

THE BALLOT AND THE BLACK CUBE

BY CORRINE MALIN

THERE ARE SOME MEMBERS WHO CONSIDER BALLOTING A MERE MATTER OF FORM, INCIDENTAL TO THE GENERAL ROUTINE OF BUSINESS. OTHERS CONSIDER IT A WEAPON WITH WHICH TO STRIKE A WICKED BLOW TO SOMEONE TO WHOM THEY ARE OPPOSED OR WHOM THEY DO NOT LIKE. OTHERS CONSIDER BALLOTING AN IMPORTANT DUTY AND ALMOST A DIVINE TRUST, A MORAL OBLIGATION. IT IS TO THIS LATTER CLASS THAT THE ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR OWES ITS CONTINUED EXISTENCE. WE ALL STOOD TOGETHER AT THE SACRED ALTAR, WHERE, IN TOKEN OF BROTHERLY LOVE, WE MADE SEVEN SOLEMN VOWS WITHOUT FALTERING, WITNESSED BY THE MASTER ABOVE, BUT DO WE EVER SIT ALONE WITH OURSELVES AND ENUMERATE THOSE VOWS ONE BY ONE, OR, WHEN WE ARE BALLOTING, DO WE CONSIDER JUST WHAT THOSE INCOMPARABLE VOWS MEAN TO EACH OF US - DO WE REALIZE WHAT WE ARE DOING AT THE BALLOT. WE MAKE OR MAR THE LIFE OF A MAN OR A WOMAN SEEKING A HOME IN OUR STAR.

WHEN CASTING OUR BALLOT, DO WE EVER LOOK TOWARD THE EAST AND SEE THAT BEAUTIFUL STAR - OR TO THE WEST AND SEE THE EFFULGENT SUN - THEN INTO THE LABYRINTH AND SEE THE WHITE LIGHT OF OUR MASTER. DO WE EVER SEE THE BEAUTIFUL COLORS THAT SHED THE SOFT LIGHTS FROM THE FIVE POINTS OF OUR STAR; WITH A BROTHERLY LOVE DO THEY EVER BLESS YOU LIKE A RAY FROM AFAR? WHEN WE RAISE OUR HANDS TO RECEIVE THE BALLOT, AND JUST BEFORE WE CAST THE VOTE, MAY WE HEAR RING IN OUR EAR, "NOW, VOTE FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER", THEN WHEN WE SEEK OUR SEATS IN SILENCE, AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT COMES FROM THE EAST, "ANOTHER WILL BE ADDED TO OUR ROLL," A NEW PEACE WILL FLOOD OUR SOULS, AND THEN WE KNOW WE HAVE NOTHING TO REGRET.

THE BALLOT IS A NECESSITY IN EACH CHAPTER. IT MAY STIMULATE THE GROWTH AND CHARACTER OF A CHAPTER, OR, WHEN UNWISELY USED, IT MAY WEAKEN AND DESTROY THE VERY LIFE OF A CHAPTER. BALLOTING IS A SERIOUS AND SACRED PRIVILEGE, AN AFFAIR OF HONOR, AND SHOULD BE EXERCISED WITH RESPECT AND REVERENCE. ANY MEMBER WHO MENACES THE PEACE OR HIGH STANDARD OF A CHAPTER BY CASTING A BLACK BALL MALICIOUSLY IS NOT WORTHY TO HOLD MEMBERSHIP IN ANY CHAPTER. WE SHOULD FORGET ALL ENVY, MALICE, AND JEALOUSY, AND THINK OF THE OBLIGATION AT THE ALTAR. PLACE SELF ASIDE AND VOTE

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER. IT IS ALMOST BEYOND BELIEF THE REGARDLESS WAY IN WHICH THIS TRUST IS BETRAYED, BRINGING GRIEF AND SORROW TO MANY APPLICANTS. THE BLACK BALL IS AS OLD AS SOCIETY AND WAS INSTITUTED FOR THE PROTECTION OF ITS MEMBERS. IT HAS ITS FULL DUTY TO FULFILL - THAT OF THE PROTECTION OF THE ORDER - AND WE SHOULD EXERCISE SEVERE CAUTION WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY COMES TO US TO CHOOSE WHO SHALL JOIN US. MORE DISCORD AND DISTRESS HAS BEEN CAUSED BY THIS ONE THING THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE ORDER. YOU MUST KEEP SECRET THE WORK OF YOUR CHAPTER. DO NOT DISCUSS THE BALLOT AND DO LIVE YOUR OBLIGATION SO THAT YOUR CHAPTER MAY BE A POWER FOR GOOD IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

HONOR THE MEMBER WHO HAS THE COURAGE TO USE THE BLACK CUBE (THE NEGATIVE BALLOT) WHEN PROTECTION IS NEEDED - BUT DO NOT APPROVE OR ACCEPT THE MEMBER WHO WOULD DENY THE PRIVILEGE TO A PERSON WORTHY OF OUR RIGHTS. THE MESSAGES OF LOVE, FAITH, SERVICE, AND DEVOTION TO DUTY HAVE NEVER SEEMINGLY BEEN STORED IN SUCH A MEMBER - OR THE SEED HAS FALLEN ON SOIL TOO BARREN OF HUMAN KINDNESS TO TAKE ROOT AND GROW. THE BURDEN IS UPON US - NOT COLLECTIVELY - BUT INDIVIDUALLY - TO CAST THE BALLOT AS OUR CONSCIENCE DICTATES, KEEPING IN MIND THAT THE ALL-SEEING EYE KNOWS AND JUDGES WHETHER WE ARE FALSE OR FAITHFUL TO OUR TRUST. THERE IS NO FEAR CONCERNING THE BALLOT WHEN EACH ONE APPROACHES OUR ALTAR WITH A PRAYERFUL HEART.

