

THE DEFECTIVE STONE.

Some writor has given to the world as sparkling a thought under this head as a freemason could desire to read. It expresses in most conclusive terms the danger of taking into the Lodge *one bad man*. Many and many a Lodge is destrcyed through the inherent defect of *one member*. But we will give the paragraph entire, and would be glad to extend the proper credit if we knew who the author is.

"Don't put in that stone," said one mason to another as they were working together on the rear wall of a church. "Can't you see it's a poor quality, all flaky, and will scale away to pieces?" "It isn't very good grade, I see, but it fits in here, and I don't want to wait for another. Besides you can't see it from the ground, and nobody will take the trouble to climb up here to look at it." "You'd better send for another block. That isn't fit for the wall; it won't stand the weathor and if it should go to pieces, it will damage the whole building." "I guess it won't damage me nor you either, so here goes." And he lifted the block of the loose-grained, flaky freestone into its bed, though the outer shell cracked and the shell sloughed off. He dashed over it a trowel-full of mortar, and went on with the next tier. Nobody could see the defective stone, for it was covered by a projective buttress, and only the two stone masons were present when it was laid. But though unseen it was unsafe, and time brought about its own result. Every sunbeam loosened its texture a little, every storm helped to crumble off a minute fragment, and little by little, after many years the stone crumbled away. That was bad enough, but that was not all. It chanced that the great beams of the roof rested a few tiers above directly over the defective block, and as the stone decayed the beam sank a little. Presently a crack opened in the ceiling, disfiguring the fresco painting, and the crack grew to a leak, letting in the rain. And then at last the worthless block fell out, the beam drooped down, the roof sank in, and the church was no longer fit for use, until after the loss of much time, and the expense of much money, a new roof was built and a new block inserted in the wall. It was only a small defect, but it did much damage in the end. There is a structure which everybody is building, young and old, each one for himself. It is called character, and in every act of life is a stone. If day by day we are careful to build our lives with pure, noble upright deeds, at the end will stand a fair temple, honored by God and man. But as one leak will sink a ship, and one flaw break a chain, so one mean, dishonorable, untruthful act or work, will forever leave its impress and work its influence on our characters. Then let the several deeds unite to form a perfect day, and one by one the days grow into noble years, and the years as they pass, will raise at last a beautiful edifice, enduring forever to our praise.