



Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: SAM HARRIS, P.G.M.

The Masonic Burial Service

ON NUMEROUS occasions in the past twenty years, it has fallen to my lot to conduct the Masonic funeral rites for departed Brethren and regardless of the number of times one carries out this duty the task does not seem to become any less of a strain, due, doubtless, to the solemnity of the service and the fact that it is conducted on behalf of a well loved Brother, whose loss is particularly poignant at the time of the service.

While no member of the Fraternity relishes the task, it is acknowledged to be a necessary duty and, as in the case of all Masonic ritualistic or constitutional work, it should be carried out in an exemplary manner and strictly without the aid of the printed word. It is particularly desirable, it seems to me, to have the work of the burial service memorized so that it may be given without fault, as in practically all cases non-masons are present to pay their final respects to the memory of the friend and their conception of Masonry and its import may well be developed by the manner in which the ceremony is conducted.

It is essential too, in my thinking, that the loved ones of the departed Brother, should feel that the Masonic service conveys the utmost in respect and in the feeling of brotherhood which exists between him who is being honored and the members of the Craft to which he belonged during his lifetime. The widow or others of the immediate family, at this time, look for real words of comfort with which to assuage their grief and if the beautiful words of the Masonic service are forthrightly given, without hesitation or stumbling, there can be a great deal in them which will add to the comfort of the bereaved.

It will be recalled that a few years ago material alteration was made in the burial service in an endeavor to shorten the service and, to me at least, something of value was taken from the service and the ceremony made somewhat less impressive. It is my hope that further consideration may soon be given to this important item of Masonic ritual and that the ceremony may be restored, in some measure,

to its former impressiveness without adding to too great an extent to its length.

It appears to me to be important that the Director of Ceremonies of the Lodge should be thoroughly familiar with the burial service in all details, that he should be able to impart to the Brethren in attendance the desirability of the proper order of procession on entering or leaving the Church and that he should have the ability to have the members form the desired square around the grave without uncertainty and without unnecessary shuffling or indefinite movement.

Members attending the funeral service of a Brother might well be reminded that they have a part in the service and that it is not a case where an acting Worshipful Master carries out the ceremony in its entirety without the co-operation of the members. For instance, during the committal part of the service Brethren are expected to accompany the Worshipful Master with the words . . . "We commit his body to the earth . . . we cherish his memory in our hearts . . . his spirit we commend to God who gave it"; the words being lent dignity and meaning by the use of the gestures as outlined in the burial service ritual.

If the words are clearly spoken by each Brother and if they are kept in unison and accompanied by the gestures given with exactitude and good timing much will be added to the impressiveness of the ceremony and all present will doubtless be cognizant that the members of the Masonic fraternity are sincere in their attitude of bereavement and in the discipline which always gives evidence of feeling and the common spirit of the closely-knit organization. If, however, the words are merely muttered by some and forgotten altogether by others, or if the gestures are half heartedly or incorrectly given much of the dignity of the service will be lost and the public may receive an altogether erroneous and improper conception of the burial service, the final mark of respect and love that Masons pay, one to the other, as occasion requires.

Similarly, at the appropriate time, each Brother should file past the grave of the deceased Brother,

pausing for a sufficient time in which to drop the sprig of evergreen on the casket and, at the same time, say the words . . . "Farewell, my Brother". This part of the ceremony involves all Masons in attendance and if each sorrowing Brother lends all possible dignity to the words and to the placing of the evergreen the cumulative effect will be greatly enhanced and the grieving relatives and friends are certain to be much more impressed and helped, than if the words are carelessly or listlessly spoken and the evergreen dropped hurriedly on the casket. The appearance of lack of interest or undue haste should at all times be avoided.

The words of the officiating Master . . . "To offer up to his Memory before the world this last tribute of our affection, thereby demonstrating the sincerity of our past esteem and our steady attachment to the principles of the Order" . . . are words which must necessarily impress all within hearing if they are spoken with feeling and sincerity, but these beautiful words may be somewhat less impressive if all taking part in the service fail in the least degree to carry out their part, small though it may seem to be.

