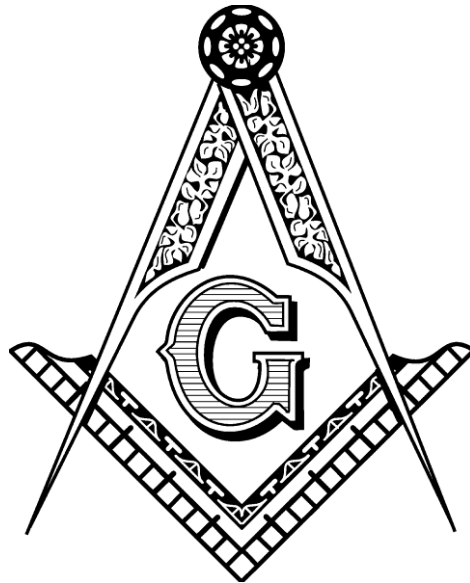


Booklet No. 2

Entered Apprentice Degree - Initiation

To be used by the lodges in advancing the
Lodge System of Masonic Education



Prepared for the
Grand Lodge of Mississippi F & AM
By the
Committee on Masonic Education
For the use of the Subordinate Lodges
and their Members

FOREWORD

This is the second of four booklets to be used by the Lodge Committee for Candidate instruction in The Lodge System of Masonic Education. The Educational Committee of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi has at last crystallized its findings in a method that is without doubt the best that has yet been devised.

This is the Lodge System of Masonic Education. It is simple, it is practicable, it is employed under the immediate authority and direction of the local Lodge, it works at the point where Education is most needed and best appreciated; namely, with the Candidate himself, and the results, if the method is used consistently, automatically guarantee themselves. We recommend it unreservedly to every local Lodge.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM “ENTERED APPRENTICE”

Subject No. 1 — Meeting No. 2

My Brother:

You are now an Entered Apprentice Mason. The first step in your journey to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason has been taken. I am sure that you found your Initiation an experience you will never forget. Nor should you ever forget it; a Degree of Masonry is not an isolated experience once had and then done with, but an ever-enduring privilege. Always you can sit in an Entered Apprentice Lodge; always you can return to observe, to participate in, and to study its ceremonies. Your possession of the Degree is a life-long possession which you can continue to enjoy and to enter into as long as you live.

Doubtless you have an eager curiosity to learn more about this remarkable Degree before you pass on to the Fellow Craft Degree; perhaps its ceremonies seemed somewhat strange to you; its language fell on your ears with unaccustomed accents; and at the end of it you may have been somewhat bewildered to understand it all. It is our function as mentors to help you to interpret it, and we shall try to do that by explaining various phases and aspects of it. For the present, it is my privilege to assist you to that end by giving you a brief explanation of the term “Entered Apprentice” itself. To do so intelligibly we must lead you back into one or two chapters of the early history of our Fraternity.

As you have already learned, Freemasonry originated with the builders, who were called Masons, of all those remarkable structures erected in the Gothic style of architecture in the Middle Ages in Europe and Great Britain. This was from six hundred to nine hundred years ago. Our name for those builders is “Operative Masons.” We call them “Operatives” because they were builders in the literal sense, hewing stone from quarries dressing it in shape, laying it in the walls, constructing roofs, doors, windows, and spires. In short, it was their trade and means of livelihood.

Those Operative Masons were organized in Lodges, governed by Worshipful Masters and Wardens. They had Lodge-rooms and in them held frequent communications. The members were divided into grades. They employed ceremonies of Initiation, used symbols, and passwords, preserved secrecy, admitted men only to membership — that is, as you have immediately seen, they were in many ways strikingly similar to our own Lodges. How we are descended from those Operative Masons, and to what extent we have inherited their practices you have already learned.

It was necessary for the Operative Masons to recruit new members to replace those lost through removal, accident, illness or death. To do this they used the apprenticeship system, which was in vogue in all crafts and continued to be from many centuries.

The word “Apprentice” means “learner,” or “beginner,” one who is taking his first steps in mastering a trade, art, or profession. The Operative Apprentice was a boy, usually from ten to fifteen years of age. He was required to be sound in body and without maim in his limbs in order to be able to do work requiring physical strength and endurance. Also it was required that he be of good habits, obedient and willing to learn, and of unquestioned reputation, and that he be well recommended by Master Masons already members of the Craft.

