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Murray, Idaho EST 1886

Monthly Trestleboard

Seat of Knowledge

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Bro. DB Jordan

CDA20.org





The Seat of Knowledge Trestleboard - Issue XI - November 6018

The Seat of Knowledge Trestleboard is an education based newsletter extracting articles and knowledge of interest from the past. Freemasonry is a rich and diversified field with world renown scholars who have contributed their knowledge to enhance ours, therein lies the reason for this particular Trestleboard. We are however happy to receive any articles or news including pictures from brothers of CDA 20 as well as recommendations and or suggestions. Please email submissions to: Bro. DB Jordan: CDA20.org@gmail.com

“Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writings so that you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for.” – Socrates



**CDA 20 Stated Communication
2nd Mon. @ 1900 Hrs-Dark Jan & Feb**

**CDA Valley Scottish Rite Reunion
Jan. 26 2019 — 8 am sharp**

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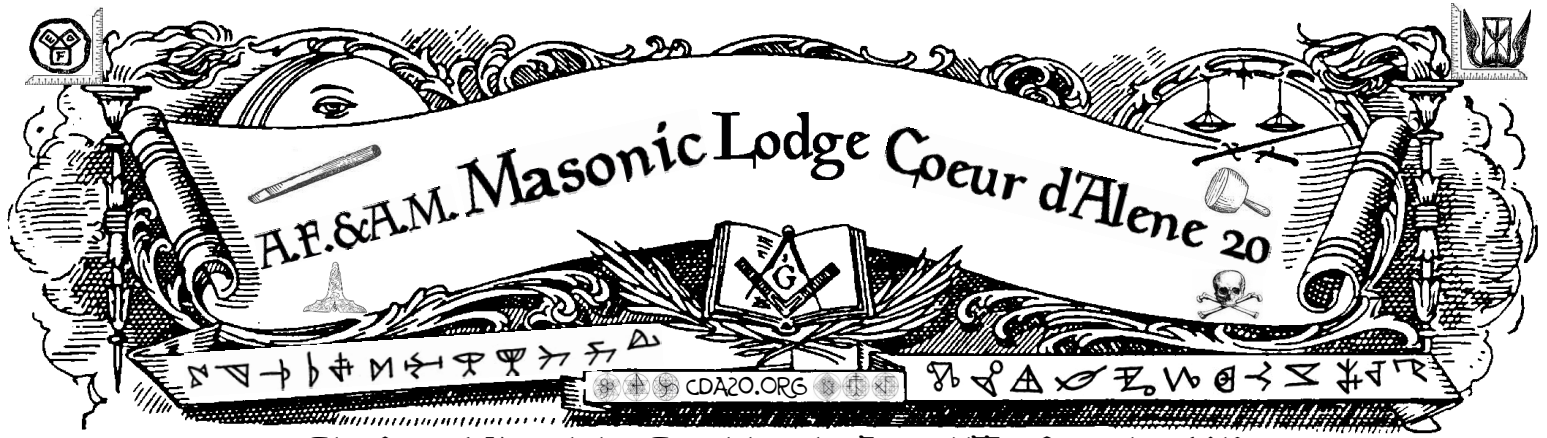


SOMEHOW OR OTHER

Life has a burden for every one's shoulder —
None may escape from its trouble and care;
Miss it in youth, and 'twill come when we're older,
And fit us as close as the garments we wear.
Sorrow comes into our lives uninvited,
Bobbing our heart of its treasure of song ;
Lovers grow cold, our friendships are slighted,
Yet somehow or other we worry along.
Everyday toil is an e very-day blessing,
Though poverty's cottage and crusts we may share;
Weak is the back on which burdens are pressing,
But stout is the heart that is strengthened by prayer.
Somehow or other the pathway grows brighter,
Just when we mourn there is none to befriend;
Hope in the heart makes the burden seem lighter,
And somehow or other we get to the end.

—From N. T. Dispatch.





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NEWS



Bro. Patrick Duane Waters, passed away Wednesday, December 26th at the age of 53 at the Schneidmiller Hospice House. The Brothers of CDA 20 extend their condolences to his family and friends.

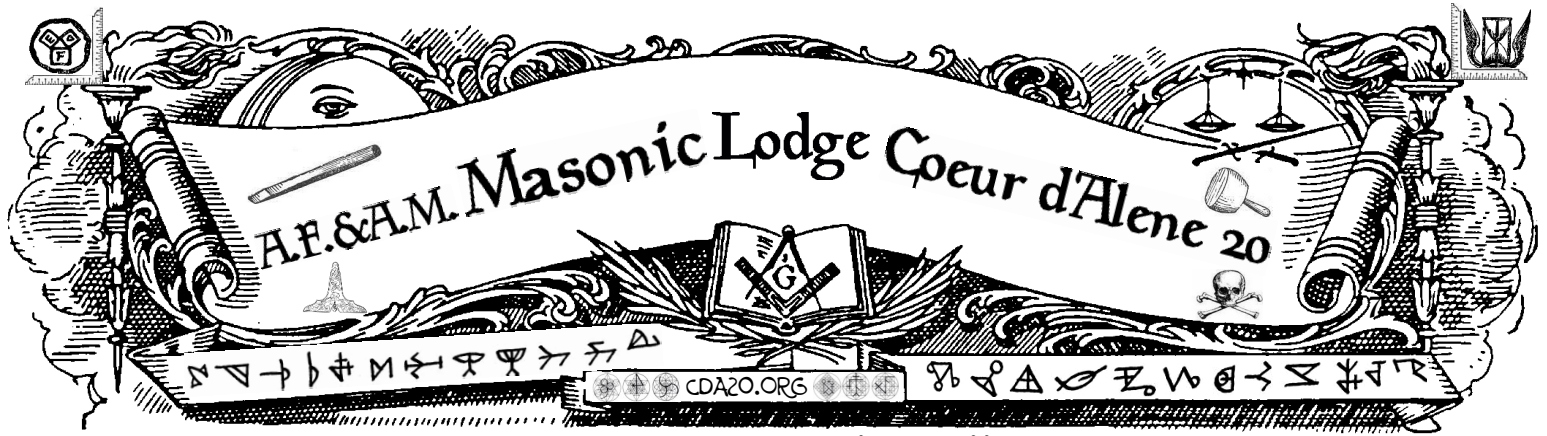
DEC. 19. Installation of new officers for CDA are as follows:

WM—Taylor Marlow, SW—John Hull

JW—B. Becker—Treasurer—Bill Needham

Sec.—DB Jordan

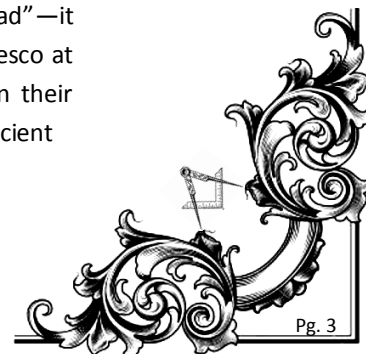
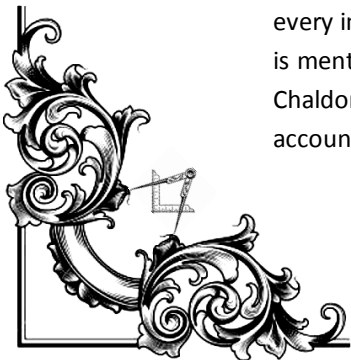
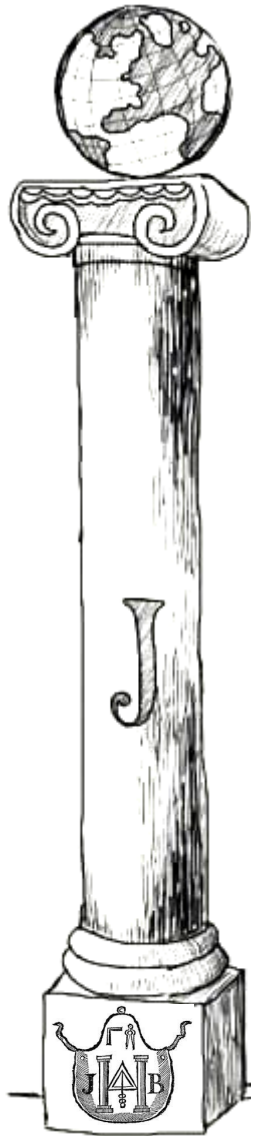




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FREEMASONRY: THE HEIR OF THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

HOW many realize that the Ancient Mysteries are not dead but exist among us in the twentieth century as strong and virile as ever they were in the days of Ancient Rome? They have changed their name, but they are with us nevertheless, and find their most notable expression in Freemasonry. The outside world may smile at the suggestion, and even old past masters in the craft may shake their heads, but that in no way disproves my statement. In the old mysteries there was always an esoteric meaning, and the latter was not disclosed immediately to the novice. Probably the great majority of those who entered the mysteries were never taught their inner meaning. They were not deemed worthy. Before any hint was given, the initiate must show that he (or she), by himself, had fathomed at least a part of the secret teaching, and this is even more true today. Freemasonry is like a Gothic cathedral, and if the foundations and crypt are the craft, then the higher degrees represent the nave and aisles, the side chapels and the fretted roof whose spires point upwards to the Heavens. Even old Masons are often ignorant of the very names of these degrees. They have probably heard of the Royal Arch and of the Mark, a few perhaps know of the Rose Croix, but when it comes to degrees like the Knights Templar, the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher or the Royal Order of Scotland, they are completely out of their depths. Yet these three orders contain within themselves some of the most wonderful examples of the secret tradition and the mystic quest which survive anywhere in the world. Again, consider a little known degree like the Red Cross of Babylon, which tells of a mysterious bridge which must be passed. In the Royal Order of Scotland we find this same bridge once more. What is this bridge? The ordinary Mason no doubt thinks it is a material bridge which connects the two banks of the river as the Legend of the Red Cross of Babylon relates, but when we turn to the Royal Order we find the bridge is a drawbridge which leads out of a mystic tower wherein is a dungeon. In short, this bridge is the bridge which marks the transition from one state, in the world beyond the grave, to another. Shall we say it marks the passing of the soul from the astral plane to the spirit plane? There is no doubt that we are symbolically dead before we reach these degrees. Every Master Mason can see that, and in the ritual of one of these degrees the members go the reverse way of the sun, the age-old symbol for the journey of the spirit through the under world. Moreover the "Bridge" forms a part of every important eschatology in the world. Mediaeval Christians taught of a "Brig o' dread"—it is mentioned in an old north country dirge sung over a corpse. It is also painted as a fresco at Chaldon Church, Surrey. The Mohammedans, Parsees and Japanese also describe it in their accounts of what befalls a man after death. Thus it is evidently a remembrance of the Ancient

