

IT PREPARES THE WAY.

BY C. WOODHOUSE, M. D.

Masonry does this by so arranging its signs of recognition that a stranger in London, Chicago, or New York, need not long be without congenial acquaintances, "if worthy, and well qualified." Society is full of barriers to acquaintanceship. In the big cities, year in and year out, as is well known, next-door neighbors live and die, side by side, with only a brick wall between them, yet profound strangers to each other, because each, engrossed in his own cares and with his limited circle, and bound by social rules, cannot or dare not overstep the conventionalisms of fashionable usage, to bid the other a friendly good-morning. Pride and wealth interpose their barriers, also, to generous acquaintance, and many a lonely heart longs for a friendly word, a kind look, which they refuse to give.

Even a church acquaintanceship is often of the most limited, the coldest and most formal character. In a large parish, the minister knows but slightly many of his flock. He too often has his favorites, such is the infirmity of human nature, on whom to expend his courteous attentions. He gives the hand of fellowship in the broad aisle to-day to one—humble and poor—whom he fails to recognize in the broader streets to-morrow. While all classes look with suspicion or indifference on the stranger who appears in their midst; and this because they feel no special bond that binds them to greet him kindly, or because they say, to themselves, "Let every one look out for himself." So talks and acts a selfish world.

Now Masonry is pre-eminently a *social* institution. Masonry has gone before you, my brother Mason, to New York or London, and has prepared the way for you, and made it easy, if you conduct yourself properly and as becomes a good man and a Mason, to find friends to rejoice with you in your good fortune, to counsel you in difficulties, and assist you in perils and dangers.

Every good Mason recognizes this duty. Every worthy Mason, high or low, rich or poor, enjoys these "benefits." It is not too much to say, that herein consists one of the great merits of this ancient Order. Its members feel bound, they *are* bound by the strongest obligations, to extend to each other, when found worthy, the hand of fraternity and good will.

Why does an "entered apprentice" aspire to the "craftsman's" degree, and the craftsman to the sublime degree of a finished workman? Is it not that he may, in the spirit of lawful adventure, travel into other lands, and reap the reward of his attainments among those willing to receive him, not as a stranger and foreigner, but as a brother who has fraternal claims upon them?