

The Arizona Keystone

Scientia Coronati Research Lodge 4 F. & a. m.

Newsletter

jan - mar 2010 A.L. 6010

Volume 3, Issue 1



**ASK AND IT
SHALL BE GIVEN
TO YOU**



**SEEK AND YOU
SHALL FIND**



**KNOCK AND IT
SHALL BE OPEN
UNTO YOU**



The Arizona Keystone

Volume 3, Number 1

Jan - Mar 2010

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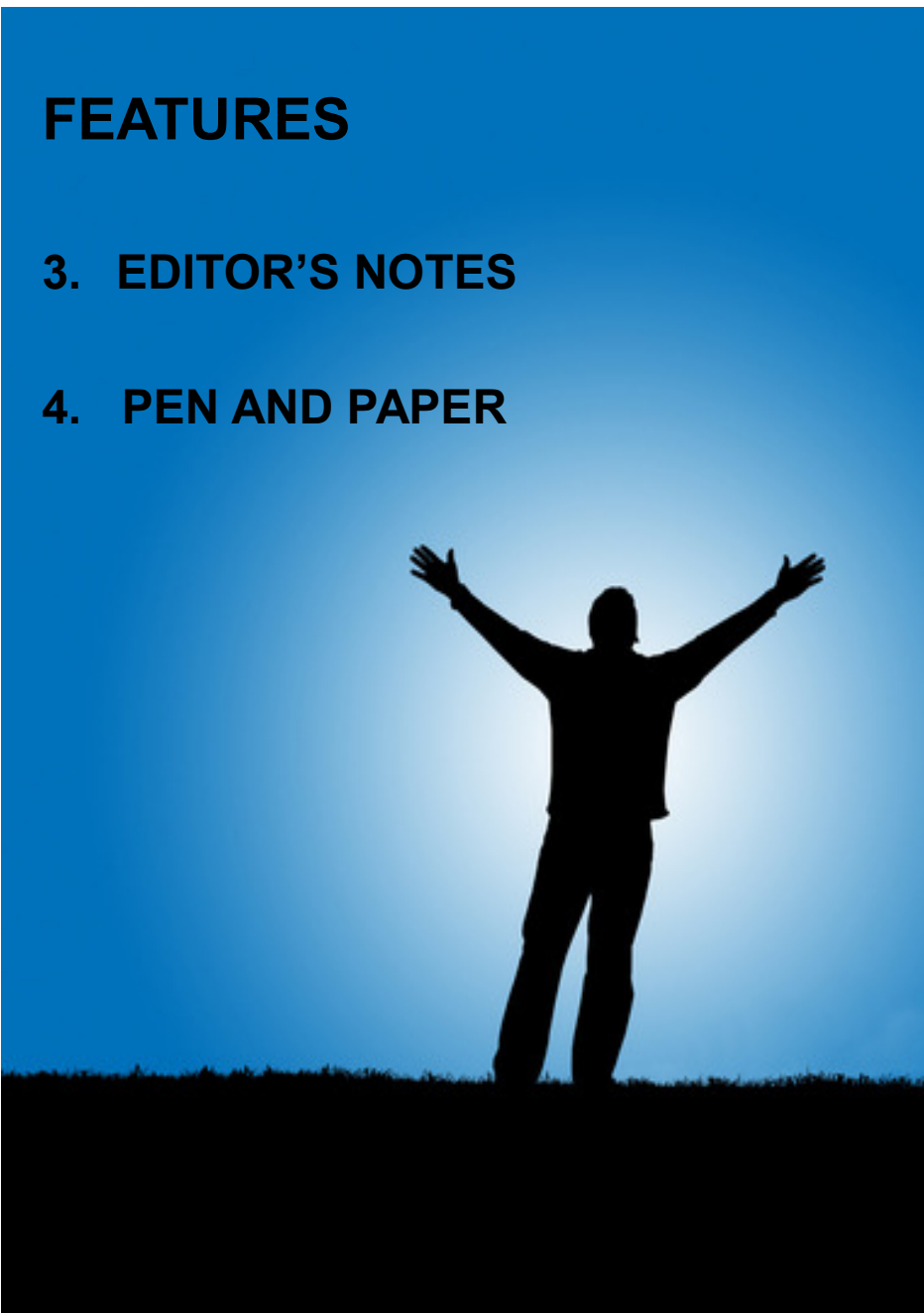
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Master's Notes

*M*y Brothers,

Masonry is a university, teaching the liberal arts and sciences of the soul to all who attend to its words. Its chairs are seats of learning; its pillars uphold the arch of universal education, not only in material things, but also in those qualities which are of the spirit.

