



LODGE VEGAS # 32

Spiritual Side Of Freemasonry

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ONE of the most beautiful of natural phenomena is the dew. We rise up early in the morning, throw open the casement, and there, spread out before us on earth's green carpet, lie myriads upon myriads of gems more brilliant than ever graced a queenly brow. It is as though God before rolling up the canopy of night had laid the stars for a moment upon the earth for man's nearer view.

As we gaze, entranced, the sun asserts his majesty, and along invisible paths the wealth of magic beauty vanishes in thin air. But each crystal drop has left refreshment in its wake. The tender blade of grass, the new-born leaf of the shrub, the unfolding petal of the blossom has each in turn gathered fresh life and renewed vigor.

And so, in a way, is spirituality. Heaven sent, it comes to earth to quicken men's souls into new life. It is all that the dew is to nature, but it is far more. It more closely resembles the gentle rain in the depth and permanence of its effect.

A dove brought a seed from the skies, and it said to the man, "The seed I bring is precious beyond all price. Its name is the Knowledge-of-God. I would fain plant it where it shall find constant nourishment, so that it may germinate and grow and bear fruit for the healing of the nations."

Reverently the man uncovered his head, and humbly bared his breast. "O gentle dove," he said, "vouchsafe that this seed may find lodgment in my poor heart." And the dove replied, "So let it be," and straightway it planted the seed in the human breast so freely offered.

And there flew to earth another dove, and the seed it brought- was called Faith, and this seed, too, found lodgment in the man's heart. And still another dove brought the seed of Hope, and another the seed of Charity, and a fourth the seed of Brotherly Love, and again a fifth the seed of Immortality; for these seeds, too, the man's breast gave welcoming place.

The name of the man was Freemason. The life he lived, and the deeds he wrought, be they small or great, are known to all, but the vision of the doves and the planting of the seeds were for his eye alone.

Brethren, if I have indulged in metaphor and resorted to parable, it has been but to stimulate the imagination that you may the more easily rise with me to the plane upon which Masonry in its teachings and their fulfillment rests. The first seed implanted in the heart of the Freemason was the Knowledge-of-God. To put our trust in Him is the initial and the directing step in the journey of life. With Him as our guide, our mentor, we can press forward without doubt or fear. As Christian, Jew, Brahmin, or Mohammedan, each may call Him by a different name, but to one and all He is the Great Architect, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and as we learn to accept His guidance, He becomes better still the Heavenly Father, drawing us to Him with bonds of love. "We feel His presence, e'en unseen," and we walk by faith, and are sustained by hope in its whispered promise of eternal life. And so it is with the other seeds. In the exercise, for example, of charity through the promptings of brotherly love--charity which softens and modifies our judgments, makes us conscious of our own shortcomings, and renders us responsive to the appeals of those in distress--we become partakers of the Divine nature and thus children of God.

"To worship rightly is to love each other; Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer."
"Each loving life a psalm of gratitude."

King Solomon's Temple is long crumbled into dust, but we as Masons are taught that we may rear another in its stead. The plan lies upon the trestle board of the Supreme Master. Happy is the man who builds according to that plan. For the temple site is the human heart, and the temple is known as character. Masonry is character-building, and whether we be Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, or Master Mason, our duties are clearly defined, and our accountability made clear.

Now, character is what we are, and must not be confounded with reputation, which is what men think of us. If character be sound, be good, be true, then reputation can safely be left to take care of itself. Men covet reputation, but reputation is only secure when it rests upon a moral foundation. Hypocrisy, deceit, false pretensions may achieve their ends for a while, but sooner or later the sham will be found out, and the structure so faultily built prove but a house of cards. Therefore, the question which concerns me as a Mason is not what do men think of me, but what do I think of myself ?

In the light of Masonry I am able to judge myself. The plan lies before me. My obligations are emblazoned upon the walls of my remembrance. How have I hewn and laid the foundations of my character? How have I built the superstructure? Dare I apply to the walls the plumb and square and level of righteousness ? The heart of the man who received the seeds from the doves knew as the days and the years went by how well it had cherished the divine gifts. So, as I lay my head at night upon my pillow, and turn upon myself the eyes of introspection, I can search my soul.

Shall I be discouraged by the faults I find? Nay, not so. If I only realize that I have tried to build a temple acceptable to the Supreme Architect, I have not wholly failed. To be able to discover the fault shows that I have not lost sight of the plan, and am not deaf to the still small voice of conscience. And the wonderful thing in character-building is that so long as life lasts opportunity is given all to correct the faults. Fortunate, indeed, am I if the faults be those of days rather than of years. Yet it were better to begin all over again, though the structure eventually remain incomplete, than never to have made the attempt. But I must not put off the rebuilding to "a more convenient season," for "the night cometh when no man can work." Opportunity is mine, but it is limited. The sands remaining in my hour-glass I cannot see.

