

nothing to say, but he must answer affirmatively the question, "Do you believe in the existence of God, the Almighty and ever living," or we cannot admit him.

When, therefore, any body of men departs from this, the original plan of Freemasonry, it steps at once beyond the pale, and ceases to be Masonic, in fact, whatever it may call itself.

Starting from this point, the reader will be able to appreciate the action of the French Orient, to which we now proceed to call attention. A proposition was presented to the body to strike from the Constitution the words quoted above. It was referred to a committee, which reported in favor of indefinite postponement. Upon this a lengthy debate ensued, and as the speakers were requested to furnish copies of their argument, in writing, to the Secretary, we are justified in believing that they are fairly reported in the volume before us. We cannot of course, give these arguments in *extenso*, but we select a few paragraphs to show the avowed belief of the speakers. The first one said: "I recognize the fact that Masonry is neither Deism, Atheism, nor even Positivism. As an institution affirming and practicing human unity, it is a stranger to every dogma or religious creed whatever. Its only basis is absolute respect for the liberty of conscience. In matters of faith it neither affirms nor denies anything, hence our doors open with equal facility to the Protestant and the Catholic; the Mussulman and the Christian; the *Atheist* and the Deist."

A speaker on the other side remarked: I am in favor of absolute liberty of conscience. You cannot change the fact that an immense majority of the Masons, spread over the surface of the globe, believe in the Great Architect of the Universe and in the immortality of the soul; yet this is no wise affects the liberty of conscience, since it is provided in Paragraph 3 that Masonry regards the liberty of conscience as the personal right of every man, and excludes no man for his belief. Let me relate a fact recently occurring in a lodge. A candidate, with excellent recommendations, was unanimously accepted. Before his final admission, however, he was asked, among other things, whether he ever prayed, and upon his answer, that in moments of suffering he had addressed his prayers to the Supreme Being, twenty-seven black balls were cast against him, and initiation was refused! And yet our lodges will admit a candidate who believes in nothing." Another insisted that the contradiction of requiring belief in God, and at the same time according perfect liberty of conscience, must be cured by striking out one or the other, and as belief in God is a form of religion (Deism), and Masonry cannot be the champion of one form more than another, the first should be stricken out. And so of others. Finally the vote was taken, when sixty-five voted in favor of indefinite postponement, and one hundred and ten for accepting the proposed amendment and sending it to the subordinates for discussion preparatory to final action next year.

This, of course, is not such action as would justify any one in saying that French Masonry has become Atheistic, nor that the amendment will be finally adopted, but it does demonstrate that in the French lodges an Atheist can be initiated, which, as has been seen, they justify under the plea of perfect liberty of conscience. As will also have been seen, Masonry proper limits this liberty, and it does so on the ground that to one that has no belief in God, conscience is an idle term, having no fixed standard and no boundary, but such as the individual himself may fix. The conclusion is inevitable that the Grand Orient of France is not a Masonic organization, and that its adepts do not receive at its hands what it has not given, Ancient Craft Masonry, and that the sooner Masons everywhere disentangle themselves from its alliance the better it will be for them and for the institution.—*New York Dispatch.*

MASONIC PROGRESS.

THE records of man's progress are no longer the property of a favored few—they are open to all. This easy access to knowledge has its advantages; for while to the observant reader, the knowledge thus acquired without difficulty is gratefully received, because greater time and opportunity are afforded for its right use, to others this very facility becomes a stumbling block. Facts of interest are passed unheeded by. Fortunately for all, in the march of life there are halting places, where we may take time to ponder over the journey from the last starting point, and so, perchance, improved our pace during the succeeding portions of the way.

Such a resting place is the present season of the year—a resting place in which are to be found banners of far more value than the silken flags of a so-called chivlry, and monuments of more real sentiment than the breathing marbles of Greece. Many such emblems of the past raise up mind pictures of war and bloodshed, of want and oppression; but the standards now inscribed with the record of progress, as raised aloft in