

Another Very Happy New Year to Everyone

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Grand Lodge Bulletin

Editor: SAM HARRIS, P.G.M.

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

It is nothing new to say that at the beginning of a year we take both a backward and a forward look, and the general trend of ideas today is inclined to ridicule any backward look. We are told we have been dragging too much of the old past along with us and we should get rid of it.

However, we, in our Order, must look backwards. Our whole ritual is rooted there and our teachings are based on examples from the remote past, as well as from more recent times. Just the other day the writer was reading a book on the Cathedrals of England. It was mentioned there that Wren, the designer of St. Paul's, London, had a bond of understanding between him and his craftsmen "which allowed the latter to a greater extent to interpret his requirements, even when not provided with drawings". We who know our Masonic history know what that bond was.

During a lengthy convalescence recently I did quite a bit of reading, and was surprised in reading a novel of the early days of American settlement in Western Pennsylvania that lodges were held on the frontiers during the Indian wars and that even some of the Indians had some of our secrets. The point that was being made by the author was that the brethren in those days were the stabilizing influence in those turbulent days.

These are examples of what the principles of our Order have done in the more recent past and we know the great lessons we are taught in the three degrees of craft Masonry.

To teach these great facts we go back to the early Old Testament story and to the great characters there, and the accounts of their actions. When we see light our eyes are opened

to see truths we have not noticed before. When we see the ornamental pillars in front of a building, are we reminded of anything? We are taught to see God all around us in His wisdom, His power and His beauty. The Universe is not big enough to contain Him, and yet we are able to approach Him on the ladder of charity.

Then we go on to the study of Arts and Sciences which, if properly used, will also lead us to a knowledge of God, not just by observation, but through the use of our mental processes, through study, in other words.

Finally we get the highest lesson of all — we are taught in spite of all opposition or any danger that may meet us, we must press on, even to death. But to the Mason even death itself has no power over us as we rise to the life beyond. We can lift our eyes to the light of the star rising in the East, the star of light and life.

Such does our Order teach us from our backward look, and from that background we can look to the year ahead. What then should be our forward look? What should be our aim for this year?

There are those who would strive to see ever increasing numbers taken into our Order. The making of larger numbers of Masons in itself is not something to strive after. While we all want to see our Order grow, we must remember that quality is far more important than quantity. We should see to it that all possible care is exercised in proposing new members — that only those who will adorn the Order are taken into it.

In this regard we can rejoice that there is a strong movement at present to get unaffiliated members back on the active list. Every ef-

fort should be made to continue this work.

Here we must do some real thinking and self examination. What has caused all the lapsed memberships or the inactivity of those who pay their dues, but never attend a meeting or take part in any Masonic effort? Age or physical disability will account for only a small percentage of these.

One reason for the lack of interest, in the large centres of population particularly, is that many of our lodges have grown far to large. It is impossible to keep up a real spirit of fraternity in a very big lodge. As we all know, it is impossible to even know the names of all the members in one's own lodge. It is said that without a large membership it would not be possible to keep financially solvent. Is that the reason for making Masons? Would it not be better to cut the overhead? It might be well to think that over in the coming year.

Another thing that causes lack of interest is something that applies to each one of us. We have raised a most beautiful edifice, our Masonic work points to us great truths. Too often it stops there. Our sense of beauty is appealed to, our thoughts are drawn upward as in the closing of the Second Degree, but is that all?

No, our Order will really be what it is intended to be when we try to live outside the lodge rooms what we profess to be within them. It would seem, sometimes, that because there are Masonic secrets, therefore, everything in connection with Masonry must be kept secret. We should never let it be known what Masonry stands for, because if we do we will be revealing secrets. Do we forget the second question put to a candidate for initiation?

The second thought we should meditate upon at this time then is how we are living up to what we profess. How we are putting life into the edifice erected. It is only as there is life in the structure that it fulfills its function. Otherwise it soon becomes a ruin. We should strive to make our own lives something like what we have seen in the characters in the past, and something more like what our whole Masonic work teaches us.

When individual Masons are really striving to live according to Masonic principles our lodges will become places where, in the company of brethren, we are uplifted to greater heights, then will Masonry really flourish — then there will be very few lapsed brethren — then will the real spiritual background of our Order shine forth — then will our Order be the power for all that is good, that it is intended to be.

As we look to the future these ideas should be the power behind all we do as Masons and citizens.

*R. W. Bro. Rev. Canon W. H. Morgan,
Grand Chaplain, Alberta.*

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

If a person who is not a member of the Masonic Fraternity should ask a dozen members of the Order, "What is Freemasonry?" he quite likely would receive a dozen different answers.

