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## **Freemasonry as a Constructive Life Force.**

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When the historian of the 20th Century comes to write his story we can well imagine him speaking of it as the Century of Transition.

Looking back to its early years we know that it opened as a century wherein rank materialism flourished. A materialistic Science dominated the thinking community. Everything was supposed to have its Alpha and Omega in natural law without a law-giver. Everything could be traced to matter. The world was soul-less, and when such poets as Longfellow sang: -

"Life is real, Life is earnest,  
"And the grave is not its goal,  
"Dust thou art to dust returnest  
"Was not spoken of the soul."

The cynic smiled in good-natured compassion. The Churches were largely a spent force. The increase of education led to a questioning of the formulas and creeds of the Churches and the multitude were outside; and even those within were little influenced by the message of its pulpits. Wealth and not character was the standard of successful living. But as the years have passed science has reversed its findings. Led by such men as Sir Oliver Lodge, Prof. Flammarion, Prof. Crooke and others— eminent in their particular sphere of scientific research — discoveries have been made which have revolutionised their standards. The laboratory has demonstrated that there are mysterious forces and power which has been given by the materialism of the past into the of life after death has become a recognised scientific axiom.

But this very change has brought with it a renewed emphasis upon Life and Conduct, and men have seen a revival of the great fact that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Concurrent with this change of scientific thought another significant change has been taking place. The World's economic system has crashed; the hoarded material wealth has slumped; men are being faced with startling facts which haunt them, abundance of food and clothing for the human race yet the majority in poverty, wretchedness and want. The destruction of nature's abundant gifts for the sake of sordid gain, notwithstanding the plea of the hungry and unclad. The grim spectre of Greed and Selfishness is seen to dominate the situation because of the power which has been given by the materialism of the past in to the hands of gold, and thinking men cannot get away from the fact that a revolution is slowly but surely coming and the question is being asked will it be a bloodless or a Bloody Revolution which the world is hastening to meet?

All this has led to a change of values. Men are realizing that what a man **is** and what he **has** is the real standard of life. Men are being driven to face REALITIES as against the unreal standards which the policies of the past have set up. Men, earnest men, are seeking for new light, and a changed standard of living, but alas, they are leaderless. They have heard of the song -

"I heard a bird at the break of day

“Sing from the autumn trees  
“A song so mystical and calm  
“Twas full of CERTAINTIES.

but they cannot find those certainties. The irony of the situation lies in the fact that 1900 years ago the greatest of all leaders gave to the world His programme, whereby man could reach to the highest and the best, but none seem able to find the true interpreters of His programme today ; and yet all feel that in that way lies the solution of our difficulties and the world's return to prosperity as well as to the certainties of the life beyond.

Now turning to Dr. Buck in his most recent work "Mystic Masonry" we read — "The religion of Jesus was in every respect that of the mysteries. It was the same old Wisdom Religion though the ethical features were more pronounced. Freemasonry though not a lineal descendant of the ancient mysteries may justly be regarded as a connecting link between the ancient mysteries and modern times. If it has preserved only the broken fragments of ancient grandeur it has nevertheless cherished and honoured these as a priceless possession. Will masons really undertake the noble and glorious work of rebuilding the city and temple of God?"

Later he says :— What a future lies before Masonry should it determine to enter into its birthright, to possess it. Thoroughly organised as it is and counting its membership by tens of thousands; rehabilitated in its ancient wisdom it may become an irresistible force in shaping the present civilization and in influencing the future destiny of man. It will give us Knowledge and Power without oppression, Religion without superstition, Universal Liberty Toleration and Fraternity, Universal Compassion Peace on Earth and Good will to man."

If this is a true picture of Masonry and its possibilities and I suggest that it is, then surely here we have the missing leadership. Here lies the power which rightly used will bring about a transition from the chaos and disunity of present conditions to a world of Brotherhood and Peace. In masonry we may find that constructive force in life which will build up a human character perfect in all its parts; a human world of equality and fraternity and lighten up the pathway to the etherial mansions veiled from human sight.

In order to achieve this (greatly to be desired) task I suggest that we must educate our Masonic brethren to take a wider and deeper interpretation of the ideals and philosophy of Masonry. Dr. Oliver says :— Consider whether your Masonry be passive, negative or positive. If the former you will soon abandon it, if negative you will retain your connection with it for its convivialities alone but if the latter your career will be glorious and its end honourable."

