

# **AN EXPLANATION OF THE THIRD DEGREE TRACING BOARD**

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BRO: THOS CHARLES CUMMINGS.

## AN EXPLANATION OF THE THIRD DEGREE TRACING BOARD

Before I approach, very tentatively, an explanation of our Third Degree Tracing Board, a few words about Tracing Boards in general will serve as an introduction to the subject.

To begin with, to refer to these Boards as Tracing Boards undoubtedly is incorrect. The proper title is "The Lodge Board," and as such it is mentioned at least once in our Ritual as it is practised amongst us to-day. Those Brethren who have been present at the Consecration of a Lodge will remember, perhaps, that at a certain point the Consecrating Officer says: "Let the Lodge Board be uncovered," and what we know now as the First Degree Tracing Board is exposed to the view of the Lodge for the first time, and the rubric directions throughout that ceremony use the same term.

But as it has been the custom for so many years to use the term "Tracing Board" with reference to these painted, or otherwise coloured, diagrams I shall refer to them by that name, which is so familiar to all of us, during this Lecture.

Now, a true Tracing Board, as far as Masonry is concerned, is just what its name implies, i.e., a plain board such as is used by architects, draughtsmen, etc., and our Ritual refers to it as being for the "Master to lay lines and draw designs on, the better to enable Brethren to carry on the intended structure with regularity and propriety," (\*The Ritual: Explanation of the First Degree Tracing Board) and in the early days of the Craft such a board, supported by trestles, was always present in the Lodge when it was open and at work. For this reason we find it referred to in early rituals as the Trestle Board. I think I am right in saying that to-day such an one is present at every meeting of that famous Lodge of Instruction in London known as The Unions Emulation Lodge of Improvement for Master Masons. As Masonic symbolism began to develop it is found later on with various lines drawn upon it representing, one presumes, the ground plan of Solomon's temple and in this latter form it is depicted on our First and Third Degrees Tracing Boards and also on the present Grand Lodge Certificate. Our present day Boards have not evolved from this true sense of a Tracing Board, but from something quite different.

In the early days of the Craft, Lodges had not the dignity and decorum of to-day. We have progressed a very long way from that period when an enterprising tavern keeper exhibited a notice bearing the words: "Freemasons made here for half-a-crown," and when many a man was made a Mason for the price of a round of drinks. The Lodges met at their own particular taverns, from which a Lodge derived its name; for instance, there was a Lodge which met at this hotel from 1729 to 1735 (\*In 1735 it moved to the White Lion. Grass Market (now Norfolk Street), and later on, in 1785, to the Crown, Church Street. This was the first Lodge to be constituted in West Norfolk and the  
it second in the County. Practically no records survive of its life and activities. It was erased in 1786.) and was known, therefore, as the Duke's Head Lodge. In those days the floors of the taverns were sanded. Before the meeting commenced the Tyler would draw in the sand rough sketches of various Masonic symbols, such as the sun, moon, blazing star, etc. In duetime the sanded floors passed away, but the era of carpets or mosaic tiled floors for Lodges had not yet

arrived, and use was made of the bare boards of the Lodge Room, the Tyler drawing the symbols thereon with chalk or charcoal. This procedure was known as "drawing the Lodge," and the Tyler received a special remuneration for this particular service. The amount varied with different Lodges and in old accounts I have seen the fee range from half-a-crown to four shillings and sixpence. At the conclusion of the meeting the Initiate, or youngest apprentice, was handed a mop and pail of water and instructed to wash out the drawn emblems. The idea was not to enforce a menial task but to teach him that as he obliterated the designs on the floor, so was he to exclude from his conversation with those of the outside world everything he had heard or witnessed in the Lodge. It was, therefore, a symbolical act inculcating in the mind of the new member the Masonic virtue of silence.

