

The Tracing Board of the Second Degree

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"There is a great difference between the external and the internal man; for the intellectuality of the former perishes, while the wisdom of the latter remains". (Paracelsus: "De Fundamento Sapientiae.")

"Virtue proceeding to the end, and being ingenerated in the soul in conjunction with wisdom, will present God to the view." (Plotinus: "Ennead," ii 9; 15)

"Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge". (Proverbs xxiii, 12.)

It is an axiom of Masonic instruction that the apprehension of Truth by the individual Freemason is demonstrated by the quality of life produced. Thus the ceremonial progress of every candidate through the Craft Degrees implies an intention on his part to convert the significance of each Degree into corresponding actual advancement in his own conscious experience. Although the three Degrees are permitted to be taken rapidly, at minimum intervals of four weeks (Book of Constitutions: Rule 172), it is not expected that in so brief a time the candidate will assimilate their meaning and purpose to the full; he is merely furnished in that short period with a system of morality to which he is indeed exhorted to conform his future way of living, but which may take him years of thought and effort to work out in practice. To assist him in this subsequent reflection upon the Craft doctrine and symbols various methods are presumed to be employed, and of these the Tracing Boards exhibited in the Lodge are important examples. The general nature of Tracing Boards was outlined in Transaction No. 83 ("The Tracing Board of the First Degree"), and we now confine our remarks to the Tracing Board of the Second Degree in relation to the prescribed Fellowcraft work.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BOARD

We will commence by describing briefly the salient features of the Board. The lower half is an illustration of the ground floor interior of an elaborate place of worship, and the design gives a prominence to two great Pillars standing in the entrance. The upper half of the Board, which alone is used in many Lodges, depicts quite a different scene. It portrays a landscape of open country, through which runs a river, flowing over a weir and making a waterfall, on the hither side of which grows a single ear of corn. The open country and waterfall are shown on the South side of the Board, and from this symbolical sunny region a man, who apparently has forded the river, is approaching the southern porchway of the edifice. This southern entrance is guarded by an armed Janitor and admits to a winding stairway, also visible in the lower half, at the top of which is posted a second armed custodian guarding a concealed upper chamber of the building. We are told in the Lecture on the Tracing Board that the Board in fact depicts the historic Temple of King Solomon, and the winding staircase leading from the porchway entrance on the South side to the Middle Chamber; while the two armed Janitors are said to be the ancient Junior and Senior Wardens stationed at the foot and head of the staircase to oppose unauthorised ascent. There are, however, obvious absurdities attaching to this conventional explanation, and if the Board was really intended to represent the Temple at Jerusalem, it would be a topographical blunder to picture open country and a waterfall adjoining the structure in that riverless and crowded city. The sole idea of the Tracing Board is personal and not historical, and the thoughtful student will soon realise that the depiction on the Board must not be interpreted literally. It is addressed to, and is meant to be applied by, every Brother who is working in the Second Degree stage of our Masonic science; that is to say, in the higher reaches of his own nature. The work of the First Degree is on the ground floor level, but man is not a being limited to one level; his being comprises upper storeys also, although for the present they have remained closed to him. Body, soul, spirit; these are the three storeys, the three degrees, of our being, and each has its secrets and mysteries. The body, the ground floor level, has its mysteries, about which we all know something; but the mysteries of the body are as nothing compared with those of the soul, our "middle chamber" or "upper room", into which it is possible for aspirants to ascend who come "properly prepared" and can give the rightful password. It is therefore written: "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalm cxxxix, 14). And beyond the sublime mysteries of the soul lie the supreme mysteries of the Spirit, the "Sanctum Sanctorum" or "most Holy Place", to be entered only by those who become high priests of that Spirit.

