

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

WHAT IS MASONRY?

MASONRY, so far from being the worthless, indefinable thing that some represent it to be, has conferred immense benefits upon communities and the world at large. It may seem selfish and exclusive for men to band themselves together with a common object in view, but it is really nothing of the kind, for, although no one is asked to join the brotherhood, all who bear an irreproachable character are admissible, and receive a cordial welcome. The exclusiveness, if such it can be called, simply amounts to this, that none but those who are true men can be admitted to the privileges of Masons, and, in order to protect themselves against imposition, certain signs and tokens are used. This, we are told, destroys the usefulness of the Order, and renders it objectionable as an institution. When, however, any person takes the trouble to examine for himself, he finds that there can be nothing wrong in the use of secret signs, inasmuch as they are the only safeguards Masons have; besides, even some strictly benevolent societies use pass-words, and are not regarded with suspicion on that account. Then why should Freemasonry be subjected to any such objections as are sometimes urged against it? There is nothing in connection with Masonry that should prevent it being acknowledged as a valuable and beneficent Order; hence all the objections that are raised are of no account, as they do not affect its true character, nor invalidate the standing of those who devote their energies and zeal to its promotion.

We may be, and very often have been told, that Masons are banded together with the sole design of screening and protecting one another from the consequences of their misdeeds. Nothing could be further from the truth, yet it is a popular notion. The very obligation of a Mason binds him to be a true, loyal and obedient subject, at the same time that he holds himself amenable if he transgresses the law. There is no person more thoroughly under the law, yet we have it dinned into our ears that he cannot be a law-abiding subject, as his brethren consider it their bounden duty to screen him from punishment. How such a fallacious, not to say monstrous idea, ever came to be entertained surprises us, for we have never known an instance of misdirected zeal in behalf of a Masonic brother when justice had to be meted out to him. In nothing are Masons more exacting than the punishment of erring and guilty brethren. So long as they are right, or rather so long as it does not appear by irrefragible evidence that they are guilty of crime, Masons will have the aid and support of the brethren to the fullest extent; but let it be made clear that it is otherwise, then no leniency will be shown. On the contrary, proof of guilt brings speedy expulsion, and they are no longer permitted to retain their membership. If, however, persecution or unjust dealing should be made manifest, then a Mason so situated may depend upon the support of the brethren, who will not willingly see him subjected to contumely and wrong. Surely there can