The words are from Manly P. Hall and they should resonate with every brother withosoever dispersed.

Our Research Lodge is a Mystery School, it does not bring its light to man, man must bring his light to it. Our Mystery school is being restructured for the betterment of Masonry in General and our present and future members in particular. It's an exciting time not only to be an active part of the research and discussions, but to witness the re-tooling and re-facing of our Research Lodge. Improvements either for strength or ornament are wise words and are being implemented to ensure our Research Lodge marches strongly forward and to stand proudly as a noble institution. We are the temple builders, we improve by the labor of our hands, the meditation of our hearts, and the aspiration of our souls.

We are all living essays of our Masonic culture. Lets us not fade into the shadows and be forgotten.



PEN AND PAPER

The Three Degrees

Julian Rees Listens to Resonance



The temptation to see the three degrees as separate ceremonies in themselves is almost unavoidable; yet these three stages are in reality parts of a whole. There are many correspondences between the three degrees, and these need to be examined for what they can teach us.

The first degree, we are told, deals with the emergence out of darkness into light. This is the journey from unknowing to knowing; the first stage on the path to self-knowledge. The second degree encompasses, in more senses than one, the journey through life, and the Fellow Craft for this reason is sometimes known in other jurisdictions as the 'Journeyman', the man journeying to acquire knowledge in order to free himself from his apprenticeship. The third degree deals with the transition from earthly life to the eternal.

We enter the temple as an aspirant in darkness, but this darkness is ours alone, because the journey from darkness to light is an individual, personal journey.

The Brethren in the Temple are with us in a spirit of brotherhood, first to ensure that we meet no harm, physical or spiritual. Secondly, they are there to ensure that our initiation is regularly and properly conducted. Thirdly, and importantly, they are there to re-visit the experience of their own initiation and to contemplate the lessons they have themselves learned.

When we enter the Temple for our second degree, the contrast could not be more stark. Where before there was no light – except for the light we might have found within ourselves – now all is light, the light of day that any journeyman might need to progress on his journey. The whole feeling of this degree is one of light, happiness and peace. Where in the first degree, disabled physically and disoriented mentally, we had stumbled and faltered, here we are able to journey, freely appreciating the beauties and the joy of nature, an allegory of our own nature that we are in the process of discovering.

Our admission to the Temple in the third degree can only offer a yet starker contrast; now all is darkness, not only for us as aspirants, but for all those present. The Brethren are now able to share with us the deprivation of all but the faintest light in the east. The near total darkness is a bleak reminder for all present that the quest for our Self, newly-purged of all material concerns and obsessions, is a serious one, and that the goal is one we all ultimately aspire to: first a glimpse of, and then an experience of oneness with eternity, should we be so fortunate. It has a resonance with the first degree lecture:

So ought every mason to conduct himself towards this world; to observe a due balance between avarice and profusion; to hold the scales of justice with equal poise; to make his passions and prejudices coincide with the just line of his conduct; and in all his pursuits to have eternity in view.

THE JOURNEY



But the resonance between the degrees is not restricted to their beginnings. If we view the whole of Freemasonry as an allegory of a journey, leading from birth, through life, to death and perfection, then within each of those degrees we find pilgrimages within the overall journey. In the first degree we first progress round the temple to show that we are deserving of Freemasonry; our second such journey is to prove what we have learned. In the second degree we first prove ourselves as masons, secondly to prove that we have completed the necessary work to be advanced and then, after advancement, the examination to test us once again.

Crucially the third degree is different. We undertake three pilgrimages. The first two are related to the first two degrees, and the third to prove that we are qualified to advance. What is missing here is the final pilgrimage, the one with which we are examined for proficiency and prove our knowledge. But the secrets demonstrated by the Wardens in the third degree closing are but the substituted secrets. The true secret, the one in our hearts, is so private as to be incommunicable to another, and that is as it should be, for this secret concerns eternity; and that we must discover for ourselves.

