

THE MORAL TEACHINGS OF FREEMASONRY

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"A peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols."

CHAPTER 1.

The above phrase is often quoted as if it supplied a complete and adequate definition of Freemasonry, but this is a mistake. It occurs in a certain catechism addressed to an E. A. and should be regarded merely as an explanation of Freemasonry intended for the initiate.

Freemasonry is something much wider than a school of purely moral instruction, as becomes manifest when we study the second and third degrees, which to a large extent consist of mystical teaching of a more complex and spiritual nature than that usually designated by the term, "moral instruction."

The true significance of the above quoted phrase lies in the fact that it is given to an E.A., and the first degree teaches the important lesson that spiritual progress is only possible to those who have conformed rigidly to the moral law. Indeed, it is only when the apprentice has satisfied his instructors that he has made himself acquainted with the principles of moral truth and virtue that he is permitted to extend his researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science.

Now, "The hidden mysteries of nature and science" are clearly something quite different from the principles of moral truth and virtue. These, we are told, form a necessary qualification for advancement in the search for further knowledge, and this fact should put us on our guard against assuming that Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality, and nothing more.

Let us, however, consider the phrase in more detail, for at first sight it strikes us as unusual in form. Many students have jumped to the conclusion that it indicates that the morality of Freemasons is peculiar, but even a cursory glance through the rituals, not only of the first but also of the second and third degrees, reveals nothing at all unusual in the type of morality taught. It is, indeed, hardly distinguishable from the ordinary code of morality proclaimed by all the various Christian churches.

What is peculiar, however, is that much of it is taught by allegories and symbols instead of by didactic phrases. Not that the latter are entirely lacking, but in so far as they exist they do not fall under the terms of this definition, and although well deserving of study are obviously for the most part 18th century additions.

It is this system of moral instruction which is accurately described as peculiar and it may, indeed, be regarded as almost unique or at least as characteristic of Freemasonry. It is, moreover, especially marked in the first degree, whereas in the second and third degrees, though not entirely lacking, it is clear that we are dealing with a rather different subject, including the nature of God, the initials of Whose name we are supposed to discover in the second degree.

In this book we hope to set forth some of the moral lessons of Freemasonry which are taught by her to the candidates by means of allegories and symbols, but we shall not entirely ignore some of the definite moral precepts declaimed during the ceremony itself, although, as a rule, these require much less elucidation.

It may be argued, however, that it is necessary to prove that moral instruction is given, even in the first degree, by means of allegories and symbols, as distinct from obvious and perfectly intelligible admonitory phrases. This we will proceed to do.

The manner in which the candidate is brought into the lodge is intended to symbolise the fact that man is by nature the child of ignorance and sin, and would ever have remained so had it not pleased the Almighty to enlighten him by the Light which is from above. We are truly taught that but for Divine inspiration and teaching we should not even be able to perceive what is right and what is wrong. This inspiration may come from our own consciences, which are sparks of the Divine Spirit within us, or from the instruction contained in the V.S.L., but without it we should ever have remained in a state of moral darkness.

Thus at the very commencement of our Masonic career we are taught in a peculiar way, by means of allegory and symbol, that the moral laws are not man-made conventions but Divine commands, which man should be able to recognise as such by means of the Divine Light within him.

This is by no means an unimportant lesson to a world wherein some doubters are loudly proclaiming that there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong, and that all moral codes are but the accumulated experience of past ages as to what is expedient or convenient. To those who would argue that there is no moral turpitude in theft, since no one has any real right to possess property, and that at the most all that can be said is that it is convenient for the community to punish theft, as otherwise the victim might take the law into his own hands and create a disturbance, the Mason replies by placing his hand on the V.S.L.. Remembering the most dramatic incident in the first degree, he declares that the Divine Wisdom sets forth in that sacred book the definite command, "Thou shalt not steal," for having been taught to look to the V.S.L. as the great Light in Freemasonry, he has no alternative but to accept this as a definite and binding instruction, disobedience to which must be accounted for before the throne of God Himself.

In like manner, the first regular step inculcates the important moral lesson that we must subdue our passions and trample the flesh under our feet. In one of my other books* I have shown that

*The E.A. Handbook, published by The Baskerville Press, Ltd.

this st. represents a tau cross, a symbol which stands for the phallus, and that the latter not unnaturally represents our passions, which therefore must be brought into due subjection. In the Lectures this fact is carefully stressed in unequivocal language, for to the question,-

".... what do you come here to do?"

The reply is,

"To learn to rule and subdue my passions, and make a further progress in Freemasonry."

Now it should be noted that the candidate has not had the significance of the f.r.st. explained to him in the initiation ceremony, yet, from the above answer in the Lectures, it is clear that he is supposed to have sufficient intelligence to understand the significance of this piece of symbolism and apply it to his own character.

The above two examples, out of many possible ones, are sufficient to prove that the definition, given, be it remembered, by the candidate previous to his being passed to the second degree, is a true and accurate definition of Freemasonry as revealed to an E. A.. Namely, a peculiar system of teaching morality, based on the use of allegories and symbols. It is thus that today we should no doubt word the definition, but for all that its true significance is easily discernable. Let us then try and discover similar pieces of moral, as distinct from mystical, instruction contained in our rituals.

CHAPTER II.

"That virtue which may justly be denominated the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's Heart - Charity."

It is very significant that one of the first lessons taught to the initiate is charity, and when using this word we must remember that in its original sense, which was still in use in the 18th century, the word charity meant far more than the mere giving of money or relief to a person in distress. This, indeed, is but the outward expression of the true charity, which today can be best translated by the phrase, "Brotherly Love."

