

# SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE DEGREES

BY

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PART TWO

THE FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE

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**SYMBOLISM OF THE THE THREE DEGREES  
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# **THE FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE**

# SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE DEGREES

## THE FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE

The ceremonies of initiation, passing, and raising, as well as the lectures explanatory of them, are necessarily brief; want of time and the danger of overburdening the candidate require that they should be so. The Mason, therefore, who relies solely upon what he sees and hears in the lodge will obtain a very inadequate conception of Freemasonry. He may and doubtless will be more or less affected by our ceremonies; it could scarcely be otherwise, so solemn and impressive are they, but he will fail to discover and understand some of the greater truths which lie hidden beneath the surface, and can never become truly speaking a "bright Mason."

Nearly every Masonic symbol or ceremony (like all true allegories) has two (sometimes more) significations, one literal, the other symbolical. The literal meaning, usually the more apparent, is often of great interest, frequently affording striking evidences as to the origin and antiquity of Freemasonry. But it is the symbolical or allegorical meaning, usually the more recondite, which appeals most to the thoughtful mind.

Nor is it unfortunate that the more important lessons are somewhat veiled from observation. We do

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not prize what we obtain easily; it is that for which we have striven or paid a big price which we value. If, therefore, from beneath the surface of these familiar ceremonies any of us by our own studies and reflections are enabled to discover and bring to light truths which have lain somewhat hidden, the appreciation of them is keener and the impression produced deeper and more lasting than if they had been open to superficial observation. For this reason many of the greatest lessons of Freemasonry are wisely hidden away as prizes for the studious and the diligent only. The "mysteries" and the "secrets" of Freemasonry are not synonymous terms; the mysteries continue such forever even to the Mason who will not study and read. Do you feel that Masonry is an idle and frivolous thing, unworthy of the attention of serious men? If so, did you ever reflect whether the fault was yours or that of the institution? Unless you are sure that you know what Freemasonry is and what it teaches and what are its designs and that you thoroughly understand its methods of teaching, withhold your condemnation till you have made it the subject of a little serious study, because, as observed by an eminent authority, the character of the institution is "elevated in every one's opinion just in proportion to the amount of knowledge that he has acquired of its symbolism, philosophy and history."

Freemasonry is a many-sided subject. There is something in it which arrests and appeals to the shallowest mind or the most frivolous moral character. At the same time, there is much in it which has chained the thought and attention of the world's greatest intellects and wisest philosophers. It pre-

sents many aspects for study and investigation, either of which will amply repay the efforts of the intelligent mind and will lead to knowledge not merely curious, as some suppose, but of the utmost practical value.

We are forced to refer again to one line of thought touched on in the preceding chapter because we regard it as fundamental to the study and understanding of any part of Freemasonry. This idea is that Freemasonry is an elaborate allegory of human life, both individually and collectively, in all its varied aspects, past, present, and future; that the lodge represents the world into which mortal man is introduced, lives, moves, has his being and eventually dies; that it also represents the place or state of the redeemed in the life which we believe follows this; that the lodge-member typifies the individual man; that its organised membership represents mankind united into human society; that the ideal lodge-member, ruled by love, wisdom, strength and beauty, typifies man raised from a state of imperfection to one of perfection.

Of all the ceremonies of the lodge, the Fellow Craft Degree, when viewed by itself is the most difficult and the least generally understood. Preston, who wrote the first Monitor, tells us that "such is the latitude of this degree that the most judicious may fail in an attempt to explain it." In Akin's Georgia Manual we read that the "splendid beauty of the Fellow Craft Degree can be seen only by the studious eye and that the Master who would impress it upon the candidate must store his mind with the history, traditions and ritualism of this Degree."

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A flood of light, however, is at once shed upon the subject when we consider it a part of a human allegory, of which the Entered Apprentice and Master's Degrees are respectively the beginning and the completion.

Let us then briefly consider it in this manner and endeavour to reach a clearer understanding of its meaning. That we may the better perceive just where it falls into the complete scheme, it will be necessary first to consider for a moment the Entered Apprentice and Master's Degrees.

We are told in the Master's lecture that the Entered Apprentice represents youth; the Fellow Craft, manhood; and the Master Mason, old age. A little study will serve to show us how completely this simile is justified.

The introduction or first admission of the Entered Apprentice candidate into the lodge, therefore, typifies the entrance of man upon the world's stage of action or in other words, the birth of the child into this life. The distinguished Masonic scholar, Dr. Mackey, says that the Entered Apprentice is a "child in Masonry" and we read in many Monitors that "the first or Entered Apprentice Degree is intended symbolically to represent the entrance of man into the world in which he is afterwards to become a living and thinking actor." In English working the candidate is reminded that his admission into the Entered Apprentice lodge "in a state of helpless ignorance was an emblematical representation of the entrance of all men on this their mortal existence."<sup>1</sup>

The preparation of the candidate and the plight in

<sup>1</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 307.

which he is admitted an Entered Apprentice strikingly symbolises the helpless, destitute, blind and ignorant condition of the newly born babe. Yes, it is even certain that there are features preserved in Masonic symbolism which allude to that part of life preceding even birth and which hint at the phenomena of coition, generation, conception and gestation of the child in its mother's womb. These things rightly considered are as much a part and as pure and holy a part of a human life as birth or death, and could no more be omitted from any complete representation of it. Let no one, therefore, imagine that he has found anything impure in Freemasonry because he has discovered in it symbols and ceremonies which once undoubtedly bore phallic significations.

We may, therefore, say that the Masonic system epitomizes allegorically the life of man from the moment he is begotten through every stage of existence, conception, gestation, birth, infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, old age, death, the resurrection and everlasting life. Did any greater theme ever engage the attention of any society? Anything that pertains to any of these great subjects and which tends to strengthen, to elevate or to ennoble the human being and his character is properly a part of Freemasonry.

