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Grand Lodge Bulletin

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QUALIFICATIONS FOR MASONRY

Many years ago one of the most distinguished Craftsmen of Western Australia, Bro. G. W. Speth, laid down some prerequisites, which he deemed necessary for a man in order that he become a Mason. Although Masonry is a progressive science, we cannot see that over half a century has made much, if any, difference in the class of man we now require. We feel sure that our readers will be greatly interested in the following:

They must be believers in one sole, personal God. Further, of good position, i.e., following some reputable calling. A usurer, a police-informer, the follower of any degrading occupation, even though perfectly legal, such as a hangman, would be an impossible candidate, because his presence would dishonor the craft, and he would be unfit to associate with gentlemen.

They must be of adequate means: that is, their income must be in excess of their actual necessities. Freemasonry is always more or less expensive, and we hold it a Masonic crime to devote to the craft what is required by one's family.

They must be of good repute or morals. This does not imply that every candidate shall be absolutely faultless; but what is known of him must be, on the whole, to this credit. The man of business whose smartness borders on dishonesty; the boon companion whose conviviality resolves itself into frequent excess; the man who is often seen in doubtful company; the hot-headed disputant, whose violence of temperament leads him to forget the respect due to his adversary; these are not desirable members of the craft, even though their good qualities exceed their bad ones. And yet, if carelessly admitted, there is a likelihood that the craft and its lessons may do them great good.

On the other hand, the inveterate liar, the unclean liver, the drunkard, the rowdy, the companion of rogues and vagabonds, the fraudulent bankrupt, the gambler, the spendthrift, the betrayer of innocence, the hypocrite and the niggard, are under no circumstances fit and proper candidates for the privileges of Freemasonry.

They must be free. When Masonry was first established, serfs and villains existed in the land. Such were not admitted to apprenticeship in our lodges. In like manner we must not admit a man

who is not master of his own time and actions. But we apply the restriction to his intellect also. A man bound down in the chains of superstition, unable to take a free and manly view of matter in general, the bondsman of priestcraft, of social laws and prejudices, of his business avocations even, or a slave to his own passions, is not a fit associate for Free men and Masons.

They must be sound men. When Masonry was chiefly composed of operative Masons, a cripple was not admitted to apprenticeship; the reason is obvious. We no longer insist upon this soundness of limb, provided the candidate can fulfill our requirements; but we stipulate for mental soundness. A Mason must have a sound mind, capable of reasoning, of instruction, of appreciating the beauties of our ritual of expressing himself clearly, of discriminating between good and evil, the noble and the base.

They must be educated men. This does not imply a university career, or even a board-school education. The best and truest and most serviceable education is often acquired among one's fellow men in the battle of life. That they must be able to read and write is obvious. But they must have been educated to possess the most valuable attributes of a gentleman. Not in the restricted and false sense in which My Lord Tomnoddy would apply the word. Polished manners and a good tailor neither make nor mar the gentleman. Masons understand by the term a man one who has learned to be considerate to all men, of a kind and chivalrous nature, who avoids acts and words which pain his neighbours, honest in thought and deed, the support of the weak, the vindicator of the oppressed. Such a man, though his hands be horny, his boots clumsy, his gait heavy, and his H's misplaced, is a noble man, a friend to be trusted and will make a good Mason. If in addition he possesses the grace and accomplishments of Lord Chesterfield, or the erudition of Bacon, he will be doubly welcome but the latter qualities, without the former, are as naught.

They must be of a charitable disposition. Charitable in giving of their superabundance, charitable in sympathy with the distresses in body and mind, charitable in thinking no evil of friend or foe. To virtue ever kind, to faults a little blind.

Courtesy of The "Ashlar"

EDITORIAL

As this issue of the Masonic Bulletin comes into the hands of our readers we will be entering upon what we hope and trust will be a bright New Year and while we may not, altogether consciously, formulate new resolutions with respect to our continued interest in and adherence to the great principles of the Craft, it is almost axiomatic that we, the privileged members of one of the world's fine Fraternities, will feel a surge of gratitude for the pleasures of our past association with Freemasonry and a rising sense of loyalty and devotion to the welfare of those who constitute the membership of our Order.