When such a boy was chosen an Apprentice he was called into the Lodge, where all the members could assure themselves of his mental, moral, and physical qualifications. If they voted to receive him, he was then given much information about the Craft, what it required of its members, what his duties would be, and something of its early history and traditions. That done, he was made to give a solemn promise to obey his superiors, to work diligently, to observe the laws and rules, and to keep the secrets.

After being thus fastened in the ties of his Obligation, he was bound over, or indentured, as they describe it, to one of the more experienced Master Masons. As a rule he then went to live with this Master Mason, and from him, day by day, learned the methods and secrets of the trade. This apprenticeship lasted many years, usually seven.

After this young man had gone to school in this manner long enough to give assurance of his fitness to master the art and to become an acceptable member of the society, his name was entered on the books of the Lodge and he was given a recognized place in the Craft organization; and because of this official entering of his name he was given the title “Entered Apprentice,” and along with all others of the same degree of advancement constituted the rank, or grade, of Apprentice Masons.

It is difficult to exaggerate the amount of care our Operative Masonic forebears devoted to these learners. The indenter, as the Master Mason was called to whom the Apprentice was indentured, was obligated by law to teach him the theory as well as the practice of Masonry; and it was not until the Apprentice could prove his efficiency by meeting the most rigid tests of skill, and after many years, that he was permitted to advance to a higher rank in the Craft. Other Master Masons with whom he was set to work at the simpler tasks were also his teachers. He was given moral instruction; his conduct was

carefully scrutinized; many rules were laid down to control his manner of life. When we read the Old Charges and ancient documents that have come down to us we are constantly impressed by the amount of space they devoted to Apprentices. The Operative Masons knew that what the Apprentices of today were, the Master Mason of the future would be.

As time passed, therefore, there grew up about the rank and duties and regulations of the Apprentice an organized set of customs, ceremonies, rules, traditions, etc., and these at least became crystallized into a well-defined unit, which we may describe as the Operative Entered Apprentice Degree. And when, after the Reformation, Operative Masonry became modified and was at last transformed into Speculative Masonry, the Entered Apprentice Degree was retained as the First of the Three Degrees of the Speculative Lodge — that very Degree which was recently conferred upon you. It was modified, of course, to some extent, to meet the needs of the Speculative Fraternity, but in substance and meaning is fundamentally the same as it always has been.

As an Entered Apprentice Mason you therefore are a learner, or beginner, in Speculative Masonry. You have taken the first step in the mastery of our art. And it is because you have this rank that certain things are expected of you. I shall briefly describe a few of these requirements.

First, you are expected to show certain humility. As a learner you must have guides and teachers; you must show obedience to them and be willing to have them lead you.

Second, you must learn the catechism (questions and answers) of the Degrees, so as to prove your proficiency in open Lodge. But the purpose of learning these lessons is not merely to pass this test; you must master them so thoroughly that they will remain with you through life, because you will have need of them many times in the future.

Third, you must study to improve yourself in Masonry in all other possible ways. Your Lodge will not be content merely to have your name on its books and to receive your annual dues; it requires of you that you become a real Mason, not merely a member in name only.

Fourth, you will learn from another member of this Committee what are the laws, rules, and regulations by which an Entered Apprentice Mason is governed; it is your duty to live in exact conformity to those laws.

You will recall, my Brother, that as you stood in the Northeast Corner of the Lodge during your Initiation you were taught a certain lesson concerning a cornerstone. The meaning of that lesson should now be clear to you. You yourself are a cornerstone of the Craft. Today you are an Entered Apprentice; in a short time you will be a Fellow Craft; after that you will become a Master Mason. The day will come when into your hands will fall the responsibilities of the Lodge. What Masonry is to be in the future depends on what you Entered Apprentices are now. You are the cornerstone on which the Fraternity that is to come is now building itself. It is our hope and prayer that you will prove to be a solid foundation, true and tried, set for square, on which our great Fraternity may safely build itself for its work in many years to come.

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE AND THE WORLD OF MASONRY

Subject No. 2 — Meeting No. 2

My Brother:

As you already have learned, the word “Apprentice” means a beginner, a learner. In what is the Entered Apprentice Mason a beginner? Of what is he a learner? It is my privilege to give you some suggestions that will help you to answer these questions for yourself in order that you may better appreciate and understand the First Degree which recently was conferred upon you.

