

MASONIC EDUCATION

Modern fiction writers avoid mention of the Masonic Fraternity in their writings. Yet, just a few decades ago, we found many authors who recognized the Ancient Craft as an integral part of the community.

Brother Rudyard Kipling, in many of his stories, and in many of his poems, found ways to weave Freemasonry into his tales. He was an ardent and active Mason.

Brother and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who created the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, was a member of Phoenix Lodge No. 257 in Portsmouth, England. His writings contain many references to Freemasonry.

Most Worshipful Brother Carl H. Claudy, long-time Executive Secretary of the Masonic Service Association of the U.S., was probably the most prolific writer of American Masonic fiction. His *The Lion's Paw* is a delightful novel with a Masonic background. His Masonic plays remain popular.

At the turn of the century, many novels contained references to the Masonic lodge as a focal point in the community, or references to Masons as the outstanding pillars of behavior.

Somewhere along the line, either we have lost some of our Masonic luster or the art of story telling has become blind to our existence. It was a refreshing experience for the Masonic Service Association to receive the following two gems of fiction for consideration as a Short Talk Bulletin. The author, Wor. Bro. William W. Price of Vacaville Lodge No. 134 in Vacaville, California, reports that he had an urge to put some of his feelings and memories into writing. He stated that each contains situations based upon real people and places that had very deep and lasting effects upon his Masonic life. In these stories their love and dedication for the Craft lives again.

For your enjoyment and inspiration we are pleased to share them with you.

The Last Stated

It was Friday night and the wind was blowing and there was a chill in the air, uncommonly cool for June. The street where the old Temple was located was desolate and dark.

The aging Tiler took out his keys and opened the large door to the old Temple. He turned on the Square and Compass over the door and it shone brilliantly in the darkness. He slowly climbed the twenty-seven stairs as he had done for the past fifty years.

"It is a Stated tonight" he said to himself, "all the brethren will be here and everything must be in its proper place and station."

He opened the door to the paraphernalia room. There was a mustiness which he no longer seemed to notice. The rods of the Deacons and Stewards hung on the right, the jewels of the officers on hooks on the wall, and the aprons were stored in the old wooden box. Ever so gently, he took them and arranged the Lodge with loving care. He then opened the altar, took out the Holy Bible, Square and Compass and laid them so reverently on the altar. He checked the lesser lights, and all three were working. "The Master always wanted them checked before he opened the Lodge" he remembered. He then turned the letter "G" on and observed that it shone particularly bright tonight. He then turned all the lights off except the "G" because he always enjoyed looking at it that way. He also turned on the light over the altar even though he knew Grand Lodge didn't approve, but "It looks so right", he thought, and smiled to himself. He opened the ledger and entered the date, A.L. 5985 The Year of Light, and 24 June 1985. "It was St. John's Day", he remarked to himself. "The Order doesn't celebrate it as they used to do."

He clothed himself in his apron and jewel, the cloth was old and faded, and the jewel was dull. He took his sword and sat down by the door to the Lodge Hall, so he could see the bright letter "G" and the Three Great Lights, and there he waited as he had for all these years, waiting for the Brethren.

He must have dozed for he noticed the door to the Lodge Hall was closed, but he was tired, very tired. It had not gone well for Ancient Landmark Lodge for many years, but he was sure the Brethren would come tonight, "Wasn't it a Stated and St. John's Day?", he said to himself. Then he heard from inside the Lodge a voice.

It was the Master saying, "The Officers will assume their Stations and Places. The Brethren will come to Order and take their seats". The Tiler thought out loud, "I'm here, Worshipful and Brethren, as I have been for all these years." The next day they found the old Tiler. He must have passed away in his sleep. They looked into the Lodge Hall and saw the bright letter "G" and the light above the altar burning brightly. "I don't understand what happened here", the investigator said. "This old Lodge has been closed for some time".

An old Mason who was there to inventory the property remarked "Yes, I know, but this would have been the first time that a Stated would have fallen on St. John's Day in 50 years, it would have been a grand evening. There's something awful strange about this".

