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Grand Lodge Bulletin

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LET US BE THANKFUL

The Rev. Robert L. Hall

Grand Chaplain, Grand Lodge of Indiana

The 136th Psalm is a song of thankfulness for God's loving kindness and tender mercy towards His people. The theme is carried over from Psalm 135 which we all ought to read during this early part of a new year. If you will examine this great piece of literature, you will find it to be a call to give Thanks to Almighty God for His marvellous creative power as expressed by the universe, and for His love manifested toward His children.

The Psalm has been paraphrased as follows:

Let us with a gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord for He is kind,
For His mercies shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure.

I do not bring you anything new, unless it be the old story of God's love for His children. The poet Milton expressed it in words that sing:

All things living He doth feed,
His full hand supplies their need,
For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Are you not glad to be alive? Glad to be here, and glad that life offers the promise of a new and glorious tomorrow. Life is always new. It is only as we look back across the years that we realize the wisdom of the words, "For His mercy shall endure, ever faithful, ever sure." I want you to think deeply about life and living, for they are rather wonderful, even though it is said times are changing and things are not what they used to be.

Long ago Tennyson declared, "The old order changeth, yielding place to new and God fulfills Himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world." But, and it is a great but, though the times are changing, God endures, and therein lies our hope for the future; for our hope is in God. There is no standing still to life. It moves on like a great river, so let us with a gladsome mind praise the Lord for He is kind.

Would it not be well for us to ask the questions, what does our life mean to ourselves and others?—and what are we going to do with this marvellous something called life? Surely it is not enough to live just for amusement, for profit, for what we can get out of life for ourselves. There is that side of life, but that is not all.

There is such a thing as work well done, and service rendered, and courtesy extended, and love manifested in generous action. Believe me, life does mean something grand and glorious and true, and we are simply wasting our time unless we make it count for some-

thing that enriches our life and the lives of others. Be thankful in heart if you would be great in life.

Too often we look back over the years and we say, "That was pretty rugged," and then we look into the future and say to ourselves, "well, it is not going to be easy" and we have little room in our lives for thankfulness. Well, you ask, what is thankfulness?—and why should we be grateful?

What is thankfulness? Is it not a sense of God's goodness, and loving kindness, and tender mercy toward us as we have journeyed? Is it not the feeling that we can trust Him for tomorrow and all the years that are to come? The testimony of my years is this, "As thy days thy strength shall be, the Eternal God is thy refuge." And that is your testimony too, if you will be fair and honest as you take stock, and count your blessings.

Be sure of God, and you can face life and all that life brings to you, unafraid. Think for a moment! Is there not something for which you can say, "Thank you, God?" Search your own heart; I know life is a struggle. Well, thank God who has matched you to this hour; perhaps you have been 'slapped down;' yes, but you have gotten up again—then thank God for the glory of trying again and for the friends you have accumulated along the way, for friends make a man rich in the real values of life.

You live in a land that is not given over to tyrants. The tragedy of the 20th century is that there should be any tyranny at all; be glad and thankful you live in a free land, thankful that you are a Freemason, and that you can still call your soul your own. "But my problems?" you reply. Do not expect to live in a world without problems. The world is as it is because people are as they are. If you want a better world as Wyle observed in his book *Generation of Vipers*, we shall have to be better people. Do you know what we ought to do? We ought to make a new beginning; try and forget the past and begin again. "Let the dead bury the dead," so said our Lord to a young man who desired to follow Him, but hesitated in so doing.

Today is a new day with new duties and new tasks; then forget your yesterdays and make today count for something. The providence of God which surrounds us all will sustain you in the days that are to come. We do not realize how often He guides and guards us. It is still true:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps on the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Have you any blessings? What about your homes, and the wives who serve you, the husbands who love

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EDITORIAL

THE BANFF CONFERENCE

The Proceedings of the September 1959 so-called Banff Conference (a conference of the officers of the four Western Canadian Grand Lodges) have recently been sent to the Lodges throughout the Province of Alberta and despite the urging from those familiar with the tremendous value of the deliberations of Grand Masters and others, it is altogether likely that at least some of the splendid books containing Masonic information of untold and unusual value will be pigeon-holed by the Secretary of the Lodge to whom the book is addressed and thus, the members of the Lodge concerned denied the worth of the material made so conveniently available.

