

the symbols are often meagre—if the ceremonies sometimes contain anachronisms, as when a bell is sounded at the temple of Solomon—if the legends are at times extravagant—no matter; we must take them as the rudiments of symbolism—as relics of the past—which we have no right to chance because they constitute “the body of Masonry.” To establish a new ritual would be to form a new degree or a series of new degrees, which would no longer be recognized as the Masonry of the olden time. In the lodge we must accept what the lodge has always presented to us.

Close Masonry is a very different affair. Here we are not controlled or impeded by that opposition to innovation which has always been an imperative law of Masonry. Accepting the symbolism in the lodge with all its deficiencies or imperfections, we may take the symbol into our closet or library, and there study it in all its bearings, investigate its origin historically, compare it with similar symbols in the cognate institutions of antiquity, and give to it a more elevated interpretation.

For instance, while we are in the lodge, we hear the legend of the third degree explained as symbolizing an instance of fidelity to trust and of unswerving integrity. We see at once the inanity of such an interpretation. We are satisfied that Speculative Masonry has not been maintained for so many years simply to preserve the trivial moral of a fable. We recognize in the words of the French proverb, that the game is not worth the candle burnt in playing it, and we are sure that this is not the primitive interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the legend, but that it has been foisted in by some incompetent reformer of the ritual.

And then we take this legend of the third degree, so unsatisfactorily explained in the lodge, to our study. We there compare it with a similar legend, which was common to all the ancient mysteries. We enquire, what was its meaning there? and, at last, we discover that in this legend is hidden symbolically the dogma of the resurrection to life eternal. And thus we get new and more elevating views of the design of Freemasonry as a science of symbolism. If Academies of Instruction, such as have been recommended in the present article, were established wherever there was a sufficient number of intellectual Masons to constitute one, it is impossible to estimate the advantages that would most surely result. Preston, when he invented his new system of lectures, which were certainly an improvement on the old one, founded what he called Chapters of Harodim. But these chapters were intended to teach the ritual as it then existed and really only to make what are now styled “parrot Masons.” The Academies of Instruction would do more than this. They would take the symbolism in the rude ore as it lies in the lodge ritual, and from it would extract the pure metal. Gladly would I see such Academies established in every city, town or village, where the Masonic population would supply the material. Three or four lodges might unite their cultured members in one Academy. At each meeting one or more symbols might be made the subject of investigation and discussion. The true signification of the symbols would be discovered and what was learned in the Academy would have its effect upon the lodge. At all events a class of Masons would be formed with elevated notions of the true design of Freemasonry as “a science of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.”

All Masons cannot be learned men; but no Mason need be absolutely ignorant of what the phrase—“Symbolism of Speculative Masonry”—denotes.—*Voice of Masonry.*

A SINGULAR INCIDENT.

ABOUT fifty years ago a boy, named Phillip Wagner, living near Chittenango, Madison county, New York; on his way to school discovered a wayfarer, apparently in distress, by the road side. The boy returned home and informed his father, who went and conveyed the aged wayfarer to his house, where he died during the same night. There was nothing found upon him by which to identify him, except his Masonic diploma. It was dated November 25, 1776, and signed by Samuel Barrett, W. M.; Geo. Calder, S. W.; John Gardner, J. W.; William Brock, P. M.; and Christopher Hussey, Treas. It was written in both English and Latin, on thick parchment. This document has lain concealed, among other papers of Mr. Wagner, all these long years, scarcely ever having been opened, and never seen by any member of the Fraternity, until about four years since, when it became the property of Charles P. Wagner, a grandson of Philip Wagner, Sen., father of the boy above mentioned. On the margin of the diploma is the autograph of David Squire, written twice, and dated August 5th, 1776. Through Oneida Lodge, No. 270, of Oneida Depot, Madison county, New York, these facts became known to Union Lodge, and a request was made that the diploma be returned; but only a copy could be obtained.—*Ex.*