Although many of my readers will instinctively turn to a certain incident towards the end of the ceremony as the occasion when they first had the importance of charity forcibly, and somewhat dramatically, impressed upon their minds, as a matter of fact the method of their preparation and the manner of their progression round the lodge were intended to impress this lesson on them at the very beginning of their advance towards the Light. It is as if they were compelled to enact the Part of one of the most pitiable spectacles in our great cities; some poor, blind, old beggar, dressed in rags, through which his naked flesh can be seen, led by someone eke through the bustling streets, weak and penniless. A figure fortunately seldom seen in all its grim penury in England today, but still common enough in Eastern countries.

That it is intended to convey this lesson and so stimulate our sympathy for others is shown by this answer in the Lectures:-

Ques. "Why were you led round in this conspicuous manner?"

Ans. "It was figuratively to represent the seeming state of poverty and distress in which I was received into M., on the miseries of which (if realised) were I for a moment to reflect, it could not fail to make that impression on my mind, as to cause me never to shut my ears unkindly to the cries of the distressed, particularly a brother Mason, but listening with attention to their complaints, pity would flow from my breast, accompanied with that relief their necessities required and my ability could afford."

Now it is important to notice that we are definitely told that the manner of progression is intended to make us realise the meaning of poverty and distress in others, and further that we should not merely assist the unfortunate financially, but listen to their sorrows with a sympathetic ear and pour the balm of Consolation into the bosom of the afflicted.

It is often sympathy, not financial assistance, that a brother requires, a fact which was forcibly brought to my mind by an incident which occurred in a lodge I recently visited. A brother rose and said:-

"Many years ago I lived in a boarding house in Bloomsbury and among the other Boarders was a Roman Catholic, who seemed to be a hard-fisted, unsympathetic sort of man, and by profession was a money-lender. One night, however, I obtained an entirely new light on his real character, which left a profound impression on my mind. At 10.30 p.m. there was a knock at the hall door. It was a message for this man who, as soon as he received it, got up from his comfortable armchair, put on his hat, and went out in to the sleet and rain, for it was a vile night. I discovered that he did not return until breakfast time next morning and drew him into conversation that evening. It seems that he was a member of a certain Roman Catholic Society, the members of which took it in turn to visit members of their church who were sick so as to cheer them up. That night he had been summoned to the bedside of a dying man, a stranger, and had remained with him until the end. Now brethren, I thought that that was a truly Christian and brotherly act.

"On the other hand, a member of this lodge has been seriously ill for six months. I knew him long before he was a Mason and because I am an old friend I have visited him. He is now well

on the road to good health, but I am sorry to say that not a single member of the lodge, other than myself, has ever been near him or shown the slightest sympathy or interest in him. I suggest that this is not right, and therefore I beg to propose that the following be entered on our minutes:-

"That, in the event of the illness of any member of this lodge, the secretary shall make a point of ascertaining whether the invalid would like to receive visits from the members, and if so he shall arrange that various members from time to time shall call upon our sick brother in order to cheer him up and evince their genuine interest and sympathy'."

To the credit of the lodge, be it said, the proposal was unanimously approved, and it was clear that the former invalid had not been neglected from mere callousness, but simply because many were not aware of his illness and it had never occurred to others that he would like visitors.

The incident shows, however, a very practical method of putting into practice our protestations of brotherly love, and one which might well be adopted in all lodges. It is useless to preach brotherly love unless we take steps to apply its precepts. In this particular case there was no real lack of sympathy but there was a defect in organisation, a defect probably existing in most lodges, namely, the lack of a link between the sufferer and his friends. The Secretary is the obvious official to supply this link, and he should make it his duty to keep in touch with the various members of the lodge. Then as soon as he learns that one is sick, or in trouble, he should communicate with the other members who, when thus informed, should feel in duty bound to visit the brother and do what they can to alleviate his distress or inspire him with hope and confidence.

It may be thought that the average secretary already has his hands full with the multitudinous duties thrust on his devoted shoulders, and there is much truth in such an objection. This difficulty could be surmounted, however, if the Secretary made it a rule that if any brother be absent from lodge without sending an explanation showing that he is in good health and happy, after the close of lodge he should pass on the name of such a brother to an old Past Master, who would make it his duty to get in touch with the absent one and ascertain whether all is well.

There are many Past Masters who would be only too pleased to have allocated to them a definite piece of work of such practical utility.

We have seen that the lesson of true charity is dramatically inculcated at the very beginning of the ceremony, and so that it shall not be obliterated from the mind of the candidate by the subsequent incidents in the ritual, it is again emphasised towards the end of the ceremony by the test for m. s. As soon as the full significance of this has been explained to the candidate he is told to retire in order to restore himself to his per. c.. The object of this latter procedure is that there may be a distinct break in the ceremony, during which the candidate can meditate on the important lesson thus conveyed to him, before resuming his further course of instruction, while the emphasis laid on the loss of his former comfort reminds him of the feelings of the poor blind beggar whom he has thus symbolised.

In conclusion, let us not forget what the Lectures themselves say concerning charity, for therein we are taught that it is the best test and surest proof of the sincerity of our religion. Moreover, since Charity and Brotherly Love are but different words for the same all embracing sentiment, let us remember that by the exercise of Brotherly Love we are taught to regard the whole human species as one family; high and low, rich and poor; created by One Almighty Being and sent into the world for the aid, support and protection of each other. Hence, to soothe the unhappy, sympathise in their misfortunes, compassionate their miseries and restore peace to their troubled minds, is the grand aim we should have in view.

These are indeed lofty aspirations, and form the very basis of Masonic morality. They are taught to the initiate by means of allegories and symbols as soon as he enters a lodge, with

the definite implication that until he has comprehended them he is not properly prepared to be passed to a higher degree.

CHAPTER III.

