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Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: S. CARL HECKBERT, P.G.M., Vermilion, Alberta



Christmas 1964



For six months I have been your elected servant and I have had opportunity to visit the brotherhood stretching all the way from Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories to Lethbridge in the south. What a joy and inspiration that has been! How kind, generous, thoughtful and forgiving you have been! Now I have the unparalleled opportunity to greet you all personally at this Christmas season through the pages of the Bulletin.

During these months I have been tremendously impressed with the power that is latent within the Masonic Order in Alberta. You really are the salt of the earth. You are the pillars of your Churches and communities. At the same time, I must confess to you, I have been saddened in the realization that the power that the Masonic Order possesses is often latent and never has been exploited to its complete potential. So often our attempts at benevolence and charity have been minimal and ineffective. Too frequently have we spent more time in considering our own welfare and amusement than we have in planning for the good of humanity.

I hope you will all pick up Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol" and read it carefully once more. May I suggest that you read especially that section where Marley's Ghost visits Ebenezer Scrooge. Jacob Marley was Scrooge's business partner and he had been as stingy and hard headed as Scrooge but now he was dead. After death he had learned, through much suffering, another way of life, and his ghost returned to point out the new attitude to Scrooge. Scrooge tries to comfort the ghost and says,

"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob"

Then Marley's Ghost cries:-

"Business! Mankind was my business; the common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence were all my business."

But Marley had discovered his real business too late. So do many of us. In this world of rush and turmoil we are inclined to live to ourselves and to forget the claims of mankind upon us. The works of mercy and benevolence and the com-

mands of God get, at best, only lip service. We need, as Scrooge did, to be led out of the lethargy into which we have slipped. It is the Star of Christmas that will serve as our guide.

Certainly our personal lives need direction and so does the world. The Star of Bethlehem is the symbol of hope for us all. It points to the Manger at Bethlehem where all the hopes of the world meet together. For the good news proclaimed at the Manger in the Inn still has the power to conquer evil and to revolutionize the societies of mankind.

Each Master Mason has lifted his eyes to view the bright and morning star that shines in the East and I hope that during this Christmas Season each one of you will attempt to recapture some of those emotions which tugged at your heart when first you saw the Star of the East. So often the brightness of the Star has become dulled and all that we recall is the glimmering light. If this is so then let us lift up our eyes once more for the Star still shines even as the Star of Bethlehem still glows brightly over the cradle of the Christ-child even though many centuries have passed since the birth.

If I have been sobered by the failure of the Masonic Lodges to live to their full potential, I have been inspired by those faithful and kindly brethren who never falter in their devotion to the ideal of the Craft. Mankind is our business. The common welfare is our business. Charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence is our business. This too is the business of the Christmas Season. A powerful partnership can be formed by Christmas, the Star in the East and Masonry! What an opportunity to lead a world weary of sin, greed and selfishness into the way of brotherly love, relief and truth. May your Christmas in 1964 be truly lighted by the illumination of the Stars which shine in Bethlehem and in the East.

Grand Master

EDITORIAL

As we approach another Christmas Season fellowship among the members of our Masonic Order will be enhanced by pleasant memories of the past year and there is certain to be a measure of stock taking and of the possibilities for the advancement of all of the tenets of the Craft in the months that are to follow.

The Bulletin extends every good wish for a genuinely happy Christmas to all its readers and if a final word at the year end were to be said in this column, it would seem that nothing would be more appropriate than to quote the words of the Editor of the Masonic Record in a recent Christmas issue of that valued Journal.

"To the Mason who, from the moment of his initiation, has been taught that very few of the worth-while things of this life can be achieved without self-knowledge which is the beginning of all wisdom.

Have we done everything in our power to apply outside the Lodge, in the profane world, those exalted principles we are taught within it? Have we made our presence felt in our businesses and in the area in which we live, not by openly preaching those virtues which Freemasonry inculcates, but by the rectitude, the uprightness, the integrity and probity of our words and actions? What have we done in the past to enkindle a desire in the hearts of those near to us to be as we are?

