,' I must, while very cheerfully and sincerely believing you, observe, that it would be at the expense of the very explicit import of the master mason's oath. By that oath, the master mason promises to keep the secrets of a brother master mason, as secure and inviolable as if they were in his own breast, 'murder and treason excepted.' That is, excepting two specific enumerated crimes. What, then, is the meaning of this exception? and why are they excepted? The naming of them, emphatically leaves all other crimes, included in the *promise* and *excluded* from the exception. The master mason's promise does therefore, by the plain import of its terms, pledge him to keep secret the knowledge of any crime committed by a brother master mason, and communicated to him as a masonic secret; other than the two specified by name; and if you should be in the unfortunate condition of having such a secret communicated to you, and should give notice of it at the Police Office, you would discharge your duty to your country, only by considering your masonic promise as null and void.—For here is the dilemma. If the masonic promises are *all* made with the tacit reservation, that *nothing* contrary to law is understood to be included in them, then the exception of murder and treason in the master mason's oath is not only superfluous, but deceptive: since it limits to two specific crimes, the exception already referred to, of all crimes whatsoever; and if the masonic promises are made without the reserved exception of *all* unlawful things, then the exception of murder and treason, from the secrets which the master mason pledges himself to keep, leaves all other crimes as distinctly under the shelter of the promise, as if they had been included in it expressly by name.

3. To the Penalty.

Death by Torture and Mutilation.

I have, in a former letter, exposed the fallacy—I must say the disingenuous fallacy, of the attempt to defend this part of the Masonic Obligation in the late Rhode Island legislative investigation. In the tale of 'January and May,' when the dotting, blind and abused husband, by the miraculous interposition of the King of the Fairies, receives instantaneous restoration to sight, to witness his own dishonor; the Queen of the Fairies, with equal promptitude, suggests to the guilty wife, an EXPLANATION. The masonic brotherhood of Rhode Island, are as ready to take a suggestion from the Queen of the Fairies, as the youthful and *studious* May. The Committee of the Rhode Island Legislature was composed of men too intelligent to be duped like the wittol January; yet were they contented to be told, and to believe, that the penalty of death, for revealing a secret was identically one and the same thing as the heroic martyrdom of death *rather* than to reveal a secret. All Language is a system of Logic. All Language is a system of Morals. All figurative Language is Translation. The words may say one thing and intend another—but translation must not confound moral distinctions, and Irony and Dedications are the only figures of speech which are permitted in human intercourse to 'wash an Ethiop white.'

Your own Exposition of this penalty is more candid, and more plausible. You consider the words in which the penalty is expressed as *unmeaning*—because the candidate has been told that the obligation contains nothing contrary to law; and because the Society neither possesses nor exercises the power to authorise the execution of the penalty. This, of course, considers the penalty as null and void.

And so one would think it *must* be considered by every fair minded, and honorable man. And why, then, do fair minded, and honorable men adhere to this penalty? Is it worthy of fair minded and honorable men to use words full of sound and fury, signifying nothing—to use them as the sanction to a promise?—to use them with an appeal to the everlasting God? Are the words so charming in themselves—is the thought conveyed by them to the mind so irresistibly fascinating that even now twelve hundred fair minded and honorable men of Massachusetts declare in the face of their country and of mankind that they will not renounce the use of them. O, say not what fair minded and honorable men will or will not do! Twelve hundred men of Massachusetts, men of fair and honorable minds, even now, after all the arts, parts and points of the mysteries of free masonry have been revealed and published to the world, nay, after the very check-word transmitted to them for their protection against the intrusion of book masons upon their mysteries had been divulged with the rest—after all this, twelve hundred masons of Massachusetts have declared that they will not renounce or abandon the mysteries of free masonry;—that they will still continue to hold their meetings, to Tyle their Lodges, to brandish their drawn swords for the exclusion of Cowans and Faves droppers, and to swear the knave or simpleton who will henceforth submit to take the Oath, never to reveal, never to write, print, cut, carve, paint, stain, or engrave, secrets known to every one who will take the trouble to read—secrets, in their own estimation, insignificant and puerile—secrets, in the estimation of great multitudes of their fellow citizens, disgusting and blasphemous;—that they will continue to swear the candidate to this oath of secrecy, under no less a penalty than that of having his throat cut across from ear to ear, his tongue torn out by the roots, and his body buried in the rough sand of the sea, at low water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty four hours. But that they will take care to explain to him, that this only means he will rather die than reveal to any person under the canopy of heaven these secrets known to all the world; that his oath is not to interfere with his religion or politics, nor with any of his duties to his neighbor, his country, or his God. For thus speaks the mystic Muse of masonry:—

