

Wishing You a Very Happy New Year

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Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: SAM HARRIS, P.G.M.

A New Year's Message

At the beginning of a year we frequently hear it said "I am going to turn over a new leaf". There are several things that this may mean, and we might as well know just what we do mean by this statement.

To some it may mean that the old leaf is turned over and stuck down permanently. There are those who are so disgusted with what has passed, they don't want even to be reminded of it. They feel that they have made such a mess of the past, personally, that they want to forget all about it.

Others are so impatient with things as they have found them, that they would like to seal down the past and so begin a brave new world all at once. "Let us scrap all that old stuff, it has many faults and doesn't get things done fast enough." "Away with it, let us start afresh altogether". Some there are that say that Christianity has failed, and that there is no use even keeping up the pretense.

Even in our fraternity we sometimes hear it said that there are many things we could do away with and make Masonry more appealing to a greater number, and probably bring many who have lapsed.

So the page that is dirty and blurred in some places, almost illegible in others, not very much to be proud of on the whole, is gladly turned down, in the hope that it will stay down for good.

Those who think this way forget a few things. If it is an individual who would try to seal down another page of his own life, he finds that he cannot seal himself down. He is the same individual who is starting a new page, with the same characteristics, the same faults and the same virtues. It is his past that has made him what he is now, and the only thing to do is to change himself by a new vision and new ideals, and seek a new Power outside himself to help him.

If one is dissatisfied with moral, social or eco-

nomie conditions, and wants to see them different, the same things apply, but with added problems. He now has to take others into consideration. This also applies to our fraternity, when some of our members feel that it would be well to make some change which it is thought might improve our order.

One is entirely selfish who thinks that any organization can be remade just to suit himself. Other people have as much right to their own opinions as I have to mine, and it is only as we try to find common ground with others with whom we are associated that we can begin make changes or improvements. We must also bear in mind that much which we have inherited has been handed down to us by men who were much greater than we are, and who of their knowledge and experience have crystallized their thoughts for future generations. And we must always remember that human nature never does change very much fundamentally.

So here the old page is filled up, and we have a bright new clean one in front of us. Before we put anything on it, let us glance back over the old pages and see where the faults were. Here it is a bit illegible. We were not clear and straightforward at that time. Here are blots that were wrongdoings. Face up to them and they will help you to overcome the same faults in the future, with God's help. Don't forget that! So many of our failures are there because we try to go it alone.

When our dissatisfaction is with some of the things we have found in our surroundings, or in our craft, and we want to make a new start, there are a few things we need to do.

First, is the trouble in ourselves? We are taught that ours is a progressive science. Sometimes we think and act as though that means that only the science is progressive. Do we stop to think that the real progress is in our own knowledge of its teach-

ings? Have we been faithful in our attendance and paid attention to all phases of the work? Do we try to do some reading to acquaint ourselves with the thoughts of others? Do we seek for some new light in all our well known symbols, acts and words? We will always get some new shafts of light if we do. Our lodges are not merely good-fellowship clubs.

Perhaps our dissatisfaction is with something that we really think could be improved for the good of all, and we think we should start it. Growth there must and should be, but an organism can grow in only one way, altogether. Most of the divisions we find are caused by one or two enthusiastic souls who want to rush forward and find themselves up against the ultra-conservatives who never want change. The would-be reformers often get disgusted and either lose interest, or go off by themselves and try to start something else. This, of course, doesn't improve matters. We have to be very sure that what we want to do is the right thing **for all concerned**, and then we have to go out and convince others. We must be prepared to see the change come gradually, as others are convinced of the need of it too. Only so can we keep coherence, and can we really advance.

So as we turn a new page we should try to see the faults of the past, and thus be more able to correct them. We should remember that those things which we think need changing must be changed gradually, and that as we are members of an organization we must try to work for change along with others. Thus we will find that if what we think is really worth changing, then a little leaven can leaven the whole lump.