I fear that to many Masons, Masonry has become as creeds to some in the Churches, just meaningless ritual, whilst to many others its attractiveness is the goodfellowship and pleasantries of the supper room. Nevertheless I suggest that the real fault lies not with them, but with those of us who claim the distinction of being Rulers of the Craft. To swell the number of candidates, to hasten through the work and to be heedless of the further progress of the brother who has reached the M.M. degree and received his diploma seems to be the rule rather than the exception. This is illustrated I think by the answer which is usually given to an enquiring brother who seeks to know really what Masonry means. Is he not told that the three degrees represent man in his youth, manhood and age. This may not altogether be a false definition but I submit it is altogether inadequate. To illustrate my point I would remind you that it is now recognized by all serious students of Human Nature that whilst passing through the Earth experience the human EGO has three methods of functioning, the vehicles of which are usually termed BODIES namely: -

The PHYSICAL which enables us to correspond to the material world; The MENTAL or Etheric which enables us to intelligently understand the material and also bridges over to The SPIRITUAL or Psychic which enables us to contact the higher or spiritual realm and teaches us that our final goal is not in the physical or material, but in a spiritual world and thereby leads us to the contemplation of that greatest of all counsels "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all other things shall be added unto you."

This is where to my mind, the value of the philosophy of Masonry rightly understood is evidenced, for a little consideration will prove that the

FIRST or ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE deals purely with our Physical body or selfhood;

The SECOND or FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE unfolds our Mental Possibilities; whilst the THIRD or HIGH AND SUBLIME DEGREE is entirely PSYCHICAL or SPIRITUAL.

Thus FREEMASONRY provides a true philosophy for our life here in all its ramifications.

To validate this interpretation which may be new to many let me briefly illustrate from each of the three degrees, according to this the symbolism etc. of the first degree will all relate to the purely Physical. Well let us see:

The PREPARATION CHARGE is a statement of LIMITATION and RESTRAINT illustrating the limitation and restraints put upon our real selfhood by our physical or material environment. The H.W. not only symbolize ignorance as to Freemasonry but further the limitations of our knowledge of the greater spiritual realities. The C. T. gives warning of the danger of unprepared and too hasty adventure to the Psychic Plane. The UNCOVERED L. B. and K. illustrate the place of CONSCIENCE and its purpose. The removal of all metals, money, etc. and the N.E. Charge emphasize how poverty stricken the material is to meet the needs of the spiritual man and our call to assist each other in the spiritual quest. The Candidate passes the W.M. chair and knocks only at the Wardens wickets because as yet he is unfitted even to attempt to enter the spiritual wicket until the lessons of the material and Mental experiences have been learned. THREE is the number of MANIFESTATION and the three steps therefore indicate that the Manifestation of TRUTH is least in the Physical, More in the Etheric, and complete in the Spiritual.

The word of this degree is explained as In S. but in the Hebrew it is In Him is my strength and the interpretation of the word itself indicates FLEETNESS or Quick Passing. The Working Tools when read in conjunction with the position of the Sq. and C. surely teach that through the physical alone we can never find out God, but urges us to so use the powers of prayer, labour, refreshment and rest as to fit ourselves for releasing the compasses and thereby working successfully.

Is not all this an emphasis of our PHYSICAL LIFE and its NEEDS?

Before we enter the SECOND or FELLOW CRAFT we are reminded by the passing Word and Symbol that the Knowledge we are about to receive is not self contained or self created but comes from another source and should prove food to the intellect as Corn is to the Physical.

Coming to the degree itself we may briefly illustrate it by THE WINDING STAIR OR UPPER ROOM.

The entrance being indicated as the RIGHT SIDE surely means the North or Darkness. The steps symbolize 3 Initiation or entrance. 5 Advancement 7 Completion or Perfection, while 15 is 10, the number of God, and 5 Advancement — thus to climb the stair is to advance to the knowledge of God.

The special symbol, said to be in the room, indicates its purpose, that of meditation, prayer and study.

We find then that the combined symbolism of the Stair and Room give access to and provision for the means of increasing knowledge, though the student is warned that he must needs put perseverance and assiduity into his work if he would secure perfection.