"That excellent key, a Freemason's tongue which should speak well of a Brother, absent or present, but when unfortunately that cannot be done with honour, and propriety, should adopt that excellent virtue of the Craft, which is Silence."

The above paragraph constitutes the charge at the end of the first section of the First Lecture and inculcates a lesson which is particularly needed in a Society such as Freemasonry. A group of men constantly meeting together are only too prone to indulge in idle chatter and mild scandal-mongering. It is not necessary to assume that when Bro. A relates to Brother B the latest stories he has heard about Bro. C he is actuated by malice. As likely as not he is merely passing the time between lodge and refreshment, and hardly realises that he may be doing a real injury to a brother by passing on some tale which reflects no credit on the victim. It is clear that the reorganisers of Freemasonry in the 18th century realised how easy it was for petty scandals to pass from mouth to mouth, to the detriment of real brotherly affection, for there is little doubt that the moral lesson that you should speak well of a brother or else remain silent is dramatically taught on two occasions during the ceremony.

Soon after his entrance into Lodge the candidate is led to two of the chief Officers, and is only allowed to pass when each Officer in turn is satisfied that the tongue of good report has spoken in his favour. Here at once we have an important hint of this precept, for seeing that the candidate only gained admission because no one spoke unkindly of his past career, he should remember this fact and not speak unkindly of other brethren. If there were any doubt on this point, the similar testing which takes place towards the end of the ceremony would remove it. Therein the candidate is with much elaboration taught the important lesson of Caution; ostensibly it is caution with regard to Masonic secrets, but though, no doubt, it has this object in view, there is hardly an incident in Freemasonry which does not teach more than one lesson at the same time.

Let us then consider what is meant by the secrets of Freemasonry. Obviously, they are something more important than a few test "words and signs whose chief utility, apparently, is to enable brethren to recognise each other. There would be no use in having such signs unless Freemasonry itself contained some hidden secrets which these guarded, and we do know that hidden in her symbolism, particularly in the second and third degrees, is a system of mystical teaching and possibly, even, a certain amount of occult training.

But in the first degree we perceive that the main object of the ceremony is moral training, notwithstanding the fact that there are also mystical secrets hidden therein. From the standpoint of moral training, why then this emphasis on the necessity for silence and secrecy, and why should the first section of the Lectures close on this note ?

The explanation is surely that Masonry aims at developing Brotherly Love and in order that this may be achieved one of the first essentials is confidence in each other. If one brother finds that another has been passing on unkind remarks about him, the fact is sufficient to mar the harmony of the lodge and destroy mutual confidence. It is not merely that a trifling incident passed by word of mouth from man to man tends to be distorted and exaggerated, although this is a fact which cannot be denied, but even more that as brothers we ought to avoid doing anything which may harm another's reputation or hurt his feelings. At a later date the Candidate definitely promises to keep a brother's lawful secrets, but even thus early in his career the importance of caution and silence when dealing with the affairs of others is impressed upon his mind. Is it not a golden rule that when we cannot speak well of a brother we should at least remain silent ? There may be exceptions to this rule, occasions when we must protest against a certain line of conduct, but these are far fewer than at first sight one may be inclined to think. Moreover, in a higher degree the duty, if needs be, of reproofing a brother is recognised, but that instruction is not given to an E.A., who is only at the beginning of his masonic career and is in the position of a junior among seniors.

It should be noted, however, that while there may be good reasons for reproving a brother to his face, there are none for telling tales about him behind his back, and the very school boy's code which lays it down that one must not sneak shows that Masonry is not unique in stressing the fact that we should speak well of a brother absent or present, but when that is unfortunately impossible should adopt that excellent virtue of the Craft, which is silence. If this were always done much bitterness and bickering which at present disfigures the social life of the world would automatically vanish.

CHAPTER IV.

"Ever remember that Nature hath implanted in your breast a sacred and indissoluble attachment towards that country whence you derived your birth and infant nurture."

This is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful phrases in the first degree and truly depicts one of the most unselfish characteristics of the human heart. In patriotism we have a virtue wherein personal interest plays a smaller part than in almost any other guiding principle of life; in fact, it may be considered as one of the most altruistic of all the virtues.

It is a striking example of that practical commonsense which lies behind Freemasonry that it should thus recognise the important influence that patriotism exerts in every well-balanced human being, while at the same time holding up the banner of an enlightened internationalism.

Freemasons are taught that a Mason is a brother whatever his country, colour or religion, wherein the Craft transcends all frontiers and prejudices, but in the above phrase she acknowledges the fact that every man has a particular affection for his native land. Herein she is both wiser and more human than those idealists who think that man in his present stage of evolution can cast aside affection for his Motherland and replace it by a kind of world citizenship. Indeed, many of these idealists go further and suggest that a man cannot be both a patriot and a good citizen of the world. No view could be more mistaken. If we cannot love our own fellow citizens, whose language we speak and whose ideals we can understand, how can we possibly hope to comprehend the aspirations of men of a different race or religion? To abuse our country and to decry it in the supposed interests of internationalism, merely shows ignorance of the fundamentals of human life.

There are, of course, different types of patriotism, and this virtue must not be made an excuse for narrow-minded bigotry or for an arrogant claim to over-ride the just rights of other races. Such an attitude, even if it resulted in temporary gain to our country, would be bought at a heavy price indeed, since nations, like individuals, have moral obligations and cannot ignore them without prejudice to their spiritual well-being. The true patriot will, in fact, be the better enabled to understand the attitude of a man of another nation if he realises that he, too, has an indissoluble attachment to that country whence he derived his birth and infant nurture.

