

## Introduction from the “Illustrations of Masonry”

Whoever, attentively considers the nature and tendency of the Masonic institution, must readily perceive its general utility. (Mr Arnold, in his Dutch Dictionary, under the word Freemasonry, says, that it is "A Moral Order, instituted by virtuous men, with the praiseworthy, design of recalling to our remembrance the most sublime truths, in the midst of the most innocent and social pleasures, founded on liberality, brotherly love and charity.") From an anxious desire to display its value, I have been induced to offer the following sheets to the Public. Many reasons might have withheld me from the attempt; my inexperience as a writer, my attention to the duties of a laborious profession, and the many abler hands who have treated the subject before me; yet, under all these disadvantages, the persuasion of friends, added to a warm zeal in the cause, have stimulated me to risk my reputation on the fate of my performance. When I first had the honour to be elected Master of a lodge, I thought it proper to inform myself fully of the general rules of the Society, that I might be able to fulfill my own duty, and officially enforce a due obedience in others. The methods which I adopted with this view, excited in some of superficial knowledge, an absolute dislike of what they considered as innovations; and in other, who were better informed, a jealousy of pre-eminence which the principles of Masonry ought to have checked. Notwithstanding these discouragements, however, I persevered in my intention of supporting the dignity of the Society, and discharging with fidelity the trust reposed in me.

As candour and integrity, uninfluenced by interest and favour, will ever support a good cause, many of my opponents (pardon the expression) began to discover their error, and not only applauded, but cheerfully concurred in the execution of my measures; while others, of less liberality, tacitly approved of what their former declared opinions forbade then publicly to adopt.

This success exceeding my most sanguine wishes, I was encouraged to examine with more attention the contents of our various lectures. The rude and imperfect state in which I found them, the variety of modes established in our lodges, and the difficulties which I encountered in my researches, rather discouraged me first attempt; preserving, however, in the design, I continued, I continued the pursuit; and assisted by a few friends, who had carefully preserved what ignorance and degeneracy had

rejected as unintelligible and absurd, I diligently sought for, and at length happily acquired, some ancient and venerable landmarks of the Order.

Fully determined to pursue the design of the effecting a general reformation, and fortunate in the acquisition of the friends which I had made, I continued my industry till I had prevailed on a sufficient number to join in an attempt to correct the irregularities which had crept into our assemblies, and to exemplify the beauty and utility of the Masonic system.

We commenced our plan by enforcing the value of the ancient charges and regulations of the Order, which inattention had suffered to sink into oblivion, and we established those charges as the basis of our work. To imprint on the memory of a faithful discharge of our duty, we reduced the more material parts of our system into practice; and to encourage others in promoting the plan, we observed a general rule of reading one or more of these charges at every regular meeting, and of elucidating such passages as seemed obscure. The useful hints afforded by these means enabled us gradually to improve our plan, till we at last succeeded in bringing into a connected form the sections, which now compose the three lectures of Masonry.

The progress daily made by our system pointed out the necessity of obtaining the sanction of our patrons; hence several brethren of acknowledged honour and integrity united in an application to the most respectable members of the Society for countenance and protection and so far happily succeeded, as not only to obtain the wished for sanction, but to secure the promise of future support, Since that time the plan has been universally admitted as the basis of our Moral Lectures; and to that circumstance the present publication owes its success.

Having thus ventured to appear in vindication of the ceremonies, and in support of the privileges, of Masonry, I shall be happy to be considered a feeble instrument in promoting its propriety. If I am honoured with a continuance of the approbation of my brethren, and succeed in giving the world a favourable idea of the institution, I shall have attained the full completion of my wish; and if my hopes are frustrated, I shall still indulge the not unpleasant reflection, of having exerted my best endeavours in a good cause.

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