

WHAT A FELLOW CRAFT OUGHT TO KNOW

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AS we look about this world in which we live and consider the various forms of life with which we are familiar, we find a sameness in the general plan that would be monotonous if it were not so beautiful in the infinite variety of the details. The life of a world, the life of a race, of a nation, a man, an animal, a flower, an insect--each of these goes through the same relative processes, a progress from beginning to end and as they pass beyond it seems likely that those processes are repeated. First there is the period of preparation, then the birth, the growth, the fruiting time, the decline and finally the dissolution.

For countless ages a fragment clings to its sun--a world in preparation; eventually it is thrown whirling into space to begin a separate existence--the birth of a world; the gases solidify, land and water appear--the period of development; vegetable and animal life are brought forth, the period of fruitfulness; then come the decline and dissolution.

A tiny seed lies in the ground; it bursts and the sprout makes its way to the top of the soil and a plant is born; it grows and flowering, sheds a sweetness abroad and perhaps gives useful fruit; but its work done, it too, fades and dies. Whence came the plant and whither has it gone ? It knows not, nor cares.

From a tiny egg in the waxen cell within the hive a larva is hatched, passes through the various stages of development until eventually the bee comes forth to perform its amazing, complicated series of duties; finally, with flayed wings worn out in gathering the nectar from a myriad of blossoms, it crawls away to die alone. Whence came the bee and whither has it gone? It knows not, nor cares.

After a suitable period of preparation a babe is born, grows to manhood, does his work whether of good or ill, declines and dies. Whence came the man and whither has he gone? Man knows not, but cares and the question that he has ever asked himself from the time when the first gleams of intelligence were developed in him is, "whence come you ?" and later, "whither are you traveling?" Perhaps the first question a child will ask upon seeing a new born infant is, "where did he come from?" Later, as he comes to realize the meaning of death he will ask, "where do the dead go?" For there is in mankind a feeling that death does not end it all and he has ever refused to concede to

death the victory, feeling rather that human life is a preparation for a greater life to come beyond the grave.

Two stages of human life have ever been awe inspiring, Infancy and Old Age; the infant, a candidate for the mysteries of this world, and the old man, a candidate for the mysteries beyond the grave. Whence comes the infant, from the everywhere, or nowhere? Who can stand beside the cradle of a babe only a few days old and see it smile in its sleep, without feeling that it has had an experience? It has no consciousness of the present world; then whence its smile? Can there be still memories of the everywhere it has left before the experience of this world crowd them out? What possibilities lie before it during the few years it is to spend in this life! Who knows the consequences that may hang upon the use it makes of the opportunities of human existence! And so it is that Old Age also, facing the end of human existence, facing a journey into undiscovered countries, fills the contemplative mind with serious thoughts. If there be sleeping and dreaming in that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns, will the dreams that shall come to him newly born to the heavenly life, cause sweet smiles to play across his radiant face and bear witness to the beauty and happiness of a useful mortal life ?

It is only by realizing that human life is a preparation for a greater life beyond, that he has lived before and shall live again after death ends mortal existence, it is only by so realizing that one can understand the significance of Freemasonry because it is an epitome of human life and each degree teaches the duties of certain stages of life using the customs of the Ancient Operative Masons as a foundation and teaching great moral and intellectual lessons by means of allegories and symbols.

When we speak of our Ancient Operative brethren we allude to those men who composed the lodges of stone masons who built the cathedrals, abbeys, temples and national and civic edifices prior to the seventeenth century. But those men were not merely stone masons; their leaders were architects and master builders and possessed that secret knowledge of the building arts which they guarded among themselves and taught only to those proven worthy.

Operative Masons have plied their art in the building of many famous structures from the dawn of civilization in Egypt and we have records of many distinguished

Master builders; The first architect to erect a building of stone was Imhotep the Wise, who completed his initial work about the year 3000 B.C. A few years later, in 2900 B.C., the architects of King Khufu built the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, an undertaking which demonstrates upon the part of those men, a knowledge of arithmetic, geometry and astronomy marvelous to contemplate.