And many a Holy text, around she strews
To teach masonic Moralists to die.

Have I proved that the entered apprentice's *oath* is a breach of Law, human and divine? That its *promise* is undefined, unlawful, and nugatory? That its *penalty* is barbarous, inhuman—murderous in its terms, and in its least obnoxious sense null and void? If so—my task is done. The first step in free masonry is a false step. The entered apprentice's obligation is a crime—and like all vicious usages should be abolished.

JOHN Q. ADAMS.

The following is an extract from a Letter from the ex-President of the United States, to Benjamin Cowell, Esq. of this city, who had requested his opinion as to the most proper means to be used to put down the masonic institution in this country.

Washington, 28th Nov. 1832.

BENJAMIN COWELL, Esq.

Sir—Your letter of the 23d inst. enclosing your address before the Antimasonic Convention held at Providence on the 2d inst. proposes a question of considerable difficulty—namely, by what means the institution of freemasonry, with all its exceptionable properties, may be put down.

Answer by the voluntary dissolution of the Society, or by its extinction by the forbearance of others to contract its obligations.

I have hoped that the virtuous and intelligent members of the Order, upon finding that all their secrets have been revealed and made public; upon perceiving the numerous atrocious crimes connected with the murder of Morgan, and to which their Oaths, Obligations and Penalties have given rise, and upon discovering the

general obloquy into which the Institution was gradually sinking, would frankly have abandoned it of their own accord. This expectation has not been fully realized. But great numbers of masons have ceased to frequent the lodges—numbers of lodges and chapters have sufficed their charters to expire; and I believe the instances are now few in which they swear a man upon the penalty of having his throat cut from ear to ear, to keep secret from every human being, what every human being who will read the books of David Bernard and Avery Allyn, knows as well as the brightest masons of the land—still the majority of masons do adhere to the Craft, and refuse to give up their Idol. The only way to deal with them, is to bring to bear upon them Public Opinion. And that mode of treatment has been pursued with regard to the disease with considerable and encouraging success.

I concur with you in the opinion that the administration of masonic oaths, obligations and penalties, ought to be prohibited by statutes of the State Legislatures, with penalties annexed to them, not of cutting throats from ear to ear, nor of cutting the body in two by the middle—nor of opening the left breast, and tearing out the heart and vitals—nor of smiting off the skull to serve as a cup for the fifth libation; but with good wholesome penalties of fine and imprisonment adequate to their purposes of deterring every Master, Grand Master, Grand King or other Dignitary of the sublime and ineffable degrees from ever more polluting his lips with the execrable formularies, which have at length been dragged into light.—Most cordially would I, were I a member of any State Legislature in the Union, give my voice and vote for the enactment of such monitory statutes. But this cannot be effected so long as masonry controls the majorities in the State Legislatures, that is so long as the people continue to elect as members of the State Legislatures adhering freemasons—or men who are neither masons nor antimasons; or, what you call *moral* antimasons; men, who disapprove masonry, but are afraid of incurring masonic vengeance, by raising a finger, or uttering a word against it—men whose virtue consists in neutrality between right and wrong; and who are willing to believe that to refuse their votes to a man, because he is an adhering freemason is *persecution*. So long as the people continue to constitute majorities of their State Legislatures of such men as these, so long will it be idle to expect any statutory enactment against masonic oaths, obligations and penalties.

