

The following is an article written in 1855 regarding Masonic Moral Standards. It is interesting to see that high standards of a freemason have been a topic for discussion in times past. The standards in this article are from a period of time when the country was still young and the population was still reveling in self-reliance. Are these standards comparable to today's society, or has the world evolved to require a new set of standards both for the ordinary man and for a freemason. Comments and discussion are well welcome on the district forum at [www.district19.ca](http://www.district19.ca).

Fraternally,  
Bro. Shane Stirling

## A Higher Stand

### Masonic Review - 1855

Every Mason who has attentively observed the action of Grand Lodges within the last few years. must have seen the indications of progress shown by these bodies assuming a higher position in regard to moral requirements. Although morality is one of the foundation stones of our mystic temple, yet for many years there was some remissness in enforcing its observance. Members were too often permitted to violate the moral law with impunity, forgetful of the solemn admonitions of the Order, and reckless, not only of their own standing, but of the reputation of Freemasonry itself. The moral aspect of Masonry is, to a great extent, known by the uninitiated only as it is seen in the character and conduct of its members. Hence, a swearing, drinking, gambling, sabbath-breaking Mason, was considered by "outsiders" as a legitimate representative of the Order to which they belonged: and when told that Masonry did not sanction nor permit such things, they triumphantly pointed to facts - to A, to B, to C, - whose daily practice taught a very different doctrine, and whose membership in the Craft sustained the

assumption.

Of late years, however, Grand Lodges have felt the necessity of assuming a higher tone in these matters; and by formally re-asserting the great moral doctrines of Freemasonry, and insisting upon their practical exhibition in the deportment of members, they have re-traced their steps to the position from which the Craft had practically wandered. This has placed the Order in a proper position before the world, and justified our claims to a pure and elevated morality.

The Grand Lodge of Arkansas, at its last session, adopted the following 'resolution for the government of its subordinate Lodges, in the matters in question.

"Resolved, That any kind of gambling, profane swearing, and the intemperate use of ardent spirits, is unmasonic ; and that the Grand Lecturer be requested to give the same in charge to the subordinate Lodges ; and that such as are guilty of such unmasonic conduct be subject to admonition, suspension, or expulsion."

This movement shows the high appreciation of the morality of Masonry by the Craft in Arkansas, and does equal honor to them as men and as Masons. The Grand Lodge of Indiana had preceded our Arkansas brethren, in adopting, substantially, the same rule ; and the Grand Lodge of Iowa has followed rapidly in the track of both of them. We are persuaded that the Craft in every, other State will take their stand upon the same broad and sure foundation ; and thus, by the moral influence

of their united and harmonious sentiment, create a "pillar of strength" which shall successfully resist the progress of these pernicious practices among us.

No man can be a Mason, in the strict sense of the word, unless he be a good man, and "obey the moral law." Obedience to moral law is the tenure of his masonic membership ; and when a member will no longer conform to this requirement, he should be excluded from among us. He should be counselled and advised on the impropriety of his conduct ; the old, experienced, and influential of the Lodge should labor for his reformation as they would for a brother or a son; but if moral suasion will not cure him, a more severe procedure must be resorted to, and the wilful transgressor cut off.

Masonry, regarded as a mere social organization, should shelter none but gentlemen ;-and the great Washington said "gentlemen never swear." We may add that gentlemen never become intoxicated. If profanity is a deliberate violation of an express command of God, drunkenness is equally an offence against our moral and physical nature, as well as against our social relations and society at large. We repeat it, when a man is intoxicated he is not a gentleman, for he has neither the moral qualities nor the intellectual abilities to behave himself as a gentleman.

How would it sound, when a man (?) is seen staggering along the street under the influence of ardent spirits, to hear it said- there goes a Freemason? A miserable inebriate has crawled home to his insulted family, and

with brutal curses has turned his heart-broken wife and frightened children into the street-would you like to hear it said of that man, "he is a Freemason." A man has taken his gun on Sunday morning and wandered off into the forest, or over the prairies, and spent the day in shooting game, instead of remaining with his family and respecting the laws of the land and the usages of christianized society";-would it not grate harshly upon your ears to hear it tauntingly observed-" that man is a Freemason?"

Another man is seen in a " gambling hell," squandering his means amongst unprincipled sharpers, and acquiring habits ruinous to soul and body both : yet he wears as a breast-pin, the square and compasses, thereby making the impression that he is a Mason ! Would you admit such a man to your friendship, or as a visitor into your family on terms of intimacy? Why he is a gamester ; he treads a pathway polluted by the lowest and basest of our race ; he breathes an atmosphere of moral pestilence ; his touch is contamination-his embrace is death. A gambler a Freemason ? Not if the members of Lodges do their duty.

We have perhaps said enough for this time, but may recur to the subject again hereafter. A higher stand must be taken, by both subordinate and Grand Lodges. The old banner of Masonry has been too long shrouded in comparative darkness ; its emblems and its mottoes have been concealed within its own foldings. The words, TEMPERANCE, FORTITUDE, PRUDENCE, JUSTICE, should be revealed upon its folds to the eye of enquiring humanity everywhere. We should not be ashamed of these words, but glory in them. Let the world read

them ; and let the world see them exemplified in the conduct of our membership. Compel the world to know that a Mason is no gambler, no drunkard, is not profane, nor does he violate the " day of rest;" in short, that he is A GENTLEMAN.

From its origin to the present hour, in all its vicissitudes, Masonry has been the steady unwearing friend of man. - Rev. Erastus Burr