I would urge that all Lodges, at a convenient time each year or oftener, go through the service, having the members take their part, so that when the necessity for a Masonic funeral arises all will be familiar with their duty and the officiating officer may feel confident that the Brethren will add their mead of impressiveness to the service and that proper dignity will prevail throughout the solemnity.

While it is not pleasant to dwell upon this service or the occasional necessity for the service we must at all times face the demand that comes from time to time and we should ever have in mind the fact that the conduct of the Masonic burial service is practically the only occasion on which Masons perform their rites or delineate their principles by word of mouth before members of the public and we should see to it that dignity and solemnity create the impression of absolute sincerity on each occasion.

It would be well for us, perhaps, to occasionally remind ourselves of the words of the service . . . "the arm of friendship cannot oppose the king of terrors, nor the charms of innocence elude his grasp" . . . from the moment of our birth we must prepare for our eventual passing and while grief does enter the picture during final rites, there must be satisfaction when it is known that the Brother who lives in accordance with the great teachings of Masonry finally goes to join the Great Architect of the Universe in the Grand Lodge above. There will be much less cause for sorrow if we permit our Masonic teachings to become such a power within us that we may:

"So live today, that when tomorrow comes
Thou shalt not cloud the sun with vain regret
But let thy hand and heart commit those deeds,
That love for man . . . and faith in God . . . begets".

R.W. Bro. S. Carl Heckbert,
Deputy Grand Master, Alberta.

THE MASTER'S CHAIR

The greatest honour Masonry can bestow upon any brother comes to him when he is elected and installed in the Chair of his Lodge. This high honour brings to the recipient a great responsibility. Were this not so, the honour would be an empty one. It is with feelings of pleasure, mingled with anxiety, that most brethren approach the eventful meeting when in their hands will be placed the gavel of authority.

The pleasure ultimately experienced will depend largely upon the confidence with which the Master meets his new responsibilities.

The essential quality of confidence which will assure commendation, not condemnation, from experienced brethren, can only have been acquired as the result of hard work and study while progressing through the various offices leading to the seat of authority.

The new Master who has a background of knowledge is thereby prepared and will not be discomforted by an over-measure of anxiety.

Early preparation should be the watch-word of every Mason who aspires to the honour of ruler of his Lodge. To have been elected Master presupposes knowledge and ability, the acquisition of which is not an easy task; but being a good Master is not supposed to be easy.

To occupy the Chair in their Lodge is an ideal towards which many brethren stretch eager hands without a proper realization of the great responsibilities which attainment will bring to them.

In any Lodge, perhaps, the ideal Master has never presided, but the clearer conception a brother has of the ideal, the more strenuously will he strive towards it and the closer to it will this approach be.

Here let it be emphasized that any brother's concept of the ideal Master will be the outcome of his knowledge of the nature and objects of Freemasonry and a clear vision of the proper function of his Lodge in relation to the community.

The ideal Master knows his Masonry as the result of many years' study of all the branches of the Order.

To be Master of a Lodge is quite different from being president of a club or society.

A survey of each succeeding years' work in a great majority of Lodges reveals that few Masters bring to the Chair the assets essential to a successful rule. How many Past Masters there must be whose head lies on a sleepless pillow thinking sad thoughts of the opportunities missed, when passing through the various offices, of fitting themselves for the pleasures of a successful Mastership, which can now never be theirs.

For all brethren who aim at reaching the Chair of their Lodge, the time to begin preparation is "now", and may these thoughts stimulate every such brother to further and wider study of Freemasonry against the great day of "Installation".

New South Wales Freemason

A BLUE PRINT OF MASONRY

No one knows how many Masons have lived upon this earth. We do know their numbers run into millions. And we do know each and every one of them made certain commitments and assumed certain vows along with a solemn obligation to keep and perform the same. Yet even today, we find some confusion over exactly what a Mason is, what he stands for, what he hopes and works for and what he expects in the way of reward for good work well done. A measure of this haziness can be found among some Masons themselves. Much of it, of course, will be discovered in the non-Masonic world.

