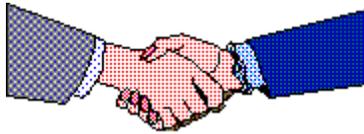


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APPRENTICE
PAPERS



STB-96-09

IN WHOM DO YOU PUT YOUR TRUST?

By: Rev. Harold J. Schieck

Bro. and Rev. Schieck is a member of Penn-Morris Lodge #778, Morrisville, PA and is a Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

Forty-five years ago, which was my eighth year as a young minister in the Methodist Church, and in my fourth year as pastor of the Methodist Church in Frackville, PA, I knelt before the altar of Freemasonry. It was in Frackville Lodge No. 737, I was asked, In whom do you put your trust? Then, in repeating after the Worshipful Master, I took the oath and obligation of an Entered Apprentice Mason. The experiences that November evening, 45 years ago, have been indelibly etched in my mind. Many men were present in Frackville Lodge that evening, and I was amazed to have seen nearly every man who was a leader in the congregation where I was the pastor. Over the years this has been my continuing experience. In 25 years in parish ministry, and nearly 20 years in church administration, most of the leaders I worked with were Masonic men.

Membership in Masonry has always been a universally recognized badge of honor. Its stress has always been on character. The fundamental Masonic teachings are love of God, loyalty to country, a high standard of personal morality, and a belief in the universal brotherhood of man. In the life of a Mason, these fundamental teachings reach out through participation and support in church and community life. Masonic men find an inner peace and contentment when they are contributing to the well-being, growth and support of the church of their choice.

I asked myself again and again, what attracted these men to Masonry? What was its appeal? Why were so many of them ardent and active members throughout their lifetimes? Also, in my parish and church administration responsibilities, I was privileged to work with Masons of varied cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. I soon realized that the questions just posed also applied to me -as I am sure they must have been of concern to each of us during our early and most impressive Masonic years.

Certainly it was not due to solicitation. No man is ever asked to join. However, today, the literature and public relations of the outstanding Friend To Friend program, used in Pennsylvania, is encouraging a positive response for Masonry from men in many areas of life.

I believe the answer is found in Freemasonry's lofty idealism. Its stress has always been on character. Membership in Masonry is recognized as a standard of honor, of Brotherhood, of uprightness and decency. From the Revolutionary period through the founding of this nation, and through today, fourteen Presidents of the United States of America were Masons. Innumerable Senators and Representatives, Justices of the Supreme Court, National and International military leaders, Governors and elected officials in the many states, leaders in education, industry, medicine, science, and space technology have also been members. Also, many of the persons who led their native lands into democratic forms of government in Europe, South and Central America were Freemasons.

We as today's Masons have been climbing on the shoulders of an endless line of splendor, of men across the centuries who believed in and acknowledged the basic teachings of Freemasonry. Today, I am convinced the teachings of Masonry have not changed. While all dimensions of life are adjusting to a new age, to a changing world, to computer technology, the basic concepts of the Fatherhood of God, of Brotherhood, of honor, of uprightness and decency will never change. We have a rich heritage in Freemasonry. It is ours to grasp and follow during our lifetimes, and is incumbent upon us to pass it on to future generations.

Let us never forget, or lose sight of the truth, that Masonry begins at the Altar in the Lodge Room. Its foundation is a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. This is the first and fundamental principle in the life of every Mason. Hear again the question, In whom do you put your trust?

King Solomon is credited by most Biblical scholars for the words in Proverbs 3:5- 6, words written a thousand years before Christ, or three thousand years ago, Trust in God with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. In all aspects of life God is to be taken into account. The thought of God is not to be limited to special seasons or sacred places. God is to be acknowledged in the home, in business, at

work, and at play. In other words, God is to be thought of sufficiently to influence conduct and life. To acknowledge God requires true humility. He has made us and not we ourselves are the words from Psalm 100:3. Upon God we are dependent for life and breath and everything. Acknowledging God will help a man not to think of himself more highly than he ought to.

Yet, Masonry is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for Religion. Masonry is not interested, nor is it concerned in how a man may develop his religious faith. However, it stands for, teaches and practices, tolerance toward all faiths that rest upon this first and fundamental principle, belief in the existence of a Supreme Being! Men of various religious faiths come into Masonry, here in our great nation, as well as in nations in the uttermost parts of the world. They retain the religion of their choice and are strengthened in the practice of their particular beliefs by the truths and teachings of Masonry. God is known by many names, and worshipped in many ways. There is no religious bar to anyone who would become a Mason, provided he is not an atheist. So, a Hindu, a Parsee, a Buddhist, a Moslem, a Hebrew, a Christian can all agree on the inscription on our coins, In God We Trust.

Everything in Masonry has reference to God, implies God, speaks of God, and points and leads to God. Every degree, symbol, obligation, lecture, charge, finds its meaning and derives its majesty from God, the Great Architect and Master Builder of the Universe.

While Masonry is religious, it is not, even in the remotest sense, a religion. Masonry has no creed, no confession of faith, no doctrinal statement, no theology. Masonry does not assert and does not teach that one religion is as good as another. It does not say that all religions are equal simply because men of all religions are Masons. It is precisely because we are not a religion, we can come together as men of faith. Masonry asks only if a man believes in God. If he were asked if he believed in Christ, or Buddha, or Allah, that would be a theological test involving a particular interpretation of God. Belief in God is faith. Belief about God is theology.

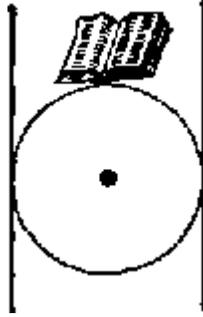
From its very beginning, Masonry has been consistent that religion and politics--are not suitable subjects for consideration within the Lodge Room. Masonry believes in principles rather than political programs. Principles unite men, political programs divide them. So we are taught to leave our opinions on religion --and politics outside the door of the Lodge Room.

While Masonry is not a religion, it is not anti-religious. We are a completely tolerant body. It is a Brotherhood whose trust is in God. Its stress has always been on character.

We are charged to maintain peace and harmony, and to uphold the chief Masonic virtue, charity or brotherly love. Membership in Masonry is recognized as a standard of honor, of Brotherhood, of uprightness and decency. We are sure that he who is true to the principles he learns in Freemasonry will be a better church member, a better businessman, because of it.

As Grand Chaplain, Brother Charles H. Lacquement of Pennsylvania points out, "Freemasonry gets its amazing vitality because its foundation is laid on the great truths from which come the great moral lessons it inculcates. Behind the two great truths, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, is the chief Masonic virtue, Charity or Brotherly Love. Masons are taught to practice this virtue at all times and to assimilate it into their very lives. It is this virtue that leads Masons to do their duties, to stretch forth a helping hand to a fallen brother, to hold a brother's reputation equally with his own, to whisper good counsel in his ear, and in the most friendly manner, endeavor to bring about the best person this brother can be. In so doing the Mason is strengthening his own inner self and bringing about the best in himself. Masonry makes in men, strength of character, of thought, and of emotional stability."

And so, following that most impressive and unforgettable night 45 years ago, when I first knelt before the Altar of Freemasonry, and was asked the question, In whom do you put your trust?, I have traveled, as you have, across many peaceful and many troubled waters, and again and again my trust in God strengthened me. No person, more especially a Mason, can live for himself alone. We are guided by the great teachings of Masonry, the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the chief Masonic virtue, Charity or Brotherly Love.



SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.IX August, 1931 No.8

POINT WITHIN A CIRCLE

by: Unknown

"There is in every regular and well governed Lodge, a certain point within a circle, embordered by two parallel perpendicular lines. . . ." Familiar to every Mason, this ancient symbol is too often considered merely as one of many, instead of what it really is, among the most illuminating of the entered Apprentice's Degree.

It is particularly important not only for its antiquity, the many meanings which have been and may be read from it by the student, but because of the bond it makes between the old Operative Craft and the modern Speculative Masonry we know.

No man may say when, where or how the symbol began. From the earliest dawn of history a simple closed figure has been man's symbol for deity - the circle for some peoples, the triangle for others, and a circle or a triangle with a central point, for still others. The closed figure, of course, represents the conception of Him Who has neither beginning or ending; the triangle adds to this the reading of a triune nature. It is to be noted that the Lesser Lights form a triangle placed in our Lodges in that orientation which expresses Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. In some Jurisdictions a Lodge closes with the brethren forming a circle about the Altar, which thus becomes the point, or focus of the Supreme Blessing upon the brethren.

Nor must we consider that a reading which is wholly beyond the monitorial explanation of the point within a circle is beyond Masonic conception. A symbol may have many meanings, all of them right, so long as they are not self-contradictory. As the point within a circle has had so many different meanings to so many different people, it is only to be expected that it have meanings for many Masons.

We find it connected with sun worship, the most ancient of religions; ruins of ancient temples devoted both to sun and fire worship are circular in form, with a central altar, or "point" which was the Holy of Holies. The symbol is found in India, in which land of mystery and mysticism its antiquity is beyond calculation. Of its presence in many of the religions of the East, Wilford says (Asiatic Researches):

"It was believed in India that at the general deluge everything was involved in the common destruction except the male and female principles or organs of generation, which were destined to produce a new race and to repeople the earth when the waters had subsided from its surface. The female principle, symbolized by the moon, assumed the form of a lunette, or crescent, while the male principle, symbolized by the sun, assumed the form of the lingam (or phallus) and placed himself erect in the center of the lunette, like the mast

of a ship. The two principles in this united form floated on the surface of the waters during the period of their prevalence on the earth, and thus became the progenitors of a new race of men."

This is the more curious and interesting when a second ancient meaning of the symbol is considered - that the point represents the sun and the circle the universe. Indeed, this meaning is both modern and ancient, for a dot in a small circle is the astronomical symbol for the sun, and the derivation of this astronomical symbol marks its Masonic connection. The Indian

interpretation makes the point the male principle, the circle the female; the point became the sun and the circle the solar system which ancient peoples thought was the universe because the sun is vivifying, the life-giving principle, for all the lives. The two parallel lines, which modern Masonry states represents the two Holy Sts. John, are as ancient as the rest of the symbol, and originally

had nothing to do with the "two eminent Christian Patrons of Masonry." It is a pretty conception, but of course utterly without foundation. The Holy Sts. John lived and taught many hundreds of years before any Masonry existed which can truly be called by that name. If this is distasteful to those good brethren who like to believe that King Solomon was Grand Master of a Grand Lodge, devised the system and perhaps wrote the ritual, one must refute them with their own chronology, for both the Holy Sts. John lived long "after" the wise King wrought his "famous fabric." The two perpendicular parallel lines are sometimes thought to have been added to the symbol of the point within a circle as a sort of diagram or typification of a Lodge at its most solemn moment, the point being the brother at the Altar, the circle the Holy of Holies, and the two lines the brethren waiting to help bring the initiate to light.

But it is obviously a mere play of fancy; the two lines against the circle with the point date back to an era before Solomon. On early Egyptian monuments may be found the Alpha and Omega, or symbol of God, in the center of a circle embordered by two upright serpents, representing the Power and the Wisdom of the Creator.

Mackey reads into the symbol an analogy to the Lodge by observing that as the Master and Wardens represent the sun in three positions in the Lodge, and as the Lodge is a symbol of the world (or universe) the circle can be considered as representing the Lodge, the point the sun at meridian, and the two lines, the Wardens or sun at rising and at setting.

This also seems to many students to be a mere coincidental reading. That derivation of the symbol which best satisfied the mind as to logic and appropriateness, students found in the operative craft. Here is more to encourage than in all the researches into ancient religions and the symbolism of men long forgotten.

Fully to understand just how the point within a circle came into Speculative Masonry by way of Operative Craftsmanship, it is necessary to have some mental picture of the times in which the Craftsmen of the early middle ages lived and wrought.

The vast majority of them had no education, as we understand the word. They could neither read nor write - unimportant matters to most, first because there were no books to read, second because there was nothing which they needed to write! Skilled craftsmen they were, through long apprenticeship and careful teaching in the art of cutting and setting stone, but except for manual skill and cunning artifice founded on generations of experience, they were without learning.

This was not true of the leaders - or, as we would call them - the Masters. The great Cathedrals of Europe were not planned and overseen by ignorance. There, indeed, knowledge was power, as it is now, and the architects, the overseer, the practical builders, those who laid out the designs and planned the cutting and the placing of the stones - these were learned in all that pertained to their craft. Doubtless many of them had a knowledge of practical and perhaps of theoretical mathematics.

Certain parts of this theoretical knowledge became diffused from the Master Builders through the several grades of superintendents, architects, overseer and foreman in charge of any section of the work. With hundreds if not thousands of men working on a great structure, some sort of organization must have been as essential then as now. And equally essential would be the overseeing of the tools.

Good work cannot be done with faulty instruments. A square and upright building cannot be erected with a faulty square, level or plumb!

The tools used by the cathedral builders must have been very much what ours are today; they had gavel, mallet, setting maul and hammer; they had chisel and trowel as we have. And of course, they had plumb, square, level and twenty-four inch gauge to "measure and lay out their work."

The square, the level and the plumb were made of wood - wood, cord, and weight for the plumb and level; wood alone for the square.

Wood wears when used against stone. Wood warps when exposed to water or damp air. The metal used to fasten the two arms of the square together would rust and perhaps bend or break.

Naturally, the squares would not indefinitely stay square. Squares had constantly to be checked for the right-angledness. Some standard had to be adopted by which a square could be compared, so that, when Operative Masons' squares were tried by it they would not "materially err."

The importance of the perfect right angle in the square by which stones were shaped can hardly be over estimated. Operative Masonry in the Cathedral building days was largely a matter of cut and try, of individual workmen, or careful craftsmanship. Quality production, micrometer measurement, interchangeability of parts were words which had not yet been coined; ideas for

which they stand had not even been invented. All the more necessary, then, that the foundation on which all the work was done should be as perfect as the Masters knew how to make it. Cathedral builders erected their temples for all time - how well they built, a hundred glorious structures in the Old World testify. They built well because they knew how to check and try their squares!

Today any school boy knows the simple "secret of the square" which was then the closely guarded wisdom of the Masters alone; today any school boy can explain the steam engine which was a wonder two hundred years ago, and make and use a wireless which was a miracle scarce ten years gone by. Let us not wonder that our ancient Operative brethren thought their secret of a square so valuable; let us rather wonder that in time in which the vast majority of men were ignorant of mathematics, so many must have known and appreciated this simple, this marvelous, geometrical secret.

Lay out a circle - any size - on a piece of paper. With a straight edge draw a line across through its center. Put a dot on the circle, anywhere. Connect that dot with the line at both points where it crosses the circle. Results - a perfect right triangle.

Draw the circle of whatever size you will; place a dot on the circumference where you will, it makes no difference. So be it. So be it the lines from the dot meet the horizontal line crossing the circle through its center and they will form a right angle.

This was the Operative Mason's secret - knowing how "to try his square." It was by this means that he tested the working tools of the Fellows of the Craft; he did so often enough, and it was impossible either for their tools or their work "to materially err." From this, also, comes the ritual used in the lodges of our English brethren, where they "open on the center." Alas, we have dropped the quaint old words they use, and American Lodges know the "center" only as the point within a circle. The original line across the center has been shifted to the side and became the "two perpendicular parallel lines" of Egypt and India and our admonitions are no longer what they must have once been; . . . "while a mason circumscribes his "square" within these points, it is impossible that "it" should materially err."

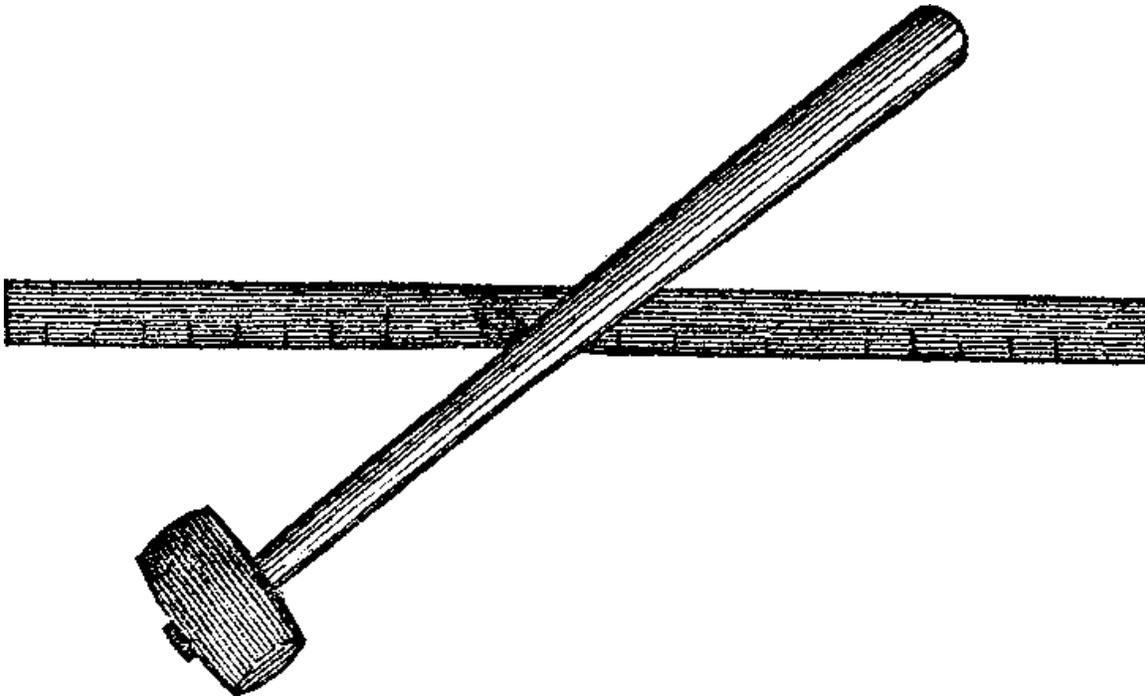
Today we only have our Speculative meaning; we circumscribe our desires and our passions within the circle and the lines touching on the Holy Scriptures. For Speculative Masons who use squares only in the symbolic sense such an admonition is of far greater use than would be the secret of the square as was known to our ancient brethren.

But - how much greater becomes the meaning of the symbol when we see it as a direct descent from an Operative practice! Our ancient brethren used the point within a circle as a test for the rectitude of the tools by which they squared their work and built their temporal buildings. In the Speculative sense, we used it as a test for the rectitude of our intentions and our conduct, by which we square our actions with the square of virtue. They erected

Cathedrals - we build the "House Not Made With Hands." Their point within a circle was Operative - ours is Speculative!

But through the two - point in a circle on the ground by which an Operative Master secretly tested the square of his fellows - point within a circle as a symbol by which each of us may test, secretly, the square of his virtue by which he erects an Inner Temple to the Most High - both are Masonic, both are beautiful. The one we know is far more lovely that it is a direct descendant of an Operative practice the use of which produced the good work, true work, square work of the Master Masons of the days that come not back.

Pass it not lightly. Regard it with the reverence it deserves, for surely it is one of the greatest teachings of Masonry, concealed within a symbol which is plain for any man to read, so be it he has Masonry in his heart.



SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.XI September, 1933 No.9

TWENTY-FOUR INCH GAUGE

by: Unknown

In the early editions of his Monitor (1797 and on) Thomas Smith Webb wrote:

"The twenty-four inch gauge is an instrument made us of my operative Masons, to measure and lay out their work; but Free and Accepted Masons are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of dividing their time; it being divided into twenty-four equal parts, is emblematical of the twenty-four hours of the day, which they are taught to divide into three equal parts; whereby are found eight hours for the service of God and a distressed worthy

brother; eight hours for their usual avocations; and eight for refreshment and sleep." Time and the often witless tinkering of well-meaning but uninformed brethren have altered here a word and there a phrase; in some Jurisdictions it is now "Vocations," in others it is "we" instead of "they" and so on.

But in essentials most American Jurisdictions use the paragraph as the great ritualist phrased it for us a century and a third ago. Unfortunately, he did not go deeply into the symbolism of the gauge, leaving it to us to dig out for ourselves its concealed meanings, and learn from it, as we are able to learn; thinking through it, as we are able to think.

Like most Masonic symbols, it conceals far more than it reveals. Like many, the Monitorial explanation deals only with the obvious meaning, leaving the inner symbolism for the delver in the rubbish of the Temple's verbiage who seeks the hidden truths Freemasonry discloses to all who look.

Among the oldest of man's beginnings of civilization, measures seem to have originated among all peoples with parts of the human body - the foot, the hand, the palm, the digit, the cubit (elbow to tip of the middle finger) etc. The word inch comes (as does ounce) from the Latin "uncia," a unit divided into twelve parts. Some contend that origin of an inch was in the thumb joint. Both foot and Roman "uncia" are very old and our ancient brethren of the Gothic Cathedral building age must surely have known both. But what is important is not the name of the measure but the division of the gauge into units than its total, and their applicability to time. The relation of twenty-four inches to twenty-four hours is plain enough, but when we examine just what it is that is divided into twenty-four parts, the explanation becomes difficult.

