

teachings unfortunately underwent the same fate. Nevertheless, he influenced, to some extent, the higher degrees. To the adoption, in part, of his views is the Royal Arch indebted for its more elevated order of symbolism, in which it far surpasses what are usually called "the blue degrees." He was, also, if not the founder, at least the instigator, of that series of degrees which, after many revolutions, finally culminated in the Scottish Rite. The influence of his symbolic theories is there very evident, and they have given to that rite the character of profound and philosophical symbolism which makes it so much a favorite with cultured intellects, and often produces good impressions on intellects which are not of much culture. They appreciate the beauty of the system without thoroughly understanding it.

At a later period, Hutchinson undertook to rescue the symbols of Speculative Masonry from the debased interpretation of the old operative organization. He introduced some new views of the symbols, which, if they had been incorporated into the ritual would have tended greatly to elevate its tone. But it was too late to make these changes acceptable; or, perhaps, I should rather say, it was too early; the intellectual condition of the Order was not yet ripe enough for such improvements. Hutchinson's lectures, however, have exerted a marked influence on the Masonic scholars who have succeeded him.

Preston introduced a new system into English Masonry, but he did not, I think, feel at liberty to make any radical changes in the explanations of the symbols. These he left unchanged, but he made great improvements in the language of the ritual.

When Webb re-organized the Masonic system in this country he was influenced by a dread of innovation in declining to amend the interpretation of those symbols that he retained. Some symbols, belonging to the English system, he rejected, and some new ones he introduced; and he made radical changes in many of the ceremonies. In the organization and arrangement of the higher degrees, his system was completely novel. If he was authorized to make such important changes, it is evident that he was equally authorized to introduce philosophic or classical interpretations of his new symbols. It is, therefore, greatly to be regretted that the intellectual culture of Webb was not of so high a caste as to render him capable of giving that elevated tone to the symbolism of Masonry that he might well have done if he had had the ability or the inclination. Unfortunately, his labors had no such result.

The question now is, whether it is possible at this, or at any other time, so to improve the symbolism of Freemasonry not by the introduction of new symbols, or by the exclusion of old ones, but by the adaptation of them to better interpretations, so as to give to the institution a more elevated, philosophic character. Any changes in the symbols, or rather in their interpretation, which would materially affect the ritual would be disastrous to the identity and uniformity of Masonry. The idea of such changes can not, therefore, be entertained by those who desire to see the Institution maintain its ancient or primitive form.

But I think that there are methods by which, while the old forms and the old interpretations are retained so that the ritual may remain unaltered, new interpretations may be super-imposed by which these symbols may become more elevated and more instructive.

One of the methods would be by the organization of what might be called "ACADEMIES OF INSTRUCTION." The Craft are already familiar with *Lodges of Instruction*, whose object is to teach their members the ritual in its present form, and the explanation of the symbols as they are now received. But these Academies of Instruction would be devoted to the examination of the symbols of Freemasonry, not as they now exist, but as they were at first produced. They would be sought in their early sources, such as the ancient or mediæval associations—the progressive steps by which these symbols had passed into Masonry would be traced—their old and their new meanings would be explored—and the connection of the one with the other would be investigated. Thus a true science of symbolism would be inaugurated, whose elevating effect on the character of Speculative Masonry can be readily appreciated.

Those who should take part in the deliberations of these Academies of Instruction would necessarily be men of education. They need not all be men of learning, but would have to be possessed of a considerable share of intellectual culture. They could not be taken from the masses, but from the higher minds—the "Harodim" of the Order. In comparison with the great body of the brotherhood they would, therefore, be but few in number, but they would exert a wonderful influence, for out of these Masonic Academies would come forth a class of ripe, Masonic scholars, who would completely revolutionize the Institution, elevating it to a higher intellectual rank than it has ever yet attained.

To thoroughly understand what would be the labors and duties of these Academies, it is necessary that we should briefly enquire into the present condition of Masonic symbolism.