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SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE DEGREES
BY OLIVER DAY STREET
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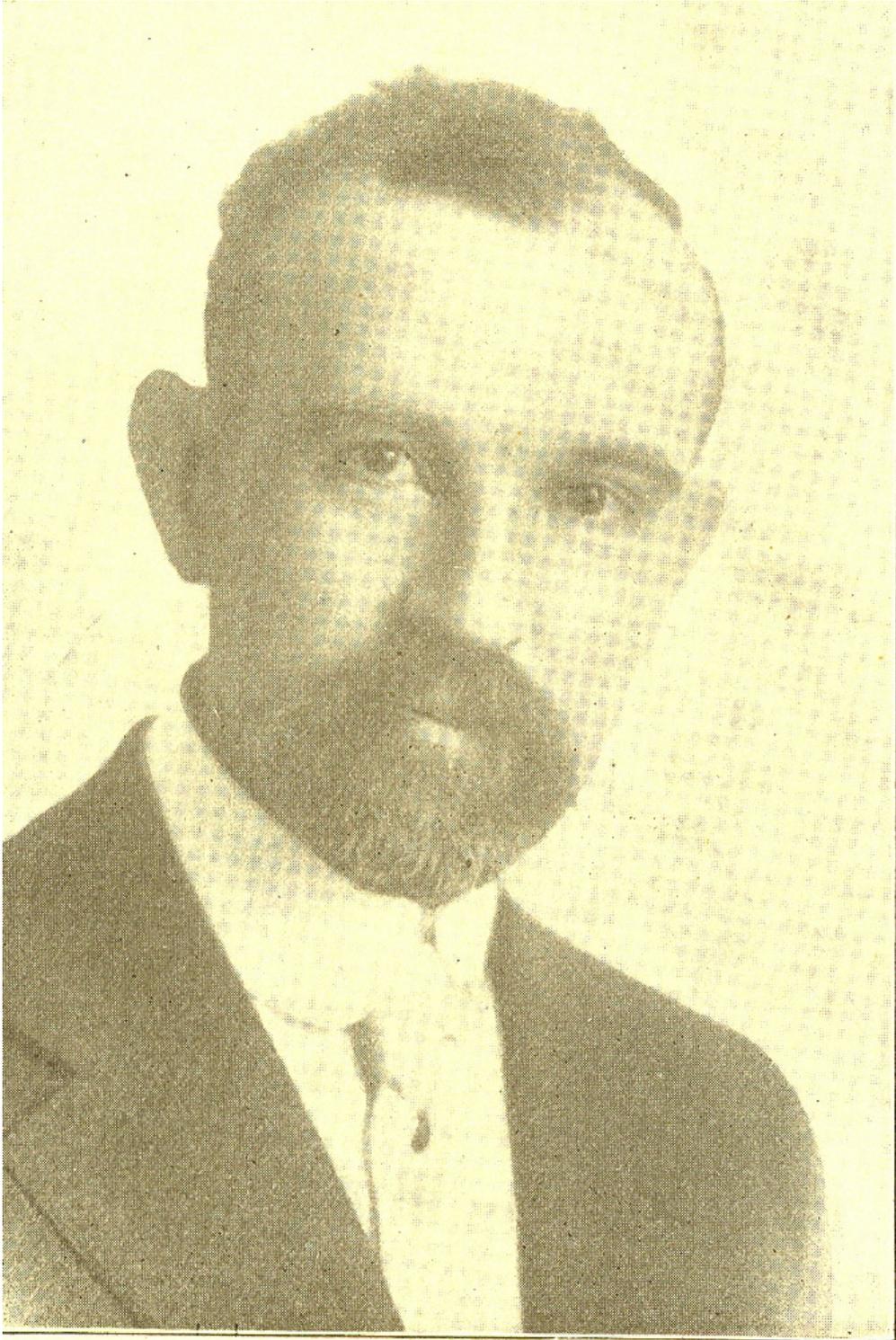
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SYMBOLISM
OF
THE THREE DEGREES

A SERIES OF LECTURES
BY
BROTHER OLIVER DAY STREET
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OLIVER DAY STREET

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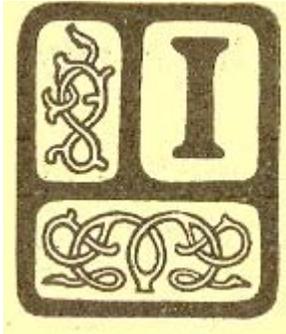
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SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE DEGREES

PART I

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE



It is first necessary that we should understand the scope of my subject. First, be it understood, I attempt to exhaust no topic upon which I touch, but only to stimulate the interest and curiosity of my readers to pursue the subject further for themselves. Under the term "symbolism" I include also the legends and allegories of Masonry, though properly speaking they are not symbols. Yet they are all so closely interwoven and so employed for the same or like, purposes they can scarcely be treated separately.

General Albert Pike, that great Freemason and philosopher, says that "to translate the symbols (of Freemasonry) into the trivial and commonplace is the blundering of mediocrity."

That there has been some blundering of this kind on the part of our Monitor makers must be apparent to any serious and intelligent student of Masonry.

Difficult as it is to assign adequate meaning to some of our Masonic symbols, it is equally difficult, when once started, to know where to stop. Says a distinguished British Freemason, Brother W. H. Rylands:

"Symbolism is always a difficult affair as everyone knows or at least ought to know. When once fairly launched on their subject, it often becomes an avalanche or torrent which may carry one away into the open sea or more than empty space. On few questions has more rubbish been written than that of symbols and symbolism, it is a happy hunting ground for those, who guided by no sort of system or rule, ruled only by their own sweet will, love to allow their fancies and imaginations to run wild. Interpretations are given which have no other foundation than the disordered brain of the writer, and when proof or anything approaching a definite statement is required, symbols are confused with metaphors and we are involved in a further maze of follies and wilder fancies."

Thus I am to steer our bark between the Scylla of Brother Pike and the

Charybdis of Brother Rylands; without, therefore, descending to the common-place on the one hand or soaring away from the plane of common sense on the other, I hope to be able to say something of interest concerning the symbolism of the First degree.

A symbol is a visible representation of some object or thing, real or imagined, employed to convey a certain idea. Sometimes there is an apparent connection between the symbol and the thought represented, but more often the association seems to be entirely arbitrary. The earliest forms of symbolism of which we know were the ancient hieroglyphical systems of writing. We may indeed say that symbolism is but a form of writing; in fact, the earliest and for hundreds, and perhaps even thousands of years, the only form of writing known to the human race. It prevailed among every ancient people of whom we have any definite knowledge.

The learned Dr. William Stukeley, of England, the author of many antiquarian works, said truly that the "wisdom of all the ancients that is come down to our hands is symbolic."

This ancient form of writing, now generally fallen into disuse, Masonry has to some extent at least perpetuated and employs in recording her precepts and impressing them upon her votaries.

Another ancient and favorite method of teaching still employed by Masons is that of the allegory. The allegory is a figure of speech, that is to say, a departure from the direct and simple mode of speaking, and the employment, for the sake of illustration or emphasis, of a fancied resemblance between one object or thing and another.

If we say of a man, as we often uncharitably do, "He is an ass," this is a metaphor. If we say of him as Carlisle did of Wordsworth, "He looks like a horse," this is a simile. An extended simile with the comparative form and words left out, in which the real subject is never directly mentioned but left to be inferred, is called an allegory. The most famous example of the allegory in literature is Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

One desirous of entering into the real spirit of these ancient methods of imparting instruction should read Bacon's "Wisdom of the Ancients," and particularly the preface to that remarkable book. He shows that nearly all the complex and to us absurd tales of Grecian mythology were but parts of a great system for inculcating natural, moral and religious truths by means of the allegory. What more grotesque and revolting, we may ask, than the myth of Pan?

"He is portrayed by the ancients," to quote Bacon, "in this guise: on his head a pair of horns that reach to heaven; his body rough and hairy, his beard long and shabby; his shape bifurcated, above like a man, and below like a beast; his feet like goats hoofs; and he bore these ensigns of his jurisdiction, to-wit, in his left hand a pipe of seven reeds, and in his right a sheephook, or a staff crooked at the upper end, and his mantle made of a leopard's skin."

Yet under the master touch of Lord Bacon this incongruous creature, half man and half goat, is shown to be a beautiful and apt symbol of all nature.

Approaching that branch of symbolism which at present concerns us, Masonic Symbolism, it may be asserted in the broadest terms that the Mason who knows nothing of our symbolism knows little of Freemasonry. He may be able to repeat every line of the ritual without an error, and yet, if he does not understand the meaning of the ceremonies, the signs, the words, the emblems and the figures, he is an ignoramus Masonically. It is distressing to witness how much time and labor is spent in memorizing "the work"; and how little in ascertaining what it all means.

Far be it from me to under-rate the importance of letter-perfection in rendering our ritual. In no other way can the symbolism of our emblems, ceremonies, traditions, and allegories be accurately preserved, but I do maintain that, if we are never to understand their meanings, it is useless to preserve them. The two go hand in hand; without either the beauty and symmetry of the Masonic temple is destroyed.

It is in its symbols and allegories that Freemasonry surpasses all other societies. If any of them now teach by these methods it is because they have slavishly imitated Freemasonry.

The great Mason and scholar, Brother Albert Pike, said:

"The symbolism of Masonry is the soul of Masonry. Every symbol of a lodge is a religious teacher, the mute teacher also of morals and philosophy. It is in its ancient symbols and in the knowledge of their true meanings that the preeminence of Freemasonry over all other orders consists. In other respects, some of them may compete with it, rival it, perhaps even excel it; but by its symbols it will reign without a peer when it learns again what its symbols mean, and that each is the embodiment of, some great, old, rare truth."

In our Masonic studies the moment we forget that the whole and every part of Freemasonry is symbolic or allegoric, the same instant we begin to grope in the dark. Its ceremonies, signs, tokens, words and lectures at once become meaningless or trivial. The study of no other aspect of Freemasonry is more important, yet I believe the study of no aspect of it has been so much neglected. Brother Robert F. Gould, of England, our foremost Masonic historian, declares it is the "one great and pressing duty of Freemasons." Brother Albert Pike, no doubt the greatest philosopher produced by our fraternity, declared as we have seen that symbolism is the soul of Masonry.

We are told in our Monitors that "every emblem, character and figure depicted in the lodge has a moral and useful meaning and forcibly inculcates the practice of virtue." The same may with equal truth be said of our every ceremony, sign, token, legend, and allegory. If this be true, it must follow that to be ignorant of Masonic symbolism is to be ignorant of Masonry.

In the ceremonies of making a Mason, however, we do not attempt to do more than to indicate the pathway to Masonic knowledge, to lay the foundation for the Masonic edifice; the brother must pursue the journey or complete the structure for himself by reading and reflection.

There must be somewhere in Freemasonry a consistent plan running entirely through it by which all that is genuine in it may be rationally explained. It can not be that a miscellaneous collection of rules, customs, symbols and moral precepts, however valuable in and of themselves, thrown together without order or design, could have attracted the attention among intelligent men that Freemasonry has done in all ages in which it is known. Surely unity must somewhere exist in the great variety which we find in the

Masonic system.

A little study will reveal to us that the great, vital, underlying idea, sought to be inculcated by the several degrees considered collectively and which runs entirely through the system, is to give an allegorical or symbolical representation of human existence, not only here but hereafter, and to point the way which leads to the greatest good both in this life and in the life to come. Our ceremonies and symbols, while beautiful and impressive in and of themselves incidentally teaching valuable lessons of religion, morality and industry, all cluster around and contribute to this central idea. But it is only when we reflect upon them in relation to this sublime allegory of human life that we are enabled to comprehend them in the fullness of their beauty and grandeur. The Masonic student, therefore, who has never caught this conception of his subject has failed to grasp freemasonry in its most instructive and important aspect.

Endeavor, therefore, to get clearly in your minds the point I emphasize and which I shall attempt to demonstrate, namely, that every sign, every symbol and every ceremony in the First degree, in addition to any primary signification it may have, is also designed to illustrate allegorically some moral phase of human existence.

I have dwelt at length on this thought because I believe that it is not otherwise possible adequately to explain any part of the Masonic system.

INITIATION

Initiation is now as it has been for countless ages, employed as a symbol of the birth and endless development of the human mind and soul. The Entered Apprentice degree represents birth and the preparatory stage of life, or in other words, youth; the Fellow Craft represents the constructive stage, or manhood; the Master Mason represents the reflecting stage, or old age, death, the resurrection, and the everlasting life. This explanation of the three degrees is briefly given in our lecture on the Three Steps delineated on the Master's Carpet.

THE LODGE

Is it true that the lodge symbolically represents the world? I might say to begin that some have thought the word "lodge" derived from the Sanskrit word "loga," meaning the world. However this may be, our Monitors tell us that the form of a lodge is an "oblong square" from East to West and between North and South, from earth to heaven and from surface to center. This of course, if it means anything, can mean nothing less than the entire known habitable earth and Masonic scholars universally so interpret it. This meaning was more manifest at the period when Freemasonry is supposed to have had its origin, for the then known world living around the shores of the Mediterranean sea was literally of the form of an "oblong square." One doubting this may consult any, map of the ancient world.

Dudley, in his, Naology, says that the idea that the earth was a level surface and of a square form may be justly supposed to have prevailed generally in the early ages of the world. It is certain that down to a comparatively recent date it was believed that beyond a certain limit northward life was impossible because of the darkness and cold, and likewise that beyond a certain limit southward, it was impossible because of the blinding glare and intense heat of the sun. It was even supposed that in the farthest South the earth was yet molten. The biblical idea was that the earth was square. Isaiah (xi, 12) speaks of gathering "the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth," and in the Apocalypse (xx, 9) in the vision of "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth."

So thoroughly grounded were these beliefs that in ancient times the "square," now the recognized symbol of the Lodge, was the recognized symbol of the earth, as the circle was of the sun. In this antiquated expression "oblong square," we therefore have not only an apt description of the ancient world and evidence that the lodge is symbolical thereof¹, but also a remarkable evidence of the great age of Freemasonry. It tends strongly to date our institution back to the time when the human mind

¹ Univ. Cyc. Rome, vol. X.

conceived the earth to be a plane surface and was ignorant of its spherical character.

Likewise the lodge, which is sometimes defined as "the place where Masons work," symbolizes the world or the place where all men work.

Again, its covering is said to be a cloudy canopy or starry decked heaven, a description that could have not the slightest application to anything else but the world.

If the lodge symbolizes the world and the Mason symbolizes man, it follows that initiation must symbolize the introduction of the individual into the world, or the birth of the child. It was so regarded in the ancient systems of initiation and is now so understood by Masonic scholars everywhere. It is the least important view to consider it merely as the method of admitting one to membership in a Society.

PREPARATION

The preparation of the candidate and the plight in which he is admitted an Entered Apprentice strikingly typifies the helpless, destitute, blind and ignorant condition of the newly born babe. But initiation means more than this; by all the authorities it is agreed to be a symbolical representation of the process by which not only the child had been brought into existence and educated into a scholarly and refined man but that by which the race has been brought out of savagery and barbarism into civilization. D....., neither n..... nor c....., b nor s....., w..... c..... t....., fittingly typifies the barbaric, not to say savage, state in which man originally moved when he knew not the use of metals and out of which he has been brought to his present condition. It is precisely this that has led to the application of the term "barbarians" to the uninitiated. On this point I quote Brother Albert Pike, again; he says:

"In that preparation of the candidate which symbolizes the condition of the Aryan race especially in its infancy, he is deprived of all m..... and m....., because their use was not known to the earliest men; that he is n..... nor c..... represents the condition of the race when there were no manufacturers and the fabrics of the loom were unknown, when men

dressed in the skins of animals, and, when the heat made these a burden, were hardly clothed at all. That he is b..... represents their blindness of ignorance, even of the most useful arts, and although of divine truths; and that in which the number 3 appears, the c..... t... three times around the, the bonds in which they were held of their sensual appetites, their passions that were their masters, anger, revenge, hatred, and all the evil kindred of these; and their superstitious fears."

A little study and reflection will show that every Masonic symbol has an apt application not only to the moral and intellectual life history of the individual but also to that of the race considered collectively. Biologists tell us that this parallel between the individual and the race holds good in the material realm and that in the physical growth and development of every child from the moment of its conception till it is a fully grown man, there is epitomized the history of the evolutionary development of the race through all the ages that have passed. However this may be, it is certain that an exact parallel does exist between the moral and intellectual growth of the child and the process which history indicates the race as a whole has passed through.

TOOL SYMBOLS

One of the things first noticed in the Entered Apprentice degree and continued throughout all the degrees is the employment of the tools of the operative Mason, as emblems of moral qualities. This peculiarity of Freemasonry is well known even to outsiders.