The first important lesson impressed upon the candidate after his entrance into the lodge is intended to signify to us that the very first idea that ought to be instilled into the mind of the child is a reverence and adoration for the Deity, the great and incomprehensible author of its existence. From beginning to the end, the Entered Apprentice Degree is a series of

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moral lessons. This is a hint so broad that one need not be wise in order to understand that the moral training and education of the child should precede even the development and cultivation of its intellect. How many parents and teachers fail just at this point! They polish and adorn the minds of their children and pupils with great diligence, at the same time neglect their moral training, and when too late find that often they have made of them smart criminals.

The placing of the young Entered Apprentice in the northeast corner of the lodge in imitation of the ancient custom of laying the corner-stone of a building in the northeast corner, signifies that as an Entered Apprentice he has but laid the foundation whereon to build his future moral edifice, that of life and character. It aptly and beautifully symbolises the end of the preparatory period and the beginning of the constructive period of human life.

The admonition there given him is to the effect that, having laid the foundation true, he should take care that the superstructure is reared in like manner; in other words, that his life, his moral temple, be kept in harmony with the moral precepts which have been given him in the Entered Apprentice Degree.

This likening of the human body to a temple of God is an ancient metaphor. Jesus' employment of it in speaking of his own body was but in keeping with a common practice among Jewish writers and teachers of his time. It immensely dignifies the physical body of man and teaches that, when kept clean both in the literal and the moral sense, it is a fit place for even Deity himself to dwell.

This body, so powerfully and yet so delicately contrived that often apparently slight causes produce death, we have no right to defile or abuse with any kind of excess. No mechanism was ever so delicately adjusted and no careful engineer would ever think of putting even too much oil upon a fine piece of machinery. Yet excessive indulgence in food, drink, or other appetites works far greater injury to our bodies.

The lesson is that we have no more right to defile or abuse our bodies than had the Jew to defile the Temple of God upon Mount Moriah.

In the Third Degree the matters pressed upon our attention are the closing years of life, death and the vast hereafter. The twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, the most beautiful and affecting description of old age in all literature is introduced. We are also told that the events it celebrates occurred just before the completion of the Temple, which is but a figurative way of saying that the period of life symbolised by the Master's Degree is that just preceding its close, just before the completion of the moral and spiritual temple.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, with the greatest propriety that the Master's Degree is said to represent old age.

If then the Entered Apprentice represents childhood and youth, and the Master Mason old age, the Fellow Craft Degree should, in order to complete the allegory, represent middle life and its labours, and this is precisely what it does with the greatest beauty and consistency.

<sup>2</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 307.

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Although the candidate for the Fellow Craft Degree is to be regarded as a seeker after knowledge, yet the first section of this degree consists chiefly of a reiteration of the moral teachings of the First Degree. This is to remind the young man as he is about to enter upon the serious labours and struggles of life that virtue is to be always the first consideration, that no knowledge, no success which is purchased at the sacrifice of morals, honour or integrity is to be prized. This lesson is repeated more than once in the course of this degree, admonishing us that, no matter how engrossed in the affairs of life we may become, we should never suffer the allurements of coveted gains to seduce us from the pathway of strict rectitude and justice.

Although thus reiterating and emphasising the moral precepts of the First Degree, the Fellow Craft Degree is as distinctly intellectual in its purpose and spirit as the Entered Apprentice is moral. The great theme of the Second Degree is the attainment of knowledge, the cultivation of the mind and the acquisition of habits of industry.<sup>3</sup> This feature becomes prominent in the second section of this degree. Preston, who, as already observed, wrote what might be termed the first Monitor, says that while the First Degree is intended "to enforce the duties of morality," the Second "comprehends a more diffusive system of knowledge." We read in Simon's Monitor that "the Entered Apprentice is to emerge from the darkness to light; the Fellow Craft is to come out of ignorance into knowledge." Dr. Mackey expresses it

<sup>3</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 307.

thus: "The lessons the Entered Apprentice receives are simply intended to cleanse the heart and prepare the recipient for that mental illumination which is to be given in the succeeding degree"; and further he says, "The candidate in the Second Degree represents a man starting forth on the journey of life with the great task before him of self-improvement," and that the result is to be the development of all his intellectual faculties and the acquisition of truth and knowledge. In England (Emulation Working) the candidate is informed that while in the Entered Apprentice Degree "he made himself acquainted with the principles of moral truth and virtue, he is in the Fellow Craft Degree permitted to extend his researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science,"<sup>4</sup> and that he is "led in the Second Degree to contemplate the intellectual faculty and to trace it from its development, through the paths of heavenly science, even to the throne of God himself." Brother J. W. Horsley, Rector of St. Peter's Cathedral, London, thus expresses the idea: "Generally, therefore, we may say that the Third Degree represents and enforces the blessedness of spiritual life and the duty of progress therein, as the Second Degree performs the same office for the intellectual life, and the first for the moral life."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Perfect Ceremonies of Craft Masonry* (Lewis, 1896), p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> *A. Q. C.*, Vol. XII, p. 52.

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### THE JEWELS OF A FELLOW CRAFT

The very means of gaining admission into a Fellow Craft Lodge \* \* \*, alluding to the three jewels of a Fellow Craft, are made to typify the processes of communicating, acquiring and preserving knowledge. "The attentive ear receives the sound from the instructive tongue and the mysteries of Freemasonry (as indeed all other knowledge) are safely lodged in the repository of faithful breasts."