It is therefore the duty of pure and disinterested antimasonry to operate, as well as it can, upon public opinion; and one of the most effective modes of thus operating is the ballot-box. It is just and proper that every individual, honestly believing that the masonic institution is an enormous nuisance in the community, which if not voluntarily relinquished ought to be broken down by the arm of the law, should resolve that he will vote for individuals as members of the State Legislatures, entertaining upon this subject the same opinions as himself, and for none other.—If this resolution be just and proper for each individual separately; it is equally so for as many individuals collectively, as can agree upon the principle. Far from being obnoxious to the charge of persecution, it is perhaps the mildest of all possible forms of operating upon public opinion—by public opinion itself.

It is thus the antimasons have acted; first in the State of New York, where the Morgan murder has fastened upon the head of masonry a spot of blood, like that which the dream of Macbeth's wife paints upon hers, and which all the perfumes of Arabia can never sweeten: and subsequently in other States, including that of Rhode Island. Thus far, the principle of political antimasonry has my hearty approbation, and in the diversity of opinions which still unhappily prevails on this question, it is a satisfaction to me that the dictates of my judgment coincides with that of a large majority of the inhabitants of my native town, my friends and neighbors, and of a highly respectable portion, if not a majority of the constituents whom I have the honor of representing in the Congress of the United States.

With regard to the political course of the antimasons in Rhode Island, I am not a competent judge. To the *cause* of antimasonry, I consider the Legislative Investigation of the last winter, as having essentially contributed. It has substan-

tially settled the question what the *Oaths, Obligations* and *Penalties* of Free masonry ARE. It has cut short all quibbling equivocation, and attempts to blast the credit of Avery Allyn and David Bernard. It has given us those Oaths, Obligations and Penalties in their naked deformity. It has dragged the struggling savage into day, and has shown us the last writhings of his Protean form, in the impudent pretension that the death of a traitor in masonic language means the death of a martyr. To the conclusions the majority of the Committee of Investigation—namely that it is the indispensable duty of the masons to dissolve their fraternity, and re-mingle in communion with the general mass of their fellow-citizens, I respond amen and amen; though when I read their report, and observe the process by which they reach them, I cannot forbear an exclamation of astonishment at the novel process of induction, by which their conclusion slaps the face of all their premises.

I hope and trust that the freemasons of Rhode Island will ultimately follow the advice of the Committee of Investigation, which so magnanimously waved the Legislative right of exacting testimony to their secrets, and thus suffering the law of the land to cower before the law of masonic secrecy. I thank the Committee for having peremptorily exacted the real Oaths, Obligations and Penalties, as taken and administered in Rhode Island, and consider the result as having settled in the mind of every reasonable and independent man their nature and their character.

Respectfully sir, your servant and fellow citizen,
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

A PORTRAIT OF FREE-MASONRY.

PREFACE.

Public attention has been recently directed to an investigation of the principles and obligations of Freemasonry, and the nature of their influence upon our civil rights and social condition. It is believed that this institution, without possessing any power of subserving a single purpose of any considerable utility, still has, from its very constitution, in an eminent degree, an alarming capacity for extensive mischief. Believing that the subject is deeply interesting to every one who is solicitous for the perpetuity of our free institutions, the following brief sketch is submitted to the public in this shape, in the hope that it will arrest the attention and direct the enquiries of some at least, to a more thorough examination of this vitally important subject. It is from the pen of the Hon. JOHN C. SPENCER, of the state of New York, and was published as a communication to a public Journal in October last. His name alone, engaged as he was officially in the investigation of the outrages committed by freemasonry, and distinguished as he is, as an able lawyer and an eminent man, will be considered a sufficient warrant for the accuracy of his statements. If the facts are questioned or doubted, they are capable of being abundantly authenticated. The purpose of this publication will be answered, if it shall open the eyes of any citizen to the dangerous tendency of Secret Societies in a government, as free as is that of these United States.

Washington, February 20, 1832.

A PORTRAIT OF FREE-MASONRY.