THE TWO PILLARS

Upon examining the Tracing Board in detail, it will be observed that the two Pillars illustrated in the lower half do not in any sense form part of the structure. They are ornamental Columns and their value must be regarded as being purely symbolic. Pillars in pairs have been used from time immemorial in this monumental manner, and even in our own day aboriginal tribes set them up in connection with their tribal initiatory rites, so it is evident that they have a deep and significant meaning. The two Pillars are in fact emblematic of certain metaphysical principles embodied within the soul. In form they are alike, except that one is, or should be, white and the other black, signifying opposites, the positive and negative attributes being indicated by their names. The square base, or sometimes cubical pediment, is a figure of our normal personality, the bodily man, which draws nourishment from the earth like a tree. Within our mortal person, however, dwells an energy or life force which is not material, and which we call the soul; it is represented by the ascending shaft of the pillar. Like the trunk of a tree springing from the soil in which it is rooted, so the human soul grows upwards out of the personal patch of Mother Earth forming the physical body, and is nourished by daily earthly experience, ever building something new into itself by daily activities of thought, conduct and aspiration. And as the sap of the tree ultimately breaks into leaf, flower and fruit, so at the capital of the pillar, the energies of the soul are shown as manifesting in analogous results, the graces and fruits of the spirit. The globe or circle at the top of the pillar is the emblem of the spiritual pole of man; it is the sphere into which the seeds or essence of his bodily activities are garnered and come to fruition. These seeds are here represented by the pomegranate fruit with which the chapter is seen to be surrounded. The highest part of ourselves, our spiritual summit, is always invisible, beyond sight of the eye and ken of the mind;

that is why, in the pillar, it is covered with a canopy. We do not see what we build into ourselves from hour to hour and day to day, but, as the pillar indicates, the essence of our bodily activities is conserved within ourselves and comes to flower and fruit in our superphysical part, shaping there our character and future. The two Pillars further correspond with the chequered flooring of the Lodge, and one is associated with the left hand and the other with the right. The reason for this is that everything in Nature, including ourselves, has two sides or aspects, a spiritual and a physical, an active objective side and a passive subjective side, a good side and a bad side. Force and Resistance, Spirit and Matter, are the twin pillars or basic positive and negative principles of which everything is constituted and into which everything is polarised; hence we are provided with the picture of these symbolic Pillars on the Tracing Board, while every candidate is identified with them at the outset of his Masonic career. The whole purpose of the symbolic Pillars is to emphasise the dualism of our human constitution, and to inculcate the necessity of bringing the two opposite sides of ourselves into equilibrium.

THE RIVER AND THE FALL OF WATER

The man depicted on the Board, who has crossed the river and is seen approaching the building, stands for the candidate himself. He typifies every aspirant who has become sufficiently enlightened to seek for experience upon higher levels. Having been taught, in the First Degree, to lay the foundation of a new life in the Moral Law, he is bidden now to "come up higher" and gain instruction: "Afterward he brought me again to the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastwards; for the forefront of the house stood toward the East, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the South side of the altar" (Ezekiel, xlvi, 1). The river may be construed variously; as the waters of regeneration or baptism; as the Jordan river which the Israelites crossed on entering the land of greater promise; or, as the "water of life" which flows through the earth for all those who are "thirsty" for the new life:-

"For there went forth a stream, and became a river great and broad; and all the thirsty upon earth were given to drink of it; for from the Most High the draught was given. Blessed then are the ministers of that draught who are entrusted with that water of His; they have assuaged the dry lips, and the will that had fainted they have raised; and souls that were near departing they have caught back from death; and limbs that had fallen they straightened and set up; they gave strength for their feebleness and light to their eyes. For everyone knew them in the Lord, and they lived by the water of life for ever." ("The Odes of Solomon"; Ode VI.)

But from either of the foregoing interpretations the crossing of the river implies that the candidate has made a clean break with his old life and cleansed himself in preparation for the new. In the Hebrew system, as in the Lodge, the South always denotes a condition of mental enlightenment in contrast with the corresponding mental darkness of the North, hence in the Second Degree the candidate is placed for certain purposes in the South-East, and on the Tracing Board his approach, or break away from the bondage of the senses, is likewise deemed to be from this direction: "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south" (Psalm cxxvi, 4). The waterfall or "fall of water" is associated with the password leading to the Second Degree, which is a Hebrew word, signifying in English "sprouting forth", and is given to the candidate as a title expressive of himself at this juncture. He is already a changed man, new life has germinated within him, and he is beginning to "sprout forth" spiritually; the inner forces of his soul have begun to organise and manifest themselves in his thought, his conduct, his speech, and his person.

