



**The warmth of Freemasonry.....1**  
**Iranian freemasons in exile .....2**  
**Ritual reminder .....2**  
**Reconstruction in Haiti .....3**  
**Tassel, tarsel, tassellated, etc. ....3**  
**Lodge secretaries' reminder .....4**  
**Xmas? .....4**  
**Grand Master's itinerary .....4**

# The human touch

by RW Bro. George Moore, Grand Secretary

Throughout our masonic careers we have all read extensively about the benefits and accomplishments of Freemasonry. Every book, every document and every webpage you examine usually has something to say about how we can make ourselves, and others, better men.

We talk about brotherly love which is felt, rather than seen, and then, sadly, only by some.

There is that often used phrase, which when abbreviated, sounds like a Hollywood movie studio, and which I can't bring myself to use, even here

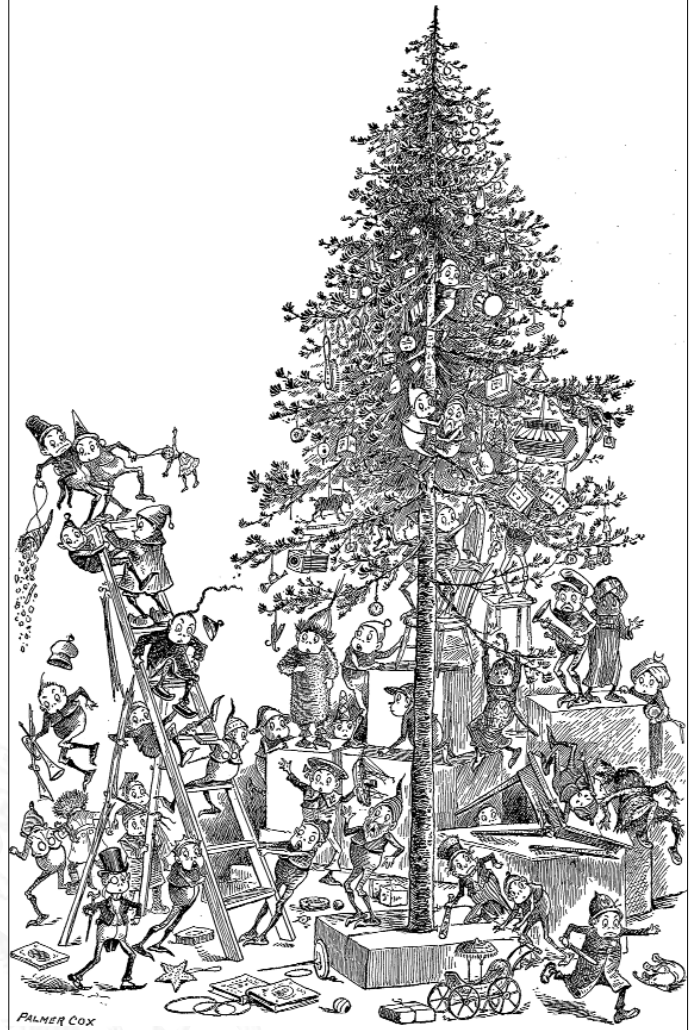
Then there are the subliminal messages learned through allegory and illustration; these take longer to identify and absorb and are part of the long and never-ending journey towards perfection. They are all good. However, it is my opinion that what we really do is provide a safe and comfortable environment within which men can achieve a level of comfort that eases their inhibitions,

touches their hearts, and captures their desires.

What I wish to talk to you about today is the warmth or the spirit of Freemasonry and how it touches us; the joy, the laughter, the friendships, the emotion, the love, the happiness, the sanctuary and the peace that can be found in our lodges. These are all things that can be experienced but are quite difficult to describe.

In the business world I learned all too well the necessity of disclosure and of having a clear understanding of the deal. I also learned that no matter how good the deal was, or how well it was presented, or how much money was on the table, it would not be successful unless all the players had a good warm cosy feeling about it; a high degree of comfort, if you will. It is the same with Freemasonry, most of us get hooked on a feeling: whether we are aware of it or not.

