

ceremony of its dedication—in all these things the true craftsman sees the symbols of a still more glorious temple, with its golden streets. And the Mason who does not look beyond the mere forms and ceremonies of the institution fails, utterly fails, to realize the import of its teachings. Its sublime truths are indeed mysteries to him. But no brother can fail to become a better and a wiser Mason if he carefully pauses on his way through the degrees and studies the allegories and symbols so profusely set before him. If he turns to the right or to the left the lessons of truth are there before him, and it only remains for him to study their deep and hidden meaning. It is necessary that I should state these facts, because whatever good effect or whatever good impression Masonry is calculated to produce are all lost upon the careless or unthinking Mason. The system has certain lessons of practical wisdom to teach, and a certain impression for good to produce, or else how shall we account for the hold which it has upon the learned, the great and the good of all ages and nations. A system which has outlived centuries of conflicts, of defeats, and victories, and which has become so extended in its ramifications, must certainly contain within itself living principles of paramount importance. To bring to light some of these principles, and to show their practical bearings upon us as Masons, is at present our object.

When a candidate once passes the door of a Masonic Lodge, he is made to feel that whatever distinctions prevail in the outside world, within that Lodge all are equal. It is quite true that in a Masonic Lodge we have certain distinctions, which are secured by moral worth, and, it may be, intellectual culture; yet, nevertheless, the broad fact remains, that we, as Masons, are all equal, and meet upon the common basis of a brotherhood. This fact will appear patent to every one who realizes that Freemasonry is not an association, order, or institution, but a fraternity. So that within a Masonic Lodge the poorest Mason may feel himself as the equal of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales. A Mason is made to feel at the very threshold that he is a poor candidate in a state of darkness, and that all that lies before him in the world of Masonry has to be acquired by patient labor, close observation, and by a spirit willing to learn. Such an ordeal is well calculated to take from a man all vain conceit, and all silly puffed up ideas of superiority. Here, also, in this fact lies the grave responsibility of a Freemason when about to cast his vote for the admission of a candidate for initiation. By such a vote you are about admitting one into the fraternity, and, as a matter of course, into the most intimate and confidential relationship to yourselves. It behoves you, therefore, to weigh the matter honestly and fearlessly, and to act according to your well founded convictions. On such an occasion it is necessary that every Mason should lay aside all prejudices, and to weigh such an one in the scale of righteousness, to see whether he comes up to the weights of the temple and to the requirements of our ancient usages. If, by reason of carelessness or unfaithfulness, an unworthy man is admitted, you do yourselves and the fraternity at large an irreparable injury. Then again, on the other hand, if by reason of prejudice, a narrow mind, a mere matter of feeling, a good and true man, well calculated to grace our mystic gatherings, is rejected, you yourselves and the fraternity at large suffer a grievous loss.

The more attention I devote to Masonic Ritual, the more am I convinced, that if we faithfully and honestly carry out its requirements, we cannot fail to maintain for our institution the distinguished and honorable position which it ever has held. In the entered apprentice degree the candidate is required to declare his belief in the existence of God, because he is the source of all knowledge and the fountain of all light, and how can a man enter upon the search of that which he does not believe in? His existence is the central fact of human life, and every other light or knowledge is only a broken reflection from the great sun. Therefore it is that no one can take even the first step in Masonry until he declares his belief in the great I Am, of whom the tetragrammon is the symbol. And the Mason's first prayer is for the gift of divine wisdom that he may be enabled to display the beauties of virtue, to the praise and glory of that holy name. It has been wisely said by one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity, that "reverence for the Supreme Being is the foundation of all religion." This spirit of reverence for the Supreme being is fully recognized in Masonic Ritual, and enters largely into all its teachings. Nor do we wonder at this, for we find that even the cultured minds among the heathen of old would never allow the names of their gods to be profaned; but informed as are Masons as to God's glorious character and excellent glory, how much more weighty are our obligations to reverence his holy name. And it is a question which every one must individually settle, whether a Mason who takes the name of the Supreme Being in vain and profanely, whether he is not by reason of such conduct unmasonic and recreant to the solemn pledge which he has made.

Following immediately after this confession comes, as a matter of course, a Mason's obligation, to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. I do not mean to infer from