IF YOU HAVE THE SUBMISSION OF ADAH, THERE WILL BE NO DISCORD AFTER AN ELECTION;

IF YOU HAVE THE LOYALTY OF RUTH; YOUR WORTHY MATRON WILL NEVER LACK SUPPORT;

IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE OF ESTHER, YOUR CHAPTER WILL EVER BE IN THE RIGHT;

IF YOU HAVE THE FAITH OF MARTHA, PEACE SHALL ABIDE WITH YOU;

IF YOU HAVE THE CHARITY OF ELECTA, THE BLACK BALL WILL NEVER BE A MENACE IN YOUR CHAPTER.

ALL MEMBERS OF THE ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR, WHEN PRESENT IN THEIR CHAPTER AT THE TIME OF BALLOTING ARE ENTITLED TO VOTE ON CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREES OR FOR AFFILIATION.

THE BALLOT UPON PETITIONS FOR THE DEGREES OR MEMBERSHIP CAN BE TAKEN ONLY AT A STATED MEETING. THE ASSOCIATE CONDUCTESS MAY CARRY THE BALLOT BOX TO EVERY MEMBER PRESENT -- OR MAY PLACE

THE BALLOT BOX UPON THE ALTAR. IF THE BALLOT BOX IS PLACED ON THE ALTAR, EVERY MEMBER ENTITLED TO BALLOT APPROACHES THE ALTAR FROM THE WEST BETWEEN THE STATIONS OF RUTH AND ESTHER AND MAKES THE SALUTATION SIGN TO THE OPEN BIBLE, DEPOSITS A BALLOT, AND TAKES ONE STEP BACKWARD AND TURNS AND WALKS OUT OF THE LABYRINTH BETWEEN THE STATIONS OF ESTHER AND MARTHA. ON APPROACHING THE ALTAR TO BALLOT, EACH MEMBER MUST PAUSE AT THE EDGE OF THE LABYRINTH WHILE THE PRECEDING MEMBER IS CASTING A BALLOT. WHEN THE BALLOT BOX IS PRESENTED TO ANY MEMBER AT HER/HIS SEAT THE SALUTATION SIGN IS NOT GIVEN - THE SALUTATION SIGN IS GIVEN TO THE OPEN BIBLE WHEN A MEMBER IS BALLOTING AT THE ALTAR.

NO ORDER CAN LIVE ANY LENGTH OF TIME UNLESS THE PRINCIPLES FOR WHICH IT STANDS ARE FOUNDED UPON TRUTH AND JUSTICE. BALLOTING AND THE USE OF THE BLACK CUBE (THE BLACK BALL) ARE FOR OUR PROTECTION AND AS SUCH MUST BE RECOGNIZED AND HONORED. INVESTIGATING COMMITTEES ARE APPOINTED IN OPEN CHAPTER AND ANY MEMBER KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT A PETITIONER IS OBLIGATED TO BRING ALL INFORMATION TO THE COMMITTEE - THAT THE COMMITTEE MAY MAKE A REASONABLE AND VALID RECOMMENDATION TO THE CHAPTER. KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE FIRST-HAND, NOT HEARSAY, AND PREJUDICE MUST ^{NOT} ENTER. IF ANY INFORMATION IS WITHHELD, WHICH THE COMMITTEE HAS NO WAY OF FINDING OUT ABOUT, THE COMMITTEE MAY UNKNOWINGLY MAKE AN ERRONEOUS REPORT ON THE PETITIONER. THE MEMBER(S) WHO KNOW OF THIS INFORMATION ARE NOT ACCEPTING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM THE MEMBERS OF THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE AND ARE AT FAULT. THE UNHAPPY FEELINGS FELT WHEN A BLACK CUBE IS CAST -- AND A PETITIONER IS REJECTED - WOULD NOT BE SO VIVIDLY FELT BECAUSE THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE'S REPORT WOULD PROBABLY BE UNFAVORABLE AND THE MEMBERS WOULD NOT BE UNPREPARED FOR THE "NEGATIVE VOTE." THE PROPER INFORMATION - FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE - KNOWN BY MEMBERS OF THE CHAPTER MUST BE GIVEN TO THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE TO ASSIST THEM IN BRINGING A VALID REPORT TO THE CHAPTER.

WORDS ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO EXPRESS ONE'S FEELINGS ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS IN OUR BEAUTIFUL ORDER. REMEMBER THESE QUOTATIONS FROM OUR HOLY BIBLE: "LET HIM WHO IS WITHOUT ANY FAULT CAST THE FIRST STONE." - AND THE GOLDEN RULE - "DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT OTHERS WOULD DO UNTO YOU."