Brother George Fleming Moore, editor of the *New Age* and Sovereign Grand Commander, A. and A. S. Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, declares that it is clear that the ancient Chinese philosophers used our present Masonic symbols "in almost precisely the same sense in which they are used by us in modern Freemasonry."²

The tools with which men labor are not inappropriate for use as moral symbols, they are neither humble nor trivial. They are worthy emblems of the highest and noblest virtues. Tools have performed an astonishing part in

² *New Age*, vol. XVII, p. 283.

civilizing and enlightening mankind. They are one of the few things that distinctly mark man as immeasurably superior to the other animals. Some scientists have even contended that it is alone man's ability to fashion and use tools that has raised him above the level of the brute creation. But radical as this view must be, it cannot be denied by any thoughtful man that the use of tools has been one of the chief instrumentalities in all human progress, not only material but mental and spiritual. Without tools we could not till the soil, or work the mines, or reduce the metal; we could enjoy only the rudest shelters; and all the creations of art which appeal to our spiritual natures would be impossible. The very stages of human advancement are named from the character of the tools that were employed during them; thus, the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age.

Scientists suppose the first great achievement of man in his progress from savagery to civilization to have been the development of articulate speech; the second, the discovery of the uses of fire; the third, they believe to have been the invention of a tool, namely, the bow and arrow. Pottery, another class of utensils, they hold to have been the fourth; the domestication of animals, the fifth; and the discovery of the manufacture and use of iron, the sixth. The seventh was the art of writing which also involved the use of a tool. Thus we see that four of the epoch making strides of savage and barbaric man had to do with the use of tools.

With civilized man, the case has been even more striking. His first four great discoveries or inventions were gun-powder, the mariner's compass, the manufacture of paper, and the printing press. The fifth was the demonstration by Copernicus (1530) that the earth revolved on an axis and that the sun did not daily make a circuit around her. The next in order was the steam engine and machines for weaving and spinning. Lastly, we may name machines for generating and utilizing the boundless possibilities of electricity. We might also mention in this connection the gasoline engine. We will not count the flying machine whose value as a civilizing agent is yet to be demonstrated. Thus we see of civilized man, according to the highest

authorities, seven of his eight great and distinctive achievements have been the invention and use of new tools. And it must be remembered that the eighth, the discovery of Copernicus, was rendered possible only through the use of another tool. To the Psalmist the heavens declared the glory of God's handiwork, but a thousand times more solemnly and impressively do they now disclose it through the medium of the telescope. It was nothing less than an inspiration that prompted our ancient brethren to symbolize the tools with which they produced those creations of art and architecture whose sight causes our breasts to heave with the highest emotions of which we are capable.

Professor Henry Smith Williams,³ after pointing out the many material advantages involved in the use of tools, says that we must not "overlook the aesthetic influence of edged implements."

And then what must be said of the tools that make our music?· If there is a glimpse of heaven obtainable on earth, it is in the wonderful art made possible through our marvelous musical instruments.

How our various working tools acquired the particular symbolical meanings we now attach to them we know not. In some instances we know that they have borne them for ages.

At any rate, it is with peculiar fitness that the material tools, which contribute so essentially to the building and the beautifying of the material structure, should be made to symbolize those virtues which are so essential to the building and beautifying of human character, that moral and spiritual building not reared with hands.

MODESTY OF TRUE CHARACTER

We are told that in the building of Solomon's Temple there was not heard the sound of any tool of iron. It is a well-authenticated historical fact that the Jews, not to mention other ancient peoples, believed that an iron tool was polluting to an altar to Deity. Hence, in the days of Moses, the laws

³ Enc. Brit. Vol. VI, p 404

prescribed that in erecting an altar of stone to Jehovah no iron tool should be employed upon it. The work of erecting the Temple, therefore, went on noiselessly but with speed and perfection.

This tradition, besides being borne out by the known facts of Hebrew history, has a beautiful symbolism. It is this: the erection and adornment of the moral and spiritual temple in which we are engaged, that of human character, and of which Solomon's was typical, is not characterized by the clang of noisy tools. About true character building there is nothing of bluster and show; it is a silent, noiseless process. It is the emptiest tub that makes the greatest noise. Whenever you see the front pages of the newspapers constantly filled with the interviews of some man or when you see him constantly struggling to get into the lime-light, you may rest assured that back of it all is not the highest type of character. It is certain that there is present vanity; it is probable that there is back of it selfishness and a sinister purpose. Beware of the self-advertiser and "head-liner." The greatest characters in the world's history have been men of modesty; their deeds, not their words, have silently spoken for them.

CABLE-TOW

The candidate is early introduced to the Cable-Tow. We have seen that his introduction into the E. A. lodge is symbolical of birth. Among the Hindus, the Brahmans wear a sacred cord symbolizing the second birth which they profess. The Cable-Tow thus has in Masonry what we might term its primary allusion. It has, however, a deeper symbolism. The word is not found in most of our dictionaries; it is characteristically Masonic. Its obvious literal meaning is the cable or cord by which something is towed or drawn. Hence with the greatest aptness it represents those forces and influences which have conducted not only the individual, but the human race out of a condition of ignorance and darkness into one of light and knowledge. With symbolical meanings of this kind the cord seems to have been employed in many, if not all, of the ancient systems of initiation. The explanation of this paraphernalia given in our lecture is its least important meaning.

DISCALCEATION

It is very true that the plucking off of one's shoes is an ancient Israelitish custom adopted among Masons. It was employed among the Jews as a pledge of fidelity of one man to another. Such is the symbolism of it in the Entered Apprentice degree. It has another meaning with which we are not concerned here, but which is brought out in the Master's degree.

CIRCUMAMBULATION

A certain ceremony, the candidate is told, was intended to signify to him that "at a time when he could neither foresee nor prevent danger he was in the hands of a true and trusty friend in whose fidelity he could with safety confide." This has a literal meaning very applicable to the candidate's then condition, but if we regard the candidate as we should, as man pursuing the journey of life, the symbolical signification of this ceremony becomes truly profound. We all grope in the dark from the moment we are born till we are laid upon the bier. The candidate is no more oblivious to his way than is every man in this life to what is before him. In our moments of apparently greatest security we often to our astonishment find that we are in the very presence of death. The sinking of the Titanic or the Lusitania was but one of thousands of proofs of this truth. The winds, the lightnings, the floods and the fires destroy us without warning. With all our boasted wisdom and foresight we cannot see an inch into the future. But every man is in the hands of a true and trusty friend in whose fidelity he can with safety confide. He needs but do his part to the best he knows and may then rest confident that our All-Father will take care of the results in a manner befitting an all wise and all loving Creator.

UPRIGHT

In eastern countries (and formerly in western countries) the inferior approaches the superior, the servant the Master, the subject the sovereign, in an abased or groveling manner, oftentimes with the face averted as though it were insolence to look directly upon the august presence. Not so in Masonry; the candidate is taught to approach the East, with his face to the

front, walking erect as a man should walk. This attitude is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the other animals. A few can feebly imitate it, but only on occasion and then haltingly. Nothing adds more to a man's self-respect and strength of character than to walk erect, holding the head well up and looking the world and every man squarely in the face. You may experience a feeling of sorrow or sympathy for the man who appears before you with a cringing or abject bearing, but with this feeling there is mingled contempt. This idea we have turned into a terse though vulgar apothegm, "Hold your head up if you die hard." We promptly suspect the integrity of the man who can not look us squarely in the eye.

Freemasonry teaches that all men are and of right ought to be free; that, therefore, no man should abase or humiliate himself before another. But this manly, erect attitude which the candidate is taught to assume has the same symbolism as the plumb. It teaches that we should always walk upright in our several stations before God and man.

THE BIBLE

The Bible is one of the Great Lights, one of the Furniture, and rests upon the top of the Two Parallel Lines. No lodge should be opened without its presence. Still it is but a symbol; it represents divine truth in every form, whether in the form of the written word, or in that referred to by the psalmist when he says:

"The Heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge." -Ps. 19, 1.

But the shadow must not be mistaken for the substance. There is nothing sacred or holy in the mere book. It is only ordinary paper, leather, and ink. Its workmanship may be much inferior to that of other books. It is what it typifies that renders it sacred to us. Any other book having the same signification would do just as well. For this reason the Hebrew Mason may with perfect propriety use the Old Testament alone, or the Mohammedan

may, as has been done, employ the Koran in his lodge. In fact that book should be used which to the individual in question most fully represents divine truth.

APRON

We are told that the lambskin or white leather apron, the badge of a Mason, is "more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honorable than the Star and Garter." This sounds a little bombastic, we must admit, yet it is literally true. The order of the Golden Fleece, which is here referred to, had its origin in A. D. 1429; the Roman Eagle, which was Rome's ensign of imperial power, became distinctively such, according to Pliny, no earlier than the second consulship of Gaius Marius or about 105 years B. C. On the other hand, it is certain that the apron was worn as a badge of honor or sanctity more, than a thousand years before Christ. The Garter is confessedly the most illustrious order of Knighthood in England, and is historically identified with the chivalry of the Middle Ages. But for this very reason, it like all the other orders of chivalric knighthood, was, as has been said by high authority, George Gordon Coulton,⁴ "hampered by the limitations of medieval society." Edward A. Freeman, the great English historian, who has perhaps most nearly defined the spirit and influence of knighthood, says:

"The chivalrous spirit is above all things a class spirit. The good knight is bound to endless fantastic courtesies towards men and still more towards women of a certain rank; he may treat all below that rank with any degree of scorn and cruelty. The spirit of chivalry implies the arbitrary choice of one or two virtues to be practised in such an exaggerated degree as to become vices, while the ordinary laws of right and wrong are forgotten. The false code of honor supplants the laws of the commonwealth, the law of God and the eternal principles. Chivalry again in its military aspect not only encourages the love of war for its own sake without regard to the cause for which war is waged, it encourages also an extravagant regard for a fantastic show of personal daring which can not in any way advance the siege or campaign which is going on. Chivalry in short is in morals very much what feudalism is in law. Each substitutes purely personal obligations devised in the interests of an exclusive class, for the more homely duties of an honest man and a good

⁴ Enc. Brit. Vol. XV, p. 858.

citizen."⁵

This view presents knighthood as the very antithesis of Freemasonry.

F. W. Cornish presents a somewhat brighter picture of knighthood but says, "Against these (virtues) may be set the vices of pride, ostentation, love of bloodshed, contempt of inferiors, and loose manners."

But whether we take the one or the other view, Freeman or Cornish, chivalry will not bear comparison with Freemasonry in the nobility of its principles. Let us set against the pictures of Freeman and Cornish the things which Freemasonry stands for. It is in theory at least a vast school urging the study of the liberal arts and sciences which tend to broaden, strengthen and enlighten the mind. But it is much more than this; it is a great society of friends and brothers teaching by precept, and let us hope by example, all those mental and moral virtues which make and adorn character and prepare us to enjoy the blessings not only of this life but of that which is to come. Let me enumerate some of the things that are taught and by ceremonies peculiar to Freemasonry, are impressed upon the minds and hearts of its initiates. A belief in Deity; the service of God; gratitude for his blessings; reverence and adoration for his holy name; veneration for his word; the duty and efficacy of prayer; the invocation of his aid in every laudable undertaking; faith in Him; hope in immortality; charity to all mankind; the relief of the distressed, particularly the brethren and their families; the cultivation of brotherly love and the protection of the good name of a brother and that of his family and the sanctity of his female relatives; the adornment of the mind and heart; purity of life and rectitude of conduct; the curbing of our desires and passions; living in conformity to the "Great Books" of Nature and Revelation; the practice of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice; the cultivation of habits of patience and perseverance; the eschewing of profanity; love for and loyalty to country; devotion and fidelity to trust; the beauty of holiness; the maintenance of secrecy; the observance of caution; the recognition of real merit; the contemplation of wisdom;

⁵ Norman Conquest, vol. V, p. 482.

admiration for strength of body and character; the love of the beautiful in nature and art; the observance of the Sabbath; the promotion of peace and unity of the brethren; the preservation of liberty of thought, conscience, speech and action; equality before God and the law; the cultivation of habits of industry; the certainty of retributive justice; the brevity and uncertainty of this life; the contemplation of death; the resurrection of the body and life everlasting after death to those who love God and his creatures and observe his laws. All of these and others I am not privileged to mention here are taught every candidate and are impressed upon his mind by peculiar ceremonies which constitute a part of the secret arcana of the lodge.

Do you say that all these things may be learned elsewhere with equal thoroughness and equal ease, and that Masonry is therefore, a useless institution?

I maintain not. The fact that the institution has lived and flourished for so long a period and that it is today more powerful in its influence and more general in its dissemination than ever before proves not. It approaches the mind and heart from a direction that enables it to reach and grapple many men whom no other influence can reach, while at the same time it doubles and multiplies many times the power for good of those whom other influences do reach.

Is it, therefore, any exaggeration to say that Freemasonry is more ancient than the Golden Fleece and more honorable than the Star and Garter, or any other order that can be conferred upon its initiate by king, prince, or potentate?

DEFINITION OF LODGE

We are told that a lodge is a certain number of Masons duly assembled with the Holy Bible, square and compasses. These three properties should indeed always be present but to the existence of a lodge in its highest sense it is more necessary that there should be present what they symbolize, namely: Truth, Virtue and Self-restraint. Without these there may be the semblance of but no real lodge. Bible, square and compasses should be

displayed in every opened lodge, not chiefly for their own sake but for what they represent.

HIGH HILLS AND LOW VALES

We are told that our ancient brethren usually held their lodges on high hills or in low vales. This allusion to this antiquated custom is another hoary lock upon the brow of our symbolism. The explanation given is a very simple and practical one, namely: because they better lent themselves to purposes of secrecy. But there is another and deeper reason. Whatever may be the explanation, it is clear that from the remotest times hills and valleys have been peculiarly venerated by mankind. On the "High Places" the Jews and their neighbors worshipped God; the glens and dales our imagination has populated with the charming "Little People," the sprites and fairies of mythology and our nursery tales. The beauty spots of earth are where mountains and valleys succeed each other in greatest profusion. These are they that in all ages have testified to the majesty and glory of God and stirred our imaginations and inspired our poets.⁶

WISDOM, STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

We are told in our Monitors that our institution is supported by three great pillars, Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, because there should be wisdom to contrive, strength to support, and beauty to adorn all great and important undertakings. The lodge whose members are characterized by wisdom to plan with judgment, strength to resist evil tendencies and influences, and by the beauty of brotherly love and charity is sure to prosper. Nothing more is needed to give it success. Truly may it be said that these three attributes support our institution and with equal truth may it be said that they support all other institutions and creations.

Infinite wisdom planned and formed this universe, omnipotent strength hurls the sun, the earth, the moon, the stars through space at speeds we can not conceive, and yet holds each in its accustomed orbit with such

⁶ A. Q. C. vol. III. P. 21; U. M. L., Part II, p. 66p Orientation of Temples, p. 6.

inerrancy that astronomers can now calculate the position of each thousands of years hence, while a beauty which poets have for ages in vain attempted to express completes the work. In short, wisdom, strength and beauty sum up the universe in three words.

Wisdom, strength and beauty make a perfect building. There must be wisdom to plan and execute; this gives to the structure convenience and utility. There must be strength to support; this gives to the building firmness and durability. There must be beauty to adorn; this gives that which pleases and appeals to man's moral and aesthetic taste. There may be wisdom and strength but without beauty the result is, as has been truly observed, mere construction or at most a piece of engineering. It may be admirable, even wonderful, but without beauty it is not architecture. There may be beauty, but if there is not wisdom of plan and execution and strength to resist the processes of decay the result is a disappointment. Who, that visited the Chicago Exposition in 1893 and viewed that dream of beauty, was not saddened by the thought that there was no strength there? These three essential elements of architecture, Vitruvius, the noted architect who flourished shortly before Christ, enumerates as **Firmitas, Utilitas, Venustas**, which is to say stability, utility and beauty.⁷

So of man. Wisdom, Strength and Beauty make a perfect man. How often have we said with a sigh "that is a beautiful woman," or "that man is a beautiful character, but there is neither wisdom nor strength." This beauty may be so great as to be lovely or be even admirable but there is not perfection.

On the other hand, how sad, how inexpressibly sad, when we behold a man with a great mind and a great body and yet no beauty of character; a soul in which there is selfishness instead of sympathy, cruelty instead of kindness, hate and bitterness instead of love and charity. When to beauty of heart and person and character you add wisdom to plan and strength to execute, weighing down all evil opposition, we have what may truly be called

⁷ Enc. Brit. Vol. II, p 370.

"the noblest work of God." Nothing can be added to wisdom, strength and beauty in either a building or in a man, unless it be more wisdom, more strength and greater beauty.