Our Masonic organisation aptly illustrates the ideal at which we should aim. Every man feels a peculiar attachment to his Mother Lodge. He probably thinks it is the best lodge in the world, but this in no way prevents him from working for the general good of all branches of the Grand Lodge to which he belongs, and in like manner the true patriot, while being loyal to his Motherland, will strive to work for peace and harmony between the various nations which constitute the whole world.

We are, no doubt, far distant from the day when all the nations of the earth will be joined in one vast federation, but we can each and all of us do our best to assuage asperities of feeling between different nations. When we travel abroad and bear fraternal greetings to a lodge and another jurisdiction, even the humblest of us is an ambassador of peace and goodwill, and we may be assured that the members of that foreign lodge will think no worse of us because we show we are proud of being Englishmen, while we on our part by a tactful speech, and, above all, by the obvious sincerity of our fraternal feelings, will do much to remove misunderstandings and help to create a focal point of good fellowship for our own native land in the country we are visiting.

This, indeed, is patriotism of the highest order, as well as good masonry.

CHAPTER V

"Be careful to perform your allotted task while it is yet day."

How often in life do we meet the man who says, "I am too busy earning my living to spend time in doing good or helping those less fortunate than myself, but in a few years things will be easier and even if I don't retire from business I shall have more time to devote to others." The tragedy is that that time never comes, for the more a man becomes immersed in his own personal interests the less time does he find for helping others. This, indeed, has been the burden of every teacher since the dawn of man. "Do good to-day, for tomorrow may never come."

It is so easy to put off doing the altruistic deed which our conscience tells us is required but which necessitates some self-sacrifice of time, if not of money. There is much to be said for the maxim of the boy scout, that we should not be content to lie down to rest at night unless we have at least one fresh good deed to our credit, but we should remember that not only is this a minimum qualification, but it is one intended for boys, not men. The Mason, if he is sincere, should strive to do his duty and, if that were possible, a little more than his duty, on every day which he lives.

It may be asked what is our allotted task? Until we have satisfactorily answered that question we cannot successfully perform that task. The simplest answer is to do whatever our hand findeth to do and do it with all our might, not for our own advantage, but to the glory of the G. A. O. T. U. and for the welfare of our fellow creatures. But every mason should consider that as a member of the Craft he has a special piece of work to do. He hopes to be a perfect ashlar in the Temple of the Most High, and every ashlar in a building has an allotted place and a definite function.

Therefore, as soon as he enters the Order a man should seriously ask himself what task he can perform for the good of Freemasonry. He has stated that he has entered the Order so as to make himself more generally serviceable to his fellow men, and this being so it is clearly his duty to render service in some fashion.

In particular, what service will he give to the Order which has received him? He has a multitude of tasks from which he can make his choice. Will he study the significance of the ceremonies and as he grows older try to teach the younger brethren what they really mean? There is considerable need for a body of men in Masonry who would undertake this task. At present thousands enter the Order and no one gives them a hint as to the significance of the ceremonies or the valuable lessons they inculcate. In consequence many of these members either drift out of Freemasonry or merely attend it for its social side. If, however, a brother has no aptitude for this line of work but says that the Social side appeals to him, this does not preclude him from rendering valuable service.

Not merely can he be a supporter of the charities, wherein he can do most useful work, both by contributing himself and by keeping alive the active interest of the whole lodge in these charities, but he can extend the social usefulness of the Lodge itself by seeing to it that every newcomer gets to know all the members. In our modern civilisation, with its speed and turmoil, men are often extremely isolated. It is no longer as easy to make friends or to get to know each other intimately as it was in the days when people were born in small towns and lived there most of their lives. In a City like London the members of a lodge often come from far distant suburbs and meet at a restaurant in town, perhaps six times in the year, and unless someone makes it his special task to bring the members into close touch with each other the new initiate is likely to remain a brother in name only, for the rest of his life.

Numerous other tasks will occur to thoughtful readers, and the real value of them depends largely on the fact that a brother has thought them out for himself. Of this we may be sure,

that if each of us earnestly desires to find some task to do we shall find it without much difficulty.

Nevertheless, we ought not to be content to restrict our service to members of our own fraternity. After all, we said that we wished to render ourselves more generally serviceable to our fellowmen, and in no way can we enhance the prestige of our beloved Order more adequately than by so acting as to lead the outside world to say "He is always willing to help because he is a mason." Here, again, a fine example has been set by the Boy Scout movement.

Many of my readers must have seen a reference in the papers to the fact that some years ago an American citizen was helped by a boy scout when in difficulty. He did not even find out the name of the boy, but he discovered that the ideal of a boy scout was to do at least one good turn every day. This so impressed him that when he got back to the United States he started a boy scout movement there. Now would it not be a fine thing if we had men coming into Freemasonry because they had found masons so willing to help that they felt it to be an institution which they would like to support and spread throughout the whole globe? This, indeed, would be performing our allotted task while it is yet day, and at the end of our earthly career we should have no need to fear the night when no man can work.

CHAPTER VI.

"The Common Gavel is to knock off all superfluous knobs and excrescences, and the chisel is to further smooth and prepare the stone for the hands of the more expert craftsman."

Before considering the moral significance of this sentence it is perhaps desirable to point out that the gavel is not strictly the same tool as the mallet or the setting maul. The tool with which the Master and the other Officers keep order is really a mallet. The gavel is the same as the Adze, which was the principal tool used by Asiatic workmen and by European masons up to the close of the Norman period. Norman work in stone was dressed and carved with this implement, and it was the introduction of the chisel in the 12th century which enabled the craftsmen to produce the more finished carvings and mouldings which constitute one of the characteristic features of early English architecture.

