



Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: Sam Harris, P.G.M.

The Acquiring of Masonic Knowledge

A lot has been said about Masonic Education. This no doubt has been going on since 1717 and will continue for all time.

The more I think of it, the more I realize, that it is in a large measure up to the individual to acquire this knowledge for himself, with of course, if he so desires, the aid of other members and the literature available.

A new Mason should have a good primary education before he joins any Lodge. He should be the better, if in his early days he had a good schooling in Religion.

He should have seen for himself, that a Freemason is one he can look up to and trust, as a man whose work and promise can be depended on, one whose hand is guided by justice and whose heart is expanded by benevolence.

Having learned this lesson he should come into Freemasonry to better himself. His first example of fitness is a declaration of his belief in the existence of a Supreme Being and that he puts his trust in that Supreme Being at all times.

His experience in going through the Degrees will teach him very little unless he is a keen student with a good memory.

There is so much in these degrees, it has been said, it would take a lifetime to study them fully. Perhaps the lecture in the N.E. Angle will sink in more than any other part.

Now in becoming a Master Mason it is to a large extent up to himself. We are told that Masonry does not inculcate her truths, she states them once and briefly, or hints them perhaps darkly—"Seek and ye shall find knowledge and truth."

However, he could take a lesson from the Cable Tow, and his assistance through the darkness of youth by an able Brother until he is brought to Light.

Then at the N.E. Angle he is about to leave the place of darkness, and enter the East of Masonic Light, or in the words of Saint Paul, "to put off the old and put on the new."

In his journey, he is reminded that in olden days they thought that by following the course of the sun they gained some advantage by not going against nature, and not striving against our fellow men and be at cross purposes, but all work-

ing together for the common good.

There are many meanings in the figure three, but there is one in particular, "Seek and ye shall find, ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

He should learn the Ritual by all means, learn the By-Laws and study the constitution, and the three lectures of the degrees.

They are full of knowledge; written in 1723 they were so perfectly worded they have never been changed to any extent.

The officers of a lodge should give a new member something to do—a part of the work—put him on some committee—put him on an examining board with a P.M.—anything to make him feel he is part of the organization. We have all seen the Brother who will dig in and study, and the Brother who is very willing to let the other fellow do it, and perhaps though not very well informed may still be a good Mason, because we are told that it is not the length of time you have been a Mason, but the proper use of that time that will entitle you to the wages of wisdom and knowledge.

Every lodge should have a question box. Have some one put in one or two questions; the W.M. will allot the questions to some of the new members who will bring in the answers at the next meeting. Once a member digs up something for himself he will never forget it.

It does not seem right for some member to give the same part of the work for years and years, give someone else a chance.

Don't bore the members with long-winded speeches. Some speakers have the unhappy faculty of talking all around the subject, or a lot of words but no answer.

Recall some of the speeches you have heard; they start off by telling a good joke (?) a month later the joke still sticks to some memories, while the rest of the speech is forgotten.

Shakespeare says "Tis the mind that makes the body rich".

A careful examination of a candidate before he gets his M.M. Apron is a good start on memory work, and he should start right away to apply his knowledge to every day life.

A new member should ask, "why?" Ask one of the older members, or a P.M., ask the Master,

ask the D.D.G.M., ask the Grand Secretary, ask the Grand Master. I never saw one yet who refused to answer a question, or tell you where you can get the information you want. You generally find you can get the answers in your own lodge.

You are advised to read any Masonic literature you can find, there is lots of it. Come to lodge, repeat the work to yourself as it is given on the floor. Never mind if someone makes a mistake in the work; overlook it because no one is perfect. Ask yourself questions and visit other lodges.

Watch your conduct during the hour of refreshment. Some people can be popular during the refreshment period by sheer talent, some by rendering a good song, some may be popular on account of their social standing or their wordly possessions, some by being just themselves and some unfortunately by telling so called good stories.

Some of the antics, speeches and stories have driven away good material from the lodges.

There is one sure and simple method to apply your Masonry in your daily life.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

—R.W. Bro. R. G. Thomson, P.P.D.G.M.

