

THE APPROACH TO FREEMASONRY (Part I)

by WBro G.A. Culham, M.B.E., P.M., Lodge Haven of Peace, No. 4385, Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." (Proverbs i, 5)

FORWARD by WBro R. A. L. Harland, P.M. Lodge No. 1679 President of the Circle

The study of Freemasonry has a special fascination. Many students devote their time to some particular item of ritual or work as though it were a miniature portrait to be studied in detail through a microscope with meticulous care. This method has its advantages but there is danger for the beginner of losing the atmosphere in studying the single stroke of the brush.

In this Paper entitled "The Approach to Freemasonry", W. Bro. G.A. Culham has tried another method, namely that of drawing a picture with sweeping outlines, and I am sure that numerous students themselves approaching the serious study of Freemasonry will be grateful to him for his excellent introduction to the significance to our Craft system. It is a sobering thought when we reflect that England, under God and the forces which act providentially for the evolution and blending of the nations of the world, was raised up to become the focus point for the dissemination of freedom and brotherhood. Brotherhood is the keynote of this Paper, but the subject goes much farther than Bro Culham has permitted himself to enter upon and it opens doors to wider considerations. Suffice it to say here, that the fifteenth century made possible the condition for the formation in 1717 of the Grand Lodge and the subsequent diffusion of Freemasonry in England and thence throughout the world. Despite inevitable incidents in the process of expansion, such has been the innate potency of the spiritual content of Freemasonry that the Craft has gone on growing, generating peace, goodwill among men and administering relief and philanthropy on a vast scale, and, however unresponsive as yet to its deeper spiritual implications, there is none of its millions of members but values his membership of the Order and feels himself incorporated into something greater and better than he understands.

It is with the purpose of encouraging the proper approach to the study of Freemasonry that the reflections offered in this Paper will prove to be of service. The whole Masonic system stands for a relationship between the material and the spiritual which gives dominance to the latter, and interprets the former as it were sacramentally, or at least symbolically. It is this fact alone which explains the problem of our Craft's institution, which accounts for its inherent vitality, for its strong mystical appeal, and for its mysterious dynamic hold upon the hearts of so many Freemasons who have not yet attained to the full appreciation of its aims and ideals. Let us, then, pray that this great Masonic movement, custodian of tolerance and love of freedom may henceforth become illumined by the personal spiritual development of each individual, and meanwhile awaiting this momentous transformation we must strive to improve our understanding of those things which will at all times ensure our correct approach to Freemasonry and its way of life. I commend to members of the Circle this contribution by Bro Culham to our Transactions, and would express to him my personal thanks and those of the Governing Council for his excellent Paper.

R.A.L. HARLAND, President.

THE APPROACH TO FREEMASONRY (Part I)

INITIATION

To initiate a man is to make him a mason, to admit him into the Craft in accordance with the ancient masonic rite, to make him a Brother among masons. In The Wisdom of Solomon, one of the books of the Apocrypha, translated in the sixteenth century, we read, *"for she is initiated into the knowledge of God."* It is more than likely that the speculative mason adopted the actual term "initiate" from the old customs of the Church. The Church Fathers in their homilies commonly refer to the baptized brethren as "the initiated."

Literally, the initiate makes a "beginning." That is the meaning of the Latin word from which "initiate" is derived. "Candidate," too, comes from the Latin and meant originally "clothed in white" from the custom of Roman candidates for office being obliged to wear the white robe, the toga candida. The masonic Candidate is a man who requests the favour of a degree, who aspires to one, or who is about to pass through or is passing through a ceremony conferring a degree upon him.

The Candidate's Declaration

There was long ago put into neat form what should be the Candidate's correct approach to freemasonry. We find it in the Candidate's

Declaration, which under the English Constitution every Candidate must sign before Initiation. This declaration is as follows :

To the Master, Wardens, Officers and Members of the Lodge of..... No.:.....

I, A.B., being a free man, and of the full age of twenty-one years, do declare that, unbiased by the improper solicitation of friends and uninfluenced by mercenary or other unworthy motive, I do freely and voluntarily offer myself a candidate for the mysteries of Masonry; that I am prompted by a favourable opinion conceived of the institution, and a desire of knowledge; and that I will cheerfully conform to all the ancient usages and the established customs of the Order.

This declaration, occupying a separate page of a printed book kept by the Tyler, has the blessing of old custom, its present wording being much the same as in the eighteenth century. In American lodges Candidates make this declaration orally.

The Candidate's Qualifications

A Candidate for freemasonry must be a man of good reputation and integrity and well fitted to become a member of the Lodge in which he seeks Initiation. He must be a free man, of the full age of twenty-one years. and the tongue of good report must have been heard in his favour. He must be well and worthily recommended and have been regularly proposed and approved in open lodge. He must come of his own free will and accord, humbly soliciting to be admitted to the mysteries and privileges of freemasonry. He will be asked to make a solemn affirmation that he puts his trust in God, and he must, at the right time and in the right way, be presented to the Lodge to show that he is a fit and proper person to be made a mason. The serious responsibility resting on his sponsors (his proposer and seconder) is shared by the Master, Officers, and Committee, who inquire into the Candidate's credentials. The Grand Lodge of England does not lay down any minimum period for which a Candidate must be known beforehand to his sponsors; "it is the extent of the knowledge which is important, and Lodge Committees are desired to investigate every case in full light."