Wisdom and Beauty early become subjects of philosophical study and disquisition. Among the Greeks, "Wisdom" was regarded as the knowledge of the cause and origin of things; among the Jews, it was regarded as knowing how to live in order to get the greatest possible good out of this life. Neither Greek nor Hebrew philosophy seems to have concerned itself greatly about a future life. This subject was productive among the Jews of the "Book of Wisdom," which has been pronounced by Dr. Crawford H. Toy, as "the most brilliant production of pre-Christian Hebrew philosophical thought." The Greeks boasted a vast body of "Wisdom literature," as it is called. So, Beauty gave rise to a body of philosophical thought called Aesthetics. The earliest writers on this subject, as on so many others, were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates thought it resolvable into the useful and as not existing independently of a percipient mind. Plato took the contrary view on each point. Aristotle made great advance on both and defined certain essential elements of beauty which have since been generally accepted. All agree that the purest of our pleasures arise from the contemplation of the beautiful and that the effect is chastening and elevating. Freemasonry combines this philosophy with both the Greek and the Hebrew ideas of Wisdom, as a topic worthy of philosophical study. With us, as we shall see in the third degree, the conception of Wisdom is extended beyond what either the Greek or Hebrews understood it and embraces the search for knowledge of the future.

Strength was greatly prized by the Jews, as well as the Greeks and Romans, and among them was regarded as one of the attributes of Deity. Both Samuel and Joel acclaim Jehovah as the Strength of Israel. Job (xii, 13) declares "With him is wisdom and strength," while David (Ps. xcvi, 6) sings "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." But the Preacher (Ec. ix, 16) with a truer appreciation declares that "wisdom is better than strength."

Examples could be multiplied indefinitely from the old Bible of the high esteem in which the Jews held these three Masonic qualities.

THE COVERING OF THE LODGE

The covering of the lodge is said to be a clouded canopy or starry-decked heaven. The appropriateness of this symbol is striking when we regard the lodge as emblematic of the world, for such is literally at all times the covering of the earth. Equally true, in the literal sense, was this description when lodges were held in the open air, as we are assured and as seems probable they were. In the earliest temples erected by man for the worship of God there was no roof, the only covering being the sky. As to them also this description holds good. This fact may give additional point and meaning to the statement that our lodges extend from earth to heaven. Later when temples were covered and our lodges began to be held in closed rooms it was customary to decorate the ceiling with a blue canopy spangled with stars. This starry-decked heaven, when now exhibited in our lodge rooms, either on the ceiling or on our charts, or master's carpets, is obviously reminiscent of the real canopy of heaven with which anciently our lodges were in fact covered, and is symbolical of that abode of the blessed which is universally regarded as located in the sky.⁸

THE ORNARAMENTS OF THE LODGE

The ornaments of the lodge are the Mosaic pavement, the indented tessel and the blazing star; that is to say its floor, the margin thereof, and the stars with which its ceiling are or should be decorated. Does this symbolism hold good when applied to the earth? It does most perfectly. To the beholder the visible part of the earth appears as surface, horizon and sky. The surface of the earth, if viewed from above checquered with fields and forests, mountains and plains, hills and valleys, land and waters, would be found to look very much like a pavement of Mosaic work. A few miles up it would seem almost as delicate. The horizon, that mysterious region that

⁸ *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 235, 365; *Mackey's Symbolism*, pp. 102, 117; *Hamlin's His. Of Arch.*, p. 2; *Steinbrenner*, p. 150.

separates land and sky, earth and heaven, where the heavenly bodies appear and disappear, with its inexpressible charms and numberless beauties, has in all ages been a source of mystery and inspiration to the poets. It is fitly typified by the splendid borders which surround the floors of some of our most magnificent buildings and which is fabled to have surrounded the floor of Solomon's Temple, while the firmament above studded with stars by night and the blazing sun by day complete the ornamental scheme of the earth. The surface, the horizon, the firmament embrace all of visible beauty of Nature there is, and they have never yet been exhausted by poet, painter or singer.

THE THREE GREAT LIGHTS

If we read discerningly the explanation given of these in our lectures and ceremonies we must perceive that they symbolize, respectively: (1) The Bible, the word of God, not merely that disclosed in his revealed word, but including also the knowledge which we acquire from the great book of Nature; (2) the square typifies the rule of right conduct, and (3) the compasses is an emblem of that self-restraint which enables us on all occasions to act according to this rule of right. Beyond a perfect knowledge of God's word and therefore of the rule of right living nothing is needed to make the perfect man except a perfect self-restraint.

THE THREE LESSER LIGHTS

Equally appropriate is the symbolism of the Three Lesser Lights. It was literally true to our ancient operative brethren that from the Sun and Moon they obtained all that natural light which rendered possible those great architectural creations, some of which still remain as perpetual sources of wonder and delight. But all this skill must have quickly perished from the earth had not the Master communicated to the Apprentice from generation to generation the mental illumination which kept alive the knowledge of architecture. Thus literally were the Sun, Moon and Worshipful Master lights to our ancient operative brethren. But as a knowledge of architecture is less than knowledge of God; as the correct rule of building is less than the

correct rule of living; as the restraints imposed upon the structure is less important than the restraint imposed upon one's self, so are the Sun, Moon and Worshipful Master less important lights than are the Bible, square and compasses, when rightly understood.

To the untutored mind the sun was the most striking object in nature. His daily march across the heavens must to those, who did not know that his motion was only apparent, have been far more impressive than to us. Add to these his enlightening and fructifying influences, which must have been apparent to man even in his rudest stages of development, and we are not surprised that the orb of day became in all countries an object of worship. The point of his daily appearance, the East; his station at the mid-day hour, the South; the quarter of his disappearance at night, the West, could not fail to become objects of special significances. He seemed to shun the North, whence it became in popular opinion a place of darkness. It is obvious that conceptions like these belong to the past age and yet they contribute to the completion of that allegory of the world and human life which we know as Freemasonry.

Of scarcely less interest to man in all ages have been the Moon and the Stars; little less striking and even more beautiful are they. The glorious orbs of day and night have not yet lost their power to stir thoughts of divinity in the human mind, as witness Joseph Addison's beautiful words:

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their Great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land,
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly, to the listening earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;

While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid the radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine."

There are said to be three lights in the lodge, one in the South, one in the West, and one in the East. There is said to be none in the North and that hence it is called a place of darkness. Applied to our ordinary lodge rooms this is meaningless, but applied to the world, as the ancients knew it, and of which as we have seen; the lodge is emblematic, it has a charming symbolism. It alludes to the fact that to persons living in the northern hemisphere, (where all the civilized people of antiquity dwelt,) the Sun each day appears in the East, ascends to the zenith in the South where he seems to become stationary for a short space, and thence descends and disappears in the West. The East, South and West seem, therefore, to be his stations; he never attains the North. The ancients supposed the South to be a region of intense heat and blinding light and the extreme North to be a region of perpetual darkness. We have in this symbol, therefore, a reflection of these primeval conceptions of mankind concerning the world.

SITUATION OF THE LODGE

The situation of lodges due east and west is not at all peculiar to Freemasonry. In ancient times the custom was well nigh universal to locate sacred edifices east and west. This is why the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were so situated. This old idea of orientation, as it is called, is practically lost except among Masons. We preserve it in theory even though necessity often compels us to depart from it in practice. The parallel

between the lodge and the world holds good here as elsewhere. As the lodge is or should be situated east and west, so in ancient times was the world. The "oblong square" which made up the ancient world had its greatest length east and west.

JACOB'S LADDER

The ladder is, of course, a familiar implement to the builder. It was in constant use by our ancient operative brethren. In a system where working tools are made to symbolize moral properties, it could scarcely happen otherwise than that the ladder would be made to typify the power or means by which man is lifted or attains to a higher state of existence. It was employed always with the same meaning in the Ancient Mysteries and was a familiar symbol of salvation long before Jacob in his vision saw it extending from earth to heaven. We, as did the ancients, ascribe to it seven rungs, symbolical with us of the four cardinal and the three theological virtues by which it was supposed a man was prepared for and elevated to the higher state.

CARDINAL VIRTUES

The cardinal virtues mean simply the pre-eminent or principal virtues. They were declared by Socrates and Plato 400 years before Christ, as they are by us today, to be Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. This list has been criticized as being arbitrary, as not covering the entire field, and as overlapping each other. In the light of the broadening influence of modern ethical and religious ideas the justice of these criticisms must be conceded. But reflection will disclose to us that these four virtues cover a surprisingly large part of the moral realm of human life.

Temperance means moderation not only in drink but in diet, not only in diet but in action, not only in action but in speech, not only in speech but in thought, not only in thought but in feeling.

Fortitude implies, it is true, a physical bravery that leads one to resist insult or attack with force, but more especially that moral courage that

enables one at the risk of incurring the sneers of others, to refrain from a resort to violence except where the necessity is imperative. When, however, this necessity arises it is not deterred by pain or circumstance be it ever so appalling or threatening.

Prudence as the critics have pointed out, enters to some extent into .the last named virtue. It signifies also to meet every situation, however dangerous or difficult, with common sense and reason. It is a virtue which is lacking in a surprising large proportion of the human race.

Little need be added to what is said of the virtue of Justice in our monitors. It is truly the "very cement and support of civil society." This conception of justice evidences a distinct advance by mankind. To be able and willing to mete out exact justice to everyone, even one's self, in every relation of life, in thought, word and action, very nearly sums up the total of all possible human virtue. In a system of moral philosophy, such as Plato's (as distinguished from a religious philosophy such as we now have,) justice very nearly covers the whole field.⁹

What a multitude of evils and mistakes the full possession and practice of these virtues would enable us to avoid!

But with the birth and development of theology the Platonic scheme seemed and doubtless was incomplete. It took little or no account of those higher speculative virtues which we class as religious. There was absent from it the conception of that charity or love which has entered so largely into modern sociological thoughts and movements. The later philosophical and religious teachers, therefore, added to the cardinal virtues what they termed the theological virtues, namely, Faith, Hope and Charity. These three were believed to include anything omitted from the other four, and together were supposed to cover the entire field of the moral thought and conduct of man.

⁹ Enc. Brit., vol. V, p. 324; Ibid, vol. 9, p. 813

CHALK, CHARCOAL, AND CLAY

We are told that Entered Apprentices should serve their Masters with Freedom, Fervency and Zeal; with freedom, in that it should be done freely and without constraint as becomes a free man, not grudgingly and hesitatingly as characterizes the slave; with fervency and zeal, these terms are synonymous, one is from the Latin **ferveo**, to boil, while the other is from the Greek **zeo**, meaning the same. I have been unable to find that chalk, charcoal or clay, anciently bore any symbolic significations. It must, however, be admitted that chalk is a fitting symbol of freedom, charcoal of fervency, and earth of zeal.

NORTH EAST CORNER

From the most ancient times it has been the custom of builders to lay with ceremonies the cornerstone of important edifices. As it was a custom of the ancients to orient their temples, that is to make them face the east, so for some similar reason it was their custom to lay the cornerstone in the northeast corner. Why this particular part of the structure was chosen has been the subject of much speculation. Some have attributed it to the fact that the rising sun sheds its beams more directly upon this corner of a building situated due east and west than upon either of the other corners. But many have supposed (and no doubt truly) that a symbolical reason existed for this custom. This also has given rise to further speculation and as a specimen I introduce this interesting conjecture by General Albert Pike:

"The apprentice represents the Aryan race in its original home on the highlands of Pamir, in the north of that Asia termed Orient, at the angle whence, upon two great lines of emigration south and west, they flowed forth in successive waves to conquer and colonize the world."

As speculative Masonry gradually developed from operative Masonry, it preserved this ceremony of laying the cornerstone, because of the moral and religious symbolism which seems always to have pertained to it. With the operative it was a serious part of the actual process of building; with us its chief value lies in its symbolical significations.

As placing the newly made Entered Apprentice in the northeast corner of the lodge marks the completion of his initiation, so it symbolizes the completion of the preparatory period of life and his readiness to enter upon its serious labors and business. The admonition there given him is, that having made proper moral preparation for life, his future activities should be kept in accord with the teaching and training he had received in his youth.

This, my brethren, briefly reviews the symbolical teachings of the ceremonies of initiation. As said at the outset I have barely touched upon them. Anyone of them would be sufficient of itself to occupy a whole evening. I could easily consume another hour talking to you about the symbolical teachings of the Entered Apprentice lesson without exhausting it. Let me illustrate with a single question and answer and I am done.

"WHENCE CAME YOU?"

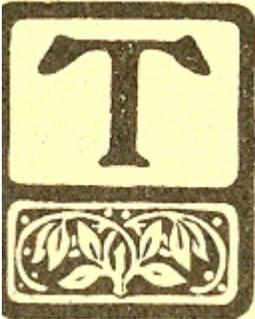
Daily this question is asked by Masons without the slightest thought as to its real meaning. It is fitting that the answer we make to it in the lodge is well nigh unintelligible, for it is about as intelligible as any ever given it or as probably will be given it. Who can answer the question "Whence came you?" Who has ever answered it? Who will ever answer it? Equally baffling and profound is that companion question, familiar in some jurisdictions, "Whither are you bound?" Equally an enigma is the answer we give it. Simple as these questions appear, they search every nook and cranny and sound every depth of every philosophy, every mythology, every theology, and every religion that has ever been propounded anywhere by anybody at any time to explain human life. They allude to the problems of the origin and destiny of mankind; they lie at the foundation of all the thinking and of all the activities of man except such as are concerned with the purely utilitarian question "What shall we eat and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" All our better impulses, all our loftier aspirations, all our faiths, all our longing for and striving after a nobler state of existence, either in this or a future life, are but attempts to answer these two questions. They are the supreme questions which men have been asking themselves and each other ever

since men were able to think and to talk, and they are the questions which men will continue to ask oftenest and most anxiously until the time when we are promised that we shall know even as we are known. It is thus that study and reflection bring out the beauty and the profound significance of the simplest of Masonic formulas.

SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE DEGREES

PART II

THE FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE



THE ceremonies of initiation, passing, and raising, as well as the lectures explanatory of them, are necessarily brief; want of time and the danger of over-burdening the candidate require that they should be so. The Mason, therefore, who relies solely upon what he sees and hears in the lodge will obtain a very inadequate conception of Freemasonry. He may and doubtless will be more or less affected by our ceremonies; it could scarcely be otherwise, so solemn and impressive are they, but he will fail to discover and understand some of the greater truths which lie hidden beneath the surface, and can never become truly speaking a "bright Mason."

Nearly every Masonic symbol or ceremony (like all true allegories) has two (sometimes more) significations, one literal, the other symbolical. The literal meaning, usually the more apparent, is often of great interest, frequently affording striking evidences as to the origin and antiquity of Freemasonry. But it is the symbolical or allegorical meaning, usually the more recondite, which appeals most to the thoughtful mind.

Nor is it unfortunate that the more important lessons are somewhat veiled from observation. We do not prize what we obtain easily; it is that for which we have striven or paid a big price which we value. If, therefore, from beneath the surface of these familiar ceremonies any of us by our own studies and reflections are enabled to discover and bring to light truths which have lain somewhat hidden, the appreciation of them is keener and the impression produced deeper and more lasting than if they had been open to superficial observation. For this reason many of the greatest lessons of Freemasonry are wisely hidden away as prizes for the studious and the diligent only. The "mysteries" and the "secrets" of Freemasonry are not synonymous terms; the mysteries continue such forever even to the Mason

who will not study and read. Do you feel that Masonry is an idle and frivolous thing, unworthy of the attention of serious men? If so, did you ever reflect whether the fault was yours or that of the institution? Unless you are sure that you know what Freemasonry is and what it teaches and what are its designs and that you thoroughly understand its methods of teaching withhold 'your condemnation till you have made it the subject of a little serious study, because, as observed by an eminent authority, the character of the institution is "elevated in everyone's opinion just in proportion to the amount of knowledge that he has acquired of its symbolism, philosophy and history."

Freemasonry is a many sided subject. There is something in it which arrests and appeals to the shallowest mind or the most frivolous moral character. At the same time, there is much in it which has chained the thought and attention of the world's greatest intellects and wisest philosophers. It presents many aspects for study and investigation, either of which will amply repay the efforts of the intelligent mind and will lead to knowledge not merely curious, as some suppose, but of the utmost practical value.

I am forced to refer again to one line of thought touched on in the preceding lecture because I regard it as fundamental to the study and understanding of any part of Freemasonry. This idea is that Freemasonry is an elaborate allegory of human life, both individually and collectively, in all its varied aspects, past, present, and future; that the lodge represents the world into which mortal man is introduced, lives, moves, has his being and eventually dies; that it also represents the place or state of the redeemed in the life which we believe follows this; that the lodge-member typifies the individual man; that its organized membership represents mankind united into human society; that the ideal lodge-member, ruled by love, wisdom, strength and beauty, typifies man raised from this state of imperfection to one of perfection.

Of all the ceremonies of the lodge, the Fellow Craft degree, when viewed

by itself is the most difficult and I believe the least generally understood. Preston, who wrote the first Monitor, tells us that "such is the latitude of this degree that the most judicious may fail in an attempt to explain it." In Akin's Georgia Manual we read that the "splendid beauty of the Fellow Craft degree can be seen only by the studious eye and that the Master who would impress it upon the candidate must store his mind with the history, traditions and ritualism of this degree."

