

The Museum Collection

No.18

The Importance of Benevolence



A collection of short articles on benevolence
taken from old RAOB GLE Journals

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Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Grand Lodge of England

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THE MEANING OF THE WORDS
“SPIRIT OF TRUE BUFFALOISM”
AND
“BENEVOLENCE”

As practised by Minor Lodges throughout
the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes
under the Grand Lodge of England.

A collection of short articles on benevolence
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INTRODUCTION

“THE SPIRIT OF BUFFALOISM”

The object of this book in the series of Museum Collections is to bring to the attention of our membership the importance of the words “The Spirit of Buffaloism and Benevolence”.

It is particularly poignant that this edition is published just before the festive season is upon us, may it remind us the Spirit of true Buffaloism and Benevolence is a year long recipe and not just a one off time for giving.

Although the stories are from Western Germany it should also be pointed out that the same benevolence is shown by the many Lodges and Provinces throughout the United Kingdom and indeed throughout the world and to incorporate all the stories would make this publication far too big, so perhaps you will forgive me for only highlighting these short ones.

All items in this edition are recorded in old RAOB Journals and make fascinating reading.

Mick Walker ROH, Grand Primo 2006

September 2008

GRAND LODGE AND THE PROFITS

I will not pretend that the phrase which has inspired this article surprises me because having heard it and a hundred others distinguished by the same vacuum, nothing the human voice can utter now surprises me. The phrase? Yes, here it is: "Grand Lodge seems to be doing all right", and the speaker went on to give figures alleged to show the profits made by Grand Lodge and included a plea for lower charges.

Let us examine it. Who, or what, is this "Grand Lodge" that is doing so well. What is it composed of and who picks up these profits of which complaint is made. What goods or services do they handle and what happens if we reduce their profit to the point of loss.

The commodity Grand Lodge handles is benevolence. Benevolence to members recovering from sickness, to the aged brother and his wife or the brother's widow; and benevolence to the widow with orphan children. Benevolence is the balm we apply to ease the pain and suffering caused by age, ill health or the loss of a beloved husband and father. It is the symbol by which good men indicate their human sympathies and give practical expression to their natural desire to "defend the weak and render assistance to those in difficulty or in need".

The medium by which men who combine for these purposes can find peace of heart by subduing the fear and sometimes desolation in the lives of others whose hearts have become heavy with the dread of want or the loneliness and despair which follows the passing of a breadwinner.

That is the commodity we handle and the question I ask myself and those of you who moan about the profits made by Grand Lodge or by any other section dealing with the distribution of our commodity, is "Can you find me anyone in the Order who thinks there is anything wrong with our final product, anyone who thinks we should produce less of it, anyone who thinks we should shut up shop altogether, anyone who thinks he can produce a substitute at a lower cost or even a more efficient substitute at a higher cost".

No! To date I have been unable to discover any of these bright lads who will stand up to argue the propositions I have indicated here.

The facts are that they are not really bad people; they just don't use the grey matter the Lord endowed them with and have never spent a moment in analysing their own conclusions. Let us do it for them.

This "Grand Lodge" then, as it was there I heard the statement on the last occasion. This Grand Lodge that we are to deprive of its "Profits". What is it, how is it run; and who picks up the profits.

It is quite simple. The Minor lodges send representatives to the Provincial Grand Lodge and the Provincial Grand Lodge is governed by them. The Provincial Grand Lodge sends representatives to Grand Lodge and Grand Lodge is governed by them.

So in the final analysis Grand Lodge is composed of men who represent the views and opinions of the Minor lodges. The people who constitute Grand Lodge are the directors appointed by the shareholders. And who are the shareholders? Why YOU, just YOU. Nobody owns or runs Grand Lodge except YOU. It is the machine by which you give expression and administrative effect to your desires and nothing is or can be done unless YOU approve.

Who gets the profits? Or had we better first decide what is meant by the term and see how "profits" arise.