This editorial, therefore, is an invitation to the members of the Order throughout the Grand Jurisdiction to make full use of the information contained in the Proceedings and, in the event that the valuable booklet is not conspicuously placed in the Lodge for all to see, to make the request of the Worshipful Master that this worthwhile source of information be utilized to as great an extent as possible.

It should be remembered that the holding of the Conference costs money and that each Lodge contributes in a measure towards the convening of the officers each autumn and therefore has a perfect right to demand that the information assembled after due consideration be utilized to as great an extent as possible. If a Secretary is lax in not making the publication available to the members it would not be in the least unreasonable that a demand be made for a study of the contents of a book which contains the essence of considered opinion on the part of those named to lead the Craft for the current period.

A resume of the contents of this year's Proceedings will divulge that such important subjects, listed herewith, are discussed pro and con and conclusions placed in printed form for the use of the membership and not merely as an indication that an annual conference is held. The 1959 subjects discussed were:

1. The Collar Jewels of Elective Officers.
2. What does modern Freemasonry teach?
3. How to make your Lodge effective and its meetings inspirational, instructive and interesting.
4. The importance of Lodge histories.

These subjects were introduced first of all through carefully prepared papers, compiled and read by leaders of the Craft in one or the other of the Western Provinces; another leader, usually from a different Province submitted constructive criticism of the highest value and then the subject was open for general discussion, in which many of those attending took part. The result is a most revealing documentary record which would doubtless repay a careful study in constituent Lodges in Alberta and it is strongly rec-

ommended that the 1959 Banff Conference Proceedings be made an integral part of the Masonic study in every Lodge in Alberta this year.

S.C.H.

THE CONCEPT OF FREEMASONRY

By *R.W. Bro. R. H. Milnes*

Deputy Grand Master, Connecticut.

The fact that the institution of Freemasonry early lent its name to an attitude or concept of a way of life is no accident or coincidence. The recognition by those outside the Craft of the friendship and brotherly love displayed among the members of the Craft, one toward another, led to the adoption of the name of the institution to describe the same camaraderie under whatever conditions it might exist. As such Freemasonry was spelled with a small 'f.' Literature of the 19th century not infrequently uses the term to describe some particularly harmonious and friendly relationship among people. The "Wonderful freemasonry of childhood" is an example from a book published in 1886.

Thus expressed the concept undoubtedly meant a great deal more to those who used it and to those who read it than simply a friendliness among individuals. There was the added force of meeting upon a common level, of a mutual understanding of common problems, of a knowledge of the trustworthiness of one's companions. Above all freemasonry implied a sense of security because each person could identify himself with his fellowman.

To some extent the use of the word by those outside the Craft has diminished in our day. To those within the Craft its use and its force should be increasingly evident. In a world wherein hatred, suspicion and distrust are rife we sorely need the concept of Freemasonry. Emotions too long pent up within us are bound to break forth at last, sometimes disastrously. In the freemasonry of brothers and friends we find the needed outlet which enables us to vent such emotions. We should not always expect that we are going to be the one in the right under such circumstances. A valuable part of the concept of freemasonry is that it gives us the opportunity to have our faults corrected without anger and without antagonism.

Perhaps the greatest worth of the concept is its inclusion of the word "free" with "masonry." While its primary meaning is that of the freedom to pursue the occupation of a mason, be it operative or speculative, its secondary and no less important meaning is that of the freedom to converse with one's brethren without fear of any consequences. Yet, in a seeming paradox, such freedom is assured only when it is circumscribed and kept within due bounds. If freedom becomes licentiousness it is no longer freedom. As Freemasons we should guard jealously the concept of freemasonry, one of the greatest concepts ever known to mankind.

WITHIN THE CRAFT IN ALBERTA

MEDICINE HAT HONOURS 76-YEAR MASON



Samuel William Sprague

76 Years a Mason

Medicine Hat Lodge No. 2 advances what appears to be a well-supported claim to include in its membership a revered Brother who has for seventy six years been a member of the Craft and who thus might well be the 'Oldest Living Mason.' Worshipful Brother Samuel William Sprague has attained the age of 101 years and we are honoured to reproduce a photo of this fine Mason and citizen in this paper.