A flood of light, however, is at once shed upon the subject when we consider it a part of a human allegory, of which the Entered Apprentice and Master's degrees are respectively the beginning and the completion.

Let us then briefly consider it in this manner and endeavor to reach a clearer understanding of its meaning. That we may the better perceive just where it falls into the complete scheme, it will be necessary first to consider for a moment the Entered Apprentice and Master's degrees.

We are told in the Master's lecture that the Entered Apprentice represents youth; the Fellow Craft, manhood; and the Master Mason, old age. A little study will serve to show us how completely this simile is justified.

The introduction or first admission of the Entered Apprentice candidate into the lodge, therefore, typifies the entrance of man upon the world's stage of action or in other words, the birth of the child into this life. The distinguished Masonic scholar, Dr. Mackey, says that the Entered Apprentice is a "child in Masonry" and we read in many Monitors that "the first or Entered Apprentice degree is intended symbolically to represent the entrance of man into the world in which he is afterwards to become a living and thinking actor." In English working the candidate is reminded that his admission into the Entered Apprentice lodge "in a state of helpless ignorance was an emblematical representation of the entrance of all men on this their mortal existence."¹⁰

The preparation of the candidate and the plight in which he is admitted an

¹⁰ Mackey's Symbolism, p. 307.

Entered Apprentice strikingly symbolizes the helpless, destitute, blind and ignorant condition of the newly born babe. Yea, it is even certain that there are features preserved in Masonic symbolism which allude to that part of life preceding even birth and which hint at the phenomena of coition, generation, conception and gestation of the child in its mother's womb. These things rightly considered are as much a part and as pure and holy a part of a human life as birth or death, and could no more be omitted from any complete representation of it. Let no one, therefore, imagine that he has found anything impure in Freemasonry because he has discovered in it symbols and ceremonies which once undoubtedly bore phallic significations.

We may, therefore, say that the Masonic system epitomizes allegorically the life of man from the moment he is begotten through every stage of existence, conception, gestation, birth, infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, old age, death, the resurrection and everlasting life. Did any greater theme ever engage the attention of any society? Anything that pertains to any of these great subjects and which tends to strengthen, to elevate or to ennoble the human mind and character is properly a part of Freemasonry.

The first important lesson impressed upon the candidate after his entrance into the lodge is intended to signify to us that the very first idea that ought to be instilled into the mind of the child is a reverence and adoration for the Deity, the great and incomprehensible author of its existence. From beginning to the end, the Entered Apprentice degree is a series of moral lessons. This is a hint so broad that one need not be wise in order to understand that the moral training and education of the child should precede even the development and cultivation of its intellect. How many parents and teachers fail just at this point! They polish and adorn the minds of their children and pupils with great diligence at the same time neglecting their moral training, and when too late find that often they have made of them smart criminals.

The placing of the young Entered Apprentice in the northeast corner of the lodge in imitation of the ancient custom of laying the corner stone of a

building in the northeast corner, signifies that as an Entered Apprentice he has but laid the foundation whereon to build his future moral edifice, that of life and character. It aptly and fully symbolizes the end of the preparatory period and the beginning of the constructive period of human life.

The admonition there given him is to the effect that, having laid the foundation true, he should take care that the superstructure is reared in like manner; in other words, that his life, his moral temple be kept in harmony with the moral precepts which have been given him in the Entered Apprentice degree.

This likening of the human body to a temple of God is an ancient metaphor. Jesus' employment of it in speaking of his own body was but in keeping with a common practice among Jewish writers and teachers of his time. It immensely dignifies the physical body of man and teaches that, when kept clean both in the literal and the moral sense, it is a fit place for even Deity himself to dwell.

This body so powerfully and yet so delicately contrived that often apparently slight causes produce death, we have no right to defile or abuse with any kind of excess. No mechanism was ever so delicately, adjusted and no careful engineer would ever think of putting even too much oil upon a fine piece of machinery. Yet excessive indulgence in food, drink, or other appetites works far greater injury to our bodies.

The lesson is that we have no more right to defile or abuse our bodies than had the Jew to defile the Temple of God upon Mount Moriah.

In the Third degree the matter pressed upon our attention are the closing years of life, death and the vast hereafter. The xii chapter of Ecclesiastes, the most beautiful and affecting description of old age in all literature, is introduced. We are also told that the events it celebrates occurred just before the completion of the Temple, which is but a figurative way of saying that the period of life symbolized by the Master's degree is that just preceding its close, just before the completion of the moral and spiritual

temple.¹¹ It is, therefore, with the greatest propriety that the Master's degree is said to represent old age.

If then the Entered Apprentice represents childhood and youth, and the Master Mason old age, the Fellow Craft degree should, in order to complete the allegory, represent middle life and its labors, and this is precisely what it does with the greatest beauty and consistency.

Although the candidate for the Fellow Craft degree is to be regarded as a seeker after knowledge, yet the first section of this degree consists chiefly of a reiteration of the moral teachings of the First degree. This is to remind the young man as he is about to enter upon the serious labors and struggles of life that virtue is to be always the first consideration, that no knowledge, no success which is purchased at the sacrifice of morals, honor or integrity is to be prized. This lesson is repeated more than once in the course of this degree, admonishing us that, no matter how engrossed in the affairs of life we may become, we should never suffer the allurements of coveted gains to seduce us from the pathway of strict rectitude and justice.

Although thus reiterating and emphasizing the moral precepts of the First degree, the Fellow Craft degree is as distinctly intellectual in its purpose and spirit as the Entered Apprentice is moral. The great theme of the Second degree is the attainment of knowledge, the cultivation of the mind and the acquisition of habits of industry.¹² This feature becomes prominent in the second section of this degree. Preston, who, as already observed, wrote what might be termed the first Monitor, says that while the First degree is intended "to enforce the duties of morality," the Second "comprehends a more diffusive system of knowledge." We read in Simon's Monitor that "the Entered Apprentice is to emerge from the darkness to light; the Fellow Craft is to come out of ignorance into knowledge." Dr. Mackey expresses it thus: "The lessons the Entered Apprentice receives are simply intended to cleanse the heart and prepare the recipient for that mental illumination which

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Idem.

is to be given in the succeeding degree," and further he says, "The candidate in the Second degree represents a man starting forth on the journey of life with the great task before him of self-improvement," and that the result is to be the development of all his intellectual faculties and the acquisition of truth and knowledge. In England, the candidate is informed that while in the Entered Apprentice degree "he made himself acquainted with the principles of moral truth and virtue, he is in the Fellow Craft degree permitted to extend his researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science," and that he is "led in the Second degree to contemplate the intellectual faculty and to trace it from its development, through the paths of heavenly science, even to the throne of God himself." Brother J. W. Horsely, Rector of St. Peter's Cathedral, London, thus expresses the idea: "Generally, therefore, we may say that the Third degree represents and enforces the blessedness of spiritual life and the duty of progress therein, as the Second degree performs the same office for the intellectual life, and the first for the moral life."¹³

THE JEWELS OF A FELLOW CRAFT

The very means of gaining admission into a Fellow Craft lodge^{***}, alluding to the three jewels of Fellow Craft, are made to typify the processes of communicating, acquiring and preserving knowledge. "The attentive ear receives the sound from the instructive tongue and the mysteries of Freemasonry (as indeed all other knowledge) are safely lodged in the repository of faithful breasts."

THE WORKING TOOLS

The plumb, square, and level were the appropriate tools of the operative Fellow Craft Mason. To the Master or Overseer fell the duty of superintendence, to the Entered Apprentice that of gathering and rough hewing of the materials, but to the Fellow Craft fell the labor of actual construction. This involved the laying of level foundations and courses, the erection of perpendicular walls and the bringing of the stones to perfectly

¹³ Ars Quatour Coronatorum, vol. XII, p. 52.

rectangular shape. These labors necessitated the constant use by the operative Fellow Craft Mason of the plumb, square and level. Their operative uses very appropriately symbolize the analogous processes in the building of human character. This symbolical application of these implements of the builder is by no means recent; it dates back even among the Chinese more than 700 years before Christ. Five hundred years before Christ what we call the Golden Rule was by the Chinese called "the principle of acting on the square." Mencius, the great Chinese philosopher, who lived in the third century before Christ, teaches that men should apply the square and level to their lives, and speaking figuratively says that he who would acquire wisdom must make use of the square and compasses.

BOAZ AND JACHIN

Solomon, in accordance with the common practice of his day, placed two immense and highly ornate pillars or columns at the entrance of his temple. It is well known that King Hiram did the like for the great temple to Melcarth erected by him at Tyre. Many other instances might be cited. Whence originated this custom has been a matter for much speculation. We have seen what was the ancient conception of the form of the earth. To their world the Strait of Gibraltar appeared to be a veritable door of entry. On either side of this entrance rose two enormous rock promontories, Abyla and Calpe, (now called Gibraltar and Ceuta) which completely commanded egress and ingress and are familiarly known as the Pillars of Hercules. They were believed by the ancients to mark the western boundary of the world. Many have seen in these two vast columns of stone, set by nature to the entrance of the then known world, the counterparts of the pillars so often set by the ancients at the entrance to their temples, which were to them, as the lodge is to us, symbols of the world.

The first objects that engage the attention of the Fellow Craft on his way to the Middle Chamber are the representatives of these pillars at the entrance to Solomon's Temple. In addition to the explanation given in the lodge, they undoubtedly have also an allusion to the two legendary pillars of

Enoch upon which tradition tells us all the wisdom of the ancient world was inscribed in order to preserve it "against inundation and conflagrations." Standing at the very threshold of Solomon's Temple, as well as of the Fellow Craft lodge, they admonish us that after a proper moral training the acquisition of wisdom is the next necessary preparation for a useful and successful life.¹⁴ Their names, Boaz and Jachin, possess also a moral signification, meaning together that "in strength God will establish His house." Symbolically applied to the candidate, they mean that God will firmly establish the moral and spiritual edifice of the just and upright man.

THE GLOBES

The idea that the globes upon the two brazen pillars represent the globes celestial and terrestrial is certainly modern. The globular form of the earth was unknown to the ancients. Except to a few profound thinkers like Plato, the conception of the earth as a sphere was utterly foreign. Not until about the time of the discovery of America did this fact become generally understood.

Moreover, the Bible, at least in English translations, says nothing of any globes upon the pillars, but distinctly states that there were "made two chapiters of molten brass to set upon the tops of the pillars," and that "upon the tops of the pillars was lily-work." 1 Kings vii, 16,22. The more recent revisions of the Bible call the "chapiters" by their more familiar name of "capitals." The learned Jewish Rabbi, Solomon Jehudi, speaks of them as "pommels," a word signifying a globular ornament. It is well known that many of the architectural features and ornamental designs of Solomon's Temple were borrowed from the Egyptians. The so-called "lily-work" was unquestionably some form of water-lily or lotus pattern of ornamentation so common in ancient architecture and which even now is employed in conventionalized forms nearly everywhere. It sometimes assumes the form of the lotus leaf, at others of the full blown blossom, and at others still of the bud: Our common "egg and dart" pattern is a development therefrom.

¹⁴ Mackey's Symbolism, p. 219.

At the time of Solomon, one of the most frequent and at the same time one of the most beautiful of the lotus or water-lily designs was the lotus-bud capital, which often assumed an egg-like or oval shape. It is accurately indicated by the word "pommel," and indeed this term is employed in some of our Masonic Monitors in lieu of the term "globes." There seems little reason to doubt that the two Brazen Pillars were columns of the Egyptian style with the lotus-bud capitals. Their great diameter as compared to their height (about six diameters) is another strong evidence of their Egyptian derivation. Furthermore, we know that winged globular ornaments, sometimes of immense size, were extensively employed by the Egyptians' in adorning the entrances to their temples.

The lotus or water-lily was the sacred plant of the Egyptians and among other things signified "Universality." The conclusion, therefore, seems reasonable that, if there was anything like globes on the two Brazen Pillars, they were not true globes of the earth and of the heavens, but representations of the lotus-bud. If so, though the symbol has not been accurately perpetuated, the symbolism has.

There is another ancient conception to which the idea of globes upon the pillars may be related. From remotest times men must have observed that numerous forms of life proceeded from an egg. This observation gave rise to the belief which we know to have been widely disseminated in ancient times, and which modern science has almost completely confirmed, that life in every form proceeds from an egg. This supposed universal source of life became to the ancients the symbol of the source of things universal. In other words, the egg was the symbol of the Universal Mother. It is easily perceivable that to a people entertaining these ideas, globes or eggs mounted upon columns would convey the idea of universality.

LILY-WORK

In addition to the lotus capitals, no doubt the two pillars were, in keeping with the universal custom of the time, further ornamented with various forms of the lotus or water-lily design. The familiar token of peace with us is the

palm branch, but to the Egyptian and the Jew this office was fulfilled by the lotus or water-lily. It is, therefore, with precise accuracy that we say that the lotus, or Egyptian water-lily, (an entirely different plant from our lily,) denotes peace.

THE NET-WORK

The network which adorned the capitals or chapters of the pillars might be more familiarly described as "lattice-work." Curious specimens of this ornamentation are found in ancient and medieval architecture, particularly in that of the Magistri Comacini, or Comacine Masters of Northern Italy. Many of these are of the most beautiful and intricate designs and without either beginning or end. A more appropriate emblem of unity than these could not be conceived.

It is interesting to note in this connection, that recently a woman, and of course a non-Mason, Mrs. Baxter, writing under the nom de plume of Leader Scott, has in her splendid book, "The Cathedral Builders," adduced much evidence to prove that our modern Freemasonry is derived from these same Magistri Comacini, and through them from the Collegia Fabrorum, or Colleges of Builders, of the pre-Christian Roman era. To my mind, one of the strongest of these evidences is the common possession and employment of this net-work ornamentation.

This tracing of our society back to the Roman Building Societies of the eighth century before Christ, (if it can be sustained,) carries us back to the time when we know that building societies were common not only in Rome, but in Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Palestine. Indeed, it is impossible to explain the erection of such architectural wonders as the great pyramids and temples of Egypt, Asia, Greece and Rome, without supposing the existence at that time of building societies, or associations of architects, embracing within themselves the most brilliant intellects and skillful workmen, not only then living, but whose superior the world has never since seen; in other words, precisely such a society as our traditions teach built King Solomon's Temple. Evidences of ancient history point to the existence of such a

brotherhood, known as the Dionysian Architects, at Tyre, the home of the two Hiram's at the time of the building of the Temple and it was to this place, according to Scripture, that Solomon sent when he wanted artisans competent to carry out his great design.

THE POMEGRANATE

The pomegranate, which also adorned the capitals of the pillars, is a symbol of great antiquity, but its meaning seems to have been sacredly guarded. Pausanias, who wrote about 150 A. D., calls it **aporreto teros logos**, - i. e. a forbidden mystery. Ancient deities were often depicted holding this fruit in their hands and this, Achilles Staius, Bishop of Alexandria, says "had a mystical meaning." The Syrians at Damascus anciently worshipped a god whom they called "Rimmon," and this we know to be the Hebrew word for pomegranate.

Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough, a most learned antiquarian, guessed that on account of the great number of its seeds a pomegranate in the hand of a god denoted fruitfulness or fecundity. This corresponds closely enough with the meaning that we, as Masons attach to it, that of plenty.

OPERATIVE AND SPECULATIVE MASONRY

The candidate is informed that there are two kinds of Masonry, operative and speculative; the one, the erection of material edifice to shelter us from the inclemencies of the seasons; the other, the building of that moral, religious and spiritual edifice, human life and character, that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. He is reminded of the historical fact that our ancient brethren wrought in both kinds of Masonry, but we work in speculative only. With this distinction in mind, the candidate is expected to be able to grasp the allegorical meanings of the succeeding ceremonies.

THE WINDING STAIRS

In the Winding Stairs an architectural feature of Solomon's Temple is seized upon to symbolize the journey of life. It is not a placid stream down which one may lazily float, it is not even a straight or level pathway along

which one may travel with a minimum of exertion; it is a devious and tortuous way requiring labor and effort for its accomplishment. This is appropriately symbolized by a winding stairway. It teaches us that our lives should be neither downward nor on a dead level, but, although difficult, progressive and upward.

SCIENCE OF NUMBERS

The Winding Stairs consist of 3, 5 and 7 steps, numbers which among the ancients were deemed of a mysterious nature. This introduces us to what is to us one of the most curious bodies of learning of the ancient world, what is known as their Science of Numbers, many fragments of which are scattered throughout Masonry. It is exceedingly difficult for the modern mind to get any grasp whatever upon what is meant by this so-called science, so highly speculative was it. It does not allude as its name might seem to indicate, to any of the mathematical sciences, or anything akin to them. It was a system of moral science or philosophy, wherein numbers were given symbolical meaning and the letters of the alphabet were given numerical values; whence words were supposed to have certain occult significations according to the sums or multiples of the numerical equivalents of its letters. The elaboration of this idea was productive of what is known as the Hebrew **Kabala**. Pythagoras is reputed to have introduced this school among the Greeks and according to Aristotle he taught that "Number is the principle of all things and that the organization of the Universe is an harmonic system of numerical ratios."¹⁵ To illustrate, the soul was made to correspond to the number 6, and 7 was the counterpart of reason and health.