Operative freemasons in medieval days would not admit to apprenticeship a youth that had a bodily blemish. Apparently they were prompted by priestly insistence on certain Old Testament laws and by obvious considerations of a practical nature. That the apprentice mason should have the full power and proper use of his limbs is fully understandable when we remember that he would be called upon at times to do work demanding strength and agility, such as the moving of heavy blocks of stone with the use of simple tackle. Any youth physically unequal to such tasks might soon have found himself broken, and thereby have added to the risks of those with whom he worked, thereafter becoming a charge upon his Brethren or upon the Master that employed him.

But many trades besides the masons and other workers in heavy material insisted upon physical perfection in their apprentices. Is it not on record that a goldsmith, having accepted a hunchback as an apprentice, was fined by his guild and the indentures cancelled? G.W. Bullamore tells us that in 1420 the Cutlers' Guild insisted on the apprentice being "of free birth and condition, handsome in stature, having straight and proper limbs"; that the Brewers examined Apprentices in the Common Hall of the Craft as to "their birth, cleanness of their bodies," etc.; and that the Barber Surgeons were particular as to the "colour and complexion of the said man or child, if he be avexed or disposed to be 'lepur or gowty,' maimed or disfigured in any pities of his body whereby he shall fall in disdain or loathfulness unto the sight of the Kings liege people."

Candidates for the ancient mysteries many thousands of years ago were required to be unblemished in hand or foot, while Leviticus xxi, 17-23, should be read for a statement of the extremely strict Jewish law by which a man who had a bodily blemish could not even come nigh unto the altar, his presence in the sanctuary being a profanation. But it is difficult to see why speculative masonry took over that requirement and so punctiliously applied it. Eighteenth-century by-laws insisting on "uprightness in body and limbs" kept out of freemasonry thousands of men who ought to have been within it. That the prohibition did in fact operate is obvious from a minute recording that the Maid's Head Lodge at Norwich, in 1809, was proceeding to make a Candidate "as an Entere'd Apprentice Mason but in consequence of his not being upright in body, he could not be admitted and therefore was rejected accordingly."

During the nineteenth century the Craft began to look at the matter more sensibly and humanely, and today we find English lodges admitting to their membership men of good report whether they have physical blemish or not so long as any blemish does not "render them incapable of kerning the art," to quote a phrase from "The Charges of a Freemason," printed as a prelude to the General Laws and Regulations of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Proposing a Candidate: Initiation Fees

The serious responsibility resting on the proposers of a Candidate has already been mentioned. The rules of the English Grand Lodge provide for full publicity being given to the name, age, profession, private address and business address of a Candidate, and the names of his proposer and seconder. These particulars must be provided in proper form, and at the right time will find their place in the printed summons to a meeting. There was a custom in German lodges of writing the name of a Candidate on a blackboard which was displayed on the lodge premises for a month, so as to ensure full publicity of the Candidate's intention, and give members and visiting Brethren full opportunity of lodging an objection if they thought the Candidate was not worthy. In Oldham, Lancs., and in some other places it is still customary for the names of Candidates to be circulated to all lodges in the area.

The sponsor or proposer of a Candidate is known, both in France and in Germany, as the Candidate's Godfather, whereas in England the masonic father, or godfather, of a Candidate is generally regarded as the Master that initiates him.

The question of giving publicity to the names of the proposer has been looked at rather differently, notably in some German lodges, where the name of the proposer was not made known until after the ballot, in order that the Brethren of the lodge should not be influenced one way or the other by the proposer's rank and station. A comment on this is that in some English lodges, but only some and then on rare occasions, it has been felt that it might be unwise for the Master to propose a Candidate, on the score that members might be unduly influenced in the exercise of their vote.

All Grand Lodges prescribe minimum fees for Initiation. The Grand Lodge of England does not allow any Lodge to forgo or defer the fee, and would have looked askance at some lodges of the eighteenth century which accepted the fee by instalments.

A little scandal is related by A.F. Calvert concerning a famous lodge, the Albion, now No. 9, one of the earliest of the "Ancient" lodges, and warranted in 1769. Back in its early days some of its officers were charged with having initiated many persons for the mere consideration of a leg of mutton for dinner or supper! This was rightly held to be a disgrace to the Craft, and the officers were debarred from being admitted into any 'Antient' Lodge during their natural lives." A "pledge to appear" was insisted on by at least one lodge about 1800, the Candidate depositing half a guinea as a security that he would duly attend. It is known that a few lodges still follow the custom, the deposit or proposition fee being accepted as part of the Initiation fee, to be returned if the Candidate were not elected.

The Ballot

It is a general custom to ballot for Candidates, both for Initiation and joining. All Grand Lodges insist on a ballot being taken and closely guard it against risks of irregularity. A Candidate rejected in the ballot is said to be "blackballed," the term deriving from a custom, dating back to at least the days of Ovid (born 43 B.C.), Of casting a white ball in favour of a Candidate and a black one against him. "Balls," by the way, were often pebbles. It is a custom in Lodge to use white balls only, the ballot box having two divisions, one marked "Yes" and the other "No." But it is not invariable, and there are still lodges, more particularly outside the London area, that prefer the two-ball system as being less likely to lead to accidental mistakes. Voting by ballot was encouraged by the ancient Greeks, who tied it up with elaborate rules and with whom the "balls" (pebbles, counters, copper and wooden discs, etc.), were articles of commerce. By regulations of the English Grand Lodge the ballot goes against the Candidate if three black balls appear, but it is quite proper for the by-laws of the Lodge to enact that a smaller number than three shall exclude. In some jurisdictions very special care is taken to ensure that an unfavourable ballot is not due to mistake or thoughtlessness on the part of any Brother exercising his vote. In English lodges it is customary, should there be the faintest suspicion that a black ball is due to a mistake, for the Master to order a new ballot.