Or have we been content to be just 'Lodge' Masons, donning our Masonry when we put on our aprons, and doffing it when the doors of the Temple close behind us? Have we, in the profane world, been satisfied to drift along with the stream, to do as others do, because we have not the courage to stand up for the principles of temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice which we preach with so much conviction within the closely tyled Temple? Which one of us has the courage these days to conduct himself in such a manner in the outside world that, by his actions, he is in fact echoing the words of Martin Luther: "Here I stand. God help me — I cannot do otherwise!"

By our demeanor, by our conduct, we must engender a desire for emulation in the hearts of those who are near us but do not belong to the Order. And from the stone which we drop into the pond of our immediate environment ever-widening circles of beneficence will spread which eventually will embrace many more men than those intimately connected with us.

Masons, by their life and conduct, can demonstrate to the rest of the world that they have found a solution for living in peace and harmony. We have the secret, and we are prepared to share it with all who have ears to hear. We can — we must — persuade the world to listen, and, at least, to try the solution which we know will work."

—SCH

IF I CAN THROW A RAY OF LIGHT

If I can throw a ray of light across the darkened pathway of another; if I can aid some soul to clearer sight of life and duty, and thus bless my Brother; if I can wipe from any human cheek a tear, I shall not then have lived in vain while I am here.

If I can guide some erring one to truth, inspire within his heart a sense of right, a love of truth and beauty; if I can teach one man that God and Heaven are near, I shall not then have lived in vain while I am here.

If from my mind I vanish doubt and fear, and keep my life attuned to love and kindness; if I can scatter light and hope and cheer, and help remove the curse of mental blindness; if I can make more joy, more hope, less pain, I shall not have lived and loved in vain.

If by life's roadside I can plant a tree, beneath whose shade some wearied head may rest; though I may never share its shade, or see its beauty, I shall yet be truly blest — though no one knows my name, nor drops a flower upon my bier, I shall not then have lived in vain while I am here.

Bro. F. B. Austin
in the New Zealand Craftsman.

DON'T WAIT TOO LONG

Don't wait for some supreme moment to act according to the dictates of your heart and mind.

Simple kindness is not a commodity to be saved up for some high moment in one's life. There is an everyday need for the application of kindness in every contact that we have with others.

Don't wait for the spotlight of publicity to be turned on you before you do an act of charity. Let such an act be the spontaneous expression of one who realizes that all he has is given to him to share generously with others.

Don't wait too long to say a good word about a person. Say it when the person can hear it, and when he might gain an entirely new outlook on life by your words of praise and encouragement.

Don't wait for a perfect setting to exhibit Faith, Hope and Courage. This day is the most important one in your life and demands the best of you.

Don't wait for some special day to express your love for a Brother. Tell him many times. The power of love is limitless, and the more you give, the more you have.

Don't stand idly by waiting for the day when all men will be Brothers. Start with the little world you live in.

—The Wisconsin Freemason

SOUL SEARCHING

By Dwight L. Smith, Grand Secretary, Indiana

The wailing wall is crowded these days. Masonic leaders are lined up, each awaiting his turn to lift his voice in lamentation. The thing to do is to adopt this project or that and, as might be expected, the projects and gimmicks are about as impossible as they are often ridiculous.

First — Whatever attendance trouble our lodges may be having is not caused by bowling, curling, etc.; they may contribute, but they do not constitute the whole cause. When we complain of lack of attendance, what we really say is that the INTEREST is at a low ebb, for if there is interest there will be attendance. The ailment isn't quite that simple. We are looking at the symptoms — not the disease. The real source of trouble is within ourselves.

Second — the problem we have will not be solved by forcing men to memorize a set of questions and answers, nor by cramming books and lectures down their throats or by any Big Brother plan or by any other organization or movement. The treatment must come from within.