Taking the last question first we find that "profit" arises from the fact that a bye product of our main product, benevolence, is a number of services and things your directors give or supply to you in the Provincial Grand Lodges and Minor Lodges, the profit being the difference between the cost of the service or article and the price you pay for it.

Who, then, gets the profits so secured. Let us examine the process of distribution of profits in our case.

To be in a position to make available and distribute benevolence we need that elusive thing called money, and we obtain this today from three main sources. First by ordered subscriptions from each Minor lodge registration

fee, second from voluntary subscriptions of good brethren and third from this distasteful thing “profits”. In 1952 these three came to a total of £51,400 and the cost of making the service or article available to you and the monetary expression of our benevolent work totalled £51,509.

So, in spite of the alleged profit factor your directors distributed more than they received from Minor Lodges. Distributed it to whom? Why, who else than to YOU, who are the only shareholders in this vast concern.

We are thus able to see clearly the implications of reducing the “profit” made by Grand Lodge. Reduce it by £1,000 and you automatically reduce the amount you are able to distribute in your benevolent work by £1,000. Of course, if you think we are producing too much you should stand up and say so and say why you are of such opinion, but because of the strong views held by many experienced people as to the need for an ever increasing effort to eliminate the causes of mental and physical distress I would suggest that you say it softly in case the multitude hear you, or, not a happy thought this, in case it happens to be your turn, or the turn of those beloved by you, to need this splendid commodity next.



PURPOSEFUL WISE MEN

We all know the traditional story of the magi, the wise men who followed a star consistently, for how long their sojourn we cannot tell, in order that they might bring their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh in offering to the new born Babe in the stable of an inn in Bethlehem. If at no other time, at least at Christmas we all remember it.

At the same time the story of the chorus of the angelic host also comes to mind, and, midst the many thoughts which crowd the mind, a man is apt to overlook the moral of purposefulness in life a moral which is exemplified in the determination of those wise men to pursue their mission to its end.

If we in our humble ways are to be good or wise, then in our lives, during the business day or in the hour of recreation, we have to be purposeful. Where providence has offered us the opportunity of doing those things which will make the world that little bit better for our service, we are neither good nor wise if we fail to be purposefully conscientious in the discharge of what we recognise as a moral duty. That applies whether our labours are under the arc lights of publicity or in the cool shadows of obscurity. whether in public affairs, in private life, or in comparative seclusion of a Buffalo Lodge.

Each year we shall celebrate Christmas in our respective ways and we shall be doing it at a time when secular civilisation seems to be cracking before our very eyes, leading ever more quickly to its own destruction.

Throughout the world there is a feeling of frustration and insecurity. Mankind, as we think of it, is everywhere crying out for goodwill. As members of such a Brotherhood as ours are the first to recognise, the greatest security in life is that which has its foundations in goodwill. It was, perhaps, inevitable that the angel voices should have cried. "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of goodwill". That is a very important part of the Christmas Message.

It has always seemed to me that one's sense of personal thankfulness goes a long way in determining one's goodwill.

It is wise at times, for one's own mental and spiritual equilibrium, to count one's blessings, especially in the day of adversity. May I recall some lines, published during the last war?

What'er one's trials
The load the lighter is.
If one but counts
The blessings that are his.

Having counted our blessings, with thankfulness of heart and in the spirit of goodwill, let us remember the lame dogs who can be helped over the stiles of life if in us that goodwill is real, purposeful and objective. No other organisation of men offers finer opportunities of such service than the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes under the Grand Lodge of England.

The realisation of this carries with it a moral responsibility that no honest member can shirk. The responsibility is not to be lightly discharged by spasmodic efforts an odd gift or an occasional attendance in lodge but must become part of one's life purpose. Like the magi, we must carry through our Buffalo mission to the full and to the end.

We shall experience disappointments here and there, the older Brethren must have done so countless times, but our purposefulness has to rise above the particular and the personal, and our eyes must ever be fixed on the star of our idealism. In the odd moment of despondency, when the chill breeze of man's ingratitude blows upon us to chill our enthusiasm, we shall do well to remind ourselves that we are working not for the moment nor for this person or that, but for the cause of goodwill and the wide conception of the Brotherhood of all good men. The cause is greater than the man.

