

24th May 1939.

Some items of masonic interest.

In the 4th section of the 1st lecture, we get the following paragraph, and the same words are also to be found in the explanation of the first T.E. :-

"The Universe is the Temple of the Deity, whom we serve; Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty are about His throne as pillars of His works, for His Wisdom is infinite, His Strength omnipotent, and Beauty shines through the whole of the Creation in symmetry and order. The heavens He has stretched forth as a canopy; the earth He has planted as a footstool; He crowns His Temple with Stars as with a diadem, and with His hand He extends the power and glory. The Sun and Moon are messengers of His will, and all His law is concord. The three great Pillars supporting a Freemason's L...e are emblematic of those Divine attributes, and further represent S.K. of I., H.K. of T. and H.A. "

This is only one item of symbolism, or perhaps I ought to say, a series of items; and it will not be out of place at this stage to remind ourselves of the question "What is freemasonry?"; and the reply -----

We find in our lectures, and in our ritual, many references to King Solomon's temple, and also to the earlier tabernacle, both of which were constructed

in accordance with detailed plans previously revealed or made known. Sometimes we wonder why so much elaborate details have been recorded; and also why certain materials were to be employed; and why definite colors were to be introduced. Even the workmen were most carefully selected for their special skill; and the chosen people, the Israelites, were not the only workers, a selection being made from all the surrounding countries. Sacred and profane history can be referred to on most of these points; and I suggest that there is an endless series of symbolism relative to the design, materials, construction and uses of the temple, that will continue to occupy our minds and the minds of many generations that may come after us. There is divine inspiration behind the whole structure and in every detail of it. Our job is to search, to look around, to examine, and to study, so that we may profit by the beautiful work planned and accomplished by our ancient brethren. They have transmitted to us the allegories and the symbols. We have to discover the key. Having found the key, we can try it; and step by step we shall find our way to the light, to life, to the hidden mysteries of nature and science, and through the veil to the glorious beyond. You will remember something of this step by step progress: at first, the careful ones maintained contact with mother earth, and the best that can be said for many of them is that they shuffled forward like a blind man. Still, it was a progressive move on their part in more than one

sense. Theoretically, the next progressive movement was forward, upward, and around, without losing touch with the centre to which our attention was directed on the first T.B. Our ascent was to give us a wider, broader view of the world around; and surely that was also to typify the uplifting and expansion of our mind and of our outlook on life from a higher plane. Finally, there was the triumph over the finite portion of our selves; and the bold, triumphant, straightforward steps to the beyond. You can see in this a wealth of symbolism, and it should not be difficult to apply it in a variety of ways.

Let us go back and look at this learning, study, and progress in another way. The newly born child gropes about for its food, but quickly finds the way to it in a very few days. Later on, in the "spoon" stage, it has a wish to feed itself; and how we enjoy watching the early attempts at finding the mouth with the spoon. We have even handed a piece of chocolate to an infant so as to note the mess that is usually made. Now what sort of mess do we make when we set out to learn to do something new? Our fingers are all thumbs, we have two left-hands, we fall over our own feet; and generally speaking we feel ourselves to be quite as awkward as the youngsters to whom reference has just been made. But, in due course, by continuous application, by proper diligence and study, we become proficient in our

work and in our play. In the processes of studying, learning and working on a problem, we say that we are going to hammer at it until it is right - we are going to lick it into shape, and so on. We are thus working in a quarry, like the men of Gebel, the Giblemites or stonequarers. That is when we are seeking the truth, or truths; for stone in the V.M.L. corresponds to truth. The same line of reasoning will apply when we say that we are working in timber, brass, silver, and gold; for you will remember that all these materials were used in the construction of the temple. Each has a symbolism or correspondence. Each is necessary in the work of construction; and each corresponds to a human attribute, as we have seen on previous occasions. Gold, for example, is representative of love; and every day we use words and phrases carrying this sense, perhaps without noticing that we are going so. Sometimes (may be not very often) we refer to a child as "good as gold", or to an individual as having "a heart of gold". That person's heart is like yours and mine - flesh and blood - but it is always understood that we are referring to the person's kind disposition and character. Brass, on the other hand, something harder than gold, looking like gold when burnished, when kept at work, indicates the more common every day good works of a necessary character if the world (our world) is to run smoothly, happily, and satisfactorily. It is much more common than gold; and so are the characteristics

corresponding to the two metals.