R. W. Bro. Rev. Canon W. H. Morgan,
Grand Chaplain, Grand Lodge, Alberta.

AFTER THE LODGE IS CLOSED

Masonry teaches us how to live, how to die, and our duty towards our fellow men. Do we all realize the significance of the word "fellow men?" It means more than fellow-Masons. We naturally have a special tendency to safeguard our Brethern of the Mystic Tie, but actually our duty lies beyond the fold as well. In these difficult times when the kindly courtesies of bygone days seem to be fading away in the struggle for existence, the Mason often finds himself presented with opportunities for rendering kindly help. Not necessarily the giving of alms, that of friendly counsel, loving sympathy, and a willingness at all times to render aid when properly called upon. The giving of a kindly hand of help to a mother with young children on an escalator, the call at a neighbor's when serious illness has occurred, and other small acts of courtesy and kindness in daily life, are factors which should distinguish the Mason from others. Let thought for others be the motive in daily life, and then the Mason reflects the teachings and tenets of his Craft.

Masonic Record, London.

Think not so much of what thou hast not, as of what thou hast; but of the things thou hast, select the best, and then reflect how eagerly they would have been sought if thou hadst them not.

—Marcus Aurelius.

THE LETTER "G"

There is one symbol that stands out above all others. Even a stranger, entering a Masonic Lodge room, must be struck by a mysterious Letter which hangs over the chair of the Master in the East. No one need tell him its meaning; it is a letter of light and tells its own story.

Yet no stranger can know its full import, much less how old it is. Indeed, few Masons are aware of all that it implies, either as symbol or history. There it shines, a focus of faith and fellowship, the emblem of the Divine Presence in the Lodge, and in the heart of each Brother composing it.

When the Lodge is opened, the mind and heart of each member should also be opened to the meaning of the great symbol, to the intent that its light and truth may become the supreme reality in our lives. When the Lodge is closed, the memory of that Divine initial and its august suggestions ought to be the last thought retained in the mind to be pondered over.

The Holy Bible lies open upon the Alter of Masonry, and upon the Bible lie the Square and Compasses. They are the three Great Lights of the Lodge, at once its divine warrant and its chief working tools. They are symbols of Revelation, Righteousness, and Redemption, teaching us that by walking in the light of the Truth, and obeying the law of Right, the Divine in man wins victory over the earthly. It is the philosophy of Life set forth in simple symbols. How to live is the one important matter, and he will seek far, without finding a wiser way than that shown us by the Great Lights of the Lodge.

The Square and Compasses are the oldest, the simplest, and the most universal symbols of Masonry. All the world over, whether as a sign on a building, or a badge worn by a Brother, even the profane know them to be emblems of our ancient craft. Some years ago, when a business firm tried to adopt the Square and Compasses as a trademark, the patent office refused permission, on the ground, as the decision said, that "there can be no doubt that this device, so commonly worn and employed by Masons, has an established mystic significance, universally recognized as existing."

How simple and beautiful it is, revealing the oldest wisdom man has earned and the very genius of our craft. In fact and truth, the Square rules the Mason as well as the Lodge in which he labors. As soon as the candidate enters the Lodge he walks with square steps round the square pavement of a rectangular Lodge. All during the ceremony his attitude keeps him in mind of the same symbol, as if to fashion his life after its form. When he is brought to light, he beholds the square upon the Altar, and at the same time sees that it is worn by the Master of the Lodge, as the emblem of his office. In the north-east corner he is shown the perfect Ashlar and told that he is the type of a finished Mason, who must be a Square-Man in thought and conduct, in word and act. With every art of emphasis the Ritual writes this lesson in our hearts, and if we forget this first truth the Lost Word will remain forever lost, though we journey to the ends of the earth, in search of it.

W. Bro. M. H. Sylvester, P.M.
Friona Lodge No. 1322, Texas.

WHAT IS MASONRY?

Being persuaded that a just application of the principles on which the Masonic fraternity is founded, must be promotive of private virtue and public prosperity, I shall be happy to advance the interests of the Society and to be considered by them as a deserving Brother.—George Washington.

Have you ever stopped to think what Masonry is and does? Masonry is the product of the most unselfish thinking, the most whole-hearted and selfless effort, the world has ever known. Through it a universal brotherhood of millions of men has been brought into being, to any one of which you and I have the right to turn, sure of sympathy, understanding and some help in time of need.

