

The Significance of the Fellowcraft Degree.

Masonry is a progressive science, and is divided into different classes or degrees for the more regular advancement in the knowledge of its mysteries. In the first degree we are taught the duties we owe to God, our neighbour and ourselves. In the degree of a Fellowcraft, we are led to contemplate the intellectual faculties, and to trace them in their development through the paths of Heavenly science, even to the throne of God himself, and more thoroughly inducted into the mysteries of moral science, and learn to trace the goodness and majesty of the Creator by minutely analyzing his works.

In seeking to grasp the meaning of the universe, its structure workings and purpose, and the place of Man in the scheme of things, our Masonic Fathers compared life to architecture. Upon this analogy the whole symbolic structure of Masonry is built.

Josephus, writing of the building of K. S. Temple informs us:- Now the whole structure of the Temple was made with great skill of polished stones, and those laid together so very harmoniously and smoothly that there appeared to the spectators no sign of any hammer or other instrument of architecture, but as if, without any use of them, the entire material had naturally united themselves together, that the agreement of one part with another seemed rather to have been natural than to have arisen from the force of tools upon them, and as certain of our forebears reflected on the magnificence and unique construction of K.S.T., it impressed them as symbolic of the universe. They reasoned: As K.S.T. pre-supposes an architect and definite plans, so creation demands a Creator: the Universe a supreme Architect. So in Masonry the Universe is viewed as one vast structure, which owes its existence to the G.C.O.T.U., and as Man too is a builder, he is engaged in the construction of personal character. For this sublime task he is supplied in the Fellowcraft degree with abundant materials, worthy pattern and explicit instructions. The candidate is instructed to view Masonry as a progressive process. It emphasizes the need of advancement in personal knowledge and control.

It is perhaps best illustrated by the winding staircase. These are symbolic of that steep ascent that must be made by all those who would live on the highest plane of Masonic behaviour. Life, figuratively speaking, is lived on a slope, a slope so precipitous that it is impossible to stand still; we are either strenuously striving upward or sliding backward, and whatever a man's qualities or qualifications, his highest usefulness can only be achieved through association and concerted effort with the use of the S.L. & P. and never to forget that the Brotherhood of man depends on the conduct of the Brother.

Founded as the Ritual is on the building of K.S.T, it follows naturally that tools and implements of the stone and brickmason's calling should be used to impress the fundamental truths of morality, ethics, and right living. The Sq. L. & P.R. were commonly used tools of the Ancient Builders as they are those of the operative masons of today. What could be more appropriate than that the Sq. should be chosen to symbolise morality, "Q" Square thyself for use, a stone that may fit in the wall is not left in the ways" is an old Persian proverb. What could better symbolise the equality upon which Masons meet than the Level. That simple instrument "The P.R." by which perpendiculars are established could not be improved upon as an indication of uprightness; in action as in position. In the 7th Chapter of Amos 7 & 8 verses we read: Thus he shewed me with a plumb-line upon a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand, And the Lord said unto me, Amos what seest thou? and I said a plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel I will not again pass by them anymore.

The H'sn or Sn of P. took its rise at the time when J fought the battles of the Lord, for it was in this position he prayed fervently to the Almighty to continue the light of day until he had completed the overthrow of his enemies.

There was nothing more remarkable or more particularly struck the attention than the 2 great pillars which stood at the porchway entrance of K.S.T. These Pillars or Monuments were cast in the clay ground near Jerusalem of a material we know to have been brass, which shows that a knowledge of mechanical chemistry was then among the many accomplishments of the day. Thus we may see that 1015 years before the Christian Era or its coincident time "The Roman Era" a civilisation existed which has come down through the centuries unimpaired, unaltered and still effective enough to continue to leave its stamp upon every step we take in art, or the kindred reaches toward the beauties of life befitting the pictures of the mind we draw upon our Tracing Boards.

So these Pillars combined in their blends of symmetry all the orders of architecture then known and still followed as examples of perfect work.

