To what extent am I my Brothers Keeper is a problem which has occupied the minds of the leading men of the World for nearly one hundred years, and is today the one great question being asked in a hundred different ways.

The answer is not as yet satisfactorily determined, but there is ample evidence that public opinion is rapidly destroying the most selfish forms of individualism, and is recognising the Divine Law which says "No man liveth unto himself". There is throughout the civilised World an ever growing acceptance of the threefold Masonic duty which is "Man's duty to his Creator, to his neighbour, and to himself."

When this threefold duty is fully understood we shall have discovered a tremendous force back of the flesh, which heals, regenerates, harmonizes, and upbuilds, and which a well known writer says will ultimately bring us into that state of blessedness which we instinctively feel is the birthright of every human being.

It might, however at this time be interesting and profitable if we took a retrospective view of the states through which the claim of a Man's duty to man has already passed, and endeavour to ascertain if Freemasonry has had any connection with, or is taking any part in this great social movement, which will ultimately result in a full recognition of the Masonic teaching that all men have sprung from the same stock, and are partakers of the same nurture. Let us look back to the year 1215 when the great Magna Carta was signed. This famous document is the foundation on which British Freedom has been gradually built. The freedom originally granted was enjoyed only by the nobility and Freemen of England the later portion of the people were left in a condition of Villeinage - a state of existence which, in these days, we have almost lost sight of as an historical fact, for even under the great Magna Carta men were so debased that their right to live upon the land was only on condition of their doing the meanest services for the Lord of the Manor, and in many cases men went with the sale of the Land, as chattels.

Macauley tells us that some faint traces of Villeinage can be found as late as the days of the Stuarts. There was clearly and unmistakably "One Law for the Rich, and another Law for the Poor", and although some slight measure of protection was afforded to every man, it was so slight as to be of little practical value to the poorer classes. The privileges, as originally granted, were from time to time extended by revision, but generations passed away before Villeinage and Serfdom ceased to exist in England. Their abolition was the result of the internal forces of Society and not of legislative enactment. The great battle was for freedom, and slowly, but surely, men were being inspired with the knowledge of their relationship to God with all its potentialities, and light was penetrating the darkness in every direction, but in no section of Society were the principles of universal freedom better understood than by the operative Masons in England, who, at that time, must have been a large and influential body of men judging by the enormous amount of work of the highest class performed by them in England during a few centuries.
Their Society was no doubt a secret organisation, closely guarded and common brotherhood, one of the fundamental brotherhood. Social distinctions most probably were recognised, as well as a proper system of discipline.

There were the mentally strong men, masters of the Arts and Sciences who prepared the Drafts, or Plans for the intended structure, and determined with accuracy and precision the limits and proportion of its several parts; that these men were giants of intellect and creative power is clearly demonstrated. Their plans were passed on to other Brethren the overseers, who marked out the ground, and allotted the various section of the work to those of the Brethren who were specially skilled in the use of the Square, the Level, and the Plumb Rule every man performing his allotted task, not as Servant to Master, but as Brother to Brother.

I think we are justified in assuming that the Members realised that the doctrine of common brotherhood adopted and practised by this organisation was so much in advance of anything contemporary with their own work, that they decided to extend their Membership by admitting any good and worthy citizen who would subscribe to the principles of the Brotherhood, although not intending to follow the occupation of an operative Mason; hence in the memorable year of 1717 Free and accepted, or Speculative Freemasonry became a living force, and on the foundations then so well and truly laid there is gradually being erected a glorious social edifice; the material for which as ordered by the great Architect to be used are, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. The ingredients from which the cement is made to form the solid mass is a personal and daily practice of the principles of the five points of Fellowship. We must however with shame admit that much of the work in the construction of this Masonic edifice has been very indifferently performed.

Much of the material labeled "Brotherly Love" proved to be unreliable. It could not stand the pressure of solid truth, but crumbled away, and left the Masonic Building out of Plumb, and object of derision. The passer by, seeing the Masonic brand upon the material reflects and says, "See what the solid rock of Truth has done to those empty professions of Masonic Brotherhood. Masonry is a "hollow sham", and there is no beauty in the structure."

