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Post Office Department, Ottawa

Grand Lodge Bulletin

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"How Big Is Your Masonry?"

Address of W. Brother J. Marlin Kyle, Senior Grand Deacon, Grand Lodge of North Dakota.

My Brethren: As we go about our daily tasks and engage in the many activities of this modern day we are prone to take ourselves and the things around us quite for granted. The many blessings that we enjoy—life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, friends, bounteous supplies of material things to satisfy our physical wants, and great religious, educational and social institutions to beautify and adorn our cultural life — all too often, by most of us, are given little thought or appreciation.

There are many aspects of this situation on which one could dwell but the topic I have chosen to discuss is, I hope, very pertinent to you and to this meeting. We have assembled in fraternal fellowship to review the accomplishments of the past year and to plan for the activities of another year. It is meet that we pause in these deliberations and indulge in a little self analysis wherein our Masonry is concerned.

Masonry is the oldest and the largest of our modern day societies—a great institution founded on the tenets of brotherly love, relief and truth, teaching the principles of God and the Immortality of the Soul. It is social; our meetings may be held for degree work, business or pleasure—often a combination of all these features. There may be social pastimes, refreshments, informative programs or perhaps we just fraternize and get to know our brethren better. Masonry is charitable; from the very beginnings of Masonry aid, protection and service to a brother and his family has been inculcated in its teachings. It teaches great moral truths with the aid of mason's tools as symbols, and adherence to which, enables its members to "live the good life" and to "shape themselves as living stones for that house not made with hands".

Now, brethren, I wish to propound in your minds a question. It is one that I am quite certain that many of us seldom consider and if we do we discuss it as of little consequence. The question that I would have you consider with me is: HOW BIG IS YOUR MASONRY? You will note that I have emphasized two words—"big" and "Your"—not how big are you or how big is Masonry—but how BIG is YOUR Masonry?

Have you ever asked yourself that question? I am certain that when each of us can truthfully answer this question and find ourselves satisfied with the answer that then will 'the honor, glory and reputation of the institution be firmly established and the world at large convinced of its good effects'. More important still is that then also will each of us labor diligently at shaping our lives according to the designs laid down on our earthly trestleboard by the Great Architect of the Universe.

Perhaps this all encompassing question cannot be answered in any definite way. I don't suppose that any one of us can fully determine in our minds just how big is our Masonry but I would have you consider it with me under three separate headings.

Let us call the first one INFORMATION or what do you know about Masonry? I am sure you will all agree with me that in order to be successful or accomplished in anything one must have some knowledge or skill in that field. Why then are so many men satisfied to be Masons without knowing very much about Masonry?

Now, obviously, I cannot expound on or enumerate to you all that one should know about Masonry. I merely wish to point out the need for Masonic Education. It is becoming increasingly apparent that many of our members do not have the proper knowledge and background in Masonry. This is of much concern in practically all of our Grand Jurisdictions and has been the subject of many meetings and conferences.

I would point out that knowledge of Masonry does not begin and end with the ritual. It is also important that we know something of the background of Masonry — a general knowledge of where, when, and how Masonry had its beginnings—in other words, know Masonic History. It is more important that we also know something of Masonic Jurisprudence, that is, how our lodge and the Grand Lodge is governed, what rights we have as individual members and as lodges, and what place custom and usage or the unwritten laws of Masonry have in the government of the craft—all very necessary information to help us to know and understand Masonry.

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EDITORIAL

The National Trestle Board had this to say in a recent issue; "You find Freemasons all about you pretending to be Masonic lights, who never read. Some of them can quite glibly repeat certain portions of the ritual, but could not give you an intelligent interpretation of the same to save their lives. Masonic reading is an essential part of the education of a Freemason and it is never too late to begin, but always better to begin early. It is the duty of the Master to impress this fact upon the newly-made Masons, but if they themselves are in the class of non-reading Freemasons, how can we expect from them much wholesome advice?"

This paper has, on occasion, urged that members take advantage of the many excellent publications which are available, not alone for the purpose of the study of the principles and philosophy of Freemasonry, but for a great deal of altogether pleasurable reading and once again, having particularly in mind the exhortation in the words of the National Trestle Board, takes advantage of the opportunity to urge members in general and officers of lodges in particular to make use of publications of various kinds which cater specifically to those who would have a thorough understanding and appreciation of all that Freemasonry means.

