

THE QUEST FOR BROTHERHOOD

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Many of you may recall the rather amusing comedy, "Bunty Pulls the Strings". There was in it a youngster who protested against learning the Catechism because he said that he couldn't understand it. The father indignantly replies to the youth: "Who's expecting you to understand it - learn it". This perhaps illustrates what is happening in Masonry in too many lodges. Many have learned their lectures, but what it is all about they have never found out and no one asked them to do so.

In this connection we might also consider the reply given by the Senior Warden at the opening of the lodge. He says that the Master is placed in the East "to set the Craft at work, giving them proper instruction for their labour".

In most of our lodges the extent of our instruction is confined to the required question and answer formula necessary before a candidate is permitted to proceed to the next degree. What is being practised is nothing more than mechanics: What did you do? - What was said to you? - Then what happened? - etc., without a single word about the underlying principles.

We all know men who have ably imparted to their brethren the secret work of Freemasonry. Their delivery of the ritualistic ceremonies has been nearly letter perfect, but, after all, to what extent can we measure instruction and progress? Have they succeeded in planting in the heart of the initiate the secret of how to live with himself and with others - how to bring about the reality of Brotherhood?

As we read the current literature, including the Annual Proceedings, we are appalled by the repeated references made to lack of interest shown by a vast number of Masons. These comments are usually made in a complaining voice. It is just like the complaint heard in some churches on poor attendance but the people who should hear it are not there to hear it. Yes, we HAVE laggards in our membership, but what are we DOING to remedy the situation? Surely not by making speeches in the lodge room.

How can we kindle the flame of sustained interest? Shall it be through Grand Lodge? Grand Lodge might send out an inspiring list of speakers who might visit every lodge in the jurisdiction. If they were the best in the country and the lodges were filled to capacity some good would result, but, like most stimulants, they wear off and the flame tends to die and disappear. Shall it be by lodge action? That

means, in the final analysis, by and through the Worshipful Master. Fortunately for the Craft there are and have been many outstanding Masters, brethren with vision and also decision, who really try and generally succeed in making lodge membership a vital factor in the lives of others. But, good Masters are often sandwiched between those not so good and the effect of one year bogs down in the year following. If not by these two, then how? By the individual brother. You can bring the entire membership to hear all the speakers you can find, but if the individual brother does not open his ears you cannot make him HEAR.

It is YOU - the first personal individual YOU, who is the one over whom you have full control. You can make your place a place to inspire, not only yourself, but also the men with whom you meet. You can put emphasis on the spiritual, intangible things and help others to see them as you see them.

You, and only you, can do this for yourself, and having done it for yourself you can help your brother in the Quest for Brotherhood.

I have never been quite satisfied with the explanation that Freemasonry is "a beautiful system of morality." We MUST make it more than a mere system. We MUST see in Masonry a GREAT FRATERNITY, a GREAT FELLOWSHIP, a GREAT BROTHERHOOD. It should require no argument on my part to prove that it far surpasses anything as limited as a system. You will realize that we have in our lodges many who practise a superficial type of Masonry. Some of our members nurse a grudge; or vow vengeance for some fancied wrong.

Instead of looking to Freemasonry for help and guidance he embitters his whole outlook and often ends up by warping it completely. How often do we see blind prejudice destroy the harmony of a lodge?

The average lodge represents an excellent cross-section of the community. Here men of different walks of life meet and address each other as "Brothers". But outside the lodge these same men by reason of their business or professional affiliations, meet to discuss problems and difficulties. In the changed environment we find an entirely different atmosphere. WHY? Surely modern industry, civic, municipal, or national affairs are not better for the loss of reverence or cooperation - of brotherly love and communal responsibility - which distinguished the Fraternity of Operative Masonry from which we sprung. Today master and man are far apart. They have little personal contact. Men go to their work as if driven, finding no joy in accomplishment, shirking it if possible. Our ancient brethren never gave a thought to getting all they could for as little effort as possible. An eminent Masonic scholar has declared that no man has the right to claim to be a Freemason unless he has endeavoured to put into practice some of the teachings of

the Fraternity. "It is not necessary," he asserted, "to go up to the lodge room to practice Masonry.

The place to practice Masonry is in the busy marts of the world, where men meet each other in their daily affairs, and where human kindness and helpfulness and honesty are so much needed. All progress is made by men of faith who believe in what is right, and, even more important, actually do the right in their private business. You cannot add to the peace and good will of the world if you fail to create an atmosphere of harmony right where you live and work.

There seems little hope of peace in the industrial world until the spirit of humanity and fraternity is recovered. We must inject practical brotherhood into all our relationships, and realize that Masonry did it once and Masonry CAN do it again. The world is perishing because of a lack of Brotherhood and, though we of the Craft have the great ideal on our lips, it has not found its way into the hearts of the initiates. Let us start NOW in becoming operatives in the most important phase of the whole Masonic structure. It has been said that the goal of Freemasonry is the realization of Brotherhood for Freemasonry is NOT a Brotherhood only. It is a sales agency for the Brotherhood idea and a force for the establishment of the collective life of man IN Brotherhood."

The tragic thing about the poor results is that the young initiate soon discovers that our practice and our profession of brotherhood are not identical. Too little attention is being paid to this insincerity. We must resurvey the field and then demonstrate within our membership that the Brotherhood which Freemasonry seeks to establish is not a matter of formula, that the ritual is but the spoken word - and that our principal work cannot be expressed in a specific directive. The Brotherhood we need is a living, vital, driving force, which must be deeply felt and understood by the man who would practise Freemasonry. To have a great ideal that consists merely in ritual phrases in paper and words, will never bring the kind of Brotherhood that is needed into his old world of ours. We must work at the business of practical brotherhood. Let us not be discouraged at the slow progress we seem to be making. If we were, our Craft would have folded many years ago.

We cannot draw up a code of rules for the realization of brotherhood. There must be individual initiative. We must remember that the first preparation of every initiate is in his heart. We must expand that preparation - make his inner life RIGHT, the motives SOUND and the dynamic force LOVE of fellow man.

It isn't national leaders as much as "men of goodwill" that we need in each of our little communities. So, my brethren, let us always remember that our progress

in Freemasonry is measured by our individual capacities, never in mass formation. May our quest for Brotherhood be stirred and deepened by a build-up of the spirit which brought so much friendliness among our founding fathers in the pioneer days of this nation. When you go back home tonight, ask yourself this question: "What can I as a member of my Lodge, and what can my Lodge through my membership show by its labours that it is engaged upon the Quest for Brotherhood?" This is a personal job. It cannot be referred to someone else - it is YOUR responsibility.

Masonry is not routine because human beings are concerned. Masons need more courses in human nature and fewer in technical procedure. When you reach the time for New Year resolutions what are yours going to be? The call should be: "Whither are you directing your course?"

Holman Hunt's great painting "The Light of the World" shows Christ at midnight standing before a closed door knocking with one hand while holding a lighted lantern up with the other. When it was first placed on display one man said: "But Mr. Hunt, your painting is not finished - there is no handle on the door." To which Mr. Hunt replied: "That is the door to the human heart - it can only be opened from the inside."

My brethren, there will be many candidates who will knock on your preparation room doors in the future. What are you going to do about it? Don't just "let him in"; receive him - teach him well - continue to teach for many years and then, maybe, you will have fulfilled that quest for brotherhood.

Brethren - there is a knock at the door - what are YOU going to do about it?