

# The Masonic World

## Unknown

All of us live in a plurality of worlds. Each of us inhabits his world of the home, his world of business or profession, his world of pleasure which may be anything from books to baseball. Freemasons live also in the Masonic world, but, curiously enough and rather pitifully, not one in a hundred adventures far into that land. For the majority of Masons the Masonic world begins and ends at the doors of their lodges.

The average Mason reads his lodge circular or Trestleboard, hears occasionally of lodge charities, now and then attends a lodge funeral. More rarely he may be attracted to some interlodge gathering, as when a District Deputy pays a visit to two or more lodges meeting under one roof, or an educational meeting in which several lodges participate.

But unless he is an officer, and a very interested official, or a Freemason with both curiosity and determination, he knows little of the many “foreign countries” of the Masonic world, its broad highways, its numerous bypaths, its beautiful vistas, its lovely landscapes. Like him to whom “a primrose by the rivers brim, was just a simple primrose – and nothing more,” many a Mason believes the Masonic world to be an occasional evening at the lodge – and nothing more.

Yet what a world it really is, and how far it reaches, curiously intertwined with the social and civic worlds, avoiding or meeting them at will. The Masonic world is usually non-existent to the general public, except as the profane occasionally catches sight of it in public ceremonies or newspaper notice of a meeting of Grand Lodge. Which is as it should be since Freemasonry devotes herself to her purposes silently, if not secretly, without ostentation or advertising.

In Jurisdictions where Masters and Wardens Associations function in Masonic Districts, the officers have an opportunity to envisage a larger horizon of their Masonic world than in states where each lodge is a little world unto itself, touching other little lodge worlds only at Grand Lodge. Masters and Wardens Associations bring together the principal officers of all lodges in a given area, affording an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, the solution of puzzling problems and often foster visits by lodge to lodge which makes for broader horizons to all who take part.

The same may be said for those Jurisdictions which have Schools of Instruction, either stationary in one place, traveling from District to District, or held occasionally or periodically at prearranged points which differ from year to year.

Cities afford the opportunity to belong to a Masonic Club, which small towns do not. Masonic Clubs, in which Masons from many lodges, governed by a common purpose, or occupation, meet in fraternal intercourse, have grown by leaps and bounds during the last few years. The employees of one great business may form a Masonic Club; Physicians who are lodge members may form their club; clubs exist in many cities which draw members almost wholly from a given trade. The majority of such Masonic Clubs, which hold a national convention once a year at which unified plans are discussed and furthered. Just now Masonic Club emphasis is put upon education, in which field a noble work has been and is being done.

Some Jurisdictions have looked with some disapproval on Masonic Clubs, fearing that “the tail may try to wag the dog,” but in general Masonic Clubs have been guided by the spirit of the League and have been cooperative in worthy Masonic movements and avoided any conflict with Grand Lodges, in which of course, they must inevitably lose. The very hearts of the Masonic world are the Grand Lodge, and he loses much who does not inform himself of the deliberations of these august bodies. A Grand Secretary would be bewildered, and probably greatly perturbed, if even one Mason in every ten should ask for a copy of the “Proceedings” of the Grand Lodge, yet what a marvelous out pouring of Masonic spirit might result if one Mason in ten did read the annual “Proceedings.” For here is set forth the Alpha and Omega of the Jurisdiction; the acts, the problems, the hopes and the troubles of the Fraternity. Annually, in most states, quarterly in two, here meet the Master and Wardens (in some States only the Masters) sometimes the Past Masters, to legislate for the coming year, discuss problems, appropriate funds for the Home or other Grand Lodge Charity, admonish the lax lodge and praise the leaders, and in general check up and take stock, plan and go forward for another year.

It would be most interesting to learn how many Masons know whether their Grand Lodge has a Masonic Library? How many know whether they help support a Masonic home, and if so, where it is? How many know whether their Grand Lodge engages in a program of Masonic education, and if so, how many have made use of it? Yet these activities of Grand Lodge touch every Mason, in his pocketbook if nowhere else. It may be stated without fear of successful contradiction that no matter how large the State, or how far from the Masonic Home a brother lives, after visiting that Home he will agree that his time and money were well spent. Yet of the multiplied thousands of Masons who give cheerfully to the support of a Home where live the guests of the Fraternity who can no longer fight their own battles; where the orphans of Master Masons are brought up to be self-supporting, happy and successful citizens, not one in hundred ever sees this inspiring and ennobling sight – truly the Grand Canyon and the Yellowstone Park of the Masonic world!

Now and then a Grand Lodge lays a Corner Stone or dedicates a Masonic Temple; in some Jurisdictions the Grand Master empowers particular lodges to perform these functions. As in funerals, the Masonic world here touches the profane world, and as many non-Masons as Masons may observe the ceremonies. But the informed Mason knows of an inner meaning of the deposit of corn and the pouring of the wine and oil, which makes these observances of peculiar significance. Not to have seen them is to have missed one of the views of the Masonic world which is both beautiful and informative.