"Drawing the Lodge" continued for some time, when the idea was conceived of using a sheet of canvas, with the emblems painted thereon, which could easily be laid down and rolled up again and stored away at the conclusion of the Lodge meeting, and as the use of these floor cloths proved a much quicker and handier method than drawing with chalk or charcoal prior to each meeting, "drawing the Lodge" gradually became obsolete. From the canvas which could quickly be rolled and unrolled to our present day Tracing Boards was but a short step. Thus it will be seen that although the true Tracing Board, i.e., the Tracing Board mentioned in the Ritual, is the plain drawing board, the diagrams we call Tracing Boards to-day had their origin in the sanded floors of the XVIIIth Century taverns.

It is well to remember here that although Grand Lodge does not oppose the presence in our Lodges of the present day Tracing Boards, as they are anointed with certain elements at the consecration of Lodges, yet Grand Lodge has never defined the nature of them nor given any ruling that they must conform to a particular pattern (\*A.Q.C. XXIX). Consequently, in the early days of the present form of Tracing Boards we find a variety of designs, although the modern ones are all of a conventional style.

In the early and middle XIXth Century, Masonry produced three Brethren for whose artistic ability and knowledge of Craft symbolism, Masonry, as a whole, owes a deep debt of gratitude: Brothers Jacobs, Bowring and Harris. These three Brethren, all of London, were responsible for the present method of arranging and grouping the symbols on our Tracing Boards. It is necessary to point out that their respective designs were not identical and each one produced sets of Tracing Boards which differed in detail. The first two of these Brethren need not concern us here. For those who are interested their work has been dealt with fully elsewhere (\*A.Q.C. XXIX. *Miscellanea Latomorum*, III, 56.). It is Brother Harris who is of interest to the members of this Lodge, for this set of Tracing Boards is one of his designs, and as far as I know, it is the only set in the Province, and naturally, Philanthropic Lodge prizes them greatly. The fact that they are not original paintings but lithographed reproductions does not necessarily detract from their value in our estimation of their artistic and symbolic representations of the doctrines and principles outlined in the three degrees. We may also dismiss as being irrelevant, the somewhat biased opinion of a well-known Masonic student and critic that the Tracing Boards produced by Brother Harris contained nothing of artistic merit but were mere daubs.

It would appear that Brother Harris rose to fame as a designer of Tracing Boards when the Emulation Lodge of Improvement adopted a set of his designs in 1846, after which he received orders for Tracing Boards from several other Lodges. He was initiated in the Lodge of Good Intent, No. 479, in 1818. Unfortunately he became blind in 1857, and from then onwards until his death in 1873 he was a pensioner of the R.M.B.I. It is because our Tracing Boards are of his design, and that this Third Degree Tracing Board differs greatly from the conventional pattern of the present day, that I have chosen it as the subject for this evening's Lecture.

This set of Tracing Boards was presented to the Lodge by Brother Cummings in 1957. To-day very little is known or remembered of Brother Cummings. According to the Centenary History of Philanthropic Lodge, he was a tailor and draper at Fakenham, Norfolk, and was initiated in this Lodge in 1855 and became its Master in 1859, receiving the Provincial Honour of Superintendent of Works the following year. Although, apparently, nothing else is known now of Brother Cummings, yet this one act of his alone, of presenting the Lodge with this set of Tracing Boards deserves our everlasting gratitude and remembrance. The other set of smaller Tracing Boards was given to the Lodge in 1884 by Brother T. M. Wilkin (through Brother Glasier) who joined the Lodge in 1858 from the British Lodge, No. 8, and was our Master in 1860, 1861 and 1864, and was Provincial Senior Grand Warden in 1860. These smaller Tracing Boards, which are also Brother Harris' designs, follow, less or more, the customary pattern of to-day. It is quite possible, and highly probable, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, that the only Tracing Board in the possession of Philanthropic Lodge prior to 1857 was the one, now highly prized by us, which belonged to Philip Broadfoot, that famous Mason of the first half of the XIXth century who rendered such great service not only to Masonry in general, but to this Lodge in particular, of which he became a joining Member in 1835. This Tracing Board deals with the subject matter of the First Degree only. We have nothing to show that Philip Broadfoot possessed Tracing Boards of the two superior degrees.

