

## THE WORKING TOOLS - Pt. II

The working tools in the Fellowcraft Degree, so it appears to me, the Square, the Level, and the Plumb-rule, are intimately related one with the other, and all concern themselves with one basic moral quality - honesty. In the field of activity of the operative builder, architect, or engineer, these three implements are also intimately related one to the other, and concern themselves with a single technical quality - namely, accuracy, precision, or truth. Lacking their aid it is not possible, so it seems to me, for the engineer to assemble a structure, or the builder to execute the design of his architect. Similarly lacking these symbolic moral tools, and the standards of retitude they represent, it is not possible for the Free and Accepted Mason to bring into reality in his life the great design laid down for us by the Grand Geometrician of the Universe. For, just as the physical instruments represent adherence to standards, the horizontal standard, the vertical standard, and the angle of ninety degrees contained between them, so the symbolic working tools of the Fellowcraft degree represents the inseparable moral standards of level steps, upright bearing, and square conduct, which we are enjoined to maintain. Let us, then, look at these tools individually.

### THE SQUARE

The Square, as we are taught, and as we all well know, is an instrument having an angle of ninety degrees - exactly ninety degrees, not "about" ninety degrees, for no approximations are allowable in this instrument of precision. That which is not square is crooked, and that which is not honest is dishonest, for we cannot place our reliance upon a partially-honest man, any more than the curate could enjoy a partially-fresh egg. The value of this basic instrument, the square, lies in its accuracy, and the value of our standard of honesty depends wholly upon uncompromising strictness in maintaining it.

### THE LEVEL

The level is, in some ways, the most interesting symbolic instrument of all. The modern operative builder thinks naturally of the level in terms of the spirit-level. But this is a device of quite modern introduction, not known to our Ancient brethren. In the tool which we see and handle in our Masonic work, the level surface of reference is derived from the plumb-rule, and the device itself is, in fact, a plumb-rule supported between two squares, and the level surface thus depends upon a combination of the infallible plumb-rule and the uncompromising accurate angle of ninety degrees, being the fourth-part of a circle. In this way are these three instruments of precision, symbols of uncompromising truth, intimately related to one another. The Level, derived from the Infallible Plumb rule and the Angle of Ninety Degrees.

### THE PLUMB-RULE

In that long and very beautiful lecture, the Plumb-rule is referred to as "The Infallible Plumb-Rule." Why "infallible"? Infallible because the Laws of Nature are infallible, and immutable, and decree that a plumb-line, hanging free with its bob at rest, can take no other position than a true vertical position, and any other position, for a plumb-rule, is a distorted or false one. Thus, the standard of uprightness is, again, an uncompromising one, whether in a physical structure or a moral edifice. The man whose outlook is slanted, by expediency, as well as the man who "leans over backward" is not upright. There are no degrees of uprightness.

The precepts laid down in the lecture accompanying the presentation of the Fellowcraft working tools, are of a some-what general nature

regarding the Square, enjoining truth and moral rectitude, and concerning the Level, exhorting the candidate to fairness, justice, and equality of treatment towards people in different stations of life. But their message is clear and unmistakable. For who that is human has not had to resist the temptation to bend, just a little, the exact truth of a statement or action, to present the facts a little more in his own favor? But our Masonic conscience says, "No! this is wrong. The angle must be 90 degrees, not a little more or a little less!" Or again, who has not felt the temptation to pander, or toady a little to those who are in some position of authority over us, or to adopt a slightly haughty or condescending attitude towards those who, for one reason or another may be regarded as our subordinates. But here again, our Masonic teaching tells us that such an attitude is tilted, and in adopting it we are not observing the principle of the Level.

Concerning the Plumb-rule, however, the lecture deals specifically and at length with the many kinds of departure from Masonic uprightness which we are directed to shun. Each denotes a "slant" of one kind or another. In the "enthusiast" and the "persecutor", a slant towards bigotry; in the reviler of religion the very opposite, a slant towards atheism; in slander, malice, revenge, and contempt of our fellow creatures, a slant towards bitterness and hatred; and in envy, avarice and injustice, a slant towards greed and self-seeking. The Mason who does not "slant" in any of these directions is an upright Mason, and the lecture sums it up in a beautiful metaphore - "to steer the bark of his life over the seas of passion, without quitting the course of Rectitude, is the highest perfection to which human nature can attain."

And the lecture continues, "As the builder raises his column by the Level and the Plumb-Rule, so ought every Freemason to carry himself uprightly in this Life."

Thus, in the Fellowcraft Degree, we contemplate our great Masonic column, the Right-Hand Pillar, Jachin - "God will Establish". To "establish" means "to render stable". The edifice whose columns are upright, whose foundations are level, and whose angles are square, is a stable edifice; the man whose bearing is upright, whose actions are square, and whose steps are level is a stable person, fit to be a Freemason; and our Craft will be, and will remain, the stabilizing influence in the community which we all desire, so long as we, its Craftsmen, are respected as upright citizens, square in their dealings, and strictly on the level.

Let us, then, Brethren, pursue our good works with honesty softened by modesty but without "an angle", (unless it be the true angle of ninety degrees, the fourth part of a circle), so that none shall be justified in saying, concerning us - "I fear the Greeks when they bring gifts!"

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