A large part of this difficulty most likely arises from the fact that Masonry does not and never has publicized a creed or set of tenets to circumscribe or define its beliefs, acceptance of which is necessary for membership. The setting up of such definite standards is customary in most organizations, particularly those of a religious nature. Masonry has no criticism of this policy, but for its own purpose demands only one unequivocal declaration of faith before membership is granted, and that is, belief in Deity. No atheist or unbeliever, if known to be such, can ever become a Mason.

Masonry is not a religious system, or order, which fact also gives rise to some confusion.

Masonry began as a Craft. In former times its devotees were actual masons—builders, governed by strict rules and conventions to maintain the highest standards of skill and integrity. Speculative, or modern, Masonry is still a Craft, but instead of working with stones, timbers and metals, its materials are the many and varied forces, conditions, emotions and acts which combine to make up the character of man.

The difference between the purely religious and the Masonic approach to the weighty factors of life and time may be stated as follows: Religion places its main emphasis on the spiritual phases and the hereafter. It believes that if these are properly evaluated, the effects will be made manifest in right living and consequent benefits during human life. Masonry places its concern first with life as it is lived here and now, believing that if the principles of charity, honor, justice, equality and brotherhood can be brought to wide acceptance and demonstration among men here and now, vast benefits in the present life will result and open the way for more rapid advancement into the spiritual or religious realms.

It will be seen, therefore, that no conflict exists between religion and Masonry.

Both aim at the same thing—the eternal welfare of man—but approach it from different angles, with Masonry, perhaps, having slightly wider latitude in earthly affairs than does religion.

Nevertheless, both use the same Great Light as

the source of their teachings and instruction — the Bible.

Masonic principles and teachings are plain and simple. They are words of truth as applied to man's conduct here on earth. They admonish us to avoid evil speaking and babbling criticisms because such always lead to iniquity and are wholly incompatible with the spirit of the Fraternity.

It will be well for all Masons to fasten that blueprint securely in mind and heart. If we try always to speak only words that will be profitable to our fellow men; if we seek diligently to know the words of truth that have been given us and to divide (understand) them correctly, if we consistently shun profane and vain talk among ourselves and before the public, we cannot help but set a good example before the world, thus bringing honor and credit to the Craft, along with still greater opportunities for service.

Masonic Chronicler.

■ ■ ■

What impressiveness would be added to our work if we were to realize that every word spoken during the exemplification of the Master Mason's Degree is an expression of some portion of the handiwork of the Great Architect of the Universe.

Unhappily we realize that the time is fast passing when the officers of our Lodges and those who witness that great tragedy of the Master's Degree go home from the Lodge feeling that they have spent an evening just a little closer to God. Nor will those days ever return until we realize that we, as Masons, are working for the glorification of God and the instruction of the initiate, rather than for the amusement and entertainment of the onlookers.

The Ashlar, Queensland.

■ ■ ■

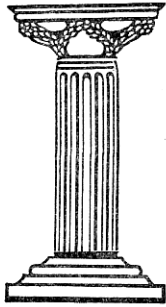
FREEMASONRY NOT AN ORDER

Freemasonry is often spoken of as an order, and its ceremonies as a ritual. These terms are neither technically nor legally correct. Freemasonry is a craft and its ceremonies are "work". An order is an association of persons. A craft is something more, inasmuch as it inculcates or teaches a "mystery". The word "craft" is derived from "kraft", meaning power, skill or the unexplained ability, by long practice to produce a desired result.

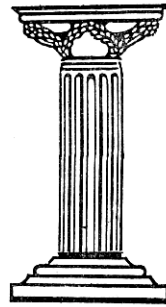
■ ■ ■

If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds; if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and love for our fellowmen, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten all eternity.

Daniel Webster.



