

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE E.A. DEGREE

In many quarters serious concern is being caused by the continual falling off in the active ranks of the Craft.

To some extent this shrinkage is due to modern economic conditions, but it cannot be denied that an important factor is the failure of Lodges and sponsors of candidates to "afford assistance and instruction to Brethren in the inferior Degrees."

What advantage is there in being able to recite the ritual verbally perfect, and yet be unable to understand its hidden mysteries and spiritual meaning?

Notwithstanding the urge given by Masonic experts there are numerous Brethren who never try to solve the meaning of Masonic Symbols, or to discover the spiritual truth underlying the words of the ritual. Their only ambition, after attaining the status of a Master Mason, seems to be to get through the Chair - quite a laudable ambition - but if that is their one and only desire, with no wish or attempt to understand the inspiring message of Masonry to mankind, then it is no wonder that they find themselves subsequently in possession of the mask, with no experience of the sweetness of the kernel within.

Happy is the E.A. who is initiated in a Lodge where the Master can explain to him those things which lie beneath the surface of the Initiation Ceremony, and thrice happy is he whose proposer and sponsor are so enlightened as to be able to explain to him the hidden spiritual truth behind the test questions, to which he must reply, as he progresses from one Degree to another.

An initiate thus blest in the early stages of his Masonic Career will never become a Masonic bankrupt in the spiritual sense, but will develop strength and vision at every step he takes.

Masonry is a remarkable Fraternity in that it offers the things that men have sought in all ages and in all countries - a bond of friendship, a stimulus to upward progress, a form of ritual observance, and a gathering place for congenial souls. To build things, to grow things in a literal or figurative sense, are the chief concerns of mankind, and these things are done in



Masonry.

Freemasonry is generally conceded to have had its beginning among a band of workers - men whose pleasures were derived not from the artificial but from the real. They believed and taught that by the application of certain principles, many of which the tools of their trade symbolised, man could live a more useful life - a life whose influence would not be limited to the short span of the individual, but would, through their good deeds, contribute to human welfare through the centuries.

That the origin of Freemasonry is somewhat ~~secure~~ need not trouble us.

The glory of Freemasonry is not in its antiquity, nor in the form of symbolism it uses, but in those great ideals of life, for which it stands, and those high principles of character and conduct, which it enforces. These draw staunch and stalwart manhood into its mystic circle, and give it its glory.

Freemasonry is a course of instruction in morality, in philosophy, in the principles of right living, and in spiritual truth for which the F.A. Degree is a preparation.

All selfish purposes and unworthy desires must be left behind; this is the meaning of the H....W....k and the C...T...

The S.A. in the "convenient room adjoining the Lodge" begins a development of mind and soul, that has perfection for its goal. The degree is an initiation into a beloved Fraternity, into a venerable Institution, and into a splendid inheritance of lofty thinking and heroic action. It brings to a man a challenging opportunity to live the Masonic life of uprightnes, usefulness and aspiration.

The C....T.... in its first inception, seems to have been used as a physical means of controlling the C....., such an explanation still being given, but in reality it is symbolical of a new birth. The Candidate is initiated into a new life, and the C....T.... is not removed until he has voluntarily dedicated himself to live the good life.

Copyright Worcester-shire Masonic Library and Museum Trust



The deprivation of W. and M...S... implies all that clogs and clings to us from our associations in the outer world. These constitute our W...P..., but are actually our limitations and not our real wealth.

While undoubtedly the original meaning of "free and of full age" referred to slaves and serfs, this could not be the present day application. It now means that the candidate is to be a free man in the moral rather than the civil sense, voluntarily offering himself for the work, and free from all attachments hindering its achievement. He is to be of "full age" - full bodily and mental maturity - an sound judgment is essential and strict morals imperative.

"To be of good report" is to "speak truth". A man of quality is invariably marked by charm, an impressiveness and a sincerity absent from other men. He possesses "the tongue of good report" -----

The Prayer is an expression of the desire to know God's will, and for strength to follow it; while the implication of the confession of trust in Him is that, as Freemasonry is a system of moral mysticism, faith in God, and in eternal life, is a necessity to aid the candidate to secure a closer conception of his duty to God and man, to develop his spiritual faculties, and to exalt and refine his life in fellowship and service.

The foregoing remarks are transcribed from a lecture to the Mersey-side Association for Masonic Research by Bro. the Rev. Joseph Johnson (P.A.G. Chaplain).

Interesting references and interpretations were also given in regard to the Altar, the V.W.L., the W.T.'s and the Three Grand Principles, and the lecture was concluded with the following eloquent address :-

Brethren :- We are here only for a few years, if Masonry means anything at all we ought to be better men for being in association with it. In a short time - and the wisest of us knows

not how soon - we shall come to that fatal threshold, where the philosopher ceases to be wise and the song of the poet is silent; where the poor man is as rich as the richest, and the rich man is as poor as the poorest; where the strongest has no supremacy, and the weakest need no defence; and where the proud man surrenders his dignities, and the worldling his pleasures. Is it not therefore of supreme importance that we take our Masonry seriously, and practice out of the Lodge in every walk of life, the duties we have been taught, and thereby prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our Ancient and Honourable Institution.

-----

vide The Freemason 10th October, 1932.

-----

Copyright Worcestershire Masonic Library and Museum Trust