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This paper may be handed to the Candidate after completing his Excellent Degree.

THE DEGREE OF EXCELLENT MASTER

RE Comp R E Pugh-Williams PG Lec

The origin of the New Zealand System of Royal Arch working is clear. In 1892 the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand adopted the Scottish working of Mark Master, Excellent Master and the Holy Royal Arch Degrees, a sequence which was established in Scotland in 1840.

Our Excellent Degree is therefore the one worked in Scotland of which few details were known before the standardisation of the Scottish Ritual in 1840.

In 1835 the English Ritual was completely revised with the veils being omitted. Scotland however, retained the Passing of the Veils as a separate Ceremony. It is this system that we in New Zealand have adopted, whilst in Ireland, USA, and England the Veils Ceremony forms the first part of the Royal Arch Degree, and as such has created a situation where an Irish, American or English Royal Arch Mason is unable to visit a Scottish or New Zealand Chapter when an Excellent Degree is being worked.

The Excellent Degree is one of preparation.

The Candidate is prepared and acknowledged as an Excellent Master, as well as being prepared and qualified for the experience which is to follow, The Exaltation to the Holy Royal Arch.

He is also prepared symbolically to meet the challenges that lie behind the veil of each new experience in life, and in preparation for the moment when he stands symbolically before the White Veil at the end of his mortal life.

The Mark Degree is a pure Craft Degree. The legend is based upon the building of the First Temple, and in New Zealand it is the open sesame to the Excellent Degree and Holy Royal Arch.

The Excellent Degree is a link between pure Craft Masonry and the Holy Royal Arch. It is a transition Degree symbolising the return from Babylon to Jerusalem taking us across the gap that separates Craft teachings from the spiritual truths of the Holy Royal Arch.

It is also a proving Degree, which teaches the lessons necessary to prepare us for the ultimate admission to the Sanhedrin. In the passing of each veil, we are taught another lesson.

The Word of the Blue Veil is (Bazaleel) Bezaleel' interpreted as 'In the Shadow of God'.

As we pass the first veil we leave behind our worldly cares and move into the shadow of God's House. The Sign of the Rod symbolises the powers of good with which the Great Architect of the Universe has credited us with.

If we cast away those powers for good, we are beset by serpents of doubt, selfishness, greed and avarice. It is only when we have the courage to face up to, and grapple with the vices that beset us all that we gain the Rod, the symbol of Powers of Good.

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At the Second Veil we receive the Word 'Aholiab' interpreted as 'Father is My Protection' implying our drawing nearer to the Father, being sure of his help and protection.

In the Sign of the Second Veil we have a picture of how the weaknesses that perplex us are part of our in consciousness. Vice is destructive and disfiguring, even as leprosy is a destructive and disfiguring disease.

When Moses' hand became leprous he thrust it back into his bosom and plucked it forth a second time, when again it was whole as his other flesh.

This implies that the nursing of our private grievances and hidden vices create within us an inner leprosy that destroys our capacity to fashion a keystone, as each of us knows our individual weaknesses. Thus the Purple

Veil shows us that we likewise have the power to pluck those weaknesses from our heart and restore ourselves to the whole flesh again.

In the Scarlet Veil the words are (Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh) 'E I Ashi E I' meaning 'I am that I am'.

We are told that the pronunciation of this incomprehensible word was known only to the High Priests who used it but once a year. Moses would certainly have known the word and is likely he would have used the expression when God spoke to him.

In the Excellent Degree the word used when the Candidate has passed the Third Veil and is ready to present himself before the entrance to the Sanhedrin, the sign of the Veil indicates that the Candidate is ready to give his all in order to be found worthy.

At the White Veil there is the final admonition and the Grand Word 'Ammi Ruhamah', meaning 'My People Having Obtained Mercy'.

The transition is now completed. Symbolically the Candidate has seized the tail of the serpent that beset him and has plucked from his heart the leprosy that halts progress and pored out his whole self to be free and is ready to be admitted within the White Veil.

There he stands in readiness for the Holy Royal Arch Degree.

Our New Zealand Royal Arch Installation Ritual explains these Colours:-

BLUE (Third Principal) Is the Emblem of Universal Benevolence and Friendship

PURPLE (Second Principal) Is the Emblem of Unity

SCARLET (First Principal) Is the Emblem of Imperial Dignity

Blue represents truth, honour and friendship. It is the colour of the heavens symbolising the abode of God.

Purple is a combination of Red (positive) and Blue (negative) it therefore takes on the symbolic meanings of both, that is, Red of love and self-sacrifice, and the Blue of truth, hence it is symbolic of wisdom and rulership based on sacrifice and honour.

Red denotes life, action and cheerfulness, courage and energy, power and happiness.

White is symbolic of innocence, purity and chastity.