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IS PROUD TO PRESENT:



SYMBOLISM OF THE FIRST DEGREE  
HEW TO THE LINE  
SYMBOLISM, THE HIRAMIC LEGEND, AND THE  
MASTER'S WORD  
SYMBOLISM IN MYTHOLOGY

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## ***SYMBOLISM OF THE FIRST DEGREE***

By Brother Asahel W. Gage, Illinois

From *The Builder*, October 1915

IN the beginning, the seeker for truth must be duly and truly prepared. In the usually accepted sense, this talk is unprepared. And yet, I spent five years in the "line" of the lodge observing, thinking about and studying Masonry. It is this study and my later contemplations that are my preparation to speak on the symbolism of the first degree.

It seems to me that the essence of every Masonic lesson is presented in the symbolism of the first degree. An entered apprentice is a Mason. The second, third, and so-called higher degrees are elaborations. All Masonic business was formerly transacted in a lodge opened only on the first degree.

The Masonic lessons are practical lessons. They have a dollar and cents value. The Senior Warden tells us that he became a Mason in order that he might receive master's, or larger wages. That there may be no misunderstanding as to his meaning monetary wages, he further says, in order to "better support himself and family." If we will look honestly into our own hearts, we will see that we paid the price for the Masonic degrees because we hoped to receive the equivalent or a greater return. If we have not received a return equal to our original and annual investment, it is because we have not applied ourselves to the study of Masonry with freedom, fervency and zeal.

But let us understand each other. There is little chance of our making much headway unless we agree on a clear and definite meaning of the terms we use. It is not only good and pleasant, but it is necessary for us to dwell together in unity of thought, if we would arrive at a harmonious conclusion. We should therefore endeavor to clearly define our subject.

The word "symbol" is derived from the Greek, meaning "to compare." A symbol is the expression of an idea by comparison. Often, an abstract idea may be best conveyed by a comparison with a concrete object. A dictionary definition of a symbol would be, a sign or representation which suggests something else.

Symbolism, therefore, is the science of symbols or signs, the philosophy or art of representing abstract truths and ideas by concrete things. Symbolism is suggestion; in sculpture and painting by form and color, in language by words, in music by sounds. What allegory and parable are in literature; what figurative speaking is in language; the same is symbolism.

The symbolism of the first degree is for the apprentice. An apprentice Mason is one who has begun the study of Masonry. Certain qualifications are necessary for every apprentice. The qualifications of a Masonic apprentice are a belief in a God, a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish to be of service to his fellow creatures. Possessing these qualifications, the candidate must follow a course of ancient hieroglyphic moral instruction, taught agreeably to ancient usages, by types, emblems and allegorical figures. This is symbolism, and symbolism is universal

language. It is the language in which God reveals himself to man. The manifestations of nature are only symbolic expressions of God.

Children learn best from symbols. Blocks and toys are crude symbolic representations of the more complicated things of life. Most of us learned our alphabet and almost everything else by the relationship or correspondence to things with which we were familiar. We are only children after all. Older children call themselves scientists and make their experiments in their laboratories. Each experiment is a symbol of what is taking place in the real world outside.

The apprentice in the moral science should give up the rags of his own righteousness and also all precious metals, symbolical of worldly wealth and distinction, and all baser metals, symbolical of offense and defense, in order that he may realize his dependence upon moral forces only. He should be clad in a garment signifying that he comes with pure intentions to learn the noble art and profit by its lessons, not to proselyte among others, but to develop and improve himself. He is carefully examined to ascertain whether he is worthy and well qualified to receive and use the rights and benefits of Masonry. Being satisfied that he is worthy and well qualified, he is admitted and is immediately impressed with the fact that he must undergo sacrifice and suffering if he would attain the end he seeks. Realizing that the good intentions of the candidate, his own righteousness or even the lodge organization, are not sufficient, we invoke the blessing and aid of God upon our search for knowledge and truth.

We follow the system of symbolism. When we would know the truth in regard to things too great for our minds to comprehend, we take as a symbol that which is within our mental grasp. We know that the truth about the things we cannot comprehend, is identical with the truth in relation to the symbol which we do comprehend.

The apprentice in his search for Light must start from the North with the Easter Sun in the East, and travel by way of the South to the West, and back into darkness. He again comes out of the North in the East and passes through the same course again and again in his development. Obstacles are met by the apprentice in his progress, so similar that they seem identical. The little occurrences-of life may seem unimportant but they determine whether we will be permitted to advance. The apprentice must ever be worthy and well qualified.

