

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER, OR SIXTH DEGREE

No Mason can receive the Degree of Most Excellent Master, until after he has become a Past Master, and presided in a Lodge, or, in other words, been inducted into the Oriental Chair of King Solomon. When the Temple of Jerusalem was finished,¹ those who had proved themselves worthy, by their virtue, skill, and fidelity, were installed as Most Excellent Masters, and, even at this date, none but those who have a perfect knowledge of all preceding Degrees are (or should be) admitted.²

¹ The Masonic tradition upon which the Degree is founded is described in the ancient Book of Constitutions, in the following words:

"The Temple was finished in the short space of seven years and six months, to the amazement of all the world; when the cope-stone was celebrated by the fraternity with great joy. But their joy was soon interrupted by the sudden death of their dear Master, Hiram Abiff, whom they decently interred in the Lodge near the Temple, according to ancient usage.

"After Hiram Abiff was mourned for, the tabernacle of Moses and its holy relics being lodged in the Temple, Solomon, in a general assembly, dedicated or consecrated it by solemn prayer and costly sacrifices past number, with the finest music, vocal and instrumental, praising Jehovah upon fixing the holy ark in its proper place, between the cherubim; when Jehovah filled his own Temple with a cloud of glory."

² It is an established doctrine of the Order, that while three form a Lodge, and five may hold it, seven only can make it perfect. In such a case there requires an intermediate Degree to complete the series; for the Mark and Past Masters have been already admitted into the Craft Lodges. This Degree, as used by our transatlantic brethren, who are zealous and intelligent Masons, is called the Excellent Master, and the routine is thus stated: 1. E. A. P.; 2. F. C.; 3. M. M.; 4. Mark Master;

A Lodge of Most Excellent Masters is opened in nearly the same manner as Lodges in the preceding Degrees. The officers are, a Master, Senior and Junior Wardens and Deacons, Secretary and Treasurer, and of course a Tyler.

The officers of a Chapter rank as follows:—

The High Priest, as Right Worshipful Master; King, as Senior Warden; Scribe, as Junior Warden; Principal Sojourner, as Senior Deacon; Royal Arch Captain, as Junior Deacon. The Treasurer, Secretary, and Tyler corresponding in rank with the same officers of other Degrees.

The symbolic color of the Most Excellent Master's Degree is purple. The apron is of white lambskin, edged with purple. The collar is of purple, edged with gold. But, as Lodges of this Degree are held under warrants of Royal Arch Chapters, the collars, aprons, and jewels of the Chapter are generally made use of in conferring the Degree.

The Right Worshipful Master represents King Solomon, and should be dressed in a crimson robe, wearing a crown, and holding a sceptre in his hand.

A candidate receiving this Degree is said to be "received and acknowledged as a Most Excellent Master."

Lodges of Most Excellent Masters are "dedicated to King Solomon."

The officers of the Lodge are stationed as in the Entered Apprentice's Degree, described on Page 8. The Master presiding calls the Lodge to order, and says:

Master (to the Junior Warden).—Brother Junior, are they all Most Excellent Masters in the south?

J. W.—They are, Right Worshipful.

Master (to the Senior Warden).—Brother Senior, are they all Most Excellent Masters in the west?

S. W.—They are, Right Worshipful.

Master.—They are also in the east.

Master gives one rap, which calls up the two deacons.

Master (to Junior Deacon).—Brother Junior, the first care of a Mason?

J. D.—To see the door tyled, Most Excellent.

Master.—Attend to that part of your duty, and inform the Tyler that we are about to open this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, and direct him to tyle accordingly.

Junior Deacon goes to the door and gives six knocks, which the Tyler from without answers by six more. He then gives one

knock, which the Tyler answers with one, and he then partly opens the door, and informs the Tyler that by order of the Most Excellent Master a Lodge of Most Excellent Masters is now about to be opened in this place, and he must tyle accordingly. He then returns to his place and addresses the Master:

J. D.—The Lodge is tyled, Most Excellent.

Master—By whom?