### THE WORKING TOOLS

The plumb, square, and level were the appropriate tools of the operative Fellow Craft Mason. To the Master or Overseer fell the duty of superintendence, to the Entered Apprentice that of gathering and rough hewing the materials, but to the Fellow Craft fell the labour of actual construction. This involved the laying of level foundations and courses, the erection of perpendicular walls and the bringing of the stones to perfectly rectangular shape. These labours necessitated the constant use by the operative Fellow Craft Mason of the plumb, square and level. Their operative uses very appropriately symbolise the analogous processes in the building of human character. This symbolical application of these implements of the builder is by no means recent; it dates back even among the Chinese more than seven hundred years before Christ. Five hundred years before Christ what we call the Golden Rule was by the Chinese called "the principle of acting on the square." Mencius, the great Chinese philosopher, who lived in the

third century before Christ, teaches that men should apply the square and level to their lives, and speaking figuratively says that he who would acquire wisdom must make use of the square and compasses.

#### BOAZ AND JACHIN

Solomon, in accordance with the common practice of his day, placed two immense and highly ornate pillars, or columns, at the entrance of his temple. It is well known that King Hiram did the like for the great temple to Melkarth erected by him at Tyre. Many other instances might be cited. Whence originated this custom has been a matter for much speculation. We have seen what was the ancient conception of the form of the earth. To their world the Strait of Gibraltar appeared to be a veritable door of entry. On either side of this entrance rose two enormous rock promontories, Abyla and Calpe, (now called Gibraltar and Ceuta) which completely commanded egress and ingress and are familiarly known as the Pillars of Hercules. They were believed by the ancients to mark the western boundary of the world. Many have seen in these two vast columns of stone, set by nature to the entrance of the then known world, the counterparts of the pillars so often set by the ancients at the entrance to their temples, which were to them, as the lodge is to us, symbols of the world.

The first objects that engage the attention of the Fellow Craft on his way to the Middle Chamber are the representatives of those pillars at the entrance to Solomon's Temple. In addition to the explanation

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given in the lodge, they undoubtedly have also an allusion to the two legendary pillars of Enoch upon which tradition tells us all the wisdom of the ancient world was inscribed in order to preserve it "against inundation and conflagrations." Standing at the very threshold of Solomon's Temple, as well as of the Fellow Craft lodge, they admonish us that after a proper moral training the acquisition of wisdom is the next necessary preparation for a useful and successful life.<sup>6</sup> Their names, Boaz and Jachin, possess also a moral signification, meaning together that "in strength God will establish His house." Symbolically applied to the candidate, they mean that God will firmly establish the moral and spiritual edifice of the just and upright man.

### THE GLOBES

The idea that the globes upon the two brazen pillars represent the globes celestial and terrestrial is certainly modern. The globular form of the earth was unknown to the ancients. Except to a few profound thinkers like Plato, the conception of the earth as a sphere was utterly foreign. Not until about the time of the discovery of America did this fact become generally understood.

Moreover, the Bible, at least in English translations, says nothing of any globes upon the pillars, but distinctly states that there were "made two chapters of molten brass to set upon the tops of the pillars,"

<sup>6</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 219.

and that "upon the tops of the pillars was lily-work." (1 Kings vii, 16, 22.) The more recent revisions of the Bible call the "chapiters" by their more familiar name of "capitals." The learned Jewish Rabbi, Solomon Jehudi, speaks of them as "pommels," a word signifying a globular ornament. It is well known that many of the architectural features and ornamental designs of Solomon's Temple were borrowed from the Egyptians. The so-called "lily-work" was unquestionably some form of water-lily or lotus pattern of ornamentation so common in ancient architecture and which even now is employed in conventionalised forms nearly everywhere. It sometimes assumes the form of the lotus leaf, at others of the full blown blossom, and at others still of the bud. Our common "egg and dart" pattern is a development therefrom.

At the time of Solomon, one of the most frequent and at the same time one of the most beautiful of the lotus or water-lily designs was the lotus-bud capital, which often assumed an egglike or oval shape. It is accurately indicated by the word "pommel," and indeed this term is employed in some of our Masonic Monitors in lieu of the term "globes." There seems little reason to doubt that the two Brazen Pillars were columns of the Egyptian style with the lotus-bud capitals. Their great diameter as compared to their height (about six diameters) is another strong evidence of their Egyptian derivation. Furthermore, we know that winged globular ornaments, sometimes of immense size, were extensively employed by the Egyptians in adorning the entrances to their temples.

The lotus or water-lily was the sacred plant of the

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Egyptians and among other things signified "Universality." The conclusion, therefore, seems reasonable that, if there was anything like globes on the two Brazen Pillars, they were not true globes of the earth and of the heavens, but representations of the lotus-bud. If so, though the symbol has not been accurately perpetuated, the symbolism has.

There is another ancient conception to which the idea of globes upon the pillars may be related. From remotest times men must have observed that numerous forms of life proceeded from an egg. This observation gave rise to the belief which we know to have been widely disseminated in ancient times, and which modern science has almost completely confirmed, that life in every form proceeds from an egg. This supposed universal source of life became to the ancients the symbol of the source of things universal. In other words, the egg was the symbol of the Universal Mother. It is easily perceivable that to a people entertaining these ideas, globes or eggs mounted upon columns would convey the idea of universality.

### LILY-WORK

In addition to the lotus capitals, no doubt the two pillars were, in keeping with the universal custom of the time, further ornamented with various forms of the lotus or water-lily design. The familiar token of peace with us is the palm branch, but to the Egyptian and the Jew this office was fulfilled by the lotus or water-lily. It is, therefore, with precise accuracy

that we say that the lotus, or Egyptian water-lily (an entirely different plant from our lily), denotes peace.

#### THE NETWORK

The network which adorned the capitals or chapters of the pillars might be more familiarly described as "lattice-work." Curious specimens of this ornamentation are found in ancient and mediæval architecture, particularly in that of the Magistri Comacini, or Comacine Masters of Northern Italy. Many of these are of the most beautiful and intricate designs and without either beginning or end. A more appropriate emblem of unity than these could not be conceived.

