

INTRODUCTION.- John Anderson

This Tracing Board, or general diagram, or portrayal of the symbolic teachings conveyed in the Degree of Mark Master Masonry, occupies the same relative position towards the Mark Lodge taken up by the three regular Tracing Boards in the Symbolic Lodges of the Craft. It is desirable to state, at the same time, that none of these Tracing Boards are of any high antiquity; they are only to be referred to the earlier portion of the eighteenth century, and they have been formulated to convey pictorially the truths inculcated in the several Degrees to which they respectively apply.

Prior to the eighteenth century such pictorial Tracing Boards were almost entirely unknown to the Craft, and when they were required at Lodge meetings, the symbols were usually rudely drawn in chalk and charcoal upon the floor of the apartment in which the Craft or Mark Lodge was held, these designs being afterwards effaced with the utmost care in order that the profane might not obtain ideas capable of damaging the philosophical secrecy of the Institution. It was, however, a matter of general notoriety that all the symbols were derived from objects in architectural and mathematical science, and only applied in a higher or more moral sense to the labours of the assembled Brethren.

"To point the moral and adorn the tale," those symbols only were selected in each Degree which emblematically represented the lessons enforced in the course of the ceremonies themselves, and as it was found convenient to have them in a permanent form, they were drawn upon separate or movable pictures or slabs, to which the appellation of Tracing Boards was wisely and worthily affixed in the common technical language of the Craft.

While the Tracing Boards of the Craft were confined to the three Degrees of Craft Masonry itself, it became necessary to devise for the Degree of Mark Master Mason a Tracing Board in like manner embodying the principles taught within the confines of a Mark Lodge. But this Tracing Board, conveying a different series of ideas, necessarily consists of a number of symbols varying in some degree from those primeval ones handed down from ancient times by Masonic historical tradition. These symbols, moreover, even when identical in form, differ in their actual interpretation, hence the absolute necessity for a separate Lecture.

It may be remarked that a Mark Master Mason's Lodge can scarcely be regarded as bound to adopt the very archaic and primitive designs of the eighteenth century. There can exist no reason for displaying in a Mark Lodge a general design in monstrous perspective and impossible proportions, and the superior elegance and truthfulness of modern art may, without offence or impropriety, be adopted in our own day, so long as the solemn lessons proposed to be illustrated receive their due place upon the Tracing Board itself.

A commentary of an exhaustive character upon Mason's Marks would involve a lengthened

treatise upon art and art history, obviously out of place within the limits of a ceremonial Lodge, where, for the time being, the innate principles of this portion of the Royal Art are, so to speak, put into actual visible motion and appearance. Nor, indeed, would it be possible to afford adequate explanations of these most ancient symbols on such occasions, and it has therefore been found necessary to circumscribe the arena by a judicious selection of illustrations of the most prominent symbols, leaving the general study of this deeply interesting and most important topic to the enterprise of individual students of Masonry.

The Marks used by Mark Master Masons in an individual sense are left to their own selection. Every MMM selects his mark by which he is afterwards to be known, and this Mark is enrolled and registered in the books of his own Lodge, and afterwards transmitted to the Grand Scribe Ezra, whose duty it is to record it for future reference in the records of United Supreme Grand Chapter. It is usual for these Marks to have something of a geometrical character in them; angles rather than curves are most generally in use, and when curves are used they are presumed to be taken from apposite technical instruments used in the symbolical labours of Freemasonry in general.

LECTURE – Alan Gale

These Marks, while extremely varied in the number of points comprised in the figure selected, as well as in character generally, are many of them taken from the ornaments, emblems, jewels, or tools used in the Fraternity; and these again are symbolical of various moral truths inculcated in the various degrees of Freemasonry. Marks have also been frequently derived from symbols used in the occult fraternities which were contemporaneous with operative and speculative Freemasonry, and so long as they in no way conflicted with the moral doctrines of Masonry, they were received and admitted as true and faithful marks in themselves.

Each of the ancient operative Masons employed at the building of the Temple of King Solomon was thus enabled to distinguish his own work by the particular Mark or symbol cut upon it, and by that means also each Craftsman's work was known to the Overseer.

Many of the marks thus used conveyed philosophical or scientific instruction; but as Freemasonry is perhaps most emphatically a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, it is not extraordinary that moral symbols most fittingly find their place upon the Tracing Board of the Degree or as individual symbolical marks appertaining to the Craftsmen themselves.