THE EAR OF CORN NEAR TO THE FALL OF WATER

The ear of corn growing by the waterfall is a symbol of extreme importance. Corn is found associated with the Ancient Mysteries where, as in our Sacred Writings, it is always the emblem of the "seed" or "vital and immortal principle" sown by the Almighty in the soil of our mortal bodies, these constituting the "earth" given to each of us so to cultivate that what is planted in it may spring up into everlasting life. In the words of the Psalmist: "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it" (Psalm lxxv, 9). Our old English ballad of "John Barleycorn", the "hero bold", perpetuates in popular parable the mystery of the immortal principle in man which however often cut down and threshed, "will aye spring up again", and come to life more vigorously than ever. The parallel to the motif of dying and rising again is that of being lost and found again. In the Egyptian Rituals the candidate, holding an ear of corn fertilised by the sacred waters of the river Nile, declared "I am a germ of eternity," and at his death grains of corn were buried with him as emblems of immortality. Moreover, at Eleusis the supreme degree of the Mysteries of Ceres, whence came our word "cereal", was signified by the symbol of an ear of corn; while today upon the full dress collar of our Grand Lodge Officers the same ear of corn is displayed, coupled with another emblem of immortality, the "sprig of acacia". The "ear of corn", then, the "vital and immortal principle" planted in us, must be suffered to spring up out of our personal "earth;" there, like a seed of natural corn, it must be 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. We find the same sentiments expressed in a nineteenth century hymn:-

*Only the wheat, before it comes up to the light in its fertility
Must die in the womb of the earth,
First freed from its own nature.
(Hymn by Samuel Preiswerk.)*

Thus the candidate, at the threshold of the Second Degree, is given preliminary instruction regarding the expansion of consciousness which will ensue providing that he faithfully follows the path now opening to him. He is intended to realise that the "ear of corn" depicted on the Tracing Board represents the immortal omniscient principle already planted within himself, waiting to be nourished by his own efforts so that it will grow and bear fruit abundantly. We may therefore perceive why, in connection with the symbol of an "ear of corn", we communicate the word "P ... y", for this word is the equivalent of the Greek word "pleroma," signifying fullness or abundance. The

growth is gradual, corresponding with our three Degrees: "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear; after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark, iv, 28); by which is meant that, as the growth progresses, the faculties of the soul unfold themselves from an embryonic state into maturity, perfection and power. To quote again from the Psalms: "*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season*" (Psalm i, 3). Note carefully the phrase, "in his season;" not immediately or instantly; for the growth of the spiritual consciousness is a matter of gradual and progressive expansion. Finally, just as modern physicists have proved that locked up within the atom there are energies of amazing power which are waiting to be released and harnessed to use, so likewise locked up within we ourselves are concentrated latent faculties awaiting liberation and ready to be put to use in divine and human service.