Since the public attention in this quarter has been roused by recent events to the practical evils of Freemasonry, numerous inquiries are made for the means of information respecting the ridiculous ceremonies, the unlawful oaths, the dangerous obligations and the blasphemous mockeries of the order. Although these have been from year to year for the last five years, spread before the public, yet as our citizens here, were indifferent to the subject, they avoided reading what was so profusely laid before them: and the consequence is, that now, when they begin to feel and think on this momentous matter, they find themselves in want of that information necessary to enable them to understand it. It shall be my purpose to supply the deficiency to some extent, by pointing out the sources of full and extensive knowledge, and by presenting as briefly as possible, the prominent features in the character of Freemasonry. It has become a question of such engrossing interest, that every man should desire to be informed, and every citizen who is called upon to act in reference to it in his capacity as an elector, is bound by the highest duties of patriotism, to act understandingly.

The first revelation of masonry in this country, was made by William Morgan. In 1826 he published a pamphlet entitled 'Illustrations of Masonry,' in which the ceremonies of initiation and the obligations of the three first degrees were disclosed. For this publication he was kidnapped and forcibly carried away from a wife and two children, and was murdered by being drowned in the Niagara river. This was

done by Freemasons. Thus he has sealed the truth of his revelations by sacrificing his own life, and the Freemasons established their accuracy incontrovertibly by the punishment they inflicted on him. For, according to their own bloody code, he could not have incurred the penalty of death, if he had not revealed their secrets. In February, 1823, a convention of seceding Masons was held at Le Roy, in the county of Genessee, composed of some thirty or forty of the most respectable citizens. They published a declaration to the world under their signatures in which they declared the revelation of William Morgan to be strictly true and perfectly accurate. Under the same responsibilities they also published the oaths and obligations of the higher orders. In the course of the same year, Elder Bernard, a Baptist Clergyman, of good character, and who was a distinguished Mason, published a work, entitled, 'Light on Masonry,' in which the ceremonies, oaths and mummeries of the order are given at full length. In 1829, on the trial of Elihu Mather, in Orleans county, the obligations of the three first degrees and of a Royal Arch Mason were proved, at a Circuit Court held by Judge Gardiner, by the testimony of three seceding masons and of one adhering mason. In obedience to a resolution of the Senate of New York, Judge Gardiner reported this evidence, and it was printed by order of the Senate. In 1830, on a trial in Rhode Island, the same obligations were proved in open court, and the trial was published at large in the newspapers. In 1831, on the trial of H. C. Witherell, at New Berlin, in Chango county, the same obligations were proved by the oaths of three adhering masons, among whom was Gen. Welch, the Sheriff of the county. In the year 1830, Avery Allyn, a regular knight templar, published a book called the 'Ritual of Freemasonry,' in which the ceremonies of initiation, the lectures, oaths and mummeries of thirty-one degrees are fully exhibited. Thousands of masons individually have under their names in the public papers, declared these publications of Bernard and Allyn to be strictly accurate.

Such are the sources of information before the public. From them I propose to publish a brief compend of the degrading ceremonies of initiation in the earlier degrees; the most offensive parts of the oaths in the degrees up to and including the Royal Arch Companion's, and some instances of the profanation of religion and the Holy Scriptures in the mummeries of the order. The brevity at which I aim, will permit only the exhibition of the most striking and disgusting features of free masonry.

No man can become a Mason without submitting to a personal degradation, which excites the astonishment of all, when they are first informed of it. The candidate is compelled, in the preparation room, to take off his coat, vest, pantaloons, cravat, stockings and shoes: he slips his left arm out of his shirt sleeve and puts it through the bosom of his shirt so that his arm and left breast are naked; a pair of red flannel drawers kept for the occasion, are put on him; he has one slipper given him; his eyes are blindfolded by a handkerchief or hoodwink; a rope called a cable-tow is tied around his neck, the end of which is held by his conductors; and thus accoutred, a human being, in the image of God, is introduced into a lodge room, for the purpose of being initiated as an entered apprentice. The following is the preparation of making a master mason:

The junior and senior deacons strip the candidate *naked*; he is then furnished with an old pair of drawers which are tied or buttoned just above his hips, and the legs of the drawers are rolled up above his knees; his shirt is then put over his head and slipped down round his body, so that the parts from the middle of his body up, and from the knees down, are entirely naked; a rope is put three times around his neck; he is blindfolded, and is prepared in due form for the third degree of Masonry. In the course of his initiation, he is made to represent a dead man, *Hiram Abiff*, and is brought on a blanket to the master of the lodge! In the Royal Arch degree three candidates are initiated at a time. There coats are taken off, a bandage is tied around their eyes, a rope is coiled seven times around the body of each, which unites them together, with about three feet of slack rope between them; and with the end of the rope in the hand of their conductor, who leads them

groping in the dark, into the chapter. They pass under a *living arch* of the brethren, who hold their hands clenched together over the heads of the candidates, and as they pass, apply their knuckles to the heads and backs of the candidates, until they are pushed down to the floor, sprawled at their length, kicking against each other. In another stage of the proceedings, the candidates are thrown down, bound, and carried out into the preparation room. After they are returned, they are conducted over a rough and rugged path, which consists of blocks and logs of wood, old chairs, benches, &c. &c. they remaining blindfolded during this dignified diversion.

There are other proceedings of the same character in the higher degrees; but this specimen must suffice for the present. This personal degradation is a just and fit preparation for the moral degradation which ensues. In the very first obligation that is taken, that of an entered apprentice, the candidate swears upon the holy bible, (upon which all the masonic oaths are taken,) that he 'will ever conceal and never reveal any part of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient free masonry, which I have received, am about to receive, or may hereafter be instructed in,' without knowing what it is he has thus sworn to conceal! And he binds himself 'under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, from ear to ear, my tongue torn out by the roots, and my body buried in the rough sands of the sea, a cable tow's length from the shore at low water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty four hours.'

In the master mason's degree, the following are the most objectionable parts of the obligations. The candidate swears that he will not give the grand hailing sign of distress 'except I am in real distress, or for the benefit of the craft when at work; and should I see that sign given, or hear the words accompanying it, I will fly to the relief of the person so giving it, should there be a greater probability of saving his life, than losing my own.' It is this obligation which compels master masons to help each other in every difficulty. In another part of the very long oath which is taken, is a promise 'to apprise a master mason of all approaching danger.' There is nothing to qualify this promise, and we have to seek its application in the notice given to the kidnappers of Morgan to enable them to elude the pursuit of the officers of justice, and which so effectually answered the purpose in those instances.—Another part of the oath, is in these words: 'furthermore do I promise and swear that a master mason's *secrets* given to me in charge as such, shall remain as inviolable in my breast, as in his before communicated, murder and treason excepted, and they left to my own election.' The universality of the language would leave no doubt that secrets of every kind were to be kept; but as if it were intended that there should be no room left for cavil, the exception of murder and treason is inserted, while all other crimes are left under the protection of the oath. Connected with this, is an obligation to obey all summons and signs communicated by a brother master mason. What a system is here presented to protect a mason from the consequences of any crime, but murder and treason. First: The fact that a crime has been committed, may be communicated with entire safety. This enables the brothers to know what kind of relief the case requires. Secondly: The grand hailing sign of distress being made, the brother is bound to fly to the relief of the criminal; and Thirdly: He is to apprise him of all approaching danger. Can such obligations be consistent with the administration of justice in any country? Are they not directly at war with all governments?

The penalty for avoiding any of these obligations, is this: 'binding myself under no less penalty than to have my body severed in two, in the centre, and divided to the North and South, my bowels burnt to ashes in the midst and scattered by the four winds of heaven, that there might not the least remembrance remain among men of so vile and perjured a wretch as I should be, should I ever be guilty of violating any part of this my solemn oath or obligation of a Master Mason.' This grand hailing sign of distress, should be universally known, that men not belonging to the Fraternity, may know when it is given. It consists in holding up both hands parallel with the head, keeping that part of the arm from the shoulder to the elbow

joint, in a horizontal position. It is the natural sign of astonishment. The words accompanying it are, 'O! Lord, my God, is there no help for the widow's son.'