The most casual glance at Norman sculpture work shows that it is comparatively rough and shallow, and entirely lacking in the polish and finish of the chisel-cut sculpture of the succeeding styles. Thus the gavel, or adze, is a different tool from the mallet, which is used with the chisel, and the general use of the term "gavel" for the Master's mallet is almost certainly erroneous. The main difference between the two tools is that while the gavel has at one end a cutting edge, the mallet should be cut off blunt at each end.

The fact that a chisel is given to an E.A. is in itself an anachronism for it is a tool used, not for the squaring of rough stones, but for the finishing of a perfect ashlar, or for the carving of a delicate piece of sculpture. This anachronism appears very markedly in the ceremony itself, for whereas the first degree deals practically entirely with the training of the moral character, we are told that the chisel points out to us the advantages of a liberal and enlightened education. Now it is the second degree which symbolically sets before us the advantages of education, whereby we are permitted to extend our researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science: thus the work of the gavel must precede that of the chisel.

With a few deft blows of the adze (or gavel) the skilful mason knocks off the rough knobs and excrescences and produces the rough ashlar. It might be possible to produce the same result with mallet and chisel, but it would be slow and laborious, and one would probably produce no better results than with the adze. We are told that the latter represents conscience and it is an apt simile, for conscience enables a man to roughly shape his character, in broad sweeping lines, and to tell in an instant whether a particular course of action is right or wrong. If it is wrong, he must cut it away, otherwise it will form an ugly excrescence on his character.

A very usual figure of speech is, "So and so is a rough diamond." It implies that he is a man of a fine disposition but lacking in those little refinements which go to make a polished gentleman. To acquire this polish it is necessary to apply the chisel, or, in other words, education, and a man spoken of as a rough diamond is so described because he lacks this polish.

Now it should be noted that if the conscience of a man is defective, although you may produce what appears to be a polished gentleman a closer inspection reveals the fact that there is a serious moral defect in his character. In masonic language, the rough ashlar has not been trimmed square, and although the chisel of education has been applied to the block of stone, the finished ashlar, even though the surface be smooth and polished, is not a true square and would prove useless in the building. It may be that one side is longer than the other or that one surface is convex. Whatever be the defects it is not after all a "Perfect ashlar." In other words, we must first apply the gavel of our consciences before utilising the chisel of education.

We now perceive why symbolically it is wrong for the Master to use the gavel. Each man must use his own conscience, it is the very first tool he should apply, and nobody but he can use it, whereas the Master, who represents a spiritual teacher or instructor, may be fittingly

described as using the mallet, that is to say, as directing the education of the junior members of the Craft, for it is with the mallet that the skilled craftsman applies the force required for the chisel and controls the direction in which it shall cut.

Although in a masonic lodge it is almost the universal rule that the E.A. should pass to a F.C., in real life it is not the case, and certainly every one is not capable of directing the education of others. This work requires a skilled teacher, one who has himself learnt thoroughly that which he has subsequently to teach, and also possesses in addition the ability to impart the knowledge he has acquired, qualities which are not by any means always found residing in the same person. On the other hand, God has given to every man a conscience, which will enable him to define the broad principles of right and wrong, and although education may do much to assist the conscience, education without a good conscience may prove a curse instead of a blessing so far as the moral development of the man is concerned.

Thus it will be seen that to call the Master's mallet a gavel and to say that it is given to him as a sign of his power and rulership is flatly to contradict the explanation of the working tools in the first degree. Every workman must use the gavel, even if he be only an E. A., and no man hands over his conscience to the control of another, certainly not one who has had the benefit of our Masonic training. On the other hand, the Master is specifically told that it is his duty to employ and instruct the brethren, and if we choose for the moment to regard the brethren as chisels directed by the Master, we shall probably obtain a true picture of the real intentions of our Masonic system.

So far as Operative Masonry is concerned there seems no shadow of doubt that the first tools given to an E.A. were the gavel and straight edge; the latter being merely a piece of wood five feet long, whereby he could mark out a rough square on a piece of stone, which he then shaped with his adze. No craftsman would place in the hands of a beginner a delicate instrument like a chisel, a tool more quickly damaged than almost any other builder's implement.

Nevertheless, although we can cavil at the presence of the chisel among the working tools of all E.A. from the Operative standpoint, there is for all that considerable justification for its presence at this point in a Speculative Lodge. It is exceedingly probable that by education our 18th century revisers were thinking more of moral instruction than of technical, literary, or social training. Although every man possess a conscience, it cannot be denied that definite moral and religious training is necessary for the boy, whereby he is helped to perceive more clearly those finer distinctions between right and wrong which, without some such training, might not be so apparent to him. In this sense the chisel may fitly be regarded as a companion tool to the gavel, for it is impossible to draw any hard and fast line between our natural conscience and our acquired instinct of what is right and wrong, since the latter begins to grow within us even before we can talk or run about.

There is one point about both the chisel and the gavel which must ever be borne in mind since it teaches an important lesson to every sincere freemason. Both necessitate friction, and we may almost say, wounding blows, on the raw material. Now this is precisely the effect alike of conscience and of any system of training. It is not always pleasant when our conscience forbids us to do something; it often means losing something we should like to have, something perhaps which seems actually a part of ourselves. Moreover, often it is through coming into contact, we may almost say friction, with other human beings, that our conscience is brought into play or we acquire education.

A solitary man on a desert island would hardly have any occasion for consulting his conscience at all, but one living in a crowded city is constantly brought into conflict with other men and his conscience alone will help him to decide whether his attitude towards them is just and unselfish. In like manner, a baby on a desert island might grow to man's estate but would acquire little real education without someone to teach him, even if he found a box of books cast up from a wreck he could not read them without being first taught by another human being.

