

SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS.

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BOTH these words are of Greek origin, the former from *symbolon*, *symballein*, to throw or bring together, to compare, conclude, etc., the latter from *emblema*, *emballein*, to lay into, throw into, etc.; they are extensively used by the Masonic fraternity, and it may, therefore, not be out of place to inquire into their object and meaning.

A symbol is a representation of an idea, the conception of which however, is not merely confined to the picture, as a form, but generally having reference to every figurative representation of an idea, be it by a visible figure, by a tactile token, or by an audible word.

The symbol, however, is always intended to be a representation of some truth, by means of an object which is more or less related to that truth, and which renders it perceptible by means of the senses.

The symbol is calculated to convey to the mind by means of the senses, that which is invisible or unknown—it performs this conveyance either by an actual form that is visible, or by a token that is tactile, or by a figurative word which is audible; by signs that are either made by the hands or produced in speech. Every symbol, therefore, must necessarily be the expression of an idea; it does, however, not lie in the nature of a symbol, that it be always in conformity with the rules of art, and that it be always beautiful in that respect; on the contrary, the symbol is entirely independent of any rules of art, but what is most essential in every symbol is, that it *really and truly designates and represents the idea* it pretends to designate and to represent, and that it thus conveys that idea to the mind.

The symbol particularly refer to the higher religious ideas, which, at the same time, may contain the deepest philosophical intuitions.

The teachings, marks of recognition, precepts, and maxims, in the Mysteries of the Ancients, were always conveyed by symbols; this mode of communication they adopted for two reasons: firstly, to exclude the profane from a participation of the fruits of their deep researches into the natural sciences, and secondly, to convey them to the mind of the initiate in the most impressive and expressive manner.

Christian symbols are the sacraments, as visible signs of an invisible salvation, likewise all Christian customs and exercises of worship are symbols, in so far as they are expressions requisite to convey the ideas which they are intended to designate and to inculcate.

Symbols, as already observed, being the representation of ideas conveyed to the mind by the three principal senses, seeing, feeling, and hearing, it necessarily follows that they must be of various kinds, we therefore find symbols expressed in types, enigmas, parables, fables, allegories, emblems, hieroglyphics, tokens, grips, and words,

Thus the queen of flowers, the rose, in British heraldry is the type of sweet rule and gentle majesty.

The emblem, gracious queen, the British rose.

Type of sweet rule and gentle majesty, Prior.

Great morals and virtues are variously and often most beautifully represented by enigmas, parables, fables and allegories. This obscure language of many ancient enigmas, when once unriddled, has revealed great moral or important and useful truths. The most instructive