

## THE NORTH-EAST CORNER

No doubt many newly made Masons, including newly raised Master Masons, will, during their period of initiation into the workings of a lodge, and the peculiarities of the stations at which various parts of the degrees are unfolded, wonder why - to use a phrase so often repeated during the ceremonies - in this peculiar manner are the candidates so placed. One of the first of these is the placing of a candidate during the first degree in the NE corner of the lodge, by the rough ashlar.

Simply stated, the symbolical significance or character of this position is that the Entered Apprentice is said to take his first step in his new life as a Mason at this juncture, in an analogy to the custom of, 'at the erection of all stately and superb edifices to lay down the foundation stone at the NE angle or corner of the building.' In this position, the E.A. is made to represent figuratively speaking, the first stone in the building of his own Masonic life.

The North, in symbolical masonry, is said to represent the place of darkness - the symbol of the unregenerate world, while the East is the place of light and perfection. Therefore, the Candidate in his standing at this juncture in the NE angle, is at the foundation stone of his new life and is seen as progressing from the ignorance of darkness and ready to enter into the light. He has, at the beginning of the ceremony of his initiation, been told that to receive Light (increased knowledge), is the predominant wish for his future life. The North, masonically speaking, is called a place of darkness, as has already been mentioned. The Sun, however, in his progress through the ecliptic never reaches further than 23 degrees and 28 minutes North of the Equator. Figuratively speaking, a wall erected on any part of the earth farther North than that will, at Meridian, receive the sun's rays only on the south side of the wall, while the north would be in the shadow. The north as ! the symbol of darkness, reaches back to the days of the sun worshipers of which many references are to be found in literature concerning Gnosticism and hermetic philosophy.

In a like manner, the East was considered as the place of the sun's daily birth and therefore highly revered. Masonry, therefore, uses the NE angle to represent the initiate's first step in seeking knowledge of that light, that fountainhead of all knowledge, from which all goodness emanates. Thus we see the NE is the first of the stations in which the candidate will be placed in his progression from the darkness of ignorance to that of the Light in the East. Similarly, the Rough Ashlar, representing the stone as it comes from the quarry in its rude form is made to represent man in his natural state - ignorant and uncultivated. But when education has exerted its wholesome influence in expanding his intellect, retraining his passions and purifying his life, he is then represented by the perfect Ashlar. Here we see the result of the stone under the skillful hands of the Master Mason, the roughness has been made smooth and it has been squared on all sides to form a perfect ! cube and fitted for its place in the finished building.

While true perfection will never be attained in or by our endeavors, still that must be our aim, to as nearly as possible reach perfection of character, keeping the Great Geometrician of the Universe at the center of all we do and are, for this and this only is the point at which a Master cannot err.

By Bro. C. H. Pirie, Published in  
The Tracing Board, GRS, May, 1979.