The apprentice must advance on the square by regular upright steps. The symbolism is so common and universal that it is used in the slang of the street. Obligations are duties assumed. We must assume them if we would advance and having assumed them we are bound by them whether we will or not. Then the light breaks and we begin to see. We find that others, even the most learned, stand like the beginners. The Master is on a level with the apprentice, and extends a hand which is grasped fraternally, and the candidate is raised. There is the key to the Masters Word--an open book, but he may never find the word itself.

Then, as before, the apprentice must follow the course of the Sun. As is the greatest, so is the smallest. In the drop of water are all the laws of the universe. If we study carefully, we will find in the dew drop the particles revolving and whirling in

their little circles the same as we find the heavenly bodies revolving and turning in their great orbits, circle within circle and circle upon circle. The seeker after Light always emerges from the North in the East and passes by way of the South to the West and again into darkness, with full faith and perfect confidence that day will follow night. He is continually subjected to tests and trials and always held responsible for what he has learned and for that which has gone before.

God's Holy Book, His revelation to us, is the guide in our search for light. To the Jew this Holy Book is the history of Israel, substantially the Old Testament. To the Christian, it is the Old and New Testament. To the Mohammedan, it is the Koran; to the Hindu, the Veda. But whatever book it is, it is the Holy Book of the seeker for Light and that which he believes to be the word of God. The Holy Book together with the square and the compasses are the great lights of Masonry.

The lesser lights are the Sun, Moon and Master of the Lodge. The Sun symbolizes the great active principle, the Moon the great passive principle. This symbolism is so commonly accepted that even the uninitiated refer to the Sun as masculine and the Moon as feminine. The Master is symbolical of the offspring of the great Active and Passive Principles. He is the mediator, the child of the two great forces. He sets the craft to work upon their symbolic studies, which is no light responsibility to be assumed by the uninformed. Only chaos and disaster can overtake him who attempts the work he is not qualified to perform. When the apprentice has received his degree he is given his working tools and the primary or elementary instructions as to how to go to work.

The working tools of an apprentice are the 24 inch gauge and the common gavel. The gavel symbolizes strength or force. Force undirected is the flood devastating all in its path or the idle puff of the unconfined powder which accomplishes nothing. Undirected force is the gavel without the rule. But intelligently controlled, and directed along a proper line by the rule of intellect, the force of the torrent grinds the grain and does the work of many men. The force of the exploding powder prys the rock loose so that the work of months is accomplished in a moment.

The operation of universal laws in the moral world is just as ascertainable and understandable as in the physical world. Morals are as susceptible of scientific study as physics.

The lambskin apron, a most ancient symbol, signifies that it is only by honest conscientious toil that the moral laws can be learned and applied, and that this toil must be done in purity and innocence.

In the lectures which follow the ceremony of the first degree, the apprentice is given preliminary information. It would be too tedious to analyze these lectures at this time. Suffice it to say they are very superficial and of little worth in themselves. They must be understood and felt, if they are to be of any value. Briefly we may describe a Lodge as a place to work, a place to study, analyze, and master the moral science so that we may make use of the moral laws and principles in our every-day life. Symbolically, it is representative of the world, our daily working place.

The foundation of the Lodge and its teaching is squareness. It is, however, supported by three pillars; Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. From which we may learn that in every undertaking, when intelligence or wisdom directs, and strength or power works, then beauty and harmony result.

The Lodge is covered with the blue vault of Heaven. Blue is the symbol of equality, it is a proper mingling of all colors, it is perfect concord. It is also symbolical of the universality of that charity, which should be as expansive as the blue vault of Heaven itself. Charity is not the giving of money alone. It is also necessary to have charity toward the weaknesses and mistakes of others.

This life is a checkered pavement of good and evil, but in the center is the blazing star which is the seed and the source of all life and eternal life.

The parallel lines have a symbolism analogous to that of the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which is more fully developed in other degrees. The point in the center of the circle between the parallels is sometimes compared to the individual member and sometimes to God who is the center of all things. The circumference may suggest the boundary of man's conduct, or God's creatures, all equally distant and all equally near to Him. Sometimes the circumference is used to depict the endless course of God's power, and His existence without end. This is all speculation, it is symbolism, the contemplation of which will develop the individual.

If the apprentice pursues his studies in the moral art with freedom, fervency and zeal, he will receive Master's, or larger wages, and be thereby the better enabled to support himself and family and to contribute the relief of the distressed.

