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THE NEWLY RAISED MASTER AMONG MASONS

by

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Some pertinent observations on the duties that they have assumed. For the benefit not only of our newly raised brothers, but to refresh the memories of our more adept Masters among Masons, it is well that we look back in retrospect upon our labours as apprentices and as Fellowcraft, that we may assess in all humility, the results of those labours so far. From such assessment, to prepare ourselves for those duties that we have voluntarily assumed and which will be expected of us in our role as Masters among Masons

In the course of the ceremony of the Master's Degree, when the candidate is invested with the distinguished badge of a Master Mason, he is reminded that it is not only to point out his rank, but it is to remind him of those important duties which he has solemnly engaged himself to perform

He is further reminded that it calls on him to afford assistance and instruction to his younger brethren in the inferior degrees. It stands to reason therefore, that the first and the most lasting impressions that the new initiates and fellowcraft receive of Masonry, will to a large extent depend on the knowledge of the Craft, its teachings and its duties, as imparted to them by those (who by virtue of their rank and station in the Craft) the newly admitted brothers must turn to for advice and instruction. That is one reason why it is necessary for us to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.

A brother who studies Masonry, and endeavours to make a daily advancement in the science, will as the years roll by, realize that he has embarked on a life-time study, because Freemasonry is just that, the study, the meanings, and the purposes of our lives. In it we learn of the duties that we owe to our Creator, our fellowman, and to ourselves

It is in this sense that it is for each brother individually, to discover the secrets of Masonry, by reflections upon its teachings and its symbolism. No other Mason can do it for him. We can only guide him. By the study of the teachings of Masonry, true knowledge will gradually unfold to him. As the volume of the Sacred Law so aptly expresses it "Seek and Ye Shall Find, Knock and It Shall be Opened Unto you." Man 7. - 7 "For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

To the new Masters, let me state that much of the Masonic secret manifests itself without speech revealing it to him; that he will partially comprehend all the degrees in proportion as he receives them. The more that one prepares himself in the striving for a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge, the better prepared he will become to imbue the brethren with whom he comes in contact, with the same enthusiasm and the desire to mold their lives, their Spiritual beings, as brethren of a common Father.

The command and the desire of our Father, is that we make perfection of character the goal of our life, rather than the seeking of a heavenly reward. This command we will find in the great light of Masonry, the volume of the Sacred Law; where it states - Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is the perfect one." Matt.5. 48.

This seeking for the perfection of character will be found in both the Old and the New Covenant of this great light, as being the goal of life which we should be striving to attain. In many places we will find the Creator mentioned as the Perfect One, and if we would do His will, we must set our feet on the road to perfection.

At the very onset as an apprentice, the candidate is told something of what Freemasonry' consists. He learns that it is a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbolism; and immediately he receives a little of the instruction pertaining to this teaching in allegorical form. The lessons that it contains are illustrated by the use of certain symbols.

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As he advances in the work, he receives further instruction by the same means. During this progression it soon becomes apparent to him, that one of the foremost characteristics of our fraternity is that it has a constant and a consistent theme, that runs through it from beginning to end, by means of which it can be logically and reasonably explained. 'This theme is quickly revealed as a system of morality. depicting the proper conduct necessary in our relationship to the Great Architect of this Universe, and to our fellow man.

But this system, no matter how beautifully it may be designed or how skillfully it may be devised, is of little value until its teachings are put into practice. Thus it can be seen that a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge by itself is not enough.

That is why the practice of every social and moral virtue is the admonishment given to every new brother.

True Masonry, above all else, is a practicing order of dedicated and devoted men, closely united, who by the use of symbolic forms borrowed principally from the operative Mason's trade, from architecture, and from nature, work together for the welfare of mankind.

It has no other aim than that of the upbuilding of humanity, in faith, friendship and freedom.

To ennoble and to beautify life, and the soul of men, this world-wide fraternity of free and devout men, seek also to deepen their own faith, and as I have already stated, to set their goal of life as the perfecting of their character.

Here let me state for the benefit of our new Masters, that Masonry does not claim to be a religion. It can never usurp the birthright of the Synagogue, Church or Temple, and it has no desire to do so. It receives into its fellowship those of all faiths professing a belief in the Supreme Being, who is the Creator of the Universe. Also that the Supreme Being has so created man, that he can choose to do that which is good, or that which is evil, but of his own volition will come his punishment or his reward. according to the manner that he carries out the will of his Creator, as has been revealed to man.

