

POWER OF INFLUENCE OF FREEMASONRY.

Address by R.W. Bro. Sir Kynaston Studd to Arcadian Lodge
Masonic Study Circle.

Sir Kynaston Studd addressed the Circle on the power and influence of Freemasonry. Commencing in a personal note, he told of his introduction to Freemasonry. Vague ideas in reference to it had come to him when at Cambridge. On route to America he met a man who told him more, and in particular that all meetings began with prayer. His next impression, years afterwards, was while he was Honorary Secretary to the Polytechnic. Returning from a holiday he found that two of the men working with him had become Freemasons. It did not seem right that they should have some knowledge which he did not have access to, so he decided to become a Freemason. He then discovered the extreme generosity of Brethren towards Masonic charities, and learnt the great influence of Masonry in that direction. Some people claimed that Freemasonry was a religion; others looked on it as a philosophy. To him Freemasonry was a rule of conduct founded on principles accepted by all; Freemasonry was religious but not a religion.

A short while ago he was privileged to go with a delegation to India, and was greatly interested by seeing the effect of Freemasonry among peoples of different creeds and civilisations. Wherever they journeyed in every quarter of India men of diverse creeds were present in the Lodges. In some Lodges there were four Va.O.T.S.L. representing different beliefs. Everywhere they met in fraternal amity. In Madras a Brother, replying for the guests, remarked how extraordinary it was that he should be dining with them, because if he had invited any of them to dine with him in his own home a screen would have been placed between him and them, as he was a Brahmin. Thus circumstances which separated one man from another outside the

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Lodge were entirely removed in Lodge. At another place Brethren who had travelled over 200 miles to meet the deputation and local Brethren, were asked what language they used in their communications with the local Brethren. They replied: "English." Another instance illustrating the influence of Freemasonry was furnished by a high official who knew of only two cases in which Freemasonry and politics had clashed. To those Brethren it was pointed out that in the particular course they were following, their Masonic obligation was being ignored, and it would be necessary to give up one or the other. One chose to adhere to his politics and the other to Freemasonry; the former has since regretted his choice.

Speaking of the visit to Burma, Sir Kynaston Studd told of the Lodges where Chinamen held high office. In one Lodge the deputation attended by different religions were represented. In Ceylon there was the same kind of thing, though perhaps in a smaller degree. Everywhere they went they realised that Freemasonry provided an accepted basis of union which placed a great power for good in the hands of Freemasons. What about extending that power? Freemasonry was not a theory - it was a practice; and its extension must rest primarily with the individual. They were told that what they learnt in their Lodges they were to practice outside. The principles which dominated their life inside the Lodge must be manifested outside. If they really absorbed these essentials in the Lodge they could not help interpreting them through their life in the world outside.

Sir Kynaston Studd stressed that the Ritual meant more than something just to enable one to reach the Master's Chair and carry through certain ceremonies. They needed to absorb it into themselves. An analysis followed, showing the progressive nature of the degrees of Freemasonry. First, there was the foundation; next, expansion and development; and then worship, which involved fidelity, even unto death.

The final revelation was that God was the centre of everything. Throughout the world, by whatever name known, by whatever forms worshipped, God was one and the same.

Reference had already been made to the Brethren's exceptional generosity. Did we realize how much Freemasonry did give? Every year they raised some £250,000 for the three great Masonic charities. In addition, provincial and district funds disbursed many thousands. The Hospital absorbed great sums also, and the Fund of Benevolence distributed between £30,000 and £40,000 annually. The speaker begged those who gave so generously not to be satisfied with merely giving, but to visit the Masonic schools and the other institutions, and see for themselves the splendid work being done.

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