J. D.—By a Most Excellent Master Mason without the door, armed with the proper implements of his office.

Master—His duty there?

J. D.—To keep off all cowans and eavesdroppers, and see that none pass or repass without permission of the Right Worshipful Master.

The Master now questions each officer of the Lodge as to his duties, which are recited by them as in the other Degrees.

Master (to Senior Warden).—Brother Senior, you will assemble the brethren around the altar for our opening.

S. W.—Brethren, please to assemble around the altar, for the purpose of opening this Lodge of Most Excellent Master Masons.

The brethren now assemble around the altar, and form a circle, and stand in such a position as to touch each other, leaving a space for the Right Worshipful Master; they then all kneel on their left knee, and join hands, each giving his right-hand brother his left hand, and his left-hand brother his right hand; their left arms uppermost, and their heads inclining downward: all being thus situated, the Right Worshipful Master reads the following verses from Psalm XXIV:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah. Lift up your heads, O ye gates (here the kneeling brethren alternately raise and bow their heads as the reading proceeds); and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts; he is the King of glory. Selah.”

While reading these verses, the Right Worshipful Master: 1-

vances toward the circle of kneeling brethren, taking his steps only when reading those passages relative to the King of glory.

The reading being ended the Right Worshipful Master then kneels, joins hands with the others, which closes the circle, and they all lift their hands, as joined together, up and down, six times, keeping time with the words as the Right Worshipful Master repeats them: "One, two, three; one, two, three." This is Masonically called balancing. They then rise, disengage their hands, and lift them up above their heads, with a moderate and somewhat graceful motion, and cast up their eyes; turning at the same time to the right, they **extend** their arms, and then suffer them to fall loose and somewhat nerveless by their sides. This sign is said by Masons, to represent the sign of astonishment made by the Queen of Sheba, on first viewing Solomon's Temple. (See Fig. 30.)

The Right Worshipful Master resumes his seat and says: "Brethren, attend to the signs." He himself then gives all the signs, from an Entered Apprentice up to this Degree, and the brethren join and imitate him.

Master (to the Senior Warden).—Brother Senior, it is my will and pleasure that this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters be now opened for dispatch of business, strictly forbidding all private committees, or profane language, whereby the harmony of the same may be interrupted, while engaged in their lawful pursuits, under no less penalty than the by-laws enjoin, or a majority of the brethren may see cause to inflict.

The Senior Warden repeats this to his Junior, and the Junior announces it to the Lodge, as follows:

J. W.—Brethren, you have heard our Right Worshipful Master's will and pleasure, as just communicated to me—so let it be done.

The Lodge being opened, the ordinary business of the evening is gone through with, as in the former Degrees. If a candidate is to be initiated, the Junior Deacon goes to the preparation-room, where he is in waiting, and prepares him. He takes off the candidate's coat, puts a cable-tow six times round his body, and conducts him to the door of the Lodge, where he gives six distinct knocks (which are answered by the Senior Deacon from within), and then one knock, which is answered in the same manner.

S. D. (partly opening the door).—Who comes there?

I. D.—A worthy brother, who has been regularly initiated as an Entered Apprentice Mason; passed to the Degree of Fellow Craft; raised to the sublime Degree of Master Mason; advanced to the honorary Degree of a Mark Master Mason; presided in the chair

as Past Master; and now wishes for further light in Masonry, by being received and acknowledged as a most Excellent Master.

S. D.—Is it of his own free-will and accord he makes this request?

J. D.—It is.

S. D.—Is he duly and truly prepared?

J. D.—He is.

S. D.—Is he worthy and well qualified?

J. D.—He is.

S. D.—Has he made suitable proficiency in the preceding Degrees?

J. D.—He has.

S. D.—By what further right or benefit does he expect to obtain this favor?

J. D.—By the benefit of a pass-word.

S. D.—Has he a pass-word?

J. D.—He has it not; but I have it for him.

S. D.—Give it to me.

Junior Deacon whispers in the ear of the Senior Deacon the word RABBONI. (In many Lodges, the Past Master's word, GIBLEM, is used as pass-word for this Degree, and the word RABBONI,¹ as the real word.)

