

THE BUILDER.

(By Rt. Rev. Lawrence W. Burt.)

Through all the degrees of Freemasonry there runs a grand theme of accomplishment—the progressive fulfilment of a great task. To safeguard, and yet render that purpose more readily comprehensible to the initiated, this grand Freemasonic theme is veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.

As the symbolism of hieroglyphics and language are used to convey thoughts and ideas from one mind to another, so geometrical figures have ever been used in religion and philosophy to convey to man, through his mind and intuition, the great fundamental truths of life.

Freemasonry, being a science of life, adopted the symbolism of the Builder as its means of instructing the brethren, and from the First Degree to the highest the moral and spiritual truths of our Ancient and Honourable Order, with its wealth of symbolism, centre upon the Master Builder, the Workman, and the Building in the accomplishment of a great and glorious purpose.

So completely has the symbolism of the Builder, his work, his tools and implements been adopted by Freemasonry, to illustrate moral virtues and spiritual values, that it is not surprising to find that, for many, Freemasonry is believed to be derived, in the first instance, from the building crafts of the Middle Ages, or the trade guilds of the sixteenth century. A study of the Volumes of the Sacred Lore, however, reveals that some at least of the Builder symbolism was used centuries earlier. If we study the Christian Scriptures we find several instances where St. Paul used this symbolism. In 1 Cor., 3, 10, he wrote:

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise **master builder**, I have laid the foundation."

And in his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul speaks of **God** as a "builder and maker" in the words:

"For he looked for a city, which bath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. XI, 10.)

The Lord Christ also used this symbolism and said:

"Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." (Matt. 21, 42.)

While in the Acts of the Apostles (IV, 10-11) we read:

"Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised up from the dead . . . This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

That surely is a most illuminating statement for the M.M.M.

But more extraordinary is the fact that we find the same symbolism in use centuries earlier, for we read in Psalms CXVIII. 22:

"The stone which the builder rejected is become the head stone of the corner."

In the Book of Proverbs (VIII, 27-30. R.V.), we have this interesting passage: "When He established the heavens I was there. when He set the **compass** upon the face of the deep, when He marked out the foundations of the earth: then was I by Him as a **master-workman**."

Now to the glory of T.G.A.O.T.U.. or in the Name of Him Who plans and designs creation, the candidate, at his initiation, is enrolled in the ranks of the workmen as an Entered Apprentice Freemason—he is apprenticed to the great work. What more appropriate symbolism could be employed to designate man's relation to the Master Builder—his Creator—and at the same time represent man's task in creative evolution? We need to realise that creation did not cease at the beginning of existence. Creation is an eternal process, and the G.A.O.T.U. is still engaged in creating man into His own image, evolving perfection through man and in all creation. The candidate apprentices himself to become a workman in that stupendous task.

This is indeed an inspiring thought—that man can apprentice himself to become a **builder** employed in building the temple, designed by the G.A.O.T.U., and thus co-operate in God's plan for mankind, which is perfection through evolution, and can become employed in building the temple of perfected humanity.

St. Paul expressed this thought when he wrote:

"For we are labourers together with God . . . ye are God's building." (1 Cor. III., 9.)

The wonder of it is that the Temple we are employed in building is no earthly temple; but that glorious temple, eternal in the heavens, of which King Solomon's was but a symbol.

"A building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. V., 1.)

The Entered Apprentice, at his initiation, is presented with W.Ts., and is set the task of self-development, a task that requires ages of effort. It is a never-ending task until the apprentice, by his own effort, passes through all stages of craftsmanship, of spiritual evolution, and attains to union with the Master Builder, with the Divine. We are here reminded of that thought expressed by Charles Kingsley:

"We knew of old that God, the Master Builder, was so wise that He could make all things, but, behold, He is infinitely wiser than ever we thought, in that He can make all things make themselves,"

or, shall we say: "He can make all things **perfect** themselves."

