

No. 27.

HASTINGS.

August 6th, 1940.

THE FURNITURE OF THE LODGE.

by Wor. Bro. E. C. Hurdsfield, W.M. - P.M.

In selecting the subject for this evening's lecture—"The Furniture of the Lodge"—I was actuated by one of my earliest recollections of Freemasonry.

Shortly after my initiation, my father, then a P.M. of a Victorian Lodge, wrote to me and said :—"Most of the teachings of Freemasonry are found in the T.B's of the various degrees; these are worthy of the closest study."

Not unnaturally, I looked forward with keen interest to these particular charges in our ritual.

Possibly many who are here present will remember that it was not always the custom in the, Lodges to deliver the T.B's during the ceremonies of they several degrees, but the explanations were reserved for some later period, when it was possible to have several candidates present to receive the instruction.

The lengthy nature of these "explanations" was offered as an excuse for this practice, but in recent days when the ritual was revised it was 'considered expedient to prepare shortened forms of these addresses so that candidates could be fully informed on the important points of each degree before proceeding to the next.

How many Master Masons have been made who never heard a T.B. lecture?

How many of the earlier initiates could have, successfully answered the question:—"What comprises the Furniture of a Masonic Lodge?"

The paragraph in the lecture on the First T.B. which stands out in my recollection and which answers this question is :

"The Furniture of the. Lodge are the Volume of the S... L..., the S... e and the C... s."

This made a profound impression on my mind and when at tote completion of my initiation I was permitted to possess a ritual of my own this was the first paragraph I investigated, and "The Explanation of The First Tracing Board" was the first charge I memorised.

The Furniture of the **LODGE!** not an individual lodge, but **THE LODGE!** With these three articles the Lodge could held anywhere, providing at least seven regularly made Freemasons were present, for we are told in the First T.B. that "the Lodge is emblematically depicted by seven stars, which have an allusion to as many regularly made Freemasons without which number no Lodge is perfect, neither can any candidate be legally initiated therein." This meaning is extended in the Second T.B. where the W.....g S.....s is described as consisting of fifteen steps, "Our traditions divide them into three flights, consisting severally of 3, 5 and 7 steps; thus symbolising the 3 who rule a Lodge, the 5 who hold a Lodge, and the seven who make it perfect."

Thus we are informed of the absolute minimum requirement with respect to Lodge Furniture, and it will be interesting to describe the origin of and the use to which each article of Furniture is put in our Lodge rooms.

"The S....d W....s are to rule and govern our faith; on them we Obligate our candidates for Freemasonry ; so are the S....e and C.....s, when united to regulate our lives and actions. The S....d V....e is the gift to man in general; the S....e belongs to the whole Craft, and the C.....s to the Grand Master in particular.

Here we find other names, the V.O.S.L., viz., the S....d W....s, and the S....d V....e.

In other places in our ceremonies we find additional references, and under other names. The V.O.S.L. may justly be deemed the **SPIRITUAL T.B. of T.G.A.O.T.U.**

"The P.....t A.....r represents the mind of man in the decline of years after a life well spent in acts of piety and virtue, which can no otherwise be tried and proved than by the S.... E.... of **GOD'S WORD**, and the C.....s of his own self convincing conscience."

The V.O.S.L. supports Jacob's Ladder, and is referred to as that **HOLY BOOK**.

After the O.B. the V.O.S.L. is described as one of the three "**GREAT EMBLEMATICAL LIGHTS**" in Freemasonry, and this is further stressed when the Chaplain is invested. His jewel is described as the **OPEN BOOK**, and the greatest of the "**Three Greater Lights**" in Freemasonry. Without it no Lodge is perfect, and without an openly avowed belief in its Divine Author no candidate can be legally initiated.

In the method of P. reference is made to an ancient **BIBLICAL** custom and to certain passages of **SCRIPTURE**. Again it is referred to as that **GREAT LIGHT** which shall lead you to all **TRUTH**, and when at the conclusion of the Third Degree the V.O.S.L. is presented with the **Holy Word** it is referred to as a **LAMP** to his feet and a **LIGHT** to his path.

In this connection the following poem recently published seems peculiarly appropriate.

If you will follow me,
You need not see
The darkness of the ways that others go;
You will not hear
The whisperings of fear
That crowd along the paths they choose to go.

For we shall tread a way
Where moonbeams play,
And laughter rings around us and above;
A way that leads to all a soul most needs
To light, to peace and beauty, and to love.

And when we see at last
A brightness cast
Across the end of this long way we came,
Then I shall say,
"Come put the lamp away,
We do not need it now—blow out the flame !"

In no particular place in our ritual is this book directly referred to as the "Bible," and all O.B.'s are sealed on the V.O.S.L.

