

WB C. F. Arkoncel, PM (50)

In the last 38 years that I have been in Masonry, I have been wondering at times why there was little or poor attendance in Lodge meetings compared with those in other fraternal, civic or cultural societies. Inducements for good attendance were made in some instances, reminders were duly given, and penalties were provided for, but the anomaly still goes on. While attendance in Lodge meetings is compulsory, yet the exceptions in our obligation are sometimes the excuse for absenteeism in Lodge meetings. But if a brother Mason is not sick, or has no urgent work to do and has extra time for the Lodge, he should go and attend his Lodge meetings.

Discovered Cases.

I have attempted to observe closely the causes for poor attendance in Lodge meetings among old and new Masons and the result was a unique revelation. There were cases where a brother Mason continued paying his monthly dues, but was always absent in Lodge meetings or public appearances of Masonry. One reason was the brother was sickly so as not to feel comfortable in going out at night. Another reason was that the brother had been working hard the whole day and he was too tired to go. There was another case where a brother Mason lost his employment and he preferred to save expenses rather than go to the Lodge and bother his brethren for assistance. There was another instance where a brother was slighted by another brother Mason and since then he absented himself from the Lodge. There was another case where a brother resented an unpleasant

treatment from another brother, and since then he preferred to stay out of the Lodge, demitted from Masonry and joined another society. On the other hand there was another case where a brother was black-balled in a Lodge meeting, but persisted to apply for initiation and after he was admitted, he became an exemplary lodge-goer. There was another case where a brother felt he was discriminated by another brother, and since then he absented himself from the Lodge but continued paying his dues. There was another instance where a brother damaged the interests of another, and since then he did not like to see the face of the offending brother. A brother was also found to be reluctant to go to the Lodge because his wife became a religious fanatic. A true Mason is sensible not sensitive, reasonable not unreasonable, cool-headed not impulsive, intelligent not weak-minded, but as a human being he cannot escape defects which he must correct himself toward excellence or perfection.

Inside the Lodge.

The present writer, human as he is like others, does not pretend to know everything about Masonry. But Masons should like one another, maintain mutually good and friendly relations, cooperate with one another in the solution of Masonic problems, and help or assist one another whenever possible.

Inside the Lodge which is at work, a Mason has to maintain good decorum and obey all orders emanating from the East. But this does not

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mean that any Lodge officer or brother has the right or power to mortify or injure the feelings of another brother by assuming the pride of a peacock, or arrogantly exposing or correcting the ritualistic mistakes of another brother. Any officer or brother must practise courtesy and politeness without arrogance, without the necessity of hurting the feeling or pride of another. He may courteously request him to do something, but under no circumstances order him disrespectfully to do this and that in the manner of a despot. A Lodge officer or brother should avoid behaving despotically, or making an unnecessary show-off of power or wisdom, or pretending to be virtuous or wise. He should act all the time toward a brother Mason with friendliness, fairness and justice, and without wrongful discrimination. In other words, he must follow and practise the Golden Rule: "Do not to others which you do not like to be done to yourself."

Outside the Lodge

After behaving with a strictly formal decorum in a Lodge meeting, the brethren go back to their ordinary social status to be treated and to treat one another in the appropriate manner. The brethren are again free to exchange amenities, engage in mirthful conversations, play jokes, talk about anything, but should always main-

tain the usual courtesy, politeness, fairness and friendliness. Plain humbuggery should be avoided as it provokes hatred or suspicion. Complimentary greetings, kind words and polite language which are the earmarks of a good Mason, should often be employed. Pardon and ask pardon if it is proper to do so in case of mistakes, and any brother Mason should not be taken for granted. A brother Mason should not snub, belittle or disregard another brother Mason for Masonry teaches its votaries to be kind, helpful and useful to one another. A brother Mason should not deny another brother as long as the thing asked is within the length of his cabletow. If it is not within his power to give it, he should be frank and not delay to say no; otherwise, he is Masonically dull. In that event silence ceases to be gold, becomes a deterrent to friendship, fellowship and harmony. Do not presume a brother to be this or that because he might not be as you think him to be. It is better to play safe, say the truth, and confess your inability, rather than show yourself to be a big despot, selfish, proud and egoistic. The days are not always bright. There are always floods and storms, misfortunes and calamities ahead where you might need the helping hand of Masonry and brother Masons. △

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