If, in its early days, there was present in the Lodge the true Tracing Board of our Ritual and which is still referred to as one of the Three Immovable jewels of the Lodge, (\*The Ritual: Explanation of the First Degree Tracing Board.) or if the Lodge made use of the painted canvas floor cloths which preceded the diagrammatic boards we erroneously call Tracing Boards to-day, they have long since passed away and disappeared from the memory of the Lodge. I have heard no traditions concerning them.

The fact that we possess the First Degree Tracing Board only of Philip Broadfoot may cause us to agree with the theory put forward by Brother Dring (\*\*A.Q.C. XXIX, 250.) that the body of Masons known as the Ancients had but one Tracing Board which sufficed for the three degrees. Brother Dring is also of the opinion that the other body of Masons, whom the Ancients referred to as the Moderns, had two Tracing Boards. When the division into the three boards of to-day came about, unfortunately, is not known.

We may also note here the consideration of another well-known authority on the subject, the late Brother E. A. T. Breed, that Tracing Boards were not in general use, especially in country Lodges, before 1825. (\*,A.Q.C. xxiii, 191.). Incidentally, it is rather more than probable that although there were two other Lodges in King's Lynn at that period, viz., Union and Good

Fellowship, Philip Broadfoot joined Philanthropic Lodge, because having been initiated in an Ancient's Lodge, the influence of his early Masonic career was still manifest, and whereas, up to the time of the famous Union of the Moderns and the Ancients in 1813, Philanthropic was an Ancients' Lodge, the other two were under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the Moderns. Union Lodge was erased in 1836 and Good Fellowship in 1851.

Having then, very concisely, but far from completely, traced the origin and evolution of our Tracing Boards, we may now pass to the interpretation of the symbols portrayed on our Third Degree Board by Brother Harris. We do not know and it is most unlikely that we will ever know whether Brother Harris produced his designs to order or whether they prove his merit as a Masonic scholar and symbolist.

That dramatic representation known to us as the Third Degree deals, in allegory and symbolism, with the subject of death and the Life Eternal which lies beyond the grave. That Life Eternal and all it implies, is of greater import than death **ir**, this degree is shown in the closing sentence of the prayer with which the ceremony opens, wherein the hope is expressed that the Candidate " may rise from the tomb of transgression to shine as the stars for ever and ever." Brother Cartwright has pointed out (\*\*E. H. Cartwright: A Commentary on the Freemasonic Ritual, 183.) this sentence has often been objected to by various critics as containing a nonsensical simile, but such ,critics have not known the V.S.L. as well, perhaps, as they might. The phrase "to shine as the stars for ever and ever" is derived from the Book of Daniel, XII, 3, and a marginal note refers to I Corinthians, XV, 41 and 42, where speaks as only that great Initiate, St. Paul, could speak, of the glory of that life which is to come. In one sense of our Ritual death is the veil the eye of human reason cannot penetrate, unless assisted by that Light which is from above, which Light is, of course, the V.S.L., but to him who is a Master Mason in the true meaning of the term, "the veil is partly drawn aside, disclosing a glimpse of Life Hereafter and Eternal." (\*Revd. Canon W. W. Covey-Crump: " The Symbolic Significance of the Middle Chamber) It is not given to man to comprehend wholly the mystery of life after death and that partial glimpse obtainable by him who has thoroughly assimilated the teachings of the three Degrees is not shown on this particular board but is symbolised on our modern Tracing Board by the small representation of a figure slightly drawing aside the veil which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple. We may read in another place when at a certain hour that veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. (St. Mark, XV.)

