



LODGE VEGAS # 32

MASTER

The Latin root mag had the general meaning of great—as in “magnitude”; it was the source of the Latin magister, head, chief, principal, the word of which “magistrate” was made. During the Middle Ages it fell into use as a conventional title applied to persons in superior rank, preserved in our own familiar “mister,” always written “Mr”, a colloquial form of “master.” Also it came to be used of a man who had overcome the difficulties in learning an art, thereby proving himself to be greater than his task, as when it is said of an artist who has overcome all the obstacles and difficulties of painting, “He is a master.” A Master Mason is so called because he has proved himself capable of mastering the work; also because he belongs to a Degree so named.

- **Source: 100 Words in Masonry**

The Model Master

By Most W. Bro William Mercer Wilson

To become the model Master of a Lodge should be the ambition of every Brother, and to discharge with efficiency and zeal the duties of that important office should be his most anxious desire. These duties are not confined to the mere repetition of a few phrases, learned by rote, but he should be enabled to instruct the Craft, not only as to the meaning and origin of our ceremonies, but also to explain to them the philosophy which is veiled in its allegories and illustrated by its symbols.

He should be able, also, to convince his Brethren, that all science and art, legitimately directed, are but lines that radiate towards the great "I AM;" that the Sciences are the media by which we are led to contemplate the goodness, greatness, wisdom and power, of the Great Architect of the Universe; and that the Arts are the modes we have developed of expressing our sense and admiration of the wondrous glories of an Almighty Father which are scattered around us.

The Master of a Lodge should also, in his life and in his conversation, be a model for his Brethren to admire and imitate, and should himself practice, out of the Lodge, those great moral doctrines and virtues which he inculcates within its walls. He should be punctual and methodical in all things, and, both by his character and conduct, command the respect, the esteem, and good will of all men; for, as the Master is supreme in his Lodge, and distinguished by his position in the Craft, so should he also be distinguished as the possessor of an irreproachable character, a dignified demeanor, an expanded intellect, and a liberal education. Happy and prosperous must those Lodges be which are governed by such men! - their time of meeting is looked forward to by the Brethren with the most pleasing anticipation. Prompt at the hour, every Brother is at his station,

and the work is carried on with pleasure and profit. The Worshipful Master who presides over his Lodge with ability, firmness, and decision; (for without force of character there can be no force of impression) whose manner is courteous yet dignified; whose decisions are consonant with reason and Masonic Law; and who dispenses light and information among the Craft, will ever be regarded by his Brethren as one who is entitled to their highest respect and their most fraternal regard.

The anxious enquirer after Truth and Light feels that he may appeal with confidence and safety to such a ruler of a Lodge, as to one who is not only able and willing to reward and advance him according to his ability and worth, but to one whose duty and high privilege it is to diffuse the beams of light and to scatter abroad the seeds of truth. The aspirant, animated by the love of truth, uninfluenced by mercenary motives, duly appreciating the philosopher's apothegm, that "Knowledge is Power," and prompted by higher desires, eagerly presses forward, believing in a nobler destiny and aspiring after a brighter record; it is the Master's duty to assist him in his research - it is his high privilege to "pour the balm of instruction o'er the mind," to fill it with light, to stir up its powers, and to raise it to its proper supremacy over matter. It is for him to bestow upon the neophyte - if he finds him worthy and qualified - not only wealth but power also; not the wealth that corrupts its owner, nor the power which enslaves its dependent, but the ennobling wealth of wisdom and the enduring power of knowledge.

The Financial affairs of the Lodge are managed by such a Master with prudence and economy - he regards debts due either by or to his Lodge peculiarly as debts of honor, and takes care to have them promptly arranged - the Brethren, loving the man and respecting his authority, submit to his decision with cheerfulness and alacrity, and are ready at all times to aid him in his efforts to advance the interests of the Order. The cement with which he has bound the Brethren together is not confined to the Lodge Room, but is carried out into the world, and practical illustrations of friendship and brotherly love are daily exemplified. Time will not now permit me to enlarge upon the various qualities and virtues which adorn the model Master. I must therefore leave the subject for the present, and conclude by remarking, that I feel proud and happy in being enabled to say that, I believe, we have among us many Masters and Past Masters of Lodges who are an honor to the Fraternity and the Order-many, who are not only Masters of men but also of work, and who are indeed entitled to the proud distinction of being regarded as the cream of the Craft.