Through Masonry, a system of philosophy has been evolved, and through its lodges that philosophy is taught to all brethren of the M.M. degree, without money and without price. Through it we learn, charity, toleration, courage, fortitude, justice, truth, brotherly love, relief. Through it we learn decency, patriotism, high-thinking, honour, honesty, and helpfulness. Through it, and all of these, we are made into better men, better citizens, better husbands, better fathers, better lovers, better legislators, better followers of our several vocations.

Masonry may penetrate only a fraction of an inch beneath the skin of her follows, but by that fraction of an inch the man who takes even a little of her blessings to himself is a better man, and so the world is a better place for the rest of us. In some of us it strikes deep, deep. We become soaked through and through with Masonic ideas, and strive in our feeble, human way, to show forth to the world whatever measure we may accomplish of the perfection for which Masonry strives.

Those of us who take it seriously and love it much also make the world a better place for the rest of us.

The lodge provides a spiritual home for brethren who may have no other. If one has another in his church, the lodge gives him a second spiritual home to which he may go once in a while and feel more strongly, perhaps, than in his church the close touch of a brother's hand, the sweet smile of a brother's love, the supporting arm of a brother's strength. To me, my lodge is a rest, a haven, a harbour for the tired mind.

When I come to my lodge, I find myself uplifted, strengthened, made whole again. I may come tired, worn, weary with the day; I leave refreshed, invigorated, helped with the reviving of old truths, the remaking of old vows, the renewing of old ties.

Our ancient brethren had "cities of refuge," to which the fleeing man, criminal or oppressed, might run for safety. Masonry is our modern "city of refuge," to which we, criminal in intent if we are such, or oppressed with injustice and cruelty may fly for spiritual comfort and safety, knowing that within the four walls of a lodge is rest and peace and comfort.

All this has the lodge in particular, and Masonry in general, offered since the beginning, to all upon

whom Masonry lays her gentle hands. You are the recipient of her bounty, as I am. Within these walls we all take generously and without stint from Masonry's storehouse of loveliness, of beauty, of rest and comfort and love. What have I done for Masonry, which does so much for me?

M. W. Bro. Carl H. Claudy,
Past Grand Master.

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

UNITED STATES

All of the 49 Grand Jurisdictions in the United States, except the District of Columbia and Vermont, report a substantial net gain in membership of 71,946, a decrease of 581 from last year. The District of Columbia shows a loss of 53 and Vermont a loss of 14. California reports the largest increase in membership, 8,637. New York has the largest membership, 308,273, also the largest number of lodges, 1,069. Nevada has the smallest membership, 5,160 with 27 lodges but Delaware has the smallest number of lodges, 23, with a membership of 7,656 members. The total number of lodges in the United States is 15,620 an increase of 71 last year, the total number of members being 3,964,657, an increase of 71,946 members from last year.

CANADA

All of the Grand Lodges in Canada, with the exception of New Brunswick report a substantial net increase in membership, 4,071. New Brunswick shows a loss of 74 members. The Grand Lodge of Canada, in the Province of Ontario has the largest membership, 130,307, also the largest number of lodges, 595. Prince Edward Island has the smallest membership 1,347, also the smallest number of lodges, 16. The total number of Lodges in the Dominion of Canada is 1,494 with a total membership of 246,547.

—Courtesy Iowa Grand Lodge Bulletin.

The Province of Newfoundland still continues to function under the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Lodge of Scotland. No statistics are at hand.

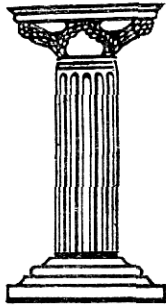
S. H.

BUILDING

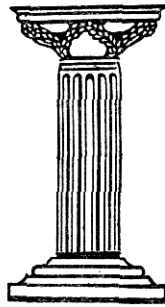
We must build higher — ever higher — in order to guarantee forever the preservation of the principles of our Craft — principles which are identical with the principles of our democratic form of government — the greatest government upon the face of the earth. Those principles, I reiterate, are equality, freedom, liberty, independence, and fraternity. They constitute the dearest and most sacred heritage ever given to a free people. Regardless of the cost, they must be preserved.

And, while we build collectively, we must remember to build individually. We must build our own character. This is each Mason's contribution to the unseen — the spiritual temple which God and humanity have been building throughout the ages. "Some men build in marble; some in brick; and some in wood, hay, stubble."