It is only by the study of the revelation contained in the V.S.L. that the natural horror of death is partly explored, enabling darkness to become visible, permitting the truly prepared candidate a vision of the glory of that future life which is here portrayed by the fully illuminated Sanctum Sanctorum. It is, in the words of one of our past Honorary Members, the late Revd. Canon W. W. Covey-Crump, "A vision across the open grave." (British Masonic Miscellany, X, 6a.). The Sanctum Sanctorum must not be confused with the Middle Chamber mentioned in the Second Degree, which is a symbol of ideas quite distinct from that which is implied by the Holy of Holies. The Middle Chamber is a representation of certain conceptions of our present life. The other denotes the condition beyond the worldly life.

At the head or west end of the Tracing Board is a sprig of acacia, another symbol of resurrection and life eternal. It is placed at the head and not elsewhere because the seat of all intelligence or consciousness lies in the brain, and the brain is situated in the cranium or skull. It is for this reason that this particular "emblem of mortality" is given prominence in the Third Degree. It may, perhaps, help us to understand better what is implied by making use of the skull as a symbol, very prominent not only in this Degree, but on our Tracing Board, to recall that the life, teaching, and Passion of a great Initiate reached its culminating point at Golgotha which, we are told, means the place of a skull. (\*St. John, XIX.). The sublime Degree follows very closely, in alternate symbolism, the life and doctrines of that outstanding figurehead of Christianity. Such an interpretation of the Third Degree has been dealt with at length by a well known Masonic student and writer in a most interesting work, published some years ago, which made a deep impression on the Craft as a whole, and has already run into several editions. (\*\*W. L, Wilmshurst: The Meaning of Masonry). But the acacia is also a symbol of innocence, and in this respect we may well remember those five Craftsmen who marked a certain piece of ground with a sprig of acacia ere they hastened back to Jerusalem.

The fact they were Craftsmen, i.e., Initiates who fully understood the mystery of Regeneration and the conditions of the life entailed thereby, and that they placed the sprig of acacia in an exact position to mark their discovery, is an important point of symbolism of the great allegory which constitutes this Degree which is frequently overlooked, and merits more than a cursory consideration by those who would endeavour to make a real daily advance in Masonic knowledge.

The above is but a brief and incomplete sketch of all that is inferred by the central feature of our Third Degree Tracing Board. That it forms part of a subject very difficult of comprehension is not to be denied. In words which ought to be familiar to all of us, yet which comparatively few have heard or are even aware of, for we are too busy making Masons to spare time for speculating on our Royal Art in Lodge: "To a perfect knowledge of this Degree few will attain, but it is an infallible truth that he who gains by merit those marks of pre-eminence and distinction which the Degree affords, receives a reward which amply compensates for all his attention and assiduity." (\*Third Lecture: Introductory Address.)

It is quite possible that those words were written by Philip Broadfoot himself, as a letter of his suggests(\*\*see Appendix). It is a letter written when he was residing in King's Lynn and was a member of Philanthropic Lodge. I possess a copy of it and the original is still in existence, being in the possession of the descendants of the late Brother Henry Muggeridge, who was one of the Preceptors of the famous Stability Lodge of Instruction, founded in 1817.

Around the foot of what constitutes the main feature of our Tracing Board are grouped three identical Hebrew letters in the form of an inverted triangle. This letter, the He, the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, appears on other Tracing Boards as the figure 5. What these three 5s symbolise is a matter of controversy. W. Bro. Covey-Crump was of the opinion that taken individually they stand for the signs of the Degree, the five P . . . . ts of F..... p and one of the secrets now associated with the Royal Arch. (\*\*British Masonic Miscellany, X, 74).

A most ingenious theory put forward by a Brother some time ago is that on an old Tracing Board there were three symbols somewhat like the letter V, from which he deduced they referred to the position of the feet when making a certain mode of progression peculiar to this Degree at an important part of the Ceremony. Later artists mistaking these symbols for the Roman numeral V, changed them to the more familiar figure 5, and the designers of modern Tracing Boards continue to perpetuate this error. The general opinion, however, among students to-day, is they allude to the three classes or Lodges of Fellow Crafts who were ordered to carry out a particular quest, of which only one class proved successful.