What is time? To most of us it is the duration between two noons; the elapsed interval between any two events; the passage of a certain fraction of life. To the philosopher, time is an unknown quantity. Like space, it appears to be a conception of the mind, without objective existence. Modern mathematicians contend that time and space are but two faces of the same idea, like the two sides of a shield. While we can comprehend one without reference to the other,

we cannot "use" one without the other. Every material thing occupies space for a certain time; every material thing existing for a specified time, occupies space. We pass through space in three directions - up and down, right and

left, forward and back. We pass through time, apparently, continuously in one direction from birth to death. We cannot go back for even the smallest fraction of an instant. Omar wrote:

"The moving finger writes; and having writ, Moves on; nor all Piety nor Wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all your tears wash out a Word of it."

The operative workman measures his stone with his gauge; if the ashlar is too long, he shortens it. If it is too broad, he narrows it. If it too crooked to make square, he casts it on the rubbish heap and begins anew with a rough ashlar.

But the Speculative Mason, measuring his time with the twenty-four inch gauge, has no such latitude. The ruined minute is forever away; the crooked hour can never be made straight. The day unfit for the Building Not Made With Hands can never be set in the Eternal Wall, nor can the workman find in any quarry a new day to mould. Thinking of it thus, could any symbol cry a more clarion call for accuracy of labor? For skill with which to work? For care and pains in building?

"Eight hours for the service of God and a worthy distressed brother, eight hours for their usual avocation, and eight for refreshment and sleep."

There is no time to waste. There is not time to be lost. There is no time for idleness. Thomas Smith Webb builded better than he knew when with so sparing a hand he laid out the Speculative Mason's time for the lighter side of life. In his conception, all such must be taken from the eight hours allotted to refreshment and sleep. He who would "pass the time away" - he who would indulge in "pastimes," must, according to the Monitor, take these hours from bed!

To divide our twenty-four hours into three equal parts is a very practical, everyday admonition. Here is no erudite philosophy such as "laborer est orare" - to labor is to pray. Nor is there any suggestion that even refreshment may be in the "service of God." Again, the old ritualist knew his audience. His instructions are simple; their profundity is only for those who wish to look beneath the surface.

For these, indeed, the whole twenty-four hours may be literally "in the service of God" since labor and sleep are necessary for life as we have to live it, and it is a poor theology which does not teach the common lot to be the Will of God.

In 1784 Sir William Jones wrote:

"Seven hours to law, to soothing slumber seven, Ten to the world allot, and all to heaven."

Webb does not so put it, but if the eight hours for labor us also to be "in the service of God," it must be labor which results in good work, true work, square work. Refreshment of mind and body which is an offering to heaven must be clean and wholesome, if on the morrow the laborer is to be wholesome and clean for new labor, and prayer and service.

The Mason interested in a further interpretation of the three-fold division of twenty-four hours need look no further than the Great Light upon his Altar - indeed, he need only turn back from Ecclesiastes XII to Ecclesiastes III to find the inspiration of this Monitorial admonition that there is a time for everything. We read: "To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."

But nowhere in the wise counsel of prophet or patriot, preacher or teacher, is there set forth a time to waste time. Time is the very substance of life, its golden minutes the only stones we have with which to build. Every accomplishment of man, be it Temple of marble or Temple of character, act of selfishness or selfless giving to others, building a nation or building a house, must be accomplished with "Time." Without time nothing is ever done.

Hence he who wastes either his time or another's, squanders that which he cannot replace; which comes from we know not whither, to go we know not whence, which once gone, is gone forever.

About us are many varieties of men with as many ideas of how time should be spent. Every human being has the same number of minutes in an hour, of hours in a day, of days in a year. Some have little or nothing to show for their thirty, forty, or fifty years. Others have great accomplishments to exhibit as the product of their time.

Lincoln used all the time he did not need to devote to his usual avocation to mastering geometry, learning politics, understanding the question of slavery. Albert Pike made himself a learned scholar by constant use of spare time. These men knew what the twenty-four inch gauge really meant, how profound a symbol it is - aye, Lincoln knew, though he was a Freemason only "in his heart" and not a member of any Lodge.

It provokes sober thought to apply the Masonic rule to a determination of how long we really have. Our days are allotted as three score and ten. We rarely start on our life work before we are twenty. Of the fifty years of actual time for labor, we are admonished to spend a third of it in the service of God and a distressed worthy brother, a third in refreshment and sleep, and but a third in

labor - not quite seventeen years in which to accomplish all we have to do! No wonder so few of us leave behind a monument which will stand long enough to be seen by the coming generation, still less one which will last through the ages.

"But the harder the task, the greater the joy of accomplishment!"

Much has been made of the amount of time spent in the "service of God and a distressed worthy brother" by enemies of the Craft, who have tried to read into this admonition the thought that the other sixteen hours are to be used without service to God, and that only a distressed "brother" is to share in our labors.

This, of course, is pure casuistry. If we instruct a workman to build a wall, we mean that he is to carry the brick, make the mortar, lay the courses, level the whole, leave an opening for the gate, point up the joints - do the whole job!

"Service to God," then, does not mean merely spending time upon ones knees in prayer, but living life acceptable to the Great Architect.

By "worthy distressed brother" we have no reason to assume that Masonry means only "brother of the Mystic Tie." Masons are repeatedly bidden to turn to the Great Light as the rule and guide of faith and practice. Here we find "inasmuch as ye do it into the least of these . . ." And all men who own to a common Father are brothers.

The attentive Freemason quickly notes how frequently are the Masonic allusions to work, and how few to refreshment. Our twenty-four inch gauge gives us - almost grudgingly, it seems - eight hours for two occupations of which we know one needs the greater part - eight hours for refreshment and sleep. The other sixteen are for labor, work, effort, doing.

To him who finds labor irksome, the twenty-four inch gauge must be a painful symbol. Alas, all symbols are painful for the idle! But for those who have learned life's greatest lesson, that the most lasting joy comes from accomplishment, the symbol is beautiful.

Fortunate is the man who is happy at his daily task; discontented he who has not found his work. For him who likes his job, sixteen hours a day are scarce enough. Find the carpenter who carves wood in his spare hours, the bookkeeper who spends his evenings doing mathematics, the doctor whose leisure is spent teaching his healing art, and you hear men singing at their labors; men who curse the clocks which go too fast!

Find the Mason interested in the Ancient Craft, prompt to offer his services for visiting the sick, doing committee work, helping the tiler, laboring on Fellowcraft or Degree Team, and you see one happy in his lodge.

Such men have no time to waste - all have some division of their gauge of time which makes every minute count with "sixty seconds worth of distance run."

Time - substance of life! Time - gift of the Great Architect! Time - building stone for the spiritual temple! Time - man's greatest mystery, bitterest enemy, truest friend! Its care, conservation, employment, is the secret of the twenty-four inch gauge - its waste and aimless spending is the sin against which this symbolic working tool unalterably aligns the Ancient Craft.

The Scythe, emblem of Time, wins in the end. We can race with Father Time for but a little while.

"But we can win while we are permitted to race." And at the end, the great ruler of our lives is merciful! As you think of the twenty-four inch gauge and its three divisions, think also of these tender and beautiful words written of the mighty servant, mightier master, Time:

I bring you woe and scalding tears and all life holds of sadness,

Because I am remorseless, your heart in torture pays

In bitter coin of memories of times when time was madness,

"I am the passing hours; I am your march of days."

Enemy and best of friends am I to those who sorrow;

Pitiless in passing, yet Oh, so slow, so slow. . .

I hurry to the sleeping the greyness of tomorrow;

Sluggard in my sun-down, I never seem to go . . .

Little bit by even less, all pain I can diminish,

Slowly win the smile to eyes that now know but to weep.

I began your race with life, and I shall see its finish;

My arms, and none but mine, shall in the end give sleep.

I linger not for anyone, yet I may not be hastened;

You must bear your agony until I bid it cease . . .

But when your head is in the dust, and all your pride is chastened,

"At long last, I promise you, I bring the gift of peace."



SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.II April, 1924 No.4

THE SQUARE

by: Unknown

The Square and Compasses are the oldest, the simplest and the most universal symbols of Masonry. All the world over, whether as a sign on a building, or a badge worn by a Brother, even the profane know them to be emblems of our ancient Craft. Some years ago, when a business firm tried to adopt the Square and Compasses as a Trade- Mark, the Patent Office refused permission, on the ground, as the decision said, that "There can be no doubt that this device, so commonly worn and employed by Masons, universally recognized as existing; whether comprehended by all or not, is not material to this issue. " They belong to us, alike by the associations of history and the tongue of common report.

Nearly everywhere in our Ritual, as in the public mind, the Square and Compasses are seen together. If not interlocked, they are seldom far apart, and the one suggests the other. And that is as it should be, because the things they symbolize are interwoven. In the old days when the earth was thought to be flat and square, the Square was an emblem of the earth, and later, of the earthly element in man. As the sky is an arc or a circle, the implement which describes a Circle became the symbol of the heavenly, or sky spirit in man. Thus the tools of the builder became the emblems of the thoughts of the thinker; and nothing in Masonry is more impressive than the slow elevation of the compasses above the Square in the progress of the Degrees. The whole meaning and task of life is there, for such as have eyes to see.

Let us separate the Square from the Compasses and study it alone, the better to see its further meaning and use. There is no need to say that the Square we have in mind is not a Cube, which has four equal sides and angles, deemed by the Greeks a figure of perfection. Nor is it the square of the carpenter, one leg of which is longer than the other, with inches marked for measuring. It is a small, plain Square, unmarked and with legs of equal length, a simple try-square used for testing the accuracy of angles, and the precision with which stones are cut. Since the try-square was used to prove that angles were right, it naturally became an emblem of accuracy, integrity and rightness. As stones are cut it fit into a building, so our acts and thoughts are built together into a structure of Character, badly or firmly, and must be tested by a moral standard of which the simple try-square is a symbol.

So, among Speculative Masons, the tiny try-square has always been a symbol of morality, of the basic rightness which must be the test of every act and the foundation of character and society. From the beginning of the revival in 1717 this was made plain in the teaching of Masonry, by the fact that the Holy Bible was placed upon the Altar, along with the Square and Compasses.

In one of the earliest catechisms of the Craft, dated 1725, the question is asked: "How many make a Lodge?" The answer is specific and unmistakable: "God and the Square, with five or seven right and perfect Masons." God and the Square, Religion and Morality, must be present in every Lodge as its ruling Lights, or it fails of being a just and truly Constituted Lodge. In all lands, in all rites where Masonry is true to itself, the Square is a symbol of righteousness, and is applied in the light of faith in God. God and the Square - it is necessary to keep the two together in our day, because the tendency of the times is to separate them. The idea in vogue today is that morality is enough, and that faith in God - if there be a God - may or may not be important. Some very able men of the Craft insist that we make the teaching of Masonry too religious. Whereas, as all history shows, if faith in God grows dim morality becomes a mere custom, if not a cobweb, to be thrown off lightly. It is not rooted in reality, and so lacks authority and sanction. Such an idea, such a spirit - so wide-spread in our time, and finding so many able and plausible advocates - strikes at the foundation, not only of Masonry, but of all ordered and advancing social life. Once men come to think that morality is a human invention, and not a part of the order of the world, and the moral law will lose both its meaning and its power. Far wiser was the old book entitled "All in All and the Same Forever," by John Davies, and dated 1607, though written by a non-Mason, when it read reality and nature of God in this manner: "Yet I this form of formless deity drew by the Square and Compasses of our Creed." For, inevitable, a society without standards will be a society without stability, and it will one day go down. Not only nations, but whole civilizations have perished in the past, for lack of righteousness.

History speaks plainly in this matter, and we dare not disregard it. Hence the importance attached to the Square of Virtue, and the reason why Masons call it the great symbol of their Craft. It is a symbol of that moral law upon which human life must rest if it is to stand. A man may build a house in any way he likes, but if he expects it to stand and be his home, he must adjust his structure to the laws and forces that rule in the material realm. Just so, unless we live in obedience to the moral laws which God has written in the order of things, our lives will fall and end in a wreck. When a young man forgets the simple Law of the Square, it does not need a prophet to foresee what the result will be. It is a problem in geometry. Such has been the meaning of the Square as far back as we can go. Long before our era we find the Square teaching the same lesson which it teaches us today. In one of the old books of China, called "The Great Learning,"

which has been dated in the fifth century before Christ, we read that a man should not do unto others what he would not have them do unto him; and the writers adds, "This is called the principle of acting on the Square." There it is, recorded long, long ago. The greatest philosopher has found nothing more profound, and the oldest man in his ripe wisdom has learned nothing more true. Even Jesus only altered it from the negative to the positive form in his "Golden Rule. " So, everywhere, in our Craft and outside, the Square has taught its simple truth which does not grow old. The Deputy Provincial Grand Master of North and East Yorkshire recovered a very curious relic, in the form of an old brass Square found under the foundation of an ancient bridge near Limerick in 1830. On it was inscribed the date, 1517, and the following words: "Strive to live with love and care Upon the Level, by the Square. " How simple and beautiful it is, revealing the oldest wisdom man has learned and the very genius of our Craft. In fact and truth, the Square Rules the Mason as well as the Lodge in which he labors.. As soon as he enters a Lodge, the candidate walks the square steps around the Square pavement of a rectangular Lodge. All during the ceremony his attitude keeps him in mind of the same symbol, as if to fashion his life after its form. When he is brought to light, he beholds the Square upon the Altar, and at the same time sees that it is worn by the Master of the Lodge, as the emblem of his office. In the North-East Corner he is shown the perfect Ashlar, and told that it is the type of a finished Mason, who must be Square-man in thought and conduct, in word and act. With every art of emphasis the Ritual writes this lesson in our hearts, and if we forget this first truth the Lost Word will remain forever lost. For Masonry is not simply a Ritual; it is a way of living. It offers us a plan, a method, a faith by which we may build our days and years into a character so strong and true that nothing, not even death, can destroy it. Each of us has in his own heart a little try-square called Conscience, by which to test each thought and deed and word, whether it be true or false. By as much as a man honestly applies that test in his own heart, and in his relations with his fellows, by so much will his life be happy, stable, and true. Long ago the question was asked and answered: "Lord, who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." It is the first obligation of a Mason to be on the Square, in all his duties and dealings with his fellow men, and if he fails there he cannot win anywhere. Let one of our poets sum it all up:

It matters not whate'er your lot
 Or what your task may be,
 One duty there remains for you
 One duty stands for me.
 Be you a doctor skilled and wise,
 Or do your work for wage,
 A laborer upon the street,
 An artist on the stage;
 Our glory still awaits for you,
 One honor that is fair,
 To have men say as you pass by:
 "That fellow's on the Square. "
 Ah, here's a phrase that stands for much
 'Tis good old English too,
 It means that men have confidence
 In everything you do,
 It means that what you have you've earned,
 And that you've done your best,
 And when you go to sleep at night
 Untroubled you may rest.
 It means that conscience is your guide,
 And honor is your care;
 There is no greater praise than this:
 "That fellow's on the Square. "
 And when I die I would not wish
 A lengthy epitaph;
 I do not wish a headstone large,
 Carved with fulsome chaff,

Pick out no single deed of mine,
If such a deed there be,
To 'grave upon my monument,
For those who come to see,
Just this one phrase of all I choose,
To show my life was fair:
Here sleepeth now a fellow who
Was always on the Square. "

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.II May, 1924 No.5
THE COMPASSES
by: Unknown



No symbolism can be more simple, more profound, more universal, and it becomes more wonderful the longer one ponders it. Indeed, if Masonry is in any sense a religion, it is Universe Religion, in which all men can unite. Its principles are as wide as the world, as high as the sky. Nature and revelation blend in its teaching; its morality is rooted in the order of the world, and its roof is the blue vault above. The Lodge, as we are apt to forget, is always open to the sky, whence come those influences which exalt and ennoble the life of man. Symbolically, at least, it has no rafters but the arching heavens to which, as sparks ascending seek the sun, our life and labor tend. Of the heavenly side of Masonry the Compasses are the Symbol, and they are perhaps the most spiritual of our working tools.

As has been said, the Square and the Compasses are nearly always together, and that is true as far back as we can go. In the sixth book of the philosophy on Mencius, in China, we find these words: "A Master Mason, in teaching Apprentices, makes use of the Compass and the Square. Ye who are engaged in the pursuit of wisdom must also make use of the Compass and the Square. Note the order of the words: the Compass has first place, as it should have to a Master Mason. In the oldest classic of China, "The Book of History," dating back two thousand years before our era, we find the Compasses employed without the Square: "Ye Officers of the Government, apply the Compasses." Even in that far off time these symbols had the same meaning they have for us today, and they seem to have been interpreted in the same way.

While in the order of the Lodge the Square is first, in point of truth it is not the first in order. The Square rests upon the Compasses before the Compasses rest upon the Square. That is to say, just as a perfect square is a figure that can be drawn only within a circle or about a circle, so the earthly life of man moves and is built within the circle of Divine life and law and love which surrounds, sustains, and explains it. In the Ritual of the Lodge we see man, hoodwinked by the senses, slowly groping his way out of darkness, seeking the light of morality and reason. But he does so by the aid of inspiration from above, else he would live untroubled by a spark. Some deep need, some dim desire brought him to the door of the Lodge, in quest of a better life and a clearer vision. Vague gleams, impulses, intimations reached him in the night of Nature, and he set forth

and finding a friendly hand to help knocked at the door of the House of Light.

As an Apprentice a man is, symbolically, in a crude, natural state, his divine life covered and ruled by his earthly nature. As a Fellowcraft he has made one step toward liberty and light and the nobler elements in him are struggling to rise above and control his lower, lesser nature. In the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason - far more sublime than we yet realize - by human love, by the discipline of tragedy, and still more by the Divine help the divine in him has subjugated the earthly, and he stands forth strong, free, and fearless, ready to raise stone upon stone until naught is wanting. If we examine with care the relative positions of the Square and Compasses as he advanced through the Degrees, we learn a parable and a prophecy of what the Compasses mean in the life of a Mason.

Here too, we learn what the old philosopher of China meant when he urged Officers of the Government to "apply the Compasses, since only men who have mastered themselves can really lead or rule others. Let us now study the Compasses apart from the Square, and try to discover what they have to teach us. There is no more practical lesson in Masonry and it behooves us to learn it and lay it to heart. As the Light of the Holy Bible reveals our relation and duty to God, and the Square instructs us in our duties to our Brother and neighbor, so the Compasses teach us the obligation which we owe ourselves. What that obligation is needs to be made plain; it is the primary, imperative, everyday duty of circumscribing his passions, and keeping his desires within due bounds. As Most Excellent King Solomon said long ago: "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.:"

In short, it is the old triad, without which character loses its symmetry, and life may easily end in chaos and confusion. It has been put in many ways, but never better than in the three great words; self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control; and we cannot lose any one of the three and keep the other two. To know ourselves, our strength, our weakness, our limitations, is the first principle of wisdom, and a security against many a pitfall and blunder. Lacking such knowledge, or disregarding it, a man goes too far, loses control of himself, and by that very fact loses, in some measure, the self-respect which is the corner stone of a character. If he loses respect for himself, he does not long keep his respect for others, and goes down the road to destruction, like a star out of orbit, or a car into the ditch.

The old Greeks put the same truth into a trinity of maximums: "Know thyself; in nothing too much; think as a mortal; and it made them masters of the art of life and the life of art. Hence their wise Doctrine of the Limit, as a basic idea both of life and of thought, and their worship of the God of bounds, of which the Compasses are a symbol. It is the wonder of our human life that we belong to the limited and to the unlimited. Hemmed in, hedged about, restricted, we long for a liberty without rule or limit. Yet limitless liberty is anarchy and slavery. As in the great word of Burke, "It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that a man of intemperate passions cannot be free; his passions forge their fetters." Liberty rests upon law. The wise man is he who takes full account of both, who knows how, at all points, to qualify the one by the other, as the Compasses, if he uses them aright, will teach him how to do.

Much of our life is ruled for us whether we will or not.

The laws of nature throw about us their restraining bands, and there is no place where their wit does not run. The laws of the land make us aware that our liberty is limited by the equal rights and liberties of others. Our neighbors, too, if we fail to act toward him squarely may be trusted to look after his own rights. Custom, habit, and the pressure of public opinion are impalpable forces which we dare not altogether defy. These are so many roads from which our passions and appetites stray at-our-peril. But there are other regions of life where personality has free play, and they are the places where most of our joy and sorrow lie. It is in the realm of desire, emotion, motive, in the inner life where we are freest, and most alone, that we need a wise and faithful use of the Compasses.

How to use the Compasses is one of the finest of all arts, asking for the highest skill of a Master

Mason. If he is properly instructed, he will rest one point in the innermost center of his being, and with the other draw a circle beyond which he will not go, until he is ready and able to go farther. Against the littleness of his knowledge he will set the depth of his desire to know, against the brevity of his earthly life the reach of his spiritual hope. Within a wise limit he will live and labor and grow, and when he reaches the outer rim of the circle he will draw another, and attain to a full-orbed life, balance, beautiful, and finely poised. No wise man dare forget the maxim "In nothing too much," for there are situations where a word too much, a step too far, means disaster. If he has a quick tongue, a hot temper, a dark mood, he will apply the Compasses, shut his weakness within the circle of his strength, and control it.

