

The Wages of an Entered Apprentice

Source - William Harvey, J.P.

The Catechisms of the Craft and the conventional Lecture on the Tracing Board of the Second Degree, all of which speak with that authority which belongs to age, tell us that the Wages of an Entered Apprentice are Corn, Wine, and Oil. Sometimes it is added that he received Corn for food, Wine for nourishment, and Oil for comfort. The broad difference that was sought to be set up between the Apprentice and the Fellowcraft apparently was that the Fellowcraft was paid in coin while the Apprentice was paid in kind. I fear it would be very difficult to produce any authority for this, and probably the distinction between the Masons of the two degrees is the invention of some imaginative brother who may have got the hint from a practice that was not uncommon among early operatives. Two or three centuries ago the conditions of labour were laid down as firmly as they are to-day by our powerful Trades Unions. A master could not employ more than a certain very limited number of apprentices-often the number was restricted to one-and these apprentices were taken bound to serve their masters for a period of seven years. Not unfrequently, alike in mason and other trades, the apprentice went into residence with his master, and during the early years of his apprenticeship received no remuneration except board and lodging. Only when he became a journeyman, or Fellow-craft, and was free from the master who had taught him his business, was he entitled to wages in the form of cash. If, as is possible, some elaborator of Freemasonry, got the hint here as to the remuneration of an apprentice, one can easily understand that commonplace language such as " board and lodging " would not appeal to him and that he would seek to ornament the matter with just such a combination of words as " Corn, Wine, and Oil.

One of the traditions of the Craft, dearly beloved by uncritical Freemasons, says that the whole number of workmen engaged on the Temple at Jerusalem amounted to 217,281 persons, and that of these, 80,000 were Fellowcrafts, and 30,000 were Entered Apprentices-the latter of whom were arranged into one hundred lodges with three hundred members in each. This immense multitude was paid weekly on

the sixth day of the week; and one tradition solemnly asserts that the 80,000 Fellowcrafts toiled up the Winding Stair to the Inner Chamber to receive their wages. Mackey tells us in his "Lexicon" that the Fellowcrafts "were paid in corn, wine, and oil," and the authors of "The Reflected Rays of Light upon Freemasonry," adopting the same view say, "What could be more absurd than to believe that eighty thousand craftsmen had to ascend such a stair, to the narrow precincts of the Middle Chamber to receive their wages in corn, wine and oil?" It is very evident that Mackey and the authors of "Reflected Rays" have misread the Lecture on the Second Tracing Board. It was the Entered Apprentice who received the corn, wine, and oil, and wherever he got it, he did not receive it in the Inner Chamber. To gain access to that apartment a workman required the pass-grip and password of a Fellowcraft, and it is obvious that no Entered Apprentice could have possessed these.

One may pause here for a moment to remark that, according to another tradition all the workers of every degree were paid in current coin. The total wages bill is alleged to have amounted to about 140,000,000 Pounds Sterling, and it was distributed among the craftsmen on a progressive scale which was quite obviously adjusted on the principle of the more honour the more pay. At the one end of the industrial line stood the humble Entered Apprentice who received one shekel, or about 2s 3d of English money per day, while, at the other end, was the Super-Excellent Mason who received 81 shekels per day, equal to about 9- 2s 3d sterling. One Masonic author very generously describes this as "only a fanciful speculation of some of our ancient brethren," and we may return, therefore, to our Corn, Wine, and Oil.

If I am right in my theory that the Wages of an Entered Apprentice in Speculative Freemasonry were suggested by the board and lodging which were the reward of the Operative youth while learning his trade, I think it is clear that the person who fixed the Wages of the Speculative Apprentice found his material in the Volume of the Sacred Law. We read in the Second Chapter of the Second Book of the Chronicles that, when Solomon appealed to the King of Tyre for assistance in

building the Temple, he said, " Behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil." The offer of Solomon was accepted by the King of Tyre, who replied, " Now, therefore, the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants: and we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need." The account preserved in the fifth chapter of the First Book of the Kings, indicates that the gifts were made annually to Hiram's work people, but there is a discrepancy as to the amount. In 1st Kings the Wine is omitted, and the Oil is set down at " twenty measures " equal to about 1640 gallons, whereas the 20,000 baths of 2nd Chronicles were more than ten times as much, being the equivalent of about 165,000 gallons.

