

THE
MASONIC LADDER:
OR THE
Nine Steps to Ancient Freemasonry,
BEING
A PRACTICAL EXHIBIT, IN PROSE AND VERSE,
OF THE
MORAL PRECEPTS, TRADITIONS,

Scriptural Instructions and Allegories

OF THE DEGREES OF

ENTERED APPRENTICE, FELLOW CRAFT, MASTER MASON,

MARK MASTER, PAST MASTER, MOST EXCELLENT MASTER, ROYAL ARCH
MASON, ROYAL MASTER AND SELECT MASTER,

By JOHN SHERER,

Compiler of the "Masonic Carpets of Blue Lodge, Chapter and Council
Masonry," and other Masonic Publications.

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MADE IN THE U.S.A.

TO

The Great Masonic Brotherhood,

“A MULTITUDE, WHICH NO MAN CAN NUMBER, OF ALL NATIONS
AND KINDREDS AND PEOPLE AND TONGUES;”

WORSHIPPING A COMMON DEITY; JOINING HANDS AROUND A COMMON ALTAR;
ENGAGED UPON LIKE DEEDS OF BENEFICENCE ON EARTH,
AND CASTING HOPE'S STRONG ANCHOR UPON
THE SAME HEAVENLY SHORE;

The Masonic Ladder,

ILLUSTRATING THE THREE GREAT SYSTEMS OF SYMBOLICAL,
CAPITULAR AND CRYPTIC MASONRY,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND FRATERNALLY

Dedicated,

BY JOHN SHERER.

PREFACE.

IN presenting a new volume to the Masonic Fraternity, and soliciting their patronage for it, it is incumbent on the compiler to show wherein it differs from, and claims superiority over, other publications already in the market.

The great number of Masons do not sufficiently discriminate between the doctrines, covenants and aims of the different degrees. The Three, Seven, or Nine Degrees, conferred in the various Masonic bodies, are apt to be jumbled up in the minds of their recipients, as though they were only so many sections of the same Degree. The more striking parts of the ceremony are remembered, while the instructions, which give the rational explanations of the emblems, are forgotten. Something, then, is needed which the brother can take home with him and read, to refresh his mind upon what is, in reality, the only practical part of the Masonic institution. For this part the "Monitor" is used, and

so far as it goes it supplies that want. But the "Monitor" is not sufficiently diffuse. There is not sufficient latitude given to the historical branch of the subject; nor in the moral application of Masonry is the "Monitor" precise and distinct. Something more has been wanted by generations of Masons, and it is strange that none of the Masonic authors have attempted to supply that want.

"The Masonic Ladder" has been prepared with reference to this very want. It is so arranged that the brother may, by its perusal, recall the more striking parts of the Degrees he has taken; may judge of the extent of his covenants; may understand what bearings the history and geography of the Holy Land have upon the traditions that have been communicated to him; and may trace out to its full extent the excellent morality taught in each Degree. At the same time that "The Masonic Ladder" assists the brother to remount the steps he has taken, and enjoy over again the pleasant thoughts experienced when he first took them, they communicate no secrets to an outsider. Like the Bible itself, which is full of Masonic secrets to the

initiated, "The Masonic Ladder" can not open the way to the arcana of the Order save to those who have once penetrated to them.

The compiler has had able assistance in the preparation of this volume, and all the matter contained in it, whether original or selected, has been re-written and adapted to the plan upon which the book was prepared.

The compiler is so well known as the author and publisher of Sherer's "Masonic Carpets" and "Masonic Degree-Books," that he will be indulged in saying that "The Masonic Ladder" is prepared in strict accordance with those well-known and popular productions. The form of the Emblems, and the order of their arrangement, were guides in combining "The Masonic Ladder," so that the two may go together. Every Lodge that has heretofore purchased a Carpet, or may hereafter supply itself with a Degree-Book, can now have a volume explanatory of it. This is a desideratum long sought for by the Lodges.

THE FIRST ORDER IN FREEMASONRY.

THE SYMBOLICAL DEGREES:

CONSISTING OF

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE,
THE FELLOW CRAFT,
AND
THE MASTER MASON.

THESE three Degrees are conferred, according to the system adopted throughout the Masonic world, in Lodges of Symbolical Masonry. The ballot is taken in the Third or Master Mason's Degree, absolute unanimity being essential to an election. All discipline for vice, immorality, improprieties, and the violation of Masonic laws, originates in this Order of Masonry.

