

The Third Degree In Freemasonry Its Ornaments and Emblems

by
William Harvey, J.P., F.S.A., Scot.
Provincial Grand Master Depute
of Forfarshire

**DUNDEE:
T.M. SPARKS & SON
CROSSWELL WORKS**

1948

1st Edition, 1917.
2nd Edition, 1919.
3rd Edition, 1920.
4th Edition, 1926.
5th Edition, 1932.
6th Edition, 1948.

I want to explain that while the form may be original the matter is not wholly new. I have gone to the great minds of the past and drawn whatever I thought might be of service to the Freemason of to-day. I am glad to learn that what I have done has received commendation, and that the following pages have been incorporated into the recognised Ritual of many Lodges. Right Worshipful Masters who adopt the following Lecture should use the "Short Raising" as it appears in my "Complete Manual", and substituting this Lecture for the "Charge After Raising", which is given in that handbook.

The Third Degree: Its Ornaments And Emblems

Sir, -- The observant brother who completes the Masonic circle by reaching the High and Sublime Degree of Master, cannot fail to notice that the great purpose of our Fraternity is to advance the destiny of the race by deepening the spirit of brotherhood, ennobling humanity, and establishing truth and righteousness in all the world.

In future years you may journey far along our mystic paths in a praiseworthy desire to add to your knowledge of our ancient Craft, but I venture to say that nothing you may hereafter learn will add to the simple dignity of the structure, the plan of which is now revealed to your gaze, and in the building of which I invite you to become a fellow-worker with all those in whose footsteps you have travelled to-night.

As Freemasons, drawing our inspiration from those sermons in stones which rose to the music of the mallet and chisel of our early operative Brethren, we look backward along the corridor of time, and conjure up the mighty fane that was raised by Israel's King to Israel's god, and, taking that as the symbol of our faith, we seek to build a temple in the hearts of men. Its foundation are laid in our common brotherhood; its walls are raised in our mutual sympathies and kindred needs; its pillars are fashioned out of purity and truth; its altar is fear of God and love of our fellow-men; and its chief oblation is a heart aglow with the desire of doing good.

He who would build well must have a keen appreciation of the value of time, and recognise that every moment is a precious jewel not to be wasted nor thrown lightly away. Therefore it is meet that in these emblems of mortality that lie around, the Hourglass should occupy a place of prominence. Down through the centuries this simple device has been used as a means of measuring Time, and in the age-long process has come to be regarded as a fitting symbol of human life. You remember what the poet says?

A handful of red sand from the hot clime
Of Arab deserts brought,
Within this Glass becomes the Spy of Time,
The Minister of Thought.

As the Hourglass is a symbol of human life, so the Scythe is an emblem of time. Artists, seeking to give form and feature to the advancing years of the world, have pictured time as a man grey in service and wise with experience who, in calm serenity of mind and purpose, is for ever employed in gathering the harvest of this mortal life unto the vast storehouse of Eternity. And how uncertain is the time of harvest for all of us! It is but a commonplace of speech to say that the sun may never rise again for you or me. Ere the dawn we may be numbered with the countless millions who have laid down the working-tools of life for ever. But even this very uncertainty of time should be an incentive to us so to use our days that when we pass into that Silent Land where Death is King, we shall leave a name untarnished and beloved. It matters not how long we live, but how.

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.

The emblems of human life and Time - the Hourglass and the Scythe - to which I have drawn your attention, are fitly associated with the Chequered Pavement, which is patterned on the floor of every Lodge. According to the Masonic tradition, it was thus that the pavement of the great Temple of Solomon was adorned, and the striking arrangement of stones having passed into our scheme of moral symbolism, has become an emblem of character. The white squares and the black at once suggest Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Heaven and Hell. The choice lies before each of us; our lives are in our hands to make them what we will; but if our Masonic system be of any value - if it have any influence - then surely shall we follow after Good and forsake Evil, seek light and eschew Darkness, and so play our parts in building the moral Temple of the Universe, that our feet shall ever be kept in the narrow path of rectitude that leads at last to Heaven.

Let us meditate, therefore, upon our days and the swiftness of their passing. Even now as we linger, the running sands are carrying with them the moments of our lives into the eternity of the past, each with its tale of good or evil, its record of

things done or undone. And no moment ever returns.

As the Persian philosopher phrases it?

The Moving Finger writes; and having writ
Moves on; nor all they Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line;
Nor all they Tears wash out a word of it.

How imperative it is, therefore, that we should realise the mission to which, as Freemasons, we are called. To soothe calamity, alleviate misfortune, compassionate misery, and restore peace to the troubled mind is our grand aim. On this basis we establish our friendships and form our connections. We recognise that the Universe has not been provided as a mere plaything for Man, but that Man was created to carry out certain labours in obedience to the divine Will. And the Great Architect of the Universe lays down the lines upon which that work shall become effective. All the Masonic virtues are means by which God makes our lives enrich Society and the World, and therefore, as faithful workers in the design of our Grand Master, it is our bounden duty to devote every moment to the one supreme task of making

This life, as best we can,
Devoid of suffering, pain, heartache,
A present heaven for man.

