

I trust it will not be thought egotistical, if I inform you that the funds of our Order are raised for special purposes, and the returns of the Order show that they are sacred to those purposes, viz: of relief and support to Brothers, their widows and orphans.

The returns to the General Grand Lodge, for the year ending June 30, 1845, show a gain of members by initiation, in one year; of 22,862. The revenue amounted to \$449,194. The whole number of contributing members was near 100,000. Relief had been extended to 6,834 Brothers, and 476 widowed families. The total amount paid for relief, during that year, was \$124,669, to which we may add 9 Grand Lodges which failed to make report of relief extended, and doubtless show near two hundred thousand dollars expended for the benefit of the sick Brethren—the support of the Widows and Orphans of our beloved Order.

It is asked if our funds are scattered broad-cast to every wanting person? We answer, our Lodge funds belong to the Brethren and their families. Our individual funds *may* be given as freely as those of any other men. The Lodge funds being held sacred to the Order, we must have the privilege of preserving them exclusively for the Order. We must have the means of ascertaining whether those who would appropriate them, are entitled to that privilege. In protection to Brothers—to widows and orphans, our institution is eminently distinguished. See ye the lone orphan, for whom no mother's bosom throbs in soft sympathy!

"See ye the widow forced in age for bread,
To strip the brook, with mantling cresses spread;
To pick the winter's faggot from the thorn,
Then seek some nightly shade and weep till morn."

These are the objects of the Odd-Fellow's tender regard. Perhaps there is no association of men that can with more truth say:—"When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I searched out."

But it is often alleged that ours is a secret society, and that the secrecy peculiar to it cannot be reconciled with the benevolence it professes. We remark that ours is not a secret society. Is that a secret society, whose principles are spread out all bare and beautiful before the world—whose members are publicly known as members—whose laws, places of meetings, and practices are understood by the whole community. No! That is a secret association whose plans, purposes, places of meeting and membership, are all concealed—who keep banded together like robbers and assassins, unknown to others. The Carbonari of Italy, or the band intent on stratagems, treason and strife; these may be termed secret societies; but not ours, although we observe the principle of secrecy. The secret principle is not peculiar to Odd-Fellowship. We use it for self-protection. A man without secrecy is said to be an open letter, for every one to read. If our Lodges were thus open, we might expect that every mendicant and drone that has the power of locomotion, would dishonestly live on our funds, till none would be left for the sick and distressed, the widow and the orphan among ourselves.