

# **INTRODUCTION TO FREEMASONRY**

## **The Fellowcraft Degree**

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## Music

As battle-weary men long for the sea Like  
tired children, seeking Mother's breast,  
And in its restless endlessness find rest, Its  
crashing surf a soothing systole;  
As seeks the stormtossed ship the harbor's lee, So  
mariners upon life's deep, hard-pressed  
To weather boiling trough and mounting crest,  
Steer for the shelter of Freemasonry.

Her ancient waves of sound lap on the strand, A  
melody more God's than man's.  
We hear, Like gentle murmurs in a curved sea shell  
Which whispers of some far off wonderland  
Where lightning flashes from blue skies and clear, The  
rolling thunder of the ritual.

## *Fellowcraft*

As the Entered Apprentice Degree as a whole is symbolic of infancy and youth, a period of learning fundamentals, a beginning, so the Fellowcraft Degree is emblematic of manhood.

But it is a manhood of continued schooling; of renewed research; of further instruction. The Fellowcraft has passed his early Masonic youth, but he lacks the wisdom of age which he can attain only by use of the teachings of his first degree, broadened, strengthened, added to, by those experiences which come to men as distinguished from children.

Of the many symbols of this degree three stand out beyond all others as most beautiful and most important. They are the brazen Pillars; the Flight of Winding Stairs as a means of reaching the Middle Chamber by the teachings of the three, the five, and the seven steps; and the Letter "G" and all that it means to the Freemason.

Very obviously the Fellowcraft Degree is a call to learning, an urge to study, a glorification of education. Preston, [1] to whom we are indebted for much of the present form of this degree, evidently intended it as a foundation for that liberal education which in its classic form was so esteemed by the educated of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century England.

The explanations of the Five Orders of Architecture, the Five Senses and the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences no longer embrace the essentials of a first-class education, but think not less of the degree on that account, since it is to be understood symbolically, not literally, as the great Masonic scholar may have intended.

While the degree contains moral teaching and a spiritual content only surpassed by that of the Sublime Degree, as a whole it is a call to books and study. If the Fellowcraft takes that to mean Masonic books and Masonic study he will find in this degree the touchstone which will make all three degrees a never-ending happiness for their fortunate possessor.

Certain differences between this and the preceding degree are at once apparent. The Entered Apprentice about to be passed is no longer a candidate – he is a brother. In the first degree the candidate is received with a warning; in the second, the brother to be passed is received with an instruction. In the first degree the cable tow was for a physical purpose; here it is an aid, an urge to action, a girding up, a strengthening for the Masonic life to come. The circumambulation of the Fellowcraft is longer than that of the Apprentice: journey through manhood is longer than through youth. The obligation in the Entered Apprentice Degree stresses almost entirely the necessity for secrecy; in the Fellowcraft Degree secrecy is indeed enjoined upon the brother who kneels at the altar, but he also assumes duties toward his fellows and takes upon himself sacred obligations not intrusted to an Entered Apprentice. He learns of the pass, and he is poor in spirit indeed who is not thrilled to observe the slowly opening door which eventually will let in the whole effulgent Light of the East, typified by the position of the Square and Compasses upon the Volume of the Sacred Law.

A degree to muse upon and to study; one to see many, many times and still not come to the end of the great teachings here exemplified. Alas, too many brethren regard it as but a necessary stepping-stone between the solemnities of the Entered Apprentice's Degree and the glories of the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. Stepping-stone it is, indeed, but he uses it with difficulty and is assisted by it but little who cannot see behind its Pillars a rule of conduct for life; who cannot visualize climbing the Winding Stairs as the

pilgrimage we all must make; to whom the Middle Chamber is only a chamber in the middle and for whom the Letter "G" is but a letter.

## *Cable Tow*

The Fellowcraft wears it so that it may be an aid to his journey; by it a brother may assist him on his way. He also learns in this degree that a cable tow is more than a rope; it is at once a tie and a measurement.

How long is a cable tow? Thousands have asked and but a few have attempted to reply. In much older days it was generally considered to be three miles; that was when a brother was expected to attend lodge whether he wanted to or not if within the length of his cable tow.

Now we have learned that there is no merit in attendance which comes from fear of fines or other compulsion. The very rare but occasionally necessary summons may come to any Fellowcraft. When it comes, he must attend. But Freemasonry is not unreasonable. She does not demand the impossible, and she knows that what is easy for one is hard for another. To one brother ten miles away a summons may mean a call which he can answer only with great difficulty. To another several hundred miles away who has an airplane at his command it may mean no inconvenience.

Long before airplanes were thought of or railroad trains were anything but curiosities, it was determined (Baltimore Masonic Convention, 1843) that the length of a cable tow is "the scope of a brother's reasonable ability."

