

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF FREEMASONRY  
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Brethren:

I have endeavoured in this paper to set down some of the past, present, and what the future may have in store as far as Freemasonry is concerned, because I believe that the character of the institution is elevated in everyone's opinion just in proportion to the amount of knowledge that he has acquired of its symbolism, philosophy and history.

1. Attendance:

We go to Lodge, year in and year out, knowing exactly what we are to see and hear. We meet upon the level and part upon the square, and somehow a tie is spun and woven between man and man. Masonry has its own methods, its own spirit and art of welding men together, which no one can define, much less analyze.

Attendance at the communications of his Lodge on all convenient occasions is considered as one of the duties of every Mason. At one time it was usual to enforce attendance by fines. The By-Laws of early Lodges contain lists of fines to be imposed for absence, swearing and drunkenness.

2. Behaviour:

In the charges of Freemasons, first published in 1723, the sixth article is exclusively appropriated to the subject of behaviour and divided into six sections as follows:

1. Behaviour in the Lodge while constituted.
2. Behaviour after the Lodge is over and the Brethren not gone.
3. Behaviour when Brethren meet without strangers, but not in a Lodge formed.
4. Behaviour in the presence of strangers not Masons.
5. Behaviour at home and in your neighbourhood.
6. Behaviour towards a strange Brother.

3. Hall:

For a long time after the revival of Masonry in 1717 Masonic Lodges continued to meet, as they had done before, in taverns. In America the practice ceased only

at a comparatively recent period. We know that the Lodge in Annapolis Royal met for a time in what is now known as the Farmer's Hotel. Records tell us that it was "only a step from Labour to Refreshments".

#### 4. Songs:

The song formed in early times a very striking feature of the Masonic Institution. In the beginning of the 18th century songs were deemed of so much importance that they were added to the books of constitutions in Great Britain, Continental Europe, and followed in America. In those days the word "refreshment" had a practical meaning and the Brethren indulged in innocent gaiety, of which the song formed an essential part. Early books of constitutions tell us of a Master's song, to be sung with a chorus; the Warden's song, the Fellow Craft song, and the Apprentice song. Between the years 1734 and 1837 about 213 songs were published in the English, French, German, Danish and Polish languages. How often and how many of those songs do we hear today?

#### 5. Lectures:

A history of the changes of lectures, which they have from time to time undergone, constitutes an interesting part of the literature of the Order. The system of Lodge lectures is undoubtedly a modern invention. No trace of any forms of lectures like the present can be found before the middle or perhaps the close of the 17th century. Examinations, however, of a technical nature, intended to test the claims of a person examined to the privileges of the Order, appear to have existed at an earlier period. But they were perpetually changing, so that the tests of one generation of Masons constituted no tests for the succeeding ones. Just one sample question: "How blows the wind?" Answer: "Due East and West". Addresses, charges and tests used by the Master of the Lodge varied with the talents of the presiding Officer.

Nothing can be said with any certainty about lectures in England until the last quarter of the 18th century, when William Preston took the matter in hand and revised or probably rewrote them entirely. These lectures were for nearly half a century the authoritative text of the Order of England.

After the union of the two Grand Lodges in the year 1813, (the Moderns and the Ancients) the lectures were again revised. The duty was entrusted to Rev. Dr. Hemming. They are now the standard of English Masonry. Nothing definite can be stated about lectures used in America until near the end of the 18th century, when a system of lectures was put forth by Thomas Webb.

Quote: "In Touchwood Lodge where I was raised - No. 51, G.R. of

Saskatchewan- the first-degree chart had its place at the J.W. Station, the second degree chart at the S.W. Station, and the third degree chart at the Master's station, and these respective officers delivered the lectures to the candidates. By this arrangement any P.M. could substitute in the absence of any of the three principal officers. In the beginning of the 18th century expositions of the Ritual began to be published.

In 1794 a book "The Master's Key" was printed in cypher. The first of its kind. The "Ancient York Rite" was adopted by the Grand Lodge according to Sec. 29 of the Constitution in 1870. From a report of B.H. Shaw, M.D., D.D.G.M., of District No. 3 to the Grand Lodge in 1877, I quote: "The more I visit among the Lodges the more I see the necessity of a uniformity of work; in fact, though every Lodge in this district works well in its way, yet there are no two that work exactly alike."