S. D.—The word is right. You will wait until the Most Excellent Master is made acquainted with your request, and his answer returned.

Senior Deacon repairs to the Right Worshipful Master in the east, and gives six raps at the door.

Master—Who comes there?

S. D.—A worthy brother, who has been regularly initiated as an Entered Apprentice; passed to the Degree of a Fellow Craft; raised to the sublime Degree of a Master Mason; advanced to the honorary Degree of a Mark Master; presided as Master in the chair, and now wishes for further light in Masonry, by being received and acknowledged as a Most Excellent Master.

Master—Is it of his own free-will and accord he makes this request?

S. D.—It is.

Master—Is he duly and truly prepared?

S. D.—He is.

Master—Is he worthy and qualified?

S. D.—He is.

¹ "She turned herself, and saith unto him, RABBONI; which is to say Master."
—*St. John*, xx. 16.

Master—Has he made suitable proficiency in the preceding Degrees?

S. D.—He has.

Master—By what further right or benefit does he expect to obtain this favor?

S. D.—By the benefit of a pass-word.

Master—Has he a pass-word?

S. D.—He has not; but I have it for him.

Master—Give it.

Senior Deacon whispers in his ear the word RABBONI.

Master—The pass is right. Since he comes endowed with all these necessary qualifications, let him enter this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters, in the name of the Lord.

The door is then flung open, and the Senior Deacon receives the candidate upon the keystone. The candidate is then walked six times around the Lodge by the Senior Deacon, moving with the sun. The first time they pass around the Lodge, when opposite the Junior Warden, he gives one rap with the gavel; when opposite the Senior Warden, he does the same, and likewise when opposite the Right Worshipful Master. The second time around each gives two blows; the third, three, and so on, until they arrive to six. (See Note K, Appendix.)

During this time the Right Worshipful Master reads the following verses from Psalm CXII:

“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. (• •)

“Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together. (• • •)

“Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. (• • • •)

“For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. (• • • • •)

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. (• • • • •)

“For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.”

The reading of the foregoing is so timed as not to be fully ended until the Senior Deacon and candidate have performed the sixth revolution. Immediately after this the Senior Deacon and candidate arrive at the Junior Warden’s station in the south, where the same questions are asked and the same answers returned as at the door. (Who comes there? &c.) The Junior Warden then

directs the candidate to pass on to the Senior Warden in the west, for further examination; where the same questions are asked and answers returned as before. The Senior Warden directs him to be conducted to the Right Worshipful Master in the east, for further examination. The Right Worshipful Master asks the same questions and receives the same answers as before.

Master (to Senior Deacon).—Please to conduct the candidate back to the west, from whence he came, and put him in the care of the Senior Warden, and request him to teach the candidate how to approach the east, by advancing upon six upright regular steps to the sixth step, and place him in a position to take upon him the solemn oath, or obligation, of a Most Excellent Master Mason.

The candidate is conducted back to the west, and the Senior Warden teaches him how to approach the east in this Degree: First, by taking the first step in Masonry, as in the Entered Apprentice's Degree, that is, stepping off with the left foot, and bringing up the right foot so as to form a square; then taking the steps as directed in the Fellow Craft Degree, and so on up to this one—beginning always with the Entered Apprentice's step. (See Fig. 14, p. 93.)

On arriving at the altar the candidate kneels on both knees, and places both hands on the Bible, square, and compasses. The Master then comes forward and addresses him:

Master—Brother, you are now placed in a proper position to take upon you the solemn oath or obligation of a Most Excellent Master Mason, which I assure you, as before, is neither to affect your religion nor politics. If you are willing to take it, repeat your name and say after me:

I, Peter Gabe, of my own free-will and accord, in presence of Almighty God and this Lodge of Most Excellent Master Masons, erected to Him and dedicated to King Solomon, do hereby and hereon, most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, in addition to my former obligations, that I will not give the secrets of Most Excellent Master to any one of an inferior Degree, nor to any person in the known world, except it be to a true and lawful brother of this Degree, and within the body of a just and lawfully constituted Lodge of such; and not unto him nor them whom I shall hear so to be, but unto him and them only whom I shall find so to be, after strict trial and due examination, or lawful information.