The oath of a Royal Arch companion is quite long. The following are prominent parts of it.—'I furthermore promise and swear that I will assist a companion Royal Arch Mason when I see him engaged in any difficulty; and will espouse his cause so far as to extricate him from the same, whether he be *RIGHT OR WRONG*.'—'I furthermore promise and swear that I will keep all the secrets of a companion Royal Arch Mason, when communicated to me as such or knowing them to be such, murder and treason not excepted.' Instead of the latter words, the oath is sometimes given 'with an exception.' It is this clause in the oath, which explains the circumstance that in the last scenes of the tragedy performed upon William Morgan, none but Royal Arch Masons were concerned. This is an admirable system for conspiracy and confederation to execute any crime and to protect the offenders! To render it the more effectual, a cipher has been invented for the Masters of this degree, which is published at large in Allen's Ritual, with the key.—It was testified on the trial of Aaron Burr that he used this cipher in communicating with his confederates, and thus availed himself of their Masonic obligations.

The penalty, in this degree, is the following:—'binding myself in no less penalty than to have my skull smote off, and my brains exposed to the scorching rays of the meridian sun, should I knowingly or willfully violate or transgress any part of this, my solemn oath or obligation of a Royal Arch Mason.'

Thus far, have these obligations been repeatedly proved in courts of justice. Although those taken in the higher degrees are of the same general description, advancing in horror and profanity at every degree, yet as they have not been judicially established, they will not be here repeated, except one, which seems to demand particular attention. It expresses that directly, which is the basis, the end and object of the whole order, namely, to confer on its members peculiar advantages, exclusive of the rest of their fellow-citizens. The obligation alluded to, is contained in the degree called 'Secret Monitor,' and is as follows: 'I furthermore promise and swear, that I will assist a brother secret monitor in preference to any other person, by introducing him to business, by sending him custom, or in any other manner in which I can throw a penny in his way.'

In the same spirit is an addition that was made to the Master's oath, in the Northern part of this State, a few years since, by Gov. Fitch, who introduced it from Vermont. It was to the effect, that in voting for public officers, a preference should be given to a Mason over another candidate of equal qualifications. Very respectable testimony of the fact, was published very generally in the newspapers about two years since, and has never, to the knowledge of the writer, been contradicted or questioned. It is admitted that this obligation, in terms, has not generally been administered, but it is insisted, that if the principle be once admitted, that men in our country may band together in secret concave for any purpose not known to the laws, and may bind themselves under obligations involving the penalty of death for their transgression, they may as well pledge themselves to any new object or purpose, as to these for which they have already associated. There is no limit to the extent of such associations, if they are allowed at all. The principle itself is radically wrong. But independent of any positive obligation, the very creation of such artificial ties of brotherhood, the strength which they acquire by frequent repetition, and by the associations of the fraternity, necessarily produce a clammy attachment which will ordinarily exhibit itself in the most important concerns of life, in bestowing business and patronage on a brother, and in elevating him to office and rank, which will reflect back honor upon the order to which he belongs. The inevitable result, therefore, of such institutions, is, to give to one class of citizens, unequal and unjust advantages over those who are not of the favored order. And when we find this natural result hastened and strengthened by obligations under the most awful penalties, to fly to the relief of a brother, to espouse his cause whether right or wrong, and to conceal his crimes, have not the

rest of the community a right to say to these exclusives, these privileged orders, we will not submit to your usurpations; until you restore your fellow-citizens to equal rights and privileges with you, we will not give you our votes or trust you with public office? This is Antimasonry; and to accomplish this object, political organization is the only means. Let free masons give up their own favoritism and claims to peculiar privileges—let them meet their fellow-citizens in the fair field of emulation in business, and honorable controversy in politics, on equal terms—in fine, let them abandon their lodges, their chapters, their midnight conclaves, their unlawful oaths and their horrid penalties—and Antimasons will then, but not till then, yield their hostility to Freemasonry.

Another view of the character of Freemasonry remains to be taken. It relates to the profanation of religion in its frivolous ceremonies, and the 'irreverent use of scripture and of the name of Deity.' A few instances, only, can be given, because, in most cases, the use of scripture is so interwoven with long ceremonies, that its perversion could not be understood without a description of those ceremonies, which would be too voluminous for this essay. Those who are curious on the subject, are referred to Bernard's Light on Masonry, and to Allyn's Ritual.

