



Grand Lodge Bulletin

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

"Something to Think About"

WITH many another of more consequence, we have been, at times, the recipient of more or less well-chosen words of thanks by chairmen at meetings, and have winced at that commonest of comment which runs to the effect that "the speaker has given us something to think about".

We have long since ceased to flatter ourselves that audiences ever think about anything after the usual address following a Lodge meeting, unless it be of the last streetcar for home or of the dark miles ahead in the country. A speaker may propose to turn the institution inside out or tell his audience it is composed of supreme good fellows. He may succeed in creating momentary irritation, for an audience hates to be disturbed, or may flatter the vanity of his hearers for a minute, but the process of mass digestion is too much for him, and on the morrow he realizes that he has made about as much impression as a pea-shooter would do on a charging elephant. The amount of irritation or the pressure of unctious depends, to some extent, on the calibre of the speaker, but the general and ultimate effect seems to be about the same.

Perhaps that's why planners of brave new worlds seldom get a chance to put their plans into practice, and why a million sermons have failed to convert the reprobate human animal. One may warn of latent danger, discover in words the extreme chance of impending change, but until the dangers actually appear, or the changes shake the individual out of his complacency by administering a swift and urgent kick in the shins, inertia binds him, and voices crying in the wilderness, stay there. This, more than anything, seems to be the root of "it can't happen here" of "too little and too late" of human defeat from the fall of Rome to the end of the Indies. The croaker is never popular, and the human grasshopper never seems to heed the snap in the fall winds till winter engulfs him.

All of which is not introduction to another grave warning. There are enough warnings abroad to speed the flutterings of the least timorous. This is but the build-up for a suggestion that with another

session of Grand Lodge upon us, we might well begin to think about what we are going to do with it.

To those in the blue ribbons, it will be a gala occasion. Good fellowship will flow in a mighty torrent, and oratory will pound upon ears with the roar of a verbal Niagara. There will be generous back-slapping and we shall return to our Lodges and and benchers to explain what Freemasonry in general, and this Grand Lodge in particular, proposes to do in a world tumbling about its ears. What can we tell them? What have we told them? What will we tell them of the Sessions of 1942.

If you expect some devastating statement in this man's commentary, my dear brother, stop reading, there will be none; for we begin to think we have said our say, that Freemasonry believes itself the Rock of Ages, the same yesterday, today and forever, which being so, relieves the present writer and others of his ilk who think otherwise and permits them to lead their pessimism off into a corner to wait for what is to be. That, in itself, may be "something to think about".

It is possible, as we look out of our window this fine spring evening, that we are hearing the urgent call of the out-of-doors, and that with that call our sub-conscious mind is comparing the foolishness of man-made pursuits in the face of Nature, human and universal. Reason too suggests that one man can do little save bruise his own soul upon the rock of sheer indifference, and that exhortation is but a breath in the present gale of hate. If this be true, leadership seems meaningless and the inevitable end—sterility.

From this pessimism we swing full cycle to a pious hope, we scarce dare call it optimism, that when Grand Lodge meets, and all the plethora of reports and addresses and debate and plain harangue have disappeared into the cold print of the Annual Proceedings, some critical consideration will have been given to our future. The short view of this year or next may have been extended for a decade or a generation. Some plan, no matter how modest

may have been made, that we will have been given "something to think about", and most important of all, we shall have found ourselves impelled to translate our thinking into realistic action suited to the crying need of our day and age.

Here the hair-splitter will pause to ask, "What is the crying need of our day and age?" We mildly opine that a strongly reviving practice of that curious trait known as common honesty among men just about meets the case. Consideration of the implications of that homespun virtue might really give us "something to think about".

A.M.M.

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"SO MOTE IT BE"

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HOW familiar the phrase is. No Lodge is ever opened or closed, in due form, without using it. Yet how few know how old it is, much less what a deep meaning it has in it.