ASK, and ye shall receive;
SEEK, ye shall surely find;
KNOCK, ye shall no resistance meet,
If come with ready mind;
For all that ask, and ask aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

Lay down the bow and spear;
Resign the sword and shield:
Forget the *arts of warfare* here,
The *arms of peace* to wield;
For all that seek, and seek aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

Bring hither thoughts of peace;
Bring hither words of love:
Diffuse the pure and holy joy,
That cometh from above;
For all that knock, and knock aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

ASK help of Him that's high;
SEEK grace of Him that's true:
KNOCK patiently, the hand is nigh,
Will open unto you;
For all that ASK, SEEK, KNOCK aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE.

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE.

WHERE two or three assemble round
In work the Lord approves,
His spirit with the group is found
For 'tis the place He loves:
Be now all hearts to friendship given,
For we, the Sons of Light, are *seven*.

Bring here the Gavel and the Gauge,
Those implements renowned;
And from each conscience disengage
The faults that there abound:
Be now afar each folly driven,
For we, the Sons of Light, are *seven*.

Display the Law, the volume grace
With Compass and with Square;
Illume the tapers in their place,
And all for work prepare:
We'll please our Master well this even,
For we, the Sons of Light, are *seven*.

Spread o'er us yon rich Canopy,
Set up the Ladder high,
That angel-visitants may see
And from their stations fly:
Where Faith, Hope, Charity have striven,
And we, the Sons of Light, are *seven*.

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE.

THE FIRST SECTION.

THE THEORY OF THE DEGREE OF ENTERED APPRENTICE.

THE Degree of Entered Apprentice is the initial letter of the Masonic alphabet, the first round in the ladder of grades, variously numbering three, seven, nine, eleven, twenty-nine, one hundred and twenty-five, or whatever figures the fancy of modern ritualists may assume to embrace all the Degrees of Freemasonry. An Entered Apprentice is a beginner, a neophyte. All that is explained to him in the First Degree must be in the sense of laying down a foundation; for he can have no previous information or instruction upon which to base it.

Yet the Entered Apprentice, in theory, is *already a Mason*, even before he enters the Lodge; that is, he must be already *prepared in heart*, for there is nothing in Masonic science that can do the work of heart-preparation. And the neophyte must have had some exoteric knowledge of Masonry as a public institution, because he is required to declare that "he has long entertained a favorable opinion of it."

The theory which makes the character of the Entered

Apprentice that of "a hewer of wood and drawer of water" does not militate against the fact that to his more advanced brethren he is "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a *brother beloved*."

ASK AND RECEIVE.—The manner of application at the door of God's favor, symbolized in the Closed Door, is described in various passages. God said to Solomon: "Ask what I shall give thee." Elsewhere it is recorded: "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

In close connection with the symbolism of the Closed Door is that of the Three Knocks, peculiar to the Masonic Ritual. A splendid genius, now deceased, extending the Masonic theory beyond the vale of time, figures the Grand Master of the Universe standing in the Celestial Orient upon "the appointed day," and giving the Three Knocks which shall summon the sheeted dead. At the first knock, the ground of their interment begins to heave with expectation. All nature is hushed. Earth and heaven await with trembling the consummation. At the second knock, bone comes to his fellow, flesh re-clothes them; blood moves once more through the veins, and the dead are ready for the last summons. It falls, and at once the armies of the dead arise, stand erect, facing the East, and listen to the words of their Maker!

RIGHT ANGLES, HORIZONTALS, AND PERPENDICULARS.
Every thing in Masonic Science admits of a rational

explanation. In truth, Freemasonry is *the perfection of reason*. All its instructions conform to mathematical ideas, and the simplest drawings of *right angles*, *horizontals*, and *perpendiculars* form emblems of greater significance upon its trestle-board. As the architect would say that "all the parts of his edifice are tested by those three emblems, the *square*, the *level*, and the *plumb*, because they are the instruments by which the *right angle*, the *horizontal*, and the *perpendicular* are made upon his drawing," so in *Freemasonry*, which is but another name for *moral architecture*, all methods of communication known to the ancient Craft are to be subjected to the same tests, and *such as fail are spurious*. Thus these simple emblems, the first upon the trestle-board, become among the most important. When two persons meet, who are able to recount similar necessities, trials, and successes, what mutual disclosures take place! What trustful communications, what tender sympathy is manifested! Then one soul gushes out and flows over into the other, and time steals rapidly on. Such is the nature of Masonic intercourse between sympathetic hearts.