Under the English jurisdiction a Brother (not a serving Brother) automatically becomes a subscribing member of a lodge in which he is initiated. In past days the Initiate became a member only if he expressed his wish to do so at the time of his Initiation, and even today in Lodge No. 41, Bath, there is a convention by which an Initiate is asked whether he wishes to become a subscribing member.

The Candidate's "Preparation"

The physical preparation of a Candidate for Initiation is in close accord with tradition, but unfortunately it must be admitted that the meanings of some of its details are not now fully understood. The officer responsible for the preparation is the Tyler, who should be an experienced craftsman well able to ensure, both by his knowledge and his personality, that the Candidate enters upon his preparation in the right spirit.

In the ceremonies connected with the mysteries of thousands of years ago, as much care was taken with the preparation of the Candidate as with the Initiation that followed. Biblical texts can be given that tend to show that there is strong Jewish influence in the traditional preparation of a masonic candidate. Mackey quotes the Talmudic Barcoth, which insists that *"no man shall go into the Temple with his staff, nor with shoes on his feet, nor with his outer garment, nor with money tied up in his purse,"* reminding us that in many, but not all, American lodges, as in the early English lodges, the Initiate is "neither naked nor clad" and may wear a special white garment designed to give effect to that description.

The minutes of some English Lodges between 1770 and 1809 indicate that their Candidates wore dress of an especial style. Some of these minutes have a quaintness all their own, as, for example, those of Lodge Percy of London, meeting at the Three Tuns, Cross Street, Hatton Garden, which record in 1795: "Wee order'd a pair of flannel Drawers to bee made for the use of the Lodge." In 1775, the Marquess of Granby Lodge, Durham, No. 124, had "one pair of Fustian Drawers"; in 1788 the Anchor and Hope Lodge, Bolton, No. 37, had "one pair Trowsers linen"; in 1812, the Lodge of Felicity, No. 58, had "Sundry Cloathing, i.e. five flannel jackets, four pr. draws, five pr. slippers." A few English and many American lodges still provide special garments for Candidates.

The special arrangement in English lodges of the Candidate's dress, taking three particular points in their well-known order, is thought to have been designed (1) possibly to ensure that the Candidate conceals no weapon of defence or offence, a provision that may have had meaning hundreds of years ago ; (2) by uncovering the heart, to reveal sex, but even more likely, in view of the wellnigh universal tradition that the heart is the seat of the soul, to suggest the Candidate's fervency and sincerity; and lastly (3) as evidence of the Candidate's humility, perhaps the greatest of all the qualities that freemasonry sets out to teach. The Candidate is deprived of moneys, metallic substances, and of "everything valuable" before he enters the lodge, so that, emblematically, he is received into masonry poor and penniless, a symbolism which we might regard as being all-sufficient. In 1730, or earlier, the "Lectures" included the following :

Q. And pray how much money had you in your pocket when you was made a Mason? A. None att all.

Tradition has attached to this item of the Candidate's preparation an allusion to the building of King Solomon's Temple, of which we read that "the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." The old lectures include questions and answers based on this text.

It can be well understood that Candidates for the mysteries all through the ages, have been required to be blindfolded, and it follows naturally that in every mystery, including freemasonry, the hoodwink is an emblem, not only of secrecy, but of the darkness that vanishes in the light of initiation. Milton's words, "What in me is dark, illumine; what is low, raise and support," should be the prayer of every Candidate, whose physical darkness symbolizes his spiritual ignorance. Plato said that "the ignorant suffered from ignorance, as the blind man from want of light."

Here is part of an old catechism of the eighteenth century :

Q. Why was you hoodwink'd? A. That my heart might conceal or conceive, before my eyes did discover. Q. The second reason, Brother? A. As I was in darkness at that time, I should keep all the world in darkness.

The more we study the question of the Candidate's "slipshodness" the more we are likely to believe that this item of the Candidate's preparation was not casually introduced, but, on the contrary, possessed originally very great significance. It is highly probable that the Candidate's slipshod shoe came into masonry chiefly, but not perhaps entirely, from folklore, and part of its original purpose was to avert danger from him. Danger of what? We must assume it to be the danger, or risk, of his violating his obligation, but we cannot entirely rule out that the risk in mind was that of the Candidate's failing to be "born again" into a state of true enlightenment.

The slipshod condition is usually associated with two ancient Jewish traditions, the one providing the suggestion that the slipshod condition is a gesture of reverence, and the other that it is the confirmation of a covenant. With regard to the first of these, the reference is to the well-known story of Moses and the burning bush, in which "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a Hame of Are out of the midst of the bush"; and Moses received the command: "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exodus iii, 2,5.). There are other and similar biblical texts.

The poet has well caught the idea in these lines:

Earths crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

The idea of the bare or slipshod foot is so ancient that we cannot even guess at its age. Jason, a celebrated figure in ancient Greek legend, who led the Argonauts in quest of the Golden Fleece, came before Pelias the Usurper without a sandal on his left foot, Pelias having been warned by an oracle that a man in that condition would appear before him. We can expect that such details were pregnant with meaning.

The second of the Jewish traditions is to be found in Ruth iv, 7-9, where we learn that to unloose the shoe and give it to another person was a gesture of sincerity, of honest intention, a confirmation of a contract that had been made between the two parties. The inference to be drawn from this is that the Candidate's slipshod condition is in itself a token of fealty or fidelity.

