

own free will—his entrance is of my free-will. Your quotation means either more or less than you claim, and your position can not be sustained, I think.

What you may have meant to claim perhaps, is that the candidate for the mysteries of Freemasonry *makes the request* "of his own free-will and accord,"—that is to say, his first impulse, and his first steps to gratify that impulse, were his, and his alone; that he was not under duress; that he sought Freemasonry, and Freemasonry did not seek him. But it seems absurd to claim that a profane enters my lodge of his own free will and accord, when I can stop him at any moment of his progress, even at the threshold of the lodge.

"Enforced membership is contrary to the very spirit of our Institution," you say. Since when? I ask. You law-givers, who know not Moses and the Prophets, are responsible for many half-truths which work all the harm of whole errors. The average Mason of to-day is no student; like our professional men who are *case-lawyers*, and study decisions rather than law, our craftsmen of to-day take the *ipse dixit* of some self-constituted teacher, who writes much and makes some mistakes; and especially is our young Mason inclined to adopt doctrines thus announced, if they have a pleasant jingle, or coincide with his wishes or his hastily gathered notions.

The ancient regulations, in substance, say, if I am not in error (and am no law-giver or teacher) that, "every brother *ought* to belong to a lodge, and in ancient times no Master or Fellow *could* be absent from it without incurring severe censure until it appeared to the Master and Wardens that pure necessity hindered him." Thus far Nebraska goes and no further. And no legal quibbles, no word twisting, no distorting the meaning of the words "ought" or "could" will relieve you from this refutation of your heresy. I fully

credit you with an earnest desire to be useful to the Craft, and to aid in building up our Institution, but it seems to me that in this matter you are guided by policy rather than by principle; that you test work by the bevel of to-day rather than by the square of yesterday; and yet with us yesterday is to-day and to-morrow. You permit cobwebs to obstruct your outlook and details to distract you from a general survey.

In some jurisdictions a Mason who renounces Freemasonry is furnished with a perpetual certificate of good standing—a dimit. If a brother desires to abandon the Institution why will not suspension or expulsion serve his purpose as well as a dimit? Do you answer that he may object to the odium of suspension or expulsion? I reply that the whole is greater than any part, that the interests of the Craft are paramount to his; that his suspension or expulsion is not published to the world in a well regulated jurisdiction, and that if he really desires to abjure Freemasonry it matters little to him how he stands with the Craft after the consummation of his desire.

You presume to speak *ex cathedra*. Few words in your article express toleration of opinions different from yours. Only in your concluding paragraph do you use as mild language as "*we believe*." "We believe that any Grand Lodge adopting so narrow-minded a policy" (*policy*, mark you) "is actually building up non-affiliation within its jurisdiction, and acting contrary to the very spirit of Freemasonry." I reply that you have not based your argument on the true corner-stone of our ancient regulations; that you have not tested your theory by the touchstone of our ancient usage; that you seem to think freedom means absence from all restraint; that you prefer policy to principle. In Nebraska we try to do as near right as we know, we disdain to adopt a policy merely because it is fashionable; we mean to hew to the