W. Bro. Sprague was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia on October 19th, 1858, and moved to Medicine Hat in 1892, where he followed a railroad career for twenty years. He then entered the grocery business for many years, eventually yielding to the demands of advancing years and retiring.

Bro. Sprague rises each day about 6:30 a.m., enjoys an 'after dinner nap' in the early afternoon and retires early, thus conserving his strength and making it possible to enjoy his numerous visitors. He still enjoys a cigarette or a cigar and eats hearty meals. While his hearing and sight are somewhat impaired through the passage of time he is still fairly active and, as the writer knows, his visitors are cordially received and find much to enjoy in his delightful company.

Wor. Bro. Sprague originally joined Corinthian Lodge No. 13 of the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick on July 11th, 1883, and was its Master from 1887 to 1892. When he came to Alberta he joined Medicine Hat Lodge No. 2 and has since been an honoured member of that Lodge.

The Grand Lodge of Alberta has made exhaustive inquiries, eventually establishing beyond reasonable doubt the fact that Wor. Bro. Sprague has more years of membership than any other living person.

The Bulletin salutes this grand Mason and trusts that so long as he can enjoy life, he may be spared to continue to spread joy among his numerous friends.

YORK RITE LODGES CONVENE IN CALGARY

A Lodge meeting of unusual interest was held in Calgary during November, when Foothills Lodge No. 174 organized a 'York Rite Family Nite' and had as their guests members of the following York Rite Lodges: Cascade No. 5, Perfection No. 9, Calgary No. 23, Mount Lebanon No. 54 and Mosaic No. 176.

The Work of the Master Mason Degree was exemplified, the first section being effectively carried out by the Worshipful Master, W. J. Jack and his officers and the second section being conducted by W. Bro. T. H. Fowler of Perfection Lodge No. 9, with the assistance of members of York Rite Lodges in the City of Calgary.

Most Worshipful Bro. David Little, Grand Master honoured the meeting by his attendance and was accompanied by an impressive number of present and past Grand Lodge Officers. The Grand Master took part in the Degree and delivered a most inspiring address to the assembled members. It is hoped that the success of the meeting will encourage similar gatherings in the future.

ALLIANCE LODGE No. 135 OPENS NEW HALL

Wednesday, Dec. 9th, 1959, saw the opening of the fine new Masonic Temple at Alliance when members of Alliance Lodge No. 135 and visitors from seventeen other Lodges assembled to mark the official opening of their fine new building. Most Worshipful Bro. David Little, Grand Master, assisted by the Grand Chaplain, R.W. Bro. W. J. Collett and R.W. Bro. F. S. Bird, acting Grand Director of Ceremonies, conducted the ceremony.

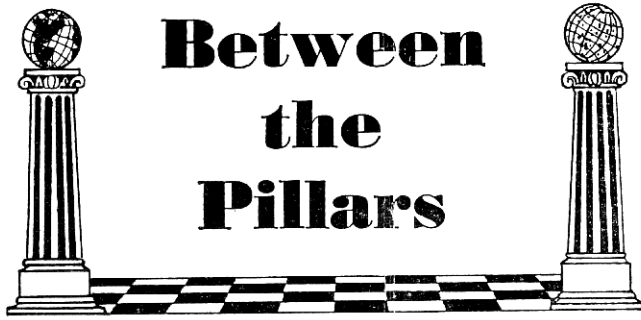
The gathering was welcomed by W. Bro. E. Lysne, who has been Mayor of Alliance for some thirteen years. Greetings from the numerous visitors were brought by R.W. Bro. H. R. Lackey of Killam and an interesting history of the lodge was presented by W. Bro. W. C. Stewart, who also made note of the contribution to the Lodge by W. Bro. Dr. C. J. Kendal, the first Worshipful Master of the Lodge. The District Deputy Grand Master, R.W. Bro. D. T. Walmsley congratulated the members on their achievement, largely accomplished by volunteer labor and the M.W. the Grand Master delivered an interesting and instructive address.

To mark the occasion, R.W. Bro. David Penman of Edmonton presented the Lodge with a set of fine hand-made gavels, beautifully inlaid with rosewood and hollywood. W. Bro. L. B. MacPherson invited the Grand Secretary to present an Altar Bible on his behalf and R.W. Bro. P. R. Elliott presented light bulbs with Square and Compasses for use at the Altar.

