

Good Masonic Books (II)

By Alphonse Cerza, P.M.

A Short Talk Bulletin with the same subject was published in November, 1945. Needing something more current, M.S.A. asked Worshipful Brother Cerza, noted Masonic scholar, to provide an update. M.S.A. is indebted to Brother Cerza for this effort.

One way of getting more out of your Masonic membership is to read good Masonic books. Unfortunately, because of part of the Obligation, many new members assume there can be no books dealing with Freemasonry, and too often they are not told there are good books available on all phases of the subject.

There are a number of Masonic libraries in the United States (a list is available from the Masonic Service Association). The member who lives close to one of these libraries is fortunate because not only can he get guidance on what he should read, but most libraries will loan some of their books to interested members. Some of the Masonic libraries also loan some of their books by mail, and have a printed list of books that are recommended. A visit to the library and a consultation with the librarian would be helpful. Unfortunately, there have been published too many books identified as being "Masonic" which are not dependable and contain much misinformation. This Short Talk Bulletin is designed for the Mason who is in need of guidance in the selection of the Masonic books worth reading.

Masonic authorities do not agree on what are the "best" Masonic books. In 1938 Norman B. Hickox, of Illinois, asked sixteen Masonic authorities to select lists of what they consider the twelve most important Masonic books. From their replies he compiled the result of his survey and published a book entitled *The Twelve Treasured Tomes of ~freemasonry*. The books listed represented the combined thought of the persons contacted, but none of them wholly agreed with the final result stated in the book .

The fact that a book is classified as a "Masonic book" does not mean it is worth reading. Many such books have been the work of enthusiastic Masons who relied on their imaginations rather than on research. Books dealing with the following subjects should be selected with care:

- 1) The origins of Freemasonry;

- 2) the Masonic membership of great men; and
- 3) presenting events in history as Masonic projects.

Under the first category there are about twenty-five theories that have been advanced, most of them are unfounded and their presentation has been a waste of time. Under the second category we find such statements as "all the governors of the original thirteen Colonies were Masons"; "all of George Washington's generals were Masons"; and "most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons." Each of these statements is untrue and are gross exaggerations. Under the third category we note the oft-repeated erroneous story that the Boston Tea Party was planned in a Masonic lodge and was executed by the members of the lodge.

The Twelve Treasured Tomes lists the Holy Bible as the first book of interest to Masons. That the Great Book has an important place in Freemasonry is apparent to all Masons. As an aid to locating items of Masonic interest in the Great Book there was published in 1948 a Masonic Concordance of the Holy Bible, by Charles C. Hunt, which has been out-of-print for many years. The Masonic Book Club has published an enlarged page facsimile of this book making it easier to read.

Each reader will have different subjects in which he will have an interest. It is recommended that as a first step he secure the current Index of the publications of the Masonic Service Association, secure those items which appeal to him, and study these items. Once he has become aware of the subjects that interest him, his choice of books to read will be easier and he will be ready to expand his Masonic horizon.

The following suggested Masonic books to read are intended to be a guide for the Mason seeking to make a daily advance in knowledge about the Craft.

A good small book to read on the general meaning of Freemasonry is *What Masonry Means*, by William E. Hammond. For an eloquent description of the Craft, every Mason should read *The Builders*, by Joseph Fort Newton, the most widely read Masonic book of all times. For a comprehensive coverage of Freemasonry and how it works there are two books which should be read together as they were originally planned as one book: *The Newly-Made Mason and More About Masonry*, by H.L. Haywood. Two good books with general information on a variety of subjects are *Facts for Freemasons*, by Harold V.B. Voorhis, and *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*, by B.E. Jones.

The history of Freemasonry is a subject of perennial interest to Masons. The multi-volume set written by Robert Freke Gould and the one written by Albert G. Mackey are intended to be used primarily as reference works. Three good one-volume histories are *Concise History of Freemasonry*, by R.F. Gould; *A History of Freemasonry*, by James E. Craig and H.L. Haywood, and *Pocket History of Freemasonry*, by Pick, Knight, and Smyth. *Pursuit of a Thread*, by Deed Vest is an examination of world history, seeking elements linked with Freemasonry. *Freemasonry in American History*, by Allen E. Roberts, briefly tells the history of the United

States, weaving in the Masonic events. Many Grand Lodges have published histories of the Craft in their states; these will be of great interest to the reading Mason. A good comprehensive history in two volumes is *Freemasonry Through Six Centuries*, by Henry W. Coil, Sr.