Some of the familiar answers that leap, ready-made, from the tips of Masons' tongues are, "It is an organization to promote brotherhood; it is a personalized program of fellowship; my Masonry is a code for moral living; to me, the Fraternity is an outlet for expression; Freemasonry offers an opportunity to use leadership talent; it helps me develop and maintain self-confidence among my associates; Masonry endows me with pride of membership in a selective group; Freemasonry obligates me to serve others with dignity, thoughtfulness, and humility; it is a gospel of reverence and respect for God."

Such a variety of answers would confuse the average man who is unexposed to Masonic light. And he might well ask, "But is there no common answer?" And, of course, there is a common answer but it is not easy to isolate for common use. The kernel of the answer is a jewel with many facets.

Masonry is a quieting experience like the whisper of a summer breeze. It is like the stealthy pattern of July raindrops; yet, it fascinates like the roar of a waterfall — the rumbling of distant thunder. It lights our way like a flash of sheet lightning in a dark night. It inspires confidence like the rhythmic pulsation of a marching column. It spreads a serenity like that of your own living room when you are doing just what you want to do. Its philosophy and lessons permeate one's very soul as surely as an ageless glacier moves towards the plain. Its beauties and allegories leave you entranced like your first eager but cautious scan from the rim of Grand Canyon.

Yes, there is a common answer but it defies the spoken word; Masonry is revealed most vividly in the thoughts and deeds of men.

Grand Lodge Bulletin, Iowa.

Here is a fourfold human relations formula, which, when applied, will help you to get along better with your fellow men. Maintain a cordial, appreciative interest in other people and their varying points of view. Encourage, strengthen and inspire your neighbor by advancing the common denominator areas of living and mutual accomplishment. Accept, tolerate and learn from the differences of approach made by others to religion and life. Exhibit in every situation of tenseness the gift of humor whose kindly light relaxes strain and brings healing power.

Bro. J. Richard Sneed, D.D.

Every reader, if he has a strong mind, reads himself into the book, and amalgamates his thoughts with those of the author. *Goethe*

TO BE AN EFFICIENT MASTER

How little does the Entered Apprentice candidate anticipate the down-right hard work a Worshipful Master has done to fit himself for the leadership that has been placed upon him. No Master becomes a genius overnight.

When Rossini had played "William Tell" the five-hundredth time, he was serenaded by a band of musicians.

They placed a golden crown of laurel leaves upon his brow. They said among themselves, "He is a genius. He doesn't have to struggle like the rest of us. "Those well-wishers didn't see what went on inside of him.

In that moment of great triumph he turned to a friend and said, "I would give all this brilliant scene for one hour of love, joy, and comfort."

In spite of his great inner struggle — in fact, because he lacked the love, joy and comfort he longed for—he went on from one triumph to another.

So it has been, is, and will be with a worthy Worshipful Master. If he becomes efficient he must pay the price. There is no free tuition. Careful attention from the time he first read a Masonic petition until his successor is installed has been the abiding factor for a Master's efficiency. Thus far in the development of civilization no one has discovered anything to replace struggle and difficulty, to develop and strengthen character and personality. The latter are the fundamental factors of an efficient Master.

Our newly installed Masters come to duty full of enthusiasm and with a desire to accomplish something. There is an obligation on the part of every Worshipful Master "to communicate light and instruction to the Brethren of the Lodge." It should not be difficult to inaugurate a simple course of instruction. In every Lodge there is at least one brother qualified to assume the direction of a course of study. Why not give these suggestion a trial?

Th Ashlar, G. L. of Queensland

THE CHURCH

The Church is a religious home, a sanctuary for worship, a school for religious instruction, a fighting unit for the new world that is building. It is a social centre of the highest type, since it gathers into relations of mutual helpfulness people of every age and condition. It adds to the attractions of the ordinary club the power of religion and the generous sympathies of the altruistic impulse. The Church is the most broadening and democratic organization among men, since its vision is to the ends of the world whither the Gospel is being carried and since its citizenship is in heaven as well as in earth.

*Rt. W. Bro. Rev. John B. Hubbard,
Past Grand Chaplain, Grand Lodges
of Illinois and Alberta.*

FUNCTION OF A MASONIC LODGE

It is not the primary function of Freemasonry to initiate candidates, or to enlarge its membership: Were it so, there would be no basis for our laws against proselyting. The primary function of a Masonic Lodge — indeed, the primary function of our Craft, is to train its members to an understanding of the truths which its rituals and its ceremonies are calculated to inculcate, to develop its members as benevolent men, to cultivate the social virtues among men, and to propagate the knowledge of the art.

The chief concern of the Lodge is with its welfare, the happiness, the Masonic development of its members, not with the admission of those who seek entrance to its doors. Its success as a Masonic Lodge cannot be gauged by the length of its membership roll or by the size of its accumulated funds.

