

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MASONIC OFFICERS.

Office in the Craft is unlike office in any other organization under the sun. In State and Church, in societies, civil, religious and beneficial, it is true that the office-holder is always a personage of importance, but there is that in Masonic office which distinguishes it from, and lifts it above, all others. There is a dignity about it, an authority, a responsibility, a power, which render it incomparable with any lower or lesser station. Whether you take the Mastership of a Lodge, or the Grand Mastership of the Grand Lodge, the office is unique. A pure democracy in its essential character and features, the Masonic Fraternity is presided over by a practically absolute sovereign, whose will is restrained only by the Landmarks and Constitutions of the Craft. He must see to it that the ancient usages and customs be preserved in all their integrity. Here arises the highest responsibility of Masonic office. It is a trust. It is not for personal aggrandizement, but for the welfare of the Brotherhood. It is not a compliment, but a sacred charge. It is something that is not to be sought, nor to be refused. The idea of electioneering for Masonic office is abhorrent to its very nature. It is a gift, not a purchase, a moral and intellectual treasure, not merchandize. The better any Brother called to fill a supreme Masonic station appreciates all this, the better officer he becomes, and the more the Fraternity prospers under his rule.

Freemasonry has no low aims, but all of its principles tend to exalt the higher nature in its initiates, and render it dominant. It distinctly recognizes the Creator of our bodies and spirits as the Grand Architect of the Universe, and it teaches every supreme officer in the Craft, be he Worshipful Master or Grand Master, that he is a subordinate architect—a

disciple of the Supreme Architect, and himself supreme in his special sphere. He is a ruler and a judge entrusted with power and authority which liken him in some measure at least, to the Father of us all, and it is this sense of fatherhood over the Brotherhood which should pervade the mind, control the will, and dignify the action of every ruler in Freemasonry. His responsibility is as absolute as his authority.

This responsibility is manifold, being co-ordinate with duty. A Master of a Lodge, primarily, is responsible for good work. He should be the "first among his equals," superior to all of his officers in ability, and able, willing and anxious to surpass all of his predecessors. The Masonic officer who is "slothful in business," slovenly in work, ambitious only to end his year of official life, and receive a Jewel—for doing nothing! such an officer deserves to have a perpetual seat on the floor. He is a figure-head, a shadow, a delusion and a snare. But the Master who is worthy of the name, and the honors which accompany it, becomes master of the Work, master of himself, and Master of the Lodge. He obtains the true work; he renders it with effect—not as an automaton, or a sort of Pretty Poll, but as a man and a Mason who knows what he is about, who is anxious to make a due impression, and determined that the reputation of Freemasonry shall be untarnished while he is responsible for it as a presiding officer.

The Master is responsible for the punctual and regular attendance of himself and officers at the meetings of his Lodge. He is an example, and they are examples. If he or they neglect their duties, very many other Brethren will likewise do so, and the Lodge will become a shadow. And it is always his duty to actively promote harmony and Brotherly Love. He is the representative of no class, but of the entire membership. He is the visible cement that unites them.