



Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: Sam HARRIS, P.G.M.

Great and Invaluable Privileges

In the course of our Masonic experience we hear this word **PRIVILEGES** on various occasions. Even as an applicant for admission we have to explain our reasons for hoping to obtain a knowledge of the Mysteries and Privileges of Ancient Freemasonry.

These being satisfactory, and our request being granted, in some measure, we again find ourselves required to give our reasons for hoping to obtain further privileges in our new associations.

This test is even more personal than the former, because it involves an estimate of our capacity to show a suitable reaction to instruction already given. If we fail to show such capacity, further advancement may be, and should be, deferred; sometimes this happens.

Assuming, however, average intelligence in reception and diligence in action, the barriers are removed and **MORE LIGHT** is provided, with, of course, additional responsibilities.

Thus, early in our Masonic career, if not previously in other groupings, we learn that privileges and duties are ethically inseparable. Any misguided attempts to enjoy the first, while evading the second, lead inevitably to tragedies, both personal and communal.

These lessons being well implanted, we approach once more that entrance, symbolic of our **INNER** state, requesting yet further privileges and offering proofs of suitable preparation. These being accepted and appropriate action resulting, we become entitled to demand the last and greatest test of ability to receive and endure the privilege of instruction in the **FINAL** mystery of human life. This test requires a mind moulded by virtue and science for, lacking such inner strength, our human frailty would be likely to collapse under the effect of outer appearances.

All these tests and gifts may, perhaps, not be considered additional privileges, since they indicate personal elements. Human nature is often ungrateful and to have one's consciousness awakened to qualities and powers which are within ourselves, but had remained unrecognized because they were dormant, would not seem, to many Brethren, equivalent to powers conferred from some outer source.

But the Craft does not thus limit its privileges even though it does not make a Christmas Tree of

itself, but requires them to be gained by merit and ability, as individual capacities and tendencies may serve. It may safely be said that, while the outer privileges of association, in some intimacy, with a new group of men of diverse qualities, capacities and outlooks on life, has **PER SE** a formative effect on oneself, the inner growth from such experiences requires a considerable perspective in time before it can be seen, measured and valued.

Take **FRIENDSHIP** for example. As a general rule, the better it is, the slower it grows. Its value is readily admitted; it is eagerly desired by most men; many attempts are made to foster its growth by artificial methods, some of them meretricious and a source of disappointment, if not distasteful to us.

But even a few years of regular attendance at lodge will reward us with the discovery of certain affinities: "like calls to like" and the psychological effects of such attraction is seen in the blossoming of Friendship, even among men of reserved type. As **Anderson** put it, in his famous Constitution: "Masonry becomes the center of union and the means of conciliating true friendship among persons that must else have remained at a perpetual distance."

In the realm of religion, not theology, with its background and foundation in an esoteric and mystic quest, the circumstances of our ceremonies have value as suggestions towards that direct communion with the best we can think of. Such titles as "Great Architect," "Grand Geometrician," with their implications of plan, foresight, composition, and combination, on a cosmic scale, find reflections in the thoughtful mind, which slowly make one aware of that Gnosis so highly valued by saints-in-making, even if they are not immediately aware of such an outlook and would blush to admit it.

Along educational lines, one must admit, our Masonic privileges are vastly enlarged today compared with those available to Brethren of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when our ritual was a-building. Operative secrets, valuable as they were, and are, to the working Mason, had become useful only as allegories and symbols to the new organization. Consequently, they also became mere archaisms, which have been greatly reduced from their appropriate settings by Brethren in auth-

ority, whose desire to "improve the ritual" was much greater than their understanding thereof.

Education beyond the "Three Rs" was then largely the privilege of the wealthy, and the works of **Preston**, in his "Illustrations of Masonry"; of **Hutchinson**, in his "Spirit of Masonry"; augmented by the prolific pen of **Rev. Oliver**, are monuments to their efforts to make education a real privilege for their Brethren in Freemasonry. But today, the design of our Past Masters jewels is taught in our public schools and our high school pupils laugh at the mnemonic formula with which the **Fellow of the Craft** concealed the secret of making his most valued tool—the "square."