Its form betrays its age. The word *mote* is an Anglo-Saxon word, derived from an anomalous verb, *motan*. Chaucer uses the exact phrase in the same sense in which we use it, meaning "So may it be". It is found in the Regius Poem, the oldest document of the Craft, just as we use it today.

As every one knows, it is the Masonic form of the ancient *Amen*. At first only a sign of assent, it has come to stand as a sentinel at the gateway of silence.

When we have uttered all that we can utter, and our poor words seem like ripples on the bosom of the unspoken, somehow this familiar phrase gathers up all that is left—our dumb yearnings, our deepest longings—and bears them aloft to One who understands.

How impressively it echoes through the Book of Holy Law. We hear it in the Psalms, as chorus answers to chorus. In the talks of Jesus with his friends it has a striking use, hidden in the English version. The oft-repeated phrase, "Verily, verily I say unto you", if rightly translated means, "Amen, Amen, I say unto you". Later, in the Epistles of Paul, the word *Amen* becomes the name of Christ, who is the Amen of God to the faith of man.

So, too, in the Lodge, at opening, at closing, and in the hour of initiation. No Mason ever enters upon any great or important undertaking without invoking the aid and blessing of Deity. And he ends his prayer with the old phrase, "So mote it be". Which is another way of saying: The will of God be done.

What, then, is the meaning of this old phrase, so interwoven with all our Masonic lore, simple, tender, haunting? It has two meanings for us everywhere, in the Church or in the Lodge. First, it is the assent of man to the way and will of God; assent to His commands; assent to His providence,

even when a tender, terrible stroke of death takes from us one much loved and leaves us forlorn.

Still, somehow, we must say: So it is; so be it. He is a wise man, a brave man, who, baffled by the woes of life, when disaster follows fast and follows faster, can nevertheless accept his lot as a part of the will of God and say, though it may almost choke him to say it: So mote it be. It is not blind submission, nor dumb resignation, but a wise reconciliation to the will of the Eternal.

The other meaning of the phrase is even more wonderful: it is the assent of God to the aspiration of man. Man can bear much—anything, perhaps—if he feels that God knows, cares and feels for him and with him. If God says Amen, So it is, to our faith and hope and love, it links our perplexed meanings, and helps us to see, however dimly, or in a glass darkly, that there is a wise and good purpose in life, despite its sorrow and suffering, and that we are not at the mercy of Fate or the whim of Chance.

Today men are asking the question: Does it do any good to pray? The man who actually prays does not ask such a question. As well ask if it does a bird any good to sing, or a flower to bloom? Prayer is natural, instinctive, in a man. We are made so. Man is made for prayer, as sparks ascending seek the sun. He would not need religious faith if the objects of it did not exist.

Are prayers ever answered? Yes, always, as Emerson taught us long ago. Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered—and that is as far as we need to go.

The place of prayer in Masonry is not perfunctory. It is not a mere matter of form and rote. It is vital and profound. As a man enters the Lodge, as an initiate, prayer is offered for him to God in whom he puts his trust. Later, in a crisis of his initiation, he must pray for himself, orally or mentally as his heart may elect. It is not just a ceremony; it is basic in the faith and spirit of Masonry.

Still later, in a scene which no Mason ever forgets, when the shadow is darkest, and the most precious thing a Mason can desire or seek seems lost, in the perplexity and despair of the Lodge, a prayer is offered.

It is truly a great prayer, to join in which is to place ourselves in the very hands of God, as all must do in the end, trust His will and way, following where no path is into the soft and fascinating darkness which men call death. And the response of the Lodge to that prayer, as to all others offered at its Altar, is the old, challenging phrase: "So Mote it be".

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Consciousness is most acute when without nudge from teacher, poet or prophet it is indulged in a little simple star gazing and grasps the brevity of life.

A SECRETARY WRITES ABOUT UNPAID DUES

By Bro. L. J. HUMPHREY,
Secretary, Nanaimo Lodge No. 110, G.R.B.C.

