

A MASTER'S WAGES

“... travel in foreign countries and receive Master's Wages.” Our Operative brethren received their Master's Wages in coin of the realm.

Speculatives content themselves with intangible wages - and occasionally some are hard pressed to explain to the wondering initiate just what, in this practical age, a Master's Wages really are.

The wages of a Master may be classified under two heads; first, those inalienable rights which every Freemason enjoys as a result of fees, initiation and the payment of annual dues to his Lodge; second, those more precious privileges which are his if he will but stretch out his hand to take.

The first right of which any initiate is conscious is that of passing the Tiler and attending his Lodge, instead of being conducted through the West gate as a preliminary step to initiation. For a time this right of mingling with his new brethren is so engrossing that he looks no further for his Master's Wages. Later he learns that he also has the right of visitation in other Lodges, even though it is a “right” hedged about with restrictions. He must be in good standing to exercise it. It will be denied him should any brother object to his visit. If he is unaffiliated, in most Jurisdictions, he can exercise it but once in any one Lodge. If private business (such as election of officers or a lodge trial, etc.) is scheduled, the Master of the Lodge he would visit may refuse him entrance. But in general this right of visiting other Lodges is a very real part of what may be termed his concrete Master's Wages, and many are the Freemasons who find in it a sure cure for loneliness in strange places; who think of the opportunity to find welcome and friends where otherwise they would be alone, as wages of substantial character.

The opportunities to see and hear the beautiful ceremonies of Freemasonry, to take from them again and again a new thought, are wages not to be lightly received. For him with the open ears and the inquiring mind, the degrees lead to a new world, since familiarity with ritual provides the key by which he may read an endless stream of books about Freemasonry.

The Craft has a glorious history; a symbolism the study of which is endless; a curious legal structure of which law-minded men never tire' is so interwoven with the story of the nation as to make the thoughtful thrill; joins hands with religion in the secret places of the heart in a manner both tender and touching. These “foreign countries” have neither gate nor guard at the frontier . . . the Master Mason may cross and enter at his will, sure of wages wherever he wanders within their borders.

Master's Wages are paid in acquaintances. Unless a newly-made Master Mason is so shy and retiring that he seeks the farthest corner of his Lodge Room, there to sit and shrink into himself, inevitably he will become acquainted with many men of many minds, always an interesting addition to the joy of life. What he does with his acquaintances is another story, but at least the wages are there, waiting for him. No honest man insures his house thinking it will burn, but the

insurance policy in the safe is a great comfort, well worth all that it costs. It speaks of help should fire destroy his home; it assures that all its owner has saved in material wealth will not be lost should carelessness or accident start a conflagration.

No honest man becomes a Freemason thinking to ask the Craft for relief. Yet the consciousness that poor is the Lodge and sodden the hearts of the brethren thereof from which relief will not be forthcoming if the need is bitter, is wages from which comfort may be taken.

Freemasonry is not, "re se," a relief organization. It does not exist merely for the purpose of dispensing charity. Nor has it great funds with which to work its gentle ministrations to the poor. Fees are modest; dues are often too small rather than too large. Yet, for the brother down and out, who has no coal for the fire, no food for his hungry child, whom sudden disaster threatens, the strong arm of the Fraternity stretches forth to push back the danger. The cold are warmed, the hungry fed, the naked clothed, the jobless given work, the discouraged heartened.

Master's Wages, surely far greater than the effort put forth to earn them.

Relief is not limited to a brother's own Lodge. In most Jurisdictions there is a Masonic Home, in which, at long last, a brother's weary body may rest, his tired feet cease their wandering. No Freemason who has visited any Masonic Home and there seen old brethren and their widows eased down the last long hill in peace and comfort; the children of Masons under friendly influences which insure safe launching of little ships on the sea of life; comes away thankful that there is such a haven for him, should he need it, even if he hopes never to ask for its aid.

Stranded in a strange place, no Freemason worries about getting aid. In all large centers is a Board of Masonic Relief to hear his story, investigate his credentials and start the machinery by which his Lodge may help him. In smaller places is almost invariably a Lodge with brethren glad to give a sympathetic hearing to his troubles. To the brother in difficulty in what to him is a "foreign country," ability to prove himself a Freemason is Master's Wages, indeed.

