

The Freemason.

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GUARD WELL THE CHAIR.

We are now in the worry of the annual lodge elections; and the discerning brother may garner a store of useful lessons therefrom if he is so minded.

"All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only, that so the lords may be well served, the brethren not put to shame, nor the Royal Craft despised." So say the Antient Charges which we are strictly enjoined to observe. But how is it in our lodges? How often is "real worth" recognized or "personal merit" rewarded? Take a retrospective glance at your own lodge, for instance, and ponder whether the mistake of one year's choosing ever brought its cure to succeeding years. The minor offices should not be regarded as stepping-stones, each one establishing a right to the one above it and the whole rendering the claim upon the chair imperative. They are but terms of probation in which it is given to the attending brethren opportunity to note whether the aspirant is worthy to be clothed with the dignity of a ruler in whom rests the weal or woe of his lodge. A brother's fitness to govern should be the first and best qualification. You may get fifty to memorize and communicate the ceremonies and not one of the lot fit to preside with that measure of justice and discretion so necessary to success. It is very wearying to hear at this season of the year the claims of a brother supported on the ground that he has served his terms in the Wardens' chairs, or because he can patter off the three degrees like a book. In many cases the ritual affords him the only chance he ever gets of opening his mouth without "putting his foot in it."

While a brother must have qualified for the chair by having served a year as Warden, it does not follow that the Warden's office completes the qualification. There are other considerations of vastly greater importance that must not be lost sight of,

uration of this was furnished in a city lodge recently. A Past Warden contended for the Master's position with the present Senior Warden and was elected. The brethren, when they came to vote for the second office, would have re-elected the latter, but piqued with his defeat he rose in his place, declined the honour and remarked that he would abandon the contest to "those people who were anxious for office." To say that the brother's action was indiscreet would be putting it very mildly, and if it alienated a degree of sympathy from him for a future occasion nobody can be surprised. It undoubtedly revealed as clear as daylight the fact that a brother, thoughtless enough to display such a deplorable want of tact, required a further course of training before he could demonstrate to his fellows that he was qualified to preside in the capacity of Master.

Our lodges have suffered so much from the too hasty promotion of inexperienced officers that it is necessary that some check should be applied. We have seen these prematurely elevated brethren so inflated with the importance which the position lent to them that they forgot that in a brief period they, too, would have to step down to make room for somebody else, and that their misdirected authority would probably be remembered. The young aspirant for W. M., who accepts the well-meant counsel of the Past Masters up to the time of election, and is heedless of it from the moment he is installed, may be termed a Masonic mistake. The little bit of power with which he is temporarily invested, he uses to exhibit his own ignorance. He "rules" and "gavels" with an utter disregard of conventionality or fraternal consideration, and if he gets a chance to "sit" on the old P.M., he does it with a gusto, and should that P.M. happen to be the one who godfathered him from the floor, his satisfaction is all the keener, and the sooner the prevailing idea that a Senior Warden, because he is Senior Warden, must be promoted, is abandoned the better it will be for Masonry. And you can see him chuckle from his boots up and next day he "blows" about his achievement to any and everybody whom he meets. But the hour of retribution and repentance comes as surely as the sun shines in the heavens, and then that very fresh young brother will wish that he knew something about the chair and its duties before he undertook to govern men with more experience and perhaps more brains than himself.

It was in a Toronto lodge, not many years ago, that the Past Masters observing that want of punctuality and general disregard of duty were the distinguishing characteris-

tics of the officers, so arranged matters that at the following election they voted themselves into all the chairs, much to the astonishment of the youthful brethren who seemed to think there was nothing required of them but to wear the title and jewel of their office. That lodge has prospered ever since.

The Installation ceremony gives the requirements for the chair.

"He ought to be exemplary of conduct, courteous in manner, easy in address, but steady and firm in principle, and able and willing to undertake the management of the work, and well skilled in the Antient Charges, regulations and landmarks.

"Can you my brother conscientiously undertake the duties of Master of this lodge under these qualifications?"

There may have been an instance, but it is not recorded, nor does living man remember it, where the aspirant for that distinguished position answered, "I cannot."

HE SHOULD BE EXPELLED.

It is freely spoken of in this city that a young brother with more enterprise than discretion and certainly with a complete forgetfulness of what was due to his sense of honour undertook to print and publish a copy of the ceremonies authorized by Grand Lodge. Whether he did this as speculation or accepted the job as a contract for somebody else is not known, but the D.D.G.M., will certainly fail in his duty if he does not at once institute a searching enquiry and either exonerate the brother whose name in connection with the offence is freely used and must have been heard by that official, or bring him to speedy trial and punishment. Expulsion is the mildest penalty that can be meted out for so barefaced a violation of a sacred pledge, and no silly sentiment should hold back those in authority from proceeding in the matter with vigour and despatch.

HOW HE PASSED THE TYLER.

Our old friend the Tyler, of Grand Rapids, who some time ago expressed so keenly his desire to revolutionize the work of the Grand Lodge of Canada, has been eloquently silent since we gave him a few fraternal admonitions a couple of months ago. His belief in the spotless perfection of Michigan is only equalled by his insatiable anxiety to elevate Canada to his own standard, and if a similar inclination were observable in any one of the twenty thousand brethren who owe fealty to the latter, it is possible that the worthy revolutionist of Grand Rapids would shake hands with himself and be encouraged to have a whack at some of the other jurisdictions that look over his fence. However, he has not given to the world any endorsement of his little weakness, and we must presume that the backing that