The possible explanation can be the more readily understood when we realise the truth of the statement in the charge at the N.E. Corner :

"In a society so widely distributed as Freemasonry the branches of which are spread over the four quarters of the globe."

The Universality of Freemasonry is indicated in many ways, but in none better than in the diversity of the **Sacred Books** used in the Lodges in the Masonic District of Bombay and Madras—India. In these Lodges are:

The Bible—for Christians and Jews.

The Al Koran—for Moslems.

The Bhagoad-Gita.—for the Hindus.

The Zend Avesta—for the Zoroastrians, or as they are also known, the Parsis.

In the district of the Punjaub the sacred book of the Sikhs, known as the Garanth Sahibs, is used when a member of that faith is initiated into Freemasonry.

Our own S....d V....e—the Bible—is adapted to every age and condition of life, and is full of that knowledge which lightens the mind and purifies the soul.

The Old Testament scriptures were first written in Hebrew upon scrolls or rolls of parchment, linen or papyrus. These were later translated into Greek, the oldest translation being known as the Septuagint or "Version of the 70," made at Alexandria for the Alexandrian library by a company of 70 learned Jew under the patronage of Ptolemy Philadelphus, about 285 B.C. This was the version in common use in the time of Christ.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek, except Matthew, which was first written in Hebrew, and later translated into Greek.

At an early date Latin translations were made and the Bible Complete was made in A.D. 383-405. Printing being at that time unknown, copies were hand written, were scarce and expensive.

A fact of great interest is that with the introduction of printing the first book printed from movable type was the Bible in Latin. This was accomplished by John Gutenberg at Moentz, Germany, in 1456.

It is reported that a copy of this work was sold in New York for £10,000—the highest price ever paid for a single book.

John Wycliff, born in Yorkshire, and educated at Oxford, became one of the most eminent ecclesiastics of his time. He adopted the principles of the Reformation, and when Rector of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, he, in 1380, finished his translation of the Bible in English.

This event ultimately led to the formation of the great Bible societies organised in England, America, and many European countries to give the Bible to every nation and people in its own language. Organised in 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society up to 1916 had published the Scriptures or portions of them in 487 languages and dialects, with a total of 263,000,000 copies. 100 years after its organisation the, American Bible Society had published 100,000,000 copies. These are but two of the 27 Bible Societies now disseminating the Scriptures.

Such in brief is the history of the production of our V.O.S.L. That great Light which leads to all **Truth**.

Truth has been described as the only object worthy of the research of every wise man, since that which is opposed to it cannot be useful to him.

A man with whom truth is a habit needs no calculation before speaking— his memory is released from the burden of remembering what he said before. He is always confident and at ease. He knows no fear and feels no confusion.

It is interesting here to refer to what is known as the Masonic Calender.

"Masons of the York and French Rites (i.e., Masons of England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany and America date from the creation of the world, calling it Anne Lucis, which is abbreviated A:, I:, signifying

"in the Year of Light." Thus 1940 is AL, 5940. In this manner are the dates of Initiation, Passing and Raising ceremonies recorded in the body of every Master Mason's Certificate.

Royal Arch Masons date from the commencement of the Second Temple, which was 530 years before the Christian Era; hence 1940 would be represented by Anna Inventionis, abbreviated to A.I. 2470. The French use l'an de la V.L. "Vraie Lumiere" verifying "Year of the True Light."

In this manner are the dates recorded in all Royal Arch Certificates.

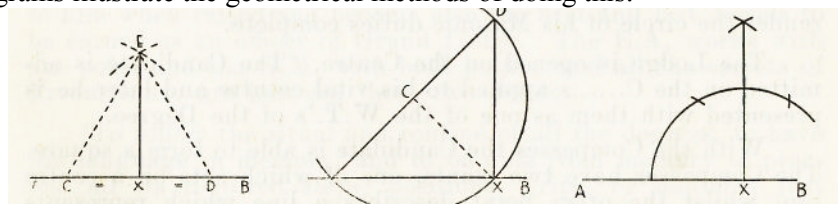
The V.O.S.L. represents the Light which the candidate receives in his first degree.

In each of the subsequent degrees it is again used and the other pieces of furniture are moved in the manner known to every Freemason in order to present further instruction. The Square is an instrument containing an angle of 90° or the fourth part of a circle, and is the important article of furniture in the Second Degree for the Lodge is opened on the S.; the candidate is admitted on the S., advances to the Altar by describing the fourth part of a circle; is obligated on the S., and later is presented with it as one of the W.T.'s of the Degree. It is used in bringing rude matter into due form.

Thus the W.M. is presented with the S. at his installation, and wears it as the emblem of his office as a symbol to all of his ability to guard the landmarks against encroachment, and at the same time to improve the intellectual powers of the candidates and qualify them to become useful member of the Craft, and to excel in what is good and great.

