

Midnight Revelation

By Wor. Bro. Harry M. Lehrbach

This article was originally published as an Editor's Comment, under the heading, "A Typical Meeting," in the Masonic Tribune, a privately owned publication in Seattle, Washington. Wor. Bro. Lehrbach is the Editor of the Masonic Tribune. We thank him for the privilege of reprinting the article as a Short Talk Bulletin.

Last night I attended my Lodge for the last time until we meet again in September. We conferred the Entered Apprentice degree on three candidates. It was to the delight of the senior members present, because most of the chairs were filled with young, energetic Masons, most of whom have been Master Masons for a year or less. I was chosen to give the lecture, which I did in reasonably good fashion, although I got my "twingue toasted" a couple of times.

There was a fair attendance, and several visitors, including one from California. At the refreshment table he noted that there was considerable difference in our work and that of his home Lodge, but still consistent enough that he had no difficulty in following the work. There was a visiting Master present, who brought along an Entered Apprentice of his own Lodge. There was a Past Master present, the father-in-law of one of the candidates. Good fellowship abounded, and everyone got a few moments to tell a story or to say a few words to the candidates, who in turn got to give their impressions. In short, it was a typical meeting that has been enacted in my presence hundreds of times. For some unknown reason, however, it seemed different. As I sat there visiting with my Brethren, something bothered me – the faint yet clarion tone of a tinkling bell was sounding in the back of my head, as if to remind me of something – what was it? Was it because the work, which is always good, was perhaps a little better? Was it because I was happy to see so many young Brothers actively participating? Was it because I kept my big mouth shut, which is unusual, because I was in a semi metaphysical state? What is it, anyhow, that keeps me going back to my Lodge week after week, year after year, to watch and assist in performing the same ritual over and over again?

I like to perform good ritual and see my Brothers do it, but that's not the reason. I like the fellowship and camaraderie, but that's not it either. We have a new, nicely furnished Temple, warm in winter and cool in summer, but that's not more than a small portion of my ardor. Still seeking an answer, I went home and wearily climbed into bed.

I switched on the eleven o'clock news to see if any new catastrophes had developed, and watched the same, drossy, distasteful repetition of "news" I had seen earlier in the evening. Boring repetition, I thought, and switched out the light to get some much needed rest. The news is getting as repetitious as degree meetings, but at least I don't have to watch it.

Suddenly I bolted upright in bed. Is that The answer? Is it because I don't have to go to Lodge meetings that attracts me to them?

Is it because I don't have to spend hours and hours learning ritual that I do it? Is it because I don't have to be a Mason at all that piques my desire to be the best one I possibly can? No doubt these are cogent reasons born of my natural love of freedom, but they still pose the perplexing problem of why?

Suddenly the faces of the three candidates flashed before my mind. Eager, interesting and totally perplexed, they were ready to learn the first lessons in Masonry as I began the lecture. As many times as I have delivered it, I always try to do so as if I was a teacher giving a lesson to an individual student, using the best possible diction and clarity of speech. But I stumbled a couple of times – I must give more study to that passage, so as not to interrupt their train of thought. They must receive this knowledge properly, and it was up to me to do it. And I thoroughly enjoyed doing it. Reason number one.

After Lodge closed, each candidate came up and shook my hand with the usual remark, "Boy, I don't know how you call remember all that work." They are sincere they are visibly moved – they have started on their journey to Master Mason. Reason number two.

In my reverie the thought occurred to me, what if Masonry didn't exist? What if there never had been any society such as Freemasonry? What would those of us who espouse the Craft teach and follow? The question may be moot, because without Masonry, there probably would never have been an America.

But just supposing there never had been any Masonry, and that somehow our country got established and our lives were pretty much as now? How much would you and I miss it? If, of course, we had never heard of it, we would not miss it all. But our lives would be inexorably different.

We would not be able to communicate our love for our fellowman without Masonry. No church, no neighborhood, no community, no nation, can be even a small measure of cohesive action without its influence. If you are going to insist that there are other Fraternities, other clubs, churches and social societies that you can turn to, forget it.

For Freemasonry is the foundation stone of both ancient and modern civil society. Its influence actually led to the formation of every other fraternal society in existence today, and in large measure most of the denominations of churches, not only in this country but world-wide. It is popular to think, for instance, that the British Empire brought Masonry to world-wide existence,

yet the secret societies of the Hindus and Chinese which bore striking resemblance to Freemasonry, existed long before Rudyard Kipling's time. The recitations can be repeated endlessly.

This is why Masonry will never die, nor is it within the power of any man or nation to kill it. It exercises too great an underlying influence on civilization to be thwarted. And when the time comes that its influence is sorely needed, the world will once again turn to it, to embrace its principles and practice its precepts. For after all, Masonry simplified is the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments.

This is why I'm proud to be a very small cog in the vast machinery of Masonry, to assist wherever I can to bring a better life to my Brethren, wheresoever dispersed. Reason number three.

I figuratively winked at the three candidates, rolled over and got the best night's sleep in a long time.

POSTSCRIPT

by Nixon Waterman

It's the kindly hearts of earth that make
This good old world worthwhile.
It's the lips with tender words that make
The care-erasing smile.

And I ask my soul this question when
My goodly gifts I see-
Am I a friend to as many men
As have been good friends to me?

When my brothers speak a word of praise
My wavering will to aid,
I ask if ever their long, long ways
My words have brighter made.

And to my heart I bring again
This eager, earnest plea-
Make me a friend to as many men
As are good, staunch friends to me.

STB - December 1980