

'WORTHY AND WELL QUALIFIED'

The Builder, April 1915

ARCANA Lodge No. 87, of Seattle, Washington, has a custom well worth considering by the Craft at large, its intent being to discover, so far as possible, the internal qualifications of candidates for the Degrees. Also, it serves to induce in the mind of an applicant a sense of the seriousness of the step he is about to take, and to obliterate every vestige of the absurd idea that Masonry is a "goat-riding fraternity." After a man has petitioned for the Degrees of the Lodge, the secretary sends him the Preliminary statement reproduced below for his consideration. His first knowledge of its existence is when he receives it in the mail, and naturally it arouses some thought. If he applies, as occasionally one does, for assistance in formulating his reply, he is told that none can be given; that it is for him to study and make his own reply, whatever that may be. After the reply is received, the petition is presented to the Lodge and follows the usual course. In no case is the Statement sent to any man prior to his petitioning the Lodge, as that would be regarded as an improper use of it. The statement here follows:

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT.

You have expressed a wish to become a Freemason. Before going further we deem it essential to meet you with candor and courteously request your careful consideration of this Preliminary statement and certain questions concerning yourself.

Masonry is a universal system of morality to which all good men may subscribe. Its teachings are based upon belief in the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the brotherhood of man. While acknowledging with deep reverence the eternal and all-powerful Creator, it places no restrictions upon a man's religious or political opinions, striving to unite all men as brothers and to free them from darkness and error. Indeed, its moral and philosophic instructions are drawn from Truth itself and harmonize with the highest and best that are to be found in every religion which makes for the enlightenment of mankind.

The realization of your desire to become a part of this Fraternity will depend upon the judgment of the members as to whether you are suitable material for the Order and whether the Order is suitable for you. It will, therefore, be their duty-- in case your petition is presented to the Lodge--to institute diligent inquiries about you; after which a vote by ballot will be taken, wherein a single negative will preclude your admission. Examine yourself, therefore, and see whether you can answer the expectations of the Order; and above all, endeavor to settle clearly and

honestly in your own mind the motives which lead you to seek our society. The following will serve to facilitate this self-examination and to guard both you and ourselves against mistakes:

1. Do you expect by becoming a member to obtain any outward advantage relative to your position as a citizen and as an individual? If so, you will be disappointed.

2. Would your present convictions prevent you from disregarding distinctions which society has made between individuals, as to their station, wealth, religious opinions, politics, etc.? If so, relinquish the idea of becoming a Freemason, as no notice is taken of those discriminations in our meetings.

3. If, however, you believe that we advocate a civil relation that is chimerical or a liberty and equality neither good nor practical, then you should reconsider your resolution to join us because with such views you would not suit our Order.

4. Curiosity, ambition for honors, and desire to enlarge the circle of your social acquaintance, are not suitable motives for seeking admission into Freemasonry.

5. To those who voluntarily knock at its doors and whose character, motives and daily lives are in harmony with its high ideals, the Temples of the Order are open. To preserve and perpetuate its teachings, every initiate is required to make vows of the most inviolable secrecy as to its rites and ceremonies. These obligations in no wise conflict with the duties he owes to God, humanity, the country of which he is a citizen, the community in which he lives, or himself.

6. Since the Masonic Order, as has already been said, consists of men of all classes and circumstances, you might perhaps find someone among us with whom you have been or are at variance. Therefore, determine to your own satisfaction, whether you will be strong and charitable enough to acknowledge such a man as your brother.

7. Our membership is attended with some necessary expense, which we require to be promptly and punctually paid, that our good works may not suffer for want thereof. The amount you can readily ascertain (by reference to our By-Laws), and you will give this due attention.

We trust you will consider these statements in the same spirit of honesty and friendship in which they have been presented. It is of the utmost importance to you as well as to the Fraternity that the motives and ideals governing your daily life be in substantial accord therewith. A frank and voluntary expression of your views, together with any explanations you may wish to make regarding these or other matters, is desired and will receive careful, sincere and conscientious attention.

Kindly return this paper with your communication to the Secretary of the Lodge on or before.....

After the petitioner has been elected, the secretary of the Lodge sends him notice to that effect, in the following letter, which gives him something further to think about while waiting Initiation.

It affords me pleasure to inform you that you have been duly elected to receive the degrees of Masonry and become a member of this Lodge by Initiation, in accordance with your petition. As soon as the exact date has been set for conferring the first, or Entered Apprentice Degree, you will be informed. Meanwhile, you may reflect with much profit upon the step you are about to take, and the motives which prompt you to seek admission into an institution inspired by the pure principles of Truth and Benevolence, the ceremonies and allegories of which are intended as useful Moral lessons, illustrative of Light and Truth to the mind of him who seeks to enter-- lessons to be cherished among life's fondest memories.