A catch question in an eighteenth-century irregular print runs:

Q. What did you pay for freemasonry? A. An old shoe, an old shoe of my mother's.

From this we may conclude that the Initiate then wore a slipper belonging to the lodge, just as he does to-day.

The Cable Tow

In the preparation of the Candidate we may narrow our interpretation of the cable tow and regard it merely as a noose or halter, a symbol which had a place in the ancient mysteries, but which to-day is hardly known apart from freemasonry and even there, particularly with regard to the English Craft, cannot be said to be a symbol having a well-understood meaning. Unfortunately, the explanation given to the Initiate at the Master's pedestal in English lodges is so greatly lacking that we might well suspect that, in the editing and rearrangement of the ritual, possibly following 1813, some phrases that would have assisted us to understand the true significance of the Candidate's cable tow were accidentally omitted.

The wearing of a halter by the Initiate appears to hark back to mysteries now lost in antiquity, and students say that the noose figures in the Brahminical ceremonies as a sacred emblem, and that in the Zoroastrian system, three thousand years ago, everyone was thought to have had cast about his neck a noose, which at death fell from the righteous man but dragged the wicked down to hell. It is probable that in some of the ancient mysteries the cable tow, or halter, was the means by which the Candidate was led, symbolically in a state of bondage, through part of the ceremony. The wearing of the cable tow may be thought to be at variance with the fundamental tenet that the Candidate must be a free man. Although the halter in this case signifies only bondage to a state of ignorance, we feel that the Irish working offers an acceptable symbolism in this regard, the Candidate wearing the sign of servitude only until he is about to take the Obligation. Then it is removed and thrown contemptuously on the floor behind him, the Conductor informing him that naught but a free man may be made a freemason.

It is possible that there is an ancient connexion between the presence of a halter, or cable tow, about the neck and the taking of a solemn oath. The History of Dunblane, quoting from an old account, tells us that armed men, one column headed by the Earl of Argyle and another by Lord James Stewart, Prior of St. Andrews, entered Dunblane Cathedral in the year 1599. Round the neck of every one of them was a halter. "We come," said the Earl, "to set forward the reformation of Religion ... and to purify this Kirk.... We have banded ourselves together ... and bound ourselves by a great oath that we are willing to part with this life as these symbols round our necks testify if we turn back or desist." They then tore down and threw into the river the altars, shrines, and images.

The Knocks

The knock or series of knocks on the outer door of a lodge is an alarm, an indication that someone seeks admittance. Much of its symbolism comes from the familiar, homely knock on the door of one's house, which has been a figure through the ages. Thus, "*Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*" (Revelation iii, 20.) And "*To him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" (Matthew vii, 8, and Luke xi, 10.)

Brethren have sought to see in the knocks on the door of the lodge all sorts of elaborate symbolism, some of which is of early date, as for instance:

Q. Brother, you told me you gave Three Distinct Knocks at the Door: Pray what do they signify? A. A certain text in scripture. Q. What is that text, Brother? A. Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. Q. How do you apply this text in Masonry? A. I sought in my Mind; I asked of my Friend; I knocked, and the Door of Masonry became open unto me.

There is a wholly Masonic explanation of the necessity of giving three knocks. One writer has suggested that there are three obstructions and three doors (one door real, and two, not imaginary, but symbolical) to be negotiated by the Candidate. There are three distinct knocks to obtain admission, and three distinct knocks to pass each obstruction.

The Reception of the Candidate

The reception accorded to the Candidate at the moment of entering the lodge must be much the same as that which all candidates for initiation, not necessarily masonic, have met at any time through thousands of years. There is brought home to him the seriousness of the step which he proposes to take, and he is reminded of the responsibility that will rest on him to guard the secrets about to be entrusted to him. It emphasizes the difficulty of entrance, in more than one sense, and even its danger if admission has been improperly achieved.

We may just refer to what appears to be a startling suggestion by G.W. Bullamore - namely, that the Inner Guard's precaution is intended to prevent the impersonation of the Candidate by a malignant spirit. Bullamore naturally admits this to be a mere conjecture, and to most people it will hardly sound convincing. But it is fair to say that in medieval days the possibility of an evil spirit impersonating a human being was firmly held by all sorts of people who, however, generally believed that the infallible means of detecting the imposture and frightening off the intruder was to confront him with the sign of the cross.

The Candidate's Circumambulation

By his circumambulation of the Lodge the Candidate is being ceremoniously but very effectively presented to the Brethren. This long word, from the Latin, means "walking all round," and frequently is confused with another word from the Latin, "perambulation" which means "walking through." Of all religious rites circumambulation is one of the most ancient, and made its mark upon popular custom probably thousands of years ago. Circumambulation always proceeded sunwise - that is, in the direction assumed to be taken by the sun. We use the term "clockwise" to explain the same thing, and we speak of the contrary direction as being "against the sun," or "counter-clockwise," while the Scots have their own curious word for it - "withershins" or "widdershins."

Thousands of years ago people became nervous of proceeding except in the sunwise direction. We read that when Plato, who lived in the fifth century, B.C., gave a symposium - a dinner and drinking party - the greatest care was taken to pass the wine cups round from right to left, and even conversation and everything that took place in the entertainment was made to observe that same rule. The superstition was strongly held through the centuries and is often met to-day. For instance, who has not noticed the look of horror on a guest's face when his left hand neighbour at table has attempted to pour him wine with his left hand?

Whether, therefore, freemasonry took the rite from the religion of either ancient or medieval days, we recognize in the circumambulation of the Candidate an element of most or of all the mysteries, stretching back, probably, to before the dawn of civilisation.

