



PAPER

King indeed According to Fred & Charlie



Summary: An explanation of the phrase *'monarchs themselves... have not thought it derogatory to their dignity to exchange the sceptre for the trowel'* in the First Degree Charge.

After watching a very satisfactory 'First', Fred and Charlie called in to the snug in the Masons Arms. Glasses filled, Charlie leant back and mused.

'You know that phrase in the Charge that;

monarchs themselves... have not thought it derogatory to their dignity to exchange the sceptre for the trowel.

Well, the Trowel is not one of our speculative working tools and it seems highly improbable that any of our kings would have been tempted to do a little moonlighting as a 'brickie'. What's it all about, Fred?'

'There's no quick explanation, Charlie. We really need to answer three separate questions. Firstly, have monarchs been members of the Craft? Most certainly they have but, understandably, before they ascended the throne. In the 18th century at least six royal dukes became Grand Master.'

'I can imagine kings joining centuries ago but how about in more recent times?' Charlie enquired.

'Our own Queen's father, King George VI, was an enthusiastic Mason right from the time of his Initiation in 1919 into the Naval Lodge, No. 2612, until his death in 1952. He became Grand Master in Scotland in 1936, the very same year that his brother Edward VIII abdicated the throne. While Sovereign, he went on to install three Grand Masters in Great Queen Street between 1939 and 1948. Edward VII, George V and Edward VIII too all had strong Masonic connections. Today the Dukes of Kent and Gloucester continue the custom that princes of the Royal Blood should provide leadership in Freemasonry.'

Charlie listened with surprise.

'I'd just not realised the connections were that close or recent. But, Fred... what about the trowel? How does that fit in?'

'I'm afraid it's another history lesson, Charlie. Before unification of the Grand Lodges in 1813 there was no formal office of Inner Guard, nor of Deacon for that matter. As the Second Tracing Board suggests,

...the five who hold a Lodge are the Master, two Wardens and two Fellow Crafts; the seven who make it perfect are two Entered Apprentices added to the former five.

A Master Mason in those days, was not then an operative grade. While the Temple door was protected on the outside by the Tyler, on the inside the duty was given to the youngest Apprentice, then known as the Inner Tyler. He was armed with both a sword and a trowel.'

'I can understand the sword but why choose a trowel, Fred?'

'In Chevalier Ramsay's 1737 Paris Oration, he suggested it had been the practise of the re-builders of the Second Temple to be equipped at their work with both trowel and sword to hand; the former to lay the stones, the latter to ward off the hostile tribes and other unwelcome intruders.'

Use of the trowel had another symbolic significance. It was a recognition that just as the stones of a Temple were bound together by mortar from the trowel, so the masons building it were bound together into a Lodge by an even stronger cement of mutual love and charity.'

Charlie broke in. *'Perhaps that's why the trowel was adopted as the Almoner's emblem?'*

Fred nodded and continued.

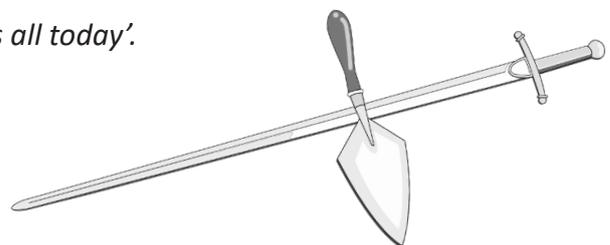
'Prior to 1816, at the door into the Temple our young Apprentice as Inner Tyler, placed the point of his trowel, not his sword, against the naked breast of the Initiate directly over his heart, symbolically the source of both love and charity. It was a clear recognition that although the Initiate had been deprived of metal, that is made penniless, he could still offer all that his new Brethren were really seeking – his unqualified love, flowing from his heart along that trowel towards them.

This charitable aspect of the trowel was re-emphasised later in the Ceremony, when the Inner Tyler presented his trowel to the candidate in the North-East corner, but this time using its flat surface to test his benevolence; echoing the manner of collecting alms in the old operative lodges.

Ramsay's Oration also introduced the concept of selfless honour into Freemasonry. About 1740 or so the Hiram legend formed part of a new Third Degree to emphasise his preference for death before the dishonour of revealing sworn secrets. In the 1816 unification of the Ancient and Modern rituals the Poniard became the chosen sharp object placed against the candidate's naked breast. Possibly it was now considered that the physical protection of a Lodge remained secure under the Tyler while the significance of love and charity could be assured from the North East Corner.

So, Charlie, when our Monarch 'exchanged his sceptre for a trowel' he was publicly proclaiming that in order to enter Freemasonry he was prepared to take on the humblest office a Lodge then had to offer, that of the most junior Apprentice or Inner Tyler armed only with sword and trowel. It was a universal reminder that to live in love and charity with fellow men was always to be preferred to a life of rank, wealth and vanity.'

After a pause Fred added: *'That's perhaps a lesson for us all today'.*



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

*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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Fred and Charlie character drawings courtesy of Eddie Wildman.

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