

SECOND DEGREE

Some extracts from Old Lectures presented by
V. Wor. Bro. F.T.F. Sweeting, Grand Chaplain

Worshipful Master and Brethren, I have been fortunate in obtaining a book entitled "**The Text Book of Freemasonry**" first published in 1870. It is a complete handbook of instruction to all the workings in the various mysteries and ceremonies of Craft Masonry, containing the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason's Degrees; the ceremony of the Installation of the Wor. Master and Officers of the Lodge; together with the whole of the three lectures; also the ceremony of Exaltation in the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch; a selection of Masonic songs etc. Illustrated with four engravings of the Tracing Boards. My copy is the third edition published 1881 and in the preface states that it has been carefully revised to bring it into conformity with the most approved systems of workings.

While adhering to the ancient landmarks of the order it states that it will open the eyes of the Junior Brethren to receive true Masonic light and learning. After the Entered Apprentice degree there are some eight sections to the First Lecture;

After the Fellow Craft degree there are five sections to the Second lecture; while after the Master Mason's degree, three sections to the third lecture.

When the lectures were presented they were done so in the form of question and answer. The first question always put to the S.W. and then "goes round the Sun". If a Brother was unable to answer a question he was to hale it, that is give the penal s in the First Degree Lecture, and in the Third Degree he merely said Pass.

Tonight I wish to follow on from your last lecture given by V. Wor. Bro. L.M. Robertson, Asst. Provincial Grand Master., and use extracts from the Second Lecture which is based on the Fellow Craft Degree, a degree which like V. Wor. Bro. Robertson I believe many of us take very lightly. When these old lectures were originally delivered there were no written questions and answers for the Brethren to use, all being committed to memory. However I am not going to do that to you tonight Brethren, and have some printed sheets for your use. To further aid the work I have numbered the questions for you. Wor. Master, may I now ask that the Junior Deacon distribute the necessary papers amongst the assembled Brethren.

INTRODUCTION

Masonry is a progressive science, consisting of different Degrees, for the more gradual advancement in the knowledge of its mysteries; according to the progress we make, we limit or extend our enquiries and in proportion to our capacities we attain to a greater or lesser degree of perfection. The Lecture of this degree is divided into five portions or sections and these are devoted to the study of human science, and to trace the goodness and majesty of the Creator by minutely analyzing His works.

Throughout the First Degree, Virtue is depicted in its most beautiful colours, and the principles of knowledge are impressed upon the mind by sensible and lively images; it is therefore considered the best introduction to the second Degree, which not only extends the same plan, but embraces a more diffuse system. From this, proceeds a rational amusement; while the mental faculties are fully employed, the judgements properly exercised, a spiritual emulation prevails and each is induced to vie one with the other as to who shall most excel in promulgating the valuable principles of the Institution. Having stated thus much as introductory to the Second Lecture, I shall now proceed to ask you, Bro. S.W., where were you passed to the degree of a F.C.? Your answer is shown as Number 1 Bro. S.W.

1. In a Lodge of F.C's.

To the next Brother on your left I ask...Consisting of how many?

2. Five.

To the next Brother....Under what denomination?

3. The W.M., two W's and two F.C's.

To the next Brother....How got you the pass-word?

4. By undergoing a previous examination in open Lodge, and being entrusted with a Test of Merit leading to the Degree.

To the next Brother....Where were you then conducted?

5. To a convenient room adjoining a F.C's. Lodge, for the purpose of being prepared.

To the next Brother...How were you prepared?

6. In a manner somewhat similar to the former, save that in this degree, I was not hoodwinked, my left arm, r..t b..t, and r..t k..e were made b..e, and the l..t h..l s..d.

To the next Brother..What enabled you to claim admission into a F.C. Lodge?

7. The help of God, the assistance of the S..e, and the benefit of a P.

To the next Brother.. How did you gain admission?

8. By the knocks of an E.A.

To the next Brother...On what were you admitted?

9. The S..e!

To the next Brother...What is a s..e?

10. An angle of 90°, being the fourth part of a circle.

To the next Brother...What are the pequiliar objects of research in this degree?

11. The hidden mysteries of Nature and Science. To the next Brother.. Having gained your admission into the Lodge, how were you disposed of?