Who could say that such a criticism was altogether unjust? We must as Masons and honest men admit that the Masonic structure is considerably out of square and plumb and needs repair as well as in the future greater care in the work of construction. There are, at the present time, however, thousands and thousands of men trying to build honestly and faithfully upon the solid foundation of Masonry and it would be well for Masonry, if they, and they alone, were building. How great their disappointment must be to find numbers constantly bring materials bearing the apparently genuine labels of "Brotherhood", which instead of being composed of "Brotherly Love" proves to be nothing but a mixture of "Selfishness" and "personal advancement". Naturally, such material when placed in position and put to the test must inevitably fall.

Between the years 1717 and 1834, we cannot trace very much advancement in the direction of a public recognition of the principle of Mans duty to Man. Poverty was a crime. To him that had much, more was given, and to him that had little, was taken away even that which he had. The condition of the poor in England during the reign of the Georges forms a page in British History we would gladly expunge were it possible to do so. Still it served a purpose and ultimately led to the
Poor Law of 1834 which no doubt was an evidence of the recognition by the State, of a duty hitherto disregarded but the Poor Law was fundamentally wrong, because it dealt with destitution when it existed, but did not attempt to prevent it, and although the laws of England are more human today that they were in 1834, there is still much to be done in the direction of removing the cause which creates distress. The best way to deal with any form of evil is to remove the cause.

The State now cheerfully accepts duties which would have been inconceivable to the people of 200 years ago, and we cannot today comprehend what the development of human life will lead to in the future, but it must be for the betterment of the race. The progress, however, must not be forced by the dreams of the Socialists, or by the destructive tactics of the Anarchists. The sure and safe lines are to be found in the Constitution of Freemasonry. For the past thirty years nearly all the leading Statesmen of the British Empire have been Freemasons. The King, when Prince of Wales, recognized the value and accepted the principles of the Craft, and no doubt with the consent of Queen Victoria, became its leader.

In whatever part of the World British Freemasonry flourishes diffusing the light of the Sacred Law and the emblematical teachings of the Square and Compasses the very breath of which is "Brotherly Love" and "relief and truth", there we shall find a reflection of those principles in the character and actions of those who control the affairs of the Nation. Free and accepted Masonry should be a solution of many of the social problems as it goes to the root of the question.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, one of the World's greatest thinkers in a very interesting article, quite recently, wrote:- "Mankind will never shake itself free until it has again a new religion which is to be a Compound of Science, Ethic, Art and Love. Such a system at once, practical, moral, and religious is in sight, and with it the storm cloud which today seems to menace humanity will not roll away into the abyss of Ancient History, and leave us with visions of a new heaven and a new earth, man's earth having grown into a real heaven, and our new heaven having become a regenerated Earth."

Was Mr. Harrison thinking of Freemasonry when he penned these lines, probably not, but it is very significant that he should express the opinion that the hope of the future was the recognition of the principles of the three degrees in Freemasonry.

1st. BROTHERLY LOVE. The moral teachings of the fist degree.

2nd The study of the Arts and Science which are the objects of research in the second degree

3rd. The ethics of life which the third degree so forcibly illustrates.

Brethren, every successful movement in Masonry, which is a progressive and not a fixed science must be in this direction. "Brotherly love" is a truth not yet fully understood, but is ever unfolding. Its limits are beyond our present powers of conception.

Let us look to it that this most recent local development on Freemasonry is built upon the Masonic principles, otherwise the Provincial Grand Lodge of Canterbury will not accomplish its purpose. Our individual duty is to seek to obtain a more thorough knowledge of the principles of the Craft, and of the work we each have to perform. To practice these virtues we profess to admire. To make a daily study of the best methods of promoting happiness in others, by ministering to their necessities, soothing them in their afflictions, covering their fault with the mantle of charity. To endeavour by all the strength we
possess to promote good fellowship amongst the brethren and create for ourselves an atmosphere of cheerfulness and by our example assist others to be happy. Never listen to slander or allow a Brother's name to be reviled. Exalt the virtues and hide the weaknesses of a Brother and generally by our own lives and actions prove what Masonry can do for mankind.