It is interesting to note in this connection, that recently a very gifted woman, Mrs. Lucy Baxter, writing under the *nom de plume* of Leader Scott, has in her splendid book, *The Cathedral Builders*, adduced much evidence to prove that our modern Freemasonry is derived from these same Magistri Comacini, and through them from the Collegia Fabrorum, or Colleges of Builders, of the pre-Christian Roman era. To my mind, one of the strongest of these evidences is the common possession and employment of this network ornamentation. See *The Comacines*, by W. Ravenscroft.

This tracing of our society back to the Roman Building Societies of the eighth century before Christ (if it can be sustained) carries us back to the time when we know that building societies were common not only in Rome, but in Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Palestine. Indeed, it is impossible to explain

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the erection of such architectural wonders as the great pyramids and temples of Egypt, Asia, Greece and Rome, without supposing the existence at that time of building societies, or associations of architects, embracing within themselves the most brilliant intellects and skilful workmen, not only then living, but whose superior the world has never since seen; in other words, precisely such a society as our traditions teach built King Solomon's Temple. Evidences of ancient history point to the existence of such a brotherhood, known as the Dionysian Architects, at Tyre, the home of the two Hiram at the time of the building of the Temple and it was to this place, according to Scripture, that Solomon sent when he wanted artisans competent to carry out his great design.

### THE POMEGRANATE

The pomegranate, which also adorned the capitals of the pillars, is a symbol of great antiquity, but its meaning seems to have been sacredly guarded. Pausanias, who wrote about 150 A.D., calls it *aporreto teros logos*,—i.e., a forbidden mystery. Ancient deities were often depicted holding this fruit in their hands and this, Achilles Statius, Bishop of Alexandria, says "had a mystical meaning." The Syrians at Damascus anciently worshipped a god whom they called "Rimmon," and this we know to be the Hebrew word for pomegranate.

Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough, a most learned antiquarian, guessed that on account of the great number of its seeds a pomegranate in the hand

of a god denoted fruitfulness or fecundity. This corresponds closely enough with the meaning that we, as Masons, attach to it—that of plenty.

#### OPERATIVE AND SPECULATIVE MASONRY

The candidate is informed that there are two kinds of Masonry, operative and speculative; the one, the erection of material edifices to shelter us from the inclemencies of the seasons; the other, the building of that moral, religious and spiritual edifice, human life and character, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He is reminded of the historical fact that our ancient brethren wrought in both kinds of Masonry, while we work in speculative only. With this distinction in mind, the candidate is expected to be able to grasp the allegorical meanings of the succeeding ceremonies.

We do not regard Speculative Masonry and non-operative Masonry as necessarily synonymous terms. It seems clear that from the remotest times the operative builders were organised into societies or guilds. Though exclusively composed of operative builders, it is quite likely that they possessed speculative doctrines. We know they adorned their edifices with symbols of many kinds and that this continued for ages. It is scarcely conceivable that the operative builders could have thus dealt with symbols for so long a time without eventually having come to regard them as their own, and without attaching to them moral and religious meanings.

If we suppose that in the beginning the workman

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was employed by the owner and that he built only as he was directed and added only such adornment and symbolism as he was specifically instructed and that this continued to be the case for a long time, it is inevitable that the workman would after a while commence to add symbols of his own accord and that in course of time this would become a common feature of all buildings, particularly those of a sacred character.

Undoubtedly one of the original objects of the secrecy observed by Freemasons was to promote knowledge and skill in architecture and to preserve the trade secrets of the Craft among its members. At that period it was composed almost exclusively of operative masons and so continued for many centuries. But gradually the outside world became cognisant that within the tiled recesses of its lodges were taught, by means of most impressive ceremonies, many of the greatest truths of morals and religion. Non-masons, therefore, began to seek admission to its mysteries, and the most distinguished for knowledge and virtue were received into its ranks. We may well believe that at this stage the test of worthiness applied to the non-operative seeking admission was rigorous in the extreme. Gradually the non-operative or, as we would say, the speculative members, began to outweigh in numbers and influence the operative members and eventually the Society became purely speculative. It was, however, a long time before the transformation was complete, beginning probably about A.D. 1450 and extending down to 1717. Scarce two hundred years ago lodges existed whose membership was exclusively operative; others exclusively specu-

lative; and others whose membership was mixed.

As the membership of the Fraternity thus changed, its mission also became altered.

It, therefore, admits of little doubt that our Fraternity is derived from an ancient society of operative builders. Both the external and the internal evidences are so numerous that this fact may be regarded as unquestionable. A question then arises and one which in a large measure affects the meanings of our symbols in every degree, How can it be explained that this Society came to be called the Royal Craft?

#### ROYAL TRADITION

The claim that our society has from the most ancient times enjoyed the favor, the patronage, the association and in some instances the membership of many of the greatest monarchs of the past has subjected us to much ridicule. It is declared that royalty would scorn to associate with a society of mere operative builders, and that such traditions among us must be set down to mere pride and boasting. Another that has created quite as much laughter at our expense is the claim that our society dates back to the beginning of architecture. Understand that we do not insist that we have historical warrant for these claims. We merely insist that they have been neither disproved nor shown to be unreasonable or unlikely. We have scanty enough references to schools, colleges, or societies of builders existing in ancient times, but their existence is proved by the buildings themselves. It is unbelievable that such structures as adorned Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Palestine, to say nothing of

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Greece and Rome, could have resulted from the disorganised efforts of individual masons and architects, however skilful they may have been. Such knowledge is not and presumably never was inherited or intuitive. It can now and presumably always could be acquired only by years of hard study from some source where the accumulated learning of all the past was preserved. There must have been some organised institution in which the necessary learning could not only be preserved from generation to generation but where it could be acquired. It was a time when, printing being unknown and writing slow and difficult, books were few and costly. Hence knowledge of the art of building, like all other knowledge, was transmitted by oral communication from father to son, from teacher to pupil, from master to apprentice. It would naturally result that knowledge so rare and so difficult to obtain and of such personal advantage to the possessor should be guarded with great care. A society possessing it must inevitably have become a secret one to the extent at least of withholding its trade secrets from the public at large. It is a safe conclusion that wherever we find in ancient times great architectural works there existed alongside them a society of architects of a more or less secret nature, who designed and built them. Thus we rationally account for the existence in most ancient times of building societies making secrets of their trade knowledge. The little evidence of a direct character which we possess is, therefore, sufficient to prove their existence. Our traditions along these lines are, therefore, in accord with what might be reasonably expected.