Stone, however, must be our item of special interest on this occasion, and it may not be out of place to study it, its uses, and what it stands for or corresponds to.

The formation of rock and stone ante-dates all known history. It varies considerably both in the material of which it consists and the method of formation. Layer upon layer of certain substances, under pressure, have become slate, coal, chalk, etc. etc. Other substances have become granite, etc. etc. under immense heat. The final state of this stone or rock depends upon the original substances and methods of formation, but speaking generally, fire, water, and air were and still are the great forming agencies in collecting and making the various types of stone or rock as known to us to-day. We must not forget that the list includes not only chalk, slate, coal, sandstone, granite, marble, etc., but crystals, iron, lead, silver, gold, platinum, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and many other precious stones and metals.

As to the uses to which these materials may be put, the list is very lengthy, as we can well imagine; and perhaps at this stage we may remind ourselves of the facts that formation has been and still is continuous, just as uses were found many ~~years~~<sup>ages</sup> ago, and are still being discovered, or as we say, brought to light. In

other words, stone (to give the various forms a general name) has existed in a variety of forms from time immemorial, and so has truth. Just as uses have been found for this stone, and a large variety of such uses, so fresh truths have been brought to light, and are still coming to light, and are being used. We use the word rock or stone in a large variety of ways. "The Lord is my Rock" is one quotation from the Psalms of David. "Rock of ages, cleft for me", was a hymn inspired in the poetic mind of a man visiting the Cheddar district. Mention of "the rock" carries our mind to Gibraltar. Stonehenge is a landmark, the origin of which is still wrapped in obscurity. Stone circles are fairly common, but their origin and use are probably not more than guessed at. Places of burial, and ancient places of outdoor worship and sacrifice, are still marked by stones. Man's first weapons and tools were probably flint stones, and specimens are frequently found, together with the wonderful work done by such tools.

Nowadays trees, hedges and fences of wood or iron, mark boundaries of fields and estates; but in ancient times, stones were set up as landmarks. These being more or less easy to move, there was a law given by Moses - "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark". The places of great historical events were marked by great stones; and we may recall Jacob's resting place on his outward journey from his home to the place of his uncle

Leban. To commemorate his dream or vision, when there was conveyed to him the great promise of his future greatness, he set up a stone, and called the name of the place Bethel (The house of God). When Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the promised land of Canaan, twelve stones were placed in the river bed, by instructions of Joshua, to mark the place where the feet of the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant had actually been; and twelve stones were taken from the river bed and set up as a memorial that the waters of Jordan were cut off to allow the passage of the people dry foot. From these few records, and there are many more, it will be noted that stones were used to signify or indicate great facts or truths; so that we may see why to this day in the V.S.L. stones correspond to truths.

We have seen from a brief quotation that symbolically "The Universe is the Temple of the Deity". Frequently we have been taught the truth that King Solomon is typical of the man who desires to make of himself a house or temple fit and worthy of the living God. Solomon himself built a temple, of which we have a wealth of details in the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles - but all those details would prove to be "dry" reading matter unless we were to appreciate and try to understand the hidden meanings and symbolism. My purpose now is to deal only with one small portion of the

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of the account, and to try to disclose the symbolic meaning.

In the first book of Kings, chapter 6, and at verse 7 we read :-

"And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building."