## **HEW TO THE LINE (November, 1915)**

By Brother J. N. Saunders, G. S. W., Kentucky

From *The Builder*, November, 1915

THE chief tendency of the students of Masonry, manifested by almost all of them, is to create a mysticism to which is given a forced interpretation by which they attempt to connect, as of simultaneous origin, the symbols of Masonry with incidents of the pre-Christian era.

The men who do this assemble isolated facts, assume as true whatever links are needed to complete the chain and in ecstasy of delight exclaim--I have found it! I have found it!!

To the thoughtful man, who declines to follow blindly, but demands to be shown, this species of Masonic interpretation and this class of Masonic history is indeed laughable. An apt illustration is found in the blindly accepted interpretation given as the Masonic lesson of the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid-- that Pythagoras, an illustrious member of the Order, upon discovering the square described upon the hypotenuse of a right angle triangle is equal to the sum of the squares described upon the other two sides, sacrificed an hundred oxen. This the lesson, in substantial entirety, as usually taught is both meaningless and historically incorrect.

Pythagoras was born about 582 B.C., and there is no historical inference that justifies intelligent conjecture of the origin of Masonry for more than a thousand years after that time, unless such assumptions are indulged as would discredit the verity of all history.

Pythagoras was a scholar and a traveller, and is due the honor of having raised mathematics to the rank of a science. He had no connection with Masonry, for Masonry did not exist. He did belong to a brotherhood based upon the ideal of abstinence and hardihood and even community of goods, but by no justifiable stretch of the imagination can it be in any way connected with any fact which leads even to reasonable supposition that he was a Mason, or that Masonry, or any antecedent organization from which it was derived, existed at that time.

How much more satisfying to the man of thoughtful intelligence is it to discard all such patch work combinations of fact, deduction, imagination, fabrication and sheer nonsense, and look the facts squarely in the face. Masonry is a noble institution, the gradual outgrowth of the divinely implanted social instinct by which men of similar tastes have been drawn together into what is now a powerful and cohesive organization, but the growth of which has been gradual, and made possible by men who have themselves left no data by which to judge with accuracy the place and period of its origin. Its growth was a slow development which did not attract the attention of the writers of history until its full attainment. The symbols now employed to convey its precepts have been of gradual adoption, and are but the result of the love of all men for figurative expression of truth. Why not let us seek a direct approach to the reason for the symbols employed? The reason that addresses itself, in simplicity, to the open mind is more to be relied upon than that which requires genius to conceive and pages to express, and whose line of reasoning is so occult

as to addle the brain and bewilder the understanding of the plain man who in plain way seeks plain facts in plain fields of plain truth.

The geometric diagram alluded to but reveals the fact that in a right angle triangle the square of the base line added to the square of the line of altitude is equal to the square of the line connecting their terminal points and on which line depends the perfect angle.

How simple the application of this figure to the very object of Masonry--the perfect character in man. The square of the foundation or base line represents the physical efforts of man, the square of the line of altitude represents the intellectual and moral uplift of man, and the sum of his physical efforts added to the sum of his intellectual and moral aspirations form his character. As the square of the level base line added to the square of the upright altitude equals the square of the line on which depends the perfect angle, so the sum of man's physical efforts if level with industry and honesty added to the sum of his intellectual and moral aspiration, if upright, collectively form the character on which depends the perfect man.

Why then does not the geometric diagram serve as a symbol to portray the perfect man rather than to recall the fabled butchery of beef cattle by a man who had no connection with our Order? It is a more satisfying explanation to me, and the same objection prevails to many of our strained interpretations of strained coincidences upon which some base the conclusion that Solomon had really felt our grip and heard our secret pass word.



# ***SYMBOLISM, THE HIRAMIC LEGEND, AND THE MASTER'S WORD***

By Brother J. Otis Ball, Illinois

From *The Builder*, December, 1915

It sometimes seems that the foundation of all that has been written on any subject may be found in Plato. The careful Emerson says, "Plato only, is entitled to Omar's fanatical remark, 'Burn the libraries; for their value is in this book.'" In Plato's *Phaedrus*, we find the fundamental principles of public address, and one of the first principles given, is for the speaker to clearly define his terms in order that there be no misunderstanding or disagreement at the start.

