



# THE HOUSTON VALLEY HERALD

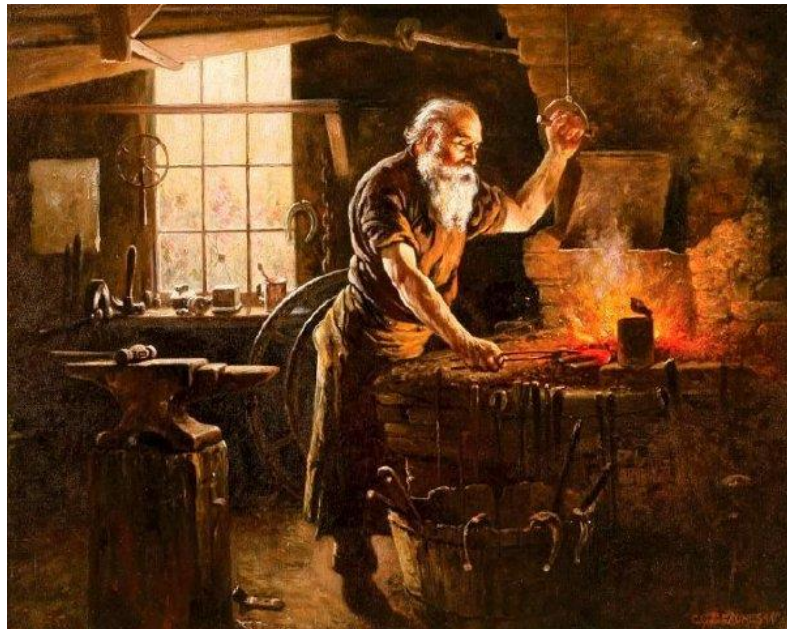
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## Labor is Noble and Ennobling

By A. B. OLIVIER 32°  
Editor-in-Chief



*The Blacksmith* (c. 1900) by Charles Grant Beauregard.

Man is a shadow of what he could be without labor and work. That labor may be working in a coal mine, or working as a plumber, an electrician, a banker, a farmer, a scientist, an author, or a blacksmith. Regardless of what it is, it is important for a man to have something to do.

Illustrious Brother Albert Pike 33° briefly touches on this in the sixteenth chapter of *Morals and Dogma*, which discusses the philosophy of the “Prince of Jerusalem” degree.

“A life of labor is not a state of inferiority or degradation. The Almighty has not cast man’s lot beneath the quiet shades, and amid glad groves and lovely hills, with no task to perform; with nothing to do but to rise up and eat, and to lie down and rest. He has ordained that *work* shall be done, in all the dwellings of life, in every productive field, in every busy city, and on every wave of every ocean. And this He has done, because it has pleased Him to give man a nature destined to higher ends than indolent repose and irresponsible profitless indulgence; and because, for developing the energies of such a nature, work was the necessary and proper element,” Pike wrote.

While men may sometimes be downtrodden by the work they do (and in some cases rightfully so), an able-bodied man who has a stable job with hopes for a bright future should be determined. The legacy of most men comes from what they worked in life. For example, even if a carpenter has a small home, he can take pride in knowing that he furnished the entire town. A banker may have a more abstract job, but he may be able to take pride in knowing that he helped families finance homes to live in.

Freemasonry, in its own right, can also be a form of work. Embracing self-improvement, learning, facing one’s fears, and accepting that others may know things that you do not are not the tasks of an idle man. If a Mason does not feel that he is working to improve himself, his brethren, or his Order, then he should reflect whether he is a speculative Freemason that is working the quarries of his mind and heart or just a passive member who does not

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*The (Great) Tower of Babel* (c. 1563) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The Tower of Babel from the Book of Genesis remains an ancient example of the arrogance of man. God scattered the people around the Earth and created different languages so that they could not complete the tower.