But how are we to account for or rather to prove the possession of these ancient operative societies of philosophical, moral, and religious tenets and secrets? In other words, while an operative society of builders appears necessary to account for the buildings themselves, what causes could give rise, within it or alongside of it, to a Speculative Masonry? Our traditions claim for our Society cordial, if not intimate, relations in the early times not only with the heads of the church but with the heads of the State; not only with the priesthood but with the royalty. Are these claims likely or unlikely, reasonable or unreasonable, or are they mere presumptuous boasts that ever a society of builders enjoyed the patronage, not to say the association, of kings and priests? The buildings themselves prove another thing, that the men who could design and construct the greatest of them were the equals intellectually of any king or priest who ever lived. There was nothing in association with such men derogatory to the dignity of monarch or high priest. The buildings themselves establish another fact, that in the earliest times the operative builders were employed in the service of (which is but another way of saying enjoyed the patronage of) kings and priests. They prove this because with few exceptions they are temples of religion erected under the immediate direction of the monarch. We credit these priests and monarchs with little intelligence to suppose that their curiosity and desire to learn would not be aroused by witnessing the rise of such stupendous and magnificent structures. On the other hand, however willing the builders might be to impart knowledge of this art to them, they could not learn without com-

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ing into intimate association with the builders. We cannot conceive how intelligent monarchs and priests could fail to enter into cordial relations of some sort with such master artists whose services they were constantly requiring. The more enlightened a monarch or priest the closer and warmer would be their relation. To this very natural result and not to mere vainglory may be attributed the fact that it is the greatest monarchs and priests of the past with whom our society claims association.

### THE WINDING STAIRS

In the Winding Stairs an architectural feature of Solomon's Temple is seized upon to symbolise the journey of life. It is not a placid stream down which one may lazily float, it is not even a straight or level pathway along which one may travel with a minimum of exertion; it is a devious and tortuous way, requiring labour and effort for its accomplishments. This is appropriately symbolised by a winding stairway. It teaches us that our lives should be neither downward nor on a dead level, but, although difficult, progressive and upward.

### SCIENCE OF NUMBERS

The Winding Stairs consist of 3, 5 and 7 steps, numbers which among the ancients were deemed of a mysterious nature. This introduces us to what is one of the most curious bodies of learning of the ancient world, what is known as their *science of numbers*, many fragments of which are scattered throughout

Masonry. It is exceedingly difficult for the modern mind to get any grasp whatever upon what is meant by this so-called science, so highly speculative was it. It does not allude as its name might seem to indicate to any of the mathematical sciences, or anything akin to them. It was a system of moral science or philosophy, wherein numbers were given symbolical meaning and the letters of the alphabet were given numerical values; whence words were supposed to have certain occult significations according to the sums or multiples of the numerical equivalents of its letters. The elaboration of this idea was productive of what is known as the Hebrew *Kabala*. Pythagoras is reputed to have introduced this school among the Greeks and according to Aristotle he taught that "Number is the principle of all things and that the organisation of the Universe is an harmonic system of numerical ratios."<sup>7</sup> To illustrate:—the soul was made to correspond to the number 6, and 7 was the counterpart of reason and health.

The numbers 3, 5 and 7 had many meanings among the Jews which are not elucidated in the lodge. The preservation in our ritual of hints of this learning of a past age is now chiefly valuable to us as a proof of the antiquity of Masonic symbolism.<sup>8</sup>

There is another interesting feature of the total number of steps of the Winding Stairs, fifteen in all. This was an important symbol among the Jews, because it was the sum of the numerical equivalents of the Hebrew letters composing the word J A H—one of the names of Deity.

<sup>7</sup> *Universal Cyclopaedia*, Vol. IX, p. 560.

<sup>8</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, pp. 219, 225.

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It will also be noted that the number of each series of steps, three, five and seven, as well as the total number of steps, fifteen, is odd. As we have seen, odd numbers were by the ancients regarded with greater veneration than were even numbers. Vitruvius, the great Roman architect, who flourished just before Christ, states that the ancient temples were always approached by an odd number of steps. The reason, he says, was that commencing with the right foot at the bottom, the worshipper would find the same foot in advance when he entered the temple, and that this was considered a favourable omen. The thoughtful Mason cannot fail to be struck with the coincidence here indicated.

### THE THREE STEPS

Adopting the method of these ancient worthies but varying the meaning, we make the number 3 allude to the organisation of our Society with its three degrees and its three principal officers. Among the earliest realisations of every man is that no man lives to himself alone; that he is dependent upon his fellow creatures and they upon him; that he owes them and they owe him mutual aid, support and protection; that to secure these advantages some must rule and some must at least temporarily obey; that there must be classes and that progress from one class to another must depend upon proficiency in the former. This state of mutual obligation and mutual dependence of men upon one another we call Society. The Three Steps, alluding to the three degrees and the division of our society into those who govern and those who

obey, leads to the ideas of organisation and subordination in the lodge. We have seen that the lodge symbolises the world; so its organisation symbolises that of the world into society and governments. Dr. Mackey says "that the reference to the organisation of the Masonic institution is intended to remind the aspirant of the union of men into society and the development of the social state out of the state of nature. He is thus reminded in the very outset of his journey of the blessings which arise from civilisation and of the fruits of virtue and the knowledge which are derived from that condition." In the allusion to the affairs of the lodge and the degrees of Masonry as explanatory of the organisation of our own society, "we clothe in symbolic language," says Dr. Mackey, "the history of the organisation of society" in general." This feature is brought out prominently in many Monitors.

