

The District Light

The information bulletin
of Niagara B District

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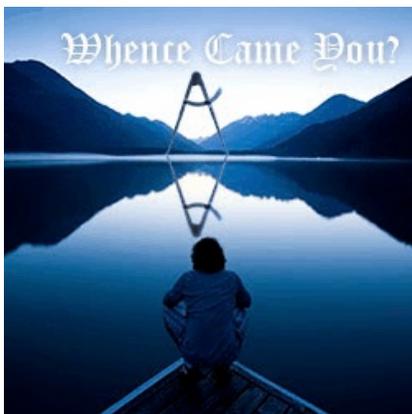
bhodwitz@gmail.com

Freemasonry, a Review

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternal societies – a society concerned with moral and spiritual values. Members are taught the rules of freemasonry by a series of ritual dramas that follow ancient forms and use stonemason's customs and tools symbolically.

We often say that our fraternity exists to make good men better. We don't say it is to make better Masons, because Masonry is a collection of tools we should be using to turn ourselves into better men both inside and outside of the fraternity.

We each have our own view of how we became and are better for our experiences through our membership in the order. This issue will focus on the spirit of masonry.



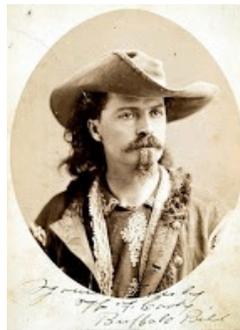
In the Recent Past

Freemasonry has been an important guide throughout its history. We are aware that presidents and prime ministers have been masons.

Masonry was a very real influence during the settling of the American west. A very good overview of that time is available at <http://masonicfind.com/video-freemasonry-in-the-old-west>

You will recognize the ideals of the craft reflected in the oath taken by riders of the Pony Express in early America:

"You will raise your arm to a level square and repeat after me. I... do hereby swear, before the Great and Living God, that during my engagement... I will, under no circumstances, use profane language, that I will drink no intoxicating liquors, that I will not quarrel or fight with any other employee of the firm, and that in every respect I will conduct myself honestly, be faithful to my duties, and so direct all my acts as to win the confidence of my employers, so help me God."



William Frederick Cody was only 14 years old when he became a Pony Express rider. He grew up to be known by a more familiar name, Buffalo Bill. He and many of his contemporaries became masons.

Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling lived most of his life in India, becoming a Freemason in about 1885.

There seems to have been some quality deep within his nature to which Freemasonry appealed. The idea of a secret bond, of a sense of community, and of high principles among men sworn to a common purpose, fitted his concept of a social order.

Kipling so loved his masonic experience that he memorialized its ideals in his famous poem, *The Mother Lodge*, and used the fraternity and its symbols as vital plot devices in his novella, *The Man Who Would Be King*.

His poem, IF, will be found at the end of this issue.



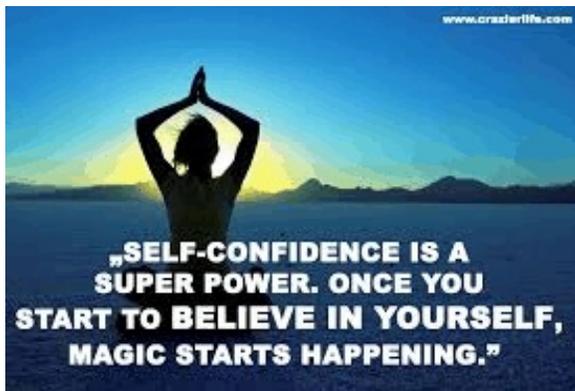
And For Us?

We know that the benefits of our membership include spiritual, emotional, and even physical improvement, but one we all share and recognize in each other is confidence.

Confidence isn't real. It's a mental construct. It's not the "thing" but the result.

A confident man is totally self-assured. He appreciates and relies on his own abilities and qualities. He believes in himself enough to let other people trust in and rely on him. That self-respect and self-reliance is confidence.