Recently I had an opportu-



Canadian children's author, W Bro. Palmer Cox's merry band of Brownies decorate a Christmas tree in this 1891 illustration. In sixteen books and numerous short stories published between 1887 and 1925, and reprinted to this day, the Brownie band travelled around the world having fun and adventures while helping others.

nity to speak at length with a brother who had just been expelled. He told me that he really loved the Craft; that it was the best thing that ever happened to him. This large, burly, tattooed man with a criminal past had experienced warmth and peace within his masonic lodge, and he was devastated when it was taken

away from him; but, for a short time ; he got it, and his life from now on, will be better because of it. Unfortunately many of us never do get it. So what is it:

Well, It's PEACE. The peace that can be found in the sanctuary of our lodges; let me explain to you what I mean by

**continued on page 2**



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## **The human touch**

*from page one*

that. Some years ago I used to travel to Asia quite frequently. While driving to and while at the airport my phone would ring constantly. In a 90 minute period once I received 19 phone calls. All while trying to check luggage, select a seat, clear security, and board the plane. It was always a stressful time and I learned to wait patiently for the flight attendant to announce the cell phones off message; then I would sit back and wait for the click of the cabin door closing. Then, and only then, I knew that for the next 12 hours or so no one could get to me. I came to cherish those most peaceful moments.

The only other place I have experienced such peace is in my lodge, when the inner guard announces that the lodge is properly tyled. I can close my eyes and know that for the next couple of hours, the outside world can't get near me; it is some of the most valuable time that I have ever known.

### **IT'S HAPPINESS**

Freemasonry refers to happiness frequently throughout its ceremonies and lectures. It also provides an environment within which it can thrive. You know; it doesn't matter what your beliefs are, what religion you have chosen or what political party you support. The very purpose of life is happiness. The very motion of our life is towards happiness.

I have seen the results of this happiness among our brethren with my own eyes and can only describe it as *awesome*.

### **IT'S ENTHUSIASM**

Now, happiness breeds enthusiasm; and enthusiasm is contagious. If you are having difficulty becoming or staying enthused, just take a look at the excitement expressed by our younger members.

I am excited about Freemasonry and I have seen the excitement of others. We all need to get excited about Freemasonry and not be shy about it; for if there is anything on this earth worth getting excited about; surely it is this wonderful fraternity that has given us all so much.

### **IT'S HUGS**

I don't think I ever hugged another man in my life until I joined Freemasonry. It's now a common, welcome and pleasurable experience. I once heard a lady remark at our summer picnic that she had never seen so many men hug each other. I felt good about that.

The Master of my lodge sent an email to all of the members recently, after dealing with a serious family medical issue. This is what he wrote; "Your support, friendship and conversations were truly appreciated, but the hugs were the most effective and best."

### **IT'S TEARS**

While at a Scottish Rite dinner in Moncton recently I listened to a young fifteen-year old girl tell about her struggle with dyslexia and how she had been helped by freemasons and the Learning Centre in Saint John. There were approximately 400 people in the room that night and there was not one dry eye as she eloquently read her address to us. Imagine, 400 people in one huge room and every one of them crying. Our lodges provide a safe haven for us and it is not unusual for brethren to shed a tear. Sometimes it is just a few, and at other times it can be quite emotional. Where else can you find an environment that embraces all of these emotions, which only a true freemason can experience.

Think also of the friendships; the smiles and warmth on the faces, the laughter; the firm grip; the willing spirit; the excitement; and all the other rewards that we are so lucky to enjoy.

If you are not experiencing these things, my brother, then you are missing out on the best that Freemasonry has to offer.

