

# The Ceremony of Passing

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# THE CEREMONY OF PASSING

## INTRODUCTORY

### I.

We are now to examine a Ceremony which, because it is less dramatic and spectacular than that of the First Degree, is often regarded as a somewhat colourless interlude between the impressive surprises of the one which precedes and the awesome grandeur of the one which follows it.

This feeling it is desirable to remove, as unjustified. If the introduction of a Candidate to the elementary knowledge of Masonic principles, represented by the First Degree, has meant much to him, his advancement to a higher grade of the Craft should surely mean much more, not less, both to him and to ourselves ; whilst the Ceremony which sacramentally signifies that advancement should, as surely, be one of greater value and purport than its predecessor. If we fail to recognise this, had we not better inquire whether the fault lies rather in our own lack of perception than in the Ceremony? Do we ourselves possess the insight requisite for the understanding of a Ceremony which claims to mark a much higher degree of progress in the work of making a Mason and assisting him to a much more advanced level of spiritual attainment than he has yet known?

So our present study is made in the hope of revealing some of the Ceremony's usually undiscerned and extremely valuable contents, and with the view of securing greater interest in it than it usually receives. Being a "veil of allegory" the Ceremony must not only be looked at but looked through, if its significance is to be realised. Merely to look at it and treat it as a formality is like looking at a closed box containing valuables, and ignoring the contents.

Before the Grand Lodge formation in 1717 the Ceremony in its present form and as a distinct rite did not exist, and its compilation belongs to that confused and nebulous transitional period during which the ancient principles of our mystical science were reduced to our present tri-graal system. This purely historical question may be left to the historians and archaeologists, our present purpose being solely interpretative. There is no doubt, however, that the Ritual now in common use (with local variations) suffers from cuts and misunderstandings of the 18th century compilers and contains errors of statement since made by not too well informed or educated Brethren and still perpetuated by those who are too conservative to sanction any correction. It is also the fact that at one time and in some Lodges the work now forming the Mark Mason Degree constituted part of the Second Degree, as it still does in Scotland, being a side branch or annexe to it, much as the Royal Arch Degree is an extension of the Third Degree. By the Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of English Masons in 1813 it was solemnly declared that "pure Antient Masonry" consisted of our present three Craft Degrees, including the Royal Arch, and no more, the Mark work being thus

eliminated by consent of both sections of Masons. In 1856 an attempt was made to restore it into the Craft Degrees but was ruled out by Grand Lodge upon the ground that to do so would infringe the express terms of the Act of Union and the constitutions which every Master of a Lodge is pledged to observe. The Mark work therefore became side-tracked under a separate constitution of its own and is available to any Brother who desires to acquire it. The merits of the Mark Degree are so high that the regret of many Brethren at its disassociation from our Second Degree is not surprising. Moreover, it contains the dramatic and spectacular elements which are lacking in the latter Degree, for which also much can justifiably be urged. The matter of its inclusion or exclusion in the Second Degree having, however, been definitely settled since 1856, it is useless now to pursue the arguments for and against any further, and it is only mentioned here to lead up to the view of the Second Degree which is about to be offered in this paper.

That view is based upon the conviction that, in the wisdom which (despite much blundering on the part of its human instruments) has always inspired and guided our Craft since its inception, it was deemed desirable that one Ceremony of its series should be definitely less spectacularly attractive than the others. This for two good reasons.

Firstly, whilst dramatic ritual and spectacle have immense value in their appeal to the imagination and in awakening the mind to the truths they are designed to express, there is nevertheless a risk of their becoming valued for their own sake rather than for their significance. In that case they not only cease to promote real advancement; they actually hinder it. That is, the inevitable risk attaching to all ritualism. Gorgeous and impressive as were the spectacles of the Ancient Mysteries they nevertheless made wise provision for a considerable part in every Candidate's training to consist of silence, solitude, and experiences involving a complete absence of all form and ceremony and of all reliance upon outside help, so that he might be thrown back upon himself, might learn that there are truths which speak by silence and which only silence can express, and might be brought to realise that true Initiation depends upon inward experience of what is formless and spiritual rather than upon anything imparted by formal and external methods.

Secondly, in the Craft's tri-gradal scheme the Second Degree has especially to do with the inner man and the inner life, rather than with the outward personality. The re-ordering of the life and conduct of the outward man formed the subject of the First Degree; the purpose of which was to set his face definitely towards the East and make him virtuous by right living and self-purification. But the Second Degree is directed more especially to his intellectuality, so that the purified understanding of the man of virtue may be crowned with wisdom and attain that intellectual light which is called interior illumination. But this is a process and an experience of purely subjective and psychological character, which is difficult, or

even impossible, to dramatise and make spectacular, and is therefore wisely left to silence and the reverent imagination.

Let us, then, regard this Ceremony as deliberately designed to stand in marked contrast with the other two, so that it may impress by what is implied but left unformulated. The fault will be our own if we still find dull and lacking interest a Ceremony which really glows with rarer light and greater instructiveness than its predecessor.

## II.

The Ceremony is called one of "passing", since it relates to a midway, transitional phase of personal experience through which every aspirant to perfection must inevitably pass before he can think of attaining the ultimate degree of soul-development and mastership to which our system leads. The First Degree began in darkness and, as we have already seen, involved an entrance into new life and the first glimpsing of new and supra-natural Light. Although addressed to the Candidate's personality in its entirety, its message was primarily addressed to his exterior nature, to his reason, and it stressed the necessity of the practice of virtue as a preliminary to his subsequently being assisted to still larger experience of Light. That discipline being presumed to have been undergone, the time comes when he is qualified for further advancement. It is now not his reason and senses but his higher and more interior nature-his soul, his mind and emotions-that are addressed and hoped to be advanced to a greater measure of self-knowledge, control and illumination. He is to take an upward step in his own evolution, to enter upon and explore a higher storey of his own being with a view to understanding and controlling it, just as he is assumed to understand and control his bodily nature. On his journey from the realm of the senses to that of the ultimate spirit he must needs pass through an intermediate region, that of the soul or mind, which is the half-way house between the sensible and the spiritual. Hence the three Degrees of Masonic progress, from (1) the darkness or benightedness of the natural reason, to (2) illumination (*lumen*) of the mind, and thence to (3) the ultimate enduring . Light (*lux*) of the *Spirit* - and hence the present Ceremony being called one of "passing" from the first to the third of these. All growth is gradual and involves a series of efforts before we can come to full knowledge of what we ultimately are. *Non uno itinere perveniri potest ad tam grande secretum*; not at a single essay can we win through to so sublime a secret as the Craft enshrines.

Now were we true to our Symbolism and not hampered by exigencies of space and expense, we should not confer this Passing Ceremony in the same room or upon the same, floor-level as that in which that of the First Degree was performed. We should go *upstairs* to another room, to an "upper chamber", made ready as a Fellow Craft Lodge, and we should mount to it, as our Hebrew forbears did, by a winding staircase and there open the Lodge in the Second Degree and confer the Ceremony. By so doing we should more vividly impress

both ourselves and the Candidate with the fact that we and he were now withdrawing to a still farther remove from the outer world and from things of sense, and were ascending upwards and inwards to a finer and more subtle plane of being and to dealing with the more abstract life of the mind and understanding.

"They went *up*, by winding stairs, into the middle chamber" (1. Kings 6 ; 8). We can still visualise the Hebrew Initiates mounting from the ground floor of their symbolic temple to the middle storey or "holy place," chanting as they went their "Songs of ascent" or "Songs of Degrees," as some of their Temple Hymns are called in the Bible, e.g., "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord or rise up into his holy hill?" (Ps. 24; 3). But it is the human mind (or soul) which is the "middle chamber" actually signified, since it stands midway between things sensible and things spiritual, and it is it which must be treated as the intermediate "holy place" to be passed through before that ultimate "holy of holies" is reached where everything sensible, material, and even mental, is transcended and only those who are high priests of the Spirit can, "after many washings and purifications," enter.

Even in Christian churches this ancient symbolism of a gradual ascent from the material to the spiritual is preserved in the steps which lead from the nave to the chancel (or "middle chamber") and finally from the chancel to the sanctuary and high altar. In our Lodges, since space necessitates our using the same room for all our Degrees, we secure the idea of ascending to progressively higher levels by ceremonially "opening up" from one Degree to another and exposing in each the appropriate Lodge Board or Tracing Board. But in doing this we should never forget that each such "opening" implies an uplift of mind and heart to a much higher level of contemplation than was called for in the Degree below it.

## **THE CANDIDATE'S QUALIFICATIONS**

Before taking the Degree the Candidate is required to hold certain qualifications. As in the former Degree he must come properly prepared and produce evidence of fitness.

First, he is not entitled to advancement at all unless and until he asks for it. At first sight this seems a trifling point; it is not so in fact, and the Craft does not provide for it without full reason. For it is a law of life that there can be no advancement unless there first be strong inward desire for it. No growth of vegetation or faculty occurs in Nature apart from some inward impelling urge towards larger self-expression, and whoso desires increase of Light in a Masonic or religious sense must first be actuated by that urge in his own heart. "Ask and ye shall have" applies to each of our Degrees, and it is Masonically improper to persuade a Brother to take a Degree; he must be left to ask for it spontaneously as evidence of his own soul-desire.

In practice this asking is usually a sheer formality, a Candidate at the conclusion of the First Degree being prompted to request that he may "take the next Degree as soon as possible". The rule of "asking" is thereby observed in form, though what the Order really contemplates is something much more than a technical compliance with the requirement. He is expected to ask from his heart, not merely from his lips, and to be obliged to do so is in itself a salutary discipline. It teaches him to reflect, firstly what dependent beings we are, how incapable of advancement by our own strength or apart from others, or without help from beyond ourselves; and, secondly, to learn that help is never withheld from those humble enough to ask for it and to stake their faith upon its being forthcoming.

Next, the Candidate must give evidence to the whole Lodge of having assimilated the teaching already imparted to him. For this the Ritual provides a few formal test questions, the answers to which are usually learned and repeated by rote. In some Lodges those questions are supplemented by many others, with a view to ensuring something more than a mechanical test. Indeed, every member of the Lodge has a right to ask that additional questions shall be put, and the Master often invites those present to do so, and also to say if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the Candidate's knowledge. Since the Lodge is meant to function as a corporate whole, its work ought not to be weakened by the presence of members who fail to maintain a satisfactory standard of knowledge and understanding of that work. An unsound stone let carelessly into a building may one day imperil the whole structure.

A simple way of proving the Candidate's knowledge is to invite him, some time before the Ceremony is conferred, to submit to the Master a written paper recording his conceptions of the purpose and teaching of the Craft so far as he has already perceived then, and indicating why he desired to proceed further and what he hopes to gain by so doing.