History, found both in our Bible and the Talmud tells us that these shafts were raised at the very entrance to K.S.T. to commemorate the successful pilgrimage of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt. They were named B. and J. because of this and because of the fulfilment of the promise given to David. In strength will I establish this mine Kingdom for ever. We may pause here to give another thought to the reasonableness of tradition. History tells us that God promised these things to David if he would obey the law as contained in the Gospel. We may discover ourselves saying contemplatively. Do you suppose any man ever held a conversation with the Supreme Being?

All this evidence of circumstance and condition tell us that the story is true.

Conditions and circumstances are testifying daily to us that we can and do talk with God, and get his advice, and feel his guiding hand when we place ourselves in a position to hold this converse.

There's yet a voice within the Breast
 that answers every prayer,
 And if we follow where it leads
 We'll go where days are fair.
 Its truths are not of cant nor creed
 Nor yet a harsh farewell
 To happiness - without the Crown
 Nor fear of death, nor hell.
 It's just a wireless telepath
 between one's God and Man
 Who whispers thus his promise
 As we believe he can.

Now the P. called B. stood on the left or Northernmost side and J. on the right or southernmost side of the entrance to K.S.T. We also learn that in addition to commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian captivity, that they were intended to mark the progress of the Arts and Sciences - the strides of civilisation which the world had witnessed during the reigns of David and Solomon his Son, Kings of Israel.

You will readily follow the placing of these Pillars north and south - symbolic of the custom thus originated - of building our temples east and west where possible. Symbolic also of the promise, so it came to pass that our Jewish Brethren did establish this their national house of worship in Wisdom, Strength and Beauty.

We may here again touch on symbolism by noting the two globes, spheres or balls, surmounting the Pillars. Upon their surfaces you may read the maps of heaven and earth. One shewing the fixed stars and the other the delineations of the known countries and continents, seas and distances as it were, commemorative of the fact that Israel was in the forefront at the time, in discovery, and the fostering and perpetuation, of world knowledge so essential to that progress consequent upon the leadership of the Monarch of the World - Solomon, King of Israel. We may be questioned as to the possibility or probability of these globes having appeared on the monuments really before, or in advance, of the knowledge that the world was round. Let us turn for answer to the story of Pythagoras who lived 200 years after K.S. time. It is a known fact that he invented the 47th problem of Euclid, still first and foremost as a solution in mathematics. In the book written by Pythagoras and still available in readable form called "Spheres and Their Music" he portrayed a round earth. The fragmentary accounts given by his disciples or followers here and there quote him as having obtained his first knowledge of a round earth from the Egyptian Schools, who held it to be a fact for two or three hundred years before his time and before the time of S.M. of Israel.

Be all these things but a surmise or conclusion, there remains this fact; that the symbolism portrayed in these completed Pillars guarding the imposing entrance to the world famous T of Solomon evidenced one foremost fact - that this T of the living God was intended to herald to the world that he indeed, this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was Lord of Earth and Sky and all that therein is. So these Pillars, raised, decorated and made use of were the most important far-reaching and comprehensive tribute and acknowledgement for all time of the existence and belief in the G.A.O.T.U. in whom on the earth, under the earth and beyond the sky, live and move and have their being.

Observing the sections of these Pillars, note the interwoven fabric or lace work. This clinging feature is, of course, symbolic of Unity, as the Lily white as snow would denote Peace - as the Pomegranates with their many seeds would denote Plenty. So upon these monuments S told the world that within his kingdom were to be found Unity, Peace and Plenty.

You who may be fortunate enough to take up the study of Masonry as a science will find the immortal figures of triangulation ever recurring in the combination of three. So let us follow down the line of the Symbolism of the Pillars, we find with Unity, Peace and Plenty, Faith, Hope and Charity, Youth, Manhood and old Age. The 3 great lights and the 3 degrees of Masonry - The 3 celestial lights - The Sun, Moon and Stars. We may compare in this way all the completed features of earth and of heaven, we have faith in finding union, beginning and accomplishment everywhere and giving an account of, and for all things. So is the divinity of man shown as a part of the Creator's handiwork, in as much as all created things to endure, are dependent upon a fellow. As they cling they live. The Hindoo triangle follows nature - It is Earth, Water and Air.