- Source: The Craftsman 1866

THE MEN'S HOUSE

By Bro. Joseph Fort Newton, England

(This address, first given in the form of a sermon to a company of Masons, is published in response to many requests, Brethren wishing to go further in the study of The Men's House may find it scientifically presented by Prof. Hutton Webster, in his "Primitive Secret Societies," especially chapters 1-4 and 10-11.)

AFTER all, the great secret of Masonry is that it has no secret, and might better be called the Open Secret of the World. If it retires into the tyled recesses of the lodge and works in the quiet and privacy thereof, it is the better to teach in parable, symbol, emblem and drama those great and simple truths which are to our human world what light and air are to the natural world. When a young man enters a Masonic lodge he is asked whence he came, and what he has come to do. Today let us reverse that order of inquiry and ask of Masonry the question which she asks of all who bow at her altar: Whence it has come, and what service it has to render to humanity? Time does not allow us to answer such questions in detail, but perhaps a brief sketch may provoke others to pursue the study, and thus learn how far back the story of Masonry goes, and how deeply it is rooted in the nature, need and aspiration of the race.

In primitive society there were four institutions, with three of which we are familiar, but the fourth is not so well known. There was, first of all, the most fundamental, the Home the cornerstone of society and civilization. It was crude, as all things were in the morning of the world, yet it had in it the prophecy of that enshrinement of beauty and tenderness into which we were born, and the memory of which remains to consecrate us. There was the Temple of Prayer--not a temple at first, but only a rough altar of uncut stone--uplifted by the same instinct for the Eternal which built the great cathedrals. Its rites were rude, often grotesque and horrible, yet even in the darkness of a great Fear there were gleams of "that light that never was on sea or land" by which we are guided through the labyrinth of the world. Then there was the state, beginning in patriarchal rule, merging thence into the tribe and the nation, and at last we see many nations fused into huge empires which met in the clash of conflict. The state, too, was rude, but it had in it the rudiments of our patriotic devotion to our Republic.

EARLY SOCIETY SECRET

But there was another institution, quite as old as the other three and hardly less important, to which we are more indebted than we realize. Of this hidden institution let me speak more in detail, not only for its human interest, but also for the fact that Masonry perpetuates it among us today. It was called the Men's House, a secret lodge in which every young man, when he came to maturity, was initiated into the law, legend, tradition and religion of his people. Recent research has brought to light this long hidden institution, showing that it was really the center of early tribal life, the council chamber, the guest house, and the meeting place of men where laws were made and courts were held, and where the trophies of war were treasured. Indeed, early society was really a secret society, and unless we keep this fact in mind we can hardly understand it at all. It is the key to the interpretation of the evolution of primitive social life, and without it one can scarcely know the process of human development.

When tribal solidarity was more important than tribal expansion it is hard to exaggerate the value of these lodges as providing bonds based upon feelings of kinship, and as promoting a sense of social unity and loyalty which lies at the root of law, order and religion. Methods of initiation differed in different times and places, but they had, nevertheless, a certain likeness, as they had always the same purpose. Ordeals often severe and sometimes frightful were required--exposing the initiate not only to physical torture, but also the peril of unseen spirits--as tests to prove youth worthy, by reason of virtue and valor, to be entrusted with the secret lore of his people. The ceremonies included vows of chastity, of courage, of secrecy and loyalty, and, almost always, a drama representing the advent of the novice into a new life. Moreover, the new life to which he awoke after his "initiation into manhood," for such it truly was, included a new name, a new language or signs, grips and tokens, and new privileges and responsibilities. If a youth failed to endure the tests, and proved to be a coward or a weakling, he became the scorn of every man of his tribe.

