




CHARITY MEM

Should we as Most Excellent Master's, considering that man at his best is subject to frailty and error, endeavour to cover his faults and imperfections, with the broad mantle of charity and brotherly love. Here we have plainly defined a higher and more noble type of charity than we have so far encountered in the series of Masonic degrees. True in all the previous degrees, the utmost and deepest meanings are implied, but are not so openly expressed as in the above exhortation.   

For instance, consider that never-to-be-forgotten charge in the N.E. angle of the lodge, a most solemn and impressive lesson, which will be with us all our days. We must note, however, that the call for Charity was on behalf of the brethren of the Craft, fading into the sere and yellow leaf of old age, or, by calamity, reduced to the lowest depths of poverty and distress, and a cash contribution large or small, was sought. The embarrassment of the candidate in not being able to comply, gives special meaning and significance to the admonition; "that should you at any future period meet a brother in circumstances of distress, who claims your assistance, you will cheerfully embrace the opportunity of practising that virtue, you now profess to admire."

Proceeding onward to the Mark Degree we have a similar lesson presented in a similar manner, but with the difference, that to save the candidate being humiliated and to enable him to fulfil his pledge, his brethren come to his assistance. In the first case the embarrassment taught the lesson. In the other it was the kindness of the brethren and their eagerness to live up to their obligation that made the deep and lasting impression.

Masonry being a progressive science, however, we have in the M. E. M^o. , a broader definition of Charity, raising it from the material application and lifting it into the realms of heart and spirit. In the process of time the word 'Charity' has unfortunately lost some of its original meaning. Today the word is almost entirely to denote alms giving, and no matter what sentiments of pity or compassion actuate us in this respect, it is hardly the full extent of its application.

The word derives from the Latin word "carus" meaning "dear or well-beloved." Its proper meaning is 'love', the universal love for all mankind, springing from the Fatherhood of God and His love for all His creatures. It is the sentiment expressed by St., Paul to the Corinthians that commences as follows: - "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not Charity, I become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Mackey in his Encyclopaedia has expressed the sentiment and its meaning most beautifully.

"John Wesley expressed regret that the word had not been correctly translated as 'Love' instead of 'charity', so that the apostolic triad of virtues would have been not 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Charity', but 'Faith' 'Hope' and 'Love'. Then we would have understood the comparison made by St., Paul when he said, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing." Guided by this sentiment, the true Mason will "suffer long and be kind." He will be slow to anger and easy to forgive. He will stay his falling brother by gentle admonition, and warn him with kindness of approaching danger. He will not open his ear to his slanderers, but will close his lips against all reproach. His faults and his follies will be locked in his breast, and the prayer for mercy will ascend to Jehovah for his brother's sins. Nor will these sentiments of benevolence be confined to those who are bound to him by ties of kindred or worldly friendships alone; but, extending them throughout the globe. He will love and cherish all who sit beneath the broad canopy of our universal Lodge. For it is the boast of our Institution that a Mason, destitute and worthy, may find in every clime a brother, and in every land a home.