During the period when the ritual printed in cypher was used a candidate was obliged to visit a well-informed brother and memorize the work. I was raised on January 17, 1930, and the ritual in cypher was used at that time. No ritual was issued to a Brother below the station of Junior Warden.

When the wife of a Mason is near her confinement, it is the custom of some Brother physician to visit her, inquire after her health, and in the name of the Lodge offer her his professional services. Nine days after the birth of her child, the Master and Wardens call upon her to congratulate her on the happy event. If the infant is a boy, a special communication of the Lodge is convened for the purpose of its adoption. The hall is decorated with flowers and foliage and incense is burned. The Wardens act as Godfathers. The Chief of the Deputation takes the child from the father, places it on a cushion and advances beneath an arch of foliage to the East. A Masonic name such as Truth, Devotion or some other of similar nature is given him. The Worshipful Master then descends from his seat, offers up a prayer, pronounces the Apprentice's obligation, which the Godfathers repeat after him. Afterwards the Worshipful Master puts a white apron on the infant, proclaims it to be the adopted child of the Lodge, and causes this proclamation to be received with honours. The child is then placed in front of the N-column and the Worshipful Master recounts to the Wardens the duties they have assumed as Godfathers. After the Wardens have made a suitable response, it is returned to its nurse in the anteroom. A circumstantial account of the ceremony is drawn up, signed by all members, and delivered to the father of the child. This document serves as a dispensation in later years.

The earliest instance of the ceremony having been practised in the U.S.A. is that of a Lodge in New Orleans in 1859.

#### 5. Benevolence:

The English Freemasons supported during the year 1877 three great Institutions:

1. The Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution for aged Masons and Widows.
2. The Royal Masonic Institution for Boys.
3. The Royal Masonic Institution for Girls and a Special Board of Benevolence.

\$4,000 was subscribed that year exclusive of Special Grants by Lodges.

#### 6. Gloves and Apron:

In the continental Rites of Masonry as practised in France, Germany, and other countries in Europe, it is an invariable custom to present the newly initiated candidate not only with a white leathern apron, but also with two pair of white kid gloves, one a man's pair, the other a woman's pair, to be presented by him in turn to his wife or his betrothed. Old documents of 1331, 1383, 1486 and 1487 mention the purchasing of gloves for the stone cutters and masons. It is therefore evident that the speculative Masons have received from their predecessors the gloves as well as the apron, both of which being used by the former for practical purposes, have been in the spirit of symbolism, appropriated by the latter to a "more noble and glorious purpose."

Now in comparison I will deal with the "Present" in the same order.

#### 1.Attendance:

We all must admit that the attendance of all Masonic functions is at a very low level, and membership in the Order is on the decline. How often has it happened that the Worshipful Master summons the Officers for a practice and due to non-attendance or poor attendance no practice can be held with the result that there is many any embarrassing moment on the night the degree is put on. In order to make a reasonable showing at St. John's Day church parade, we combine forces at District level. The social side of Masonic life is also poorly attended. Before Christmas 1959, the Order of the Eastern Star invited the members of this Lodge to a social evening and only four Masons that were not members of the Order of the Eastern Star attended. Do you realize how difficult it is to summon a sufficient number of Brethren to assist in paying the last honour to a Brother when he is

gathered into the land where our fathers have gone before us? At certain functions and ceremonies, we are visible to the public, and the Masonic Lodge is judged by the attendance of its members.

Brethren, remember that public opinion can make or break any organization.

## 2. Behaviour:

The constitution provides ways and means of dealing with Brethren that leave the straight and narrow path. In 1908, it was moved and seconded in Grand Lodge that no subordinate Lodge shall knowingly entertain the application for degrees or affiliation of any person engaged in the manufacture or sale of intoxicating drinks.

## 3. Hall:

Annapolis Royal Lodge is the proprietor of a Temple second to none, and we are indeed indebted to Worshipful Brother George B. Harris for his generosity in providing such a splendid building. With the assistance of the R.A. Chapter and the Port Royal Chapter No. 1 of the Order of the Eastern Star the building has been renovated and improved to make it a comfortable place to meet for labour and refreshments.

