

POWER OF THE BALLOT

A Master Mason has rights, duties, and privileges unknown to the Entered Apprentice or Fellowcraft. He is part of a lodge; he is invested with all the powers of a full-fledged member of the Ancient Craft. His vote is as powerful as that of the oldest member; his black cube as potent to keep an applicant out of the lodge as that of the Grand Master.

Any Master Mason has the undoubted right to cast a black cube against any applicant. It is his duty to cast it if he knows something about the applicant which would prevent him from becoming a good Mason, a useful member of the lodge. It may be his duty to cast it without such knowledge; if the applicant is one with whom any Master Mason cannot associate in lodge in peace and harmony, he should be excluded. But the Master Mason should consider well and think tolerantly and broad-mindedly of his "peace and harmony."

If a single black cube is in the ballot box, the applicant is rejected. (*)

() In most jurisdictions a single black cube in the ballot box requires the ballot to be taken again immediately to avoid the possibility of a mistake. If the black cube reappears the second time the applicant is rejected.*

This rejection does more than refuse the applicant the degrees. It creates a lodge jurisdiction over the petitioner. He may not apply to another lodge for the degrees refused him by this one without first securing a waiver of jurisdiction. He may not again apply even to the lodge which rejected him until after a certain statutory period - usually six months. When his application is again received and brought up for ballot, the fact that he previously applied and was rejected is stated to the lodge.

The casting of a black cube not only rejects for the degrees but puts a certain disability upon the applicant which he is powerless to remove.

The brother who casts a ballot wields a tremendous power. Like most powers it can be used well or ill. It may work harm or good not only upon him upon whom it is used but to him who uses it. Unlike many great powers put into the hands of men this one is not subject to review or control by any human agency. No king, prince, potentate; no law, custom or regulation; no Masonic brother or officer can interfere with a brother's use of his power.

For no one knows who uses the black cube. No one knows why one is cast. The individual brother and his God alone know.

The very absence of any responsibility to man or authority is one reason why the power should be used with intelligence and only when after solemn self-inquiry the reason behind its use is found to be Masonic. The black cube is the great protection of the Fraternity; it permits the brother who does not desire to make public his secret knowledge to use that knowledge for the benefit of the Craft. It gives to all members the right to say who shall not become members of their lodge family. But at the same time it puts to the test the Masonic heart and the

personal honesty of every brother present. The black cube is a thorough test of our understanding of the Masonic teaching of the cardinal virtue Justice, which "enables us to render to every man his just due without distinction." We are taught of justice that "it should be the invariable practice of every Mason never to deviate from the minutest principles thereof."

Justice to the lodge requires us to cast the black cube on an applicant we believe to be unfit. Justice to ourselves requires that we cast the black cube on the application of the man we believe would destroy the harmony of our lodge. Justice to the applicant requires that no black cube be cast for little or mean reasons. Justice to justice requires that we think carefully, deliberate slowly, and act cautiously. No man will know what we do; no eye will see save that All-Seeing Eye which penetrates the innermost recesses of our hearts.

A well-used black cube goes into the ballot box. Ill used, it drops into the heart and blackens it.

VOUCHING

One of the privileges - and one of the responsibilities - of the Master Mason is that of vouching for a brother.

To vouch for a Mason is Masonically to say to the brother to whom one introduces him who is vouched for: "I know that Brother A. is a Master Mason."

By implication it means (1) that the brother vouching has sat in open lodge with the brother vouched for, or (2) that the brother vouching has subjected the brother vouched for to a strict trial and due examination.

In most jurisdictions no brother may undertake a private examination of any man representing himself as a brother without the orders of the Worshipful Master of his lodge, or of the Grand Master. The Worshipful Master is solely responsible for the proper purging of his lodge and therefore has the right to decide who is and who is not competent to examine a visitor.

The number of men who have never taken the degrees who try to get into Masonic lodges is very small. Nevertheless, there have been, are, and doubtless will be such men; men without principle or honor; eavesdroppers who have heard what was not intended for their ears.

Far more dangerous than the eavesdropper is the cowan. In these modern days the cowan is the man who has been legally raised but who has been dropped N.P.D. or suspended or expelled after trial; or he is an Entered Apprentice or a Fellowcraft whose further advancement has been stopped for cause.

If such a one be evilly disposed he may - and has been known to - forge a good standing card to use as credentials. Or he may find a lost card and assume the

identity of the name signed upon it. Some brethren are so unwise as to keep their good standing cards from year to year as an interesting collection. If such a collection be stolen it may be the innocent means of letting loose upon the Fraternity a whole flock of designing cowans, since dates upon such cards are changed with little difficulty. It is an excellent Masonic rule to destroy last year's card as soon as this year's card is received. Loss of a current card should be immediately reported to the Grand Secretary, as well as the Master of the lodge. A card should be signed as soon as received.

