

each other's acquaintance, and of enjoying some degree of social intercourse with each other. It urges upon them in its instructions the duty and the necessity of regarding every member of the society both at home and abroad, both in the Lodge and outside of its portals, as his brother whom he is bound to recognize and to whom he is bound to render assistance if he stands in need of it. It puts each in possession of certain tokens which he holds in common with all other members of the Craft, whereby he may make himself known to them, and discover them when they desire to make themselves known to him. And however strange it may seem, it is found practically that the common possession of these secret tokens has larger power to excite a community of feeling and awaken sympathy when it might otherwise be wanting. Finally, it invites the co-operation of all its members in carrying out schemes of benevolence—schemes, which in some countries, have attained to respectable proportions, though unfortunately among ourselves it is in this respect still the day of small things.

It might reasonably be expected that these influences would have some good effect in the way of enlarging men's sympathies, and breaking down their selfishness. He must be a hard man, indeed, who would be proof against them all. But, nevertheless, Freemasonry has shown its wisdom in not trusting too much even to these; and the better to guarantee their success it requires that all those who enter its membership should already believe in God, and be men of good moral character. Recent events in the history of the Craft have shown that, by the great majority, it is not considered either sound Masonry or good policy to abolish either one or the other of these prerequisites to membership.

It must be admitted, however, that even with these precautions there are many who find entrance who show little sign of profiting by the wholesome instructions of the art, who never catch the genius or spirit of the Craft. They look upon the order, not as a means whereby they may be drawn towards others, but only as a means whereby others may be drawn towards them. Not as a means of doing good, but only as a means of getting benefits for themselves. It is sadly true that in many cases those who seemed at first likely to reflect credit on the Order, have shown that they were unworthy of its fellowship, and have disgraced its name, while it is also true that in some cases it has been basely prostituted to the most selfish ends, and the confidence it inspires made but the instrument of gain.

It is not altogether surprising that it should be so; for in truth the growth of the order has been too rapid to be altogether wholesome. When we remember that one hundred and sixty-two years ago there were only four comparatively small lodges in the world, and that now it counts well nigh a million members, we need not wonder that many of those added to its membership should have been unworthy. When we remember further that an unduly large proportion of those offering themselves for admission are prompted by no higher motive than simple curiosity, (which unfortunately for itself and from a mistaken idea of its true interests has been stimulated both by the whole order and by individual members) it is easy to understand why so many should prove useless or worse, when we consider that lodges have been unduly multiplied, and that each lodge considers it a matter of honour to introduce as many new members as possible without being always very scrupulous as to their character or their motives, and that when they have received them, the officers are more anxious to display before them the beauties of ritual than to inspire them with the spirit of brotherhood, the wonder is that the abuses have not been much more flagrant than they are.

But great as they undoubtedly are, the case is by no means a hopeless one; and our duty in the matter is plain. It is to seek to prevent these abuses as far as may be in the future by the exclusion of unworthy men, and to cure

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