Of the threefold sign we need only note the second, the Sign of Prayer. The incident related in connection therewith illustrates the fact that in prayer we have the possibility of setting up or unlocking psychic forces which are more powerful and can override the merely material, a lesson sadly needed by more than masons.

In this degree Masonry is called a science, whilst in the former it was a system, and science is systematized knowledge. Here I take it is the full evidence of the 2nd degree being related to the Mental.

Of the Working Tools we may remind you that the Square is the emblem of Self Examination, the LEVEL of SELF EXPRESSION, and the Plumbline of Divine Testing.

The word given fully is interpreted by modern scholars as meaning Whom God Illuminates.

In this degree I submit that the brother is bidden walk the path of intellectual attainment to behold the works of nature and read the deeper secret that "the Earth is the Lord's and Fullness thereof." To understand these things he must need spend time in meditation and prayer. Here he will learn the great secret of the MASTERY OF MIND OVER MATTER and having learnt that he will be ready for the greatest mastery of all.

#### THE HIGH AND SUBLIME DEGREE.

In order to advance my position that this is purely a Psychic degree let me point out that the great point in the story of H.A. is not that he was slain but that he was RAISED. The Resurrection and not Death is the key to this degree. The Steps, 7 in number, are indicative of the spiritual, for 7 is peculiarly a spiritual number divided into 3 over, and 4 bold, surely the interpretation can only be that stepping out of time the candidate has entered the spiritual plane. The Darkness does not refer to Death. If it is referred to Death then the room should be darkened when the C is S and restored when R.

After all spiritually the L. of M.M. is imperfect when dealing with the spiritual.

The ruffians who slew H.A. are interpreted by one Masonic writer as PERVERTED THOUGHT in the PHYSICAL

UNCURBED EMOTIONS in THE MENTAL

DESTRUCTIVE ACTION in the SPIRITUAL

The R. also illustrates the threefold nature of the degrees :•

I have dealt thus fully with these degrees in order to attempt to **summarise** the true **philosophy** of **masonry** and I suggest that it can be detailed as follows :

In the FIRST or PHYSICAL

That the true environment of man is GOD

That there is a SOLIDARITY of humanity

In the Second

Nature or the material world is a manifestation of the Divine Mind and governed in its expression by His law.

In the THIRD we come face to face with the deeper realities and discover

Man is in his true nature DIVINE

His earthly sojourn is an experience whereby he may learn those lessons of self sacrifice and service, of obedience and love which will fit him for the fullest re-union with the Divine.

Man's final DESTINY is the presence of GOD and our position when we pass through the gateway of death will be determined by our progress in understanding and service whilst here.

With this interpretation before us I claim that Masonry contains a Philosophy which if put into practise by the thousands who range under its banner would become the most powerful constructive force possible in the uplift of life, both individual, social and national, and outreaching to all the international problems which now await solution.

INDIVIDUALLY a brother realizing the supreme call of his life to be spiritual would endeavour to fashion his conduct accordingly, so that when he reaches the end of the way he may be able to say

When I am through with this old clay house of mine

When no more guide lights through the windows shine

Just box it up and lay it away

With the other clay houses of yesterday.

And with it my friends do try if you can  
 To Bury the wrongs since I first began  
 To live in this house bury deep and forget  
 I want to be square and out of your debt  
 When I meet the Grand Architect supreme  
 Face to face I want to be clean  
 Of course I know its too late to mend  
 A bad builded house when it comes to the end.  
 But to you who are building look over mine  
 And make your alterations while there is time,  
 Just study this house no tears should be shed  
 It's like any clay house when the tenant has fled,  
 I have lived in this house many days all alone  
 Just waiting, and I longed to go home.  
 Don't misunderstand me, this old world divine  
 With love birds and flowers and glorious sunshine  
 Is a wonderful place and a wonderful plan:  
 And a wonderful, wonderful gift to man  
 Yet somehow we feel when the cycle's complete  
 There are dear ones across we are anxious to meet  
 So open the books and check up the past  
 And no more forced balances, this is the last.  
 Each item is checked and each page must be clean.  
 It's the passport we carry our Builder supreme  
 So when I am through with this old house of clay  
 Just box it tight up and lay it away  
 For the builder has promised when this house is spent  
 To have one all finished with the timber I sent  
 Whilst I lived here in this one, of course it will be  
 Exactly as I here have builded you see,  
 It's the kind of material we each send across  
 And if we build poorly of course its our loss,  
 You ask what material is best to select?  
 'Twas told you long ago by the great Architect,  
 A new commandment I give unto you  
 That ye love one another as I have loved you.  
 So the finest material to send up above  
 Is the clear grained timber of brotherly love.