I leave you with these words by Spencer Michael Free (1856-1938):

*Tis the human touch  
in this world that counts;  
The touch of your hand and  
mine;  
Which means far more  
to the fainting heart;  
Than shelter or bread and wine;  
For shelter is gone  
when the night is over;  
And bread lasts only a day  
But the touch of the hand  
And the sound of the voice  
Sing on in the soul, always.* ■

*Presented at the Western Canada Conference, 2010.*

## **Ritual**

At the Annual Communication of Grand Lodge this past June, the Committee on Ritual made a number of observations on practices which they roundly condemn and are convinced have no place in this jurisdiction.

### **Canadian Work opening**

No Canadian Work lodge should have an "historical ritual" which allows short form openings, or direct openings in the Master Mason Degree. The proper opening has formally been decided by our Grand Lodge by vote in 1893, 1900 and 1955. No short form of opening exists. This also applies to the Emulation Work.

### **Short Closing**

No Worshipful Master working in any of the authorized four Works of this jurisdiction is permitted to simply bang the gavel, declare the lodge closed, have someone shut the Volume of Sacred Law and exclaim "Unclothe and untyle!"

There is only one exception to this, when the Grand Master is present, and then only when he requests it to be done.

### **"At ease"**

Lodges are either open or

closed, at labour or refreshment. Those are the only options—ones established a couple of centuries ago and practised around the masonic world. Worshipful Masters should go to refreshment if the lodge has a lull in the ceremonies and things need to be done.

These three practices which have crept into our lodges—some under the false guise of "well, we've always done it that way"—have one thing in common: a willingness to cut corners. As freemasons we know that cutting corners does not make for a perfect ashlar. ■

## **Thanksgiving**

The freemasons of **District 22** provided a Thanksgiving dinner this year to those in need in the Comox Valley.

Serving the meal were four Worshipful Masters, the DDGM, the Regional Representative and brethren from the three lodges in the valley. ■

## **Iran**

The Grand Lodge of Iran was formed in 1969 by the Grand Lodges of Scotland, France and Germany. With the fall of the Shah in 1979, Iran became an Islamic Republic and the Grand Lodge of Iran was forced into exile.

In 1985, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts authorized the lodges of the Grand Lodge of Iran (In Exile)—despite being based in Los Angeles—to meet again, confer degrees and conduct other masonic business in Boston.

The Grand Lodge of Iran (In Exile) and its lodges have thus conducted their business ever since. Our Iranian brothers work using the Emulation ritual, translated into Farsi. All meetings of the Grand Lodge of Iran (In Exile) and its lodges are conducted in Farsi. ■

*The Cross Keys September 2010 Number 140.*



## Haiti

Bro. Kevin Dornan of Langley Lodge No. 184 is in Haiti with a team of thirteen to reconstruct an orphanage school in the mountain village of Marbial.

The school suffered heavy damage in the recent earthquake, leaving the building unusable. Bro. Dornan and the team have all paid for their own personal expenses and the building supplies have been donated by a local Langley business. ■

## Tesselated

Masonic tradition has it that the floor of the Temple of Solomon was decorated with a mosaic pavement of black and white stones. There is no historical evidence to substantiate this statement.

The *Talmud* informs us that there was such a pavement in the conclave where the Grand Sanhedrin held its sessions. By a little torsion of historical accuracy, freemasons have asserted that the ground floor of the Temple was a mosaic pavement, and hence as the lodge is a representation of the Temple, that the floor of the lodge should also be of the same pattern.

The mosaic pavement is an old symbol of the Order. It is met with in the earliest rituals of the eighteenth century. It is classed among the ornaments of the lodge in combination with the indented tassel and

the blazing star. Its parti-coloured stones of black and white have been readily and appropriately interpreted as symbols of the evil and good of human life.

### TARSEL

In the earliest catechisms of the eighteenth century, it is said that the furniture of a lodge consists of a "mosaic pavement, blazing star, and indented tassel." In more modern catechisms, the expression is "indented tassel," which is incorrectly defined to mean a tessellated border. Indented tassel is evidently a corruption of indented tassel.