Dear Brother:

According to instructions in our Book of Constitutions it is my duty to notify you that you are in arrears of dues and that unless they are paid before—etc., etc. But that's just the mere formality of the affair. What I really want to do is to take this opportunity to have a bit of a chat with you regarding unpaid dues.

Do you ever look at the Annual Proceedings, that compendium of the activities of our Craft compiled every year. It is an interesting book for it outlines the actual condition of the Fraternity. It is our health chart. Now, if your doctor were to draw up for you a health chart which showed a glaring danger mark, you would think seriously and resolve to do all in your power to erase that danger mark, would you not? You would understand what it meant. You would take hold of yourself. You would act!

If you will examine the Freemasonic health chart you will observe a quite ominous and ugly blot—it is that figure representing unpaid dues. Look at it. Doesn't it make you take a mental grip on yourself as a one-time enthusiastic Freemason? This sum, all these sheer useless dollars and cents that the Craft—your own Lodge—is carrying from year to year? Consider how they could be put to the sweet uses of charity if they were paid. And, having considered thus, if you ever hear a brother scoff at Masonic charity just endeavour to suggest, as tactfully as your nature permits, that if monies are not forthcoming they cannot be available for distribution no matter how urgent the call.

From a secretarial viewpoint in this particular regard there are three classes of delinquent brethren. There is the class made up of forgetful brethren who pay their dues when reminded. If you belong to this class these few words will have set your ready hand reaching for your cheque-book. Very well.

Then there is the class representing the unfortunate brethren who would gladly keep themselves in good standing if they possibly could. Well, Brother, if you are in this class why not let your Worshipful Master know? There is no disgrace in being hard up; the flowery meads often give way to the uneven paths of adversity. Remember also that a good secretary is always sympathetically willing to use his influence on your behalf. He is discreet and kind. He will do his best to see to it that every consideration is given you, either by granting you more time in which to pay your dues or by urging the Lodge to remit them on your behalf, as our Constitutions provide.

There is another class of delinquents, the class comprised of brethren who have simply grown indifferent to Freemasonry and have drifted away from a realization of what it represents in the world. Now it is not for me to pry into your motives or

pass judgment on your attitude, but if you belong to this class permit me to urge you to realize that all good works do not necessarily advertise themselves with clatter of cymbal and parade. The very finest virtues are seated in the heart which, though unseen, beats on. The Freemasonic bloodstream is steady with the pulse of freedom, justice and liberty, that trinity of virtues or principles which are the foundation of the democratic way of living. Try to imagine life without these fundamentals. What prospect would the future hold for you then? Brother, you would simply hang your head and regret in your secret soul that you did not do all in your power to preserve the good before it was replaced by the bad. That's the whole truth of the matter.

Freedom, Justice, Liberty. You petitioned the Craft in the exercise of freedom of your own will; were accepted into it by the justice—that is, the sense of fairplay—of its members; continued in the enjoyment of its liberty within the law without which true liberty could not exist. Yes, Brother, and you signed your Lodge's by-laws in token of submission to them, including those sections dealing with the payment of dues.

Consider these things, good friend! If ever you hear a cheap jibe against Masonry measure that jibe against the great generousities of your life as a citizen of no mean country and a member of no mean Fraternity—and fling the jibe into the jiber's face with the retort that such shallowness is a destructive, negative force uttered at a time when noble words are needed and valiant faithfulness called for.

Finally, know that if the common enemy wins this war all that you hold dear will be swept away. Brotherly love, relief and truth will be banished. The old sweet friendships beneath the letter G will be no more. And that, I suggest, is a dreary thought.

So, Brother, I put it to you that this is no time to desert the Craft. Take hold of reality. Realize that in order to exist your Lodge must discharge its financial obligations—must pay its way—and that *if you are able* to pay your dues and have not done so, you should do it now. Keep yourself in good standing. Hold your head high. Do not be a Masonic fifth columnist.

May I soon have the pleasure of writing you a receipt in full?

Yours in fraternity,
SECRETARY.