The Masonic Lodge-room as represented in the Ritual is a symbol of the universe. The particular form in which this symbol was cast harks back to early times when man believed the earth to be square and the sky a solid dome; but while this form no longer represents our own knowledge of the physical shape of the world the significance remains the same; the First Degree is not intended to be a treatise in geography or astronomy.

What is this world which is thus represented? It is the world of Masonry; it is the Masonic career from its beginning to its end, including all that lies between. The Inner Door through which the candidate enters it represents birth and signifies that in taking the First Degree he is being born into the Masonic Life. Already he has been born into other worlds, physical and social, but now he is being born into Masonry; therefore he is poor, blind, and helpless; like a babe in its mother’s womb. As one of our scholars has said of

the candidate, “The old life with all its accessories has dropped from him as completely as though he were dead. He is to enter on a new life in a new world.”

That new world is an organized world. Masonry is systematic, proportionate, balanced, and exists in the form of duties, laws and definite work, supervised and regulated, controlled through laws written and unwritten, expressed through Landmarks, traditions, usages, Constitutions, and By-Laws, guided and directed through Officers vested with power and authority. When the candidate takes his Obligation it is to pledge himself to uphold that lawful system; when he salutes the Master and Wardens it is to signify his obedience to the Legally constituted Officers! When he is willing to follow his guide and fear no danger he expresses his trust in, and loyalty to, the Fraternity, as should a child which as yet is unable to trust himself.

This new world is a lawful world in which impulse and arbitrariness have no part. It has a definite nature of its own, it is devoted to specified purposes, and it is committed to well defined aims and ideals. Its members cannot make it over to suit their own whims or to conform to their own purposes; they must make themselves over to it, must conform themselves to its requirements. One does not become a Mason first in order to become a member; he becomes a member in order to become a Mason, and if there be in his nature anything that obstructs him, he must make use of his Working Tools to remove it. Among the first requirements demanded of the Apprentice is that he shall offer himself as a rough stone, to be shaped under Masonic laws and influences for a place in the Temple of Masonry.

The world of Masonry is a complete world. Existence in it is fully rounded, and it satisfies the needs of the whole man - physical, moral, intellectual, and social. It establishes its own physical conditions suitably to its needs. It requires of its citizens that they be good and true men, able to meet the test of the Square, the Plumb, the Level, and the Compasses. It offers abundant opportunities for good fellowship and social contacts. It satisfies the mind with the great teachings of a profound philosophy. It worships God, prepares its Altars, opens the Sacred Book, and leads the life of prayer according to the needs of the soul. It is to learn such a life as this that an Apprentice must study to improve himself in Masonry; it is not permitted him to come merely for the loaves and fishes, or only to be entertained, or to seek for himself some personal advantage, but it is required of him that he shall build his life according to this Trestleboard of a well-rounded existence, assisted by guides and teachers, encouraged and inspired by experienced Brethren, and using the Working Tools and all means provided.

This world of Masonry is dedicated to Brotherhood. Unless the Apprentice is willing and qualified to lead the brotherly life he will never be able to master the Royal Art. Unless in his Obligations he pledges himself to live the brotherly life with genuine sincerity, the Mystic Tie can never take lasting hold of his nature. Unless he is willing to abide by the laws, every one of which exists to define, regulate, or control the brotherly life, he will find himself out of step with the Fraternity and unable to find foothold in the world he seeks to enter. All our Ritual, symbols, emblems, allegories and ceremonies, in all the richness and variety of their meaning, point in the same direction; and unless an Apprentice shall thus accept and understand them, he will fail to comprehend the Masonic teaching.

In taking his First degree an Apprentice takes his first step into such a life as this; passes through the portals of birth into such a world as this; passes from the darkness, destitution and helplessness of the profane world into the light and warmth of such an existence as this. This is the great meaning of the Degree; and the Degree therefore is not an idle formality, but a genuine experience, the beginning of a new career in which duties rights and privileges are as actual as anything can be, so that if a candidate is to be more than an Apprentice in name only he must stand ready to do a work upon his own nature which may leave him a different kind of man.

As an Entered Apprentice he must therefore possess certain qualities.

One of these is obedience. Except a learner is willing to obey his guides and teachers, there is no way for him to learn. Such obedience is not intended to be blind or servile, nor rest on fanaticism; it is only what is required of any man, young or old, who undertakes the mastery of a new art.

