



Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: A. M. Mitchell, P.G.M.

"Twice Friends Are They Who Bring Their Support in the Hour of Need and Danger"

High Prairie, Alberta.

My Dear Brethren:

Since I appealed to you for the War Defence Fund, through the *Bulletin*, the response from many of our lodges has been encouraging, and we were able to forward \$5,000.00 to the United Grand Lodge of England at the end of March.

No words of our's can exaggerate the need for action when we think of what occurred to the people of London on the night of April 16th, when that city was subjected to the most devastating destruction that it has yet experienced. Our contribution, small as it is in comparison with such widespread misery, is even now contributing a little towards alleviating the distress. These are the people who by their magnificent stand are bravely holding the front line of civilisation as we know it. Surely our's is a debt to be met with the utmost generosity!

As I write this so soon after our peaceful Easter celebrations, it is hard to realize that conditions are so different in the British Isles and in Europe, where death and destruction are of hourly occurrence. We can only hope that the light of Freemasonry will never be finally extinguished over there, and we, far removed from the ravages of war, with all its attendant suffering, must give those who are in distress such relief as we can.

I would like to quote from a letter written by a victim of Hitler's barbarism recently: "The destruction is terrible. Yet we are fully confident of the only possible result—the defeat of Hitlerism. It will come as sure as the daylight. It may take some time yet, but Englishmen have no doubt of the ultimate result." This brother speaks with gratitude, saying, "There have been many such (gifts) from open hearted Masons outside of our own Constitution, and we thank God that Masonry the world over is so generous. . . . I have many war cases which have been assisted in this way. The work is hard and painful, but the gratitude of those in distress is wonderful to witness." A sufferer himself, he is still trying to seek the solace of his own distress by extending relief and consolation to his fellow creatures in the hour of their affliction, and if he in such a situation can do so, surely we in Alberta should in sheer admiration and gratitude extend our help in such measure as is possible.

Let us give NOW. Brethren, it might take our last dollar to help, but as your Grand Master I am making this last appeal and I know you will not fail to do your bit.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

Sam Harris.

Grand Master.

PROGRESSIVE MASONRY

5. ON TRUTH

By R. W. Bro. A. E. OTTEWELL, P.G.R.

(The Fifth of a Series of Six Papers)

Editor's Note.—Opinions expressed and speculations advanced in articles of this kind are the writer's own. Official approval of Grand Lodge is neither expressed nor implied.

AT the end of the previous article the discussion on the meaning of truth had to be interrupted for reasons of space.

Following further the question of how an honest witness may with perfect sincerity tell what is not true take the case of two witnesses looking at the same object who may be asked to say what color it has. One may name one color and the other something quite different and yet both may be honest. You may say it is impossible. But one or both of them may be color blind or not trained in distinguishing colors. From such things spring the difficulties of sorting out the true from the false in a court of law, apart of course from deliberate false witness.

But the above is relatively simple. Consider for a moment the question, can truth change? Most certainly what we accept and believe to be true can and does change. Once it was believed and taught that the earth was stationary and that the sun moved round it. Now we know that the earth moves round the sun and at the same time the sun is moving along through space. What was true for and believed by our ancestors is neither true for nor believed by us. A few hundred years ago it was accepted as true that the earth is flat, but the voyages of Columbus and countless sailors since shows conclusively that instead it is round or approximately so. Such illustrations could be repeated without number.

What then are we to use as a working plan? Certain points of agreement seem to be apparent.

1. No human being ever has been, is, or ever will be capable of knowing the whole truth.
2. What is accepted and believed to be true at one time may in the light of later information prove not to be true.
3. Different persons, though honest, will not always get the same impressions of the truth from the same experience.
4. Our social structure is built upon the assumption, based upon experience, that the majority of men are within their limits honest and honorable.
5. What we accept as truth will depend upon our heredity, training and experience.
6. How we conduct ourselves and the kind of people we are will depend upon what we believe to be the truth.

What has been said so far applies to truth in general. All of this refers to the kind of truth in which

Freemasons are or should be most interested, namely, the truths of morality. But moral truths are established by authority in addition to tests applied to other kinds of truth. Some such truths can be tested by experience. Common honesty has been found to be necessary for the successful carrying on of every day business. Profanity is by Freemasons considered immoral. The authority for this view or teaching rests upon a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being whose name is not lightly to be used. Such authority does not exist for the atheist for whom indeed profanity has no meaning one way or the other. Cruelty and intolerance become immoral as a result of belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Sabbath observance has been found by experience to be in the interests of health, both mental and physical as well as being economically sound.

Finally then we must answer the question—What are the sources of moral truths and how are they established? To say only that they are of divine origin is only a partial answer. If we go to one of the early codes as expressed in the ten commandments there appears a curious mixture. Only two or three of the ten refer directly to the Deity. Prohibitions of lying, stealing, adultery, murder, covetousness and the commands to honor parents and keep the sabbath are what might be called social rules. Practising Jews and Christians generally regard all of them as having religious or divine sanction. Recently however a code of much more ancient time was unearthed which contained most of them.

