

**FELLOWCRAFT
INFORMATION
PAPERS**

CHARITY

by: Unknown

The subject of charity, or brotherly aid, may well be illustrated by a sketch of a condition that developed itself among the Roman people many centuries ago. In essentials that condition was the same as the condition in which we now live.

In the early days of the Roman Republic a man grew up in the house in which he was born; when he married he bought his wife to live with him under the paternal roof; when he died he left his sons abiding in the same place. Neighboring families were similarly stabilized, and all these groups, owing to this perpetual neighborliness and to intermarriage, became so involved with each other that in a community there would not be one stranger.

In such a community the individual was not left to his own private resources; he was surrounded by others ever ready to aid him in misfortune, nurse him in illness and mourn him in death.

But, there came a time when this stability of life was broken up. By degrees the Romans conquered adjoining territory. A great military system was organized. Whole nations were brought into the Roman Empire. Great cities arose; travel was made possible; and a feverish restlessness took the place of the old stability. The old calm neighborhood life was destroyed, and in its place there grew up a fermenting life in town and city. A man no longer lived and died in the place of his birth, but moved from place to place, becoming a stranger in his own neighborhood, and scarce knew other persons living under the same roof. In misfortune and death he was thrown back on his own, unaided, individual resources.

In this situation men set out about the creating of a bond that would take the place of the lost neighborhood ties. They organized themselves into "Collegia" - groups formed of men in the same trade - which in the early days of their history were principally devoted to securing for a man a becoming burial service, the lack of which so filled a Roman with dread.

In the course of time these organizations - we could rightly call them lodges - assumed more and more functions until at last a man found in them charities, social life, business aid, religious influences, friendships and other features of general protection. To live a stranger in a city was no longer a thing to dread, to a man who could find in such a fellowship, the same friendship and support that his forefather had secured in the oldtime neighborhood. We men of today are living under just such conditions as brought Collegia into existence. The great majority of us are living in towns and cities; many of us are subject to conditions that shuttle us about from place to place, and from situation to situation, so that life has lost its firmness and security. Our next-door neighbor is a stranger; we may live in an apartment house, where even with dwellers on the same floor we have no ties at all.

In the midst of such conditions the individual is often thrown entirely upon his own resources. It is here that the lodge comes in, for the lodge, from this present point of view, is nothing other than a substitute for the old-fashioned small community life, wherein neighbor was so tied to neighbor that there was no need of charities, social centers or employment bureaus. In a lodge a man need no longer be a stranger; he finds there other men who, like himself, are eager to establish friendships, engage in social intercourse, and pool the resources of all in behalf of the needs of each.

From all this one can see at a glance what brotherly aid really is. It is the substitution of the friend for the stranger. It is a spirit which throws round a man the comforts and securities of love. When a worthy brother in distress, or his family, is helped, it is not as a pauper, as in the fashion of public charity, but the kindly help which one neighbor is always so glad to lend to another. Masonic charity is strong, kindly, beautiful and tender; and not charity at all in the narrow sense of the word. Nay, it does not wait until a brother is in distress, but throws about him in his strength and prosperity the affectionate arm of friendship, without which life is cold and harsh. Friendship, Fraternity and Fellowship - this is the soul of Freemasonry, of which charity is but one gesture with a thousand meanings.

Freemasonry not only inculcates the principals of love and benevolence, it seeks to give them actual and living presence in all occupations and intercourse of life. It not only feels, it acts! It not only pities human suffering, it relieves it! Nowhere in the world can a good Mason feel himself alone, friendless or forsaken. The invisible but helpful arms of our Order surround him, wherever he may be.

Mythic story tells us that the ancient gods invisibly and secretly followed their favorites in all their wanderings, and when these were exposed to danger or threatened with destruction, would unveil themselves in their awful beauty and power, and stand forth to preserve them from harm, or to avenge their wrongs. So Freemasonry surrounds all her children with her preserving presence, revealing herself only in the hour of peril, sickness or distress.

It is an erroneous idea, but one widely prevalent, that Freemasonry is a benefit society; that persons join it that they may be cared for in their periods of adversity. Nothing could be further from the truth; at least theoretically one unites with our Fraternity that he may serve and minister to the needs of others.

Freemasonry is not, in itself, a charitable organization. That is, the primary purpose of the Order is not charitable relief to its members.

Masonic charity is a great fact; it is an inherent part of the Masonic system; but it is not the primary purpose or function of Freemasonry.

The fundamental creed of Masonry is and ever must be, the study of Masonic philosophy. As Freemasons come together for the discussion of Masonic truth, a strong feeling of brotherhood naturally results. The friendships formed in this work carry in themselves a desire to relieve the necessities of unfortunate brothers.

The real Masonic charity (or assistance) that is afforded by one brother to another is assistance in the learning and understanding of Masonic truth.

We are not taught that we shall afford one another political, business or social assistance. Masonic lodges are not political organizations; they are no business syndicates; they are not social cliques. The average Freemason looks askance at the brother who seems to seek assistance of such sort. However, it is not to be denied that the strong and enduring friendships formed in the lodge are a real assistance to a man in all of his legitimate endeavors. But we must not forget that if we assist a brother Freemason in his endeavors, we assist him as a friend, and not because there is anything in Masonry that teaches us to discriminate in favor of Freemasons in the ordinary relationships of life.

It is a common error to regard charity as that sentiment which prompts us to extend assistance to the unfortunate. Charity in a Masonic sense has a much broader meaning, and embraces affection and goodwill toward all mankind, but more especially our brethren in Freemasonry. It is this sentiment which prompts a Freemason to suffer long and be kind, to control his temper, forgive the erring, reach forth his hand to stay a falling brother, to warn him of his error and whisper in his ear that correction which his fault may demand, to close his ear to slander and his lips to reproach; in short, to do unto others as he would be done by.

Charity as applied to Freemasonry is different from the usual and accepted meaning. All true Masons meet upon the same level, regardless of wealth or station. In giving assistance we strive to avoid the too common error of considering charity only as that sentiment of commensuration which leads us to assist the poor and unfortunate with pecuniary donations. Its Masonic application is more noble and more extensive. We are taught not only to relieve a brother's material wants, the cry of hunger, etc., but to fellowship with him upon our own level, stripped of worldly titles and honors. When we thus appeal to him, giving spiritual advice, lifting him up morally and spiritually with no sense of humiliation to him, we set him free from his passion and wants. To such charity there is a reciprocity rich in brotherly love and sincere appreciation.

Divinity has wisely divided the act of charity into many branches, and has taught us many paths to goodness. As many ways as we may do good, so many ways we may be charitable. There are infirmities not only of the body, but of the soul, which require the merciful hand of our abilities. I cannot condemn a man for ignorance, but must behold him with pity. It is no greater charity to clothe his body than to apparel the nakedness of his soul.

It is an honorable object to see the reason of other men wear our liveries, and their borrowed understanding do homage to the bounty of ours. It is like the natural charity of the sun, which illuminates another without obscuring itself. To be reserved in this part of goodness is the most sordid piece of covetousness, and more contemptible than pecuniary avarice.

Benevolence is absolute and real. So much benevolence as a man has, so much life has he; for all good things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice and temperance in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes. True benevolence, indeed, extends itself through the whole compass of existence, and sympathizes with the distress of every creature of sensation. Little minds may be apt to consider a compassion of this inferior kind as an instance of weakness; but it is undoubtedly the evidence of a noble nature. Homer thought it not unbecoming the character even of a hero to melt into tears at a distress of this sort, and has given us a most amiable and affecting picture of Ulysses weeping over his faithful dog, Argos, when he expires at his feet.

Freemasonry has no place for the little, selfish side of man. Its secrets are as the dead to him who looks at life that way. It looks for the man with the bigger soul, with the more universal spirit; it stops and stay with him only who sees man's mission in the betterment of the human race, who can take by the hand the fellow who is down and out, and put him on his feet and send him on his way a better man. Its teachings are wonderfully practical and godlike when once we recognize them.

It gives the individual a higher conception of a more definite mission; but while this is the spirit of Freemasonry, do we all recognize it? For no man can understand and appreciate it until he has pondered long and faithfully upon its teachings. Too many, alas, fail to understand or get that broader vision which our obligations are intended to give. To them Freemasonry is a failure; they are neither active nor practical Masons, but merely hangers-on. Such is not the fault of Freemasonry, but is due to the fact that they have failed to mix thought and action.

Every day one meets the so-called Freemason. He is in evidence everywhere. Perhaps he has been Master, or even Grand Master. Perhaps the Fraternity has bestowed upon him every possible honor. He knows he has reached the highest rung in the ladder of his personal ambition. There he halts. There he comes to a dead stop. He throws Freemasonry aside as he would an old shoe or a sucked lemon. He ceases to attend lodge meetings. He has no more interest in the Fraternity. There is not enough Masonic spirit left in him even to subscribe to a Masonic paper. To all intents and purposes, so far as Freemasonry is concerned, he is dead. He professes, but he does not possess, and really never did possess, the real Masonic spirit.

The real Freemason is the man in whose everyday life one sees an exemplification of true Freemasonry. The real Mason may be as poor as a church mouse, or he may be the richest man on earth. But poor or rich, destitute or otherwise, the real Freemason demonstrates the teachings of the Fraternity in his daily life, in his business and social dealings with his fellow-men, in his religion and in his politics. The real Mason does not lose his interest in Freemasonry of his interest in his brethren. Age, position, wealth - these do not deaden his Masonic ardor. The real Freemason never says: "I am not interested in Freemasonry; I have lost my brotherly feelings; I have gone to seed. "

Unless a man has the right kind of a heart you cannot make him the right kind of a Freemason. You can fill his brain full of obligations and teach him by symbols, and send him forth from the lodge room loaded to the guards with good intentions, and if his heart is not right he will walk a block out of his way to keep from giving a poor beggar a nickel, and then hasten back again, circulate a scandal, or interfere in matters that do not concern him. Charity, that God Given part of a man, and the foundation of Freemasonry, is lacking in his composition, and therefore he can be a Freemason only in name.

Charity or friendship, as it may well be called - is just the habit of giving our life to others; when we give our life away we possess more of it; the more we give, the more we receive.

To serve and do good to as many as possible - there is nothing greater in your fortune than that you should be able, and nothing finer in your nature than that you should be desirous to do this. The true Freemason must be and must have a right to be content with himself; and he can be so only when he lives not for himself alone, but for others also, who need his assistance and have a claim upon his sympathy.

Charity presupposes Justice, He who truly loves his brother respects the rights of his brother; but he does more - he forgets his own. Egoism sells or takes. Love delights in giving. In God, love is what it is in us, but in an infinite degree. God is inexhaustible in His Charity, as He is inexhaustible in His essence. That infinite omnipotence and infinite charity which, by an admirable good-will, draws from the bosom of its immense love the favors which it incessantly bestows on the world and on humanity, teaches us that the more we give, the more we possess.

Buddha said: "The Charitable man is loved by all; his friendship is prized highly; in death his heart is at rest and full of joy, for he suffers not from repentance; he receives the opening flower of his reward and the fruit that ripens from it. The charitable man has found the path of salvation. He is like the man who plants a sapling, securing thereby the shade, the flowers and the fruit in future years. Even so is the result of charity; even so is the joy of him who helps those who are in need of assistance. "

Confucius said: "Love is to conquer self and turn to courtesy. Could we conquer self and turn to courtesy for but one day, all mankind would turn to love. The signs of love are ever courteous of eye and ever courteous of ear; to be ever courteous in word and ever courteous in deed. Without the door to behave as though a great guest were come; to treat the people as though we tendered the high sacrifice; not to do unto others what we would not they should do unto us; to breed no wrongs in the home. To be respectful at home, painstaking at work, faithful to all. Love is to mete out five things to all below heaven - modesty and bounty, truth, earnestness and kindness. Modesty escapes insult; bounty wins the many; truth gains men's trust; earnestness brings success; kindness is the key to men's work. "

There are two principles which divide the wills of men; covetousness and charity, Covetousness uses God and enjoys the world; charity is the opposite.

Charity should be a distinguishing characteristic of every Freemason. It is in the practice of this virtue that man most nearly reveals his kinship to God.

The doctrines of Freemasonry are the most beautiful that it is possible to imagine. They breath the simplicity of the earliest ages, animated by the love of a martyred God. That word which the Puritans translated "Charity, " but which is truly "Love, " is the keystone which supports the entire edifice of this mystic science. Love one another, teach one another, help one another. That is all our doctrine, all our science, all our law. We have no narrow-minded prejudices; we do not debar from our society this sect or that sect; it is sufficient for us that a man worships God, no matter under what name or in what manner. Ah! Rail against us, bigoted and ignorant men, if you will. Those who listen to the truths which Freemasonry inculcates can readily forgive you. It is impossible to be a good Freemason without being a good man.