Egypt became the fountain head of knowledge and as the secrets of the builders' arts were jealously guarded by those learned in architecture and the correlated arts and sciences, men of other nations journeyed thither to be initiated into the mysteries. Those found worthy were so initiated, spread abroad to ply their trade and became the teachers and builders of other nations. Babylonia, Assyria, Phoenicia, Crete and later Greece and Rome, felt the influence of Egyptian civilization.

Next to the Pyramids, the most famous structure of ancient times was the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. This was built by men of Phoenicia headed by Hiram the Architect whom Hiram, King of Tyre, sent to supervise the work for his friend and ally, Solomon, King of Israel.

It is comparatively easy to trace the progress of the Art of Architecture from that day until modern times. In company with that progress went oathbound secret societies guarding the knowledge of the builders' arts and today we find Speculative Masonry as the direct descendant of those old secret societies of builders. The knowledge of Architecture once so closely guarded in oath-bound fraternities has become the common property of all who care to learn it. Lodges of Operative Masons have ceased to exist but Speculative Masonry has attached a symbolic meaning to the various working tools and to many words, terms and expressions used by the Ancient brethren.

As the lessons of Speculative Masonry are taught so largely in terms of the practices of the Ancient Operative Masons a few words as to their customs will make it easier to draw a parallel between those practices and the ceremonies of this degree.

In ancient times, when a person desired to become a Mason he made application to some Master who, if he was pleased with the applicant's appearance, took him on trial. The trial satisfactory, he was formally Entered as an Apprentice, that being his Masonic birth. Entered Apprentices were required to serve for seven years, that being a period of growth or development and during that time they learned the fundamental

principles of the Craft; obedience, sobriety, truthfulness, industry and consideration for and charity toward the brethren; they learned to adjust themselves to their surroundings and to work in harmony with those about them, meanwhile catching a vision of the seriousness of life and the beauty and dignity of their calling. Each was expected to become fixed in the habits of right living, skillful in the handling of his tools, familiar with the labors of a stone mason and ambitious to advance. The time of apprenticeship drawing to a close he worked upon and perfected a masterpiece as an evidence of his skill, which he carried before the Annual Assembly where he was required to stand an examination to demonstrate to his superiors his ability and his worth; upon the result of the examination depended his advancement.

In our time, my brother, Free and Accepted Masons carry out many of the ancient customs. You were initiated as an Entered Apprentice, served a suitable time as such, passed a satisfactory examination before the lodge, were elected to advance and have been passed to the degree of Fellow Craft. But I wonder if during the days of your apprenticeship, you became proficient in the use of the working tools of an Entered Apprentice. You remember that they are the twenty four inch gauge, or rule, and the gavel, or mallet.

Our Ancient Operative brethren used the gauge to measure or lay out their work. You, my brother, should use your mind or reason to measure your work as you labor in the building of a beautiful character. During your apprenticeship have you used your reason to measure yourself, your conduct, your usefulness, your capacity for service? Do you measure up to the high standard of upright moral and Masonic manhood? We are not enough in the habit of so measuring ourselves but it is only by so doing that we can keep our characters straight.

But it is not enough for one to measure himself; a man may measure and measure yet accomplish nothing.

Shakespeare says "Sure, he that made us with such large discourse, looking before and after, gave us not that capability and Godlike reason to fust in us unused." That is the great point--to use our faculties. As our Ancient Operative brethren used the gavel to knock off the corners of rough stones, so we are to use our will power to divest ourselves of the vices and imperfections of our characters. Have you so used your will

power? Is there any fault, any imperfection, any vice that you have resolved to forsake since you became a laborer among us? Remember,

"You will be what you will to be;
Let failure find its false content
In that poor word environment,
But spirit scorns it and is free.
"It masters time, it conquers space,
It cowers that boastful trickster, chance,
And bids the tyrant circumstance
Uncrown and fill a servant's place.
"The human will, that force unseen,
The offspring of a deathless soul,
Can hew a way to any goal
Though walls of granite intervene.
"Be not impatient at delay
But wait as one who understands,
When spirit rises and commands,
The gods are ready to obey."