On the left, or south side, of the Tracing Board appears, what is to-day, the familiar badge of a P.M. It should be noted that it is the badge, but not the symbol of a P.M., for this is an instance where there is great difference between a badge and what it symbolises. By whose authority it became the badge of a P.M. is one of those Masonic questions to which no answer may ever be forthcoming. The symbol itself appears in various early Masonic publications, but nowhere is it described as the badge or emblem of a P.M. In the first edition of the Book of Constitutions, published in 1721, it figures on the frontispiece as "That amazing Proposition which is the foundation of all Masonry." At a meeting of Grand Lodge in 1814 it was decided that a square and quadrant should be the emblem of a P.M., but in the year 1815 the Book of Constitutions describes the jewel of a Past Master as a "Square, and pendant within it the diagram of the Euclidian Proposition," and such, less or more, is the description in the Book of Constitutions to-day. There is no record in the Minutes of Grand Lodge who authorised the alteration, and, curiously enough, the alteration has never been questioned and the Craft, under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England, has tacitly accepted this symbol as the emblem of a P.M. ever since. (\*Revd. Canon W. W. Covey-Crump: The Pythagorean Proposition). But the question still arises: What does it symbolise in speculative Freemasonry? And again there is a divergence of opinion. We may, of course, put on one side its operative use. That is as well-known outside the Craft as within it. If I may refer once again to the late Bro. Revd. Canon Covey-Crump, who undoubtedly ranked among the great Masonic scholars and whose opinions on Masonic interpretations are worthy of every consideration, he says that it is evidently the symbol of another symbol and that other symbol is those "certain Hebrew characters" to which the attention of our ancient Brethren was drawn when they went to receive their wages in the Middle Chamber of the Temple. Those Hebrew characters, as we may see if we look carefully on the Second Degree Tracing Board where they appear just above the door of the Middle Chamber were the Yod, He, Van, He of the Hebrew alphabet, and constitute the name of God in Hebrew, about which so much has been written. It is said that this was the word spoken by the High Priest once a year when he entered the Holy of Holies to make Propitiation for the sins of the people. The letters are all consonants and the true vowel paintings which would make the name pronounceable have been lost. There is a tradition which states that the true pronunciation was known to the High Priest only and it was handed down orally from High Priest to High Priest until it finally became lost. When we consider what in Freemasonry that name can convey to us when analysed, especially by certain methods employed by Cabbalists, it would seem that the 47th Problem of Euclid symbolises all that is meant by a full knowledge of the mysteries of the Craft and that is the key by which to obtain the genuine secrets of a Master Mason. It can only be in this sense, that by some Unknown authority, it has become the badge or emblem of a P.M., who, theoretically, has thoroughly mastered all that Freemasonry has to teach and applies



that teaching to his daily life. The use of geometrical designs to illustrate abstract ideas is, of course, very old; as old, indeed, as symbolism itself.

As a moment or two ago I mentioned the Cabbalists, just a word concerning them is, perhaps, necessary, as the term may be unknown to most of you. Cabbala is a late Hebrew word meaning "received lore" and is the name given about the XVth century to a system of Jewish theosophy and mysticism, which had its origin about the first century, B.C., in Alexandria, that great centre of lean-Ling in the old world, and contains a mixture of Jewish, Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian elements. It flourished among the Jews in Spain from the ninth to the fifteenth century. Owing to a great persecution towards the latter part of that century there was quite an exodus of Jews from that country. They spread over the rest of Europe, including England, and their doctrines exercised more than a little fascination among the learned Christians from that time onwards. How, when and even why Cabbalism entered Freemasonry and influenced the development of its symbolism is another of those Masonic problems which has never been solved. Many theories have been advanced, but it is readily recognised by those who have made research in that direction none is wholly acceptable. To speak of Cabbalism and to illustrate how it permeates almost all the degrees of Freemasonry would require several lectures, and it is, therefore, quite impossible for me to speak more fully on this aspect of our Ritual. There is a fairly large literature on the subject which can be commended to those who would care to study it more fully, while every student will find it not only interesting but will help him to understand many points of our Ceremonies.