Such a mason will endeavour surely to solve the mysteries of the spiritual. Spiritual exercises will be cultivated and especially when engaged in the mysteries of the third degree he will attune his spirit to his spiritual surroundings.

SOCIALLY he will recognise that there is a very much wider interpretation to the obligation of his third degree than appears on the surface, and he will endeavour to be a man who in his social and domestic relationships will be the soul of honour, and whose conduct is above reproach.

He may not be extreme in his attitude to social customs and sports but he will discountenance those evils associated therewith which have led to the degradation socially and morally of so many especially in so called high society.

He may be associated with any or no particular political party but he will feel it his duty to study the present economic conditions to find some way of lessening the chasm between the workless and hungry and the idle though rich. He may reach the conclusion to which many of us have come that the present standard of economic relationships has had its day. If so he will study and when convinced advocate some other system and endeavour to bring about a revolution that shall not lunge the world into bloodshed and carnage. In his own business relationship he will endeavour to be unscrupulously honest whether he be employer or

employee. Character and not cash will be his criterion of worth and when the time comes as come I believe it will he will be prepared for the rehabilitation of the world through a system in which money will find no place

Internationally he will realize that the ties of brotherhood are stronger than those of mere nationality and he seek a solution of the world's chaotic condition not through war and bloodshed but brotherly love, relief and truth. He will surely reiterate the thought of Whittier when he sang

Put up thy sword the voice of Christ once more  
Speaks in the pauses of the cannon's roar  
O'er fields of corn by fiery sickles reaped  
And left dry ashes over trenches heaped  
With nameless dead ; o'er cities starving slow  
Under a rain of fire ; through wards of woe  
Down which a groaning diapason runs  
From tortured husbands, brothers, sons  
Of desolate women in their far off homes  
Waiting to hear the step that never comes.  
Oh men and brothers let that voice be heard  
War fails, try peace, put up the useless sword  
Hate hath no harm for love so rang the song  
And peace unweaponed conquers every wrong

In short, he will, imbued by the principles and enthused by the visions found in the true tenets of his masonry, endeavour to bring the Kingdom of God upon earth, a kingdom where peace and righteousness shall reign and all men shall be equal in opportunity in contentment and the enjoyment of the abundance which an all wise creator has so lavishly provided but which greed and selfishness have so misapplied.

Brethren I should be untrue to-night to my life's work and convictions if I did not say that I believe that the centre and source of all the needed reform in this world of chaos, confusion and strife is to be found in the discipleship to the living Christ (Rose Croix E. P. Brethren will understand) but if like many others you are confused let me put into your hands the Gospel stones without the comments of men. Let me assure you that therein you will find how wonderfully your masonic teaching helps to elucidate the Riddle of the Universe, The Rehabilitation of Humanity the Immortality of Soul and the Enigma of Death. When I think how our great fraternity outstretches the bounds of nationality, colour or creed I see in it potentialities which OUGHT to rescue the world from its present economic, industrial and social chaos. If we are not to find the world go down in a welter of red revolution which will dethrone God and manacle humanity the Masons of the world must put into practice in their own lives and in the world without, those principles which are the very life of the Institution and become the Leaders for which the world is seeking. As Dr. Oliver so well says:

These are the proper pursuits of speculative masonry and if it be practiced with a view of increasing the Faith, Hope and Charity of .its professors and producing a luxuriant harvest of Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, Justic, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth it will show forth its good works to the glory of our Father who is in heaven and then

At thy shrine O Masonry  
Shall admiring nations bend  
In futile times thy sons shall see  
Thy fame from pole to pole extend  
To worlds unborn thy heaven borne light dispense  
And systems own thy sacred influence.

**SO MOTE IT BE**