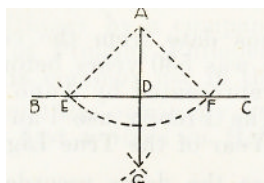
A square or an angle of 90° may be obtained in various ways, as illustrated by the problems in Geometry—"To draw a straight line perpendicular to a given straight line, either from a point in the line, or from a point outside the line."

The first three diagrams illustrate the geometrical methods of doing this.



The perpendicular thus formed symbolises the Freemason setting an upright course among his brethren, meeting them on the level and parting on the S., and treading the path which leads to immortality.

The fourth diagram shows how the perpendicular is dropped from above and symbolises the use of the p...b l..e in testing uprightness.

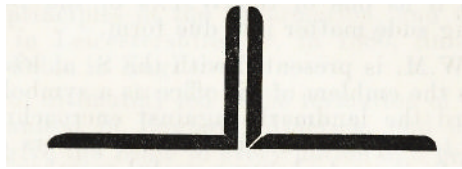


It is specifically mentioned in a passage of Scripture, Amos. Chap. 7. Verses 7 & 8.

Thus he sheaved me; and behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb-line, and with a plumb-line in his hand.

And the Lord said unto Amos : What seest thou.? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord : Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

It will be here noted that two squares placed back to back from the Level or jewel of the S.W.



whilst the two uprights with the space between form the jewel of the J.W.

Hence from the square or jewel of the W.M. are formed the jewels of the S.W. and J.W., and the particular duties of these officers are to assist the W.M. in the well-ruling and governing of the Lodge.

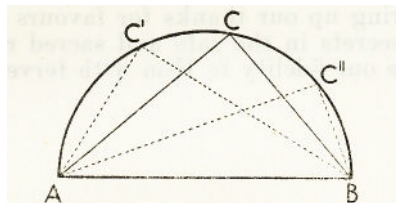
The C.....s come into greater prominence in the third degree for in this both points are exhibited to enable a Candidate to render the circle of his Masonic duties complete.

The Lodge is opened on the Centre. The Candidate is admitted on the C.....s applied to his vital centre and later he is presented with them as one of the W.T.'s of the Degree.

With the Compasses the Candidate is able to form a square. The Compasses have two points, one of which acts on a centre pin, whilst the other point describes a line which represents the circle of his Masonic duties.

Thus in the First Degree the candidate uses only one point when taking his O.B., and as an E.A., and later as a F.C. when the one point is disclosed his state in Freemasonry is somewhat restricted. When he reaches his Third Degree he is permitted to use both points, and so he is able to keep himself circumscribed.

If any point be taken on a circle and from it a straight line drawn through the centre and produced to meet the circle on the other side a semi-circle is made.



If now a third point is taken anywhere in the circle and joined by straight lines to the other points selected on it—a square is formed, i.e., a right-angled triangle.

This figure—a semi-circular protractor—is the jewel of the Grand Superintendent of Works, and was worn on the apron used by all Prov. G.M.'s in Hawke's Bay, and can be said symbolically to represent the circle of the R.W. the P.G.M.'s duties in superintending the work of his district, and more particularly the Masters and P.M.'s who wear the S., and who come under his jurisdiction.

The C.....s themselves are worn as the jewel of M.W. the G.M., because that being the chief instrument made use of, in the formation of all architectural plans and designs, is appropriated to the G.M. in particular, as an emblem of his dignity, he being the chief head and ruler of the Craft. He thus has a wider circle of duty in overseeing the various provincial districts which come under his jurisdiction.

Grand Stewards also wear the C.....s with Cornicopia. Thus the C.....s are used by the E.A. at his initiation, are presented to him when raised and become also the first and last Jewels to be earned as an officer of Grand Lodge. The E.A. works with one point and the G.M. with both points, and all the secrets of Freemasonry are between these two points.

'To follow the ritual and routine of all the degrees, to have the language in memory, and to be able from memory to practise all its required steps, positions, grips, or motions, just amounts to nothing at all, in the making of a Freemason. The spirit or revelation of the allegory of Freemasonry is required Toth as knowledge and practice, to make out the character of a **REAL Freemason**. That character is formed by the acquisition of all possible knowledge, with the benevolent desire of extending it among the whole human race; that recognises in every man a brother who has need of every other man's good-will and assistance.'—Carlisle.

And so brethren the Furniture of the Lodge can teach many lessons.

When used in the opening of the degrees they symbolise the opening of human mind to the Creator and in the closing of the Lodge after offering up our thanks for favours already received we lock up our secrets in the safe and sacred repository of our hearts and pledge our fidelity to Him with fervency and zeal.