The numbers 3,5 and 7 had many meanings among the Jews which are not elucidated in the lodge. The preservation in our ritual of hints of this learning of a past age is now chiefly valuable to us as a proof of the antiquity of Masonic symbolism.¹⁶

THE THREE STEPS

¹⁵ Univ. Cyc. Vol. 9, p. 560.

¹⁶ Mackey's Symbolism, pp. 219, 225.

Adopting the method of these ancient worthies but varying the meaning, we make the number 3 to allude to the organization of our Society with its three degrees and its three principal officers. Among the earliest realizations of every man is that no man lives to himself alone; that he is dependent upon his fellow creatures and they upon him; that he owes them and they owe him mutual aid, support and protection; that to secure these advantages some must rule and some must at least temporarily obey; that there must be classes and that progress from one class to another must depend upon proficiency in the former. This state of mutual obligation and mutual dependence of men upon one another we call Society. The Three Steps, alluding to the three degrees and the division of our society into those who govern and those who obey, leads to the ideas of organization and subordination in the lodge. We have seen that the lodge symbolizes the world; so its organization symbolizes that of the world into society and governments. Dr. Mackey says "that the reference to the organization of the Masonic institution is intended to remind the aspirant of the union of men into society and the development of the social state out of the state of nature. He is thus reminded in the very outset of his journey of the blessings which arise from civilization and of the fruits of virtue and the knowledge which are derived from that condition. In the allusion to the affairs of the lodge and the degree of Masonry as explanatory of the organization of our own society, we clothe in symbolic language," says Dr. Mackey, "the history of the organization of society" in general.¹⁷ This feature is brought out prominently in many Monitors.

THE FIVE SENSES

No representation of the pathway to knowledge would of course be complete without some allusion to the means by which it is to be acquired. Thus are the allusions to the five senses of human nature to be understood. A moment's reflection will prove to us that through them we gain all our knowledge and that without them we could learn nothing. What wonderful

¹⁷ Idem, p. 221.

and noble faculties and yet how seldom even thought of by us and how little appreciated and understood! No nobler or more interesting subjects for study exist in all the realms of nature than hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting. What a truly marvelous organ is the eye, which can without contact make us sensible of the presence; the form and the color of objects at a distance and through which we obtain our knowledge and appreciation of all that is beautiful in nature. The senses of hearing and feeling are scarcely less wonderful and are equally important. A little reflection will also furnish us with additional reasons to those given in the lodge why hearing, seeing and feeling are most revered by Masons. They are in every way the most important. Consider for a moment the relatively small part of our knowledge that comes through tasting and smelling, and how utterly useless these two senses were to our ancient brethren in their operative labors. Then consider again how helpless a human creature would be who possessed neither hearing, seeing or feeling. Helen Keller is rightly considered a marvel, yet she is bereft of only two of these, hearing and seeing. Deprive her of her finely attenuated sense of feeling and it would have been impossible for her to have made any progress whatever in knowledge. Commenting on this part of the ritual, Thomas Smith Webb says, "To sum up the whole of this transcendent measure of God's bounty to man, we shall add that memory, imagination, taste, reasoning, moral perception and all the active powers of the soul present a vast and boundless field for philosophical disquisition which far exceeds human inquiry." We could have none of these without the five senses, and they are, therefore, introduced as symbols of intellectual cultivation.¹⁸

The disquisition upon the five senses of human nature which appears in our American Monitors may be found in the English Monitors also which preceded the revision of Dr. Hemming in 1813. He eliminated all reference to them and they are still missing from authorized English "work." We feel ,that in some way Dr. Hemming must surely have failed to catch the

¹⁸ Idem, p. 222.

meaning of this part of our symbolism. Dr. George Oliver, an eminent and learned English Mason, deplors the omission and says that. it ought by all means to be restored.

Having thus indicated to the candidate something of the importance and the means of acquiring knowledge, the proper fields of study and investigation are next pointed out.

THE FIVE ORDERS IN ARCHITECTURE

The five steps are said to allude further to the five orders in architecture, the Tuscan, the Doric, the Ionic, the Corinthian and the Composite. Their origins and their relative merits are pointed out, and we are told something of architecture in general. We would naturally expect something on this subject in a society derived from one of actual builders and architects, and here we have an internal evidence of the great age of Freemasonry. This is a flotsam which has been wafted to us down the stream of time from that remote period when Freemasonry was an organization of operative Masons. To our speculative society it typifies all the other useful arts and serves to convey to the intelligent mind the truth that architecture considered as one of the fine arts is a subject well worthy of our study. It is through architecture that every great people have left the enduring records of their fame. Books perish and decay, but from their buildings, which still remain, we know for a certainty of the great nations of antiquity. George Moller, in his charming essay on Gothic Architecture, speaks of these architectural remains as "documents of stone" and declares that they "afford to those who can read them the most lively picture of centuries that have lapsed."¹⁹

THE SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Other fields of study are said to consist of the seven liberal arts and sciences and are enumerated as grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. In our Fellow Craft's charge we are recommended to study "the liberal arts and sciences which tend so

¹⁹ Mas. Mag. Vol. 6, p. 427; Mackey's Symbolism, pp. 222, 223

effectually to polish and adorn the mind." In England ("Emulation Working,") the candidate is informed that he "is expected to make the liberal arts and sciences his future study, that he may the better be enabled to discharge his duties as a Mason, and estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty."²⁰

It is, of course, obvious at a glance that these seven subjects enumerated above by no means exhaust the fields of knowledge now open to man, but the time once was when they did. And herein is another incontestible evidence of the great age of Freemasonry and its ceremonies. I cannot do better than quote Dr. Mackey again. He says that in the seventh century, that is to say 1300 years ago, "these seven heads were supposed to include universal knowledge. He who was master of these was thought to have no need of a preceptor to explain any books or to solve arty questions which lay within the compass of human reason; knowledge of the trivium (as grammar, rhetoric and logic were then denominated,) having furnished him with the key to all language, and that of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) having opened to him the secret laws of nature." At a period, says Dr. Mackey "when few were instructed in the trivium and very few studied the quadrivium, to be master of both was sufficient to complete the character of a philosopher."

The term trivium means the three ways or paths, and quadrivium the four ways or paths to knowledge. Hence it is with the greatest propriety that it is said that we are taught in the Fellow Craft degree to explore the paths of heavenly science.²¹

There is another interesting feature of the total number of steps of the Winding Stairs, fifteen in all. This was an important symbol among the Jews, because it was the sum of the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew letters composing the word J A H - one of the names of Deity.

It will also be noted that the number of each series of steps, three, five and seven, as well as the total number of steps, fifteen, is odd. As we have

²⁰ Yarker's Arcane School, p. 118.

²¹ Mackey's Symbolism, pp. 223, 224

seen, odd numbers were by the ancients regarded with greater veneration than were even numbers. Vitruvius, the great Roman architect, who flourished just before Christ, states that the ancient temples were always approached by an odd number of steps. The reason, he says, was that commencing with the right foot at the bottom, the worshipper would find the same foot in advance when he entered the temple, and that this was considered a favorable omen. The thoughtful Mason cannot fail to be struck with the coincidence here indicated.

GEOMETRY

Preeminence is given by our ritual to the science of Geometry. This now appears strange, but if we regard its history we will cease to be surprised. It and its allied branches, (trigonometry, architecture and astronomy), was the only exact science known to the ancients, but the perfection to which they had reduced it is even now constantly surprising us. By it all mathematical calculations were made. Arithmetic and algebra were then unknown. The astonishing results obtained by them from an application of geometrical processes were well calculated to impress the mind. As the only exact science known to them, it was the most appropriate emblem of moral perfection, in an age when everything had its symbol. We accordingly read in our Masonic Monitors that of the seven liberal arts and sciences, "Geometry is the most revered by Masons; that it is the foundation of architecture and the root of mathematics"; that it is "the first and noblest of sciences"; that it is "the basis on which the superstructure of Masonry is erected"; that by it "we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her most concealed recesses"; and "discover the power, the wisdom and the goodness of the Grand Artificer of the Universe"; that "Geometry or Masonry, originally synonymous terms, being of a divine and moral nature, is enriched with the most useful knowledge"; that "while it proves the wonderful properties of nature, it demonstrates the more important truths of morality."

It cannot be denied that to the present generation and in our present

state of learning, Geometry is nothing of the kind. To anyone except a Freemason, and to the great majority of them, the idea that Geometry inculcates moral truth is utterly foreign and incomprehensible. Those members of the Craft who have ever thought of the matter at all, as a rule look upon these expressions as crude extravagances, as distorted attempts to attach a speculative meaning to a science or an art which had never properly borne any other than a practical signification. We are not surprised, it is true, to find still incorporated in our System these inheritances of a past age and simply tolerate them as such without any serious attempt to ascertain their meaning or to measure their significance.

While, as stated, Geometry does not at present enjoy any such an enviable distinction among the sciences as that claimed for it in our Masonic ritual, yet the time once was when it was precisely so regarded by the wisest of men on earth.²²

What then is the significance of these ideas of a past age in our Masonic system? It seems to me to afford the strongest internal evidence of the great age of our Masonic ritual and symbolism.²³

The seven liberal arts and sciences, as thus enumerated in the lodge, are not now to be understood literally, but rather as a symbol of what they once were in fact, namely, the entire domain of human knowledge and research. No one man is, of course, expected to cultivate the whole of this vast field, but this part of the ceremony of passing urges upon us the importance and the duty of constantly applying our minds to the attainment of wisdom in some of its forms. We have no right to be idle. It is a sin against God, ourselves and society.

Contemplate the despicable figure of the habitual loafer who sits on the curbstone or whittles away his days, telling anecdotes which could not be repeated in respectable society. Listen to the "loud laugh of his vacant mind," see what a large share of his time, that most priceless gift of God, he

²² *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. X, p. 82; *Freeman*, vol. XLVIII, p. 417.

²³ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. V, p. 168.

wastes in indolence or in the pursuits that are either unprofitable or positively hurtful. Is it any wonder that so many men fail in life and that the progress of the race as a whole is so exceedingly slow? What a multitude of drones there are in the hive who are not only to be fed and clothed by the industrious, but who are positive hindrances and stumbling blocks in the way of those industrious ones who would progress. Note how almost invariably you find the idler on the wrong side of every question that arises in his community. See how he resents with bitterness the prosperity of his moral and industrious neighbor and falls into a habit of chronic antagonism to him. They will not work; fed and clothed they must be; if they cannot dead-beat a living, they turn to crime in order to get it. What a great lesson then is here taught by Masonry! Whatever others may be, Masons have no right to be idlers and loafers. It is our God given privilege and our solemn duty to work, work, work, not because a night is coming when man's work is done, but that we may be able to do better work and more work in that brighter day that all good Masons expect to see when this life has passed away.

THE WAGES OF A FELLOW CRAFT

In the Middle Chamber we are informed what the wages shall be to the faithful Craftsman who has observed the moral and the divine law and wasted not his time in idleness or vice. We are told that they shall be earn, wine and oil. Such was literally true to our ancient operative brethren, as our old documents abundantly prove. With us, of course, they are not received in the realistic sense, but emblematically. From a remoteness of time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, the spica, or ear of corn, has symbolized plenty; wine has symbolized health; and oil has symbolized peace.

The faithful Fellow Craft is, therefore, assured that his wages, his reward, shall be plenty, not mere sufficiency but plentitude to supply all his physical, moral and spiritual wants; health of body, mind and soul; peace in this life, in the hour of death, and in the life to come. Are not these wages worthy of the laborer? Verily, do they not include all things that can in any wise contribute

to our real comfort and happiness?

Idleness and vice surely lead to their opposites, poverty, disease and despair.

While I have by no means exhausted the subject this, my brethren, is briefly the meaning and purpose of the Fellow Craft degree, and, if you do not already, I am sure that a little study and reflection will lead you to agree with me that in beauty and purity and loftiness of conception this degree is worthy to keep company with those splendid degrees of Entered Apprentice and Master Mason.

PART III

THE MASTER MASON DEGREE



ANY of the lessons of the third degree are obvious to the most superficial mind, but others (and these the most important) are grasped only after long and patient study. I shall not attempt anything original, but only lay before you in an imperfect way a few of the reflections and conclusions of some of our most trustworthy Masonic scholars.

I believe it susceptible of the clearest proof that Freemasonry, viewed in the aggregate, is an elaborate allegory of human life, that the three degrees considered collectively, symbolically epitomize man's existence both here and in the hereafter. My excuse for recurring to this idea is that in my judgment Speculative Masonry can not be otherwise adequately explained. The lodge is emblematical of the world; initiation, of birth; the Entered Apprentice, of the preparatory stage of life, or youth; the Fellow Craft, of the construction stage, or manhood; the Master Mason, of the reflective stage, or old age, death, the resurrection, and the everlasting life. This explanation of the three degrees is briefly given in our lecture on the "Three Steps" delineated on the Master's Carpet. Any symbol or any meaning attributed to a symbol which does not legitimately contribute to this allegory may be discarded as non-Masonic.

THE ANTIQUITY OF MASONIC SYMBOLISM

The age of our symbolism is an important question in this connection, because upon it to a great extent depend the meanings that must be assigned to our symbols. While some of them may be of comparatively modern origin, many of them are older than the oldest written language.

Says Brother Robert Freke Gould, one of the most cautious of our historians:

"The symbolism of Masonry, or at all events a material part of it, is of very great

antiquity, and in substance the system of Masonry we now possess, including the three degrees of the Craft, has come down to us in all its essentials from times remote to our own.²⁴

Another of our historians of the most exacting school, Brother William J. Hughan, declares that "symbolism in connection with Freemasonry antedates our oldest records."

Even this cautious statement would date our symbolism back more than five hundred years, and Brother Gould is on record as declaring that, if it can be put back that far, there is practically no limit backward to which its beginning must be assigned.²⁵

Another distinguished Masonic scholar, Brother George William Speth, records his belief that "the greater part of our symbolism (including all essentials) is undoubtedly medieval at least, and probably centuries older than that."²⁶

Still another, Brother William Simpson, distinguished as an orientalist, says:

"The more important Masonic symbols are ancient and their true meanings can only be found by tracing them back into the past. This will be found to be particularly the case with the third degree; its true meaning can only be realized by the study of similar rites which appear to go far back into the history of our race."²⁷

These are the opinions of men who, noted for their scholarship, have disregarded our Masonic traditions and studied the question from the purely historical viewpoint.

Following them, (and if they cannot be followed there are none who can be,) our symbolism has come down to us from ancient times.

Of some of these symbols we know a part at least of their meanings, but of some we know nothing at all. We get a hint from Brother Pike that much of our symbolism has been forgotten, and Brother Gould asserts the same

²⁴ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. III, p. 10.

²⁵ *Idem*, p. 24.

²⁶ *Idem*, p. 27.

²⁷ *Idem*, p. 26.

and declares that "to a considerable portion of the symbolism of Freemasonry, even at this day, no meaning can be assigned which is entirely satisfactory to the intelligent mind."²⁸

Heckethorn, a non-Mason, says that many of the mystical figures and schemes of very ancient times are preserved in Masonry though their meaning is no longer understood by the Fraternity.²⁹

It should therefore be obvious that if we are ever to reacquire this lost knowledge, we must have recourse to the records and institutions of ancient times.

THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

Do we find any institutions in ancient times similar to our own and employing our symbols for like purposes? I answer at once that we do.

In all periods from the dawn of history till about the fifth century, A. D., there is recorded the existence in nearly every known country of secret societies which, so far as our knowledge of them enables us to judge, were strikingly like Freemasonry in all except name. Our foremost Masonic historian, Brother Gould, says that they taught precisely the same doctrines in precisely the same way. These ancient societies bearing different names in different countries, yet appearing everywhere to have been the same thing, are generally termed "The Ancient Mysteries."

In Egypt they were known as the Mysteries of Osiris and Isis, and these appear to have been the model for all others. They prevailed in Egypt, India, Persia, Phoenicia, Greece, Rome, Gaul, Britain, and many other countries. The most ancient of these were certainly in existence as early as 3000 B. C., and some of them were still flourishing in Western Europe, in a corrupted state, it is true, as late as the fourth century of the Christian era.

Notwithstanding their differences in name, it does not admit of a doubt that they were all substantially the same; "so much so," it has been said by

²⁸ Idem, p. 23.