In this present paper there is no time to examine even the stock test-questions and answers a candidate is expected to learn. But it may be stated that much more significance underlies their surface simplicity than is usually recognised. They contain allusions to cryptic truths calling for deep and prolonged attention, and they allude to matters involving far greater experience than is possible to a Brother who has only entered the Craft a month or so previously. How can such a Brother honestly affirm, for instance, that he "knows himself to be a Mason by the regularity of his Initiation, by repeated trials and approbations, and by a willingness to undergo further examination when called upon?" By what criterion can he be confident that his Initiation has been "regular" and in conformity with principles of Initiation as old as humanity? To what "repeated trials" of his virtue, his courage, his purity and his faith, has he been subjected since he was initiated? ; what "approbations" has he received, and from whom?; has he indeed so surmounted his trials as to have heard in his soul and conscience those "approbations" which enable him to "know" with self-convincing clearness that he is on the right path and that he is, in spirit as well as in form, a Mason in the

service of the Great Architect and engaged in the mystical work of World-building? ; and is he from his heart content to suffer, "when duly called upon," more and perhaps severer trials that may fit him still further for that great work? - It cannot be too earnestly impressed upon Brethren how deep and rich with meaning are both these test-questions and our official Lectures, which ordinarily they are content to hurry over and treat as but routine formalities.

## THE PASSPORT

Following the testing of the Candidate's knowledge comes one of the most illuminating episodes in our Masonic Ritual. Although only a preliminary to the Ceremony and, as such, too often regarded as a formality of small moment, it sounds the keynote of the Degree and introduces us to a whole range of new and instructive ideas. This is the entrusting of the Candidate with a passport by which he may claim re-admission to the Lodge after leaving it to undergo his further preparation.

This passport calls for detailed notice. It consists of a word, a token, and an emblem; and it is entrusted to him because he has himself earned it; it is his reward for his labours in the First Degree and for having satisfied the knowledge-tests to which he has just been subjected.

First as to the word. It is a Hebrew word, signifying in English "sprouting forth". It is given to the Candidate as a title expressive of himself at this juncture. For, as the result of his work in the First Degree and of the "trials and approbations" he has there undergone, new life has germinated within him. He is already a changed man and beginning to "sprout forth" spiritually; the inner forces of his soul have begun to organise and manifest themselves in his thoughts, his conduct, his speech, and his person. To a trained eye this spiritual change is easily perceptible. "How do you know a Mason by day?" (i.e., exoterically), asks a subtle question in the E.A. Lecture; and the equally cryptic reply is "By seeing him and observing the sign". But the sign observed is not the formal gesture of salute; it is the perceptible radiance of new life from within, suffusing and issuing from the man, who is intently building the temple of his own soul. That is the true Mason's "sign", and only those can observe it in-others who can display it themselves. A further question asks "How do you know a Mason by night?" (esoterically). The answer "By feeling the grip and hearing the word" will be intelligible to those who know how real a thing is that "mystic tie" which, in spiritually advanced Brethren, binds soul to soul into conscious contact and inter-communion.

*"They can parley without meeting ; Need is none of forms of greeting*

*They can well communicate In their innermost estate."*

Next, the token or pass-grip. This is given in a particular way which cannot be written about and must be left to the discernment of Brethren. But a hint may be given. As the E.A. Lecture teaches, there are two places where Initiates traditionally meet, on the "high hills" (or as is often called "the Mount of Initiation") and in the "low valleys" between those hills. The form of greeting given in the latter differs from that given on the former and indicates the rank attained by the Brother giving it.

Lastly, the emblem of corn growing near water. Why is this emblem used? The short answer is that the ear of corn is a symbol of the Candidate's own soul-growth, nourished by the fall upon it of the Living Water from above. With it may be read the passage in the first of the Psalms, "the righteous man is as a tree planted by the waterside which bringeth forth its fruit in due season", but in view of its great antiquity and use in the Ancient Mysteries it is desirable to explain it at greater length and connect its use in the Craft with its use in antiquity.

In the Egyptian Rituals the Candidate, holding an ear of corn fertilized by the sacred water of the Nile, declared "I am a germ of eternity!" and at his death grains of corn were buried with him as emblems of immortality. At Eleusis one of the most advanced and secret initiation rites was that in which an ear of corn was presented to the Candidate, when the "mysteries of Ceres" associated with it were revealed to him and he was raised, by certain secret methods, to consciousness of his own deathlessness. To-day, at the consecration of every Masonic Lodge, grains of corn are scattered to the four quarters of space; our Second Degree Lodge Board displays growing corn, with a stalk of which each Candidate for the Degree becomes personally identified; whilst the "full corn in the ear" is prominently exhibited in gold embroidery on the full dress collars of all grand Lodge officers as an emblem that what once was sown in them as bare grain has at last ripened to full and prolific fruitage. In entrusting the Candidate with the ear of corn our Craft is therefore perpetuating a sacred practice of extreme antiquity and invested with a wealth of significance little thought about to-day but deserving of prolonged reflection.

Why is corn used in preference to any other symbol of growth? The traditional secret teaching is briefly this: - Corn is a "Sacred plant". Its source has always puzzled the botanists. It is not indigenous to this world; it is never found, like other cereals and seeded grasses, in a wild state, from which its growth has been stimulated by intensive culture. This golden, graceful, prolific, and needful plant, it was taught, was never a growth of this earth, but a gift of the Gods who in the dawn of time transported it to our world from another planet with the double purpose of providing the staple food of humanity and of giving man an emblem of his own soul and of its infinite and prolific potentialities. (This ancient tradition is repeated in Psalm 78; 24-25, A.V., "He gave them of the corn of heaven; man did eat angels' food").



So, too, with the human soul. Like the corn, it is not indigenous to this time-world but is a native of eternity, whence it has become transported and sown as bare grain in the individualised patch of earth constituting the human body. There, like a seed of natural corn, it is subjected to the opposing forces of Nature, to the painful process of disintegration, dying and rising again, multiplied exceedingly as the result of the experience. Once again the Scriptures state the ancient doctrine:- "He that goeth forth (into the trials of incarnation) weeping, bearing precious seed, shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126, 6). The truth is embedded even in secular folklore in the old ballad of "John Barleycorn," the "hero bold" who, however beaten upon by storms, however often cut down and threshed, never failed to reassert himself and come to life again more vigorously than ever.

When, in founding a Lodge, the Consecrating Officer scatters corn to the four quarters of it, he is performing a profoundly sacramental act for the instruction of those who form the Lodge. He is emulating in small the cosmic activity of the Great Sower who continually goes forth sowing souls in space, like grain, which fall into natural earthly bodies that they may grow and be raised therefrom as spiritual bodies.

This, then, explains why in the Craft to-day, as in the Ancient Mysteries, there is presented to the Candidate at this particular moment an ear of corn ripening near a fall or flow of water. It is intended as a similitude of himself at this stage of his spiritual growth. It could not appropriately be revealed to him earlier, because until a man has made good headway in the First Degree work of purifying his sensual nature, tilling and weeding the soil of his personal earth-plot, acquiring virtue, and weaning his mind more away from material interests, he cannot be "permitted to enter upon the more hidden paths of his own nature" or to experience any change or growth in himself. But having submitted himself to this discipline, he at once becomes self-qualified for advancement to deeper truths; he automatically prepares his own passport to a realm of new and spiritual ideas; he can think of himself as a growing ear of wheat destined to ripen in due time into abundant corn that will sustain himself and, haply, serve as bread of life to others.

Of the many gems of symbolism in our Ritual there is perhaps none more sparkling with significance than this ear of corn. It is dealt with here at length because it is not an emblem to be carelessly passed by or treated as a casual ceremonial detail. It is a symbol meant to be personally used. It is given us as an idea to be taken into our private meditation and mentally dwelt upon until it ceases to be a symbol and the truth veiled by it breaks upon our consciousness as an irrefutable self-convincing light. The lesson the ancient Initiate was trained to learn from it was: "I am a germ of the Eternal! 'Sprouting forth' is my name, for the hitherto latent energies and faculties of my soul are now beginning to germinate." And the Mason of to-day who is in earnest with his subject is meant to realise the same truth and to see, in this simple episode of entrustment with

the passport to a higher Degree, the promise of his own immortality and the evidence of the illimitable potentialities open to his own soul.

After the presentation of this emblematic passport the Candidate retires; actually for a few moments only, to make his ceremonial preparation for his advancement; but symbolically for a long period, during which he will devote himself to reflection upon the mystical ear of corn and fall of water and in the light of their significance prepare his heart and mind for a new accession of Light from on high.

The preparation of his person now differs in certain details from that in the former Degree. As was explained in our study of that Degree, advancement to Light and Wisdom is gradual, orderly, progressive; and one's preparation for it must be correspondingly so; "line upon line; precept upon precept; here a little and there a little." The sense-nature must be brought into subjection and the practice of virtue be acquired before the mind can be educated; the mind, in turn, must be disciplined and controlled before truths that transcend the mind can be perceived.

In the First Degree, therefore, the symbolic preparation had reference primarily to the Candidate's sense-nature, which he submitted to humiliation and self-denial, applying an emblem of torture to his flesh when taking his Obligation.

In the Second Degree his dedication is that of his intellectual nature, his mind, and the symbolic preparation is varied accordingly and complementarily. The reason, of course, is that in the work of the First Degree certain energies are required to be active and others passive, whilst in the Second Degree their relationship must be reversed. When the mind, for instance, is busy or called to concentrate, the senses must be quiescent, and vice versa. Brethren may be left to think out for themselves why first the right and then the left side of the body is divested in the successive Degrees, with the hint that the right side is associated with active effort and the left with passive receptivity.

The h.w. and c.t. are dispensed with in this Degree as unnecessary at this stage of the Candidate's progress. But in other respects the bodily preparation implies the same willing renunciation and self-detachment from material and mental possessions as in the former Degree, in expectation of a higher good, and the same meekness in following whatever path may lead him to his goal.

Thus prepared and entrusted with the emblem proclaiming his title to advancement, he is permitted to approach the Lodge in his quest for a further accession of Light.

## THE OPENING OF THE FELLOW CRAFT LODGE

Meanwhile the Brethren have reconstituted themselves into a F. C. Assembly by raising the Lodge to the Second Degree. As we have learned previously, that raising implies a corresponding uplift and tension of mind on the part of all present, a *sursuin corda*, an elevation of the imagination to a loftier level than was called for in the First Degree. For in this Degree we are to pass-and to help the Candidate to pass-beyond the concrete things of time and space to the realm of the supra-sensual, the more abstract world of mind, of ideas, of soul. "They went up by winding stairs"; and we too are meant, in this Degree, to make an imaginative ascent to "a rarer aether, a diviner air", than that we breathed in the previous Degree.

This explains why the Lodge is now declared "opened upon the S". That simple builder's tool takes on for the Speculative Mason a philosophical value. It is one composed of two arms joined at a right angle; one arm being horizontal, the other vertical. When one arm is laid level on the ground the other stands erect, pointing upwards. Those two arms then become a similitude of the right relationship of body and soul when we are engaged in the mystical labour of the Second Degree. The bodily energies (represented by the horizontal arm) should subside into repose and passivity, while the higher faculties of mind and soul (represented by the upright arm) should become active and aspire upwards. Then, as one of the old texts says, "the sleep of the body becomes the awakening of the soul, and the closing of the eyes true vision"; whilst an early Initiate (Synesius, Bishop of Cyrene) refers to the same truth in stating:- "You who have been initiated in the Mysteries know there to be two pairs of eyes (the bodily and the mental) and that the lower pair must be shut when the upper pair open, and that when the latter pair close the lower ones re-open."