Another qualification is humility. An Apprentice will never be subjected to humiliation, but it is demanded of him that he have humility, a willingness to be led and directed, a freedom from egotism or conceit, a complete absence of any presumptuous belief that he already knows what he has only begun to learn.

With these he needs also industriousness. Freemasonry maintains a high threshold. It holds out no deceptive promise of an easy victory, but makes it plain that many obstacles and hazards will be encountered in the journey. Its members are called Craftsmen because they are workmen; its Lodges are called quarries because they are scenes of toil; it offers no wages or rewards except to those who earn them; it places Working Tools in the hands of its members, and not playthings.

Also it would be wise for any Entered Apprentice Mason to study a little in Masonic literature, not laboriously or necessarily a great length, but enough to familiarize himself with the Landmarks of our history, with our Ritual, Philosophy, and Jurisprudence. These talks you are hearing from the members of this Committee will serve in some measure to give you an inkling of what you would find in the works written by the masters of our traditions. Time invested in them will bring you a rich return in the future.

In conclusion let me urge that you receive what I have said as to the nature of Apprenticeship, not as a series of pious moralizing or as a counsel of perfection. It is a solemn and serious thing to become a Mason. Once the step is taken, it may well change the course of a man's life, and frequently does. What I have said about the First Degree describes actualities and realities. Let that be all the more stimulus to you to do the work of learning thoroughly; if failure brings painful consequences success will bring a lifelong reward. And our wish for you is abundant success.

SYMBOLS OF THE FIRST DEGREE

Subject No. 3 — Meeting No. 2

My Brother:

The symbols, emblems and allegorical ceremonies of the First Degree have each a meaning; taken together these meanings comprise the teachings of the Degree. Our time is too brief for me to give you complete explanations of them, or even to mention all of them, but we believe it will be profitable to you to have a few hints and suggestions, especially as they will show that every detail of the Ritual is filled with a definite significance which each Mason can learn if he applies himself.

The Hoodwink, or blindfold, represents the darkness in which an uninitiated man stands as regards the Masonic life; for this reason it is removed at the moment of enlightenment. Its removal suggests that we do not make the great things of existence, such as goodness, truth and beauty, but find them; they are always there; it is our blindness that conceals them from us.

The Cable Tow is a symbol of all those external restraints by which a man is controlled by others, or by forces outside himself. If a man does not keep the law of his own free will he must be compelled to keep it by compulsion. The removal of the Cable Tow

means that when a man becomes the master of himself he will keep the law instinctively, out of his own character, and not under compulsion.

The Lodge is a symbol of the world, more properly the world of Masonry. Initiation means birth, or a new birth, an entrance into that world. The symbol means that in its scope and extent Freemasonry is as broad as human nature and as wide as mankind and that as a spirit and ideal it permeates the whole life of every true Mason, outside the Lodge as well as inside.

The Ceremony of Entrance by which is meant all that happens at the Inner Door signifies birth or Initiation and symbolizes the fact that a candidate is entering the world of Masonry, there to live a new kind of life.

The sharp Instrument means, among other things, that which is the one real penalty for violations of the Obligations — the penalty, that is, of the destructive consequences to a man's character of being faithless to his vows, untrue to his word, disloyal to his obedience.

The Rite of Circumambulation is Masonry's name for the ceremony of walking around the Lodge-room, an allegorical act rich with many meanings. One of the principal meanings of these is that the Masonic life is a progressive journey, from station to station of attainment and that a Mason will always be in search of Light.

An equally significant ceremony is that of approaching the East. The East is the source of Light, that station in the heavens in which the sun appears when about to chase the darkness away. Masons are sons of Light, we therefore face the East.

The Altar is a symbol of any place where God is Worshipped - in Masonry a place around which our whole teaching revolves and is exemplified. It is not too much to say that all of our ceremonies, teachings and assertions, throughout the Three Degrees, comprise one continuous progressive gesture of adoration of, and fealty to, our Creator - the Great Architect of the Universe. Before the Masonic Altar all men are equal, and upon all Masons does this symbolism of the Altar lay its steadying lesson of Godly living.