No avouchment may be accepted from an Entered Apprentice or a Fellowcraft. A brother of the first or second degree may be absolutely sure that all those in the lodge in which he took his degrees were Master Masons, but not being a Master Mason, he cannot possess lawful Masonic information about Master Masons. Neither is he competent to vouch to a Tiler for any Entered Apprentice or Fellowcraft he remembers as in lodge with him as a Mason of the degree in which the lodge was then open. The right to vouch is strictly a Master Mason's right; no brother of the first or second degree possesses it.

Vouching for a brother is a solemn undertaking. Before the lodge the voucher puts his Masonic credit against the credibility of the brother he vouches for. No squeamishness of feeling should ever interfere. A Master Mason should not vouch for his blood brother even if morally sure his brother is a Mason unless he has lawful Masonic information.

No one should ever feel offended because a brother will not vouch for him. A. may remember having sat in lodge with B., yet B. may have forgotten that they sat together in lodge. If B. refuses to vouch for A., A. should be happy that B. is so careful a Mason, not offended that B. does not remember or because "he doesn't trust me."

The lodge is more important than the brother. The sanctity of the tiled door is greater than the feelings of the individual. The Masonic honor of the brother doing the vouching should be of far greater worth to him than any consideration of expediency.

The entire matter may be covered in one small commandment: "Never vouch unless you have lawful Masonic knowledge."

THE CHARACTER OF A MASTER MASON

The moral aspects of a Mason's character are foreshadowed in the Entered Apprentice's Degree. He who lives by Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice is a moral man in the best meaning of that much-abused word.

A Master Mason has a public as well as a Masonic character; he must be a citizen before he can be a Freemason. All his reputation as a Master Mason, all the teachings of integrity and fidelity, all the magnificent examples of firmness and fortitude in trial

and danger - even in the Valley of the Shadow - which a man has been taught as a Master Mason are concerned in supporting with dignity his character as a citizen.

Politics are never discussed in Masonic lodges. This law, so well-known and obeyed that it is not written in most Grand Lodge Constitutions or lodge by-laws, comes down to us from the Old Charges. In the lodge we meet upon the level and part upon the square. We are not Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, Progressives, but Masons. No lodge may take any political action; to do so would be to draw upon it the immediate censure of the Grand Master and the Grand Lodge.

But these prohibitions do not mean that Masons should not study political economy; even as a lodge Masons may listen to talks upon the science of government which is a "political" matter if the word is used in its broad acceptance.

Every good citizen is expected to obey the law, uphold the Constitution and the government, do his duty in jury service, go to the polls and vote, bear arms when called to the colors, pay his just share of taxes, take an intelligent interest in the government, his party and political economy, support the public schools, reverence and honor the flag, keep the peace, serve nation, state, county, and town when called to leadership and so to live that his neighbors are happier for his living.

When the citizen becomes a Mason, he adds to these moral obligations his pledged word, his sacred honor, his character as it is seen naked of God, that he will do certain things and refrain from doing other things. All of these pledges involve not only his duty as a man but as a citizen.

The newly raised Master Mason is bidden to "support the dignity of your character on every occasion."

The Master Mason should be a better citizen than the non-Mason because he has been better taught and has pledged his sacred honor.

A MASTER'S WAGES

In the world of business, the employer usually sets the wage for which the workman must labor. The employer is governed partly by the law of supply and demand, partly by his own cupidity or generosity. The wage he pays may be to some extent fixed by labor unions; only occasionally must he pay whatever the workman demands. Usually he pays as little as he can for as much as he can get.

In the Masonic world all this is different. A Master's wages are as large as he wants them to be! He can ask any wage he will and get it if he is willing to work for it. No labour union sets the scale; the law of supply and demand does not operate; neither cupidity nor generosity is involved. The only question asked is, "Can you earn the wages you ask?"

A Master's wages are paid in coin of the heart, not of the mint. They are earned by what a Mason does with his mind, not his hands. In operative days a Freemason set

so many stones and received each man his penny. In Speculative Freemasonry a Master builds into his spiritual temple as many perfect ashlar as he can and receives for his labour uncounted coins of happiness, satisfaction, knowledge, understanding and spiritual uplift.

In operative days a Mason's earning power was circumscribed by his strength and his skill. In Speculative Masonry a Mason's earning power is circumscribed only by his wit and his desire. He may read these little books, receive his penny, and be satisfied. Or he may see them for what they are: only an introduction, a gateway, a sign pointing out the path and read and study and ponder until he has earned not one but a handful of pennies, each penny a thought, each thought a blessing, making life easier to live.