### TASSELS

In the English and French tracing boards of the first degree, there are four tassels, one at each angle, which are attached to a cord that surrounds a tracing board, and which constitutes the true tessellated border.

These four cords are described as referring to the four principal points, the Guttural, Pectoral, Manual, and Pedal, and through them to the four cardinal virtues, temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice.

### TESSELATED

From the Latin *tessella*, a little square stone, it is applied in Freemasonry to the mosaic pavement of the Temple and to the border which surrounds the tracing board, probably incorrectly, in the latter instance.

### TESSELATED BORDER

John Browne says in his *Master Key* (London : 1802), that the ornaments of a lodge are the mosaic pavement, the blazing star, and the tessellated border; and he defines the tessellated border to be "the skirt-work round the lodge".

Thomas Smith Webb, in his lectures (1797), teaches that the ornaments of a lodge are the mosaic pavement, the indented tassel, and the blazing star; and he defines the indented tassel to be that "beautifully tessellated border

or skirting which surrounded the ground-floor of King Solomon's Temple."

The French call it *la houe dentelee*, which is literally the "indented tassel"; and they describe it as "a cord forming true-lovers' knots, which surrounds the tracing-board." The Germans call it *die Schnur von starken Faden*, or the "cord of strong threads", and define it as a border surrounding the tracing-board of an Entered Apprentice, consisting of a cord tied in lovers' knots, with two tassels attached to the ends.

The idea prevalent in America that the tessellated border was a decorated part of the mosaic pavement, and made like it of little square stones, does not seem to be supported by these definitions. They all indicate that the "tessellated border" was a cord.

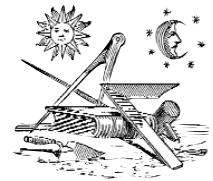
### MOSAIC PAVEMENT

The interpretation of mosaic pavement's symbolic meaning still further sustains this idea.

Browne says "it alludes to that kind care of Providence which so cheerfully surrounds and keeps us within its protection whilst we justly and uprightly govern our lives and actions by the four cardinal virtues in divinity, namely temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice."

This last allusion is to the four tassels attached to the cord. Webb says that it is "emblematic of those blessings and comforts which surround us, and which we hope to obtain by a faithful reliance on Divine Providence."

The French ritual says that it is intended "to teach the freemason that the society of which he constitutes a part surrounds the earth, and that distance, so far from relaxing the bonds which unite the members to each other, ought to draw them closer." C. Lenning (Leipzig : 1828) says that it symbolizes the fraternal bond by which all Masons are united.



Freemasonry:  
the art and science  
of right living



GRAND LODGE  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA and  
YUKON



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Don't  
like driving  
at night?

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give up lodge.

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a daylight  
lodge!

Dogwood Lodge No. 192  
Third Saturday  
Meridian Lodge No. 108  
Second Saturday

But Johann Gadicke (Berlin : 1818) is more precise. He defines it as "the universal bond by which every freemason ought to be united to his brethren," and he says that "it should consist of sixty threads or yarns, because, according to the ancient statutes, no lodge was allowed to have above sixty members."

The Rev. George Oliver says "the tracing board is surrounded by an indented or tessellated border... at the four angles appear as many tassels." But in the old English tracing boards, the two lower tassels are often omitted. They are, however, generally found in the French. Lenning assigns to them but two. Four tassels, are, however, necessary to complete the symbolism, which is said to be that of the four cardinal virtues.

The tessellated, or more properly, therefore, the *tasellated* border consists of a cord intertwined with knots, to each end of which is appended a tassel. It surrounds the border of the tracing board.

This indented border, which was made to represent a cord of black and white threads, was, in time mistaken for *tessellae*, or little stones; an error probably originating in confounding it with the tessellated pavement, which was another one of the ornaments of the lodge.