The Obligations have in them many literal meanings and as such are the foundations of our disciplinary laws, but over and above this they signify the nature and place of Obligation in human life. An Obligation is a tie, a contract, a pledge, a promise, a vow, a covenant, a duty that is owed; in addition to the Obligations we voluntarily assume, there

are many in which we stand naturally — Obligations to God, to our families, to employers or employees, to friends, and neighbors. A righteous man is one who can be depended upon to fulfill his Obligations to the best of his ability.

The salute given at each station in turn by the newly obligated Entered Apprentice is, besides being a portion of the ceremonies, a symbol of a Mason's respect for all just and duly constituted authority.

The Three Great Lights are the Holy Bible, the Square, and the Compasses. As a Great Light the Holy Bible represents the will of God as a man understands it; the Square is the physical life of man under its human conditions; the Compasses signify the moral and spiritual life. If a man acts in obedience to the will of God, according to the dictates of his conscience, he will be living in the illumination of the Great Lights and cannot go astray.

The Lesser Lights are the Sun, the Moon, and the Master of the Lodge. The Sun is a symbol of that which is masculine, active, aggressive; the Moon, of that which is feminine, receptive, gentle, non-resisting; when these two types of human action are maintained in balance, mastership is the result.

The words, Grips, and Tokens are our means of recognition by which among strangers we are able to prove others or ourselves regular Master Masons in order to enter into fraternal intercourse.

The Apron is at once an emblem of innocence, purity and the badge of a Mason. By purity is meant blamelessness, a loyal obedience to the laws of the Craft and sincere good will to the Brethren; the badge of a Mason signifies that Masons are workers and builders, not drones and destructionists.

In the Rite of Destitution the candidate discovers that he has nothing of a metallic character on his person. This symbolism reverts to those ancient times when man believed that the planets determined human fate and controlled human passions, and that there was a metal by which each planet was itself controlled. In ancient Initiations candidates were compelled to leave all metals behind, lest they bring into assembly disturbing planetary influences. While with us this symbolism no longer has its astrological character, the old point about keeping out disturbing influences remains; the candidate is not to bring into the Lodge-room his passions or prejudices lest that harmony, which is one of the chief concerns of Masonry to sustain, shall be destroyed.

The Working Tools represent those moral and spiritual virtues, habits and forces by means of which a man is enabled to reshape the crude and often stubborn materials of his nature in order to adjust himself to the needs and requirements of human society. If a man has lived carelessly, without plan, aim or ideal, he must, if he is to become a Mason, learn to systematize his life, must adopt a Trestleboard, as signified by the Twenty-four Inch Gauge. If he has traits of temper, habits of speech, or defects of character that disturb or injure others, and interfere with his taking his proper place in the Brotherhood, as “knots and excrescences” on a stone interfere with putting it into its allotted place in the building; he must rid himself of them. This is represented by the Common Gavel.

The Northeast Corner is traditionally the place where the cornerstone of a building is laid; when the Apprentice is made to stand there it is because he is the cornerstone of the future Craft. What the Apprentices are today Masonry will become in the future.

The Entered Apprentice is himself a symbol, one of the noblest in the whole emblematic system of the Craft. He represents youth, typified by the rising sun; but beyond that he represents trained youth, youth willing to submit itself to discipline and to seek knowledge in order to learn the great Art of Life, which is the real Royal Art, and which itself is represented and interpreted by all the mysteries of Masonry.

It is by such voices and arts as all these, Brother Entered Apprentice, that our magnificent First Degree gave its teaching to you as a Man and a beginning Mason. We sincerely hope that these hints and suggestions as to the meaning of these symbols and emblems, will lead you to seek further for more Light upon them, not alone in order that you may become a well-trained Mason, but also for their value to you as you lead your life outside the Lodge-room.

PLACE OF THE OBLIGATIONS IN MASONIC LAW

Subject No. 4 — Meeting No. 2

My Brother:

As an Entered Apprentice you have already taken the first of three Obligations; the next will seal you as a Fellow Craft Mason; the third will make you a Master Mason. If at this stage you pause to reflect upon the meaning and place of Obligations in Masonry, more particularly in the law of Masonry, you will be enabled to assume your next Obligation with greater interest and a clearer understanding.