My brother, it is a deplorable fact that this beautiful Fellow Craft degree is neither understood nor appreciated by the vast majority of Masons. Its purpose is not discerned and there seems to be no connection between it and the other two degrees of the Blue Lodge. In reality, the three degrees of Freemasonry form a beautiful system and the Fellow Craft is the only logical connecting link between the other two; but it is only when a view of the whole is taken that one comes to see the necessary place in the scheme that each degree occupies. We must bear in mind that Masonic Light is the object of a Mason's search and that Masonic Light is a symbol for Truth; we must know that in trying to answer the question of his origin and destiny man has come to realize that there are certain laws that govern him. These he has specified as Divine Truth and it is to know and to bring himself into conscious harmony with them that he labors.

One of our beautiful charges opens with these words: "The ways of Virtue are beautiful; Knowledge is attained by degrees; Wisdom dwells with contemplation; there

must we seek her." In those words we have expressed the degree plan of Freemasonry. Man has found that in striving to attain Divine Truth a foundation of good habits is necessary--a training in the ways of virtue; these good habits are used in the acquisition of knowledge or the development of the intellect; a combination of good habits and high intellectual development produces a lofty train of thought whence result keen judgment, foresight, prudence- all those qualities which go to make a wise man.

"Wisdom," said Solomon, "is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." Wisdom might be defined as Virtue plus Knowledge multiplied by Contemplation. Its attainment is a slow process, a matter of growth. Wisdom is the border-land from whose heights a man beholds Truth while Truth is the land of Canaan which a Moses may behold yet never fully attain.

The foundation of Wisdom is Character. It is in the building of character that every Fellow Craft is employed and this degree deals particularly with the training of the body in right habits and the cultivation of the mind. The legend of this degree presents the matter in beautiful, logical form and should leave no doubt in the mind of the candidate that the ways of virtue are beautiful and that knowledge is attained by degrees.

Let us ever remember that it is not the purpose of Freemasonry to enter into scientific dissertations upon Hearing, Seeing, Feeling, Smelling and Tasting; by entering such a maze the lessons of the degree are lost. Only architects and delvers into antiquity care to enter minutely into the history of the various Orders of Architecture or to learn with mathematical exactitude the proportion of the several columns. Nor is it the purpose of the Order to define Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. Such learned disquisitions upon the Senses, Orders of Architecture and the Liberal Arts and Sciences are a relic of the bygone days of Operative Masonry when the lodge was workshop, home and school--in fact, the whole life of the brethren; such practices were then advisable and necessary but in our time the object in view is to learn practical lessons from a symbolical presentation of those subjects.

The proper development and use of the five human senses enables us to support and protect ourselves, to enjoy the blessings and comforts of life that surround us and to contribute to the happiness of others. Their improper use may lead to animalism on

the one hand or asceticism on the other; in either case it will tend to limit the capabilities. Overindulgence and excesses tend to blunt and asceticism to dwarf the bodily powers while the reward for moderation and simplicity in the employment of the senses is certain and sure.

From the Orders of Architecture we should learn that an absolute mastery of the details pertaining to his particular line of work is necessary for a man's success; and as these orders are used to beautify and adorn as well as to be of service, we should not be satisfied with building merely an upright character but should cultivate those graces that are so pleasing when naturally and sincerely displayed. As the Ionic column, emblematic of Wisdom, bears a mean proportion between the ornamental and solid orders, so our characters should preserve the mean between a sordid, mechanical existence and artistic temperamentality.

The acquisition of knowledge and the training of the mind into habits of logical thought is no less a part of character building than the training of the body. The study of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences is typical of that intellectual development that is necessary before wisdom can be attained and the blending of the beautiful and pleasing arts with the useful sciences teaches us that something more than utility is required in the well rounded character. One may reason logically in ungrammatical language but if his speech be polished by the use of correct grammatical constructions and adorned by the use of rhetorical figures, his reasoning and personality are given an added force. While the training of the mind to a high degree in the mathematical sciences is desirable it is not sufficient in a well developed character for one so trained may become coldly precise unless a love for the beautiful enters in to temper his exactitude. If in studying astronomy, a man becomes so engrossed with the lines, angles, circles and distances of the heavenly bodies that he perceives none of the beauty of the handiwork of the Great Architect nor hears the "music of the stars," he is one of those who having eyes to see, see not and having ears to hear, hear not.

