

Official Visit to Electric Lodge No. 495

November 15, 2006

Lecture

The Masonic Apron

The Masonic Apron: *“A badge of innocence and the bond of friendship, more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honourable than the Star of Garter, or any other order in existence.”*

With these few words, Freemasonry expresses the honour paid to this symbol of our Ancient Craft.

In the E.A. ritual, the W.M. gives a lambskin or white leather apron to the candidate, saying it is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honorable than the Star and Garter....Ah, What is a Golden Fleece and Star and Garter?

A fleece is a coat of wool covering a wool-bearing animal like a sheep. This would explain the link between a fleece and our apron being white leather. Golden Fleece appears in the Greek tradition, where Aries (Latin for ram) was the winged ram of the Golden Fleece. There was also a fleece placed by the King of Colchis in a dragon-guarded grove and which was recovered by the Argonauts. It is also interesting to note that the Order of the Golden Fleece, introduced by Philip III (a.k.a. Philip the Good), Duke of Burgundy in 1429, was the highest order of knighthood, especially as wool was an important part of his domain at the time.

The Star and Garter is more difficult to research. There is an order, called the Order of the Garter, which is the most illustrious order of British knighthood. It was instituted by King Edward III in 1348. The order consists of the sovereign, and 25 companions, of which the Prince of Wales is always a member. It, therefore, signifies how important the order is, and also, more interestingly perhaps, the period from which our ritual possibly originated (12th century).

The Apron is *“more ancient than the Star or Garter* “because of all that it professes to exemplify in the life of its wearer. Essentially, the Masonic Apron is the badge of honour. The right to wear it is only given to proven and devoted men. A Freemason’s Apron must be made of lambskin. No other substance, such as linen, silk or satin should be substituted without entirely destroying the emblematic character of the apron, for the material of the Freemason’s Apron constitutes one of the most important symbols of his avocation. The Lambskin has always been considered as an appropriate emblem of innocence. Hence, we are taught, in the ritual of the First Degree, that by the lambskin, the Mason is reminded of the purity of life and the rectitude of conduct which is so essential and necessary for a wholesome existence.

The apron appears to have been, in ancient times, an honorary badge of distinction. To the Jewish economy, none but the superior orders of the priesthood were permitted to adorn themselves with ornamental girdles, which were made of blue, purple and crimson; decorated with gold upon a ground of fine white linen; while the inferior priests wore only white. The Indian, the Persian, the Jewish, the Ethiopian and the Egyptian Aprons, though equally superb, all bore a character distinct from each other. Some wore plain white, others striped with blue, purple and crimson; some were of wrought gold, others adorned and decorated with superb tassels and fringes. In a word, though the *“principal honour* “of the apron may consist in its

reference to innocence of conduct and purity of heart, yet it certainly appears through all ages to have been a most exalted badge of distinction.

A Mason is recognized by his gentle nature, his chivalrous pursuit to be morally correct with the way he treats his fellow creatures and his tolerance of the crudeness and ignorance of men is typified by his patience and fortitude. His charitable forgiveness of his Brethren when they wilfully or unconsciously cause him anguish; his dedication to a spiritual knighthood with the value of Masonic virtue of human kindness by which alone a Mason rises above the dregs of the world that carries him forward to the upward winding staircase of life.

The lambskin of life's apron presented to the Initiate during his Entered Apprentice Degree should always be a very precious possession. It should represent to him the outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual bond of righteousness and fortitude of moral values and truth.

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