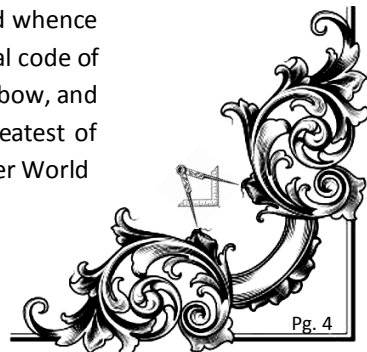
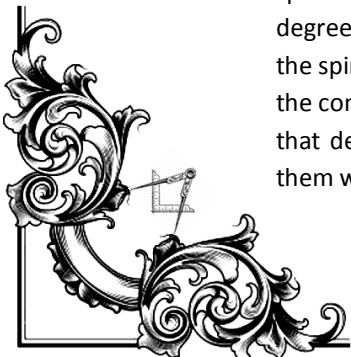
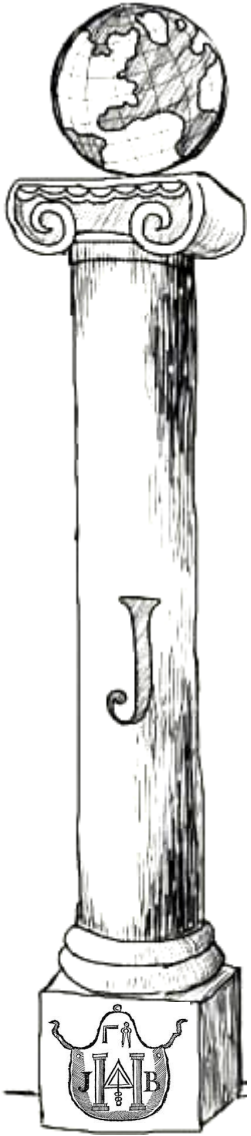


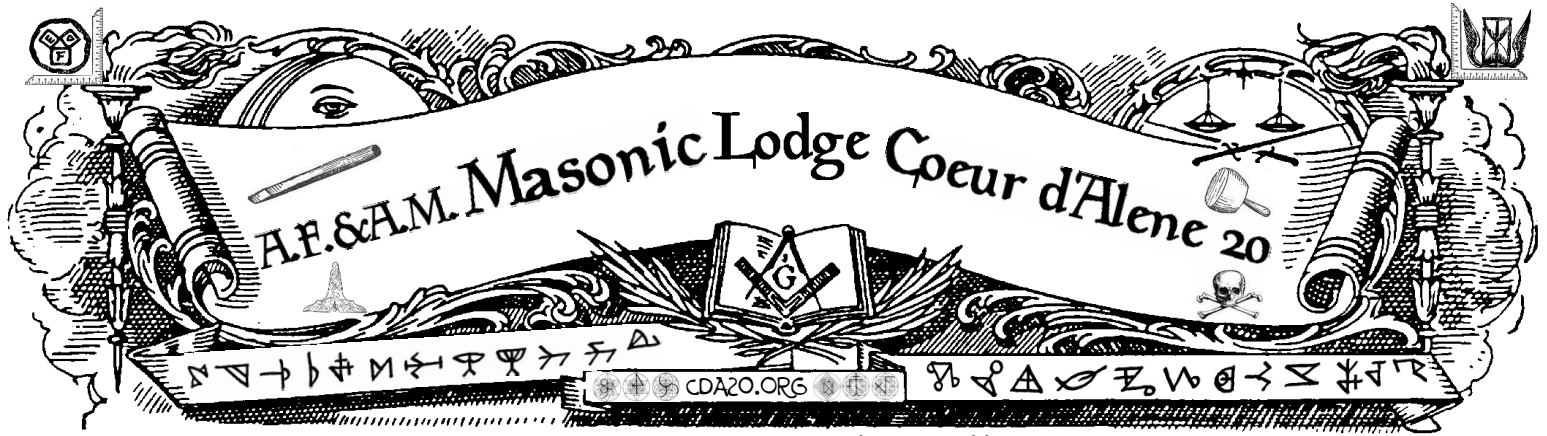


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Wisdom which has come down to us throughout the ages. And this is but one of many fragments of the Ancient Wisdom embedded in Freemasonry. Nor must we be deceived by the employment of masonic tools into arguing that in masonry we have nothing more than a building guild. Ancient Eleusis similarly employed agricultural implements and used them to convey a moral lesson, but no one pretends that they did not convey still deeper meanings. Freemasonry, just because it was a well-organized trade, is the line of descent by which the Ancient Mysteries have been carried down into the present day, but what is peculiar is that these mediaeval Masons gathered up the fragments of the ancient wisdom and preserved them during a period when the very name of the ancient mysteries was anathema. "A very pretty theory," says a critic, "but where are your proofs? What historical links connect the mediaeval Freemasons, or their modern successors, with the ancient classical mysteries? Men in the eighteenth century may have deliberately tried to reproduce the old mysteries, but how can there be any historical connection between them? There are a thousand years between the ancient mysteries and mediaeval masonry." We will take up this challenge, but first let us consider briefly what the mysteries were, and whether Freemasonry corresponds "spiritually" with them; that done, we shall see whether there is not, after all, a definite historical link between them.