"What do you mean?", asked the investigator .

"Well, this old Ledger, it's dated the 24th of June 1985 and it's full of names of Brethren I haven't seen or heard of for years", remarked the old Mason.

"Strange, very strange" said the investigator. "Well, my job is over so let's leave. Anyway, the new owners want to get started on their building construction", he added.

The old Mason turned off the main switch, but observed something was wrong. "Look" he said, "the letter "G" and the light over the altar didn't go out".

"Well, maybe we should just leave them", said the investigator.

As they shut the door to the Lodge Hall and turned to leave, they both thought they heard a voice from within saying "The Officers will assume their Stations and Places. The Brethren will come to Order and take their seats". They looked at each other without comment and locked up the old Temple and left. The Square and Compass above the large door of the Temple shone brilliantly in the darkness.

So Mote It Be!

The Old Square and Compass

It was in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and forty nine, A.L. 5849. The place: California. It was the time of the gold rush which beckoned many Masonic Brethren with hopes of finding their fortune.

About 1850 in the small township of Hiramshurg, sundry Brothers requested and received a dispensation for the Grand Lodge of California to form a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons.

The Lodge was named Immortality Lodge Under Dispensation. The membership was comprised of Brethren from many jurisdictions and all had one thing in common, they were freemasons .

Much work and effort went into furnishing the small Lodge Room located over Jones's Hardware Store. They needed it all: the Volume of the Sacred Law, the two pillars, altar, rods, officer's jewels and aprons, and, of course, the square and compass.

And thus begins our story.

We were cast near to the Jenkins Silver Mine located along the Silverado Trail which wound its way through the rich Napa Valley. We were placed in a velvet covered box, transported to Hiramshurg and presented to the Worshipful Master, Billy Fritts.

It was a joyous evening in Immortality Lodge when on that first night we were removed from the box and placed on the Volume of Sacred Law. How we glistened and shined and it was wonderful seeing the smiles and warmth on the faces of the Brethren. It was a great and exciting moment filled with Friendship and Brotherly Love. There was a glow in the Lodge Hall which only the true Mason can experience and it made us sparkle even more for we would forever be a part of the Lodge.

The speech by the senior Master Mason present was eloquent and rhetorical. Brother Herb Sturtridge said, "These instruments, the Square and Compass, are ancient to our Fraternity, as are all our beautiful furnishings. They are significant in that they represent the working tools of our profession. The square is dedicated to the Master for it is the proper working tool of his office; it teaches us to work together on the square of virtue. The compass is dedicated to the craft, for by due attention to its use we are taught to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions in due bounds toward all mankind."

So we were at each and every degree and the Stated Meetings. We were part of every ceremony where the new Mason swore to be a good man and true. Thus, under the guiding hand of the All Seeing Eye, Immortality Lodge thrived and grew for many years until...

The Village of Hiramburg saw many changes in those years. The Civil War lost us many good Brethren on both sides. The drought of 1879 and 1880 devastated most of the farmland and most moved away. The culture and population took many turns and for Immortality Lodge they were all the wrong way.

The final blow came on December 27, 1907 when an oil lamp was left burning after St. John's Day celebration. Much of the old Lodge Hall was destroyed. Our beautiful altar, the two pillars, the jewels and aprons were gone, but we were spared, God knows for what! James Harvey, Senior Warden, found us in the rubble and took us home.

The members of the Lodge could not raise the money to replace the loss. After one year, Immortality Lodge went dark. All the property that remained was turned over to the Grand Lodge, all except for us.

James Harvey never became Master. He passed away in 1909 and his belongings along with us were sold to an antique store in the County Seat.

There we have laid for these many years waiting to return to Lodge, waiting for those warm and friendly smiles.

Under the dullness our brilliance still remains, waiting to serve the Fraternity who brought us into existence. We hope, someday, someone will find us. Will it be you, Our Brother?