

SOME FAMILIAR ROYAL ARCH TERMS

'Chapter'

In the closing decades of the 18th century in England - the period covered by the advent and early progress of the Grand Chapters - the Royal Arch 'lodge' was becoming a 'chapter'; its 'Brethren,' 'Companions'; and its Candidates, instead of being 'passed' or 'raised' to the degree, tended to be 'exalted.'

The word 'chapter' has a long and attractive history. Masonically it is an old word, for masons met in general chapter in medieval days, as we know for certain from Act 3 of Henry VI (1425) which forbade masons to meet in chapters and congregations. The word was used in the earliest English Craft Constitutions (1723), which gave Masters and Wardens of particular lodges the right and authority of congregating members in chapters "upon any emergency or occurrence," but that use could hardly have had any Royal Arch association. 'Chapter' came originally from ecclesiastical usage. When monks in medieval days met in an assembly presided over by the head of their house or by a higher dignitary they were said to be 'meeting in chapter.' Their meeting-place was the chapter-house, often lavishly decorated, attached to a cathedral or abbey. A synod or council of a cathedral's clergy presided over by the dean was a 'chapter'; the corresponding meeting of a collegiate house was a 'college,' as at Westminster and Windsor. In French the word is chapitre. Ernest Weekley, the philologist, has shown that the word (in Latin capitulum, diminutive of caput, a "head") had as an early meaning a section of a book, a sense which arises naturally from that of heading, as, for example, 'to recapitulate,' meaning to run over the headings of a subject. Weekley says that the word was used *.....especially of the divisions of the Bible. When the canons of a collegiate or cathedral church, monks of a monastery or knights of an order held formal meetings, the proceedings began with the reading of a chapter from their Rule or from the Scriptures. Thus the gathering itself became known as the chapter and the room in which it was held was called the chapter-house.*

For roughly two centuries the tendency has been to designate as chapters certain Masonic bodies or gatherings outside the Craft degrees, a natural development in view of the religious and often Christian character of early chapter ceremonies. Many of the added degrees meet in chapters, as do the assemblies of knights of some of the orders of chivalry - such as the Garter and the Bath.

The tendency to substitute the word 'chapter' for 'lodge' can be traced back to the 1750 period in England, when the well known Freemason from Ireland, Laurence Dermott, referring to the Royal Arch gathering as being "more sublime and important than any of those which preceded it . . . and from its pre-eminence is denominated, amongst masons, a chapter."

By-laws of the Excellent Grand and Royal Chapter of England (1765) freely use the word. So does the 'Charter of Compact' in the following year. Obviously the coming of the Grand Chapters of 1766 and 1771 encouraged the change-over to what was regarded as the more appropriate, even the more reverent, term, and we see this

clearly exemplified in the course pursued by the senior Grand Chapter in warranting its first chapters in 1769. Each of them is given two names, one of a lodge and one of a chapter, as in these two examples: (a) The Restoration Lodge or Chapter of the Rock Fountain; (b) The Euphrates Lodge or Chapter of the Garden of Eden.

There are recorded instances of Royal Arch 'lodges' transforming themselves into 'chapters.' Thus, Unanimity Lodge, Wakefield, England, met as a lodge on June 24, 1788, but by the next meeting had become a chapter.

It is not to be lightly assumed, however, that the change-over from 'lodge' to 'chapter,' 'Master' to 'Principal,' [High Priest] and so on, was a smooth, automatic process, for, as already shown, the Grand Chapter called itself for a time in the 1790's a 'Grand Lodge of Royal Arch Masons,' and in 1801 the head of 'Supreme Grand Chapter' was a 'Grand Master.' In Ireland the word 'chapter' was slow in coming into use. It was more common to use the word 'assembly,' and the change-over in some places was not made until the coming of the Irish Grand Chapter in 1829.

'Companion'

Following the assembly of Royal Arch masons in chapter came the practice of calling them not 'Brethren,' but 'Companions,' a term not thought to have ancient Masonic status, but still most apt in its derivation and association. In his famous speech, Chevalier Michael Ramsay, refers to three classes of Brethren: the Novices or Apprentices; the Companions or Professed; the Masters or Perfected. He ascribes "to the first, the moral virtues; to the second, the heroic virtues; and to the last, the Christian virtues; in such sort that our Institution encloses all the Philosophy of the Sentiments and all the Theology of the Heart."