The immutable law of God requires that besides respecting the absolute rights of others, and being merely just, we should do good, be charitable, and obey the dictates of the generous and noble sentiments of the soul. Charity is a law because our conscience is not satisfied nor at ease if we have not relieved the suffering, the distressed, the destitute. It is to give that which he to whom you give has no right to take or demand. To be charitable is obligatory on us. We are the almoners of God's bounties. But the obligation is not so precise and inflexible as the obligation to be just. Charity knows neither rule nor limit. It goes beyond all obligations. Its beauty consists in its liberty. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is Love. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. "

To be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; to relieve the necessities of the needy; and be generous, liberal and hospitable; to return to no man evil for evil; to rejoice at the good fortune of others, and sympathize with them in their sorrows and reverses; to live peaceably with all men, and repay injuries with benefits and kindness; these are the sublime dictates of the Moral Law, taught from the infancy of the world by Freemasonry.

Antiquity knew, described and practiced charity; the first feature of which, so touching - and, thank God! So common - is goodness, as its loftiest one is heroism. Charity is devotion to another; and it is ridiculously senseless to pretend that there ever was an age of

the world when the human soul was deprived of that part of its heritage - the power of devotion. But it is certain that Christianity has diffused and popularized this virtue, and that before Christ these words were never spoken:

"LOVE ONE ANOTHER; FOR THAT IS THE WHOLE LAW. "

Love would put a new face on this weary old world, in which we lived as pagans and enemies too long; and it would warm the heart to see how fast the vain diplomacy of statesmen, the impotence of armies and navies, and lines of defense, would be superseded by this unarmed child. Love will creep where force cannot go, will accomplish that by imperceptible methods - being its own lever, fulcrum and power - which force could never achieve.

Have you not seen in the woods, in a late autumn morning, a poor fungus or mushroom, a plant without any solidity - nay, that seemed nothing but a soft mush or jelly - by its constant, total and inconceivably gentle pushing, manage to break its way up through the frosty ground, and actually to lift a hard crust on its head? It is the symbol of the power of kindness.

The virtue of this principle in human society in application to great interests is obsolete and forgotten. Once or twice in history it has been tried, with signal success. This great, overgrown, dead Christendom of ours still keeps alive at least the name of a lover of mankind. But one day all men will be lovers; and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine.

The power of gentleness is too little seen in the world; the subduing influences of pity, the might of love, the control of mildness over passion, the commanding majesty of that perfect character which mingles grave displeasure with grief and pity for the offender. So it is that Freemason should treat his brethren who go astray; not with bitterness; nor yet with good natured easiness, nor with worldly indifference, nor with philosophic coldness, nor with laxity of conscience; that accounts everything well that passes under the seal of public opinion; but with charity and with pitying loving-kindness. Charity and loving-kindness are two words that comprehend the whole political and religious creed of Freemasonry. The law of charity cannot have been enacted by, nor the spirit of loving-kindness cannot have emanated from a cruel and ferocious God. It is the expression of the Divine Will because it is of the Divine Nature.

What of the hour in Freemasonry? Brighter - Stronger - Clearer. We often become discouraged and are inclined to be pessimistic, but amid all the errors and stumbling, a better day is dawning when we shall see the beneficent labors of Freemasonry shining in effulgent splendor. Freemasonry is growing in power, and as its immortal principles take root in the fallow soil of the human heart and mind, it buds and blossoms into foliage of kindness and the fruit of charity toward all mankind.

Let me be a little kinder;
Let me be a little blinder To the faults of those about me;
Let me praise a little more.
Let me be, when I am weary, Just a little bit more cheery;
Let me serve a little better Those that I am striving for.
Let me be a little braver When temptation bids me waver;
Let me strive a little harder To be all that I should be.
Let me be a little meeker With a brother who is weaker;
Let me think more of my neighbor, And a little less of me.

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.VIII August, 1930 No.8
CORN, WINE AND OIL
by: Unknown

The wages which our ancient brethren received for their labors in the building of King Solomon's Temple are paid no more. In the lodge we use them as symbols, save in the dedication, constitution and consecration of a new lodge and in the laying of cornerstones, when once again the fruit of the land, the brew of the grape and the essence of the olive are poured to launch a new unit of brotherhood into the fellowship of lodges; or to begin a new structure dedicated to the public use.

Corn, wine and oil have been associated together from the earliest times. In Deuteronomy the "nation of fierce countenance" which is to destroy the people "shall not leave thee either corn, wine or oil." In II Chronicles we read "the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine and oil -." Nehemiah tells of "a great chamber where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine and the oil - " and later "then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, the new wine and the oil into the treasures." There are other references in the Great Light to these particular forms of taxes, money and tithes for religious purposes; wealth and

refreshment. In ancient days the grapes in the vineyard and olives in the grove and the grain of the field were not only wealth but the measure of trade; so many skins of wine, so many cruses of oil, so many bushels of corn were to them as are dollars and cents today. Thus our ancient brethren received wages in corn, wine and oil as a practical matter; they were paid for their labors in the coin of the realm.

The oil pressed from the olive was as important to the Jews in Palestine as butter and other fats are among occidentals. Because it was so necessary, and hence so valuable, it became an important part of sacrificial rites. There is no point in the sacrifice which is only a form. To be effective it must offer before the Altar something of value; something the giving of which will testify to the love and veneration in which the sacrificer holds the Most High. Oil was also used not only as a food but for lighting purposes; more within the house than in the open air, where torches were more effective. Oil was also an article of the bath; mixed with perfume it was used in the ceremonies of anointment, and in preparation for ceremonial appearances. The "Precious ointment upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment;" as the quotation has it in our Entered Apprentice Degree, (and Nevada's Master Mason opening and closing) was doubtless made of olive oil, suitably mixed with such perfumes and spices as myrrh, cinnamon, galbanum and frankincense. Probably oil was also used as a surgical dressing; nomadic peoples, subject to injuries, could hardly avoid knowledge of the value of soothing oil. With so many uses for oil, its production naturally was stimulated. Not only was the production of the olive grove a matter of wealth, but the nourishing and processing of the oil gave employment to many. Oil was obtained from the olive both by pressing - probably by a stone wheel revolving in or on a larger stone, mill or mortar - and also by a gentle pounding. This hand process produced a finer quality of oil. "And thou shalt command the children of Israel that they bring pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always." (Exodus, 27-20.)

The corn of the Bible is not the corn we know today. In many, if not the majority of the uses of the word, a more understandable translation would be simply "grain." The principal grains of the Old Testament days were barley and wheat; corn represents not only both of these, but all the grains which the Jews cultivated. Our modern corn, cultivated and cross-bred was, of course, unknown to the ancients, although it might be going too far to say they had no grain similar to the Indian maize from which our great corn crop has grown.

An ear of grain has been an emblem of plenty since the mists of antiquity which shroud the beginnings of mythology. Ceres, goddess of abundance, survives today in our cereals. The Greeks call her Demeter, a corruption of Gemeter, our mother earth. She wore a garland of grain and carried ears of grain in her hand. The Hebrew Shibboleth means both an ear of corn and a flood of water. Both are symbols of abundance, plenty and wealth. American Masonic use of a sheaf of wheat in place of an ear of wheat - or any other grain such as corn - seems rather without point or authority. As for the substitution occasionally heard, of "water ford" for "water fall," we can only blame the corrupting influence of time and the ignorance of those who have permitted it, since a water "Ford" signifies a paucity, the absence of water, while a water "Fall" carries out both the translation of the word and the meaning of the ear of corn - plenty.

Scarcely less important to our ancient brethren than their corn and oil, was the wine. Vineyards were highly esteemed both as wealth and as a comfort - the pleasant shade of the "vine and fig tree" was a part of ancient hospitality. Vineyards on mountain sides or hills were most carefully tended and protected against washing away by terraces and walls, as even today one may see the hillsides of the Rhine. Thorn hedges kept cattle from helping themselves to the grapes. The vineyardist frequently lived in a watch tower or hut on an elevation to keep sharp look-out that neither predatory man nor beast took his ripening wealth.

The feast of Booths, in the early fall, when the grapes were ripe,

was a time of joy and happiness. "New Wine" - that is, the unfermented, just pressed-out juice of the grape - was drunk by all. Fermented wine was made by storing the juice of the grape in skins or bottles. Probably most of the early wine of Old Testament days was red, but later the white grape must have come into esteem - at least, it is the principal grape of production for that portion of the world today.

Corn, wine and oil form important and necessary parts of the ceremonies of the dedication, consecration and constitution of a new lodge.

Lodges were anciently dedicated to King Solomon, but as we all know, our modern lodges are dedicated to the Holy Sts. John. "and since their time there is represented in every regular and well-governed lodge a certain point within a circle, embordered by two parallel perpendicular lines, representing those saints."

This symbol of the point within the circle is far older than King Solomon's Temple. The two lines which emborder it, and which we consider represent the Saints, were originally representative of the summer and winter solstices. The Holy Sts. John have their "days" so closely to the summer and winter solstices - (June 24 and December 27 are almost coincident to June 21 and December 21) that there can be little doubt that both lines and dates represented to our "ancient brethren" the highest and lowest points which the sun reached in its travels north and south. They are, most intimately connected with the time of fecundity and harvest, the festivals of the first fruits, the depths of winter and the beginning of the long climb of the sun up from the south towards the days of warmth which that climb promised.

Hence corn, wine and oil - the produce of the land - are natural accompaniments to the dedication of a lodge which it is hoped will prosper, reap in abundance of the first fruits of Masonic cultivation and a rich harvest of ripe character from the seeds it plants. Corn, wine and oil poured upon the symbolic lodge at the ceremony which creates it, are essential to "erection" or "consecration." All lodges are "erected to God and Consecrated to the services of the Most High." From earliest times consecration has been accompanied by sacrifice, a free-will offering of something of real value to those who thus worship. Hence the sacrifice of corn, wine and oil - the wealth of the land, the strength of the tribe, the come-fort and well-being of the individual - at the consecration of any place of worship or service of God.

Like so much else in our ceremonies, the idea today is wholly symbolic. The Grand Master orders his Deputy (or whatever other officer is customary) to pour the Corn, the Senior Grand Warden to pour the Wine and the Junior Grand Warden to pour the oil upon the "lodge" - usually a covered structure representing the original Ark of the Covenant. The corn is poured as an emblem of nourishment; the wine as an emblem of refreshment and the oil as an emblem of joy and happiness.

The sacrifice we thus make is not actual, any more than Masonic work is physical labor. The ceremony should mean to those who take part in it, to those who form the new lodge, that the symbolic sacrifice will be made real by the donation of the necessary time, effort, thought and brotherly affection which will truly make the new lodge an effective instrument in the hands of the builders. When the Grand Master constitutes the new lodge, he brings it legally into existence. A man and a woman may be married in a civil ceremony of consecration. But as the joining of a man and woman in matrimony is by most considered as a sacrament, to be solemnized with the blessing of the Most High, so is the creation of a new lodge, but the consecration is also its spirit.

In the laying of a corner stone the Grand Master also pours, or causes to be poured, the corn, wine and oil, symbolizing health, prosperity and peace. The fruits of the land are poured upon the cornerstone to signify that it will form part of a building which shall grow, be used for purposes of proper refreshment, and become useful and valuable to men. The ceremonies differ in different Jurisdictions - indeed, so do those of the dedication, consecration and constitution of a lodge - but the essential idea is the same everywhere. regardless of the way in which they are applied in the

ritualistic ceremonies.

It probably matters very little what varieties of grain, of oil and juice of the grape are used in these ceremonies. The symbolism will be the same, since the brethren assembled will not know the actual character of the fruits of the earth being used. The main theme is that "Fruits of the Earth" are being used, no matter which fruits they are! To be quite correct though, barley or wheat should be used for the corn, olive oil for the oil, and sacramental wine, such as is permitted by the Volstead Act (during the days of the prohibition!) for religious purposes for the wine. It may be noted, however, that "new wine" or unfermented grape juice was used by the children of Israel as a sacrificial wine, the ordinary grape juice in no way destroys the symbolism. Mineral oil, of course is oil, and is a "fruit of the earth" in the sense that it comes from the "clay which is constantly being employed for man's use." The oil of Biblical days, however, was wholly vegetable, whether it was the olive oil of commerce, or the oil of cedar as was used in burials.