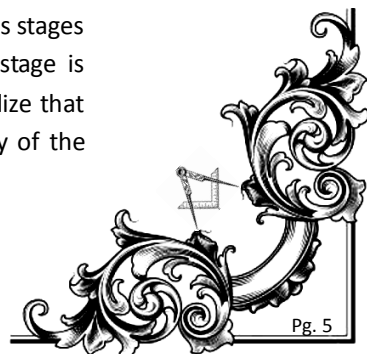
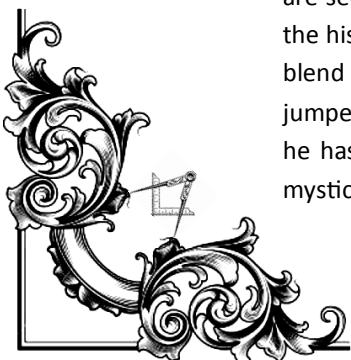
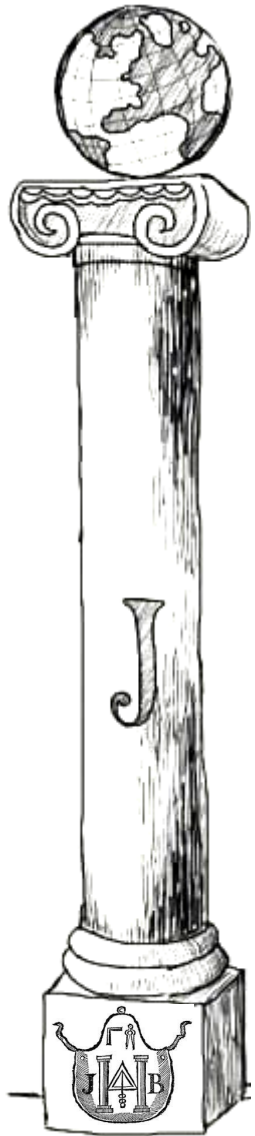
The mysteries varied considerably in detail, but they seem always to have had the same great aim. They taught of the soul of man, whence he came and whither he was going. Above all they taught of a mystic quest, of the desire of the soul for reunion with God, whence it had come. In detail, there were many variations, but in essentials all the mysteries taught the same great lesson; that within himself man had the power to raise himself towards the Divine Source of his being. The mysteries were not restricted to any country or any age. The ancient Hindus and Chinese had mysteries. One Chinese "Society" used the emblems of architecture to convey moral lessons, and its members even wore aprons. The writer has a picture of an ancient bronze Chinese figure wearing one of these aprons and making one of the signs of a certain high degree in Freemasonry! Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, Babylon, all had their mystery cults. So had the Aztecs and Mayas in the New World, and these rites were still being worked when the Spaniards burst into the New World and destroyed the indigenous civilization. Moreover the first beginnings of these rites can still be traced among the primitive savage races in Australia and Africa. Thus we see that the "mysteries" are common to all races, and evidently correspond to some fundamental spiritual instinct in the whole human race. And what did these mysteries teach? The lower degrees taught of Birth, both physical and spiritual. How the child came to be born and whence the spirit came which animated the body—of Life and its trials and dangers and the moral code of the community—of Death, before whose dread scepter monarch and beggar alike must bow, and that death does not end all. But the mysteries did not end here. No, the best and greatest of them went on to talk of what befell the soul after death. How it passed through the Under World