From the number of symbols thus used, the following have been selected as pre-eminently illustrative of the teachings of this branch of our Ancient fraternity, and to them we attach a series of symbolical explanations:-

I. THE VOLUME OF THE SACRED LAW. – Brad Del-Muns

This is necessarily and absolutely placed first, as being in itself the Foundation of the entire Masonic System. Without the Volume of the Sacred Law, Freemasonry becomes essentially worthless, and sinks to the level of associations of a mere social kind. The Sacred Writings have been prepared for us in order to govern our Faith; and upon them we obligate our Candidates. They were given by God as an unerring Standard of Truth and Justice, to enable us to regulate our lives and actions by the Divine precepts they contain, and which the arguments they exhibit encourage and enjoin us to practice. These words of Masonic Light are our surest guides, and from them we are enabled, by the assistance of Divine Providence, to form our bodies into temples of happiness by learning to practice the whole duty of man.

II. THE ALL-SEEING EYE. - Arthur Macken

The Eye of the Almighty is ever upon us, to aid us in our laudable undertakings, to preserve us in love from all difficulty and danger, and restore us unscathed from the trials of our mortal existence. It reminds us of the constant vigilance and unceasing watchfulness of TGOOTU, to whom, whatever be our creed or race, we are taught to attribute not only the creation, but the preservation of all things; and after we have worthily or unworthily performed the conditions of our mortal existence, we find within the Volume of the Sacred Law a promise or foretaste of the true reward awaiting us in all due season in our Father's many mansions. Whatever may be our faults, however we may neglect the various tasks allotted to us in our several stations; whether indolence or apathy cause us to be indifferent to the call of duty; the Eye of Omniscience never slumbers nor sleeps, but exercises an unwearied supervision over the actions and the affairs of the whole human race. These considerations ought to induce us at all times to observe rules of social conduct, to be cautious in our demeanour, to avoid the offence of the tongue, and so to act in every relation of life as to show the sincerity of our conviction that we are always under the All-Seeing Eye of the Almighty, TGOOTU.

III. THE CHISEL. – Andrew Manzo

This tool symbolises the effect of the working of education upon the human mind, and is thus emblematic of discipline. The mind in its natural state is rude, and unpolished as the rough ashlar, and as the effect of the chisel on the external surface of the latter is to expose its hidden beauties, so education brings out the latent virtues of the mind, thus displaying the perfection of human wisdom, the necessity of observing our duties to God and Man.

IV. THE PLUMB RULE. – Simon Nieminski

This simple instrument is used by operative Masons to try and adjust uprights when fixing them upon their proper bases, but as Masonry is of a speculative nature, It denotes the necessity of justness and uprightness of life and actions. As the building which is not perpendicular must of necessity be insecure and likely to fall to the ground, so he whose life is not supported by an upright course of conduct, but whose principles are swayed by the uncertain dictates of interest or of passion, must soon sink in the estimation of the good and virtuous; while, on the other hand, the upright and unwavering man, who, neither bending beneath the attacks of adversity nor yielding to the temptations of prosperity, turns not to the right hand nor to the left from the strict path of duty, will ever stand erect amid the fiercest tempests of fortune, and be far above the frowns of the envious and the slanders of the malignant.

V. THE MALLET. – Tom Pfieffe

This instrument resembles the Gavel in the Craft Mason's Lodge, but is by no means identical with it. Traditional history asserts that the mallet was used by the Fellow Craft and Master Mason in setting in their places the various stones of the Temple of Solomon, where no metal was allowed. It teaches us how to correct irregularities of temper and to curb ambition, while it depresses the malignity of envy and moderates anger. Thus it knocks off moral excrescences, and teaches us to maintain a quiet demeanour in the school of discipline and to learn to be content. Vice being removed from the mind and heart, the soul is fitted like a well-wrought stone for an exalted position in the Great Temple of the Deity.

VI. THE TROWEL. – Richard Pickering

This is an implement used in operative Masonry to spread the cement which binds all the parts of the building into one common mass. The symbolism of the Trowel reminds us of the necessity of spreading the cement of affection and kindness which unites the whole of the Fraternity throughout the globe into one great companionship of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. No Master of a Lodge can work to advantage without this important tool.

