



**On
The
Threshold**

Foreword

This booklet is given to you in order that you may gain some understanding of the structure and purpose of Masonry prior to your actual entrance therein. It is important that you learn these things in advance, since your appreciation of what you are about to receive will be far greater because of your having acquired this knowledge.

Another booklet will be given to you after each of the three degrees. These will likewise be important to your understanding of what you have seen and heard, and will reveal to you your own proper place in the Fraternity. All of these booklets call for and deserve your careful study.

On The Threshold

You have been elected by unanimous ballot to membership in the Masonic Fraternity. In your petition soliciting this honor you made several significant statements. You declared that:

1. You were not biased by improper solicitations of friends;
2. You were not influenced by mercenary motives;
3. You were prompted by a desire for knowledge and a sincere wish to be serviceable to your fellow citizens;
4. You would cheerfully conform to all the ancient established usages and customs of the Fraternity.

All this would indicate that you realize somewhat of the importance of the engagements you are about to assume. You should approach with a receptive mind, and as you progress through the three degrees interpret for yourself, as far as possible, all that you hear and witness. Everything you find difficult or obscure should be a challenge to you to search out its meaning, for you may be

certain that it has its purpose, and that it concerns you no less than those things which were readily understood.

The proposal to become a Freemason is a matter for very serious consideration, and should not be entered into hastily, inadvisedly, or by persuasion.

When in seriousness of purpose you cross the threshold of the Masonic lodge, it should become for you a sacred place. In a very vital sense the lodge will become your home, wherein you should be content to love and serve your brethren, honor your God, and learn the many lessons which Masonry seeks to teach.

Before you come to seek entrance into this sanctuary you should be careful to attend the following duties:

(1) You should be clean in body. Let this be symbolic of a deeper process of purification within your heart, and of the integrity of your intentions.

(2) You must be clear in mind. Come with your mental faculties free from distracting thoughts that would tend to divert you from the instructions you will receive. Seek to set aside all prejudice

and any spirit of antagonism that may be latent within you, and be free to accept and assimilate the solemn truths you are about to contemplate.

(3) You must be pure in heart. Put away evil thoughts of every kind. If you have done anyone wrong, seek honestly to redress it.

(4) You must be prayerful in spirit. Whether or not it is your daily habit to pray to your God, pray on the eve of your initiation for His blessing upon what you are about to do, for wisdom that will help you to understand, and for strength of purpose that will make you steadfast.

(5) You must be confident of your intentions. Be sure that it is still your sincere desire to proceed upon the quest for light and knowledge for which we are endeavoring now to prepare you. For it is vital that you know, before you cross the threshold, that there is no rightful place in Masonry for the halfhearted or unstable.

Symbolism reaches a high degree of development in Freemasonry, and is largely responsible for its universality. Men of different tongues often may find it

difficult to reach a common understanding; but symbols enable all men to comprehend each other without the necessity of any spoken word. The use of symbolism is one of the most effective means by which Freemasonry endeavors to unite all men.

The symbolism of Freemasonry deals with the intellectual, moral and spiritual values of life. Be assured there is nothing of a light and trifling character in the degrees of Masonry. Any intimation you may have had to the contrary is false. There is a profound significance in every step of your progress. You will be amply rewarded, as many others have been, for an earnest study of these principals, and for their faithful applications in your everyday life.

I. What is Freemasonry?

There have been a great number of definitions of Freemasonry. Perhaps one of the simplest and most direct is that employed by our English brethren: "Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols." The idea of teaching through allegories and symbols, however, is not a new one,

All great teachers have more or less followed this method.

The system of morality to which we have referred as Freemasonry is that which every Mason is bound to profess and practice. If it includes principles with which he was more or less familiar before his entrance into Masonry, he will nevertheless find these presented in new ways and under forms different from those with which he was previously familiar. If he finds in Masonic teachings nothing startlingly new, he must remember that in some respects at least there is "nothing new under the sun," and that the essence of morality is to be found in the utter simplicity (though not the ease) of its requirements.

