

Masonic Etiquette and Decorum

By VWB. HERMOGENES P. OLIVEROS

Senior Grand Lecturer

Third of Four Installments

The preparation room is the place in the Temple where every possible precaution, courtesy and kindness are shown to the candidates. It is in this place where all degrees begin. Here, a candidate receives his first impression of the Craft. If he finds the preparation room in a mess, or full of smoke, or a place where members joke freely with each other, the candidate might form an erroneous impression of Freemasonry, a bad picture of the organization which may remain with him for years.

Preparing the Candidates in ritualistic garb should be done with tact; the brethren who perform this preparation must manifest consideration and humility so that the candidates would realize that entrance into Masonry is not a mere formality but a serious and meaningful experience, with a far-reaching effect on their lives. When they are led through the Inner Door, they should not be stifled by tobacco smoke nor be surprised by a hum of conversation. The officers should be ready at their stations, prepared and alert to perform their parts; all present should observe the necessary decorum.

The Inner-Door

The Inner-Door of the Preparation Room leading into the lodge

room should never be opened or used except for the purpose of admitting or returning the candidates. Any door leading into the Preparation Room should be kept locked during the Preparation of the Candidate. Nobody should be allowed in the room except the Master and the Stewards.

Passing Between the Altar and the East

Nothing is mentioned in our Monitor with regard to forbidding Master Masons from passing between the Altar and the East when the lodge is open. Oftentimes, many newly raised Master Masons, not of their own fault, find themselves embarrassed when they attempt to cross that space. Many brethren assigned to instruct the newly raised brethren overlook this important part of the instruction.

When a brother Mason inadvertently makes that mistake the Worshipful Master should immediately rise and politely call his attention to it. The Worshipful Master should explain to the newly raised Master Masons that it has become a matter of courtesy, based upon ancient usage, that a Mason is not allowed to pass between the Altar and the station of the Worshipful Master when the lodge is open. The space therein has been

deemed a sacred ground, not to be trodden upon. There should be no obstruction between the East and the Three Great Lights, since the Three Great Lights are the particular responsibility of the Worshipful Master. Therefore, no brother should ever bar the view of the Worshipful Master from the Three Great Lights. From these the Worshipful Master gets his inspiration to rule and govern wisely his Lodge. The fact that during the degree work the candidate would pass or would be placed in that particular space does not militate against this interpretation but rather supports it, because the ground or space between the Altar and the East is considered sacred; hence, this concept lends dignity, impressiveness and solemnity to our ceremonies.

The Master's Hat

During lodge meetings, only the Master wears a hat, but he must at once uncover his head when the Grand Master or his Deputy enters the lodge; he so remains hatless until he is directed to continue governing his lodge.

To wear a hat is an old custom, but there is no law, either written or unwritten, which requires the Worshipful Master to wear a hat when he is in the East. However, owing to heat or to lack of ventilation in the lodge room, the Master may remove his hat if he feels uncomfortable to continue wearing a hat. This is an exception to the rule. Neither is there anything in the rule, whether written or unwritten, which prescribes the kind of hat a Master should wear; but the

principles governing this matter is determined by sound judgment and by good taste. A Master should never wear a hat of such odd style which might attract attention or which would tend to derogate the dignity of the Oriental Chair.

The hat is an emblem of the Master's authority, a mark by which the importance of his office is distinguished, a visible and conspicuous badge of his position as presiding officer and as the titular head of the lodge. The hat should always be removed when the name of the Supreme Deity is mentioned and when the prayers are recited. Removing the hat is a sign of respect and reverence to the Supreme Grand Architect of the Universe.

The hat should also be removed when the Worshipful Master is giving the obligations. In funeral services, the Master does not wear a hat. He should, however, wear his hat in funeral processions.

Dress

There is a philosophy as regards the kind of dress a Mason should wear in lodge meetings. The governing principle is good taste. The correct practice is to wear such attire which would show respect and lend dignity to the institution.

The propriety of wearing a formal dress depends entirely upon the occasion and the circumstances; such is a matter for the lodge to decide. As a mark of respect to the Fraternity, the Brethren should attend lodge meetings in business suits.

Prayer

Edict Number 43 is self-explanatory. It needs no elaboration, except that the Master holds his

hat with his left hand and place his right hand over his left breast. The Deacons take the rods in their left hands, hold the rods in vertical position, and place their right hands over their left breasts, as in giving the sign of fidelity.

The District Deputy Grand Master

Whenever the District Deputy Grand Master visits any lodge in his district, whether officially or unofficially, he represents the Grand Master. On official visits he should be received with Grand Honors. On other visits, the Master should only call up the lodge as the District Deputy Grand Master enters and have him conducted to the East. The gavel should be presented to him in the usual manner. Like the official visitations of the Grand Master, nobody should sit in the East during his reception except the Master. As a matter of courtesy, the DDGM may invite the Grand Officers, the Past Grand Officers, Inspector of the Lodge, and Past Masters who



TWO SIGNALS

At the entrance to the harbor of the Isle of Man there are two lights which guide the mariner into the harbor. One would think the two signals would confuse the pilot. But the fact is that he has to keep them in line, and so long as he keeps the two lights in line, his vessel is safe. And it is just as we keep our eye on the two signals—the love of God and the love of man—that we keep the channel, and are safe from the rocks on either hand.

— Dr. W. J. Watkinson

HERE AND THERE

A delightful Chinese "lauriat" was held by Shriners sojourning in Manila and nearby places Saturday evening, September 1 at the Foochow House on Claro M. Recto Avenue. It was a benefit dinner for the Masonic Hospital for Crippled Children under the auspices of Bamboo Oasis, sponsored by Chinese nobles. It was managed by Noble Tom Loft who conceived of the idea of the Shriners doing something tangible this year for the Hospital. To the credit of Noble Tom Loft and the Chinese Nobles who cooperated with him, the affair was a towering success.

The Life Membership roll of the Hospital received a big boost when seven Shriners and Sister Marie Reid, friendly and personable wife of Noble George Reid, subscribed for new Life Memberships. A life member pays P500, and so the Hospital became richer by P4,000. In addition the "up-turned fez" yielded P350.50 which also went to the Hospital coffers. Those who subscribed for Life Memberships, either in person or for their Lodges were, aside from Sister Reid, Nobles Howard Spuler, E. Bundenthal, (Leonard Wood Lodge), Jose L. Arameta, Yao Muntek (Mencius Lodge), Stephen Lewis (Manila Lodge), Frank Finsko (Lincoln Lodge) and Virente L. Co Chien.

The dinner was topped by a program of Chinese music and folk dances. A modern Chinese orchestra under the baton of conductor