Every Brother present, therefore, is required to "prove himself" a Mason of this Degree; which means he must demonstrate by a ceremonial gesture that, for the work in hand, his outward and inward energies stand in the relationship symbolised by the arms of the S., - the former temporarily dormant, the latter in a state of activity, uprightness and aspiration. Only upon the supposition that all those present "prove themselves" united in this condition can the Lodge really be "opened upon the S.", and its work upon the Candidate be effectually performed. When a whole Lodge consists of Brethren each of whom is indeed a living S. for the time being, it may be imagined that a wonderful atmosphere is created for the reception of the Candidate, how appropriately the Lodge can in those circumstances be declared to be "open upon the S.," and how favourable are the conditions for the fulfillment of the invocation by the Master that "the rays of heaven may shed their blessed and benign influence upon us and enlighten us in the more hidden paths of nature and science".

Thus the Opening must not be created as mere formality It is a solemnity by which the stage becomes set, the atmosphere created, and the minds of the

Brethren unified and attuned for the work about to be done. More desirable is it than even in the former Degree that perfect silence should prevail and that no disturbance, conversation or moving from one's place, should mar the quietude and serenity which the Ceremony presupposes. As before, the Master should invite the co-operation of those present by uniting with him in prayerful concentrated thought upon the work about to be performed.

### **THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Again after the Candidate's admission the Ceremony begins with a prayer ; a prayer which is a marvel of succinct but comprehensive statement, covering in a single sentence the whole process of transforming the unenlightened man into an initiated intelligent co-operator with the Great Architect in the work of Spiritual Masonry. It divides that process into three distinct stages, corresponding with our three Degrees-a beginning, a middle period of continued effort, and a completion. Its petition is that the work (1) begun in the Divine name may be (2) carried on to the Divine glory, and finally (3) perfected (or established) in conformity with Divine precepts. (Possibly the prayer is based on one of similar brevity and comprehensiveness - the Church Collect which speaks of 'all our works begun, continued, and ended in Thee").

The terms of this prayer make it abundantly clear that the process of becoming a Mason is a work, not merely a ceremony; that that work is a sacred work, not a social compliment or personal privilege; and that the object of that work from beginning to end is not the Candidate's personal aggrandisement, but to augment the glory of God by transmuting so much lead into gold, so much unconsciousness into living intelligent energy. Therefore (as in the former Degree) it is less the prayer of the Candidate than of the Lodge, into more advanced fellowship with which he is in process of becoming spiritually incorporated. It is meant to be the earnest supplication of the whole Craft that its value as a "spiritual" force may be enlarged by the Candidate's accession to it.

### **THE PERAMBULATIONS**

Note that immediately following the Prayer, the Candidate is required to perambulate the Lodge. This is instructive. There are, of course, ceremonial reasons for the perambulations; (1) he must demonstrate to the Lodge his status as an Apprentice, (2) he must produce his passport qualifying him for a higher Degree, and (3) he must finally make his way to the East. But behind these there is a deeper reason for these symbolic journeyings.

We saw that the perambulations in the First Degree symbolised the Candidate's benighted wilderness-wandering before he struck the path of Light; we spoke of them as representing the odyssean vicissitudes of his previous career. But now that he has actually found that path, why are his wanderings resumed? Because no human soul stands still until it has finished its appointed course and reached its goal. Motion is inseparable from life. Stagnation and inertia spell death. The

Unconscious is wrought into conscious being as the result of constant movement. "Move on!" applies equally to solar system, planet and man; each has to tread its path of self-fulfillment to the end. Men, like the stars, move in their courses towards a goal, though, unlike the stars, their ignorance and self-will cause them to miss the track until the pains of life force them back to it. The human Ego may either move of its own will towards good or evil, light or darkness, or be driven about like a blown leaf by forces extraneous to itself ; but move it must.

The perambulations in the present Degree, therefore, signify the Candidate's willing forward motion towards perfection under the urge of his own heart's promptings. You remember the Pilgrims' March in Wagner's "*Tannhauser*," where the music so graphically suggests the resolute persistent plod-plod of weary but courageous feet, toiling through dangers and difficulties, up hill and down dale, but ever onwards to a distant but assured goal. It represents, and was meant to represent, the inward urge that impels all aspirants along the path of Light, and therefore may be thought of as admirably illustrating what is implied by these ceremonial perambulations of the Masonic pilgrim. Let us think of these mystical journeys about the Lodge as typifying his soul's continued forward movement to the goal of his desire; let us see in the deacon who companions and guides him, the impersonation of his own unerring enlightened conscience; let us discern in the salutes he makes to his superiors during his progress, his recognition of spiritual powers higher than himself, and, in the examinations he has to undergo, the testings, the ordeals and titles to advancement which every soul experiences upon its upward way. There is, you see, a wealth of significance (usually wholly unperceived) concealed within these ceremonial details.

Let us turn now to another of them. The perambulations are made on the level floor of the Lodge, which the Candidate keeps on "squaring," visiting each of its four sides in turn. But at the end of the third circuit the moment comes when his forward motion on the level ceases, and he is directed to mount spirally, by a series of winding steps. Linear motion gives way to circular ; he advances now not merely forward, but up. "They went up, by winding stairs, into the middle chamber". By this change of motion, this spiral ascent, is implied that the time has come when the Candidate must leave the level of the sense-world and rise to the supra-sensual ; must divert his thoughts and desires from sensuous objects and concentrate them on the insensible and much more real things of the world of mind. For, as we have said, this Ceremony is one of Initiation into the mysteries of the purified mind and the more hidden paths of nature.

We must not hurry over this point but give it the reflection it deserves. For there is a scientific justification for this ceremonial detail. All motion is really circular, spiral, vortical (like the winding staircase). Nature knows no straight lines.

*Line in Nature is not found ;*

*Unit and Universe are round.*

*In vain produced, all rays return ;*

*Evil will bless and ice will burn.*

The earth's surface looks flat to our ignorant confused perception, but continued motion upon it brings us back to our starting-point and teaches us it is round. Beams of light, once thought to be straight, are now known to bend and become circular. And this is especially true of thought-energy, which is mind in motion. Strongly concentrated thought and desire function spirally, like a corkscrew boring a passage into the world of mind-the "middle chamber" between the material and the spiritual to which the Candidate must ascend. An ancient and biblical emblem of penetrative, one-pointed thought-energy was the spiral horn of the unicorn projecting into space from the centre of that mythical animal's forehead.

Before we can climb to a height we must first learn to walk on the level, as the Candidate does in this Ceremony. And in doing so, he follows the Great Architect's law as expressed in Nature. Everything in Nature is created upon the principle of the Square ; all animal forms tend to proceed from the horizontal to the upright. Worms and creeping things precede the quadruped, from which comes the upstanding biped. A child creeps "on all fours" before it walks. A man must walk before he can fly, and even then his aeroplane will "taxi" on level ground before soaring into the blue. The same law holds on the plane of thought and morals; our ideas are grovelling, materialistic and sensual to begin with. Hence the need for their drastic purification and the uplifting of the inward eyes to the hills whence cometh strength and a whole new realm of being becomes visible.

From the moment of ascending the winding staircase, then, the Candidate is mentally leaving the outer world more and more behind him and rising into an inner invisible world. He is making what has often been called *Itinerarium mentis in Deo*, the ascent of the mind to the Source of Light ; and it will be to exploring these new regions and learning their many secrets and mysteries that his labours as a Fellow Craft will be devoted. It will be a task claiming all his energies of mind and desire, but the exercise of these will create new faculty as he proceeds, and make possible for him what at first he may deem hopelessly beyond his powers.

*Does the road wind up-hill all the way? Yes, to the journey's end.*

*Will the long journey take the whole long day? From morn to night, my friend.*

What is thus described as a full time occupation is, with us, symbolically dramatised by ascending to the East (or source of Light) by a journey of five steps. Why five, and neither more nor less? Because, as we have learned

previously, man's nature is resolvable into a series or spectrum of seven distinct principles (corresponding with the seven officers forming a Lodge), but of these seven the two, lowest are left out of account in this Degree and the five higher ones alone are actively engaged. Our two lowest principles are the senses and the carnal reason, both of which are, as it were, left behind and transcended in the Second Degree work, whilst the higher or psychic and spiritual faculties alone come into function, and it is to each of these that a step is allotted. The Pentagon or five-pointed star is a geometrical symbol of man's five higher principles.

You may ask, how can I dissociate my five higher principles from my two lower ones and use them separately, when they all seem so blended as to be inseparable? Well, to learn to do so is one of the chief lessons of this Degree. In coming to any true knowledge of ourselves we must begin by discriminating between what belongs to the sense-world and the supra-sensual world respectively ; to distinguish between things transient and things enduring. This we do in a measure when our bodies sleep and the mind continues to function vividly, as it often does in dreams, and we shall certainly have to do so when, at death, the outer senses and reason drop away altogether, leaving us with only our five higher principles. But it is practicable to learn to do this now and it is a work of the Second Degree, the training of the mind and higher principles to function consciously apart from the senses. The subject cannot be pursued here for reasons of space; every one must pursue his own study of it in his own way and the ardent seeker will soon learn details and methods for himself or acquire them from some more expert Brother. We can only indicate here what the ascent by live steps alludes to and leave those to take them who so desire.

But before being "passed" into these high regions of self knowledge the Candidate is called upon to make further covenant of secrecy in regard to what their light may reveal to him. Hence the Obligation follows at this point of the Ceremony.

### **THE OBLIGATION**

The Obligation to secrecy follows in form that in the First Degree and to it apply the same observations as were made in that Degree. Therein it was explained that secrecy is imposed not merely to protect the Order from the divulging of its formal secrets, but in the Candidate's own interest and to teach him the art and the value of silence. Secrecy, in fact, forms part of his personal discipline. For, in its deeper sense, secrecy involves concentration; the indrawing of one's powers instead of diffusing them needlessly; the conservation of energy needed for strengthening and upbuilding the soul and husbanding its forces. "Waste not, want not" applies to one's inner energies as well as to one's outer goods. Silence secretes power and wisdom; their secretion is itself a secret, an incommunicable mystery to be learned only by those who practice meditation and observe silence.

"The secrets of each Degree are to be kept separate and distinct from those in the former," says the Ritual. Reflect, therefore, in what respect those of the Second Degree are "separate and distinct" from those of the First. The secret of the First Degree had to do with the head, i.e., with the practical every-day intelligence and the performance of active duties. But those of the Second Degree are different; they are secrets of the heart or soul; of the intuitional and affectional side of our nature, which is subjective and passive. The Candidate for self-knowledge has to train himself to understand and discipline both his head and his heart, to balance activity with contemplation; to labour zealously at practising virtue and his external Masonic duties, especially the control of his sense-nature, but also to "study to be quiet," to watch for and examine perceptions, enthusiasms and passional urges (whether good or bad) that well up from within him; above all to listen for the "still small voice" that may be heard speaking in his heart when the winds of passion drop and the tremors of the senses subside.

