

THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

Worshipful was a mediæval title of honor and respect which our forefathers in the Craft justly deemed appropriate to the presiding officer of a Masonic lodge. In Shakespeare we find the term used thus:—

"My father desires your worship's company."

"This is worshipful company."

The title is not used in Masonry as a term of adoration, but of sincere respect and deference. It accords supremacy in the lodge.

To leave no doubt of the power of the lodge's chief officer, he is styled not only Worshipful, but Master. He is a Master of Masters. All are Master Masons, but he is the Master of Masters—their Worshipful Master. His authority in the lodge is unquestionable—there, where he not only has no superior, but no equal. As the orb of day sweeps majestically and beneficently through the sky, the ruler of the material universe, with all the starry hosts of heaven silently and willingly doing his bidding, so the Worshipful Master with equal regularity and wisdom rules and governs his lodge. And just as above that sun is the sun's Creator—the Lord of all life and being, animate and inanimate, by whose infinity of wisdom the worlds were made, and in accordance with whose will all are governed; so above the Worshipful Master is the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge, with its Right Worshipful Grand Master—the constitutor of his lodge, and to which alone an appeal from his action lies.

The Worshipful Master of a lodge is infinitely more than the presiding officer of the Masonic society. There is no officer in sacred or profane usage that is his equal in privilege, power and honor. As a Master Mason all Freemasons are his peers, but he is the "first among his equals." Elevated by his fellows, through their exercise of that universal suffrage which embraces every affiliated mem-

ber of the Craft, when installed in the Master's station his authority in the lodge none there may question. Notwithstanding such absolute power is accorded him, we have never known a case where that power was exercised to serve merely personal ends. Misjudgments no doubt there have been, but malicious judgments never. The Brother who feels the weight of responsibility resting upon him, as every Worshipful Master must, has too much heart in his office to permit his head to go wrong. The most radical Brother on the floor often makes the most conservative Master of a lodge.

The Worshipful Master has two fields for the exercise of his talents—in the lodge when at labor, and in the banquet hall, when a table lodge is open, or the brethren are informally gathered to enjoy a feast of creature comforts and a flow of animal spirits. The ancient Romans had a *rex convivii*, or an *arbiter bibendi*, to preside over their banquets, and encourage hilarity or check excess. These offices are rolled into that of a Worshipful Master. At the banquet table, as in the lodge room, he is Master—Master everywhere. And here he is infinitely more than a mere presiding officer. We have many of us been at civic banquets, where, notwithstanding the fact that an eminent and honored citizen presided, he was powerless to maintain order. The tables have been mounted, the glasses tossed in the air, each end of each table became a law unto itself, having each its song and speech and would-be moderator, who had no power to moderate. Such a scene gives an idea of pandemonium. But did you ever behold pandemonium at a Masonic banquet? Did you ever see the Brother, however full of self-will, or anything else, that would not obey the sound of the gavel? There is no severer test of authority than a hundred or more men, armed with knives, forks, tongues, plates and glasses, and the wherewithal to re-