Now one of the great advantages of a lodge is that men rub shoulders with each other and learn that each is not the sole person in the lodge, but that others have their rights and are entitled to consideration. The friendly intercourse possible therein is undoubtedly of inestimable value in helping to mould the character of every member of the lodge. We are taught to subordinate our wills to the general good and to think unselfishly and for the interest of the lodge as a whole, rather than to try each to go our own way careless of the interests of others. In short, we not only polish our own characters but have them polished for us by the other members, while we in like manner render them a similar service. If, therefore, at any time some incident should occur which hurts our feelings or ruffles our equanimity, let us remember that this may be a well-directed blow of The Master Builder, which is intended to remove some excrescence from our character and thereby mould us hearer to the perfect ashlar.

CHAPTER VII.

"By square conduct, level steps, and upright actions we may hope to ascend to those ethereal mansions whence all goodness emanates."

All through the ages the square has been regarded as the emblem of justice. In ancient Egypt when the gods appear as judges they are depicted as seated on chairs in which a square is carefully portrayed, and even in the ordinary speech of the outside world a square deal is the generally recognised term for a fair and just transaction. It is not surprising therefore to find that this implement plays a prominent part in our Masonic symbolism, in fact it is one of the very first tools to which the attention of the apprentice is directed after he has received the light.

It should be noticed, however, that the three working tools of a F.C. are also the characteristic jewels of the principal officers of the lodge, and since in every degree the candidate passes, as it were, in review before each of them, we immediately obtain a valuable symbolic lesson, namely, that we cannot make progress towards the light save by square conduct, level steps and upright actions.

There is not much difficulty in understanding the significance of the first and last phrases of the above sentences but sometimes there appears to be a little uncertainty as to the exact significance of the phrase, "level steps." This implies that our feet are planted firmly on the ground and therefore that we feel no uncertainty as to the direction in which we are moving, neither will the winds of adversity divert us from our path.

We know also that the level implies that there is a natural equality between brethren, and so in the phrase, "level steps," we are taught that we should go forward side by side with our fellow members, not trying to push the weaker to the wall, in order to achieve our goal irrespective of the claims of others. This fact is more significant than appears at first sight. In real life some men are more spiritually evolved or more intellectual than others, but we are taught hereby that instead of selfishly holding on, such men should stay and help the weaker brethren, lending to them something of their intellectual ability or their spiritual insight so that they may keep pace with those more richly endowed. This is peculiarly brought out in the way that Officers work in a team for the good of the whole lodge and are promoted in rotation. It is, indeed, a valuable lesson! The spirit of esprit de corps is a high virtue and one which should particularly distinguish a Masonic lodge, and the spirit which will lead a more evolved brother to pause on his journey to help a weaker one is deserving of cultivation. Moreover, it brings its own reward, for such an action is in the highest sense unselfish, and thus further increases the spiritual evolution of the man himself and brings him yet another step along the path which leads to the goal towards which we are all striving.

When we look round the outside world and see how commercial competition has produced a spirit wherein the weakest are thrust to the wall and men say, "Let the devil take the hindmost," we see, that this little phrase conveys, perhaps, one of the most important and salutary lessons needed by the present generation, and gives another example of the truly exalted moral teaching contained in every word and line of our craft rituals.

Indeed, this willingness to slow down one's own spiritual progress to help another is the essence of self-sacrifice, and has been the guiding principle which has inspired all the great spiritual teachers of the world in their efforts to advance the well-being of struggling humanity.

Now it is important to realise that this spirit of self-sacrifice succeeds to "square conduct." In other words, it is only when a man has learnt to be just to his fellow men that he can realise the next lesson, which is that he must be more than just, he must give up his own rights to help others. There would be nothing unjust in his outpacing his companions, but it would be selfish, or at any rate self-centred. For all that, it should be remembered that the square in some measure represents the letter G., which stands for God, the Grand Geometrician of the

Universe, the Just Judge. There are other aspects of the Deity which are perhaps more lofty, but, as the old Jewish teachers perceived, you must first make man realise that God is Just before you can convince him that He is something even greater than this, namely, a loving father.

Once, however, we have realised that God is just and that we are all partakers of the same nature, all equally His children, we shall perceive that we shall hardly be acting justly to our fellow men if we leave them behind in the race, and do not help and assist them so that all humanity may achieve the same goal.

The above facts also help us to understand the significance of the plumb line, itself an emblem of God's unerring justice, for they cause us to perceive that we must show forth the lessons we have learnt by upright actions. Unless we show by our actions in life that we have assimilated these important teachings, our knowledge is but vain, and herein it is interesting to note that the level and plumb rule, or, rather, the plumb line, will themselves form a square, thus showing that these three, symbols are a trinity and may-be refer to the triune nature of the Supreme Being.

We may at any rate feel sure that the brother who acts up to the principle of the square, level and plumb rule will not have laboured in vain in the terrestrial lodge, and on quitting it may reasonably hope that he will be permitted to enter that Temple not built with hands, eternal in the skies.

CHAPTER VIII.

"For even at this trying moment our Master remained firm and unshaken."

Although it is in the first degree that the candidate is made acquainted with the principles of moral virtue, and the second and third degrees are devoted to more recondite researches, yet all three degrees have their appropriate moral teachings interwoven with other allegorical instruction. If we desired to find a word which most aptly summarises the significance of the third degree, we could not find one more suitable than the word "loyalty," although, of course, this does not preclude the fact that other moral lessons are inculcated during the ceremony.

The brethren will remember the peculiar nature of the ob. in this degree, which, while containing a definite reference to the f.p.o.f., also contains a specific promise as to the loyalty we should show towards a brother, by respecting his secrets, protecting his good name and maintaining his honour, both in his absence and presence, and in particular by never injuring him through certain of his relations.