By a certain type of mind "scaring" a candidate is considered to be an excellent joke. Those who petition a lodge are told of the terrors of the "lodge goat", thus keeping alive a form of ridicule of Freemasonry invented by its enemies more than two hundred years ago. A candidate is told that he will "back down". The terrors of the "third degree" are expounded with laughter, winks and apparent enjoyment by these who thus soil something sacred and beautiful for the sake of a moment's amusement—if, indeed, it is amusing to make a newcomer afraid of that which later proves to be without terror.

—Carl A. Claudy.

We trust that the principles of our Masonic teachings, that of equality and fraternity may prevail throughout the world. Let us therefore continue in our faith free from bigotry and prejudice and let us pray for a lasting and perpetual peace.

Masonry is a worship; but one in which all civilized men can unite; for it does not undertake to explain or dogmatically to settle those great mysteries that are above the feeble comprehension of our human intellect. It trusts in God and hopes; it believes, like a child, and is humble. It draws no sword to compel others to adopt its belief, or be happy with our hopes.—Morals and Dogma.

No power under Heaven is strong enough to overthrow the principles of Freemasonry. They are founded upon the rock of truth, brotherly love, service, and tolerance to all.

The Bible has stood the test of time. It is a living book of truth, wisdom and love.

The Masonic Lodge is founded upon the Bible; therefore, it is as it stands.

No storm from without or within can shake her timbers. Her foundation is the Masonry of life, truth and love.—The Ohio Mason.

SOLICITATION OF CANDIDATES

We are not so much concerned about what Freemasonry was yesterday, or what it was at the building of King Solomon's Temple, but what it is today and what it shall be tomorrow, and likewise what each one of us is today and what we shall be tomorrow. These are the all-important questions to the good Freemason and true men everywhere.

Eventually we shall be forced to the conclusion that we should elect to our Fraternity only those men who are good and true.

And it is just here that the fact should be stressed that every applicant for membership in the Masonic Fraternity is a petitioner. Keep in mind that he is asking to be admitted into our Order. For this reason alone, if for no other, we have a right to know everything that there is to be known about him before our privileges are extended to him.

This is a recognized Landmark of our Order. There can be no possible excuse for the solicitation of candidates, but every hope of safety in avoiding such a practice. We must not seek—we are to be sought. Our portals are open to all the good and true, but we ask no man to enter.

—Kansas Masonic Digest.

BEAUTY OF CHARACTER

There is a beauty beyond all things of sense, more regal than the splendour of a rose, more inspiring than an autumn sunset. It is the beauty of a noble character, of goodness made real in the life of a man. Such inner beauty appeals not to the eye but to the understanding. It expresses itself not in the grace of line or colour but in golden deeds. When a person lives honorably and uprightly, at peace with others without bitterness and without complaint, bearing all bravely and holding unerringly to the best, his life witnesses to something that is eternal. It testifies to the reality of God and bespeaks the soul's divinity.

—Exchange.

MASONIC SECRETS

It is true that Masons have their secrets, but they are few in number. What secrets Masonry has gathered within its fold consist in the modes of including Masonic principles and the conducting of Masonic ceremonies. These, blended together, form the evidence by which members may prove their title to the name and privileges of Masonry. But true Masonry possesses no secret involving any moral principle which it does not and has not always freely disclosed. All other societies have their secrets and keep them. Masons have theirs and cannot honestly disclose, nor with propriety be required publicly to discuss them. Heated fanatics appear now and then. Political enthusiasts frequently step to the front. A very few religious orders or societies frown upon those things that are an open book before God but not beholden unto them. But with it all no Mason as a Mason, nor as a man, is under obligation to enter the arena of discussion and argument with religious thinkers, heated fanatics or political enthusiasts.

—P. C. Somerville in Masonic News.

THE TRAINING OF MASONS

Masons should never consider the acquisition of membership as of primary importance, because by tradition and example, based upon law and usage, one of the very fundamentals of Masonry is the prohibition against solicitation. Masonic influence in a community is not based primarily upon numbers, but rather it is represented by the quality of its leadership. The value of Masonic membership is gauged by the conduct, devotion and contribution of its individual members.