I was very much impressed with Brother Gage's definition of Symbolism at the beginning of his talk on Symbolism of the First Degree, and it will probably be well for us to briefly review his definition. We may be able to make it clearer in our minds, or perhaps add some thought of value. Brother Gage dwelt upon the derivation and meaning of the word symbol. He found that the word came from the Greek, meaning to compare. A symbol is an expression of an idea by comparison. Abstract ideas are often best conveyed by comparison with concrete objects.

A symbol is also a sign, and the words sign and symbol are especially synonymous in their Masonic connection. The symbols of Masonry are the signs which guide the traveler along his journey through life and point to his destination. In olden times, when the weary pilgrims journeyed to the city of their desire--whether it was Mecca where the Mohammedans went to greet the rising sun, or Jerusalem where the Christians journeyed that they might walk upon the ground made holy by the foot-falls of the man of Nazareth--the signs along the way meant much to them. It is the same in Masonry. It is with a certain satisfaction and joy that we find these signs or symbols which point out the right road to travel and mark our moral and spiritual progress--much the same as the signs along the way, marked the pilgrim's progress in former times.

The study of these signs or symbols is called Symbolism, and the man who endeavors to find these signs in Masonry and to read them aright, is called a Symbolist. A Symbolist, in trying to understand the symbols of Masonry, not only benefits himself but he may also aid some other tired and weary pilgrim in his journey through life. Let us therefore, approach this subject of Symbolism in a thoughtful way; for if the symbols of Masonry are guide posts that will assist us in our earthly pilgrimage, then indeed, the effort is worth while.

In addition to defining Symbolism as the study of these signs in Masonry, let us also attempt to define Masonry. If each of us were handed a piece of paper and wrote a definition of Masonry, we would probably be surprised at the various ideas. Let us then, as Plato suggests, agree upon a definition. It has been said that one of the best ways to clearly fix in the mind what anything is, is to find out some of the things which it is not. We should have no difficulty in agreeing that Masonry is not politics, although some of the recent activities in our fraternity make us feel that there are those among our number who are attempting to make a political organization of the fraternity. While might makes right, we will hear brethren boast of

the political achievements of the Masonic Fraternity and encourage hatred and prejudice, but politics is not Masonry.

There is a very great difference between Masonry and the Masonic Fraternity. The Masonic Fraternity is made up of men who follow, or who are supposed to follow, the teachings of Masonry; but men are prone to err. The fraternity is apt to wander from the fundamental principles of Masonry, and the mistakes are due to the frailty of man and the errors of his judgment, rather than to the principles of Masonry. In speaking of Masonry therefore, both of its history and characteristics, I do not refer to the Masonic fraternity.

If Masonry then, is not the fraternity, what is it? In referring to our Illinois monitor, we find the following sentence in the Secretary's lecture, given in the ante-room before the candidate is admitted to the lodge: "Masonry consists of a course of ancient, hieroglyphic, moral instruction, taught agreeably to ancient customs by types, emblems, and allegorical figures." This is beautiful English, but is its full import immediately clear?

The peculiar characters cut upon the rocks in the tombs of the ancient Egyptians are hieroglyphics. For many centuries they stood as the mute unknown secrets of ages past and gone. Modern researchers, however, successfully patched together and deciphered them, and the hieroglyphics and signs were finally read and understood. They were found to be clear pictorial representations of events and ideas, full of meaning-- but only to those who understood them. Masonry, being hieroglyphic, is taught by a system of signs or symbols which mean something to those who have studied them, but to others they mean nothing.

Why is Masonry hieroglyphic? Perhaps it is because of that old principle that something which we get for very little effort, is usually very little valued; but something for which we are required to expend more effort, we believe to be of more value. Just as the etymologist discovers the meaning of an old Egyptian hieroglyphic, after months of careful study and search; so do we find truth after careful thought. As our Ancient brother Pythagoras is said to have discovered the forty-seventh problem of Euclid, only after weary and tedious toil; so will we discover the secrets of Masonry only after we seek for them. Masonry, therefore, is hieroglyphic for the good reason founded upon a fundamental truth, that something which we get for nothing is worth nothing.

Masonry is moral, because it is in perfect accord with the established principles of truth--and that is real morality. We learn that this hieroglyphic, moral system is taught by types, emblems and allegorical figures. We speak of a man of a certain type, meaning that he has certain characteristics in common with men of the same class or type. Types are expressions of classification, by which we are able to fix general truths or characteristics in our minds and draw conclusions from them. Emblems are signs or symbols visible to the eye, which stand for something in addition to themselves, and they create in the mind a flow of thought. The square, for instance, in all ages has been an emblem of Masonry, but its use has become so common that "to be on the square" has a meaning to others than Masons.