In the Mark Master's degree, the candidate is made to bring a stone to the overseers, called a *key stone*, which after some mummery, is pretended to be thrown away. After the candidate has taken the oaths, the master inquires for the key stone, which, after a pretended search is brought to him; when he reads from *Acts* iv. 11, the following: 'This is the stone that was set at naught by the builders, which is become the head stone of the corner.' The Right Worshipful Master then addresses the candidate and reads to him the following, from chapter 11 of the Revelations of St. John, 17th verse. 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a *white stone*, and in the stone, a *new name* written, which no man knoweth, saving him that receiveth it.' The master then says to the candidate, 'come forward and receive the *new name*.'—The candidate steps up to the Right Worshipful Master, who thus addresses him: 'Brother, the *new name* spoken of in Scripture, I will now invest you with; none but Mark Master Masons receive it. It is this circle of letters, which is the general mark of this degree, and are the initials of these words, *Hiram Tyrian, Widow's Son, Sent to King Solomon*.' The candidate selects his private mark from these letters. It cannot be necessary to point out to any one acquainted with his bible, the horrid profanation of the text, respecting the rejected corner stone, which every christian knows is descriptive of our Saviour, and the rejection by the Jews. The perversion of the other text respecting the *white stone* and the *new name*, is equally atrocious. It is applicable only to those who have overcome the world, and are received among the saints and just men made perfect. The audacity of pretending to give this *new name*, as one of the signs of recognition among the foot-herds of Free masonry, excites equal surprise and abhorrence.

In the initiation of Royal Arch Masons, the three candidates are paraded around the Chapter, during which, the Principal Sojourner reads the following passage from the 3d chapter of Exodus, 1—6. 'Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of the bush, and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.' By the time this reading is ended, the candidates have arrived in front of a representation of the burning bush, placed in a corner of the chapter, when the principal Sojourner directs them to halt, and slips up the bandage from their eyes. A companion who performs this part of the scene, viz.: the personating of the Deity, steps behind the burning bush, and calls out vehemently, 'Moses, Moses!' The Principal Sojourner answers for the candidates, 'Here am I.' The companion behind the bush exclaims, still more vehemently, 'draw not nigh, hither; put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I am the God

of thy fathers; the God of Abraham: the God of Isaac; and the God of Jacob.'—The Principal Sojourner then directs them to kneel down and cover their faces, and says, 'and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look up to God.' After this a scene of disorder and confusion ensues, for which there is here no room.—The candidates are asked if they are willing to go to Jerusalem, they say they are, but that they have no pass-word, and inquire for it. The captain of the host then reads to them the 13th and 14th verses of the 3d chapter of Exodus. 'And Moses said unto God, behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say unto me, what is his name, what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM, and thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' The principal sojourner then says to the candidates, 'We will go up. Companions, you will follow me. Our pass-word is I AM THAT I AM!' And this is, in very truth, the pass-word of a Royal Arch companion, as proved on the trial of Elihu Mather. (see Judge Gardner's report.)—The peculiar name of the Great Jehovah, is prostituted to the great purpose of the grips, signs and pass-words of free masonry! In higher degrees the name Jehovah itself, is used for the same degradation and vile purpose. But the subject is too disgusting to be pursued. Some reluctance has been felt at the repetition of these horrible impieties; but the nature of the case seemed to require it.—Comment must be superfluous. It is not possible in this land of intelligence, that any one can read the account of such horrible profanation of the DIVINE MASONRY without shuddering.—Will it be any longer a subject of wonder, that christian churches refuse communion with persons who adhere to an institution, that in its nightly orgies repeats this exhibition? Can ministers any longer be surprised at the indifference with which the most sublime mysteries of religion have been received by men who are in the habit of attending such exhibitions?

