

Brethren,

This evening I wish to talk for a time on things which have come to my mind over the period in which I have sat in the S.E. of the Lodge. In this part of the Lodge one has an opportunity to look back over ones period as a member of the Lodge from initiation to the passing through the Masters Chair and finally to sit with a certain period of time to look back and also to observe. As we come up through the Lodge we get little time to do such a thing, as we are either concentrating on what we have to do in the future or more likely what we have got to do within the next hour or so. This feeling along with things I have noticed has given me the urge to produce this talk, here however I must apologise for the many things which I shall not mention because of the time available but these may be talked about on future occasions.

When we make application for Membership of the Craft, we are at times in doubt as to what we are going into, and from the questions we are asked prior to being even ballotted for we may have greater doubts. Even after we have answered the questions honestly and sincerely, we go home with these doubts as to whether our answers were satisfactory. Even when we are asked if we wish to ask any questions we are lost for words, may be not because of fear but because we are making application into a society of which we have in many cases no knowledge about.

We assume that we have been successful and on the great day we come along to be initiated, if our proposers are good and knowledgeable Brethren they will put our fears at rest or attempt to, and should be close by you until they leave you to enter the Lodge. As during the ceremony you should never be left on your own, so during the time you arrive, you should never be left on your own.

It is usually a bit of a shock when the Tyler first instructs you to prepare yourself for the ceremony, it is a greater shock when the blindfold is put on, and you have to rely on a person or persons to guide you for half the ceremony in the dark. On your entrance into the Lodge the first thing you feel is the point of a sharp instrument put to your left breast. In the present day you are admitted by the Tyler, but in the 18th century you would have been admitted by the wardens or the Junior Apprentice. There is no symbolical side of the I.G. duties, other than the sharp point should remind you later that you will keep to yourself those secrets which may be conveyed to you.

You are then asked to kneel in prayer, and in order to confirm your belief in a supreme being you are asked in whom do you put your trust. Following your answer you are asked to rise, and after the declaration by the Master you are led round the Lodge to show that you are properly prepared to be admitted a Mason. You are conducted round the Lodge by the Deacons, this Office has only been in being officially since 1809, prior to this date some Lodges appointed Deacons, but in others it was the Wardens duty to take the candidate round. There are minutes however that record in 1743 the appointment of a Masters Deacon and a Wardens Deacon. Finally you are presented to the W.M. as a Candidate properly prepared to be made a Mason. You then advance to the Pedestal and take an obligation, which according to regulations must be taken on the Bible or writings of your faith, and it is a Masonic offence for this not to be done. After sealing your obligation you are restored to light. In many Lodges you will find that the Bible is turned to the W.M. as are the points of the compass. There is no ruling how these should be set out, but it is logical that as the candidate should know that the bible or book of his faith has been used he should be able to read it once he is restored to light. In America, Ireland and Scotland, along with some of our own Lodges in the North, the Bible on the Masters Pedestal remains in the position for him to read it, but there is a pedestal in the centre of the Lodge with another bible on it for the Candidate to take his obligation and it faces him. The points of the compass face the bottom of the page as it is turned to him. This was done in the early centuries as the arms of the square go away from him, and in the early days the candidate almost invariably knelt within the square to take his obligation. It is useful to know that in the Grand Lodge of England the V.S.L. faces the west, i.e. the bottom of the page is in the west, and the points of the Compass also face west, the opposite way in which we do it in this Lodge. As I have said there is no ruling, but surely during a ceremony the candidate is entitled to see that he has been obligated on the V.S.L. associated with his faith in accordance with the regulations.