Strangely enough, even a virtue, if unrestrained and left to itself, may actually become a vice. Praise, if pushed too far, becomes flattery. Love often ends in a soft sentimentalism, flabby and foolish. Faith, if carried to the extreme by the will to believe, ends in over-belief and superstition. It is the Compasses that help us to keep our balance, in obedience to the other Greek maxim: "Think as a mortal" - that is, remember the limits of human thought. An old mystic said that God is a circle whose center is everywhere, and its circumference nowhere. But such an idea is all a blur Our minds can neither grasp nor hold it. Even in our thought about God we must draw a circle enclosing so much of His Nature as we can grasp and realize, enlarging the circle as our experience and thought and vision expand. Many a man loses all truth in his impatient effort to reach final truth. It is the man who fancies that he has found the only truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and who seeks to impose his dogma upon others, who becomes the bigot, the fanatic, the persecutor. Here, too, we must apply the Compasses, if we would have our faith fulfill itself in fellowship. Now we know in part - a small part, it may be, but it is real as far as it goes - though it be as one who sees in a glass darkly. The promise is that if we are worthy and well qualified, we shall see God face to face and know ever as we are known. But God is so great, so far beyond my mind and yours, that if we are to know him truly, we must know Him Together, in fellowship and fraternity. And so the Poet-Mason was right when he wrote: "He drew a circle that shut me out, Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout; But love and I had the wit to win, We drew a circle that took him in."

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.V November, 1927 No.11



THE LAMBSKIN APRON

by: Unknown

In Masonic symbolism the Lambskin Apron holds precedence. It is the initial gift of Freemasonry to a candidate, and at the end of life's pilgrimage it is reverently placed on his mortal remains and buried with his body in the grave.

Above all other symbols, the Lambskin Apron is the distinguishing badge of a Mason. It is celebrated in poetry and prose and has been the subject of much fanciful speculation. Some Masonic writers have contended that initiation is analogous to birth, or our advent from prenatal darkness into the light of human fellowship, moral truth and spiritual faith. Much ancient lore has been adduced in an effort to show that the Lambskin Apron typifies regeneration, or a new life, and this thought of resurrection may be the cause of its internment with the body of a deceased brother. At least it will serve until a better reason is advanced for this peculiar custom in the Masonic burial service. The association of the lamb with redemption and being born again is expressed by John, the Apocalyptic Seer, who had a vision on the Isle of Patmos, and beheld the purified and redeemed "Of All Nations, Kindreds, People and Tongues. " Of them it was said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "

By many it has been regarded as a great religious symbol. In our present conception there are three parts of man; body, soul and spirit; what the body is to the soul, the soul to the spirit; namely, a house or habitation, but in oriental thought there are seven parts of man; four earthly and three heavenly; four physical and three spiritual. The four sides of the square symbolize the four physical and the three sides of the flap, or triangle, symbolize the three spiritual parts of man. The apex of the triangle, or point of the flap, stood for the Atma, and which means the eternal spark, the Divine Flame, the indestructible spirit of the living God in every human being. In this aspect it means that:

God is not a looker on At the Life of anyone;
God is under every man, God is part of every man.
A badge is either good or bad by reason of that for which it stands.
Aside from mysticism, I believe there are five distinct things of
which the Lambskin Apron is a badge.

Firstly, in its use, it is a badge of service. In his recent book on "Symbolical Masonry, " Brother H.L. Haywood has an interesting chapter on "The Apron wherein the Builder Builds, " and says it "was so conspicuous a portion of the costume of an operative Mason that it became associated with him in the public mind and thus gradually evolved into his badge. " By it Speculative Freemasonry seeks to distinguish the builder and place upon the brow of labor the laurel wreath of dignity and honor.

Secondly, made of lambskin, it is in its fabric a badge of sacrifice. The lamb in all ages has been not only an emblem of innocence, but also a symbol of sacrifice, and he who wears this Apron with understanding must be prepared for the time when hard things are to be done, when trials are to be endured, and fortitude glorified. Thirdly, in its color it is a badge of purity. White is the clean color that reflects most light.

In Masonry there are three great religious rites. One is discalceation, that is, entering a holy place or standing in the presence of God barefooted as a symbol of humility. It comes from a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he said, "Put off thy shoes from thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. " Another is the rite of circumambulation, that is, going around an Altar from east to west by way of the south. Dr. Joseph Fort Newton said: "When man emerged from the night of barbarism his religion was a worship of light; to him light was life and love, darkness was evil and death; to him light was the mother of beauty, the unveiler of color, the radiant, illusive mystery of the world; his Temple was hung with stars, his Altar a glowing flame, his ritual a woven hymn of night and day. " To him the sun was the greatest of God's creations, it inspired his adoration and in all his religious ceremonies he followed its apparent course through the heavens, as though he were walking in the footsteps of the Most High. Through this rite, memories of that religion of the dawn linger with us in Masonry today.

The third is the rite of investiture or purification; that is, the presentation of the Apron. In a qualified way it bears the relationship to the Lodge that baptism does to some Churches, it is the external symbol of an inner purification. The Psalmist asked: "Who shall ascend into the Hill of The Lord? " and answering his own question said, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. " The Apron when correctly understood is the pledge of a clean life, the testimony that a candidate means to live pure, speak true, right wrong and reverence conscience as king.

When we turn to the Ritual for its interpretation, we find the Apron to be an inheritance from the past, it is a badge of antiquity, "more ancient than the Golden Fleece and Roman Eagle. " A ministerial Brother once said that the Masonic Ritual was couched in stilted phrases and extravagant language, and, as an illustration referred to the ritualistic speech used in the presentation of the Apron. Let us see if he was right. The most specific way of conveying thought and expressing truth is by comparison, It is difficult to comprehend an idea unless we can correlate or compare it with something already known. The Order of the Golden Fleece here referred to was founded in the year 1429, by Phillip, Duke of Burgandy; the Roman Eagle became Rome's Ensign of Imperial Power about one century before the Christian era, while the Apron had come down to us from the very sunrise of time. "Herbrew Prophets often wore Aprons, " they were used in the ancient mysteries of India and Egypt, they were used by early Chinese secret societies, by the Jewish religious sect called Essenes, they were employed as emblems by the Incas of Peru, the Aztecs of Mexico, and the prehistoric races of the American continent.

As a badge of antiquity, it emphasizes the value of the past. Blackstone, in his commentaries on the English Law, said that in the making of a new law three things must be considered; namely, the old law, the mischief and the remedy. No man can apply an intelligent remedy to a existing mischief without regard to the antecedent conditions out of which it grew. Present progress must be based on the accumulated experience and wisdom of the ages. Albert Pike said, "It is the dead who govern, the living only obey. " "Every ship that comes to America got its chart from Columbus, every novel is debtor to Homer, every carpenter who shaves with a foreplane borrows the genius of some forgotten inventor. "

As a badge of antiquity the Apron exalts the greatness and glory of the past in its present contribution to human good and happiness. In the fifth place, the Apron is a badge of honor. It is declared to be "More honorable than the Star and Garter. " Here we have another comparison. The Order of the Star and Garter was created by John II of France at the beginning of his reign in the middle of the 14th century. It was a Royal plaything and at the time of its formation its founder was engaged in acts of despotism and destruction.

The Order of the Garter was formed by Edward III of England in 1349. It was composed of the King and Twenty-five knights, and originated in the false pride and fantastic pomp of medieval manners. Edward A. Freeman, an English historian says: "The spirit of knighthood is above all things a class spirit. The good knight is bound to endless courtesies toward men and women of a certain rank; and he may treat all below that rank with any degree of scorn and cruelty. " "Chivalry is in morals what feudalism is in law. Each substitutes personal obligations devised in the interest of an exclusive class, for the more homey duties of an honest man and a good citizen. "

Freemasonry is in striking contrast to such conceptions. It stands for the dissipation of discord and dissension, for the promotion of peace, the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of brotherhood, for untrammelled conscience, equality of opportunity and the Divine right of liberty in man, for devotion to duty, the building of character and rectitude of life and conduct. Its symbolical supports are wisdom, strength and beauty; the principal rounds of its theological ladder are faith, hope and charity. Its primary tenets are brotherly love, relief and truth; its cardinal virtues are fortitude, prudence and justice. Its Temple is erected to the Master Builder, its Great Light is the Word of Revelation and at its center is an Altar of high and Holy purpose. Like the shadow of a rock in a weary land, like a shining light in a window of a home, like a mother's kiss on a trouble brow and the breath of her prayer in the hour of despair, is the spirit of Freemasonry, calling men from the circumference of life to find God at the center of the individual soul.

When we consider the messages delivered by these Orders and the Lambskin Apron - one speaking the language of class distinction, special privilege and the Divine right of Kings; the other telling the story of exact justice, equality of opportunity, and the brotherhood of man - it is not a stilted phrase and an exaggeration of speech, to say that the badge of a Mason is more honorable than the Star and Garter.

As a badge of honor, the Lambskin Apron spells out integrity, honesty of purpose, probity of character, and soundness of moral principle.

"SO MOTE IT BE "

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.XI August, 1933 No.8



ROUGH AND PERFECT by: Unknown

The rough Ashlar and the Trestleboard seem to have been symbols in Ancient Craft Masonry at least from the beginning of the Grand Lodge period (1717). They are illustrated on the earliest of the old tracing-boards which have come down to us.

Just when or how the Perfect Ashlar came into our symbolism is another matter, and not as simple as it appears.

In 1731 one Samuel Prichard, who denominated himself as a "Life Member of a Constituted Lodge" wrote and published "Masonry Dissected," the first of a long series of exposes of Freemasonry. In it is this curious dialogue, purporting to be held between the Entered Apprentice during his initiation, and some initiating officer:

Q. "Have you any Jewels in your Lodge?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "How Many?"

A. "Six, three movable and three immovable."

Q. "What are the movable Jewels?"

A. "Square, Level and Plumb Rule."

Q. "What are their uses?"

A. "Square, to down true and right lines; Level, to try all Horizontals; and Plumb Rule, to try all Uprights."

Q. "What are the immovable Jewels?"

A. "Tarsel Board, Rough Ashlar and Broached Thurnel."

Q. "What are their uses?"

A. "A Tarsel Board for the Master to draw his designs upon, Rough Ashlar for the Fellow-Craft to try their Jewels upon, and the Broached Thurnel for the entered Apprentice to learn to work upon."

The learned Dr. Oliver, most prolific of the early writers on Freemasonry, to whose industry if not to whose accuracy Freemasonry owes a great debt, unwittingly muddled the waters of antiquity in which this Broached Thurnel was apparently immersed! He confused it with the Rough Ashlar, stating that the two were the same.

Old tracing-Boards of the entered Apprentice Degree disclose what we readily recognize as the Trestle-Board, although in those days it was known as "Tarsel!" Adjacent to it is what is plainly a Rough Ashlar. Immediately next is a drawing of a cube, surmounted by a pyramid - a cubical stone with a pyramidal apex.

Early French tracing-boards display the "pierre-cubique," of cubical stone. Modern tracing-boards show the Perfect Ashlar (not the rough Ashlar, as Oliver had it) in place of the Broached Thurnel, or cubical stone with pyramid atop.

Mackey quotes Parker's "Glossary of Terms in Architecture" as follows:

"Broach or broche is an old English term for spire, still in use in Leicestershire, where it is said to denote a spire springing from the tower without any intervening parapet. Thurnel is from the old French, "tournelle," a turret or little tower. The Broached Thurnel, then, was the Spired Turret. It was a model on which Apprentices might learn the principles of their art because it presented to them, in its various outlines, the forms of the square and the triangle, the cube and the pyramid." Modern authorities dispute this. G.W. Speth finds that Broach, in Scotland means to rough-hew. Thurnel, he states, is a chisel with which to rough-hew, rather than a model of a spired turret on which an Apprentice might learn to work. But, he inquires, what then becomes of the pyramid on the cube, displayed on the old tracing-boards? Moreover, the Scotch use "boast" as an alternate word for "broach," and "boasted ashlar" can be found in modern dictionaries, meaning chiseled with an irregular surface. As a matter of fact, no one really "knows" just what our ancient brethren meant by Broached Thurnel; what we do know is that somewhere in the early formative period of the modern ritual, Broached Thurnel gave way to Perfect Ashlar.

But it did not necessarily do so because of the presence on the tracing-board of a Rough Ashlar. No less an authority than R.W. Charles C. Hunt, Librarian and Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, presents the "Perpend Ashlar" as its probable progenitor. A Perpend Ashlar - the word has many variations, such as parpen, parpend, parpent, parpine, parpin, parping - is a dressed stone which passes completely through a wall from one side to the other, having two smooth, vertical faces. This perpenstone. or bonder, or bondstone, is the same as the Parping Ashlar of Gloucestershire - a stone which passes through a wall and shows a fair face on either side.

In the "True Masonic Chart" published by R.W. Jeremy L. Cross in 1820, appear pictures of the Rough and Perfect Ashlars, showing them substantially as we know them today. It is noteworthy that the stones illustrated are more than twice as long as wide and high, which seems to bear out the idea that the Perfect Ashlar, at least, was once the Perpend Ashlar.

Before examining the symbolism of the Ashlars it is illuminating to read at least one passage from the Great Light: "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, and costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

"And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers; so they prepared timber and stones to build the house." (I Kings, V 16-17)

There is a distinction between builders and stone squarers - while those who cut and squared the stone and those who built, both hewed, yet they were distinct in functions. It is also interesting to observe the classification "great", "costly" and "hewed." "Great" of course refers to size. The larger the stone, the harder it was to cut from the quarry, the more difficult to transport, and therefore, the more expensive. But "costly" may also refer to the expense of hewing. Then, as now, the more truly and carefully a stone was hewed and smoothed, squared and polished, the more time was required and therefore, the more "costly" the stone became. Few symbols seem more obvious, at least in their simpler aspects.

Rough Ashlar, man in his untutored state;

Perfect Ashlar, man educated, refined, with mind filled light. It is this symbolism which Brother J.W. Lawrence evidently had in mind when he wrote:

"The Perfect Ashlar, as a symbol, is the summum bonum of Freemasonry.

That is to say, everything else in Masonry leads up to it. The V. of S.L. describes it, the checkered pavement illustrates it, the Great Architect no less than the Grand Geometrian desire it, and are satisfied with nothing less. When the craft has fashioned the Perfect Ashlar, it has nothing else to do."

With part of which all can agree; if some think that there yet remains building to be done, after the Ashlars are hewn to perfection, we may still make our own the thought that the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge Above wants only perfection in the spiritual stones for the "House Not Made With Hands."

But the symbolism can be carried further. In this subject "Introduction to Freemasonry" reads:

"The common Gavel, which breaks off the corners of rough stones, the better to fit them for the builders use, joins the Rough and Perfect Ashlars in a hidden symbol of the Order at once beautiful and tender. The famous sculptor and ardent Freemason, Gutzon Borglum, when asked how he carved stone into beautiful statues, once said: 'It is very simple. I merely knock away with a hammer and chisel the stone I do not need, and the statue is there - It Was There All of the Time.'" "In the Great Light We read: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You.'

We are also there taught that man is made in the image of God. As Brother Borglum has so beautifully said, images are made by a process of taking away. The perfection is already within.

All that is required is to remove the roughness and excrescences, 'Divesting our Hearts and Consciences of the Vices and Superfluities of life' to show forth the perfect man and Mason within." Albert Pike, always original, thought the interpretation of the Rough and Perfect Ashlars, as given in our Ancient craft monitors and ritualistic instruction, to be superficial. He found another meaning:

"The Rough Ashlar is the people, as a mass, rude and unorganized. The Perfect Ashlar, cubical stone, symbol of perfection, is the State, the rulers deriving their powers from the consent of the governed; the constitution and laws speaking the will of the people; the government, harmonious, symmetrical, efficient - its powers properly distributed and duly adjusted in equilibrium."

Any brother is privileged to extend symbolism in new directions as far as he wishes; if his reading of a symbol is to him satisfactory teaching of a truth, it is a good reading. But the rough and Perfect Ashlars are sufficiently inclusive of the many truths-within the grasp of the average individual, without extending the interpretation to such vast conceptions as the people and the state. Even Pike, great interpreter of symbols though he was, never contended that the original symbolism of the Ashlars, as developed from operative practice by the early Speculatives, was of a political nature.

Hunt's reading of the Perfect Ashlar, as the successor to the Perpend Ashlar, is most beautiful. In "Some Thoughts on Masonic Symbolism" he suggests:

"We call it the Perfect Ashlar, but we must remember that it is perfected only because it is completely adapted to the purpose for which it was made, namely; to exactly fit into its place in the building, and act as a binder for other stones..

"In order that it may do this, it must possess certain attributes and through these attributes we are reminded 'of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors and the blessing of god.' It has two faces to be exposed, and both must be absolutely upright. It does not have one standard for the world and another for the home; the same face, square and true, is presented both to the world and the Lodge, and it teaches that we should not have one code of morals for one place and another for another, but that right is the same wherever we are and under whatever circumstance we may be placed."

The making of a Perfect Ashlar from a Rough Ashlar requires skill, tools and a plan. Without any of the three the Ashlar cannot be made perfect.

Skills to use the tools means education to wield Chisel and Mallet - education to use the talents God gave us in whatever walk of life we may be called.

Tools must the workman have, for empty hands cannot chip away hard stone; tools must the Speculative Craftsman have. for an empty mind cannot wear away the resistance of our complicated life. Speculative tools are honor and probity, energy and resource, courage and common sense and the like virtues, the generation of which forms character.

Most especially must the operative workman have a plan to which to hew. His mind must see both dimension and form, otherwise his tools will cut aimlessly, and his Ashlar will be askew, not square, fit only for the waste pile or the curiosity shop. So must the Speculative workman have a plan to which to fit his Perfect Ashlar of character . . . an ambition, a goal for which to strive, some hope in the future towards which he can stretch eager hands, bending every energy to accomplish.

Considered thus, the Rough and Perfect Ashlars become symbols of greater interest than appear on only a casual inspection. One interpretation is, perhaps, as satisfactory as another - it is one of the great beauties of symbolism that interpretations can differ widely and yet all be true, and all fit with each other. As one writer puts it:

"Most symbols have many interpretations. These do not contradict but amplify each other. Thus, the square is a symbol of perfection, of honor, and honestly, of good work. These are all different, and yet allied. The square is not a symbol of wrong, or evil, or meanness, or disease. Ten different men may read ten different meanings into a square and yet each meaning fits with, and belongs to, the other meanings . . . all these meanings are right. When all men know all the meanings, the need for Freemasonry will have passed away."

("Foreign Countries")

Read the symbolism of the Ashlars as we choose, from the simplest conception to the most profound, the thought remains; even as the cornerstone of a temple must be a perfect ashlar, so are these symbols cornerstones of our Speculative Science, the more beautiful and important that learned men have found in them so many and such beautiful lessons.

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The Four Cardinal Virtues



Temperance

Fortitude

Justice

Prudence

The Four Cardinal Virtues

In the Entered Apprentice Degree, the new brother is introduced to the Four Cardinal Virtues during the close of the explanatory lecture. These virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice and are very briefly explained to the new Entered Apprentice. Unfortunately, these virtues have no connection to the rite of initiation experienced by the new Mason and the lecture does little to clarify their introduction at this time. From an esoteric standpoint, one must go to great lengths to manipulate these virtues to make a connection to the ritual.

Up to at least 1750, none of the early Masonic manuscripts or ritual exposures contains any reference to the Four Cardinal Virtues. Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia states, "It is probable that this peculiar part of the lectures goes back beyond the dawn of symbolic Masonry and that what we have is a distorted remnant of a much more meaningful symbolism or has been built up in modern times out of a brief and unimportant part of the old pre-Grand Lodge working." In addition, one must realize that the Masonic ritual is a combination of many ideas that have come from the distant past and woven into a ritual. Over time, ideas have been added, removed or merged with other concepts to form the current Masonic ritual. Based on the evidence, the Cardinal Virtues were not added to the Masonic ritual until after the middle of the eighteenth century. Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia suggests that the Cardinal Virtues were "taken from the Christian Church, which derived them from Plato and to which the Church had added the three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity, which Freemasonry also borrowed."

In any event, the Cardinal Virtues have intrinsic value to the Mason and are certainly essential to Freemasonry. They can stand on their own within the ritual without any direct connection to the initiatic experience or to Masonic symbolism. The Texas Monitor of the Lodge provides an explanation of each of the four virtues.

"Temperance is that due restraint upon our affections and passions which renders the body tame and governable, and frees the mind from the allurements of vice. This virtue should be the constant practice of every Mason, as he is thereby taught to avoid excess, or the contracting of any licentious or vicious habit, the indulgence of which might lead him to disclose some of those valuable secrets which he has promised to conceal and never reveal, and which would consequently subject him to the contempt and detestation of all good Masons." Temperance represents restraint. The Mason must control his passions and desires. He must practice restraint in all things and avoid excess. He must exercise caution in his action, speech, thought, feeling, judgment, and life.

"Fortitude is that noble and steady purpose of mind, whereby we are enabled to undergo any pain, peril, or danger, when prudentially deemed expedient. This virtue is equally distant from rashness and cowardice; and, like the former, should be deeply impressed upon the mind of every Mason, as a safeguard against any illegal attack that may be made, by force or otherwise, to extort from him any of those valuable secrets with which he has been so solemnly entrusted, and which were emblematically represented upon his first admission into the Lodge." Courage is another name for fortitude. For the Mason, fortitude symbolizes more than physical courage. It also represents moral courage. The Mason must have the strength and ability to make a decision based upon his own moral convictions and stick to it regardless of the consequences. The Mason must exhibit the highest moral and ethical principles in his life and stand by those principles when society looks unfavorably upon those principles.