²⁹ Idem, p. 24.

high Masonic authority, "that we may conclude either that they were all independent copies from a great original or that they were propagated one from another." Brother Gould, than whom no more judicious historian has ever written on any subject, thinks they were only differentiated types of one original form of worship, the object of which was in every instance the God of Light and of Truth and of Beneficence. The Osiris of Egypt, the Brahma of India, the Mithras of Persia, the Bacchus (or Dionysius) of Greece, the Bel (or Baal) of the Chaldeans, the Belenus of Gaul, the Baldur of Scandanavia, the Adonis of Phoenicia, and the Adonai of the Jews were all the same god; each, to his own people, was the Supreme One, the Creator, the Enlightener, Lord and Master. All the mysteries taught a more or less pure system of monotheism, though coupled with the idea of a Trinity, or one God in three persons. Their Trinity differed from ours, however, in that they conceived it to be a male, female and offspring, or Father, Mother and Son. They taught also the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul.³⁰

Cicero tells us that in the Elusinian Mysteries they were taught to live virtuously and happily and to die in the hope of a blessed futurity.³¹

"The great doctrine of immortality of the soul," says Brother Gould, "and the teachings of the two lives, the present and the future, are to be found in the Ancient Mysteries, where precisely the same doctrines were taught in precisely the same way" that they are now taught by the Freemasons.

It seems that among pagan people of ancient times, a few superior minds and spirits were found who did not accept the idolatrous notions of the populace as an adequate conception of the Deity and who searched constantly in the great book of nature in the effort to find out and understand him aright. To have openly proclaimed their beliefs and their rejection of the popular gods and popular religion would have but called down upon themselves contempt and ridicule and doubtless persecutions. They,

³⁰ Gould's Concise History, pp. 24, 25.

³¹ Mackey's Symbolism, p. 36.

therefore, chose to drift along with the common herd to all outward appearances, reserving the contemplating and discussion of their cherished beliefs for secret communication with those of kindred mind in societies where they were secure from observation and the interference of the outside world. Such seems to have been the occasion of the origin of these ancient fraternities.

These societies were characterized by fixed forms of initiation, successive steps or degrees, oaths of secrecy, a symbolical system of teaching, and the possession of emblems and perhaps of grips, signs and words of recognition.³² Their rites were usually celebrated at night in chambers securely guarded against intrusion and arranged similarly to our lodges, often with the three chief officers seated in the South, West and East. With all of them the East was an object of peculiar veneration as the source of light and knowledge.

Initiation was an allegorical search for light and knowledge and consisted of prescribed physical and moral preparations of the candidate, lustrations, purifications and the administrations of oaths of secrecy; the ushering from darkness to light symbolizing a transformation from ignorance to knowledge, from corruption to moral and spiritual purity; the investiture with an emblem of this purity consisting sometimes of a white apron, sometimes of a white sash or robe; the encountering of trials and dangers sometimes mock and sometimes real. In the Mithraic Mysteries the candidate was received into the place of initiation upon the point of a sword piercing his naked left breast. Many of their symbols were identical with those that can now be seen in any Masonic lodge.

To each of the Ancient Mysteries pertained a characteristic legend, which was made the instrumentality of teaching with great impressiveness the doctrines of the resurrection and immortality.

The legend of Osiris, probably the oldest and the model for all the other was as follows:

³² Yarker's Arcane Schools, p. 113.

Osiris, meaning the soul of the Universe, the Governor of nature, was at once king and god of the Egyptians. The name appears as far back as 3000 B. C. Having taught civilization, the arts and agriculture to his own people, he magnanimously resolved to spread in person their benign influence throughout the world. Leaving his kingdom in charge of his wife, Isis, he departed upon his beneficent mission. After an absence of three years he returned, but meanwhile his brother Typhon had organized a conspiracy to murder him and seize the throne. At a grand banquet given in honor of his return, Typhon provided a magnificent chest which exactly fitted the body of Osiris. All the other guests being in the conspiracy, they feigned great admiration of the chest and finally Typhon announced that he would give it to the one whose body it would most neatly contain. Osiris, trying the box, was no sooner in it than the lid was clapped down and securely fastened and the whole thrown into the river Nile. It was borne out to sea by the current and in course of time was cast ashore at Byblos, in Phoenicia, at the foot of an acacia tree. The tree grew up rapidly and completely encased the chest containing the body of Osiris.

No sooner had Isis learned of the fate of her husband than, weeping, she set out in search of his body and on her way interrogated everyone she met for information concerning its whereabouts. Virgins accompanied her who dressed and combed her hair.

She finally discovered the body in the acacia tree, but 'the king of that country, struck with the tree's beauty caused it to be cut down and a column made of it for his palace. Isis thereupon engaged herself to the king as a nurse for his children and asked and received for her pay this column. The column was broken and the body released and at once borne back to Egypt, but before it could be properly interred it was again seized by Typhon and cut into fourteen pieces and these hidden in as many places. After long search Isis succeeded in finding and bringing together all the parts except the phallus, and the body was embalmed and buried in due form. It will be borne in mind that according to ancient Egyptian ideas there could be no

resurrection in the absence of the body; hence, the great care with which they embalmed their dead. As soon as the body of Osiris had been recovered and buried, it was announced that he had risen from the dead and had resumed his place among the gods.

The ceremonies of initiation into the Egyptian Mysteries dramatically represented the death of Osiris, the search for his body, its discovery in the acacia tree, and its burial and resurrection, the murdered god being personated by the candidate.

Pertaining to each of the Mysteries was a counterpart of this legend. In Greece, Osiris becomes Bacchus, (not the drunken Bacchus of later ages,) who is slain by the Titans and his limbs torn asunder. Isis becomes Rhea, who after long and bitter search finds and inters his body, and in due course he takes his place among the gods. In the Dionysian Mysteries celebrated in his honor an effigy was stretched upon a couch, as if dead, while his votaries bitterly bewailed his decease. After a proper time the figure was quickly removed and the announcement made that the god had risen from the dead. Likewise in some of the Mysteries of India the candidate underwent an allegorical death, burial and resurrection. Those celebrated in Phoenicia during the time of Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre and Hiram Abif were obvious copies of those of Egypt. Adonis and Venus became substitutes in the legend for Osiris and Isis. During the course of these Mysteries, with which our three ancient Grand Masters must have been familiar, an image was laid upon a bier as if it were a dead body. During a momentary darkness the figure was invisibly removed, after which it was announced that the god had risen from the dead. The substantial identity with each other of all these Mysteries and doctrines they were intended to inculcate is obvious.

It is claimed by students of ancient mythology, that this legend of the Mysteries and the ceremonies based on it were all prophetic of the coming of a Messiah, who should triumph over death and the grave, and thereby demonstrate to mankind for a certainty that there is a life after death. That

this was common belief, not merely among the Jews, but the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Chaldeans, Hindus, Greeks and Romans is now generally conceded.

The teachings of the Mysteries have been thus summarized:

"They diffused a spirit of unity and humanity; purified the soul from ignorance and pollution; secured the peculiar aid of the gods; the means of arriving at the perfection of virtue; the serene happiness of a holy life; the hope of a peaceful death and endless felicity in the Elysian fields; whilst those not initiated therein should dwell after death in places of darkness and horror."

Thus did these ancient societies seek by means of the dramatic presentation of a legend to teach the great Masonic doctrines of the resurrection and the life after death.

There were lectures explanatory of the Mysteries but the crowning ceremony of initiation was the communication to the candidate of an ineffable name which it was lawful to speak only on certain occasions and in a certain manner. Among the Egyptians, Persians and Hindus, notwithstanding their wide separation, this was the mysterious AUM, pronounced OM. I have purposely mingled things dissimilar with things similar to Freemasonry but the intelligent Master Mason will be able to detect the points of resemblance.

Brother Robert F. Gould, whom I have already several times quoted, without venturing to pronounce Freemasonry and the Ancient Mysteries identical, says:

"It is a well known fact that these Mysteries offer striking analogies with much that is found in Freemasonry; their celebration in grottoes or covered halls, which symbolized the Universe, and which in disposition and decoration presented a distinct counterpart to our lodge; their division into degrees conferred by the initiatory rites wonderfully like our own; their method of teaching through the same astronomic symbolism the highest truths then known in Philosophy and Morals; their mystic bond of secrecy, toleration, equality and brotherly love."

He intimates strongly his belief that Freemasonry is a development out of the Mysteries of Mithras, which, originating in Persia, spread to Greece,

Rome and Western Europe and lingered there until the fourth or fifth century, A. D.

Enough has been said on this point to make it plain that anyone who would understand our Masonic symbolism must at least make a study of what these same symbols meant to these ancient societies.

THIRD DEGREE SYMBOLS

I shall not lengthen this paper and tax your patience by repeating explanations laid down in our monitors and lectures. I shall for the most part confine myself to things that are not explained at all, or that are explained inadequately.

Many of the symbols of the Master's degree are common to the preceding degrees and these I shall touch upon very briefly. There is, however, discoverable in their use as the degrees progress, an increasing seriousness and depth of meaning.

For instance, in the first two degrees, the lodge symbolizes the world, the place where all workmen labor at useful avocations and in the acquisition of human knowledge and virtue. But in the Master's degree it represents the Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies of King Solomon's Temple, which was itself a symbol of Heaven, or the abode of Deity. It was there that nothing earthly or unclean was allowed to enter; it was there that the visible presence of the Deity was said to dwell between the Cherubim. In the Master's lodge, therefore, we are symbolically brought into the awful presence of the Deity. The reference here to death and the future life is obvious and is a further evidence that this degree typifies old age and death.

But there is even a deeper symbolism in the Master's lodge. The allusion is not only to the sacred chamber of Solomon's physical temple, it alludes also to the sacred chamber of that spiritual temple we all are, or should be, namely, a pure heart, and admonishes us to make of it a place fit, for Deity himself to dwell.

The likening of the human body to a temple of the Deity is an ancient

metaphor. Jesus said, in speaking of the temple of his body, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Again, Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye." I quote these passages, not as a Christian doctrine, but as a beautiful expression of Jewish thought far older than Christianity. We can with difficulty conceive the extreme sacredness of the Temple in the eyes of the Jew. It far exceeded the veneration with which we now regard our churches and synagogues. This idea once, comprehended shows, how greatly this figure of speech ennobles the human body. It declares it a fit dwelling place for Deity himself.

In the Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft degrees, Light typifies the acquisition of human knowledge and virtue; in the Master's degree it typifies the revelation of divine truth in the life, that is to come.

In the first two degrees the square and compasses denote the earth and inculcate and impress upon us the desirability of curbing our passions; in the third degree the compasses symbolize what is heavenly, because to our ancient brethren the visible heavens bore the aspect of circles and arches, geometrical figures produced with the compasses.

In some of the Monitors we are told that "the compasses are peculiarly consecrated to this degree," but the reasons there given are not satisfying. In ancient symbolism the square signified the earth, while the circle, a figure produced with the compasses, signified the sun or the heavens. The square therefore symbolized what is earthly and material while the compasses signified the heavenly and the spiritual. It is not without significance, therefore, that in the Entered Apprentice degree, both points of the compasses are beneath the square; that in the Fellow Craft degree one point is above the square, while in the Master's degree both points are above, signifying that in the true Master, the spiritual has obtained full

mastery and control over the earthly and the material.³³

DISCALCEATION

Discalceation, or the plucking off of one's shoes, was in the Entered Apprentice degree, as we there learned, a symbol of fidelity to our fellow man. In this degree, however, it alludes to an ancient act of homage paid by man to Deity, namely, the Eastern custom that prevailed among both Jews and Gentiles of entering only barefooted into any sacred place or upon any holy ground. In the one case, this practice was a testimony of man to man; in the other, it is testimony of man to his Creator.

Pythagoras taught his disciples in these words, "offer sacrifice and worship with thy shoes off." Adam Clarke includes the universality of this custom among his thirteen proofs that all mankind has descended from common ancestors. A Master Mason's lodge represents, as we have seen, the Holy of Holies of Solomon's Temple into which the High Priest alone entered only once yearly, and then with bare feet. The lodge in some of the old rituals is said to stand on holy ground. God said to Moses at the burning bush: "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."³⁴

Note also the deeper significance of the shock of reception as the degrees progress. In the first, the appeal is to the sense of fear, in other words, purely physical. In the second, appeal is made to the moral sense and inculcates fair dealing with men, but in the third it is not merely to our sense of justice towards our fellow man, but to our brotherly love for him and to those higher reflective elements of our nature whose proverbial seat is the breasts.

It is a mistake to limit the "Brotherly Love" of this degree to members of the Masonic fraternity. If the lodge symbolizes the world, as it undoubtedly does, so should its members symbolize all the inhabitants thereof. The love that should prevail among the members of the lodge, therefore, typifies the

³³ *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 850, 854.

³⁴ *Mackey's Symbolism*, pp. 124, 129

love that should prevail among all mankind. In the highest sense all men are our brothers precisely as we are so strikingly taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan that all men are our neighbors.

CIRCUMAMBULATION

Circumambulation, from the Latin word "circumambulare," to walk around, is a very ancient rite, one common to all the Ancient Mysteries. The sun, the fructifier and giver of life, in his daily course across the heavens, appears to those living in the Northern Hemisphere, where the ancient world dwelt, to proceed from the East by the way of the South to the West, and thence through the darkness of the night via the North back to the East again. Vegetation was seen to spring up, animal life to be aroused from slumber and take on increased energy, as the King of Day moved with dignity across the heavens. To the untutored mind of primeval man it is not strange that the sun should appear to be the giver of life, the very Creator himself. His apparent course, therefore, from East through the South to the West and back to the East by way of the North became the "course of life", as the ancients expressed it.

The ancients in their ceremonies when representing life pursued this course, and we Masons follow their example. To proceed in the reverse direction typified death, and as every Master Mason knows at one important point in our ceremonies we take this reverse course. At the grave of a deceased brother, however, contrary to what might be expected, we still follow the course of life as a token of our belief in the life that follows death.³⁴

THE WORKING TOOLS

With us in America the especial working tool of a Master Mason is said to be the Trowel. In England, this symbol is almost obsolete, and they employ the Skirrit, Pencil and Compasses.

Of the Trowel, Dr. Oliver, a noted but somewhat discredited Masonic authority, says:

³⁴ Mackey's Symbolism, pp. 124, 129. *This footnote was used twice in the original copy.*GJH

"The triangle, now called the Trowel, was an emblem of very extensive application and was much revered by ancient nations as containing the greatest and most abstruse mysteries; that it signified equally Deity, Creation and Fire."³⁵

We will learn directly something more of the symbolical signification of the triangle.

The Skirrit, the Pencil and the Compasses are not enumerated in America among the working tools of a Master Mason. The Skirrit is an instrument working on a center pin and used by the Operative Mason to mark out on the ground the foundation of the intended structure. The Pencil is employed in drafting the plans and the Compasses in determining the limit and proportions of its several parts. Symbolically they are explained in English (Emulation) working in the following words:

"The Skirrit points out to us that straight and undeviating line of conduct laid down for our guidance in the volume of the sacred law. The Pencil teaches us that all our words and actions are not only observed, but are recorded by the Most High, to whom we must render an account of our conduct through life. The Compasses reminds us of his unerring and impartial justice, which having defined for our instruction the limits of good and evil will either reward or punish us, as we have obeyed or disregarded his divine commands."³⁶

We must admit that the trowel would seem more properly to belong to the Fellow Craft, who in Operative Masonry puts the stones in place, rather than to the designer and overseer who corresponds to our Master Mason.

Brother John Yarker in his Arcane Schools says that the Skirrit as a hieroglyphic signifies the origin of things.³⁷

DEITY AND IMMORTALITY

There are a few who feign that they believe nothing that cannot be experienced through the five senses of the body. Wonderful as are these faculties, I am persuaded that we are possessed of a sixth sense which is higher and finer even than those of the body. By this sense we perceive

³⁵ Oliver's Signs and Symbols, p. 10; Universal Masonic Library, p 14; Transactions Lodge of Research 1909-10, p. 42.

³⁶ Aiken, p. 80.

³⁷ Yarker's Arcane Schools, pp. 33, 220.

though we see not; we feel though we touch not; we understand though we bear not; we know though we neither taste nor smell. By it, also, we are aware of all the higher aspirations of the mind and soul; by it alone are we conscious of our own existence. Seeing is not thinking. Nor is hearing, or feeling, or tasting, or smelling. These five senses are but ministers to this sixth sense. The five senses of human nature we were concerned with in a former degree, but we are here concerned with something far superior to them, whatever we call it, whether consciousness, faith, mind, soul or spirit. Are the testimonies of this sixth sense any less real or any less reliable than those of the five senses of the body? By it mankind has always, in every age and in every condition, felt intuitively that there was a God and that we shall live again. These beliefs are so strong and so ever present with us that we never doubt them until we begin to argue about them.

There is nothing in Masonry so constantly pressed upon our thoughts as these two great doctrines. Signs, symbols, and legends are all repeatedly employed to emphasize them.

In the Master's degree, the Pot of Incense, the All-Seeing Eye, the Three Grand Masters, the Triangle, and the legends of the Temple and of Hiram Abif are all employed for this purpose, as I shall attempt to show.

