

THE SKILL AND ASSIDUITY IN A W. M.

In the remarks, in our issue of the 11th of October, 1884, under this head, we spoke more particularly of the skill necessary in a Worshipful Master to ensure the success of the lodge over which he had to preside. A mere knowledge of the words of the ritual, we then pointed out, was not all that was needed to entitle a brother to the highest rank among his fellows, but rather an ability satisfactorily to preside over the meetings of his lodge, whether engaged in labor or at refreshment. It may truly be said that the Worshipful Master for the time being is the corner-stone on which the whole fabric of his lodge rests—that on his skill and ability depends, not only the welfare of the lodge, but the comfort and happiness of its members. How necessary then is it that every candidate selected for the Master's chair should be able to carry out the duties required of him in a satisfactory manner. In our closing remarks on this subject, in the issue to which we have already referred, we promised to devote some attention to the relationship of the Worshipful Master of a lodge to his Past Masters, and it is our intention on the present occasion to redeem that promise. We have already said that a Worshipful Master should be ruler in his own lodge, not governing, however, with a rod of iron, but rather by kindness, and it is with the Past Masters of his lodge that he may find the greatest difficulty, or, if properly managed, from whom he may obtain the greatest assistance. Englishmen are seldom slow to show respect for the experience gained by their seniors, and few Englishmen more fully recognize this principle than Freemasons. Yet cases will arise in which a newly-appointed brother may consider his own ability equal, if not superior, to that of the brethren of his lodge who have had the advantage of actual experience in

the work which he is fresh to, and some will even go so far as to urge their opinion against that of the old and tried members of the lodge. We are not wholly opposed to this course, because unless a little spirit is shown by each succeeding Master, a lodge may run the risk of dying from inanition, but great skill is necessary to decide how far the spirit of rebellion may safely be carried. The Past Masters of a lodge have no doubt a claim to be considered, and their opinion should be respected, but only so far as a Master may feel he can coincide in their views, or at least only so far as their views may not be in exact opposition to his own, is it safe for him to go without some independent advice. He is the Master of the lodge, he is responsible for its welfare, and he alone will be to blame if any experiment results unfavorably. It will be no use for him to plead he acted on the advice of the Past Masters; he was placed in his position to manage the lodge; he accepted the office well knowing the responsibilities attached to it, and must be as equally prepared to meet any complaints as he is to listen to eulogistic compliments. True, the Past Masters will not desert him in an emergency, but between the lay members of his lodge and those who have passed the chair, there is often a great gulf, and when such does exist it is the Worshipful Master who is looked upon as the bridge which shall unite the two sections; therefore it is well to remember that any question on which there is likely to be a difference of opinion independent action is necessary more than at any other time, but this independent action must not usually be carried to extremes; a conciliatory course is possible, and in the arrangement of this the Worshipful Master will have ample opportunity for displaying that skill so essential in a ruler of the Craft.—*Freemasons' Chronicle*.

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