

FELLOW-CRAFT.

Freemasons are not hard masters, and apprenticeship when diligently pursued always meets with its fitting reward. That reward is promotion, advancement, a further glimpse of the beauties of Masonry, and a larger share in the knowledge of its mysteries. There are three leading pre-requisites to the possession of the Fellow-Craft Degree, which are service for a just and lawful time as an Apprentice, proficiency in the elementary learning that illustrates and distinguishes the first Degree, a continuance of that uprightness of character and good report among men which originally won for the candidate the favor of the Craft. In the world a man may live forever, always driven, never driving. His nominal apprenticeship may end, only to merge into a real apprenticeship that never ends. His life of toil, his increase of knowledge, his devotion to business, may never win for him a name in the partnership and share in its profits. It is not so in Masonry. The Master Mason shares his secrets with, and imparts his knowledge to, every Brother who proves himself worthy. There are no castes in the Fraternity, no exclusive platform, no lines of demarcation, no partitions to divide the Craftsmen. All meet upon the level. It is not contemplated or desired that any should remain Apprentices or Fellow-Crafts. All are designed to be Masters. When Freemasonry was an operative part it was different; but now that it is a purely speculative science, Light and Advancement are open to every Brother. So far from being debarred from them, he is expected to claim them, and if he does not, his fragmentary knowledge and his unusual position leave him without the full sympathy of his Brethren. Several centuries ago, it was otherwise. The body of the Craft was then composed of Fellow-Crafts—the Masters being the superintendents, the Fellow-Crafts being the workmen, while the Apprentices were mere learners. Thus we read in the Diary of the distinguished antiquary, Elias Ashmole that on October 16th, 1646, he “was made a Freemason at Warrington, Lancashire, by Richard Penket, Warden, and the Fellow-Crafts.” And again he writes, March 10th, 1682, when describing a reception that occurred at the Masons’ Hall, in London, I was the *Senior Fellow* among them—it being thirty-five years since I was admitted. There were present, besides myself, the *Fellows* after named.” &c. There is not the same reason now for maintaining the distinction between degrees that there was then. The learning of the Craft can be more readily imparted and more quickly mastered now. A willing mind and guileless heart, with the lapse of the lawful time, will qualify any Apprentice or Fellow-Craft for a full participation in all the mysteries of Freemasonry.

It has been aptly said that the Entered Apprentice is the child in Freemasonry, the Fellow-Craft the youth, while the Master Mason is the full-grown man. The Second Degree is symbolic of the educational period of life, when the perceptive powers are drilled, the reasoning powers developed, and the mind is taught the learning that is the foundation for all of its after achievements. The object of the First Degree is to purify the heart, that of the Second to elevate the mind. Thus with purity for the foundation-stone, the super-structure of Wisdom may be fitly raised. The Fellow Craft Degree is especially devoted to Science. While it recognizes the supremacy of law and the duty of obedience, it also inculcates the value of those seven liberal arts and sciences which are distinctively called Masonic Sciences, because