

## Without Scruples or Diffidence

All Masons are aware, of course, that Fellowcrafts received their wages without scruples or diffidence. Very few of them have any idea whatsoever what this might mean. Indeed the usage of these two words is now so far lost that the only way that we can come to an understanding of these words is through the responses we learn in the Fellowcraft catechism.

"Scruples" are doubts or objections to a proposed action on the grounds of morality. We might refuse to join in a scheme to defraud someone on the grounds that it would be immoral; an "unscrupulous" person would have no hesitation in joining. When the Fellowcrafts received their wages "without scruple" does this mean that they were unscrupulous?

The answer shows us that it's the opposite, actually. They had no scruples because they knew that they had justly earned their wages and that no moral objection could be raised to their receiving them. Just think about that for a moment. How many employees, as they are getting their paycheques, ask themselves, "Did I really earn this money? Or did I slack off or do shoddy work or pretend to be sick when I really wasn't or do anything else that would make my accepting this money morally tainted?"? Isn't it much more common to hear employees insist not only on their wage but on extensive fringe benefits while at the same time complaining that their employers want them to do their jobs properly?

The concept of diffidence is even more difficult. It is defined as "self-distrust, lack of confidence, modesty, shyness". "Without diffidence" means "confidently, boldly". When I think of someone receiving wages diffidently I think of a teenage babysitter on the job for the first time. She is so shy about the payment end of the transaction that she will not even mention it if you forget to pay her altogether. She will certainly not raise the question of the amount of her pay. The experienced babysitter receives her wages without diffidence; she knows what she is entitled to and is not afraid to insist.

It is experience, of course, that usually helps us overcome youthful shyness and lack of self-confidence. So why does the Work tell us that the ancient Fellowcrafts lacked diffidence because of "the unbounded confidence they placed in the integrity of their employers."? Shyness is so often a fear that if one speaks up one will be treated with ridicule or contempt. But if you are confident in those around you those fears do not arise.

I imagine the Fellowcraft counting his pay with a puzzled look on his face and then asking the Warden, "Does this include my pay for working last Tuesday?". He knows the Warden will give him a straight answer and in a kindly and courteous manner. How many employers these days would do that?

The payment of wages in Masonry is often a symbol for the benefits we receive from life. God is our paymaster. Our job as human beings is to work not only in the mundane world but also in the spiritual quarries where we are building a temple to His glory. And we receive not only "our daily bread" or the benefits we require for our physical well-being but also spiritual benefits as our wage. How do we receive them?

Do we think that "the world owes us a living"; that we can live the high life without doing our share, that we can cheat our way to the benefits that God offers? No, we receive them without scruple. We would not think of accepting the good things of life without doing our part; therefore, we do our job without stinting and earn our wage.

Nor are we afraid of accepting the gifts God gives us. We accept that God wishes us to have them and to use them to benefit mankind and glorify Him. We are not diffident about accepting those benefits.

Life can be so good. We are neither ashamed or afraid to enjoy it.