

costly piles of hewn stones to crush all charity out of the Fraternity in their midst. The reform I here indicate should, for the credit of the Masonic institution in America and its glory, have the attention it merits; and the great stigma that of late years has grown to be a curse upon the Fraternity, inasmuch as it has seriously weakened those mystic ties which would otherwise and should be strong, will forever be removed.

**The Working Tools of a Freemason.—
The Pencil.**

No. VIII.

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In passing through the mysteries of the third degree, the candidate, after receiving the Skirret, is presented by the Worshipful Master with "The Pencil," and informed that "with the Pencil the skilful artisan delineates the building in a draft or plan, for the instruction or guidance of the workman." This, of course, has reference to our operative brethren, and, consequently, the neophyte is taught that in a speculative sense, "the Pencil teaches us that all our words and actions are not only observed, but are recorded by the Most High, to whom we must render an account of our conduct through life." What a wondrous lesson is here emblematically given by means of a little thing, with which every child delights to play, and every schoolboy daily handles, and civilized man constantly employs.

The profane may laugh at our ceremonies, so meaningless and almost puerile to them; they may scoff at

our quaint ritual, which to many may appear crude and bald; they may jeer at our "antique conservatism," but we can afford it. They only guess at all this; we know, or should know the meaning of every line and sentence in our glorious ritual.

In Freemasonry there is a *hidden meaning* for every phrase that none can appreciate except those who have passed through the tyled door, and stood on our Mosaic pavement, before the altar, on which lie its three great lights. This is one of the *secrets* of the success and permanency of an institution that has withstood the perishable lives of States, Kingdoms and Empires.

But to return more particularly to our subject, the Pencil. Cannot every Mason perceive how each one of these apparently insignificant Working Tools draw the mind of man by a lesson of, and by itself, to the contemplation of the divine attributes of a Great and All Wise God? "Here," the candidate is told, "is a pencil; you have seen and handled hundreds before; you never thought as you wrote, or sketched, or drafted with the same, that there was anything peculiar about it; from this hour, from this very moment, you cannot possibly forget each time you do so, that One Higher and Mightier than the greatest potentate or most distinguished statesman on earth, is watching over all your actions, and recording them with the *pencil of life* in the imperishable book of *death*, which will prove at the final day, whether you were true to the tenets you now profess or were a perjured creature, who has joined our God-inspired Society of Brethren for mer-