The elementary principles of Freemasonry are exemplified in the three degrees of the symbolic (or blue) lodge. When one speaks of a "Masonic lodge," it is ordinarily the blue lodge which he has in mind. Nearly every community of any size in America has one or more blue lodges. The same is true in many other parts of the world, notably the English-speaking countries. There are millions of Masons in the United States.

Each lodge has its own officers, headed by the Master, its own committees, and its own appropriate activities. On the other hand, each lodge is subject to the jurisdiction of the grand lodge in the state or country where it is located. Thus, the Grand Lodge of North Carolina exercises jurisdiction over all its lodges within the state. There are grand lodges in each state and in the District of Columbia. Therefore, in becoming a member of a North Carolina lodge, you become subject not only to the general customs and usages of the Fraternity, but to the laws, rules, and regulations of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, as well as to the by-laws of your particular lodge; but Masonry never requires of you anything which might conflict with your duty with God, your country, your neighbor, or yourself.

In your progress through the degrees of the blue lodge, you will be “initiated” as an Entered Apprentice, “passed” to the Degree of Fellow Craft, and “raised” to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason.

There is, of course, a ritual appropriate to each degree, the significance of which will become apparent to you as you pro-

ceed. Your primary duty is to approach such degree calmly and solemnly, with mind and spirit attentive to the lessons imparted. All the ceremonies are of a most serious character, and you need have no apprehensions whatever as to the manner of your reception into each degree.

II. What Freemasonry Is Not

In order that you may not have a mistaken conception of the institution, it may be well to point out to you some things Freemasonry is not, and which it has never claimed to be.

(a) Contrary to the opinion held by many, Freemasonry is not a charitable institution, as such. It is true that one of the fundamental principles of the institution is the practice of relief, and a Mason necessarily ministers to the "widows and the fatherless in their affliction." But these and other similar modes of conduct must proceed from that "purity of life and conduct" which is one of the great objectives of all Masonic teachings.

(b) Freemasonry does not insure its members against the vicissitudes of old age, provides no sick benefits as such,

issues no policies on the lives of its members, and pays no death benefits of any kind. Not that it disbelieves in these and other means by which modern civilization undertakes to reduce suffering and privation – quite the contrary. But it confines the matter of individual relief to those cases where such relief becomes necessary, in spite of all the efforts of a brother or of his family to maintain their economic independence. Your part in this procedure is far more likely to be that of a contributor than a beneficiary, except in that larger sense, in which every man benefits from that fact that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

(c) Freemasonry is not a religion. It has a philosophy of its own, which is in harmony with the church, the school, and all other worthy institutions. The teachings of the Fraternity transcend all denominational and sectional divisions. Its sympathies are as broad as humanity.

(d) Freemasonry does not lend itself to the promoting of selfish interests. Any underlying purpose of such a nature in your mind will eventually become apparent to your brethren, and you will inevitably suffer the loss of their respect.

III. Who is Eligible for Membership in the Fraternity?

As you have been informed previously, not every man can fulfill the requirements of Masonic eligibility. The primary requisite is, of course, moral character. One whose reputation in the community is questionable cannot expect to become a Mason. But there are additional requirements which the petitioner must have, such as the following:

(a) He must be at least eighteen years of age.

(b) He must be of sound mind and body.

(c) He must be in such financial circumstances that he can maintain himself as a member of his lodge and meet the financial obligations imposed thereby.

(d) He must be a loyal citizen and one willing to discharge his duties to God, his neighbor, and himself.

(e) He must be a believer in a Supreme Being, often referred to by Masons as "The Great Architect of the Universe."

You, like Masons in all ages before you,

have come of your own accord to knock at Masonry's door. Two brethren have recommended you; nay, they have done more—they have vouched for your character and the sincerity of your motives. In a real sense, therefore, they are your Masonic sponsors. You, for your part, have resting upon you the great responsibility of seeing that they and others, who have accepted their assurances will not be disappointed.

IV. What Freemasonry Expects of You

The privileges of Freemasonry are no greater than the responsibilities of its votaries. Your obligations as a member of the Fraternity will not conflict with those you have already assumed by virtue of you membership in modern society. On the contrary, the Masonic Fraternity reiterates, reinforces, and reemphasizes them.