Underneath the badge of a P.M. are six lines in a well-known Masonic cypher, the invention of which is traditionally attributed to Albertus Magnus, Bishop of Cologne, one of the great German builders of the XIIIth Century, who is said to be among the first to teach the principles of that most noble of all orders of architecture, the Gothic, to his fellow craftsmen. It was originally my intention to illustrate on a blackboard how to obtain the key to this cypher, but I am afraid the time factor will not permit, as it would make this Lecture unduly prolonged. I will, therefore, content myself with observing that it is used in a variety of ways and in the method employed by Brother Harris, like Hebrew, it reads from right to left.

The first line consists of the initials of the pass-word leading to this degree. It is followed by the letters HAB, the usual contraction of the name of the leading figure in the allegory which comprises the Third Degree.

Beneath this is the date of the great tragedy, A.L. 3000. AL. are the initials of the Latin words Anne Lucis, which mean Year of Light, the light, in this instance, being the Light of Creation. An interesting theory concerning this date is put forward by Brother the Revd F. de P. Castells. " In the Middle Ages there was prevalent an opinion that the world was destined to last six thousand years, after which there would be a millenium of universal peace and happiness. And so the year A.L. 3000 was, in a way, the central point in human history, which the death of the brightest character recorded in the annals of Freemasonry at that point had the effect of dividing the six thousand years into two equal parts." (\*Rev. F. de P. Castells: Arithmetic of Freemasonry).

Then follow the letters MB MB. These are the contracted forms of the secret words of the Degree. There is no doubt that the first was the Master Mason's Word of the Moderns, and the other that of the Ancients. Brother the Revd. Dr. Rosenbaum, a well-known authority on Hebrew proper names informs us that . . . . . is Hebrew whilst the other . . . . . is Aramaic, and they may be said to convey the meaning attributed to them in the Ritual.

I am indebted to Brother Robin, of Ceres Lodge, Swaffham, who is a very keen student of the Cabbala for the information that when dealt with by the numerical code known as Gematria, both words reduce to seven, which is, of course, the number of perfection. I do not think this is fortuitous or even a coincidence, but that the compilers of each Ritual deliberately choose a word to designate Master Masons which would reduce to this number and that like many Hebrew proper names found in the V.S.L. they were made up. Brother Robin has also been to considerable trouble to demonstrate to me how the words of the First and Second Degrees, B. and J., both reduce to eight which according to the Cabbala symbolises not only Regeneration but equilibrium or stability.

It is more than probable that in common with so many Lodges our pronunciation of the first word is entirely wrong. The word, it would seem, is a quadrisyllable and not a trisyllable. One writer, at least, has pointed out that to make it a trisyllable is as bad as calling Salome Salom, and the father of David, Jess. (\*E. H. Cartwright: A Commentary on the Freemasonic Ritual). In the XVIIIth Century an exposure was published which ran into several editions, bearing the word as its title. There is every reason to believe that this exposure, in common with others published round about the same period was made use of by the Brethren of those days as an aid to learn their work, and seeing the word in print the habit arose of pronouncing it as an English word of three syllables and this error has been committed by a large number of Lodges ever since. When spoken as a quadrisyllable the correct pronunciation is with the second syllable accented, thus it is pronounced in this manner in most Lodges in the North and West of England as well as in the Lodges of Ireland, Scotland and the Dominions. (\*\*E. H. Cartwright: A Commentary on the Freemasonic Ritual).

The last two lines may be taken together. They consist of six single letters, the first three being CCC and the others FFZ. They refer to a portion of the seventh section of the First Lecture :-

"How long should an E.A. serve his master  
"Seven years."

"How should he serve him  
"With Freedom, Fervency and Zeal."

"Excellent qualities, what are their emblems ?  
"Chalk, Charcoal and Clay."

The Lecture then continues with a disquisition upon the moral qualities symbolised by these three substances.

