

WHAT A MASTER MASON OUGHT TO KNOW

By Bro. Hal Rivierre, Georgia

A YOUNG son of the Old South stands in the State Capitol before a case in which are lovingly and tenderly preserved some of the war-torn battle-flags of the Lost Cause; tears blur his sight and cast a halo around those dear-loved, honored emblems while voices from the dead past seem to speak to him words of wisdom that encourage and strengthen him for the battles of life. He passes on more erect and with a firmer step, fired with zeal and determination but withal, humble and reverent in his heart.

The past is filled with messages of counsel and comfort to men who open their hearts to receive them and it would be hard to find a man in the whole world whose heart-strings will not vibrate when touched by some hand from out the long-unheeded past. Time adds a sanctity to that which is good and true and even error, when well established by long practice, takes on the appearance of right and is hard to be overcome.

It is this quality of old age, of venerableness, together with the natural beauty of the system and the eternal truths upon which it is founded that gives Freemasonry such a hold upon the hearts of those who are most intimate with its history and philosophy; for Masonry must be studied to be appreciated; but it is with tender hands that we should reach into the past to uncover the eternal principles upon which it is founded and it is with reverent hearts and minds that we should think and meditate on them; for the ways of Masonry are the ways of God. One cannot fully travel those ways very far without feeling as Moses felt when he saw the burning bush and heard the voice of God saying, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Freemasonry is so broad in its scope that there are few lines of thought which it does not bring the Masonic student to consider. As to the past, it is bound up with history, religion and philosophy; as to the future, it is a prophecy of that ideal state where present day snarls and contentions in regard to sociology, ethics and religion shall resolve themselves into that harmony which brotherly love, relief and truth only can bring; then will all men practice that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree. And when one endeavors at the completion of the Third degree to sum up in one brief hour the things that a Master Mason ought to know, he

must of necessity present an outline only, and leave time and the earnest efforts of the candidate to fill in the details. Much must remain unsaid.

An extended lecture might well be given upon any one of a number of subjects. The ritualistic work, or the ceremonies employed in the opening and closing of the lodge and in the conferring of the degrees offer an attractive and entertaining theme. The history of this great Institution is so highly interesting that many men have given years of study to it; they have searched in foreign lands, learned dead languages and dug in the long-hidden remains of forgotten cities in order to discover, if possible, the connection between modern Masonry and those ancient initiatory ceremonies which have left their impress so plainly upon our Order today. The philosophy of Masonry has engaged the attention of some of the master minds of the past two centuries and it is in itself a subject of great interest. A little book, "The Philosophy of Masonry," by Brother Roscoe Pound, Dean of the Harvard Law School, presents in attractive form the best that has been brought out on this subject and it is earnestly recommended to your attention. No doubt you remember how insistently you have been reminded all during your short Masonic career that the Freemason is a seeker, a seeker for Truth. So, as a Freemason, you are or should be a seeker for Truth. Unless you realize that the lessons of these degrees which have been conferred upon you have a personal message for you, unless you search out their hidden meaning, take them to your own heart, apply them to your own life, work them out in your own experience, what has it profited you to become a member of this great Fraternity?

To the young Masonic student the one best aid in his search is "The Builders," a book written by Brother Joseph Fort Newton. It is intensely interesting and presents in small space the fundamentals of Freemasonry. Having read this book one possesses a knowledge of the Order far greater than that of the majority of Masons and should he care to search further into this beautiful subject the way is made plain.

Whenever I assist in raising a candidate to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, one question invariably comes to my mind, "What induced you to become a Mason?" I remember that the application you signed and which was read before the lodge stated that you came seeking for knowledge and a sincere desire to be of service to your fellow creatures. But printed applications do not always reveal the true state of mind of the applicant, so the question I would have you answer honestly for yourself is "What

induced me to become a Mason?" Perhaps you cannot give a satisfactory answer in words. No matter; we shall know just the same as your actions as you go in and out among us will reveal your state of mind was it mere curiosity that prompted you to seek membership in our noble order? Well! your curiosity satisfied, you will go on your way and our question will be answered. Was it a desire for business, social or political influence which you hoped to gain by the display of a Masonic or higher degree emblem? Again we shall have our answer for time will reveal it to us and let us hope that you may receive your just reward.