The Craft, however, still provides a wide field of research to all who wish to understand its Mysteries, and are willing to labour therein. In ranks and dignities one may occupy the highest seats of honor but only for a limited period. Always the occupant becomes "Past" so and so, and must see his duties carried on by others, who may, but often do not, continue his efforts. In this field there are no such limits; its privileges may be enjoyed as long as the mind is alert and the interest unabated. One of our poets has happily expressed this truth in the following lines:

"O happy is the man who hears
Instruction's warning voice.
And who celestial Wisdom makes
His early, only, choice.
According as her labors rise
So her rewards increase;
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace."
—Bro. N. W. J. Haydon, F.P.S., Toronto, Ont.

THE PLUMBLINE

The Lord stood on a wall made by a plumbline; Amos gave to us for all time the right way of making a wall true and upright. So the plumbline of Masonic significance is to be used by the Fellowcraft in making his wall true and upright.

None may escape judgment by pleading, "I do not know how to use a plumbline." For every man has a plumbline in his heart; if the cord is twisted, the plumb broken, the whole awry, Freemasonry will set another in its place. To fear and love God; to walk uprightly before all men; to bend the attentive ear to the instructive tongue; to go out of one's way to serve a brother; to be helpful, kind, considerate, tolerant, charitable, and wise; to learn, to teach, to follow the Golden Rule, these are the strands of which Freemasonry weaves her plumbline, and when the cord is woven and weighted with the plumb of intellect to pull it straight, any man, be his education ever so limited or his vision ever so clouded, can see whether or not he measures upright enough to be worthy to be judged by its perfection.

—Foreign Countries by Carl H. Claudy.

Grand Lodge will convene in the Masonic Temple, Edmonton, at 9 a.m. sharp, on Wednesday, June 14th next. Please attend.

OUR NEW INITIATES

In the statistical report on membership which appears in the latest printed proceedings of Grand Lodge we read that during the twelve months under review, six hundred and ninety-nine (699) candidates crossed the threshold of Freemasonry. These figures are now more than a year old and the evidence is strong that a still greater number was initiated during the calendar year, 1946.

This is no new or novel experience for Masonic Lodges here and elsewhere. In times past we have observed membership in the Craft Lodges growing very fast, while on the other hand, it seems but yesterday that our Manitoba Lodges echoed the cry, "we have no work whatever on our trestle-board."

About 25 years ago there was an unprecedented rush of new members. This condition was reflected right across the American continent and was not confined to Manitoba. Within ten years the upsurge gave way to a continued falling off not only in new applications but in loss of membership through suspension and demission.

Reflecting upon past experience we might pause and do a bit of thinking. We need to plant beyond today if we hope to avoid the bitter experience of yesterday.

One of our difficulties has been that we are all inclined to consider what it is that will help us at the present moment rather than what will be the effect on the Lodge and on the Craft in time to come.

Is it wise to load every Lodge meeting with a never-ending succession of degree work?

Are we truly exemplifying to our new initiates what Freemasonry is by the continual turning of the degree mill?

Must we clear the decks month after month and thus make way for more and more meetings of a similar nature?

Ask yourself this further question. Can our new members be blamed if they decide that all they get when they attend Lodge is a repetition of something they witnessed every time they went to Lodge since they themselves received "the rights and privileges" of the Craft.

Any one might honestly enquire if the work they see is the only effort designed to increase their usefulness as members of this ancient and honourable fraternity. In order to become useful one must learn—surely the ritual of our ceremonies is not the only thing we have to offer our young initiates.

We do need vision if history is not to be repeated. We must look ahead. The fuller development of a man who has recently been initiated is of much greater importance in the Masonic Plan than the rushing of succeeding classes, pell-mell to the sublime degree, then to begin all over again and repeat the process with another waiting group.

Masonry has a great and glorious history—a philosophy and a symbolism—wider and reaching far beyond the words of any ceremony.

The Worshipful Masters and Officers of our constituent Lodges have the opportunity, if only they have the will, to break new trails by making the

BUILDING A TEMPLE

When a candidate knocks at the outer door and kneels at the altar of Freemasonry for the first time, he has designed and laid down the cornerstone for erecting as great and abundant edifice that a man can construct.

If,—as he goes forth into the realm of his daily life and contact with the world, ever having close at hand the silvern Trowel, regulating his days by the twenty-four inch gauge, then day by day he will have stepped forward on the right foot and not on the wrong foot.

When he has set aside for the last time the trestleboard of life whereon he has scribed right angles, horizontals and perpendiculars, circumscribed by the compass, when the working tools of life have fallen from his shaking hands he will have builded a great temple of character and virtue that will remain in the hearts and memory of men and Masons—long after his earthly body has decomposed in putridity in the silent and lonely tomb.