Thus, in asking Masonry to share with you its past, present, and future, and all the privileges of its brotherhood, you must bear in mind the fact that the relationship is a reciprocal one, and therefore certain things are expected of you.

Remember always:

(a) That the calling of a Freemason is a high one, and that you should never suffer yourself to derogate yourself from it.

(b) That loyalty to home, to country, and to the Fraternity is expected of you at all times.

(c) That patriotism is a bounden duty, and you should not countenance disloyalty or rebellion.

(d) That the Masonic institution stands for liberty, equality, and fraternity—not only for Masons, but for all mankind.

(e) That freedom of thought, speech and action is the watchword of Freemasonry, so far as this is not incompatible with the same rights on the part of others.

(f) That, in like manner, every Freemason is the enemy of ignorance, bigotry, oppression, superstition, and of all mental and spiritual darkness.

(g) That a Mason champions the cause of the widow, the fatherless, the weak, and the oppressed, and challenges the arbitrary assumption by anyone of the power to dictate the actions, beliefs and

destinies of any group or individual.

(h) That the time-honored virtues so cherished by our forefathers are still “coin of the realm” among Masons, and the humility, patience, charity, and gentleness are among the hallmarks of purity and integrity of character.

V. Your Lodge

The lodge to which you have applied for admittance is one of the working units not only of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina but of the Fraternity as a world-wide institution.

It dispenses charity, encourages and contributes, through its members, to the moral and spiritual uplift of its community. Hence, your lodge deserves your loyal cooperation. There is always work for the new member, and his punctual and regular attendance upon lodge meetings is one of his first duties. Through a study of Masonic literature, conversing with well-informed brethren, and otherwise, the young Mason obtains that store of information which enables him to become an efficient and useful member.

While each lodge, as already indi-

cated, is an integral part of and subject to the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, it is important to remember that it is nevertheless a separate entity and has its own officers and by-laws. The presiding officer is called the master, and he is assisted by other officers designated as wardens, deacons, and stewards. There are also the treasurer, the secretary, the chaplain, and the tyler. Early in your Masonic career you should take advantage of opportunities for rendering such service as you can, though never in a forward, aggressive, or unseemly manner. You will visit other lodges whenever possible, always prepared to prove your identity as a Mason in good standing whenever there is no brother present who can vouch for you.

In these and similar ways you not only will enable Masonry to mean much to you, but you will broaden your Masonic experience and fit yourself to make a real contribution to the Fraternity, of which you should form a vital part.

VI. The Grand Lodge of North Carolina

The Grand Lodge of North Carolina, organized December 12, 1787, has grown numerically from ten lodges to nearly 400 lodges now active with more than 45,000 members. Its growth has been contemporary with that of the state itself, and its influence has been and now is nationwide. Its members have been honored by state and nation, and they have made noteworthy contributions to every creditable branch of effort.

The membership composing the Grand Lodge are its officers, its past elective officers while members of our subordinate lodges, the members of its boards and standing committees, and the masters and wardens of its chartered lodges.

It is the supreme Masonic power, legislative, executive, and judicial, within the State of North Carolina and has exclusive jurisdiction over the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason in the Grand Jurisdiction.

The executive head of the Grand Lodge is grand master. The grand secretary has charge of the general admin-

istrative duties, including that of grand librarian. The custodians are in authority over matters concerning the ritual and its teaching.

The province of the Committee on Masonic Education, as broadly defined, is "to devise and execute plans and methods encouraging the interest of our members in attaining a greater knowledge of Masonry."

No attempt is made here to enumerate all the officers and committees of the Grand Lodge; the forgoing is sufficient for the time being to give some idea of its structure and the vital part it plays in the Masonry of North Carolina.

VII. Conclusion

In your progress in Masonic knowledge there are many more things for you to learn; these will be explained to you at the proper time. In addition, there will be much knowledge for you to acquire through your own efforts. You will have abundant opportunity to read Masonic books and other publications, and to meditate upon the truths derived from the sources. Meanwhile, keep ever uppermost in your thoughts the solemn

engagements and covenants into which
you will enter.