Allegories are parables. In seeking why Masonry is taught in allegories instead of by logical statements of truth in direct form, we may answer that in many ages truth has been taught by allegories and parables, in order that the mind may conceive great and fundamental truths by comparison with simple things. Some think that Masonry is taught by types, emblems, and allegorical figures in order to conceal the thought, but it seems to me that they reveal the truth and make it clear and understandable. In the wonderful parable of the Sower, we learn of the seed that fell on fertile ground, the seed that fell among thistles, and the seed that fell on the rocks and stony places. Does the parable conceal the thought? On the contrary, the parable or allegory makes the thought clear to the thinking mind, but only after a certain effort in thinking the thing through.

Call Masonry, then, a philosophy, a science, an art, or even a religion if you please, but retain the idea of a system of hieroglyphic moral instruction taught by types, emblems, and allegorical figures. In this sense Masonry is indeed ancient, and we may trace four ideas in this peculiar system through many ages. These four principle ideas might even be called Land-marks. They are: a belief in one God, a teaching of Immortality, a symbolic idea of building, and a seeking after something which was lost.

We find these characteristics in Masonry from the time of the Ancient Egyptians in the mysteries of Osiris, where it is said Moses was initiated into the solemn rites which antedated the return of the chosen people of God; in the old Persian Mysteries of Mithras, where we find traces of an unusually clear conception of a life after death; and in Syria where we find the Dionysian Mysteries which came from Greece and were probably carried by the workmen of Tyre into Jerusalem when Solomon's temple was built on Mount Moriah. We also find these four characteristics in the mysteries of Bacchus in early Rome; later in the Roman Collegia of Builders; and in the teachings of the peaceful Essenes along the Jordan, where some authorities conjecture that Jesus was initiated before the beginning of his ministry. In the middle ages we find this hieroglyphic moral system taught by types, emblems and allegories, among the Cathedral Builders; in the dark ages, we find it among the Comacine Masters on the little island in Lake Como; and we may trace it through the guilds of travelling Masons, to the Speculative Masonry of 1717, which we substantially teach today.

Our Iconoclastic friends, who are interested in the history of the fraternity, may smile at the dream of a symbolist, but bear in mind that we are not speaking of the fraternity when we use the word Masonry; we are speaking of that hieroglyphic, moral system taught agreeably to ancient customs by types, emblems and allegorical figures; and having four principal ideas: a belief in one God, a life after death, a symbolical idea of building, and the seeking after something which was lost. It is true that the careful student finds clouds of darkness occasionally hiding these real intents and purposes. At times we read of the ceremonies degenerating into the common and vulgar, as in the case of the mysteries of Bacchus at Rome. But like the hidden river which disappears under ground, only to flow out fresh and pure farther on; so we find these fundamental characteristics of Masonry occasionally hidden, but later coming to light.

Considerable has been written on all of these four characteristics, especially on the belief in one God and on the idea of building. Let us also look into the subjects of immortality and the seeking after something which was lost. These two subjects are so closely akin to the legends of Hiram and of the Master's Word in our Masonry of today, that it may be well for us to see what meaning these two symbols had in the Masonry of Antiquity.

In the ancient Egyptian Mysteries, Osiris represented the spirit of the Sun, the principle of light and life. He was assailed by the powers of evil and was killed, and apparently the forces of darkness ruled. Isis went out to seek for him, and Osiris was later resurrected and brought to life. This story was portrayed in dramatic form in the Egyptian mysteries. The facts are verified by Plutarch, Plato, Epictetus, and others. Substantially the same story was told by Mithras in the old Persian Mysteries, of Dionysus in the Grecian and Syrian Mysteries, and of Bacchus in the early Roman rites. All were slain and then sought for, and finally raised or brought to life. A death and a life after death has been one of the fundamental teachings of Masonry in all ages. These old mysterious ceremonies have been an expression of that idea of immortality which seems to be ever present in the heart of man from remotest antiquity.

The ancient sun-worshipers saw the sun retire in the Fall and reach the Winter solstice. If, as some antiquarians think, the sun worship had its beginning in the far north, the old Norseman on the shores of the Arctic seas experienced a long period of night during the Winter. In the Spring, they saw the sun's resplendant rays again light and warm the earth. The old legend was that the sun was slain and that during the period of darkness, the sun was dead; and that later the sun, as in the case of Osiris, Mithras, and Dionysus, was brought to life again and there was light and life. Ceremonies were instituted and the lesson of a life after death, was taught by a dramatic portrayal very similar in character to that of the legend of Hiram today.