Much less to the point is a note by the well known English Mason Bro. Dr. George Oliver, who, having stated that Pythagoras distinguished his pupils by calling them Companions, goes on to say that the members of the Royal Arch are denominated 'Companions' and entitled to a full explanation of the mysteries of the Order, whereas members of the former degrees are recognized by the familiar appellation of 'Brothers,' and are kept in a state of profound ignorance of the sublime secret which is disclosed in the chapter. This sounds very fine, but Royal Arch masons were still Brethren in most places until late in the 1770's and in some lodges for long afterwards.

The derivation and the associations of the word are equally attractive. The word is built up of two Latin terms, one meaning 'together' and the other 'bread,' the implication being that Companions eat bread together - that is, share their meals with one another. In some orders of chivalry a knight is termed a 'Companion.' Paul the Apostle writes to his "brother and companion in labour," and Shakespeare freely uses the word.

'Exalt'

The term 'exalted' is in the English Masonic 'Charter of Compact' in 1766 and the minutes of the Chapter of Concord, No. 124, in 1787, and probably other records round about that date would reveal other instances of its use in England. Its adoption by masons must have been inspired by the extensive Biblical use of the word in its various forms. Psalm lxxxix, 19, says: "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." The Magnificat (St. Luke i, 52) says, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." The word, which is from the Latin and signifies 'to raise or lift up' (the one so raised being an 'exaltee'), has acquired the meaning 'to raise or elevate in dignity, rank, power, or position,' and it amply sustains the particular meaning which the freemason has given it.

Editions of the laws produced by the first Grand Chapter of England late in the 1800s have a lengthy preamble addressed "to all the Companions of that estate but more particularly to INITIATES." So, apparently, not until early in the 19th century did it become really customary to use the now familiar word 'exaltee.'

'The Sojourners'

The word 'sojourner' also comes from the Latin, and incorporates the word diurnus, meaning 'daily.' Literally to 'sojourn' is to dwell in a place for a time, to live somewhere as a stranger and not as a member of the community. Genesis xii, 10, says that "Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there," and still more apt is a verse in 1 Chronicles xxix, 15: "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." Psalm xxxix, 12, says, "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner." There are many similar texts. The word 'sojourner' came straight into freemasonry from the Bible, in which there are well over fifty examples of its use in one form or another.

At the time of the Royal Arch 'union' in England, Sojourners in many chapters were known as the junior, Senior, and Principal Sojourners respectively, and their duties were to guard the veils. At the opening of the chapter they individually answered questions addressed to them by the First Principal and explained their duties, and we see a reflection of this in today's table ritual. As from the formation of the first Grand Chapter the Sojourners were among the officers who were elected annually, but there grew up in some chapters a custom by which the elected Principal Sojourner exercised a privilege of appointing his two assistants. Indeed, a rule to this effect appears in the Royal Arch Regulations of 1823, this remaining in force in England until 1886, when the power of election returned to the chapter.

Keystone (Masonic Keystone, Royal Arch Symbol)

The **keystone** is a significant symbol in the York Rite of Freemasonry, where it figures in the unfolding symbolic tale of Hiram the builder. In masonic lore, Hiram is the inventor of the keystone, and its significance is lost upon his assassination. The ritual narrative centered around this stone recalls the biblical “stone the builders refused,” as the uninitiated, not knowing the purpose of the oddly-shaped stone, consign it to the rubbish heap. It is only rediscovered when King Solomon inquires after its whereabouts.

The letters inscribed are short for the coded phrase: “Hiram The Widows Son Sent to King Solomon,” an obvious cipher, the meaning of which is likely lost.

In masonry, the keystone is the stone that holds together a stone arch. The oddly-shaped keystone is a feat of early engineering, allowing builders to incorporate windows, doorways, and other building elements to a building without sacrificing strength. The main benefit of this innovation is to allow for much more natural light in a structure.

Symbolically, the stone is the last placed, completing the arch created by the pillars Jachim and Boaz. It is analogous to coagulation in the alchemical process, an emblem of completion. Astrologically, the keystone represents the summer solstice—the sun entering the sign of Cancer at its highest point in the northern sky.