Some masons have been inclined to criticise the last clause on the grounds that by implication it releases the Freemason from a like responsibility to the relations of those who are not masons. This, however, is a gross travesty of the truth. The obligation must be considered in its entirety, and not as if each sentence were a separate and distinct command. The promise is one of loyalty to the Brotherhood as a whole, and to every member thereof, as is shown by the great stress laid on keeping inviolate the lawful secrets of a brother. No one has ever suggested that because a Freemason thus promises to keep a brother's secrets, this implies that he is thereby exempted from a like duty in the case of non-masons. Similarly, every clause in the ob. inculcates the virtue of loyalty, a lesson which is immediately driven home by the dramatic incidents which follow, in connection with the Traditional History.

After all, what is the clearest moral teaching of the incident here related, is it not loyalty to one's duty, to the promises one has made and to Freemasonry itself? This does not mean that there are not more mystical meanings hidden within the story, there undoubtedly are, but the moral instruction is nevertheless of great importance.

Loyalty to duty. It is this which the story teaches us, and my readers may be interested to know that the same theme is taught in the Mahabarata, in the legend of the Last Journey of Yudisthira, which relates how he goes on a long journey which ultimately ends at the gates of Heaven. There he is told that he is welcome, but his dog, who has followed him, cannot enter Heaven, for Heaven is not the place for dogs. Whereupon the Indian king replies that the dog has followed him loyally throughout his lone, weary journey, and that to forsake a friend is as vile as to commit a murder. Rather than do such a foul deed he is prepared to give up all hope of Heaven. Immediately on his utterance of these words the dog changes form and stands beside him as Dharma, the god of Duty, and he enters into heaven.

Here, then, we have the same underlying lesson of loyalty to duty, and it should be remembered that the F.C.s who went in search, on a long and dreary journey, were similarly actuated by loyalty to their lost Master, and inspired by a sense of duty.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that among us English people loyalty to duty is considered one of the highest virtues. The pages of our history give countless examples of this fact, and this virtue probably appeals to us more than almost any other. It is therefore fit and proper that the culminating degree of the Craft should emphasise its importance in almost every line in the ceremony.

We must be careful, however, not to give too narrow an interpretation to the word "duty." The ceremony inculcates loyalty in all its aspects; loyalty to our fellow men; loyalty to a sacred trust reposed in us; loyalty to those set in authority over us and, above all, loyalty to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. The lesson is driven home by the manner in which the

opposite vice is depicted. To all right-minded men, treachery is a peculiarly abhorrent defect. Dante places traitors in the very lowest part of Hell and lowest of all places those who have betrayed a benefactor. The three villains in our story are traitors first of all to a brother, secondly, to their Master, and lastly, to their benefactor, for, ex hypothesi, they must have received the F. C. degree from the very man whom they subsequently treated so badly.

There is one important lesson on this subject which is apt to be overlooked, namely, that the opportunity for the display of this virtue seldom occurs except in times of sorrow and defeat. It is when the foemen ring the castle round, the last food is eaten, the last water drunk and the walls are crumbling before the assaults of the attacking party, that the soldier is able to prove his loyalty. It is when false friends forsake a man, when troubles creep in on every side, that the true friend shows himself in his real colours. It is when a cause is lost, when victory rests on the banners of the enemy, when cowards fly and false friends prove traitors, that loyalty shines out as a glimmering ray amid the darkness. It is tragic, but true, to say that the real test of loyalty is usually on the brink of an open grave, and often the loyal man does not live to receive the reward of his virtue in this life, It is, therefore, in some ways one of the most unselfish of virtues, but it leaves behind it a fragrance sweeter than myrrh and a crown which is truly celestial.

CHAPTER IX

MASONIC PROVERBS, POEMS AND SAYINGS.

The foregoing chapters make no pretence at exhausting the subject. To deal fully with the moral teachings of Freemasonry would necessitate the writing of many volumes, but such is not the purpose of this book. Herein I have endeavoured to elucidate the moral teaching underlying certain well-known and significant phrases in our ritual, hoping thereby to inspire others to attempt a similar task. It is with this purpose in view that a number of the most pregnant passages have been selected for inclusion in this volume. All of them are worthy of the most careful consideration by thoughtful masons, who will find them most valuable themes for short addresses or brief speeches, wherein they can help to instruct the junior brethren, more especially those who are only just passing through their degrees. Let us not forget that a sound moral basis is the very foundation of every religious system, and Freemasonry herself declares that it is an essential qualification for the student who would endeavour to unravel her more secret teachings.

Moreover, when faced by a critic from the outside world, a brother will often find that an apt quotation will enable him to develop an argument in defence of our Order which, without disclosing Masonic secrets, will enable an honest critic to perceive that Masonry is definitely a force for good in the world.

The inclusion of a few verses of Masonic poetry needs no justification, for they enable a brother to memorise some Masonic ideal and set it ever before his eyes.

Masonic Proverbs, Poems and Sayings.

- (1) Right glad am I to find your faith so well founded.
- (2) That virtue which may justly be denominated the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's heart, - CHARITY.
- (3) The practice of every moral and social virtue.
- (4) Let me recommend to your most serious contemplation the Volume of the Sacred Law.
- (5) By looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support.
- (6) Ever remember that Nature hath implanted in your breast a sacred and indissoluble attachment towards that country whence you derived your birth and infant nurture.
- (7) Let PRUDENCE direct you, TEMPERANCE chasten you, FORTITUDE support you, and JUSTICE be the Guide in all your actions.
- (8) Endeavour to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.
- (9) Masonry is not only the most ancient, but also the most honourable Society that ever existed.
- (10) A Mason's Charity should know no bounds, save those of prudence.
- (11) Learning originated in the East.
- (12) The Universe is the Temple of the Deity we serve.