In the legend of Hiram we may find the lesson of immortality, and we may also find one of the greatest tragedies ever conceived by man. Edwin Booth, the famous Shakespearian actor, referred to the legend of Hiram as the most sublime tragedy; and said that in its portrayal in a Masonic lodge, he would rather play that part without applause, than to play the greatest tragedy Shakespeare ever wrote. We may find in the journey of Hiram the symbol of Man's journey through life. In this journey, man encounters many obstacles which may be symbolically referred to as enemies. They may be considered as accosting him from the three aspects of his being--the mental, spiritual and physical. Three of these enemies are Ignorance, Doubt, and Prejudice.

The encounter with ignorance may be considered as symbolical of the first effort made by man in his progress. Perhaps the twenty-four inch gauge, as the weapon used by ignorance, is symbolical of the mental and the idea that the knowledge which man already has, is sufficient. As he presses on in his journey for further light, Doubt is encountered. The little knowledge which man has, may be confined to material things, and there is doubt about those things which are not material. Perhaps the square, symbolical of the earth, may be used by Doubt and a correct understanding of great, eternal and spiritual truths prevented by confusion with

earthly things. If man still presses onward, he may encounter a third and more deadly enemy--Prejudice--which often slays him and stops his progress. The word prejudice comes from the Latin, Prae meaning before, and Judicium meaning judgment. Prejudice is a previous judgment, clung to even after contrary facts are disclosed. Our prejudices, or previous judgments, often come from the passions. Fear, hatred, jealousy, and love of the passionate sort, all engender prejudice. These passions have their abiding place in the physical.

In addition to the universally taught lesson of immortality, we find in the lodge a continued admonition to seek for the Master's Word. But even after we have completed the several degrees, we do not find the Master's Word. In the last degree of the Blue Lodge, we find that as Master Masons, we will have to be content with a substitute. All through the degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, we find further indications of this continued seeking. At last, when a brother is made Sublime Prince of The Royal Secret, he still receives an admonition to advance, to progress, and to seek. "He is to advance and conquer in his heart those old enemies, Ignorance, Doubt, and Prejudice, and to seek the Master's Word." That is the Royal Secret. In the degree of the Royal Arch, we are told that in a book there is a key to the Master's Word. The Master's Word is not a few meaningless syllables whispered in the ear, neither is it a few arbitrary characters. Neither is it the name of the Great Jehovah, unless it is considered in a symbolical sense, as representing Truth and Perfection. The key to the Master's Word is in the book, which to us is the Holy Bible, the Great Light in Masonry. There, we will find the key to the Master's Word, but not the Master's Word itself.

What is this Master's Word, and why this continual search? We find in the Masonic funeral service an allusion to a certain "pass" whereby we may obtain entrance into the Grand Lodge above. What higher conception could we have of the Master's Word, than the pass whereby we can find immortality and entrance into the Grand Lodge on High? We are told that this pass is, "the pass of a pure and blameless life." The symbolism is perfect. Now we know why we will have to be content with a substitute, because on earth we will not attain the Master's Word, "the pure and blameless life." We learn that Moses had this Master's Word; his inspiration came direct from God himself. Solomon had the Master's Word, until he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, then he lost the Master's Word. It was buried amid the rubbish of his physical temple.

But since we cannot attain this Master's Word, "the pure and blameless life," why are we so continually admonished to seek for it? Why seek for that which we cannot find? Why this ceaseless, endless search for perfection and truth, only to receive a substitute? Because in the very seeking for the Master's Word, "a pure and blameless life," we come nearer to it. Like the Cathedral Spires of Gothic Architecture, which point upward, although they never reach heaven; we find that in our seeking after perfection, we come nearer and nearer to it.

The seeking for the Master's Word, therefore, is the real purpose of Masonry--that hieroglyphic moral system of types, emblems and allegories. It should be the purpose and the object of every true and worthy brother to find this Master's Word. With the thought of the unity of God, the hope of immortality, and the seeking after

the perfect life, we will build a temple that will be eternal. We will also exercise that charity toward the weaknesses and failings of others, which is incumbent on all Masons; and as taught in the Council Degrees of Royal and Select Masters, we will deposit in the secret vault true copies or counterparts of those sacred treasures of Mercy, Justice, and Love, which are in the Sanctum Sanctorum above. Then, after the destruction of this temple, the treasures or their counterparts will be found at the building of a second temple not made with hands but eternal in the heavens, and there we will find the true Master's Word, "the pure and blameless life"--not here, but hereafter.