VII. JACOB'S LADDER. – Don Savage

This symbolises many and multiform mysteries, and the authorities have thus taken it into their system. It is symbolical of the hope that all Masons entertain of reaching unto the heavens and entering the Grand Lodge above, after a well-spent life in the present sphere.

It is composed of several staves or rounds, the three principals of which point out three moral virtues - Faith, Hope, and Charity. The first Step represents Faith in the Volume of the Sacred Law. By the means of this first Step, being full of Faith, we reach the second Step of Hope. The third and last Step to which we should aspire is that of Charity to all men, in its most ample sense; and it is the summit of all that makes the life of any individual Mason useful, and therefore beautiful hereafter. Jacob and his ladder constitute a wonderful and beautiful allegory for those who can understand.

VIII. THE TWENTY-FOUR-INCH GAUGE. – Gregg Summerhayes

Mark Masonry has more especially taken the operative tools of Craft Masonry as its guide, and among these the Twenty-Four-Inch Gauge or Two-Foot Rule is important. Being itself divided into three portions of eight, itself the only perfect number for mortals, it signifies the tripartite division of the day, and its corresponding tripartite duties. We should so apportion the day as to distribute our duties in a ratio satisfactory to TGOOTU - some portion necessary to sleep, the greater portion to labour, and some part to the necessary refreshment of the mortal frame. But in the latter portion an integral part should be given to earnest prayer - not to avert calamity, but to direct each individual in the right path. This confidence in TGOOTU constitutes what is called prayer, and this is further spoken of as Faith. Prepared by Faith on the lowest round of the symbolical ladder, the next Masonic virtue is Hope; that feeling of hope inspires us with an undaunted spirit to overcome temporal and mental obstructions; and, finally, we triumph on the third step of Charity, and qualify ourselves for those steps yet veiled in the glory of the Creator of All, to whom all will be responsible. But when we have attained the third step of Charity, we still have solemn duties incumbent upon us. As we have received, so we should freely give. Our labours are not for the immediate gratification of individual ambition, but for the benefit of all our Brethren.

IX. THE SQUARE AND COMPASSES. – Alan Tuffley

This symbol teaches us to regulate our lives and actions by Masonic line and rule, and to harmonise our conduct by the precepts of virtue. The Compasses teach us to limit our desires in every station of life, that, rising to eminence by merit, we may live respected and die regretted.

X. THE HOUR-GLASS. – Tony Wise

This emblem reminds us, by the quick passage of its sands, of the transitory nature of human life. Should we escape the numerous evils which accompany childhood, and arrive with health and vigour to manhood, we must remember that sooner or later we have to leave this scene of probation. It is therefore desirable that we should endeavour to improve the remaining portion of life, so that when we are summoned hence to our reckoning, we may take our place in those blessed regions where dwell eternal life and light, and the necessity for the Hour-Glass is no more.

XI. THE ROPE AND ANCHOR. – Len Wellington

This symbol is one belonging to our Degree, but more particularly refers to another - the Ark Mariner Degree. Still, it is emphatically a Masonic emblem, the general history being veritable. But it is not a prominent emblem, having been often used by other associations. Still, it is emblematic of a firmly fixed hope arising from a well-spent life, and of that Spiritual Rope and Anchor by which we shall be safely moored in a peaceful haven, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," and where we may hope to be welcomed by the joyful salutation, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XII. THE LEVEL. – Richard Pickering

This instrument is used by operative Masons to lay levels and prove horizontals. In Freemasonry it is an emblem of that equality which prevails throughout all judicious minds. In the sight of God - the only Being to whom supremacy can be attributed, or to whom obeisance should be paid - all men are equal, being subject to the same infirmities, hastening to the same goal, and preparing to be judged by the same immutable law. Let us then ever remember that, however we may differ in rank and fortune, we are all Brethren, and that a time will come when all distinctions must cease save those of piety and goodness.

XIII. THE AXE. – Darren May

The Axe has been an instrument of punishment used by all nations from the earliest times, and it is prominent in this Degree as the emblem of office of the Junior Warden. Armed with this weapon, it was the duty of the Antient Junior Warden to stand on the left of the Antient Senior Warden during the payment of wages to the different classes of workmen at the building of King Solomon's Temple, and in the case of an impostor, or one detected in the attempt wrongfully to obtain the wages due to one of a superior class, to inflict the penalty thereby incurred. This should teach us to avoid the danger of indulging in deception and of attempting fraud by acting openly and straightforwardly in the face of our fellow-men, so that, with minds conscious of right, we need not fear detection or dread exposure, but be able to walk boldly onward with consciences void of offence towards God and towards man.