THE PORCHWAY or ENTRANCE

The next feature of the Tracing Board calling for interpretation is the porchway leading to the winding staircase. This is said to be that of the Temple of Solomon, although it must be borne in mind that the Temple at Jerusalem, like a modern cathedral, had not one but several entrances, and being itself symbolic each of the three main entrances was emblematic and represented one of the various ways by which the central Truth may be apprehended. Some aspirants may approach the "Throne of Grace" by means of what the Sacred Writings term: "*The gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful*" (The Acts, iii, 2); namely, by way of the devotional path and through the exercise of their affectional, rather than their intellectual, faculties. Others may strive towards the final goal through the unremitting labours of the gate of "Works;" that is, by way of the path of righteousness in altruistic service, selfless activity, and sacrifice for the good of their fellow men. Still others may advance by the purely intellectual way, "the paths of Heavenly science;" through the gate of "Wisdom," contemplation, and enlightened mental application. All three "ways" or "gates" lead to the "Centre," but the illustration on the Tracing Board refers to the gate of "Wisdom," which is metaphorically called "the porchway entrance of King Solomon's Temple" in allusion to the traditional teaching attributed to the "wise King:" "*As for wisdom, what she is, and how she came up, I will tell you, and will not hide mysteries from you*" (Wisdom of Solomon, vi, 22). By zeal for wisdom and the study of cosmic Law, whether in its moral, intellectual or physical aspect, the mind becomes exalted above surface appearances and ascends gently and gradually, as by a spiral way, to plane above plane of widened consciousness and understanding. We know how, with the Greeks, philosophy served as a porchway to Truth, and how their fearless pursuit of its intellectual aspect widened human understanding for the whole world. Each of us, of course, must find his own suitable pasture, but perhaps no better intellectual and moral regimen can be recommended to Masonic students than a course compounded of Platonism, the Psalms and modern mathematical and nuclear physics. Hence it is that the candidate in the Second Degree is instructed: "*you are expected to make the liberal arts and sciences your future study,*" such studies being called "liberal" because the pursuit of some branch of abstract truth has always a "liberating" effect upon the mind. Geometry and mathematics are peculiarly helpful in enabling the mind to grasp abstruse ideas and become qualified for spiritual illumination. Work of this kind cannot be readily explained or taught; and therefore the Second Degree ceremony is much less spectacular and dramatic than the other two of the Craft series. In the field of psychological development to which this Degree is assigned, every Brother must labour for himself and discover his own best way of advance along the various channels which are open to him. The work of the Second Degree is to secure clarification of the mind and control of thought. It is peculiarly an intellectual work, in which the aspirant has to learn to cast out prejudices and preconceived ideas and approach Truth fearlessly, following it wherever it may lead, and to acquire mental poise and tranquillity even in the most disturbed and trying circumstances. By such discipline we are gradually led: "*beside the still waters*" (Psalm xxiii, 2), instead of experiencing the "*rough seas of passion.*" The mind must become like an unruffled pool capable of reflecting without distortion the sunlight of ultimate Truth when that "sun" rises and, in the words of the Ritual, "*the rays of Heaven shed their benign influence, to enlighten us in the paths of virtue and science*". It is at this stage of his progress that the aspirant experiences the natural and inevitable tension which the soul encounters in its growth, this is a tension caused by an awareness of the disparity between what man is and what he is called upon to become. We must never forget that serenity of spirit must not be too cheaply bought; neither, paradoxically, must it be bought too dearly; and we should understand that a healthy tension of struggle and growth is not a neurosis.

THE WINDING STAIRCASE

We now come to the significance of the Winding or Spiral Staircase, and this proves to be of great symbolic value. As consciousness disentangles itself from phenomenal things it is found that the Cosmic Law operates spirally. All motion and progress of whatsoever kind is not by a straight advance, as our senses first deceive us into supposing, but circularly and upon a spiral principle:

*To every Form of being is assigned
An active Principle: howe'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures; in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
The moving waters, and the invisible air.
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.
This is the freedom of the universe;
Unfolded still the more, more visible,*

*The more we know; and yet is revered least,
And least respected in the human Mind,
Its most apparent home.*
("The Excursion" by William Wordsworth.)

Light is found to bend circularly; the ether functions in whorls and vortices; the stellar nebulae are huge spirals of incandescent gas; our solar system swings spirally towards a centre vaster still; and this universal spiral registers itself even in tiny things; in the dust eddy, in the shell of a snail, the horn of a ram, the tendrills of a plant, and the curls of our hair. It is for this reason that the Winding Staircase is used in the Second Degree as a figure of the cosmic life process, and as an emblem of our personal path back to the spiritual heights. Hence the candidate in this Degree is directed to take his symbolic steps towards the East as though he were mounting a spiral way, and the ascent of the Winding Staircase indicates the passing from a lower to a higher plane. The five steps signify the controlled senses, by means of an enlightened intelligence. In this context Intelligence is regarded as that mechanism of the brain whereby awareness of existence and environment is recognised; the manifestation of intellect in action. The Intellect may be thought of as the brain mechanism which acquires knowledge, which apprehends the Ideal as a conception, and is the abstract power of which the Intelligence is the result. Neither Intelligence nor Intellect should be conceived as separate entities of the brain; they possess no anatomical localisation, any more than there exist areas capable of dissection and known as the Conscious and Subconscious; they are useful presumptions for the sole purpose of classifying certain mental phenomena: -

Higher than the senses are the objects of sense, Higher than the objects of sense is the mind; And higher than the mind is the intellect, Higher than the intellect is the Great Self. (Katha Upanishad.)

From the moment of ascending the Winding Staircase, then, the Second Degree candidate is mentally leaving the outer world 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 secrets and mysteries that his work as a Fellowcraft 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 to be hopelessly beyond his powers.