"Prudence teaches us to regulate our lives and actions agreeably to the dictate of reason, and is that habit by which we wisely judge, and prudentially determine, on all things relative to our present, as well as our future happiness. This virtue should be the peculiar characteristic of every Mason, not only for the government of his conduct while in the Lodge, but also when abroad in the world. It should be particularly attended to in all strange and mixed companies, never to let fall the least sign, token, or word, whereby the secrets of Masonry might be unlawfully obtained." In its most comprehensive sense, prudence implies not only caution but also the ability to judge in advance the probable consequences of one's actions. It also symbolizes wisdom in the conduct of one's activities. Wisdom of mind and soul comes from thought, study and circumspection. It brings the Mason closer to God. Prudence reminds the Mason to reflect upon the moral and social consequences of his activities and his relationship to his Creator.

"Justice is that standard, or boundary of right, which enables us to render to every man his just due, without distinction. This virtue is not only consistent with Divine and human laws,

but is the very cement and support of civil society; and as justice in a great measure, constitutes the real good man, so should it be the invariable practice of every Mason never to deviate from the minutest principles thereof." Justice symbolizes equality for the Mason. The Mason should govern his own actions, have them judged openly, and his conduct towards others should be without deception. He should undertake actions because he desires to and not because he is forced to. His actions should be unselfish and self-sacrificing.

The Four Cardinal Virtues of Freemasonry provide a framework for daily living and serve as a guide for our relationship with God and our fellow man. Thus these virtues are essential to Freemasonry. Perhaps this is why they are introduced in the Entered Apprentice Lecture, to provide a foundation upon which to build the lessons of Freemasonry. As new Masons we must begin to develop and strengthen these virtues, which will help us grow and develop into better men. As experienced Masons, we should constantly remind ourselves of these virtues and their importance in our lives. If we strive to perfect the Four Cardinal Virtues in our lives, we will grow closer to God, be content with our station in life, and influence society for the better.

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.IV March, 1926 No.3

THE CABLE-TOW

by: Unknown



The Cable-Tow, we are told, is purely Masonic in its meaning and use. It is so defined in the dictionary, but not always accurately, which shows that we ought not depend upon the ordinary dictionary for the truth about Masonic terms. Masonry has its own vocabulary and uses it in its own ways. Nor can our words always be defined for the benefit of the profane.

Even in Masonic lore the word cable-tow varies in form and use. In an early pamphlet by Pritard, issued in 1730, and meant to be an exposure of Masonry, the cable-tow is called a "Cable-Rope," and in another edition a "Tow-Line." The same word "Tow-Line" is used in a pamphlet called "A Defense of Masonry," written, it is believed, by Anderson as a reply to Pritchard about the same time. In neither pamphlet is the word used in exactly the form and sense in which it is used today; and in a note Pritchard, wishing to make everything Masonic absurd, explains it as meaning "The Roof of the Mouth!" In English lodges, the Cable-Tow, like the hoodwink, is used only in the first degree, and has no symbolical meaning at all, apparently. In American lodges it is used in all three degrees, and has almost too many meanings. Some of our American teachers - Pike among them - see no meaning in the cable-tow beyond its obvious use in leading an initiate into the lodge, and the possible use of withdrawing him from it should he be unwilling or unworthy to advance.

To some of us this non-symbolical idea and use of the cable-tow is very strange, in view of what Masonry is in general, and particularly in its ceremonies of initiation. For Masonry is a chamber of imagery. The whole Lodge is a symbol. Every object, every act is symbolical. The whole fits together into a system of symbolism by which Masonry veils, and yet reveals, the truth it seeks to teach to such as have eyes to see and are ready to receive it.

As far back as we can go in the history of initiation, we find the cable-two, or something like it, used very much as it is used in a Masonic Lodge today. No matter what the origin and form of the

word as we employ it may be - whether from the Hebrew "Khabel," or the Dutch "cabel," both meaning a rope - the fact is the same. In India, in Egypt and in most of the ancient Mysteries, a cord or cable was used in the same way and for the same purpose.

In the meaning, so far as we can make it out, seems to have been some kind of pledge - a vow in which a man pledged his life. Even outside initiatory rites we find it employed, as, for example, in a striking scene recorded in the Bible (I Kings 20:31,32), the description of which is almost Masonic. The King of Syria, Ben-hada, had been defeated in battle by the King of Israel and his servants are making a plea for his life. They approach the King of Israel "with ropes upon their heads," and speak of his "Brother, Ben-hadad." Why did they wear ropes, or nouses, on their heads?

Evidently to symbolize a pledge of some sort, given in a Lodge or otherwise, between the two Kings, of which they wished to remind the King of Israel. The King of Israel asked: "Is he yet alive? He is my brother." Then we read that the servants of the Syrian King watched to see if the King of Israel made any sign, and, catching his sign, they brought the captive King of Syria before him. Not only was the life of the King of Syria spared, but a new pledge was made between the two men.

The cable-tow, then, is the outward and visible symbol of a vow in which a man has pledged his life, or has pledged himself to save another life at the risk of his own. Its length and strength are measured by the ability of the man to fulfill his obligation and his sense of the moral sanctity of his obligation - a test, that is, both of his capacity and of his character.

If a lodge is a symbol of the world, and initiation is our birth into the world of Masonry, the cable-tow is not unlike the cord which unites a child to its mother at birth; and so it is usually interpreted. Just as the physical cord, when cut, is replaced by a tie of love and obligation between mother and child, so, in one of the most impressive moments of initiation, the cable-tow is removed, because the brother, by his oath at the Altar of Obligation, is bound by a tie stronger than any physical cable. What before was an outward physical restraint has become an inward moral constraint. That is to say, force is replaced by love - outer authority by inner obligation - and that is the secret of security and the only basis of brotherhood.

The cable-tow is the sign of the pledge of the life of a man. As in his oath he agrees to forfeit his life if his vow is violated, so, positively, he pledges his life to the service of the Craft. He agrees to go to the aid of a Brother, using all his power in his behalf, "if within the length of his cable-tow," which means, if within the reach of his power. How strange that any one should fail to see symbolical meaning in the cable-tow. It is, indeed, the great symbol of the mystic tie which Masonry spins and weaves between men, making them Brothers and helpers one of another.

But, let us remember that a cable-tow has two ends. If it binds a Mason to the Fraternity, by the same fact it binds the Fraternity to each man in it. The one obligation needs to be emphasized as much as the other. Happily, in our day we are beginning to see the other side of the obligation - that the Fraternity is under vows to its members to guide, instruct and train them for the effective service of the Craft and of humanity. Control, obedience, direction or guidance - these are the three meanings of the cable-tow, as it is interpreted by the best insight of the Craft.

Of course, by Control we do not mean that Masonry commands us in the same sense that it uses force. Not at all. Masonry rules men as beauty rules an artist, as love rules a lover. It does not drive; it draws. It controls us, shapes us through its human touch and its moral nobility. By the same method, by the same power it wins obedience and gives guidance and direction to our lives. At the Altar we take vows to follow and obey its high principles and ideals; and Masonic vows are not empty obligations - they are vows in which a man pledges his life and his sacred honor.

The old writers define the length of a cable-tow, which they sometimes call a "cables length," variously. Some say it is seven hundred and twenty feet, or twice the measure of a circle. Others say that the length of the cable-tow is three miles. But such figures are merely symbolical, since

in one man it may be three miles and in another it may easily be three thousand miles - or to the end of the earth. For each Mason the cable-tow reaches as far as his moral principles go and his material conditions will allow. Of that distance each must be his own judge, and indeed each does pass judgment upon himself accordingly, by his own acts in aid of others.

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.IX November, 1931 No.11

FREE AND ACCEPTED

by: Unknown

The origin of these terms, descriptive of Speculative Freemasons, goes back into the very beginnings of the history of the Order; indeed, behind the history of the building Craft in Europe. But it is only in keeping with the antiquity of the teachings of Freemasonry. Many of our symbols and their meanings go back to the very childhood of the race. Through these a direct relationship may be traced in mind, heart and ideal; if not in written document, to such diverse ages and places as China four thousand years ago, the priesthood of ancient Egypt and the Jews of the Captivity. For purposes of understanding the genesis of the word "Free" as coupled with Mason, it will suffice to begin with the Roman "Collegia", orders or associations of men engaged in similar pursuits. Doubtless their formation was caused partly by the universal desire for fellowship and association, particularly strong in Rome, in which the individual was so largely submerged for the good of the Empire, and partly by economic necessity, just as labor unions are formed today. These "Collegia" speedily became so prominent and powerful that Roman Emperors attempted to abolish the right of free association. In spite of edicts and persecutions, however, the "Collegia" continued to exist.

The Colleges of Architects, however, for a time were sanctioned even after others were forbidden. They were too valuable to the State to be abolished, or made to work and meet in secret. They were not at this time "called" Freemasons, but they were "free" - and it is the fact and not the name which is here important. Without architects and builders, Rome could not expand, so the colleges of Architects were permitted to regulate their own affairs and work under their own constitutions, free of restrictions which attempted to destroy the "collegia."

Then, as now, "three" were necessary to form a College (no Masonic lodge can meet with less than three); the College had a "Magister" or Master, and two Wardens. There were three orders or degrees in the College which to a large extent used emblems which are a part of Freemasonry. Roman sarcophagi show carvings of square, compasses, plumb, level and sometimes columns.

Of the ceremonies of the "Collegia" we know little or nothing. Of their work we know much, and of their history enough to trace their decline and fall. The Emperor Diocletian attempted to destroy the new religion, Christianity, which threatened so much which seemed to the Romans to make Rome, Rome. Many members of the Colleges of Architects were Christians - a very natural result, since these associations had taught and believed in brotherhood because of a common Father, the members of the College or Architects took for their own his doctrine, so strangely familiar.

Persecution, vengeance, cruelty followed; this is not the place to go deeply into the story of the four Masons and the Apprentice who were tortured to death, only to become the Four Crowned Martyrs and Patron Saints of later builders and the Masons of the Middle Ages. Suffice it that the College of Architects were broken up and fled from Rome. Comes a gap which is not yet bridged. Between the downfall of Rome and the rise of Gothic architecture in Europe we know little of what happened to the builders' "Collegia." It is here that we come to the fascinating theory of the Comacines - that some of the expelled builders found refuge on the Island of Comacina in Lake Como, and, through generation after generation, kept alive the traditions and secrets of the art until such time as the world was again ready for the Master Builders. All this is fascinatingly set forth in several books, best known of which is Leader Scott's "Cathedral Builders, the Story of a Great Masonic Guild." The author says that the Comacine Masters "were the link between the classic "Collegia" and all other art and trade guilds of the middle ages. They were Freemasons because they were builders of a privileged class, absolved from taxes and servitude, and free to travel about in times of feudal bondage. During the Middle Ages and the rise of Gothic Architecture, we find two distinct classes of Masons; the Guild Masons who, like the Guild Carpenters, Weavers or Merchants were local in character and strictly regulated by law, and the Freemasons, who traveled about from city to city as their services were needed to design and erect those marvelous churches and cathedrals which stand today inimitable in beauty.

It may not be affirmed as a proved fact that the Freemasons of the Middle Ages were the direct descendants through the Comacine Masters of the Colleges of Architects of Rome, but there is too much evidence of a similar structure, ideal and purpose and too many similarities of symbol, tool and custom to dismiss the idea merely because we have no written record covering the period between the expulsion from Rome and the beginning of the Cathedral building age.

However this may be, the operative builders and designers of the Cathedrals of Europe were an older order than the Guild Masons; it is from these Freemasons - free of the Guild and free of the local laws - that the Masonry of today has come. Incidentally, it may be noted that the historian Findel finds the name Freemason as early as 1212 and the name occurs in 1375 in the history of the Company of Masons of the City of London.

The history of the Freemasons through the Cathedral Building Ages up to the Reformation and the gradual decline of the building arts, needs volumes where here are but pages. But it must be emphasized that the Freemasons were far more

than architects and builders; they were the artists, the leaders, the teachers, the mathematicians and the poets of their time.

In their lodges Speculative Masonry grew side by side with their operative art. They were jealous of their Order and strict in their acceptance of Apprentices; strict too, in admitting Apprentices to be Fellows of the Craft, requiring seven years of labor before an Apprentice might make his Master's Piece" to submit to the Master and Wardens of his lodge, when happily, he might become a Fellow and receive "the Mason Word."

No fools built the great Cathedrals of Europe.

Mathematics, architecture, strength of materials, the principle of the arch, proportion, unity, beauty - all had to be practiced by experts to produce these tremendous structures, on which the most modern science and art cannot improve.

It was only natural then, that the Masters desired a high quality of Craftsmanship. Only Apprentices of character and willingness to learn were accepted. Only those who could make a perfect Master's Piece were accepted as Fellows. Doubtless only the most expert and learned of the Fellows could ever hope to be Masters. Then, as now, to secure fine workmen they began early and trained them long. As a workman who was immoral, a drunkard, a gambler, a loose liver could not hope to learn to do good work, or to be trusted with the operative secrets; it was essential that moral precepts and philosophical lessons be incorporated into operative lodge life. Unquestionably the building crafts from the earliest ages - ate, even back of the Roman Collegia - incorporated speculative teachings with operative instructions given to Apprentices. This practice grew and expanded during what may be termed the formative period of the Fraternity. The Cathedral Builders of the Middle Ages must have been a little world unto themselves in the towns in which they worked. They would employ the local Guild Masons for the rough work, but strictly excluded them from their lodge when meetings were held. Doubtless these meetings were frequent, perhaps nightly, to discuss the great work being done.

Young Apprentices, like young men the world over, would skylark and want to have a good time. Their elders would reprove and read them a lesson in a simple parable of the building art. The square, the compasses, the trowel, the chisel, the mallet, the gavel and the setting maul would all be brought into such lessons. And so, through year after year and age after age, the teachings of Speculative Masonry grew. And as is invariably the case the thing which was used as an example to teach, gradually came to symbolize the lesson taught. To be "square" was at first but an essential of a tool and an ashlar. Universally now, a "square man" is an honest one. Trowel and gavel took upon themselves significances far beyond their operative use. Master after Master would add from his store of learning; lesson after lesson would be incorporated with an operative practice, until the Speculative Art and the Operative Craft were, apparently, dependent upon each other.

It is world history that knowledge cannot be kept from those who seek it. By hook or crook, in one way or another, the student will find that which he seeks.

In an age when learning was difficult to get, and association with the educated was hardly to be had outside the church, it was but natural that thoughtful and scholarly men should desire membership among Freemasons.

Other men, thoughtful but not scholarly, would see in the Speculative teachings of the Masons that road to knowledge which was otherwise hard to find. Neither, however, would want to practice operative Masonry, serve seven years apprenticeship or make a Master's Piece. Just how such men accomplished their desire and became "accepted" members of the Order we do not know. Doubtless they had something to bring to, as well as something to get from their operative brethren. But we do know the fact; a place was made for such seekers after the light. Distinguished by the title "accepted" that they might not be confused with "free" Masons, these non-building members encouraged and expanded the speculative side of Masonry.

It is not possible to say when this practice began.

The Regius Poem, the oldest document of Freemasonry (1390) speaks of Prince Edward (twentieth century) as: "Of Speculatyfe he was a Master." Ecclesiasts, desiring to become architects and builders, joined the Order. Lovers of liberty were naturally attracted to a fellowship in which members enjoyed unusual freedom among their fellows.

Gradually the "accepted" or Speculative Freemasons equaled, then outnumbered the operative craftsmen and slowly but surely the Craft came to be what it is today, and has been for more than two centuries, wholly Speculative in character. Through the years, particularly those which saw the decline of great building and coming of the Reformation, more and more became the Accepted Masons and less and less the operative building Freemasons. Of forty-nine names on the roll of the Lodge of Aberdeen in the year 1670, thirty-nine were those of Accepted Masons. Hence our title - Free and Accepted Masons - abbreviated F & A.M. United States Grand Lodges style themselves under several different abbreviations: F. & A.M., F. and A.; A.F. & A.M.; and other variations using the Ampersand (&) in place of the word "and." The District of Columbia still uses F.A.A.M., meaning Free and Accepted Masons, in spite of the possible confusion as to whether the first "A" stands for "and" or "ancient." The variations are accounted for both by difference on origins, some Grand Lodges coming into being with lodges held under the "Ancie-nts" and some from the "Moderns" and by variations due to the errors which are seemingly ineradicable in "mouth to ear" instruction.

But of all of us, regardless of what order we choose for "Ancient," "Accepted," "Free" and "Masons," all are "Free and Accepted."

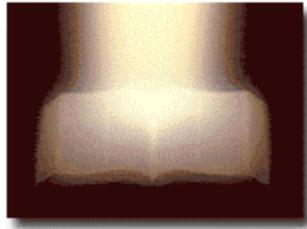
It is one of the glories of the Craft that her historians can trace such derivations into such a long gone past. That Mason is dead of soul, indeed, who cannot thrill to the thought that as a Free and accepted Mason he is kin not only to those ancient brethren of Old England who first began the practice of "accepting" good men because they "were" good men, not because they were builders, but also to the builders of ancient Rome and all the generations which sprang from them,

who were "Free" of the bonds which bound less skillful and esteemed workmen.

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.II March, 1924 No.3

THE HOLY BIBLE

by: Unknown



The history of the Bible in the life and symbolism of Masonry is a story too long to recite here. Nor can any one tell it as we should like to know it. Just when, where, and by whom the teaching and imagery of the Bible were wrought into Freemasonry, no one can tell. Anyone can have his theory, but no one can be dogmatic. As the Craft labored in the service of the Church during the Cathedral-Building period, it is not difficult to account for the Biblical coloring of its thought, even in days when the Bible was not widely distributed, and before the discovery of printing. Anyway, we can take such facts as we are able to find, leaving further research to learn further truth.

The Bible is mentioned in some of the old manuscripts of the Craft long before the revival of Masonry in 1717, as the book upon which the covenant, or oath, of a Mason was taken; but it is not referred to as a Great Light. For example, in the Harleian Manuscript, dated about 1600, the obligation of an initiate closes with the words: "So Help Me God, and the Holy Contents of this Book. " In the old ritual, of which a copy from the Royal Library in Berlin is given by Krause, there is no mention of the Bible as one of the Lights. It was in England, due largely to the influence of Preston and his fellow workmen, that the Bible came to its place of honor in the Lodge. At any rate, in the rituals of about 1760 it is described as one of three Great Lights.

No Mason needs to be told what a great place the Bible has in the Masonry of our day. It is central, sovereign, supreme, a master light of all our seeing. From the Altar it pours forth upon the East, the West, and the South its white light of spiritual vision, moral law, and immortal hope. Almost every name found in our ceremonies is a Biblical name, and students have traced about seventy-five references to the Bible in the Ritual of the Craft. But more important than direct references is the fact that the spirit of the Bible, its faith, its attitude toward life, pervades Masonry, like a rhythm or a fragrance. As soon as an initiate enters the Lodge, he hears the words of the Bible recited as an accompaniment to his advance toward the light. Upon the Bible every Mason takes solemn vows of loyalty, of chastity, and charity, pledging himself to the practice of the Brotherly Life. Then he moves forward from one degree to another, the imagery of the Bible becomes familiar and eloquent and its music sings its way into his heart.

Nor is it strange that it should be so. As faith in God is the corner- stone of the Craft, so, naturally, the book which tells us the purest truth about God is its Altar-Light. The Temple of King Solomon, about which the history, legends, and symbolism of the Craft are woven, was the tallest temple of the ancient world, not in the grandeur of its architecture but in the greatest of the truths for which it stood. In the midst of ignorant idolatries and debasing superstitions the Temple on Mount Moriah stood for Unity, Righteousness, and Spirituality of God. Upon no other foundation can men build with any sense of security and permanence when the winds blow and the floods descend.

But the Bible is not simply a foundation rock; it is also a quarry in which we find the truths that make us men. As in the old ages of geology rays of sunlight were stored up in vast beds of coal, for the uses of man, so in this old book the light of moral truth is stored to light the mind and warm the heart of man.

Alas, there has been more dispute about the Bible than about any other book, making for schism, dividing men in sects. But Masonry knows a certain secret, almost too simple to be found out, whereby it avoids both intolerance and sectarianism. It is essentially religious, but it is not dogmatic. The fact that the Bible lies open upon the Altar means that man must have some Divine Revelation - must seek for a light higher than human to guide and govern him. But it lays down no hard and fast dogma on the subject of revelation. It attempts no detailed interpretation of the Bible. The great Book lies open upon its Altar, and is open for all to read, open for each to interpret for himself. The tie by which our Craft is united is strong, but it allows the utmost liberty of faith and thought. It unites men, not upon a creed bristling with debated issues, but upon the broad, simple truth which underlies all creeds and over-arches all sects - faith in God, the wise Master Builder, for whom and with whom man must work.

