

LEWIS AND LOUVETEAU

Old English Tracing Boards of the entered Apprentice degree show the Lewis, a peculiar tool of operative masons.

The instrument is made of a pair of dovetail wedges, provided with a hook or ring. Inserted in a hole in a large stone, pulling on the hook or ring spreads and locks the wedges securely in the stone, so that it may be raised by derrick or other lifting force, without putting a rope or chain about it. The greater the pull, the heavier the stone, the more securely is the Lewis locked in the hole. From this the Lewis easily became a symbol of strength, and is so denominated in certain old English rituals.

In the transactions of “Quatuor Coronoti Lodge,” the great research organization of London, in Volume X (1897) appears the following:

“In a Charter of Ethelbert, dated 862, Lewisham is known as a “Liofshema mearc’,’ the mark of the inhabitants of ‘Liofsham,’ the home or dwelling of some person whose name began with the element ‘Liof’ or ‘Leof,’ i.e., dear. This prefix appears to be corrupted from Keofsu, which was from Leofsuna, literally, dear son. It still survives in the family named Leveson, pronounced Lewson. The place name appears to go through some digressions, for the seventeenth century it was written Lews’am, and was spelt phonetically as Lusam, and eventually it became, through change of etymology, Lewis. In Masonic language, we have also another Lewis to account for, namely the combination of pieces of metal, which form a dovetail; now if the urchin who assisted his father was called Lewis, it is possible that the comparatively small piece of mechanism, in comparison to the weight it is capable of sustaining, as a saving of labor, may have in trade vocabulary been called a Lewis - dear one.”

The Harris Masonic manuscript, No.1 (seventeenth century) defines the word as follows:

“A Lewis is such an one as hath served an Apprenticeship to a Mason, but it is not admitted afterwards according to the custom of making Masons.:

Compare this with the curious statement in the Carmick manuscript, in the possession of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania:

“You shall not make a Mould or Square for any that is cut a Kenis, for a Kenis is one that hath not admitted afterwards according to the Custom of Making Masons.”

Hughan, the great Masonic scholar, read “Cut a Kenis” to mean “But a Lewis” - in other words, the prohibition to Masons is that no Mould or Square may be made for any one who is “only” a Lewis, not actually a member of the Craft.

The son of an English Mason is called a Lewis, for a reason which is set forth in Browne's "Master Key," which purports to be a verbatim account of a part of the original Prestonian lecture. It reads:

What do we call the son of a Freemason?

A Lewis.

What does it denote?

Strength.

How is a Lewis depicted in Mason's Lodge?

As cramp (clamp) of metal, by which, when fixed into a stone, great and ponderous weights are raised to a certain height, and fixed upon their proper basis, without which Operative Masons could not so conveniently do.

What is the duty of a Lewis, the Son of a Mason, to his aged parents? To bear the heavy burden in the heat of the day and help them in time of need, which, by reason of their great age, they ought to be exempted from, so as to render the close of their days happy and comfortable.

His privilege for so doing?

To be made a Mason before any other person, however dignified by birth, rank or riches, unless he, through complaisance, waives this privilege.

In France the son of a Freemason is called a Louveteau (daughter Louvetine) which may have been derived from "louffton" a word occasionally used in place of Lewis in the seventeenth century; the French word for the operative instrument is "Louve." Here a curious verbal bypath invites the student; Louveteau also means a young wolf. In the Egyptian Mysteries, the candidate, wearing a mask or covering simulating a wolf's head, was often called "wolf." Apparently the reason for the masking of a candidate as a wolf is found in the tenuous connection between the sun, which scatters the flocks of stars from the sky, and the wolf, which scatters the flocks of sheep and cattle. The sun was the central symbol of many ancient mystery religions. Similarly, the Greek "Lukos" is both the sun and a wolf. Albert Pike said that a Louveteau might be received as such when twelve years of age, or over. According to this authority, any Symbolic Lodge might receive any Louveteau by a special ceremony, which while it did not especially obligate the Lodge to support or educate him, did promise that the Lodge would watch over him, protect him, give him counsel and advice. In his book, "Offices of Masonic Baptism, Reception of a Louveteau and adoption," Pike states:

"It (the ceremony of reception) entitles the Louveteau to be received an Apprentice at the age of twenty-one years, if he be found worthy and intelligent."

The qualifying phrase obviously takes away from the privilege the first promises, since all men who are “worthy and intelligent” may be “received an Apprentice at the age of twenty-one years.”

Pike lays down rules regarding the reception of a Louveteau; the question may be considered at a regular meeting of the Lodge; application must be made in writing by the father, if living; otherwise, in writing by the mother, or other relative or friend; the father must be a member of a Lodge, except that, by unanimous vote, a Louveteau may be received even if the father is not a member - “the son may be worthy, though the father may constitute the strongest claim of the child on the Lodge;” action may be had without a Committee, in the absence of objection; if a brother desires, a Committee of three “will be appointed, to report at the next regular meeting;” ordinarily, a two-thirds vote is sufficient to insure reception; applications refused may be re-presented in six months; “bad character of applicant or unworthiness of the father is good cause for rejection,” otherwise, “to become a Louveteau is a matter of right;” vote is in an Entered Apprentices’ Lodge and “the result with the names of those voting yea and nay” is to be entered on the records.