Every Grand Lodge has a committee on Foreign Correspondence. The reviews of the Masonic worlds by the devoted brother known as the Fraternal Correspondent are published yearly, usually as part of the annual "Proceedings," occasionally in a separate volume. The theory of the Report of the Fraternal Correspondent is simple; it is supposed that Grand Masters and other officers of the Grand Lodge are too busy to read "Proceedings" which are published once each year in each of the forty-nine Jurisdictions of continental United States, and from ten to twenty-five "Proceedings" of foreign Jurisdictions. The Fraternal Correspondent reads and digests them, then comments upon the work of these Grand Lodges, giving a summary of their labors and their accomplishments, noting that which is peculiar, new, different, odd, interesting, that all who run may read.

Alas, these informative reports are read by far less brethren than would be interested, did they only know what they pass by! But should that mythical one brother in every ten – aye, even one in every hundred! – write to ask any Fraternal Correspondent for his report, it is feared that he might suffer an attack of heart failure. Yet no brother can really know his Masonic world who does not read this yearly guide book to the "foreign countries" of other Grand Lodges.

Some seventy-five journals in this country are devoted exclusively to the Masonic world. Some are excellent reading for Masons anywhere; some are local to one Jurisdiction, even to one city. Not to subscribe to at least one is to miss much that is interesting and informative. The Masonic world is very large; the brethren in one Jurisdiction do and experience that which is unknown to the brethren of another. The Masonic journal is the monthly record of that which is worth knowing in the Masonic world and should be a part of the equipment of every interested Freemason.

Several publishing houses are devoted entirely to the production of Masonic books. The reading Mason knows a side of his Fraternal world which the non-reader has never even heard of! Many splendid books have been written of various facets of the jewel which is Freemasonry; her history, her jurisprudence, her symbolism – hundreds on this subject – her charities, her labors for mankind. Not dry, difficult-to-read volumes, but books filled with real Masonic light, to read which is a joy and an education. They are the glasses with which the near-sighted can see the far horizons of freemasonry. Any of these publishing houses will be happy to send literature about these books to the interested. In many lodges "book clubs" are formed, in which each of ten to twenty-five brethren buys a book, and then passes it on to the next brother in the club. receiving

his in return. For the price of one book, the reading brother may thus dip into as many volumes as there brethren in the club.

The Lodge of Research is just becoming well known in this country. Three American Lodges of Research now function, and while they all are new, much is expected of them. In England and Canada are Lodges of Research which are well known, especially the great Quatuor Coronati, No. 2076 (The Four Crowned Martyrs) of London, which has nearly a century behind it.

The Lodge of Research is a regular constituted and Chartered Lodge, but works no degrees, raises no brethren. It is devoted entirely to research into Freemasonry, and the publication and dissemination of papers and reports. A full set of the forty-one bound volumes of the great London Lodge – Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, familiarly known to Librarians as “A.Q.C.” – are all but priceless, comprising as they do the result of the work of historians, antiquarians and Masonic educators for many years. Any Freemason may subscribe to the publication, become a member of the Correspondence Circle of the Lodge and receive the quarterly reports. He who either buys or borrows volumes of the past will find therein a ticket to a new frontier of Freemasonry, and travel in by-ways of the Masonic world which without such a guide book are sealed mysteries.

The Masonic world includes several national movements. All who attend Grand Lodge know of the great George Washington Masonic National Memorial, erected by the Freemasons of the United States at a cost of more than three million dollars. It is to be dedicated on May 12th of this year. The Association meets yearly, and from its labors has resulted this enormous structure which will stand forever – it is built only of granite, marble and concrete; no structural steel being used – as a monument at once to Washington, Freemason, and to the Fraternity which honors itself in honoring him. Coincident with the annual meeting of this Association, the Conference of the Grand Masters meets in Washington, D.C., there to discuss for a day the mutual problems which are common to all Grand Lodges. The reports of these annual meetings are of intense interest. Containing the deliberations of the premier leaders of the Craft, they should be read by every interested Freemason.

The Grand Secretaries also hold a conference, for the discussion of their peculiar problems, as do Masonic Librarians and Educators. While more special than the reports of the Grand Masters Conference, the wanderer in the Masonic world will find in them much of informative interest.

This short sketch of the extent of the Masonic world, like any other sketch, is intended only to be suggestive. The Masonic world has hundreds of other ramifications too numerous even to catalog. But perhaps enough has been said to give an idea of its size and variety. He who will inform himself as here suggested will have no difficulty in following these unnamed pathways into the quiet pastures, the woods and streams of the world of Masonry, where are still waters and cool shade, interest and inspiration, for all who will take the time to travel therein.

*STB - March 1932*