

The Masonic Institution

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Freemasonry is, in its method of operation, a moral and spiritual educational institution, and as such has much in common with temporal institutions of learning. Like them, it has imposed certain qualifications or requirements for admittance, such as aptitude, learning capacity, and the prior possession of certain basic knowledge. Like them also, we advance our students through progressive grades or classes which we call degrees.

Just as the best educational institutions often fail to produce the desired results, so Freemasonry, for all our efforts and notwithstanding all our precautions, frequently fails to train initiates into adepts or to produce true Masons from those accepted for membership.

The greatest universities may graduate no more than half of those who matriculate. Sometimes no more than a very small percentage of graduates attain even minimal success in the art or science for which they were presumably trained. Freemasons, enjoying a much greater proportionate achievement in their educational aims, need not be disheartened by occasional failure nor should the Craft be criticized for the presence of a few unworthy men in its ranks.

Just as there are men who remain ignorant in spite of long schooling while others become learned who have never attended any school, so there are Masons who may never even have heard of our institution and other possessing credentials who are by no means true Masons. For-

tunately, both of these are rare exceptions.

It is a terrible thing to be under obligation to the profane, but it would be the greatest misfortune to deprive ourselves of association in Freemasonry with true adepts, men of wisdom, goodness, and intellect.

The greatest boon to mankind is wisdom, which, although not synonymous with intelligence, is not entirely separable from it. Neither is schooling to be confounded with learning nor learning with knowledge with wisdom: each has its place and function.

One may have years of schooling and be invested with other scholastic honors, yet remain essentially ignorant. One may be able to recite from memory an entire lexicon of scientific terms without ever becoming a scientist. He may be able to pronounce, spell and define ten thousand English words, yet be unable to speak or understand a single intelligible sentence in the English language.

We are often told that Solomon prayed for and was granted wisdom, but we read in the tenth verse of the second chapter of Second Chronicles that Solomon prayed for wisdom and knowledge. He must already have been exceedingly wise to have made such a request, for he evidently understood the great truth that although knowledge without wisdom is dangerous, wisdom without knowledge is weak and ineffectual. One is a tool without a master, but the other is the master with no working tools.

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