What seems to have happened is that men found by experience that if they were to live together in any ordered and orderly way some things must be done and others not done as the case might be. In other words, rights of person and property must be respected. After these had been established by practice they were enacted into a formal code and were based upon or prefaced by the invocation of Divine authority.

And this is not different from the procedure in our own British system. The final symbol of authority is the Crown and all laws are based upon the authority and enforced in the name of the Crown. But the coronation ceremony includes the expression "By the Grace of God, King." Few if any would contend that a law governing highway traffic results from special divine inspiration, but its final authority rests upon the Crown. The conclusion would seem to be that moral truths come from two sources, faith in a Supreme Being, the Ruler of the universe, and experience. Faith gives us the conception of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and experience shows us what must be done to make that belief effective in practice.

Masonry accepts this fundamental belief and attempts to develop its teachings as the results of experience progressively require.

FACING THE FACTS

(*Editor's Note.*—Recently we published a short article by Bro. Colin D. MacKenzie of Edmonton which, in mildly critical view, suggested certain weaknesses in the body of the Order. At the time we invited correspondence. Three letters have been received and appear below. Further correspondence is solicited but please be brief, considering space limits. As always, opinions expressed in these letters are the writer's own and the official approval of Grand Lodge is neither expressed nor implied by their publication in the *Bulletin*.)

Dear Editor:

May one speak who is away from his Alberta Lodge and residing under a different jurisdiction? You ask us to be brief, so here goes.

Bro. Colin MacKenzie's article in March *Bulletin* is surely its own answer. Here is a man and a gentleman, a good business man, good citizen and good Mason who has made and is making a real contribution to all three, yet bemoans his infrequent attendance at his Lodge meetings. He is the type that would, but the reason of his absence is a different one to that of the general inattendance.

Hardly any of the ideas mentioned are but what might be controlled by the Master or at most by his Grand Lodge. The average member seems to think he is not getting his money's worth without two meetings monthly, whereas, of course the exact opposite should be the case. In the Old Land business is completed in 30 minutes or less and one meeting monthly or less is sufficient. Masonry is not lived in the Lodge room only. We spend the best part of an evening discussing matters few know anything about. What are general purpose committees for?

By all means let us face the facts. Masonry, like a religion, is a grim business and the Christian religion especially so. The Churches too are bemoaning poor attendances, but there are instances where there is hardly room for those who wish to attend, yet all offer the same basic Gospel. Is it not a careful selection of those appointed to minister? Too many, so called, Masons. Too many meetings. Too many Lodges. Too many ornate, so called, Temples. The greatest meeting in history was of a few men in an upper room. Our Volume of Sacred Law tells us—"many are called but few are chosen." So it is with Masonry which never was measured by numbers. The same Book tells us—"The Kingdom of God is within you." So it is with Masonry.

As regards two different Rites. Well, we have Presbyterians, Anglicans and Romanists. That question must necessarily be one of slow movement and will ultimately resolve itself, both in Masonry and denominational belief. Yes, by all means let us face the facts.

F. F. W. LOWLE,
Penticton, B.C.

Dear Editor:

I would offer one or two suggestions for your Forum on "Let's Face the Facts"—

The business details can be made more palatable by efficiency in the presentation of essential features

only. The Secretary and the Master in a preview of the agenda can save much time and eliminate non-essentials, which detract from interest.

A Lodge that is on stilts continually is not attractive to younger members particularly. By the addition of some games for after the meeting, such as table tennis, etc., the Lodge will take on more of the spirit of a club and prove more attractive to youth.

The program for the supper table should be prepared. Notify speakers as far as possible ahead of time, placing a time limit on their talks. Have none of those impromptu speeches which are always unfair to the man on his feet and irksome to those in the seats. A bright, snappy half hour leaves pleasant memories.

H. B. COLLIER,
Viking, Alberta.

Dear Editor:

I believe every brother who has read this contribution is in sympathy with nearly all that Bro. MacKenzie has to say.

He asks, "Just why do I stay away?" One very prominent brother, whose lodge practises the "York" work, told me that he disliked visiting one using the "Canadian" work because of the tiresome opening and closing ceremonies, and that he always tried to arrive after it had been opened in the M. M. degree.

Bro. MacKenzie asks, "Do we always have to open and close in full form?" It is a nuisance, isn't it? I know that I am harping on an old grievance, but once again I say, "Let us do our business in the E. A. degree." There is where the other (York) ritual has had an adverse influence on the so-called "Canadian". Brethren practising the former should have very little to say about the ceremonies used by the latter. "A lodge is made perfect when two E. A.'s are added to the former (three M.M.'s and two F.C.'s) five. An E.A. having paid his fee and been told that he is a "Brother among Masons" should have his say in the lodge's business.