Solomon, in his humility, asked for wisdom. Not only was that granted to him in very full measure so that the wisdom of Solomon is a proverb even unto this day, but riches, honor, and long life were additional blessings granted to him because of his meekness and humility. His wisdom showed him the desirability, the necessity, for drawing his prepared stones from the quarry, so that these stones might be placed in position without alteration, chipping or changing. We have seen that stones signify truths when the word is used in the V.S.L. While it is true that Solomon built a wonderful temple, the whole story of it is recorded as a Divine Parable, and is simply full of the same type of symbolism that we now find in our ritual and lectures. This present paper actually starts with such an example from one of our lectures.

In the V.S.L. we are taught that the ten fundamental commandments were recorded originally on



tables or tablets of stone, and were placed in the Ark of the Covenant for safety. Those same commandments, those truths, are applicable to us to-day just as they were to the Israelites of old; and also in the V.S.L. there are to be found for our good many other important truths and examples of sound characters for us to follow and upon which we shall do well to found, establish, and build up like characters in ourselves. If we can recognize, receive, and apply these great and noble truths, these stones taken from the Divine Quarry (the V.S.L.) and use them, just as they are, there will be no sound of hammer or axe or tool of iron in the process of building. We shall be upright men, working on the level, and acting on the square. Our friends and neighbors will get from us a square deal: we shall have a heart of gold, and shall not be hard-hearted, our voice will be soft and clear as from a silver trumpet: and ours will be wisdom, good health, honor, and riches of every kind.

But, if we find it desirable to make large or small modifications in the truths and commandments, to adjust these to our own very special circumstances, (and human weakness inclines us this way) we are lifting up the tools of iron, the hammer and the axe, which may be said to represent or correspond to self-derived intelligence - not true knowledge, understanding, and wisdom - and our character must suffer accordingly; the corners and edges will have been removed, and the shape

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will have been changed.

What says Shakespeare :-

There's a divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough hew them how we will.

That surely is an inspired passage, and is helpful to us. The plan is given to us, the truth, the shape, is provided, but if we profane it with our tools of iron, the whole is spoilt.

We are all borrowers and lenders, in a large or small way, of both material and other things; although Shakespeare warns us to be neither. When, however, we are in search of knowledge and truth, perhaps we are justified in asking permission to make good use of the words of another. I have asked for and obtained permission to read to you the following phrases written and delivered by our non-masonic friend, the Rev. S.J. C. Goldson, and nothing of my own will be added to mar or spoil what he has to say on this interesting subject :-

"Solomon the wise man, brought the stone from the quarry where it was cut and prepared for use; and<sup>56</sup> it was brought away so was it built into the noble structure.

The wise disciple of the Lord should come to the quarry of the Divine Word and receive from the Quarry Master clearcut specific truths; words of distinctive

value; Doctrines all squared and polished for immediate use in the building of character. The wise disciple should take these stones and patiently, earnestly, intelligently seek the proper places for them; he should put them in position intact, untire, untouched by "hammer, axe, or any tool of iron" that would change their form or figure or fraction; diminish their magnitude or importance, and thus spoil their real purpose and use; and so prevent the building from being erected according to the Divine Plan.

The way of most of us is not that of the wise Solomon. We acquire truths from the Word; the Lord reveals specific commandments; He makes known to us truths of great beauty and strength, and we carry them away to our homes and look at them, and think about them and proudly shew them to others. But we do not always at once see how they fit in with what we are doing at that particular time; with the aspirations, desires, purposes we are intent upon; and so, too often, we straightway take some natural argument, some worldly consideration, some self-intelligent qualification and we modify a truth; we make it fit in with OUR idea; we make it smaller; we knock off this corner or that; we change its possibility of service; whereas we ought to have carefully, prayerfully sought to find out the specific position for that truth just as it is; for thus only can

we build the character or soul on the grand scale and  
to the pattern the Lord has in view: we spoil the truth;  
we attain to a building that is mean and feeble, poor and  
commonplace."

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