

THE LOST WORD

Many Masons think of the Lost Word as unique: in the Craft the central thought of the Master's Degree is unique, but in the long history of religion, philosophy and ethics, which has been that of man's progress from savagery and superstition to enlightened thought, it is any thing but unique. In one form or another, it has played a part in the lives of most civilizations; it has influenced the thinking of uncounted thousands; it has been both the hope and the despair of more races than can be cataloged.

Apparently inherent in man, and coming into his thought from no one may say what starting point, is the consciousness of a Golden Age; an age when men were happy; when there was no war because there was no dispute; when there was no evil because all were virtuous; when there was no labor because food was to be had for the taking, fruit grew the year round, honey dripped from trees and flocks and herds needed no tending; a time when all the earth was contentment; an era which somehow disappeared, leaving to men a sad world of toil and trouble and war and struggle.

Many a poet has sung of this Golden Age; perhaps none more dearly than Macauley in his Lays of Ancient Rome, in which, in the tale of brave Horatius who with two others were the "dauntless three" who held the bridge against an army is to be found this stanza:

Then none was for the party, Then all were for the state; Then the great man helped the poor, And the poor man loved the great; Then lands were fairly portioned; Then spoils were fairly sold; The Roman's were like brothers In the brave days of old.

There was once a land called "Arcady" -at least according to the poets! In Arcady was only happiness; it was the land of sun and plenty; it was a land of beautiful women and brave men; beauty over which no men fought, and bravery which no man need show because there was no danger.

Utopia is another such dream of something lost; a place where everything and every one is perfect; where no man suffers, where joy and laughter compete never with tears and sobs; where happiness is from sun to sun and trouble has not been known.

And where are Arcady and Utopia Gone with the Golden Age.

There is a tale of a Lost Continent - Atlantis. It, too, was the home of happiness. According to the legend - it is only legend now - it is at the bottom of the Atlantic ocean; a convulsion of nature took it away from man and with it took his contentment.

As children we lived with the fairies in fairyland; a land where there was no age; in which the little people had all power both to please themselves and to work their happy will on human beings. Fairy dogs, fairy horses, fairy flowers and fairy bells were a part of fairyland, into which no trouble ever came, or, if it reared its ugly head, the wave of a fairy wand caused it to disappear!

Where now is fairy-land? It still exists, for children, but for their elders it is one with Arcady.

In the Great Light is the story of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden; a place all quiet joy and happiness. There was no sin, nor evil, nor hunger, nor thirst; the weather was always kind and warm (for the man and woman were naked and yet comfortable in body as well as in minds that knew no shame nor fear). It was a place and time of innocence.

Then the serpent and the temptation; the eating of the forbidden fruit; the sudden knowledge of good and evil and the terrible judgment of the Most High; to be cast forth from the delightful garden; to bear children in pain; to eat only after toil.

It is again, the story of a Golden Age; a place and time lost to men, a hope denied, a longing unsatisfied, a something lost which can only be hoped for and hunted for and - never found.

The Wandering Jew was bidden "tarry thou till I come." And ever since, so runs the legend, Ahaseurus has walked the earth. He has visited every country, learned all languages, experienced all evil, had all knowledge except that of how to die. With the pronouncing of his doom, according to the legend, he lost the power to leave this life for another and has suffered and wept over his private hell, the boon of rest denied him, ever since. Curiously enough, he has been reported actually seen and talked to many times in history, even as late as 1868 in this country, in Utah!

Lost words are those which were spoken in the Never-Never-Land of Heart's Desire; history is filled with the tales of the great secrets which were in these words. Usually they are lost because of some accident or happening which men could not control. How, for instance, was the pronounciation of the great Word of the Israelites lost? JHVH we have, but no vowels to show us if Jehova is correct or not. To be spoken but once a year and then only by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, when there was no more a High Priest or a Holy of Holies, there was no more the mighty word of the Jews in which was all power and all ways of communication with the Lord God Almighty.

"Men, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," written by hand upon a wall seems less than terrible - the syllables are the names of small coins. But to those who saw the dread writing, the words had another meaning. We say they meant "thou hast been weighed in the balance and found wanting" but was that the real meaning to those who were terrified at the names given to money?

Belonging among the myths and legends which recount man's uneasy consciousness of a lost Golden Age, a something gone from life which was once comforting, a secret : o longer known are the tales told of the search for the Holy Grail.

The Holy Grail was the cup Jesus drank at the Last Supper.

The two most famous and oft told stories of the search for it and its findings are those of Sir Galahad, knight of King Arthur's Round Table, and Parsival, hero of Wagner's tremendous opera of the same name. After many adventures the pure and blameless knight Sir Galahad came finally to Sarras, where he was shown the Holy Grail by Joseph of Arimathy (In the New Testament, Arimathaea) but, on taking it into his hands, died and was borne to heaven by a "great multitude of

angels."

Parsival, also a pure and blameless knight, grows up untainted and innocent in the depths of a forest, finally goes in quest of the sacred cup, and, at long last, finds it and becomes its guardian.

Both stories are allegories retelling man's ceaseless quest for something precious, something lost, something necessary to happiness, something close to if not a part of God.