THE ARMED WARDENS AND THE MIDDLE CHAMBER

The design on the Tracing Board shows that the spiral upward path is doubly guarded by the two armed Wardens, and the Lecture likewise instructs the candidate that he will find himself challenged and unable to ascend it unless he can give the appropriate password. It is first demanded of the candidate that he gives "the pass grip and password" which he received from the Master on entrustment. The armed Junior Warden is the agent of the Master and represents the awakened faculty which will test our fitness for further progress. We must pass the Censor before we can ascend; the higher we climb the more alert this inner guardian becomes; and where the faculty sleeps we cannot ascend the Winding Staircase at all. Before we can climb to the heights we must first learn to walk on the level, which the candidate symbolically does in the perambulations in the Second Degree ceremony. 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. At the end of the second circuit the moment comes when his forward motion on the level ceases, and he is instructed to advance "as though ascending," by a series of winding steps. Linear motion gives way to circular; he goes now not merely forward, but up. He must learn that progression is by spirals, and that everyone constantly finds themselves "in the dark" spiritually before enlightenment dawns anew on their consciousness. It is also implied here that the "*hidden mysteries of nature and science*" are precluded from us until morally, intellectually and spiritually, we are fitted for their perception. The Junior Warden signifying the rectified mind is rightly depicted as being on guard at the foot of the Winding Staircase because it is primarily through his "thinking" that man must advance. Nevertheless, every man's own personal experience is securely locked within himself, and to evoke response from another some medium of communication is essential. The recipient of instruction can only share in the declared purpose in so far as he is able to translate the outward and visible signs of the ritual into terms of consciousness. Therefore, before the candidate can become the supplement of the status avowed, it is required of him that he is in "possession" of the titular credentials, and "*having given these convincing proofs*" he is allowed to ascend to "*the summit of the winding staircase*," where he is again tested by the Senior Warden. Here the Senior Warden marks the advanced stage of progress, and together with the Junior Warden, represents powers present in the candidate serving as "*Guardians of the Threshold*," which will as surely challenge his right to enter the higher planes of life as the Tyler and Inner Guard of the Lodge will confront an intrusive stranger.

RECEIVING WAGES

Following the episode of scrutiny by the Wardens, the Lecture on the Tracing Board refers to the payment of "wages" which are received "*without scruple or diffidence*" and in complete confidence in the justice of the employer. Candidates must often wonder what ritual importance is attached to an incident which, even if historically true, cannot have the least value to us today, and yet is given prominence by being made the subject of official test questions to be answered before taking the Second Degree. Taken literally this teaching about "wages" is indeed of no practical moment and merits no consideration. But it is not meant to be taken literally; it is part of the veil of allegory in which our whole doctrine has been clothed. It signifies that when a man resolutely sets his feet upon the path, and aspires to enter the porchway leading to the winding stairway to the heights, he makes a break with his past; in less or greater measure he detaches himself from the world and the interests he previously prized; he endeavours to reconstruct his life and adapt it to new ideals. He soon finds, however, that the world and his old way of life will not readily let him go; he has built them into himself in the past and they are not suddenly to be uprooted. He will find perhaps his family and friends turning against him, wondering at the change that has come over him. Wages of a disagreeable kind come to him in shape of unexpected obstacles, and it seems as if at

