

THE MASONIC LIBRARY.

"We want thinkers, we want them," said Coleridge, speaking of the bigotry and superstition of the church in his day, and there is a sense in which the expression is applicable to Masonry. We want intelligent Masons, we want them. We want Masons who can give a good reason for the faith that is within them. Masonry has a rich and varied literature, much of it as fascinating as romance; yet it is a fact, that a very large proportion of its members are groping in darkness so far as a knowledge of its history, symbolism, and jurisprudence, is concerned. Ask the first man you meet to give you a definition of Masonry, that will individualize and distinguish it from all other Orders, and the chances are that he would be non-plussed. It might even puzzle him to explain the meaning of the emblems he wears suspended from his watch-chain. Many who pass as "bright Masons," who are proficient and brisk in degreism, ritualism, and ceremonial, the use of mystic signs and words, would find themselves greatly confused in attempting to give an intelligible account of the traditions of the fraternity, and the doctrinal significance of its imposing symbolism. They have the form, not the substance, of Masonry.

And this ignorance is largely owing to the carelessness of our officials and lodges, in providing the means of information. And there is no possible excuse for this state of things. In all our large towns and cities, it would not be difficult to find lodge-rooms sumptuously furnished and brilliantly lighted, and the officers decorated in costly jewels, that have not the nucleus of a library. The money that is annually spent in banquets, banners, parades, and pageantry, would be amply sufficient to endow the lodge with a well-selected collection of Masonic books, magazines, and papers. With a little economy, and a trifling sacrifice, every Lodge,

Chapter, Council, and Commandery, could have a good library and reading-room attached to their respective halls.

It is a duty that we owe to the young neophyte we encourage to come among us. He is usually taught that there are immutable signs and phrases that he should learn by heart, and be able to repeat readily, and this is well, is indispensable. But, if he is of an inquiring turn of mind, he soon finds that these antique phrases, and fixed signs, are merely the alphabet of Masonry, the cabala that enshrines an occult science and history. He goes on climbing through the twilight the mystic ladder, hoping to find in the strange, turretted height and cupola of the ancient temple, the hidden glory, but only finds a new vocabulary. He enlists in the army of crusaders, starts with pilgrim staff and scrip to the Holy Land, confident that near the sepulchre and place of Crucifixion, he may find the grand sun-burst of glory; but everywhere he finds ritual and ceremony, pageantry and drill, of which he soon grows weary. He would penetrate the arcana of mystery, the wondrous symbolism, as explained by Rebold, Folger, Findel, and Hughan; or woven into liquid verse by such poets as Rob. Morris; but there is no one to show him the way. He has been invited to a feast, but the elegant dishes are empty. He asks for bread, and is given a stone; and this will ever be, so long as we are unable to lead our brother into a room adjoining the hall, richly supplied with the treasures of Masonic lore, as interpreted and expounded by our great historians, juriconsults, poets, and thinkers.

And now see how this works. Our young neophyte has threaded his way through the curriculum of degreism. He has a good memory, and can repeat, with parrot-like exactness, its ritual and ceremonial. He is proficient in the work, and is elected to a Warden's chair, and aspires to fill