We find that we have for this symbol five different names: in English, the indented tassel, the indented tassel, the indented tassel, the tassellated border, and the tessellated border; in French, the *houpe dentelee*, or indented tassel; and, in German, the *Schnur von starken Faden*, or the cord of strong threads.

The question as to what is the true tessellated border would not be a difficult one to answer, if it were not for the variety of names given to it in the English rituals. We know by tradition, and by engravings that have been preserved, that

during the ceremonies of initiation in the early part of the last century, the symbols of the Order were marked out in chalk on the floor, and that this picture was encircled by a waving cord.

This cord was ornamented with tassels, and formerly a border to the tracing on the floor was called the indented tassel, the cord and the tufts attached to it being the tassel, which, being by its wavy direction partly in and partly outside of the picture, was said to be indented.

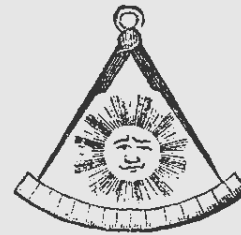
This indented tassel was subsequently corrupted into indented tassel, the appellation met with in some of the early catechisms.

Afterward, looking to its decoration with tassels and to its position as a border to the tracing board, it was called the tassellated border.

In time, the picture on the floor was transferred to a permanent tracing board, and then the tassels were preserved at the top, and the rest of the cord was represented around the board in the form of white and black angular spaces. These were mistaken for little stones, and the tassellated border was called, by a natural corruption, the tessellated border.

One can readily trace the gradual steps of corruption, and change from the original indented tassel, which the early French freemasons had literally translated by *houpe dentelee*, to indented tassel, and sometimes, according to the Rev. Oliver, to indented tassel; then to tassellated border, and finally to tessellated border, the name which it now bears.

The form and the meaning of the symbol are now apparent. The tessellated border, as it is called, is a cord, decorated with tassels, which surrounds the tracing board of an Entered Apprentice, the said tracing board being a representation of the lodge, and it symbolizes the bond of love — the mystic tie — which binds



## GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY DECEMBER 2010

9 Th	Education Night	Britannia Lodge No. 73	Victoria
13 M	District 28	DeWolf Lodge No. 78	Port Coquitlam
18 S	Installation	Ashlar Lodge No. 3	Nanaimo

the Craft wheresoever dispersed into one band of brotherhood. ■

*Excerpted from Albert G. Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, 1929.*

## Note bene

Lodge secretaries are reminded that templates for the forms used in communicating with the Grand Secretary's office are available on the Grand Lodge website. Also available are pdf versions of the *Lodge Officers Guide*, *Book of Constitutions*, the current *Grand Lodge Annual Proceedings* and other publications and information.

Brethren wishing copies of these may secure them from their lodge secretaries. ■

## Xmas?

The word Christmas originated as a compound meaning "Christ's mass." It is derived from the Middle English *Christemasse* and Old English *Cristes maesse*, a phrase first recorded in 1038. "Cristes" is from the Greek *christos* and "maesse" is from the Latin *missa*. In early Greek versions of the New Testament, the letter  $\chi$  (chi), is the first letter of Christ. Often deprecated as a modern innovation introduced by advertising copy writers, in fact since the mid-sixteenth century  $\chi$ , or the similar Roman letter X, has been used as an abbreviation for Christ.

Hence, Xmas is often used as an abbreviation for Christmas.

After the conversion of Anglo-Saxon Briton in the very early seventh century, Christmas was referred to as *geol*, the name of the pre-Christian winter festival from which the current English word 'Yule' is derived. ■

## Bulletin

Now in its seventy-fourth year, the *Masonic Bulletin* was first published in 1937 by the Committee on Masonic Education and Research to promote masonic knowledge.

Today, with the internet and a surfeit of masonic publications available, perhaps that need is being met elsewhere.

Your editor would like to hear your ideas for where the *Bulletin* should be going in the future. Write today! ■



PALMER COX

The hands that do  
and hearts that dare  
Leave monuments upon  
the square.