

The Chisel

May 8, 2011

The Chisel, whose principal characteristics (so says our Ritual), are its smallness and its sharpness; what gift at our birth can we think of as corresponding in its nature to the

“diminutive implement of exquisite temper”?

Our Ritual itself supplies the answer—**Perseverance**, that human quality which says *“try, try, try again”*; which says *“let’s have another go, next time the results should be better”*; that very human quality in us which is prepared to labor long and tediously for the sake of a fine end result.

Those of my brethren who have, by chance, watched the serialized television production of Thomas Hardy’s classic novel “Jude the Obscure”, will recall that the story is about a young stone-mason, and that each television episode was introduced by a close-up of a stone-mason’s hands surfacing a block of ashlar with chisel and gavel. Each blow with the gavel produces a short, precise movement of the chisel, and removes a tiny amount of material in working towards the final smooth surface.

Similarly, and symbolically, when considering the improvement of our characters as we travel through life, it is true that the rude material receives its fine finish by repeated efforts alone.

The men we most admire are not, in the main, persons who have accomplished some great and spectacular feat of charity, bravery, or moral victory; but those whom we know as unfailingly kind and considerate in little things. Men, who would never dream of a shabby act, even a small one. Men who, when angered

or aroused, do not let slip the bitter, damaging, but irretrievable words, BUT bite their tongues, count to ten, and then either say something conciliatory, to help mend matters, or else say nothing at all.

Such men are irresistible, for the **chisel of perseverance is**

“of such exquisite temper as to make an impression on all but the hardest substances”

and indeed it is a case-hardened character who is not ultimately influenced for good by the unflinching acts of courtesy and consideration of a man well skilled in the use of Masonic tools.

Such men are modest, but are well recognized in their community.

When their name is mentioned, people, say, ***“Oh, everyone respects him,”*** or ***“Oh, everyone seeks his advice,”*** or perhaps, ***“Oh, you can always depend upon him!”***

But here in the ***“abode of friendship and brotherly love”*** we make use of a different phrase; we say

“Ah yes, he is a Freemason!”

Presented by Brother Phil J. Croft, of King David Lodge No. 93, West Vancouver, B.C. where the Canadian Ritual is followed. His talk on the Entered Apprentice Tools appeared in the March and April 1972 issues of the MASONIC BULLETIN, .