“Obligation” is one of those words which define themselves. The root of it is the same as the root of our word “ligament,” and means a cord or tendon by which one thing is tied to another. An Obligation therefore is a solemn pledge, made on a man’s honor, by which he ties himself to a society and at the same time ties himself to the duties and responsibilities imposed by it. Such an Obligation may not always be legally binding in a public court of law but it is morally binding, and a man cannot disregard it except at the cost of damaging his own honor. The Masonic Obligations are taken by the candidate as binding without limit of time; that is, he accepts them for the remainder of his natural life; he may possibly in the future withdraw from the Fraternity or by it be suspended or expelled, but that will not ease him of his pledge, because he took that pledge, not as a Lodge member, but as a man. Under no circumstances in the future, whether as a Mason or as a non-Mason, can he ever violate it without proving himself dishonorable. This is the true meaning-the limits within which it is true - of the old saying, “Once a Mason, always a Mason.”

Another old saying is, “The Obligation makes the Mason.” If you as a candidate in the First Degree had withdrawn from the Lodge at any time prior to taking the Obligation, you would not now be an Entered Apprentice; upon taking the Obligation you became an Entered Apprentice, and nothing could undo that step.

Upon analysis you will find that your Obligation may be divided into separate clauses. These clauses are called “points.” The points as a whole are divided into “affirmative points” and “negative points,” as the terms themselves suggest, the positive points consist of those clauses which require certain acts to be done, the negative points are those which forbid that other acts be done. Both the positive and the negative points are covered by one general point requiring that the whole Obligation be kept in strictest secrecy; this is called the “Tie.”

No man can take a Masonic Obligation, and if he does it cannot be binding, unless he is of lawful age and unless he is of sound mind, not insane and not in his dotage. This means that the candidate taking it accepts, and is competent to accept, full responsibility for it. If afterwards he is charged with having violated any of the points, he cannot seek to evade the consequences by pleading ignorance or inability at the time he gave his pledge. This is all of a piece with Freemasonry’s attitude to the candidate throughout; no pressure is brought to bear upon him, no undue influence; he comes unsolicited and of his own free will and accord as a free man in every sense of the word; he is left free to withdraw before taking any Obligation; in short, it is ascertained at every step that he is competent,

and to the end he is held responsible for every promise he makes and every pledge he gives.

There is among the laws of Masonry a set of laws which regulate the individual's conduct as a Mason; these lay down what is demanded of him in conduct, define Masonic crimes and affix certain penalties. These may be described as the "disciplinary law" of the Craft. In the majority of cases when Masons are brought to trial for un-Masonic conduct it is this disciplinary law that is involved. The important point about our disciplinary law, important at least for us here and now, is that the Obligations are its foundation. I shall ask you to pay very close attention to this fact, and for this reason; the Obligations appear as a portion of the Ritual; much of that Ritual is symbolical and not to be taken literally, therefore you may be tempted to feel that the Obligations also are merely symbolical and are a kind of formality or ceremony; this is not true, for the Obligations are in force in the same manner as all other definite law, are in fact themselves law in its most definite and specific sense. This is important for you to know and to remember at the outset of your Masonic career, because the Obligations will always remain binding. Your conduct as a Mason is not left to the guidance of any vague mood or uncertain feeling, but is to be governed according to strict and clearly stated rules.

You may wish to know why it is, if this be true, that the penalties attached to the Obligations are of a type so different from the Obligations proper. If the positive and negative points of the Obligations proper are to be taken literally, why not also the penalties? The answer is that the penalties are to be taken as they stand when they are correctly understood. The form of these penalties comes to us from history. Speculative Freemasonry began, as you have already learned, in England with the organization of the first Grand Lodge, in 1717. At that time all crimes were understood to belong to either of two classes, heresy or treason. By heresy was meant some violation of the religious principles, morals and ideals of the state; by treason was meant some crime against the political and legal authority of the state. The conventional form of punishment for heresy was burning at the stake, or some variation of it; for treason it was hanging, in some form. These two sets of punishments, familiar to everybody for three or four centuries, became so identified with the two types of crime that they became synonymous with them. You can now understand our own penalties: they mean that any crime against Masonry is either heresy, that is, a violation of its teachings; or treason, that is, action against the authority of Lodge or Grand Lodge or against our laws. The penalties are a symbolical presentation of that truth, and truth it is because a Mason may be punished for violating the official teachings of Masonry as surely as for violating its written laws.