The Obligation

An oath to keep secret what would be communicated to him has naturally been demanded of every initiate in every mystery. In medieval days the craft apprentice took an oath. To-day the speculative Apprentice takes an obligation. The two are not quite the same. An oath is a solemn appeal to God in support of the truth of a declaration and in witness that a promise will be kept. An obligation is a binding

agreement.

All craftsmen in medieval days, not only the mason operatives, took solemn oaths to conceal and keep secret what should be communicated to them. Here, for example, is the oath of the Barber and Surgeons Guild of 1606: "*You shall concale, keep secrett and not disclose such council as att any tyme hereafter shall be used or spoken of by or amongst the said company soe helpe me God and by the Holy contents of this Booke.*"

Some of the Old Charges required the oath to be kept "*without any manner of equivocation or mental reservation.*" What exactly does this imply? Mental reservation on the part of one who takes an obligation means simply the intentional failure to disclose something that affects the meaning of the statement made, and which, were it disclosed, would change the import; thus, the Obligation, as the individual intends and well knows, means one thing to him that enters into it and another to those that receive it or hear it recited. The full phrase is found for the first time, we believe, in the Protestant Declaration or Oath of 1678 and 1679, and *Miscellanea Latomorum*, in its very first volume, tells us that it was the outcome of the national frenzy engendered by Dr. Titus Oates, who in 1678 professed to have discovered a popish plot against the King. Since the first year of William and Mary the phrase has formed part of the Declaration made by the English Sovereign before taking the Coronation Oath, the actual words being:

"And I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare, that I do make this declaration and every part thereof in the plain and ordinary sense of the words read unto me, as they are commonly understood by the English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation or mental reservation whatsoever."

Freemasons might well ask what is the origin of the severe penalties attached to the Obligation? Gould lights up the subject for us when he says that in the earliest times the necessity was felt of making as conspicuous as possible, in the most varied but always telling ways, the penalties that would be incurred by a breach of oath or promise. While there is no historical record, he says, of their actual infliction, the retention of the barbarous penalties of medieval days in so many local codes bears witness to their high antiquity. Punishments of a horrible description were known to be the rule many hundreds of years ago in many parts of the world. The subject can be followed in *Old-Time Punishments*, by William Andrews (1891), from which the following extract is reproduced :

"In the curious ordinances which were observed in the reign of Henry VI, for the conduct of the Court of Admiralty for the Humber, are enumerated the various offences of a maritime connection, and their punishments. In view of the character of the court, the punishment was generally to be inflicted at low-water mark, so as to be within the proper jurisdiction of the Admiralty, the chief officer of which, the Admiral of the Humber, being, from the year 1451, the Mayor of Hull. The court being met, and consisting of 'masters, merchants & mariners with all others that do enjoy the King's stream with hook, net or any engine,' were addressed as follows : 'You masters of the quest, if you, or any of you, discover or disclose anything of the King's secret counsel, or of the counsel of your fellows (for the present you are admitted to be the King's counsellors), you are to be, and shall be, had down to the low-water mark, where must be made three times, O Yes! for the King, and then and there this punishment, by the law prescribed, shall be executed upon them -, that is, their hands and feet bound, their throats cut, their tongues pulled out, and their bodies thrown into the sea'."

It is on record that in 1557 six pirates were hanged at Wopping on the shore at low-water mark, where they were left until three tides had overwashed them. And from a dialogue between Simon and Philip, dating back to 1730, or perhaps many years earlier (made available by Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones), we learn of this dreadful penalty alleged to be incurred by the old mason should he break his oath :

"... my Heart pluck'd from my Left breast, my Tongue pluck'd from the roof of my mouth, my Throat cutt, my Body be torn to pieces by Wild Horses, to be bury'd in the Sands of the Sea where the Tide flowes in 24 hours, taken up and burnt to Ashes and Sifted where the four winds blow that there may be no more Remembrance of me. SO HELP ME GOD."

Whether the medieval penalty clauses of a masonic obligation are in keeping with the days we now live in, and, if not, whether they should continue to be included as an essential element of the Obligation is a question arising now and then. Brethren have asked whether, inasmuch as some penalty clauses reflect the cruelty and mental darkness of other days, Obligations including them as essentials may properly be sworn on the V.S.L., and have ventured to wonder whether any reasonable modification would leave the Craft any the poorer or constitute an "innovation" affecting any true landmark of the Order? They have argued that the oaths taken by operative brethren in days of old did not include barbarous penalties, and that nothing of the kind has been traced in connexion with the forms of obligation adopted in the Scottish operative lodges, although, as one writer puts it, "the peril to a man's soul, for the breaking of the vow was nearly always insisted on." They have reminded us that many of the German lodges regarded the old oath as a matter of history only, and in its place put a simplified obligation incorporating a solemn vow.

On the points so raised it may be remarked that, although most English Brethren assume that the medieval penalty clause is an absolutely essential part of the Obligation, as also of the ceremony of Initiation, we have to remember that even in the one country of England the penalty clause is given in different ways. In the Bristol working, for example, it concludes with these words "or until this horrible punishment shall be inflicted, the less dreadful (but to an honest mind) of being further branded as etc., etc." And in the Irish lodges, the Candidate in the course of his Obligation bears in mind "the ancient penalty of having etc., etc.," and binds himself "under

the real penalty of being deservedly branded as an etc., etc.": the ancient penalty is referred to in the Irish working as the Symbolic penalty. Of course, that is the real position in all English-speaking lodges, and it would be all to the good if Initiates were definitely taught strictly to regard the penalty entirely in that light, clearly insisting that they should understand the real penalty to be that of being branded as a wilfully perjured individual, void of all moral worth, etc., etc. In the words of the old German oath already recorded, let the Initiate be taught to keep his masonic secrets "enclosed in his heart on peril of his soul's salvation."