Furthermore do I promise and swear, that I will obey all regular signs and summonses handed, sent, or thrown to me from a brother of this Degree, or from the body of a just and lawfully

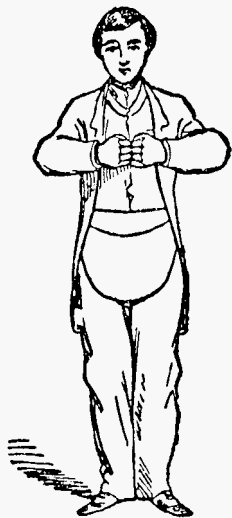
constituted Lodge of such; provided it be within the length of my cable-tow.

Furthermore do I promise and swear, that I will support the Constitution of the General Grand Royal Arch Chapter of the United States; also, that of the Grand Chapter of this State, under which this Lodge is held, and conform to all the by-laws, rules, and regulations of this, or any other Lodge of which I may hereafter become a member.

Furthermore do I promise and swear, that I will aid and assist all poor and indigent brethren of this Degree, their widows and orphans, wheresoever dispersed around the globe, as far as in my power, without injuring myself or family.

Furthermore do I promise and swear, that the secrets of a

FIG. 28



SIGN OF A MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

brother of this Degree, given to me in charge as such, and I knowing them to be such, shall remain as secret and inviolable in my breast as in his own, murder and treason excepted, and the same left to my own free-will and choice.

Furthermore do I promise and swear, that I will not wrong this

Lodge of Most Excellent Master Masons, nor a brother of this Degree, to the value of any thing, knowingly, myself, nor suffer it to be done by others if in my power to prevent it.

Furthermore do I promise and swear, that I will dispense light and knowledge to all ignorant and uninformed brethren at all times, as far as is in my power, without material injury to myself or family. To all which I do most solemnly swear, with a fixed and steady purpose of mind in me to keep and perform the same; binding myself under no less penalty than to have my breast torn open, and my heart and vitals taken from thence, and exposed to rot on the dunghill, if ever I violate any part of this, my solemn oath, or obligation, of a Most Excellent Master Mason. So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same.

Master (to the candidate).—Detach your hands and kiss the book six times.¹ (Candidate obeys.) You will now rise and

FIG. 29



GRIP OF A MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

receive from me the sign, grip, and word of a Most Excellent Master Mason.

¹ We have seen in the Masonic ceremonies a constant reiteration of the number *three*, and sometimes thrice repeated, which is called giving the grand honors of Masonry. There must have been some cause or reason for this custom, now unknown. And I will venture to say, that its original intention was in honor and out of reverence to the ancient Trinity. The practice seems to be kept up by the Church of Rome, which goes to corroborate this opinion. One of the rules established by the reverend mother abbess of the Ursuline Convent at Charlestown, as reported by Miss Reed, one of the novices in that institution, is, "before entering the room, to give *three knocks* on the door, accompanied with some religious ejaculation, and wait until they are answered by *three* from within." The Mason will see that this is an exact copy of his rules and practice.

The reader has observed that the number *six*, in the Degree under consideration, is particularly respected. In the opening scene of initiations, not noticed above, the candidate is prepared with a rope wound six times round his body, and is then conducted to the door of the Lodge, against which he gives six distinct knocks, which are answered by the same number from within; and, when admitted, he is walked six times around the Lodge, *moving with the sun*. On the contrary, the brethren more advanced form a procession, as above stated, and march six times around the Lodge, *against* the course of the sun. Masons from habit pass through these ceremonies, without stopping to examine into their meaning and original intention.

