

church, and to use no errors or heresy by your understanding and by wise men's teaching; also, secondly, that ye shall be true men to the King of England, without treason or any falsehood, and that ye know no treason or treachery, but that ye shall give knowledge thereof to the King, or to his Council; also, ye shall be true to one another, that is to say, every Mason of the Craft that is Mason allowed ye shall do to him as ye would be done unto yourself. * * * Sixthly, you shall truly pay for your meat and drink wherever ye go to table or board; also, ye shall do no villainy there, whether the Craft or science may be slandered."

It is the inculcation of doctrines like these which has given Freemasonry its permanency and power. This is its vital force, which has outlived all the mutations of fortune and all attempts of civil and ecclesiastical power to compass its overthrow. When the material importance of the Masonic corporations on the continent of Europe began to decline, church architecture having been suspended for a season on account of the vast sacrifices of the people in this direction and the abuses of the clergy, Freemasonry began to lose its operative character, and attract to its Lodges and Chapters men eminent for their knowledge and attainments in art, science and literature. As early as the year of our Lord 1500, the Masonic fraternities of Europe may be said to have finished their labors in church architecture, and to have dispersed to find occupation in their individual capacities as constructors of public buildings for civic and municipal purposes. In England, however, they continue to flourish, and were there employed in that work, which had ceased in those countries whose ecclesiastical establishments were perfected and whose churches were either suspended or completed.

Here it was that the Order rose gradually to the position of a great conservator of religion and morality. The initiation of honorary members under the designation of Accepted Masons, into the English Lodges, prepared the way for the foundation of British Speculative Masonry, which now has its organization in every civilized quarter of the globe, and which, about 1650, received its great vital force from the celebrated antiquary, Elias Ashmole, who was initiated as an Accepted Mason, and who rearranged and composed the forms of the Society of the Red Cross Brothers, which had been organized in London, after the model of the new Atlantis of Lord Bacon, and held its assemblies in the hall which had been hitherto used by the Freemasons.

It is to a Masonry built on foundations like these, that we are devoted; it is to this cause that we have assembled to dedicate a Masonic institution in this ancient town. It is of such as this that Brennan so forcibly says: "Moral Architecture or Modern Freemasonry, the issue of the Masonic corporations of Britain is, without doubt, more closely allied by its object to the ancient initiations than was that practiced among the colleges of builders; but it can never become a school of science and philosophy, seeing that science and philosophy have become common attainments of all who are now situated and disposed to their study. While, however, this position is denied it, Freemasonry should be grander, more sublime, than any form of ancient mysteries, inasmuch as while they were exclusive and confined to classes and peoples, it may embrace the whole race of man, and transform that race into a society of Brothers, united by love of science and labor. It is to such an object every phase of the Freemasonry of to-day should tend, and for the accomplishment of which each of its initiates should solemnly engage his efforts and influence."

And now, my brethren, in order to perfect the system of impressing upon the mind the abstract truths like these and to cement the brotherhood, we have, in accordance with a universal human desire and a custom known in all ages, strengthened our edifices like a true master-builder, with symbols and signs appropriate to our work. It has been said of Freemasonry that "it is a system of morality developed and inculcated by the science of symbolism." To this form of expression the human mind has ever been ready to resort, both in its feeblest efforts and in its most sacred aspirations. To the child, the symbol is the most vivid and striking form of utterance; to the faithful devotee, the symbol is full of the tenderest significance. The first learning of the world consisted chiefly of symbols; and the sublimest form of religious faith in the light of revelation, crowns all its efforts with symbols whose meaning appeals to the most affectionate and elevated emotions in the heart of man.

To all religious systems, to the ecclesiastical organizations of every pious people, to Egyptian, Jew, Phœnician, Chaldean, Christian, to every great moral and religious teacher, to Plato, to Socrates, to Pythagoras, to the Divine Master, the symbol has been in all time the great interpreter. Associated as it was with man's primitive religious systems, "it was afterwards continued when in the advanced stage of the human mind, the previous necessity no longer existed; and it thus came to constitute a kind of sacred language, and became invested with an esoteric significance understood only by the few." But to that few how valuable and expressive it always is! Drawn, as the symbols of Masonry are, from the most important events in the sacred history of the world, they come clothed with a peculiar and impressive power, and transport the initiated back to those sublime hours which are filled with most imposing