Corn, wine and oil were the wages paid our ancient brethren. They were the "Master's Wages" of the days of King Solomon. Masons of this day receive no material wages for their labors; the work done in a lodge is paid for only in the coin of the heart. But those wages are no less real. They may sprout as does the grain, strengthen as does the wine, nourish as does the oil. How much we receive and what we do with our wages depends entirely on our Masonic work. A brother obtains from his lodge and from his Order only what he puts into it. Our ancient brethren were paid for their physical labors. Whether their wages were paid for work performed upon the mountain and in the quarries, or whether they received corn, wine and oil because they labored in the fields or vineyards, it was true then, and it is true now, that only "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." To receive the equivalent of corn, wine and oil, a brother must labor. He must till the fields of his own heart or build the temple of his own "house not made with hands." "He must labor to his neighbor or carry stones for his brother's temple.

If he stands, waits, watches and wonders he will not be able to ascend into the Middle Chamber where our ancient brethren received their wages. If he works for the joy of working, does his part in his lodge work, takes his place among the laborers of Freemasonry, he will receive corn, wine and oil in measures pressed down and running over, and know a Fraternal Joy as substantial in fact as it is ethereal in quality; as real in his heart as it is intangible to the profane of the world.

For all of us then corn, then wine and then oil are symbols of sacrifice, of the fruits of labor, of wages earned. For all of us, "SO MOTE IT BE!"

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.VI March, 1928 No.3

FAITH, PROGRESS AND REWARD

by: Unknown

Josephus, the Hebrew historian, says: "Moreover, this Hiram made two hollow pillars, whose outsides were of brass." He then gives a detailed description of their dimensions, including their chapters. He states that there was cast with each their chapters lily work, that stood upon the pillar, round about which there was a network interwoven with small palms made of brass; to this also, were hung two hundred pomegranates in two rows. One of these pillars he set at the entrance of the porch, on the right hand, and the other at the left hand. and gave them names.

It is a poor symbol that has but one meaning; these have been subjected to many different readings.

It has been asserted that the Ancients believing that the earth was flat, and being unacquainted with the law of gravity, supposed it to be supported by two Pillars of God, placed at the Western entrance of the then-known world. These became known as the Pillars of Hercules, and are now called Gibraltar, on one side of the straight, and Ceuta on the other. This may account for the origin of the twin pillars.

However this may be, the practice of erecting columns at the entrance of an edifice dedicated to the worship prevailed in Egypt and Phoenicia, and at the erection of King Solomon's Temple the Brazen Pillars were placed in the porch thereof.

Some writers have suggested that they represent the masculine and feminine elements in nature. The contention has been made that they stand for the authority of Church and State, because on stated occasions the High Priest stood before one pillar and the King before the other. The opinion has been held that they have an allusion to the two legendary pillars of Enoch, upon which, tradition informs us, all the wisdom of the ancient world was inscribed in order to preserve it from inundations and conflagrations. William Preston supposed that, by them, Solomon had reference to the pillars of cloud and fire which guided the Children of Israel out of bondage and up to the Promised Land. Doctor Hutchinson says a literal translation of their names is: "In Thee is Strength," and, "It Shall be Established," and by natural transposition may be thus expressed: "Oh, Lord, Thou Art Almighty and Thy Power is Established From Everlasting to Everlasting." I cannot escape the conviction that in meaning they are related to religion, and represent the strength and stability, the perpetuity and providence of God; and in Freemasonry are the symbols of a living faith.

Like every subject of universal extent, faith cannot be defined. The factors and faculties of mightiest import cannot be caught up in speech. Life is the primary fact of which we are conscious, and yet there is no language by which it can be fenced in. No chart can be made of a mother's love, because it is deeper than words, and reads in little, common things, a wealth that is more than golden. Paul, one of the deepest thinkers of the ages, called faith "The Sub-stance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But all attempts at definition have been in vain.

While we cannot define, we can recognize the powers of faith. It generates energy. It is the dynamics of elevated characters and noble spirits, the source of all that bears the impress of greatness in the world.

While we cannot define, we can realize its necessity.

Without faith it would be impossible to transact business. "It spans the earth with railroads, and cleaves the sea with ships. It gives man wings to fly the air, and fins to swim the deep. It creates the harmony of music and the whirl of factory wheels. It draws man up toward the angels and brings heaven down to earth." By it all human relationship is conditioned. We must have faith in institutions and ideals; faith in friendship, family and fireside; faith in self, faith in man and faith in God.

Freemasonry is the oldest, the largest and the most widely distributed secret society on the face of the earth today by reason of its faith in God.

The Winding Stairway is a symbol of Progress. From a few words contained in the sixth chapter of the First Book of Kings, a fascinating allegory has been fabricated. In his book on the "Symbolism of Freemasonry," Dr. Albert G. Mackey says: "Although the Legend of the Winding Stairs forms an important tradition of ancient Craft Masonry, it is only as a symbol that we can regard this old tradition." M.W. Oliver Day street's book on "Symbolism of the Three Degrees" contains a statement to the effect that in the Winding Stairs, an architectural feature of Solomon's Temple, is seized upon to symbolize the journey of life. This symbol teaches that a man's life should never be downward, nor on a dead level; but, no matter how hard or difficult, should always be progressive and ascending. It means, as Dr. Frank Crane says, that "The man who fails is not the man who has no gifts, no chance, but the man who quits or the man who never tries." It is a clarion call to face forward and pull the belt tighter. It means that a Mason can at least try. Edgar A. Guest said:

I'd rather be a failure than the man who's never tried;
I'd rather seek the mountain-top than always stand aside.
Oh, let me hold some lofty dream and make my desperate fight,
And though I fail I still shall know I tried to serve the right.

The longing to climb onward and upward, symbolized by the Winding Stairs, caused Robert Lewis Stevenson, frail and sickly in body but mighty of soul, to write these words:

"To thrill with joy of girded men, to go on forever and fail and go on again, with the half of a broken hope for a pillow at night, to know that somehow the right is the right."

It stands for that spirit of progress which, like a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, has led the race across the wilderness of life, out of the dark night of ignorance and superstition, up to the day-dawn of civilization, of knowledge and science, of intellectual and spiritual power.

Just as the Brazen Pillars are symbols of faith, the Stairway winding upward is a symbol of human progress. As such, it stands for all that gives us better clothes, better food, better music, better schools, better churches, better homes, better heads and better hearts; and for the vision, industry and endurance of those through whom the results are achieved. Robert G. Ingersoll said:

"The progress of the world depends upon the men who walk in the fresh furrows and through the rustling corn, upon those who sow and reap, upon those whose faces are radiant with the glare of furnace fires, upon delvers in the mines and the workers in the shops, upon those who give to the winter morning the ringing music of the axe, upon those who battle with the boisterous billows and go down to the sea in ships, the brave thinkers, the heroes, the patriots and the martyrs."

This is the meaning of the Winding Stairs. It stands for art and science and song and hope and love and aspirations high. As a symbol of progress it is a prophecy of the future, that tomorrow will be better than today. It speaks not only of the past and present but of a dim and distant day when the "Old Ghosts of Race Prejudice and Religious Bigotry will cover eyeless sockets with fleshless hands and fade forever from the mind of man, when love will rule the race, casting out fear, and brotherhood will heal the old hurt and heartache of humanity."

Masonry has played a conspicuous part in the onward march of civilization, and so long as Masons transmute this Legend of the Winding Stairs into conscience, courage, character and conduct; it will continue its contribution to the progress of the world. The Middle Chamber is a symbol of Reward. In Speculative Freemasonry it stands for that place in life where a man receives his wages, the reward of his own endeavors.

Let us not misconceive this word "Reward." Some of the wealthiest men on earth today are minus bank accounts. Carlyle said: "The wealth of a man consists in the number of things he loves and blesses and in the number of things he is loved and blessed by."

The word reward is like a two-edged sword, it cuts both ways; it means to give in return, whether good or evil. The shortest Book in the Old Testament is the Vision of Obadiah. It consists of one chapter, at the center of which is this text: "As Thou hast done unto Thy brother it shall be done unto Thee, Thy reward shall return upon Thine own head."

The law of compensation is manifest in every department of nature. The Middle Chamber is the Masonic expression of that principle. "As Thou hast done, it shall be done unto Thee." is like saying that lives have echoes. Out there is a great mountain of humanity; consciously or unconsciously, silent influences issue from each life and, striking against the peaks and summit tops of that mountain, reverberate and echo back upon the life from whence they came. If they go out good and true they echo back in blessings and benedictions; if they go out mean and low they echo back in curses and consternation.

Benedict Arnold is the saddest figure in American history. Just as Judas Iscariot sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver, Benedict Arnold sold his honor and his manhood for thirty thousand dollars in English gold and became a traitor to his homeland and the cause of freedom. The influences that came out of his life were those of treason and treachery; and by the operation of this principle, symbolized by the Middle Chamber, the echo that came back was the contempt of mankind. For all the generations of time the name of Benedict Arnold is inseparably linked to that of Judas Iscariot; together they will go down the ages a byword and a hissing. Some years ago I read a volume by Dr. Hillis, entitled:

"Great Books as Life Teachers," and in it discovered how this principle operated in the life of one of the greatest men of the last century.

Lord Shaftsbury was the seventh in the line of Earls. At the age of twenty-five he took his place in the Parliament of England. For more than forty years, when Parliament rose at midnight in the winter, and the other Lords went to their palatial homes or clubs, Shaftsbury would take a lantern and go through snow and sleet to London Bridge, Waterloo Bridge and the other spots in which unfortunates hid themselves and huddled together to keep warm. By the light of his lantern, he led shivering men and boys to shelter houses, where each received a bowl of soup, a loaf of bread and a thick blanket. For the half-clothed street Arabs he started fifty schools, in which crowded the thousand ragged boys. He established night schools, industrial schools and homes.

I cannot call the roll of his manifold labors, but after years of service had accumulated upon his head he gave this testimony: "During a long life I have proved that not one kind word ever spoken, not one kind deed ever done, but sooner or later returns to bless the giver and becomes a chain, binding men with golden hands to the throne of God." Members of the English Royalty and Nobility, many financiers, merchant princes, scholars and statesmen of the British Empire, assembled at his funeral in Westminster Abbey. The Orator of the occasion began his address with this remark: "This man goeth down to the grave amid the benedictions of the poor and the admiring love of the rich."

The influences that came from his life were those of love and unselfish service. By the operation of the principle symbolized by the Middle Chamber in Freemasonry, the echo that came back was a myriad-voiced chorus of love and honor to his memory, and the name of Shaftsbury became one with which to conjure and inspire men forward to noble deeds.

In his "Essay on the Law of Compensation," Emerson asked this question: "Has a man gained anything who has received one hundred favors and rendered none?" The answer is easy; such a man has become a moral bankrupt, the smile has left his face, the song has deserted his heart, to him life has become a selfish and sordid thing.

Emerson says this principle means that "Crime and Punishment grow out of one stem, that curses recoil upon the head of him who imprecates them, that a man cannot do wrong without suffering wrong, that in the last analysis the thief steals from himself and the borrower runs into his own debt," that "The Chief end of nature is benefit, but for every benefit received a tax is levied, the benefit must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent to somebody," that by the operation of this law "The Martyr can never be dishonored, every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame, every prison house a more illustrious abode, every burned book enlightens the world, every suppressed word reverberates through the earth from side to side; it is the whipper who is whipped and the tyrant who is undone."

The Middle Chamber, as a symbol of reward, means that a man will get out of his Lodge, out of his home, out of his life exactly what he puts into it. It also means that whenever a man pursues a noble quest, whenever he is held in the viselike grip of devotion to a great ideal, the end is sure and the reward beyond all doubt.

Much of the philosophy of the Fellowcraft Degree is contained in these three words; Faith, Progress and Reward. The Pillars stand for faith, the Winding Stairs for progress and the Middle Chamber for reward. There has never been any progress without faith and there is no good reward without progress.

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THE LETTER "G" by: Unknown

The Short Talk Bulletin of July, 1927, bears the title "G". This popular exposition of the meaning and symbolism of the letter so precious to Freemasons is long out of print, although preserved in many sets of bound volumes and in libraries. This present paper is intended to be supplementary to, and not a recapitulation of, that printed as Number 7, of Volume V of these Bulletins.

"It is merely an accident of the English language that God and Geometry begin with the same letter; no matter what the language or the ritual, the initial of the Ineffable Name and that of the first and noblest of sciences are Masonically the same.

