



PAPER

Promotion According to Fred & Charlie



Summary: Free and accepted from operative through speculative to the present day.

It had been a good evening and a quiet night-cap seemed in order. Their usual table at the Masons Arms was free and that first sip was surely pure nectar.

The silence was eventually broken by Charlie.

'What are my chances of getting the Secretary's, Treasurer's or DC's job? They seem to have been in office since the year dot.'

Charlie was not long out of the Chair and Fred, normally willing to be supportive to an enthusiastic younger Mason, asked simply why on earth he wanted any of them.

Charlie came quickly to the point.

'The chaps say that if you want promotion, these three almost certainly guarantee an active Provincial rank.'

Fred let the fallacy of Charlie's logic rest for a moment.

'Do you have special qualification? Have you been secretary to a club or taken Minutes at work? Have you had any accountancy or book-keeping experience?'

'Well, no but they can't be too difficult, Fred. You only present the accounts once a year as Treasurer, and you always have the little blue book to fall back on as DC. I agree the monthly summons and minutes are a bit of a chore as Secretary, but I can handle a computer programme with the best.'

'Look Charlie, ideally the offices you mention should be filled by experienced Past Masters. You only left the Chair a short while ago. Assistant Secretary's coming up and so is Charity Steward. Let the Secretary or Senior Warden know you are interested when he makes his list for next year.'

'But they don't get noticed by Province do they Fred?'

Fred pressed on.

'Why do you want a Provincial appointment so much?'

Charlie grinned sheepishly.

'Province seems to be where all the action is. There seem to be dozens of Provincial Officers all saying what we should be doing. The senior officers from the 'Chain-Gang', the Provincial Secretariat, Pathway gurus. Provincial mentoring teams, visiting officers, District visiting officers, Provincial membership officers, Grand Orators, Grand Charity Steward... the list goes on and on. All of 'em advising, and we have to accept it and agree. It would be nice to join 'em and receive some salutes rather than giving them all the time. After all, we are a voluntary organisation and not one of them has ever been elected.'

Fred took a long sip. He needed time to think.

'It may be Charlie, that you are looking at things through the wrong end of the telescope. The be-all and end-all of Speculative Freemasonry stays firmly within the Lodge. That is Masonry's cornerstone. That's where friendships are made, where our families can meet, where in sickness or in loss, we care for each other. That is where you have been accepted as a member of the team. You can't put a price on that!'

He paused.

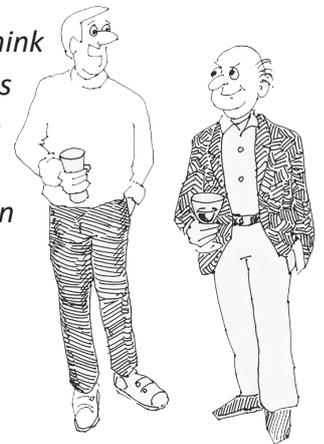
'Province is in many ways so much froth. Provincial officers merely help in the administration of a Province. Our Provincial Grand Master has many Lodges and can appoint a set number of active officers. He will look over the Past Masters of that year and, given the various offices held then time expired, select those who best fit his needs at that time.

It follows only a few Past Masters can become eligible for an active rank. Most will have had a goodish year, but most will have to be content with a past rank. That's not a reflection on them, merely on the needs of the day. If you do Lodge Secretary and do it well, you may get an active rank; do it badly and you may not. It is not the office that is the qualification, it is the potential of the chap filling it.

A second point to consider Charlie. Those chaps filling the roles that are apparently disturbing your equanimity. They are basically there to help if a Lodge runs out of ideas or experience. Province does not tell a Lodge how to run its affairs. What it does is to offer advice on best practise, on keeping to the Book of Constitutions. It is up to the Lodge to accept or reject it. These chaps can work very hard, often giving up evenings and weekends in committees, displays, presentations and training days. All these require preparation time too. They earn their corn, some of them big time.

Learn from me, Charlie. Focus your energy on your Lodge, be a good team player. Think of others, not yourself. Help where you can, attend the rehearsals. If a job needs doing, Assistant Secretary say offer to help. If you earn a reputation as a bloke who quietly gets on with the job, word gets around and Provincial Office can soon follow. You should never seek higher office Charlie, just do your level best as and when opportunity comes.'

They finished their pints in silence. Each had given the other much to think about.



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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