No doubt it was the antiquity of the idea and necessity of initiation which our Masonic fathers had in mind when they said that Masonry began with the beginning of history--and they were not so far wrong as certain smart folk think they were. At any rate, they saw clearly the service of secret societies in the development of civilization, and that, like the home and the temple, the Men's House was one of the great institutions of humanity. When the tribes ceased to be the unit of society, giving place to the nation, the secret training place for men became at once a school and temple, preserving and transmitting the truths of religion, the rudiments of science, and the laws of art, all of which were universally held as sacred secrets to be known only to the initiated. By a certain wise instinct men felt that everything must not be told to everybody, but that men must approve themselves as worthy to receive truths which had cost so much; and that instinct was wise and true. Even the gentle Teacher of Galilee would not cast His pearls before swine, and it was therefore that He taught in parables, cryptic and dim. Hence the great ancient orders called the Mysteries, which ruled the world for ages before our era, and he who would estimate the spiritual possessions of humanity must take account of their influence and power. Thus the

Mysteries of Mithra in the East, of Isis in Egypt, and the Eleusian Mysteries of Greece swayed mankind, using every device of art to teach the truths of faith and hope and righteousness. In the temple of the Mysteries, which contained the tradition and ministry of the Men's House, the greatest men of antiquity received initiation--such men as Pythagoras, Plato, Plutarch, to name no others, and Cicero tells us that the truths taught in the house of the hidden place made men love virtue and gave them happy thoughts for the hour of death. Those temples of the Mysteries were shrines where art, philosophy, science and religion had their home, and from which, as time passed, they spread out fanwise along the avenue of human culture.

THE TEMPLE BUILDERS

History is no older than architecture. Man could not become a civilized being until he had learned to build a settled habitation, a Home for his family, a Temple for his faith, a Memorial for his dead. So, and naturally so, the Men's House came at last to be associated with the art of building, with the constructive genius of the race, using the laws and tools of the builder as emblems to teach the truths of faith and morality. Long before our era we find an order of Builders called the Dionysian Artificers, working in Asia Minor, where they erected temples, theatres and palaces--a secret order whose ceremonies perpetuated the ancient drama of the Mysteries--and they were almost certainly the builders of the Temple of Solomon. Thence we trace them eastward into India, and westward into Rome, where they were identified with the Roman College of Architects whose emblems have come down to us.

When Rome fell a band of artists took refuge on a fortified island in Lake Como, in Northern Italy, where for a period they lived, offering an asylum to their persecuted fellows, and where they preserved the traditions of classic art. From them descended the great order of Comacine Masters--the Cathedral Builders-- whom we can trace through the middle ages, and who early became known as Freemasons--free, because they were exempt from many restraints, and unlike Gild Masons, were permitted to travel at liberty wherever their work required. They were great artists, commanding the service of the finest intellects of the age, yet so bound together that, as Hallam said, no cathedral can be traced to any one artist. For the cathedrals were not the work of any one man, but the creation of a fraternity who so united the spirit of fraternity with a sense of the sanctity of art as to obliterate individual aggrandizement and personal ambition.

Thus the Freemasons traveled through the years, building those monuments of beauty and prayer which still consecrate the earth, until the decline of Gothic architecture, when the order of Cathedral Builders began to decline. As early as 1600, scholars and students of mysticism began to ask to be accepted as members of lodges of Freemasons, the better to study their symbolism and teachings--as, for example, Ashmole, who founded the museum which bears his name at Oxford. These men though not actual architects, were accepted as members of the order, hence Free and Accepted Masons. From earliest time, as we may learn from our own Bible--as well as from many ancient writings, such as the Chinese classics and the Egyptian Book of the Dead--the tools and laws of building had been used as symbols of moral and spiritual truth; and when the work of practical architecture became so changed as no longer to require the service of a fraternal order, the Freemasons ceased to be builders of temples of brick and stone, but retained their organization and traditions--builders not less than before, but using their tools as symbols of the truths and principles with which they sought to build a Temple of Righteousness and Friendship upon earth.