It is clear that these gifts of Corn Wine, and Oil were made to the hewers of wood in the forests of Lebanon, none of whom were Entered Apprentice Masons, but it would be unprofitable and useless to linger upon a discussion of the matter, as the Wages of the First, Degree in Speculative Freemasonry are merely symbols upon which to meditate, and from which to draw inspiration for everyday duties.

Corn, Wine, and Oil were the three staple crops of the Holy Land, and each of them entered into the fibre of the national life, furnishing figures of speech for the Hebrew poets, and points for the proverbs of the people.

CORN was always regarded as an element of national wealth. It formed part of the tribute brought to Hezekiah on the restoration of the priesthood. Bread was one of the signs of welcome and goodwill to Abraham.

WINE, in a metaphorical sense, represents the essence of goodness. Jerusalem, Israel, the Messiah, the righteous - all are compared to wine. The wicked are likened unto vinegar, and the good man who turns to wickedness is compared to

sour wine. An abundance of wine was regarded as an indication of prosperity. Jacob blessed Judah that " he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." We read in the ninth chapter of judges that, when the trees went forth to anoint a King, they said unto the vine, " Come thou, and reign over us;" whereupon " the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the e trees ? A writer in the "Jewish Encyclopedia" says that as wine "cheereth God" no religious ceremony should be performed with other beverages.

OIL was one of the most important and perhaps the most characteristic of the products of Palestine. It is mentioned no fewer than two hundred times in the Bible and, with one exception, the references are to "olive oil," as it is expressly termed in Exodus and Leviticus, according to the more correct rendering of the Revised Version of the Scriptures. Oil was largely used in the preparation of different kinds of food, and it was spread upon bread very much in the same way as we use butter; it was employed in the lighting of houses and places of worship-that used in the Temple being no doubt of the finest quality like the "beaten oil" for the Tabernacle - and it occupied a very prominent place in the ceremonial of anointing kings and priests- The metaphorical uses of the word " oil " are many. Part of the blessing of Asher was that he should "dip his foot in oil," that is, that he should have a large measure of worldly prosperity by finding abundance of oil within his territory. In the book of the Proverbs we find the foolish use of oil quoted as a token of extravagance and a source of poverty, while the husbanding of it is a certain proof of wisdom. Words of deceit are said to be smoother and softer than oil; and cursing is said to permeate the life of the wicked even as oil soaks into bone. The power and use of oil are illustrated in many ways in sacred writings. The scholars of Palestine were often referred to as "sons of oil." One injunction has a singularly poetic fancy about it: "Ye shall take olive oil to light the Temple as an atonement for your souls which are like to lamps" The yoke of Sennacherib was said to have broken " because of the oil which Hezekiah lighted in the schools;" and we have a singular parallel to this in the saying of one of the early English reformers who, when Ridley was burned at the stake, exclaimed: " Thou hast lighted such a fire in England to-day, Master Ridley, as shall not be put out." One common and significant use of Oil in Palestine was that of anointing the heads of guests

entertained at a festive meal, and from this daily custom oil came to be regarded as a symbol of joy and gladness.

The Wages of an Entered Apprentice constitute the Masonic elements of consecration. Corn, Wine, and Oil figure very prominently in the elaborate ceremonial by which buildings are solemnly set apart and dedicated to the purpose of Freemasonry. After appropriate exercises of prayer and praise, the junior Warden, handing the Cornucopia to the consecrating Master, says: "In the dedication of Masonic Halls, it has been of immemorial custom to pour corn upon the Lodge in token of the divine goodness exhibited in the liberal provision made for all our wants, spiritual and temporal. I, therefore. Present to you this vessel of corn, to be employed by you according to use and wont.," The Master thereupon accepts the vase and, sprinkling some corn upon the floor,- says: " In the name of the great Jehovah, to Whom be all glory, I do solemnly dedicate this Hall to Freemasonry."

