

“The Festive Board” and its (Working Tools)

by
J. Clark, R.W.M. Lodge 1310

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I present to you the working tools of the “Festive Board.” They are the Fork, the Knife and the Tumbler.

The fork is an implement which can be placed in the hands of even the most unexperienced Mason to enable him to secure (sometimes by reaching across the table), the most delicate and succulent morsels which decorate and adorn our Festive Board, to delight the eye and stimulate the jaded appetite. It is also employed to convey the various portions to that aperture specially designed to receive them which reduces all nutriment to a common level. More especially should this implement be used when partaking of peas, for, if conveyed to the mouth by the Knife these vegetable globules often prove very elusive, added to which the Knife is liable to slip and cut the mouth.

The Knife when properly ground and sharpened, is used in bringing crude matter into due form, and assisting us to dissect the anatomy of even the most venerable rooster and to prepare and divide the same into proper proportion to suit the dimensions of the aforesaid aperture, so that it may not be filled to excess, and thus prevent the fervid flow of eloquence which should at all times be the distinguishing characteristic of the convivial Mason.

The Tumbler enables us with accuracy and precision to ascertain and determine the quantity of liquor most conducive to the preservation of our genial joviality, and whilst all glasses have not that mark upon them commonly called "the pretty" the skilful craftsman can generally manage to measure his "tot" by the aid of the two or three finger rule.

We are not, however, here assembled as Free and Accepted but rather as Operative or Energetic Masons, and these tools are delivered to us as vehicles of moral instruction and thus we apply them.

In this sense the Fork points out to us that we should not at all times sit still and wait for those things which we most desire, but should reach out, secure, and retain them, thus profit by our opportunity, and, accumulating the knowledge gained by our experience. Nor should we forget that the little things of life require to be looked after lest they elude our grasp and be lost beyond recall. As the prongs of the Fork are all equal and mutually assist each other, being joined together in one compact structure, so are we all equal when met together as Masons, so that the Fork points out to us that we should stand together shoulder to shoulder and practice those great qualities which cannot be too strongly recommended, namely:--

1. Sympathy with the failings of a brother.
2. Straightforwardness in all our dealings with one another.
3. Good temper in all our differences of opinion.
4. Fidelity to the sacred cause which binds us together.

The Knife points out to us the value of assiduity and patience, for, as it requires to be sharp and in good condition to enable it to cope with some of the problems which confront us, so we are taught to be careful of our corporal and mental faculties, that we may not be left behind in the battle of life. Moreover, it teaches us not to cut off more than we can comfortable chew, but to limit our desires in every sphere of life that, rising to eminence by merit, we may live respected and die regretted.

The Tumbler indicates the necessity of moderation in all things, for, as it has no graduated scale to measure its contents, the user must exercise his own judgment as to the quantity of liquor required to be poured within, so that he must be careful to ascertain and not exceed the limits of his internal economy, for, as the glass will only hold a certain quantity⁷ without detriment to its surroundings, so must we be careful to avoid the overflowing either with unseemly hilarity, or to the confusion of our mental and physical faculties. As the perfect Tumbler rings true, whether it be empty or filled with liquid, so should the perfect convivial Mason ring true after participation in the labours of the "Festive Board." A cracked Tumbler is despised and rejected by all men.

Thus the Working Tools of the "Festive Board" teach us to bear in mind and act accordingly to the cordial wishes of Prudence and Temperance, so that when we are summoned to drink the Tyler's Toast after partaking of all the good things which a bountiful providence has provided for us, may we rise and depart on our homeward way with the gratifying testimony of a contented mind, and equable poise, and an equally clear head.

J. Clark, R.W.M., 1310