XIV THE EQUILATERAL TRIANGLE. – Gary Young

This, the most perfect of all figures, was adopted by all the ancient nations as a symbol of the Deity, and it still retains that allusion as an emblem in Freemasonry. In Mark Masonry it has peculiar significance as denoting the Master's approval of the work. This emblem should therefore teach us to strive earnestly to perform our duty both to God and man, so that, when called from our labours here, we may be found worthy to receive the approval of TGOOTU.

XV. THE MASONIC CYPHER. – Brad Del-Munns

The Tracing Board of the Mark Degree, as exhibited in the Lodge, bears upon it what is known as the elements of the ordinary Masonic Cypher. This Cypher enables Freemasons of this Degree to correspond secretly with each other. It can, of course, be varied and altered at will, as will be afterwards explained. In times of difficulty and danger, and in an era of comparative ignorance, cypher methods of intercommunication between the learned were absolutely necessary, but the immediately suggestive form was adopted by the Freemasons.

XVI. THE CRAMP. – Arthur Macken

The Cramp is a necessarily suggestive instrument in Mark Master Masonry, alluding to the peculiar circumstances of the Degree, the mode of receiving wages, and the after means of communicating with a Brother MM. This peculiar instrument is depicted on the Tracing Board, and signifies close and strong union for the purpose of removing difficulties of a temporary nature. In very ancient times marks were used in a broken form between families, who thereby bound themselves to assist the members of the said families. A person thus going from Rome to Athens possessing the half of a tesseron would be admitted to all the rights of a denizen during his stay. And as Rome and Athens vied with each other in architectural glory, it became a travelling pass in Masonry, while the Cramp or Lewis (as it has been called at a later time) was the united symbol of strength, denoted by the divided tesseron. Thus families of widely remote regions were made one by the offices of hospitality, as well as by the solemn compact thus shown by the fractured tesseron.

XVII. THE SQUARE, OBLONG, AND KEY STONES. – Andrew Manzo

These stones necessarily occupy prominent positions upon the Tracing Board, so that they may impress more deeply the lessons which their employment in the ceremony of advancement made upon your minds, and which, it is hoped, have not been blotted out.

XVIII. THE SUNBEAM. – Simon Nieminski

The Sunbeam striking the roof of the Temple has a particular and important significance in this Degree, but its explanation is always reserved for communication to those Brethren only who are admitted to the distinguished position of WM of a Lodge of MMM.

DESCRIPTION – Alan Gale

The pictorial representations in the North and South of the Tracing Board portray scenes and occurrences which are associated with the work carried on for the construction of the Temple, in the plain of Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredathah, in the forest of Lebanon, and near the precipitous heights of Joppa. These have already been fully explained in the course of the ceremony of advancement, and therefore require no further illustration in this present Lecture, which terminates the system of instruction in the Mark Degree.

The inscription at the head of the Tracing Board, *Lapis reprobatus caput anguli*, in the original Hebrew is found in Psalm 118. V 22,

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner";

in the Greek we find it thus

"The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner" (1 Peter Ch. 2. V 7), and keeps forcibly before us the leading truth inculcated in this beautiful Degree - the fallibility of human judgment, and the comforting assurance derived from a belief in the existence of a Heavenly Judge, to whose impartial, and, we trust, merciful tribunal, our work will hereafter have to be submitted. God seeth not as man seeth; and while in the honest endeavour to frame our conduct by the plans laid down for our guidance, interpreting them to the best of our ability by the imperfect light vouchsafed us, we may be misjudged and misunderstood by our erring fellow-mortals, we may yet confidently place our reliance *there*, and look for our reward from Him who is as merciful as He is unerring.

All Mark Master Masons should ever remember that there is no talent vouchsafed by God to man to be hidden away unproductively, and the only manner in which we can render glory to the All-High is so to make our mark that it will be found fair and square work in the Almighty eye, although heaved over into the rubbish by the fallible judgment of man.