By the thoughts, words and actions of our daily lives we are builders - or it may be destroyers - of the Temple, to the erection of which we are called, and when, at the touch of the grim Tyler of Eternity, we lay down the mallet and chisel, Time - merciless but just - will reckon with what measure of success we have builded or destroyed. Therefore, my brother -

Redeem the hours while in they Glass
The Sands in silence run;
Too soon the day of life will pass
Too soon the sunset gun
Will sound, and summon thee to rest
And all thy work be done.

If, as the last sands run out and the shadows fall around, you are permitted to dwell for a moment on the record of your days, surely there shall be peace in your heart, if the exclamation of the poet may truthfully be yours -

And when the precious hours are done,
How sweet at set of sun

To gather up the fair labourious day!
To have struck some blow for right
With tongue or pen;
To have smoothed the path to light
For wandering men!
To have chased some mighty fiend of Ill away!

The Coffin, Skull and Cross bones are emblems of the inevitable destiny of our mortal bodies. As we stand in the presence of these grim reminders of decay and dissolution, let us meditate for a moment upon Death and all that it portends.

Behold this ruin; 'tis a skull
Once of ethereal spirit full;
This narrow cell was Life's retreat,
This space was Thought's mysterious seat;
What beauteous visions filled this spot,
What dreams of pleasure long forgot,
Nor hope, nor joy, nor love, nor fear,
Hath left one trace of record here.

Beneath this mould'ring canopy
Once shone a bright and busy eye,
But start not at the dismal void -
If social love that eye employed,
If with no lawless fires it gleamed,
But through the dews of kindness beamed,
That eye shall be for ever bright
When sun and stars are sunk in night.

Within this hollow cavern, hung
The ready, swift and tuneful tongue;
If falsehood's honey is disdained,
And, where it could not praise, was chained;
If bold in virtue's cause it spoke,
Yet gentle concord never broke,
That silent tongue will plead for thee
When Time unveils Eternity.

An Eastern proverb says that Death is a black camel which kneels at every door, and our Masonic teaching adopts the Level as the symbol of death, which is the grand Leveller of all human greatness.

The prince who kept the world in awe,
The judge whose dictate fixed the law,
The rich, the poor, the great, the small
Are levelled; Death confounds them all.

In the presence of Death what are the externals of majesty, the pride of wealth, or the charms of beauty? View life stripped of her ornaments and exposed in her natural meanness, and you will be convinced of the futility of these empty delusions. In the grave all fallacies are detected, all ranks levelled, and all distinctions done away.

But in spite of the mementoes of mortality with which we daily meet, and notwithstanding the fact that Death has established his empire over all the works of nature, we are apt to forget that we are born to die. We go on from one design to another, adding hope to hope, and laying out plans for the employment of many years, till we are suddenly alarmed with the approach of Death when we least expect him, and at an hour which, amidst the gaieties of life, we probably conclude to be the very meridian of our existence. As life is uncertain, and all earthly pursuits vain, no man should postpone the important concern of preparing for eternity. Rather should we all hasten to embrace the happy moment, while time and opportunity offer to provide against the great change, when the pleasures of the world shall cease to delight, and the reflections of a virtuous mind yield the only comfort and consolation. Our hopes will not then be frustrated, nor shall we be hurried, unprepared, into the presence of the All Wise and Omnipotent Judge, to Whom the secrets of all hearts are known, and from Whose dread tribunal no culprit can escape.

As, therefore, you have been taught at every step of your Masonic career your duty to God, to your neighbour, and to yourself, you should support with propriety the character of our profession, advert to the nature of our solemnities, and, with assiduity, pursue the sacred tenets of our Order.

Strive to adorn the symbolic jewels of a Master Mason, which are Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love. These should ever be an adornment to your mind - Morality being practical virtue and the duty of life; friendship that personal kindness which extends from the centre of private connections to the circle of universal philanthropy; and Brotherly Love, the purest emanation of earthly friendship. The desire of power in excess caused the Angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused Man to fall; but in Brotherly Love there is no excess, neither can angel or man come in danger by it. It is the foundation and keystone, the cement and glory of our Ancient Fraternity.

By its exercise you are taught to regard the whole human species as one family, the high and the low, the rich and the poor who, as children of the same parent, are to aid, support, and protect each other. On this principle Freemasonry unites men of every country, sect, or opinion; and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance. By the study of our emblems and the practice of our precepts may you, as a child of Light, be enabled through Divine aid to turn from works of

Darkness, Obscenity, Drunkenness, and all manner of Evil, and live in the daily practice of Charity, Benevolence, Justice, Temperance, Chastity, and Brotherly Love. Ever bear in mind that Virtue is true nobility, and that Wisdom is the channel by which Virtue is directed and conveyed. Wisdom and Virtue are the only qualities that are permitted to mark distinction among Freemasons. With becoming reverence supplicate the divine aid of the Great Architect of the Universe, by Whose favour and under Whose protection you may be permitted to excel in both, and thus, when the awful moment arrives when Death shall raise his warning finger, you will enter without dread or apprehension upon that journey to the country whence no traveller returns.