the very moment he has begun to promote his spiritual development, all the powers of darkness are crowding in upon him to hinder his advance. So they are; but they are powers proceeding from within himself; he is encountering an opposition from his own self, and experiencing from reactions of the Moral Law to his former, and probably forgotten, breaches of conduct. The soul of each one of us contains its own Judgement Book with a debit and credit account of what is due from, or to, ourselves by the Law underlying 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. These, then, are the "*wages*" which we are bidden to accept "*without scruple or diffidence,*" and the fact that they are being paid is sure evidence of spiritual progress.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The explanations of symbolism given in this Paper on the Tracing Board of the Second Degree may serve to demonstrate that our Masonic allegory is not a dead letter, but the veil of enduring Truth; not merely a perpetuation of archaic symbols and obsolete forms, but an accurate expression of a doctrine valid in all ages and for all men. The emblems we have been interpreting, the "*ear of corn near to a fall of water,*" the "*porchway entrance,*" the guarded "*winding staircase,*" indeed all served in antiquity to assist the intellectual and spiritual needs of men who had been moved in their hearts to seek the Light of the East, and they can still equally assist us today, since the realities of which they are the tokens have never varied, nor will they alter while the world endures and the Temple of a perfected humanity remains incomplete. The candidate in the Second Degree is charged to so conduct his future life as not only to prevent his newly won illumination from evaporating, but to enlarge it. To this end, he is urged to persist in practising all that was enjoined in the First Degree, but in addition to "*study such of the liberal arts and sciences as may lie within the compass of*" his own attainments. 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. It is traditional that a sound mind and a sound body is desirable in candidates for perfection, thereby ensuring them of that "*perfect harmony*" of all the parts of their sevenfold nature to which the "*seven liberal arts and sciences*" apply. In modern Freemasonry the term "harmony" used in our Lodges has no relation to the singing of songs; it means the harmonisation of the discordant elements of our being. The old name for "harmony" was Eirene, or Iris, signifying "the Rainbow," the "bow set in the cloud," of our earthly organism. We may observe that the natural rainbow is not a confused jumble of colour, but an ordered series of seven hues, each issuing out of the former, and the heat rays culminating in light rays. So likewise in ourselves; the "white light" of the "*vital and immortal principle*" has been "set in the cloud" of our terrestrial bodies, remaining obscured until by our "*fervency and zeal*" it is made possible for "*the rays of heaven to shed their benign influence,*" shining out from us in harmony and order. It is not regarded as essential in our age to adhere to the curriculum of the arts and sciences of the ancients; times have changed and have forced upon us altered social conditions which provide other means of reaching the same result. Nevertheless, it remains valid that a corresponding discipline of some kind must still be practised, and any method of mental exercise that promotes abstract thought and intellectual flexibility is useful. It is important, however, that the acquisition of knowledge by reading and working upon abstruse problems should be evenly balanced by reflection, meditation, and the interior prayer known as recollection. Paradoxical as it may appear, the moments of profoundest mental passivity are found, by those experienced in these matters, to be the moments of highest illumination.

In our Masonic studies we are inclined to overlook the fact that the greatest of all discoveries is made in the Second Degree; it is made by the Junior Warden in the place to which every Fellowcraft must go for a similar disclosure, that is "the middle chamber" of his personal temple. Impliedly, each Fellowcraft may expect to find the same revelation if he becomes as the Junior Warden emblematically, namely a spiritually illumined seeker who "asks" with his prayer, "seeks" with his intellect, and "knocks" by his own energy. The candidate in the Second Degree again comes to the Lodge "properly prepared," or fit and in readiness for spiritual advancement, a state which is presumed as flowing from the passage of time since his admission. It is the consequence of a period of spiritual ripening: "*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season*" (Psalm i, 3). We are intended to understand that the recognition of value which is suggested by these words of the Psalmist is based not merely on possibilities, or "roots," but on results, or "fruits." The state of our being ready, that of "the fit or proper person," who comes "properly prepared," indicates results from previous efforts; hence it is written: "*Ye shall know them by their fruits*" (Matthew, vii, 16). In our Masonic system we acknowledge two opposed positions, that of the Right and that of the Left, and two Pillar symbols are defined in the ritual as corresponding with these situations. They represent, in this context, the active and passive, the "fruits" and "roots", aspects in the candidate himself. It is interesting to reflect upon the fact that North and South, that is Right and Left, can only be localised by reference to one fixed point, the East; and further to trace the various associations of movements and accompanying phrases in the ritual, which depend upon their astronomical relationships for their symbolic meanings. We may see from the ceremonial procedure in the Second Degree that the energies to be released in "passing" should act as an impelling or directional power, tending to produce a change of motion in the active efforts of the candidate along the pathway of spiritual endeavour, and so of his future results.