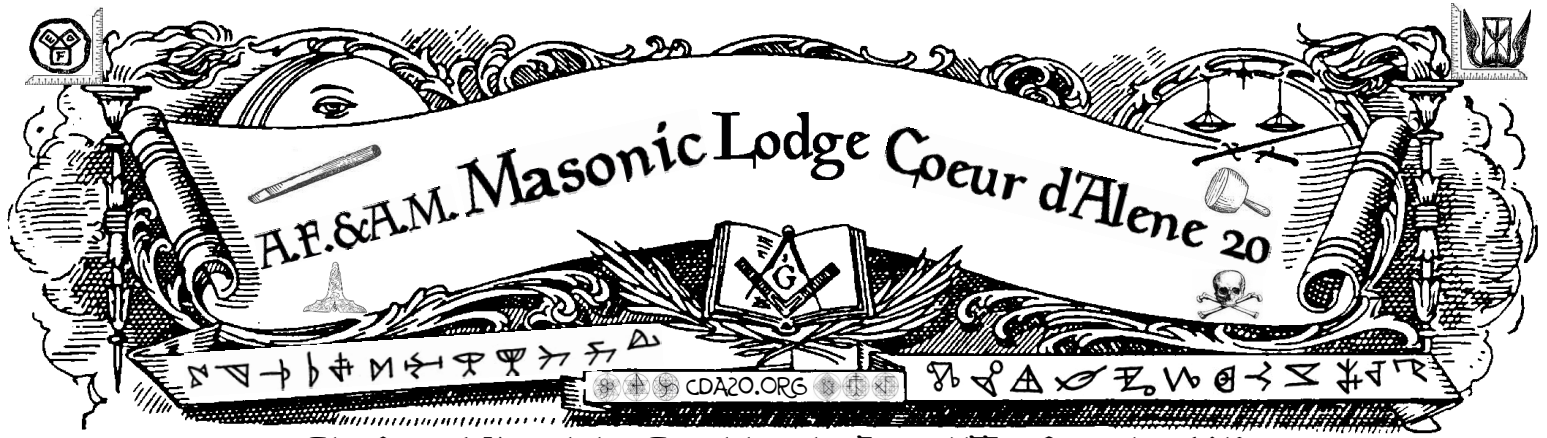




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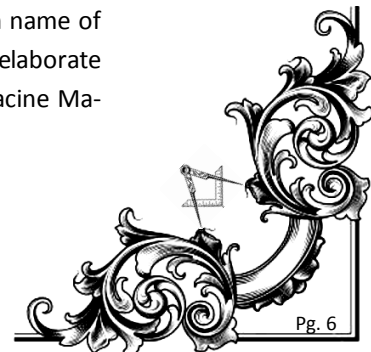
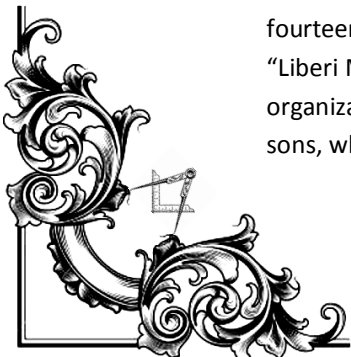
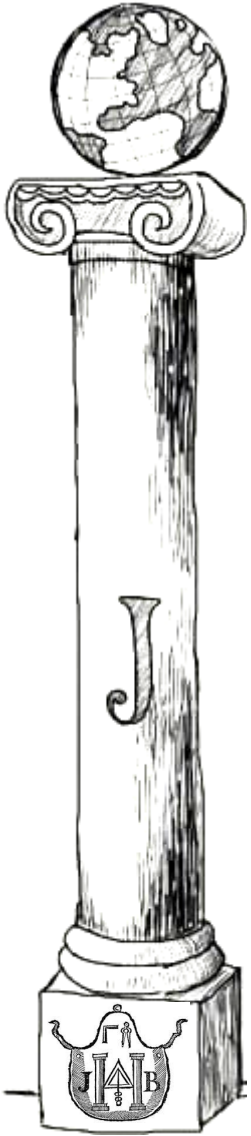
and crossed the dread bridge between the astral and the spirit planes. How thence it climbed the ladder which led to the Mansions of the Blest, and entered into the Kingdom of the Gods. Yet still upward, the high grades led men on, teaching in allegory and symbol that at long last the purified soul became one with God the Infinite, and so obtained Union and Peace. Interwoven with this simpler teaching were still deeper meanings. The mystic quest in all its splendor was unfolded to those who had eyes to see. That man, even while in the body, could in some measure raise his soul, till by degrees it became in tune with the Source of All; yea, that it even might for a brief space behold the Beatific Vision and in some mysterious way become one with God. The allegories therefore depict the stages through which the soul of the mystic passes as he goes on the mystic quest. In simple language, so that all may understand, let me sketch the typical life history of the genuine mystic. It runs somewhat as follows. He starts as an orthodox member of some established religion, but after a time it ceases to satisfy his longing. Gradually he feels himself drifting away from the simple orthodox beliefs of childhood. Then he enters on a period of doubt and difficulty. He has lost the old light, the old faith, and he has nothing to guide him. He wanders as it were through a fog, or he finds himself "amid a dreary wood astray." But worse is to follow, in agony and despair he goes on and he descends into the Valley of Despair, into the Garden of Gethsemane. He kneels in anguish and prays that the cup may be taken from him, but he is compelled to drain it to the very dregs. He is despised and scorned by his fellow-men, who, unable to understand his doubts and difficulties, call him a fool, and by the self-righteous he is regarded as a knave and an abandoned soul. He sacrifices all that once was dear to him and passes through that great horror, the mystic death. As it were he is slain— hung on a cross perhaps—and in the agony of despair he cries out "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Then in dull despair, he sinks into that stage of self-reproach usually depicted by the term, "He descended into Hell," but if still he persists in the quest there comes a day when he finds he has passed, like Dante, through Hell, and he rises from the mystic grave, yea, even from the Hell of self-accusation, and sees before him the light of the resurrection of the soul— triumphant. Then before him he still other experiences, till at last—at long last— comes the reward of all his seeking, the Beatific Vision of the Splendor of God. This is a real experience, as real as any that are physical. The Soul becomes able to comprehend God with all its being, He becomes one with God, and the final peace is won. Henceforth all worldly troubles are seen in their true perspective—they are illusions. He no longer believes, he knows. This is the history of the mystic quest carried through to its completion. Sometimes the various stages blend into each other so that they are hard to distinguish. Often one or another stage is jumped, or is so closely interwoven with another that the mystic himself does not realize that he has passed through them, but in the main this sketch does summarize the history of the mystic's





