

## MMM DEGREE - EMBARRASSMENT

Brethren, my talk this evening is the Mark Master Mason degree as it relates to the embarrassment of the candidate. I recall that when I was a candidate for this degree, prior to the commencement of the degree, R. W. Bro. E. David Warren, cautioned me that I may find parts of the degree embarrassing. In hindsight, I'm pleased that I was cautioned. It is evident that R. W. Bro. Warren felt that, as a candidate, I might feel uncomfortable with some of the aspects of the degree and was providing me with some initial understanding and support.

The MMM degree certainly presents many opportunities wherein a candidate may be embarrassed. There are purposefully several situations where the candidate may feel awkward or ashamed for his actions. Let's review these situations and surmise on what the purpose of this is, and perhaps contemplate how we, as witnesses and participants, should conduct ourselves in the degree. And my brethren, there are different opinions on this.

Firstly, similar to the EA degree, the candidate is divested of all M. Perhaps he can assume that since this is the first body in the Chapter, like Lodge there may be some type of charity lecture and that he's going to be put on the spot again.

After perambulating the lodge, he takes his obligation. Similar to most degrees, the candidate vows that he will not divulge the secrets of the degree and that he will owe allegiance to the governing body. However the obligation also introduces commitments for receiving and for pledging a Bro. MMM's mark. This is somewhat of a "leap of faith" for the candidate because at this point he is very likely unaware of what a MMM's mark is. However, he vows to receive it when offered to him as a pledge and, then he pledges to faithfully redeem it.

He then represents one of the FCM who were employed in the quarries and is instructed on how to carry and present the keystone for inspection. In some Chapters, the keystone is heavy and difficult to carry. When I was advanced I dropped it several times and the brethren explained "pick it up". Carrying-up the keystone is supposed to be difficult as it symbolizes the difficulty that man encounters in his journey through life, and rather than make fun of the candidate's difficulty, we should be sympathetic as we bring to mind our own difficult journey. Then the overseers compliment the work of the S.D., but are uncertain or don't understand the candidate's work. And finally his work is declared unfit for the building and thrown among the rubble in a somewhat humiliating manner, another embarrassment to the candidate.

The candidate then proceeds to the apartment of the S.W. to receive his wages, and not knowing the T. is detected as an imposter. At this point the brethren act harshly and express little sympathy for the young workman - their initial reaction is that he should be punished by having his hand struck off. The candidate is brought before K.S. and reprimanded.

The candidate is then presented with the charity lecture and put in the awkward situation of not being able to comply with that part of his OB, which requires him to return a brother's mark with its value thereon. The situation is even worse than in the E.A. degree as not only is the candidate unable to return the value of the pledge, but he is accused of violating part of the OB that he had just undertaken. And now, here for the first and only time in this degree, the brethren come to his assistance. It is the kindness of the brethren and their eagerness to live up to their obligation that makes a deep and lasting impression. This is why it is so important that as many brethren as possible participate in assisting the candidate.

Finally, the sixth day of the week comes around a second time and the candidate again proceeds to the apartment of the S.W. This time, being in possession of the T., he receives his wages, but is chastised by the older workmen who feel that he should not have been paid equal to them. As I have stated before, the most important lesson in the MMM degree is not for the candidate, but for our older members. At this point the candidate is informed that he may in reality be more earnest in his researches than the oldest and may be rewarded with more light in M. in consequence. This ought to be the time for our older members to listen, to reflect and ask themselves; Am I being earnest in my researches; Am I putting my heart and soul into my task; Am I providing light and instruction to our younger member; Have I been a member for 20-30 years, or for one year 20 to 30 times.

Brethren are we allowing and encouraging our relatively new, young, energetic and enthusiastic members to grow and mature within these sacred walls; and more importantly, are we providing them with the tools and resources necessary to assist them on their Masonic journey? Are we setting them up to be successful in their endeavors?

Our new members come to the Chapter in hopes of receiving additional light and to better understand what they received in the first three degrees, and they deserve good example, encouragement and praise. Let us ensure that we put the MMM degree lesson to work and create an environment of harmony and growth within our Chapters.

Rt. Ex. Comp. George Fairbairn  
Grand Third Principal  
August 21, 2020