As for "Modernizing"; this suggestion crops up periodically, especially when "stayaways" turn up by special invitation on P.M.'s and Old Timers' nights. The Grand Lodge of England had the same experience in the early part of the last century, but the chief remedy was not so much in the way of "modernizing", but rather of "purification". At no time has the Grand Lodge of England insisted on any particular ritual and at the period above mentioned, constituent lodges were introducing all kinds of lectures, using anything to moralize upon whether connected with operative masonry or far removed from it. Gould tells us that about 1813 "There existed a certain degree of rivalry and jealousy among the preceptors of those days. . . . A Lodge of Reconciliation was formed with the object of bringing the various forms of working into one harmonious whole. . . . The perfected form of Williams is that now in use in the Emulation Lodge of Improvement and which seems destined to become the more general

form of working in the Craft." Of this ritual all must concede that it is simple, dignified and impressive, and omits nothing essential. While it has been said by prominent brethren in Alberta that the Canadian work is the same, I must respectfully differ; I would say that the Canadian is the Emulation "spoiled" (e.g. the dissertation on the Wkg. Ts of an E.A.). If we of the Canadian work lodges did our business in the E.A. degree and used the Emulation ritual there would be very little to complain of regarding the "dull business sessions," these could be "pepped up" further if such trimmings as asking the S.W. for the next order of business, if the reading by the secretary of all the preliminaries printed on forms of application, S.N..P.D. restoration etc., were omitted, and by refraining from reading every communication in detail, especially when several contain nothing more than good wishes and a notification that dues are enclosed; why not bunch them together and say, "Bros. A, B and C send dues and greetings"?

Cut out the business trimmings and give the brethren on the side every opportunity to join in useful discussion and to enjoy themselves. Don't ignore questions however trivial they may appear to some, particularly those from younger members; give them correct answers even though we have to postpone them for a month or more so that we can obtain authoritative data. If members are shy or diffident, use a question box.

In my old Lodge we had but six regular meetings a year—the general custom throughout the country—with an occasional "meeting of emergency" (and it had to be a case of emergency); the result—90 per cent attendance, and reasons sent by the other 10 per cent for their absence. Here, emergent meetings are advertised on the lodge notices regularly; why call them emergent? We used to arrange our personal businesses so that "Lodge" evenings were free; it was a treat to get away from the usual routine—whether business or pleasure—and six meetings a year did not conflict with much.

May I conclude with a note on "Rite"? Mackey's Lexicon says: "The Lodge of England and America practise the *same rite*, the York, so far as the three symbolic degrees, and yet the *rituals* of the two countries vary considerably; 'Canadian Rite' is a misnomer." An esteemed brother once spoke in Grand Lodge of a ritual as a "Landmark"—that cannot be.

Fraternally submitted,

H. A. S., P.D.D.G.M.

CHIPS FROM A ROUGH ASHLAR

Hint for Lodge orators. Speak when you have something to say, not because you feel you have to say something.

If we took more interest in today and less in next week or next month, life might be more amusing.

Most sound human institutions are the result of average experience.

The kick in life is in self-discovery.

The wise Mason never pretends, for he knows true fraternity is not built on illusion.

It is a curious fact that folly uses a megaphone, but wisdom a soft-breathed whisper.

Beware the ornate sentence. Of such is the propaganda of deceit.

Those who vote the Lodge funds should remember, as well as the dollar's buying power, its goodbyeing power.

• • •

OLD CANADIAN LODGE HONORS ITS OLDEST MEMBERS

St. Andrew's Lodge No. 16, A.F. & A.M., of Toronto, Canada, which has been active for 118 years, honored its veteran members at a recent meeting. George McGill, Past Master, received and extended a welcome to the brethren in three groups according to their number of years' standing in the Lodge. The first group were members from twenty-five to thirty-nine years; the second, forty to forty-nine years, and the third over fifty years.

Included in the oldest group were Joseph B. Watson, aged ninety-one, fifty-eight years a member of the Lodge; L. H. Luke, aged eighty, fifty-seven years; John F. Logan, aged eighty-three, fifty-five years; John Pearson, aged seventy-six, fifty-four years, and Charles E. Edmonds, aged seventy-nine, fifty-three years.

• • •

A MASON'S INFLUENCE

The influence of one man whose life is guided by the light of Masonry is far beyond estimation. One may build a mansion, may spend uncounted sums in rearing its walls of marble, and in storing it with every element of beauty within, and yet, passing from this mortal realm, may have accomplished but little; while another, perhaps, never built anything save a mansion of character. The invisible precious stones are laid around his own character. He left little save influence, but that influence, exerted day by day, falls into sensible souls, and shapes, moulds and directs the course of life, and reveals the truth to countless others.

—The Indiana Freemason.

• • •

The following quotation is from a statement made before a Masonic Lodge in 1809. These words, spoken over a century and a quarter ago, seem applicable to Masonry in some countries today:

"They may destroy this Temple, but not the edifice of our hearts; they can prevent our meetings, but not our unity in spirit; they can prohibit our calling ourselves Masons, but not our being Masons. I salute thee, O Masonic Temple, when all else beareth chains thou art the only Sanctuary in a devastated world."