For most of us, feeling confident isn't a natural state. It's a byproduct of taking action, forming habits, and constantly improving.



And Looking Outward . . .

Once a Mason has really trained himself to regard every man as his brother, it becomes natural for him to feel the impulses which prompt him to relieve the distressed, whether they suffer physical wants, fears, sorrows, wrongs, or bitter grief.

The word *charity* evokes the idea of the giving of money, but masonic charity is something else. It ministers to a man's heart and mind rather than to his body. It is the charity of thought. The greatest relief it can render is relief of the spirit.

And the most beautiful charity of all is the charity of opinion. Let us not be judges of our brother. Let us not try to make ourselves the keepers of his conscience. Let us speak no ill of a brother; let us keep our critical thoughts to ourselves.

With This Apron . . .

"Masonry has known for hundreds of years that the thoughts of the heart make us what we are, and that it is possible for man to control those thoughts, to keep out the bad and call in the good and by controlling those thoughts we can control every act of our lives.

"This Apron you may remove when you leave the lodge room, but symbolically it will ever be tied about you, and to your dying day you can never remove the obligation which this garment symbolizes. If you disgrace it by dishonesty, stain it by impurity or by any of those things which are immoral, you will violate your own most sacred promise."

Grand Master of Masons in Georgia
in 1938, Brother John L. Travis

Other Insights

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.



from The Talmud (the collection
of Jewish law and tradition)

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.

Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.

The difference between a good man and a bad man is the choice of cause. William James

For the sceptic, truth is NoWhere.

For the awakened, truth is NowHere.

Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply.
Speak kindly.

"The sole purpose of humanity is to shed light in the darkness." Carl Jung

May you become a beacon for the guidance of all those who are seeking light.

Rudyard Kipling (reprise)

If the cultural values and rules of behaviour are relative, are there any absolute values and rules?

In Kipling's time as well as in the 21st century, masonry provided working tools and words of advice for men on a quest to find answers to those questions. Kipling came to masonry for the same reason that we came to it: in a search for a true identity.

In the poem, **If**, Kipling writes of human dignity and wisdom, of human beings' right to act and experience.

The Masonic value of the poem is not only in what it states, but also in the question which is posed: What does it mean to be a Man?

(Two of the four verses are reproduced here.)

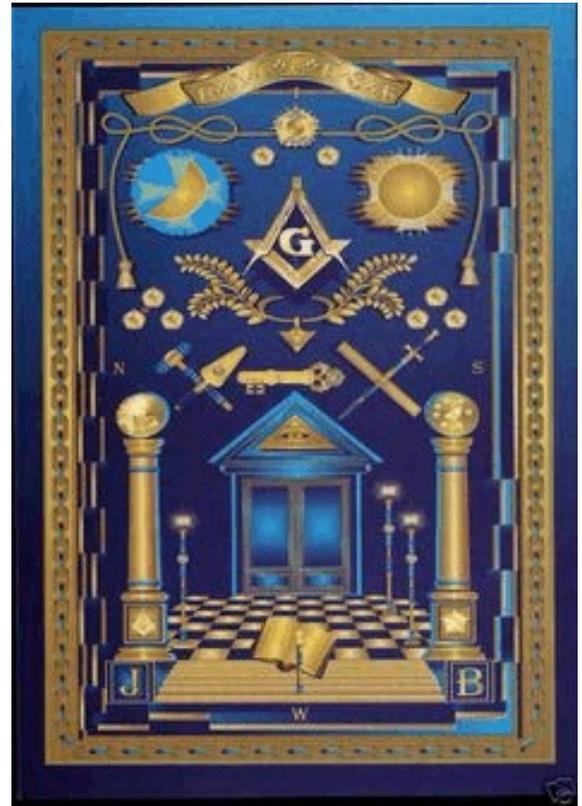
If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

**If, part two**

The theme of the poem by Kipling is used in this clip from The Simpsons:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJQPFmictmo

A Wonderful Tapestry

Listen, study, learn, be.

And enjoy the trip.

