

## “THAT GLOOM WHICH RESTS . . .”

Q. What do you understand by ‘that gloom which rests on the prospect of futurity’? Does it mean that man must live in continual dread of death?

A. Taken on the face of these words alone and thinking of the present meaning of the word ‘gloom’ in our language it is not surprising if you should imagine that its import is as you suppose. Yet in this passage we have to remember three things.

The first is that these words are set in the context of an action that has already taken place for the one who hears them. Whatever the full nature of his feelings at this moment he must surely realise that whatever the darkness, or the place of his resting a little while ago, he has been restored to life with his companions and there is hope in his prospects. It is therefore most unlikely that he is being thrust back into a state of dependency and fear. It is not that kind of gloom.

The second is that the word is related to three others which are close to it - darkness, visible and veil. The word is thus meant to link with something connecting it to eventual light. It is not a state of mind but a stage of experience. Where the mason now stands is a place where he does not yet see the glory that is to be his for that is veiled from him by the limited, glimmering ray which only penetrates so far. The ‘gloom’ is in fact like the light of the ‘glamr’ (the ‘moon’ in old Norwegian) and the ‘gloaming’ of more modern Scots. He is in the twilight area which prevents us from yet seeing what lies ahead for us in the future.

The third is that at the end of the charge in which these words

occur the mason will be given the promise of how, by lifting his eyes up afresh, the gloom will be dispersed by ‘that bright morning star’ which will show what the future really does hold. It is simply present dimness which limits our vision - not fear and dread - for these will be trampled under our feet.

Neville B. Cryer

**ALL REMITTANCES**, for whatever purpose must be in favour of Q.C.C.C. Ltd. Please remember this as otherwise it means additional work for the staff.

## WHITHER DIRECTING YOUR COURSE?

Q. In one of our normal closings the J.W. states that he comes from the West whither he has been in search of the g.s. of a m.m. Could you please explain why he went to the West to find what had been lost? Surely the secrets of knowledge were originally in the East so why do we allow this form of words?

A. The late Harry Carr once remarked (*Freemason at Work*, p.370) that he wished he could help with this problem but that it was "always difficult to give a practical answer to a 'speculative' problem." Whilst recognising the judgement of so eminent a masonic scholar I should like to suggest two ways of unravelling the apparent conundrum that may commend themselves to brethren of differing standpoints.

The first is to interpret the words in terms of the 'world' as understood when our rituals were being first formed and when English Freemasonry was still avowedly Christian in inference. Set in that context the words of the 1730 exposure by Prichard:

Where are you going? To the West.

What are you going to do there? To seek for that which was lost and is now found . . . .

can surely be interpreted in terms of wise men from the East knowing that the culmination of all their knowledge has yet to be discovered. That would have been but a logical application in those days.

The second way, however, and one perhaps more appropriate for our own time, is to think in terms of the Temple of Solomon. If one sought the fulfilment of all truth and knowledge then one had quite literally to move from East to West in the temple precincts. The second degree tells us what was found in the approach westwards to the middle chamber and it was in the West that there lay the Holy of Holies. Is it not there that the true secrets of Hiram's building lay and are still to be sought?

Neville B. Cryer