

The Orphans' Friend.

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Many wise and good men object to the present plan of supporting the Orphan Asylum, and think a better can be devised. The Masons of Mississippi are now studying the same difficult problem in their own jurisdiction. An intelligent committee has gathered facts and statistics and embodied them in a very elaborate report. We purpose to discuss some of the topics mentioned in this report, and to dissent from the conclusions which our illustrious brethren have reached. This discussion will have direct reference to our own Orphan Work. Let our own people (whether Masons or not) consider carefully what course is wisest and best, and let us work harmoniously on any plan that may accomplish the end proposed. We publish the entire report that it may be deliberately pondered, and that we may all study thoroughly the lessons which it teaches:

At the last Annual Grand Communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Masons in the State of Mississippi, the following was adopted:

Resolved, That a special committee of five be appointed to digest and mature a plan for the organization and maintenance of a Masonic Widows' and Orphans' Home and Industrial School in this Grand Jurisdiction; said committee to report to the Grand Master, who shall cause said report to be printed, and send the same to the Subordinate Lodges during the recess of the Grand Lodge, that they may instruct their Representatives at the next Annual Grand Communication how to vote thereon.

The undersigned Committee, appointed pursuant to said resolution, being desirous of obtaining all the information possible upon the subject, before preparing their report, in order that the Grand Lodge may profit by the experience of other Masonic bodies who now have charitable institutions in practical operation, or who having tried the experiment, have from any cause failed, respectfully solicit from you an answer to the following inquiries:

1. What Masonic charity is at present maintained in the jurisdiction in which you reside?
2. What are its objects?
3. What are the details of its organization and government?
4. How are the means of support obtained?
5. What, if any, modification of the plan upon which it is conducted, either as to its object, organization, government, means of support or in any other respect you can suggest, which will enable us to devise a better system?
6. If there are any other Masonic charitable institutions with which you are familiar, please inform us specifically regarding them, or if you cannot do this, please do us the kindness to place this letter in the hands of some brother who can do so.
7. If any Masonic charitable institution with whose workings you are familiar, has failed, please state what in your opinion caused such failure?

The Committee will thankfully receive any suggestions bearing upon the important matter which you may be pleased to make, or cause to be made to them, and also any documents relating to the subject which it may be con-

venient for you to send to them.

Please address your reply to the Chairman of the Committee at Vicksburg, Miss.

Very truly and fraternally yours,
 FREDERIC SPEED, Ch.
 THOMAS REED,
 WILLIAM S. PATTON,
 H. W. WALTER,
 A. P. BARRY,
 Committee.

Replies were received from Canada, Colorado, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Idaho, Iowa, Ireland, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Scotland, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin, from which it appears that in the following Grand Jurisdictions no Masonic charitable institutions of the character contemplated by your resolution have been organized, viz: Canada, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Scotland, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Canada—This Grand Lodge instructed Bro. Otto Klotz, Chairman of the Committee on Benevolence, to reply to our circular, and to him we are indebted for a full response to our interrogatories. In 1863, the Grand Lodge set apart \$6,000 from its general fund to constitute a "Benevolent Fund," of which only the interest is available. In 1864, this fund was supplemented by the appropriation of ten per cent. of the entire receipts of the Grand Lodge, but the income of the fund being inadequate to meet the demands upon it, the deficiency is met by annual appropriations; that for 1876 amounts to \$4,000, and it is proposed to increase the permanent fund, at an early day, to \$20,000, the funds in the treasury admitting of such an appropriation. This fund is mainly disbursed by the Board of General Purposes to needy brethren and widows and orphans of deceased brethren, and is in addition to the sums donated by "private" Lodges or individual brethren. Applications are required to be sent through the Grand Secretary, and by him laid before the Board; this body refers them to a sub-committee which examines into the merits of each case and apportions the amount to be donated to each applicant. If the Grand Lodge is in session, this report is submitted for its action, but if the meeting of the Board of General Purposes, which occurs more frequently than those of the Grand Lodge, is not held at the same time, its action is final, although this Board makes full reports of all its proceedings to the Grand Lodge at its stated Communications. The Board keeps systematic records of all donations and of the recipients of its bounty. This plan is found to work well in practice, and it is thought that no better system can be devised. Local boards of relief have been organized, in which Lodges, Chapters and Perceptories join. These organizations are, as occasion demands, aided by the Grand Lodge. There is no Masonic charitable institution, of a public

character, in Canada, but, some years since, a fund was collected for the purpose of building an asylum for aged and decayed Masons, their widows and orphans. Owing to a want of faith in the result of such an experiment, at the last meeting of the Grand Lodge, the trustees of the fund surrendered it to the Grand Lodge, but its disposition was not determined upon. It is stated that such an institution is not required in a sparsely settled country like Canada, where the number of those who would avail themselves of its benefits is too small to justify the expense, and it is thought best to support those in need of assistance at their own homes, where they would be near their friends and relations. It, also, is stated that careful enquiry has elicited the fact that of several hundred whose names appear upon the "benevolent account" but six were found who were without relatives, and to whom an asylum would be preferable to the present system. Masonic schools are rendered unnecessary by the admirable public school organization which is in operation in the Province of Ontario, which embraces the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Canada.

Connecticut—Is about establishing a Home for Aged and Infirm Masons, their Widows and Orphans. A fund of one hundred thousand dollars is to be raised before any attempt to organize is made. This fund is to be raised by contribution, but the Grand Secretary, who is our informant, failed to say whether the contribution is to be voluntary or enforced.