The Druids also paid great veneration to the number six. "As to what remains," says Mayo (vol. II. p. 239), "respecting the superstitions of the Druids, I know not

The sign is given by placing your two hands, one on each breast, the fingers meeting in the centre of the body, and jerking them apart as though you were trying to tear open your breast. It alludes to the penalty of the obligation. (See Fig. 28.)

The grip is given by taking each other by the right hand, and clasping them so that each compress the third finger of the other with his thumb. (If one hand is large and the other small, they cannot both give the grip at the same time.) It is called the grip of all grips, because it is said to cover all the preceding grips. (See Fig. 29.)

Master (holding candidate by his hand and placing the inside of his right foot to the inside of candidate's right foot) whispers in his ear—RABONI.

Should there be more than one candidate for initiation, the ceremony stops here until the others are advanced thus far, and then they all receive the remainder together.

A noise of shuffling feet is now heard in the Lodge, which is purposely made by some of the members.

Master (to Senior Warden).—What is the cause of all this confusion?

S. W.—Is not this the day set apart for the celebration of the cope-stone, Right Worshipful?

Master—Ah, I had forgotten. (To Secretary.) Is it so, Brother Secretary?

Sec. (looking at his book).—It is, Right Worshipful.

Master (to Senior Warden).—Brother Senior, assemble the brethren and form a procession, for the purpose of celebrating the cope-stone.

The candidate now stands aside, while the brethren assemble and form a procession, double file, and march six times around the Lodge, against the course of the sun, singing from the text-book the first three verses of the Most Excellent Master's Song:

All hail to the morning that bids us rejoice;
The Temple's completed, exalt high each voice;
The cope-stone is finished, our labor is o'er;
The sound of the gavel shall hail us no more.

what was the foundation of the religious respect which they had for the number six; but it is certain they preferred it to all other numbers. It was the sixth day of the moon that they performed their principal ceremonies of religion, and that they began the year. They went six in number to gather the mistletoe; and in monuments now extinct we often find six of these priests together."—*Fellow's Inquiry into the Origin, History, and Purport of Freemasonry*, p. 318.

To the power Almighty, who ever has guided
 The tribes of old Israel, exalting their fame;
 To Him who hath governed our hearts undivided,
 Let's send forth our voices to praise His great name.

Companions assemble on this joyful day
 (The occasion is glorious) the keystone to lay;
 Fulfilled is the promise, by the Ancient of Days,
 To bring forth the cope-stone with shouting and praise.

The keystone is now brought forward and placed in its proper place; that is, two pillars or columns, called Jachin and Boaz (see pp. 71 und 83), each about five feet high, are set up, and an arch placed on them, made of planks or boards, in imitation of block-work, in the centre of which is a mortise left for the reception of a keystone; the Most Excellent Master takes the keystone and steps up into a chair, and places it into the arch, and drives it down to its place by giving it six raps with his gavel.¹

As soon as this ceremony is through, all the brethren move around as before, continuing the song:

There is no more occasion
 For level or plumb-line,
 For trowel or gavel,
 For compass or square.

As they come to these words, all the brethren divest themselves of their jewels, aprons, sashes, &c., and hang them on the arch as they pass round.

Our works are completed,
 The ark safely seated,
 And we shall be greeted
 As workmen most rare.

The Ark, which all this time has been carried round by four of the brethren, is brought forward and placed on the altar, and a pot of incense² is placed on the ark.

¹ During the ceremonies two pillars are erected, each of about five feet high, and an arch placed over them, made in imitation of block-work, in the centre of which a mortise is left for the reception of a KEYSTONE; the Most Excellent Master, taking the keystone in his hand, places it in the arch, and drives it home with six raps of his gavel.—*Historical Landmarks*, vol. II. p. 128.

² This pot contains gum camphor or other inflammable matter.

Now those that are worthy,
Our toils who have shared,
And proved themselves faithful,
Shall meet their reward;
Their virtue and knowledge,
Industry and skill,
Have our approbation—
Have gained our good-will.

The brethren now all halt, and face inward to the altar, and beckon the candidate to come forward and join in the ceremonies, which he does.