This distinction between the things of the head and those of the heart accounts for the difference in the posture assumed by the Candidate when taking his Obligation. If we recall that in the Craft as in the Scriptures the right side and limbs of the body are associated with the head and the left with the heart, we shall readily see why, at the Obligation, complementary parts of the Candidate are exposed or covered. For both head and heart, though intimately related, have their distinct functions and must be separately understood by those who seek knowledge of themselves. Both are as necessary to us as the two sides of the body, but until the head is so enlightened by the heart that reason and intuition function in unity and cannot act separately, either of them may prove a terribly treacherous and misleading faculty. Wrongheadedness is far more common than evil-heartedness and responsible for far more mischief and suffering, because we are prone to form our judgments by the darkened carnal reason, in preference to consulting the luminous intuitions of the heart. Let us recall the Biblical injunction, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth!", by which we must understand that the heart will often have to refuse its sanction to the impulses of the head.

The penal provisions of the Obligation call for notice. They too are appropriate and instructive. In the First Degree the penalty related to the head; we saw that infidelity in the form of abuse of speech occultly reacted upon the voice, in the sense that all power of spiritual utterance might vanish from it. In the Second Degree the penalty relates to the heart, which, if unfaithful, may become sterile and uprooted. In the Third Degree Obligation we shall find still a third region of the body imperiled.

Let no one imagine that these penalties are introduced by way of hyperbole or that the three separate regions of the human organism to which they are related are mentioned without both purpose and justification, even if we fail as yet to appreciate the reasons for them. And since the penalties are such that, in



existing social conditions, their literal exaction is unthinkable, the description of them may strike us as needlessly barbaric and blood-thirsty. We shall be wiser, however, if we treat them as having veiled significances and as intended by their very frightfulness to serve as danger-signals, warning us that infidelity to one's solemn dedications is a very serious sin and one entailing correspondingly terrible physical and spiritual reactions analogous to the physical penalties mentioned in the Obligations. To those who treat our Ritual as but formality these considerations will carry no weight, but since such know nothing as yet of what is meant by "spiritual wickedness in high places" they are unlikely to commit it in any serious measure or to attract the penalties that attend it. But the informed Brother will know that it is possible to sin psychically as well as physically and will be aware that there exist sound psycho-physiological reasons for the references, in the penal provisions, to certain parts of the body, and that the prescribed penalties have a singular though concealed propriety to the offenses involved.

The subject cannot be pursued here, but the point of it all is that we are most strongly warned to "keep the heart with all diligence" and to protect it "from the attacks of the insidious," a warning which the Ritual emphasises again and again.

Who, or what, are "the insidious"? The expression may, of course, be taken as referring to inquisitive busy-bodies anxious to pry into things they are not entitled to know. But as common sense will enable us to deal with such, this explanation is altogether too shallow and we had better look for one more in keeping with the obvious gravity and solemnity of the subject. Now in the penal clause of the Obligation is a reference to the heart being thrown to "the ravenous birds of the air as a prey." Lest this phrase also be deemed fantastic imagery, let us remind ourselves that it is taken from the Old Testament where it occurs more than once and is used in a terribly realistic sense. (See Ezek. 39 ; 4, and Is. 34, 11-15). "Ravenous beasts" and "ravenous birds of the air" are Scriptural terms for invisible evil entities and intelligences which infest our planetary atmosphere and find easy prey and nesting places in hearts allowing them entrance. Classical literature also abounds in allusions to these "harpies," "furies" and "vultures" and to their tormenting power. Modern psychology, sceptical of the ancient science, speaks of these "powers of the air" more prosaically, as obsessions by alien wills, as secondary personalities, uncontrollable impulses and uprushes from the subconscious, the unhappy victims of which are often relegated to asylums for the mentally afflicted. It is these which are referred to as "the insidious", from whose invasion the heart has to be "shielded" and "kept." In many ways not necessary to mention here it is possible to succumb to their attacks and, though this subject is one to which the average Brother of to-day gives little heed, this explanation would be incomplete if it failed to elucidate the reference to the "ravenous birds of the air" and to point out that those who venture into "the more hidden paths of nature and science" are indeed exposed to certain real dangers from the "air" or plane of mind upon which much of the work of the Second Degree is meant to be conducted. Because those dangers are real our Obligation expressly refers to them before the Ritual goes on to say that "you are now

permitted to extend your researches into the more hidden paths of nature". Until one possesses a high degree of personal purity, virtue and understanding, such research is not "permitted", the Craft thus perpetrating a principle uniformly insisted on by teachers of wisdom throughout the ages. One of the greatest of these declared that "where the carcass is, there are the eagles gathered together", implying that if the human personality suffers itself to become passive and evacuated of its controlling principle, to lose contact with the central spiritual Ego appointed to dominate it, it becomes as but an empty shell or "carcass" liable to invasion by all manner of undesirable and insidious entities.

To the man of strong virtue and level-headedness, who knows beforehand what he is doing and acts under a competent teacher, there is no danger in venturing into "the hidden paths". He will act, and with safety, upon the age-old enjoinder of the Mysteries "To know; to will; to dare; and to keep silent."

### **THE SILENT CLIMAX OF THE CEREMONY**

In our study of the First Ceremony it was pointed out that, following upon the Obligation, that Ceremony reached its peak point at the Restoration to Light. In the present Ceremony, however, no such corresponding culmination occurs; at the conclusion of the Obligation the officiating Master usually hurries on with the Ritual without break or pause. This, it is submitted, is a grievous mistake and indicates a failure to realise the spirit and implication of the ritual at this point.

Let us examine the position. As the two Ceremonies run on parallel lines (being alike in general form and differing only in necessary details), one would expect to find, following the Second Degree Obligation, a dramatic climax corresponding with and complementary to the act of restoration to light in the First Degree. But no such climax is provided; something seems lacking at this point; the emotional crescendo of the Ceremony, after moving towards a culmination, seems suddenly to stop short and never reaches it.

Does this mean that the Ritual is defective here or that, in the course of time, some ceremonial incident corresponding with the restoration to light has dropped out and ceased to be worked? In my submission, no. In my view the Second Ceremony, like the First, does reach a true climax after the Obligation, but a climax which is, and is meant to be, a passive non-spectacular one, a climax to be expressed in and by silence as the climax in the First Degree was expressed by the sound of the *Fiat Lux!* and the thunder-clap of hands.

Obviously the real culmination of the Passing Ceremony must be the moment when the Candidate's consciousness is presumed to experience a change by "passing" from a lower to a higher level; and the context of the Ceremony shows that that "passing" is presumed to be effected immediately following his covenant to keep his new experience secret. Such an experience must needs be of a subjective and silent character. No uttered word, no ceremonial gesture, is

capable of symbolising what occurs in the middle chamber" or "holy place" of the human soul when it becomes illumined to perceive the secrets and mysteries of its own nature. What then occurs can be signified only by silence. *Deus loquitur; taceant omnes doctores*. When "the Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth (everything material) keep silence before Him".

To rattle on with the Ceremony at this point (as is usually done) is to mar it, to overlook its central point and purpose. The Obligation, it is suggested, should be followed by a pause sufficiently definite and prolonged to mark it as the supreme moment of the Ceremony, -a pause during which the upstanding Brethren should direct the full tension of their united thought towards the Candidate in the desire that the Light which in the former Degree was symbolically manifested to his outward eyes may now arise and shine inwardly in his heart.

Further, the Ceremony being essentially an aspiration that the Candidate may henceforth be illumined in his inward parts by Wisdom from above, it would be extremely apposite to conclude the pause referred to by reading a selection of versicles from the Wisdom books of the Bible, declaring what Wisdom is, and by what methods and in what circumstances Wisdom flows into the human mind. A suggested series of such versicles is

Ecclesiasticus II., 1-5; III., 17-19 ; IV., 11-1.8

or

Wisdom IV., 12-18; VIII., 1-7; IX., 1-11.

### **THE THREE GREAT LIGHTS**

Immediately following the climax of the Ceremony, the Candidate's attention is drawn to the altered position and relationship of the "Three Great Lights. The alteration of the physical symbols is extremely slight, but the spiritual change in the Candidate signified by it is enormous. He is "now midway in Freemasonry," superior to an E.A., but still far inferior to the rank he is hoped eventually to attain. The altered relationship of the S. and C. implies that his hitherto latent spiritual principle is at last beginning to emerge from dormancy and concealment into activity and personal consciousness, whilst his subordinate personality or form recedes correspondingly into the background. Tide one increases, the other decreases, in importance and function.

How has this great change in him come about? Partly as the result of his own labours in the apprentice stage, which have purified his personality, disciplined him in virtue and made him a more lucid vessel for the transmission of Light; but partly also by the help of God, the assistance of the square (in the sense previously explained, and the help of those who are initiating him and we see now the justification for the pause just described is "the silent climax of the

Ceremony"; it marks the moment at which the change was effected (so far as it can be ceremonially represented). From that moment he is an Initiate of the Second Degree and able to perceive truths of which he was previously unconscious.

Apart from the personal application of all this to the individual Mason, let us view it in a wider, a cosmic sense. We may apply it to mankind at large, for humanity as a whole, as it were, passes unconsciously through its initiations into the mysteries of life. In a broad general sense our race has emerged from its primitive darkness and taken its First Degree in the life-process and is now 'mid-way' in - not the more highly refined and specialised development of it signified by Freemasonry, but mid-way in its moral and spiritual progress as a social organism. As a corporate whole it is socialised, ethicised, and, in some small measure, even spiritualised, having worn off at least some of its grosser defects, though its present condition is "far inferior to that which it is destined ultimately to attain" as the ages pass. Slowly yet gradually its darkness is being dissolved by light; slowly but surely one point of the Great Architect's Compasses is coming into sight and overlaying the Square of human activities. There are signs everywhere and in every department of life and thought that materialism is a decreasing, and idealism an increasing, tendency. Physical science has revealed the seeming solid earth to be as immaterial as moonshine, and is leading men's thoughts up winding stairways of research to explore middle chambers of space and being, the very existence of which it but recently denied. Human consciousness is expanding as these new vistas open; new and enlarged mental perceptions are manifesting in new expressions of art, literature, music; new conceptions of social life and duty are being put to practical test. It is all very crude, imperfect, grotesque even, at the moment. But it signifies real growth, and the pains attending the readjustment of the Square and Compasses are the growing pains incident to all rebirth and reconstruction upon a higher level.

The Mason, personally initiated as he is into the mystic and cosmic principles of the Square and Compasses, and knowing them to rest - as in the Lodge their symbols do - upon the unshakeable basis of Divine Law, is thus peculiarly privileged and favourably placed for interpreting these world-changes. They are the enlarged reflection of himself; he in turn is a miniature of them. In his "mid-way" position in the Craft he will discern, in both himself and them, the fluctuating conflict of darkness and light, with the light always conquering in the end; and he will expect to experience pains and difficulties similar to those society at large is suffering in endeavouring to focus its sight to new perceptions of truth and to adjust its life to the new claims made upon it.

