



THE HOUSTON VALLEY HERALD

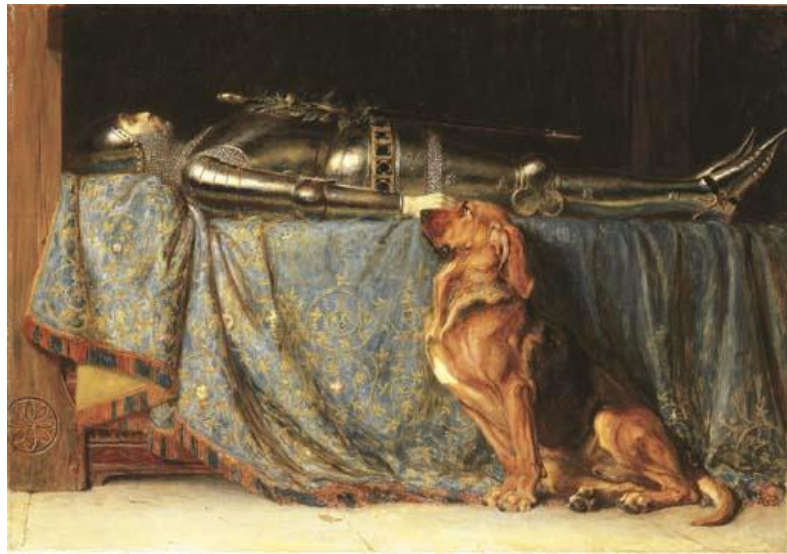
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Love & Loyalty

By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH



Requiescat by Briton Rivière 1888

This beautiful work of art from 1888, titled *Requiescat* by Briton Rivière, shows a solemn and mournful morning in a medieval castle. A knight in his armor lies in state while his faithful companion stands by, unsure of what's happening nor why his friend isn't moving. His unwavering loyalty to his friend to stand beside him and be there at his side reminds us to also have such dedication to a fellow brother.

It is hard losing someone, be it a family member, brother, or friend. We do not always know why. The pain can be difficult to cope with. Dealing with life and death is taught in our Craft in the Blue Lodge degree and lectures. The Scottish Rite elaborates further with teachings and examples of how best to handle such loss and even our own mortality.

In the Fifth degree, The Perfect Master, the lodge is no longer in deep mourning but still in sorrow over the death of the Master. We lay to rest a dear friend and brother, and learn that the duty of a Mason is to be an honest man, and not lie about anything great or small, no matter how just and compassionate it may seem. We are taught to prepare ourselves for that day when we wake up on a distant shore and swift sunrise when our journey through life is complete. We should meet all men on the level, act by the plumb, and part upon the square.

Sometimes things happen for a better and greater purpose, which we often do not know at the time why it happened, but we have belief in something greater than ourselves. God is essential to all Masons and the continuing battle to fight against ignorance and injustice. We must follow moral law and love one another as we love ourselves, even those with whom we do not always get along.

May we all grow deeper in our faiths, love as a faithful companion, and cherish all of those around us, more especially a Brother Mason.

So mote it be.

Christmas Truce

By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH



The Illustrated London News of 9 January 1915: "British and German Soldiers Arm-in-Arm Exchanging Headgear: A Christmas Truce between Opposing trenches."

On Christmas Eve 1914, in the dank, muddy trenches of the Western Front during the Great War, a miracle happened. It would become to be known as the Christmas Truce. The infantrymen of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment were spending the holiday eve shivering in the mud, trying to keep warm. They had spent a good part of the last few months fighting the Germans. And now, in a part of Belgium called Bois de Ploegsteert, they were crouched in a trench that stretched just three feet deep by three feet wide, the days and nights marked by an endless cycle of sleeplessness and fear, stale biscuits, and cigarettes too wet to light. Around 10 p.m., soldiers noticed a noise. One soldier proclaimed "I listened, Away across the field, among the dark shadows beyond, I could hear the murmur of voices." The soldier turned to a fellow in his trench and said, "Do you hear the Boches [Germans] kicking up that racket over there?"

"Yes," came the reply. "They've been at it sometime!"

The Germans were singing carols, as it was Christmas Eve. In the darkness, some of the British soldiers began to sing back. "Suddenly, we heard a confused shouting from the other side. We all stopped to listen. The shout came again." The voice was from an enemy soldier, speaking in English with a strong German accent. He was saying, "Come over here."

One of the British sergeants answered: "You come half-way. I come half-way." What would happen next would show the world the true meaning of Christmas in the years to come, and make history. Enemy soldiers began to climb nervously out of their trenches, and to meet in the barbed-wire-filled "No Man's Land" that separated the armies. Normally, the British and Germans communicated across No Man's Land with streaking bullets, with only occasional gentlemanly allowances to collect the dead unmolested. But now, there were handshakes and words of kindness. The soldiers traded songs, tobacco and wine, joining in a spontaneous holiday party in the cold night. It was not just on that one battlefield. On Christmas Eve, small pockets of French, German, Belgian and British troops held impromptu cease-fires across the Western Front, with reports of some on the Eastern Front as well. Some Christmas Truces suggest a few of these remained in effect for days. *Continued on the back.*

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We can see from these examples that we do not need to kill our fellow man. Love and peace can be achieved even in the darkest of places, even in "No man's land" where death and the horror of war is everywhere. Good men can rise above all of that, as these men did out of their trenches, and let the light of God and Love shine.

In the 23rd degree "The Chief of the Tabernacle" we learn the nature of God and that simple faith is wiser than vain philosophy, and that we should constantly endeavor to promote the welfare of man.



"Christmas Truce at the Front: Snowballs and Jokes With The Foe," declared a front page story in the U.K's Daily Mail newspaper on Dec. 31, 1914. Under that banner headline was a photo of British and German soldiers standing together.

"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

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 (Click the "Newsletter" tab). Anyone is welcome to receive this publication via email as well. To join our mailing list, email acompass@yahoo.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS

By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

On behalf of the Houston Valley Scottish Rite and myself, Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukah. Whatever your beliefs are, keep this in mind during this time of year. Love your family and hold them close, hug your kids and grandchildren. Sing songs, be Merry, give warm toasts, call a Brother Mason and wish him a Happy New Years and tell him that he is missed and that he matters. We are all a family and families look after one another.

"Be ye all of one mind, live in peace, and may the God of love and peace delight to dwell with and bless you. Amen."



Who else still believes in Santa?.....

Editor in Chief
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