The fundamental function of the Lodge should be the training of its members in an understanding of the truths and ethical values of the fellowship. All of its ceremonies and rituals emphasize the proposition of inculcating the desire to become benevolent men, instructed in the social virtues of human relationship, and imprint indelibly upon the hearts and minds of its members their duty to propagate the ideals of the art.

The success of a Masonic Lodge cannot be gauged by the measuring stick of its membership roll or by the accumulation of funds, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesseth."

The chief concern of a Masonic Lodge should be the welfare and happiness and the development of its members. The activation of those high principles of human virtue that result in a fellowship so closely entwined together and so firmly dedicated to making alive the beauties of our ritual and the fundamental virtues that are taught at the altars of our symbolic Lodges.

The value of a Masonic Lodge to the community in which it lives consists entirely in the operative art of Masonry as practiced through the influence of those whom it has helped to train into what we recognize as Masonic character.

The most important function of a Masonic Lodge, therefore, is to train its members and keep them informed in the arts and history, philosophy and symbolism of Masonry and endeavor to make these the shining symbols of a Mason's life and conduct.

—The Oklahoma Mason.

FOR TRUTH AND FREEDOM

Some day, when the cloud of prejudice has been dispelled by the searchlight of Truth, the world will honor Masonry for its heroic service to freedom of thought and freedom of faith. No part of its ministry has been more noble, no principle of its teaching has been more precious than its age-long and unwavering demand for the right and duty of every soul to seek that light by which no man was ever injured, and that Truth which makes him free. Down through the ages—often where human conscience was dragged as a slave at the wheel of the ecclesiastical chariot—always and everywhere, Masonry has stood for the right of the soul to know the Truth, and to look up unbidden from the lap of the earth unto the face of Him in whose great hand it stands. Not freedom from faith, but freedom of faith, has been its watchword, on the ground that as despotism is the mother of anarchy, so bigoted dogmatism is the prolific source of skepticism.

—Joseph Fort Newton.

BETWEEN THE PILLARS

(Cont. from Page 24)

never be fitted to take its place in the intended structure.

The building of the Masonic edifice can only be carried out by individual effort, and the extent of that effort will be governed by the "compass of your attainment", which will be as varied as human nature itself.

In recognition of this diversity of human nature, even when confined within the landmarks of the order, Freemasonry does not impose any particular task upon any of its members. It does not demand that each stone shall be of the same size, nor brought to the same degree of perfection, but it does demand that the stone presented shall be perfect in its parts and that the effort made shall be honourable to the builder.

Thus the ashlar may be said to symbolise life itself; shaped partly by hard treatment, partly by persistent and oft-times wearisome strivings and partly by personal contacts.

For it is that rubbing of shoulders with our fellowmen that will serve to give that fine polish and remove those irregularities which prevent us from fitting into one harmonious whole. And although perfection is always just out of reach, the love of the ideal will always furnish the incentive for sustained effort.

Brethren, since there can be no precise definition of a symbol, it will necessarily follow that there will be many interpretations of our ritual and ceremonial, yet no matter how much may be expressed, there will always remain that greater part, that real Freemasonry which is the inexpressible.

THE FELLOWCRAFT

The degree of Fellow Craft deals with material interests of life and man's intellectual nature. Its object is to stimulate every incentive to pursue and attain those things that go to make up man's welfare and comfort in material things and in his mental development and satisfaction.

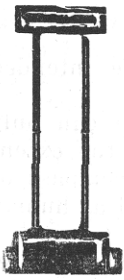
It matters not whether the Freemason toils, as a day laborer, in the clay grounds between Succoth and Zaredetha, or stands as the exponent of the liberal arts and sciences. There is but one standard for King or subject, rich or poor, educated or ignorant. The plumb-line of moral rectitude must be applied to every walk in life.

—Wisconsin Freemason.

THE VOICE OF ALBERT PIKE

He who would become an accomplished Mason must not be content merely to hear or even to understand the lectures, but must, aided by them, and they having as it were marked the way for him. STUDY, INTERPRET and DEVELOP THE SYMBOLS FOR HIMSELF.

Get the sunshine of life into your soul. Nothing can do you more good than a long walk in the woods. It will get you on fire with a desire to do. Go alone. Get acquainted with yourself and with God.—Masonic Historiology.



