



NUGGET

The symbolism of the key

Summary: Symbolism of the Key illustrated by reference to First Degree Lecture.

Nowadays the 'key' is only encountered as the jewel of the Treasurer, presumably to encourage him to keep the Lodge's funds secure. In fact, it is a very old symbol of Masonry, being referred to in The Edinburgh Register House Manuscript of 1696. On many older tracing boards it is shown hanging from Jacob's ladder. This clearly associates it with the virtues of Freemasonry, which are represented by the rungs of the ladder. You will no doubt recall that the three principal staves represent Faith, Hope and Charity.

The following exchange occurs in the first section of the First Lecture:

- Question** *Have Masons' secrets?*
- Answer** *They have, many invaluable ones.*
- Question** *Where do they keep them?*
- Answer** *In their Hearts.*
- Question** *To whom do they reveal them?*
- Answer** *None but to Brothers and Freemasons.*
- Question** *How do they reveal them?*
- Answer** *By Signs, Tokens, and particular Words.*
- Question** *As Masons, how do we hope to get at them?*
- Answer** *By the help of a key.*
- Question** *Does that key hang or lie?*
- Answer** *It hangs.*
- Question** *Why is preference given to hanging?*
- Answer** *It should always hang in a Brother's defence, and never lie to his prejudice.*



Josiah Bowring First Degree Tracing Board
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Question *What does it hang by?*

Answer *The thread of life, in the passage of utterance, between Guttural and Pectoral.*

Question *Why so nearly connected with the Heart?*

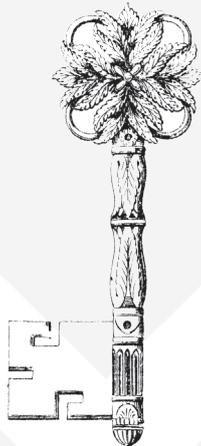
Answer *Being an index of the mind, it should utter nothing but what the heart truly dictates.*

Question *It is a curious key, of what metal is it composed?*

Answer *No metal, it is the tongue of good report.*

The charge of that section of the lecture then follows:

‘That excellent key, a Freemason’s tongue, which should speak well of a Brother absent or present, and when unfortunately, that cannot be done with honour and propriety, should adopt that excellent virtue of the Craft, which is Silence’.





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.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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