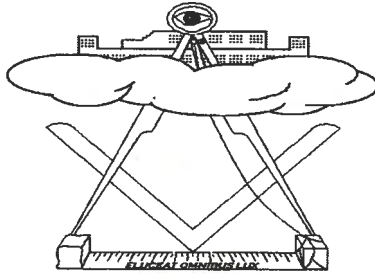


HONOLULU MASONIC



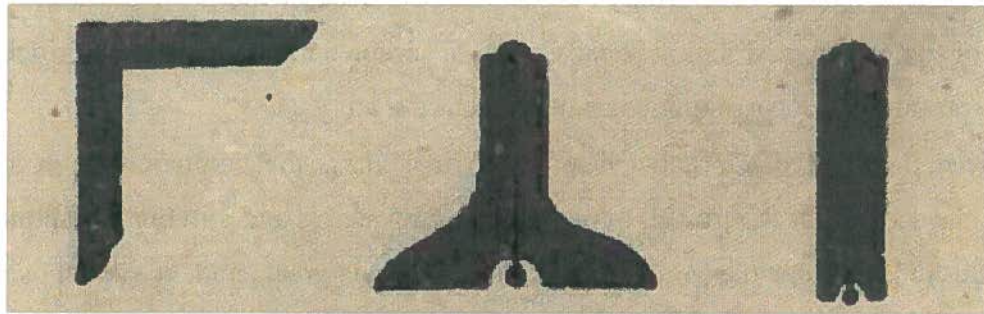
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Working Tools of the Second Degree

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Produced in the frontispiece of Charles W. Moore's *New Masonic Trestle-board*

Introduction

In the First, or Entered Apprentice, Degree we learn the working tools are the 24" Gauge and the Gavel.¹ With these tools in hand, the work done by the Entered Apprentice could be considered cruder than that of the Fellow Craft; he completes the preliminary work that prepares the materials for more expert hands. What we see in the Second, or Fellow Craft, Degree are tools that deliver greater precision to the work and allow it to be set in its proper place, namely the Level, the Plumb, and the Square.

Similar to the tools in all of the Masonic degrees, the tools of the Fellow Craft derive from the Operative Mason's practical and functional use on the work-site of the actual tools symbolised in this degree. In contrast, in Freemasonry, these tools are used allegorically to provide moral instruction, as follows.

The Level

The Level is a symbol of equality, but we should not assume that it suggests the need for equality in all aspects of society. There is a recognition that each of us has different skills; some lead and exercise authority over others, others are less physically capable and require protection against misfortune and the undesirable vicissitudes of life. Rather, it is in the essence of what it is to be human that all are equal, and more particularly in the sight of God; that none can escape the inexorable slide of aging and infirmity and, ultimately, death – the great leveller; and that all, regardless of station or class, should equally observe accepted moral and ethical principles whose aims are to produce a just, harmonious, and productive society.

Indeed, the Entered Apprentice hears in his final charge that "monarchs have, for a season, exchanged the sceptre for the trowel, to patronize our mysteries and join our assemblies". On the one hand, this indicates that the Masonic institution is of such great eminence that those occupying the highest offices in the land would not think it beneath their dignity to join Masonic assemblies. On the other, it shows that, in order to join Masonic assemblies, the accoutrements of public and civil office must be left at the door, and with them all the trappings and authority of high office such that all in the lodge room are equal. Moreover, while the Craft is at labour, the Senior Warden

¹ Also the chisel in British and related jurisdictions – see a former paper on the First Degree Working Tools for a discussion of this aspect of jurisdictional differences.

presides over the Lodge on behalf of the Master, and as such all “are on a common level of subordination”.² Thus, it is appropriate that the Level is his jewel.

While not explicitly a part of the Masonic catechism, with the foregoing thoughts in mind (of seeing oneself as equal to all others and willing to be placed under the direction of others regardless of station), we can also infer the need for humility from all Masons.

