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THE WILL AND A WAY

In the exercise of Freemasonry, Harmony is emphasized as an essential tenet. The things likely to disturb Harmony are forbidden by landmark and usage and peace reigns in the lodges.

If Freemasonry is to serve as a force of any consequence in the world, its devotees must work for Harmony in every walk of life. Unfortunately we see every day evidence of the exact opposite of Harmony among vowed and active Freemasons in the conduct of business, sectarian religion and party politics and, what is worse, evidence of acrimony and meanness of spirit as far removed as the poles from the brotherhood and mutual help so patiently taught in our several degrees.

It were idle to expect men to be of one mind; indeed this old world would be a dull and drab place were we all cut to a common pattern. Surely men can agree to disagree in a friendly way and refrain from scowling at each other across a lodge room floor, avoiding Harmony because of difference of opinion on this political theory or that sectarian dogma.

Freemasonry is all things to all men and, while it precludes the discussion of party politics and sectarian differences within its lodge rooms, it forbids no man thinking as he chooses. It enjoins us to act as brothers, as children of a common Father, and this if anything, is the wider implication of the Corner stone.

Freemasons in high places and in low should remember the effect upon themselves, their brethren and the Craft before attacking or humiliating their fellows who honestly differ in creed or political philosophy.

As an exercise in Toleration let each of us ponder the ceremony of the North East corner and having re-digested Freemasonry's finest lesson, deliberately carry it into action wheresoever our lot may be cast. That is practical Freemasonry.

A. M. M.

THE APRON

The apron has had a sacerdotal and religious use quite distinct from Freemasonry as we now use that name. On the monuments of Ancient Egypt a garment, which can best be described as a triangular apron with the point upward, is depicted in circumstances indicating that the wearer is taking part in some kind of ceremony of initiation. In connection with which fact it is interesting to note that in Egypt it was customary to bestow a "collar of office" on those whom Pharaoh desired to honour. Such collars were circular in shape and in the picture mentioned above, Pharaoh is shown wearing one.

In China, some of the ancient figures of the gods wear semi-circular aprons, very similar in general appearance to some Scotch aprons.

In Central America the Ancient Gods are constantly sculptured wearing aprons. Tepoxecatl the Preserver, is depicted wearing an apron with a triangular flap, and on his head a conical cap on which is "embroidered a skull and crossbones," and finally, he holds in his right hand a hammer or gavel.

In Peru, also, we find figures adorned with veritable aprons, and before leaving this point it is well to bear in mind that among certain primitive tribes in Central Africa, it is customary to invest a candidate with an apron of leaves at his initiation into Manhood.

Finally, it is not without interest to note that the modern Anglican Bishop wears an apron, although it appears to have developed from a long flowing robe somewhat the shape of a cassock.

- J.S.M. Ward.

THE OBLIGATION OF SECRECY

One of the most notable features of Freemasonry is the secrecy behind which it moves and acts. It is a distinctive characteristic of the Order, and the first obligation of a Mason is silence and secrecy. Why is this? Among the ancients, silence and secrecy were considered virtues and the origin of secrecy in Masonry must be found in the intrinsic value and divine excellence of the principle of secrecy itself.

Mystery possesses charms for all mankind; it is the divine order of Nature. Creation is founded on secrecy, and so the founders of Freemasonry made the Institution conform to the same Order. Thomas Carlyle, in "Sartor Resartus," writes: "thought will not work, except in silence; neither will virtue work, except in secrecy."

Another reason why Freemasonry regards secrecy as a fundamental principle is because unity and strength are the result, and cannot be obtained in any other way.

This common secrecy in Freemasonry makes for universal brotherhood and creates a family feeling; and although centuries and oceans may divide Brethren, they do not weaken the bond, and neither time nor distance can break the chain. The charm of mystery and poetry is thus thrown around the Order, and Freemasons remain forever one, for by their secret and inviolable signs, carefully preserved among the fraternity, all races are united, not only by the common ties of humanity, but the still stronger secret obligation of the Great Brotherhood.

-Frederick Wm. Bull.

"It is unfortunate for Freemasonry that there are brethren who think that they must be funny and attempt jokes at the candidate. They delight in approaching a candidate with remarks which to them are excruciatingly humorous. It is unnecessary to repeat their catch phrases. All know them. None are new or original, but all are un-Masonic. They tend to destroy in advance the beautiful lessons sought to be conveyed. The lectures of Freemasonry have been compiled with an earnest desire to impress wise and important truths. To have their serious contemplations burlesqued by thoughtless remarks and innuendo is embarrassing to the candidate and distasteful to the Craft in general."

