

confession, which, if the man has any manhood or respect for himself left, will make him ashamed and blush for his misfortune. But why among brothers you ask? *Brothers!* Do we in many things act like brothers to each other? Is it not too true that Masons are much like other men, that their Masonry is a farce, neither controlling their words or actions? It would seem indeed that Masonic influence is almost a dead letter, and this fact alone furnishes many an one with a reason for quitting its ranks; they, in fact, see that Masons are not one whit better than their fellow men. I would therefore go with your message of Love to a distressed brother; I would see in what his distress consists; I would have the case represented to the Lodge, and in all worthy cases I would have the dues cancelled and, if possible, a money grant made. This is what I call benevolence and charity—*going* to the distressed, not *waiting* for the distressed to come to you.

It will be urged that there are Boards of Relief, I know. Do not they require a confession too? Such Boards, I maintain, should never relieve individual Lodges from looking after their own distressed, and although assistance may be got from such body, yet action should be taken on behalf of the distressed by his mother or affiliated Lodge. Herein Freemasonry fails, and always will, until there is a properly organized system in connection with every Lodge enabling it to at once stretch out its helping hand, unsolicited, in case of need.

"Acacia" refers to the English Constitution, which admits members to certain definite claims on the Benevolent Fund under certain circumstances, a statement which seems to show that our English brethren have realised what should exist in our own Grand Lodges, viz., a fund from which pecuniary assistance may be assured. Of course I know that Masonry is not a benefit society. But why should it not be? Why should not the English example be copied? Would it not encompass a great amount of *practical* benefit? Would it not be rather an honor than a discredit? What landmarks would it displace? Both landmarks, if they stop the way of progress or the benefit to the Craft. It is well known that large numbers of Masons are Odd Fellows; that they regularly subscribe to a benefit fund, and in case of need do not refrain from receiving therefrom. We know that there are many more whom we would gladly have among us but who do not offer themselves because they see no *practical* benefit in Freemasonry. A brother said to me the other day, "I have given up Masonry altogether. I want something more practical. If I am sick Masonry may give me something and it *may* not. I want a definite thing for myself and my family and I get it in Odd Fellowship." Such, I

believe, is the view of a vast number of brethren, and I have not the slightest doubt but that the introduction of a definite relief fund would be the means of building up and renewing such an interest that suspensions for N. P. D. would be much rarer, nay that they would almost cease except in cases where the Craft is well rid of the suspended.

As to Lodge dues they may be, as "Acacia" states, a modern invention, but so are many things, and yet are indispensable. Certain expenses (often out of all proportion with the ordinary income of a Lodge) are absolutely necessary. These have to be paid. Supposing few or no candidates present themselves, how are you, "Acacia," going to make ends meet? If not by dues then by private subscription, which means practically a few bear the whole cost and the remainder pay nothing—unfair, evidently.

Again, Mr. "Acacia," according to present Constitution, private Lodges are compelled to pay to Grand Lodge for every brother on their books. Now if a brother is not to be dealt with for non-payment, it is adding insult to injury to compel Lodges to pay for such defaulting members to Grand Lodge. Don't you think, Mr. "Acacia," the Constitution had better be altered to suit your ideas?

A point is undoubtedly made on the subject of what is unnecessarily called a Lodge "guzzle." That word is offensive, say "refreshments," good brother. I am of opinion that Freemasons, as a rule, know how to behave themselves in their Lodges, and although there may be isolated cases where propriety is overstepped, yet such instances are indeed rare. This refreshment business is a sore spot with some, apparently with "Acacia." I cannot understand why a brother may not rationally enjoy himself, and I think it is beneficial. On the other hand, I suppose "Acacia" cannot understand why I should wish to do so, and sees plainly a trap ending in my social downfall. I should be sorry for the Craft if it were so, for certainly then we should be but poor stuff, unworthy to belong to any lodge or society, miserably weak creatures, sure to fall in some other way. True, Lodge funds are consumed in refreshments, which could be better spent, and to that end I would have a by-law passed by each Grand Lodge prohibiting any moneys being taken from Lodge funds for such purpose. Then those who wanted refreshments would have to pay for them, and so put an end to many bickerings. How does that suit you Mr. "Acacia," and brethren?"

There are other points in "Acacia's" letter which I should like to notice, but I refrain at present, this communication having already passed the bounds of usual editorial courtesy. B.