The great discovery made in the Second Degree is, of course, the Sacred Symbol, and this is the direct result of the work of the candidate at this stage of his progress. Doubtless the discovery will not come suddenly or until after a period of devoted labour in the work of the Degree, but the personal realisation is the whole purpose of the Second Degree. In other and more familiar terms, the candidate is to "discover" that in his heart there burns a "Blazing Star or Glory in the Centre", and he now knows that the "kingdom of God" (T.G.G.O.T.U.) is within himself. The candidate who aspires to realise the teaching of the Craft in spirit, and not merely in letter and ceremonial, must indeed be, as the word "candidus" signifies, a "white man" both within and without, and he may then hope to receive the "white stone" which is promised to him "that overcometh," and which is the "perfect ashlar" of our Masonic system. But the word "candidus" implies something more than whiteness in point of colour. It involves the idea of incandescence, the white glow resulting from heat, representing the stage of progress when the aspirant becomes so enthused by his "fervency and zeal" that he is mystically "on fire." We are rarely permitted to see the grandeur and radiance of men who are spiritually developed, mainly because we are accustomed to seeing them in humdrum or drab surroundings, but there is ample evidence to show that in moments of exaltation or crisis their invisible spiritual power springs to the surface, and they are "irradiated" with an ethereal beauty. The clothing

or "raiment" of the "illuminated" man represents the subtle or "celestial" bodies with which the spirit is clothed; these have become so purified that they are "white and glistening," like snow. When such a light gleams from an aspirant, the Eastern schools say that he has gained the "Diamond Body," which is glistening and flashing from every facet. It can otherwise, and in Masonic terminology, be expressed that when the "Blazing Star or Glory" shines through a purified personality, the mind is raised to the highest power and becomes illumined with the azure light of *"the place of sapphires"* (Job xxviii, 6).

At the Second Degree stage of his progress the Masonic aspirant is deemed to study thought control as a preliminary to what is known elsewhere as the "air initiation." Initiation by "air" signifies the understanding of the workings and powers of the mind. Even in our ordinary everyday language the word "air" is associated with the mind; we say that a thing is "in the air" when we mean that the minds of men are everywhere turning towards a certain mode of thought. The work of the "air initiation" is technically known as the cleansing of the mental body, and the aspirant is required to sublimate the quality of his thought, thereby constantly correcting impressions made on the lower mind by knowledge drawn from the higher. Spiritual energies, however, cannot be set in motion without inducing results of some kind, and if they do not act under discipline creatively and constructively, they react when used ignorantly destructively and like a boomerang. Because these dangers are real, they are expressly referred to in the penal provisions attached to the Obligation of the Second Degree, where they are linked with a special Sign (the Sn. of F.), which alludes to the protection of the heart *"from the attacks of the insidious."* There is also a further reference in the penal clause to the heart being thrown to *"the ravenous birds of the air as prey"* and lest this phrase be deemed fantastic imagery, let us remind ourselves that it is taken from the Old Testament, where it is used in a terribly realistic sense: *"I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured"* (Ezekiel, xxxix, 4). These are scriptural terms for invisible entities and intelligences which infest our planetary atmosphere, and find easy prey and nesting place in hearts allowing them entrance. It is these which are referred to as "the insidious", and from whose invasion we must "shield" our hearts. Moreover, as the ritual stipulates, until we are possessed of a high degree of personal purity, virtue, and understanding, permission is not granted to *"extend" our "researches into the more hidden mysteries;"* although, to the man of virtue, who knows in advance what he is attempting, and whose progress is guided by the principles of moral truth *"the assurance is given that no danger will ensue"* upon his venturing into *"the paths of heavenly science."* He will act, and with safety, upon the age old enjoinder of the Mysteries:

To know; to will; to dare; and to keep silent.