To furnish a complete picture of Free masonry, it should be exhibited in its practical results. But for this, room is afforded only to glance at a few of the most important heads. Drinking, singing and carousing, form a regular part of the business at every meeting of a lodge or chapter. How many victims of intemperance may trace their ruin to this single cause? Separated from their homes and their families, enveloped in the darkness of night, and guarded from all intrusion by a vigilant Tyler at their door, the bacchanals have every inducement to excess; no motive for restraint. They are shut from the eyes of the world, and their brethren are sworn to secrecy!

Free masonry, corporate free masonry, is chargeable with the stealing a free citizen, and the murder of a father and a husband. The proof on this subject is perfectly conclusive, and is to be found in the reports of the trials of the kidnappers of William Morgan, and in the official accounts given by the different special Attornies. It is responsible, also, for having baffled inquiry, for having defeated investigation by the removal of witnesses, and for having produced the acquittal of persons notoriously guilty. Wm. Wilson, a mason and a juror on one of the late trials, shamefully disregarded all the evidence, and the charge of Judge Nelson, and refused to concur in a verdict with his eleven fellows. It has been decided by Judge Marcy, in the State of New York, by two sets of triers at a circuit court held by Judge Gardner, in the same state, and by a court in Rhode Island, that the obligations of free masons disqualified a man from being an impartial juror, in a case where a brother mason was a party; and such undoubtedly is the law of the land. The Grand Lodge of New York has given one hundred dollars, in charity, to one of the most guilty kidnappers of Morgan. The Grand Chapter of the same state, has given one thousand dollars to aid and sustain other well known kidnappers, and to enable them to escape from justice, at a time when they had no money to bestow, in charity, to widows and orphans. This has been recently established in the trial of a libel suit, brought by Jacob Gould, which was tried at Albany, in the State of New York.

But perhaps the most remarkable evidence of the binding force of masonic obligations and of the real power of the fraternity, is afforded in the conduct of those who control the newspapers of the country. When the English forgery, Stephenson, was kidnapped in a distant state, and brought forcibly to New York, the whole country rang with the alarm which was sounded by the newspaper press and every patriot was called on to resent this invasion of personal liberty.

But when a free citizen of America was dragged from his family, forcibly carried through the country and drowned in the deep waters of the Niagara, a death-like silence pervaded the newspapers; or if they spoke, it was to notice the outrage in terms of irony as a trifling and unimportant affair. The papers of every party teemed with the most gross misrepresentations; a simultaneous attack was made on all who were engaged in discovering the offenders; fabricated accounts of Morgan's having been seen at different and distant places, were incessantly circulated, and every effort was made to delude the public mind and mislead inquiry. How tremendously powerful must have been that organization, which could produce this shameful treachery of the press to its public duties! These facts are as notorious as the sun at noon day, and a stronger proof of their general truth can not be adduced, than the single circumstance, that to this day, thousands and millions of the reading citizens of this country are ignorant of the history of Morgan's abduction and murder, and are totally uninformed of the abominations of free masonry. *The usual sources of their information, on this subject, are dried up;* the stream of intelligence does not flow from them.

This abstract must draw to a close. To the people of America is presented this faithful picture of an institution existing in their bosom;

Which debases its own members by a most disgusting personal degradation, in the very act of their reception;

Which desecrates the religion of the country, and mocks the DIVINE MAJESTY;

Which muzzles the press, and perverts and poisons the sources of intelligence,

Which creates an order of nobility in this free country; fills it with officers named in abject deference to monarchical institutions; calling them Worshipful Masters, Kings, Grand Kings, Knights, Princes of Jerusalem, Priests, Prelates, High Priests, and Grand High Priests;

Which claims for, and bestows on its members, peculiar and exclusive privileges, to the prejudice of their fellow men;

Which bids defiance to the laws, interrupts their administration, and vanquishes justice in her own temples.

To exterminate this monster, men of all parties have united in an appeal to the ballot box, the only corrective for such evils. Hitherto, wherever their voice has been heard, their cause has triumphed. It is the cause of THE PEOPLE themselves, against a usurped authority over them; it is the cause of public justice and of equal rights, and it must and will finally and speedily prevail.

PHOCION.