

FINER SPIRITUAL EVALUATION.

Oration Given at Xenophon Consecration by V.W. Bro, C. E. Butler, Grand Chaplain.

Brethren, you are about to join in the responsibility of constituting a new Lodge. Its number being 200 on the register of the Grand Lodge makes it an occasion of great rejoicing, and we wholeheartedly congratulate the foundation members upon their zeal and enterprise in their new venture. Masonry in this State is certainly growing apace as far as numbers is concerned, but the most important question arises: "Is it growing as rapidly in the true spirit and intention of Freemasonry?" To many of us that becomes a question of major importance when making a new Lodge, and should be of vital concern in the E. and W. as well as the N. and S. of any such Lodge.

To erect an enduring edifice, it is first necessary to create a true and strong foundation. To that end, and to constitute properly this L., we must proceed to consecrate it. By consecration, we mean the act of setting apart from a common to a sacred use, the material and physical components that represent a L.

This changing over from common to sacred use is not the result of some mystical alteration in the material and physical things themselves, but it is to be the commencement of a new attitude, a changed spirit begun within the soul of the one who is to view and re-view these self-same objects, and he may use them for a higher purpose. It is thus to be a deeper spiritual conception of what Freemasonry is and that for which it stands.

As the purpose of this Lodge will be to make men true Freemasons, there must be very serious consideration of this basic aspect of the Craft. No matter how carefully new members are chosen from those who profess a belief in God, and who are of strict morals, we must fully appreciate the fundamental differences there are in human nature. These differences have been exemplified in the well-known couplet:—

"Two men looked out from their prison bars;
The one saw the mud, the other the stars."

Here, then, were two men in the same environment, but what a difference in perception! One was concerned only with the material; the other with the spiritual. I suggest that the true meaning and spirit of Freemasonry is to encourage men to develop that finer perception that will see the stars beyond the mud, in spite of their particular environment.

It is no easy task to make men true craftsmen, for before we can inspire others to build bravely and wisely, we must first of all become master builders ourselves. The apprentice depends so much on the finer perceptions of those who would make him a craftsman, that we call say on his behalf:

"Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part, new depths of the divine."
(Browning.)

Our rituals express in most beautiful language the rules and regulations encouraging the correct use of the tools, the kind of wood and stone to be used, as well as the form and feature of the intended structure. We can become excellent ritualists—even letter perfect—and yet miss the spiritual interpretation necessary to inspire the vision that sees the stars beyond the mud. We need to emphasise again the rebuke of Browning when he says:

"Earth's cramm'd with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes."

We must cultivate assiduously that finer spiritual insight that creates a fuller, richer belief in God as the G.A.O.T.U., expressing itself in a deeper spirit of reverence. It is only this spirit of reverence that will give purpose and meaning to our belief in God and all His works, which will inspire trust in and understanding of our fellow men, and from which are evolved those virtues that characterise a true Freemason.

In choosing the name of Xenophon to distinguish the L., the members will no doubt by precept and example during the passing years, extol the virtues of their choice, by emphasising his skill and pertinacity as a military leader, by praising his subtle reasoning as a philosopher, and by commending his ability as a historian. It will also be necessary, however to appraise the man, his worth, his work, by his belief in the Divine government of the world and his selection of friends who were similarly minded. When writing of one of his friends, he first explains and extols his piety, for without that as a foundation, no other virtues can be imagined. Having enumerated the virtues of which every man of honour and integrity must be possessed, he touches on others which are creditable in men, such as modesty, readiness to render service, cheerfulness, kindness, and faith and goodwill towards allies and friends.

This encourages us to think of Xenophon as having a clear spiritual insight, based on piety and reverence, undoubtedly inspired by his master, Socrates, who prayed:

"Beloved All-Father, and all you gods that haunt this place, grant me to be beautiful in the inner man, and all have of outer things to be one with those within! May I count only the wise man rich, and may my store of gold be such as none but the good may bear. Anything more? That prayer, I think, is enough for men."

Yes, it was enough for Socrates, and in the light of our new day, enough for all men. May the continuity and spiritual vision of that prayer inspire the members of this L. to become worthy of all prosperity and blessing.

So mote it be.

—"WA. Craftsman."