

ity is founded must be promotive of private virtue and public prosperity. I shall always be happy to advance the interests of the society and to be considered a deserving brother."

As indicated by these approving words the mission of the Masonic institution is to promote the general welfare, and with this end in view it establishes its standards all along the way of social interests and human progress. It does not seek merely to instruct and morally elevate its own membership, but to communicate in broader lines some teaching of knowledge of truth. It inculcates a benevolence that is of world-wide extent, and so recognizes the claims of human brotherhood, reaching far beyond the lines of its own organic life.

Having this character—these definite aims and tendencies—there need seemingly be no mistake as to the position which the Masonic institution ought to occupy, or as to what should be its rightful course of procedure. The foundation is a good one and ought not to be departed from. The fathers planned wisely and well. Exhibited an admirable forecast in what they put in and in what they left out of the Masonic system. Perhaps they builded more wisely than they knew. At any rate, they established wholesome rules and pledged themselves to abide faithful thereto; and so their successors have been pledged even to the present time. There has always been a solemn warning against innovation. In the ancient charges, read to every Master of a lodge in the installation ceremony, this obligation has place: "You admit that it is not in the power of any man, or body of men, to make innovation in Masonry." Thus it is provided, not only that the ritual of the craft shall be preserved intact, but, also, that the original functions and purposes of the institution should be observed. There is certainly as much need of maintaining the ancient character and aims of

Masonry—its proper personality—as of rigidly adhering to the old formularies in regard to government and ceremony. All the essential characteristics of Masonry deserve to be ranked together as landmarks.

That there have come divergencies from the original plan cannot be denied. These changes and modifications are in some cases unimportant—in some instances helpful to genuine Masonry, and only what might have been counted upon in the natural evolution of the system, and its better application to the conditions of a progressive humanity. There are, however, departures from the ancient law and practice of the craft which can only be denominated as unwise divergencies. They run contrary to the first principles of the order and tend to destroy its usefulness.

It is in South Africa and on the continent of Europe that we witness the most and the worst of such sad divergencies. There innovation has crept in to an alarming degree, setting aside the ancient practice in regard to ceremonial and symbolism, and changing almost the entire character of the institution. Thus it has come about that in some of those countries it seems to be wholly forgotten that Masonry was established on the idea of an entire exemption from political and religious controversy, for the ambitious brethren who there have control of the order, use it unhesitatingly to promote political intrigue and to advance their selfish schemes of one sort and another. Perhaps they use it against the church or some objectionable system of faith or philosophy; perhaps they make it an upholder of a certain school of reformers in society or sceptics in religion; perhaps they invoke its power to sustain or break down an administration in power, or, possibly, they seek to dissipate its practical power by clothing it in a garb of weak sentimentality, so disguising its features of well-established utility and blessing.