As for punishments literally in force, they may be, as our Williams Digest states: 1. Reprimand, 2. Suspension from all rights of Masonry for a definite or indefinite time, 3. Expulsion. The penalties attached to the Obligations express the general nature of the offense. The penalties prescribed in the Williams Digest describe the punishments literally in force. No other kinds of punishment have ever been used by Freemasonry; which is to say, a Mason found guilty of violating the teachings of Masonry, of violating its written laws or of flouting the authority of its Officers may be reprimanded, suspended or expelled.

At no point does our Fraternity transgress upon the province of the civil authorities - to do so would violate the Landmarks - but within its own province it is itself a system of law and order. A body of unwritten law is in force within it; the Lodge and Grand Lodge, upon certain occasions, are legislatures and may rescind or modify old laws or adopt new laws by decision of duly qualified representatives; the Grand Lodge may interpret the law, certain Lodge and Grand Lodge Officers enforce the law; and both the Lodge and the Grand Lodge may sit as courts for the trial of cases, may hear testimony, decide innocence or guilt, and affix penalties.

Such facts as these are of paramount importance to you as you gradually form your conception of Freemasonry. Our Craft is not an open arena, a society in which members may go-as-you-please, a loose and formless social circle, but a completely organized institution in which law, the enforcement of law and punishment for crime are as serious and as real, within their own province, as they are anywhere outside it. The Obligations contain the Mason's vows as well as the disciplinary measures provided for the nonobservance of them. Here is an expression of law and order which is to the body of Masonry what the skeletal frame work is to the body of man.

MASONRY IN MISSISSIPPI: A Sketch

Mississippi became a state on December 10, 1817. The following year on July 27, 1818, the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Mississippi was organized. At that time there were three lodges in the area. Harmony No. 7 (later No. 33) at Natchez, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, held its organizational meeting on March 12, 1802. Andrew Jackson No. 14, also at Natchez, was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Tennessee on August 13, 1816; and Washington No. 17, Port Gibson, on April 19, 1817. Those three lodges promptly surrendered their charters to the Grand Lodge of Mississippi

and received new ones. They were renumbered respectively as Lodges No. 1, 2, and 3, continuing as such to the present day. Three other lodges which existed in the days of the Mississippi Territory fell in the area that was destined to become Alabama. Recognition of the new Grand Lodge came first from the Grand Lodge of Kentucky on September 2, 1819; and later from other jurisdictions.

The state was still largely wilderness when the Grand Lodge was formed. Only eleven counties existed then, all of them in the southwestern corner of the state. The only town of consequence was Natchez. It was there that Grand Lodge held its annual communications for more than three decades.

From 1827 to 1852 it owned a headquarters building in Natchez. Efforts were regularly made to change the place of meeting to the “seat of government.” Federal occupation of Natchez during the War Between the States finally compelled the Grand Lodge office to be removed to Jackson. Much later it was removed to its present location in Meridian.

Freemasonry spread gradually over the entire state. A sampling of still extant lodges bearing numbers below 100 will illustrate the early expansion to areas distant from Natchez. Columbus No. 5 was chartered in 1822, Oxford No. 33 in 1837, Ripley No. 47 in 1841, Hernando No. 51 in 1842, Panola No. 66 in 1846, Joseph Warren No. 71 in 1846, Ebenezer No. 76 in 1847, Pontotoc No. 81 in 1847, and Richmond No. 97 in 1849.

The exemplary life of John A. Quitman, often referred to as “the father of Masonry in Mississippi,” is evidence of the prominence of Freemasonry in the early and middle portions of the nineteenth century. He served as Grand Master for many years (1826-37, 1840, 1845, 1846). Twice he was governor of the state (1835-36, 1850-51); and for a while — at the end of the Mexican War - he was military governor of Mexico. In that war he was a major general of the Mississippi Militia, distinguishing himself at Monterrey, Fort Tenerice, Vera Cruz, and Chapultepec. He was instrumental in securing dispensations and charters for two military lodges; Quitman No. 96 at Vera Cruz and St. John No. 97. Those were the first so-called “traveling lodges” created by the Grand Lodge of Mississippi. In time Quitman was made an active member of the Supreme Council 33° of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction.

Of different but equivalent distinction was the Rev. “Rob” Morris, who lived in Mississippi 1842-52, first as a teacher, then as a journalist. Made a Mason in Oxford No. 33 in 1846, he developed over the next few years the Order of the Eastern Star, probably the most famous and widely spread Masonic-related body for women in the world. He

also wrote extensively, becoming thereby the second “poet laureate of Masonry” (the first was Robert Burns). Some of his poems have been put to music for use as hymns.