## Internal Obstacles to The Craft

By A. B. OLIVIER 32°  
Editor-in-Chief

In 1827 a decomposed body washed ashore on the banks of Lake Ontario. It was believed at the time that the body of the dead man belonged to William Morgan. The ensuing “Morgan Affair,” as it came to be known, resulted in the founding of one of America’s first political parties, known as the “Anti-Masonic Party.” While the Anti-Masons made numerous outrageous claims and outright lies about the fraternity, their primary stance was a conspiracy theory that Freemasons were a threat to the American Republic. They purported that Masons met in secret to conspire to control the government. The Anti-Masonic Party was the first organized national backlash against Freemasonry in the United States. Many of the lies and ignorant rumors spread by the Anti-Masons are conspiracy theories that are still spoken today in America.

Since that time, American Freemasonry has had to deal with gullible non-Masons who believe rumors they hear off the street. Masons know that we should not confront these people or argue with them into oblivion. However there have been several recent hostile acts committed against Masons or Masonic property. In Texas alone lodges have been vandalized or broken into, someone attempted to burn down the El Paso Scottish Rite Temple, and a brother was murdered shortly after his lodge’s installation in South Texas.

While *The Houston Valley Herald* cannot offer solutions on how to dispel false conspiracy theories or how to address our country’s mental health crisis, we know that it is becoming increasingly important that we, as Freemasons, can trust and rely on each other. If the Craft is going to live up to being the brotherhood that we say we are, then individual Masons need to do some deep self-reflection on how they treat their brethren.

Chapter fifteen is one of the shortest in *Morals and Dogma*. But in this chapter, Illustrious Brother Albert Pike 33° underscores what Freemasonry stands for and makes some critical and honest points about how we, as individual Masons, can become an adversary to the fraternity because of how we treat our brother Masons.

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Continued from, "Labor is Noble and Ennobling."  
recognize the powerful tools that are before him.

"Remember always that all Masonry is work, and that the trowel is an emblem of the Degrees in this Council. Labor, when rightly understood, is both noble and ennobling, and intended to develop man's moral and spiritual nature, and not be deemed a disgrace or a misfortune..."

"[Masonry] teaches its toiling children that the scene of their daily life is all spiritual, that the very implements of their toil, the fabrics they weave, the merchandise they barter, are designed for spiritual ends; that so believing, their daily lot may be to them a sphere for the noblest improvement. That which we do in our intervals of relaxation, our church-going, and our book-reading, are especially designed to prepare our minds for the action of Life," Pike wrote.

Everything that we do, including our hobbies, can help prepare us for other steps and challenges in life whether they are professional or personal.

Masonry, like reading a book, is something that Masons engage in during their leisurely time. We practice Freemasonry because it has something to offer us. The code of ethics, the knowledge, and the other teachings provide a blueprint on how a man can be a more wholesome and good individual. What we should be ultimately pursuing in Freemasonry is enlightenment, wisdom, self-improvement, and fraternity. The Masonic lodge is not a place for men who want to keep idle hands. Freemasonry is for men who realize that they are not perfect and who wish to strive for greatness.

## Announcements

### Valley of Houston Scottish Rite Blue Lodge Degree Team



The Scottish Rite Blue Lodge Degree Team conferred the third degree at Caledonia Lodge No. 68 on July 22, 2023. If your blue lodge (under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Texas) needs assistance with an EA, FC, or MM degree contact Illustrious Brother Kevin Binder 33° at: [kevinbinder30@gmail.com](mailto:kevinbinder30@gmail.com)

### Houston Valley School of Instruction

On August 12, 2023 the Houston Scottish Rite School will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the Valley Board Room. Doughnuts and coffee will be available to all who attend. These practices are held on the second and fourth Saturday of every month. These meetings cover esoteric studies as well as opening/closing of the various lodges, conferring degrees, and more.