12. I was conducted between the two Deacons to the left of the S.W, and directed to advance as a Mason.

Next Brother..What were you then desired to do?

13. Kneel and receive the benefit of a prayer. Which the next Brother will repeat.

14. We supplicate the continuance of thine aid,

0 merciful Lord, on behalf of ourselves and him who kneels before Thee; may the work begun in Thy name be continued in Thy glory, and evermore establish in us, by obedience to Thy precepts.

To the next Brother..How were you next disposed of?

15. I was conducted by the S.D, twice around the Lodge.

And so the questioning and answering continued, with the whole of the ceremony being reviewed. I found the portion after the Obligation interesting and so will jump forward to that portion and ask of the next Brother....Having taken the solemn O.B. of a F.C.M, what did the W.M. require of you?

16. As a pledge of my fidelity, and to render it a solemn O.B. equally binding with the former, he requested me to salute the Volume of the Sacred Law twice with my lips.

Next Brother...How then did he address you?

17. Your progress in Masonry is, marked by the position of the S and C. When you were made an E.A. Freemason both points were hid; in this Degree one is disclosed, implying that you are now midway in Freemasonry, superior to an E.A. but inferior to that which I trust you will hereafter attain.

The next question has an interesting answer I think. How did he then proceed?

18. He friendly took me by the right hand, and said, Rise, newly obligated F.C.M.

Let us now make a jump further in our lecture and begin that portion labelled the Second Section and it was probably another meeting's work so we begin again with the S.W, and ask...Bro. S.W. why were you passed to the degree of a F.Craft?

For the sake of Geometry, or the fifth science, on which this part of Masonry is founded.

Let us now move around to the Brother who is next to the Brother who answered number 18 and ask....What is Geometry?

19. A science by which we find out the contents of bodies unmeasured, by comparing them with those already measured.

To the next Brother I ask....What are its proper subjects?

20. Magnitude and extension of a regular progression of science, from a point to a line, from a line to a superfice, from a superfice to a solid.

And from there brethren we discover by question and answer that a point in this Degree is the beginning of Geometrical matter. A line is the continuation of the same. A superfice has length and breadth but is without thickness and a solid has length, breadth and thickness, forming a cube which comprehend the whole.

We next learn that Geometry was first founded at Alexandria in Egypt as a science and the reason is given as this:

The River Nile, annually overflowing its banks, caused inhabitants to retire to the mountainous parts of the country; when the waters subsided, they returned to their former habitations, but the rapidity of the floods having washed away their ancient landmarks, caused grievous disputes among them often terminating in civil wars. They, hearing of a Lodge of Geometricians, of Masons, at Alexandria in Egypt, the capital of their country, where Euclid presided as Grand Master, a deputation of inhabitants repaired there and laid their grievances before him; he, with the assistance of his Wardens and Brethren, gathered together the scattered elements of Geometry, arranged, digested, and brought them into due system, such as was practised by most Eastern nations in those days, but are bettered in the present, by the fluxions, conic sections, and other modern improvements. By the science of Geometry, he taught the Egyptians how to measure and ascertain their different districts of land by measurement, which put an end to their disputes, and terminated their civil wars.

That answer having been recited the next Brother was asked to give the moral advantages of Geometry to which he replied: Geometry is the first and noblest of Sciences and the basis on which the superstructure of Freemasonry is erected. By Geometry we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her utmost concealed recesses; by it, we may discover how the planets move in their different orbits, and mathematically demonstrate their different orbits, and mathematically demonstrate their various revolutions; by it, we can rationally account for the return of the seasons, and the beautiful and mixed variety of scenes which each season displays to the discerning eye; numberless worlds are around us, all formed by the same divine artist, which roll through this vast expanse and are all conducted by the unerring law of nature. Then, while such objects engage our attention, how ought we to improve? and with what grand ideas, ought such knowledge to fill our minds?

A survey of nature and an observation of her beautiful proportions first induced man to study symmetry and order; this gave rise to societies, and the birth of every useful art; the architect began to design, and the plans which he laid down, having been improved by time and experience, have produced those stupendous works of art which have been the admiration of every age.