"But that is a secret! cries some newly made brother who has examined his printed monitor and finds that the ritual concerning the further significance of the letter "G" is represented only by stars. Aye, the "ritual" is secret, but the "fact," is the most gloriously public that Freemasonry may herald to the world. One can no more keep secret the idea that God is the very warp and woof of Freemasonry than that he is the essence of all life. Take God out of Freemasonry, and there is, literally, nothing left; it is a pricked balloon, an empty vessel, a bubble which has burst." (Introduction to Freemasonry.)

That the Letter "G" is not a secret symbol is attested by hundreds of Masonic writers, each of whom has written of it from a different standpoint. Mackey has much to say of it - too much to quote at length, but space may be found for an extract:

"G. The seventh letter of the English, Latin and Romanic alphabets. In the Greek and many other alphabets it is in third place; in the Russian, Wallachian, and some others, it is in fourth; in the Arabic the fifth, and in the Ethiopian the twentieth. In Hebrew it is called Gheemel, is of the numerical value of three, and its significance is "camel." It is associated with the third sacred name of God, in Hebrew, Ghadol, or in Latin, Magnus, the Mighty. In Freemasonry it is given as the initial of the word God. "Hutchinson, in his Spirit of Masonry" (1776), says of the sacred letter:

"It is now incumbent on me to demonstrate to you the great significance of the letter "G", wherewith Lodges and the medals of Masons are ornamented. To apply its significance to the name of God only is depriving it of part of its Masonic import; although I have already shown that the symbols used in the Lodges are expressive of the Divinity's being the great object of Masonry, as Architect of the World. This significant letter denotes Geometry, which, to artificers, is the science by which all their labours are calculated and formed; and to Masons, contains the determination, definition and proof of the order, beauty and wonderful wisdom of the power of God in His Creation."

Dr. Frederick Dalcho wrote (1801) as follows:

"The Letter "G," which ornaments the Mason's Lodge, is not only expressive of the name of the Grand Architect of the Universe, but also denotes the science of Geometry, so necessary to artists. But the adoption of it by Masons implies no more than their respect for those inventions which demonstrate to the world the power, the wisdom and the beneficence of the Almighty Builder in the works of creation."

Various attempts have been made to place the date when the Letter "G" first came into the ritual of Speculative Freemasonry.

Pichard's expose, originally published in 1730, does not contain any reference to it. Later editions do include a curious doggerel which is worth repeating here. It is in the usual Question and Answer, or Examiner and Response, form so popular in all ritualistic work in the early days.:

Resp. In the midst of Solomon's Temple there stands a "G," A letter for all to read and see; but few there be that understand what means the Letter "G."

Exam. My Friend, if you pretend to be of this Fraternity, you can forthwith and rightly tell, what means that Letter "G."

Resp. By sciences are brought to light, bodies of various kinds. Which do appear to perfect sight; but none but males shall know my mind.

Exam. The Right shall.

Resp. If Worshipful.

Exam. Both Right and Worshipful I am, to hail you I have command, that you forthwith let me know, as I you may understand.

Resp. By letters four and science five, this "G" aright doth stand, in due Art and Proportion; you have your answer friend."

While authorities differ as to just when the letter "G" came into the ritual, all are agreed that the date is not later than 1768; very probably it was earlier.

Authorities are, however, by no means at one on the origin of the symbol then adopted into Speculative Masonry. The choice is wide and the fancy free; if we are willing to admit presumptive testimony, even if it will not satisfy a legal mind as evidence, then the introduction of the symbol into our system is as old as Speculative Masonry - however old that may be!

The Letter "G" as we know it, the Roman "G", is not a geometrical figure. It is part circle, part oval, part horizontal and vertical lines. It bears internal evidence of being a conventionalizing of a much more severe design.

In the Greek, Gamma, or "G", the third letter, is a square standing on end with the horizontal arm extending to the right, like a plain block letter "T," with the left extension of the cross piece omitted. In Hebrew the "G" is a square with the right side omitted; two right angles joined, the horizontal arms extending to the right.

Refer to the doggerel again;

"By letter four and science five, this "G" aright doth stand."

"Letters four" properly refers to J H V H, the tetragrammaton or four-letter word, the Hebrew designation of deity, which we call Jehovah, for want of a more likely rendition of the vowels (omitted in early Hebrew writing).

"Science Five," of course, is Geometry.

The Pythagoreans revered numbers as sacred; geometry was to them the sacred science. Its initial letter, Gamma, a square, was especially revered. The Gamma looks like a square used by builders; it was the symbol of the actual, four-sided, or geometrical square, the first whole number square, and therefore, the representative of deity, the four-letter word, the tetragrammaton.

Symbols are easily converted the one into the other and back again. If the Gamma, which appeared like a workman's square, was a symbol of the geometrical square, which in turn was a symbol of Deity, then, by a simple reconversion looked like Gamma, which in one position looked like the square of the workman, soon came to symbolize the tetragrammaton or four-letter word.

The Greek Gamma was rounded into the Latin "C." For a while it stood for both the sounds of "g" and "k." Later (third century B.C.), a slight change was made in the Latin "c" which stood for the soft, or "j" sound - and behold, our modern Roman "G." Hence, by a path straight to any but mind demanding documentary proof, we place the origin of our "G," as representing both God and Geometry, as far back as the Pythagoreans (sixth century, B.C.).

Another interesting hypothesis - it is hardly more - calls attention to the fact that three geometrical forms appear in the Greek alphabet, as we have seen; Gamma (G) is a square standing on end, the horizontal arm extended to the right. Omicron (O) is a circle, Delta (D) is a triangle.

Writing one letter on top of another to form a monogram is very old. The three Greek letters, Gamma, Omicron and Delta may be combined in a monogram to form a very fair conventionalizing of our letter "G" inside a triangle which looks not unlike our modern square and compasses!

Here is further testimony that the letter "G" and the ancient square, the Greek Gamma, or the Greek monogram of Gamma, Omicron, and Delta, which make a conventional Roman "G" inside a triangle, were connected in ancient Masonic minds. This is credited in the "Bulletin" of the Grand Lodge of Iowa (September, 1932) to Brother John A. Cockburn, noted Masonic writer.

"If further proof of the former identity of the letter "G" and the square were needed, it is to be found in the text of a ritual no longer in use among us. Therein it is recorded that in an attack on our Master a second blow was struck with a square across his breast, "and that on an exhumation a faint resemblance to the letter "G" marked on his left breast was discovered." (Italics ours -Ed.)

The combination of square and circle, or cross and circle (a cross forms two right angles, or squares) appears in a hundred guises in as many religious rites. The interested may recall the "hot cross bun" and the association of the egg, marked with crosses, with Easter; in Yorkshire, the brides cake at weddings was formerly cut into small squares and passed through a wedding ring, as a form of prayer for fertility; circle and square are combined in the wearing of a wedding ring on the fourth finger; the very number "4" itself was originally a circle, being changed to the present conventionalized square and upright after the fifteenth century; children still play the ancient game of noughts and crosses, or "tit-tat-toe," a combination of circles and squares.

That Freemasonry has in her letter "G" and its connotations a relationship with this ancient association of "letters four and science five -" that is, of Deity and science or knowledge - is not remarkable - rather it would extraordinary if she had not. In all ages and all religions, man has interwoven together his thought of spirit and matter, his ideas of relative and absolute. Freemasonry's "G" is but another of these conceptions, expressed in a symbol. If the symbol now used - a Roman "G" - is less fitting for an art concerned especially with squares than was the original Gamma, it at least should receive the reverence due a respectable age. Even those whose ideas of the fitness of things would be better satisfied if our "G" were Gamma, would hardly subscribe to an effort to change now. Mackey, the great Masonic authority, regretted that the Roman "g" ever found its way into our symbolism, and read the "G" as a substitute for the Hebrew Yod, which in turn is a symbol of the tetragrammaton, or four-letter word. Unquestionably the "Lost Word," the very heart of the Masonic system, is represented by the Yod, but it is a far cry to include also Geometry in that representation. The Greek Gamma, (of which our roman "G" is a substitute) however, did represent both the ineffable Name and the greatest of the sciences.

Three Greek letters which spell our name for Deity can be monogrammed to make a modern Roman "G" inside a square and compasses. However corrupt the geometrical form of the Roman "G", and however much more illuminating it might have been had we continued to use the Greek Gamma of Pythagoras, what we have adopted and made so integral a part of our Masonry that it is in every English speaking Lodge in the world, is far too sacred and familiar ever to change.

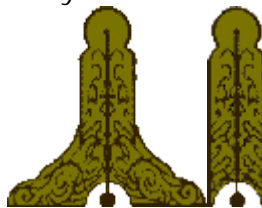
Of course Mackey is not lightly to be set aside, yet modern scholarship so differs with the great authority on this point that even those who revere him most, agree that here his genius led him astray.

Sufficient has been said to indicate that the Letter "G" is far more than a mere letter. A symbol of Deity and His Own science, Geometry, it carries us back to the childhood of knowledge; it combines and associates other symbols from which it sprang and the ideas for which they stand. As a symbol "G" is particularly Freemasonry's own. To the inquiring mind it calls insistently, if always softly, for better understanding and appreciation from Craftsmen.

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.II June, 1924 No.6

THE LEVEL & PLUMB

by: Unknown



Among the Craft Masons of olden time the actual work of building was done by Fellowcrafts, using materials gathered and rough hewn by Apprentices, all working under the guidance of the Master In our Symbolism, as the Apprentice is youth, so the Fellowcraft

is manhood, the time when the actual work of life must be done on the Level, by the Plumb and Square. Next to the Square and Compasses, the Level and Plumb are among the noblest and simplest symbols of the Craft, and their meaning is so plain that it hardly needs to be pointed out. Yet they are so important, in use and meaning, that they might almost be numbered among the Lesser Lights of the Lodge.

The Level, so the newly made Mason is taught, is for the purpose of proving horizontals. An English writer finds a lesson in the structure of the Level, in the fact that we know that a surface is level when the fluid is poised and at rest. From this use of the Level he bids us seek to attain a peaceful, balanced poise of mind, undisturbed by the passions which upset and sway us one way or the other. It is a council of perfection, he admits, but he insists that one of the best services of Masonry is to keep before us high ideals and, what is more, a constantly receding ideal, otherwise we should tire of it.

Of course, the great meaning of the Level is that teaches equality, and that is a truth that needs to be carefully understood. There is no little confusion of mind about it. Our Declaration of American Independence tells us that all men are "created equal" but not many have tried to think out what the words really mean. With most of us it is a vague sentiment, a glittering generality born of the fact that all are made of the same dust, and sharers of the common human lot, moved by the same great faith and fears, hopes and loves - walking on the Level of Time until Death, by its grim democracy, erases all distinctions and reduces all to the same level. Anyone who faces the facts knows well enough that all men are not equal, either by nature or by grace. Our humanity resembles the surface of the natural world in its hills and valleys. Men are very unequal in physical power, in mental abilities, in moral quality. No two men are equal; no two are alike. One man towers above his fellows, as a mountain above the hills. Some men can do what others can never do. Some have five talents, some two, and some but one. A genius can do with effortless ease what is futile for others to attempt, and a poet may be unequal to a hod-carrier in strength and sagacity. When there is inequality of gift it is idle to talk of equality of opportunity, no matter how fine the phrase may sound. It does not exist. By no glib theory can humanity be reduced to a dead level.

The iron wrinkles of fact are stubborn realities. Manifestly it is better to have it so, because it would make a dull world if all men were equal in a literal sense. As it is, wherein one lacks another excels, and men are drawn together by the fact that they are unequal and unlike. The world has different tasks demanding different powers, brains to devise, seers to see, hands to execute, prophets to lead. We need poets to inspire, scientists to teach, pioneers to blaze the path to new lands. No doubt this was what Goethe meant when he said that it takes all men to make one man, and the work of each is the glory of all.

What, then, is the equality of which the Level is the Symbol? Clearly it is not identity, or even similarity of gift and endowment. No, it is something better; it is the equal right of each man to the full use and development of such power as he has, whatever it may be, unhindered by injustice or oppression. As our Declaration of Independence puts it, every man has an equal and inalienable right to "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness," with due regard for the rights of others in the same quest. Or, as a famous slogan summed it up; "Equal Rights for all; Special Privileges to None!" That is to say, before the law every man has an equal right to equal justice, as before God, in whose presence all men are one in their littleness, each receives equally and impartially the blessing of the Eternal Love, even as the sun shines and the rain falls on all with equal benediction. Albert Pike, and with him many others, have gone so far as to say that Masonry was the first apostle of equality in the true sense. One thing we do know; Freemasonry presided over the birth of our Republic, and by the skill of its leaders wrote its basic truth, of which the Level is the symbol, into organic law of this land, the War for Independence, and the fight for Constitutional Liberty, might have had another issue but for the fact that our leaders were held together by a mystic tie of obligation, vowed to the services of the rights of man. Even Thomas Paine, who was not a Mason, wrote an essay in honor of an order which stood for Government without tyranny and religion without superstition - two principles which belong together, like the Level and the Plumb. Thus, by all that is sacred both in our Country and our Craft, we are pledged to guard, defend and practice the truth taught by the Level.