We accept and receive them,
Most Excellent Masters,
Invested with honor
And power to preside
Among worthy craftsmen,
Wherever assembled,
The knowledge of Masons
To spread far and wide.

As they begin the next verses, each one throws up his hands and rolls his eyes upward—giving a sign of admiration or astonishment like that described (see p. 203) as having been expressed by the Queen of Sheba on first viewing Solomon's Temple—and keeps them in that position while singing these two verses of the song: (See Fig. 30.)

Almighty Jehovah,
Descend now, and fill
This Lodge with thy glory,
Our hearts with good-will;
Preside at our meetings,
Assist us to find
True pleasure in teaching
Good-will to mankind.

Thy wisdom inspired
The great institution;
Thy strength shall support,
Till Nature expire;
And when the creation
Shall fall into ruin,
Its beauty shall rise
Through the midst of the fire.

The brothers now all join hands as in opening, and while in this attitude the Right Worshipful Master reads the following passage of Scripture, 2 Chron. vii. 1, 4.

FIG. 30



SIGN OF ADMIRATION, OR ASTONISHMENT

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good (here the Master, who is high-priest of the Chapter, kneels and joins hands with the rest), for his mercy endureth forever."

They all then repeat in concert the words, "*For he is good* (here one of the brethren, standing behind the candidate, throws a piece of blazing gum-camphor or other combustible matter into the *pot of incense* standing on the altar, around which the brethren are kneeling), *for his mercy endureth forever,*" six times, each time

bowing their heads low toward the floor. The members now balance six times, as in opening (see page 203), rise and balance six times more, then, disengaging themselves from each other, take their seats.

Master (to candidate).—Brother, your admission to this Degree of Masonry is a proof of the good opinion the brethren of this Lodge entertain of your Masonic abilities. Let this consideration induce you to be careful of forfeiting, by misconduct and inattention to our rules, that esteem which has raised you to the rank you now possess. It is one of your great duties, as a Most Excellent Master, to dispense light and truth to the uninformed Mason; and I need not remind you of the impossibility of complying with this obligation without possessing an accurate acquaintance with the lectures of each degree. If you are not already completely conversant in all the Degrees heretofore conferred on you remember that an indulgence, prompted by a belief that you will apply yourself with double diligence to make yourself so, has induced the brethren to accept you. Let it, therefore, be your unremitting study to acquire such a degree of knowledge and information as shall enable you to discharge with propriety the various duties incumbent on you, and to preserve unsullied the title now conferred upon you of a Most Excellent Master.

This charge closes the initiation, and a motion is generally made to adjourn, and close the Lodge.

Master (to J. W.).—Brother Junior, you will please assemble the brethren around the altar, for the purpose of closing this Lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

The brethren immediately assemble around the altar in a circle, and kneel on the right knee, put their left arms over, and join hands as before. While kneeling in this position, the Master reads the following verses from the one hundred and thirty-fourth Psalm:

"Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord.

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.

"The Lord, that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion."

The Master then closes the circle as in opening, when they balance six times, rise and balance six times more, disengaging their hands, and giving the signs from this Degree downward. The Lodge is then closed as in the preceding Degrees. The following is read at closing:—

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of

righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."—*Psalms* XXIII.¹

LECTURE ON THE SIXTH, OR MOST EXCELLENT MASTER'S DEGREE

Question. Are you a Most Excellent Master?

Answer. I am. Try me.

Q. How will you be tried?

A. By the cap stone.

Q. Why by the cap stone?

A. Because it completed King Solomon's Temple, upon the ceremonies of the dedication of which this Degree is founded.

Q. Where were you received and acknowledged as a Most Excellent Master?

A. In a regular and duly constituted Lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

Q. How gained you admission?

A. By six distinct knocks. (● ● ● ● ● ●)

Q. To what do the six distinct knocks allude?

A. To the Sixth Degree of Masonry, it being that upon which I was about to enter.

Q. What was said to you from within?

A. Who comes here?

Q. Your answer?

A. A worthy brother who has been duly initiated, passed to the degree of Fellow Craft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master, and regularly passed the chair, now wishes for further promotion in Masonry, by being received and acknowledged as a Most Excellent Master.

