



A MASONIC MINUTE

*The Craftsmen
have done their duty*

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2013

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Recently in this Grand Jurisdiction, there have been Especial Communications of Grand Lodge summoned for the purpose of Dedicating new Lodge Halls in Timmins and St. Thomas. During the Ceremony of Dedication the Grand Master directs and dismisses the three principal officers (Deputy Grand Master, Grand Senior and Grand Junior Wardens) to make an examination of the hall using the implements of Operative Masonry to test symbolically those parts of the building that should be square, level, and plumb. On their return to the lodge room each, in turn reports that *“the Craftsmen have done their duty.”*

It is pertinent to observe that the tools employed in the ceremony – square, level, and plumb rule – are explained to the Entered Apprentice as the Moveable Jewels worn by the three principal officers of the Lodge and are the working tools presented to the Fellowcraft. With them the Craftsman tests the precision and accuracy of his work. It may also be noted that the Lodge is opened in the Second Degree for the Ceremony of Dedication.

Michael Armstrong relates this tale. *“The ancient Romans had a tradition: whenever one of their engineers constructed an arch, as the capstone was hoisted into place, the engineer assumed responsibility for his work in the most profound way possible: he stood under the arch.”*

In the days of Operative Masonry it was crucial that the workmanship was of the highest order, true and trusty *“according to the rules of architecture,”* otherwise the whole structure was in danger of collapsing. The consummate skill of our ancient brethren – the Architects and Master Masons of the Middle Ages – has endured in the magnificent buildings, ecclesiastical and secular, they erected in stone

throughout Europe. These great edifices stand today as monuments of unsurpassed architectural glory, a testimony to the skill and ability of the Craftsmen.

Herein are both inspiration by example and a cautionary tale by analogy for us as Speculative Masons. As Free and Accepted Masons, what is the Craftsman's duty? What is it that we are endeavouring to build today? And how are we going about it? Are we prepared to undergo years of "apprenticeship" learning our trade to ensure that our work will stand the test of time? In other words are we engaged in the serious pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our Masonic journey?

In the Grand Master's Address to the fifth Annual Communication of Grand Lodge on July 11, 1860, M.W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson reminded the Brethren that "*for every right there is a parallel duty.*" The rights and privileges accorded by Freemasonry are abundant; the duties arising there from are many. The Constitution of Grand Lodge defines our legal rights; the Obligations taken and the Charges delivered in the Three Degrees delineate, reiterate, and emphasize the principles of morality and virtue that are our bounden duty to observe. There is no free lunch in Freemasonry.

At the present time there appears to be a renewed interest in associationalism in general and fraternalism in particular. Active lodges continue to initiate an increasing number of candidates – keen young men seriously seeking something they have not been able to find elsewhere to satisfy their quest for knowledge and understanding of their place in the world. All too often their expectations are not realized, and the statistics reported by the Grand Secretary indicate that resignations and suspensions continue to exceed initiations. As a result our total membership in Ontario declines annually. There are those that suggest that Freemasonry is an endangered species, that apathy is our greatest danger.

William Pollard articulated the challenge facing us: "*It is the responsibility of leadership to provide opportunity, and the responsibility of individuals to contribute.*" In this fraternal environment, every Craftsman will exercise his rights with restraint, and embrace his duties with enthusiasm and resolve. It would be well to heed the admonition of Abraham Lincoln: "*You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.*" May it be said of our generation, "*The Craftsmen have done their duty.*"

Raymond S.J. Daniels, 2013