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WORTHY AND WELL-QUALIFIED

There is a growing feeling among thinking Freemasons that admission to the Order is too easy and that we have dissipated our strength in mere numbers.

True it is that the present apparent qualifications for admission to a Masonic lodge are no more than are required for almost any organization of honest men who demand integrity, ability and willingness to pay his way as the principal needs of the initiate.

But Freemasonry demands more than integrity of character and ability to pay. It demands high intelligence, a desire for knowledge for its own sake and that type of mentality which can practically interpret symbols into everyday action, not only in the body of the lodge but in the day to day business of life.

Too many superlatively honest and kindly men are in our ranks with but a limited idea of what Freemasonry is trying to do and too many good men have passed through these ranks bored with endless repetition of apparently idle ceremonies, failing to grasp the foundations of the personal and practical philosophy of life which the Masonic ritual strives to teach.

Freemasonry itself may be, as is all too often the case, at fault in failing to properly instruct its neophytes, but if the material with which the teachers must work is missing, the chances of making Masons rather than lodge members is small.

With a group of members whose ideal of Freemasonry is the endless conferring of degrees, with only a limited understanding of what the symbolism and language of these degrees are intended to convey, it is small wonder that eventually these same members imbued with exactitude of repetition as the final goal of perfection, will, as officers, control the lodge and unwittingly drive from its ranks those who have caught something of the gleam.

It seems, therefore, that "worthy and well-qualified" shall require, not only sterling character and willingness to pay a material price, but the capacity and intelligence to absorb, develop and use an ancient philosophy, and the ability to find in the hoary old ceremonies a retreat to eternal truths far from the rampant materialism of our age. Initiates might be fewer, for such qualifications are not given to many, but of them is the real Freemasonry made.

A. M. M.

"YORKMINSTER ORDINANCES FOR MASON"

The Fabric Rolls of the Minster of York contain the Ordinances for the Masons and other workmen of the structure, of the years 1352, 1370 and 1409. The masons had no share in their formulation. The Ordinacio was imposed by "the Worshipful Chapter of the Church of St. Peter of York" and required that the masons observe "the ancient usages...in the traditional manner". The Master of the stonemasons is sworn to enforce them, under penalty of incurring "God's malison and St. Peter's."

The following brief summaries, while having to do only with York, at three distinct periods, may be accepted as typical of regulations for masons elsewhere in English establishments and largely also on the Continent, more particularly in France.

1352 - Work begins at sunrise and continues till the ringing of the bell of St. Mary's; then rest in the lodge until the Master raps at the door, when all return to their labors till noon. Noonshen (midday meal) in the lodge. After the repast, the men may sleep in the lodge until the Master or his deputy wakens them to work till first vesper bell. Third vesper bell is signal for more work, till sundown. Noncompliance with the rules, is punished by dismissal, the culprit not to be reinstated except on promise under oath - at his peril - to observe the regulations punctiliously.

1370 - Added to that no cementarius shall be hired until he shall have been examined as to the quality of his work and, when found satisfactory, "He shall be sworn on the Book, that according to his ability he will observe and keep all points of this

ordinance, honestly and diligently, without equivocation, grumbling or deceit, in all things which concern him, as long as he shall remain a hired stonemason at the building of the Church of St. Peter, and that he will not quit work or leave without permission of the Master. Whoever fails to observe this ordinance and violates it, against the will of the Chapter, shall be struck by the curse of God and St. Peter".

1409 - The masons are designated as latomi, a Byzantyne term instead of the Latin Cementarii. None shall be admitted to the Lodge except by the sanction of the Canons and the Master of the Work. The Master and Wardens (gardiani) and the older masons, must swear, under penalty of physical suffering, to be industrious and honest; should they observe collusions or a conspiracy among the workers, they shall make prompt report to the Chapter. A Vicar is appointed supervisor of the lodge (chaplain) with the duty to be there constantly.