On the right or North side of the Tracing Board is a symbol familiar to as many outside the Craft as within it, the five-pointed star known as the Pentagram or Pentalpha. This symbol is not mentioned in the Ritual nor in the Third Degree Lecture and it would appear that Brother Jeremy Cross (1783-1867) was the first to consider it as an emblem of the Third Degree and put it in his "Hieroglyphical Chart" first published in 1859. It is definitely not the Bright Morning Star alluded to in the Ceremony, although it often is mistakenly referred to as such by Masters of this and some other Lodges. It is generally considered as the symbol of a Master Mason and the F P of F. When a man stands upright with his arms horizontal and legs outstretched he illustrates this.

If, however, we interpret this symbol according to Cabbalism, which as I have already said permeates Freemasonry, we will find that it contains within itself, very concisely, almost the whole of the Masonic philosophy. Let us take the Pentagram in its simplest form with one point in the ascendant. (When placed the other way with two points uppermost it is considered the symbol of evil). "The single point at the head represents the Great Spirit, God. A line drawn from there to the left-hand angle at the base represents the descent of the spirit into matter in its lowest form, whence it ascends to the right angle, typifying matter in its highest form, i.e., the brain of man. From here a line is drawn across the figure to the left angle representing man's progress in intellect and material civilisation, which if not directed in the right way constitutes a danger point from which he is liable to fall into moral corruption, signified by the descent of the line to the right angle at the base. But the soul of man being derived from God cannot remain at this point, but must struggle upward, as is symbolised by the line reaching again to the apex, God, from whence it issued."(\*Encyclopedia of Occultism: Art. Magical Diagrams.)

If the drawing of this line has been followed closely it will have been seen that a Pentagram has been drawn within a Pentagram and it is this latter form of the symbol that Brother Harris has delineated on his Tracing Board, enclosed within the circle of Eternity.

Below the Pentagram, continuing downwards and across the foot of the Tracing Board are some lines of Hebrew. It is a matter of conjecture whether Brother Harris was as good at his Hebrew as he was with his painting, as some of the words are doubtful, but the following may safely be taken as a good translation: "The house of the holiness in Jerusalem. It was built by the hands of Solomon, King (of) Israel, Hiram, King (of) Tzor (=Tyre) and Hiram Abif (?), and the work was completed in the year 3000."

At the foot of the Tracing Board are the weapons made use of by the three ruffians mentioned in the ritual, and the events concerning their use are familiar to you all. There are to be seen also the W.T.'s of the Degree lying on a true Tracing Board. The one depicted here symbolises our individual selves in this life and the lines, drawn upon it, the plan of our own lives, which ought to be carried out according to the Masonic line and rule, while the W.T.'s remind us to perform our allotted task as Master Masons, while it is yet day.

A word may now be said concerning the position of the Tracing Board in our Lodges. That it should be laid on the floor in the centre of the Lodge is a point on which all authorities are agreed. As the Tracing Board has taken the place of those emblems which were once drawn upon the bare floor boards of the Lodge room it is but logical that this is the proper place for it to

be displayed. Propping it up against the Pedestal of the J.W. or the Secretary's Desk, a procedure found in so many Lodges to-day, where it can be seen by a section of the brethren only, is a modern innovation which has nothing to commend it. Where the Tracing Boards are to be found in Philanthropic Lodge is, of course, an impossible position and has not one single point of tradition behind it, and leaves one wondering, somewhat vaguely, where they were placed when the Lodge met elsewhere.

We have now surveyed, very briefly, the origin of our Tracing Board and the interpretation of the Third Degree shown in the arrangement of the symbols as originally painted by Brother Harris. That this Third Degree Tracing Board is more interesting than its modern successors I think you will all agree as many points arising from Freemasonry as outlined in the three degrees which Brother Harris has symbolised are missing from the Third Degree Tracing Boards of to-day.