Such a length the Fellowcraft may take to heart. Our gentle Fraternity compels no man against his will, leaving to each to determine for himself what is just and right and reasonable – and brotherly!

## *Spurious*

The use of two words in the Fellowcraft's Degree is a relic of antiquity and not a modern test to determine whether or not a Mason heles [ii] the true word of a Fellowcraft. We have more accurate ways of knowing whether or not a would-be visitor comes from a legitimate or clandestine lodge [iii] than his knowledge of ritual.

There are clandestine or spurious Masons, but they are not difficult to guard against. What all Fellowcrafts must be on watch to detect is any quality of spuriousness in their own Freemasonry. For there is no real Freemasonry of the lips only. A man may have a pocket full of dues cards showing that he is in good standing in a dozen different Masonic organizations; may be (although this is rare) a Past Master, and still, if he has not Freemasonry in his heart, be actually a spurious Mason.

Freemasonry is neither a thing nor a ritual. It is not a lodge nor an organization. Rather is it a manner of thought, a way of living, a guide to the City on a Hill. To make any less of it is to act as a spurious Mason. If the lesson of the pass as communicated in the degree means this to the Fellowcraft, then indeed has he the lesson of this part of the ceremony by heart.

## *Grand Lodge*

Every initiate should know something of the Grand Lodge, that august body which controls the Craft.

Before a Craft lodge can come into existence now there must be a Grand Lodge, the governing body of all the particular lodges, to give a warrant of constitution to at least seven brethren, empowering them to work and to be a Masonic lodge.

The age-old question which has plagued philosophers: did the first hen lay the first egg, or did the first egg hatch into the first hen, may seem to apply here, since before there can be a Grand Lodge there must be three or more private lodges to form it! But this is written of conditions in the United States today, not of those which obtained in 1717, when four individual lodges in London formed the first Grand Lodge.

Today no regularly constituted lodge can come into being without the consent of an existing Grand Lodge. Most civilized countries now have Grand Lodges; the great formative period of Grand Lodges – the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries – is practically over. The vast majority of new lodges which will grow up as children of the mother will not form other Grand Lodges for themselves. It is not contended that no new Grand Lodges will ever be formed but only that less will come into being in the future than have in the past. [<sup>iv</sup>]

The Grand Lodge, consisting of the particular lodges represented by their Masters, Senior and Junior Wardens, and sometimes Past Masters, as well as the officers, Past Grand Masters and Past Grand Officers of the Grand Lodge, is the governing body in its jurisdiction. In the United States jurisdictional lines are coincident with state lines. Each Grand Jurisdiction is supreme unto itself; its word on any Masonic subject is Masonic law within its own borders.

A Grand Lodge adopts a constitution and by-laws for its government which is the body of the law of the Grand Jurisdiction, which, however, rests upon the Old Charges and the Constitutions which have descended to us from the Mother Grand Lodge. The legal body is supplemented by the decisions made by Grand Masters, or the Grand Lodge, or both, general regulations, laws, resolutions and edicts of the Grand Lodge, all in accord with the "ancient usages and customs of the Fraternity."

In the interim between meetings of a Grand Lodge the Grand Master is the Grand Lodge. His powers are arbitrary and great but not unlimited. Most Grand Lodges provide that certain acts of the Grand Master may be revised, confirmed or rejected by the Grand Lodge as a check upon any too radical moves. But a brother rarely becomes a Grand Master without serving a long and arduous apprenticeship. Almost invariably he has been Master of his own lodge and by years of service and interest demonstrated his ability and his fitness to preside over the Grand Lodge. The real check against arbitrary actions of a Grand Master is more in his Masonry than the law, more in his desire to do right than in the legal power compelling him to do so.

Most Grand Lodges meet once a year for business, election, and installation of officers. Some Grand Lodges (Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, for instance) meet in quarterly communications. All Grand Lodges meet in special communications at the call of the Grand Master.

The Grand Lodge receives and disburses certain funds; these come as dues from the constituent lodges, from gifts and bequests, from special assessments, etc. The funds are spent as the Grand Lodge orders; upon charity, the maintenance of the Home, the expenses of the Grand Lodge, maintaining a Grand Secretary and his office and staff, publication of Proceedings, educational work, etc.

Most Grand Lodges also publish a manual or monitor of the non-secret work of the degrees which may or may not also contain the forms for various Masonic ceremonies such as dedication of lodge halls, cornerstone laying, funeral service, etc. Most Grand Lodges also publish a Digest or Code, which contains the constitution, by-laws, and regulations of the Grand Lodge, and the resolutions, edicts, and decisions under which the Craft works. The interested Mason will procure these at his earliest convenience that he may be well informed regarding the laws and customs of his own jurisdiction.