## 4. Songs and Music:

Need I say anything? We have among our members talented singers and musicians. An attempt had been made a few years ago by the then presiding Master to have a quartet assist in the conferring of the degrees. Several brethren were approached but showed no interest. The degrees would be much more impressive and dignified with appropriate music.

## 5. Ritual and Lectures:

It is my firm conviction and belief that the printing of the ritual in a language that can be read by any uninitiated person is responsible for removing 99% of the mysteries of Freemasonry. Any Master Mason can now purchase a ritual. It can be very distracting to the members of the degree team and the lecturer to observe so many brethren following the work in the ritual during the conferring of a degree. The ritual was never meant to be displayed openly in the Lodge room. It was printed for the convenience of its members to be used in the privacy of their own home, thus saving many journeys to an informed Brother.

## 6. Benevolence:

Our obligation reminds us to contribute to Masonic relief as liberally as the necessity might require and our ability permits. In the year 1908 the committee to

whom were referred matters connected with the proposed Masonic Home submitted, among other, following information to the Grand

Lodge: The property then known as "Fairfield", now the present Masonic Home, could be purchased for \$5,000 and the estimated cost of making it into a suitable home would be \$2,725. The home was purchased in July 1908 and received its first guest on February 10, 1909. The urgent demand resulted in an addition to the home in 1913, providing for 22 more guests; and in 1931 a fireproof brick wing was added containing 14 single rooms, 6 double rooms, and infirmary, wide corridors, and an iron staircase. In 1951, the Peace Memorial Wing was added providing modern hospital accommodation. Necessity requires another wing and the committee in charge has endeavoured to raise \$300,000 for its construction and endowment fund.

Each and every member should know if he has been instrumental in reaching the goal of that committee. Brethren, this is the only home that Nova Scotia Masons support, and so let every member do his duty. If every Mason of Nova Scotia would donate the small sum of \$20.00 the goal set by the committee would be reached.

#### 7. Gloves and Aprons and Dress:

The presentation of gloves to the candidate is no longer practised in England and America, yet their use as a proper clothing in the duties of the Lodge or in procession is still retained. I believe most of the Lodges present the candidate at his initiation with an apron, and the retiring Master with a Past Master's apron in recognition of faithful service. The balance of the dress is equally important and instrumental in upholding the dignity of any Lodge. Styles have changed and suits of all colours and tints are offered, and I will leave it to your judgement if sports shirts minus tie and sport shoes should be worn in Lodge. Or do you feel that dark suits and black bow ties and black shoes would add to the dignity of a Lodge? If the Officers would take the lead in appearing in the proper dress, I am confident the brethren in the North and South would follow.

Now, what about the future of Freemasonry? Will the membership increase, or, as it has done lately, keep decreasing? What can be done should the latter trend continue? Worrying means going around in maddening circles. Concern means realizing what the problems are and calmly taking steps to meet them

First: We must find out what is the cause of the problem.

Second: What are all possible solutions of the problem?

Third: What solution do you suggest?

1. Attendance:

How could we increase attendance?

- a. By shorter meetings and special evenings for degrees?
- b. By enjoying a social hour after the regular meeting?
- c. By having special evenings designated for a social get together?
- d. By revising the ritual?
- e. By changing the constitution? or
- f. By broadening the scope of the aims and objectives of the Order?

2. Behaviour:

I think you will agree with me that, taking the human factor into consideration, the behaviour in this Lodge is, on the average, equal to that of other Lodges.

3. Hall:

This hall, as far as comfort and convenience is concerned, is second to none, and is not a deciding factor in non-attendance.

4. Songs and Music:

A great deal could be said about this. A good quartet and organ or piano player could greatly increase the attendance.

5. Lectures:

Lectures should be presented to the candidates in every degree. It would increase his knowledge of the symbolism, philosophy, and history. The newly raised Mason should, especially in this Lodge, be presented with a pamphlet containing the history of the Lodge. He would be proud of having been raised in Annapolis Royal where the first Lodge of Canada was established in the year 1737. He would communicate these facts to other brethren and Annapolis Royal Lodge No. 33 would be kept before the eyes of Masons from East to West and North to South. Visitors should receive the pamphlet with the compliments of this Lodge.

6. Ritual:

The ritual should be presented in a dignified and fluent and well-organized manner, and the only way this is possible is with plenty of practice. We may not all be the most powerful and masterful orators, but most of us can with practice and perseverance, memorize and retain and deliver the work. Too many Masters are leaving the chair without knowing all the work. Very few are unable to present a lecture.