But it is in the free and friendly air of a Lodge of Masons, about an Altar of Obligation and Prayer, that the principle of equality finds its most perfect and beautiful expression. There, upon the Level, the Symbol of Equality, rich and poor, high and low, prince and plain citizen - men of diverse creeds, parties, interests, and occupations - meet in mutual respect and real regard, forgetting all differences of rank and station, and united for the highest good of all. "We Meet Upon the Level and Part Upon the Square;" titles, ranks, riches, do not pass the Inner Guard; and the humblest Brother is held in sacred regard, equally with the Brother who has attained the highest round of the wheel of fortune.

Every man in the Lodge is equally concerned in the building of the Temple, and each has his work to do. Because the task demands different gifts and powers, all are equally necessary to the work, the architect who draws the plans, the Apprentice who carries stones or shapes them with chisel and gavel; the Fellowcraft who polishes and deposits them in the wall, and the officers who marshal the workman, guide their labor, and pay their wages. Every one is equal to every other so long as he does good work, true work, square work. None but is necessary to the erection of the edifice; none but receives the honor of the Craft; and all together know the joy of seeing the Temple slowly rising in the midst of their labors. Thus Masonry lifts men to a high level, making each a fellow-worker in a great enterprise, and if it is the best brotherhood it is because it is a brotherhood of the best.

The Plumb is a symbol so simple that it needs no exposition. As the Level teaches unity in diversity and equality in difference, so the Plumb is a symbol of rectitude of conduct, integrity of life, and that uprightness of moral character which makes a good and just man. In the art of building accuracy is integrity, and if a wall be not exactly perpendicular, as tested by the Plumb-Line, it is weak and may fall, or else endanger the strength and stability of the whole. Just so, though we meet upon a Level, we must each build an upright character by the test of the Plumb, or we weaken the Fraternity we seek to serve and imperil its strength and standing in the community,

As a workman dare not deviate by the breadth of a hair to the right or to the left if his wall is to be strong and his arch stable, so Masons must walk erect and live upright lives. What is meant by an upright life each of us knows, but it has never been better

described than in the 15th Psalm, which may be called the religion of a gentleman and the design upon the Trestleboard of every Mason:

"Lord, who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy Holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." What is true of a man is equally true of a nation. The strength of a nation is its integrity, and no nation is stronger than the moral quality of the men who are its citizens. Always it comes back at last to the individual, who is a living stone in the wall of society and the State, making it strong or weak. By every act of injustice, by every lack of integrity, we weaken society and imperil the security and sanctity of the common life. By every noble act we make all sacred things more sacred and secure for ourselves and for those who come after us. The Prophet Amos has a thrilling passage in which he lets us see how God tested the people which were of old, by the Plumb-Line; and by the same test we are tried:

"Thus He showed me: and, behold the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in His hand. And the Lord said unto me, 'Amos, what seest thou?' And I said, 'A plumb-line.' Then said the Lord, 'Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people of Israel: I will not again pass them by any more.'"

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol. XII May, 1934 No. 005

MASONIC GEOMETRY

by: Unknown

Fellowcrafts receive several admonitions and exhortations regarding the Sciences of Geometry and astronomy, and many an initiate has wondered just how far his duty should carry him in undertaking anew the study of branches of mathematics which are associated in his with much troubled effort in school days.

While some mathematical-minded men may find the same joy in the study of lines, angles, surfaces, spheres and measurements which the musician obtains from his notes, the painter from his perspective and colors; and the poet from his meter and rhymes; comparatively few brethren rejoice in the study of the mathematically abstruse. This must have been well known to Preston, when he wrote those portions of our Fellowcraft Degree which we owe to his genius, as to any modern. So it seems fair to conclude that it was less the literal study of geometry, with a design to become an expert, than a figurative appreciation of its implications which the great Master of Masonry had in mind. Indeed, a careful and critical examination of the ritual which speaks of geometry, and its child, astronomy, will demonstrate this.

Fellowcraft rituals, in this country, with very few exceptions trace back to Thomas Smith Webb. Because of the variations which ritual committees, Grand Lecturers and others have introduced, so that few Jurisdictions are exactly at one as to what is the proper form. our examination here will be based on Webb. His several para-graphs, here quoted in succession although separated in his "Monitor," read as follows:

"Geometry treats of the powers and properties of magnitudes in general, where length, breadth and thickness are considered; from a point to a line, from a line to a "superficies" and from a superficies" to a "solid."

"By this science, the architect is enabled to construct his plans and execute his design; the general to arrange his soldiers; the engineer to mark out ground for encampments; the geographer to give us the dimensions of the world, and all things therein contained, to delineate the extent of seas, and specify the divisions of empires, kingdoms and provinces; by it also, the astronomer is enabled to make his observations, and to fix the duration of times and seasons, years and cycles. In fine, geometry is the foundation of architecture, and the root of mathematics.

"Astronomy is that divine art, by which we are taught to read the wisdom, strength and beauty of the Almighty Creator, in those sacred pages of the celestial hemisphere. Assisted by astronomy, we can observe the motions, measure the distances, comprehend the magnitudes, and calculate the periods and eclipses of the heavenly bodies. By it we learn the use of the globes, the system of the world and the preliminary law of nature. While we are employed in the study of this science, we must perceive unparalleled instances of wisdom and goodness, and through the whole creation, trace the Glorious Author by his works.

"Geometry, the first and the noblest of sciences, is the basis on which the superstructure of Masonry is erected. By geometry, we may curiously trace Nature, through her various windings, to her most concealed recesses. By it we discover the power, the wisdom and the goodness of the Grand Artificer of the Universe, and view with delight the proportions which connect this vast machine. By it, we discover how the planets move in their different orbits, and demonstrate their various revolutions. By it we account for the return of the seasons and the variety of scenes which each season displays to the discerning eye. Numberless worlds are around us, all framed by the same Divine Artist, which roll through the vast expanse, and are all conducted by the same unerring laws of

nature. "The study of the liberal arts, that valuable branch of education, which tends so effectually to polish and adorn the mind, is earnestly recommended to your consideration; especially as the basis of our art. Geometry, or Masonry, originally synonymous terms, being of a divine and moral nature, is enriched with the most useful knowledge; while it proves the wonderful properties of nature, it demonstrates the more important truths of morality."

The interested Mason will find here far less of admonition to make himself a geometer than an attempt to make him appreciate what the science of geometry means to Masonry, as a demonstration of the

"glorious works of creation," the majesty and awe-inspiring magnitude of the universe, and thus, the "perfection of our divine creator." To understand how geometry "demonstrates the more important truths of morality," it is essential to comprehend just what this science really is.

Geometry is that deductive science which deals with the properties of space, and masses which occupy space. Science is exact and classified knowledge. In the last analysis all science is measurement. It may be measurement of time or space; of atom or electron; of event or process, but measurement it is. Hence geometry, which is based on measurements of area, masses, angles, spaces and the relations between them, is fundamental to all science. It may come as a shock to some minds to know that there is not, strictly speaking, any really "exact" science. One of the greatest truths man has learned, in all his centuries of study, is that there is no absolute to be known; all truths, including the mathematical, are relative. There is no absolute rock on which any geometry, either the familiar Euclidian geometry of our school days or the non-Euclidian geometries of the mathematician, can be based. For all geometries are founded upon "some" assumptions. The axioms of geometry are so-called self-evident truths which not only need no proof. but which cannot be proved. These self-evident truths are those which we instinctively know by experience; truths which no counter experience questions. And right here we meet with one of the great pregnant meanings of Geometry from the Masonic standpoint. The whole of the system of Freemasonry, the essence of all its teachings, the content of all its philosophy, the soul of all its morality, rest upon an axiom, an assumption which can never be proved, as either mathematical or legal world understands the word "proof" . . . the existence of Deity.

Deity can neither be proved nor disproved, using the word in the scientific sense. "Proof" is a process of the mind, a matter of logic, a satisfaction of the intellect, and in the end rests upon the assumption that which is universally observed, and universally constant, has always been and always will be so. It is unthinkable to our minds that two plus two could ever be anything but four, though we perform the addition on the farthest star. Yet we are learning that what seems "true" when bounded by earthly conditions, is not necessarily "true" when considered from a vaster and more distant viewpoint.

Belief in Deity is not the result of a process of the intellect, but of the heart or soul.

Man is now, has always been, and presumably will always be, universal in his belief in, and longing for, a Great Architect of the Universe. Masons accept the belief without question. It is part of our lives; we could have no masonry without it. Lacking it we could not live as we understand life. But from the scientific standpoint it is as impossible to prove as are any of Euclid's axiom, without which there could be no geometry.

And those very statements are as near a proof" as we can come. Surely, if it is a fair assumption that the geometry on which rests all science, and which in itself rests upon unprovable axioms, as a "true" science, so is the belief, on which rests all hope and happiness in life, but which is not scientifically provable, a "true" belief.

We are taught that geometry "demonstrates the more important truths of morality."

"Morality" can hardly here mean any code of human conduct, such as the observance of the ten commandments, the "live and let live" idea on which modern civilization is founded, observance of man-made law, etc. Such, indeed, is morality in the strict sense, but here morality must mean something much greater and quite different. The "more important truths of morality" which geometry teaches must be those fundamental beliefs on which all life is founded; the existence of Deity, the immortality of the soul, the reality of the love of God for his children.

The intelligent reader will have noted that here Preston says "demonstrate" and not "prove," as he does a phrase before. Geometry may "prove the wonderful properties of nature" but "demonstrate" is as much as we can claim for "the more important truths of morality." Imagine yourself in the middle of the Sahara desert. You are alone, many miles from any human being, You have no knowledge whatever that any one has passed this way before you. Suddenly you come upon a watch, lying in the sand. It is running, and it agrees with your watch. On tests you find that the watch will run but thirty-six hours without winding.

You are absolutely certain, and no one could convince you to the contrary, that, (1) some human being was here within thirty-six hours, or, (2) that the watch was tied to some animal, and fell off that animal at the spot where you found it, or, (3) that it was tied to some bird, and fell from the bird, or (4) that it was dropped from an airplane or balloon.

The one inescapable fact is that the watch was running; it had been wound within thirty-six hours.

Geometry "demonstrates the more important truths of morality" very much as the watch demonstrated to you that some one had been where you found it, before you. A running watch "proves" a maker and winder . . . the human mind is so constituted that it cannot conceive of a plan without some intelligence to make the plan. No power or argument could convince you that the watch made itself; or rolled or flew to the spot where you found it. It is a watch - therefore it was made by hands. It runs - therefore it was wound. It is where no watch can be, ordinarily speaking - therefore it was brought to that spot by something living.

The geometer measures the "numberless worlds around us, which roll through the vast expanse and are all conducted by the same unerring laws of nature." From his measurements he concludes that the orbit of a certain planet - say Venus - is such-and thus, and its time of travel from here to there is so-and-so many days. By careful computation, aided by numberless observations, he reduces these facts to exact data. From these he predicts that on a certain day, at a certain hour, minute and second, Venus will appear against the sun - will "transit," in other words.

If, then, Venus "does" cross the face of the sun, beginning at the time predicted, and taking just the interval prophesied to do so, the geometer "knows," as well as it possible for the human mind to know, that his calculations are correct.

In other words, Venus revolved in her orbit and the sun swung in his, "according to plan." The astronomer repeats the feat for a thousand heavenly happenings. Eclipses of the sun, moon, the tides, occultation of countless stars, the beginning and ending of "times and seasons" he predicts in advance with such accuracy and certainty, that no brother scientist questions the verity of his predictions. All are agreed that the numberless worlds about us "roll through the vast expanse" according to a "plan."

The previous statement is here repeated; "there can be no plan without a planner!"

In this way, then, does geometry demonstrate the most important possible truth of "morality" - the definite existence of Some One who planned; planned with such exactitude that even poor witless ignorant humans are able to prophesy the future results of the working of that plan.