- (13) The Sun and Moon are messengers of His Will, and all His Law is concord.
- (14) To be in Charity with all men.
- (15) CHARITY comprehendeth the whole.
- (16) The distinguishing characteristics of a Good Freemason are Virtue, Honour, and Mercy, and may they ever be found in every Mason's breast.
- (17) You are expected to make the liberal arts and sciences your daily study, that you may the better discharge your duties as a Mason, and estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty.
- (18) "There's naught but what's good To be understood, By a Free and an Accepted Mason."
- (19) He who is placed on the lowest spoke of fortune's wheel is equally entitled to our regard, for a time will come - and the wisest of us knows not how soon - when all distinctions, save those of goodness and virtue, will cease, and Death, the Grand Leveller of all human greatness, reduce us to the same state.
- (20) Steadily persevere in the practice of every virtue.
- (21) Judge with candour, admonish with friendship, and reprehend with mercy.
- (22) You are to encourage industry and reward merit; to supply the wants and relieve the necessities of brethren to the uttermost of your power.
- (23) View their interests as inseparable from your own.
- (24) To the just and virtuous man death hath no terrors equal to the stain of falsehood and dishonour.
- (25) The posture of my daily supplications shall remind me of your wants.
- (26) You are to inculcate universal benevolence and, by the regularity of your own behaviour, afford the best example for the benefit of others.
- (27) You agree to be a good man and true, and strictly to obey the moral law.
- (28) Practise out of the Lodge those duties you have been taught in it, and by virtuous, amiable, and discreet conduct prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our ancient institution; so that when anyone is said to be a member of it, the world may know that he is one to whom the Burdened Heart may pour forth its sorrow, to whom the Distressed may prefer their suit, whose hand is guided by Justice and whose Heart is Expanded by Benevolence.
- (29) What you observe praise-worthy in others you should carefully imitate, and what in them may appear defective you should in yourself amend.
- (30) We learn to be meek, humble, and resigned, to be faithful to our God, our Country, and our Laws, to drop a tear of sympathy over the failings of a Brother, and to pour the healing balm of Consolation into the bosom of the afflicted.
- (31) May all these principles and tenets be transmitted pure and unpolluted from generation to generation.

(32) Q. What manner of man should a free and accepted mason be?

A. A free born man, brother to a King, fellow to a Prince or to a Beggar, if a Mason and found worthy.

(33) Q. What do you come here to do?

A. To learn to rule and subdue my passions.

(34) The tongue, being an index of the mind, should utter nothing but what the heart may truly dictate.

(35) Masonry is free and requires a perfect freedom of inclination in every Candidate for its mysteries. It is founded on the purest principles of piety and virtue.

(36) FAITH.

Is the foundation of Justice, the bond of Amity, and the chief support of Civil Society. We live and walk by FAITH.

(37) HOPE.

Is an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and steady, and enters into that which is within the Veil.

(38) CHARITY

Is the brightest ornament which can adorn our Masonic profession, and is the best test and surest proof of the sincerity of our religion.

(39) To-day we may travel in PROSPERITY; to-morrow we may totter on the uneven paths of Weakness, Temptation and Adversity.

(40) THE BIBLE

The Almighty has been pleased to reveal more of His Divine Will in that Holy Book than He has by any other means.

(41) MERCY

Mercy, when possessed by the Monarch, adds a lustre to every gem that adorns his crown.

(42) Our Mother Earth is continually labouring for our support; thence we came, and there we must all return.

(43) May Virtue, Honour and Mercy continue to distinguish Free and Accepted Masons.

(44) Contemplate the intellectual faculty and trace it from its development, through the paths of Heavenly science, even to the throne of God Himself.

(45) Let us toast every brother, Both ancient and young, Who governs his passions And bridles his tongue.

(46) May the fragrance of Virtue, like the sprig of acacia, bloom over the grave of every deceased brother.

(47) Our prayers are reciprocally required for each others' welfare.

(48) May all Freemasons live in love and die in peace.

(49) May every Brother have a heart to feel and a hand to give.

(50) May we be more ready to correct our own faults than to publish an error of a Brother.

(51) May we never condemn in a Brother what we would pardon in ourselves.

(52). To every true and faithful heart That still preserves the secret art.

(53) A MASONIC DIRGE.

There is a calm for those who weep, A rest for weary pilgrims found, They softly lie and sweetly sleep Low in the ground! Low in the ground!

The storm, which wracks the winter sky, No more disturbs their deep repose Than Summer evening's latest sigh That shuts the rose! That shuts the rose!

Ah, mourner! long of storms the sport, Condemned in wretchedness to roam, Hope, thou shalt reach a sheltering port, A quiet home! A quiet home!

The sun is like a spark of fire, A transient meteor in the sky; The soul, immortal as its Sire, Shall never die! Shall never die!

(54) So here's to the sons of the widow, Wherever soever they roam, Here's to all they aspire, And if they desire, A speedy return to their home.

R. Kipling.

(55) We met upon the level, And we parted on the square, And I was Junior Deacon, In my Mother Lodge out there.

R. Kipling.

(56) FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL.

From Yucatan to Java's strand We have followed thy trail o'er sea and land. When Pharaoh lived he knew this sign, Brother of mine, Brother of mine.

Where Vishnu sits enthroned on high I noted Hanuman passing by, And as he passed he made this sign, Brother of mine, Brother of mine.

In the ocean of peace I came to a land Where silence broods on an empty strand, Where ancient Gods of carven stone Gaze o'er the waters, still and lone, And, search as I might, I could but find Fragments of wood, which bring to mind Ancient writings of bygone days . . . Whilst on the hieroglyphs I gaze I find that they also knew the sign, Brothers now dead, yet Brothers of mine!