ADVANCING TO THE EAST

Consider also the means of advancing to the light in the east in the three degrees. In the first degree, we are in total darkness. The steps we take are necessarily faltering and are achieved only by the guidance of the Deacon at our side. Each step is a little more sure than the previous one, since we gain in confidence as we progress. But all steps in the first degree are in a straight line, and all of them on the same level.

In the second degree, not only do we stray from the straight line, we also ascend; a powerful allegory of the ascent from material pursuits to the union hoped for in the middle chamber.

These steps are assured and purposeful and reflect the new-found confidence that the second degree permits.

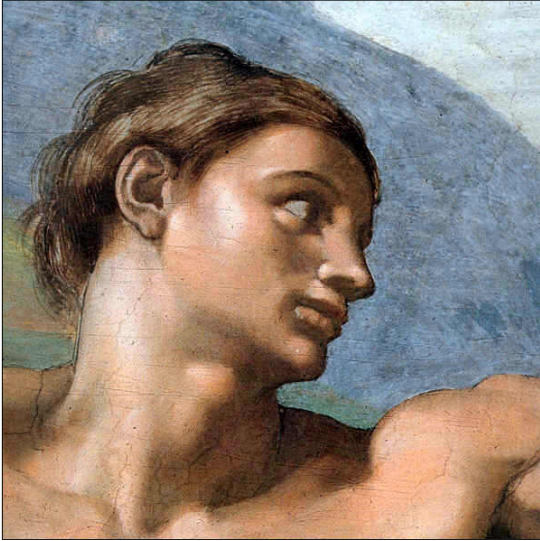
In the third degree, the difficulties are far greater than we encountered in the first. True, we can see the way ahead for the steps we are to take, but that way is blocked by an obstacle, and the very object over which we have to pass is the negation of life. By these steps we allegorically bury our old materialist self in order to approach perfection.

WORKING TOOLS

The working tools in the three degrees afford another interesting insight into the correlation of the whole. Kirk MacNulty, in *The Way of the Craftsman*, points out that the only tools of true construction are those of the second degree. Those of the first degree are tools of preparation – with them we prepare, cut to size and embellish the different stones using gavel, chisel and rule. Those of the third degree are tools of creativity, in laying out the ground properly surveyed, determining the proportions and design of the building, and then committing that to the drawing-board.

But in a real sense it is the tools of the second degree that are the most telling. We have the stones, properly prepared and ready to be set, to form the integrity of the building. We have the newly-created plans and the groundwork on which to commence. The square, level and plumb rule will enable us to place the stones, and so they are tools of quality control, enabling us to be assured that our building has a level basis; that the stones, proved by the square to have been truly formed, will fit together, and set in an upright way, as will be proved by the plumb rule.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT



One of the first things we notice after being restored to material light in the first degree is the checkered floor on which we stand. The white and black remind us, intentionally, of the contrasts of joy and sorrow, light and dark. So although material light is restored, fortune and adversity may always be present through our lives. The Fellow Craft will therefore travel, in the second degree, through his new landscape of joy and fruitfulness, but constantly reminded that darkness is an ever-present contrast.

In one sense it proves to be a forewarning since when he comes to the third degree he finds a darkness far more bleak than he experienced in the first degree; it is to be hoped that the sustenance of the second degree, the corn, wine, and oil, will be sufficient to support him in this last and greatest trial.

THE DESTINATION

Although the whole of Freemasonry is depicted as a series of journeys, there are important differences as regards the destination in each of them. The first degree takes us, by level steps, to that place where, by means of the vow of fidelity, we may receive light, material and symbolic. But for the moment it goes no further than that. In the second degree our steps are no longer level; having passed the altar, the point at which we attained light, we have the right to ascend, as proved by our use of the password, to another level, one on which we gain admittance to the middle chamber, there to pay our dues and to show we are worthy to receive our wages, wages symbolizing a spiritual value.

In the third degree, we remain on that higher level but pass through the veil separating us from the hope of eternal life into the Holy of Holies. This is why the third degree is referred to as sublime since it is here that we come face to face with the Great Architect and learn to know and to own the divine spark within ourselves, which may rightly be regarded as the summit of our journey and the object of our true aspiration.

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My Brothers,

Until the next issue...May the light shine brightly in your lives forever and ever.