## **SYMBOLISM IN MYTHOLOGY**

By Brother C. T. Seago, Georgia

From *The Builder*, December, 1915

MOST boys at some time come to the age when nothing pleases them so much as do stories of the exaggerated deeds of some far off hero. As William Tell they shoot arrows from their imaginary sons' heads; as Jack-the-Giant-Killer they wage their mimic warfare on grosser foes; as Princes Charming they break into enchanted castles and kiss away the dreams from the eyes of Sleeping Beauty. But real as these heroes are to boyish minds, the student learns that maturer years render still more real the characters of his childhood stories. William Tell still has an unerring aim with his arrows; Jack-the-Giant-Killer still defeats his foes; and the Sleeping Beauty of flower and field wakes to new life each year under the ardent vernal kiss of the personified prince who shines as one of the lesser lights of Freemasonry. Many fairy tales are the folklore of yesterday, and this folklore was the highly symbolic philosophy and religion of the ancients. The minds of men in general do not readily grasp an abstraction. That is one of the reasons why we use symbols. We do not cheer firesides, and homes, and fields; nor thoughts, and hopes, and aspirations; we cheer the flag which symbolizes all those things. When only the ruins of a one time civilization mark the sites of New York and San Francisco, the eager archaeologist from Asia will discover pictures and statues of Uncle Sam and will believe that we present day Americans worshipped Uncle Sam as our tutelary god, our patron saint, and that we prayed to him for help in times of need.

There is a psychological need for symbols, a real demand for stories, which man has ever supplied. By descent through the ages these stories became legends and fairy tales. When they are employed for pastime purposes only, these stories become corrupted by recital and changed so as to be almost unrecognizable. The story of Sleeping Beauty illustrates this. Not at first does one recognize in the sleeping princess the glory of the springtime flower and the promise of autumn fruit. Equally changed is the prince, really the sun, who breaks through the confining walls of winter's cold earth and claims his promised bride.

But when these legends are told not for amusement only but in order to secure a definite result, then their teachings never change. The effect must be always procured, and it can be procured only by following the prescribed formula. So the legend of the third degree, introduced into our body I do not know when, is the same today as it was when we first learned it. The Ancient Mysteries had many things similar to our teachings and classical mythology personified thoughts that are eternal.

The Sleeping Beauty falls into slumber after having received a prick from a distaff. In Grecian mythology the distaff is a boar's tooth. The legend tells us that Adonis while hunting was killed by a savage boar. After the death of Adonis his soul went to Hades, which is here merely an underworld, a place of gloom and not a place of torment. But the goddess of love descended into Hades and prevailed upon Proserpine, its mistress, to allow Adonis to return to the earth for a certain time each year. This story is more readily understood than is the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale.

The youthful Adonis is the vegetative spirit of nature. The boar is winter, harsh, rough, and bristly. The goddess of love is the warmth of springtime which coaxes the vegetation to leave Hades.

These annual returns of Adonis were made the occasions of much symbolic ceremony. The god was mourned as dead; women went wailing through the streets in utter disregard of their usual care for their attire. The ordinary social conventions were broken down and unrestrained sex license prevailed among the celebrants. In later days the celebration was given over chiefly to courtesans. For into this celebration, as in many others, in time there came more or less phallic worship. The pomegranate was worshiped as a symbol of plenty, and so was corn. Enormous images of the male generative organs were carried in public processions and set up and worshiped as superhuman. Our maypole is a survival of those days, and our architecture is filled with many similar reminders.

Adonis is the Grecian form of the Hebrew word, Adonai, signifying Lord. In Babylonia, Phoenicia, and Canaan, Adonis was known as Tammuz. Ezekiel, the prophet, reproaches the Hebrew women for indulging in the celebration I have just spoken of. The name of the god is fixed today in the Jewish month Tammuz. Tammuz or Adonis afterwards became identified with the Egyptian Osiris of whom I shall speak later.

