

NOW IS THE HOUR

This Short Talk Bulletin is based upon an address given by Most Worshipful Brother Charles R. Glassmire, PGM of Maine, at the semi-annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire in November, 1976. We thank Brother Glassmire, who is Editor of The Maine Mason, for sharing this with us.

We are always thinking in Masonry about the word "building." We are told that Masons are builders. Yet how often do we ever stop and think of the true meanings of this word? We should consider it under four headings.

First, we must consider the building of the vast universe; that product of the Grand Architect of the Universe; that inestimable gift of God to Man; that structure which we use every day but seldom do we stop to appreciate it and to give thanks. Sometime ago, a group of us stood atop Mount Blanc, at an altitude of 15,000 feet, viewing the majestic Alps. The beautiful fertile valley lay below us with the glaciers above. It was very easy to be awe struck, to close your eyes and to give a prayer of thanks to Almighty God. How often in our own communities do we ever look around us and give thanks for the things that do not have actual physical beauty and yet see beneath them the handiwork of the Great Architect of the Universe? Yes, even sometimes in things which are actually ugly to the sight. Who can look at the town drunk, for instance, and see in him a work of God? Yes, it's a work of God but a neglect of man and perhaps we are largely responsible for much of this neglect. We pass him day by day lying in the gutter, when perhaps by stretching forth a helping hand, giving a pat on the back or a word of encouragement, we might help that man to achieve his rightful place in society, all to the glory of God. It's up to us to help make this universe the place that He intended it to be.

Secondly, if we're thinking in terms of building, we must think in terms of the fact that man is a builder and from the day of his birth he is constantly engaged in the building of his own personality and his own character. Every day we have the opportunity to do things which will make us better individuals but so many times we neglect it. There is an old saying which says, "What man needs not nor sows most abundantly grows. " This, of course, in one connotation refers to the weeds in that neglected garden behind the house. But think for a moment of the neglect which permits those weeds to grow inside the mind and the character of each and every one of us. Before long, just as the beautiful flowers are destroyed by the weeds in the garden, so is that great mind which is potentially there destroyed by the weeds of neglect. A little poem says it better:

Of all that I hear and see Day by day I am building me.

I alone have the right to choose What to reject and what to use. Nobody's workmanship but mine Can keep the structure true and fine, Strong or feeble, false or true.

I build myself by the deeds I do.

Yes, Brethren, remember we are saved not by what we think but by what we are. Day by day we build ourselves by the deeds we do. Next, if we are going to consider man as a builder, we must appreciate the fact that man is also commissioned to build an ideal social structure and Masons must qualify as living stones for that structure if it is going to be the society it can be. We have another great responsibility as Masons. We tell the world that as Masons we take good men and make them better. Are we really doing this today in Masonry? How many times have we had the unpleasant experience of raising a Brother from that Altar and having him go out the door and never seeing him again? Statistically, one out of three of the Brethren that are raised at that Altar will leave that night and never come back. Why? The answer is obvious and perhaps falls into two categories. First of all, we have lost the opportunity by failing to impress upon him the beauties of Freemasonry. We have perhaps done the work in a slipshod fashion. Officers have mumbled the words which have been poorly memorized and the Brother gets very little from it. He sees nothing that you and I have seen as we have gone through Masonry . . . of the things which bring us back. Secondly, so many times the man's dignity is insulted. How often have we unfortunately seen a man literally ridiculed for the amusement of some of the Brethren on the sidelines. We tell a man to kneel at the Altar and pray to Almighty God and then tell him to arise, follow the conductor and fear no danger, only at a later date to have him treated in such a manner that he can't see the beauties because of the lack of dignity. We are told that of those who do come back, another third are going within a year. Once again, the opportunity is lost. No man becomes a Mason simply by taking three degrees any more than a man becomes a Christian simply by joining a church. It requires work. It requires work on his part and it requires work on our part. First to impart the knowledge to him and secondly to give him a job to do. Only if he is kept busy will he return as you and I have done. Yes, we can take good men and make them better and we have the tools with which to work right there on the Altar.

That great American poet, Brother Edwin Markham, put it in verse this way:

We are blind until we see
That in the human plan
Nothing is worth the making
if It does not make the man.
Why build these cities glorious
If man un-built goes?
In vain we build the work
unless The builder also grows.

Lastly, my Brethren, as we speak in terms of building, we must appreciate the fact that from the moment we are born until the day we die we are constantly engaged in the building of that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. How many of us go through life consciously building that house? As young men we're immortal. No young man ever thinks of the possibility of dying. It's only when we get older that we realize that we cannot expect an exemption from the common fate of man, but sometimes by the time that realization comes, it's too late and we have not begun, let alone finished the building of that house not made with hands. I suggest to you that if you have not started building it yet, now is the hour. We are very fortunate to have religion to assist us in this and I don't mean necessarily the membership in any particular church or sect. I'm thinking in terms of the definition of religion which says, "Religion is the life of God in the soul of man." We have the power to reach God in prayer and yet most of us waste that power. I suspect that ninety percent of all of the prayers that are wafted Heavenward are never heard because they are simply a repetition of the "gimmies." "Gimmie" this, "gimmie" that, "gimmie" me something else, when really what we should be praying for is the strength and the character to carry on in daily life, working for those things which are pleasing in His sight as we

build our house not made with hands. Oh, it's a pretty tough world as we look around. Many times we come home discouraged by what we see--war and pestilence on one hand, dishonesty in high places on the other hand. We may get into bed at night and with all these things around us find it very difficult to sleep. Unfortunately, too many people in this culture are turning to drugs. There's no answer here. Drugs may provide a small portion of oblivion, but later the problem is still there. Other people say if you come home at night and get into bed and can't sleep, that you should count sheep. I don't believe this works either. No, Brethren, if you come home at night, get into bed and cannot sleep, don't count sheep--talk to the Shepherd.

In the meeting notice of a Lodge in one of the Western Jurisdictions, we recently saw an item which sums it up nicely:

"A favorite pastime with many people--especially women--is rearranging furniture.

"Don't you think it is about time we, the human race, get busy and rearrange our mental furniture? Well, I do, and I think we had better do it real fast.

"First of all, we should take everything from the walls of the mind. Then we should sweep the floor and scrub it so it will be clean.

"Next, we ought to change our thoughts let us move the hatred table into the love corner, the sinful dresser behind the door of forgiveness, and the beds of prejudice by the wall of kindness.

"After this is done, we can lie down and rest with a clean mind and life."

Brother Builders, Now is the hour!