The Plumb

The Plumb “is a symbol of rectitude of conduct and inculcates that integrity of life and undeviating course of moral uprightness which can alone distinguish the good and just man.”³ Deviating from the course set by the Plumb means the edifice is no longer upright and in that state has inherent weakness such that it is at risk of collapse. Similarly, deviation by the Mason from the rectitude of proper conduct leads to weakness in his moral structure.

The Square⁴

The Square symbolises morality and is one of the greater lights of Freemasonry guiding Masons towards proper conduct in their every-day life. This is particularly true when conjoined with the compass which admonishes the Mason to keep his actions circumscribed and “within due bounds”. This reminds again of the principle of morality; of keeping one’s desires and passions in check, particularly where their expression might impinge upon the liberties and freedoms of others. Together they constitute the diarchy of the Master’s emblems.

While the Square is most regularly thought of as a symbol of morality in Masonic teaching, as outlined above, the Master, when closing the Lodge, also urges his Brethren to “part upon the Square”. Thus the Square also alludes to the way Brethren deal with each other (and with others outside the Fraternity). That is, in a way that leaves all feeling satisfied that they have received their due and that they have worked together in Masonic harmony, not with the intent of cheating or defrauding fellow brethren. But this is a principle now not only peculiar to Masonry; the term

² Albert G. Mackay, *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, Philadelphia : Moss and Company, 1874, p. 466.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 588.

⁴ Further to the discussion here on the accepted symbolism of the Square, Charles W. Leadbeater, an author of Egyptian mysteries, outlines some of the characteristics of the ancient versions of Masonic operative tools. For example, the “mathematical square ... has lost its full shape, and is now represented only by one corner of the square”, see C. W. Leadbeater, *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry*, Madras, India : The Theosophical Publishing House, 1926, para 230.

“fair and square” is often heard to denote a similar notion indicating the way in which we should treat others outside the Lodge room, which also contributes to a strong sense of morality.

Further Remarks on the Comparison of the Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft Tools

With some of the concepts from this, and a former paper on the First Degree working tools, in mind, one can divine a parallel between the first two degrees of Freemasonry, as well as the progression of brethren long the path of Masonic enlightenment and in the toil of erecting their spiritual temple. The work of an Entered Apprentice is cruder; and the tools that reflect his work provide broad guidance on the direction in which an Entered Apprentice should take his life. However, a Brother arrives at a point as a Fellow Craft where finer adjustment can be made to ensure the more “crude work” done as an Entered Apprentice in building his moral edifice accords with his overall spiritual plans. The more exacting nature required of the Square, Plumb, and Level will “try and adjust” the moral and spiritual development of an Entered Apprentice as they continue their journey as a Fellow Craft and ensure that the moral and spiritual path he is on is the correct one.

Conclusion

The tools of the Entered Apprentice can be thought of as preparatory; the 24”Gauge to divide the day amongst a Brother’s primary requirements, the Common Gavel (and chisel) to labour and crudely fashion. While the tools of the Second Degree are better used to ensure the correctness of the work done and to put it in its proper place – the Plumb for uprightness, the Level to prove horizontals, and the Square to try and adjust right angles. Indeed, the excellent instruction from Mackay is that the Entered Apprentice tools “prepare his mind for the reception of the great truths which are hereafter to be unfolded to him; as a Fellow Craft, to mark their importance and adapt them to their proper uses.”⁵

The Fellow Craft Degree could therefore be thought of as a period for reflection on a Brother’s journey as an Entered Apprentice and to ensure that his labours have been expended in

⁵ He goes further in considering the tools of the Master which are ‘to adorn their beauty by the practice of brotherly love and kindness, the cement that binds all Masons in one common fraternity.’ See Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

the right endeavours, trying and adjusting his efforts towards the goal of moral and spiritual perfection.

Mackay ascribes to the Square the character of being “one of the most important and significant symbols in Freemasonry.”⁶ However, it forms but one pillar of a complex and interconnected system of philosophy and allegory to guide the just and upright Mason on his path. The others Mackay might have included amongst the Square in importance are the other two tools listed here that constitute the tools of the Fellow Craft, but also the Compasses.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 735.

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