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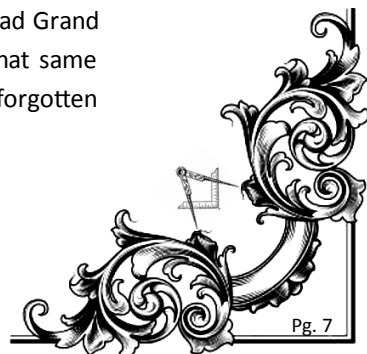
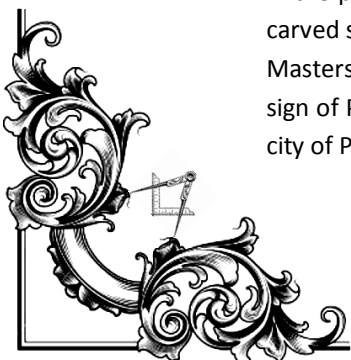
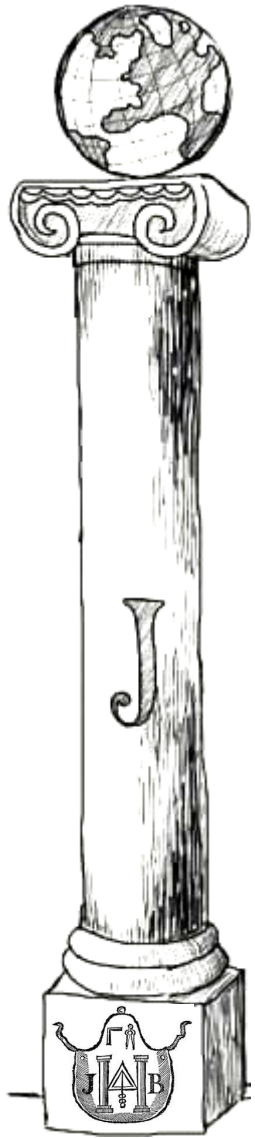
experience, and this “story” is interwoven with the more obvious teaching of all the mysteries. Briefly we may therefore say that the most evolved mystery has at least three sets of meanings, one within the other. First a simple exoteric lesson teaching the candidate to be a good man and true, and strictly to obey the moral law. Secondly, an esoteric meaning teaching the evolution of every soul through the body after death in the spirit planes, and thirdly, a still deeper meaning, the history of the evolution of the true mystic in his quest after union with God. Take the story of Osiris. We learn of his birth, life and death, we follow Isis searching for the body. We hear of a babe begotten by the dead man, and the ultimate triumph of this strange child over Set the power of Evil. We learn how Osiris, and like him every dead Egyptian, passes through the terrors of the under world; how he mounts into Heaven and enters into the company of the Gods. Finally we read curious hymns which reveal the fact that Osiris (and after him his followers) eats up the Gods, becomes one with Ra, and achieves the position of the One, the supreme, the One in All. Now let us turn to Freemasonry. The first three degrees correspond with birth, life and death—this is so obvious that it hardly needs stressing, but the genuine secrets are lost, for even after death man is not capable of fully comprehending God. Then through a series of little understood high degrees the earnest candidate pursues the search for the lost word. He obtains one answer in the Royal Arch—an explanation non-Christian, and in many ways similar to that given to the Hindu mystic. In other grades he learns that the lost word is the Logos, to us Christians, Christ. Our candidate journeys through Hell, crosses the dread Bridge, he passes through veil after veil, which mark stages of spiritual evolution till in symbolism he learns of the Beatific Vision, of the mystic rose of Dante—in short of the true end of the quest. And in and out runs the shuttle of the life of the mystic set forth with astonishing clearness in the degrees of Knights Templar, Knights of Malta, Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, pageant on pageant, mystery on mystery, full to the brim of ancient symbolism and old world wisdom, now but little understood by the bulk of those who pass through them, yet having such magic that even the most materialistic are caught by the splendor of the hidden glory and love these ancient rites:—though they know not why. In a periodical such as this, which will be read by many who are not Masons, it is difficult to be more explicit, but for those who have the eyes of the spirit, the hidden message is graven in almost every line of the Masonic rituals. And now to show the historic links. Modern Freemasonry, it is admitted by all students, was evolved out of the mediaeval Guilds and took its present shape at the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. The mediaeval Freemasons can historically be traced back to the fourteenth century under that name, and before that they were spoken of by the Latin name of “Liberi Muratori.” Now from whence did these “Liberi Muratori” come, and whence the elaborate organization they possessed? They were the same body as are also known as the Comacine Masons, who were lineal descendants of the sole lodge of the Roman Colleges of





