

required from a Brother, in the preceding Degree, before he is advanced to the next higher one. All the trouble lies here. What is the origin of it? Not in the fundamental law, for there is scarcely a Masonic jurisdiction whose regulations are not specific upon this point. For example, the Ahiman Rezon of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania provides: "A candidate shall not receive more than one Degree on one day, nor a subsequent Degree at a less interval than one month, from his reception of a former Degree, without dispensation from the Grand Master. But it is recommended to all Lodges to *require proof of a Brother's proficiency in the Craft before he is advanced.*" And the By-Laws of the subordinate Lodges in many instances supplement this regulation by a still more stringent one of their own, providing for an examination in open Lodge prior to advancement. The fault does not lie in the law, but in the administration of it. The case is the same with Masonic law as with political law—it is often practically obsolete; and the one who is responsible for it in our case is the Worshipful Master. All power is his. He may make or mar a Lodge; admit to it only those who are skillful Craftsmen, or every one who has served a Masonic Apprenticeship, without regard to whether he has learned anything or not.

There are three reasons why there are so many rusty Masons about. One is that just mentioned—the neglect of Worshipful Masters to enforce the regulations of their Grand and subordinate Lodges. There is no excuse for this; and if they do not see the propriety of administering the fundamental law themselves, the Past Masters of their Lodges ought, in a fraternal manner, to direct their attention to it. A second reason is: the neglect of the recommenders of a candidate to see that he perfects himself in the ritual, as he proceeds to take his Degrees. It is the imperative duty of recommenders to do this. They owe it to themselves, and to their friends thus introduced; and yet we have known Brethren who have taken their first Degree, and were in the preparing-room prior to taking the second, to be found by their guide as ignorant as though they had never been brought to Masonic Light. And yet, when introduced, they have been passed and raised as if their skill was equal in magnitude to their ignorance. Their recommenders erred primarily, and the W. M. secondarily; but both radically and unmasonically. The third reason is: the too great readiness of Grand Masters to grant dispensations for the conferring of more than one Degree at the same time. It is to this error, doubtless, that we owe the discredit of our travelling Freemasons, who are unable to work their way into any foreign Lodge. Pennsylvania, in its day, has erred in this way, equally with its sisters. Indeed, a correspondent in Atlanta, Georgia, writes us, that we have attained rather an unenviable reputation abroad for sending out unskillful Brethren. If this be so in the past, we do not think it will be so any longer. The last year or two we have turned over a new leaf, and every so called emergency is not hastily endorsed as such, and a dispensation granted as a matter of course, upon application. Let us be still more stringent in this respect, for it will be for the good of Freemasonry in general and this jurisdiction in particular.

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The tears of beauty are like clouds floating over a heaven of stars, bedimming them a moment that they may shine with a brighter luster than before.