## 7. Benevolence:

Freemasonry is a charitable and benevolent organization. It is not organized for profit and all of its income is devoted to the promotion of the welfare and happiness of Master Masons, their widows and orphans. But are we doing all that is possible along this line? Or are we at times to be inclined to be a bit too selfish? Again, I think each Mason has the answer in his own heart.

Do we visit the sick or senior member as often as we should? Infirmary, distance, and lack of transportation are factors that prevent those members from attending communications. Distance and lack of transportation problems could be solved by a brother living in the vicinity. In this modern age distance is no obstacle. But in order to overcome those obstacles we must make a decided effort to get out of that easy chair, shut off the T.V., leave the punt, canoe, boat, cruiser or yacht on shore, and keep away from the camp, cabin, cottage or summer home once in a great while, and also ignore the golf bag in the closet and steer our car to the home of those brethren and let them know that we appreciate their membership and inability to attend meetings. I am positive that you will be rewarded for those kind acts.

## 8. Gloves and Aprons:

That the presentation of gloves has been eliminated is to my mind a step in the wrong direction. I am also of the opinion that the Master of the Lodge upon his retirement is entitled to a Past Master apron. Many have given seven years of faithful service, at times under very trying and difficult circumstances. The presentation of a Past Master apron would be an inspiration to the new members to take a keener interest in the Lodge.

The result would also be a more dedicated group of officers.

But the big question is, can we build a big membership on ritual and sociability alone? Is the solution found in any of the foregoing paragraphs? Or will Freemasonry be forced to appeal to the heart and make sizeable contributions to rehabilitations in hospitals and sanatoriums?

Loan hospital beds and wheelchairs? Or go into life insurance as other powerful societies are doing? Those seven societies are: The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America; Maccabees; Independent Order of Forresters; Knights of Columbus; Loyal Order of the Moose; independent Order of the Oddfellows; and the Loyal Orange Associations. The Knights of Columbus own the land on which the Yankee Stadium was built. The Forresters do roughly eight million dollars worth of business in Canada, U.S.A., and Great Britain. Shriners specialize in crippled children's hospitals. Knights of Columbus, Moose



and Maccabees concentrate on community and boy's work. Oddfellows make contributions to hospitals and sanatoriums. The Loyal Orange Association has established homes for orphans in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and British Columbia. The Order of Moose went into life insurance and in Timmins, Ontario, they supervise teenage dances. They also build and equip playgrounds and sponsor pee-wee hockey and baseball. And let us not forget the recently organized Lions Clubs.

Several times I have been asked what Masons are doing for the community. This is rather a hard question. We know that Masons propagate moral teachings among their membership through symbols and allegories.

They exert a moral influence in their respective communities and do material good in unobtrusive ways. Many leaders in a community are Masons.

Freemasonry is devoted to the promotion of the welfare and happiness of mankind. It has been said that high initiation fees and dues keep many good and honest men from joining. Others state that the low fees and dues keep many prospective and desirable candidates away. Much can be said for both statements. When I became a candidate to Freemasonry a little over 30 years ago the initiation fee was \$60.00 and dues \$10.00 per year. That was at a time when eggs old at eight cents per dozen, and butter was cheaper than axle grease.

Far too many members ask for their demit and far too many are suspended for non- payment of dues. Why does this condition exist? What is the cause of this decline of membership during the last few years?

Dramatic changes have occurred in the economy and mode of living during the last 25 years. These changes have brought problems. The problems must be solved, without damaging or destroying the principles of Freemasonry, to increase the membership and attendance of communications and to elevate Freemasonry to its former position of prestige and dignity which it so rightly deserves.

In closing I would like to leave these thoughts with you:

Have you ever helped another,  
Ever earned a grateful smile;  
Ever asked a weary Brother  
In to ride with you a mile?  
Have you ever given freely  
Of your riches and your worth?  
If you haven't, then you've really  
missed the greatest joy on earth  
Has a thrill of pride possessed you,

Have you felt your pulses run  
As a weaker Brother blessed you  
For some good that you have done?  
Have you seen eyes start to glisten,  
That were sad before you came?  
If you haven't, stop and listen,  
You have missed life's finest game.