Among our Ancient Operative brethren a man desired to become a Mason so that he might be free to pursue a calling that carried great privileges; free to go about and seek work; free to travel even in foreign countries and work for and receive a far more satisfactory wage than was paid to men of other callings. For in a day when most men were serfs bound to a lord and unable to leave his possessions, the Operative Mason was indeed free and enjoyed privileges greater by far than those accorded any other class of workmen.

Though men in civilized countries today are not bound to a lord as men were under the old feudal system, they are bound by the ties of ignorance, selfishness, prejudice and vice to a life as destructive to true happiness and usefulness as ever men were in the olden days. But in your new character as a Master Mason you have thrown off the shackles that bound you to a life of servitude; established in the ways of virtue, filled with knowledge, wise in the beautiful simplicity of a pure heart, you are free to gavel in a country foreign to those still struggling with the fetters which you have cast aside; a country where the practice of Justice, Moderation, Toleration, Simplicity and Brotherly Love precludes the necessity of any man-made laws and guarantees to the inhabitants thereof the wages of a master workman. Travel, my brother, travel! Leave the West, the place of darkness and ignorance where brute force reigns, and travel toward the East, the source of Light and Life. Seek your Lord if perchance he may be found. Is he here? The brightness everywhere reveals the beauty of His handiwork. Everywhere His power and glory are displayed. Things unseen and unthought of in the West are revealed in the East and you know your Lord is; but you find him not here. Retrace your steps and in the West where the sun of Light and Life set, the land of the dead, seek. Delve beneath the rubbish of doubt and ignorance and intolerance and

prejudice under which the dead are buried; raise the dead from the level of mediocrity to the living perpendicular Truth. That which you raise is not what you seek but is the nearest approach to it that man can hope to obtain the Godin-man that was lost, buried beneath the cares, ignorance and superstition of the world. This is the substitute for that for which men seek and with which he must be content until in the course of spiritual progress he stands before the Great Architect of the Universe; for no man can see God and live, yet no man can really live until he finds God within his own heart; until he can descend in spirit to the level of those lost to all higher instincts and find the Divine Spirit buried beneath the degradation of sin and ignorance. For there is hope for a man even though seemingly dead to all noble impulses that he can be raised from the depths and that the Divine Spirit may be revealed in his new life.

My brother, human life is not such a simple affair that man can live it alone. All men need assistance; hence, we as Masons are banded together to render mutual aid and encouragement. It is the duty of a Mason to assist a distressed brother in every possible way; to go upon an errand of mercy that his necessity be relieved even though it require great personal sacrifice and inconvenience. In the black hours of the American Revolution when our country was in deep distress, groaning under the unjust practices of an oppressive government, our soldiers fought and marched even barefoot and over frozen ground that the necessity of their distressed country be relieved; and the Father of his Country, our illustrious Masonic Brother George Washington, seeing their privation, himself beset by foes, criticized, maligned, hampered by those who should have rendered every assistance, the Father of his Country constantly sought Divine guidance through the medium of prayer. Can we doubt that he remembered his brother Masons when in devotion to Almighty God? If "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its workings" what a power would be the united prayers of the millions of Masons throughout the world if they would only remember their brethren when on banded knees before the Great Architect of the Universe.

It is in times of trouble and despondency that men most feel their dependence upon each other. The knowledge that a secret can be confided to a brother to be kept inviolable within his breast, that his advice and counsel can be sought is of much comfort to one in distress. This feeling of confidence does much to draw Masons together. The hand that wields the trowel to spread liberally the cement of brotherly love

and affection will never be raised in anger against a brother Mason nor will the tongue speak evil of him, but will rather speak words of counsel and comfort, warn him of approaching danger and vindicate his character when wrongfully traduced.

