

oblivious of his duties as a Mason, and even forswearing his honor as a man, he resorts to the revenge of the ballot-box, and hides himself behind its unquestionable right and inviolable secrecy. He strikes at the vitals of Masonic fellowship and from that moment the Lodge is dead.

Instances have occurred in which this destroying spirit assumed a bolder attitude and proclaimed in the Lodge and out of it, in private and public, on the streets and highways, that no more work should be done in—Lodge, as every application would be black-balled—the dissatisfied Mason himself, announced that he would do the deed. In such cases there is speedy redress in charges of “gross unmasonic conduct” and expulsion from the sanctuary so wantonly profaned.

There is some merit of hardihood or even bravery in the latter exhibition of rage, for it discloses an enemy who lays himself open to attack, and challenges combat. It is the covert foe from which the Lodge suffers most. He is truly a serpent in a dove’s nest, and as he enjoys his revenges in secrecy, wherever he is, or whoever he may be, he is not likely to charge that the epithet above applied personally and particularly to him. He will know it himself, and keep it among his own Masonic secrets.

Let him keep the secret, and let him resolve henceforth to be a man and a Mason. Let him realize, if he never did before, the essential purity of the thing he has soiled and the solemnity of the privileges with which he has been trifling, and he will not have read these words in vain. He will thereafter use the secret ballot as contemplated in the design and structure of Freemasonry—the guard of purity, the keynote of harmony and the soul of honor. He will feel himself free from the tyranny of petty spite, and once more a reasonable, responsible, independent man. He will realize with a keen sensibility the truth in these words:

“ ‘Tis pleasant to have a giant’s strength,
But tyrannous to use it like a giant.”

—*The Freemason.*

SHOULD A PETITION EVER BE RETURNED?

The question involves more points for thought than the mere surface of it indicates. The nature and intent of a petition, its pre-requisites and consequences, all come in review, from the very character of the institution to remote results.

Masonry seeks no votaries—no initiates. Our theory is, that whoever petitions must do it at his own request and of his own free will and accord. His opinion of the institution must be favorable, and it should have been so a long time. If Freemasons act as our tenets require, the opinion of the applicant should be based upon his reading, familiarity with our rules and laws, acquaintance with our members, and a comparison of them with others. Whoever presents or recommends a petition, thereby vouches for the good character and moral worth of the applicant. The petitioner is aware that he must undergo the ordeal of investigation and the scrutiny of the ballot at three different times. If the applicant be accepted, the petition has no further importance; it is filed away in the archives of the lodge.

In case the petitioner is rejected, the petition becomes important in the future.