

LODGE MEMBERS AND MASONS

“Our finances are low, Brethren,” a Worshipful Master announced in his lodge one evening, “we must get busy securing candidates.”

By “securing candidates,” of course, he meant getting people to join his lodge who will be known as Masons. So, the good Brother in effect said, “We need money for our lodge; let us make more Masons.”

But for the fact that remarks like this are now frequently heard from well meaning Brothers genuinely concerned with the welfare of their lodge, comments seem unnecessary. We fear that for all their sincerity, these brethren miss completely the true meaning of Masonry; for to confer the title of Freemason on any one merely to raise money is repugnant to the character of the Order.

In the first place, we cannot “secure candidates” without violating one of the ancient traditions of the Order, namely, one who seeks membership comes of his own free will and accord. A fervent advocate of liberty, Masonry would have every neophyte realize that he is entering the portals of the Order without inducements or invitation from any one. Besides, Masonry needs no mass support or numerical power — as do those who have to campaign for membership to achieve their ends — because its province is morality and its task, the search for perfection.

Incidentally, we cannot make Masons. Men make themselves into Masons from the lessons of the Order. Joining a lodge makes one a member of it but not necessarily a Mason. This he must do for himself. Degrees conferred especially under the circumstance stated above, more often than not,

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are worse than wasted because they prove to be mere trappings that misrepresent the Order. Because of the belief that to be a lodge member is all that is needed to become a Mason, there are many lodge members but very few Masons.

There is no denying that money is necessary to run a lodge. But there are many ways to bolster lodge finances when necessary. Many a lodge has successfully solved its financial problems without cheapening the Order. The fact, however, is that there would be no need to tax our ingenuity and resourcefulness in that direction if members observe faithfully, as they must, their duties to their lodge. Our obligations bind us not only to the vows assumed at the altar but to all engagements entered into because a Mason's word must be his bond. The weakness of the Order in many places is due to the lowered appreciation of Masonic values on the part of many of our brethren; for only as we hold high an ideal and invest it with true devotion, can it become real, alive and strong.

And so let us address this thought to our Brethren who are troubled by adequate financing and other problems of their lodge, "Seek ye first a proper appreciation of Masonic values and all these things shall be added unto you." —N