We cannot but recall that, during the year just closed, friends and brothers have received the call to higher service, leaving a void that is difficult to fill and that there may well be opportunities for each one of us to do our part in relieving distress, where it exists, of healing the wounds of loved ones who mourn the passing of their husbands and fathers.

At this time of year there is, perhaps, a certain benign flood that makes it possible for us to look with forbearance and the spirit of kindness upon the frailties of our neighbour and to forgive imagined or realized hurts that have come to us through the course of the past year.

It may well be the proper time for us to re-read and to re-digest the words of 1 Corinthians, 13:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass."

The New Year surely brings to mind that this is a time of giving—a time of re-dedication—a time of thanksgiving—a time of renewal—a time to remember and to be grateful for all of the blessings which the Supreme Architect of the Universe has bestowed upon us and, as we remember, let us, each in his own way, make certain that we fulfill each and every one of the great tenets of Freemasonry which have come down to us through centuries of time and which have meant so much to us individually and collectively.

It is a matter of satisfaction for us all that in our fair land we enjoy a prosperous economy but this may not be reflected in the lives of all whom we hold dear, either in the family or the fraternal circle and, as we approach the new life of the new year let us never fail to fulfill our promise to give "Charity" wherever it is needed, regardless of whether the Charity involves only the paltry monetary consideration or the much more important and vital giving of ourselves and what we stand for to those who are in need of the helping hand and the understanding heart.

—SCH

THE SELECTION OF THE D.D.G.M.

Adapted from the report of

R. W. Bro. G. H. Bremness, P.D.D.G.M., District No. 12

R. W. Bro. Bremness who had completed his work as District Deputy Grand Master of District No. 12 included in the report of his stewardship some very thought provoking remarks and we are pleased to pass them along to the members of our Constituent Lodges for their future consideration.

Bro. Bremness says, in part, "If I have done anything for Masonry during my term of office it will perhaps have been observed and, at any rate, I am sure that any re-hash at this point and in my monotone will not build a fire under anyone within the sound of my voice.

I would rather, and I hope you will bear with me by giving serious thought to what I consider a quite important problem in respect to the manner in which our Masonic Districts are presently established and, even more important, the role and the selection of the District Deputy Grand Master.

I will deal firstly with the election of the District Deputy Grand Master and here we might just as well look at the cold hard facts of life. I deal here, in particular, with my own election. In the course of time it was decided that it was our Lodge's "turn" to have a District Deputy. Our active Past Masters were then asked, in turn of seniority, if they would stand for election and I was the first in line to accept.

In a Fraternity such as ours, which is blessed, we hope, with the cream of good men, is it not a little ridiculous to select the representative of our Grand Master for our District in this manner? I would suggest two corrections:

1. That a committee be appointed, representative of many Lodges and including Brethren familiar with District work, to seek out impartially the very best man or men for the position, whether he comes from a large Lodge, a small Lodge, a city or country Lodge and regardless of the fact that the man finally selected and his immediate predecessor in the office might be from the same Lodge (the latter being at least highly improbable).
2. That we have one or two assistants in the role of Warden so that these men may become familiar with potential District Deputy Grand Masters. This would appear to conform not only to my make-up of Grand Lodge, but also to that of the Constituent Lodge.

These men might also take some of the load off the District Deputy Grand Master when he had entered upon the duties of his office, particularly during Lodge visitation and at the annual District Meeting itself. It would not be necessary,

or even desirable, that these Wardens have any rank in Grand Lodge and their succession to the rank of D.D.G.M. should not be considered in any way 'automatic'.

Secondly, I would deal with the duties of the D.D.G.M., not so much from the standpoint of the Constitution, but rather as it has come to be accepted.

We have a Fraternity in which everyone builds and even our name is symbolic of building, but when a newly elected D.D.G.M. is installed in office he is told that he has the 'right' to lift the Charter of a Lodge under certain circumstances, thus intimating to him that he may, if he considers it essential do a certain amount of 'tearing down', but if the District Deputy is to be a true representative of the M.W. the Grand Master, his job is to build up—to guide—to lead and the selection of the District Deputy Grand Master is therefore a most vital step in the building of the Temple of Freemasonry. The District Deputy need not necessarily be one who is unusually adept at ritualistic work and, certainly, he should not be an individual who is 'power-happy'.