Herein our gentle Craft is truly wise, and its wisdom was never more needed than today, when the Churches are divided and torn by angry debate. However religious teachers may differ in their doctrines, in the Lodge they meet with mutual respect and good will. At the Altar of Masonry they learn not only toleration, but appreciation. In its air of kindly fellowship, man to man, they discover that the things they have in common are greater than the things that divide. It is the glory of Masonry to teach Unity in essentials, Liberty in details, Charity in all things; and by this sign its spirit must at last prevail. It is the beautiful secret of Masonry that all just men, all devout men, all righteous men are everywhere of one religion, and it seeks to remove the hoodwinks of prejudice and intolerance so that they may recognize each other and work together in the doing of good.

Like everything else in Masonry, the Bible, so rich in symbolism, is itself a symbol - that is, a part taken for the whole. It is a symbol of the Book of truth, the Scroll of Faith, the Record of the Will of God as man has learned it in the midst of the years - the perpetual revelation of Himself which God has made, and is making, to mankind in every age and land. Thus, by the very honor which Masonry pays to the Bible, it teaches us to revere every Book of Faith in which men find help for today and hope for the morrow. For that reason, in a Lodge consisting entirely of Jews, the Old Testament alone may be placed upon the Altar, and in a Lodge in the land of Mohammed the Koran may be used. Whether it be the Gospels of the Christian, the Book of the Law of the Hebrew, the Koran of the Mussulman, or the Vedas of the Hindu; it everywhere Masonically conveys the same idea - symbolizing the Will of God revealed to man, taking such faith and vision as he has found into a great fellowship of the seekers and finders of the truth.

Thus Masonry invites to its Altar men of all faiths, knowing that, if they use different names for the "Nameless One of an Hundred Names," they are yet praying to the one God and Father of all; knowing also, that while they read different volumes, they are in fact reading the same vast Book of Faith of Man as revealed in the struggle and tragedy of the race in its quest of God. So that, great and noble as the Bible is, Masonry sees it as a symbol of that eternal, ever-unfolding Book of the Will of God which Lowell described in memorable lines:

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves, nor leaves of stone;
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Text of despair or hope, of joy or moan,
While swings the sea, while mists the mountain shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the Prophets' feet the nations sit.

None the less, while we honor every Book of Faith in which have been recorded the way and Will of God, with us the Bible is supreme, at once the mother-book of our literature, and the master-

book of the Lodge. Its truth is inwrought in the fiber of our being, with whatsoever else of the good and the true which the past has given us. Its spirit stirs our hearts, like a sweet habit of the blood; its light follows all our way, showing us the meaning and worth of life. Its very words have in them memories, echoes, and overtones of voices long since hushed, and its scenery is interwoven with the holiest associations of our lives. Our father and mothers read it, finding in it their final reasons for living faithfully and nobly, and it is thus a part of the ritual of the Lodge and the Ritual of Life.

Every Mason ought not only to honor the Bible as a great Light of the Craft; he ought to read it, live it, love it, lay its truth to heart and learn what it means to be a man. There is something in the old Book which, if it gets into a man, makes him both gentle and strong, faithful and free, obedient and tolerant, adding to his knowledge virtue, patience, temperance, self-control, brotherly love, and pity. The Bible is as high as the sky and as deep as the grave; its two great characters are God and the soul, and the story of their romance. It is the most human of books, telling us the half-forgotten secrets of our own hearts, our sins, our sorrows, our doubts, our hopes. It is the most Divine of Books, telling us that God has made us for himself, and that our hearts will be restless and lonely until we learn to rest in Him whose will is our peace.

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. " Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the Prophets. " "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted by the world. " "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.IV February, 1926 No.2

LESSER LIGHTS

by: Unknown

When an initiate is first brought into the light in a Masonic Lodge, the radiance come from the Lesser Lights, which form a triangle about the Altar. It seems, at first, rather odd that so great and important a symbol should receive such scant attention in the ritualistic body of Freemasonry.

We are instructed that they are called Lesser Lights, that they are placed in a triangle, that by their light we may see other objects, that they represent the Sun, Moon and Worshipful Master, for certain reasons which are rather briefly explained . . . and that is all! Later on we learn, more by example than by precept, more by custom than by law, that Lesser Lights are always lit when a lodge is opened. Even when their flames do not really burn (have you ever stood at a grave side on a day too windy to permit the flickering candle to send forth its light?) they are constructively burning. They are supposed to be lighted as soon as the lodge is opened, and then the Altar is arranged; to be extinguished after the Altar is disarranged, and the Great Lights displaced. But

nowhere in our ritual are we told much of anything as to why all these things are so; how the Lesser Lights came to be; what their hidden, covered, secret, symbolic meaning is.

And you shall search through many a Masonic volume and tome and find no more light on the Lesser Lights than the ritual gives. Mackey, the great authority, is unusually brief, and beyond drawing a parallel to the use of the seven branched candelabra as described in the Great Light, and stating that their use in Masonry is very old, they appearing in print in references to Masonry in the seventeenth century, adds practically nothing to the ritual explanations.

And yet it could not be possible that so important a symbol could have no more soul than is given in the few words we devote to it. It seems obvious that it is one of those symbols in Freemasonry . . . of which there are so many! . . . which the individual brother is supposed to examine and translate for himself, getting from it what he can, and enjoying what he gets in direct proportion to the amount of labor and thought he is willing to devote to the process of extracting the meaning from the outer covering.

Let us dig a bit together; labor in company is lightened always; a burden shared is a burden halved!

Immediately after the Lesser Lights are named, our attention is directed to the fact that they are in a triangle about the Altar. In some Jurisdictions they are closely about the Altar; in others, one is placed at each of the stations of the three principal officers.

In some lodges the three Lesser Lights form a right, in others an equilateral; in others an isosceles triangle. What is uniform through out the Masonic World is the triangular formation about the Altar; what is different is the shape and size of the triangle. Of course, it is not possible to place three lights to form anything else but a triangle, or a straight line; they cannot be made to form a square or a star. Which brings us to the first place in which to sink our Masonic shovel; why are there three Lesser Lights, and not two or four?

There are a number of reasons. Any thinking brother has already discovered that there is "Three" throughout the whole system of Ancient Craft Masonry; three degrees, three steps, three ancient Grand Masters; and so on. It will be no surprise to recall that three is the first of the great Sacred Numbers of the ancient Mysteries, and that it is the numerical symbol of God. Not, if you please, because God was necessarily considered triune.. While many religions of many ages and peoples have conceived of Divinity as a trinity, the figure three as a symbol of God is far older than any trinitarian doctrine. It comes from the triangle, which is the first possible figure made up of straight lines which is without either beginning or ending. One line, or two lines have ends. They start and finish. The triangle, like the square or the five or more sided figure, has no loose ends. and the triangle is the first of these which can be made; as God was always considered as first; and also as without either beginning or ending, the triangle itself soon became a symbol of Deity.

Sun worship was among the first of religions; let him who knows lay down the facts as to whether sun worship preceded fire worship, or fire worship that of the sun. To us it does not matter. Sun worship is far, far older than any recorded history; it goes back, far back, into the first dim mists which obscure the very first beginnings of intelligence. So it was only natural that the early worshipers should set a light beside their Altar or Holy place and name it for the sun.

Ancient peoples made much of sex. Their two greatest impulses were self-preservation and mating. Their third was protection of children. So enormously powerful were these impulses in primal man, that not all his civilization, his luxury, his complicated and involved life, have succeeded in removing these as the principal mainsprings of all human endeavor. It was natural for the savage worshiper of a shining God in the sky to think he, too, required a mate; especially when that mate was so plainly in evidence; the moon became the Sun's bride by a process of reasoning as plain as it was childlike.

Father, Mother . . . there must be a child, of course.

And that child was mercury, the nearest planet to the sun, the one the God kept closest to him. Here we have the origin of the three Lesser Lights; in earliest recorded accounts of the Mysteries of Eleusis (to mention only one) we find three lights about the Holy Place, representing the Sun, Moon and Mercury.

Albert Pike says: "They are still the three lights of a Masonic Lodge, except that for Mercury, the Master of the Lodge has been absurdly substituted.

Albert Pike was a very great and a very learned man.

To him Freemasonry owes a debt greater, perhaps, than to any other who ever lived; he gave her study, he brought forth her poetry, he interpreted her symbols, he defined her truths, he made plain much that she had concealed. But Pike himself defended the right of Masons to study and interpret the symbols of Freemasonry for themselves. So that it is with no thought of controversy with the immortal dead that many contend that there is no absurdity in Freemasonry taking the ancient lights which symbolized the Sun, Moon and Mercury, and making them stand for the Sun, Moon and Worshipful Master of His Lodge.

For the Sun and Moon give light. While it is true that there is no real "regularity" with which the Moon "Governs" the night . . . since the night gets along just as well without the Moon as with her . . . she does give light when she is present. There is no question that the Sun Governs and Rules the day. And the Sun, of course lives light and life as well.

The Worshipful Master rules and governs his lodge as truly as the sun and Moon rule the day and night. There can be no lodge without a Worshipful Master; he is, in a very real sense, the lodge itself. There are some things he cannot do that the brethren, under him, can do. But, without him the brethren can do nothing, while he, without the brethren's consent or even their assistance, can do much. It is one of the principal functions of the Worshipful Master to disseminate light - Masonic Light - to his lodge. That the duty is as often honored by neglect as by performance has nothing to do with the fact that it is a duty.

So that the inclusion of a symbol of the Worshipful Master, as a giver of light, is to most of us neither fanciful nor absurd, but a logical carrying out of that Masonic doctrine which makes a Master a Giver of Light to his brethren.

The ritual instructs candidates that they behold the Great Lights of Masonry by the illumination of the Lesser Lights. This is an actual fact, but it is also a symbol. The Great Light cannot be read without light; the Square and Compasses cannot be used in the dark; and neither can be understood, nor can we make any use of them for the noble and glorious purposes taught us in Speculative Masonry, without we receive symbolic light, Masonic light from the East; that is, from the Worshipful Master, or those he delegates to bring that "Good and Wholesome Instruction" which is at once his duty and his happiness.

A lesson is taught in the references to regularity of the heavenly luminaries, as guides for the government of a lodge by the worshipful Master. The fact that the Moon is not "Regular" in her attendance upon the sun, or the night, and she does not, in any such sense as does the sun, "govern" that period of darkness in which she appears, in no way detracts from the force of these admonitions. For these phrases are very old, and go back to a time when men knew much less of astronomy than they do today; to a time when the moon, in popular belief, had much greater powers than she actually possesses. We know the moon to have almost no effect upon the earth, as far as our lives are concerned, save as she makes the tides. Our ancient brethren believed her light to be full of weird and wonderful powers; "Moon-Struck" and "Lunatic" (from luna, the moon) are symbol words of these ancient and now exploded beliefs. Less than two hundred years ago, many crimes, misdemeanors, beneficent influences and beautiful actions were ascribed to the moon; things evil had to be done "in the dark of the moon;" witches were supposed to ride in moonlight; dogs bayed at the moon because by its light they could see what was hidden from

mortal eyes; sheeted ghosts preferred moonlight to star light; incantations were never properly recited unless in the moonlight, and the moon gave or withheld crops, influenced the weather and, when eclipsed, foretold disaster.

With such a body of belief it is not surprising that the moon was considered, even by the educated, to have "governing" powers, whence, probably, her inclusion with such abilities into our ritual.

That we know better is in no sense antagonistic to our use of the old, old phrase in our ceremonies. We know better about many things. The knowledge of the art of architecture as set forth in the Middle Chamber lecture would get no one a job as office boy in a builder's office today. Our penalties, never enforced by Masons, are wholly symbolic. We have many other ways of transmitting intelligence today which are not included in a list of ways of writing and printing. But we love and repeat the old ritual because it is old; because it is a bond with those who have gone this way before us, because it is the time-tried and well-trusted way of making Masons, and we would not alter it; no, not for any modern phrases, no matter how deep in erudition they were steeped.

And so we continue to have our moon "govern" the night, and do it "regularly," too, finding in this a bond with other men of other times something dear and precious, none the less that the words portray only a fancy.

Indeed, the whole matter of the Lesser Lights is such a bond, and such a fancy. It would be far more accurate if we repeated "The Lesser Lights represent the Sun,, the Earth and the Moon. As the sun, in its gravity, causes the earth to revolve around it in three- hundred and sixty-five and a fraction days, and the moon revolves about the earth in approximately twenty-eight days, so the earth is never without government and light, as all lodges should also be."

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.V December, 1927 No.12



THE LODGE
by: Unknown

"God hath made mankind one vast Brotherhood, Himself their Master, and the World His Lodge." Out of an old, dark abyss a whirling fire-mist emerged, and the world was made. Ages afterwards a race of men began to walk about on its surface and ask what it means. Dimly aware that things are more than they seem to be, man sought in the order of nature and in the depths of his own being for a clue to the questions which haunted his mind: What is the world? How did it come to be? Why does it exist? Has it a Mind, a Purpose, a Plan? Why is man here? What is he sent to do and be? What is life for? What is its meaning, its duty, its hope? Is death the end? Where does man go when he falls into a still, strange sleep, and does not wake up?

Such faith as man won from the mystery of life, such truth as he learned by living, he set forth in sign and symbol, in sacred rite and ceremony, in the Temple and the Lodge. For, next to the Home and the House of Prayer, the Lodge is the oldest Shrine of humanity - so ancient is the idea and art of initiation, as far back as the earliest ages. Rituals, if not the oldest records of the race, show us man the mystic, telling himself the truth until it is real and vivid, seeking to lift his life into higher rhythm of reality .

The men's house was the center of tribal society, the place where youth was tried, trained, and taught the secret lore of the race. Its rites were crude - often, no doubt, cruel - as all things were in the beginning; but their intent was to test men before intrusting to them treasures which had cost so much and must not be lost. Always the crowning rite of initiation was a drama of the immortal life, revealing man undefeated by death, keeping his hidden treasure - by virtue of that in him which has never accepted utter identity with outward force and fact.

Ages later, by the same mystic insight, the art of initiation was linked with the art of building. Back of this blending of two arts lay the truth that the life of man must reproduce the law and order of the world in which he lives. So every Temple became a symbol of the world - its floor the earth, its roof the heavens; and every ritual repeated the life and death of man - showing the passage of the soul through nature to Eternity. How impressive it is uniting a truth so old that it is easily overlooked and an insight so simple that men forget its sublimity.

If not by direct historical descent, at least by spiritual affinity the same truth and insight are united in the moral art of Masonry, in which the Lodge is a symbol of the world and the ritual the drama of the life of man. Such an insight is as valid today as it was ages ago, though our idea of the shape of the world - no longer a cube, but a globe - has altered; since its normal order abides, and man must learn to live in harmony with it, building upon the Will of God by His help and in His name.

The world is a Lodge in which man is to learn the Brotherly Life. So Masonry reads the mystery of the world and finds its purpose, its design, its prophecy. It is a simple faith, a profound philosophy, and a practical way of life. How to live is the one matter, and he will wander far without learning a better way than is shown us in the Lodge. Still less may one hope to find an atmosphere more gentle for the growth of the best things, or a wiser method of teaching the truth by which man is inspired and edified.

In the days of Operative Masonry, a Lodge was a hut or a shed, of a temporary kind, near the place where the work was carried on. It was variously used as an office, a storeroom, or a place where the workmen ate and slept together, as we read in the Fabric Rolls of New York Minister, in orders issued to the Craft in 1352. Not unnaturally, in time the name of the room came to describe the associations and meetings of the men using the Lodge Room; and they were called the Lodge. Hence, our habit of speaking of the Fraternity itself as a Lodge, and so it is, since in its symbolic world men are built together in love.

At one time the Tracing Board, as it is called in England, was known as the "Lodge;" as when Preston tells how "The Grand Master," attended by his officers, form themselves in order round the Lodge, which is placed in the center, covered with white satin." Again, in the Book of Constitutions, 1784, we read of "Four Tylers carrying the Lodge covered with white satin;" as if it were a mystic Ark of the Covenant, as used in certain Masonic ceremonies. Such a use of the

word has passed away, or well nigh so, along with the practice. For us the Lodge is the world, and some trace the word Lodge back to the Sanskrit word "Loga," meaning the world. However that may be, manifestly it goes back to the days when men thought the world was square, and to live "On the Square" meant to be at one with the order of the world. Also, since the Lodge is "The Place where Masons Work," its form, position, dimension, covering and support are likewise symbolical of the conditions in which man lives, going forth to his labor until in the evening, and the night cometh when no man can work. As Goethe put it in his poem:

The Mason's ways are
A Type of Existence,
And his persistence
Is as the days are
Of men in this world.

By the same token, if the Lodge is the world, so initiation is a symbol of our birth into it. But it is only an analogy, and may be pressed too far, as is often done, leaving it cloudy with ideas which have no place in it. For the Masonic initiation is a symbol of our birth out of the dim sense life into a world of moral values and spiritual vision; out of the animal into the angel. Not to see that it is a moral and spiritual birth, in which the hoodwinks of the flesh are removed, is to miss both its meaning and its beauty.

Back of the art and practice of initiation, in the olden time, lay a profound idea, never better told than in the Hymn of the Soul in an old book called the "Acts of Thomas." The story is told by the Soul itself, of its descent from the house of its Father, to Egypt to fetch a Pearl away. Before it left its heavenly home, its White Robe and Scarlet Tunic were removed, and it went naked into a far country in quest of a Pearl of great price, to find which all else might well be given up.

In Egypt the Soul eats of the food of the land, forgets its Father and serves the King of Egypt - forgets the Pearl, as if overcome by a deep sleep. But a Letter is sent to it by its Father, bidding it remember that it is the son of a King, and to call to mind the Pearl and the White Robe left above. The Letter flies in the likeness of an eagle. The Soul awakes, seizes the Pearl, strips off its filthy, unclean dress, and sets off eastward and homeward, guided by the light of the Letter, from Egypt, past Babylon to Maisham on the sea.

There the Soul meets the White Robe, and because it only dimly remembered its fashion - for in its childhood it had left the Robe in its Father's House - the Robe became a mirror of the Soul. "All over it the instincts of knowledge were working." The White Robe speaks and tells how it grew as the Soul grew, and then of itself it invests the Soul with that of which it had been divested - a perfect fit - and the Soul returns to its Home, like the Prodigal Son in the parable of Jesus. Thus our initiation is a return of the Soul, along a dim, hard path, led by a Shining Letter hung up in the Lodge; the discovery by man of who he is, whence he came, and whose son he is.

So understood, the ritual of initiation is a drama of the Eternal Life of man, of the awakening of the Soul and the building of character. For character is built of thoughts, and by thought, and the Lodge offers both a place of quiet and purity and a method by which the work may be carried on, isolated from the confusions of the ordinary life. Sect and party, creed and strife are excluded. Not out of the world, but separate from it, "close tyed," in a chamber of moral imagery, and in the fellowship of men seeking the good life, we may learn what life is and how to live it.

Outside, angry passion and mad ambition fill the earth with their cries. At the door of the Lodge, vice, hate, envy and the evil that work such havoc are left behind. Inside, the Faith that makes us men is taught by old and simple symbols, and the Moral Life becomes as real and vivid as it is lovely. Where, in all the world, is there another such shrine of peace and beauty where men of all ranks, creeds and conditions are drawn together, as brothers of one mystic tie, dedicated and devoted to the best life!

Here, in the Lodge, in a world of the ideal made real, we meet upon the Level and part upon the

Square, sons of one Father, brothers in one family, united by oath and insight and a Love which is Pearl of great value, seeking a truth that makes is fraternal. Outside the home of the House of God there is nothing finer than this old, far embracing Lodge of ennobled humanity.

No hammer fell, nor ponderous axes rung, Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung.

"SO MOTE IT BE"

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.27 October, 1927 No.10

THE NORTHEAST CORNER

by: Unknown

Surely no Mason ever forgets the moment when he is placed in the Northeast Corner of the Lodge, and hears the Master say, that he there stands a just and upright Mason. It is one of the thrills along the great journey of initiation, a point at which the idea and purpose of Masonry begin to take shape in the mind.

A thrill of joy is felt in the Lodge, not only by the initiate but by the Master and the Brethren, as if a son had been born, or a new friend found; a note of exaltation on having arrived at so happy a climax, as when a pilgrim pauses to rejoice in so much of a journey done. And naturally so, because the Corner Stone of a Mason's life has been laid.

Always, as far back as we can go in the story of mankind, the laying of a Cornerstone has been a happy event. It has always been celebrated with solemn and joyous rites. It is the basis of a new building, the beginning of a new enterprise; and the good will of God is invoked to bless the builders and the building.

How much more, then, should it be so when a man takes the first step out of Darkness toward the Light, and begins the adventure of a new life! More important by far than Temple or Cathedral is the building of a moral character and a spiritual personality. Stones will rot and Temples crumble under the attrition of time, but moral qualities and spiritual values belong to the Eternal Life.

The initiate stands in the Northeast Corner on a foundation of Justice, the one virtue by which alone a man can live with himself or with his fellows. Without it no structure will stand, in architecture, as Ruskin taught us, much less in morals. In the Rite of Destination he has learned to love Mercy, and at the Altar of Obligation prayer has been offered, in fulfillment of the words of the prophet:

"He hath Shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!"