Thereafter the Senior Warden presents the Vase with Wine, saying: " Right Worshipful Master, Wine, the symbol of strength and gladness, having according to ancient custom been used by our brethren in the dedication and consecration of their Lodges, I present to you this vessel of Wine, to be used on the present occasion according to established Masonic form." And the Master, sprinkling some of the wine upon the floor, says: " In the name of the Holy Saint John, I do solemnly -dedicate this Lodge to Virtue.

Finally, the Substitute Master approaches with the vase containing Oil and says: " Right Worshipful Master, I present to you, to be used according to ancient custom, this vessel of oil, an emblem of that joy and peace which should animate every bosom on the completion of every important undertaking." And the master, sprinkling some oil upon the floor, says: " In the name of the whole Fraternity, I do solemnly dedicate this Lodge to Universal Benevolence."

In ancient days Corn, Wine, and Oil constituted the wealth of the people, and were esteemed as the main supports of life. The Psalmist counts them among the greatest blessings mankind enjoys, and you may recall that he brings them together in the 104th Psalm where he speaks of them as "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." It is sometimes said that modern Freemasonry is but ancient sun-worship disguised. We believe in a beneficent Creator; the sun worshipper paid his adorations to the glorious luminary of the day to whose genial agency the fruits of the earth -corn, wine, and oil-were due. To that extent we have a community of thought, and Freemason and sun-worshipper alike look from Nature up to Nature's God.

Moralising upon the Wages of the Entered Apprentice as symbols instinct with meaning to the Mason who would be true to the altruistic spirit of the Craft, the Rev. Thaddeus Harris says: "Wherefore my brethren do you carry Corn Wine, and Oil, in your processions, but to remind you, that in the pilgrimage of human life you are to impart a portion of your bread to feed the hungry, to send a cup of your wine to cheer the sorrowful, and to pour the healing oil of your consolation into the wounds which sickness hath made in the bodies, or affliction rent in the hearts of your fellow-travellers."

And surely brethren, that is the sum and substance of the matter. As Entered Apprentices we receive these Wages in spirit, not to expend upon ourselves but as a constant source of aid to our less fortunate Craftsmen. As Corn is an emblem of Plenty, let us be abundant in the measure of our brotherly love, ever ready to use what means God hath given us to assist a brother who may claim our help. As Wine is an emblem of Cheerfulness, let us foster the spirit of joy and gladness so that, when sorrows throw their shadows upon life, we may be enabled to look forward to the brighter day when the trials of our earthly pilgrimage shall be forgotten, and sadness shall be unknown. And as Oil is an emblem of Peace may it be ours to extend the boundaries of her Empire, so that strife and discord may be banished for ever from the mind of man. " Nothing," says Emerson in one of his

Essays, " nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles." And this personal note is emphasized in a striking passage in one of Ruskin's "Lectures." "People," he says, "are always expecting to get peace in heaven: , but you know whatever peace they get there will be ready made. Whatever making of peace they can be blest for, must be on the earth here." The whole teaching of the Craft is the promotion of peace on earth, goodwill to men, and it is the personal duty of everyone of us to advance the cause. of the universal brotherhood of man.

Brethren, I do not know that any one could leave a sweeter memory behind him than just this that he had faithfully used the Wages of an Entered Apprentice. The day will come when the walls of our Lodge shall know us no more, and we shall live in the recollection of our fellows for but a little while - a month, a year, at the most a generation. But that recollection will be a sacred one if those with whom we have laboured recall our names from time to time, and tell those who did not know us that, faithful to our trust, we were ever ready to relieve distress, aid the weak, and comfort the mourner. Thus shall we have proved our right to the Wages of an Entered Apprentice, and thus may we hope for the recognition that awaits all faithful Craftsmen at the hands of the Great Architect of the Universe.

About William Harvey, J.P.