FREEDOM, FRIENDSHIP, FRATERNITY

This newer Masonry, as it has been called, took form in the organization of the Grand Lodge of England, in 1717, from which it has descended to us having spread all over the civilized world. Forming one great society of devout and free men, it toils in every land in behalf of Freedom, Friendship and Fraternity among men, seeking to establish government without tyranny and

religion without superstition; seeking, that is, to refine and exalt the lives of men, to purify their thought and ennoble their faith; teaching them to live and let live, to think and let think, to love peace and pursue it. Truly, the very existence of such an order of men, initiated, sworn and trained to uphold all the redeeming ideals of humanity, is an eloquent and farshining fact. It does not solicit members, save in so far as its influence in a community may invite the cooperation of right-thinking men who wish to foster what is noblest in humanity, toiling the while to strengthen that social and moral sentiment which gives to law its authority and to the gospel its sovereign opportunity.

What, then, is Masonry? For one thing, let it be said with all emphasis that it is in no sense a political society, and its historic Constitutions--called Old Charges--forbid the discussion of political issues in its lodges "as what never yet conduced to the welfare of the lodge, nor never will." Individual Masons, like others, have their political opinions; but as Masons, and certainly as a lodge of Masons, we never take part in political disputes. There was once an anti-Masonic political party in this country, born of falsehood and fed on fanaticism, which defeated Henry Clay for the presidency because he was a Mason; but, without intending to do so, it elected Jackson, who was also a Mason. While Masonry is not a political order--for politics divides men, and it is the mission of Masonry to unite them--it does train men for citizenship, and it is a fact that it did in this way write its basic principles of civil and religious liberty into the organic law of this Republic. Our first President was a Master Mason, and was sworn into office on an open Bible taken from a Masonic altar.

Having presided over the birth of this Republic, the Masonic order has stood guard all down the years of its history, its altar lights along the heights of liberty; and so it will be to the end. Let it never be forgotten that, in an evil hour, when States were torn apart and churches were rent in two, the fellowship of Masonry remained unbroken, true and tender amidst the mad passion of civil war. If it was unable to prevent the strife, it did mitigate the horrors of it, building rainbow bridges from battle line to battle line. When this period of Masonic history is told, as it is my purpose sometime to tell it, men will see what Masonry meant in those awful years, and how nobly it labored against untold odds, in behalf of friendship; even as it labors today, without resting and without lasting, for freedom, gentleness and justice between men and nations.

Nor is Masonry a church, unless we use the word church as Ruskin used it when he said, "There is a true church wherever one hand meets another helpfully, the only holy or mother church that ever was or ever shall be." But if we use the word in its specific sense, Masonry is not a church, nor is it the enemy of any church of any name, seeking instead, to bring men of every faith together the better to teach them to love and honor one another. To that end it invites them to an altar of prayer, laying emphasis only upon that which underlies all creeds and over-arches all sects, while laboring in behalf of that love without which St. Paul said truly that the most perfect theology is nothing. It holds that all true-hearted men are everywhere of one religion, and that when they come to know what they have in common they will discover that they are brethren. Today the religious world, by reason of closer fellowship and a finer courtesy, is moving rapidly toward the Masonic position as set forth in the Constitutions of 1717, and when it arrives Masonry will rejoice in a scene which she has prophesied for ages.

WHAT, THEN, IS MASONRY?

If Masonry is neither a political party nor a religious cult, what, then, is it? It is a world-wide fraternity of God-fearing men, founded upon spiritual faith and moral truth, using the symbols of architecture to teach men the art of building character; a historic fellowship in the search for truth and the service of the ideal, whose sacramental mission is to make men friends and train them in righteousness and liberty. It is, therefore, that it wins the confidence of young men, teaches them to pray to the God whom their fathers trusted, and upon the open Bible which their mothers read asks them to take solemn vows to be good men and true, chaste of heart and charitable of mind, and to build the edifice of their faith and hope and conduct upon the homely old moralities, and

to estimate the worth of life by its service and its sanctity. By as much as this spirit prevails, by so much will this sad earth be healed of the wounds of war, the shame of greed and lust and all injustice and unkindness !

Come, clear the way, then, clear the way;
Blind creeds and kings have had their day;
Break the dead branches from the path:
Our hope is in the aftermath--
Our hope is in heroic men,
Star-led to build the world again.
To this event the ages ran--

Make way for Brotherhood--make way for Man !

- Source: The Builder July 1917

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