In the grand scheme of human existence the E.A. symbolises that stage of human evolution when the individual, realising something of the grandeur of God's plan for man, which is perfection through evolution, dedicates himself to co-operate in that plan by true worship to God through service to mankind. Through the centuries Freemasons—the Builders—are employed shaping, moulding, polishing and adorning the living stones for that spiritual temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, as St. Peter states in his Epistle:

"Ye also as living stones are built up into a spiritual house." (I Peter II, 5.)

The implements the Builders use in this stupendous task are the powers of the soul: **intuition** to catch and interpret the plan of the Master Builder, the **power of thought** to create, and the directing power of the Will to achieve, for skill without exertion is of little avail. As the Builder selflessly labours for the uplift of mankind, his own soul powers develop and increase, and this is typified by the progress made in our Freemasonic Science. Commencing as an E.A., the neophyte, by the fulfilment of his duties, proves himself, and is passed a F. Craftsman, is raised a ACM., advanced a M.M.M., is progressively created an Excellent Master, and so on to the highest rank.

Such is the high calling of the true Freemason—a Builder of the spiritual temple of perfected humanity, a worker in the quarries of life, aiding the soul development of mankind that each individual may in due time fit into his appointed place according to the plan of the Master Builder, the G.A.O.T.U.

Slowly, but definitely, through the ages, humanity has progressed under the guidance and inspiration of mighty Teachers, from primitive savagery to our modern achievement. Something of that onward march is recorded in the history and archaeology of past nations and civilisations, each of which contributed its note to the chorus of evolving perfection. During the lifetime of the Aryan Race, records tell of the splendour of Ancient India, with its emphasis on the spiritual nature of man. Ancient Egypt has bequeathed to us unmistakable evidence of its high scientific knowledge and learning. The Persian civilisation sounded the note of unity, and today we read of the "Glory that was Rome and the Beauty that was Greece."

Then, lastly, there is this western civilisation which took its birth from the message sounded by the Lord Christ, Who stressed the value of the human individual in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. By His sublime example of self-sacrifice, the Lord Christ opened the way for man's redemption from tyranny and ignorance, making possible the development of modern science with its material wonders and benefits. Step by step through the ages humanity evolved man's physical organism, our emotional and artistic nature, and mental and analytical faculties. But the upward trend must not delay here, greater achievements lie immediately ahead, involving the unfoldment of spiritual powers and capacities, for:

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," (1 Cor. II, 9.)

The world chaos and the tragic world war, with its incredible horrors, are the result of unbalanced development. The concrete mind, which analyses, separates, divides, eclipsed man's moral and spiritual faculties, gave rise to competition and rivalry in human relationships, with soulless materialism dominating human affairs.

To restore the balance, which will bring peace on earth and goodwill to all men, the synthetic mind, the faculty of seeing the underlying unity in all beings, must be developed, also the intuition, the voice of the spiritual self, needs to be awakened. Co-operation, and mutual aid, must supplant competition and selfish possessiveness—observing the golden rule in all phases of human life without distinctions.

The noble principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth must not be restricted to the Brotherhood of Freemasons; but must expand to include the Brotherhood of Humanity. The World Charter, supported by 50 United Nations at San Francisco, is an excellent beginning—a foundation well and truly laid. Freemasons, as Builders of the G.A.O.T.U., must devote head, heart and hand to erect a new civilisation on that foundation, to the glory of the Master Builder, and for the perfection of humanity.

These things shall be a loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known shall rise
With flame of freedom in their souls,
And light of science in their eyes.
They shall be gentle, brave and strong
To spill no drop of blood, but dare
All that may plant man's lordship firm
On earth and fire, and sea and air.
Nation with nation, land with land,
Unharm'd shall live as comrades free;
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity. —J. R. Lowell.

"Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone;

"In Whom all the temple fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;

"In Whom ye also are build'd together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians II, 19-22.)
—"N.S.W. Freemason."