

## **THE SYMBOLS OF THE ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE**

Each of the symbols emblems and allegorical ceremonies of the First Degree has a meaning. Taken together these meanings comprise the teaching of the Degree. Time is too brief to give complete explanations or even to mention all of them, but we believe it will be profitable to you to have a few hints and suggestions, especially as they will show that every detail of the ritual is filled with a definite significance which each Mason can learn if he applies himself.

The hoodwink represents that darkness in which an uninitiated man stands as regards the Masonic life. For this reason it is removed at the moment of enlightenment. Its removal suggests that we do not make the great things of existence, such as goodness, truth and beauty, but find them. They are always there. It is our blindness that conceals them from us.

The cable-tow is a symbol of all those external restraints by which a man is controlled by others, or by forces outside himself. If a man does not keep the law of his own free-will he must be forced to keep it by compulsion. The removal of the cable-tow means that when a man becomes the master of himself he will keep the law instinctively, out of his own character, and not under compulsion.

The Lodge is a symbol of the world, more properly of the world of Masonry. Initiation means birth, or new birth, an entrance into that world. This symbol means that in its scope the extent Freemasonry is as wide as human nature and as broad as mankind, and that as a spirit and ideal it permeates the whole life of every true Mason not only in the Lodge but outside the Lodge as well.

The ceremony of entrance, by which is meant all that happens at the inner door, signifies birth or initiation and symbolises the fact that a candidate is entering the world of Masonry, there to live a new kind of life.

The sharp instrument means, among other things, that there is but one real penalty for violation of the obligations - the penalty, that is, of the destructive consequences to a man's character of being faithless to his vows, untrue to his work, disloyal to his obedience.

The ceremony of circumambulation is the name for the ceremony of walking around the Lodge room, an allegorical act rich with many meanings. One of the principals of these is that the Masonic life is a progressive journey, from station to station, to attainment and that a Mason will always be in search of more light.

An equally significant ceremony is that of approaching the East. The East is the source of light that station in the heavens in which the sun appears when about to chase the darkness way. Masons are sons of light, and therefore face the East.

The altar is the most important article of furniture in a Lodge room, and at the same time a symbol of that place which the worship of God holds in Masonry - a place at the centre, around which all else revolves.

The obligations have in them many literal meanings and as such are the foundations of our disciplinary law, but over and above this they signify the nature and place of obligation in human life. An obligation is a tie, a contract, a pledge, a promise, a vow, a duty that is owed. In addition to the obligations we voluntarily assume, there are many in which we stand naturally - obligations to God, to our families, to employers and employees, to friends and neighbours. A righteous man is one who can be depended upon to fulfil his obligations to the best of his ability.

The Great Lights are the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses. As a Great Light the Volume of the Sacred Law represents the will of God, as man understands it. The Square is the physical life of man under its human conditions. The Compasses signify the moral and spiritual life. If a man acts in obedience to the will of God, according to the dictates of his conscience, he will be living in the illumination of the Great Lights and cannot go astray.

The Lesser Lights are the sun, the moon and the Master of the Lodge. The sun is a symbol of the masculine, the active, the aggressive; the moon, of the feminine, the receptive, the gentle, the non-resisting. When these two types of human action are maintained in balance, mastership is the result.

The words, grips and tokens are our means of recognition by which, among strangers, we are able to prove others or ourselves to be regular Master Masons in order to enter into fraternal fellowship.

The ceremony of salutation, in which the candidate salutes each station in turn, is, in addition to its function as a portion of the ceremonies, also a symbol of a Mason's respect for and obedience to all just and lawfully constituted authorities. The Old Charges states this in a single sentence: "A Mason is a peaceable subject to the civil powers, wherever he resides or works."

The same significance is found in the office of Worshipful Master, who is a symbol as well as the executive officer of the Lodge. As the sun rules the day, he rules and governs his Lodge; his title, "Worshipful", means that as the governor he is worthy of reverence, respect and obedience; and he stands for just and lawfully constituted authority everywhere.

The apron is at once the emblem of purity and the badge of a Mason. By purity is meant blamelessness, a loyal obedience to the laws of the Craft and sincere goodwill to the Brethren. The badge of a Mason signifies that Masons are workers and builders, not drones and idlers.

In the North East Charge the candidate discovers that he has nothing of a metallic character on his person. This symbolism reverts to ancient times when men believed that the planets determined human fate and controlled human passions. Men thought that there was a meal by which each planet was itself controlled. In ancient times candidates were compelled to leave all metals behind, lest they bring into the assembly disturbing planetary influences. While with us this symbolism no longer has its astrological character, the old point about keeping out disturbing influences remains. The candidate is not to bring into the Lodge room his passions or prejudices lest that harmony which it is one of the chief concerns of Masonry to sustain shall be destroyed.

The northeast corner is traditionally the place where the cornerstone of a building is laid; when the Apprentice is made to stand there it is because he is the cornerstone of the future Craft. What the Apprentices are today Masonry will become in the future.

The working tools represent those moral and spiritual virtues, habits and forces by means of which a man is enabled to reshape the crude and often stubborn materials of his own nature in order to adjust to the needs and requirements of human society. If a man has lived planlessly, carelessly, without aim or ideal, he must, if he is to become a Mason, learn to systematise his life, must adopt a rule of life as signified by the twenty-four inch gauge. If he has traits of temper, habits of speech, or defects of character that disturb or injure others, and interfere with his taking his proper place in the Brotherhood, as "knots and excrescence's" on a stone interfere with its being put into its allotted place in the building so he must rid himself of them. This is represented by the mallet.

The Entered Apprentice is himself a symbol, one of the noblest in the whole emblematic system of the Craft. He represents youth, typified by the rising sun. But beyond that he represents trained youth, youth willing to submit itself to discipline and to seek knowledge in order to learn the great art of life, which is the real royal art, and which itself is represented, embodied in, and interpreted by all the mysteries of Masonry.

It is by such voices and arts as these that the First Degree gave its teaching to the EAF as a man and a beginning Mason. It is sincerely hoped that these hints, these suggestions as to the meaning of the symbols and emblems, will lead all Masons to seek further for more light upon them, not only in order that they may become well-trained Masons, but also for their value to them, as they lead their lives outside the Lodge room.