Q. What were you then asked?

A. If it was an act of my own free will and accord; if I was worthy and well qualified; if I had made suitable proficiency in the preceding degree, and was properly vouched for, all of which

¹ "Recent discoveries in Ethiopia have brought to light," says a writer on the Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum, "arches regularly constructed with the keystone. The same arch is also found in the vaulted roof of a small building or portico in the Egyptian style, which is attached to one of the sides of the largest pyramids at Assour. At Jebel Barkal, Mr. Waddington observed an arched roof in a portico attached to a pyramid." These pyramids are supposed to be of higher antiquity than the building of King Solomon's Temple.—*Theo. Phil.*, p. 208.

being answered in the affirmative, I was asked by what right or benefit I expected to gain this important privilege.

Q. Your answer?

A. By the benefit of the pass.

Q. Give it. (Word—Mark Well.)

Q. What was then said to you?

A. I was directed to wait until the Right Worshipful Master could be informed of my request, and his answer returned.

Q. What was his answer?

A. Let the candidate enter.

Q. How were you then disposed of?

A. I was conducted *six* times round the Lodge, to the Worshipful Senior Warden in the West, where the same questions were asked and answers returned as at the door.

Q. How did the Worshipful Senior Warden dispose of you?

A. He directed me to be conducted to the Right Worshipful Master in the East, where the same questions were asked and answers returned as before.

Q. How did the Right Worshipful Master dispose of you?

A. He ordered me to be conducted to the Worshipful Senior Warden in the West, who taught me to approach to the altar, advancing by six upright Masonic steps, my feet forming a square and my body erect, to the Right Worshipful Master.

Q. What did the Right Worshipful Master do with you?

A. He made me a Most Excellent Master.

Q. How?

A. In due form.

Q. What is that due form?

A. Kneeling upon both knees, both hands covering the Holy Bible, square and compasses, my body erect, in which due form I took upon myself the solemn oath of a Most Excellent Master.

Q. Have you that obligation?

A. I have.

Q. Will you give it?

A. I will with your assistance.

Q. Proceed. (I, A. B., etc., etc. See obligation.)

Q. Have you a sign belonging to this degree?

A. I have several.

Q. Show me a sign. (Give sign.)

Q. What is that called?

A. A duegard.

Q. Show me another sign. (Gives sign.)

Q. What is that called?

A. The sign.

Q. To what does it allude?

A. To the penalty of my obligation, that I would have my breast torn open—my heart torn out and exposed to rot upon the dung hill, sooner than divulge any of the secrets of this degree unlawfully.

Q. Show me another sign. (Give sign of admiration.)

Q. What is that called?

A. The sign of admiration.

Q. To what does it allude?

A. To the wonder and admiration of our ancient brethren who were present and permitted to view the interior of that magnificent edifice which King Solomon had erected, and was about to dedicate to the service of the Supreme Being.

Q. Have you a grip?

A. I have.

Q. Communicate it to a brother? (Give grip.)

Q. Has it a name?

A. It has.

Q. Give it. (Rabboni.)

Q. What does it signify?

A. Good Master or Most Excellent Master.

Q. What is it otherwise called?

A. The cover grip.

Q. Why?

A. Because as this covers grips of preceding degrees, so should we as Most Excellent Masters, considering that man in his best estate is subject to frailties and errors, endeavor to cover his faults and imperfections with the broad mantle of charity and brotherly love.

Q. When originated this grip?

A. At the completion of the temple. When King Solomon entered he was so well pleased with the master builder that he took him by the right hand and exclaimed, Hail, Rabboni, which signifies Good Master and Most Excellent Master.

Q. What followed?

A. A procession was formed, the ark safely seated, the cap stone placed in the principal arch, and Lodge closed with solemn invocations to Deity.



KEYSTONE