Between the Pillars



STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

There were two massive pillars which stood in the porchway or entrance of King Solomon's Temple. The two together denote "stability," established strength, and are admirable emblems of solid goodness of character. But while these two pillars were made strong they were also made ornamental; for they were invreathed with delicate chains of carved pomegranates and upon the capitals of the pillars was lilywork. There was a combination of strength and beauty. Thus are strength and beauty to be combined in every well developed Godlike character. Neither of these qualities are of themselves uncommon. Strong characters are not rare, and beautiful characters are not rare; but characters that are both strong and beautiful are rare. It is their combination that is so rare. It is difficult to be firm and not be hard, to be inflexibly just and not to be cold, to have the solid virtues that make for strength and with them the soft and gracious qualities that command our sympathy and love. Somehow in this world the strong is not usually the beautiful and the beautiful is not usually the strong. We think of beauty in nature as the fragile, delicate, the evanescent. We think of the strong and with its massive solidity it is difficult to associate any thought of grace and loveliness.

Let us consider the strength typified by these pillars indicated as, not physical strength, but moral strength—strength of character. It is better that a building be strong rather than it should be only ornamental. The same is true of character also. Ornament, beauty, however, ought to accompany strength. It is not good art to put into a building a useless feature merely because it is outwardly beautiful. The true artists will beautify the useful. The practical purpose will be first. Just so, the practical, useful and moral of life are to be the first things sought after and then you have something worth adorning.

It is the hard stone that takes the best polish, and it is the strong earnest character which may be made the most beautiful. The man who puts his trust in God cannot but be a strong character.

The next thing is beauty. Some people are content with the strength and care little or nothing for the beauty of life. Everyone knows their worth, believes in their honesty and trusts implicitly in their integrity. But at the same time they do not

inspire confidence, and win love and respected by their gracious bearing, their kind words and their charitable construction of men and things. In a word they have the strength but they lack something of the lilywork, the beauty, the warmth, the attractiveness of the gracious character. Not all the strong, solid piety is as beautiful and attractive as it might be. There is many a man that has not much lilywork about his harsh and repulsive character. We might instance thousands of men, honest at heart and sincere in their profession, who would be wonderfully improved by lopping off some of their unsightly branches and chipping off the sharp, rough corners of life which cause mischief and pain, and which give offence. There are many people who have much in them that is very commendable. They could, and might, and ought to be very useful and helpful in the essential things of life, but they are so harsh and ungentle in their dealings with others, and whatever they do or give, they do not do it willingly, joyfully, spontaneously, graciously, so that people are always afraid to approach them. They are something like a chestnut burr that may have a good sound nut inside of it but on one cares to prick his fingers in coming at it. It is often said of a person: "He is not a bad sort, rather a decent fellow, has some good qualities, could be very useful, BUT! IF"! It is just these "ifs" and "buts" which spoil and lessen life.

What is the use of a man's good qualities if you have to use a pick and shovel to get at them.

"It is not such much what you say,
As the manner in which you say it.
It is not so much what you do,
As the manner in which you do it."

And so we find that a man may have a strong character—and how we admire him for it. He may be a pillar of strength to whom we can go in the time of trouble and upon whom we might lean; but because the pillar lacks lilywork, the beauty, the warmth, the attractiveness it repels and throws us off, it makes us afraid to solicit his help, and it is only half the good that can be done because of the unloveliness of character.

And there are those in whom the lilywork is so gentle and sweet and yet, somehow, or other, no use. They have no great moral strength. They are not fit to lean upon. They let us drop the moment we are unpopular or have to stand up for a truth which does not commend itself to the people. To make life perfect and complete both characters are needed. Above all, the thing to aim at is to get the two characters in one—pillar and lilywork combined.

R.W. Bro. Rev. A. Lewis,
P. J. G. Warden, Queensland.

■ ■ ■

ATTENTION SECRETARIES: If you would like the Grand Lodge Bulletins folded ready to be placed in envelopes, please advise the Grand Secretary.