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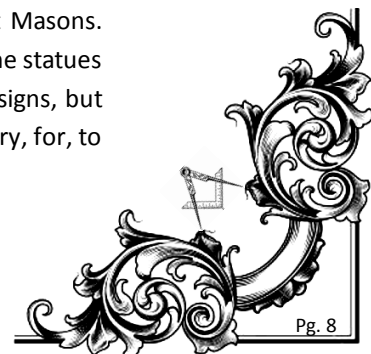
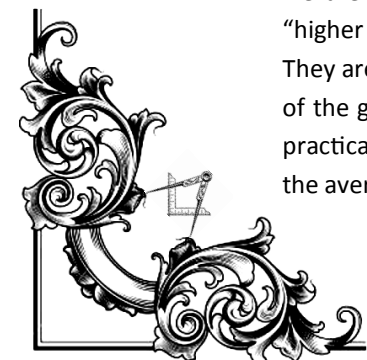
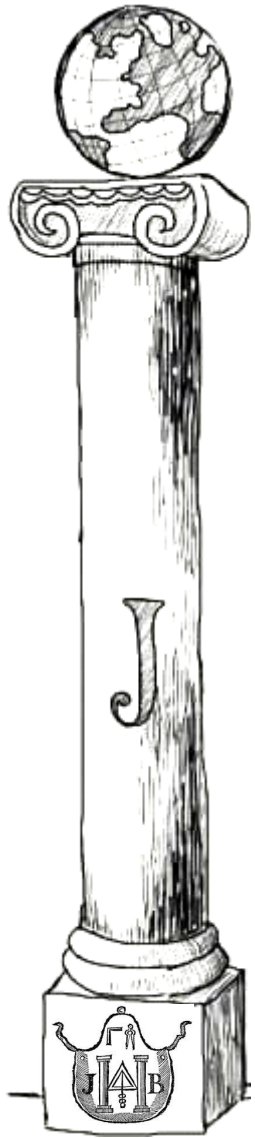
Architects, which survived the general havoc worked by the Lombards, when they swept into Italy. The writer has given full details of both these bodies and their connection with the later mediaeval Freemasons in his book *Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods* but briefly their history is as follows: In the days of classical Rome the Architects, like the members of other trades, were organized into elaborate Guilds. They had regular officers, similar to those in a modern Masonic Lodge, and used the tools of their craft to mark the tombstones of their members, especially the square and compasses, the level, plumb-rule, etc. They venerated the double triangle, or seal of Solomon, as we call it, and had a mystery rite which included a degree of death. Moreover, they certainly knew and venerated a certain Masonic sign associated with the degree of life and having, as it still has, the esoteric meaning of Preservation. One of their Temples has been unearthed at Pompeii, and in it was discovered the aforesaid double triangle and an elaborate mosaic "tracing board" on which were depicted a skull, plumb-line, pilgrim's staff with a ragged coat and the staff of victory with a royal robe, together with other symbols clearly indicating the age-old mystery drama of death and resurrection. Close by was a fresco wherein one of the characters is making this peculiar "Masonic" sign indicating Preservation; and its use in the fresco, which depicts the preservation of (Edipus, is most significant and appropriate. Now the same sign is also associated with the Preserver in the Egyptian Papyri. Similarly it is found associated with Vishnu, the Preserver, in India and with Quetzalcoatl, the Preserver, in ancient Mexico. This temple of the Roman Collegia was covered up by the ashes from Vesuvius in a. d. 71. The Colleges, however, continued to flourish in Rome right down to the time of its fall, but the Lombards smashed them up as they smashed up the rest of the ancient civilization; one Lodge, however, survived on the island of Comacina in the middle of Lake Como. This city was never stormed by the Lombards. Rothares, king of the Lombards in a. d. 643, was a man of some culture and realized that if Italy was to recover from the terrible state of desolation into which it had fallen, the building trade must once more be organized and encouraged. On November 22, a. d. 643, he issued an edict confirming the privileges of this surviving Roman College at Comacina and giving it control over all the Masons in Italy. At once a great revival in building took place, and the so-called Lombardic style arose. Soon the re-organized body began to send its members all over Europe, and, wherever they went, they left their symbols in the buildings they erected. They came to Weirmouth in Northumbria, according to Bede, to build the new Church there; while at Wurzburg in Germany they set up two pillars in the porch of the church they built, pillars well known to every Mason. Over their Lodges they carved square and compasses—even rose and compasses—O Rose Croix Masons! They had Grand Masters and Wardens, wore ceremonial aprons, had signs and passwords, and used that same sign of Preservation. At Ravello Cathedral, near Sorrento, not far from the buried and forgotten city of Pompeii, these





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lineal descendants of the old Roman Collegia in the thirteenth century made an elaborate pulpit with a design in mosaics, depicting Jonah coming up alive out of the whale's mouth, and as he comes up he makes the sign of "Preservation," just as their long-forgotten ancestors had done at Pompeii. What is more, at the same time their English members were carving a boss at Peterborough, and on it depicted Christ making this same sign of Preservation, for Christ to us is the Preserver. Roman Collegia, Comacine, and Modern Masons all using this same sign! Roman Collegia with a mystery drama of death. Modern Freemasons with a similar drama! In the fourteenth century the International organization collapsed before the rising tide of nationalism. In England the members began to call themselves "Freemasons," and the first of the "Ancient charges" appear, and it is from them the speculative masons descend. Does the chain hold? "Not so fast," says our critic, "your legend of the Builder was made up in the eighteenth century." Was it? If so, how is it that Guercino, who died in 1656, painted the scene of the "Death of the Master"? The original now hangs in the Hall of the Supreme Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland. In short, our critic can produce no evidence that the Masonic legend was invented in the eighteenth century, his view is pure theory, and I counter it with the very concrete fact that Guercino knew this legend and painted it in the first half of the seventeenth century. It is not really necessary to push back our investigation further than Roman times, for all are agreed that the mysteries were working at the same date as the Roman Collegia. Moreover, in Asia Minor the old Pagan mysteries survived certainly as late as the end of the fifth century A.D. But we can actually push back the line of descent hundreds of years earlier. Whence came the Roman Collegia? We hear of a mysterious body known as the Dionysian Artificers who came into Asia Minor from the East in the sixth century B.C. or earlier. That they were an organization of Masons who had secret signs, passwords and a mystery cult of Dionysus, the Syrian god who was slain and rose from the dead. It was they who evolved the Grecian style of architecture and spread all over Greece and ultimately reached Magna Græcia (South Italy). In due course they took a Latin name and became the Roman Collegia. Strabo in his Geographia, lib. XIV 921, wrote: "Lebedos was the seat and assembly of the Dionysian Artificers who inhabit Ionia to the Hellespont: there they have annually their solemn meetings and festivals in honor of Dionysus." In modern language Lebedos was the seat of their Grand Lodge and, like the surviving Operative Lodges in England today, they evidently had an "annual Drama." But if we consider the most "sacred things" in Freemasonry, the grips and signs, we are astonished to find that all the important ones, not only those in the craft, but in the "higher degrees" also, are known and venerated the world over by men who are not Masons. They are associated with the primitive initiatory rites of the savages, and are carved on the statues of the gods. In the codices of Ancient Mexico we see not only our craft and Rose Croix signs, but practically every important incident in the latter ceremony. Now this is really extraordinary, for, to the average Mason, the