MANSONRY'S ONE PURPOSE

For more than two centuries, Freemasonry, as we know it, has pursued its peaceful way alone. It has sought no public acclaim; it has asked no help from outside its circle; it has permitted the world to think what it may about its object and its works. Its best advertisement has been the fact that it does not advertise itself or its works. It has had and today has, only one job to perform, only one reason for its existence.

That job is to take the material that comes to it and make good men out of that material. Everything else, our charities, all our works, are incidental to one purpose.

If Masonry does that job — if it works at it honestly, even if with only a measure of efficiency, it has lived up to its purpose and fulfilled its highest ideals.

Both articles, Master Mason, San Diego

ONE CRAFT

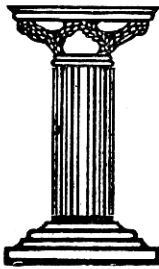
In South Australia the Board of General Purposes issued a statement calling upon Lodges to refrain from the use of the Masonic emblem and letter "G" on printed paper napkins used at Masonic banquets. The Board stated that it "considers the letter 'G' of too great significance to Freemasons to be used for serviette purposes."

Indiana Freemason

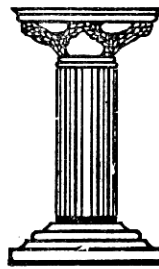
BUILD UPON A ROCK

When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them: "See this our fathers did for us."

John Ruskin.



Between the Pillars



PROGRESS

Freemasonry has often been criticised on account of the pride it has in its absolute unchangeability. This inexorable adherence to its ancient usages and customs, which it regards as sacred and inviolable, is said to militate against the progress of society and seriously to impede people from bringing themselves into line with social evolution as it confronts them.

The truth of the position can best be detected if a clear distinction be drawn between the words progress and evolution. The process of evolution is one of mere change whether good or bad and can be seen in the evolution of society from age to age and from country to country. On the other hand, progress is a change for the better — an increase, an improvement, a betterment in the social relationship of men.

Social evolution can best be seen in a short range view, whereas progress is noticeable rather over a long range view. In the long march of social progress the rate of advance is necessarily slow. Often a setback delays it, but the trend is upwards, onwards, and ever forward to better living.

This progress of society has many aspects, but basically it is intellectual, moral and spiritual, and can only come through persistent, conscious effort to express in practice the instinct that has been deeply implanted within each of us. Over the centuries man is able to, and actually does, build up a society in which self-discipline, moral stability, and common sense prevail — a society in which the amelioration of the conditions of life are such that each step in the ascent but leads to the attainment of an ideal of perfection.

In order to bring such a state of things to pass the individual is the important link in the chain of affairs, for it is of persons that society must consist; and as the individual can only make progress by utilizing the principles that have proved successful to his forefathers, it is to them that he must look for guidance in his moral journeyings.

The great moral principle upon which human society has been built have ever remained the same from generation to generation, and although mankind has often been wilful and wayward in its wandering from the straight and

narrow path along which progress lies, being endowed with the power of evaluating their own conduct men have ultimately responded to the teachings of ages that lie a long way behind the actual point they have themselves reached.

Freemasonry seeks to promote social progress, not to impede it, but in so doing enunciates no new moral principles, for the very simple reason that there are none to declare. It can claim, however, that what is entirely new and absolutely its own is the method by which it seeks to convey those immutable principles upon which progress depends.

In the general "evolutionary" process that goes on among human kind, wars will come and block the upward reach of man; ideologies will arise that may subvert the highest values upon which life has so far pinned its faith; but in so far as Freemasonry can be said to have an aim it will ever seek to maintain and uphold these ancient and fundamental verities that its worthy founders clearly saw were the very foundation of moral and social "progress" or advancement.

Freemasonry as a system of morality has taken these fundamentals and embodied them in a ritual calculated to make such an impression on the mind of its beholders that the reaction will result in that moral progress it seeks to promote. Its hope, too, is that the influence thus far brought to bear on society in general through good Freemasons will also result in gradual social progress and so conduce to superior conditions of life as a whole. If in the fulness of time such is the case, the world will be convinced that Freemasonry's inflexible adherence to its ancient usages and customs rather than constituting a point for ill-founded criticism comes to be a matter of unstinted praise and honour.

South Australian Freemason

WHAT WILL YOU CARVE?

You are given at birth a block of untouched, unscratched marble, out of which you may make anything you choose. Every day and every hour and every moment of your life you are chiseling upon this marble block. You can chop away without a model or design or plan; you can smite it with your anger and disappointment, you can bring out of it a satanic, beastly, vulgar image which will disgust and demoralize every beholder, or you can bring out the angel of beauty, of truth, the ideal which lives in every normal soul. Carve something, however, you must — for you cannot leave that marble untouched. — Orison Swett Marden.

The Florida Mason

"The best reformers the world has ever seen are those who commence upon themselves."

—George Bernard Shaw.