The occasion was one of note and members of the Craft in Alberta will join in extending the most sincere congratulations to this energetic Lodge.

The measure of a man's life is the well-spending of it, and not the length.

Plutarch.



Between the Pillars

TEACHING — NOT DRIVING

The position of Masonry among the vast number of political, social, religious and economic organizations of the world is unique indeed. Of those that have been able to exercise some measure of influence upon the affairs of men only one has done so without projecting itself into those age-old conflicts as an individual unit offering a more or less definite programme backed by its own name. At no time nor anywhere has Masonry thrust itself into any controversy or proposal as an organized body. Nor will this ever happen. Never will Freemasonry be found to be engaged in lobbying; never is it found displaying its power before any political body. It never presents to governing officers petitions or demands declaring those to be Masonic thought or opinion. To exert influence by any such means is contrary to all the rules and regulations of the Craft.

The wise men of long ago who founded the Fraternity knew, and those who constitute the Lodges of today know that advantages gained by sheer power are not lasting, nor do they always result in unmixed good. The exercise of power never fails to create an opposing power which brings conflict and more often than not delays the good objectives sought. Masonry has always believed there is a better way to benefit mankind, to make life easier, better, nobler, in this world. To that way the Fraternity must hold fast and true.

The way of Masonry is teaching—not driving. Masonry believes that if the divine and eternal principles of truth, honor, justice, love and charity are voluntarily accepted by a man and then incorporated into his life, it should not be necessary to force him to do what is best for him and for his fellowman. A course of action that springs from honest conviction is far better than one compelled by weight of numbers and threats of punitive discipline. Thus, Masonry conducts no membership drives. No man is ever asked to join the Craft. Only those who come of their own free will and accord are accepted—and not then until careful investigation proves them worthy and they themselves have openly expressed a desire to participate in the rights, lights and benefits of the Fraternity.

Holding strictly to these rules the membership is comparatively small—but the quality is very high. The fact is reflected in the number of Masons found chosen to occupy important posi-

tions of trust in all nations where individual freedom exists. Is it not significant that many of the great leaders of the free nations were Masons? And is it not also significant that a vast amount of the truth and justice in the laws governing the free nations can be directly traced to Masonic teachings and principles? It is also worthy of thought that a preponderance of present day leaders are Masons.

All this has been accomplished without the organized support of the Fraternity. The Craft does no electioneering. It supplies no funds. Partisan politics and the support of candidates are never mentioned in the Lodges. A Mason seeking public trust must stand upon his own record of principles, fidelity, competence and honor. All that Masonry can or will do for him is to help him develop a worthy character deserving of public confidence. If he has observed the lessons taught, he can be depended upon to walk upon the level and act upon the square.

What we have said above has always applied to Masonry in the past. All that is part of the record that cannot be changed. Now—the important question is—what of the future? Revolutionary changes are taking place in the world. The habits of men's thinking are being altered. What is the impact to be upon Freemasonry? What will be the destiny of the Craft?

Shakespeare said: "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them though we may." Our destiny will depend upon how well we "hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may." Our daily acts are a part of that hewing. Our accepted principles are as great, as true as ever and if the prestige of Masonry declines it can only be because we fail to uphold those principles.

Therefore every Mason, and especially those in the public eye, must be careful to avoid even the appearance of evil. Every act must be held to the highest standards of integrity. We will be judged by what we do, rather than by what we profess. And if our deeds prove that Masonic principles produce men of high character and enlightened abilities, we can be sure that the destiny of Masonry will be one of honor and usefulness in the all-important work of creating a true Brotherhood among men.

M. A. STILLWAUGH
The Masonic Chronicler.

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you and the children spared to you. Are such things nothing? You have a measure of good health, a home, honest work to do, some friends, a Book that lights you on your way. You are a member of a noble Fraternity; man, you are rich. Then be thankful. Do you not know that a thankful heart is a hopeful heart? "For His mercies shall endure, ever faithful, ever sure."

That is my word to you, my Brethren, and I think it is a true word, for out of a rich experience I have come to know the kindness of God, and to understand the value of a thankful heart. Amen!