#### THE OFFICERS OF THE LODGE

It is said that the Master and Wardens bear a solar symbolism but this is too abstruse and too lengthy for us to enter upon here.<sup>30</sup> We are more interested in a very practical symbolism borne by them. If we remember that the lodge typifies human society organised into government, then it becomes at once apparent that the officers of the lodge chosen for fixed periods symbolise the officers chosen for the time being to administer the affairs of the state. The lessons and admonitions of obedience to the officers of the lodge given to its members and the injunctions of

<sup>9</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

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moderation, fairness, and justice towards the members of the lodge, laid upon the officers at their installation, typify most strikingly the relative duties which the citizens and the officers of the state owe to each other. With this symbolism in mind make a new study of those portions of our ritual dealing with and defining the mutual attitudes of the officers and members of the lodge toward each other and these parts of our ritual will take on new meanings. This feature is brought out strongly in the Past Master's Degree as given in the Chapter.

### THE FIVE SENSES

No representation of the pathway to knowledge would of course be complete without some allusion to the means by which it is to be acquired. Thus are the allusions to the five senses to be understood. A moment's reflection will prove to us that through them we gain all our knowledge and that without them we could learn nothing. What wonderful and noble faculties and yet how seldom even thought of by us and how little appreciated and understood! What a truly marvellous organ is the eye, which can without contact make us sensible of the presence, the form and the colour, of objects at a distance and through which we obtain our knowledge and appreciation of all that is beautiful in nature. The senses of hearing and feeling are scarcely less wonderful and are equally important. A little reflection will also furnish us with additional reasons to those given in the lodge why hearing, seeing and feeling are most revered by Masons. These are in every way the most

important. Consider for a moment the relatively small part of our knowledge that comes through tasting and smelling, and how utterly useless these two senses were to our ancient brethren in their operative labours. Then consider again how helpless a human creature would be who possessed neither hearing, seeing nor feeling. Helen Keller is rightly considered a marvel, yet she is bereft of only two of these, hearing and seeing. Deprive her of her finely attenuated sense of feeling and it would have been impossible for her to have made any progress whatever in knowledge. Commenting on this part of the ritual, Thomas Smith Webb says, "To sum up the whole of this transcendent measure of God's bounty to man, we shall add that memory, imagination, taste, reasoning, moral perception and all the active powers of the soul present a vast and boundless field for philosophical disquisition which far exceeds human inquiry." We could have none of these without the five senses, and they are, therefore, introduced as symbols of intellectual cultivation.<sup>21</sup>

But the five senses are only ministers or servants to still more important and more mysterious attributes or powers of the human mind, such as consciousness and subconsciousness, reason, memory, expectation, experience, imagination, taste, psychic feelings, emotions, attention, cognition, conation, desire, perception, judgment, ideation, understanding, belief, etc. To get any adequate conception of the vast field covered by the characteristics and attributes of the human mind turn to some standard treatise on psychology. Consider imagination: without it we could

<sup>21</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 222.

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not have looked into the future and seen anything which we had not already experienced. Improvement along any line could have been nothing but fortunate blundering; we could not have consciously gone to work to test the truthfulness of reality of a hypothesis, something we had only imagined or seen in our mind's eye. A wild or uncontrolled imagination we call insanity, but a sane imagination has been the mother of all conscious human progress. Consider the power of reasoning: a disordered reason is insanity, but without reason we could from facts experienced draw no conclusion as to facts not already known. The man who allows his imagination and reasoning processes to run away with his judgment is no less an object of either condemnation or pity than is the man who allows his appetite and passions to overcome him.

Yet, who would, if he could, chain the human imagination? Who would, if he could, strip us of our natural impulse to draw deductions and conclusions? Misleading as these two attributes of the human mind are when not kept in restraint, they lie at the fountain head of nearly all our knowledge and of our achievements.

The disquisition upon the five senses of human nature which appears in our American Monitors may be found in the English Monitors also which preceded the revision of Dr. Hemming in 1813. He eliminated all reference to them and they are still missing from English "work." We feel that in some way Dr. Hemming must surely have failed to catch the meaning of this part of our symbolism. Dr. George Oliver, an eminent and learned English Mason, deplores the omis-

sion and says that it ought by all means to be restored.

Having thus indicated to the candidate something of the importance and the means of acquiring knowledge, the proper fields of study and investigation are next pointed out.

#### THE FIVE ORDERS IN ARCHITECTURE

The five steps are said to allude further to the five orders in architecture, the Tuscan, the Doric, the Ionic, the Corinthian and the Composite. Their origins and their relative merits are pointed out, and we are told something of architecture in general. We would naturally expect something on this subject in a society derived from one of actual builders and architects, and here we have an internal evidence of the great age of Freemasonry. This is a flotsam which has been wafted to us down the stream of time from that remote period when Freemasonry was an organisation of operative Masons. To our speculative society it typifies all the other useful arts and serves to convey to the intelligent mind the truth that architecture considered as one of the fine arts is a subject well worthy of our study. It is through architecture that every great people have left the enduring records of their fame or even of their existence. Books perish and decay, but from their buildings, which still remain, we know for a certainty of the great nations of antiquity. George Moller, in his charming essay on Gothic Architecture, speaks of these architectural remains as "documents of stone" and declares that they "afford to those who can read them the most lively picture of centuries that have lapsed."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, pp. 222, 223; *Masonic Magazine*, Vol. VI, p. 427.