It is clearly impossible for many lodges to maintain large libraries and it could hardly be expected that members could subscribe in any broad measure to Masonic publications which are produced under the auspices of Grand Lodges throughout the world or, in some cases, by publishers who operate the business of the production of excellent magazines and papers as profit enterprises.

Despite what has been said in the immediately preceding paragraph, there is no valid reason why any Mason in Alberta should forego reading Masonic books and periodicals, for the Grand Lodge of Alberta maintains a very worth while library and would welcome the opportunity to provide reading material of quality to any member requesting the service.

In addition to the more formal publications there is available to lodges and their members each year the very excellent material provided by the Proceedings of the sessions of Grand Lodge and, as well material which could provide much of inspiration and basic information available through the annual report of the Banff Conference, at which gathering leaders of the Order in Canada's four Western Provinces meet to discuss matters of the greatest moment to Freemasons. The Secretary of your own lodge has on file, and will be more than pleased to produce, literature which if read and properly digested, would go a long way towards the establishment of a well informed membership.

WITHIN THE CRAFT IN ALBERTA
GRAND MASTER VISITS YELLOWKNIFE

M.W. Bro. Morley G. Merner, Grand Master paid a visit to the members of Yellowknife Lodge No. 162 on August 5th., being accompanied by R.W. Bro. Lloyd McPhee, Deputy Grand Master. Met at the airport on Saturday by W. Bro. L. F. G. Borden the visitors were made welcome. On Sunday, August 6th the distinguished visitors attended the annual Masonic picnic at Camp Quaquinchy, site of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides' summer camp on the southern shore of Long Lake.

On Monday, August 7th the Grand Master and party proceeded by float plane to secluded Prelude Lake where they enjoyed a successful fishing trip. The evening was given over to an emergent meeting of the Lodge which was largely attended. In an inspiring address the Grand Master spoke of the necessity of leadership being maintained in the Craft, listing the six principles of leadership as integrity, courage, enthusiasm, human relationship, effective speaking and humility and his remarks were greatly appreciated.

Needless to say the contact of the chief officers of Grand Lodge with the members of the far north lodge was pleasing to all concerned and will doubtless do much to cement the ties of brotherhood.

DISTRICT MEETINGS IN PROSPECT

A number of District Meetings have been scheduled for early fall dates and members generally are urged to acquaint themselves with the dates applicable to their own district and to make sure that they attend the meeting of their choice and enjoy the fellowship which will be so readily available.

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The very perpetuation of the craft depends on what we know and understand about Masonry. Masonry has evolved far from the ancient days when operative masons took an apprentice who worked for seven years to learn the arts and skills of the craft. Today much of the knowledge that is required to become a well informed Mason will "reveal itself to the candid inquirer"—yet it is essential that we create in the newly made Mason a desire for that knowledge and we cannot possibly do that without having a considerable amount of that knowledge ourselves. North Dakota and many other Grand Jurisdictions either have or are establishing the Mentor System and other devices whereby well informed brethren instruct and teach the newly made Mason. Yes, my brother, what do you know about Masonry?

The second thought I want to bring to you is APPRECIATION, or what does Masonry mean to you? Is the lodge a place where we take a series of degrees and acquire a certain esteem that may be associated with them? Do the lessons taught by Masonry have little meaning in our

associations outside the lodge room? These last two questions are admittedly of an extreme nature but the world judges us and the lodge by the interest and appreciation we show about Masonry to the world. Information and appreciation are very closely related. There can be little appreciation without information but the best informed Mason if he does not appreciate or value that for which Masonry stands is not a Mason in the true sense of the word.

The Mason who really appreciates his Masonry will attend lodge whenever possible, serve cheerfully on committees when asked, and generally conduct himself as an honorable, industrious, and useful citizen in the community.

The third point to which I would call your attention may be called CONSECRATION, or what do you do for Masonry? Consecration is a word, that I am convinced, many of us shy away from. We think of consecration only as binding us unequivocally to a sacred cause, but in a broader sense it is a devotion to any cause or course of action. It is putting into practice or earnestly working for and with that which we know and appreciate. Consecration is dependent on knowledge and appreciation for a proper course of action. The most consecrated person without a thorough understanding may do any cause a great disservice.

