

## THE BLACK CUBE

Unfortunately, no hard and fast rule can be laid down on the use of a *Black Cube* when balloting. There is no way to explain "*this* is a good reason, but *that* is not a good reason" for casting a black cube. Each Mason has to judge the reason for himself. Yet some suggestions may be given.

We know a man we dislike. He has different ideas from ours. He belongs to a different "set." He is not the type that we admire. Our dislike does not amount to hatred, nor is it predicated upon any evil in the man's character. He and we are antipathetic; we rub each other the wrong way. When he applies to our lodge we must decide this question: will the unpleasantness to us, in having him as a member, be greater than the good to him which may come from his reception of the Masonic teachings? Are we sure that we cannot accept him as a brother merely because we "have never liked him?"

We all know cases like this; the president of the bank turns down Johnson's application for a second mortgage. Johnson makes the matter personal. He "has it in" for the president. The president applies for the degrees. Someone casts a black cube. It may or may not be Johnson. No one knows. But later perhaps we hear Johnson's boast "I got even with that son-of-a-gun who turned down my loan!" He doesn't say how he "got even," of course. But we are pretty sure we know. Such a use of the black cube is, of course, utterly un-Masonic. It is a misuse of a great power. We might as well turn down the minister of the Baptist church because he doesn't agree with our minister, who is a Methodist! Or turn down the automobile dealer because he refused to give us a larger allowance on our old car! To turn the Masonic black cube into a secret dagger for personal revenge is un-Masonic and indefensible.

Freemasonry works some curious miracles. A self-made man applied five times for the degrees in a certain lodge. The man was rather uneducated, yet a commercial success. He had, literally, raised himself by his bootstraps from the poverty of the streets to a business position of some prominence. Yet he was rather raw, rough and ready, even uncouth. No shadow of personal unworthiness rested upon him; he was honest, upright, a good citizen. In this lodge a certain Past Master (as was discovered in after years) voted four times against this applicant. The Past Master left the city. On the fifth application the petitioner was elected. Something in Masonry took hold of his heart. Through Masonry he was led to acquire some of the education that he lacked; through Masonry he was led into the church. In time he made such a reputation for himself as a Mason that he was put in the officers line, and finally achieved the solemn distinction of being made Master of his lodge. He is still regarded as one of the best, most constructive and ablest Masters that lodge has ever had.

In the course of ten or twelve years the absent Past Master returned. In the light of history, he confessed (which strictly speaking he should not have done!) that it was he who had kept this man out for what he really believed were good reasons. He thought the "rough neck" would detract from the dignity and honor of the Fraternity. Yet this same "rough neck," through Masonry, became educated, a good churchman, a fine Mason and an excellent officer.

Had the Past Master, whose black cubes were cast with honest intention to benefit the Fraternity, not left town the blessings of Masonry might forever have been denied to a heart ready to receive them and society, the lodge and the church been prevented from having the services of a man who gave largely of himself to all three.

The black cube is the great protection of the Fraternity; it permits the brother who does not desire to make public his secret knowledge, to use that knowledge for the benefit of the Craft. It gives to all members the right to say who shall not become members of their lodge family. But at the same time it puts to the test the Masonic heart, and the personal honesty of every brother who deliberates on its use.

The black cube is a thorough test of our understanding of the Masonic teaching of the cardinal virtue, justice, which "enables us to render to every man his just due without distinction." We are taught of justice that "it should be the invariable practice of every Mason, never to deviate from the minutest principle thereof."

Justice to the lodge requires us to cast the black cube on an applicant we believe to be unfit. Justice to ourselves requires that we cast the black cube on the application of the man we believe would destroy the reputation of our lodge.

Through justice to the applicant we are taught to render justice *to every man*, not merely *to* Masons. To symbolically cast no black cube for little reasons, small reasons, mean reasons. And justice to justice requires that we think carefully, deliberate slowly, and act cautiously. No man will know what we do; no eye will see, save that All Seeing Eye that pervades the innermost recesses of our hearts, and will, so we are taught, reward us according to our merits.

Shakespeare said, "O, it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant!" The black cube is a giant's strength to protect Freemasonry. Used thoughtlessly, carelessly, without Masonic reason, it crushes not only him at whom it is aimed but also him who casts it.

A well-used black cube goes into the ballot box.  
Ill-used, it drops into the heart and blackens it.

Remember: Always vote for the good of the Fraternity.

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