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### THE SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Other fields of study are said to consist of the seven liberal arts and sciences and are enumerated as grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. In our Fellow Craft's charge we are recommended to study "the liberal arts and sciences which tend so effectually to polish and adorn the mind." In England (Emulation Working) the candidate is informed that he "is expected to make the liberal arts and sciences his future study, that he may the better be enabled to discharge his duties as a Mason, and estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty."<sup>13</sup>

It is, of course, obvious at a glance that these seven subjects enumerated above by no means exhaust the fields of knowledge now open to man, but the time once was when they did. And herein is another incontestable evidence of the great age of Freemasonry and its ceremonies. We cannot do better than quote Enfield. He says that in the seventh century, that is to say 1300 years ago, "these seven heads were supposed to include universal knowledge. He who was master of these was thought to have no need of a preceptor to explain any books or to solve any questions which lay within the compass of human reason; knowledge of the trivium (as grammar, rhetoric and logic were then denominated) having furnished him with the key to all language, and that of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy)

<sup>13</sup> Yarker, *Arcane Schools*, p. 118.

having opened to him the secret laws of nature." At a period, says Dr. Mackey, "when few were instructed in the trivium and very few studied the quadrivium, to be master of both was sufficient to complete the character of a philosopher."<sup>14</sup>

The term *trivium* means the three ways, or paths, and *quadrivium* the four ways, or paths, of knowledge. Hence it is with the greatest propriety that it is said that we are taught in the Fellow Craft Degree to explore the paths of heavenly science.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE LETTER G

This is the initial of our name for Deity and is appropriate enough in lodges employing the English language, but our greatest scholars maintain that the proper and original letter is the letter Yod, which is the initial of the name of Deity in the Hebrew language. A volume of abstruse symbolism revolves around this letter which it is impossible even to enter upon here.<sup>16</sup> The serious Masonic student must read and study it for himself.

However, whatever other meanings it may bear, it serves again to remind us of the existence and beneficence of Deity and of His omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

<sup>14</sup> Enfield, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 337; Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, p. 224.

<sup>15</sup> Mackey, *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, pp. 223, 224.

<sup>16</sup> Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 15.

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### GEOMETRY

Another numerous class of Masonic symbols are geometrical figures, the square, the triangle, the pentalpha, the hexalpha, the circle, etc. We know that some of them have been employed for ages as symbols of moral qualities.

Geometry is defined as that "branch of pure mathematics that treats of space and its relations; the science of the mutual relations of points, lines, angles, surfaces, and solids, considered as having no properties but those arising from extension and differences of situation." (Standard Dictionary). Or, as defined in our Masonic Monitors, it is "that science which treats of the power and properties of magnitude in general, where length, breadth, and thickness are considered, from a point to a line, from a line to a superficies, and from a superficies to a solid."

It is by this science that we lay off angles, triangles, circles, squares, etc., etc., and are enabled to calculate their dimensions and areas. By it the surveyor measures land, locates rivers and seas, delineates the boundaries of oceans, and fixes the limits of nations. By it all architectural plans are devised and the movements of the heavenly bodies are calculated. It is highly probable that at an early period every Masonic lodge was a school of architecture and that the mastery of this subject led to the study of the other liberal arts and sciences, particularly Geometry. This accounts for many features of our ritual that are otherwise inexplicable.

Pre-eminence is given by our ritual to the science of Geometry. It and its allied branches (trigonom-

etry, architecture and astronomy) were the only exact sciences known to the ancients, and the perfection to which they had reduced them is even now constantly surprising us. By them all mathematical calculations were made. Arithmetic and algebra in the modern sense were then unknown. The astonishing results obtained by them from an application of geometrical processes were well calculated to impress the mind. As the only exact science known to them, Geometry was the most appropriate emblem of moral perfection, in an age when everything had its symbol. We accordingly read in our Masonic Monitors that of the seven liberal arts and sciences, "Geometry is the most revered by Masons"; that "it is the foundation of architecture and the root of mathematics"; that it is "the first and noblest of sciences"; that it is "the basis on which the superstructure of Masonry is erected"; that by it "we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her most concealed recesses"; and "discover the power, the wisdom and the goodness of the Grand Artificer of the Universe"; that "Geometry, or Masonry, originally synonymous terms, being of a divine and moral nature, is enriched with the most useful knowledge"; that "while it proves the wonderful properties of nature, it demonstrates the more important truths of morality."

It cannot be denied that to the present generation and in our present state of learning, Geometry is nothing of the kind. To any one except a Freemason, and to the great majority of them, the idea that Geometry inculcates moral truth is utterly foreign and incomprehensible. Those members of the Craft

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who have ever thought of the matter at all as a rule look upon these expressions as crude extravagances, as distorted attempts to attach a speculative meaning to a science or an art which had never properly borne any other than a practical signification. We are not surprised, it is true, to find still incorporated in our system these inheritances of a past age and simply tolerate them as such without any serious attempt to ascertain their meaning or to measure their significance.

While, as stated, Geometry does not at present enjoy any such an enviable distinction among the sciences as that claimed for it in our Masonic ritual, yet the time once was when it was precisely so regarded by the wisest of men on earth.<sup>27</sup>

What then is the significance of these ideas of a past age in our Masonic system? It seems to me to afford the strongest internal evidence of the great age of our Masonic ritual and symbolism.