Some "stupid atheists" counter such an argument by saying "You do not need a plan - the planets revolve according to natural law." Very well, "Who" made the natural law? If the skeptic says "Eclipses are but the nature of things" "Who created the nature of things?" Question can be added o question, and each push the answer further back in space and time and consciousness; but, inevitably, at the end, we come to "Who?" That is geometry's "demonstration" of the most important truth.

Our minds are wholly sense bound. We can obtain no information regarding the universe except through our five senses, and the use our intelligences make of the information thus secured. A man without sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling might still "think," but he could not communicate, nor be communicated to. A man so born could never learn anything, since he would have no channels through which even the simplest information could run. It is inescapably true that if in our universe are facts which cannot be learned by our senses, mortals can never learn them. In other words, there "is" a limit to human knowledge. Therefore must there be a limit beyond which no human science, such as geometry, can demonstrate great truths. But with these we are not concerned, since those truths, physical or moral, of which we know and of which we teach that a geometrical demonstration is possible, are sufficiently beyond common understanding without asking for others still less comprehensible. If the "more important truths of morality" are, as stated:

1. Existence of Deity. 2. Immortality. 3. Love of God for his children:

Then geometry can be said to demonstrate the first, thus:

1. There is no plan without a planner - geometry proves that the universe runs according to a plan, which follows laws to exact that predictions successfully can be made from them.

2. It is impossible for Deity to be less perfect than his creatures.

3. All his creatures exhibit love, tenderness and devotion for their children. No human parent but would give indefinite life to his child if he could.

4. Therefore, Deity, infinitely more perfect than the most perfect of His children, has, in His infinite love, provided infinite life for His children.

The attempt to prove that which is known of the soul in terms known only of the mind is more or less fruitless. But it is only by some such process of reasoning that we can follow out the admonitions of the Fellowcraft degree. We are to study geometry, not so much in books and lines and angles and measurements and axiom and theorems and propositions and problems, as in a demonstration of the "wonderful properties of nature." From these we deduce that the universe in general, and the world in particular, exist, move, evolve, live according to definite laws or plans. Knowing that plans cannot create themselves, any more than the watch in the desert could create and wind itself, we are logically compelled to believe in the planner. In the nature of things, as we know them. He who plans must be more perfect than we who were planned. Our virtues, then, must be but pale reflections of His. If we would not deny immortality to those dependent upon us whom we love, then the love of the Great Architect, and His provisions of immortality, are as much proved to us as any processes of the mind can prove the certainty of the soul.

So considered, the study of geometry, so magnificently set forth in the Fellowcraft degree, becomes not an admonition to "do examples" or "learn from a book" but a clarion call to understand that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork."

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.V June, 1927 No.6

SO MOTE IT BE

by: Unknown

How familiar the phrase is. No Lodge is ever opened or closed, in due form, without using it. Yet how few know how old it is, much less what a deep meaning it has in it. Like so many old and lovely things, it is so near to us that we do not see it.

As far back as we can go in the annals of the Craft we find this old phrase. Its form betrays its age. The word MOTE is an Anglo-Saxon word, derived from an anomalous verb, MOTAN. Chaucer uses the exact phrase in the same sense in which we use it, meaning "So May It Be." It is found in the Regius Poem, the oldest document of the Craft, just as we use it today.

As everyone knows, it is the Masonic form of the ancient AMEN which echoes through the ages, gathering meaning and music as it goes until it is one of the richest and most haunting of words. At first only a sign of assent, on the part either of an individual or of an assembly, to words of prayer or praise, it has become to stand as a sentinel at the gateway of silence.

When we have uttered all that we can utter, and our poor words seem like ripples on the bosom of the unspoken, somehow this familiar phrase gathers up all that is left - our dumb yearnings, our deepest longings - and bears them aloft to One who understands. In some strange way it seems to speak for us into the very ear of God the things for which words were never made.

So, naturally, it has a place of honor among us. At the marriage Altar it speaks its blessing as young love walks toward the bliss or sorrow of hidden years. It stands beside the cradle when we dedicate our little ones to the Holy life, mingling its benediction with our vows. At the grave side it utters its sad response to the shadowy AMEN which death pronounces over our friends.

When, in our turn, we see the end of the road, and would make a last will and testament, leaving our earnings and savings to those whom we love, the old legal phrase asks us to repeat after it: "In The Name Of God, AMEN." And with us, as with Gerontius in his Dream, the last word we hear when the voices of earth grow faint and the silence of God covers us, is the old AMEN, So Mote It Be.

How impressively it echoes through the Book of Holy Law. We hear it in the Psalms, as chorus answers to chorus, where it is sometimes reduplicated for emphasis. In the talks of Jesus with his friends it has a striking use, hidden in the English version. The oft-repeated phrase, "Verily, Verily I Say Unto You," if rightly translated means, AMEN, AMEN, I say unto you." Later, in the Epistles of Paul, the word AMEN becomes the name of Christ, who is the AMEN of God to the faith of man.

So, too, in the Lodge, at opening, at closing, and in the hour of initiation. No Mason ever enters upon any great or important undertaking without invoking the aid of Deity. And he ends his prayer with the old phrase, "So Mote It Be." Which is another way of saying: "The Will Of God Be Done." Or, whatever be the answer of God to his prayer: "So Be It - because it is wise and right.

What, then, is the meaning of this old phrase, so interwoven with all our Masonic lore, simple, tender, haunting? It has two meanings for us everywhere, in the Church, or in the Lodge. First, it is assent of man to the way and Will Of God; assent to His Commands; assent to His Providence, even when a tender, terrible stroke of death takes from us one much loved and leaves us forlorn.

Still, somehow, we must say: "So it is; so be it. He is a wise man, a brave man; who, baffled by the woes of life, when disaster follows fast and follows faster, can nevertheless accept his lot as a part of the Will of God and say, though it may almost choke him to say it: "So Mote It Be." It is not blind submission, nor dumb resignation, but a wise reconciliation to the Will of the Eternal.

The other meaning of the phrase is even more wonderful; it is the assent of God to the aspiration of man. Man can bear so much - anything, perhaps - if he feels that God knows, cares and feels for him and with him. If God says Amen, So it is, to our faith and hope and love; it links our perplexed meanings, and helps us to see, however dimly, or in a glass darkly, that there is a wise and good purpose in life, despite its sorrow and suffering, and that we are not at the mercy of Fate or the whim of Chance.

Does God speak to man, confirming his faith and hope? If so, how? Indeed yes! God is not the great I Was, but the great I Am, and He is neither deaf nor dumb. In Him we live and move and have our being - He Speaks to us in nature, in the moral law, and in our own hearts, if we have ears to hear. But He speaks most clearly in the Book of Holy Law which lies open upon our Alter.

Nor is that all. Some of us hold that the Word Of God "Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us, Full Of Grace and Truth," in a life the loveliest ever lived among men, showing us what life is, what it means, and to what fine issues it ascends when we do the Will of God on earth as it is done in Heaven, No one of us but grows wistful when he thinks of the life of Jesus, however far we fall below it.

Today men are asking the question: Does it do any good to pray? The man who actually prays does not ask such a question. As well ask if it does a bird any good to sing, or a flower to bloom? Prayer is natural and instinctive in man. We are made so. Man is made for prayer, as sparks ascending seek the sun. He would not need religious faith if the objects of it did not exist.

Are prayers ever answered? Yes, always, as Emerson taught us long ago. Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered - and that is as far as we need to go. The deepest desire, the ruling motive of a man, is his actual prayer, and it shapes his life after its form and color. In this sense all prayer is answered, and that is why we ought to be careful what we pray for - because in the end we always get it.

What, then is the good of prayer? It makes us repose on the unknown with hope; it makes us ready for life. It is a recognition of laws and the thread of our conjunction with them. It is not the purpose of prayer to beg or make God do what we want done. Its purpose is to bring us to do the Will of God, which is greater and wiser than our will. It is not to use God, but to be used by Him in the service of His plan.

Can man by prayer change the Will of God? No, and Yes. True prayer does not wish or seek to change the larger Will of God, which involves in its sweep and scope the duty and destiny of humanity. But it can and does change the Will of God concerning us, because it changes our will and attitude towards Him, which is the vital thing in prayer for us.

For example, if a man living a wicked life, we know what the Will of God will be for him. All evil ways have been often tried, and we know what the end is, just as we know the answer to a problem in geometry. But if a man who is living wickedly changes his way of living and his inner attitude, he changes the Will of God - if not His Will, at least His Intention. That is, he attains what even the Divine Will could not give him and do for him unless it had been effected by His Will and Prayer.

The place of Prayer in Masonry is not perfunctory. It is not a mere matter of form and rote. It is vital and profound. As a man enters the Lodge as an initiate, prayer is offered for him, to God, in whom he puts his trust. Later, in a crisis of his initiation, he must pray for himself, orally or mentally as his heart may elect. It is not just a ceremony; it is basic in the faith and spirit of Masonry. Still later, in a scene which no Mason ever forgets, when the shadow is darkest, and the most precious thing a Mason can desire or seek seems lost, in the perplexity and despair of the Lodge, a prayer is offered. As recorded in our Monitors, it is a mosaic of Bible words, in which the grim facts of life and death are set forth in stark reality, and appeal is made to the pity and light of God.

It is truly a great prayer, to join in which is to place ourselves in the very hands of God, as all must do in the end, trust His Will and way, following where no path is into the soft and fascinating darkness which men call death. And the response of the Lodge to that prayer, as to all others offered at its Altar, is the old, challenging phrase, "So Mote It Be!"

Brother, do not be ashamed to pray, as you are taught in the Lodge and the Church. It is a part of the sweetness and sanity of life, refreshing the soul and making clear the mind. There is more wisdom in a whispered prayer than in all the libraries of the world. It is not our business to instruct God. He knows what things we have need for before we ask him. He does not need our prayer, but we do - if only to make us acquainted with the best Friend we have.

The greatest of all teachers of the soul left us a little liturgy called the Lord's Prayer. He told us to use it each for himself, in the closet when the door is shut and the din and hum and litter of the world is outside. Try it Brother; it will sweeten life, make its load lighter, its joy brighter, and the way of duty plainer.

Two tiny prayers have floated down to us from ages ago, which are worth remembering; one by a great Saint, the other by two brothers. "Grant Me, Lord, ardently to desire, wisely to study, rightly to understand and perfectly to fulfill that which pleaseth Thee." And the second is after the manner: "May two brothers enjoy and serve Thee together, and so live today that we may be worthy to live

tomorrow." "SO MOTE IT BE"

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.II April, 1924 No.4

THE SQUARE

by: Unknown



The Square and Compasses are the oldest, the simplest and the most universal symbols of Masonry. All the world over, whether as a sign on a building, or a badge worn by a Brother, even the profane know them to be emblems of our ancient Craft. Some years ago, when a business firm tried to adopt the Square and Compasses as a Trade- Mark, the Patent Office refused permission, on the ground, as the decision said, that "There can be no doubt that this device, so commonly worn and employed by Masons, universally recognized as existing; whether comprehended by all or not, is not material to this issue. " They belong to us, alike by the associations of history and the tongue of common report.

Nearly everywhere in our Ritual, as in the public mind, the Square and Compasses are seen together. If not interlocked, they are seldom far apart, and the one suggests the other. And that is as it should be, because the things they symbolize are interwoven. In the old days when the earth was thought to be flat and square, the Square was an emblem of the earth, and later, of the earthly element in man. As the sky is an arc or a circle, the implement which describes a Circle became the symbol of the heavenly, or sky spirit in man. Thus the tools of the builder became the emblems of the thoughts of the thinker; and nothing in Masonry is more impressive than the slow elevation of the compasses above the Square in the progress of the Degrees. The whole meaning and task of life is there, for such as have eyes to see.

Let us separate the Square from the Compasses and study it alone, the better to see its further meaning and use. There is no need to say that the Square we have in mind is not a Cube, which has four equal sides and angles, deemed by the Greeks a figure of perfection. Nor is it the square of the carpenter, one leg of which is longer than the other, with inches marked for measuring. It is a small, plain Square, unmarked and with legs of equal length, a simple try-square used for testing the accuracy of angles, and the precision with which stones are cut. Since the try-square was used to prove that angles were right, it naturally became an emblem of accuracy, integrity and rightness. As stones are cut it fit into a building, so our acts and thoughts are built together into a structure of Character, badly or firmly, and must be tested by a moral standard of which the simple try-square is a symbol.

So, among Speculative Masons, the tiny try-square has always been a symbol of morality, of the basic rightness which must be the test of every act and the foundation of character and society. From the beginning of the revival in 1717 this was made plain in the teaching of Masonry, by the fact that the Holy Bible was placed upon the Altar, along with the Square and Compasses.

