

MASONIC THOUGHTS

Many things have been written about Freemasonry in countless books and in papers to be delivered to Masonic research associations, but how many of us know that there is wealth of beautiful material out there about Freemasonry, such as quotations or poems. Some of the world's greatest men of letters who were Freemasons themselves, have written some wonderful words. Let's take Rudyard Kipling and Robbie Burns as just two examples, yet equally some less well-known Masons have embodied the teachings and philosophy of Freemasonry in their writing and we will take a look at these too during the coming months.

An extract from

The Master

By Joseph Fort Newton

Hear now the history of a word as it has come down to us from days of old. In the ancient Guilds of artisans, the skilled metal-smiths of the Middle Ages, an Apprentice toiled for seven years at his tasks. When at last his hand was trained, and he had wrought some beautiful thing, perhaps in beaten silver, he brought it to the Master of the Guild and said, "Behold my experience!" Having worked for seven long years, the sum of all his impassioned patience and aspiration was in that tiny bit of shining metal; it was a symbol of his character which, as the word tells me, is something carved.

Like every man who achieves a delicate and difficult task, he had made many mistakes, had spoiled many a piece of metal, had dulled the edge of many a tool. Had spent painful days and nights in labour, and his Masterpiece, his Experience, was the sum and reward of all his Experiments. He had given himself to his task with enthusiasm; he had obeyed his Master, his faith had made him faithful – and the whole was in that tiny bit of silver. He might now take his kit of tools and go out as a journeyman, a Master of his Craft.

Which is a parable of how a man becomes a Master Mason, not by receiving a Degree, but by the attainment of a habitual mastery of his appetites and passions by the Reason and the Moral Sense; a habitual mastery, as Pike reminds us, not a never failing mastery – for that is a trophy which few mortals win in this world. The task of every man is to take the raw material of his life, with whatever of glowing passion or hard heredity it may hold; take it as it is and by patience in spite of blunders, is by perseverance in face of failure, by loyalty to an ideal and fidelity to a noble Life-plan, shape it into a constant beauty and enduring worth.

No man who has tried it needs to be told that this is no easy task, albeit for some it is easier than for others – as it was easier for Emerson than for Burns, who tried so hard and failed so much. By the same token, since every man fights a hard fight, no one can boast over his fellow; and if, by reason of rare power or a sweeter ancestry he is unhampered by the failure of his fathers, it is the more reason why he should be an inspiration and aid to his fellow men

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