THE DAGGER.—In the Master Mason's lecture, the emblem of "The Sword pointing to the naked Heart" expresses the judgment reserved to the last day for those who presumptuously sin against God and their fellow-men. The same idea is conveyed, but in a more restricted form, by the emblem of the Dagger. It reminds us that there is an inward monitor, *the conscience*, which will not be silent when the heart has resolved upon sin. A person entering the Masonic institution with a view to betray its secrets and violate its covenants need not

think that our Order has no avenger. The voice of God within him is our avenger, and the eternal justice of Him who has wisely permitted the existence of this Society for countless ages speaks even now through that voice to his heart, and will speak in thunder-tones to his guilty soul on the Judgment-day. It needs not that any penalty be inflicted by the Craft upon the betrayer of secrets save the necessary discipline of expulsion. We can leave the guilty in the hands of God, who is the avenger of his own laws.

Nor can the utmost treachery of evil men divulge what it is our interest as a society to preserve. Our secrets are lawful and honorable. They were intrusted in peace and honor to the Masons of ancient times, and they will be so transmitted to the ages to come.

THE APRON.—There are two prominent ideas connected with the Masonic use of the Apron: that of protecting the garments from the defilement of the materials with which the practical builders wrought, and that of the distinguishing mark or badge of the Craft. The first notice in Scripture of an Apron, is where our first parents, having their eyes opened, and seeing themselves naked, sewed together fig-leaves and made themselves aprons. But this was not worn for a purpose analogous to ours. The Masonic Apron is exhibited as a continual memento, both to himself and those around him, that he is under peculiar engagements to keep his conscience void of offense, both to God and man.

But the idea, fully reviewed, becomes still more tender and affecting. The Masonic Apron is not made of material of an ordinary sort, such as is used for garments of warmth, decency, or protection. It is made of *lamb-*

skin, and that only, and it thus incorporates into its real ordinary meaning all that pertains to that Divine emblem of innocence. This makes up one of the finest allegories in Freemasonry, and those members of the Fraternity who are Christians see in their Apron every thing taught in the Altar, the Thorny Crown, and the Cross.

THE TWENTY-FOUR INCH GAUGE.—The proper division of our time involves every thing useful in our life. *Our time is our life*; they expire together. He who wastes the one, wastes the other. Nothing but a systematic distribution of time can accomplish the purposes for which we were placed in this world. A portion for God, a portion for needful avocations, a portion for refreshment and sleep—this is the division that Freemasonry enjoins. It were well for every member of the Craft to resolve, in his moments of prayerful reflection, that he will improve, in the best manner possible, all his leisure moments in growing in morality, and to be daily increasing his moral stature in conformity with the lessons inculcated upon the Masonic trestle-board.

THE COMMON GAVEL.—The necessity of a great and radical removing of those evil things that incrust and encumber the conscience is as great as that of breaking off the outside crust and envelopments from the marble before a perfect statue can be formed. The emblem that suggests this necessity is the Gospel. How greatly the beauty of the immortal soul is disfigured, its usefulness impaired, its happiness destroyed, and the God who made it, dishonored, for want of the proper use of this simple instrument for cleansing, trimming, and lightening the soil!

THE THREE GREAT LIGHTS.—The combination of the

three objects, the *Holy Bible*, the *Square*, and the *Compass*, under this denomination, is not incongruous when the character of the instructions they convey to the Masonic mind is considered. The first guides our *faith*, the second our *works*, the third our *passions*. Belief, labor, spirit—these are the three ideas conjoined in this beautiful trio. It is not the reverence we bear to them as tangible objects that is considered here. The Mason reveres *the Bible*; he does not revere any other tangible object. But these three objects are conjoined here simply as emblems, or moral instructors, teaching great inward lessons by outward forms.

THE THREE LESSER LIGHTS.—Pursuing the imagery employed in the last paragraph, we make the three lesser lights, or mediums through which instruction is conveyed to the Craft, to be the Sun, Moon, and Master of the Lodge. The government of the Master is analogous to that exercised over the day by the Sun, over the night by the Moon—a thought which is amplified in the lectures of the Past Master. Much care is exercised in the ritual of the Entered Apprentice to teach the respect due to the Master of the Lodge, without which, order would be lost and innovations flood the Institution.

THE ALTAR.—As a support to the copy of the Holy Scriptures, which forms so essential a piece in the furniture of the Lodge, the Altar would be a highly conspicuous object, were there no other meaning conveyed by it. As an emblem, however, it calls to mind the piety of Abel, Noah, Abraham, and other Old Testament worthies, who are recorded as the builders of altars. It more particularly suggests a sacrifice of prayer and praise to God.