What place does Masonry have in your life? Do we practice Masonry and Masonic principles to the extent that we are able? Perhaps I have conjured in your mind a picture of a most exemplary workman—one who knows all about Masonry and loves the fraternity wholeheartedly — one who devotes his life to and gives his all for Masonry.

It is well that we have a goal or an ideal but it is not my purpose to imply that we all should or could be a Preston, Mackey, Pike, Haywood or Claudy. I do want to impress on you that each of us can in our own way and to the extent of our abilities work for Masonry and that for which Masonry has always stood.

Albert Pike, the great American Masonic scholar of the nineteenth century and in address before the Grand Lodge of Louisiana in 1858 made his statement which I believe applies to us here today just as truly as it did to those Masons a century ago. Listen to this:

"The true Mason . . . occupies himself with what is near at hand. Right here he finds enough to do. His Masonry is to live a true, honorable, upright, affectionate life, from the motive of a good man. He finds evils enough near him and around him, to be corrected; evils in trade, evils in social life, neighborhood abuses; wrongs swarming everywhere, to be righted; follies crackling everywhere, to be annihilated. 'Masonry' it has been well said, 'Cannot in our age, forsake the broad way of life. She must walk in the open street, appear in the crowded square, and teach men by her deeds, more eloquent than any lips.'"

When I was a boy I read avidly all the books in the Tarzan series by Edgar Rice Burroughs that I could buy, beg or borrow. As you may know,

these were more or less impossible adventure stories of a half civilized, half savage Englishman who had been reared in the jungles of Africa by a band of apes or gorillas. Of the many stories that I read, the only one that I can now recall with any detail is one entitled, "Tarzan and the Jewels of Ophir." Ophir is a fabled city of antiquity where Solomon is said to have gotten the gold for the Temple, and is supposed by many to have been located deep in the heart of ancient Africa.

Tarzan, in one of his adventures, came upon this ancient site. The civilization and the city that had once flourished so lavishly was in ruins—the only inhabitants a band of fierce, vicious, half human, half ape-like creatures ruled over a white Goddess or priestess who, the reader was led to believe, was somehow a throwback physically and intellectually to the superior race who had many generations ago built the city.

The scene that I remember best was of a religious sacrificial rite where these beastlike creatures were gathered around an altar and being led in their ceremony by the priestess who was chanting a ritualistic service. These lowly creatures were responding in a language and by forms that had long since ceased to have any meaning for them and was far beyond their meager comprehension.

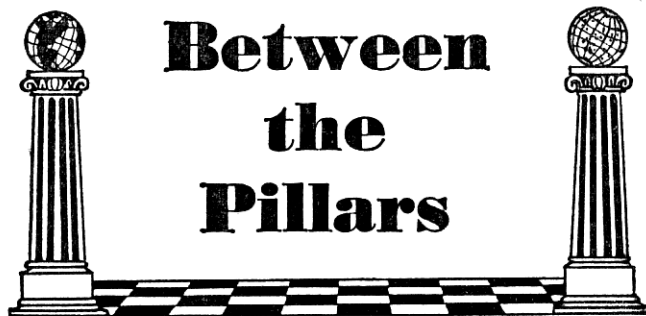
I don't know whether the author was being cynical or pointing with ridicule at some of the forms of our present day civilization but I do believe that there is something here that could well give us food for thought. We certainly, by no means, have descended to the depths of the scene just depicted but I wonder if we, to some extent, are not losing sight of the real meaning of Masonry and the responsibilities that we have as members of this noble fraternity? Is not the real meaning of our ceremonies too often lost upon both the recipient and the participant? Is not the edification and instruction of our newer members in many instances being neglected and the service we owe to our brethren and to our fellowmen often times avoided or forgotten?

Brethren: These are serious and soul searching thoughts that I wish to leave with you. They are as vital to you as they are to me—in fact they are vital to the very existence and perpetuation of Masonry of today. Let us all give ourselves and our Masonry a thorough self-analysis and then resolve to go forth and to work as this little poem by Past Master A. S. MacBride entitled, "The Working Tools", so aptly admonishes us to do;

THE WORKING TOOLS

Go, work on mind and matter now,
A Master raised to power art thou,
Impress on each and all you can
Wise Heaven's eternal Temple-plan.
As on a trestle-board portray
The great Design from day to day,
And build, in silence rever'ntly,
The temple of Humanity.