The temple he will have built will stand aloft long after the skin slips from the flesh, and the flesh cleaves from the bone; long after his bones have crumbled away and only marrow dust remains.

The temple he erected to character and dedicated to virtue will still be standing long after the Most Worshipful Grand Master on High has put forth His hand, raised his enfranchised spirit with the strong grip of Judah and said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the sanctorum sanctorum of eternal peace and rest forevermore. Amen!"

—Bro. Burton G. Taylor, Texas.

BEAUTY

There is a beauty beyond all things of sense, more regal than the splendour of a rose, more inspiring than an autumn sunset. It is the beauty of a noble character, of goodness made real in the life of a man. Such inner beauty appeals not to the eye but to the understanding. It expresses itself not in the grace of line or colour but in golden deeds. When a person lives honourably and uprightly, at peace with others without bitterness and without complaint, bearing all bravely and holding unerringly to the best, his life witnesses to something that is eternal. It testifies to the reality of God and bespeaks the soul's divinity. The beauty of a good life is not ephemeral. It is a constant blessing, its memory an abiding benediction.

—The Victorian Craftsman.

degree work a stepping stone toward the realization of creating Freemasons.

Within every Lodge in this jurisdiction there exists latent talent waiting the call. When it is sounded the workmen will prepare themselves to do the work of a Master Craftsman.

—The Ashlar, Australia.

and a Mason. It is the Mason's gift to you as a Man. It is visible and marks you as a man of integrity. but, Brethren, you wear two aprons, one visible to man, the other visible only to the G.A.O.T.U. Himself. The earthly one, coming from mortals, is a mortal thing; it will in time decay and become no more. The other invisible one is the gift of the Omnipotent; it is spiritual, undecaying, eternal. Man seeth the one, the G.A.O.T.U. seeth the other. The earthly one, when life's work is done will be tarnished, worn, stained and torn and honour shall be meted out to you by your fellows according to the unselfish work that you have put in getting it soiled. But look to it that you keep the unseen one clean and spotless so that when the apron you wear now, having found its resting place with your mortal remains, beneath the clods of the valley shall be seen no more, the one which a Master greater than that which any earthly ruler invested you, when viewed by the Grand Master himself, shall be clean and spotless He will then reward or punish you according as you have striven to keep it clean.

—W. Bro. F. W. Thornback, P.D.G.M., Bombay,
In the Indian Masonic Journal.

MASONRY AND FREEDOM

If it were not for the Freemasons of the world today there would be no freedoms. Never before in the history of man have the principles of Masonry been needed more than at the present time. Imagine if the heads of all the world powers were Masons, who could sit down together and discuss things as you and I would do. They would have the respect and trust for one another, knowing that each had travelled the same path, and each was interested in the other's welfare. Perhaps some day we will live to see the time when men can leave their troubles outside and come into meeting with an open mind and be interested in the welfare of everyone, and not just for selfish desires.

We, as Masons, have a challenge to meet, and we are taught the principles of Masonry in the Lodge that can be applied to our everyday lives. If we will but remember our Masonic teachings in dealing with our fellowmen in the business world, in the Lodge, the clubs, and in church, we will show the way for continued freedom.

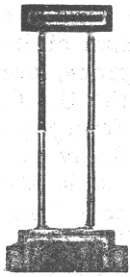
—Kansas Masonic Digest.

Masonry, by its teachings, endeavors to restrain men from the commission of injustice and acts of wrong outrage . . . There must always be a wide difference between him who only ceases to do evil and him who has always done well. . . . Repentance for a wrong done bears the fruit of purifying the heart and amending the future, but not of effacing the past. . . . Repentance is still as valid as ever; but is valid to secure the future, not to obliterate the past.

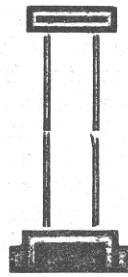
—Morals and Dogma.

The experiences of yesterday, the opportunities of today, and faith in the possibilities of tomorrow, constitute the foundation of a good life.