While originally a cleric- sacristan or monk - was the supervisor of the masons in the lodge, it was ordered in 1345, after an investigation of various complaints that no one except the Master of the Masons should interfere with their work, nor to employ or dismiss, promote or demote. The Vicar appointed in 1409, to supervise the lodge appears to have been expected chiefly to see that no time or material was wasted. But the presence of such functionary in the lodge in monastic establishments on the Continent, almost invariably implied that he also functioned as Chaplain. The point is rather important, as the assumption appears to be warranted that the Ancient Charges, as represented by the Regius poem, were compiled by the Chaplain of a mason's

lodge in either a monastic or cathedral community.

The number of hired masons appears to have varied between forty or fifty; but as St. Mary's of York had about one-hundred-and fifty lay brothers at that time, the masons among them may not be accounted for. All were supplied by the Chapter with tunics, gloves and wood-soled shoes.

The regulations of 1352 and 1409 were written in Latin, those of 1370 in the English of that time.

There was as yet no differentiation between artisan and artist. Only the work proclaimed it. They had their traditions and customs, their special feast days and all that, which employers might or might not respect, though ecclesiastic establishments as a rule did. Otherwise they enjoyed no favors which were not accorded to other skilled artisans as well. Nor were they exempt from being impressed for the King's works or the Bishop's, as sailors were shanghaied within days of living memory. York Minster had to send a messenger to Nottingham to get back masons carried off to work on the King's castle there.

The Master of Work or Master Mason, was accorded more consideration. He was frequently pensioned or given employment as sexton, doorkeeper, guide, adviser, after having reached the age limit.

The York Ordinances of 1352 and 1370 are the oldest known documents supplying information of the status of medieval masons in England.

- Ossian Lang, 1934.

FREEMASONRY AND REVOLUTION

(Freemasonry and Revolution
by Bernard Fay. Little,
Brown & Co. New York.)

Almost half way through the twentieth century Freemasonry is an institution with apparently but little of the social force it could use and did use a hundred and fifty years ago.

The story of Freemasonry's part in three revolutions is simply but most capably told in this volume and even the most modern-minded Craftsman, when he has finished Mr. Fay's marching paragraphs must sigh for these good old days when the Craft, tired of cathedrals, was building "that house not made with hands", the social structures of England, France and the United States of America.

In his foreword, Mr. Fay, in maintaining that faith in the future rather than dumb reverence to the past has directed the political and intellectual evolution of humanity from 1775 down to the present, speaks thus of Freemasonry's part in translating that faith into action:

"This new faith in the future of humanity that spread in the eighteenth century was not simply an abstract fact or a mental force. It became a social force and a concrete fact through the agency of Freemasonry which at once accepted it and advocated it; the great historical importance of modern Freemasonry results from this attitude that it took then and to which it has since consistently adhered. Thus Freemasonry has become the most efficient social power of the civilized world. But it has been a hidden power, difficult to trace, to describe and to define. Consequently most historians have avoided treating it seriously and giving it due credit."

The book is divided into three sections, the Rise of Freemasonry in England, the spread to France and finally to the United States. No clear cut divisions are made but logically, step by step, Mr. Fay marshals his materials so that the progress of the Fraternity and its tremendous impact on affairs of the time is clearly and arrestingly brought out. This is a book which should be read by every Freemason and particularly by those who have grown weary of inaction in the face of magnificent opportunity.

As samples of the author's style, a few paragraphs dealing with the well established history of Freemasonry in England, follow:

"The Guild of the Masons, whose prosperity and fame depended upon these cathedrals, had enjoyed considerable prestige and influence in the British Isles. It had never lost that power; it had known also how to make use of it. Without a doubt it was originally just a guild and brotherhood, as all other Corporations of the Middle Ages; but, at a period when specialized architects and professional sculptors did not exist, the church-builders themselves, had to have technical knowledge, the practice and secrets of which they guarded carefully and transmitted from generation to generation. Some of their knowledge came from France, some from Italy and some from the Orient. The bricklayers' technique of the Middle Ages was originally the creation of Mesopotamian artisans. It came to Lombardy by way of Syria, Byzantium and Ravenna. The Lombardian Guild of Masons carried it to all parts of Europe, building churches in Germany, France, England and even in remote Scandinavia. Byzantium, Syria and Persia all contributed to the art of cathedrals. In regard to the basic principals of building, it seems that Jewish science, very much advanced at a certain period of the Middle Ages,

played a considerable role.