Buffaloism is greater than the Brother. If we serve Buffaloism faithfully, in our respective spheres and accordingly to our ability and opportunities, then our lives will pass into the lives of others, not only to propagate good character, but to create for all the year and all the years, not only the Christmas spirit but the yearly spirit of goodwill.

BENEVOLENCE.
TO SUCCOUR AND DEFEND

To Succour and Defend. This basic principle of our Order, repeated by every single member on initiation, is discarded by all too many of those who accept it as an article of faith as the figures of our wastage in membership show. To those who remain, however, in many cases, perhaps one might say most cases, it becomes part of a new life springing from a realisation of the personal happiness derived from its practice.

There are, quite naturally, degrees of fervour in its application and no one could even attempt to say why apparently similar cases receive varying treatment because the human content of benevolence itself is not a staple factor.

What no one will deny is that when the spirit moves them there are no heights too great for the brethren to scale.

Such a case is that which commenced with the death of Bro. W. G. Mussell of the "Death or Glory" Lodge (17/21st Lancers) in Western Germany Province No.3.

Without bothering to take another pull at the old milch cow, Grand Lodge, the brethren immediately set up a fund in an effort not only to relieve the widow and child, but to establish them in life if that were possible.

Every lodge in Germany, Belgium, Trieste and Austria was asked to help and the response was so near an epic that the story ought to be told in full, and the best person to give the story point is the one who eventually had the privilege of handing a cheque for £270 to the widow.

That person was Bro. Ben Witcher, and here, in his own words, is the story:

Monday, December 21st, 1953. A telephone call from Bro. George Smith, Grand Secretary of England, asking if I would deliver a cheque of £270 which had been collected by the

Lodges in Western Germany for the widow of one of their brothers, Bro. Mussell of the Death or Glory Lodge. I said I would be pleased to do this for them and the Grand Lodge of England. The Grand Secretary said he would express the cheque and letters relating thereto. I received the cheque on Tuesday evening, and on Wednesday evening I set out to do the job I had undertaken.

The place was a village by the name of Oare on Salisbury Plain about 32 miles from Bath. I set off in my old car and after leaving Devizes had to find my way through narrow and winding lanes until the village was reached. The house I had to find was called Box Cottage, so I went to the only pub in the village to make enquiries.

In a chat with the landlord I found that Box Cottage was not very far away and he gave me directions for finding it, but of course the village of Oare being only about 300 inhabitants, very scattered, and the night dark as pitch, it was not quite as easy as the landlord had explained.

As I was making my way round in the darkness, I heard the village choir singing carols, and the words of the First Noel came clearly to me.

They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the East beyond them afar,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.

which made me think of the wonderful mission I was entrusted with. I wandered on until I found Box Cottage, and as I walked up the path to the door the carol singers were singing the last verse of Good King Wenceslas:

Therefore Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now do bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

As I knocked at the door a big lump came to my throat. The door of Box Cottage opened and there stood a dear old

lady. I asked if Mrs. Kathleen Mussell lived there. She said yes, it was her daughter. I explained who I was, and was asked into the living room of a lovely little cottage, very neatly kept. The mother introduced me to her daughter and I could not but help seeing the sadness of her loss in her eyes as she greeted me. With her was her little son aged ten.

I sat in the circle by the fire and told them why I had come, that her husband and all others when they joined our Order, undertook to succour and defend a worthy brother under circumstances of difficulty or need, and that when a brother passed to the Grand Lodge above, the brothers he knew, held it their sacred duty to succour and defend those he had left behind, and on this evening the day before Christmas Eve I had come on their behalf to give her the expression of their faith. I then handed her the cheque of £270 with all good wishes for the future.

