

provision for those who are in want. There is the most sacred duty resting on every Mason in this wide world to help a worthy Brother in need of assistance. That is just where Masonry differs from the beneficiary societies. They pay so much a week to every sick member, and so much to the widow or family in case of his death, no matter how little either may really need the amount, but Masonry deals with each case on its own merits, and pays money and renders other assistance only where there is a real need.

Masonry is *not* a system of grips, passwords, and signs, by means of which its members can recognize one another and claim aid in time of need. If such were the case, it would seem unworthy of perpetuation, however valuable these means of recognition are when they are joined with other more useful information. And then these are by no means arbitrary or selected at random; they are all fraught with the deepest meaning. All our secret modes of recognition, every article of dress and ornament worn by members or officers, the whole arrangement, form, furniture, and ornaments of the lodge-room are far from being accidental; they are all intended to teach useful moral lessons. Freemasonry is not even a secret society in the strict sense of that term. It is secret only with regard to its modes of recognition and its forms of initiation. All its doctrines and principles are as open to the public gaze as those of any other society whatever.

Masonry is not a social "club," however praiseworthy such an organization may be. But Masonry is far from forgetting our social wants. How many of us have heard some brother remark that Masonry is "a good thing." Just what does he mean by "a good thing?" Is it not in many cases this, that Masonry enables him to come into intimate relations with those who would otherwise perhaps remain forever strangers

to him? Is it not that Masonry enables him to find, in whatever obscure village of the civilized world, a friend and a brother who will stretch forth the hand of sympathy, and in whose heart will well up a flood of tender emotion? That is to say, it is the social side of Freemasonry that makes it "a good thing" in his eyes. And this is no small thing. For my part, I believe Masonry is "a good thing" for many other and perhaps better reasons, but I do not forget, and I would not have others forget, that it is the great social society of the world. It is not enough that we are all human beings, children of the same Heavenly Father. Most of us are not cosmopolitan enough to allow this fact to make a stranger, with perhaps another colored skin, seem our brother. We want some special bond; Freemasonry furnishes that bond and unites the countless multitudes of the good and true of all nations and all climes where civilization has shed her benignant rays into one band of BROTHERS.

Masonry is not aggressive; she wages no wars except against intolerance, bigotry, and ignorance, and against these she uses no weapons but those of logic and reason. Freemasonry is the enemy of wars and bloodshed; she is the great harmonizer, the Apostle of Peace among men.

I have already hinted at the fact that Masonry gives instruction by means of symbols. This is pre-eminently the case in the first three degrees, which are universally known as the Symbolic Degrees. What is particularly true of these three degrees is equally true, though perhaps in less measure, of all Masonic degrees. Indeed, Masonry is a vast system of symbolism. Everything is symbolic from the first degree to the last. Legends having a more or less real historic basis of fact are recited to the neophyte, and by means of these he is taught wise and useful lessons for his guidance in life. If it be objected that wise and useful