

conscience from the thoughts of turning a needy brother away without granting his request. But I am satisfied this way of doing is all wrong. If a worthy member of the Fraternity claims and needs Masonic charity, he should have it; but if he claims it as a Mason, he should be able to convince those to whom he applies, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that he is what he represents himself to be. If he is all right, he will not object to answering all proper questions that may be propounded to him, either Masonically, or as to how he came to be in destitute circumstances. An examination in the ritual amounts to very little: They are generally "bright," and can pass a good examination so far as that is concerned. A good plan is, to give them pen ink and paper, and require them to write replies to such questions as may be asked them. Then they should be requested to write down where they live, when and where they were made Masons, name, number and locality of Lodge, name of Master and other officers, the kind of employment they are, or have been engaged in, whether their place of residence can be reached by telegraph or railroad, and such other questions as may suggest themselves as the examination proceeds. If, after an examination similar to this, the party making the examination is not perfectly satisfied, he should give himself the benefit of the doubt, by telegraphing to the Master of the Lodge to which he claims to belong. As a rule, these Lodges are located in out of the way places, where they can not be reached by telegraph, and this in itself is enough to rouse suspicion. After becoming satisfied on these points, it will be in order to enquire them to prove themselves Masons, by the tests known to every well-informed brother. If they can do this, it will be a pleasant duty to take them by the hand as worthy brothers, grant them the relief they need, and send them on their way rejoicing.

It is only very "expert" and "brassy" impostors, who have the courage to operate in large cities, where their deviltry is likely to be detected. They almost invariably pay their respects to Lodges located in the rural districts. They generally have a tale to tell sufficiently 'melancholy to melt the heart of a stone, and their business is such that they must hurry on to their destination at the earliest practicable moment.

I remember a case in point, that happened in my own experience a few years ago. I was at that time acting as agent at one of the Stations, for one of the principal railroads in this state, and being the main man about the depot, I was, of course, the first one accosted by travellers for information. Shortly after the mail train arrived one summer afternoon, while seated at the telegraph table, looking up the track, I noticed a man dressed in a hickory shirt, over hauls and straw hat, leisurely walking down the track towards the station. He soon entered the office, and, coming round the railing where I was writing, after passing the time of day he addressed me as follows,

"Can you tell me who the boss mason is in this town?"

His general appearance at first sight was unfavorable, and feeling myself insulted by the manner in which he addressed the "boss mason," my first impulse was, to take him by the nape of the neck, and kick him out of the office. But I did not do it. After informing him that I was the "boss mason," he said he belonged to that most ancient and honorable Order, and was in destitute condition, and wanted help to enable him to return home, and requested me to examine him. I told him I would do so, but before I commenced, I would like to know