As you knelt at the Altar in initiation, you typified by your presence and the position of that C tow - the point within the circle. These three, all yours - and all there is to man - an immortal spirit, a mortal body, and that continuous or never-ending circle about you. You were the point. This is the world sign of immortality as portrayed by the science of numbers and philosophy of Nature. So in the degree of Fellowcraft, you are again partaking of the sacrament of salvation. The last step you take atop the flight of winding stairs is the step that

opens the door for you to the Holy of Holies.

Thus has the Fellowcraft degree in our beloved Craft been the messenger of a God who doeth all things, knoweth all things and liveth forever and forever.

Now I will call your attention to another feature of this splendid degree, separate and apart from what we may read on the Pillars. I refer to the establishment in the fellowcraft degree of a complete and intimate connection between operative and speculative masonry.

This is the prominent part given to the Arts and Sciences, Geometry, the working Tools and the 39-L and PR. In an old Ritual published in New York in 1853 - 90 yrs. ago. They have in the fellowcraft degree. The 5 senses of Human Nature which is called "An analysis of the human faculties" in which the external senses of Hearing, Seeing, Feeling, Smelling and Tasting form a very interesting study. Unfortunately they are too lengthy for me to give in this reading, but they finish as follows:-

To sum up the whole of this transcendent measure of God's bounty to man, we shall add that memory, imagination, taste, reasoning, moral perception, and all the active powers of the soul, present a vast and boundless field for philosophical disquisition, which far exceeds human enquiry, and are peculiar mysteries known only to nature, and to nature's God, to whom all are indebted for creation, reservation and every blessing we enjoy.

The 7 Liberal Arts and Sciences you are all so well acquainted with that I only propose to say a few words on the advantages and history of Geometry.

The Working Tools and Operative Masonry.

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operative Masonry, the second or third degree of Fellowcraft was for years the highest pinnacle to which craftsmen aspired. Masters came in time and place. Craftsmen who worked with their hands, hearts and brain banded together as Masons formed a fair-sized army. They met in Fellowcraft Lodges and perfected their mighty plans for the uplift and civilisation of the world, by means of their widespread campaigns of education. The mighty art of building strong and beautiful structures - Churches, Temples and Cathedrals in the fine long step from primitive ignorance to perfect symmetry was first brought about in Fellowcraft Lodges. From this beginning grew the "perfect Asplar" we see today. Your stately city hall, St. Peter's at Rome; St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and every monument to the genius of man and the blessings of God owe their form and feature to our early craftsmen. Every architect, every teacher of the Arts and Sciences is to be found worshipping at the shrine of Masonry's example, even as he pays homage to the Deity. Masonry's altars are indeed sacred places. What this world owes to Masonry may never be computed, except one may say with pride it is all within the first square or angle of a Mason's work. So we may learn to acquire the square to all we build of brick, stone, wood, or indeed, that house not made with hands - character.

We are the descendants of those old operative masons or actual builders, who created the great cathedrals of England, but whereas they were operative builders, we are now purely speculative.

There are two of these sacred edifices which particularly merit our attention. They are Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral -

St. Paul's Cathedral was commenced in 1675 and completed in 1710. The Masons who built St. Paul's held their meetings at the Goose and Gridiron Ale House in St. Paul's Churchyard, and Sir Christopher Wren was for 18 years a member of this old Lodge.

There are many objects of interest to Freemasons (especially those of our Brethren from abroad) to be found in St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, and one is interested to note the union of classic details and style with the essentially Gothic structure of St. Paul's and the numerous monuments of those great naval and military heroes who helped to make the history of our vast Empire.

Over the S portico is a phoenix with the inscription "Resurgam" and it is related and will be of much interest to those of you in another degree, that, when the position and dimensions of the great dome had been marked out, a labourer was ordered to bring a stone from the rubbish of the old Cathedral to be placed as a guide to the Masons. The stone which he happened to bring was a piece of a gravestone with nothing of the inscription remaining save the one word "Resurgam" in large letters. This incident was regarded as a favourable omen, and the word accordingly adopted as a motto.