In his specialized field, Morris was one of those strangely imaginative and creative geniuses like James Anderson, Chevalier Ramsey, Laurence Dermott, and William Preston of Great Britain, and Thomas Webb and Albert Pike of the United States. He and they have all left their imprint on the Masonic Order. After Morris left Mississippi he became Grand Master of Masons in Kentucky.

The popularity of the word “Star” for a lodge name may have, in part suggested to Morris the title of his Rite. In Mississippi there have been eleven lodges with “Star” in their names. Two called Western Star (No. 20, Hinds County, 1833-37, and No. 229, Paris, 1858-94) and two called Eastern Star (No. 27, Monticello, 1836-44, and No. 79, same place, 1847-1932) are now defunct. Two have borne the name Polar Star (No. 22, Woodville, 1833-37, and No. 154, Handsboro, 1852, the latter still in existence). There was one called Morning Star (No. 530, Lemon, 1912-34) and one called quite simply Star, from the town where it nourished (No. 523, Star, 1911-74), but they have disappeared. Still with us are Evening Star No. 70 (Florence, 1846), Center Star No. 322 (Mantachie, 1869), and Southern Star No. 500 (Long Beach, 1908). Some of those lodges overlapped the time “Rob” Morris was in Mississippi.

In the meanwhile concordant Masonic bodies were established in the state. In 1830 a Scottish Rite Consistory was erected; in 1846, a Grand Royal Arch Chapter; in 1856, a Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters; and in 1857, a Grand Commandery of Knights Templar. In each case such action implies (as of the Grand Lodge) the previous formation of separate groups before a grand body could be established. In one case, that of Vicksburg Royal Arch Chapter 3, it is known that it was chartered as early as 1840 by the General Grand Chapter of the U.S.A. (now, International). Later came other Masonic affiliated Bodies, including the Order of the Eastern Star, the Shrine, the Order of DeMolay (for boys), and the Order of the Rainbow (for girls). Other concordant Bodies established in Mississippi include the Knights of the York Cross of Honor (KYCH), the Allied Masonic Degrees (AMD), the Knight Masons, the York Rite Sovereign College of North America, the Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priest (HRAKTP), the Sovereign Order of Knights Preceptor, the Red Cross of Constantine, and the Masonic Rosicrucian College (SRICF).

As during the Mexican War, so during the War between the States Grand Lodge created military lodges for the comfort and convenience of the troops. Probably twenty-eight,

possibly twenty-nine, such lodges were granted dispensations during the interval 1861-65. Of those only eight were chartered. The Grand Lodge of Mississippi discontinued the practice in later wars.

Today, (2019), the Grand Lodge of Mississippi recognizes slightly more than 200 lodges with approximately 15,000 members. More than three hundred lodges are now extinct. Some have simply vanished from the record, but others have consolidated with stronger neighboring lodges. As Mississippi became more and more urban, the country lodges tended to disappear, but in larger towns (for example, Jackson, Vicksburg, Meridian, Natchez) there are two or more lodges where once there was but one. Mississippi has two of the few remaining “Moon Lodges” in the United States. They are Betheden No. 205, Louisville; and The Mississippi Lodge of Research No. 640. Their stated communications are held in close association with the full moon of each month - reminiscent of an earlier time when night meetings required the light of the full moon for travel.

The Masonic fraternity in Mississippi has lived up to Masonic reputation for charity, the most notable being the Masonic Home in Meridian, established in 1907, for children with close Masonic ties. In addition to being a home, it also made provision for education of its children. Each child, moreover, who qualified for college was assured of it through the Grand Lodge Murphy-Martin Educational Endowment Fund. The Masonic Home functioned effectively for over one hundred years; but, the decision was made in 1997 to cease operations. The Masonic Home for Children was sold in 1998 but the Murphy-Marten Educational Endowment Fund continues to insure that qualified children might receive college scholarships.

So, through many a highway and bypath, the immemorial craft of Masonry, inherited from medieval guilds and chivalric orders of the Crusades, preserving fragments of curious and forgotten lore, still radiates its gentle, kindly light and its beneficent influence upon Mississippians of today and upon free men throughout the world.