-National Trestle Board.

"Can a man be a Freemason and harbour ill will in his bosom against his brother? No! It is contrary to the principles and teachings of Freemasonry. Why then will brethren entertain animosity and hatred, and endeavour to injure those who have bowed at the same mystic altar with themselves? If a brother believes that I have done him an injury, however humble in life he may be, I will, because I believe it to be my duty, not only as a Freemason, but on account of the ties of common nature, go to him at once and learn from him the grounds of complaint against me. If I have really wronged him I am prepared to make proper amends; if he labours under an erroneous impression I have the satisfaction of disabusing his mind, and the high gratification of causing his otherwise ill feelings to be changed into friendship, love and fraternal kindness. Is this not a better course than for years to harbour unkind feelings until they grow into bitter dislike and hate?"

-Oklahoma Mason.

"It is not enough that in the lodge room or among Freemasons the bond of brotherhood should hold. It is the mission of the Craft to so spread the gospel of human kinship that all the world will acknowledge the bonds of amity and accord. Freemasonry is no longer an exclusive and withdrawn body, doing good by stealth or concerned only for its own. Its principles are blazoned for all men to behold; if now we fail to match fair professions with worthy deeds the fraternity will be brought into contempt and will deserve the condemnation of mankind."

-National Trestle Board.

"We are told that the great purpose of Freemasonry is to build character. What is character but a reflection of God? The trouble with Freemasonry is that it is not understood. The need of the world today is a better setting forth of the object and the principles of this fraternity, a need for keener analysis of that which is behind the teachings of this great society in the hope that men may be brought to realize the function and purpose of life."

-Illinois Freemason.

FREEMASONRY AND THE CRAFT GUILDS

There is to be found in the first half of the fourteenth century no clear trace of any Trade Guild of Masons in England, though a few religious fraternities of masons were in existence. Certainly, if anywhere, evidence of such a gild should be found in London. But this is what we learn from the Municipal Records of

the City:

On Monday, the second day of February 1536, a meeting was held of "all the good folks of the mason trade." It had been called by Simon Fraunces, Mayor of the City of London, "to have from them due information how their trade might be best ordered for the profit of the common people." The reason given for the call was that "divers dissensions and disputes had arisen between the masons who are hewers (stone-cutters and carvers) on the one hand, and the masons who are layers and setters on the other, because that their trade has not been regulated in due manner by the government of folks of their trade, in such form as other trades are."

Two distinct facts are established by the call: (1) In England's largest city the masons had no craft gild in 1356 (2) The stone-hewers and the stone-layers and setters were divided into two contending camps.

There were present at the summoned meetings, besides the leaders (good folks) of the two camps, the Mayor, Alderman, Sheriffs and three Commoners.

Then the good folks of the said trade chose from among themselves twelve of the most skilful men of their trade, to inform the Mayor, Alderman, and Sheriffs, as to the acts and articles touching their said trade."

The elected committee on rules consisted of six "Mason hewers," or Free-stone Masons, and six "Mason Layers and setters." The very names of the list of Master Free-stone Masons (the stone hewers) reveal their superior rank. Among them was the

famous Henri de Yvele (Yeevelee), then a working freemason, later the Master Mason of Westminster Abbey, who also supplied plans and the model of Westminster Hall and the design of St. Dunstan's, became the King's Master Mason, was citizen and freeman of the City of London, constructed the marble tomb for Richard II and his Queen, and dies in 1400.

In 1473 the 'Hole Crafte and fellowship of Masons' was granted a coat-of-arms, the grant being confirmed in 1520. The Fellowship was incorporated as a Company in 1411, and re-incorporated by Letters Patent, on September 17th 1677 by the name of the "Masters, Wardens, Assistants and Commonality of the Company of Masons of the City of London." The minutes of this Company for 1650 contain an entry of money paid by Thomas Moore Jr., and Richard Herneden, for admission to the Livery upon Acceptance of Masonry. This Acceptance was open to men in no way connected with the mason trade, and appears to have formed a society within the Company. From it sprang Lodges which, in 1717, formed the Grand Lodge which became the mother of our present system of Freemasonry.

But in Scotland the development, on documentary evidence, can be traced a whole century further back.

It will be obvious by this time that trying to derive Freemasonry, from trade-gilds of Masons is not very satisfactory, except that the gild forms the last stage in a development which sprang from another source. The clue to that source is suggested in the Fabric Rolls of York Minster, in the North of England.

-Ossian Lang, 1934.