Masonry may be said to be the "Rock of Gibraltar that guards the gateway to the

Sea of Religion;" - an all embracing sea that hugs the shoreline of Temple, Synagogue, and Church worship.

During the few months of a new brother's progress in Masonry there is so much to learn that the mind is unable to comprehend the full import of the lessons taught in the degrees in which he has taken part. It is during the few months of a new brother's progress in Masonry, there is so much to learn, that the mind is not until he has been obligated in the Master's Degree that his attention is recalled to a retrospect of those degrees that he has already received. It is then that he will probably realize for the first time, a fuller import of their lessons and to appreciate the connection of the whole system. Finally, with the completion of the Master's Degree, its truths begin to make a real impression on his mind. It is then that the esoteric symbolism of Masonry gradually unfolds itself, and begins to make a real meaning to the underlying purpose of the Craft. His seeking admission to the Craft, and the entrance in the state of darkness, knowing nothing of what he is about to receive; the seeking of light, his dependency on his guide, the hidden mysteries of nature and science, death, resurrection and immortality, all leave their lessons thinly veiled in allegorical form and of a symbolic nature. They all have an allusion to the birth of man, his progress in life, and his aspirations for a new life in a spiritual realm when his tardily body has ceased its functions and is again returned to the earth from whence it derived its nourishment. However it must be remembered that in its esoteric symbolism, freemasonry is neither dictatorial, nor dogmatic.

To every brother of the Craft is given the opportunity to adapt for himself whatever meaning of our esoteric symbolism that may appear to him to be both logical or correct. He is left to study for himself and to make clear in his own mind, the message that Freemasonry has for him in the symbolic sense.

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It is as personal as his own religious belief.

In a pamphlet on symbolism, prepared for the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania by Bro. Wm. Montgomery, he states, and I quote, "The one great vital fundamental idea sought to be inculcated by the several Craft Lodge Degrees considered collectively as a system, is to give a representation of human existence, to portray the beginning, the struggles the progress of humanity, individually and as a race.---In a symbolic sense, the novitiate in Masonry may be likened to a human embryo about to be born into the world. The preparation of the candidate and the circumstances in connection with his admission into the Ledge room, (that is, the world), may well be compared with what brother Oliver Day Street calls 'the helpless, destitute, ignorant condition of a newly born babe,' who has little or no power over his actions and knows nothing of the new life he is entering, and must therefore depend upon others for assistance, guidance and direction. And so likewise, a new candidate in Masonry, his freedom of actions partially restricted, must rely on others with implicit and unquestioning obedience, for without that guidance he cannot advance in those ritualistic ceremonies which depict his journey of life," (Unquote) In the progress of the candidate through the three degrees, at first in a state of complete darkness, and reliant upon his guides, and gradually overcoming the obstacles that he encounters in his journey, and his giving oral proof of the progress he is making from the instructions that he has received, symbolizes the journey that we all make in the early formative years of our life. We have to rely so much on the guidance and instruction we receive from our parents, teachers, older friends and others who may be interested in our welfare.

Similarly, we rely on our Pastor, Priest or rabbi and the teachers in the laity

of our faith. whatever form it may take, to help set our feet on the right path in our quest for the Divine truth.

In our ceremony, the prayers of the faithful join with the candidate that he may be endowed with the competency of divine wisdom, so that he may be the better enabled to display the beauties of true Godliness, to the Honor and Glory of the Most High. This is the first regular step and it is in this position of heart and of soul, that the secrets and light that he is seeking can be communicated to him.

Thus the candidate is brought face-to-face with the truth that the first regular step that is required of him in his newness of life, is the observance of that blameless purity of life and conduct, that alone will enable him hereafter to stand before the Great Architect of the Universe, unstained by vice, and unspoiled by sin. As the loving Father has been merciful to him, he in turn must practice love, or charity, (synonymous terms), to his fellow man; to divide his bread with the hungry, and to assuage his thirst, ever remembering that we are all brothers of one great family, and that God is the Father of all mankind. Further, he is reminded of that moment in his life when he also stood before his Maker, poor and penniless, neither naked nor shod, at his entrance into this world. In his adolescence, there comes that rashness of youth, and he will be reminded of his struggling against the cable tow that would have kept him within all due bounds, and from the rashness of his behaviour. Eventually, there comes the stabbing of the heart, and the pricks of the conscience, and the remorse that follows for his foolish and willful behaviour.