Next, may I offer what I consider to be the three basic premises. First, the history of Freemasonry is one of ups and downs. In the period of the 1920's and 30's, it is nothing to some of the crises of the past. Second, in our decline we again see history repeating itself. It is in many a case of our sins catching up with us. We had a decade where there was a membership influx, but it was unhealthy and unhappy. We ran our Adelson line, we could count new members by the thousand, but new Masons only by the score. Now comes the pay-off. Third, whatever is wrong with lodge attendance in 1964 was wrong 25 years ago when I was Master of my lodge. I doubt if lodge attendance has ever been 'what it used to be'. I had to work my head off to sustain interest in my time as Master. The situation is no different today; tomorrow it will be the same. Our troubles are of our own making. Corrective measures must go to the heart of the trouble or be of no avail. Then let us take an honest look at some of the conditions within our house which have contributed to lack of interest.

1. Let's face it: Can we expect Freemasonry to retain its past glory and prestige unless the level of leadership is raised above the present position? On many occasions Masters and Secretaries have come to my office and again and again I have said: "There is nothing wrong with your lodge nor with Freemasonry that good leadership will not cure". I believe that.

2. How well are we guarding the West Gate? Again, let's face it: We are permitting too many to pass who can pay the fee and contribute little else. On every hand I hear the same whispered complaint, "We used to be getting petitions from the good substantial leaders in the com-

munity, now what are we getting? What they are getting, you know as well as I do.

3. Has Freemasonry become too easy to attain? Fees for the degrees are ridiculously low; annual dues are far too low. Everything is geared to speed — getting through as fast as possible and on to something else. The lodge demands little and gets little. It expects loyalty but does almost nothing to put a claim on a man's loyalty. When we ourselves place a cheap value on membership, how can we expect petitioners and new members to prize it?

4. Are we not worshipping at the altar of bigness? Look it in the face. Too few Lodges and those we have in many cases too large. We let a new Mason become lost in the shuffle and then we nag because he does not come to meetings to wander around with nothing to do.

5. What can we expect when we have permitted Freemasonry to become subdivided into a score of organizations? Each organization dependent upon the parent, but each claiming to be the Pinnacle to which the Master Mason may aspire. We have spread ourselves thin and the Ancient Craft is the loser. Downgraded, the Symbolic Lodge is used as a springboard. The tail can wag the dog.

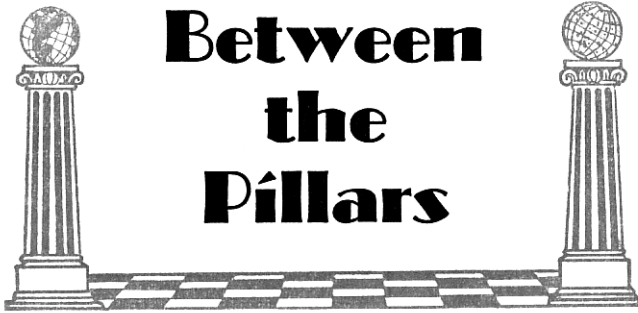
6. Has the passion for bigness and efficiency dulled the spirit of Masonic charity? The sweetness of by-products has ceased to be a gift from the heart and has become the writing of a cheque. Unless the personal element is there, charity becomes as sounding brass.

7. Do we pay enough attention to the Festive Board? Should any reader have to ask what the Festive Board is, that in itself will serve to show how far we have strayed from the traditional path of Freemasonry.

8. What has become of the "course of moral instruction, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols" that Freemasonry is supposed to be? If it is a course of instruction, then there should be teachers, and if ours is a progressive science, then the teaching of the Master Mason should not end with his raising.

9. Hasn't the so-called century of the Common Man contributed to making our Fraternity a little too common? We cannot retain the prestige of the past if we permit the standards of the picnic ground, the bowling alley and the golf links to be brought into the Lodge. Lowering of standards is sure to make a mark on every Lodge, large and small.