Still, I must not despair. Hands of brotherly love are outstretched to help me.

Toil though we may, none toils alone-- A brother's hands help lift the stone My arm is powerless to place; And love is beaming from his face.

Furthermore, we cannot contemplate the sublime truths of Masonry without receiving a reciprocal blessing. It is an immutable law that like begets like. Out of the abundance of the harvest is the promise of another garnering of like kind. And we sow without doubt, knowing that as we sow so shall we also reap. What is true of nature is true of spirituality. Of all the gifts of the inner life, the highest is that of love. Brotherly love unifies Masonry, and in its expression ennoble the lives of the brethren. It is this ennoblement, this enrichment so evident in innumerable instances, that draws men to our sanctuaries, humble and voluntary applicants for admission. They have discovered in the influences of Masonry a transforming power for good which they would fain enjoy.

Sculptured in profile on a New England mountain cliff is the noble face of a man. Tradition foretold that one day the counterpart would appear in human form. And the story runs that a lad was wont to visit the spot, watching in his boyish faith for the fulfillment of the promise. Alas, many passed, but never one who in lineament and expression reflected the heavenly beauty of the face of the granite hills. From boyhood the watcher grew to youth, and from youth to manhood, and still his dream remained unfulfilled. The tocsin of war sounded, and he hastened to the defense of his country's flag. Bravely, honorably, heroically he did his part, but often on picket duty in the gloomy watches of the night or amid the fitful sleep of the turf-pillowed bivouac, that radiant face of the distant mountain would reveal itself, and he would study it with the eyes of introspection. The war ended, and it was vouchsafed to him to return to his home. From force of habit he repaired to the mountain. There stood the face, as it had stood for ages untold, not an attribute impaired. Lost in reverie the soldier in his faded uniform became unconscious of surroundings, and unaware of the gathering of an awe-struck group. The tradition was at last come true; the counterpart in human form was there--but he did not know it.

Like begets like, beauty begets beauty, love begets love, holiness begets holiness, but the discovery is left to others.

Frequenting the almost inaccessible peak of a lofty mountain was a bird of snow-white plumage. Its name was Purity, and to him who should find one of its spotless feathers was the promise of eternal life. Many essayed to find a feather, but discouraged by the obstacles became disheartened and dropped back to the Valley of Ease---all save one. Undaunted, though bruised and bleeding, he pressed upward. Often he stumbled, sometimes he slipped backward, but only to regain lost ground and to keep on climbing. Would he ever reach the top ? His strength was giving out, when suddenly the shadow of the bird rested upon him. With one last effort he stretched forth his hand, but only to grasp thin air. He fell and died, and then, lo the miracle ! From the pitying breast of the hovering bird descended a feather, and rested on the palm of the nerveless hand. The gift of eternal life was won.

Brethren, the spiritual rewards of Masonry are not to be sought in the Valley of Ease. They may be summed up in one phrase--the satisfaction of feeling that we have endeavored to walk uprightly in every path of life, and to discharge our duties to God, to country, to home, to our fellow-men in conformity with the sublime teachings of the Order. The rest may be left to Him who noteth even the fall of a sparrow.

"Oh ! the cedars of Lebanon grow at our door, And the quarry is sunk at our gate; And the ships out of Ophir, with golden ore, For our summoning mandate wait; And the word of a Master Mason May the house of our soul create ! While the day hath light let the light be used, For no man shall the night control ! Or ever the silver cord be loosed, Or broken the golden bowl, May we bui/p King Solomon's Temple In the true Masonic soul!"

And the meaning is this--that we do not have to go far afield to discharge our Masonic obligations, and to be spiritually quickened. In the pursuit of wealth men often travel to the uttermost parts of the world and endure danger and privation without end, alas, sometimes in vain, not realizing that mines of golden promise lie buried at the very doorsteps of the homes they have spurned. So the demands for the exercise of Masonic virtues lie close at hand. The stranger, hopeless, distressed, is knocking at our gate for admittance. The tearstained faces of the widow and the orphan are lifted in appeal to our windows. The brother, needy in a material or in a spiritual sense, is mutely stretching out his hand for help and sympathy along the pathway of our daily routine. Our homes are demanding of us the highest expressions of love. Our city and our country are expecting us to exemplify civic righteousness. And the voice of God is ever ringing in our ears, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

It is a misnomer to speak of the spiritual side of Masonry. If there be another side it is foreign to our Order, and I know it not. Spirituality is the life of Masonry. Blest is he who is privileged to partake of it, and to help rebuild the Temple of King Solomon.

-Source: The Builder November 1915

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