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LOOKING FOR LIGHT.

FROM THE MASONIC ECLECTIC.

We suppose that when a profane has been initiated, passed and raised, and is given to understand that the ceremonies through which he has passed are, so to speak, but the casket in which the jewels of Masonry are enclosed, the key by the aid of which he is to find his way to the inner sanctuary and be enabled to work out for himself the problems that may be presented to him, it is intended thus to impress upon his mind the fact that the true light will not reach him unless he places himself within the influence of its rays, and to encourage him to look for and find light of himself.

We suppose that the object of the many publications on the subject of Masonry has been not only to disseminate such light as their authors may have obtained, but to encourage others to seek, and having found, to divide with brothers and fellows the results of their findings.

We suppose that the great mass of the Fraternity, constantly increasing in numbers by accretions from the profane, are not thoroughly familiar with all that Masonry has to offer in the way of instruction, do not even know many of the most elementary truths of its doctrine, and especially have not so thoroughly digested its system of jurisprudence that they can at once lay hands on the law and equity of any given case.

We suppose that it is better for Masonry, and better for Masons, that, not knowing, they should seek information, and that those who do know should esteem it not only a privilege but a duty to aid those who are earnestly looking for light with such information as may be calculated to direct their inquiries in proper channels, and make the task of searching as pleasant and attractive as possible.

We suppose that one of the objects to be attained by Masonic journalism is the dissemination of instruction on all such points as may be publicly treated, thus offering a medium for the ready and prompt solution of difficulties which to the young Mason are sometimes of very great importance, and a wrong impression of which might lead him astray on matters of greater moment.

We suppose that the editor of a Masonic journal, if he be conscientious in the discharge of his important duties, if he will before answering a question take the trouble to ascertain the authoritative decision on it, has just as good a right to impart the information in his possession as any other man, and that a Mason must needs be a Grand Master before his eyes can be opened to the law, the philosophy, the history, symbolisms and teachings of the institution, is what the subjects of the Sultan call "bosh."

We take it for granted that the thousands of young men annually received into Masonry do not at once become experts, though they may desire to do so; that the mere fact of being placed in possession of a copy of the by-laws does not qualify them to solve many apparently simple questions, nor at once place them among those who ought to know if they don't; because it is a fact that Masonic knowledge and Masonic skill can only be attained by industry and perseverance, and they do not, like the pig in Paddy's dream, run about the streets crying "ate me," "ate me." It is therefore, obviously proper that these young Masons should seek instruction from those they believe qualified to impart it.

We take it for granted, as a logical sequence of the foregoing, that when one set of initiates have mastered the rudiments and got a foothold on the road to proficiency the work of instruction is by no means completed, but that other initiates having the same right to knowledge, feeling the same need of light, will in turn propound the same questions and be entitled to the same answers, and so on *ad infinitum*, and that hence when any one finds fault because some question is asked with which he is perfectly familiar he should be reminded that there was a time when he, standing in need of that self-same information, was glad to find some one able and willing to impart it to him. We presume, therefore, that we shall all agree with Grand Master John Q. A. Fellows, of Louisiana, when he says:

"Although the labors of the past year have been somewhat arduous, yet in matters of serious moment my official acts have been comparatively few. Of the minor questions and matters of business I may refer to letters making inquiry as to some point of Masonic law, already determined, and to answer which only required a reference to the authority or a statement of the solution in general terms. To almost any one familiar by the every-day experience of years many of the questions would seem too trivial to require an answer, and yet a moment's reflection would serve to convince the wisest of us that our wisdom was in a great measure acquired by the laudable seeking after knowledge, such as these inquiries manifest; and hence, instead of being even tacitly reprehended as a needless exhibition of ignorance, a spirit, a desire for improvement is manifested, which is in every sense commendable, and should on all occasions be encouraged."

It has been well said that there is no royal road to knowledge, and this saying is specially applicable to Masonic acquisition. We see daily developments of a desire to know all about the society, and we see, too, that the zeal thus brought into play is, in a majority of cases, perverted into a red hot devotion to skill in repeating the words of the ritual, that in many, many instances of a brother who, by dint of