

man on account of his rank or worldly possessions, and then as soon as a man cannot pay \$6 for his year's dues cut him off. It may solace some to think the suspended can at any time resume his connection with the Order by paying up, but how many such instances do you, gentle reader, remember? Does not the memory of the wrong and cruelty inflicted act as a barrier to reunion? Does not the suffering (which is actual) practically tend to kill in the breast of the suspended brother all the theory that the Order inculcates of love and ministering to the afflicted and distressed. Is not this the *argumentum ad hominem* that no amount of reasoning can remove? It appears to be a matter of great injustice, not only to the brother, but to the teaching of the Craft. Every candidate, prior to initiation must freely and voluntarily offer himself as a candidate for the mysteries of Masonry, and on his initiation becomes a member of the universal brotherhood, and according to the constitution of England, he only becomes a member of the Lodge that initiated him on his subsequently expressing a wish to that effect on the day of his initiation. Now the amount owed by the brother is not owed to the Craft, and can hardly be said to be owed to the Lodge, because he has had no value for it. He has only agreed to pay \$6 per annum, and this only while it is possible for him to do so, for the law obliges no man to do an impossibility. While the suspension is operating, the brother has no more Masonic rights than a profane, while he has been guilty of no crime. Let some punishment be invented, if it be found absolutely necessary to punish a Mason for being poor, that will deprive him of his privileges as a Lodge member, but not interfere with the rights acquired as a member of the Order. A man may be a Mason, though not a member of any Lodge, and as a Mason he possesses Masonic rights. The constitution of England gives a brother a claim on the fund

of benevolence if he has been for two years a paying member of a contributing lodge, but the limit of two years does not apply to cases of shipwreck, capture at sea, loss by fire or breaking or dislocating a limb. Here, then, we have simple initiation entitling a brother to consideration, while we in our wisdom suspend the brother who has regularly paid his dues for perhaps ten or twenty years; just as soon as he begins to feel the pressure of want—just as soon as the outside cold world frowns upon him, and he cherishes the idea that there is one place that prizes honor and virtue more than the external advantages of rank and fortune, then we kick him out with ignominy. It can not be claimed that the brother has violated any landmark or leading tenet of the Order—Lodge dues are a modern invention; nor can it be said that they are indispensable, for there are some jurisdictions where they do not exist. If such narrow views are to prevail, the sooner we eschew Masonry and espouse Oddfellowship the better. In the latter, we shall have a clear bargain of so much per week while sick and in want, in consideration of so much regularly paid as dues as long as we continue to pay them. This at least has the merit of a plain mercantile contract that the other does not possess. Some reply "but no Lodge will cut off a member who comes up and says he is unable to pay." I want to know why a man should be so far humiliated as to have to come before an open Lodge and lay bare to a not very sympathizing circle the secret of his life—the worm that gnaws him. It is surely bad enough to have to bear the sting of poverty, without exposing your mortifying position. I have known men, deserving but unfortunate Masons, apply for assistance, and when they received it, the memory of it burned them so that for years they could not refer to it without the blood rushing to their faces and their eyes flashing. Is this Masonry? Is this our vaunt-