Death cannot come
To him untimely who
is fit to die;
The less of this cold
world, the more of
Heaven;
The briefer life, the
earlier immortality.

But - and this is one of the great purposes of the third Degree - while Death is ever near, riding on every passing breeze, and lurking in every flower, still, in the truest sense,

There is no Death! What seems so is a transition.

This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian.

All men desire to be immortal, and there is in the minds of men, whatever their religion or want of religion, a certain presage of a future existence, and this takes the deepest root and is most discoverable in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls. One of the ornaments of a Master Mason's Lodge is the Porch, which was the entrance to the Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies, and this, to the meditative Mason, symbolises the grave through which all must pass. The grave is but the gate that leads to a larger and full life ? is but the passing from darkness to light, from the uncertain gloom of time to the unsullied radiance of Eternity, or, in the language of our Masonic Art, is by the close-tyled door that leads to the Celestial Lodge over which the Grand Master Himself presides, and in which there is an honoured place for all those who have been faithful here. Other Emblems of our Faith are instinct with lessons of similar import. To the thoughtful Mason, the Spade denotes that this world is but the tilling-ground of Heaven; the Anchor is the emblem of a well-grounded hope in a glorious immortality, when the frail barque of life shall be moored for ever to the shore of that fadeless land whether the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest; and the Sprig of Acacia, as an evergreen, is a fitting emblem of the immortal soul which never dies. All combine in the third Degree, my Brother, to teach you to look beyond the narrow limits of this world, and to see man raised from the grave of iniquity, by faith and the grace of god, to everlasting life and blessedness. By the light of the Divine Countenance you may pass without trembling through the gloomy mansions of the dead, where all the things of life are forgotten; and when, having fought a good fight here, you stand at the Bar of divine Justice to receive your reward, you will most surely realise that,

It is not death to die
To leave this weary road,
And with the brotherhood on high
To be at home with God.

And now, my brother, having by the ceremonial through which you have gone won your place as a Master Mason among these friends and brethren of your Mother Lodge, let me, in conclusion, address a few words

to those who constitutes the Lodge within whose walls you have now a place.

Brethren, surrounded thus by these emblems of dissolution, let us, ere we return with our young Brother to the outer world, resolve anew to mark our superiority and distinction among men by the sincerity of our profession as Freemasons. The Masonic virtues are those upon which Society is based. The Masonic ideals are those of pure and aspiring humanity. The Masonic life is the spirit in which families cling to each other, citizens adhere to each, class has intercourse with class. Let us never forget that Freemasonry has no room for the man who places money above honour, selfishness above righteousness, passion above virtue, power and place above manhood and integrity.

Within these sacred walls may we enjoy every satisfaction and delight which disinterested friendship can give and, as a result of our meeting from time to time, may we become increasingly influential in spreading the light of Wisdom, aiding the strength of Reason, dispensing the beauty of Virtue, and lessening the sum of human misery and vice. May we be taught to measure our actions by the rule of rectitude, square our conduct by the principles of morality, and keep our thoughts within the circle of propriety. Let us cultivate the moral virtue and improve in all that is good and amiable. Let the genius of Masonry preside over our conduct, and under her sway let us perform our part with becoming dignity. Let us preserve an elevation of understanding, a politeness of manner, and an evenness of temper; let our recreations be innocent and pursued with moderation, and never let irregular indulgences lead to the subversion of our system by impairing our faculties, or exposing our character to derision. In conformity to our precepts, as patterns worthy of imitation, let the respectability of our character be supported by the regularity of our conduct and the uniformity of our deportment. Then, as citizens of the world, and friends to every clime, we shall be living examples of virtue and benevolence, equally zealous to merit as to obtain universal approbation. In such wise shall we be true and good Masons, faithful in our imitation of the celebrated artist whose unshaken fidelity and noble death have once again been represented to us. By such exemplary conduct we shall convince the world that merit is the only title to our privileges, and that the favours of Freemasonry are not undeservedly bestowed.

As forth we stand on every briary path,
We know that in the ages long gone by
Each bitter toil did find its aftermath
In laurels green, and lives that never die.
And therefore journey, therefore patient build
Our nation and ourselves. With workful prayer,

Cementing well each joint as Heaven-willed,
Submitting all to God's great perfect square.
And as we labour on the quarried stone,
And wall, and join each course to Heaven's plan
We see that 'gainst the deep, blue sky is thrown
The Temple, symbol of Completed Man.