The eight large mosaics in the spandrel of the Dome represent St. Matthew, St. John, St. Mark and St. Luke, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, while on the panels below the stone ribs of the roof are 6 figures of virtue - Hope, Fortitude, Charity, Truth, Chastity and Justice between the clerestory windows on the S side are David, Solomon, Apoliab, Berzakeel Moses and Jacob. Along the S corridor on the wall

at each end of a monument are pieces of stone believed to be original stones belonging to K.S. T. at Jerusalem

The builders of Westminster Abbey too had their Fellowcraft Lodge called the St. Stephens Lodge, and their Lodgings or Refectory was at Tothill Street near the Abbey where they slept, stored their tools and had their meals, being called from Refreshment to labour and labour to Refreshment. They also had their little social gatherings, and were very fond of amateur theatricals. Their favourite drama was the tragedy and death of Hiram Abiff, and there is no doubt that a considerable portion of this drama was used when the traditional history now found in our 3rd degree was completed by our Fathers in the speculative Masonry of today.

Westminster Abbey was entirely re-built by our predecessors, the old operative masons in the 13th Century.

With its royal burial vaults and long series of monuments to celebrated men, it is not unreasonably regarded by us as our National Temple of Fame, and interment within its walls is considered the last and greatest honour which the nation can bestow on the most deserving of her offspring.

The spaciousness and gloom of this vast edifice produces a profound and mysterious awe and reverence. We step cautiously and softly about as if fearful of disturbing the hallowed silence of the tomb, but there is also a feeling or atmosphere of peace and contentment and we feel that we are surrounded by those great men of past times who have filled history with their deeds, and the earth with their renown.

Should you happen to visit any of these old Cathedrals when under repair and examine any of the stones forming the main parts of the buildings, you will find carved out by the chisel on each stone the Mason's Mark or Masonic Emblem, and you can almost picture those old worthy masons laying those stones with loving care, believing that the G.G.O.T.U. with his all seeing Eye was watching them in building that house for his name, and it should remind us that within the peaceful walls of our respective Lodges, his all seeing Eye observes us and whilst we continue to act in conformity with the principles of the Craft, let us not fail to discharge our duties towards him with fervency and zeal, and in like manner of those old worthy masons, let us also leave our individual marks on the foundation stone of speculative masonry by expounding to our Initiates those eternal, moral and spiritual truths contained in our beautiful ritual which, when fully absorbed teaches us to build up our personal characters and fit ourselves for that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

All have a share in the beauty
All have a share in the plan
What does it matter what duty
Falls to the lot of a man
Someone has blended the plaster
Someone has carried the stone
Neither the man or the Master
Ever has builded alone.
Building a room from the weather
Or building a house for a King
Only by working together
Men have accomplished a thing.

Never has the mission of Freemasonry in promulgating the virtue of moderation and conciliation in this world, been needed more than at the present time. Founded on the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man and the life to come, Freemasonry has incorporated in its teachings some of the priceless jewels of life - amongst these are prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice, tolerance, virtue, brotherly love, relief, truth, faith, hope and charity. Along the highways of life, past the crossroads of error and doubt, it has erected many a signpost for the guidance and instruction of mankind. It teaches its initiates those eternal moral and spiritual truths contained in its beautiful ritual. Some of the finest men of each succeeding generation, gather round its altar. Men of all creeds, races and colours, each with his heart attuned to God, and each striving to do his duty to God, his neighbour and to himself. In some of the Lodges you will see three or even 4 different volumes of the Sacred Law, and Jews, Gentiles, Mahommedans and Hindus all seated together working in harmony and unity. Such is the power of the Masonic Trowel to cement brotherly love, peace and friendship and to level away all differences and distinctions of social position, creed and colour, and it is up to all of us who call ourselves Freemasons to assist in this noble work, by endeavouring to practice outside the Lodge those excellent precepts that we are taught within it, and by virtuous, amiable and discreet conduct, prove to this mad world of today with its strife, its turmoil and its bloodshed, the happy and beneficial effects of our ancient and honourable institution.

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