

arrived by evening mail. Wondering what massive document had thus come to me, I waited on my arrival at the hall to examine it. I found, on arrival at home, that the package contained a magnificent diploma creating me an honorary member of the M. W. Grand Lodge of _____, the full amount of my donation to my suffering brother, and a most gratifying series of complimentary resolutions, full of thanks for the Masonic care and fraternal love which had so materially aided the Grand Master of that State, who, like the stranger succored by the Samaritan, had fallen among thieves. Here was a striking incident, illustrating the value and uses of Masonry. This incident is, I understand, written, framed and hung up in the Grand Lodge of which the brother was a member. Here is a beautiful illustration of the benefits of Freemasonry—the right hand knoweth not what the other hand doeth.

THE OLD SPIRIT OF MASONRY.

WE often hear old men of the Craft speak of "the old spirit of Masonry," and we have sometimes been led to ask others if this "spirit" was not all a myth, an imaginary divinity, which, like the gods of the heathens, had no real existence. But doubtless there was such a spirit, or it would not be remembered so distinctly and so sacredly by our ancient brethren. Yet what it was—to us of the present day—like the old ancient word may be lost forever. Still, perhaps we may guess at it, as we do at other things, and if we miss it, our honorable venerables, who know more of Masonry than we do, can correct us.

We know this much, that it is a patent fact, that all associations of men have had a peculiar spirit in their origin, which the years have usually worn out. Time indeed is apt to work deteriorations in all things, and it may have done so in the spirit of Masonry. The men of the earlier years were primitive in themselves, and they felt their Masonic obligations binding upon them unto the death. With them Masonry was a royal brotherhood which they held should be as pure as truth, as sacred as the spirit of divinity itself. Hence they always met as a royal brotherhood, on the level everywhere, and to be recognized everywhere as a member of the Fraternity, was to receive the fullest confidence of every mystic heart. The union was one of spirit, and not one of mere mechanical or worldly show. Nature itself paid homage to it, and even conventional law gave it its best salutations. Whether they met on the highest hills or in the lowest valleys, they came together in the unity of a noble brotherhood, with the spirit of fraternal respect and confidence, and with the reverent feeling of the highest social life.

Their reunions were convocations of the true, fraternal spirit, and hence they were never parted save upon the square.

It is not strange that those who lived in that happy day should be jealous of the dying away of any part or parts of that sublime and ancient regime. They saw this spirit was simple and sincere, as well as common and beautiful, hence they prized their Masonic meetings above all other gatherings. This, as far as we have been posted, is what they term the old spirit of the Craft, which they learned to love so dearly, and which they would like to see revived throughout all our jurisdictions. The fact that our modern society, both in civil and religious life, is satisfied, in the general way, with mere forms has doubtless had something to do with our Masonic formality, and it may be that this has been the chief cause of the fraternal indifference which is so frequently manifested.

Some men, we know, were Masons who perhaps never should have been initiated, and charters have been granted and continued when they never should have been even ordered. But to go back to the real weakness of our grand institution we may perhaps say that the "old spirit" has never been wounded except "in the house of its friends." Incompetent men have too often conferred its degrees and too frequently it has been the case that bigotry, selfishness, prejudice, or native meanness, has not been routed out of the hearts of some of our brethren, who have for a period worn the grand jewel of the Master.

Obligations have not always been impressively given, and therefore they have not been properly comprehended, and therefore the poor blind candidate has been left to wander on, in, at least, comparative darkness, so that up to the present hour he knows but little more about the moral, social and intellectual sublimities of Masonry than if he had only been initiated into the mystic mummeries of the "Thousand and one."

To have the old spirit of Masonry one must look, think, feel and know what this spirit is. He must seek for it, and labor to get it, and then have the self-mankind about him to show it in all his intercourse with his brethren and with the rest of mankind.