### **THE ENTRUSTMENT WITH THE SECRETS**

The Entrustment repeats the procedure adopted in the First Degree and our comments upon it in our study of that Degree apply equally here. Of the real secrets nothing can be said in writing, and the Obligation prohibits their mention

except in special circumstances. Of the formal secrets we can only repeat that the ceremonial signs and tokens serve as the clues to the actual secrets, which can only be acquired by private effort and experience. To quote a leading authority (A. Pike), "What is worth knowing in Masonry is never openly taught. The symbols are displayed, but they are mute. It is by hints only, and these the least noticeable and apparently insignificant, that the Initiate is put upon the track of the hidden secret. It was never intended that the masses of Masons should know the meaning of the Blue Lodge Degrees, and no pains were spared to conceal the fact."

The following remarks may, however, help to the better understanding of the signs and tokens.

*The Step.* As before, a pre-requisite to this is perfect physical erectness, with the feet Masonically quadrated, implying that, for real progress, physical and moral rectitude must reflect each other and the heart's intuitions be checked by and balanced with intellectual perception. Then from that position, a further forward step may be taken in this Degree; again a single step only. We saw that the First Degree step covered a theoretical period of seven years, allotted to purifying and re-ordering the sensenature. The Second Degree step covers five further years, devoted to the purifying, control and illumination of the mind; these five years thus corresponding with the five steps of the winding staircase.

Seven and five make twelve, a number always found associated with extension and fullness of development. The space of our solar system is bounded by a belt of twelve zodiacal signs; our clocks divide time into periods of twelve hours. The "chosen people" were ranged into twelve tribes. The Christ radiated his influence and teaching through twelve Apostles. The cubical Holy City of the Apocalypse had twelve gates, and the Perfect Ashlar (which the bellow Craft- Mason aspires to become) has twelve edges.

Geometrically all these twelves are exemplifications of that wonderful figure of completeness, the dodecahedron or solid figure with twelve equal bases and comprising twelve pentagons, which provides the philosophical mystic with matter for endless contemplation.

Conformably with this the Initiate who had fulfilled these two periods of seven and five years, mastering his sense-nature and attaining a high degree of mental illumination, was formerly said to be, mystically, "twelve years old". It was this mystical age which Jesus is described (Luke 2 ; 42) as having attained when his abnormal wisdom and insight amazed the official teachers of his time. Solomon records (Wisdom 7 ; 17-21) the wonderful penetrative insight that came to him in his youth from the luminous uprush of wisdom into his mind as the result of his previous right living and aspiration for light. "All such things (he says) as are either secret or manifest, them I know. For Wisdom, which is the worker of all

things, taught me. . . . and in, all ages, entering into holy souls, she maketh there friends of God and prophets."

These examples from the V.S.L. repeat themselves "in all ages" and become re-exemplified in every one who lives out the implications of our Second Degree. It is possible for every Fellow Craft Brother to become "twelve years old" and to share with the legendary head of our Craft that "wisdom of Solomon" which indeed still floods and saturates with supra-sensual Light the understanding of those who yield themselves to their utmost limit to "obedience to the Divine precepts" enshrined in this Second Degree of ours. If confirmation of these assertions be needed, it may readily be found in the numerous psychological studies available to-day of instances of expanded and "cosmic" consciousness.

*The Sign.* This is a single Sign with a threefold gesture. It is probably the oldest Sign in the world, being traceable to every ancient country and race. Like our other Signs, having no possible relation to the operative builder's trade, it must be regarded as connected with spiritual science and the education of the soul. This is confirmed by our Ritual's reference to its having been used at a time when Joshua was "fighting the battles of the Lord,"\* [\*In many Lodges a serious error is perpetuated in saying that the sign was "used by Joshua in the Valley of Jehoshophat." For this there is no biblical or other justification. The passage in Exodus 17, 10-13 has been confused with that in Joshua 10, 11-13. In the latter passage no mention of a sign is made; in the former a sign, but not that of our Degree, was given by Moses on the heights whilst Joshua fought in the plains ("Rephidim") below, not in "the valley of Jehoshopat" as often wrongly worded.] an obvious reference to the conflict between the good and evil, the higher principles and the lower tendencies, in man himself. But the Sign is far older than Hebrew history and embodies a host of ideas that cannot be explained here. Indeed a whole treatise might be devoted to the Masonic signs in even then exoteric significance, but their vital interpretation becomes known only to those who learn it from a qualified teacher or by private experimental use of them. For once more it cannot be too earnestly repeated that all our Signs are provided for private use out of Lodge as well as for ceremonial use within it, and that they are not mere formal gestures but acts of worship, into which one's understanding must enter so fully that the outer *signum* becomes a faithful reflection of the habitual quality of mind of him who uses it. It is one thing, and a vain one, to give a sign in ignorance of what it means; it is quite another, and one of potent value, to give it "with intention", with full awareness of its implications and as a sacramental reflex of one's spiritual condition. Whoever has learned to do this will know how extremely appropriate and valuable our Signs are, and to what varied and beneficent purposes they can be applied.

Now the First Degree Sign implies (among much else) humility; the humbling (to the point of removal) of the head or natural carnal reason in the presence of the great mystery of Being, of which we, as initiates, are seeking to learn something. The Second Degree Sign, on the other hand, refers (also among much else) to

the need for purity, fidelity and perseverance of heart in the pursuit of that mystery. In each case these virtues humility, purity, fidelity, perseverance - must become the habitual ingrained features of the Mason's soul, which then will of itself become a living sign, apart from any physical gesture he may casually use. On a previous page we referred to the question in the E.A. Lecture "How do you know a Mason by day?" and to the answer, "By seeing him and observing the sign";- not merely the ceremonial sign (which no one goes about publicly displaying), but by instant insight into his inner being and observing whether it exhibits the virtue to which that sign relates. And as no Mason may enter his earthly Lodge unless duly clothed and in possession of the appropriate sign, so we may be assured that on the higher planes of life he will be unable to gain entrance to the Grand Lodge Above if his soul fails to exhibit those inward Signs of grace which the bodily ceremonial signs are meant to be a reflex expression.

Let us reflect now for a moment upon what we call the Sign of Perseverance. Perseverance in the work of the Masonic life is every Brother's duty; in the First Degree every Candidate pledges himself to "persevere". In this Degree the duty of perseverance is still further emphasised by a special sign. As previously mentioned, motion (which involves perseverance) is inseparable from life; hence in one of its many implications our Sign of Perseverance is the equivalent of the ancient pastern Swastika, the emblem of perpetual motion and of the eternally persevering Divine Energy - whirling into manifestation and differentiating itself into creatural life and form. Observe that, like the Swastika or Fire Cross, our Sign displays a series of squares, built up out of horizontal and vertical lines, and therefore is specially appropriate to a Lodge which is "opened upon the Square".

Everything in Nature tends to evolve from the horizontal to the upright and to comply with the principle and the form of the builders' Square. The Great Architect's Compasses define the circular area in which Nature is to work. Thereupon she begins to "lay down levels and prose horizontals" and afterwards to erect vertical lines at a right angle to them. She prepares the level strata of soil and sedimentary rock, and then, as if dissatisfied with these, the volcanic energy of her fiery centre proceeds to tilt them on end to heave up Mountain peaks in an effort to attain an upright position. Look at a mountain pine-tree, the most primitive, the most "perfectly erect" and, in virtue of its erectness, perhaps the most graceful of trees; it is Nature's first effort to set tip a vertical vegetable at a right angle to the earth's mineral surface. Every spire of grass stands at a right angle to the soil it grows from. Horizontal reptiles, worms and creeping things, learn eventually to stand up and evolve at last into the vertical biped. With what immense and patient perseverance through axons of time, has Nature succeeded in producing from protoplasmic slime a creature able to "stand perfectly erect", physically and morally, and capable of himself continuing that perseverance still further--from Nature to Nature's God!

"The capacity to stand erect (says Tagore in his Hibbert Lectures for 1930, ['The Religion of Man']) has given our body its freedom of posture, making it easy for us

to turn on all sides and realise ourselves at the centre of things. Physically it symbolises the fact that while animals have for their progress the prolongation of a narrow line, Man has the enlargement of a circle. As a centre he finds his meaning in a wide perspective and realises himself in the magnitude of his circumference".

Hence the propriety and deep significance of our Sign of Perseverance. Nature has perseveringly built man's body to the state of erectness and provided him with a physical vehicle to the limit of her powers. There her work ends; from that point she leaves man to continue the building work with like perseverance and to promote his own advancement to spiritual heights beyond her jurisdiction.

A man standing in the position of the Candidate about to be entrusted with the secrets of this Degree is Nature's finished product. She leaves him now to continue her work himself, to carry it on to still loftier heights, to become the shaper of his own soul, the squarer of his own living stone, to which work he must apply the same perseverance as did Nature from whose quarry lie has been drawn.

Hence we are given this Sign of Perseverance. No wonder that this sign is of such age and universality ; no wonder that the earliest guardians of our race taught it to primitive man from whom it has reached us Masons of to-day, still providing a clue to secrets and mysteries of life. In all ages and lands, barbaric and civilised, it has served as an act of prayer, worship, self-dedication; whilst for Initiates it is of potent use in other ways,-ways to which the rule of silence attaches.

*The Word.* Not until after the taking of the Step and the use of the Sign have been disclosed is the ceremonial word imparted. From this we may deduce that no one will learn the real secrets of the Degree until he has first qualified for them by undergoing the necessary preliminary discipline.

Like that in the First Degree, the word is a biblical one, and the two words are meant to be used in combination; they are as inseparable as the two symbolic pillars at the entrance of Solomon's Temple. (At one time both words were imparted in the First Degree, not separately as now).

Solomon's Temple, like many earlier ones, was a symbolic structure, figurative of the architecture of the human organism. Near its entrance, but not inside it, stood two pillars, representing the metaphysical principles upon which that organism is based. The first of these is our B. which is biblically translated as "Strength", but really means primal energy, the basic dynamic force behind all manifestation, the "Fire" (or electrical energy) which the earliest philosophers called "the father of all things". The second principle (or "pillar") necessarily involves something opposite but complementary to the first. If the first is active energy and power, the second implies resistance to it; inertia; a passive, steadying, restrictive element. And this



is precisely what the word J. means. Speaking broadly and in modern terms, B. means spirit and J. the form or body which clothes spirit but yet limits its action. Of these two every man is compounded. Without an origin in spirit we should not be mortal or immortal beings; without a material body and environment to limit and check our incorporeal fiery energies, our spirits would remain unstabilised abstractions. These two opposite principles are present in ourselves ; and our business is to bring them into perfect balance.

Now the word J. is a shortened form of the Hebrew word "Jehoiakin", which literally means "Jah establishes" or makes firm; Jah being an abbreviation of Jehovah. Taking B. and J. together the meaning is "God stabilises fire" (or spirit); i.e. God individualises undifferentiated spirit into distinctive human beings and, by subjecting it to material conditions and limitations, renders it stable and differentiated, (to use a simple analogy, diffused electricity, which manifests destructively as lightning, can be so controlled and harnessed as to serve constructively in globes of electric light). This may be taken as a modern paraphrase of "In strength will I establish this My house that it may stand firm". For God's "house" is man and the building of man from the quarry-stone of unconditioned Nature into a strongly individualised living stone, perfect in all its parts and redounding in honour to the builder, is the whole aim and end of the Masonic Craft.