"The Masons, proud of that knowledge essential to the practise of their profession, jealously kept it to themselves. In their eyes these secrets assumed a sacred character and the mystic and magic qualities they conferred on their precepts and traditions created a sort of confusion in their own minds, as well as in the minds of the public; which was rather natural, because each guild and each chapter placed itself under the protection of a saint, who, in exchange for the religious service held in his honor, was expected to grant individual support to his faithful worshippers. The liturgy, the professional secrets and the esoteric nature of their meetings started rumors and gossip which later caused Freemasonry to be envied, watched and finally, to be considered dangerous by many. However, the Masons were not the only craftsmen for whom such traditions existed; very similar customs were to be found among the printers; but the Masons had a more ancient and time-honored tradition which had struck the popular imagination. They had even managed to make friends among the powerful. Many a nobleman and important baron, curious about the secrets of the Masons or desirous of personally supervising the construction of the buildings being erected for him, or motivated by the desire for intrigue, had managed to become a member of the brotherhood. From the Middle Ages Freemasonry in England was a social force. Through their technical secrets gathered from all corners of the globe, the glory acquired by their achievements and the numerous great people who had wished to be affiliated with that strong guild, the Masons held tremendous power."

A. M. M.

CORONATION CEREMONIES

The Grand Secretary has received a letter from the Grand Lodge of England stating they would like to know in advance the names and Masonic rank of any members of lodges in this jurisdiction who intend visiting London next year for the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VIII, and also if possible their addresses when in England, in order that through the medium of the Freemasons' Hall, London, they may be brought in touch, if they so desire, with English Masons and Masonry. The Grand Secretary would be glad to know of any such brethren who have it in mind to attend the Coronation Ceremonies.

This courtesy on the part of the Grand Lodge of England should be greatly appreciated by any who can take advantage of it.

AN IRISH DRAMA

A Drama of an Ancient Lodge of Freemasons, Ireland, 1730, compiled by V.W. Bro. Philip Crossle, Librarian of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, and Secretary of the Lodge of Research, C.C., Ireland, proved of unusual interest to those attending the Annual Meeting of District No. 1 on October 24th.

The play was presented by members from King George Lodge No. 59 and depicted the Entered Apprentice Degree as worked in Ireland in 1730. The cast portrayed the work in an excellent manner with a close attention to detail, and the colorful costumes, together with the ceremony itself—so familiar yet so different—gripped the imagination of those present.

The enthusiasm shown by the gathering would indicate that we shall hear more of this play in the near future.

HUMOR VERSUS VULGARITY

Wit and humor are valued allies to the after-dinner speaker. When incorporated to give point to remarks it is used in its highest form; but for the sole purpose of amusing those present it loses most of its value.

Humor usually relies upon exaggeration—a play of words, lampooning certain peculiar national characteristics, a surprise in the turn of events or the lights and shadows of domestic life. Vulgarity in the form of double entendre or smutty stories may pass for humor in radio or the movies, but it is for the most part counterfeit.

The offensive practice fortunately is only occasional, but it is disturbing to hear of Masonic banquets at which members were disgusted by the relating of off color stories. In such cases it is usual that the first story told seems to call forth a peculiar form of courage on the part of a later speaker.

Now, I prefer to think it is inexperience rather than lack of intelligence which is responsible. However, as your Grand Master I say that this practice must cease. I suggest to presiding officers that offenders receive immediate reproof.

Some persons do not realize that a story which may seem harmless among friends immediately becomes objectionable in the presence of strangers, which is a matter of lack of respect for their intelligence. Because someone "got away" with a piece of Vulgarity at some other gathering is no criterion of its fitness for repetition at a Masonic banquet. It has no place there.

For the better guidance of the Craft I direct that this Bulletin item be read in all lodges.

- V. HAROLD MACAULAY,
Grand Master.