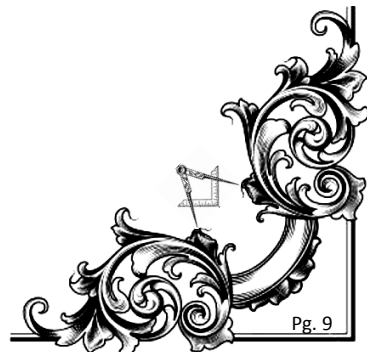
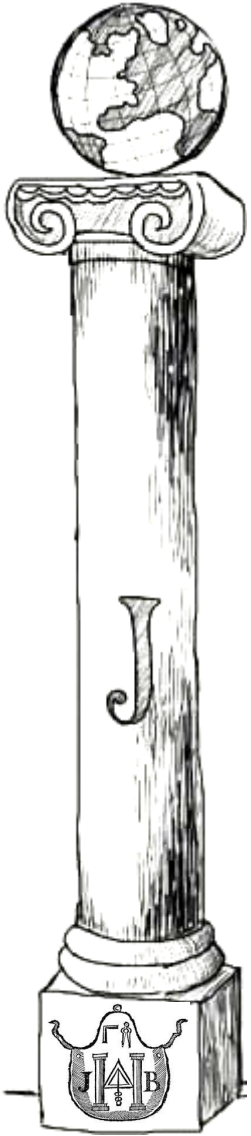


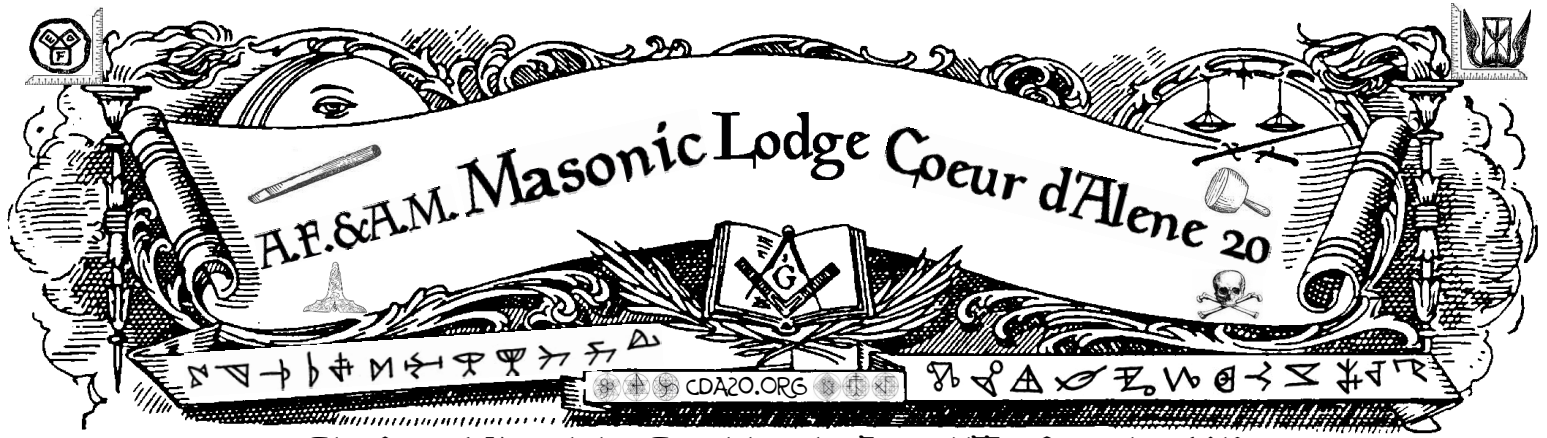


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Rose Croix appears to be a purely Christian degree, and yet we find the same scenes enacted and the same signs made by weird Aztec gods in extraordinary head-dresses. These codices were painted before the Spaniards landed in Mexico, and remember, there could have been no intercourse between European Masons and Mexico for thousands of years at least. How then can be explained this universal use of our secret signs and the reproduction of the same dramatic representations? The answer is that Freemasonry is the heir not only of the Ancient Mysteries, but of something even older, of the primitive initiatory rites of our savage ancestors, out of which in time evolved not only the mysteries, but all the great religions of the world. These "signs" are prayers, mantras, and spells. They were used to denote ideas for which adequate words did not then exist, and, because of their ancient power and magic might, they have been retained throughout. They were too sacred to be lost, and though later generations have attempted to give more modern explanations in the exoteric teaching, their esoteric meanings are still the same. Nor should this survival of the Ancient Mysteries arouse such surprise after all; nay, it would be far stranger if they had vanished entirely. Modern man still carries into modern life superstitions which can be traced back thousands of years. Thus the superstition that if you bring May blossom into the house there will be a death in it within a year, is due to the fact that the emblem of Bechta, the Saxon goddess of death, was May blossom, and if you brought in her flowers—her emblem—you naturally summoned her. I wonder how many who know of the superstition know the reason? Bechta has been forgotten for 1300 years, yet she still influences thousands in this curious way! In like manner the mysteries have survived. Not merely in the spirit, but by true, lawful and lineal descent, Masonry can claim her title and justify her right to be regarded as "from Time Immemorial," not in the narrow lawyer's sense, but in its plain and obvious meaning, and she still performs the same task as did the mysteries of old.

JSM WARD





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