S. H.



Between the Pillars



THE MASON'S APRON

From the very earliest times there has always been a sacerdotal or religious use attached to aprons quite distinct from Freemasonry. The ancient Gods of Egypt are sometimes depicted wearing aprons, indicating that the wearer had taken part in some kind of ceremony. In China some of the ancient figures of the Gods are shown wearing aprons. In Central America they are often sculptured as wearing aprons, in fact Tepoxtecatl is shown wearing an apron with a triangular conical cap and in his hand is a gavel.

Every time we come to Lodge we gird round our loins our apron each according to his degree, and I wonder how many of us ever give a second thought to it. Do we ever try to discover what it means, what it symbolises or why we wear it? If a Lodge of Masons was asked, "What does your apron stand for?" "To what does it allude?" or "What is its meaning?" the answer would be in the majority of cases: "It is the badge of innocence and the bond of friendship" or "it stands for my Masonic rank." But is that all it stands for? No. It has a far deeper meaning than that. Ours being a symbolic Order, everything connected with it has a symbolic meaning or a reference to some Masonic point, ceremony or teaching. Let us see for a minute if we can find any meaning except those I have mentioned.

Descended From The Operative

There is no doubt that our apron of the present day was evolved from the aprons worn by Operative Masons to prevent their clothes from being soiled. Even down to the Middle Ages the aprons in use among Speculative Masons differed little from those worn by the Operatives. They were long, coming down to below the knees, and had a flap or bib to protect the chest. In about 1750 the Brethren took to decorating their aprons with designs, usually painted on by hand and probably first done by the owner himself.

Naturally in course of time these designs became popular and certain of them began to get somewhat standardized. One group contained two pillars and sometimes their names were given as well; others contained the various emblems, gavels, squares, levels, etc., while another group contained seals from the various ceremonies. At the time of the Union it was considered that these aprons should be standardized and the results is the apron we are all wearing tonight.

Before going any farther, I may mention that in other countries the aprons sometimes differ from those worn in England. For instance the Dutch

apron is bordered in black and has the E.O.M. on the flap. Some other Continental aprons have curved sides and a shape more like a shield, while the Scotch Lodges wear different colours, some even Tartan and have a circular instead of a triangular flap.

But take our apron. The colour is Cambridge Blue. It is a colour closely related to the Virgin Mary and has been brought forward from Isis and other Gods of the ancient world. Those of Grand Lodge are Oxford or Garter Blue, the colour associated with the Royalists at the time of the Civil War. Therefore blue being a Royal colour the colour reminds us of the loyalty to our Sovereign and to the G.A.O.T.U. we should always show.

A Study Of Triangles

The three rosettes form a triangle. The flap forms another and the two intersect. These are worthy of study. The one with the point upwards, that formed by the rosettes, is an emblem of Shiva, it is the triangle of fire; the Divine Spark of the Spirit. The one made by the flap of the apron is the triangle of water; of the Soul. These two triangles are within the square of matter or body. Therefore the M.M. Apron represents the triune nature of Man, Body, Soul and Spirit.

Take another view. One triangle represents the Spirit entering the square, matter, and so depicts the entry of Spirit into Man. The two rosettes on the Fellowcraft apron show that as yet the Spirit has not yet entered the Soul, but, with the Third Degree, that is completed and the man is complete. They also represent the two pillars. They indicate that the F.C. is not complete, not a united being. Body and Soul are united but the Spirit is absent. They also correspond to the knocks of the F.C. degree and to the position of the compasses when taking the obligation.

The Tassels

Now take the tassels. There is little doubt that the origin of these was the strings which used to hang down when the apron was bound round the waist. The 18th century aprons did not have tassels, and officers of the Grand Lodge for the year do not wear tassels. It is only Past Officers who wear it. They consist of a piece of ribbon with seven chains. These chains allude to seven, the perfect number, the liberal arts and sciences, the seven steps in the Third Degree, the number required to make a perfect Lodge and doubtless other symbolisms. The two ribbons allude to the two pillars.

Then take the fastening. A strip of webbing ending in a snake. The snake has two kinds of symbolism. Firstly, it is the enemy of man; therefore representing the powers of evil. Secondly, it is an emblem of Wisdom. "Be ye wise as Serpents" does not refer to the Devil, but to Divine Wisdom. In this country the Sacred Cobra is looked upon as essentially good. The Serpent is worshipped in many parts; thus we can take it that our apron is encircled by holy wisdom.

Emblem of Innocence

The Apron itself. It is of white lambskin, the emblem of purity, the badge of innocence, the bond of friendship, the insignia of a just, upright man