Between the Pillars



The Symbolism of the First Degree

By V.W. Bro. A. Bright, P.G.L., P.M.
New Zealand.
Conclusion.

One of the most important symbols of the First Degree, is the apron with which the candidate is invested. This apron, which should be of white lambskin, is described as being the badge of innocence and the bond of friendship.

In the New Zealand ceremonial, it is referred to, as the badge of an Entered Apprentice, but it is this plain white lambskin apron which is the true badge of a Mason. Any adornment which may be superimposed as one possesses rank and Masonic title, has little or no symbolic significance. In all ages, white has been a symbol of purity and the lamb a symbol of innocence, and it is the combination of these two which justifies the Masonic teaching that purity of life and actions are essential to gaining admission to the Grand Lodge above.

The apron is undoubtedly a connecting link with our associations with the operative masons. It is part of the dress of a workman.

Today, Speculative Freemasonry still refers to its labours as "work"; hence, the apron could also be deemed to be a symbol of the dignity of labour and a fitting support to the Masonic teaching that "skill without exertion is of little avail", and that "labour is the lot of man".

This appreciation of physical exertion is further exemplified by the Working Tools of the First Degree, for they, too, are symbolical of labour and perseverance. The Common Gavel is a symbol of the voice of conscience, the Chisel of the advantages of a liberal and enlightened education and the 24in. gauge, as a means by which to ascertain how far one's activities can be extended in the acquisition of the principles of moral truth.

But the knowledge of moral truth of itself, is not sufficient; it is necessary that this knowledge should be able to be applied. Of what use is it for the heart to conceive or for the head to devise, if these conceptions and devices are not put into execution. In the language of the ritual, knowledge must be aided by labour and sustained by perseverance in order to overcome the difficulties which are met with in the preparation of the material and the erection of the edifice.

These efforts, the Apprentice is adjured to spread over the hours of the day in a proper proportion between prayer to Almighty God, labour and refreshment, and to serving a brother in time of need.

Thus these tools might well be said to be symbolical of those efforts which the Mason should make in the fulfilment of his duty to God, his neighbour and to himself.

The Labour of a Masonic life is sometimes referred to as the preparation of a stone, fitted to take its place in the intended structure, and this preparation is symbolised in our Lodges by the Rough and Perfect Ashlars.

The Rough Ashlars, situated in the northeast, the place of the foundation stone, the birthplace or the starting point and the Perfect Ashlar situated in the west, the place of completion, the setting of the sun and the close of life.

The Rough Ashlars is described as being a stone rough and unhewn as taken from the quarries, but this description is not entirely appropriate in its application to a Masonic initiate. Freemasonry expects that each candidate—or each rough ashlar—it receives, shall have been wrought sufficiently to show that it is capable of being shaped as near to a perfect cube as it is possible for human efforts to attain.

It is not the task of Freemasonry to teach the elementary principles of good living. Indeed, no one can—or should—gain the right to be proposed as a member, unless he has given very clear proof that his character has been moulded to such an extent that he recognises the necessity of fulfilling his duty to God, his neighbour and himself. It is only by such preliminary testing and the knowledge that the stone will stand up to the heavy blows of the gavel, that it can be confidently expected that it will respond to the repeated efforts of the chisel.

The ritual and ceremonial of Freemasonry plays its part by symbolically demonstrating how one can best use those talents wherewith one has been blessed, to the glory of God and the welfare of one's fellow citizens. But it was never intended to be the instrument by which to teach and instil the fundamental principles of right living, nor will the mere conferring of degrees ever make a Mason, in the true sense of that word.

In the preparation of the Perfect Ashlar, nothing is added to the original stone. Perfection is attained by the removal of imperfections; and although its external appearance may be altered, the quality of the stone remains the same.

For this reason, the utmost caution should be exercised in connection with the acceptance of candidates. If, on the night of his initiation, the candidate fails to present himself as a "just and upright Freemason", if he is not sincere in his avowal to make himself more extensively serviceable to his fellow creatures, if, in short, there are faults in the heart of the material, then such a stone can

(Cont. on Page 23, Col. 2)