

THE IDEAL MASON.

THERE are few perfect people in the world. Something is always lacking to completeness of character. Even in those natures of grandest endowment a careful survey will find deficiencies, and note some element of weakness or shame among the more noble properties of life. Achilles, invulnerable to his enemies save by that unbaptized heel through which he received his mortal wound, may stand as a type of the world's leaders and heroes who have rarely shown characters of perfect strength and symmetry. The philosopher Bacon, so pre-eminent in many things, was most deficient in other essentials to true greatness, and the world remembers that famous scholar as Pope characterizes him, "The greatest, wisest, and meanest of mankind." Blemishes and deficiencies will always appear when any careful estimate of human character is made. The best man is but human and therefore fails to give us a faultless model. It is not wise to expect a perfect manifestation of character on the part of our friends and associates. It is better to average men in forming our judgments, and to make allowances in view of the common human nature in which we all partake.

'Tis well, however, to fashion our ideals and keep them steadily in view. The artist who would produce good work in marble, or on canvass, is helped thereto by keeping before his vision the clear image of ideal loveliness. The toiler in any department of life will do his best, and accomplish most, if he has large conceptions of his duty and of possible achievement. By aiming at the stars the arrow goes farther than if pointed at the ground. By putting before the mind a high ideal of life, we shall be moved to greater activities, thus making some progress, probably, toward those attainments which are revealed to us in our best moods of thought and aspiration.

The ideal of Masonic character ought to appear in fair and grand proportions.

The tenets and principles of the Institution should be given an embodied and vitalized presentation, that every member may have an attractive model constantly before him, by which to shape his own conduct and life. We do not propose to make an enumeration of all the qualities and manifestations which belong to the character of the Mason. It is sufficient for the purposes of this article that we name certain essentials which lie uppermost in our thought.

The ideal Mason is a companionable man. It is a contradiction of terms to speak of a Mason and a churl as one and the same. And even if a man is not habitually rough and surly, yet if he is of a cold and unsocial nature he ought not to be allowed to enter the Institution. He will be out of place and most uncomfortable in a fraternity such as ours. The true Mason gladly accepts the close alliances and loving fellowships without which the life of Masonry would depart. He welcomes the social communion and friendly interchange to which he is called, and is ready to do his full part in kindling the electric fire of a free companionship. Wherever he goes, he carries an atmosphere of heartiness and good fellowship. He is so genial and companionable in all his intercourse with others as to illustrate in the strongest manner the great social idea that permeates our whole system.

It follows of logical necessity that the ideal Mason is possessed of generous and quick sympathies. Not only does he carry the sunshine of his presence into the social circle where mirth and good cheer rule the hour, but he has a ready interest in whatever concerns the well-being of those with whom he is associated. He has such tender loving interest in others that he counts it no hard duty but a blessed privilege to go out of his way to serve them, when their needs or their good make the requirement. Filled with the spirit of brotherhood, he makes daily proof of his possession of that sweetest virtue, which "glads the world, deals joy around, and saves."

And he is tolerant as well as sympathetic. He does not expect that there will be an exact agreement of views and practices among men. He is willing to fraternize with his brethren on certain great principles, which are amply sufficient to furnish a bond of working fellowship, without attempting to bring all the different opinions to his own. He sets up no claim to be an oracle, and is never found denouncing his brethren as stupid or ignorant because they do not accord with his own notions in every particular. A noble soul is always a tolerant one. The ideal Mason will always do his own thinking, and he will not murmur because his associates are disposed to do the same.

In our ideal of the true Mason he always appears as a gentleman. Courtesy and affability mark his intercourse with all. He may not be versed in the laws of technical politeness, yet he is never found acting the part of a boor. Having a proper appreciation of the proprieties of every occasion, he is not liable to transgress the special rules of society. Possessed of a high sense of honor and a tender respect for the feelings of other people, it does not matter much what his culture or his social position may be, for he is the true gentlemen, both in character and bearing, and as such fitly represents the genius of Masonry in at least one important respect.

The ideal Mason is a man of progressive ideas. He does not despise the past. He