

HIEROGLYPHICAL EMBLEMS

Portions of our degree lectures are based on monitors published by William Preston in England and Thomas Smith Webb in America. These monitors refer to the hieroglyphical emblems of the Master Mason Degree as inculcating many useful lessons, extending knowledge and promoting virtue. It would appear that these emblems and their explanations were once considered esoteric and therefore were unwritten. However, it does not appear that these emblems were ever part of the third degree conferral itself, and there is no reference to them as such in the *Emulation* ritual used by many lodges in England.

The following thoughts are offered to supplement the explanation of the hieroglyphical emblems found in our California *Monitor*.

The Three Steps reminds us how each of youth, manhood, and old age has its own particular duties, privileges, and problems, and each calls for its own unique philosophy. They also refer to the three stages of our Masonic advancement: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason.

The Pot of Incense is "an emblem of a pure heart." The pot refers to the heart which has been considered the repository of the human spirit and conscience. Just as incense is sometimes used in religious services to symbolize the prayers and thanksgiving of the people ascending to the Divine, the incense which burns in the pot is a symbol of our heartfelt prayer and thanksgiving. Our hearts should thus glow with prayer and thanksgiving for the blessings we enjoy.

The Bee Hive is a symbol of both industry and cooperation. We should never be content with the current state of things but continue to work for the improvement of our own welfare and that of others. By implication, it is a symbol also of social obligation and reciprocal love and friendship. As in the most crowded hive bees live in peace and harmony with their fellows, we are reminded that, by working together, we are greater than the sum of our parts.

The Book of Constitutions Guarded by the Tyler's Sword is a symbol of silence and circumspection. The Book of Constitutions represents the rules and regulations

adopted by the craft for its governance, central to which are the modes of recognition and their secrecy. The Tyler's Sword guards the craft while at labor and represents watchfulness in guarding against intrusion. It reminds us of the circumspection required in preserving our Masonic secrets.

The Sword Pointing to a Naked Heart symbolizes justice. This emblem was probably adopted by William Preston from early Masonic initiation ceremonies on the Continent which use swords pointed at the candidate to remind him that sooner or later he will be held accountable, even if the only judge is his conscience, represented by the heart.

The All-Seeing Eye symbolizes the watchful care of the Great Architect which reassures us that our hope is justified. It also reminds us that our thoughts and deeds are known and that we should act appropriately. The eye in many cultures has been a symbol for God. The All-Seeing Eye may be found above the pyramid on The Great Seal of the United States printed on the reverse side of a one dollar bill.

The Anchor and Ark is a symbol of hope. The Biblical story of the deluge and the ark remind us that Divine Providence will find a way to deliver us from adversity. The anchor represents the safe haven we hope to attain when we are translated from this imperfect to that all perfect lodge where the Supreme Grand Master of the Universe forever presides. The anchor and ark therefore represent our hope for safe passage from this life to another.

The Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid is the Pythagorean Theorem and is used to solve for the length of a side of a right triangle, thusly:

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

Given the distance of a mountain and the angle of sight to its top, mathematics may determine its height. Tunnels are driven through mountains from both sides to meet by means of measurements calculated using this theorem. Navigation of the seas depends upon it.

It is sometimes known as the Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid, because that was the theorem's place in Euclid's book of numbered problems in geometry, written about two centuries after Pythagoras. Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher who traveled the Mediterranean region in search of further enlightenment, just as we should

symbolically make our personal journey seeking similar enlightenment. Studying harmony in the universe to understand the Divine can be traced back to the philosophical school surrounding Pythagoras and his theory of the harmony or music of the spheres. The Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid appears on the frontispiece of Anderson's Constitutions, published in 1723, which is said to be the earliest example of a printed symbol of Freemasonry. In English Masonry today, the Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid is the jewel of a Past Master in recognition of the wisdom which he has attained through study and service in the Master's chair.

The Hour-Glass was an instrument for measuring time before the invention of mechanical time pieces. By the passage of sand, mercury or water through a small opening between two glass vessels, time can be measured. The sands pass imperceptibly but eventually all will be gone. So it is with human life, which reminds us of the need to work now before time gets away from us.

The Scythe is a tool with a long handle and sharp crescent blade used to cut grains and other grasses. It reminds us of the eventual end of our own existence, another reminder to work now before time gets away from us. Remember also the lesson of time from the twenty-four-inch gauge that was explained when you were made an Entered Apprentice Mason. Time is indeed a precious commodity. Use it wisely.