In the union of B. and J., then, the Candidate is taught to see that the two opposite but complementary "pillars" or principles are blended in himself. Both B. (spirit) and J. (matter), are present in him; he is himself a combination of dynamic energy and of a static inert principle opposed to spirit, but necessary for the restraint and education of his spirit. For spirit to be effective needs confinement in body; and body, to become perfect, must be suffused and sublimated by spirit; whilst to be "established in strength and stand firm" implies the attainment of perfect balance and harmony of these two opposites. (Other emblems indicating the same truth are the interlaced triangles forming "King Solomon's Seal", and the United Square and Compasses).

In a duly equipped Lodge two moveable pillars are employed as part of the regular furniture, one (B) coloured white, and the other (J) dark, and at appropriate parts of the Ceremony the Candidate is placed between them to signify that the two opposed principles must be equilibrated in himself. For at present, with most of us, spirit and body are far from being balanced and harmonised, and the office of the Craft, as of all Initiation Schools, is to assist its members to a knowledge of themselves so that they may reduce their disordered principles into unity and concord. Few Lodges, however, possess such pillars or understand their meaning; hence the desirability of providing instruction upon a point that stands at the very threshold of Masonic science, just as the pillars themselves stood at the entrance to King Solomon's symbolic temple.

"I come from between the pillars" is a frequent utterance by the Candidate in Egyptian rituals far older than Solomon's Temple, and it signified "I have trodden the narrow way and balanced the good and evil in myself". In the *Telesterium* or great Initiation Hall of the temple at Delphi there are said to be the pediments of two stone pillars between which, authorities have suggested, the Candidate had to stand and pass through. They are so close together that in standing between them he touched both, uniting them as it were in his own person, whilst to squeeze through them was a matter of effort and difficulty. Hence the references elsewhere to "the narrow way", to "passing through the eye of a needle" and to "the street which is called Straight," (Acts 9 ; 11).

### **THE TESTING BY THE WARDENS**

Following the entrustment with the secrets, the Candidate is, as in the former Degree, bidden to resume his "pilgrim's march". He is sent round to the Wardens to be examined about them and to demonstrate whether he retains and continues to observe the precepts which have been disclosed to him. As was intimated in our study of the First Degree, every accession of Light from above is followed by a subsequent personal test of our worthiness to receive it, and there are higher spiritual principles within ourselves-principles represented by the two Wardens - which during one's personal soul-growth subject us to "repeated trials and approbations" - or perhaps disapprobations of our fortitude, our fidelity, and our perseverance.

This small episode of scrutiny by the Wardens is, therefore, big with meaning. To discern its true value we must magnify it imaginatively till we see it referring to an actual period of trial certain to be experienced by everyone who tries to live out in personal experience the transitional stage to which the "passing" Ceremony alludes. Being a transitional stage it is notoriously one usually involving considerable mental and emotional upheaval, since the mind is gradually detaching and weaning itself from its former interests and has not yet become re-established upon a new and higher basis. The process of "passing" is like a sea-voyage from one land to another; one may have - and generally does have - a rough passage. Indeed this is the actual imagery used in the V.S.L. to describe the psychological unrest and emotional instability of those who journey into the "more hidden paths of nature" and the as yet unplumbed depths of their own being. They are likened to those who "have their business in great waters", where they come to see "the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep". But, during the voyage, it is said that they "reel to and fro, and stagger as a drunken man and are at their wits' end", though finally they are brought to "their desired haven" (Ps. 107 ; 30). To this scriptural metaphor we probably owe the reference in our Ritual to "steering the soul by the helm of rectitude over the rough seas of passion, that we enter not the harbour of vice."

Another allusion to the personal troubles encountered in the "passing" stage is the reference to "wages" and to their payment in the porchway or entrance to the

Temple, i.e., in the initial stage of one's spiritual progress. (This mention of "wages" in the present Degree is a remnant from the Mark Degree, where it is dealt with much more fully).

Now every Craftsman may rest assured of receiving good wages for his work and for all effort he expends in promoting the spiritual development of himself or his Brethren; the Great Overseer and Paymaster will see to that. But as soon as he wholeheartedly sets about to do such work he may, and probably will find wages of a disagreeable and unexpected kind coming to him, in the form of obstacles, illness, losses, estrangements; as though, at the very moment he had begun to reconstruct his life and outlook, all the powers of darkness were crowding in upon him to prevent his advance. Well, so they are; but they are powers proceeding from within himself; he is encountering opposition from his own self and experiencing the reactions of the Moral Law to his own past, and perhaps forgotten, breaches of it. The soul of each of us contains its own judgment-book with a debit and credit account of what is due from or to us by the Law underlying our being, an account which is often overdrawn and which sooner or later has to be balanced; and there are "wages of sin" as well as wages of righteousness. The "wages of sin" is always "death," i.e., a deadening and dulling of spiritual faculty, and it is the peculiar trial of every real Initiate that, after his first glad glimpse of Light and after most earnest resolves to be faithful to his vision, he loses it and finds himself suddenly confronted with unexpected inexplicable difficulties in recapturing it.

Hence, then, our Craft's reference to receiving our mystical "wages" without scruple or diffidence, well recognising ourselves to be justly entitled to them and in complete confidence in the Employer into whose service we have entered. We leave to learn what darkness is, as well as what light is; and in the inner life of man, as in the outer life of Nature, it is always darkest just before dawn.

By those who see and wish to see in Masonic "science" nothing but ceremonial and social pleasantries tempered with elementary ethics, these interpretations will be discredited as fanciful. For such, however, they are not written. They are meant for the happily increasing number of Brethren who realise the Craft to be a custodian of the "knowledge of oneself" and to enshrine profound truths of spiritual science beneath its veil of allegory. Even among ourselves there are many who already have personally verified the truth of what is here being affirmed; who have found themselves subjected to those "repeated trials" - so sudden and unforeseen, so distressing and disturbing - which visit those who are earnestly turning from shadows and pressing towards the Light; who have experienced that divided and unstable state which arises when the soul is as two kingdoms, "one (lead, the other powerless to be born". It is a state when a man may well doubt his own sanity and is, as the Psalmist says, "at his wits' end"; when he asks himself whether he is not being fooled by fantasy, whether the newly glimpsed ideal be not a dream or at least a goal unattainable by himself, and whether it is not better to abandon it and return to the old forsaken fleshpots.

Let all such be of good cheer, accepting what comes "without scruple or diffidence", and persistently holding aloft the Sign of Perseverance until their troubles pass, until their "enemies" are discomfited, and the sun of clear spiritual consciousness stands still and permanently established in their personal heaven. Let them count themselves privileged that they are experiencing; that painful transitional state prefigured in our Ceremony of "passing" from a low to an advanced order of life; assuredly it is they who, best of all, will be qualified to understand the significance of the symbolic testing by the Wardens which decide whether, as they tread their path, their steps are true and the signs of their progress sure.

### **THE INVESTITURE WITH THE APRON**

In our study of the former degree it was stated that as the Candidate advanced in the Order he would find a corresponding change and beautifying in his apron. Those changes are the "marks of his progress" - of both his ceremonial and his personal spiritual advancement. Mind moulds body. It can dominate, and suffuse the animal tendencies of the flesh or be smothered by them. The fleshy clothing can become sublimated and transfigured by the wisdom, strength and beauty of the soul within, or if that soul be itself impure and sensual, its defects will display themselves in its outward body.

*"For of the soul the body form doth take,*

*For soul is form and doth the body make."*

This elementary psychological truth is exemplified by the altered form of the Apron with which the Candidate is directed to be invested "to mark his further progress in the Science". Note that it is not the W. M. who invests, but his chief officer, acting under delegated authority. The point is a subtle one, but symbolically and psychologically justified. The supreme principle or spirit, being above all form and embodiment, does not *directly* create form or "clothe"; it is the soul or derivative principle which by its own thought and actions clothes itself, taking on form of embodiment which is then tested by the Divine Square to determine whether it be "wrought into due form". Hence the Master (representing the spirit) delegates the actual clothing to his subordinate chief officer, signifying thereby that the soul fashions body for itself out of its own substance and by its own actions, and marks its own progress by its own self-made vesture.

The Apron's form becomes altered in this Degree in two respects; (1) the triangular flap is lowered and identified with the quadrangular part; (2) blue rosettes burgeon forth upon the formerly unadorned lower part of the Apron. These must be explained in turn.

(1) The triangle flap has already been said to signify the spiritual, and the quadrangular base the material or bodily, aspect of man : the soul attaching itself to body as it approaches birth,

Incarnation of the soul, however, is not complete or total at birth; it is a gradual process covering many years and marked by well defined physiological changes every seven years. And because it is not assumed to be complete until that "mature age" and those "years of discretion" are reached when a man is accorded full civil rights and treated as a fully responsible being, it is on this account that no one is permitted to seek initiation till of "the full age of twenty-one years", till then he is deemed psychologically immature and physiologically unfitted for the strain which real initiation involves.

As the Apron with the raised flap refers to "the entrance of man on this their mortal existence", so the lowering of the flap testifies to that entrance becoming complete; the soul has now descended fully into incarnation, has become completely involutionised, and must now begin its evolutionary re-ascent, just as a seed sown in the earth begins at once to struggle back to the air and light. This descent of the soul into body is, in the mystical language of Scripture, the "going down into Egypt", (Egypt denoting the bondage and constriction of material existence), and the purpose of this descent is that the soul may gather experience and wisdom and develop its innate faculties as it could not do in any other way. For "there is corn in Egypt"; there are lessons to be learned and experience to be acquired which can only be learned in the flesh and by "spoiling the Egyptians", i.e., by extracting the full Value of all mundane experience. By so doing the soul is raised from unconsciousness to self-consciousness, brought from nescience to "knowledge of itself" ; from the seed state it becomes the growing "ear of corn" which, as previously shown, is so prominently associated with this Degree.

(2) But birth and involution of the soul into body sets up reactions. There is opposition, conflict, constant warring between the higher and lower natures; our rational and irrational principles are at strife. One or the other of them must prevail, for a divided house cannot stand for any length of time. We need not consider here what happens when the lower or animal man prevails, but if the higher man dominates, if the submerged involutionised soul-energies struggle forth from the grave of the body and "acquire dominion over the passions", then they begin to manifest as virtues, faculties, and graces of character. Like yeast pervading a mass of dough and causing it to rise, the soul suffuses, sublimates and gives glory to the body, which proceeds to bring forth the flowers and eventually the fruits, of its indwelling spirit.

This flowering is figured in our symbolism by the blue rosettes which now for the first time appear upon the Candidate's Apron. They are the symbolic evidences of the further progress his soul is making. The former bare wilderness of his personality is now beginning to rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Why are the borders and rosettes of the Apron blue? Why is our Craft System called "Blue Masonry?" For the same reason that the sky is blue. Blue is the highest colour in Nature, and at the summit of the spectrum of light. Nature, the garment of God, is a "coat of many colours", of which three are primaries and most in evidence. Her mantle is red at her volcanic fiery depths; green in her seas and surface vegetation; blue in her airy heights. As we look up in wonder to the blue heaven, so the Apron calls us to lift our ideas from mundane levels into limitless, "the blue". When the visible sun shines upon massed unclouded air, we see the latter as blue sky; and when the invisible Sun at the Centre of each of us gets the chance to shine through a purified personality, the mind is raised to its highest power and becomes illuminated with the azure light of "the place of sapphires" (Job 28, 6).