On the subject of masonic secrecy much could be written, but little that would matter. It must, however, be clearly stated that freemasonry is not a secret society. Instead, it is a society having secret modes of recognition between its members - which is a distinction with a real difference. Necessarily the Initiate is sworn to secrecy. The Obligation closes his lips, much as, but not exactly as, in the ceremony of "making" a cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church, in which the Pope closes the new cardinal's lips to remind him of the discretion required of his office, and later opens them again to indicate the need for fearlessness in proclaiming truth and justice.

Freemasonry makes no secrecy of the great principles it teaches. It publishes the names of its members and officials, and the times and places of its meetings. It prints its Constitutions. The Grand Master, the Prince of Wales, in his speech at the laying of the cornerstone of Truro Cathedral, in May 1880, said:

"We have among us secrets concealed from those who are not Masons, but they are lawful and honourable, and not opposed to the laws either of God or man. They were entrusted to Masons in ancient times, and, having been faithfully transmitted to us, it is our duty to convey them inviolate to our posterity."

An Irish clergyman once remarked (and every freemason under the English-speaking jurisdiction could do the same with equal truth) that "no secrecy of masonry obliged him to conceal anything which, as a Christian, he should divulge, and the concealing of which might prove injurious to his fellow creatures." The design, the object, the moral and religious tenets and doctrines of freemasonry are those of an open society, "one that could meet on the highway beneath the sun of day and not within the well-guarded portals of the Lodge." But there is in freemasonry a secret although an open one to him whose heart inclines him towards its discovery. It slowly dawns upon the faithful Brother, who rarely shares it with anybody - for one thing, because it is difficult to put into words. Perhaps Emerson was getting near it when he said that humility is the secret of the wise. But probably, in a roundabout way, one of Disraeli's characters was getting still nearer when he said that sensible men are all of the same religion. "And pray, what is that?" inquired the Prince. "Sensible men never tell," was the response. (Benjamin Disraeli, *Endymion*, chapter 81).

The badge, working tools, the warrant, the by-laws, and certain other things that have a place in the Initiation ceremony are separately referred to later in the lecture.

The Word "Brother"

Freemasons, in calling each other Brother, are following old guild and old operative practice, as well, of course, as basing themselves upon Biblical custom. The word "Brother" was not by any means restricted to the mason craft in early days, for in nearly every guild the members were enjoined to call one another Brothers and Sisters. The Old MS Charges of the English operative masons contain the injunction, "*you shall call masons your Brother, or else your fellows, and no other foul names.*" Then, too, the swearing of brotherhood was a mere drinking custom during the Middle Ages. "Brotherhood" and "Fraternity" look different, but actually both of them have descended from the Greek phrater ("brother"), the one through the Saxon tongue, and the other through the Latin. "Brother" is a common word in the language of the Bible, and of the many classes of men there so called, the freemason is chiefly interested in those who have a community of nature, who are equals, and who have a natural affinity for one another. Freemasons are Brothers one of the other, inasmuch as they come into one or more of those categories, have all passed through the same ordeal of Initiation, have been given particular modes of recognition, and have been taught the same philosophy.

"So Mote It Be"

"Amen! Amen! So Mote It be! So say we all for Charity." The earliest of all masonic manuscripts (1390) ends in that way. "So mote it be" is known as an operative exclamation, because it expresses a wish, or desire. The "Amen," that at one time preceded the exclamation, means "verily," "certainly," "truly" - in everyday phrasing, "Yes, we agree." "So mote it be" includes a part of speech of the Anglo-Saxon word *motan*, having the general meaning of "to be allowed." Thus "So mote it be" is simply "So may it be." Apparently, in the early lodges the word "Amen," coming from the Master or from a Senior Brother, was endorsed by the Brethren's "So mote it be," but in course of time the "Amen" has fallen from use, although it is still customary in some American lodges: as follows :

Master: May the blessing of heaven rest upon all regular masons. May Brotherly Love prevail and every moral and social virtue cement us. Amen. Brethren: So mote it be."

The Cable Tow as a Measure of Length

The cable tow as a measure of length is not known outside freemasonry, and has given rise to much fruitless argument. What actually is a cable tow? We know that a cable is a strong rope made of cords twisted together, often around a centre-cord. One definition of "tow" is the hemp or other fibre used in rope-making, but it is unlikely that this kind of "tow" here meant, in spite of the use in a Bradford Lodge of the phrase "a cable of hemp or tow." An irregular print of 1766 says in a footnote A cable tow is three miles in length: so that

if a Fellow-Craft is that distance from his lodge, he is not culpable on account of his non-attendance." It is idle to suppose that a speculative mason's cable tow has, or ever did have, any physical length, in spite of early writers. When a freemason is summoned to attend the duties of his lodge the phrase "if within the length of my cable tow" can mean only "if within all reasonable possibility," or "if within the scope of my ability." pleading no excuse thereto except "*sickness or the pressing emergencies of my public or private avocations.*"

"Hele"

"I will always hele, conceal, and never reveal." In this phrase the Candidate may think that he meets for the first time a very unusual word. As a matter of fact, it is a delightfully simple word, and the Candidate has often met it in related forms. Although obsolete among townsmen, it is still used by countrymen, as it has been for centuries. Its origin is the Anglo-Saxon *helan*, meaning "to cover and conceal," and its significance to the Initiate is that, by its use in the Obligation, not only does he undertake not to reveal the secrets of freemasonry, but he undertakes to cover them up and conceal them. The use of the word prepares him for the Master's injunction cautiously to avoid all occasions which may inadvertently lead him to disclose any of those masonic secrets which have been entrusted to his keeping. "Hellier," "healyer," etc., are the old names, still in occasional use, for the "roof slater" and "tiler"; hence we get these words as common surnames. In some country districts a cover, such as a drain cover, is a "heler." "Hell" meant originally the covered, or concealed, world or place: thus, in the Apostles' Creed, occur the words, "He descended into Hell" - the covered place. The helmet covers the head; "helm" is one form of the same word. A hill whose crest is covered by cloud is said to be "helmed."

