



UGLE Oration

It makes me think - Second Degree

Index

The Second-Degree can make you think.

Summary

The many elements contained within the Second-Degree, which stimulate the mind and make one think.

Keywords

Second-Degree, History, Pillars, Globes, Nature & Science,

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If you were to be asked which part of our Second-Degree ceremony you find most interesting, you would in all probability give a wide variety of answers, but many of you would probably refer to one of the stories which are of biblical origin because they conjure pictorial images and the association of ideas is the key to memory.

So, refer to Joshua and one immediately has an image of the walls of Jericho tumbling down at the sound of a trumpet; but that is not in our text. The Tracing Board of this Degree gives us a very detailed description of two great pillars; Jephtha's campaign against the Ephraimites and a full account of the way in which our ancient Brethren organised pay day.

There are other memorable and beautiful pieces of prose in this Degree. One example is in the extended version of the explanation of the working tools, *'To steer the bark of this life over the seas of passion without quitting the helm of rectitude is the highest perfection to which human nature can attain'*. Another is in the charge given to the candidate standing at the South-East part of the Lodge which ends with the words, *'... as in the previous Degree you made yourself acquainted with the principles of Moral Truth and Virtue, you are now permitted to extend your researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science'*. The old word for hidden was occult, which is still used today by the medical profession, but the word 'occult in general use has a very different meaning today. Even taking a simpler interpretation of these words, 'Nature and Science' can embrace just about anything.

The text which I should like to take as the starting point for this oration concerns the description of the *'Two Great Pillars'* and, more particularly to the *'spherical balls on which were delineated maps of the celestial and terrestrial globes'*. Hang about! Our ancient Brethren regarded the earth as being flat; surely, this can't be right!

When we were very young, we were taught in black and white, something was true or untrue, right or wrong and this was particularly so with regard to what we were taught about religion, whatever our parents' faith. We had to believe, what we were told to believe, however unlikely it seemed to our young minds.

A child asked its mother whether there really was a 'Father Christmas' and her answer, 'what do you think?' was, I invite you to agree, a wise one. A little girl sat on her uncle's knee and after listening to him reading from 'Peter Pan' asked him whether he believed in fairies. He replied that he had never seen a fairy but that didn't mean that there weren't any.

Now I see the answer to many 'true or false' questions as lying on a kind of grey scale of probability between the absolute negative and the certain positive or, occasionally I duck out on an escape route called 'does it really matter'? Sometimes the question tempts me to do some research and so it has been with those 'globes'.

Can we give King Solomon a date? The best I have been able to come up with is about early bronze age. The first man to go on record as questioning the 'flat earth' belief was Aristotle who, around 340 BC, looked at an eclipse of the moon and decided that the dark bit was a shadow of the earth and unless the sun was always directly under the centre of the flat disc, the earth was a ball. We know this because he wrote it in his book '*On the heavens*'. He also referred to the fact that the North Star appeared lower from a vantage point in the South than when viewed further north.

340 BC was certainly a long time after the reign of Solomon, but, just perhaps, there was a very wise man who followed the same train of thought as Aristotle but did not write it down or maybe, we have yet to find where he hid his tablets or scrolls.

My conclusion is that it doesn't matter much, but it did stimulate my interest in the progress of astronomical research; reading about several very brave men who dared to challenge current thinking at risk of some very nasty forms of punishment, Galileo and the first telescope, right on to Einstein, modern particle physics, and the 'Big Bang'.

'The hidden mysteries of Nature and Science'? I would not claim that I have acquired knowledge in depth extending to the nature of quarks and Einstein's concept of time, but I have bought a copy of Darwin's '*Origins of the Species*' and wondered why it should have caused such an uproar, much as did, so many years ago, the idea that the earth was not flat and in the centre of the universe.

Thus, I found that the image of the celestial and terrestrial globes stimulated me to extend my researches to learn something of the mysterious natural and scientific processes by which the Grand Geometrician created the universe and to begin to appreciate how wonderful and beautiful so much of it is.

Brethren, allow our masonic ornaments, jewels and written words to stimulate your thinking, you may be surprised where they can take you.

##END##

Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by ‘any questions’
 - As a precursor to a discussion (*in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself*)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary.

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (*in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand*).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling’s dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his ‘serving men’, as follows: *‘I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who’.*

Rudyard Kipling

If used as part of an event, the paper should be advertised and promoted by way of trailers, flyers and announcements, in summonses, letters, emails, notice boards, and on social media.

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

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