

## FACTORS OF MASONIC POWER.

From its remote origin Masonry had its political or material and its moral or spiritual side. When the age of constitutional governments and of rapid advances in civilization occurred, and men could submit their rights to the protection of the law with safety, the moral aspect of Masonry began to shine out more conspicuously; the primitive restriction of membership to the Craft was relaxed; the worthy of whatever occupation, or even of none, were received into the Fraternity, and Masonry, as an institution, passed, at first slowly, but soon with great rapidity, from an operative to a speculative character, having for its object the inculcation of moral ideas and the teaching of industry, honor and probity by means of solemn charges and of emblems drawn from the working tools and instrumentalities of the Craft. It also determined, with the true spirit of ancient chivalry, to champion the cause of the poor and unfortunate, to see that none of its members whom adversity might overtake should suffer, to defend each other's reputation when wrongfully assailed, to mutually aid in the building up of character, and to have all her altars and banners, pillars and spires inscribed with the one heaven-descended word, Charity; which word stood for the presumed unselfishness of every true Mason and the essential and inalienable characteristic of the Fraternity.

In the earlier periods of the history of the institution of Speculative Masonry the inculcation of certain fundamental principles of morals taught by a peculiar symbolism, borrowed from the traditions, working-tools and implements of Operative Masonry, was a most honorable and useful characteristic of the Fraternity. This feature of Masonry made it, to those who were admitted to its privileges and benefits, a light shining in the midst of darkness.

The period of which we speak antedated the time when morals as a

basis of human character had been reduced to a science, when it was taught in the schools, and its principles, through the agency of the printing press and domestic instruction and training, had become generally diffused. If this feature of the Fraternity presents at the present day the appearance of the inculcation of elementary principles already well understood, the fact must be attributed to the great advance which the world has made in general intelligence, and along all the lines of a higher civilization. The candid mind will revert to the time when Masonry, by inculcating in its adherents, and insisting upon certain principles of morals as the basis of the Masonic character, was kindling a light in the midst of comparative gloom; a time when each man, to a greater or less degree, framed his own code of morals—when might was a stronger law than right, and individuality, with its accessories of selfishness, rapine and plunder was the rule, rather than the fraternity and interdependence of man. It is to the lasting honor and credit of Masonry that at such a time she presented to the world an Institution wherein the fraternity and equality of men upon a basis of moral character was asserted and successfully maintained.

She undertook to demonstrate that man could and should be just and true to his brother; that he should help him in adversity and comfort him in sorrow and trial; that the family of a brother should be as sacred to him as his own domestic hearth; that he would respect his personal rights as he demanded that his own should be respected, and that his rights of property should not be infringed upon to the smallest appreciable amount. Such principles as these do not become superannuated nor depreciate in value so long as a lawless individuality is pressing for a place, and selfishness is struggling for the control of the human heart. Although these principles may seem