

obligations which every Mason has assumed, and thus make his conversation and action bear testimony to the excellence of the principles of, and incalculable benefits resulting from Masonry when fully lived up to by its adherents. I do not overlook the many difficulties with which we have to contend, by reason of the frailties incident to our human nature. I do not forget there are two natures in man, the "higher and the lower, the great and the mean, the noble and the ignoble," nor does Masonry; but in every degree teaches its membership to cultivate and practice the better part of our nature, and continually guard ourselves against the temptations suggested by our prejudice, passions, and appetites. We should be slow to make inferences which a full examination of the facts would prove unjust, as well as to firmly refuse to approve that which justice and good morals would condemn.—*M. W. J. H. Bankhead, Alabama.*

ABSENTEEISM IN MASONRY.

In a recent editorial article in the *Keystone*, entitled "The Wages of the Craft," we intimated that the brother who habitually absents himself from his lodge, of necessity cannot, and of right ought not to, receive any wages. As a general statement this is undoubtedly true; but, like most other truths, under some circumstances it is liable to qualification. We purpose referring, in the present article, to some of the exceptional aspects of the subject; premising, however, by saying that in the Church, the State and Masonry absenteeism, whatever its cause, is always an evil. Members of a religious body often abstain from attendance in their places, and then wonder why "things go wrong." Many of the best citizens of the State usually remain away from the polls at primary elections, and then express surprise that such unfit men are nominated for office. England is now

wrestling with a foe of good government—absenteeism in Ireland, and the outcome of the struggle no man can foretell. Masonry has a struggle on account of its non-affiliates, and its indifferent members, who are conspicuous only by their absence from the lodge. Take up the roster of membership of almost any Masonic lodge, read over the names, and then attend the lodge at a stated meeting, and you will probably find that fully one-third of those present are visitors, and that the total number present does not equal one-third of the membership. If Freemasonry ever wanes, it will be owing to absenteeism.

But there are two classes of absentees—those that remain away from choice, and those that have been in some unfair manner estranged. There are some brethren, of years of experience and of high character, who habitually remain away from the lodge, for reasons for which they personally are not answerable. Their absence is, in some sense, an enforced absence. Some of them have been laborers in season and out of season, always seeking to advance what they conceived to be the best interests of the craft, so that they were in every sense dutiful to their lodge; but some brother under-estimated their efforts, and derided them, and, in effect, closed the doors of the lodge upon them, so that they could not receive any of the wages due the craft. This result may come about in many ways. We instance a few. A brother is zealous as a workman, ever ready to lend a helping hand to the Master, studying Masonry through and through, and taking a pride in performing its work. Sometimes his zeal begets jealousy, and jealousy carping criticism, and criticism ends in innuendo and misrepresentation. This conduct may not be deliberately planned, but one error leads to another, and the end is, the zealous brother is led to absent himself from the lodge, and the lodge usually does not find that his detractors can or