I might add here that in the early days the step we take forming a square with our feet dates back to 1700, and has always been used as a means of recognition. In 1730 there were three steps prior to the obligation and entrusting. But in 1760 we find that the E.A. was taught to take one step; the F.C. Two steps and the M.M. took first the one E.A. step, then the two F.C. steps and finally the three M.M.s. steps. All steps were before the obligation, and there is no record at this period of additional steps before entrusting. However in 1802

in Brownies Master they we find that the E.A. advanced by 3 steps to the Master for obligation, and no steps for the entrusting, so we can only assume that the steps as we know them to day came out of the Lodge of Promulgation after the Union of the two Grand Lodges. After the entrusting our candidate is taken round the Lodge and is invested with his apron. The Deacon is then instructed to place him in the N.E. Part of the Lodge, and here he is told to place his left foot across the Lodge and right foot down the Lodge thus forming a square on the corner of the carpet. He stands in this part of the Lodge to indicate upright Lines and square intentions, in the corner where all foundation stones were laid, and where on this night he is laying a foundation stone of his upright intentions and conduct in Masonry. It seems to us all a most awkward position to stand, especially when the Master is to your left, or in the case of the second degree to your right. In days gone by however the Master was nearly in line with you, as most of the ceremony was carried out at the table. But why is this position:- In the early days the Lodge was drawn on the Floor, and invariably the rough and perfect ashlar were placed at the respective corners of the Lodge i.e. the rough ashlar in the N.E. which was for the entered apprentice to practise his work on and the perfect ashlar in the S.E. for the F.C. to try and adjust his jewels on. The symbolism of these two stones you will find in the Lectures. While in this position you are asked during the charge if you have anything to give in the cause of Charity. I feel most candidate refer this item to the giving of money, as invariably the charity box is offered to you. Such is not the case, you are told that it is to prove that you had no hidden metal about you, so that you have not entered the lodge with any offensive weapon. The charity you are called upon to practise is that to your fellowmen, a dedication of yourself.

You are then taken from the Lodge and after restoring yourself to your personal comforts are returned to the Lodge where the J.W. delivers the Charge to the younger brethren I would say read both the Charity Charge and the Charge given to you by the J.W. and think seriously of what they tell you.

When you were entrusted you then found that a cable tow had been placed about your neck, and although the Master in his entrusting did give an explanation of why it was there, it may also be accepted as a token of submission there is little symbolism and today the candidate's obligation when we use the words if within the length of your cable tow, is simply a promise to answer a

Lodge summons and promise to attend the Lodge so long as in your power to do so, and no specific distance is involved. Several years ago a distance of Three miles used to be quoted.

The matter of squaring the Lodge during the ceremonies was in being as I have said in the 1730, but a good many Lodges do not do it today. The practise of Squaring the Lodge is wholly admirable as it adds much to the dignity of our ceremonies. I might add the reason for the posture in the N.E. and S.E. corners is, undoubtedly symbolical and can easily be explained in the words of the writer (Fort Newton) who said we enter the Craft in order to build Spiritual Temples within ourselves. When we stand in the N.E. & S.E. corners and hear the exhortation from the W.M., we are participating in the dedication of our own spiritual foundation.

You are now an E.A. and eventually you will prove your ability and merit by answering questions leading to the F.C. Degree. In former times prior to 1727 there were only two degrees, and as such many of you will know that this is the reason that the W.M. is obligated in the 2nd Degree. At installations we only open in the ~~Third~~ Third Degree and nothing takes place as regards installation, as all Master Masons leave the Lodge. It was not until after ~~1772~~ 1727 that we find the introduction of the 3rd Degree.

You might ask what do we learn from Craft Masonry, briefly Brethren it teaches our duties to one another and finally it prepares us for death.

There is nothing like Freemasonry to teach you humility, and any brother who feels this is out of character for himself will never enjoy the chair of his Lodge. Those of us who have gone through the chair have the prefix W. Bro. and are classed as M.M. however we return basically to what we were prior to going into the Chair M.M. A worshipful Master is a Bro. until he has installed and served his year as an I.P.M., and a W.M. outside his Lodge should be referred to in Lodge as a Bro. He is not even allowed to wear his collar outside his Lodge except on specific occasions when attending Provincial Grand Lodge or the Masonic Service, and at Grand Lodge as it shows his eligibility to attend. Like wise any other Officers of the Lodge, but the wearing by other Officers of Collars on special occasions is restricted to Wardens. The collars of the Lodge Officers irrespect of the rank of the Officer is a plain blue Collar, something we have not adhered to in our own Lodge, as you will see the Secretary, Treasurer and W.M.

collars are incorrect. The only movement away allowed by Grand Lodge is that by dispensation the Master of the Lodge may have a chain attached to his collar which shows the list of Masters. I might add here that a P.M. or I.P.M. who visits another Lodge is improperly dressed if he has not got a P.M.'s collar on.

