

PRESENTATION AND SYMBOLISM OF THE GRAND LODGE CERTIFICATE

*By R.W. Bro. James H. McKergow
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It gives me much pleasure to present to you this Certificate, granted to you by the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M., of British Columbia, of which the present Grand Master is M.W. Bro. James R. Mitchell. This Certificate records that you have been regularly initiated, passed and raised in the three established degrees of Freemasonry according to antient custom and according to the Constitutions of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge.

You must realise that it is the evidence of your position and rank as a Freemason, and therefore is a precious document of which you should take special care. It is the visible bond between our Antient Craft and yourself, for on the one hand it bears the great gold seal of the Grand Lodge, and also the signature of the Grand Secretary, M.W. Bro. J. H. N. Morgan, — to indicate on their part that you are entitled to the great and invaluable privileges of our Antient Craft while you obey its edicts, rules and regulations. On the other hand; it will, before this meeting is over, bear your signature, which will be placed in the space provided for the same on the right side of the Certificate, to show your adherence to these Constitutions, and to the pledges you have given during your Masonic progress. You will see below this space the Latin words “ne varietur” — “Lest it should be changed.” Your signature as written by you tonight should never vary, because it may in the future be used as a means of identification, especially if you travel into a foreign Jurisdiction. If you are visiting a Lodge in some Jurisdiction other than your own, you may be required to present your Certificate to help in your identification, but, my Brother, this Certificate will not entitle you to admission to any Lodge without due examination.

Your Certificate, therefore, while a passport to any Masonic circle, will require the backing of a readiness at all times to undergo examination, when properly called upon.

Study your Ritual with understanding, and fit yourself to undergo proof and answer questions on any portion thereof, so that you may be able to demonstrate yourself a true Freemason, with credit to yourself and honour to your Lodge.

In presenting you with this Certificate, let me explain that the illustration surmounting it is surrounded by the Thistle, the Shamrock and the Rose, showing that three Grand Lodges of the British Isles are the parent stem from which we derive our Masonic life. Within this Imperial garland are the Royal Arms, indicating that Royalty is the Patron of Freemasonry within the Empire, while their motto “God and my right” declares to us two of the grand principles of Freemasonry, namely: a firm belief in the Great Architect of the Universe, and a determination to maintain that liberty of conscience for which Freemasonry has always stood.

In the foreground of the illustration is a shield, on one half of which are the Lion and the Crown, and on the other half three Castles, symbols respectively of strength, authority and protection. Supporting the Shield on the dexter side stands Faith with folded hands in an attitude of devotion, and on the sinister side, Hope in an attitude of adoration, while behind the Shield stands Charity cherishing orphan children — a symbol of the love and protection that is extended to the helpless and the needy by the Brethren of the Craft.

In the background are depicted the Mountains of our sunset province, with their peaks of eternal snow looking down over forest, stream and plain, all suggestive of the vast resources, which for our material benefit Nature has with lavish hands laid down through myriad years.

Above all is the equilateral Triangle, indicating the three-fold nature of man — the physical, spiritual and intellectual. Within the Triangle is the All-seeing Eye of Divine Direction, to which we need never look in vain for sure guidance on life's pathway.

In the body of the Certificate there are three Pillars representing Wisdom, Strength and Beauty — Wisdom of Thought, Word and Action in all our daily walks and conversations; Strength to resist Temptations that beset us from day to day; and the Beauty of sterling character and lofty ideals. Between these several Pillars, inscribed in English and Latin, is in brief the history of your progress in Freemasonry, and a declaration to this and all other lands of your right to its benefits and privileges wherever Brethren meet for fellowship or ceremonials, according to the rights and customs of our antient institution.

On the tessellated floor, which could represent the vicissitudes of life, are the terrestrial and celestial globes indicating the universality of Freemasonry. The Ashlars — the rough and perfect Ashlars — teach us that Freemasonry is a progressive science, and that in all our endeavours — although at first ignorant and unskilled — we may by industry and assiduity attain to the rank and dignity of master workmen.

The Working Tools — the twenty-four inch gauge, the common gavel, the chisel, square, level and plumb-rule, the skirret, pencil and compasses — all suggest the several degrees through which you have passed, and the moral lessons incident to these degrees; but chiefly in the Entered Apprentice Degree, that by the judicious division of time, and by industry and perseverance, you may acquire expert mastery over any labour to which you may turn your hand; in the Fellow Craft Degree, this being a progressive science, that you may acquire such knowledge of the arts and sciences as may lie within the scope of your interest and ability; while in the Master Mason's Degree you are at liberty to rise from the ashes of the past to a newness of spiritual life, and a greater interest in and usefulness to your fellowmen.

But, greatest of all, you are taught in every degree, more particularly in the Master Mason's Degree, the value in Freemasonry of the V.O.T.S.L., the great light in every degree of Freemasonry, that point within a circle from which a Master Mason cannot err, if he places his trust in its sacred oracles and precepts, and thereby becomes a co-worker with the Divine Creator.

Let these symbols ever remind you that by square conduct, level steps, and upright intentions, aided by the revelation of God's Will and Word, as contained in the Sacred Writings, that the E.A. as symbolized by the rough ashlar may be enabled to become like unto the perfect ashlar, polished and adorned by the Arts and Sciences, and worthy to complete his Tracing Board which is here depicted, with the aid of the moral teaching of the pencil and compasses.

Thus, my Brother, when the G.A.O.T.U. shall summon you to deliver up your Tracing Board, the symbol of your life here on earth, may it show a building perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder, and may His judgment be as favourable to you as it will be merciful.

In closing, let me add my congratulations on the very successful examination you have passed, and express my pleasure in being allowed to present you with your Certificate.

I would ask you to approach the Secretary's desk, and affix your signature in the margin of your Certificate for purposes of identification, and, remember, my Brother, "Ne Varietur."