
Backbiting a Calamity

by Eugene V. Debs

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There is nothing more baleful in our Order than personal unfriendliness. A vicious rumor flies like the winds — the truth is rarely able to overtake it. There is nothing more to be dreaded than the forked tongue of slander — slander spoken and slander published. He who retails a deliberate slander, knowing it to be such, at once becomes as vicious as its author. What is life without a good name? It costs years of sober, steady care. Slander cannot destroy it, but it may place burdens upon it. It is so much better to help than discourage mankind.

Life is a great struggle — a hard struggle. It is all uphill. The slanderer on the way is more to be dreaded than the robber. The robber seeks our money, the slanderer would crush every precious hope.

Slander sometimes creeps into the sacred precincts of our Brotherhood. There can be no excuse for it. If any brother has been aggrieved, our laws give him a rational remedy. Every injury can thus be entirely repaired. Ours is not only a tribunal of justice, but of affection. If any man is unworthy of a seat in our Order, and the fact is made manifest in the plain way provided, he is summarily sent away to return no more. Misapprehension is an ever present source of mischief. Inquiry, moderation, and forbearance will go far beyond the reach of slander in the redress of personal grievances.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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