Brethren, in this new provincial district there are nearly two thousand Masons, all vouched for as being free and of good report. This number is quite sufficient to prove what Masonry really is.

Do you, my Brother, believe in Masonry as a refining influence in human life, and if so, are you prepared by the help of God to live the life of a Mason in order that its principles may become better known?

Will you give to your Provincial Grand Lodge the use of these talents wherewith God has blessed you?

Are you prepared for the glory of the Most High, and for the uplifting of your fellow creatures, to give of your substancy? Say the small sum of sixpence per week? a small sacrifice surely, when we consider know much we waste, or spend in objects which have no value other than a passing gratification and yet, if every Mason in the Provincial Lodge of Canterbury would make this small personal sacrifice of the objects mentioned, it would yield the handsome sum of $2,600 pounds per annum. Think, what this would accomplish in this province in say ten years. What a large proportion of this amount could be handed to the Bond of Benevolence, and how much could be done to brighten the lives of those who have been overtaken by misfortune, or stricken by sickness, and yet it would be a sacrifice of less than one penny per day. This Provincial Grand Lodge of Canterbury is not established simply for the purpose of conferring Masonic rank upon a certain number of Brethren annually. That would in itself be a very unsatisfactory reason for its existence. It has been constituted for the purpose of extending the principles of Freemasonry by the collective efforts of members, everyone of whom has declare that it was in is heart preparation for membership was first made. He has likewise solemnly affirmed that his main object in becoming a member was to render himself more extensively serviceable to his fellow men.

Brethren, let us weight well the words we have uttered and the professions of love to the order which we have from time to time expressed, and say if there are any of us who before God could say I am quite unable to spare one penny per day for the uplifting of any less fortunate brother.

The Grand Lodge of New Zealand has already accomplished a great work, but it is quite impossible for an organisation of 10,000 members to watch and closely guard the individual interests of all its members, scattered over such a large area, and it therefore granted to Canterbury, a Provincial Charter in order the Masonry may more fully accomplish its purpose in this part of the Dominion.

It rests with us brethren, to determine whether Masonry is to become a practical thing in this territory. To a very large extent our work will determine whether a Provincial Grand Lodge in New Zealand is something to be desired, or something to be avoided.

Upon this Provincial District rests the responsibility of extending the influence of the Craft, or of bringing masonry into contempt by having to write the word failure across our Charter. Which shall it be brethren? I do not think the word 'Failure' will ever be written in connection with our Provincial Grand Lodge work. Let us remember that success in masonry is not determined by the number of its members, or
by the payment of money. The successful Mason is the man whose life reflects the principles of Masonry. Dilligence in business, or in work, is the road which leads to success. To act squarely with our neighbour and be true to our conscience, are the test of the true Mason. Let us remember Brethren, that whilst the practice of Masonic life and rule by a few members can be true to our conscience, are the tests of the true Mason. Let us remember Brethren, that whilst the practice of masonic line and rule by a few members has a far reaching influence, but the adoption of those principles by all the members in this new Provincial District would prove mighty and irresistible force. The realisation of this desired end may be nearer than many of us anticipate, and whilst we may be inclined to measure the success of the future to this simple truth that what is possible for one man to accomplish is equally possible for one hundred men to achieve, and if for one hundred, why not for one thousand, and so on "ad infinitum". Let our own ideal be to absorb the Truths of Freemasonry, in order that we may in our lives reflect the Three Emblematic Lights. The consciousness of having done our duty, will be our reward as well as the satisfaction of knowing that to some extend, at all events, we have assisted Freemasonry, to find the answer to the question.

To what extend am I my brother's Keeper?

Submitted by D. Roy Murray
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