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A little scepticism will keep the solution pure; too much will poison it altogether.

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There is more real joy in living below thinning hair or between graying temples than strongly pigmented and hairy young oafs can possibly imagine.

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In shaping the action of the herd, we should realize by this time that reason plain has little chance against imagination colored by emotion.

A NOTE ON JOHN PAUL JONES

Editor's Note.—In a report of a meeting of the Council of the Town of Kirkcudbright, Scotland, M. W. Bro. George Moore ran across this minute. It seems timely as a note on the "Father of the American Navy."

Paul Jones Relic

The Provost said he had received a letter from Captain D. J. Munro, R.N., New-Galloway, enclosing a photostat copy of the original application of Paul Jones seeking admission to the Masonic Lodge of Kirkcudbright. The letter stated that the document was one of the only existing documents which bore the signature of Paul Jones as John Paul, and had a historic significance at a time when every gesture from America meant so much to us in this country. It was also significant that the document should have come there at that time, particularly when it had emanated from the Naval College in the U.S.A. where the original was one of its most treasured possessions. Captain Munro had had great difficulty in discovering where that document had gone to. It originally came from Kirkcudbright, and he traced it to Canada and from there it was subsequently taken to the U.S.A. Naval College, and it was from there he had secured the copy. He was sure they would desire to express their thanks to Captain Munro for his gift.

It was agreed that the copy be framed and placed in the Museum.



CHARITY

"Silver and gold I do not have"
Said Peter in his plea.
"But what I have that do I give,
Freely unto thee."
Then in the name of Christ he blessed
The cripple at the gate,
Who with him to the temple went
To thank God for his fate.

For Charity is not of gold,
To barter in the mart.
It is the life-blood of the soul,
The fullness of the heart.

The nation destined to be great,
In Charity will find,
The spirit for which men will fight,
In brotherhood to bind;
That on the Level all may stand,
And act upon the Square,
That each may have a happy home,
With grace and gift to share.

"The Homesteader."

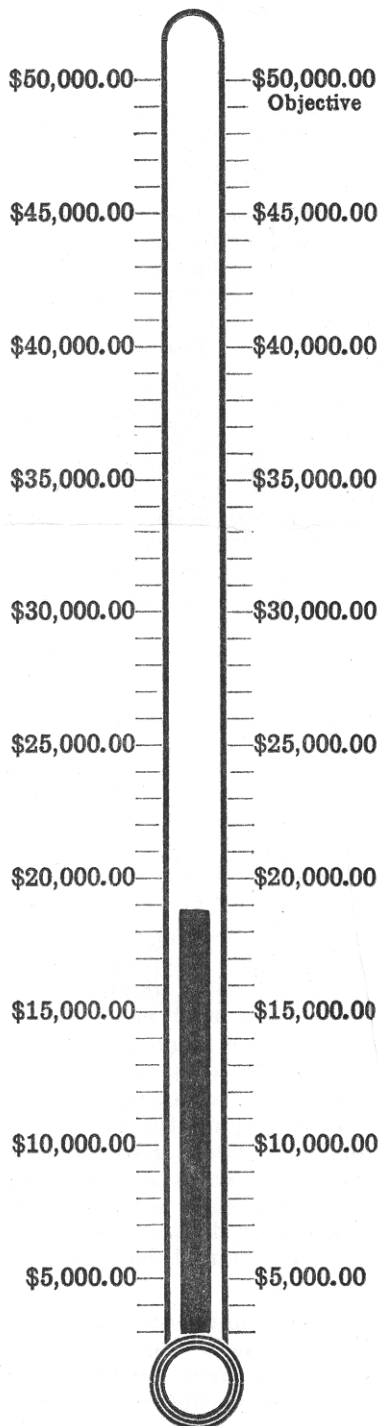
Nanton, Alberta.



We must never forget that Democracy too can set the fires of intolerance.

MASONIC WAR DISTRESS FUND

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April 22th
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