In the Northeast Corner the initiate stands midway between the North, the place of darkness, and the East, the place of Light, whence healing, revealing rays fall upon the life of man. Such is his position, symbolically, and rightly so. He is an Entered Apprentice, a beginner in the Masonic Art, neither in the Dark nor in the Light. He has come out of the Darkness, his face set toward the Light, and his quest is for more Light, with yet much light to dawn upon him. What is life for? To live, of course; and only by living it do we learn what it is for, much less how live it. It is ever an adventure, a new adventure for each man, despite the millions that have lived before us, since, as Keats said about poets, "We Never Really Understand Fine Things Until We Have Gone The Same Steps As The Author. " Only by living can we learn what life is, verifying the wisdom of ages alike by our virtues and our vices.

Yet it means much to have the wisdom learned by ages of living taught us in symbols and told us in a story, as it is taught us and told us in a Masonic Lodge. It brings to us the truth tried by time

and tragedy, and the principles wrought out and discovered by the race in its long experience. It gives us a plan, a picture, a prophecy, and the fellowship of men going the same road.

The initiate stands Erect in the Northeast Corner, upright and ready to receive his working tools, a son of the Light, himself a living stone to be polished. What is more wonderful, what more beautiful, than Youth standing erect before God - not cringing, not groveling - seeking the Light by which to make its way through the dim country of this world to the City that hath foundations! Truly, our Masonry is the organized poetry of faith!

But why the Northeast Corner? Would not some other corner of the Lodge do as well? Perhaps it would, but Masonry is very old, going back into a time far gone, when ordinary things had meanings, real or imaginary, beyond their practical use. Such a question opens a window into things quaint, curious, and even awful; and all sorts of explanations are offered us, some of which may be named.

For example, Albert Pike spread out the map of the old world of the East - the mystical territory whence so many of our symbols and legends have come - and found that "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. "

Well, what of it, interesting though it may be as a fact of long ago, if a fact it is? What truth can it teach us to our profit, beyond the suggestion that the House of Initiation took the form of the world as it was then mapped in the mind, and that the procession of initiation follows the line of march of a conquering race? It may be valuable, as preserving the dim outline of ancient history - but not otherwise.

Another student, seeking the secret of Masonry in solar symbolism and mythology, looks at the same map of the Eastern World, in the frame of an Oblong Square, studying the movements of the Sun from season to season. He finds that the point farthest North and the point farthest South on the map mark the Summer and Winter Solstices, respectively. In other words, the Northeast Corner of the World, as then mapped, is the point in the annual course of the Sun when it reaches the extreme northern limit; the longest day in the year, which in Masonry we dedicate to St. John the Baptist, the Prophet of righteousness.

Then, turning to the history of religion, he finds, not unnaturally, many rites of primitive peoples - magical rituals and Midsummer Night Dreams - celebrating the Summer Solstice. Many hints and relics of the old Light Religion are preserved for us in Masonry - rays of its faiths and fictions - one of them being that the Northeast Corner of the Universe, and so of the Lodge of which it is a symbol, is the seat of the Sun-God in the prime of his power.

So, too, the Northeast Corner, as the throne of God in hour of his majesty, became a place unique in the symbols of man, having special virtue and sanctity. As we read in the Institutes of Menu: "If he has any incurable disease, let him advance in a straight path towards the invincible northeast point, feeding on water and air till his mortal frame totally decays, and his soul becomes united with the Supreme. " What more appropriate a place from which to start an edifice, or to place an Apprentice as he begins to build the Temple of his Masonic life?

Also, because of such magical ideas associated with the Northeast Corner, it was a cruel custom for ages to bury a living human being under the corner stone of a building, to mollify the Gods, and, later, as a token of the sacrifice involved in all building. Horrible as the custom was, here no doubt was a crude sense of the law of sacrifice running through all human life, never to be escaped, even by the loftiest souls, as we see on a dark cross outside the city gate.

In the crude ages all things were crude; even the holiest insights took awful shapes of human sacrifice. Life is costly, and man has paid a heavy price for the highest truth. For there is a law of heavenly death by which man advances - the death, that is, of all that is unheavenly within him -

that the purer, clearer truth may rise. Evermore, by a law of dying into life, man grows - dying to his lower, lesser self and releasing the angel hidden within him. Thinking of all these strands of thought and faith and sorrow woven into the symbolism of the Lodge, how can any one watch without emotion as the Apprentice takes his place, upright and eager, in the Northeast Corner. There he stands, against a background of myth, symbol and old sacrifice, erect before God, and one thinks of the great words in the Book of Ezekiel:

"And God said unto me, Son of Man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. " Such is the challenge of God to the manhood of man, asking him to stand erect and unafraid, and commune as friend to friend. Alas, it is not easy to keep the upright posture, physically or morally, in the midst of the years with their blows and burdens. At last, a dark Ruffian lays us low in death, and only the Hand of God, with its strong grip, can lift us from a dead level and set us on our feet forever. So, at least, Masonry teaches us to believe and live:

Lord, I believe
Man is no little thing
that, like a bird in spring,
Comes fluttering to the Light of Life,
And out of the darkness of long death.
The breath of God is in him,
And his age long strife
With evil has a meaning and an end.
Though twilight dim his vision be
Yet can he see Thy Truth,
And in the cool of evening,
Thou, his friend, Dost walk with him, and talk
Did not the Word take flesh?
Of the great destiny
That waits him and his race.
In days that are to be
By grace he can achieve great things,
And, on the wings of strong desire,
Mount upward ever, higher and higher,
Until above the clouds of earth he stands,
And stares God in the face.
"SO MOTE IT BE "

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.I November, 1923 No.11
THE RITE OF DESTITUTION
by: Unknown

Nothing in Freemasonry is more beautiful in form or more eloquent in meaning than the First Degree. Its simplicity and dignity, its blend of solemnity and surprise, as well as its beauty of moral truth, mark it as a little masterpiece. Nowhere may one hope to find nobler appeal to the native nobilities of a man. What we get out of Freemasonry, as of anything else depends upon our capacity, and our response to its appeal; but it is hard to see how any man can receive the First Degree and pass out of the lodge room quite the same man as when he entered it. What memories come back to us when we think of the time when we took our first step in Freemasonry. We had been lead, perhaps, by the sly remarks of friends to expect some kind of horseplay, or the riding of a goat; but how different it was in reality. Instead of mere play-acting we discovered, by contrast, a ritual of religious faith and moral law, an allegory of life and a parable of those truths which lie at the foundations of manhood. Surely no man can ever forget that hour when, vaguely or clearly, the profound meaning of Freemasonry began slowly to unfold before his mind.

The whole meaning of initiation, of course, is an analogy of the birth, awakening and growth of the soul; its discovery of the purpose of life and the nature of the world in which it is to be lived. The lodge is the world as it was thought to be in the olden times, with its square surface and canopy of sky, its dark North and its radiant East; its center an Altar of obligation and prayer. The initiation, by the same token, is our advent from the darkness of prenatal gloom into the light of moral truth and spiritual faith, out of lonely isolation into a network of fellowships and relationships, out of a merely physical into a human and moral order. The cable tow, by which we may be detained or removed should we be unworthy or unwilling to advance, is like the cord which joins a child to its mother at birth. Nor is it removed until, by the act of assuming the obligations and fellowships of the moral life, a new, unseen tie is spun and woven in the heart, uniting us, henceforth, by an invisible bond, to the service of our race in its moral effort to build a world of fraternal good will.

Such is the system of moral philosophy set forth in symbols in which the initiate is introduced, and in this light each emblem, each incident, should be interpreted. Thus Freemasonry gives a man at a time when it is most needed, if he be young, a noble, wise, time-tried principle by which to read the meaning of the world and his duty in it. No man may hope to see it all at once, or once for all, and it is open to question whether any man lives long enough to think it through - for, like all simple things, it is deep and wonderful. In the actuality of the symbolism a man in the first degree of Freemasonry, as in the last, accepts the human situation, enters a new environment, with a new body of motive and experience. In short, he assumes his real vocation in the world and vows to live by the highest standard of values.

Like every other incident of initiation it is in the light of the larger meanings of Freemasonry that we must interpret the Rite of Destitution. At a certain point in his progress every man is asked for a token of a certain kind, to be laid up in the archives of the lodge as a memorial of his initiation. If he is "duly and truly prepared " he finds himself unable to grant the request. Then, in one swift and searching moment, he realizes - perhaps for the first time in his life - what it means for a man to be actually destitute. For one impressive instant, in which many emotions mingle, he is made to feel the bewilderment, if not the humiliation, which besets one who is deprived of the physical necessities of life upon which, far more than we have been wont to admit, both the moral and social order depend. Then, by a surprise as sudden as before, and in a manner never to be forgotten, the lesson of the Golden Rule is taught - the duty of a man to his fellow in dire need. It is not left to the imagination, since the initiate is actually put into the place of the man who asks his aid, making his duty more real and vivid.

At first sight it may seem to some that the lesson is marred by the limitations and qualifications which follow; but that is only seeming. Freemasons are under all the obligations of humanity, the most primary of which is to succor their fellow man in desperate plight. As Mohammed long ago said, the end of the world has come when man will not help man. But we are under special obligations to our brethren of the Craft, as much by the prompting of our hearts as by the vows we have taken. Such a principle, so far from being narrow and selfish, has the indorsement of the Apostle Paul in his exhortations to the early Christian community. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we read: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." It is only another way of saying that "Charity begins at home," and for Masons the home is the lodge.

So, then, the destitute to which this Rite refers, and whose distress the initiate is under vows to relieve, as his ability may permit, are a definite and specific class. They are not to be confused with those who are poverty-stricken by ,D,d, of criminal tendencies or inherent laziness. That is another problem, in the solution of which Masons will have their share and do their part - a very dark problem, too, which asks for both patience and wisdom. No, the needy which this Rite requires that we aid are "All Poor and Distressed, Worthy Masons, their Widows and Orphans; " that is, those who are destitute through no fault of their own, but as the result of untoward circumstances. They are those who, through accident, disease or disaster, have become unable, however willing and eager, to meet their obligations. Such are deserving of charity in its true Masonic sense, not only in the form of financial relief, but also in the form of companionship, sympathy and love. If we are bidden to be on our guard against impostors, who would use Masonry for their own ends, where there is real need , our duty is limited only by our ability to help, without injury to those nearest to us.

A church, it be worthy of the name, opens its doors to all kinds and conditions of folks, rich and poor alike, the learned and unlearned. But a lodge of Masons is different, alike in purpose and function. It is made up of picked men, selected from among many, and united for unique ends. No man ought to be allowed to enter the Order unless he is equal to its demands, financially as mentally and morally able to pay its fees and dues, and to do his part in its work of relief. Yet no set of men, however intelligent and strong, are exempt from the vicissitudes and tragedies of life. Take, for example, Anthony Sayer, the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England. Towards the end of his life he met with such reverses that he became tiler of Old Kings Arms Lodge No. 28, and it is recorded that he was assisted "out of the box of this Society. " Such a misfortune, or something worse, may overtake any one of us, without warning or resource. Disasters of the most appalling kind befall men every day, leaving them broken and helpless. How often have we seen a noble and able man suddenly smitten down in mid life, stripped not only of his savings but of his power to earn, as the result of some blow no mortal wit could avert. There he lies, shunted out of active life when most needed and most able and willing to serve. Life may any day turn Ruffian and strike one of us such a blow, disaster following fat and following faster, until we are at its mercy. It is to such experiences that the Rite of Destitution has reference, pledging us to aid as individuals and as lodges; and we have a right to be proud that our Craft does not fail in the doing of good. It is rich in benevolence, and it knows how to hide its labors under the cover of secrecy, using its privacy to shield itself and those whom it aids. Yet we are very apt, especially in large lodges, or in the crowded solitude of great cities, to lose the personal touch, and let our charity fall to the level of a cold distant almsgiving. When this is so, charity becomes a mere perfunctory obligation, and a lodge has been known to vote ten dollars for its own entertainment! There is a Russian story in which a poor man asked aid of another as poor as himself: "Brother, I have no money to give you, but let me give you my hand, " was the reply. "Yes, give me your hand, for that, also, is a gift more needed than all others, " said the first; and the two forlorn men clasped hands in a common need and pathos. There was more real charity in that scene than in many a munificent donation made from a sense of duty or pride.

Indeed, we have so long linked charity with the giving of money that the word has well nigh lost its real meaning. In his sublime hymn in praise of charity, in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, St. Paul does not mention money at all, except to say "and although I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. " Which implies that a man may give all the money he possesses and yet fail of that Divine grace of Charity. Money has its place and value, but it is not everything, much less the sum of our duty, and there are many things it cannot do. A great editor sent the following greeting at the New Year: "Here is hoping that in the New Year there will be nothing the matter with you that money cannot cure. For the rest, the law and the prophets contain no word of better rule for the health of the soul than the adjuration: Hope thou a little, fear not at all, and love as much as you can. " Surely it was a good and wise wish, if we think of it, because the things which money cannot cure are the ills of the spirit, the sickness of the heart, and the dreary, dull pain of waiting for those who return no more. There are hungers which gold cannot satisfy, and blinding bereavements from which it offers no shelter. There are times when a hand laid upon the shoulder, "in a friendly sort of way, " is worth more than all the money on earth. Many a young man fails, or makes a bad mistake, for lack of a brotherly hand which might have held him up, or guided him into a wiser way.

The Rite of Destitution! Yes, indeed; but a man may have all the money he needs, and yet be destitute of faith, of hope, of courage; and it is our duty to share our faith and courage with him. To fulfill the obligations of this Rite we must give not simply our money, but ourselves, as Lowell taught in "The Vision of Sir Launfal, " writing in the name of a Great Brother who, though he had neither home nor money, did more good to humanity than all of us put together - and who still haunts us like the dream of a Man we want to be.

"The Holy Supper is kept indeed,
In what so we share with another's need;
Not that which we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me! "

THE RITE OF DISCALCEATION

by: Unknown

A candidate for initiation into a Masonic Lodge often finds odd those requirements which he must fulfill in order to do as have all good brothers and fellows who have gone this way before. Indeed, that preparation often remains a puzzle to him, since the ritualistic explanation is only partial. Not only does the newly made brother, bewildered by the new world into which he is thrust, investigate further to ascertain if all was told him which might have been; to learn a still further meaning to the ceremony and symbol which the passage in Ruth purports to make plain. Those who read the fourth chapter of the immortal Book of Ruth will note especially the seventh and eight verses:

"Now this was the manner in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and this was a testimony in Israel.

"Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for Thee. So he drew off his shoe. "

"Redeeming " here means the taking back or recovery of land or property pledged for a debt;

"changing " refers to the transfer of ownership. As both were then,

as now, matters of importance, it is evident that the plucking off of the shoe, as a pledge of honor and fair dealing, was of equal importance, comparable with our swearing to our signatures to documents before a Notary Public, Note that "to confirm all things a man plucked off his shoe. . . " not his "Shoes. " Taking off one and handing it to him with whom a covenant was made was a symbol of sincerity. Removing "both " shoes signified quite another thought.

These are separate and distinct symbols - in Freemasonry both are used - and it is wise to distinguish between the two, not to miss the beautiful implications of entering that place which is holy with both feet bare.

The Rite of Discalceation - from the Latin, "discalceatus, " meaning "unshod " - is world wide.

Freemasonry's ritual of the entered Apprentice Degree refers to the passage in Ruth. In the Master's Degree the reference is not verbal but an act which differs in meaning from that in the first degree.

In all probability Freemasonry takes this symbol from other sources than the Old Testament; obviously any system of teaching which is the result of the coming together of a thousand faiths, philosophies, rites, religions, guilds and associations, must have received so common a symbol from more than one source, although the Great Light does contain it. In the Old Testament are several passages which make removal of shoes quite a different gesture than that described in the passage from Ruth.

Exodus (III:5) states: "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. "

In Joshua (V:15) we find: "And the Captain of the Lord's Host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. "

Ecclesiastes (V:1) reads: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. "

The association of the removal of footwear when treading holy ground is a fairly obvious symbol. Sandals or other footwear were used to protect, not the ground, but the feet, both from injury and from filth. To wear such protections in holy places, by inference stated that the holy place was harmful to feet, or was dirty! It is similar in thought-content to the world wide custom of men removing the hat in church. The Knight removed his helmet in the presence of those he did not fear. He was safe in church; the removal of his protection

against a blow was his acknowledgment that in a sanctuary not even an enemy would assail him.

We know the custom was wide spread, not confined to Israel; from many sources. Thus, Pythagoras instructed his disciples to "offer sacrifices with thy shoes off. " In all the eastern religious edifices the worshipper removes his shoes in order not to defile the temple with that which touches the profane earth. Maimonides, expounder of ancient Jewish law, says: "It was not lawful for a man

to come into the mountain of God's home with his shoes on his feet, or with his staff, or in his working garments, or with dust on his feet. " The custom was found in Ethiopia, ancient Peru, the

England of the Druids. Adam Clark thought the custom so general in the nations of antiquity that he quoted it as one of the thirteen proofs that the whole human race descended from one family. The Rite of discalceation becomes the more beautiful as we progress through the degrees. At first it is only a voluntary testimony of sincere and truthful intentions; later it is an act of humility, signifying that he who removes his shoes knows that he enters that which must not be defiled by anything unworthy.

The word "humility " must be strictly construed that it be not confused with its derivative, "humiliation. "

He who is "humble " but acknowledges supremacy in another, or the greatness of a power or principle; he who is "humiliated " is made to feel unworthy, not in reverence to that which is greater than he, but for the personal aggrandizement of the humiliator. A man removes his hat upon entering a home, in the presence of women, or in a church, not as a symbol of humility, but of reverence. The worshipper removes his shoes on entering a holy place for the same reason.. He who walks "neither barefoot nor shod " offers mute testimony - even though, as yet uninstructed, he knows it not - that he is sincere. Who walks with both feet bare, signifies that he treads upon that which is hallowed.

Freemasonry does not stress in words this meaning of the Rite of Discalceation for very good reasons; throughout our system the explanation of our rites concerns always the simplest aspect. The fathers of our ritual were far too wise in the ways of the hearts of men to teach the abstruse first, and go then to the east. Rather did they begin with that which is elementary; then, very often , our ritual leaves the initiate to search further for himself, if he will. It is Freemasonry's recognition that man values most that for which he has to labor.

But it is the less stressed meaning of the Rite which is of the greater importance. He is the better Freemason and the happier who digs for himself in the "rubbish of the Temple " to uncover that which is gloriously buried there.

Is proof necessary, that behind the tiled door of any open Lodge is a holy place? here it is! Freemasons teach that the Great Light is "dedicated to God, as the inestimable gift of God to men for the rule and guide of his faith . . . "

In the Great Light we read (Matthew XVIII:20) "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them. "Every Masonic Lodge is opened and closed in the name of God.

According to his promise, therefore, no Lodge meets without the Great Architect being "in the midst of them. "

Consequently, the Lodge is Holy Ground.

This being so, it may well be asked why all Freemasons do not remove their shoes when entering Lodge?

"Once a Freemason, always a Freemason. " No Lodge member is required to repeat the obligations he once assumed, on every occasion at which he is present when a degree is being conferred. But it is well understood that the obligation is binding upon him for life. Every time he follows the old, old words in his mind, he re-obligates himself. Whenever he sees a candidate initiated, consciously or unconsciously he himself is again initiated. Having once been taught that a candidate is prepared in a certain way because of a certain meaning in that preparation, it is unnecessary to inconvenience him every time he comes to Lodge. If he is again so prepared, in his heart, he fulfills all the outward requirements.

While the promise and the fulfillment "makes " the Lodge holy ground, it is "kept " holy only if those who form it and conduct it, so revere it. Stone Masons erect a Temple to God, ministers dedicate it and worshippers consecrate it; but a desecrating hand, as in war, may unroof it, use it as a stables, or make of it a shambles.

Mackey beautifully put the thought of the consecration holiness of a lodge:

"The Rite of Discalceation is a symbol of reverence. It signifies, in the language of symbolism, that the spot which is about to be approached in this humble and reverential manner is consecrated to some holy purpose. Of all the degrees of Freemasonry, the third degree is the most important and sublime. The solemn lessons which it teaches, the sacred scene which it represents, and the impressive ceremonies with which it is conducted, are all calculated to inspire the mind with feelings of awe and reverence.

Into the holy of holies of the Temple, when the Ark of the Covenant had been deposited in its appropriate place, and the Shekinah was hovering over it, the high priest alone, and on only one

day in the whole year, was permitted, after the most careful purification, to enter with bare feet and to pronounce, with fearful veneration, the tetragrammaton or omnific word.

"And into the Master Mason's Lodge - this holy of holies of the Masonic Temple, where the solemn truths of death and immortality are inculcated - the aspirant on entering should purify his heart from every contamination, and remember, with a due sense of their symbolic application, those words that once broke upon the astonished ears of the old patriarch: 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' "

Holiness is not a thing, but an idea. So far as we know, the beasts of the field reverence no place as holy, for they have no consciousness of God. The sacred words of the Great Light are holy to us for what they teach and mean; because of whence they came. The paper, the leather and the ink which form a Bible are no more holy than the same materials formed into a telephone directory. The stones of which a church is built, the wood from which the pulpit is carved, the metal from which the cross is made are only the familiar stones, trees and minerals used by men for a thousand purposes. The cotton and the dye which form the Star and Stripes are but the fruit of plants.

Book, Temple and Flag are holy to us because of our reverence for the ideas for which they stand. They are holy to us because we make them holy, keep them holy, think of them as holy and cherish them as holy.