Words relating to Secrecy

It is worth while to look at some of the many words meaning or relating to, secrecy as used by freemasons. A "secret" is something concealed or hidden. It is "inviolable" when the promise to keep it is not capable of being broken. Secret matters are often "abstruse" or "profound" - that is, hard to understand. With regard to secrets and mysteries we are "reticent" (reserved), and we continuously avoid occasions which might inadvertently lead us to disclose them. A "mystery" is something hidden; literally, the lips and the eyes are closed so far as the mystery is concerned. We sometimes call a book of ritual, or formulary, an "esotery" or say it is of an "esoteric" nature - that is, it is understood by the few, or designed only for the few to understand, or has been prepared for the enlightened, and for them only. We "hele" our secrets - that is, we cover them up, or conceal them, and do not reveal them to the common light. Things hidden from observation or common knowledge are said to be "occult." Secret things, or things secret except to the few are sometimes said to be "cryptic"; in freemasonry, we associate the word with a crypt or vault, a hiding-place.

In the ceiling of some of the lodge rooms in which our early Brethren met was a painted or modelled rose, the flower associated with Harpocrates, whom the Greeks and Romans (mistakenly) regarded as the god of silence, the significance being that everything said and done by the Brethren "under the rose" was secret, a matter of strict confidence between them all. The Tudor Rose is part of the beautiful ceiling decoration of some of the lodge rooms at Freemasons Hall, London, and of very many other places where freemasons regularly meet.

THE LODGE

All Brethren know that the word "lodge" has at least three meanings: it is the place - a building or a room - in which freemasons meet; it is the society, or body, of freemasons that meets there; it is the actual meeting of that body. When we think of the lodge all three meanings often coalesce. In general language, the word "lodge" applies today to a small building, sometimes a shed, and we may note that the Incorporation of Masons, one of the fourteen trade guilds of Glasgow dating back to the eleventh century, brings its meetings to an end by "closing the shed" with a series of knocks made by rapping with a folded rule. The word "shed" as meaning the masonic lodge, is known in some parts of Scotland.

Lodge Names and Numbers.

Q. What is a just and perfect or just and lawfull Lodge? A. A just and perfect lodge is two Interprintices, two fellow Craftes, and two Masters, more and fewer, the more the merrier, the fewer the better cheer, but if need require five will serve, that is two Interprintices, two Fellow Craftes and one Mastr, on the Highest Hill or Lowest Valley Of the World without a crow of a Cock or the bark of a Dogg.

Orientation of the Lodge

Why are lodges placed east to west, with the Master's place in the East? It is a fair question, while freemasonry corresponds to so many ancient Jewish precedents, it apparently departs from them in orientating its lodges in a manner opposite to the example set by the Jewish tabernacle, which had its Holy Place in the west and its porchway in the east. The freemason's lodge follows the custom set for it through the centuries by the churches which, in the vast majority of cases, have their Holy of Holies in the east, the worshippers when they turn east in prayer thereby facing the altar. From remote ages it seems that men's minds have associated the east with light and life, and the west with darkness and death, an association now rooted in religious belief. We remember that learning originated in the east. Dr. Oliver said: "*The principal entrance to the lodge room ought to face the east, because the east is a place of light both physical and moral: and therefore the Brethren have access to the lodge by that entrance, as a symbol of mental illumination.*" Our Craft ritual effects a happy simile when it says that as the sun rises in the east to enliven the day, so is the Worshipful Master placed in the

east to open his lodge and instruct the Brethren in freemasonry.

The Form of the Lodge

There is good reason for believing that the early speculative lodges were not always rectangular. We can take for granted that the greater number of the early lodges were oblong square in shape. Today such a shape is thought to be more or less the ideal, but lodge rooms vary considerably, and some of them, especially in the old country inns, are almost square. "Oblong square" is an old-time expression implying a rectangle approximately twice as long as it is wide. It was used by Sir Walter Scott (himself a freemason) in *Waverley* (1814) and in *Ivanhoe* (1819) the former in describing the Castle of Doone and the latter the lists for a tournament at Ashby, and Scott probably took the term from freemasonry and not from the general language of the time. One of the irregular masonic publications of 1762 gives the following catechism:

Q. What Form is your Lodge? A. An Oblong Square. Q. How long, Brother? A. From East to West. Q. How wide, Brother? A. Between North and South. Q. How high, Brother? A. From the Earth to the Heavens. Q. How deep, Brother? A. From the surface of the Earth to the Centre.