Pike’s “reception of a Louveteau” covers sixty pages. A single quotation will suffice:

“It is one of the duties of Brotherhood, arising out of that holy relationship, to guide and guard, and rear and educate, if need be, a Brother’s children. Let us recognize this duty, and add to its obligation our solemn pledge to watch incessantly over this youth, to avert from him pestilential influences, warn him against ill examples, and rescue him from perils. Let us, according to our ancient custom, and by the ancient and symbolic name, receive him as our Ward in the hope that he will in due time become our Brother.”

Where Pike got the authority for the statements he makes or the inspiration for his beautiful if lengthy ceremony, cannot be stated. No American Grand Lodge authorizes such a ceremony. But Pike’s statement that it is “one of the duties of Brotherhood to guide and guard, to rear and educate” a brother’s children is followed in both letter and spirit by many Grand Lodges; which maintain Homes, Schools or Charity Foundations by which the children of Master Masons are guide, guarded and educated when the father has passed beyond his power to do a father’s duty. Spiritually, then, if not by Masonic law, the children of a Master Mason are indeed treated as Pike would have had Louveteaus and Louvetines treated.

Erroneous statements are often made that a Lewis may be initiated at eighteen years of age. Washington, who received his Entered Apprentice degree when he was twenty years and eight months of age; is often mentioned to prove the point.

Whatever the practices in an older day, in England a Lewis cannot now be initiated before he is of “lawful age,” without a dispensation. There is no evidence whatever that Washington was ever considered a Lewis. His initiation before being twenty-one can much more logically be laid to the lax practices of an easy age when Freemasonry in this country was very informal, far from original authority, developing largely from its own motion in a time when experiment in a new land, with a new government, in ideas, in hopes was in the air.

In middle ages England it was an invariable custom for a son to follow in his father's footsteps; such names as Smithson, Wrightson, etc., come from the days when the smith and the wheelwright had sons who became also wheelwrights and smiths. Most fathers have a hope that their sons will follow where they led, take up the same profession, carry on the old firm; it is human expression of the longing for that form of immortality, expressed in the desire that what has been honorable and useful in the family will continue to be so.

Masons who have sons are usually intensely interested in seeing them become members of the ancient Craft. A Petition and fee is often made a coming-of-age gift to a young man on his twenty-first birthday. From this natural hope of a Mason that his son will go where he preceded him, in turn to receive Masonic light and the happiness and education that may come from membership in a Lodge, has arisen the feeling in most Lodges, the stronger that it is not expressed in formal law, of interest in the boys of members. Lodges are not consciously influenced in their judgment of petitions from the sons of members by that fact, but Masons would be less than human if they did opt look with some indulgence on the young men who ask to follow in the path their fathers have walked.

In this sense, then, the Lewis has a privilege in all Lodges; he is already known, by proxy at least, to the Lodge to which he applies, and there is a natural predisposition favorably to consider his application, and for the committee to judge him with mercy. It is a sound tribute to the common sense of American Masonic law that the Lewis has few if any legally stated privilege. The Grand Lodge of North Dakota has in its by-laws (page 38, revision of 1928): "Candidate: Age reduced in some Cases - Lewis.

Any Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction may lawfully receive and ballot upon a petition for the degrees of a son or nephew of an affiliated Mason within the last six months of such petitioners twenty-first year; however, if elected, he shall not be initiated an Entered Apprentice until he has attained the age of twenty-one."

The Constitution of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia prior to 1924 stated:

"No Lodge shall initiate any candidate who is under 21 years of age, etc."

Questions arising as to the age at which application might be received, Grand Master Roberts ruled (1924) that no petition might be legally received from a minor, basing his ruling on civil law which makes minors unable to execute contracts. Later, the Constitution was revised to read:

"No Lodge shall accept the petition of any candidate who is under 21 years of age at the time of the presentation of his petition to the Lodge, etc."

Generally speaking, Grand Lodges require petitioners to be of legal age; all in this country require them to be either "twenty-one" or of "lawful age" before initiation.

During the Great War, many Grand Jurisdictions waived not only "suitable proficiency" between degrees, but often the matter of "lawful age" for sons of Masons in the armed forces of the

nation. Lodges with a restricted membership often provided that the petitions of sons or fathers of members may be received and ballot had, regardless of whether the roster is full or not.

The Order of DeMolay for boys is for sons of Master Masons, and their friends; which in effect means any boy who can be recommended by a Master Mason. The Order continually insists that its membership is not in any way to be considered as helpful in later receiving Masonic membership.

Lewis and Louveteau, sons of Masons, in this country, then, are words with no special Masonic standing; the words are scarcely known to a majority of Masons. But in the spirit of our Lodges the old idea of the son following in his father's footsteps persists; hence it is not infrequent to find Lodges arranging "father and son" nights, and it is still an event in any Lodge when a father raises his son to the Sublime Degree - more rare, and even more interesting, when it is the son's good fortune to raise his father.

Predicating the whole philosophy of Freemasonry upon a certain Fatherhood, it would be odd indeed, however little official recognition we give them, if Masons had no special tenderness of feeling for their Lewises and Louveteas.