So must it be with our Lodges. What is a Lodge? A certain number of brethren; a charter or warrant; the Three Great Lights - and an underlying idea, a faith, a belief, a Mystic Tie never seen of men but the stronger for its intangibility. To many the Lodge is the room in the Temple in which brethren meet; walls of stone or wood or plaster; floor of carpet or linoleum; some seats; an Altar . . . and yet, by common consent of all who believe in the power of the spirit which consecrates when the Lodge is formed, holy because of what it means.

The worshipper in eastern lands removes his shoes before he enters his temple as a symbol that he knows his flesh needs no protection from that which it will there touch; a symbol that he brings not within its precincts any filth which might defile it. The Master Mason, symbolically removing his shoes before entering his Lodge, knows that here he will find that holiness which is in the promise of God unto David, the holiness of the Book on the Altar, the very presence of the Great Architect, through whom the Lodge receives the greatest of His Blessing to man - friendship. But also does he symbolically remove his shoes that he may carry nothing "of mineral or metallic nature " (earth is mineral) into the Lodge to defile it, Men can - and some do - defile their Lodges. He who brings within evil or contentious thoughts of his brethren, defiles it. In more than one Jurisdiction in the world the brethren are asked at every meeting if there be any not at peace with their brethren. If such there are, they are required to retire and return not, until their differences are reconciled, literally carrying out the instructions: "Therefore if thou brings thy gift to the Altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; "Leave there thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come offer thy gift.: (Matthew V:23-24)

The Mason who comes to Lodge to get something from it, rather than to give something to it, may defile it by that selfish attitude. Men get from Freemasonry by giving.

He who brings pride of place and power to his Lodge, and serves only for the empty honor of title or jewel, defiles that which is holy as surely as did those money changers whom the Great Teacher drove from the Temple.

He who assumes to work in his Lodge, but labors carelessly, in a slovenly manner, to the desecration of ceremonies ancient when his ancestors were not yet born, defiles his Lodge by his tacit assumptions that his convenience is of greater importance than the teachings of Freemasonry.

Alas, that so many symbolically wear shoes in the holy place, by the simple process of thinking little of it, attending it seldom, regarding it but as a club or association of men who meet together to pass the time away! Such brethren may indeed have been entered, passed and raised; but, uninspired, uninterested and unhelped, they leave, seldom or never to return. To such as these the Lodge cannot be holy; therefore charitable thought would argue that their failures cannot defile.

Luckily for us all, the majority of Freemasons who are constant attendants at Lodge - the brethren who do the work, carry the load, attend to the charity, form the committees, put on the degrees, go on foot and out of their way to help, aid and assist - the brethren, in other words, who work for

and are content with a Master's Wages - these "do " keep the Lodge holy; these "do " think of the Three Great Lights upon the Altar as the Sanctum Sanctorum; these "do, " indeed, put off their shoes from off their feet, in humble and thankful knowledge that the place in which they stand in holy ground.

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.III April, 1925 No.4

SWADDLING CLOTHES

by: Unknown

You are taught that, as an Entered Apprentice, you are passing through the period of early Masonic youth. As a Fellowcraft, should you attain that higher estate, you will learn your condition then, is emblematic of manhood; while as a Master Mason, if it is your happy fortune ever to be raised to the Light, you will learn that true Freemasonry makes a man sure of a well spent life, and gives him assurance of a glorious immortality.

When newly born into the world, a human baby is the most helpless of all animals. His first tender years are wholly a time of learning; learning to eat, learning to manage his members, learning to walk, learning to make himself understood, learning to understand. The period you, as an Entered Apprentice, must spend before you can receive the degree of Fellowcraft corresponds to these early years of childhood; you must learn to manage your Masonic Members, you must learn to understand Masonic language and to make yourself understood in it.

The Entered Apprentice is more like a child in an institution than like one in a home. In the home the child has the undivided attention of his parents; in the institution he has, necessarily, only the divided attention of those who must mother and father many children, and the help he individually receives is less as the number who claim it is greater. The lodge is an institution; as an Entered Apprentice you will receive careful instruction in the necessary arts of Masonry, in so far as you are prepared to receive them, but, obviously, there can be no coddling, no tender individual attentions to you which are not also given to all other Entered Apprentices of your lodge.

One child stands out above another in its development in an institution because of its inherent brightness, and because of its willingness to study and to learn. As an Entered Apprentice Mason you will stand out above your fellows as you pay strict attention to those brethren who are your instructors, and as you are willing to study and learn. For your monitors, my brother, no matter how great their erudition, and how large their charity and willingness to serve you, can only point for you the path, and give you those elementary instructions in Masonry which are the minimum with which you can walk onward.

Your feet have been set upon a path. In your hands has been thrust the staff of ritual, the bread of knowledge and the water of prayer. With these alone you can proceed up the path until you come to the wall marked "Fellowcraft, " and the straight gate through which you can pass only if you have digested the bread, drunk the water and still have your staff. But you can climb quicker, see more of the beauties by the way, and arrive with greater strength for the next highway upon which you will travel, if you are not content with the least which you if you may take as aids, but demand a greater equipment.

There are books, my brother; many, many books. First, there is what is known as the Monitor of your jurisdiction; a small book which contains all of the ritual of all of the degrees, which may be printed. A careful study of it will recall to your mind much that you heard while receiving your first degree, and suggests many questions to your mind; questions which any thinking candidate must ask, and queries which, answered, will make him a better Entered Apprentice. The answers to many of these questions you will find in many good books on Freemasonry.

Any Entered Apprentice who will read and ponder a good volume which deals with the first degree of Freemasonry, will approach the West Gate for his Fellowcraft degree in a more humble attitude and a more confident heart than he who is satisfied merely with his staff, his bread and his water.

For consider, my brother; Freemasonry is old, very old. No man knoweth just how old, but deep students of the art have gathered unimpeachable evidence; evidence of the character which would be convincing in a court of law, that the principles which underlie Freemasonry and which are taught in its symbolism, go back beyond the dawn of written history. Freemasonry's symbols are found wherever the physical evidences of ancient civilizations are unearthed. Secret orders of all ages, all climes, all peoples, have, independently of each other, sought the Great Truths along the same paths, and concealed what they found in much the same symbols. Freemasonry is the repository of the learning of the ages, a storehouse of the truths of life and death, religion and immortality; aye, even of the truths we know regarding the Great Architect of the Universe, which have been painfully won, word by word and line by line, from the books of nature and of the inquiring mind, by literally thousands of generations of men.

No man has mind big enough, quick enough, open enough to absorb and understand in an evening even the introduction to what Freemasonry knows; not in a month of evenings! No degree, no matter how impressively performed, can possibly take him far along this road. All that the Entered Apprentice degree can do is to point the way, and give you the sustenance by which you may travel. You may travel with your ears closed, and your eyes upon the ground. You will arrive, physically, even as a traveller with bandaged eyes may arrive after a toilsome journey. But to travel thus is not to

learn. And the Freemason who does not learn, what sort of Freemason is he? Pin wearer, only; denying himself the greatest opportunity given to man to make of himself truly one of the greatest brotherhood the world has ever known.

Therefore, my brother entered Apprentice, use the month or more which is given you between this and the Fellowcraft Degree, not only to receive your monitorial instruction and learn, letter perfect, the ritual in which much more is hidden than is revealed, but also to investigate for yourself; to read for your- self; to learn, for yourself, the meaning of some of our symbols and how they came to be.

You will find Masons who will say to you that all of Masonry which any man needs to know is found in the degrees. So will you find those who say to you that all any man needs to know of God or religion is found in the Great Light which rests upon our Holy Altar. But be not discouraged by these, my brother, nor put your faith in the vision of any Mason; the only eyes with which you may truly see are your own; the only faith which is truly valuable to any man, is his own. Reason it out for yourself; every man needs an education in Holy Writ, to expound for him the hidden truths which are in the Great Light, therefore you require some writer or student to expound for you the hidden truths which are in Masonry's Ritual and Symbols. But a legion of devoted men of God have spent thousands of years digging in the Book of Books, and always have they discovered some new gold. With no irreverence, nor any comparison of the fundamentals of Freemasonry with the Bible, it can be said that generations of men have sought in the mountain which is Freemasonry for the gold which is Truth of God, and found it; and that without such patient and delving, the gold could not be seen. Do you then, dig for yourself, but dig by the light of the lamps lit by those who have gone this way before you.

This United States of ours has its ritual; its Declaration of Independence, its Constitution, its Bill of Rights. Doubtless you have read all of these; perhaps in school, you memorized them, as now you must memorize Masonic ritual. But you would not contend that the mere learning by heart of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution ever made any man an authority upon them, nor that the foreigner investigating our institutions for the first time could become a good American merely by such memorization. We require the highest tribunal in all the world, the supreme Court, to interpret to us our own Constitution, and not yet have any of our legislators come to the end of the meanings of those liberties for which we declared when this country first lifted up its head among the nations of the world, and cried the birth cry.

As an Entered Apprentice you are barely born, Masonically. You must learn, my brother, and learn well, if you are to enter into our heritage. That which is worth living, in this world, is worth working for; indeed, as you know from your experience in life, anything which you must not work for, turns soon to ashes in your mouth. Without labor, there can be no rest; without work there can be no vacation; without pain, there can be no pleasure; without sorrow, there is no joy. And equally true it is, that while men do receive the degrees of Masonry at the hands of their brethren, there is no Freemasonry in a man's heart if he has not been willing to sacrifice some time, give some effort, some study, ask some questions. Digest some philosophy, to make it truly his own.

A certain ceremony through which you recently passed not only has the immediate and obvious significance of charity to the deserving; a man may be divested of all wealth to teach him something else than the giving of alms and the succoring of the distressed. If you will suppose yourself marooned upon a desert island, the only man upon land shut in by the sea, you will readily recognize that all the wealth of the Indies might be of less real value to you than a box of matches, a cup of water, a tool of iron. The richest man in the world could gain nothing with his gold if he were forced to live at the poles of the earth. Money is only of value where material things may be obtained by bartering labor. A man may be moneyless and still wealthy, as you might be upon your desert island if you had tools, nails, and materials with which to build yourself a boat in order to make your escape.

So this ceremony, which you have already been taught, was not performed to trifle with your feeling, should make not only a deep and lasting impression on your mind as to charity and giving aid, but should serve to point out to you that Freemasonry's deepest and truest treasures are those of the mind and heart; not to be bought, not to be received as a free gift, not to be found, not to be obtained by you in any way whatsoever except by patient search, and willing, happy labor.

Read, my brother; read symbolism and read a history of Freemasonry; read the Old Charges; read your Monitor. Read, study, and digest; make you own sum of a store of knowledge which is Freemasonry's; make of yourself an Entered Apprentice in the hidden as well as the literal sense of the word.

You are called an "Entered Apprentice " when there has been performed over you and with you, a certain ceremony, but you cannot in reality be "entered " unless you are willing to enter. There is homely truth in many an old saying. The horse who is led to water will only drink if he is thirsty; no man can make him swallow if he will not. Freemasonry, which has conferred upon you the distinction of its First Degree, has brought you through a green pasture and made you to lie down beside a still water of its truth. But there lives not the Grand Master of any Jurisdiction, all powerful in Freemasonry though he is, who can make you drink of those waters; there lives not the man, be he King, Prince or Potentate with no matter what temporal power or what strength of Army or of Wealth, who can force you through the door your brethren have swung wide at your approach.

The pathway is before you. The staff, the bread and the water are in your hand. Whether you will travel blindly and in want, or eagerly and with joy depends only and wholly upon you. And very largely upon what you now do, how soon you emerge from your swaddling clothes and how well you learn will depend the epitaph some day to be written of your memory on the hearts of your fellow lodge members; it is for you to decide whether they will say of you: "Just another lodge member, " or "A True Freemason, a Faithful Son of Light. "

TRESTLE-BOARD AND TRACING-BOARD

by: Unknown

Often confused, the trestle-board and the tracing-board are actually alike only in the similarity of their names. In the Master Mason's Degree we hear, "The three steps usually delineated upon the Master's Carpet, are, etc." "What is this Master's Carpet?" is often asked by the newly-raised Mason. He is in a good Lodge the Master of which can give him an intelligent answer!

Among our movable jewels the trestle-board is mentioned and described last, and with elaboration, but the Entered Apprentice looks long, and often in vain, for a piece of furniture which bears any resemblance to the trestle-board shown on the screen, or pointed out on the chart by the Deacon's rod.

We learn that Hiram Abif entered the Sanctum Sanctorum at high twelve to offer his devotions to Deity, and to draw his designs upon the "trestle-board." On that day when he was found missing there was a holiday in the half-finished Temple, because there were no designs on the trestle-board by which the workmen could proceed. But except in the ritual of the Entered Apprentice Degree, no explanation is given in the Lodge as to what a trestle-board may be.

Therefore it is somewhat confusing to find that the Lodge notice of meetings is sometimes called a Trestle-board and still more so when some Masonic speaker refers to the Great Lights as "The Trestle-board."

The tracing-board is a child on the Master's carpet, which is a descendant of operative designs drawn upon the ground, or on the floors of the buildings used by operative builders for meeting purposes, and during construction hours as what we would term an architect's office.

Early operative builders plans, drawn upon floor or earth, were erased and destroyed as soon as used. When Lodges changed from operative to Speculative, the custom of drawing designs upon the Lodge floor was continued; the "designs" for the Speculative Lodge, of course, were the emblems and symbols for the construction of the Speculative Temple of Character.

From their position such plans became known as Carpets the Master's Carpet, of course was the design made upon the Lodge room floor during the Master's Degree.

Such carpets were drawn with chalk or charcoal. It was the duty of the youngest Entered Apprentice to erase this Carpet after the meeting, using a mop and pail for the purpose. Doubtless this use of chalk and charcoal first suggested to our ritualistic fathers the availability of these materials as symbols. Incidentally, how did it "not" occur to some good brother of the olden days to make a symbol of that mop and pail!

Later it became evident that as no real Masonic secrets were drawn on the Carpet, the essentials of the institution were not disclosed by leaving them where the profane might see them. For convenience, the several symbols of the degrees were then painted on cloth and laid upon the floor; true Carpets now. Still later these Carpets were held erect on easels; in America the chart - in England the Tracing-board - is still a commonplace of Lodge furniture, although the more convenient and beautiful lantern slide is often used in this country where finances and electric light permit.

Old Tracing-boards (charts) are already objects of interest to Masonic antiquarians, and those early ones which follow almost exactly the illustrations in Jeremy Cross' "True Masonic Chart" (1820) are increasingly valuable as the years go by. Charts or Tracing-boards have performed a most valuable service; together with the printed monitors or manuals, they have kept a reasonable uniformity in the exoteric part of American work, thus making for a unity which is sometimes difficult for the newly made Mason to discover when he compares the esoteric work of one Jurisdiction with that of another.

The trestle-board is so entirely different from the tracing-board that it is difficult to understand how so earnest a student as Oliver confounded them. Such mistakes made the most prolific of Masonic writers somewhat doubted as an authority.

"Trestle" comes from an old Scotch word, "trest," meaning a supporting framework. Carpenters use trestles, or "saw horses," to support boards to be sawed or planed. A board across two trestles provided a natural and easy way to display plans. Hence the name trestle-board; a board supported by trestles, on which plans were shown or made.

Mackey observes: "The trestle-board is at least two hundred years old; it is found in Pritchard's "Masonry Dissected," earliest of the exposes of Masonic Ritual. Here it is called "trestle-board," but the object is the same, although the spelling of its name is different.

Symbols differ in relative importance according to the truths they conceal. Eagle and flag are both symbols of American ideals, but the flag is far the greater symbol of the two. The eagle is the American symbol of liberty - the flag, not only of liberty, but also of government of, for and by the people; of equality of opportunity; of free thought; of the nation as a whole. If one disagrees with Mackey and considers the tracing-board a symbol, it is, at most, one of teaching and learning; the trestle-board, on the contrary, has a symbolic content comparable in Freemasonry to that of the flag of the nation.

From the meanest hut to the mightiest Cathedral, never a building was not first an idea in some man's mind. Never a pile of masonry of any pretensions but first a series of drawings, designs, plans. From Mt. St. Albans, newest of the glorious Cathedrals erected to the Most High, to Strassburg, Rheims, Canterbury, Cologne and Notre Dame, all were first drawn upon the trestle-board. Every bridge, every battleship, every engineering work, every dam, tunnel, monument, canal, tower erected by man must first be drawn upon paper with pencil and rule; with square and compasses.

The ancient builders erected Cathedrals by following the designs upon the Master's trestle-board. Where he indicated stone, stone was laid. Where he drew a flying buttress, stone took wings. Where he showed a tower, a spire pointed to the vault. Where he indicated carvings, stone lace appeared.

Speculative Freemasons build not of stone, but with character. We erect not Cathedrals, but the "House Not Made With Hands." Our trestle-board, "spiritual, Moral and Masonic" as the ritual has it, is as important in character building as the plans and designs laid down by the Master on the trestle-board by which the operative workman builds his temporal

building.

The trestle-board of the Speculative Mason, so we are told by the ritual, is to be found in "the great books of nature and revelation." Mackey considers that the Volume of the Sacred Law as the real trestle-board of Speculative Freemasonry. He Says:

"The trestle-board is then the symbol of the natural and moral law. Like every other symbol of the Order, it is universal and tolerant in its application; and while, as Christian Masons, we cling with unfaltering integrity to the explanation which makes the scriptures of both dispensations our trestle-board, we permit Jewish and Mohammedan brethren to content themselves with the books of the Old Testament or Koran. Masonry does not interfere with the peculiar form or development of any one's religious faith. All that it asks is that the interpretation of the symbol shall be in accordance to what each one supposes to be the revealed will of the Creator. But so rigidly is it that the symbol shall be preserved and, in some rational way, interpreted, that it peremptorily excludes the atheist from its communion, because, believing in no Supreme Being - no Divine Architect - he must necessarily be without a spiritual trestle-board on which the designs of that Being may be inscribed for his direction."

Modern scholars amplify Mackey's dictum rather than quarrel with it. The ritual speaks of the great books of nature and revelation, and by "revelation" the Speculative Freemason understands the Volume of Sacred Law. But the great book of nature must not be forgotten when considering just what is and what is not the trestle-board of Freemasonry.

For Nature is the source of all knowledge. Without the "The great Book of Nature" to read, man could not learn, no matter what his power of reasoning and insight might be. All science comes from observation of nature. In the last analysis, all knowledge is science, therefore all knowledge comes from observation of nature. This is true of the abstract as of the concrete. Philosophy, ethics, standards of conduct and the like, are not products of natural evolution, but created by men's minds. They are the flowers of natural philosophy. Few blossoms spring directly from the earth; the flowers grow upon the stalk which come from the ground. Indirectly, all that is beautiful in orchid, rose and violet came from the earth in which the roots of the plant find sustenance. So flowers of the mind are traceable back to observations of nature; had there been no nature to contemplate, man could not have imagined a philosophy to account for it.

Therefore modern Masonic scholarship thinks of the Speculative trestle-board as "both" nature - and by inference, all knowledge. all philosophy, all wisdom and learning; wherever dispersed and however made available - and the Volume of Sacred Law, the "revelation" of the ritual.

All great symbols have more than one meaning. Consider again the Flag of our country, which means no one essential part- liberty or equality or freedom to worship as we wish - but all these and many more besides. The trestle-board is a symbol with more than one meaning - aye, more meanings than "nature and revelation." As each ancient builder had his own trestle-board, on which he drew the designs from which the workman produced in stone the dream in his mind, so each Mason has his own private trestle board, on which he draws the design by which he erects his House No Made With Hands. He may draw it of any one of many designs - he may choose a spiritual Doric, Ionic or Corinthian. He may make his edifice beautiful, useful or merely ornamental. But draw "some" design he must, else he cannot build. And the Freemason who builds not, what kind of a Freemason is he? SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.X June, 1932 No.6

THE APRON

by: Unknown

"An emblem of innocence and the badge of a mason; more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honorable than the Star and Garter, or any other order that can be conferred upon you at this or any future period, by any King, Prince, Potentate, or any other person, except he be a Mason. "

In these few words Freemasonry expresses the honor she pays to this symbol of the Ancient Craft.

The Order of the Golden Fleece was founded by Philip, Duke of Burgundy, in 1429.

The Roman Eagle was Rome's symbol and ensign of power and might a hundred years before Christ.

The Order of the Star was created by John II of France in the middle of the Fourteenth Century.

The Order of the Garter was founded by Edward III of England in 1349 for himself and twenty-five Knights of the Garter.

That the Masonic Apron is more ancient than these is a provable fact. In averring that it is more honorable, the premise "when worthily worn " is understood. The Apron is "more honorable than the Star and Garter " when all that it teaches is exemplified in the life of the wearer.

Essentially the Masonic Apron is the badge of honorable labor. The right to wear it is given only to tried and tested men. Much has been written on these meanings of the symbol, but more has been devoted to trying to read into its modern shape and size - wholly fortuitous and an accident of convenience - a so-called "higher symbolism " which no matter how beautiful it may be, has no real connection with its "Masonic " significance.

So many well-intentioned brethren read into the Masonic Apron meanings invented out of whole cloth, that any attempt to put in a few words the essential facts about this familiar symbol of the Fraternity, either by what is said or left unsaid, is certain to meet with some opposition!