In the eighteenth-century lodges, the presence of a table, around which the Brethren were seated, was usual. Students have suggested that it was this arrangement, or, alternatively, a floor drawing or lodge board in the centre of the lodge, that brought about the custom of "squaring the lodge." And it is also thought that there was a clear space at the end of the lodge in which the Obligation was taken. However, it is just as likely that the custom of squaring the lodge derived from the arrangements in which there was a central altar. In the (old) Apollo Lodge (1811-35) there was a long table with the Master at one end in the east, the Senior Warden at the other end, and the Junior Warden half-way down in the south, the Secretary having his table immediately to the left and slightly in front of the Master. Round the table were backed benches for the Brethren. It was in this style of lodge that the old lectures were worked (by the question-and-answer method); but sometimes trestle tables were erected in the lodge after the ceremonies, and the Brethren sat round them eating, drinking, and smoking, the while the catechisms continued.

The Pillars

The traditional history, as reflected in the Craft ritual, attaches remarkable importance to the pillars, but only in the few lodges still preserving the old style is this importance made evident in the appointments of the lodge. In the early eighteenth-century lodge the pillars were undoubtedly the first things to strike the eye of a Brother on entering, and in the Canongate Kilwinning arrangement pillars flank the porchway, and a Brother can enter the lodge only by passing between them. Is there a survival of those pillars in the present English lodge?

We may reasonably conclude that the Wardens' miniature columns are survivals of pillars, but of which? Some students declare that the association of the Wardens' columns with the old pillars is "absurd" but it is easy to get confused in such a matter. Let us remember that in some of the old lodges there were two pillars and two only, undoubtedly representing those at the porchway of King Solomon's Temple. It does look as though the Warden's columns, while far from being exact miniatures of those old lodge pillars, were at one time or other intended to take their place. But the trouble is that in other of the old lodges there were three pillars; that in a great many lodges there were three floor candlesticks: and that sometimes the pillars themselves were the candlesticks. So we have to look in the present-day lodge for evidences of the survival of five pillars. Probably, or at least possibly, we find them in the two Wardens' columns representing the porchway pillars of the Temple, and in the three tall candlesticks beside the Master's and Warden's pedestals, and representing all that we now have of the three old pillars of Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty.

Early rituals direct attention to three grand pillars. These supported the masons' lodge; they are emblematical of wisdom, strength and beauty; they were then associated with the pillars of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders respectively. They also represented Solomon, King of Israel, who built, completed, and dedicated the Temple at Jerusalem to God's service; Hiram, King of Tyre, who supported Solomon with men and materials; and Hiram Abif, whose curious and masterly workmanship beautified and adorned the Temple. Here is a part of a dialogue between Simon and Philip, taken from a manuscript of approximately the year 1730:

Q. How high was your Lodge? A. As high as the Heavens, and as low as the Earth. Q. How many Pillars had your Lodge? A. Three. Q. What did you call them? A. Beauty, Strength and Wisdom. Q. What do they represent? A. Beauty to Adorn, Strength to Support, and Wisdom to Contrive.

We now explain the pillars rather differently; the Master's, the Ionic, now represents Wisdom; the Senior Warden's, the Doric, represents Strength; and the Junior Warden's, the Corinthian, represents Beauty.

In many lodges of the 1700s the appropriate pillar stood before the Master and each of the Wardens, but in some lodges there was a pillar on each side of the Master's chair or behind his chair. It is obvious that each lodge had its own ideas on the subject, as have those lodges today which perpetuate the old style by still having pillars standing on the floor.

Candles

The candles in a lodge are much more than a means of illumination. They are important symbols, with a long and attractive history. The candle came into the speculative lodge not only from the hall of the guild; it came from the votive offering burning before a shrine

centuries ago. Its physical light is the emblem of the spiritual. The burning candle at the medieval altar and shrine carried with it the idea of consecration, of the making and keeping of vows, of gratitude for mercies which had been vouchsafed. It is easy to see that the lodge custom of burning three candles - particularly three - is originally of religious significance and has come from church and guild, whatever the modern interpretation may or may not be.

A freemason would hardly expect to find any association of the candle with secrecy, but the old and curious metaphor "Tace is Latin for candle" met in old-fashioned literature, means figuratively "It is discreet to be silent." The arms of the United Grand Lodge of England bear the motto, Audi Vide Tace - "hear, see, be silent."

The Greater and the Lesser Lights

In the eighteenth century the "moderns" at first regarded their three big candles carried in high candle-sticks as the three great lights, the purpose of which was "not only to shew the due course of the sun which rises in the east, has its meridian in the south and declension in the west, but also to light men to, at and from their labour" and also to represent "The Sun, Moon and the Master of the Lodge."

The "Antients" took a less obvious view of the matter, to them the three great lights were the Volume of the Sacred Law, and Square and Compasses, while the three lesser lights were the candles of the Master and his Wardens. To the "Moderns" the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and Compasses were known as the "furniture" of the lodge; they are still often known in that way. Probably by the end of the century many of the "Modern" lodges had come to look at the matter differently, and we find the Lodge of Reconciliation, after the union, adopting the "Antient" practice as to the great lights, and agreeing that the three lesser lights are situated in the east, south, and west, and are meant to represent the sun, moon, and Master of the lodge.

A Mason is obliged, by his tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understand the art he will never be a stupid atheist nor an irreligious libertine. He, of all men, should best understand that God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh to the heart. A mason is, therefore, particularly bound never to act against the dictates of his conscience. Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the Order, provided he believe in the glorious architect of heaven and earth, and practise the sacred duties of morality. Masons unite with the virtuous of every persuasion in the firm and pleasing bond of fraternal love; they are taught to view the errors of mankind with compassion, and to strive, by the purity of their own conduct, to demonstrate the superior excellence of the faith they may profess. Thus masonry is the centre of union between good men and true, and the happy means of conciliating friendship amongst those who must otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.