The seven liberal arts and sciences, as enumerated in the lodge, are not now to be understood literally, but rather as a symbol of what they once were in fact, namely, the entire domain of human knowledge and research. No one man is, of course, expected to cultivate the whole of this vast field, but this part of the ceremony of passing urges upon us the importance and the duty of constantly applying our minds to the attainment of wisdom in some of its forms. We have no right to be idle. It is a sin against God, ourselves and society. Whatever others may be, Masons have no right to be idlers and loafers. It is our God-given privilege and our solemn duty to

<sup>27</sup> *A. Q. C.*, Vol. X, p. 82; "Freemason" (London), Vol. XLVIII, p. 417.

work, work, work, not because a night is coming when man's work is done, but that we may be able to do better work and more work in that brighter day that all good Masons expect to see when this life has passed away.

#### THE WAGES OF A FELLOW CRAFT

In the Middle Chamber we are informed what the wages shall be to the faithful Craftsman who has observed the moral and the divine law and wasted not his time in idleness or vice. We are told that they shall be corn, wine and oil. Such was literally true to our ancient operative brethren, as our old documents abundantly prove. With us, of course, they are not received in the realistic sense, but emblematically. From a remoteness of time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, the *spica*, or ear of corn, has symbolised plenty; wine has symbolised health; and oil has symbolised peace.

The faithful Fellow Craft is, therefore, assured that his wages, his reward, shall be plenty, not mere sufficiency but plenitude to supply all his physical, moral and spiritual wants; health of body, mind and soul; peace in this life, in the hour of death, and in the life to come.

While we have by no means exhausted the subject this, my brethren, is briefly the meaning and purpose of the Fellow Craft Degree, and, if you do not already, we are sure that a little study and reflection will lead you to agree that in beauty and purity and loftiness of conception this Degree is worthy to keep company with those splendid degrees of Entered Apprentice and Master Mason.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE

Why is it desirable that ceremonies be brief? Can we learn all of a degree while experiencing it? Have all Masonic symbols just one meaning? Is this an advantage, and why? How do the "mysteries" differ from the "secrets" of Freemasonry? Explain the method of teaching in Masonry. Does it appeal to all minds? Why? What does the lodge represent in Masonic symbolism? Why is the Fellow Craft Degree so little understood? Why misunderstood? What part of life does the degree illuminate? What relation does it bear to Entered Apprentice Degree and Master Mason Degree? Compare preparations for the Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft Degrees. What symbolism refers to prenatal conditions? Is there any part of life from conception to resurrection not represented in Masonic symbolism? What is the first important lesson given the candidate? Why are moral teachings essential? Why especially essential to Masonic training? Explain the symbolism of the human body as a Temple of God. What lesson is taught when the candidate is placed in the N. E. Corner? How is a candidate for the Fellow Craft Degree to be regarded? Why are the moral lessons of the Entered Apprentice Degree repeated? In what way does the general purpose of the Fellow Craft Degree differ from the Entered Apprentice? What is the great theme of the Fellow Craft Degree?

*Jewels of a Fellow Craft.*—Name them. What do they typify?

*Working Tools of a Fellow Craft.*—What are they? How applied to operative Masons? How by Freemasons? Why appropriate to a Fellow Craft? Has

the Masonical application of the square an ancient counterpart?

*Boaz and Jachin.*—Why were the pillars placed? Where? Have they another than the ritual meaning? Explain the moral significance of the names. What is the symbolical significance?

*Globes.*—How do we know the idea of globes is modern? What does the Bible say? Are the Brazen Pillars Egyptian? Why do we think so? What is the relation between lily-work, Egyptian lotus buds and our globes? Give another possible explanation of the globes.

*Lily-work.*—What was the Egyptian symbol of peace?

*Net Work.*—Symbol of what? Why? Does it bear on the antiquity of Masonry? What do you know of the Dionysian Architects?

*Pomegranate.*—Is it an odd symbol? Is it well understood? Why is it a symbol of plenty? What did ancient writers say of it?

*Operative and Speculative Masonry.*—Discuss non-operative Masonry and Speculative Masonry. Were operative Masons originally Speculative? How did they become so? What may have been the original object of secrecy? How did non-Masons get into ancient lodges? What several kinds of lodges resulted? How recently?

*Royal Tradition.*—Is this serious or humorous? Is it laughed at? Why? What other tradition is ridiculed? What reasons have you for thinking Masonic antiquity is not a myth? How could operative builders become philosophers? Why should great temple builders be friendly to kings? Why would rulers consider them as equals?

*Winding Stairs.*—Of what symbol? Why a good symbol? How many steps? What was JAH to the Hebrews? What was its numerical equivalent? Why

were ancient temples approached by an odd number of steps. What in the Fellow Craft Degree does this remind you of?

*Science of Numbers.*—What was this anciently? What great Hebrew book developed from it? How do our 3, 5 and 7 steps confirm the antiquity of Masonry?

*Three Steps.*—What do they signify? How does our society correspond with society in general?

*Officers of the Lodge.*—What practical symbolism do they bear? Do their obligations teach civic duty? What duty?

*Five Senses.*—Why used as symbols on the stairs? Which are most important to Masons? What mental powers do the senses serve? What is the importance of imagination? Reason? Are these symbols in English work? Why not?

*Five Orders in Architecture.*—Does this reference instruct in the antiquity of Masonry? Do students of ancient peoples find architecture important? How?

*Several Liberal Arts.*—Do they include all knowledge? Did they ever? What do you read from this of the antiquity of Masonry? What were the trivium and quadrivium? What do they mean?

*Letter G.*—In what lodges should it not be used? What other symbols could be universally used in place of it?

*Geometry.*—What is the common definition? Masonic definition? Was it important to operative Masons? Why? Why important to us? Why did it become anciently a symbol of moral perfection? Is that its meaning to-day? How does the ancient symbolism bear on the age of Masonry?

*Wages of a Fellow Craft.*—What were they? Of what are they the symbols? Can you explain how such symbols might have come to be used?

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