

## A Short Lesson from the Beehive

In Freemasonry many symbols and hieroglyphs are explained to the newly raised Mason that are not typically found within the ceremony itself. These symbols may not even be found in our lodges, or when perhaps represented in some way, lack any further explanation of the lessons behind that symbol save the paragraph or two presented in the lecture itself.<sup>1</sup> One such symbol is the beehive.

### Drones in the Hive

The beehive is a curious symbol for a fraternity. In a beehive the term “drone” is synonymous with “male bee”. They do not harvest pollen, nectar, resin or water. They do not make honey. They do not help in the processes of cleaning the hive nor are they even equipped with a stinger to assist in defending the hive from intruders, despite their larger size.<sup>2</sup> Yet they live there and eat the honey made by the tens of thousands of other bees in the hive. With this understanding of what a drone is, it is easy to see why, in various places, a candidate is told that if he performs the tasks he’s agreed to, the lodge will be pleased that they have not received a drone into their hive.<sup>3</sup> Despite these apparent failings, “Drones are essential to the health and survival of future honey bee colonies.”<sup>4</sup> So, what are we to learn from this symbol?

### Brotherhood

For ages, Freemasonry has taught the Brotherhood of Man, under the Fatherhood of God. This provides a clue as to the use of this symbol – that of dependence on others. This drone depends on his kin to provide for his needs, to uplift and support him throughout his life - just as child depends on others, we lean upon our friends and Brothers throughout life, and just as we, no matter our age, depend upon Deity.

Throughout our adult life we may find instances where we depend upon each other for our protection and security, food, and the other necessities of life.<sup>5</sup> This dependence is not a failing, but a design of the Great Architect. Not only in the humbling of our egos to need such assistance, but in the uplifting of our soul when we are the ones who are able to provide it. This interdependence is the Brotherhood of Man and is one minute way in which we can curiously trace Nature through her various windings and thereby discover the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Grand Artificer of the Universe.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Blue Lodge Text Book, 2010, The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M., p69-82

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Poindexter, Why Drones Are Necessary, perfectbee.com

<sup>3</sup> See Charge of a Most Excellent Master, Mississippi, for just one example

<sup>4</sup> Drone Bee: The life of the Male Honey Bee – (*Apis mellifera*), buzzaboutbees.com

<sup>5</sup> Louisiana Masonic Monitor, The Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana, p141

<sup>6</sup> Blue Lodge Text Book, 2010, The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M., p57

## **Industry**

If we delve further into the concealed recesses of this beehive we can better understand the most common theme revolving around it, that of being a symbol of industry. Two simple words provide one definition of industry: Hard Work.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed hard work to be a colony of bees.

From birth to death every bee in the hive serves a purpose, and that purpose changes over time. The worker bee is not simply born into a single job, but rather assumes nearly every task within the hive at some point in her life. She progresses, if you like, in degrees. And, as with the origins of Freemasonry, there are just two major sects of her life, that of being a house bee and that of a field bee. Before a worker bee ever sees the sky, she is put to work cleaning, feeding, and caring for the others in the hive. She then begins to fly, build comb, handle the stores of materials collected by others, and guard the hive. Only after bearing all this burden is she then sent into the world to collect their needed supplies, like nectar and pollen, to scout out resources, or perhaps even a new home.<sup>2</sup>

Do you see the similarities to what we promote in our lodges? How a new Entered Apprentice is tasked to assist – being involved in nearly every aspect of the required upkeep of a lodge and its members while constantly learning new tasks? Then to eventually travel out into the world where he gains more knowledge that he brings back to the members of his lodge and, perhaps, potentially attracts the attention of others who, in time, he brings back to the lodge with him?

We can note that the worker bee never stops working until it dies. From the moment it emerges until the moment it dies, it is engaged in some beneficial work. The worker bee performs the task, as we are taught, of ever being industrious, never sitting down contented.<sup>3</sup> Are you so engaged in your task?

## **The Beneficial Drone**

But what about the drone – what purpose is it serving? In nature, the drone bee has but one task – to mate, which seems like an easy burden to bear until we learn that it dies upon doing so, but this task is more important than face value presents. The patterns of nature repeat themselves from the microscopic to the cosmic, and colonies of bees are no different. Just as each bee in a hive depends on each other, there is at least one way in which every individual colony depends on one another as well – and the connections are the drones.

It is commonly held that a drone does not mate with his own queen. Instead, each colony produces males only for the purpose of mating with other queens. In nature, this provides the genetic diversity necessary to maintain the population as a whole, and not just the individual colony. Contrary to the lazy image given to a drone, a drone will spend his whole life finding a queen to mate with.

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<sup>1</sup> Google Definitions

<sup>2</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “Colony life and social organization”

<sup>3</sup> Blue Lodge Text Book, 2010, The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M., p74

When successful, the genetics this drone passes on will change the life of the hive of the queen he mated with, as these genetics determine many factors of how efficiently and effectively a hive is run.<sup>1</sup>

In our lodges, this is the Mason who is not content to only labor within the walls of his lodge, but who instead extends his lodge from earth to heaven, and from the surface to the center.<sup>2</sup> He discovers new concepts, learns new truths, and practices those virtues everywhere he travels. By action or word, he spreads the light he has gained and, inevitably, changes the lives of those individuals and lodges he has encountered. Are you ensuring that you only affect the lives of others in a positive way, even at the risk of detriment to yourself?

## **The Practical Beehive**

In this way, the beehive should not be relegated to just a few words in a monitor. It is worthy of study, admiration and emulation. It proves the wonderful properties of nature, while demonstrating the more important truths of morality.<sup>3</sup> We must remain constantly engaged, being industrious, and not shirking the hard work. We must inspire every member of our hive, or our lodge, to be involved in the work in some measure.

One might ask – what happens to the drone who never finds a queen – does he still serve some purpose. In short, no – he does not. The rest of the colony casts him aside for the benefit of the body as a whole. *These* are the drones we are typically referring to, and we must be willing to part ways and not harbor them within our hives, ever extending our resources and weakening the colony. Yet, so long as that Mason is making that effort to find the Light for which he is searching, it is our divine duty to support and keep him.

As we pray at the parting of a deceased Brother, we must remain open to the Light from Deity, because he will make every duty plain to us and fortify us by His Spirit against the temptations that may assail us.<sup>4</sup> To find this Light we must observe the designs which He laid down, studying nature, of which we are a part, supporting one another and all humanity. Just as divinity ingrained this concept into the bees, He has written it upon us as well, if we will but take the time to notice.

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Poindexter, How Honey Bees Reproduce, perfectbee.com

<sup>2</sup> Blue Lodge Text Book, 2010, The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M., p24

<sup>3</sup> Blue Lodge Text Book, 2010, The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M., p61

<sup>4</sup> Blue Lodge Text Book, 2010, The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M., p100