It is not possible to "prove " that George Washington did "not " throw a silver coin across the Rappahannock, or that he did "not " cut down a cherry tree with his little hatchet. Yet historians believe both stories apocryphal.

It is not possible to "prove " that no intentional symbolism was intended when the present square or oblong shape of the Masonic Apron was adopted (within the last hundred and fifty years), nor that the conventionalized triangular flap in "not " an allusion to the Forty- seventh Problem and the earliest symbol of Deity (triangle), nor that the combination of the four and three corners does not refer to the Pythagorean "perfect number " seven. But hard-headed historians, who accept nothing without evidence and think more of evidence than of inspirational discourses, do not believe our ancient brethren had in mind any such symbolism as many scientific writers have stated.

The view-point of the Masonic student is that enough real and ancient symbolism is in the apron, enough sanctity in its age, enough mystery in its descent, to make unnecessary any recourse to geometrical astronomical, astrological or other explanations for shape and angles which old gravings and documents plainly show to be a wholly modern conventionalizing of what in the builder's art was a wholly utilitarian garget.

As Freemasons use it the apron is more than a mere descendant of a protecting garment of other clothing, just as Freemasons are more than descendants of the builders of the late Middle Ages. If we accept the Comancine theory (and no one has disproved it) we have a right to consider ourselves at least collaterally descended from the "Collegia" of ancient Rome. If we accept the evidence of sign and symbol, truth and doctrine, arcane and hidden mystery; Freemasonry is the modern repository of a hundred remains of as many ancient mysteries, religions and philosophies. As the apron of all sorts, sizes and colors was an article of sacred investiture in many of these, so is it in ours. What is truly important is the apron itself; what is less important is its size and shape, its method of wearing. Material and color are symbolic, but a Freemason may be - and has been many - "properly clothed" with a handkerchief tucked about his middle, and it is common practice to make presentation aprons, most elaborately designed and embellished, without using leather at all, let alone lambskin.

Mackey believed color and material to be of paramount importance, and inveighed as vigorously as his gentle spirit would permit against decorations, tassels, paintings, embroideries, etc. Most Grand Lodges follow the great authority as far as the Craft is concerned, but relax strict requirements as to size, shape, color and material for lodge officers and Grand Lodge officers. Even so meticulous a Grand Lodge as New Jersey, for instance, which prescribe size and shape and absence of decoration, does admit the deep purple edge for Grand Lodge officers.

It is a far cry from the "lambskin or white leather apron" of the Entered Apprentice, to such an eye-filling garget as is worn by the grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts - an apron so heavily encrusted with gold leaf, gold lace, gold thread, etc., that the garment must be worn on a belt, carried flat in a case, weighs about ten pounds, and can be made successfully only by one firm and that abroad!

At least as many particular lodges cloth their officers in embroidered and decorated aprons, as those which do not. The Past Master's apron bearing a pair of compasses on the arc of a quadrant, may be found at all prices in any Masonic regalia catalogue. So if, as Mackey contended, only the plain white leather apron is truly correct, those who go contrary to his dictum have at least the respectability of numbers and long custom.

Universal Masonic experience proves the apron to be among the most important of those symbols which teach the Masonic doctrine. The Apprentice receives it through the Rite of Investiture during his first degree, when he is taught to wear it in a special manner. The brother appearing for his Fellowcraft Degree is clothed with it worn as an Apprentice; later he learns a new way to wear it. Finally, as a Master Mason, he learns how such Craftsmen should wear the "badge of a Mason."

That various Jurisdictions are at odds on what is here correct is less important than it seems. Many teach that the Master Mason should wear his apron with corner tucked up, as a symbol that he is the "Master," and does not need to use the tools of a Fellowcraft, but instead, directs the work. As many more teach that the Fellowcraft wears his apron with corner up, as a symbol that he is not yet a "Master," and therefore does not have a right to wear the apron full spread, as a Master Mason should! Into what is "really" correct this paper cannot go; Jeremy Cross, in earlier editions of his "True Masonic Chart" shows a picture of a Master Mason wearing his apron with the corner tucked up.

What is universal, and important, is that all three - Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason - do wear their aprons in different ways. All are Masons, hence wear the badge of a Mason; one has progressed further than another, and therefore wears his apron differently as a sign that he has learned more.

Incidentally, it may be noted that aprons seldom are, but always should be, worn on the outside of the coat, not hidden beneath it. Alas, comfort and convenience - and, in urban lodges, the evening dress of officers and some members - have led to the careless habit of wearing the apron not in full view, as a badge of honor and of service, but concealed, as if it were a matter of small moment. The use of the apron is very old - far older than as a garment to protect the clothing of the operative craftsmen, or to provide him with a convenient receptacle in which to keep his tools.

Girdles, or aprons, were part of the clothing of the Priests of Israel. Candidates for the mysteries of Mithras in Persia were invested with aprons. The ancient Japanese used aprons in religious worship. Oliver, noted Masonic scholar of the last century, no longer followed as a historian but venerated for his research and his Masonic industry, says of the apron:

"The apron appears to have been, in ancient times, an honorary badge of distinction. In the Jewish economy, none but the superior orders of the priesthood were permitted to adorn themselves with ornamented girdles, which were made of blue, purple and crimson; decorated with gold upon a ground of fine white linen; while the inferior priests wore only white. The Indian, the Persian, the Jewish, the Ethiopian and the Egyptian aprons, though equally superb, all bore a character distinct from each other. Some were plain white, others striped with blue, purple and crimson; some were of wrought gold, others adorned and decorated with superb tassels and fringes.

"In a word, though the "principal honor" of the apron may consist in its reference to innocence of conduct and purity of heart, yet it certainly appears through all ages to have been a most exalted badge of distinction. In primitive times it was rather an ecclesiastical than a civil decoration, although in some cases the pron was elevated to great superiority as a national trophy. The Royal Standard of Persia was originally "an apron" in form and dimensions. At this day, it is connected with ecclesiastical honors; for the chief dignitaries of the Christian church, wherever a legitimate establishment, with the necessary degrees of rank and subordination, is formed, are invested with aprons as a peculiar badge of distinction; which is a collateral proof of the fact that Freemasonry was originally incorporated with the various systems of Divine Worship used by every people in the ancient world. Freemasonry retains the symbol or shadow; it cannot have renounced the reality or substance."

Mackey's dictum about the color and the material of the Masonic apron, if as often honored in the breach as in the observance, bears rereading. The great Masonic scholar said:

The color of a Freemason's apron should be pure unspotted white. This color has, in all ages and countries, been esteemed an emblem of innocence and purity. It was with this reference that a portion of the vestments of the Jewish priesthood was directed to be white. In the Ancient Mysteries the candidate was always clothed in white. "The priests of the Romans," says Festus, "were accustomed to wear white garments when they sacrificed." In the Scandinavian Rites it has been seen that the shield presented to the candidate was white. The Druids changed the color of the garment presented to their initiates with each degree; white, however, was the color appropriate to the last, or degree of perfection. And it was, according to their ritual, intended to teach the aspirant that none were admitted to the honor but such as were cleansed from all impurities both of body and mind. "In the early ages of the Christian church a white garment was always

placed upon the catechumen who had been newly baptized, to denote that he had been cleansed from his former sins, and was henceforth to lead a life of purity. Hence, it was presented to him with this solemn charge:

"Receive the white and undefiled garment, and produce it unspotted before the tribunal of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you may obtain eternal life. "

"From these instances we learn that white apparel was anciently used as an emblem of purity, and for this reason the color has been preserved in the apron of the Freemason.

"A Freemason's apron must be made of Lambskin. No other substance, such as linen, silk or satin could be substituted without entirely destroying the emblematical character of the apron, for the material of the Freemason's apron constitutes one of the most important symbols of his profession. The lamb has always been considered as an appropriate emblem of innocence. Hence, we are taught, in the ritual of the First Degree, that "by the lambskin, the Mason is reminded of the purity of life and rectitude of conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe forever presides. "

Words grow and change in meaning with the years; a familiar example is the word "profane " which Masons use in its ancient sense, meaning "one not initiated " or "one outside the Temple. " In common usage, profane means blasphemous. So has the word "innocence " changed in meaning. Originally it connoted "to do no hurt. " Now it means lack of knowledge of evil - as an innocent child; the presence of virginity - as an innocent girl; also, the state of being free from guilt of any act contrary to law, human or Divine.

"An Emblem of Innocence " is not, Masonically, "an emblem of ignorance. " Rather do we use the original meaning of the word, and make of the apron an emblem of one who does no injury to others. This symbolism is carried out both by the color and material; white has always been the color of purity, and the lamb has always been a symbol of harmlessness and gentleness. Haywood says:

"The innocence of a Mason is his gentleness, chivalrous determination to do no moral evil to any person, man or woman, or babe; his patient forbearance of the crudeness and ignorance of men, his charitable forgiveness of his brethren when they willfully or unconsciously do him evil; his dedication to a spiritual knighthood in behalf of the value and virtues of humanity by which alone man rises above the brutes and the world is carried forward on the upward way. "

The lambskin apron presented to the initiate during his entered Apprentice Degree should be for all his life a very precious possession; the outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual tie. Many, perhaps most, Masons leave their original aprons safely at home, and wear the cotton drill substitutes provided by many lodges for their members. But here again the outward and evident drill apron is but the symbol of the presentation lambskin symbol; the symbol kept safely against the day when, at long last, the members of a lodge can do no more for their brother but lay him away under its protecting and comforting folds.

Truly he has been a real Mason, in the best sense of that great word, who has worn his lambskin apron during his manhood "with pleasure to himself, and honor to the Fraternity. "

Within the Master's reach in every Lodge is some table, stand, pedestal or other structure on which he may lay his papers. Often this is considered the trestle-board because upon it the Master draws the design for the meeting. Any brother has a right to read into any symbol his own interpretation; for those to whom this conception is sufficient, it is good enough. But it seems rather a reduction of the great level of the little. A light house is, indeed, a house with a light, but he who sees but the house and the light, but fails to visualize those lost ones who by it find their way; who cannot see the ships kept in safety by its ceaseless admonition that this way lies danger; who cannot behold it as a symbol as well as a structure, misses its beauty. Those who see only the pedestal which supports the Master's plans as a Speculative Trestle-board miss the higher meaning of the symbol.

Lodge notices are not infrequently called trestle-boards, since on them the Master draws the design for the coming work, and sends them out to the Craftsmen. This too, seems belittling of the symbol, unless the brethren are led to see that so denominating the monthly notice is but a play on words, and not a teaching.

A Freemason's trestle-board, his own combination of what he may learn from man and nature, from the Book of Revelation on the Altar, and the designs in his own heart, is a great and pregnant symbol. It is worthy of many hours of pondering; a Masonic teaching to be loved and lived. Who makes of it less misses something that is beautiful in Freemasonry.

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by: Unknown



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The Roman Eagle was Rome's symbol and ensign of power and might a hundred years before Christ.

The Order of the Star was created by John II of France in the middle of the Fourteenth Century.

The Order of the Garter was founded by Edward III of England in 1349 for himself and twenty-five Knights of the Garter.

That the Masonic Apron is more ancient than these is a provable fact. In averring that it is more honorable, the premise "when worthily worn " is understood. The Apron is "more honorable than the Star and Garter " when all that it teaches is exemplified in the life of the wearer.

Essentially the Masonic Apron is the badge of honorable labor. The right to wear it is given only to tried and tested men. Much has been written on these meanings of the symbol, but more has been devoted to trying to read into its modern shape and size - wholly fortuitous and an accident of convenience - a so-called "higher symbolism " which no matter how beautiful it may be, has no real connection with its "Masonic " significance.

So many well-intentioned brethren read into the Masonic Apron meanings invented out of whole cloth, that any attempt to put in a few words the essential facts about this familiar symbol of the Fraternity, either by what is said or left unsaid, is certain to meet with some opposition!

It is not possible to "prove " that George Washington did "not " throw a silver coin across the Rappahannock, or that he did "not " cut down a cherry tree with his little hatchet. Yet historians believe both stories apocryphal.

It is not possible to "prove " that no intentional symbolism was intended when the present square or oblong shape of the Masonic Apron was adopted (within the last hundred and fifty years), nor that the conventionalized triangular flap in "not " an allusion to the Forty- seventh Problem and the earliest symbol of Deity (triangle), nor that the combination of the four and three corners does not refer to the Pythagorean "perfect number " seven. But hard-headed historians, who accept nothing without evidence and think more of evidence than of inspirational discourses, do not believe our ancient brethren had in mind any such symbolism as many scientific writers have stated.

The view-point of the Masonic student is that enough real and ancient symbolism is in the apron, enough sanctity in its age, enough mystery in its descent, to make unnecessary any recourse to geometrical astronomical, astrological or other explanations for shape and angles which old gravings and documents plainly show to be a wholly modern conventionalizing of what in the builder's art was a wholly utilitarian garget.

As Freemasons use it the apron is more than a mere descendant of a protecting garment of other clothing, just as Freemasons are more than descendants of the builders of the late Middle Ages. If we accept the Comancine theory (and no one has disproved it) we have a right to consider ourselves at least collaterally descended from the "Collegia " of ancient Rome. If we accept the evidence of sign and symbol, truth and doctrine, arcane and hidden mystery; Freemasonry is the modern repository of a hundred remains of as many ancient mysteries, religions and philosophies. As the apron of all sorts, sizes and colors was an article of sacred investiture in many of these, so is it in ours. What is truly important is the apron itself; what is less important is its size and shape, its method of wearing. Material and color are symbolic, but a Freemasons may be - and has been many - "properly clothed " with a handkerchief tucked about his middle, and it is common practice to make presentation aprons, most elaborately designed and embellished, without using leather at all, let alone lambskin.

Mackey believed color and material to be of paramount importance, and inveighed as vigorously as his gentle spirit would permit against decorations, tassels, paintings, embroideries, etc. Most Grand Lodges follow the great authority as far as the Craft is concerned, but relax strict requirements as to size, shape, color and material for lodge officers and Grand Lodge officers. Even so meticulous a Grand Lodge as New Jersey, for instance, which prescribe size and shape and absence of decoration, does admit the deep purple edge for Grand Lodge officers.

It is a far cry from the "lambskin or white leather apron " of the Entered Apprentice, to such an eye-filling garget as is worn by the grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts - an apron so heavily encrusted with gold leaf, gold lace, gold thread, etc., that the garment must be worn on a belt, carried flat in a case, weighs about ten pounds, and can be made successfully only by one firm and that abroad!

At least as many particular lodges cloth their officers in embroidered and decorated aprons, as those which do not. The Past Master's apron bearing a pair of compasses on the arc of a quadrant, may be found at all prices in any Masonic

regalia catalogue. So if, as Mackey contended, only the plain white leather apron is truly correct, those who go contrary to his dictum have at least the respectability of numbers and long custom.

Universal Masonic experience proves the apron to be among the most important of those symbols which teach the Masonic doctrine. The Apprentice receives it through the Rite of Investiture during his first degree, when he is taught to wear it in a special manner. The brother appearing for his Fellowcraft Degree is clothed with it worn as an Apprentice; later he learns a new way to wear it. Finally, as a Master Mason, he learns how such Craftsmen should wear the "badge of a Mason."

That various Jurisdictions are at odds on what is here correct is less important than it seems. Many teach that the Master Mason should wear his apron with corner tucked up, as a symbol that he is the "Master," and does not need to use the tools of a Fellowcraft, but instead, directs the work. As many more teach that the Fellowcraft wears his apron with corner up, as a symbol that he is not yet a "Master," and therefore does not have a right to wear the apron full spread, as a Master Mason should! Into what is "really" correct this paper cannot go; Jeremy Cross, in earlier editions of his "True Masonic Chart" shows a picture of a Master Mason wearing his apron with the corner tucked up.

What is universal, and important, is that all three - Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason - do wear their aprons in different ways. All are Masons, hence wear the badge of a Mason; one has progressed further than another, and therefore wears his apron differently as a sign that he has learned more.

Incidentally, it may be noted that aprons seldom are, but always should be, worn on the outside of the coat, not hidden beneath it. Alas, comfort and convenience - and, in urban lodges, the evening dress of officers and some members - have led to the careless habit of wearing the apron not in full view, as a badge of honor and of service, but concealed, as if it were a matter of small moment. The use of the apron is very old - far older than as a garment to protect the clothing of the operative craftsmen, or to provide him with a convenient receptacle in which to keep his tools.

Girdles, or aprons, were part of the clothing of the Priests of Israel. Candidates for the mysteries of Mithras in Persia were invested with aprons. The ancient Japanese used aprons in religious worship. Oliver, noted Masonic scholar of the last century, no longer followed as a historian but venerated for his research and his Masonic industry, says of the apron:

"The apron appears to have been, in ancient times, an honorary badge of distinction. In the Jewish economy, none but the superior orders of the priesthood were permitted to adorn themselves with ornamented girdles, which were made of blue, purple and crimson; decorated with gold upon a ground of fine white linen; while the inferior priests wore only white. The Indian, the Persian, the Jewish, the Ethiopian and the Egyptian aprons, though equally superb, all bore a character distinct from each other. Some were plain white, others striped with blue, purple and crimson; some were of wrought gold, others adorned and decorated with superb tassels and fringes.

"In a word, though the "principal honor" of the apron may consist in its reference to innocence of conduct and purity of heart, yet it certainly appears through all ages to have been a most exalted badge of distinction. In primitive times it was rather an ecclesiastical than a civil decoration, although in some cases the apron was elevated to great superiority as a national trophy. The Royal Standard of Persia was originally "an apron" in form and dimensions. At this day, it is connected with ecclesiastical honors; for the chief dignitaries of the Christian church, wherever a legitimate establishment, with the necessary degrees of rank and subordination, is formed, are invested with aprons as a peculiar badge of distinction; which is a collateral proof of the fact that Freemasonry was originally incorporated with the various systems of Divine Worship used by every people in the ancient world. Freemasonry retains the symbol or shadow; it cannot have renounced the reality or substance."

Mackey's dictum about the color and the material of the Masonic apron, if as often honored in the breach as in the observance, bears rereading. The great Masonic scholar said:

The color of a Freemason's apron should be pure unspotted white. This color has, in all ages and countries, been esteemed an emblem of innocence and purity. It was with this reference that a portion of the vestments of the Jewish priesthood was directed to be white. In the Ancient Mysteries the candidate was always clothed in white. "The priests of the Romans," says Festus, "were accustomed to wear white garments when they sacrificed." In the Scandinavian Rites it has been seen that the shield presented to the candidate was white. The Druids changed the color of the garment presented to their initiates with each degree; white, however, was the color appropriate to the last, or degree of perfection. And it was, according to their ritual, intended to teach the aspirant that none were admitted to the honor but such as were cleansed from all impurities both of body and mind. "In the early ages of the Christian church a white garment was always placed upon the catechumen who had been newly baptized, to denote that he had been cleansed from his former sins, and was henceforth to lead a life of purity. Hence, it was presented to him with this solemn charge:

"Receive the white and undefiled garment, and produce it unspotted before the tribunal of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you may obtain eternal life."

"From these instances we learn that white apparel was anciently used as an emblem of purity, and for this reason the color has been preserved in the apron of the Freemason.

"A Freemason's apron must be made of Lambskin. No other substance, such as linen, silk or satin could be substituted without entirely destroying the emblematical character of the apron, for the material of the Freemason's apron constitutes one of the most important symbols of his profession. The lamb has always been considered as an appropriate emblem of innocence. Hence, we are taught, in the ritual of the First Degree, that "by the lambskin, the Mason is reminded of the purity of life and rectitude of conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe forever presides."

Words grow and change in meaning with the years; a familiar example is the word "profane" which Masons use in its ancient sense, meaning "one not initiated" or "one outside the Temple." In common usage, profane means blasphemous. So has the word "innocence" changed in meaning. Originally it connoted "to do no hurt." Now it means lack of knowledge of evil - as an innocent child; the presence of virginity - as an innocent girl; also, the state of being free from guilt of any act contrary to law, human or Divine.

"An Emblem of Innocence" is not, Masonically, "an emblem of ignorance." Rather do we use the original meaning of the word, and make of the apron an emblem of one who does no injury to others. This symbolism is carried out both by the

color and material; white has always been the color of purity, and the lamb has always been a symbol of harmlessness and gentleness. Haywood says:

"The innocence of a Mason is his gentleness, chivalrous determination to do no moral evil to any person, man or woman, or babe; his patient forbearance of the crudeness and ignorance of men, his charitable forgiveness of his brethren when they willfully or unconsciously do him evil; his dedication to a spiritual knighthood in behalf of the value and virtues of humanity by which alone man rises above the brutes and the world is carried forward on the upward way. "

The lambskin apron presented to the initiate during his entered Apprentice Degree should be for all his life a very precious possession; the outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual tie. Many, perhaps most, Masons leave their original aprons safely at home, and wear the cotton drill substitutes provided by many lodges for their members. But here again the outward and evident drill apron is but the symbol of the presentation lambskin symbol; the symbol kept safely against the day when, at long last, the members of a lodge can do no more for their brother but lay him away under its protecting and comforting folds.

Truly he has been a real Mason, in the best sense of that great word, who has worn his lambskin apron during his manhood "with pleasure to himself, and honor to the Fraternity. "