We read with incredulity that men could ever bow down to, and worship, idols. Doubtless the thoughtful and intelligent ones have never done so even in pagan countries. They looked beyond and viewed the idol as merely a symbol. As the idol among pagan people usually assumed a human form, the Jews as well as other believers in monotheism of ancient times, forbade the employment of the human effigy as a symbol of Deity. To supply the need so keenly felt by the ancients of a symbol to represent every idea, conventional figures such as squares, circles, triangles, etc., were adopted by the ancient monotheists to symbolize the Deity. Thus perhaps it is that the being which alone is said to have been made in the image of his Creator is nowhere employed in our symbolism to represent the G. A. O. T. U.

THE HIRAMIC LEGEND

The most important series of symbols in Freemasonry is the legend concerning Hiram Abif and the other symbolic allusions connected therewith. For obvious reasons, I do not attempt to narrate the story of this legend. Nor shall I undertake to make any systematic or exhaustive study of it, but only to discuss in a disconnected way those symbols associated with it that are most important or whose meaning is least obvious.

As we have already seen, the Ancient Mysteries employed a legend dramatically presented to teach the great doctrines of the existence of Deity, the resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul. Among Freemasons, the legend of Hiram, the builder, is employed in a strikingly similar way to teach the same truths. It is not permissible, even if it were necessary, to enter further into details in order to demonstrate this parallel, but the points of resemblance will be sufficiently obvious to the intelligent Mason.

A few observations upon the name Hiram Abif will not be out of place. Abif is certainly not a surname as our use of it would seem to indicate. It is translated in the English Bibles "Hiram, my father's" and "Hiram, his father." This scarcely makes sense; and hence the general consensus of opinion among Masonic scholars is that "Abif" is a Hebrew idiom indicating superiority in his Craft and may therefore, in a general sense, be said to be synonymous with "Master."³⁸

The name "Hiram" itself has been supposed by many to bear a symbolic meaning. In Kings it is written "Hiram" but in Chronicles it is written "Hiram." Brother Albert Pike contends that the proper form is "Khirum" or "Khurum." The former Khirum is from the Hebrew word "Khi" meaning "living", and "ram" meaning "was or shall be raised or lifted up." Hence Khirum means "was raised or lifted up to life."

The other form, Khurum, means nearly the same, "raised up noble or free." Brother Pike shows this name to be synonymous with the Egyptian Her-ra, and the Phoenician Heracles, the personification of Light and the

³⁸ Mackey's Encyclopedia, p. 3; Morals and Dogma, p. 81.

sun, the Mediator, the Redeemer and the Savior.

But do not be misled into supposing that the reference is here Christian. The idea of a Mediator, Redeemer or Savior is far older than Christianity and by no means confined to the Jews. It is a concept that seems to have been almost universal in the ancient world.

Again, it is said that Hiram, in its pure and original form, literally meant Light or the sun. His murder by the three ruffians is by many scholars believed to have symbolic reference to the declension of the sun towards the south during the three winter months with its accompanying temporary death of many forms of vegetable and animal life; the discovery and raising of his body; to the return of spring with its manifestations of newness of life in its thousands of forms. There is no doubt that this astronomical phenomenon, so typical of both death and a new life, was extensively employed by the ancients to teach the doctrines of resurrection and immortality.

Those who attach an astronomical signification to this legend of Hiram Abif believe the fifteen Fellow Craft to be a faulty symbol; that the true number is twelve, corresponding to the twelve signs of the Zodiac through which the sun apparently passes every year; that the number of those who conspired and the number who recanted have been confused; that nine, typifying those who recanted, fill the spring, summer and autumn with their seasons of planting, growth and harvest, while the three who persisted typify winter, when all nature, if not dead, appears to be dormant. It has been pointed out as corroborating this interpretation of this legend that our two festival seasons, June 24th and December 27th, the birthdays respectively of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, very neatly coincide respectively with the summer and winter solstices; that is to say that when the sun is at its greatest intensity, and, when in the dead of winter, having reached his furthestmost limit to the South, he begins his fructifying and vivifying Journey towards the North again.

I can but touch upon this abstruse symbolism, and invite the serious student of Freemasonry to its study. It cannot be covered in an evening;

volumes have been and may still be written upon the subject without exhausting it.³⁹

In nearly all the ancient systems of religion, Deity was regarded as a triad or trinity, by whom, acting conjointly only, could anything be done that was done. Our own doctrine of the Trinity is but a mere spiritualized modification of this ancient trinitarian conception. The secrets known only to our Three Grand Masters typify divine truth known only to this trinitarian Deity, and which is not to be communicated and made known to man, the Fellow Craft, the workman, until he has completed his spiritual temple. Then, according to divine promise, if found worthy, if this temple he nobly and worthily built and made a fit dwelling place for divine truth, these secrets will be communicated to him. He can then travel into that foreign country whither we all are bound and there obtain the wages of the master, that is to say, the reward of a righteous and well spent life. But he who would force or steal this knowledge or obtain it other than by faithful labor and effort to prepare himself for its understanding and enjoyment is no better than a murderer and robber. It is the same allegory as that of Adam eating of the tree of knowledge. For a like offense, stealing the sacred fire of the gods and bestowing it upon man, was Prometheus bound to the rock, his body torn open and his liver fed upon by the vultures of the air.

THE THREE RUFFIANS

One having the least familiarity with the religions of the East cannot fail to recognize in the names of the three ruffians the name of the gods of Palestine, Phoenicia and Egypt, Jah, Bel and Om, spelled A U M. This will be even more striking to the Royal Arch Mason. Whether this is a mere coincidence or the result of design, or if designed, what is the significance, are unknown.⁴⁰

LOW TWELVE

In ancient symbolism, the number twelve, denoted completion. Whether

³⁹ Festival of Mal-Karth, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 81.

⁴⁰ *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 80, 82, 448, 488; Tyler Keystone, Aug. 20, 1908, pp. 77, 78.

this meaning arose from the fact that twelve months completed the year, or twelve signs of the Zodiac, or whether from the fact that what was regarded as the most stable geometrical figure known, the cube, is marked by twelve edges, opinions differ. At any rate, it denoted a thing fulfilled. It was, therefore, an emblem of a human life. Death followed immediately after life; the number thirteen immediately after twelve; it is for this reason that thirteen has long been regarded as an unlucky number. With us the solemn stroke of twelve marks the completion of human existence in this life.

THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

The Lion from most ancient times has been a symbol of might or royalty. It was blazoned upon the standard of the tribe of Judah, because it was the royal tribe. The kings of Judah were, therefore, called the **Lion of the Tribe of Judah**, and such was one of the titles of Solomon. Remembrance of this fact gives appropriateness to an expression employed at one point in our ceremonies which is otherwise obscure, not to say absurd. Such is the literal meaning of this phrase, but it also has a symbolical one.

The Jewish idea of a Messiah was of a mighty temporal king. He was also designated as the **Lion of the Tribe of Judah**; in fact this title was regarded as peculiarly belonging to him. The expression does not, as many Masons suppose, necessarily have reference to Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian Mason is privileged to so interpret it, if he so likes, but the Jew has equal right to understand it as meaning his Messiah. Indeed, every great religion of the world has contained the conception in some form, of a Mediator between God and man, a Redeemer who would raise mankind from the death of this life and the grave, to an everlasting existence with God hereafter. The Mason who is a devotee of one of these religions, say Buddhism, Brahmanism or Mohammedanism, is likewise entitled to construe this expression as referring to his own Mediator.

In an ancient Egyptian inscription is depicted a lion seizing by the wrist a man lying in front of an altar, prostrate upon his back as if dead. The lion seems to be raising the man up and to symbolize that power by which the

dead are brought to newness of life. Near the altar stands a man with his left arm elevated in the form of a square.⁴¹

THE FIVE POINTS OF FELLOWSHIP

The Five Points of Fellowship are symbolized by the Pentalfa, or five pointed star. The connection of this geometrical figure with the art of building is not at once apparent, but recent researches show that it entered extensively into determining the plans of many of the splendid castles and cathedrals of medieval times. To this fact is probably due its introduction or retention among the symbols of our Speculative Craft.⁴²

This figure has, however, from very ancient times borne a moral signification also. Says a recent writer:

"In the more esoteric philosophy, the symbol is used to designate man, and an examination of the shape of the figure will show that by a stretch of imagination it may be construed into a crude representation of a human figure."⁴³

In this connection it is interesting to note that there exists in England a secret gild of operative Masons who have a ceremony wherein is represented the mock-assassination of one of its three Grand Masters. His body is said to be raised and borne out of the hall on the five points of fellowship in this wise - each seizing an arm or foot and a fifth under the middle of the body.

The Pentalfa with one of its points elevated, was a symbol of the pure and the virtuous and a harbinger of good, but with two of its points elevated it became the accursed Goat of Mendes, which typified Satan and foreboded evil and misfortune.⁴⁴

In England, the Five Points of Fellowship are h. to h., f. to f., k. to k., b. to b. and h. over b.⁴⁵ It is well known that in the United States we substituted

⁴¹ Portal, p. 30; Masonic Magazine p. 328; *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 79, 254, 461. *Note, this footnote was not placed in the original copy. I placed it at the end of the paragraph. GJH*

⁴² Yarker's *Arcane Schools*, pp. 118, 119.

⁴³ Tyler *Keystone*, Oct 5, 1909, p. 151.

⁴⁴ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. I pp. 31, 57; vol. VII pp. 90, 105; *Universal Masonic Library*, vol. VI (2), p. 62.

⁴⁵ *Emulation*, pp. 111, 112.

m. to e. for h. to h. Mackey thinks this change was made at the Baltimore Conference of Grand Lecturers in 1843, and I am persuaded that the English working is the ancient and correct one.

The winged foot has for ages been the symbol of swiftness, the arm of strength, and the hand of fidelity. In the center of the Pentalfa as employed by us is usually seen two hands clasped. This as we learned in the Entered Apprentice degree is the ancient symbol of the god Fides.⁴⁶ It is an appropriate emblem of the fidelity and readiness to aid each other, which would characterize members of the Masonic Fraternity. Let it not be supposed that by assigning symbolical meanings to the persons and incidents of the legend of Hiram Abif, I thereby mean to deny its reality. I see no reason (and such seems to be the opinion of most students of Freemasonry) why this legend may not be based upon a substratum of fact, as probably were those similar legends which characterized the Ancient Mysteries. That it has undergone many alterations and been greatly overlaid with fiction is certain, but that it is, founded wholly upon fable is not at all probable.

THE LOST WORD

We next come to consider one of the most abstruse conceptions in Freemasonry. The allegory of a search for a Lost Word is not a search for any particular word; in fact it is not even a search for a word at all. The expression "The Word" had significance to the Jews and other ancient races which is hard for us to comprehend. While not strictly accurate we shall not be far wrong in saying that to the ancient mind "The Word" signified all truth, particularly divine truth. To us the most striking and familiar passage in literature containing this expression is that in St. John, as follows:

"In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God." Ch. 1

John does not here announce any new doctrine, but one that was

⁴⁶ Mackey's Symbolism, pp. 57, 190; Morals and Dogma, p. 88.

perfectly familiar to the Jewish thought of his day; only his identification of Jesus of Nazareth with the Word was new. Nor was this expression or this idea by any means confined to the Jews; it belonged to nearly all ancient philosophy. Among the Greeks it was the "Logos" a term derived from the Greek verb "lego", to speak; the same root from which comes our word "Logic", the name of that science by which we determine moral truth.

That noble attribute of man, the power of articulate speech, whereby his wisdom and his most abstract thoughts are made known to his fellows, a power so far as we can see possessed by no other animal, must have in all ages greatly impressed the thoughtful mind. The spoken word seemed an instrument worthy to be employed by Deity himself, not only in promulgating divine truth but even in creating all things that were created. According to ancient ideas Deity was so omnipotent that he had but to speak and the thing was done; he said "Let there be light" and there was light; and that without "The Word" was not anything made that was made.

Hence "The Word" under the development of philosophy, particularly that of Philo Judaeus, a contemporary of Jesus, became synonymous with every manifestation of divine power and truth, so that finally it was regarded as not only co-existent with but metaphorically as identical with Deity himself. This is clearly the meaning of St. John.

The Masonic search for the "Word", therefore, symbolizes the search for truth, particularly divine truth. The lesson here to us is to search diligently for the truth, never to permit prejudice, passion or interest to blind us, but to keep our minds always open to the reception of truth from whatever source, or however opposed to our preconceived notions it may be; and having seen it and received it, always to act agreeably to its dictates. Hence Masons everywhere are devoted to the doctrines of freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of action.

But we are also cautioned not vaingloriously to imagine that we ever here achieved all truth. The Master Mason is invested not with the True Word, but with a Substitute Word, implying that in this life we may know only in part,

that we may approach, we may approximate truth, but that we never attain it in its perfection. This search shall continue as long as this life lasts, but not until we shall have passed on to a higher state of existence will divine truth be disclosed to us in all its fullness and beauty. I may say here that this final disclosure is symbolized in the Royal Arch degree.

The preservation of this extremely ancient conception of "The Word" is not without Historic value also as indicating the great antiquity of Masonic Symbolism.⁴⁷

THE MARBLE MONUMENT

Incidental to this legend of Hiram Abif are introduced certain other symbols. For example, the virgin weeping over the broken column, an urn in her left hand and a sprig of evergreen in her right, and an old man behind her dressing her hair. Masons are familiar with the explanation of this group given in our ritual, but I am persuaded that it is very superficial to say the least.

In the Egyptian Mysteries, as we have seen, Isis finds her husband's body encased in a tamarisk, or acacia tree, which the King of Byblos converts into a column. This column, still containing the body, is finally carried away and broken by Isis and the body released. We can readily imagine her weeping over this broken column. Apulieus (second century, A. D.) describes her as a "beautiful female, over whose divine neck her long thick hair hung in graceful ringlets," and in a procession depicting her are shown female attendants following who are combing and dressing her hair.

The urn is an ancient sign of mourning. A small urn in which figuratively to catch the tears was worn by the mourners especially widows. This explanation of the presence of the urn in this emblem, as a symbol of grief, better accords with our tradition as to the disposal of our Grand Master, as well as with history, than does that given in our Master's lecture. We know that it was a well nigh universal custom of the Jews as well as the Egyptians

⁴⁷ *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 204, 251, 254, 256, 259, 268, 269, 270, 279, 281; *Edersheim's Life of Jesus*, pp. 46, 56; *Mackey's Symbolism*, pp. 176, 197, 216, 244, 226, 232, 280, 298, 300.

to bury and not to cremate their dead. Likewise from ancient times it was common for the mourner to bear in the hand to the place of interment an evergreen sprig and there to deposit it in the grave as an avowal of belief in a life to come. It seems to me that in these ancient traditions and customs is to be found the true origin of our Marble Monument⁴⁸ and that this emblem signifies that, while we mourn for, and cherish the memory of our dead, yet we believe that they shall live and that we shall see them again.

THE SETTING MAUL

The Setting Maul is a wooden instrument used in setting firmly into the wall the polished stone, and is one of those traditionally said to have been used at the building of Solomon's Temple. It would very properly be in the hands of the three Fellow Crafts, who are in the third degree reputed to have made a notable use of it just before the completion of the Temple. From that incident it is employed among us as an emblem the meaning of which is known to every Master Mason.

It has, however, in different forms been employed as a symbol of destruction from prehistoric times. In Norse mythology, Thor, the god of Thunder, was represented as a powerful man armed with a mighty hammer, Mjolnir (the smasher). Counterparts of this god and his formidable weapon are found in many of the ancient religions and mythologies.

In the Cabiric Mysteries the seven gods who slew the eighth were called "Paticii", or wielders of the hammer.

THE ACACIA

It was a custom of the Jews to plant at the head of the grave an acacia sprig for the double purpose of intimating their belief in immortality and of marking its location, as to tread on a grave was by them regarded as extremely unlucky. To them, therefore, the acacia was, as it is to us, an emblem of immortality and of innocence. The true acacia is the thorny tamarisk which abounds in Palestine, and we have seen that strangely

⁴⁸ Morals and Dogma, pp. 17, 80, 378, 387.

enough in the legend of Osiris his dead body was said to have been cast ashore at the foot of a tamarisk or acacia tree, and that this circumstance led to its discovery. This tree, owing to its hard-wood quality, its evergreen nature and its exceeding tenacity of life bore to the Egyptian and Jew the same symbolical significance it does to us. Of its wood was constructed the tabernacle, the table for the shew-bread, the ark of the covenant and the rest of the sacred furniture of the Temple, and of its boughs was woven the crown of thorns that was placed upon the head of Jesus of Nazareth.