Those who devised our system and clothing were expert symbolists, well versed in much higher branches of our science than are taught in our elementary Craft. The blue and the rosettes of our Apron derive from the stream of Rosicrucian influence which contributed so largely to the formation of our Craft in the 17th century, and they have a much deeper significance than can be explained here. Both the rose and the cross are Rosicrucian symbols, and we are given the rose in our Second and Third Degrees, whilst the cross (in the form of the Hebrew Tau-Cross) supersedes it on the Apron of every Master and Past Master of a Lodge. Would that every Brother who wears them realised their meaning!

### **THE CHARGE IN THE S.E. CORNER**

After his symbolic, clothing in the West, the Candidate is placed in the S.E. corner of the Lodge, as previously he was placed in the N.E. Note that S. is the left or heart side of the Lodge, so that once again the appeal is to his heart or spiritual intuition, rather than to his head and reason. (As before, the Tracing Board of the Degree should be exposed on the floor and the Candidate's feet angulated to its S. E. corner).

Immense progress is signified by the change from the N.E. to the S. E. In the language of the Bible and the Mysteries the North is associated with mental darkness, the south with illumination. In many places no one ever sits in the North of the Lodge, save the Candidate after his initiation. Being placed in the S.E., the sun at the centre of the Candidate's personal system is deemed now to have risen above his mental horizon; in the words of Scripture he has been given "a south land", his captivity has been turned as "the rivers in the South". In some Masonic districts "I will meet you in the South" is a happy greeting implying "I will meet you in the place of genial light and refreshment".

The Candidate is now charged so to conduct his future life as not only to prevent his newly won illumination from evaporating, but to tend to enlarge it. He is urged to persist in practising all that was enjoined upon him in the former Degree, but also now to devote himself to the study and practice of such of the liberal arts

and sciences as are within the compass of his attainment". The classical arts and sciences, seven in number, were called "liberal", because their exercise keeps the body fit and supple, whilst it has a liberating effect upon the mind, disentagling it from material and sensuous interests, and rendering it flexible and free for functioning on abstract levels. A sound mind in a sound body was and still is ever desirable for the Candidate for perfection as ensuring for him that perfect harmony of all the parts of his sevenfold nature to which the seven arts and sciences applied. Masonic "harmony" has no relation to song-singing. It means the harmonisation of the too often discordant elements of one's being. Its old name was Eirene, Iris, the Rainbow ; the "bow set in the cloud" of man's earthly organism. Look at a natural rainbow; it is not a confused jumble of colour, but an ordered series of seven hues, each issuing out of the former, the heat rays culminating in light rays. So in ourselves ; the white light of the divine principle has been "set in the cloud" of our material bodies but remains obscured until our "fervency and zeal" makes it possible for its rays to shine out from us in order and harmony, as our "coat of many colours."

It is not essential, though by no means inadvisable, for us of to-day to pursue the arts and sciences of the ancients, for times have altered and have forced upon us intellectual and social conditions which provide other means of reaching the same result. None the less it remains true that a corresponding discipline of some kind must still be practiced to purify body and mind and make them efficient receptacles of light. Any form of mental exercise that promotes abstract thought and intellectual flexibility and power is therefore useful; equally so is any exercise at controlling thought and banishing it at will; for the mind grows as much by passivity and recollectedness as it does by energising actively. The active acquisition of knowledge by reading and working upon abstract problems needs balancing by reflection, meditation, and the prayer of recollection and quietude. Paradoxical as it may sound, moments of profoundest mental passivity are found by those experienced in these things to be moments of intensest illumination. The unruffled "still waters" of the contemplative mind involve the highest mode of mental activity, for then those waters serve as an unrefracting mirror to the Light from above, and sun and mirror become as one light. *Summa scienta nihil scire*; supreme knowledge comes when we still and empty the mind and are content to know nothing.

It may be urged that multitudes of highly intellectual people exist to-day whose minds work habitually upon abstract levels and in pursuit of non-material truth, yet who never become Initiates in the Masonic or religious sense. True, and their labours will eventually prove of the highest benefit to them, for they are unconsciously building new faculty for themselves and so advancing their evolutionary progress. But the answer is, what are their dedications? One only finds what one seeks. There are ignorant seekers of truth as well as enlightened ones. The Masonic truthseeker has the advantage of knowing in advance what he is looking for and, according to the energy of his quest, so he will find. The other type is but

casually and benightedly exploring for anything that may turn up, and, should he make a discovery, he is not equipped for interpreting its value!

## THE WORKING TOOLS

Certain further working tools, appropriate to the task of a Craftsman, are next presented. As before they are three in number and are originally associated with each other, like such other triadic combinations as the Master and two Wardens, and the Greater and Lesser Lights.

The duty of presenting and explaining them, or of seeing that they are presented and explained, is incumbent upon the W.M. Having risen to Mastership himself by their use, he guarantees their efficacy to the Candidate, who is thus assured that, by using them, he too will rise to a like exalted position. Thus the keys of progress are and always have been passed on from Master to novice through the ages.

In practice the W.M. usually delegates the presentation to the J.W. in the First Degree and to the S.W. in the Second. But as the W.M. and Wardens are an organic trinity, the presentation by a Warden is the act of the Master, whilst the delegation serves to indicate the Degree to which the tools apply. In the First Degree they applied to the discipline and education of the Candidate's outward person ; in the Second they relate to the government of his mind.

The Ritual itself provides an exposition of the tools of this Degree so full that it appears adequate. So indeed it is, within the elementary limits, disclosed on the surface of the Ritual, and we shall do well to accept and act upon the simple explanation provided. But the explanation is not exhaustive and once again, we must look beneath the surface for the fuller significance of the tools.

Taking the tools separately they constitute an evolutionary, geometrical progression:

- (1) A single line; (the vertical Plumb-rule). |
- (2) Two lines, vertical and horizontal, at a right angle; (the Square). L
- (3) Three lines, forming two right angles ; (the Level). ⊥

If these lines (or the tools) be arranged in such a way that they form four right angles meeting at the centre, they yield the figure of the Cross  $\mathbb{H}$

If they be arranged so that the four right angles do not meet at a centre but away from it, they produce a superficie (or symbol of the perfect ashlar) ■



Into the mathematical and geometrical ideas behind this progression of 1, 2, 3, 4, we cannot now go, but they form the basis of all the religio-philosophical teaching of antiquity and of the Tetragrammaton of four-lettered name of Deity. Summed up in modern and personal terms they imply that, to attain the state of spiritual development signified by the Perfect Ashlar (which is the work of our Second Degree), the individual soul and body must first be brought into right and balanced relationship, and then pass through the crucial regenerative experience known as "the Cross"--or transition from natural to supernatural life.

It is well recognised that the Cross as a philosophical symbol was in use ages before Christianity and is found in connection with all the great pre-Christian religions. Amongst many significances was that of the four primordial elements (fire, water, air, earth) in a state of balanced union, for of them everything in the Universe, including ourselves, is composed, though in different proportions. Each of us has usually too much or too little of one or other of them in our composition and to restore them into balance and harmony in ourselves is the life-problem of each of us.

Accordingly in the Ancient Mysteries the Cross was as central and conspicuous a symbol as it is to-day upon the altar of a Christian church and into its closely screened secrets and mysteries only duly qualified Candidates were initiated. Contemplating it the pre-Christian Candidate was taught to see in it an emblem of himself; to discern that the Cross is the basic structural principle of the Universe and of his own cruciform body, to recognise that the human soul or Ego stands as it were bound and crucified upon the Cross of the four material elements which it must subdue into balance and harmonious function; to learn (as our Ritual still teaches) "to make all his passions and prejudices coincide with the strict line of virtue and in every pursuit to have eternity in view". And by it he received the counsel to "take up his cross" and, as a later and Christian Initiatee came to put it, so to carry it that eventually it would carry him.

Eventually the time came when the teaching of the Mysteries and philosophy was suppressed by the Roman Empire and the use of their symbols forbidden. The Initiation Schools still persisted, however, in secret, - Christianity itself being at first a closely tyled secret system - and there survives the interesting tradition that when, from fear of being raided by the civil authorities, it was dangerous for a private assembly to be found using such a symbol as the Cross, recourse was had to camouflage, and a loosely made cross of builder's tools was used which, in emergency, could readily be knocked in pieces and reveal nothing more than the Square, Level and Plumb rule which we exhibit to Candidates to-day.

Be this tradition true or fabulous the fact remains that our Second Degree tools do indeed form a Cross when combined and that their ancient philosophical significance is still implied and remains applicable to the Candidate of to-day.

And so with the presentation of the three Working-tools the Ceremony fittingly ends, leaving the Candidate to convert their moral implications into practical conduct in the career of a Fellow Craft now opening before him. Considered merely as simple separate builder's tools each of them can teach him much, and if his life becomes an expression of their moral meaning he will do well and travel far. But he will be well-advised if he can see them also unitedly and in syntheseis, forming that ancient and once secret symbol, the Cross, and perceiving it, as the Mysteries of old always taught, as a geometrical and philosophical emblem of himself and of that conflict between the spirit and the flesh which will go on in him until these twain are brought into due balance.

After all, whether he take up his builder's tools separately and lives out their respective meanings in the sense taught by our Ritual,--or whether he take up his Cross and follow all that the Cross implies, matters little ;--the difference is but one of expression. What is of moment is that he shall faithfully do what he sees to be necessary for his spiritual perfecting. In either case the task and the end will be the same ; it will involve the same labour, the same self-denial, and it will ensure the same result the shaping of himself into a "perfect ashlar."

### **THE CLOSING**

The Lodge now closes down to the First Degree and the tension of the Brethren becomes relaxed to that lower level of thought and labour. But as it does so, there rings out from the Master's Chair, one searching question; a question the answer to which furnishes the key to the whole purpose of the Degree. "What have you been enabled to discover in this Degree?"