England—We deeply regret that no notice was taken of our request for information concerning the great Masonic charities of England, by the Grand Lodge, or any of its officials, because these charities are not only the most extensive, but the most successful of which we have any knowledge. The following account was published in the *London Masonic Magazine* during the year 1873:

"The first established was the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls. It was founded March 25th, 1788, for the purpose of clothing, maintaining and educating the daughters of brethren deceased, or whose means prevented them affording their children a suitable education. The receipts for the first year were 664 guineas; the amount realized at the Annual Festival in 1873 was £7,500, being £2,000 over any preceding. The total number of girls in the Institution at the present time is one hundred and thirty; received from the commencement, 1,008. Its property consists of

Lands and institute buildings, paid for,	£30,032
3 per cent. consols,	29,950
Total,	£60,012

"The average cost of maintaining the girls for the past year was £37. 16s, including all expenses (equal to \$198, or about \$3.64 per week.)

"The second established was the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys. It was founded July 3d, 1798, under the name of the Institution for Clothing and Educating the Sons of Deceased and

Indigent Freemasons. In 1868 its name was changed to its present designation. For more than fifty years after the organization of this charity, its beneficiaries were clothed, and, at the option of their parents, sent to schools situated near their residences. In 1856 a house and ten acres of land were purchased, and in 1857 twenty-five boys were admitted to receive the benefit of a complete education and the comforts of a home, the remaining boys being placed in other schools as heretofore. The accommodations have been gradually increased until about two hundred can now be received. The property had cost on the 31st of December, 1870, £47,116, only £4,000 of which remained unpaid. The receipts of 1872, from donations, subscriptions, purchased admissions, presentations, etc., were about £10,000, and the expenditures some £360 less. The yearly cost per head was £62. 15s, (or \$314, equal to \$6.00 per week.) The Boys' School stands alone in the charities in not having any fund. It is supported entirely by the yearly contributions of the brethren.

"The third established was the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution for Aged Freemasons and Widows of Freemasons. It was founded at a Grand Lodge held on the 2d of March, 1842, and was established for granting annuities to Masons only. In 1849 the Widows' Fund was founded. The annuities have been gradually increased until at present they stand £36 for Masons, and £28 for widows. At the first festival held in 1847, the amount realized was £819. 16s., while in 1873 the large sum of £6,866. 16s., was received, being £3,000 more than was collected at any preceding festival. In 1842 there were fifteen male annuitants; there are now one hundred and fifteen. In 1849 there were only five female annuitants; there are now eighty-two, and eleven widows receiving half of the late husband's annuity. Connected with this charity is an asylum containing apartments for thirty-three annuitants, who enjoy the privileges of the house, in addition to the annuity, and are also provided with fuel during the winter months.

"The Male fund has now £23,700 invested in Government stocks. The Female Fund has £14,200 invested in like securities. The Asylum above referred to is valued at £5,000. The Boys' School and stocks amount to £47,000; while the property of the Girls' School represents £60,000, making a total of real estate and stocks belonging to these three charities amounting to the magnificent sum of £150,000, (in round numbers \$729,000.) This endowment has been raised entirely by the munificence of the Brotherhood, in excess of the yearly maintenance and expenses of these three charities."

The estimated requirements for the year 1874 were:

For the Girls' School,	£7,900
For the Boys' School,	9,300
For the Aged Males,	4,824
For the Aged Females,	3,080
Loans to be repaid,	4,000
Making a total of	£29,104

Or about \$141,600; and no

doubt was entertained that even more than this amount would be cheerfully contributed. It is furthermore stated that the Grand Lodge, from its Benevolent Fund, gave away, in 1874, nearly £3,000, or about \$14,580.

Illinois—The Grand Lodge, at its last Communication, adopted, subject to the approval of its subordinates, a resolution, of which the following is a full synopsis: It regards the establishment and maintenance of a Home for worthy indigent Master Masons, and for the widows and orphans of Masons, as a high privilege and sacred duty; and pledges the hearty sympathy and the substantial aid of the Grand Lodge and its constituent Lodges, to found and support an enterprise so commendable, so fully in accord with the spirit of Freemasonry, and so essentially a tangible exemplification of Charity, the chief corner-stone of our Institution. Said Home to be under the management of a Board of Trustees, consisting of eleven Master Masons, members of constituent Lodges—five of whom shall be *ex-officio*, viz: the Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, the Wardens and Grand Treasurer, the remaining six members of said Board to be elected by the Grand Lodge. The Trustees are to divide themselves, by lot, into three classes of two each; one class to hold office one year, another two years, and the other three years; and subsequent to the first election two members are to be elected annually, to hold office three years; but neither of the *ex-officio* members of said Board of Trustees shall be eligible to any office in said Board. The Grand Lodge appropriates the sum of \$5,000, and levies additional dues on the Lodges of \$3.00 for each initiation, and twenty-five cents per annum for each member, as a *building fund*, and for the maintenance of said Home—said moneys to be remitted to the Grand Secretary with the annual returns of each Lodge, and to be paid over by the Grand Secretary to the Treasurer of said Board, and any neglect or failure on the part of a Lodge to pay over the moneys required, will subject a delinquent Lodge to the same penalty as for a failure to pay annual dues. The Trustees are to prescribe their own by-laws and rules, subject to the approval of the Grand Lodge, and are to make full reports of all their doings at each Annual Communication. No site is to be selected, plans adopted, nor money expended, except by concurrent vote of a majority of all the Trustees, who are authorized to solicit and receive donations and contributions for the Home, and all contributions or donations of \$500 or over from any person, shall entitle the donor to an Honorary Membership in the Board, with the privilege of participating in debate upon any question, but without a vote. Vacancies are to be filled by appointment of the Grand Master, the appointee to serve until the next meeting of the Grand Lodge, when the vacancy shall be filled

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