In one of the earliest catechisms of the Craft, dated 1725, the question is asked: "How many make a Lodge? " The answer is specific and unmistakable: "God and the Square, with five or seven right and perfect Masons." God and the Square, Religion and Morality, must be present in every Lodge as its ruling Lights, or it fails of being a just and truly Constituted Lodge. In all lands, in all rites where Masonry is true to itself, the Square is a symbol of righteousness, and is applied in the light of faith in God. God and the Square - it is necessary to keep the two together in our day, because the tendency of the times is to separate them. The idea in vogue today is that morality is enough, and that faith in God - if there be a God - may or may not be important. Some very able men of the Craft insist that we make the teaching of Masonry too religious. Whereas, as all history shows, if faith in God grows dim morality becomes a mere custom, if not a cobweb, to be thrown off lightly. It is not rooted in reality, and so lacks authority and sanction. Such an idea, such a spirit - so wide-spread in our time, and finding so many able and plausible advocates - strikes at the foundation, not only of Masonry, but of all ordered and advancing social life. Once men come to think that morality is a human invention, and not a part of the order of the world, and the moral law will lose both its meaning and its power. Far wiser was the old book entitled "All in All and the Same Forever, " by John Davies, and dated 1607, though written by a non-Mason, when it read reality and nature of God in this manner: "Yet I this form of formless deity drew by the Square and Compasses of our Creed. " For, inevitable, a society without standards will be a society without stability, and it will one day go down. Not only nations, but whole

civilizations have perished in the past, for lack of righteousness.

History speaks plainly in this matter, and we dare not disregard it. Hence the importance attached to the Square of Virtue, and the reason why Masons call it the great symbol of their Craft. It is a symbol of that moral law upon which human life must rest if it is to stand. A man may build a house in any way he likes, but if he expects it to stand and be his home, he must adjust his structure to the laws and forces that rule in the material realm. Just so, unless we live in obedience to the moral laws which God has written in the order of things, our lives will fall and end in a wreck. When a young man forgets the simple Law of the Square, it does not need a prophet to foresee what the result will be. It is a problem in geometry. Such has been the meaning of the Square as far back as we can go. Long before our era we find the Square teaching the same lesson which it teaches us today. In one of the old books of China, called "The Great Learning," which has been dated in the fifth century before Christ, we read that a man should not do unto others what he would not have them do unto him; and the writers adds, "This is called the principle of acting on the Square." There it is, recorded long, long ago. The greatest philosopher has found nothing more profound, and the oldest man in his ripe wisdom has learned nothing more true. Even Jesus only altered it from the negative to the positive form in his "Golden Rule." So, everywhere, in our Craft and outside, the Square has taught its simple truth which does not grow old. The Deputy Provincial Grand Master of North and East Yorkshire recovered a very curious relic, in the form of an old brass Square found under the foundation of an ancient bridge near Limerick in 1830. On it was inscribed the date, 1517, and the following words: "Strive to live with love and care Upon the Level, by the Square." How simple and beautiful it is, revealing the oldest wisdom man has learned and the very genius of our Craft. In fact and truth, the Square Rules the Mason as well as the Lodge in which he labors. As soon as he enters a Lodge, the candidate walks the square steps around the Square pavement of a rectangular Lodge. All during the ceremony his attitude keeps him in mind of the same symbol, as if to fashion his life after its form. When he is brought to light, he beholds the Square upon the Altar, and at the same time sees that it is worn by the Master of the Lodge, as the emblem of his office. In the North-East Corner he is shown the perfect Ashlar, and told that it is the type of a finished Mason, who must be Square-man in thought and conduct, in word and act. With every art of emphasis the Ritual writes this lesson in our hearts, and if we forget this first truth the Lost Word will remain forever lost. For Masonry is not simply a Ritual; it is a way of living. It offers us a plan, a method, a faith by which we may build our days and years into a character so strong and true that nothing, not even death, can destroy it. Each of us has in his own heart a little try-square called Conscience, by which to test each thought and deed and word, whether it be true or false. By as much as a man honestly applies that test in his own heart, and in his relations with his fellows, by so much will his life be happy, stable, and true. Long ago the question was asked and answered: "Lord, who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." It is the first obligation of a Mason to be on the Square, in all his duties and dealings with his fellow men, and if he fails there he cannot win anywhere. Let one of our poets sum it all up:

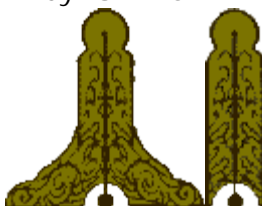
It matters not whate'er your lot
Or what your task may be,
One duty there remains for you
One duty stands for me.
Be you a doctor skilled and wise,
Or do your work for wage,
A laborer upon the street,
An artist on the stage;
Our glory still awaits for you,
One honor that is fair,
To have men say as you pass by:
"That fellow's on the Square."
Ah, here's a phrase that stands for much
'Tis good old English too,
It means that men have confidence
In everything you do,
It means that what you have you've earned,
And that you've done your best,
And when you go to sleep at night
Untroubled you may rest.
It means that conscience is your guide,
And honor is your care;
There is no greater praise than this:
"That fellow's on the Square."
And when I die I would not wish
A lengthy epitaph;
I do not wish a headstone large,
Carved with fulsome chaff,
Pick out no single deed of mine,
If such a deed there be,
To 'grave upon my monument,
For those who come to see,
Just this one phrase of all I choose,
To show my life was fair:
Here sleepeth now a fellow who
Was always on the Square."

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SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.III June, 1925 No.6

THE LEVEL AND THE PLUMB

by: Unknown



Before you could become a Fellowcraft it was demanded of you that you become proficient in the work of the First Degree; that you learn "by heart " a certain portion of the Ritual, and make yourself competent to "stand and deliver " it on occasion.

Such a memorization is the sole survival of that ancient custom of Operative Masonry of demanding from the Apprentice, who had served the legal time (usually seven years), a Master's Piece; and example of ability in Masonry by which his fellows could judge whether or no he had made good use of his time and was fit to be "passed " from the state of being but an Apprentice, to that of being a Fellow (or companion) of the Craft.

Alas, that our modern Master's Piece is so modest in its required effort! For it takes no one very long, nor does it make much of a drain upon time or patience, to "learn the words " by heart. Lucky is he whose instructor is not content with teaching him just the words and their order, but who insists upon in-structing as to their meaning and their history.

The modern Fellowcraft Degree is, as a whole, emblematical of manhood; to attain is to be grown up, Masonically speaking. As the entered Apprentice Degree speaks of birth and babyhood, of first beginnings and first principles, so does the degree of Fellowcraft speak of growth, of strength and of virility to those who have inward and spiritual ears with which to hear. No thoughtful man can avoid the impression that this degree is an attempt to emphasize the vital need of knowledge; to encourage study and research, to bring out the beauty of wisdom. It is true that the liberal education which the degree was once sup-posed to outline and encourage is no longer either liberal or educational in fact; but it is still symbolical of all that a good Mason should learn.

To understand the degree and what it attempts to do, one must have some knowledge of its history, and of William Preston, who brought the vigor of a trained mind to bear upon the often hasty and ill considered lectures with which its progenitors were given. He turned these lectures into the elaborate exposition of the five senses, the seven liberal arts and sciences which we now have. In Preston's day such an exposition of knowledge was all inclusive; it is not Preston's fault that he knew nothing of science as we know it; that he knew nothing of medicine or biology or archeology or criticism, or electricity or astronomy in the modern sense. There are those who would substitute for the Prestonian Lectures and the Prestonian-Webb form of the degree, wholly modern exposition of the obtaining of knowledge. With such as these we have nothing to do; our Fellowcraft Degree is hallowed with age, and it is a lovely thing to do as have all those good brothers and fellows who have gone this way before us. But there is nothing to prevent us from reading the degrees symbolically. We do not have to accept it as literal, any more than we have to accept the first verse of the seventh chapter of Revelations:

"And after these things I saw four Angels standing on the four corners of the earth . . . "

as proof that the earth is square and not round. We can consider the meaning of the degree, and govern ourselves accordingly. And if we do so, we will start now, at once, to make ourselves earnest students not only of Masonic knowledge, but of knowledge in general. For of knowledge and its obtaining, this degree is most certainly a teacher; from the time of entry through the West Gate until the finish of the lecture, the entered Apprentice in the process of being "passed " is instructed, taught, given knowledge and urged that only by knowledge can he hope to obtain complete growth and the final glory of Masonry and of life, the Sublime degree of Master Mason.

The most outstanding symbol in the degree of Fellowcraft is the Flight of Winding Stairs. In the Book of Kings we find; "They Went up With Winding Stairs into the Middle Chamber. " We go up "with winding stairs " into "The Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple. " Also we travel up a winding stairs of life, and arrive, if we climb steadfastly, at the middle chamber of existence, which is removed from birth, babyhood and youth by the steps of knowledge and experience, but which is not so high above the ground that we are not as yet of the earth, earthy; not so high that we can justifiably regard it as more than a Stepping Off Place from which we may, perhaps, ascend to the Sanctum Sanctorum; that Holy of Holies, in which our troubled spirits find rest, our ignorance finds knowledge, and our eyes see God.

There is a symbolism in the fact that the stairway "Winds. " A straight stairway is not as easy to climb as a winding one, which, because of the fact that it does wind, ascends by easier stages than one which climbs as a ladder. But, also, a straight stair has the goal in sight constantly, and while it may be more difficult in the effort and strength required, it is easier because one can see where one is going. There is no faith needed in climbing a ladder; one can visualize the top and have its inspiration constantly before one as one rises rung after rung.

But the winding stairway is one which tries a man's soul. He must "Believe, " or he cannot reach the top. Nothing is clear before him but the next step. He must take it on faith that there is a top, that if he but climb long enough he will, indeed, reach a middle chamber, a goal, a place of light. In such a way are the Winding Stairs and the Middle Chamber symbols of life and manhood. No man knows what he will become; as a boy he may have a goal, but many reach other Middle Chambers than those they visualized as they started the ascent. No man knows whether he will ever climb all the stairs; the Angel of Death may stand but around the corner on the next step. Yet, in spite of a lack of knowledge of what is at the top of the stairs, in spite of the fact that a Flaming Sword may bar his ascent, man climbs. He climbs in faith that there is a goal and that he shall reach it; and no good Mason doubts but that for those who never see the glory of the Middle Chamber in this life, a lamp is set that they may see still farther in another, better one.

We are taught that we should use that which God gave us, the five senses, to climb the remaining seven steps of the stairway, which are the seven liberal arts and sciences. Again we must remember that William Preston, who put such a practical interpretation upon these steps, lived in an age when these did indeed represent all of knowledge. But we must not refuse to grow because the ritual has not grown with modern discovery. When we rise by Grammar and Rhetoric, we must consider that they mean not only language but all methods of communication. The step of logic means a knowledge not only of all methods of reasoning, but of all reasoning which logicians have accomplished. When we ascend by Arithmetic and Geometry, we must visualize all science; since science is but measurement, and all measurement in the true mathematical sense, it requires no great stretch of the imagination to read into these two steps all that science may teach. The step denominated Music means not only sweet and harmonious sounds, but all beauty; poetry, art, nature, loveliness of whatever kind. Not to familiarize himself with the beauty which nature provides is to be, by so much, less a man; to stunt, by so much, a striving soul. As for the seventh step of astronomy, surely it means not only the study of the solar system and the stars, as it did in William Preston's day, but also the study of all that is beyond the earth; of spirit and the world of spirit, of ethics, philosophy, the abstract . . . of deity.

Preston builded better than he knew; his seven steps are both logical in arrangement and suggestive in their order; the true Fellowcraft will see in them a guide to the making of a man rich in mind and spirit, by which, and only by which riches, can the truest brotherhood be obtained and practiced.

The Fellowcraft Degree is one of action. Recall, if you will, where you wore your Cable-Tow; but think not that it confines action; it urges it. A great authority has stated that the words come from the Hebrew, and mean, effect "his pledge. " Here, then "His Pledge " is for action, for a doing, a girding up, an effort to be made. What effort? To climb, to rise! How? By the use of the five senses to take in and make Knowledge a part of the mind and heart. What Knowledge? All Knowledge!