I believe that the suggestions made with respect to the more careful and democratic method of selecting the District Deputy Grand Master would lead to a greater autonomy for the District and that this important office would be of greater value to the Grand Lodge and to the Grand Master.

It sometimes seems that our Fraternity, for all that it teaches compassion and temperance in all things, seeks to overload our leaders with work and, on occasion, almost to make demands of them that bring some almost to the breaking point. We require the Grand Master to work almost beyond capacity and also place upon him a financial burden in the proper meeting of our demands that should not be his under any circumstances, and, in turn, we often overload the D.D.G.M. and even the Master of the Lodge when we demand so much of them in the conduct of their respective offices. By the District taking some of the load off the Grand Master and Grand Lodge a greater measure of competency would be required on the part of the District and therefore a greater demand would have to be made upon Lodge Masters and Officers, who, in turn, would have to pass on to the membership in general some of the demand and, as M. W. Bro. Collett has said, 'here is the strength of Freemasonry'.

If the District is to exert a greater measure of force and to more effectively take its place in our establishment of Freemasonry and to enjoy a wider autonomy added financial responsibility would naturally also come to the District. It is long overdue that the District and not Grand Lodge should pay the travelling costs of the D.D.G.M. The District should also pay for its own regalia and for necessary repairs for same.

This, in turn, would release badly needed funds for the operation of Grand Lodge, for its much discussed reserves are not available for ordinary operation, but are, rather, trust funds especially set aside for other purposes than those of day to day operations. When funds are required for District purposes they may be readily raised by assessment decided by vote at the annual District Meeting.

The District Deputy's actual travelling costs should be paid, as should those of the Grand Master I hope you will agree with me that it is time that we got the operating budgets of all levels of Freemasonry in this Grand Jurisdiction out of their 1935 notch and brought into line with the much higher present day costs.

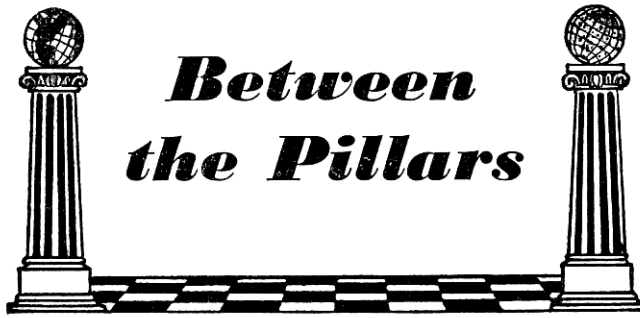
I hope that my remarks herewith may set in motion a train of thought among our membership that will start the ball rolling towards a much better system of internal operation and a much more realistic method of paying for that operation.

May I now express my most sincere thanks for the honour and privilege of serving in the office of District Deputy Grand Master; it was a wonderful year. Your gracious acceptance of me and your willing co-operation have given me warm memories which will last a lifetime. This rewarding experience has added to my training and I would hope that this may be made useful to you by some future small service as part repayment for your many kindnesses.

Editor's Note:

The quite evident thoughtfulness which has gone into the address of R. W. Bro. Bremness must necessarily, we think, cause a good deal of searching for better and better methods of conducting the work, not only of the District and the Lodge, but also of Grand Lodge.

Only those who have enjoyed the privilege of service in the higher office of Freemasonry fully realize, perhaps, the demands that are made on elected Officers both from the standpoint of physical demand and that of financial demand. It has often been felt that penury in the provision of funds for necessary travel or other expenses has made it impossible for many good men to aspire to offices which they would doubtless grace and it is to be hoped that Bro. Bremness' pregnant remarks may lead to a broader basis on which our Officers may be selected and to the provision of fully adequate funds for the dignified conduct of the offices which are so vital to the advancement of Freemasonry at a time and under circumstances when great organizations such as ours may contribute to the well-being not only of our own membership, but to the communities in which we live and have our being; surely the great tenets of Freemasonry should be used to the fullest possible extent for the betterment of all around us.