Each of the Ancient Mysteries possessed a sacred plant which was employed in their initiations and ceremonies for the same purpose and with the same symbolical significance as the acacia is by us. Among the Egyptians it was the Lotus and the Erica among the Greeks, the Myrtle, and among the Scandanavians the Mistletoe. That a tree or plant had life-giving properties was an idea familiar to the Jews in the earliest times, as witness the Tree of Life mentioned in Genesis, and by New Testament writers the immortality of man is likened to the recurrence of plant life. (I Cor. 15; John 12, 24).⁴⁹

THE POT OF BURNING INCENSE

The Pot of Burning Incense was employed in Solomon's Temple to produce a sweet savor in the Holy of Holies, that is to say, according to the Jewish conceptions, in the actual presence of J H V H. It is not supposable that the intelligent Jew regarded this as other than symbolical of the offer of a pure heart as a sacrifice to the Deity. The bloody sacrifices of bullocks, lambs and goats, as well as the peace and sin offerings, were offered in less sacred precincts of the Temple and probably meant no more than to impress the people that they should be ever generous in dedicating their earthly wealth to the service of God and the hastening of His Kingdom, but the pure, immaterial offering of a delightful incense was to remind them that after all the only sacrifice worthy of Deity himself was the spiritual and immaterial

⁴⁹ Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, vol. I p. 57; vol. IV p. 48; vol. VI, pp 9, 14; Mackey's Encycloaedia, pp. 6, 8, 9; Mackey's Lexicon of Freemasonry, p. 16; Maonic Magazine, vol. I p. 126; Morals and Dogma, p. 82; Kenning, p. 4; Tyler Keystone, Aug 20, 1908, p. 78; Universal Masonic Library, vol. X p. 83.

offering of a pure heart.

THE BEE HIVE

To the operative Mason could anything be more important than industry? By it he lives, and by it were reared those dreams of architectural beauty which excite our wonder and please our fancy.

Is it any less necessary to the speculative Mason in his work of building human character? Is it not far more so? The temple of human life is incomplete unless every talent and every virtue is brought to the highest possible state. A few years at most suffice to complete and adorn our greatest structures. If the builder die before it is finished, others can carry it on to Completion after him. But the time allotted to no man was ever sufficient for the complete development of all the possibilities of his mind and character. If he die before the work is finished, none can take it up and finish it for him. How important, therefore, is it that not a moment of our time, that most precious gift, should be wasted?

In all nature nothing is more constantly busy than the bee; and from ancient times it has been an emblem of industry. "Busy as a bee" has become an aphorism. A place of great industry we call a hive, and while I do not find it to have been employed in ancient symbolism; no symbol of labor could be more appropriate than a bee hive.

Masonry in every degree, and in none more than the Master's degree, signifies labor. Its very name is synonymous with labor and its very implement reminiscent of labor. Toil is noble, idleness dishonour. Deity himself is recorded as having worked and we see on every hand the Titanic results of his labor. He reared the mountains, He laid down the plains, He made the rivers and the seas; the very smallest of these beyond the capabilities of millions of men. He deposited the rich ore in the bosom of the earth. He stocked the waters with fish and the land with an infinite variety of vegetation and living animals both great and small. Finally He made man; not a single man, but millions, yea billions, of men; about every thirty-five years He, makes one and a half billions, four and a half billions to the

century, or about ninety billions since the birth of Christ. How many hundreds of thousands of billions he made before we cannot even surmise. But this is a manifestation of only one phase of His unceasing and prodigious activity. In thousands of other forms, it displays itself in equally staggering figures. If anyone ever conceived of God as an idler, let him get that notion out of his head. If He rested on the seventh day, we may be sure that, He began work again on the eighth. We can understand the value of the grub and even the boll-weevil, but the utility of the sluggard in the economy of this universe is beyond the perception of man, unless it be to afford us an example of something to be avoided.

SILENCE

The Book of Constitutions guarded by the Tyler's sword may be, as is claimed, a new emblem among us, but the virtue it commemorates, silence, is an old and excellent one. How much better it would be if we thought more and talked less. This virtue seems to have been more prized by the ancients than by us. The disciples of many of the ancient philosophers were required to practice absolute silence for long periods of probation, and so important was it deemed in their religious and philosophical systems that to it was allotted a special deity, Harpocrates, who was represented as full of eyes and ears, signifying that many things are to be seen and heard but little to be spoken.⁵⁰

THE ALL SEEING EYE

The All Seeing Eye is a very old symbol of Deity. The Egyptians represented Osiris; their chief god, by an open eye, which they placed in all his temples. The idea was also familiar to the Jews, for we read in Psalms (xxxiv, 15) that "The eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous," and (cxxi, 4) that "he that keepeth Israel shall neither sleep nor slumber." In Proverbs (xv, 3) Solomon says "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place watching the evil and the good." This symbol was to the Egyptians and the Jews the same that it is to us, the symbol of Deity manifested in his omnipresence and

⁵⁰ Lodge of Research "Masonic Reprints," No. 1, p. 42; *Morals and Dogma*, pp. 106, 259.

omniscience. To us it is a warning that things we would not do before the eyes of men, yet do in secret, are nevertheless beheld by an eye that can explore our innermost thoughts and will witness against us before a tribunal where there are no perjured witnesses nor miscarriages of justice.⁵¹

THE ANCHOR AND THE ARK

The Ark as a symbol in the third degree has been supposed by some to refer to the Jewish Ark of the Covenant, but others with more reason think it refers to the Ark of Noah. All the Ancient Mysteries seem to have contained allusions more or less clear to the Deluge and Noah's Ark. There being so many other symbols common to Masonry and the Mysteries, it is not surprising to find the Ark also employed as a Masonic symbol. To the pre-Christian ages, the idea of a regeneration, or a new birth, was as familiar as it is to us. In the Ancient Mysteries, as we are best able to judge, the tradition of the Deluge and the Ark, by which the human race was reputed to have been both purified and perpetuated, was in a variety of forms employed to teach this doctrine of regeneration.

In the Funeral Ritual of the Egyptians, it is by means of the Ark or boat that the deceased passed to Aahlu or the place of the blessed in Amenti.⁵² We are all familiar with the Grecian myth which represents Charon as ferrying the shades of the departed over the river Styx. Thus it is seen that the Ark has for ages been the symbol of the passage from this world to the next. We attach to it a very similar meaning, it symbolizes to us that power or influence by which we are fitted for and raised to a higher state of existence in the life that is to come.⁵³

The anchor does not seem to have belonged to ancient symbolism. Paul appears first to have employed it as an emblem of hope of immortality and bliss after this life (Heb. i, 19.) Kip, in his **Catacombs of Rome**, says that

⁵¹ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. IV, p. 43, Kenning, p. 18; Mackey's *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 9, 57; Mackey's *Lexicon of Freemasonry*, p. 29.

⁵² *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. II, p. 24.

⁵³ *Idem*, vol. I, p. 31; Mackey's *Encyclopaedia*, p. 64; Mackey's *Lexicon of Freemasonry*, p. 45; *Universal Masonic Library*, vol. VIII, p. 7, vol. X, p. 54.

the primitive Christians looked upon life as a stormy voyage and that of their safe arrival in port the anchor was a symbol. Mrs. Jameson says that the anchor is the Christian symbol of immovable firmness, hope and patience. Though apparently of Christian origin as a symbol, there is nothing narrow or sectarian in its significance, and it may with equal propriety be employed by Jew and Gentile, as well as by all others who share in the belief of a peaceful place of abode hereafter for those who have made a proper use of this life.⁵⁴

In the symbol of the Anchor and Ark we, therefore, see again pressed upon our attention the doctrines of Deity, the Mediator, regeneration, resurrection and immortality.

THE FORTY-SEVENTH PROBLEM OF EUCLID

The Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid is the earliest Masonic symbol we have on record; it appears as the frontispiece to Anderson's "Book of Constitutions," published at London in 1723, accompanied by the word "Eureka" in Greek characters. It will be understood that prior to this date only one book on Freemasonry had been printed, and not till three-quarters of a century later did our Monitors contain illustrations of the emblems and symbols. So it happens that the Forty-Seventh Problem is absolutely, so far as is known, the earliest illustration of a Masonic symbol on record.

In the text of the same book it is declared to be "if duly observed, the foundation of all Masonry, sacred, civil and military," (p. 23) and in the second edition of this work (1738), he speaks of it as that "amazing proposition which is the foundation of all Masonry, of whatever materials or dimensions" (p. 26). This figure is known by a variety of names. The Theorem of Pythagoras, the Theorem of the Bride, and the Theorem of the Three Squares. It was also known as the Gnomon, the Greek word for knowledge, and Plato in his **Commonwealth**, denominates it the "Nuptial Figure." To our fathers in their school days, it was an object of dread, as the "Pons Assinorum," or the Bridge of Asses.

⁵⁴ Mackey's Encyclopaedia, p. 64.

The remarkable properties of the right-angled triangle are well known to those who have studied geometry. Astronomers also are acquainted with its value; with it they measure the universe. Its usefulness is understood by architects and builders. Even those mechanics who are so ignorant that they do not know that a figure whose three sides are to each other as 3, 4 and 5 is a right-angled triangle, yet are aware of its convenience in making corners of a building perfectly square. When they measure three feet along one wall and four feet along the other, if five feet will exactly reach across, they know that the corner is square. These things were well understood by ancient and medieval operative Masons, and they constituted a part of their trade secrets.

But it is equally certain that to this beautiful triangle they ascribed moral and philosophical (not to say religious) meanings which are now little understood by us.

Of this figure Brother G. W. Speth says "it is certain that, while our medieval brethren may have been familiar with its symbolic meaning, we are not."⁵⁵ We are not merely told in our Monitors that "it teaches Masons to be general lovers of the arts and sciences." Perhaps this is true, but we are given no hint as to why or how it does so. The deeper meanings of this symbol are wholly lost except to those who have made it a special study. Much of it I believe is lost beyond the hope of recovery.

GEOMETRICAL FIGURES

It is a curious fact, the psychological reason for which is not known, that dimensions increasing by half (e. g. a rectangle 20x30, a solid 20x30x45), and the ratios of the base, perpendicular and hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle whose sides are as 3, 4, 5, are very pleasing to the eye. The equilateral triangle in ways not now fully understood seems also to enter into the element of proportion in successful architecture.

Odd as it may appear that geometrical figures such as points, lines,

⁵⁵ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. III, p. 27.

superficies and solids, angles, triangles, squares and circles should be invested with such meaning, yet the fact is undoubted. The ancient moral philosophers attached what appears to us an inordinate importance to geometry and geometrical figures.

Plato, the greatest of philosophers, wrote 400 years before Christ on the porch of his academy, "Let no one who is ignorant of geometry enter my doors." He taught that God was "always geometrizing," and that "geometry rightly treated is the knowledge of the Eternal."⁵⁶ At his time, geometry was the only exact science (arithmetic being not yet invented); hence, quite naturally a knowledge of this science was deemed indispensable to one in search of philosophical truth. To Pythagoras, all the ancient writers give credit for first having raised geometry to the rank of a science, and Proclus tells us that he "regarded its principles in a purely abstract manner and investigated his theorems from the immaterial and intellectual point of view."⁵⁷

In short, "from the earliest times, the knowledge of geometry was looked upon not only as the foundation of all knowledge but even by the Greek philosophers as the very essence of their religion, the knowledge of God."⁵⁸

Numerous echoes of this ancient veneration for geometry are preserved in Freemasonry, thus affording further evidence of its great age. But of all geometrical figures the right-angled triangle, or set-square, was most revered by the ancients. It has from extremely remote ages and among extremely remote peoples borne profound moral significations.

Confucius, the great Chinese teacher, tells us (481 B. C.) that not till he was seventy-five years old "could he venture to follow the inclination of his heart without fear of transgressing the limits of the square."⁵⁹

In a Chinese book written between 500 B. C. and 300 B. C., called "The Great Learning" we are told that a man should not do unto another what he

⁵⁶ Idem, vol. X, pp. 84, 92.

⁵⁷ Idem.

⁵⁸ Idem, p. 91.

⁵⁹ Idem, vol. XIV, p. 30.

would not should be done to himself; "and this," it is there said, "is called the principle of acting upon the square."⁶⁰

It is, to say the least, a strange coincidence that the Greek word for square, "gnomon," also means knowledge and that the initial of this word, the Greek letter gamma is a perfect set-square. As said by Brother Sidney T. Klein, a distinguished Mason and architect of England, to the ancients "geometry was the foundation of knowledge and gnomon was the knowledge of the square."⁶¹

In the symbolical writings of the Egyptians thousands of years ago, the square or right-angled triangle was the standard and symbol of perfection; it was also the symbol of life.⁶²

The ancients taught a very peculiar philosophy. According to their ideas Nature was tripartite, masculine, feminine, and offspring. This conception was applied in an endless variety of ways. The sun was regarded as masculine or active; the moon as feminine or passive and Mercury as the offspring. So the ancient Egyptian Trinity consisted of Osiris the father, Isis the mother, and Her-ra, or Horus, the son. To represent this conception of Deity they employed a right-angled triangle whose sides were in the proportion of 3, 4 and 5, wherein the shortest side, 3, represented Osiris, 4 represented Isis, and 5, the resulting hypotenuse, represented Her-ra, the son, or the result of the union of the male and the female. This figure, therefore, became an emblem of life.

But as it also represented Nature, and as they were wise enough to see that Nature uninterfered with was perfect, this figure became the recognized symbol of perfection.

This implement so useful among operative Masons in testing the perfection of the work was therefore, appropriately adopted by them as symbolical of that perfection which should mark the temple of human

⁶⁰ Idem, p. 31.

⁶¹ Idem, vol. X, pp. 84, 92.

⁶² Idem, p. 93.

character. This symbolical square is the instrument by which all mental, moral and religious conduct is tested.

THE HOUR GLASS

Rev. A. F. A. Woodford, a distinguished Masonic scholar of England, expressed the opinion that the Hour Glass is not, strictly speaking, a Masonic symbol. This is probably based upon the fact that evidence is wanting of its ancient employment as a symbol. The antiquity of its use as a measure of time is, however, undoubted, and it is a most fit emblem of the flight of time and of the wasting away of our lives. If it is a recent acquisition to our ritual, we will not quarrel with the Monitor maker who introduced it.⁶³

THE SCYTHE

In ancient symbolism, the scythe was one of the attributes of Saturn because he was reputed to have taught men agriculture. But Saturn was also the god of Time, and, as by another ancient myth human life was said to be a brittle thread spun by the three Fates, it is natural that this peaceful implement of agriculture should become the symbol of the power that severs the slender thread and puts an end to our existence.⁶⁴

THE COFFIN

To us the coffin is an obvious emblem of death, but it has sometimes been claimed that it would not be so to the Jews, who anciently buried their dead in shrouds and winding sheets only. But in the Ancient Mysteries of those peoples surrounding the Jews the candidate was placed in a coffin or chest as a symbolical representation of death. This custom, as well as the use by Egyptians of the coffin for burial, was undoubtedly well known to the Jews whether they practiced it or not.

The ancient symbolism of the coffin seems to have been intimately connected with that of the Ark. In fact in Hebrew the word aron denoted both. But the subject is too recondite to be entered upon further at this

⁶³ Kenning, p. 318; Mackey's Encyclopaedia, p. 700.

⁶⁴ Mackey's Encyclopaedia, p 700.

time.⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

Some have questioned whether those engaged in the operative art of building could comprehend such abstruse symbolism as that I have herein attempted to outline. Whether they understood it or not, it is certain that they, at least those of them engaged in temple and church building, employed it. The important structures devoted to purposes of worship, from the most ancient period through medieval to modern times, abound in symbolism. It is doubtless true that many of these operative workmen did not know the meanings of their own symbols, just as many speculative Masons do not now know them. But we must bear in mind that operative Masonry in ancient and medieval times did embrace classes that well may be supposed to have understood them. They were in the closest association with the priestly and monastic orders to whom we are indebted for most of the learning of the ancients which has come down to us. Architecture and its kindred sciences were until comparatively recent times the most honorable of all callings.

Brother Albert Pike claims that "during the splendor of medieval operative Masonry the art of building stood above all other arts, and made all others subservient to it; that it commanded the services of the most brilliant intellects and of the greatest artists."⁶⁶

It must be admitted that men like these were capable of appreciating and preserving the most refined symbolism. Brother Pike further declares that they "reveled in symbolism of the most recondite kind; that geometry was the handmaid of symbolism; that it may be said that symbolism is speculative geometry."⁶⁷

Brother Gould has admitted his belief that the Masons of the fourteenth century, or earlier, were capable of understanding and did understand to a greater extent than ourselves the meaning of a great part of the symbolism

⁶⁵ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. I, p. 31, vol. III, pp. 39, 40; Mackey's *Encyclopaedia*, p. 64; Mackey's *Lexicon of Freemasonry*, pp. 93, 341.

⁶⁶ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol III, p. 15

⁶⁷ *Idem*, p. 16.

which has descended from ancient to Modern Masonry.

In conclusion, permit me to say, that for every statement herein contained there is respectable Masonic authority. It is not claimed, however, that on none of these questions is there difference of opinion. Where this is the case, I have been compelled simply to adopt that view which appeared to me most reasonable, and did not have time always to state the different views and the reasons for each. This each student must do for himself. My expectation has not been to accomplish more than to arouse in some, if not all, of you, a curiosity to learn more of our beautiful and instructive symbolism.