



Nugget

‘...Every Brother has had his due...’

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An exploration of the phrase, ‘every Brother has had his due’.

Summary

An exploration of the phrase, ‘every Brother has had his due’, which has its roots in operative Masonry.

Keywords

First-Degree, Just-due, Due, Warden, Operative, Mediaeval

‘Every Brother has had his due...’

‘...that every Brother has had his due...’ How often have we heard those familiar closing words from the Senior Warden? How often though have we paused to wonder what they might mean? If pressed, many might suggest it was all about wages but they could well be mistaken.

In explanation we should perhaps remember that the Speculative Founders in our rituals drew heavily on the practises of the early operative Masons. Picture a large mediaeval building site with its Lodge(s) in place. As well as determining the building's detailed design, responsibility for approving and employing each Mason was normally that of the site's Master Mason. The remuneration of the craftsmen however would normally be undertaken directly by the client or 'customer' and not by the Master Mason. As an example, to this day within the Salisbury Cathedral Chapter House one can see the circular 'cart wheel' table across which the Cathedral Treasurer paid the men their wages of a penny a day. When the labourers demanded an extra farthing, the City's 'Penny Farthing Street' became a permanent reminder of the Clergy's parsimony.

So then what was meant by *'his due'*? Let us return to the building site. Fellow Craftsmen were fully qualified to work unsupervised or in isolation, either on the building or in the quarry. To represent their collective interests however they required an arbitrator or charge hand (or 'shop steward'), customarily known as the Lodge Warden. His was responsible to the Master Mason both for ensuring general site discipline ('health and safety') and for resolving disputes between individual Masons to ensure that the work flowed smoothly. This latter was of such importance, to the client, the Master Mason and Fellow Masons alike, that the need for a speedy resolution of problems on site was specifically included in the 14th and 15th century 'Old Charges' and Constitution.

The words *'his due'* in mediaeval times therefore acquired the primary significance of 'his right' or 'his merit'. (*Today we still retain this use in e.g. 'his due concerns', i.e. his rightful concerns*). Disputes about rights could arise from, for example, the issue of 'relative seniority' when accessing the 'free' or most workable stone; the nearest workstation to the Lodge; the fewest number of ladders to be climbed etc. The list of contestable entitlements might seem endless. The Warden's responsibility was to resolve all these issues, to be even handed, and to complete them quickly and quietly. If immediate and amicable resolution was not possible then the matter was held over until the next 'love day' or 'holy day' when all work would have to stop, and so the employer's interests would not suffer. The men in dispute would stay away from the site until then; interestingly not dissimilar to the advice given today in the First-Degree.

If we listen carefully during the Installation Ceremony to the Master's instructions when appointing the Senior Warden this mediaeval meaning of *'his due'* is in fact made very clear: *'The level... points out the equal measures you are bound to pursue .in the well ruling... of the Lodge' and '...this gavel...to enable you to assist me in preserving order in the Lodge...'*

We are well familiar with the Junior Warden's responsibilities towards visitors. In keeping with these operative traditions, the Senior Warden is seemingly also given a specific responsibility for ensuring that as and when perhaps newer or more junior members have their differences (over 'their dues') these are resolved quickly, quietly, fairly and always with good fellowship. Free of these unnecessary distractions the Worshipful Master can then focus his energies into presiding over a happy and successful year for all of his Brethren.

##END##

Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit “Solomon” at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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