He now learns that labour is the lot of man. From it he may derive daily lessons of admonition and instruction. He learns that perseverance is necessary to establish perfection of character, and that nothing short of indefatigable exertion can imbue the habit of virtue and enlighten the mind to render the soul pure. From such labours and perseverance, we can overcome all our difficulty, raise ignorance from despair and find true happiness

Finally the brother is taught that nature presents one lesson more; a great and useful lesson; for she prepares us by contemplation for the closing hours of our existence in this our mortal life. We are instructed how to die. We also learn that death has no terrors to equal the stain of falsehood or dishonour

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This is not however, the final object of this degree. In the third regular step one lesson still remains. That is, that after the silver cord be loosed, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, he is to be raised again in a new life, a spiritual life, a life eternal as the heavens

In this manner the drama of life is portrayed and gradually unfolded to our view, as we progress through the school of freemasonry

There is one lesson however, that should not be overlooked even in this so brief summary; that is. the lesson depicting how one can be raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular. We could refer to the two grips that proved a slip. We could refer to the two slip grips as being science and logic.

Sir Arthur Eddington, the great British astronomer, in his preface to "The Nature of Physical World", maintained that the physicist philosopher must look beyond physics to the borderland of the material and spiritual world. Eddington maintains that religion has become possible to recognition by science within the last century, and that this has been made possible because the philosophical trend of scientific thought has been startlingly redirected by the discoveries

by men like Einstein, Heisenberg, and Bohr in the field of relativity, and quantum physics. Dr Bell Dawson, F.R.S.C., and a member of the Engineering Institute of Canada, in his book "The Bible, Science and Superstition", states and I quote, "We must bear in mind that science has its limitations. If the student asks what electricity or gravitation is, we may never be able to give a satisfactory or final answer; for their intrinsic nature lies beyond our comprehension, and is likely to remain a matter of speculation. It is also recognized by the most clear sighted scientists that science can never reach back to the primary origin of anything; either of matter or man. This is the limitation of science itself in relation to nature, and its laws; for it is through faith that we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. "(unquote) Similarly, logic, being the science which investigates the principles governing the correct or reliable inferences, will therefore, of a necessity fail, for the same reason as any other branch of science. "The name of God", says Hobbes. "is used not to make us conceive of Him, for He is inconceivable, but that we may honour Him." As the Greek poet once said, "believe in God, and adore Him, but investigate Him not, the inquiry is fruitless, seek not to discover who God is; for, by the desire to know, you offend Him who chooses to remain unknown." "When we attempt" says Philo, "to investigate the essence of the Absolute Being, we fall into an abyss of perplexity."

We find that at the most critical moment, in the hour of our greatest need, the grip of an E.A proves a slip. Not by that grip alone can man be raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular.

Knowledge alone is not sufficient to sustain the soul through every duty, every responsibility. every trial and every tragedy of human life. Something more than knowledge, something more than skill or the exercise of individual power is needed. But surely the grip of a F.C. The F.C. who has been permitted to extend his researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and others may receive different meanings and impressions. Suffice it to say that it is my hope and desire that I leave with you, my brethren, some food of science, shall be able to prove that the soul in its nature is indivisible and indestructible and so immortal. But the grip of a F.C. also proves a slip. Not by that grip alone can man be raised to walk in newness of life.
"OLMGITNHFTWS?"

Yes, fortunately, there does remain another method - the lion's paw grip. Here is the firm grip. the sure, strong grip of spiritual faith -which is the intuitive conviction of the soul itself that which both reason and conscience approve. And yet, even this grip alone is not sufficient, for remember what the Master said: "Which with your assistance I will now make trial of" This means that it must be a faith assisted or sustained by knowledge and understanding, the voice of God speaking within, the divine word abiding in the bean. It is in this way only, that truth has ever been revealed to man. Once we realize that the soul is akin to TGAOTU, we shall receive the power of faith. It is thus, my brother, that all MM's are raised "from the valley of the shadow into light".
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In the above brief summary, it has been my endeavour to state what the great lessons of Masonry as symbolized in the Craft Lodge Degrees have meant to me. Others may receive different meanings and impressions. Suffice it to say that it is my hope and desire that I leave with you, my Brethren, some food for thought, that you may in your own way pursue the quest for the building of a more stately temple to the Glory of the Most High. So Mote It Be.

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