10. Are there not too many well-meaning Brethren who are working over-time to make Freemasonry something other than Freemasonry? It was an unhappy day when some eager beaver conceived the idea that our Craft should adopt the methods of the luncheon club. He lost sight of the fact that one of the reasons our Fraternity is prized so highly is that it does not operate like other organizations. It rightly stands on its own feet.



Between the Pillars

WHAT IS THE CONSTANT CARE OF EVERY FREEMASON?

From The Freemason of New South Wales

Every time the lodge is opened we hear the words, "What is the constant care of every Freemason"? And the answer — well, you are far too familiar with the answer to have it repeated here.

What does the words of this answer imply when used during our lodge ceremony. It is used at the beginning and end of each degree. No doubt the majority of the brethren, if asked, would connect them with the physical "locking of the door" in order to keep out all "cowans and intruders."

But the implication of the words of the answer strike much deeper than that. It is admitted that the tying of the door during the ceremonies is a very necessary precaution and must of a necessity be carried out with diligence. Our strict ritualistic approach during the ceremony tends to imply that this duty is performed solely to ensure that the work can proceed without fear of undue interference from outside the lodge.

The tying of the lodge has a deep meaning for the Mason, so much so that it becomes an incumbent duty to see that his own personal lodge has been close tyled before entering the lodge room. He must tye his mind against the external worldly matters as he enters the lodge in order that his mind is in a receptive state of the cleansing and instruction he is about to receive during the performance of the ceremony.

This is a very important matter, because no matter how carefully the Worshipful Master and Officers have tyled their personal lodges, unless all those in attendance have performed the same task a discordant note will result and the atmosphere of brotherly love and benevolence will not predominate.

Let me remind you of two well-known passages that may bring home to you the lesson to be learned here.

Firstly, that great man, St. Paul of Biblical days — he said, "Know ye not that we are a temple of the living God." Here is an early implication that our "temples" are a very personal matter.

And, secondly, from the ritual, "within you resides a vital and immortal principle" — in other

words we have built within us a way in which to proximate our intellects to an intimacy with the G.A.O.T.U.

Perhaps another useful thought on "tying" is the aspect of communal thought and instruction. Orpheus taught the worship of combined harmony, aspiring to the Deity by the means of communal chords. The pupils were told to tyle against false notes; each pupil would sound a separate note on his flute and then endeavor to harmonize with his master in building a column of music that would inspire the whole.

So the Worshipful Master sounds every officer at his post and reminds all of the present need for constant care to be taken. Unless this is done there is a discordant note in the lodge, perhaps one of animosity, distrust or variance. One must tyle against these things in order that the lodge may be properly guarded.

The Freemason of New South Wales.

THEY FAIL TO SEE

Thousands of persons tread the earth and behold the sky without discerning any of the beauty they display. They look upon a landscape beautifully ornamented by trees, shrubs, plants and flowers, but receive no definite impression of any part of it, and could not name or describe any object thereon.

They behold the starry canopy above them but see no constellations, no planets and no movements indicating the wisdom, the power, the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe.

So it is with many who are admitted into Freemasonry. They observe the forms, the ceremonies, the emblems and the jewels, and they hear the lectures and charges, but they fail to discern the ethics and the philosophy thereof.

They hear the ceremonies and that Freemasonry is a science of morally veiled allegory and illustrated by symbols, but do not fathom its meaning, and of equality; do not solve the allegories or discern the significance of the symbols.

They are in the temple but do not get the temple idea. They are among the workmen, but do not see that they are to be master builders for time and eternity. They are in the light but do not receive and apply it as the great means of fitting themselves as living stones for the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

The ritual is beautiful and should be mastered and impressively communicated, nevertheless, it is but the burr, the hull, the husk to the wisdom, the strength, the beauty of Freemasonry. It conceals gems of unparalleled richness and beauty which must be searched for diligently and faithfully if they are to be found and enjoyed.

Oh! That all the Craft would realize this fact and act accordingly, as thus they would be better panoplied with truth, better animated with faith, hope and charity, and could better build the temple of the soul.

—Exchange