Between the Pillars

FREEMASONRY IN LATIN AMERICA

Continued from December

IN NUMBERS the memberships of the Grand Lodges in Latin America are small. Cuba's was, perhaps, the largest; over 30,000. Some of the Mexican Grand Lodges have as few as three Lodges. Accurate figures are not available, since, for protection against hostile groups, some of the Grand Lodges do not publish membership statistics. A conservative estimate would put the total for Latin America at less than 200,000.

IN QUALITY, however, the memberships are outstanding, thanks not only to high standards of selection, but also to thorough instruction and indoctrination in Masonic principles. As a result, Freemasons play a role at high levels in public affairs, in government, in business and in the professions to a degree far beyond their numerical strength.

Dr. Kern then discusses the Inneramerican Masonic Confederation which includes all of the Grand Lodges south of the Rio Grande except the York Grand Lodge of Mexico and the Grand Orient of Brazil. This is similar to but much more strongly organized than the American Grand Masters' Conference. It meets every three years. Hipolito Marcano, Grand Master of Puerto Rico has just completed a three year term as President. We quote Dr. Kern's closing paragraph:

"The Presidential address of Brother Marcano deserves special mention. Particularly significant and worthy of the widest dissemination are his comments on International Relations in the Craft. In a world that through ease of communication is getting ever smaller, so that all peoples have become neighbors, Freemasonry, which has so much to offer, needs to play a bigger role in the affairs of men. We speak glibly of the recognition by regular Grand Lodges of other regular Grand Lodges, and of their exchange of representatives, as evidence of international fraternal contact. But this is largely a legendary fiction. Thus, when the Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of Tasmania near the Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico was twitted by one of the Brethren; "You don't even know where Tasmania is!" he replied, "Neither do they know where I am so we are all even". Brother Marcano regretted the lack of more frequent contact and consequently of mutual understanding, between the Masons of North America and those of Latin America. Both,

in turn, had little contact with European Masonry, and all of these no contact with the Grand Lodges of Asia and Africa. One should think in terms of a World wide Conference of the leaders of Symbolic Masonry."

YORK GRAND LODGE OF MEXICO. In connection with Dr. Kern's splendid report, some facts and figures about the York Grand Lodge of Mexico are interesting. This Grand Lodge is over 100 years old, is and has always been most regular in all particulars, practicing a fine York ritual. Its members are almost exclusively nationals of other countries than Mexico, including many English and Americans. It is recognized by nearly, if not all, of the regular Grand Lodges of the world.

The fact is, however, that the heyday of nationals from other countries in Mexico is past and York is suffering in consequence. It has nine Lodges for a total of 590 members. Only two Lodges showed a gain in membership and 20 of the 21 gained were added to Guadalajara Lodge. Thirteen of the increase were by affiliation since many Americans are retiring to this area, their average age being sixty one years.

TEMPLES OR HALLS

With regard as to whether our Lodges should be called Temples or halls, may I make a few comments.

If we turn to the Volume of the Sacred Law we are told that Bezaleel was the inspired workman of the Holy Tabernacle in which, during the Israelitish wanderings, the Divine Shikinah rested and the Ark of the Covenant was deposited. The dimensions of the Tabernacle were given by God to Moses on Mount Horeb and King Solomon adopted these measurements as a pattern for the first magnificent Temple. On its completion in the Holy of Holies, King Solomon placed the Ark of the Covenant and on this, covered by the wings of the Cherubims, the Divine Shikinah (God's Holy Presence) rested. The Temple was dedicated to the Glory of God by prayer, rejoicing and thanksgiving, hence was made a holy place.

Our Lodges today are replicas of that first magnificent temple and just as God's Holy Presence dwelt therein, so we believe His Presence dwells in our own Temples today, because we have dedicated them to His glory, even as Solomon did so many centuries ago. Within we erect altars on which we uplift that great light in Freemasonry—the Volume of the Sacred Law—God's way of life for man, teaching him to build those spiritual temples not made with hands but which shall be eternal in the heavens.

It is a solemn thought to remember that the first magnificent temple came to destruction through the infidelity of the people. Likewise, unless we place God first in our lives and strive to follow His teachings as set forth in our Masonic Art, so, surely, shall our temples, both material and spiritual, fall into decay!

*M. G. S. Blackmore, P.S.G.W.
in the Ashlar.*