The value to us of summarising fundamental principles by symbols cannot be expressed better than in the words of one of the most brilliant scholars and writers Freemasonry has yet produced: "The place of symbols in the scheme of signifying things is rather like that of Church sacraments, as if apart from the rest. They are of institution, so to speak, and are things of artifice. The Triangle, the Cross, the Pentagram, the so-called Star or Shield of Solomon are old portents indicating secret things. Behind their Masonic meanings are others of a deeper kind, and they can be read and understood in that light. The word within the word, the message at the back of the symbol, the second sense of allegory; it is in the finding of these that we shall enter into the Secret Kingdom of Rites behind the Rites, and into a living Masonry of which this at work among us is a vestige and a shadow."(\*A. E 'Waite: Emblematic Freemasonry and the evolution of its Deeper issues).

## APPENDIX.

The following is an exact copy, with all faults of the original photograph letter, found among the papers of the late Henry Muggeridge. The original letter is still in the possession of the descendants of Henry Muggeridge and was obviously addressed to him in reply to requests for some explanation of the origin of our Ritual. It is dated the year following the death of P. Thomson, for many years co-leader with Philip Broadfoot of the famous Stability Lodge of Instruction, and since 1835 to his death, in sole leadership, when Henry Muggeridge assumed the leadership by general consent. The explanation given therein refers to facts 35 years old, Stability Lodge of Instruction having been founded in 1817:-

Lynn, Norfolk.  
September 1st, 1852.

Dear Sir and Br.,

I have to acknowledge your esteemed favour of July the 1st, also yours of the 27th August, and have to apologize for my delay in answering.

I feel greatly obliged by your kind communication in furnishing me with all particulars relating to the Lodge of Instructions during the last two years, my venerable friend and Brother Thomson occasionally but more particularly at the end of each session when he usually furnished me with the occurrences that took place during the year. I shall be happy to hear from you at any time but more particularly at the end of each sessions as I take great interest in the prosperity of the Lodge of Instructions. The first degree was arranged by Dr. Hemmins and I waited several years in the hopes that he would as he had promised arrange the 2nd and 3rd Degrees but it was put off from time to time, until at last his mind became enfeebled and was incapable of doing anything in the matter. I therefore consulted my Brother Thomson and stated my intention to undertake the task myself and having the first degree as a model viz., Introduction Sections, Clauses, and moral at the end of each Section, I proceeded on that principle and although I claim no credit for originality yet the task was not an easy one, to find matter for the Introduction to the degrees, the mora , etc, etc., etc. In fact it was a task such as I never before had in hand and it is certain that I shall never be able to do anything of the kind again. I hope to be in London in October but at present it is very uncertain whether I shall be able to remain longer than one day and then I will be engaged on the business which takes me up. If I have time to remain I will do myself the Honour of waiting on you. At all events I will call on you the first time I come to London after the time before mentioned should I be unable to see you then.

Give my fraternal regard to the Brethren to whom I am known and in fact to all who form the Lodge of Instruction.

I remain Dr. Sir and Br.,  
Yours fraternally,  
Ph. Broadfoot.

As stated in the Centenary History of Philanthropic Lodge, Philip Broadfoot died at King's Lynn on the 14th August, 1858, and was buried in the local cemetery. A headstone was erected over his grave on which was depicted the jewels of a Master Mason and Worshipful Master of the Craft degrees arid of a Companion and Past Zerubabel of the Royal Arch Degree.

Among the obituary notices in the "Lynn Advertiser" of 21st August, 1858, is the following:-

On the 18th inst., aged 73 years, Mr. Philip Broadfoot, Buckingham Terrace, respected by all who knew him. He was the working friend and Brother of the late Duke of Sussex (Grand Master of England), Dr. Crucefix and the late Revd. Dr. Glover (Oliver ?). Up to the 16th ult., he was junior Grand Warden of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Norfolk. His lectures and knowledge of the Craft were well known and appreciated and his loss will be deeply felt by the Masonic body, and by the brethren at Lynn in particular. He was followed to the grave on Thursday by a number of members of the Fraternity."

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(1997-12-01)