The worship of Dionysus, or Bacchus, or Orpheus, was of a nature like to that of Adonis with the difference that it is Orpheus' wife, Eurydice, who dies and Orpheus who descends into Hades in search for her. By the magic of his music Orpheus induces Hades to consent that Eurydice may return to earth if Orpheus does not look back. But the eagerness of Orpheus to see his wife causes him to break his promise and he looks back only to see Eurydice return to Hades just as she had arrived at its exit. The same teaching is given here. Eurydice is flowers and vegetation; Hades is the death of winter; and Orpheus' lute is the magic music of the springtime sun whose appeal nothing can resist. The story is a look beyond death to the resurrection and eternal life.

Likewise the Greek Persephone playing in the flowers is surprised by Pluto and carried to the infernal regions. Ceres, the mother of Persephone, seeks her until she finds her by the aid of the all seeing Helios (sun). Ceres asks the aid of the other gods, and after all their persuasion Pluto consents that Persephone shall stay on earth a part of the year, and with him in Hades for the remainder. Here again we have the death, the search, and the resurrection annually recurring.

These myths were not confined to Asia and southern Europe. In one form or another they have been found all over the world. One illustration suffices. In Scandinavian mythology Balder the Beautiful is the god of spring, light, gladness. Blind Hoder, his very opposite, is the god of the dark and gloomy winter. Loki, the mischief maker, inspires Hoder to cast at Balder a dart of mistletoe, a winter plant. Balder falls dead, but the promise is given that he shall return and bring with him perpetual spring.

To the Mason, however, the most interesting mythological tales come from ancient Egypt. There Osiris, son of the earth and sky, brother and husband of Isis,



was early identified with the setting sun and became the god of the dead. Osiris traveled in many foreign countries spreading the light of civilization. His wicked brother, Set, god of the desert, evil, and darkness, planned to take the life of Osiris. So Set made a chest the exact size of Osiris and offered to give the chest to whomever it would fit. When Osiris entered the chest, Set and his confederates closed the lid and cast the chest into the Nile, on whose water it was borne to the sea. The chest drifted ashore near the Phoenician coast and became imbedded in the trunk of a great tree which finally enclosed it. The king of the country, ignorant of this fact, caused the tree to be cut down and made into pillars for his house. But after long search Isis found the chest in the pillar, obtained permission from the king to remove it, and carried the body to Egypt. After burying the body she went to visit her son Horus, the rising sun, the resurrected Osiris. While she was away Set found the body, tore it into fragments, and scattered them abroad. Isis again searched for the body, and found and buried its scattered parts. Horus, however, did not mourn, but rose and took vengeance on his father's murderers.

In this legend we find Osiris doing good in the world. He is murdered and his body concealed. There is mourning and a search for his corpse. The body is found, raised, and carried to Egypt for more decent interment; and the murderers apprehended and punished by Horus, the god who rises in the east to open and govern the day. Every evening the murder is committed; every night the body of Osiris, the setting sun, is cut into fragments, or stars, and these stars or fragments of Osiris, scattered to the four quarters of heaven. Every morning Isis collects the fragments and they rise as Horus, the morning sun, or the resurrection of Osiris.

There are those who pretend to see all this in our mighty drama. The twelve fellowcrafts are the twelve signs of the zodiac which the sun occupies during the twelve parts of the year. The three fellowcrafts are the three winter months. Fell and cruel they raise their impious hands to destroy all the beauty of spring, the promise of summer, and the fruit of autumn. Then all the constructive work of creation is stopped; for there is no agency active that knows the designs of nature. The vegetative principles of nature cannot be lifted to life by the chilly snow or the steely stare of the stars; their grip is too insecure. No movement on the dead earth answers the like efforts of the pale moon; its forces are too feeble. It is only when the lord of the day comes in the vernal warmth of his love that the mysteries of life overcome the thralls of death, and foliage and flower and fruit are lifted into life by the strong grip of the mightiest force of nature.

This fancy may please those who like it. There is no harm gotten by believing it. But I am thinking that something is hidden here, even as there was something hidden in the Ancient Mysteries. The uninformed and thoughtless and careless found and still find ample satisfaction in the apparent, external teaching of these schools. They little thought and little think that these teachings are carefully arranged systems of morality veiled in allegory, and that the purpose of it all is to enable those who are duly and truly prepared, worthy and well qualified, to advance, of their own volition, of their own free will and accord, without either passive submission on one part or repressing dominance on the other, into a state of real mastery, a state of conscious unity with the mighty constructive forces of the Grand Architect of the

Universe. And when this state is attained, then all things shall be seen in true perspective; many things now thought of first shall be thought of last; the small shall be magnified and the great reduced; and this life shall not seem an end in itself but merely a part of the life of the immortal soul of man.