—R. W. Bro. Rogers Kelly, Texas



Between the Pillars



THE DIGNITY OF FREEMASONRY

The dignity of Freemasonry, like so many intangibles, is as difficult to define as it is easy to understand. Freemasonry is built around the belief in and a reverence toward the Great Architect of the Universe . . . the universal brotherhood of man and its component parts . . . brotherly love . . . relief . . . and truth. Its sole mission in the world the building of character in men.

The public conception of Freemasonry is that of a society of men of character and understanding who meet and act in secret . . . devoted to good works and the care of the widow and the orphan.

The fact that Freemasonry in its very nature is inherently dignified is obvious. All types of men make up the world and it naturally follows that all types of men become Masons. Many a good man and true has little natural dignity. Lack of dignity is not, of itself, either an offence or an injury to others. But when the lack of dignity affects the aims and accomplishments of others, then it becomes a serious matter.

Freemasonry provides for certain forms and ceremonies for opening and closing a Lodge. These ceremonies are deeply symbolic. Performed with respect in the silence of the Brethren . . . done unhurriedly and with reserve, these ceremonies are beautiful and deeply impressive. Rushed through in a hurry to get downstairs for refreshments . . . done in the presence of the Brethren busily engaged in untying their aprons . . . talking among themselves . . . even laughing at some out-of-place witticism . . . these ceremonies are definitely ruined as to accomplishment of their purpose and become an agent for harm for those who thus make a mockery of what should always be done with solemnity and reverence.

Occasionally dignity is confused with stiffness and formality. The cry that Masonic meetings should always be dignified meets with the answer, "But then there would be no good fellowship, no laughter, no fun and men would not come to Lodge." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Freemasonry can and should be dignified in form and ceremony . . . but equally important, it should cherish the good fellowship and the friendly contracts which make for a real and not a theoretical brotherhood.

Let us be exceedingly careful from the time we know a man has petitioned a Lodge to the actual

time of his preparation, not to degenerate into a witless attempt to frighten him. The Lodge goat has done immeasurable harm by sending candidates into the Lodge-room apprehensive of what is to happen when they should go into it wholly confident, with a reverent and humble attitude of mind. Too many candidates present themselves at the door of the Lodge expecting to be made sport of . . . that the ceremonies are to be characterized by fun and frolic if not by farce and buffonery. Some of these impressions are gathered from tales of other fraternities . . . some from the comic papers . . . others from idle jest . . . and many I regret to say, from the pretended intimidations by the Brethren. Part of this obviously cannot be helped, but certainly that part which originates with the Brethren should and ought to be prevented. Little does the average candidate dream that he is about to receive serious and solemn instructions . . . that he is to be taught by symbolism a moral philosophy based on the belief in one God who is the benefactor of the world and therein contained, and developed to the climax of teaching the greatest and most expansive concept which God has permitted the mind of man partially to understand.

How unlikely are we to succeed in our service to him if the candidate expects sudden mirth at his expense. How much more our teaching will sink into his heart and mind if he has no thought except that he is to be received as a gentleman . . . a neophyte . . . into the company of those who are about to take him by the right hand and call him Brother.

The Master Mason degree is the sublime degree because of what it teaches. Let the Brethren fully understand that and it becomes sublime not only to those taking part, but to all who see it.

Nothing really sublime can be undignified. Freemasonry is the great heritage of our race. It has been, is now, and always will be a great power in our lives, a comfort in affliction, a glory of hope.

Masonry can be belittled, mocked, and derided by men who think of it not in terms of dignity.

Masonry can be enobled, raised up and honoured by men who believe and understand that the dignity of our Order is found in grave and noble bearing . . . impressiveness and character of manner . . . repose and serenity of demeanor.

—W. Bro. Howard D. Cann, P.M.
Wauwatosa Lodge No. 267, Queensland.

ORIGIN OF "MOTE" AND "HELE"

Mote, in the phrase "So mote it be," is an Anglo-Saxon word derived from "motan," which means "to be allowed," and means in Masonic usage, and according to its tense, "So mote it be."

The word "hele," pronounced "heal," is of similar origin and means "to cover up," or "conceal." This word is still used in its original sense in parts of England. For instance, one authority says that "in Sussex a house with a new roof is said to be newly heled."

—Masonic Light.