Undoubtedly there are many Masons - perhaps even a majority - who believe that the Substitute Word is really a substitute, and that the real word is but a syllable, a pass word, perhaps like Shibboleth at the passages of the Jordan! But the serious student of Freemasonry thinks of the Lost Word as he does of the Garden of Eden, of Arcady, of Atlantis, of Utopia and fairyland-not a name but a place and time; not a syllable but a truth; not a magic talisman or a password but a symbol of something which man once had a right to know and which has now dropped from his consciousness.

Many and many a Mason has tried to phrase his thought, his belief, his hope of what Masonry's Lost Word might be. Those who have tried the hardest have been first to agree that man has not invented the words by which to describe a symphony so another can hear the sounds; to describe a rose so a blind man may see its color; to describe his love of wife or child so another may know his feeling.

And by the same token, these who have tried so hard have usually admitted that the Lost Word is unspeakable, even if found, that it represents a something -truth, belief, knowledge, power or glory - which could not be written because the characters to express it have not been invented.

Interpretations of the Lost Word have been as many and as various as the writers.

Oliver Day Street, Past Grand Master of Alabama, and the noted author of "Symbolism of the Three Degrees" believed that the simplest interpretation of the Lost Word was that it is Divine Truth. He quoted the familiar "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This, again, he interprets as meaning that "The Word" was an expression denoting omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience; that by it, the Logos, the Great Architect was able to accomplish all of creation. Street makes the point, however, that this conception denies the possibility of man ever finding the complete reality of The Lost Word; if to be found at all in this life, it is only partially.

A. S. MacBride, famous Scotland Freemason, in his "Speculative Masonry," considers the Lost Word as an ideal "symbolising the throbbing, yearning, seeking of the human heart for something better and happier than the actual world around us." In this he seems to have Arcady and the Golden Age in mind, although he does not mention them by name.

Few if any have ever brought a greater degree of spiritual insight and poetic feeling to bear upon Masonic matters than the late, great Dr. Joseph Fort Newton. In his most famous work "The Builders" he considers that the Lost Word is "the Secret Doctrine." He believes that this, which Waite wrote of so convincingly to many and so abtrusely as to be difficult for many more to

understand, is the endless search for God which Newton conceives as the central motivation of all lives, although they may know it not. It was Newton who quoted and made deathless the curious double thought of the professing atheist, who was yet a good man; "He lives by the faith his lips deny; God knoweth why." But Newton makes it plain that no man knows the Secret Doctrine until it has become the reality of his thought, the inspiration of his acts "the form and color and glory of his life." And he ends his poetic paragraphs with the statement of the Lost Word: "Its glory lies in its openness, and its emphasis upon the realities which

With twenty-five years between Haywood made two interpretations of the Lost Word: in 1923, that it was the Tetragrammaton - JHVH. In 1948 he developed the thought that the Lost Word is Mastership and in a theme as masterful as its substance discusses the false question, the fact that Masonry asks none, and so to the belief that the Craft does not send its initiates upon a useless quest but one which, at long last, can be successful. He ends this interesting and decidedly different thought with "What the candidate discovered is that he is in search of his own mastership. Once he becomes a Master of the art he is able to take any brother's place as Master of Masons, wherefore he is that which is found, he is the answer to his own question."

Claudy takes issue with the expression "divine truth" if it means anything but truth about divinity; that truth can be divine or not divine is to him as untrue as that "lump of iron, a river, a space of time" are either divine or not divine. He believes all truth divine as all truth comes from God. He believes also, as set forth in "Foreign Countries" that the Lost Word is "unutterable, unexplainable, nonunderstandable." But he sets forth his belief in the necessity of the quest and his belief that some have believed they have found the Lost Word, but "only when it is given to man to search intelligently within himself may he hope to discover the Lost Word." And of the search he says "The glory of The Word must be beyond mortal imagination, for the glory of the search after it is more than may be put into words. Surely, He, who knows our stumbling feet and groping hands, our eyes blinded with a world of sins and weariness beyond our strength to bear, will deny to none of us that great discovery, sometime, s

In one way or another, most if not all of those who have attempted the impossible believe that the Lost Word is the road to yesterday, the way back to the Golden Age; the path that leads to a Garden of Eden and a Tree of Knowledge, the fruit of which shall not be unlawful for man to eat. With the Lost Word a man might find the harbors on the continent of the Lost Atlantis, or with a magic airplane fly to Utopia, stopping at fairyland on the way!

It seems at least possible, that some Freemasons have discovered the Lost Word for themselves. If so, it has not been as a word in any language, but as a knowledge strictly private to the discovering heart.

Others think no man has ever learned it: in another phrase, the Lost Word can be heard only "in Arcady."

Of this thought it has been written (Introduction to Freemasonry).

Never may we find it here. You shall gaze through microscope and telescope and catch no sight of its shadow. You shall travel in many lands and far and see it not. You shall listen to all the words of

all the tongues which all men have ever spoken and will speak - the Lost Word is not heard. Were it but a word, how easy to invent another! But it is not a word but The Word, the great secret, the unknowability which the Great Architect sets before his children, a will o' the wisp to follow, a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Never here is it to be found, but the search for it is the reason for life.

"The Sublime Degree teaches that in another life it may be found.

"That is why it is the Sublime Degree."