There then follows a series of questions and answers regarding our forefathers travelling from the East to the West taking with them the knowledge they had gained. Next we learn that the Brethren worked for periods of six days at a time, building King Solomon's Temple, but did not work on the seventh because the Almighty Himself worked six days and rested on the seventh. The next question was to ask the Brother to recite the beautiful illustration on the six day's work of the Creator and I shall leave that for Brethren to read at their leisure:

When we consider that the formation of this world was the work of that Divine Being who created this beautiful system of the Universe, and caused all nature to be under His supreme command how ought we to magnify and adore His holy name for his goodness to the children of men. Before the Almighty was pleased to command this vast whole into existence, the elements and materials of the Creation lay blended together without form or distinction; darkness was on the face of the great deep, and the Spirit of God moved on the surface of the waters. The Almighty as an example to man that things of moment should be done with due deliberation, was pleased to be six days in commanding it from chaos to perfection. The first instance of His supreme power was made manifest by commanding LIGHT.

Being pleased with this new operation, He distinguished it by name, calling the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. In order to keep this new framed matter within just limits, the second period was employed in laying the foundations of the heavens, which he called Firmament, designed to keep those waters which were within the clouds and those beneath them, asunder. On the third period those waters were commanded into due limits, on the retreat of which, dry land appeared, which He called Earth, and the gathering together of the mighty congregated waters He called Seas. The Earth, being as yet irregular, barren, and uncultivated, God spake the word and it was immediately covered with a beautiful carpet of grass designed as pasture for the brute creation. Trees, shrubs and flowers of all sorts, succeeded in full growth, maturity, and perfection. On the fourth period these two great luminaries the Sun and the Moon were created, the Sun to rule the day and the Moon to govern the night, and the sacred history informs us they were ordained for signs, for seasons, for days, and for years. The Almighty was also pleased to bespangle the ethereal concave with a multitude of stars, that man, whom He intended to make, might contemplate thereon, and justly admire His

majesty and glory. On the fifth period He caused the waters to bring forth a variety of fish for our use, and in order to imprint on man a reverential awe of His divine omnipotence, he created great whales, which together with other inhabitants of the great deep multiplies exceedingly after their kind. On the same period He caused the birds to fly in the air, that man may delight his eyes and ears, with some for their plumage, and others for their melodious notes. On the sixth period He created the beasts of the field, and the reptiles that crawl on the earth; and here we may plainly perceive the wisdom, power and goodness of the Great Geometrician of the Universe made manifest throughout the whole of His proceedings. He produced what effect He pleased without the aid of natural causes; such as giving light to the world before He had created the Sun, and making the earth fruitful without the influence of the Heavenly bodies. He did not create the beasts of the field until He had provided them with sufficient herbage for their support, neither did He make man until He had provided him with a dwelling, and everything requisite for life and pleasure. Then to dignify the works of His hands still more, He made Man who came into the world with greater pomp than any creature that had preceded him: they came with only a single command.... God spake the word and it was done; but at the formation of man, he as immediately formed out of the dust of the earth, the breath of life was breathed into his nostrils and man became a living Soul. Now in this one creature was a combination of everything that was excellent through the whole creation, such as the quality and substance of an animated being, the life of plants, the sense of beasts, but above all, the understanding of angels formed after the immediate image of God, thereby intimating to him, that integrity and uprightness should ever influence him to adore his Divine Creator, who had so liberally bestowed him with the noble faculty called reason.

The Almighty, as his last and best gift to man, created Woman:

"Under His forming hands a creature grew
Man—like, but different in sex, so lovely fair,
That what seemed fair in all the world seemed
now Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained: adorned.
What with all Earth or Heaven could bestow
To make her amiable On she came,
Led by her Heavenly Maker, though unseen,
And guided by His voice
Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye
In every gesture, dignity and love"

The Almighty having finished his six days' work, on the seventh He rested, blessed, hallowed and sanctified it, He has therefore taught men to work six days industriously, but strictly commanded them to rest on the seventh, the better to contemplate the beautiful works of creation: to adore Him as their Creator, to go into His sanctuaries and offer praises for life, and every blessing they so amply enjoy at His all bountiful hand.

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The world would be a much better place Worshipful Master if we but followed that command and gave a lead to our fellow mankind.

The **CHARGE** that ended the second section is:—May the recollection of the six days' work of the Almighty Creator stimulate Fellowcrafts to acts of Industry.

Thank you Worshipful Master for your invitation to speak to the Brethren this evening.