

"THE TOAST OF A LIFETIME"

A Master's Welcome to an Initiate

(The following interesting speech was delivered at a recent meeting of the Douglas Lodge 1725, Maidstone, by the Master, Bro. the Hon. Henry Mitford Cecil, in extending a welcome to the Initiate, Bro. Roger Kemble.)

Brethren. - I rise to give you the toast of the evening, that of our Initiate. In all probability he is feeling at this moment very much the same as we all did on the day when we passed through a similar experience - somewhat confused as to what he has done, and uncertain as to what he has committed himself.

Our new-made Brother has been subjected to a peculiar ritual; he has been made to take a very solemn obligation; for a moment or two he was placed in a position which, I trust, was not without some embarrassment; and, finally, he listened to a Charge which, apart from Masonic allusions, may be regarded as but the crossing of the t's and the dotting of the i's in what he, from his early youth, must have been taught to consider to be "the whole duty of man".

That, Brother Initiate, is but the beginning of Masonry. From the moment when you took what we call the First R.E. in Masonry - an irrevocable step - you launched out on a new profession - that of a builder. At that moment you commenced the erection of a superstructure which we, your Brethren, hope will prove to be perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder.

That which you have to build is a temple worthy of the three great underlying principles of our Order - Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. That edifice will be ornate or simple according to your energy, your attainments and your opportunities. It is impossible to raise any sort of superstructure without the assistance of scaffolding - a scaffolding upon which the builder can stand, firm and secure, as the structure grows within it. That scaffolding you can erect by careful adherence to the principles so beautifully and amply detailed in the Charge to which you have listened. In other words, you cannot be a good Mason unless you

are also a good citizen and a true and loyal subject to your God and your king.

Masonry may, to a certain extent, be regarded as a secret society, yet our activities and our achievements, of which we are rightly proud, are well-known to the world at large; our great Institutions - our Schools and our Hospital - testify to the world our Charity and our Benevolence.

We have also a reputation, justly earned and most sedulously to be cherished, that we are so engrossed in our beneficent activities that politics - domestic, national, or international - find no place within our Order. From the wide compass of our membership, embracing as it does the highest in the land as well as those of humble station, men of all races and all creeds, there springs concord and never discord. Therein lies our strength. To-day you have been made, as we are told in a portion of our ritual, "Brother to a king, fellow to a prince or to a beggar, if a Mason and found worthy". As we are reminded in the Ancient Charges to be found in the "Book of Constitutions" - "Freemasonry is therefore a point of unity between good men and true, and affords a happy conciliation of friendship between those who would otherwise have been kept at a perpetual distance."

You may ask: Then why the need for secrecy? In the old days of Operative Masonry, when the art of building was handed down by word of mouth, there were very practical secrets - secrets which were most zealously guarded in order to keep the science of architecture within a certain privileged society. Being Speculative rather than Operative Masons, we have no use for practical secrets; the edifice we are erecting is in our hearts, and the plans and designs are writ large for all the world to see in the pages of the V.S.L.

In all ages the search for truth, for wisdom and for inspiration, has been associated with a withdrawal from the outer world with its manifold distractions, be it a withdrawal to a cavern, to a wilderness, or to a monastic cell. As Masons we must

have somewhere where we may withdraw for undisturbed contemplation of our Masonic duties, somewhere secluded from the prying eyes of the everyday world. Our secrets are our shield. It is as if we set aside in the innermost recesses of our hearts a small study, the four walls of which are our secrets and mysteries, and to which only - but all - our Brethren possess the key; every Brother is welcome.

Our ceremonies, Brother Initiate, you cannot yet hope to understand; but as you progress in the art, as you watch, as you take part in and, I hope, eventually conduct those ceremonies, you will find our ritual and our symbolism will grow upon you until it becomes rooted in your whole being. You will learn that there is nothing in our Lodges, whether furniture, jewel, or ornament, which is not there for a special purpose; you will find the study of our symbolism of absorbing interest.

At our assemblies you will find rest after the toil of the day, you will find instruction in your duties, and you will find good cheer, that inevitable cheerfulness arising from the association of Brethren who lay aside all cares and sorrows of the outer world when they don their aprons and enter the Lodge. You will make many new and loyal friends, and you will discover new ties to strengthen old friendships. Above all, you are now provided with a passport, more potent than any which a Government can grant, which, if used wisely and discreetly, will assure you of warm and brotherly welcome the whole world over wherever Masonry flourishes.

You will, it is true, be called upon to exercise your charity when in a position to gratify your honourable sentiments; but let me remind you that wherever it is suggested in our ritual that such a call may be made upon you, there is always the qualification that it must be without detriment to yourself or to your connections. Be is no better a Mason who gives without prudence.

Finally, Brother Initiate, I will remind you of that great affirmation of trust which you made with the unseen and the unknown around you at the outset of the ceremony through which you passed to-day. Our whole Masonic teaching tends to strengthen that

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trust, until the whole background of your life becomes instinct with it. Thus, if dark clouds gather, if doubts and difficulties assail you, and the good things of life seem to be passing you by, then trusting in such sure support you may face your troubles boldly; standing firm and erect, you may take courage, inspiration and solace from the knowledge that you are a Mason.

Brother Initiate, in the name of the Lodge I extend to you a hearty welcome into our Fraternity. May your Masonry, begun this day, run through your whole life as a golden thread, leading you through many happy years of useful and successful service, until it may please F.G.A.O.T.U. to summon you to the Grand Lodge Above, your memory honoured by those of your fellow men whose lives you may have brightened and inspired by your own example, particularly your Brethren among Masons.

Brethren, although I referred to this toast a few minutes ago as the toast of the evening, I ask you to rise and honour it as it must be to our Initiate the toast of a lifetime.

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