One of the purposes of this degree is to teach perfection in practice and accuracy in information. Science is systematic thought; it is organized knowledge, while art is skill in the employment of the principles of a science. One should cultivate a due regard for all phases of intellectual activity, remembering that perfection in any art or calling will

come in the degree that knowledge of it is systematic and orderly. A Fellow Craft should not be content to perform his duty in a mechanical way but should learn the underlying scientific principles upon which it is based, thus becoming an artist instead of a laborer; his daily toil a joy instead of a task and his life a blessing and inspiration to those who come in contact with him.

Realizing that man is a builder engaged in the erection of a temple of character fit for the indwelling of the living God, Freemasonry uses the Temple of Solomon as a type to visualize the processes of building and to illustrate the end in view. Now that you have been passed to the degree of Fellow Craft, the account of the building of this Temple as recorded in the Bible will be of peculiar interest to you. Many traditions in regard to the Temple have been handed down to us, one of the most beautiful being the legend of the Fellow Craft degree. This legend is founded upon a verse in the sixth chapter of I Kings, which is in these words: "The door for the Middle Chamber was in the right side of the house and they went up by winding stairs into the Middle Chamber and out of the Middle into the Third." We must not confuse history and tradition. Eighty thousand men would find it impossible to ascend to the second story of a building in one afternoon and receive their wages nor would the room contain the wages due them. This incident is of value to us as Masons only insofar as we see the lessons designed to be taught and make practical use of them in the development of our characters.

After faithfully performing his duty the ancient Fellow Craft was invested with certain words, signs and tokens that secured his admission into the Middle Chamber where he received the wages due him. A shirker or an impostor might ascend the stairs but only he who was duly prepared by being in possession of these words, signs and tokens could gain admission.

So in life. Every man is invested with certain words, signs and tokens that determine the circle to which he shall be admitted. Every honest effort put forth and every faithful performance of duty bring their reward. A man may enter any circle or attain any desired height if he shall work until his labor brings as a reward the words, signs and tokens necessary to gain an entrance into the coveted place. The passwords must be unequivocal and no impostor by dissimulation can escape the vigilance that eternally rewards a man according to his deserts. There must be evidence in plenty that

the preparation is not superficial nor assumed as a cloak to gain unworthy ends. It is not until a sign or token is given that the required qualities have become established as part and parcel of his very being that a man is accepted with confidence into the innermost circle of his desire. He cannot hope to enter the circle of those who have labored and earned the wages due who displays no token that by earnest effort he has earned his reward. Man must give equal value for what he receives. He must pay the price.

So also, the laborer is worthy of his hire. Solomon gave the workers upon the Temple a wage of Corn, Wine and Oil. These, being emblematic of nourishment, refreshment and joy, indicate that the honest, earnest effort receives not only a material wage but that there should be a wage of satisfaction and joy in the performance of duty without which a man labors in vain and spends his strength for naught. He who finds no joy in his work has not received the full wages of a Fellow Craft.

There are three things that a Fellow Craft should value highly and treasure as precious jewels; an attentive ear, an instructive tongue and a faithful breast. The attentive ear symbolizes that earnest desire for knowledge, that openness of mind, that willingness to learn that keeps a man young in spite of his years. No quality is more valuable than that of finding the instructive tongue in all the experiences of life, hearing its message and treasuring that message within the repository of a faithful breast. He who earnestly seeks knowledge will value every source of information and if the instructive tongue be sharp and wound the pride or tear the heart yet will he receive its message humbly, gladly. "Man, know thyself," is a goal gained sooner through experience in the ways of adversity than by resting on flowery beds of ease or through the lying tongue of flattery.

And now, my brother, that you have attained the Middle Chamber and stand in the strength of manhood to receive the reward of a faithful workman, remember that it is not by your own strength alone that you have attained this position but by the assistance and guidance of the Great Architect of the Universe. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." All the labor you have expended and all the efforts you have put forth in the development of your character have been to the end that you might attain the Wisdom to know the will of God concerning you and to make of yourself a temple fit for the indwelling of the Most High.

The true Mason is essentially a religious man, fearing God and keeping his laws and reverence for his name should be a distinguishing characteristic of all who have gone this way. Let no profanity or irreverence for his Holy Name bring discredit upon your profession as a Mason.