### "Journey Passport" Program

The Houston Valley is participating in the "Journey Passport" program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport, contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at: [acompass@yahoo.com](mailto:acompass@yahoo.com)

### The Houston Valley Herald Email List

This publication is printed monthly and distributed at stated meetings of the Valley of Houston for the benefit of the brethren assembled. *The Houston Valley Herald* is also available online at [www.HoustonScottishRite.org](http://www.HoustonScottishRite.org) (Click the "Newsletter" tab). Anyone is welcome to receive this publication via email as well. To join our mailing list, email [acompass@yahoo.com](mailto:acompass@yahoo.com)

Continued from front, "Internal Obstacles to The Craft."

"Masonry is engaged in her crusade, - against ignorance, intolerance, fanaticism, superstition, uncharitableness, and error. She does not sail with the trade-winds, upon a smooth sea, with a steady free breeze, fair for a welcoming harbor; but meets and must overcome many opposing currents, baffling winds, and dead calms," Pike wrote.

Every American Mason, especially an American 32° Scottish Rite Mason, should see Freemasonry as an order of modern, intellectual, and secular knights. At a minimum we should, through the teachings of the Craft, improve ourselves as men. Our duty, in Masonic terms, is to spread light to the world. We support freedom of religion, of association, and freedom of speech. The Enlightenment principles that were embedded into our nation during the American Revolution were, and still are, Masonic principles. With that being said, no organization made up of men is perfect because no man is perfect.

"The chief obstacles to [Masonry's] success are the apathy and faithlessness of her own selfish children, and the supine indifference of the world... It is the motionless and stationary that most frets and impedes the current of progress; the solid rock or stupid dead tree, rested firmly on the bottom, and around which the river whirls and eddies: the Masons that doubt and hesitate and are discouraged; that disbelieve in the capability of man to improve; that are not disposed to toil and labor for the interest and well-being of general humanity; that expect others to do all, even of that which they do not oppose or ridicule; which they sit, applauding and doing nothing, or perhaps prognosticating failure," Pike continued.

It is not difficult for a Texas Mason to find a struggling lodge; in fact the average Texas Mason has a good chance of being a member of such a lodge. He is initiated, passed, and raised. He is quickly ushered into the officer line and, within a few years, he is Worshipful Master. He sits in the East and, at best, he has a vision to improve his lodge and he has a competent arrangement of elected and appointed officers. However, the new Worshipful Master quickly finds out that most of his lodge is uninterested and outright hostile to even the discussion of any kind of change. Any suggestion he has or initiative he supports is discouraged or ridiculed, and not in a productive way. At some point the Worshipful Master realizes that most of the lodge is not interested in self-improvement or change, and he comes to the cynical conclusion that the lodge will eventually demise due to the arrogance of its own members. After his time in the East the Master attends a handful of stated meetings or degrees and then he drops off the map as many past masters before him have done.

This kind of scenario is all too common. Sometimes newly installed Masters are overly-optimistic or have unrealistic expectations for their lodge. Sometimes they try to act more like a benevolent dictator rather than a first-among-equals. But it is even more common for a Master, other officers, and other members to encounter other Masons that are "motionless and stationary," as Brother Pike put it. As well as Masons who "expect others to do all... they sit, applauding and doing nothing." The worst may be the ones who are guilty of "prognosticating failure". These brethren see nothing productive coming from an idea that did not originate from them and, when a new idea does work, they find some small detail to complain about or they diminish the accomplishment.

Most Masons have encountered at least some brethren who are guilty of the above, or they are guilty themselves. It is ironic to think that a Mason would trust another man with his life when he could not trust that same man to memorize ritual for a degree, have a law-reading prepared for a stated meeting, or keep his word.

While all Masons have been given ancient working tools to improve ourselves as men, some of us have left the tools in a display case. Any Mason can read a book or study history, and many Masons join the Scottish Rite. But do they understand the lessons from any of the degrees? Do they reflect on what they should have learned? Do they take the journey of self-improvement to becoming a better man? Masons need each other now more than ever. But if we are going to depend on one another we must live up to the principles of our Order, otherwise our membership was for nothing but hubris.