On the subject of Masonic symbolism, the classic *Symbolism of Freemasonry*, by A. G. Mackey, is worth reading. Other books on this subject which have enjoyed a wide readership are *Symbolism of the Three Degrees*, by Oliver Day Street; *Symbolical Masonry*, by H.L. Haywood; *Symbolism in Craft Masonry*, by Colin Dyer; *The Craft and Its Symbols*, by Allen E. Roberts and *Sources of Masonic Symbolism*, by Alex Horne.

For an outline of Freemasonry throughout the world, there is *Masonic World Guide*, by Kent Henderson, which is indispensable to a traveler visiting lodges in foreign lands.

On the subject of Masonic ritual, the following books will be of interest *Six Hundred Years of Craft Ritual*, by Harry Carr; *Commentary on the Freemasonry Ritual*, by E.H. Cartwright .

The following general monitors have become standard: *Illustrations of Masonry*, by William Preston; and *Freemasons ' Monitor*, by Thomas Smith Webb. Many Grand Lodges have printed Monitors.

On the subject of Masonic law, the classic is *Jurisprudence of Freemasonry*, by A.G. Mackey, but his discussion of the Masonic Landmarks is controversial and has been criticized. The lectures by Roscoe Pound with the title, *Masonic Jurisprudence*, are recommended. For a proper foundation of the subject one must not overlook the portions of *Constitutions of the Free Masons*, by James Anderson covering the Old Charges and the Thirty-Nine Articles. The reader should read with caution the history part of this book.

On the subject of Masonic philosophy, the best are the lectures by Roscoe Pound entitled *The Philosophy of Freemasonry* and *The Teachings of Freemasonry*, by H.L. Haywood.

Men make Freemasonry, as the biographies of Masons are always of interest. The most comprehensive collection is the four-volume set *10, 000 Famous Freemasons*, by William R. Denslow. Supplementing this fine work is *Who is Who in Freemasonry*, by Allen E. Roberts. Identifying authoritatively famous Masons of the Revolutionary War period is *The Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers*, by Ronald E. Heaton.

A good book on the relationships of the Craft with religious groups is *The Clergy and the Craft*, by Forrest E. Haggard.

Masons should be aware of the fact that there are persons, religious groups, and political groups that have been and are opposed to Freemasonry. It has been the policy of the Craft to ignore attacks by these persons and groups, and this position has proven successful over the years. But we should keep our members informed about these matters for their benefit and also so they can answer those critics when friends question them about the future of Freemasonry. It is

recommended that *Let There Be Light: A Study in Anti-Masonry*, published by the Masonic Service Association, be studied carefully.

A number of good books of fiction with a Masonic background have been published. *The Man of Mount Moriah*, by C.M. Boutelle, is an old favorite. Others are: *The Lion's Paw*, by Carl H. Claudy; *The Sword of Solomon*, by R.S. Easter; *The lodge of Friendship Village*, by E.V. George; and *These Were Brethren*, by Carl H. Claudy.

Two good books of Masonic humor are *Tied to Masonic Apron Strings*, and *The Lighter Side of Masonry*, by S.M.L. Pollard.

There are a number of volumes that contain valuable collections of material. The old reliable is *The Little Masonic Library*, with the current edition consisting of five volumes; *The Collected Prestonian Lectures*, in two volumes to date, contain good papers. *The Freemason at Work*, by Harry Carr, contains 200 questions sent to Quatuor Coronati Lodge over a period of years, with answers. *Harry Carr's World of Freemasonry*, consisting of a reproduction of fifteen outstanding literary items by a great Masonic writer. *Masonic Curiosa*, by H. L. Haywood, and *The Essays of H.L. Haywood*, reproduce many items of this popular Masonic writer. *The Masonic Addresses and Writings of Roscoe Pound*, collected in one volume most of his Masonic items.

For the Mason who wants to have on hand a handy reference work, there are two books that are available: *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, by A.G. Mackey, updated from time to time; and *Masonic Encyclopedia*, by H.W. Coil, Sr.

Most Grand Lodges publish a number of items such as their Constitution and By-Laws, annual Proceedings, Monitors, a Grand Lodge Bulletin or Newsletter, etc. These items should not be overlooked. Some Grand Lodges have educational committees which publish material. Too often these items are not widely announced and are overlooked.

A free catalog of printed Masonic material is available from each of the following:

The Masonic Service Association, 8120 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-4785;

Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., P.O. Box 9759, Richmond, Virginia 23228;

Lewis Masonic Publishers, Terminal House, Shepperton, TW 17 8AS,

England, and The Temple Publishers 8120 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-4785.

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