According to the Kabbalistic tradition, which is the source of much of our Craft teaching, the Second Degree marks the stage of intermittent illumination, and is denoted by the name David, which signifies the aspirant still under testing and instruction. The Hebrew letter, corresponding to our letter D with which the name David begins and ends, is Daleth, meaning "a door," and "the key of the house of David" (Isaiah xxii, 22) denotes the aspiration of the soul after Truth, which opens the "door" to revelation. It is for this reason that David, who is represented in scripture as having passed abruptly from the sheepfolds to a throne, thus typifies the aspirant who, having learned to "rule and subdue" his passions, and "shepherded" his lower nature, is suddenly rewarded with a sense of kingship over it. At this stage of his progress the candidate is described as being "in the midway" of spiritual growth, and the name David in these circumstances, signifies the "well-beloved son;" likewise David is a name etymologically related to the Sanskrit word Deva, which means "bright," "illuminated," or "shining." The letter Daleth according to the Hebrew system is known as a "double letter," and represents contrast and oscillation between two opposed states. Folly and wisdom, weakness and strength, joy and shame, war and peace, aridity and illumination; these were the portion of the biblical, as they are of every mystical David, whose psychological life alternates between the opposite shores by which the fluidic mind of man is bounded. This state of affairs illustrates the acute discomfort which ensues on being pulled two ways at once; hence the task imposed upon the candidate in the Second Degree is the attainment of mental equilibrium. In terms which are more familiar to members of the Craft, the work of the Second Degree aims "to establish" in the mind "stability," or that serene wisdom which, personified in David's great son Solomon, asks for neither outward nor inward riches, nor "length of days" (continuous mental and moral illumination), since God is realised as being present equally in the darkness and in the light, of the mind. The exhortation to the candidate in the Second Degree is to hold fast to the Ideal, to the imparted knowledge (*"I trust that the import of the former Charge neither is, nor ever will be, effaced from your memory"*); and the reward to him who fulfils his Obligation to the Higher Self (*"to act as a true and faithful Craftsman"*), will be complete dominion over his own powers and faculties.

The change in the status of the candidate in the Second Degree is marked by the altered form of the Apron with which he is directed to be invested. It should be observed that it is not the Master who invests the candidate, but his principal officer, the Senior Warden, acting under delegated authority. This is because the supreme principle of Spirit, being above all form and embodiment, does not directly create form; it is the soul, or derivative principle, which by thought and actions "clothes" itself. Mind moulds body, in the words of the poet: -

*For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make.
(Spenser)*

Hence the Master delegates the actual clothing of the candidate to his chief subordinate, signifying thereby that the soul fashions the body, and marks spiritual progress by its own self-made vesture. This mode of progress is figured in our Craft symbolism by the blue rosettes which now appear upon the Apron of the candidate. In the First Degree the triangular flap of the Apron is raised, denoting the soul attaching itself to body as it approaches birth. Incarnation of the soul, however, is not total at birth; it is a gradual process marked by well defined physiological changes every seven years. It is, indeed, not assumed to be complete until the "years of discretion" are reached when a man is accorded full civil rights, and this is the reason why candidates are not accepted for Initiation unless they are of *"the full age of twenty-one years."* As the Apron with the raised flap refers to *"the entrance of all men on this their mortal existence,"* so the

lowering of the flap in the Second Degree testifies to that entrance having become completed. This gradual descent of the soul into body, in scriptural language, is the "going down into Egypt," signifying the bondage and constriction of material existence. The purpose of the descent is that the soul may garner wisdom through experience, and develop innate faculties which it cannot do in any other way. We learn from the scriptures that "*there is corn in Egypt*"; in other words, there are lessons to be studied and experience to be acquired, which can only be accomplished whilst in the flesh. This will also explain the significance of the "*ear of corn*" in the Second Degree symbolism.

Appropriately, the Second Degree ceremony terminates with the presentation of the Working Tools which the Craftsman henceforth uses to discipline and control his mind. The duty of presenting and explaining them is incumbent upon the Master who, having himself risen to Mastership by their use, guarantees their efficacy to the candidate, who is thus assured that by using them, he too will rise to a like exalted position. In this manner the keys of progress are, and have always been, passed on from Master to novice through the ages. And so with the presentation of the Working Tools the Second Degree fittingly ends, and the candidate is left to convert their moral implications into practical conduct in the career of a Fellowcraft opening before him. Here too we must end this Paper on the Tracing Board of the Second Degree, although this by no means exhausts the interpretation of these matters. Perhaps enough has been said to reveal the importance of the Tracing Boards in our Craft system of education. The method of instruction is so devised that the "*hidden mysteries of nature and science*" are safeguarded, unless and until we ourselves labour to interpret them, and manifest the docility of mind and humility necessary for their reception. It follows that only those who are "properly prepared" can be admitted to a "full participation of our secrets;" all others are left with but a toy which may give them pleasure to play with, but from which nothing vital can be teamed. Yet we can be assured that each step truly taken forward will consolidate our position and lead us on to that serenity of purpose which leads to the eventual goal.

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