Freemasonry is strong in defense of the helpless. The Widow and the orphan need ask but once to receive bounty. All brethren hope to support their own, provide for their loved ones, but misfortune comes to the just and unjust alike. To be one of a world wide brotherhood on which widow and child may call is of untold comfort, Master's Wages more precious than the coin of gold.

Finally is the right of Masonic burial. At home or abroad no Freemason, know to desire it, but is followed to his last home by sorrowing brethren who lay him away under the apron of the Craft and the Sprig of Acacia of immortal hope. This, too, is Wages of a Master.

"Pay the Craft their Wages, if any be due . . ."

To some the practical wages briefly mentioned above are the important payments for a Freemason's work. To others, the more intangible but none the less beloved opportunities to give, rather than get, are the Master's Wages which count them.

Great among these is the Craft's opportunity for service. The world is full of chances to do for others, and no man need apply to a Masonic Lodge only because he wants a chance to "do unto others as he would others do unto him." But Freemasonry offer peculiar opportunities to unusual talents which are not always easily found in the profane world.

There is always something to do in a Lodge. There are always committees to be served - and committee work is usually thankless work. He who cannot find his payment in his satisfaction of a task well done will receive no Master's Wages for his labors on Lodge committees.

There are brethren to be taught. Learning all the "work" is a man's task, not to be accomplished in a hurry. Yet it is worth the doing, and in instructing officers and candidates many a Mason has found a quiet joy which is Master's Wages pressed down and running over.

Service leads to the possibility of appointment or election to the line of officers. There is little to speak of the Master's Wages this opportunity pays, because only those who have occupied the Oriental Chair know what they are. The outer evidence of the experience may be told, but the inner spiritual experience is untellable because the words have not been invented.

But Past Masters know! To them is issued a special coinage of Master's Wages which only a Worshipful Master may earn. Ask any of them if they do not pay well for the labor.

If practical Master's Wages are acquaintances in Lodge, the enjoyment of fellowship, merged into friendship, is the same payment in larger form. Difficult to describe, the sense of being one of a group, the solidarity of the circle which is the Lodge, provides a satisfaction and pleasure impossible to describe as it is clearly to be felt. It is interesting to meet many men of many walks of life; it is heart-warming continually to meet the same group, always with the same feeling of equality. High and low, rich and poor, merchant and money-changer, banker and broom-maker, doctor and ditch-digger all meet on the level, and find it happy - Master's Wages, value untranslatable into money.

Ethereal as a flower scent, dainty as a butterfly's wing, yet to some as strong as any strand of the Mystic Tie all Freemasons know and none describe, is that feeling of being a part of the historic past. To have knelt at the same Altar before which George Washington prayed; to have taken the same obligation which bound our brethren of the Mother Grand Lodge of 1717; to be spiritually kin with Elias Ashmole; to feel friendly with Oliver, Preston, Krause, Goethe, Sir Christopher Wren, Marshall, Anthony Sayer to mention only a few; to be a brother of Craftsmen who formed the Boston Tea Party; to stand at Bunker Hill with Warren and ride with brother Paul Revere; to be an apprentice at the building of St. Paul's; to learn the Knot from a Comacine Master; to follow the Magister in a Roman "Collegium," aye, even to stand awed before those mysteries of ancient peoples, and perhaps see a priest raise the dead body of Osiris from a dead level to a living perpendicular - these are mental experiences not to be forgotten when counting up Master's Wages.

Finally - and best - is the making of many friends.

Thousands of brethren count their nearest and their dearest friends on the rolls of the Lodge they love and serve. The Mystic Tie makes for friendship It attracts man to man and often draws together “those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.”

The teachings of brotherly love, relief and truth; of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice; the inculcation of patriotism and love of country, are everyday experiences in a Masonic Lodge. When men speak freely those thoughts which, in the world without, they keep silent, friendships are formed.

Count gain for work well done in what coin seems most valuable; the dearest of the intangibles which come to any Master Mason are those Masonic friendships than which there “are” no greater Master’s Wages.