Archaeologists dig through the ruins of a city to uncover a forgotten one below. Push the spade in deeper and below the forgotten city is yet another, older, different, twice forgotten of men. City buried under city, patiently uncovered by the student's excavating tools - such are the symbols of Freemasonry.

Dig through the outer shell and find a meaning; cut down through that meaning and find another; under it if you dig deeply enough you may find a third, a fourth - who shall say how many teachings?

The Master Mason builds. Before he builds he digs a foundation. Let him who would receive all that Freemasonry has to give dig deeply into the symbolism, the history, the philosophy, the jurisprudence and the spiritual meanings of the Ancient Craft.

So, and only so, will he become a real Freemason - free to travel in foreign countries and receive Master's wages.

So mote it be.

FREEMASONRY COMES TO THE NEW WORLD

Space here forbids telling even in outline of the spread of Freemasonry into other lands. The interested student may read the fascinating story for himself in many excellent histories of Freemasonry. Here we must confine ourselves to a very short sketch of the coming of Freemasonry to America - a subject the beginnings of which are clouded in legend, veiled in tradition and misty in lack of records.

The first native born American Mason is generally conceded to have been Jonathan Belcher, who was made a Mason in England in 1704.

In June, 1730, the Duke of Norfolk, Grand Master of the Mother Grand Lodge, appointed Daniel Coxe, of New Jersey, the first Provincial Grand Master in America.

Johnson (*) says "There has appeared no evidence, however, that he exercised this deputation."

(1) Melvin M. Johnson, Past Grand Master of Massachusetts. His learned and comprehensive The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America is exhaustive and complete.

McGregor (*) says: "I was fortunately able to find a letter written by Daniel Coxe to James Alexander, dated from Trenton, N.J., July 31, 1730, thus definitely determining his (Coxe's) presence here."

(1) The late David McGregor, Historian of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey was a student of tireless energy and resource, with a profound knowledge not only of early Freemasonry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania but of early Colonial history in general.

On April 13, 1733, a deputation was issued to Henry Price as "Provincial Grand Master of New England and Dominions and Territories thereunto belonging."

If Coxe never exercised his authority under his deputation, then Henry Price was, as most historians claim, the father of Freemasonry in America. If Coxe did exercise his authority under his deputation, then he deserves that honour.

Both McGregor and Johnson are historians and research workers of scholarly ability. Brethren in New Jersey and Pennsylvania almost universally agree with McGregor; brethren in New England in general and Massachusetts in particular agree with Johnson. Into the merits of this friendly controversy and the claims of two great Grand Jurisdictions this sketch cannot go. Perhaps we shall do well to await the "further light" of future historical research.

After all, to most of us it matters little! Freemasonry came to the Colonies in the early third of the Eighteenth Century and spread and grew, made its own place in the hearts of the Colonists and played a mighty if quiet part in the stirring events which were to sever the Thirteen Colonies from the motherland and to form the United States.

"Occasional lodges" without charters or warrants met in the Colonies at undetermined dates prior to the first known regular and duly constituted lodge which was the "First Lodge in Boston," July 30, 1733. Johnson states (Beginnings of Freemasonry in America): Regular authority was granted for the establishment of duly constituted Freemasonry in New England in 1733; in all North America in 1734; in South America in 1735; in South Carolina, Georgia, and New Hampshire in 1735 or 1736; in the West Indies and New York in 1737; in Antigua and Nova Scotia in 1737-38; in Jamaica and St. Christopher in 1739; in the Barbados in 1739-40; in Bermuda, 1742; in Newfoundland, 1746; in San Domingo, 1748; and in Rhode Island, 1749.

By the close of the first half of the century not less than forty lodges had sprung from the Provincial Grand Lodge in Boston. Others had been warranted direct from London.

Newton states (Modern Masonry):

In point of priority, then, the following lodges have precedence in the history of regularly constituted lodges in America: The Lodge of Boston in 1733; the Lodge at

Montserrat second, in 1734; the Lodge of Philadelphia in 1734-35; the Lodge in Savannah, Georgia, and the Lodge in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1735; the Lodge in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1736; and so on as the list lengthened. The earliest American by-laws or regulations of a lodge were adopted in 1733, but no mention is made of any degrees. Masons were either "made" or "admitted" and nothing more until 1736, when for the first time the degree of Fellowcraft is named. Not until three years later, however, do we find such an entry as the following, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire: "Capt. Andrew Tombes was made a Mason and raised to a Fellowcraft." The records of Tun Tavern Lodge, of Philadelphia, in 1749, use the words "entered," "passed," and "raised" as we use them now.