Yes, my brethren: How BIG is YOUR Masonry?



Between the Pillars

WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW?

J. Carl Humphrey, Grand Master, Indiana

If you are reading this message, then it may be assumed that you have a sincere and active interest in the affairs of the Fraternity of Freemasonry. The present period of low activity in some lodges provides an opportunity for reflection and evaluation. Those who are engaged in lodge activities much of the year usually welcome the respite from the busy schedule provided by the summer recess, but turn again eagerly to the opportunity to plan for the coming months. Every interested member should also realize this same responsibility and opportunity. If suggestions for the benefit of the lodge and Freemasonry come to your mind, you should pass them on to the Worshipful Master who will surely appreciate them, and he will welcome your interest and your desire to help.

Will you sit back and take a look at your own lodge in terms of its programme, its activities and its personnel? Are the moral and spiritual lessons of the ritual being presented in an impressive yet helpful and friendly atmosphere? Are the social meetings well-planned and interesting affairs? Is a complete cross-section of your membership active and interested as officers, committee members, ritualists and in other areas of lodge activity? Does the greater portion of your membership attend regularly, often or seldom?

Does each member of your lodge recognize Freemasonry as a tremendous influence in his attitude towards his family, his church, his community and towards society in general? Does your lodge measure up? If it does, my congratulations to you, the officers and membership. If it doesn't, what can we and what should we do to insure for future generations the respect and esteem which Freemasonry has enjoyed in the past?

Some serious and original thinking and appropriate action is needed today, if we are to maintain the attraction which Freemasonry has held in years gone by. Are we satisfied with the present status of Freemasonry? Do we have a right to be complacent? Are there new channels of endeavour which we should consider? Are opportunities for service as lodges and as individuals neglected? Do we need wider participation by members? Do we need some kind of public relations programme? Should we exhibit a greater interest in youth organizations programme? Should we exhibit a greater interest in youth organizations? Are we

careful in the selection of new members or of members being chosen for positions of leadership? Are our lodges too large? Is Masonic education sufficiently a part of the lodge programme? Is the Mentor plan being used at all, or used to the best possible advantage? Are our Masons of today well informed citizens? Do new members become active and interested?

Many other questions will come to mind. Most, if not all of these questions, deserve serious consideration and some sound decisions are needed.

The Worshipful Master of each lodge should consider it his responsibility to seek out the best advice he can possibly find from the best qualified members of his lodge to assist in solving the problems with which he is, from time to time, confronted. So many times we become involved in the details of lodge work that we lose our perspective. Many of our problems are beyond the scope of our own knowledge and experience, yet we fail to utilize the varied abilities and counsel available to us through the membership. Such a policy should provide an opportunity to develop an interest on the part of those who might otherwise remain among the unconcerned.

We place a high value on the purity of our ritual. Our tenets would be acceptable as a basic part of any good moral, social or religious philosophy. The value of Freemasonry in principle can hardly be questioned. Principles, however, are of little value if they are not interpreted and applied. There must be activities which become a part of the lives of those who profess belief in our tenets.

As you reflect on the yesterdays and observe today in Freemasonry, what of tomorrow in this Brotherhood which has been referred to so many times as a 'way of life'? Let us remember that Freemasonry is not the group of principles in which we believe, it is what we do because we believe in those principles.

The BRIGHT SIDE

If we noticed little pleasures
As we noticed little pains?
If we quite forgot our losses
And remembered all our gains
If we looked for peoples' virtues,
And their faults refused to see,
What a comfortable, happy,
Cheerful place this world would be.

THE VALUE OF MAN

A Man's value to the world is in direct proportion to the unselfish service he renders. In the heart of every true Mason there is something—call it instinct, principle or what you may—that doesn't permit him to be so well satisfied with those things he does for himself as with those he does for others. That is why all members of the Craft now living, or those who shall live owe and shall owe a debt of gratitude to those who devote their lives to the teaching of Masonry.

Temple Bulletin.