These generous principles should extend further, especially to the families of the brethren. It should be the particular care of every Mason to guard the honor and reputation of the female relatives of a brother, to heed their cry of distress and to render them such assistance as his ability will permit. In addition to the duties which you owe to the brethren, you have a proper relation to maintain towards the Grand Lodge of the State and to your own particular lodge. It now becomes your duty to stand to and abide by the constitution, laws and edicts of the Grand Lodge, and the bylaws, rules and regulations of your own lodge. The latter you have signed and a copy has been presented to you. Make yourself familiar with them that, through ignorance, you may not cause confusion among the Craft. The constitution, laws and edicts of the Grand Lodge are to be found in the official 'Grand Lodge publications, copies of which may be procured from the Grand Secretary for a small sum. In some Grand Jurisdictions this information is contained in the official monitors of these Jurisdictions and, in addition, these monitors contain several of the lectures of the degrees which explain many points which will be of interest to you. A study of the monitor of your Grand Jurisdiction is most essential to one who would gain even a superficial knowledge of Symbolic Masonry for in it are given many symbols and their explanations, and as much of the work of the degrees as is proper to be written.

The lodge needs you; your frequent attendance at regular meetings will encourage the officers; your advice and counsel will be of great assistance in carrying on the business of the lodge; the display of a proper fraternal spirit will bring to you and to your fellows a feeling of affection and satisfaction that will do much to smooth the rough road along which all men are traveling. It should be your desire to become so familiar with and proficient in the work of the lodge that you be qualified to fill with dignity any station to which you may be called; while inordinate ambition and striving for honors are out of place in Masonry, nevertheless, honors come to him who is most faithful in the discharge of the responsibilities laid upon him.

Every Mason is familiar with the expression, "There should be Wisdom to contrive, Strength to execute, and Beauty to adorn, every great and important

undertaking." Nothing of importance has ever come to pass without earnest thought and planning, yet many serious plans and excellent designs have been wasted and lost through lack of energy, strength and action to put them into effect. To accomplish great things there must be a harmony between the Wisdom that contrives and plans and the strength that executes. That harmony is the Beauty in the great trinities of accomplishment. Wisdom, Strength and Beauty are symbolized by three columns, the Ionic, Doric and Corinthian placed respectively in the East, West and South, and these are said to be the supports of the lodge.

In the account of the building of the Temple of Solomon as recorded in the Bible, Solomon sought aid of Hiram, King of Tyre. Besides sending laborers to assist in the work, Hiram sent a second Hiram, a man skilled in working brass and precious metals, to supervise the laborers and to make the works of art which the Temple was adorned. Now this second Hiram was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphthali but he was a resident of Tyre. No doubt well-schooled by his mother in the traditions and idealism of the Hebrews and by experience and training skilled in the practical art of the Tyrians he was able to interpret the plans of Solomon and secure their execution at the hands of the Phoenicians. He was the Beauty or Harmony between the Wisdom of Solomon and the Strength of Hiram of Tyre. It was by this famous trio that the magnificent Temple of Solomon was built and it is by the great trinity of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty that all things good and desirable are accomplished. The co-operation or harmonious working of Wisdom and Strength generates a power that will accomplish any desired result; but if undirected Force relying upon itself alone step in and try to gain advantage, then law is defied, confusion results, faith is lost and harmony is slain; and though Wisdom comes to the rescue and casts aside the evil consequences of such rashness the memory of the disaffection is never effaced and the confidence that is restored contains a reservation; it is a makeshift, a substitute for that harmony which previously prevailed. Man cannot speed up the Divine Laws; he must sow before he can reap; he must reap before he can eat; he cannot appropriate that which is not his without sooner or later paying the price. If through ignorance or in defiance of the laws that determine his spiritual progress he attempts to gain unworthy ends or to circumvent the processes of nature the accumulated consequences of his violation crush the Divine Spirit within him and it becomes lost, buried beneath the rubbish of sin and degradation. When in this

condition though all human means fail to restore the Divine Spirit to its rightful place as directing current of his being, there is still power to prevail over the consequences of sin; the helping hand of friend and brother may fail; the power of the intellect and the accumulated knowledge of years may awaken no response; but at the touch of the Master Spirit of the Universe, that which was lost is found; that which was dead is quickened into life.