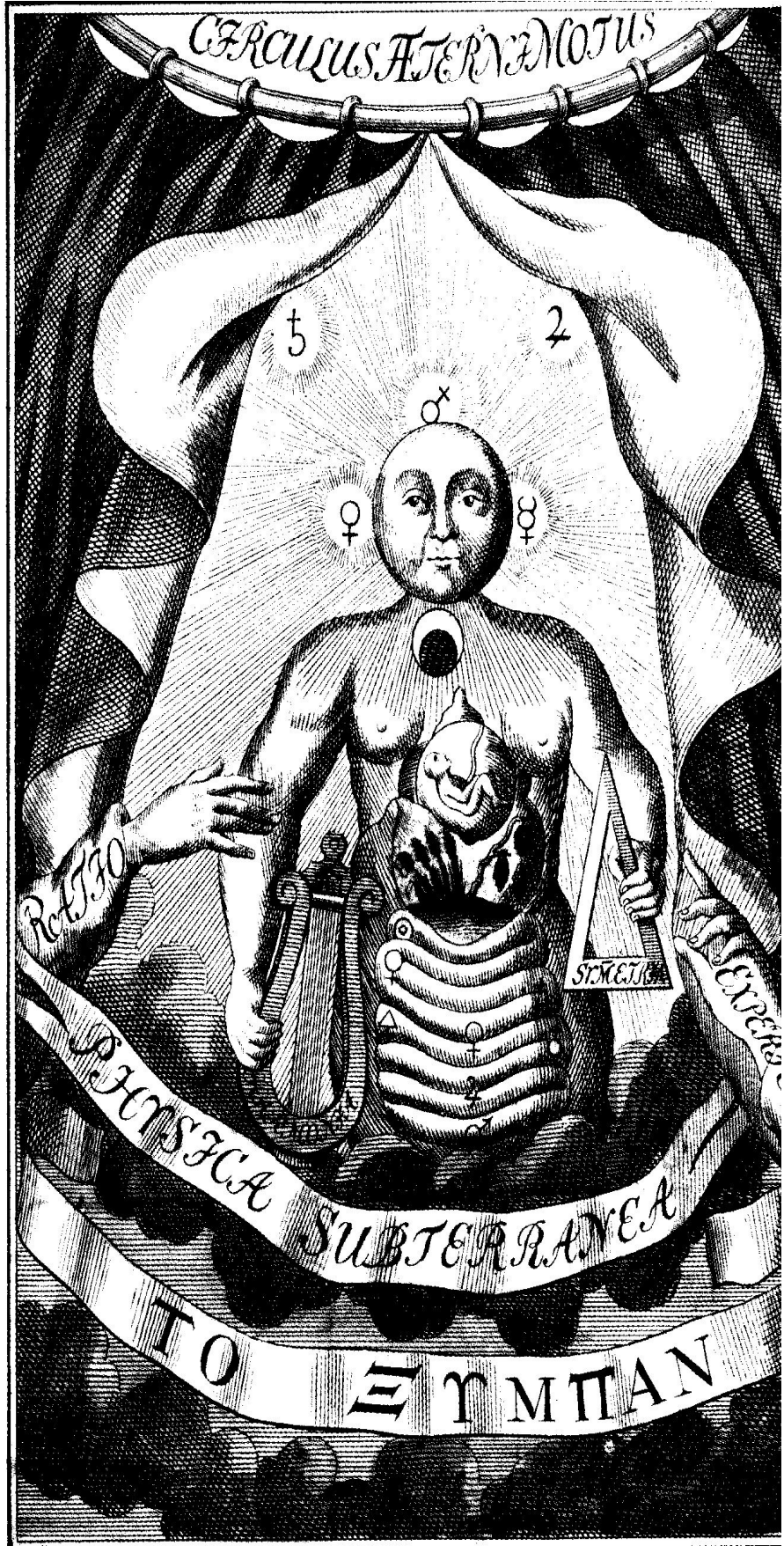
The question is addressed to the J.W., the officer who in the Lodge represents the faculty of enlightened perception; but his answer to it is meant to voice the united testimony of every Brother present. And, be it noted, the question does not say "What have you discovered in the course of this Ceremony?" It implies: What great truth has become revealed to you from your whole experience as a Fellow Craft Mason? What have you succeeded in realising from your life in that Degree?

It is a question we ought to answer honestly and after searching our conscience. If we have discovered in this Degree (as some profess to do) nothing but a comparatively dull and uninteresting ceremony, it would seem that we have wholly failed to understand it or its place in our scheme of Degree: and to profit by our initiation into it. The confession expected of us as we stand in Lodge with hand on heart, displaying the dual signs of our fidelity and our perseverance, is that this Degree has brought us to vivid realisation that in the heart of each of us there burns invisibly a "blazing star or glory in the Centre", of which a visible emblem hangs burning in the centre of the Lodge. That is the discovery we are expected to testify to; we avouch that we have found the source of all Light dwelling at our own Centre and that the kingdom of the Grand Geometrician is

within ourselves. The personal realisation of that supreme truth is the whole purpose of the Second Degree.

Doubtless that discovery will not come to any one suddenly or until after a period of devoted labour in the work of the Degree. The rising of the inward Sun into the personal consciousness is usually gradual, like the dawn of the outward sun in the world of Nature. At first we may hold it but as a notion, a theory, a belief; later, there will come a rising of light into the mind, scattering intellectual darkness and searchingly purifying the heart, burning up one's rubbish and building one's faculties anew; finally a realised fullness of light, as the meridian Sun shining in its strength, making all clear where once all was dark. No novice could bear the sudden manifesting of that Sun's full glory; whilst the unpurified man is self-barred from all perception of it. "If the Light within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" and modern psychological science has revealed something of the clotted darkness and unsuspected filth usually pervading the subconsciousness and choking the action of man's immortal spirit. Hence the Craft's insistence upon adequate preparation, upon purity and the wearing of symbolic white garments. For the Candidate who hopes to realise the Craft teaching in its spirit and intention, and not merely in its letter and ceremonial, must indeed be *candidus*, a "white man" within and without, and as such he may hope to receive that "white stone" which the Scripture promises to him who endures to the end and which in our Order is signified by the Craftsman transforming himself into the "perfect ashlar".

But *candidus* implies something more than whiteness in point of colour. It involves the idea of incandescence, the white glow resulting from heat, from ardent devotion of one's whole being to the task of self-reconstruction, from that fervent self-denying energy which overcomes natural inertia and sloth and burns up one's darkness and superfluities as with fire. One of our official Lectures refers to this under the emblems of "chalk, charcoal, and clay," whereby the old Freemasons cryptically taught that by the fire of labour our earthly understanding must be transmuted from the blackness of charcoal to the purity of chalk. And it is this idea which is preserved in the prayer offered on closing the Lodge in this Degree, that our service may be continuously characterised by "freedom, fervency and zeal," freedom of will and opportunity to pursue the Masonic task; fervency in advancing it; and a consuming zeal for the Lord's House which, as mystical Craftsmen, we have pledged ourselves to build.



## EXPLANATION OF THE FRONTISPIECE

This quaint diagram is believed to be the work of an enlightened and crude Brother, long ago deceased, whose private papers, among which I found it, came to me. It was intended to serve as an illustration to a book on arcane science which he meant to publish, but eventually abandoned from scruples of preserving secrecy and because, for such a subject, there were so few students.

The diagram bears a Greek title, *To Zumpān*, meaning Man, the all-comprising; the microcosm; the measure of all things; the Universe in miniature. Its purpose is to portray the gradual evolution of human life from a negative, nescient state ("the Unconscious" of modern psychology), to self-consciousness as a human personality, and thence to God-consciousness or consciousness in the Universal Spirit. In Masonic terms it represents the bringing of the human ego from darkness to light.

The background of the design is the Infinite, the realm of universal unconditioned Being; it is marked *Circulus ceterni motus*, the sphere of eternal cause and motivation. Enclosed within this is the subordinate sphere of the Finite, within which the Divine Idea is becoming realised in the creation of Man. This finite sphere is shut off from the Infinite by a veil or curtain, bright on one side, dark on the other. As its nether pole are black clouds and fumes, marked *Physica Subterranea*, representing the Unconscious, the primitive chaotic substate (*phusis*) out of which Light, i.e., consciousness, is to be distilled and chaos transformed to an ordered cosmos of wisdom, strength and beauty in a creature who shall be the realisation of the Divine Idea.

Emerging from this blackness and towards the Light, rises a human form. At the lower part of its trunk are the organs associated with the necessary but sensual and most elementary form of consciousness, which manifests as desire for nutrition, self-preservation, self-propagation, and other forms of selfish acquisitiveness. These viscera are shown studded with small astronomical signs to mark the first faint beginnings of consciousness, emerging like stars or pin-points of light from a dark sky. This sensual, selfish desire is consciousness in its First Degree.

Higher up, in the chest, is placed the Moon-symbol, marking an advance of consciousness from the merely sensual to the rational stage; not, of course, to suggest that the seat of reason is in the chest, but that homo animal has developed to *homo sapiens*. The Moon, a moving body whose light is a reflected one only and waxes and wanes, is a fitting symbol of the unstable natural reason.

It is shewn in the diagram as an alternative blend of darkness and light, and represents human consciousness: in its Second Degree.

Finally, higher up still, the head is represented by the symbol of the Sun, "shining in his strength", signifying the attainment of the supreme spiritual consciousness; intellectually raised to it: sublime or Third Degree. In the Lodge this state is personified by the Master, who "marks the rising Sun". It is the Sun hidden at the centre of each man's personal system, and around which the lesser lights of the reason and the senses should move in due order and control, as the natural sun is a fixed body at the centre of the solar system with the earth and other planets revolving around it.

Stars, Moon, and finally Sun, are therefore shewn in the diagram as symbols of progressive degrees of consciousness evolving in human individuals out of primitive darkness, chaos and unconsciousness. And this evolution forms the spiritual history of the whole human race and of each member of it. Each of us is summary and repetition of the creative process at work in the Cosmic Universe; each of us has to become as it were a solar system, with a sun at its centre as its ruling principle and with lesser lights moving in order around it.

The diagram shows the figure holding in one hand an equilateral triangle, marked *Symmetria*, to signify that he has brought his threefold nature (senses, reason, and spiritual intellectuality into balance, symmetry and unity; and, in the other hand, a lyre denoting the harmonious relations of all parts of his being. The curtain or veil of finite existence has become drawn apart for him and he stands in the Infinite Light.

The figure is, therefore, one that illustrates not only Masonic progress towards perfection ; it provides a bird's eye view of human evolution generally which, in the words of a recent writer, is

*"the history of an exceedingly slow and painful emergence*

*of love through a heavy atmosphere of lust, ambition,*

*fear, envy and all the dark emanations of egoism . . .*

*The full emergence of love, the full revelation of the*

*immortal self within this word of mortality is, in my*

*view, the climax to which humanity, and perhaps all*

*sentient creatures, are imperceptibly progressing."*

But the diagram contains further notable features. It indicates how this birth of new consciousness may be stimulated, and how a man, the Masonic "superstructure" becomes formed within the old one. Food is as necessary to nourish the higher life, as it is for the bodily life. Within the food-sac or stomach of the figure, therefore, are shewn ears of corn and grapes-the emblems of mystical bread and wine-by feeding upon which is generated the new man, the embryonic figure of whom is shewn in the region of the heart and attached to the old nature by an umbilical cord like a miniature cable-tow. Upon this the reader may be left to reflect for himself; it is full of significance for the Masonic Student.

From the right side of the picture the hand of an invisible teacher points to the word *Experientia*, signifying that, to learn these truths, they must be reduced to personal experience; whilst, from the left, another such hand points to the letters R A T F O. These, as often occurs in cryptic designs, are the initial letters of some instructive maxim, and probably stand for *Rectitudo ac Temperantia Faciunt Oleum*, - Uprightness and intelligent temperate labour generate oil, i.e., wisdom.

This Diagram, by an Initiate may be commended to Brethren as a key to the Masonic science in which the Craft urges them to make "a daily advance". In conjunction with it, and as a corroboration of it, may be read the testimony of another Initiate, the writer of the vision described in Revelation 1 ; 10-19