Conceived thus, the Fellowcraft Degree, from being a mere ceremony, a stepping stone from the Apprentice Degree to that of the Master, becomes something sublime; it is emblematic of the struggle of life, not materially, but spiritually, and it is a symbol with high hope and encouragement constantly held forth. There "is " a Middle Chamber; the steps "do " lead somewhere; man "can " climb them if he will. Not for the drone, the laggard, the journeyer by the easy paths upon the level, but for the fighter, the adventurer, the man with courage. for that which is not worth working for and fighting for is not worth having. It is no easy journey that we make through life, and it is no easy journey that we make through the mazes of this degree. In its Middle Chamber lecture are profound philosophies, deep truths, great facts concealed. He who is a true Fellowcraft will study these for himself; he will not be content with the Prestonian lecture as an end; it will be to him but a means.

For thousands of years men saw the rainbow and the best they could do was call it a promise of God. So, indeed, it may be to us all, but it is also a manifestation of beauty in nature, it is caused by the operation of well-understood laws, and when artificially produced in the spectroscope, it is the key with which we unlocked the mysteries of the heavens. For as long as man has lived upon this earth the lightning has flashed and the thunder roared to no end but terror and beauty. In the last few hundred years man has read the first part of the mysterious story of electricity and taken for himself the power God put in nature. Had man been content merely with what he saw and heard he would still be as ignorant as the beasts of the field.

So should the mysteries of the Fellowcraft be to you, my brother. It is but a great symbol, given in one evening, of all that a man may make of his life. It is a lamp to guide your feet; not, as Preston would have had it, both the feet and the path. Preston and his brethren were Speculative Masons, indeed, but we are enlightened as he never was; so that if we fail to use the light he lit, or see by its radiance a greater Stairway and a higher climb than ever he visualized, the fault is within us, and not in our opportunity.

There are thousands who pass through this degree who see in it only a ceremony, just as there are thousands who see in a rainbow only the color in the sky, thousands who see a lightening flash only as a portent of danger. Be you not one of these! Do you see the Winding Star an invitation, an urge to climb, to learn, to know, to reach that Middle Chamber of your life from which you can look back on an effort well made, a life well spent, a goal well won; and then forward . . . to what awaits you in the final degree? For the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, to which you aspire and which one day may be granted you, is a symbol, too . . . perhaps the greatest symbol man has ever made for himself to point a way up a yet greater Winding Stair to a more vaulted Upmost Chamber, where the real Master Mason, raised from a Fellowcraft, may reach up as a little child, and touch the hand of God!

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THE WINDING STAIRS
by: unknown



"And they went up the winding stairs into the middle chamber." (I Kings 6:8)

Freemasonry's Middle Chamber is wholly symbolic.

Solomon the Wise would not have permitted any practice do uneconomic as sending multiplied thousands of workmen up a flight of stairs to a small Middle Chamber, to receive corn, wine and oil which had to be brought up in advance, only to be carried down in small lots by each workman as he received his wages.

There actually was a winding stair in Solomon's Temple, but of the three, five and seven steps the scriptures are silent. Only in this country have the Winding Stairs but fifteen steps. In older days the stairs had but five, sometimes seven steps. Preston had thirty-six steps in his Winding Stairs; in series of one, three, five, seven, nine and eleven. The English system later eliminated the number eleven from Preston's thirty-six, making but twenty-five in all. The Stairs as a whole are a representation of life; not the physical life of eating, drinking, sleeping and working, but the mental and spiritual life, of both the lodge and the world without; of learning, studying, enlarging mental horizons and increasing the spiritual outlook.

The first three steps represent the three principal officers of a lodge, and - though not stated in the ritual - must always refer to Deity, of which "three," the triangle, is the most ancient symbol. They assure the Fellowcraft just starting his ascent that he does not climb alone. The Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens are themselves symbolic of the lodge, and thus (as a lodge is a symbol of the world) of the Masonic World - the Fraternity. The Fellowcraft is surrounded by the Craft. The brethren are present to help him climb. In his search for truth, in quest of his wages in the Middle Chamber, the Fellowcraft receives the support and assistance of all in the Mystic Circle; surely an impressive symbol.

Five is peculiarly the number of the Fellowcraft's degree; it represents the central of the three groups which form the stairs; it refers to the five orders of architecture; five are required to hold a Fellowcraft's lodge; there are five human senses; geometry is the fifth science, and so on. In the first degree the Blazing Star is Five Pointed and in the Sublime Degree are the Five Points of Fellowship. In the Winding Stairs the number five represents the five orders of architecture. Here the neophyte is taught of architecture as a science; its beginnings are laid before him; he is shown how the Greeks commenced and Romans added to the kinds of architecture; he learns of the "beautiful, perfect and complete whole" which is a well-designed, well-constructed building. Temples are built stone by stone, a little at a time.

Each stone must be hewn from the solid rock of the quarry. Then it must be laid out and chipped with the gavel until it becomes a Perfect Ashlar. Finally it must be set in place with the tempered mortar which will bind. But before any stone may be placed, a plan must come into existence; the architect must play his part.

So must the Fellowcraft, studying the orders of architecture by which he will erect his spiritual Temple, design his structure before he commences to build.

There are "five" orders of architecture; not one.

There are many plans on which a man may build his life, not one only. Freemasonry does not attempt to distinguish as between Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian as to beauty or desirability. She does suggest that the Tuscan, plainer than the Doric, and the Composite, more ornamental though not more beautiful than the Corinthian, are less revered than the ancient and original orders. Freemasonry makes no attempt to influence the Fellowcraft as to which order of life building he shall choose. He may elect the physical, the mental, the spiritual. Or he may choose the sacrificial - "plainer than Doric," or the ornamental life, which is "not more beautiful than the Corinthian." Freemasonry is concerned less with what order of spiritual architecture a Fellowcraft chooses by which to build, than that he does choose one; that he build not aimlessly.

Architecture is the most expressive of all the arts.

Painting and sculpture, noble though they are, lack the utility of architecture, and strive to interpret nature rather than to originate. Architecture is not hampered by the necessity of reproducing something already in existence. It may raise its spires untrammelled by any natural model; it may fling its arches gloriously across a nave and a transept with no similitude in nature to hamper by suggestion. The architect may - if his genius be great enough - tell in his structure truths which may not be put into words, inspire by glories not sung in the divinest harmonies.

So may the builder of his own House Not Made With Hands, if he chooses aright his plan of life and hews to the line of his plan. So, indeed, have done all those great men who have led the world; the Prophets of old, Pythagoras, Confucius, Buddha, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Washington, Lincoln -

If the Fellowcraft, climbing his three, five and seven steps to the Middle Chamber of unknown proportions, containing an unknown

Wage, is overweighed with the emphasis put upon the spiritual side of life, he may here be comforted.

Freemasonry is not an ascetic organization. It recognizes that the physical is as much a part of normal life as the mental and spiritual upon which so much emphasis is put.

The Fellowcraft's degree is a glorification of education, the gaining of knowledge, the study of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences and all that they connote. Therefore it is wholly logical that the degree should make special references to the five means by which man has acquired all his knowledge; aye, by which he will ever acquire any knowledge.

Take away his five senses and a man is no more a man; perhaps his mind is no more a mind. With no contact whatever with the material world he can learn nothing of it. As man reaches up through the material to the spiritual, he can learn nothing of the ethical side of life without a means of contact with the physical.

If there are limits beyond which human investigations and explorations into the unknown may not go, it is because of the limitations of the five senses. Not even the extension of those senses by the marvelously sensitive instruments of science may overcome, in the last analysis, the limits of the five senses. Except for one factor! Brute beasts hear, see, feel, smell and taste, as we do. But they garner no facts of science, win no truths, formulate no laws of nature through these senses. More than the five senses are necessary to perceive the relation between thing and thing, and life and life. That factor is the perception, the mind, the soul or spirit, if you will, which differentiates man from all other living beings.

The Fellowcraft's five steps glorify the five senses of human nature because Freemasonry is a well-rounded scheme of living which recognizes the physical as well as the mental life of men, and knows that only through the physical do we perceive the spiritual. It is in this sense, not as a simple lesson in physiology, that we are to receive the teachings of the five steps by which we rise above the ground floor of the Temple to that last flight of seven steps which are typical of knowledge.

Most potent of numbers in the ancient religions, the number seven has deep significance. The Pythagoreans called it the perfect number because it is made up of three and four, the two perfect figures, triangle and square. It was the virgin number because it cannot by multiplication produce any numbers within ten, as can two and two, two and three, two and four, or three and three. Nor can it be produced by the multiplication of any whole number.

Our ancient ancestors knew seven planets, seven Pleiades, seven Hyades, seven lights burned before the Altar of Mithras, the Goths had seven Deities; Sun, Moon, Tuisco, Woden, Thor, Friga and Seatur or Saturn, from which we derive the names of the seven days of our week. In the Gothic mysteries the candidate met with seven obstructions; the ancient Jews swore by seven, because seven witnesses were used to confirm, and seven sacrifices offered to attest truth. The Sabbath is the seventh day; Noah had seven day's notice of the flood; God created the heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day; the walls of Jericho were encompassed seven times by seven priests bearing seven rams' horns; the Temple was seven years in building, the seven branched candlestick burned in the Tabernacle and so on through a thousand references.

It is only necessary to refer to the seven required to open an Entered Apprentice lodge, the seven original officers of a lodge (some now have nine or ten, or even more) and the seven steps which complete the Winding Stairs to show that seven is an important number in the Fraternity.

The seventeenth century conception of a liberal education was compromised in the study of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic; called the "trivium." and Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy, called the "quadrivium. William Preston endeavored to compress into his Middle Chamber Lecture enough of these to make at least an outline available to men who might otherwise know nothing of them.

In our day and times grammar and rhetoric are considered of importance, but in a secondary way; logic is more or less swallowed up as study in the reasoning appropriate to any particular subject; arithmetic, of course, continues its primary importance, but from the standpoint of science, geometry and its off-shoots are still the vital sciences of measurement. Music is no longer a necessary part of a liberal education; it is now one of the arts, not the sciences, and astronomy is so interrelated with physics that it is hard to say where one leaves off and the other begins. As for electricity, chemistry, biology, civics, government and the various physical sciences, they were barely dreamed of in Preston's day.

So it is not actually but symbolically that we are to climb the seven steps. As a Masonic author put it:

"William Preston, who put so practical an interpretation upon these steps, lived in an age when these did, indeed, represent all knowledge. But we must not refuse to grow because the ritual has not grown with modern discovery. When we rise by Grammar and Rhetoric, we must consider that they mean not only language, but all methods of communication. The step of Logic means a knowledge not only of a method of reasoning which logicians have accomplished. When we ascend by Arithmetic and Geometry we must visualize all science; since science is but measurement, in the true mathematical sense, it requires no great stretch of the imagination to read into these two steps all that science may teach. The step denominated Music means not only sweet and harmonious sounds, but all beauty, poetry, art, nature and loveliness of whatever kind. Not to be familiar with the beauty which nature provides is to be, by so much, less a man; to stunt, by so much, a striving soul. As for the seventh step of Astronomy, surely it means not only a study of the solar system and the stars as it did in William Preston's day, but also a study of all that is beyond the earth; of spirit and the world of spirit, of ethics, philosophy, the abstract - of Deity. Preston builded better than he knew; his seven steps are both logical in arrangement and suggestive in their order. The true Fellowcraft will see in them a guide to the making of a man rich in mind and spirit, by which riches only can the truest brotherhood be practiced."

Finally, consider the implication of the "winding" stairs as opposed to those which are straight.

The one virtue which most distinguishes man is courage.

It requires more courage to face the unknown than the known. A straight stair, a ladder, hides neither secret nor mystery at its top. But the stairs which wind hide each step from the climber; what is just around the corner is unknown. The Winding Stairs of life lead us to we know not what; for some of us, a Middle Chamber of fame and fortune, for others, of pain and frustration. The Angle of Death may stand with drawn sword on the very next step for any of us. Yet, man climbs!

Man has always climbed; he climbed from a cave man savagery to the dawn of civilization; Lowell's:

***brute despair of trampled centuries Leapt up with one hoarse yell and snapped its hands, Groped for its right with horny, callous hands, And stared around for God with bloodshot eyes. was a climbing from slavery to independence, from the brute to the spiritual. Through ignorance, darkness, misery, cruelty, wrong, oppression, danger and despair; man has climbed his own Winding Stairs through much the same experience as that of the race. Aye, man climbs because he has courage; because he has faith, because he is a man. So must the Freemason climb. The Winding Stairs do lead somewhere. There is a Middle Chamber. There are wages of the Fellowcraft to be earned.

So believing, so unafraid, climbing, the Fellowcraft may hope at the top of his Winding Stairs to reach a Middle Chamber, and see a new sign in the East - - -

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