May I now go on to talk about Officers of the Lodge, First let me say that the quorum for a Lodge is Five (excluding the Tyler and candidate). Two of which must be members of the Lodge and one an Installed Master. ~~Originally~~ the Officers consisted of the W.M.; Treasurer; Secretary; two wardens, Two Deacons; and I.G. after the Union.

In 1730's we had only Secretary and Treasurer.

1760 Deacons appeared, but were very rare until the end of the century in 1815 we find that the B.Const. states the Masonic Officers of the Lodge : Master; Two wardens with their assistants two Deacons, Inner Guard.

1841 Treasurer Secretary and other Officers e.g. Chaplain, Master of Ceremonies, and Stewards. It is not until 1884 that we have Director of Ceremonies with Full Title, Capital Letters and all.

1884 Organist appears.

1911. A.D.C. made his appearance with other Officers Almoner and Assistant Secretary.

1975 Charity Steward.

After you have been raised you may then be selected to go on in Officer, and although if a brother carries out his obligations to his Lodge he will proceed up the ladder to the chain of the Lodge. It must be remembered however that Grand Lodge lays down that no brother has right to preferment, and it is the Master who will decide his Officers. In a Lodge there are only two Officers who are not responsible to the W.M. the Treasurer and Inner Guard who are elected on the night of the W.M. by the Brethren of the Lodge. All other officers are responsible to the W.M. though once he appoints you for his year has an arduous job to take your Office away from you. Likewise if an officer is in attendance the W.M. or D.C. cannot put another brother in his place, this is contrary to Grand Lodge Regulations. Each Officer has his duties, those of the Officers on the floor are plain to see, might I add here the I.P.M is not an Office he holds his place by right.

The Treasurer is responsible to the Lodge for the monies of the

Lodge and to no one else. The Secretary is responsible to the W.M. for carrying out the correspondence on his behalf, to collect the subs for the Treasurer to get out the Lodge summons in full consultation with the W.M. and to see that items put by the Lodge to the Lodge Committee appear on the agenda and nothing else, other than required details of candidates. Each year two representatives are appointed to the Lodge Committee, it is their duty to communicate to the Junior Brethren information from that meeting with the exception of matters concerning Candidates and Almoners work which are of a confidential nature and not for discussion. Therefore no member of the Lodge should be in ignorance of what is going on, as the committee carry out the members work for them, but can not make a decision, this must be made by the Lodge.

It is an offence under the Constitutions to declare how you have cast your ballot as is declaring before hand how you will ballot, and Brethren have been known to be excluded for such an offence. As the ballots are free and you are left to decide yourself how you should ballot, always remember it is on your own conscience as to what you may have done rightly or wrongly.

Finally brethren I do hope that I have given you an insight into matters I have noticed in the S.L. and a great deal was brought back to my mind when just over 15 months ago we had a decision to make and only approx. 10 P.M.'s voted and none of the brethren on the floor of the Lodge, I do appeal to you to exercise your right that we can carry on this most democratic process which has existed from time immemorial in our Lodges.

In nature we find that some insects grow up and when we come to the reproduction of the species after doing his duty the female eats the Male, Brethren we do the same in Masonry, we climb through the Officers reach the Chair and after we have installed our successor find ourselves in what is the most killing job or office of all, that of I.P.M. You cannot forget the ceremonies as you may have to prompt and if necessary at very short notice even hours take the chair for the ceremony should the W.M. be absent, for brethren according to the Constitutions the I.P.M. must take the chair if the W.M. is absent.