

pression that Freemasonry is an institution which has no alternative of refusing assistance to one who is a member thereof, or to his widow or orphans—and seem to make a trade of travelling from one lodge to another and demanding relief as a matter of course—professing wants and merits, which they do not possess, and thus not only exhausting the funds, but really eating the bread which virtue and distress ought to be relieved by. Such, we are sorry, is the case, and see no remedy for it but by a more rigid and strict enquiry into the necessities of each case, and the worthiness of each applicant.

The objects of true charity are, merit and virtue in distress; persons who are incapable of extricating themselves from misfortunes which have overtaken them in old age; industrious men, from inevitable accidents and acts of Providence rushed into ruin; widows left survivors of their husbands, by whose labor they subsisted; orphans in tender years left naked to the world. These only will be the recipients of the benefits of a Masonic Asylum or charitable institution in Canada, and what are not the claims of such when compared to that class before named; then let us hasten to perform those affectionate services, and “thus fulfil the whole law of love.”

We give in our columns this month an account of the proceedings at the third annual festival for the benefit of the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution for aged and decayed Freemasons and their widows—a perusal of which must prove interesting to our readers; and we trust that a knowledge of what our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic are doing in this “labor of love” will be a stimulus to us to emulate them in their good work.

To the Editor of the Canadian Freemason.

Dear Sir and Brother,—Being, as every brother should be, watchful over the interests of the craft, and anxious for its welfare, I am induced to come forward not only in defence of what we usually style ancient Masonry, but also of those degrees, whose history is probably not so clearly traceable, and from numerous reasons, whose landmarks are not so well defined, yet which possess beauties and allegories not in any way inferior to those of our more ancient orders. I am not aware that these higher degrees, viz., the 33rd, and even the 30th, are conferred anywhere in the Province, and it is with the hope that at no great future day we may find Canada, like her sister lodges in the Union, possessed of a supreme council, thus advancing our science to its highest state of perfection, and rendering those who are partakers in its mysteries the better prepared for reception into the Holy of Holies. As one who has taken a number of these higher degrees, I can vouch for them being built upon the only true foundation—wisdom, strength and beauty, with a full con-

fidence in our Supreme Architect; nor, indeed, can they be reached without passing through “the valley of the shadow of death,” and ascending those steps by which we hope to reach the Grand Lodge above. While they are firm in their exclusion of the Atheist, the libertine, the liar, the traitor, the thief, the disturber of the public peace—in short, all persons who are stained with vice or crime of any description whatsoever, the door is nevertheless open to all free-men of mature years, who possess an able body and a sound mind; who believe in an Almighty being, the Creator and Governor of the Universe; who can give satisfactory evidence that they respect and obey the laws of their country, and the rules laid down in Scripture for the regulation of their conduct, and who are willing to make a solemn declaration that their sole object in seeking admission into our ranks, is a desire to obtain knowledge, and to be of greater service to their fellow men; and that when admitted, they will conform to its laws and established practices. The degrees to which I refer merely carry out in greater detail the landmarks of our order, and are equally entitled to be ranked as part of that beautiful “system of morality veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols;” while they may justly be considered as the scientific application, and the religious consecration of the rules and principles—the language, the implements and materials of operative masonry, to the veneration of God, the purification of the heart, and the inculcation of the dogmas of a religious philosophy. These, then, deal with the most sublime speculations, the most momentous truths, and the most useful general principles; while the whole has been elaborated by the wisdom and skill of ancient craftsmen, and handed down to us in the most systematic order.

While I have thus spoken of the higher degrees in Masonry, you will readily understand that the same governing laws with regard to their communication are here equally applicable as in any of their predecessors; and though in these, as in all others, we are scoffed at by the world for having secrets, we can only refer to our text book, the Bible, to find our Saviour and his Apostles holding meetings with locked doors; while our great Grand Master, King Solomon, says: “as who discovers secrets is a traitor; he who refraineth his tongue is wise, and he who keepeth his tongue, keepeth his soul.”

Among the most sublime and beautiful of the higher degrees, I can refer to none more so than that of the Rose Croix, or the 18th degree of the ancient and accepted Scotch rite; for a more full explanation of which I would refer you to the works of Oliver, Preston, Mackey and others. It is dated by some of our best authorities as far back as 1314, while by others its introduction into England is considered as coeval with Christianity; as Dr.

Mackey very properly states, “no matter where precisely it received its origin, nor who has the honor of having been its inventor, it is at least certain that the degree of Rose Croix is to be placed among the most ancient of the higher degrees of Masonry; and that this antiquity in connection with the importance of its design, and the solemnity of its ritual, has given to it a universality in the masonic world, inferior only to the degrees of ancient craft masonry.”

In the jewels of this degree are included some important symbols, and some which have a direct allusion to our Blessed Lord himself. In the Scriptures we find a distinct reference made to the eagle, where Moses representing Jehovah as in allusion to the belief that this bird assists its feeble young in their flight, by bearing them upon its own pinions, (see Exodus xix. 4.) Hence the eagle is a very appropriate symbol of Christ in his divine character, bearing the children of his adoption upon his wings, teaching them with unequalled love and tenderness to poise their unfledged wings and soar from the dull corruptions of earth to a higher and holier sphere. The same allusion to Christ, but still more significantly, is found in the pelican feeding her young. As this bird was formerly supposed to wound its own breast that it might with its blood feed its young, so it has been adopted as an emblem of our Saviour who shed his blood for his children's salvation. The pelican, therefore, on this jewel is a fitting symbol of Christ in his mediatorial character. The cross one of the emblems in this degree, it is scarcely necessary to speak of since, although an ancient symbol of eternal life, and is to be found in use among the Egyptians, which signification it had long before the days of Moses, yet it has been peculiarly adopted, as an emblem of Him who suffered on it and for us. In conclusion I may add that the rose, also an emblem in this degree, is an eminently figurative appellation of Christ, where in the Book of Canticles he is called the “Rose of Sharon.”

This is then, we must all acknowledge an eminently Christian degree, since, even its documents always commence in the name of the “Holy and undivided Trinity,” and though of comparatively later date than some of its fellows, it contains within itself the elements of every thing that is good.

The discovery made in the R. A. degree here replaced by those of the Christian dispensation, ceases to be of any great value, the Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, which supported the ancient temple, are replaced by the Christian pillars of Faith, Hope and Charity, the great lights of our order remain because they are its very essence, but the three lesser assume an entirely Christian character, and have reference to the years of Our Lord's sojourning on earth.