The scene in that little cottage in the country was one I shall never forget. The little boy sitting looking at me with open mouth. The mother lost for words because of the feelings she had, and the dear old granny sitting by the fire, saying softly to herself, "Such wonderful kindness I have never heard or known of before in my life. God bless all Buffs wherever they are". As we sat silent for a few moments each with our own thoughts the voices of the carol singers came in from outside singing a verse from God rest you Merry Gentlemen. The words are imprinted on me for ever:

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood,
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface,
O tidings of comfort and of joy.

and as the singing finished I looked up into the eyes of our brother's widow and saw that the look of sadness which had been there so many weeks since that fateful telegram arrived, gradually disappeared, and a look of hope and comfort came in its place. I had to talk of other things for a

few minutes, otherwise I am sure the scene would have been too much for me. We talked of her son's future, she told me she hoped to get him into the Military School at Dover. She showed me photos of her husband at his military duties, one special one showing Monty talking to him only a short time before he died. She told me her mother was widowed at the same age herself over thirty years ago, and that her mother had lived in that same cottage since she was married 49 years ago. I asked her what she thought of doing in the future. She told me that she and her husband had been looking forward to starting a poultry farm when he had finished his time with the forces, and although that dream as they had seen it had been shattered, the gift that evening from the brothers would enable and give her courage to start one on her own.

As I came from the cottage the carol singers had moved further up the village and the words came to me:

Silent night, holiest night,
Darkness flies, all is light.

I got back into my old car and headed for Bath, and the tears came into my eyes. Not tears of despair, but tears of joy that I was a member of such an Order as ours, and that I had been privileged to act on behalf of such a wonderful band of brothers as we have in our lodges with the Services in Germany.

ALBERT WHITCHER.



WELL DONE WESTERN GERMANY!

That unknown brother who first thought of opening a Lodge in the portion of Western Germany under British Occupation, for the benefit of the troops stationed there, did something for Buffaloes that will ever reflect its glory. Those who heard, at the Blackpool Convention, the sincere appeals that we should reduce the minimum age of initiation in order that our young National Servicemen could partake of the friendship and hospitality that can be experienced in a lodge of Buffaloes, we repeat, who heard, thought we were doing a social service. We were going to provide for one night in the week at least, a retreat from, or if you will, a competition to, the distractions, not always for the best, that might beset the younger men in a foreign land. Apparently, the Powers that Be, approved of our aspirations for they have seconded our efforts in every way.

The experiment has proved far more successful than our most optimistic hopes. But in another direction than the writer, for one, ever anticipated. A spirit of benevolence has somehow become engendered through each and every Lodge in the Provinces of Western Germany that should be a shining example to brethren at home of spontaneous generosity when circumstances of necessity or need are brought to notice.

Our Service Lodges, all over the world, from the time of their inception have ever been renowned for their generosity in each and every good cause but recent news from Western Germany in three cases has surprised even hardened workers in the cause of charity. In three cases of tragedy occurring to brethren or their dependants, the magnificent sum of £781 has been raised by the Provinces and administered in the Home Country by Grand Lodge on their behalf.

Bro. Charles Spencer, K.O.M., was initiated in Japan in the Commonwealth Lodge, No. 7944 on the 30th April, 1948.

He was affiliated to the Adastral 8171 and Minster 3939 Lodges of the Reading Province and to the Rhine 8233, Five Star 8694, Border 8704 and William K. Johnson 8696 Lodges of the Western Germany No. 2 Province. Bro. Spencer passed away very suddenly on the 5th October last, leaving a widow and three children, on whose behalf the Adastral Lodge have submitted an application for a Special Grant. In the meanwhile, the sum of £250 has been raised by donations from all brethren in Western Germany and this was handed to Mrs. Spencer on their behalf by Bro. J. H. Mumford, a Past Grand Primo, who writes; Mrs. Spencer is a plucky little woman and was much moved by the gift. She intends to write the lads in Germany but hopes the gift will get a mention in the Journal so that nobody will think they have been missed. Mrs. Spencer is wisely investing the money in the Post Office Savings Bank to help her face the future and I feel, by being privileged to hand over the gift to have taken part, however small, in assisting the Service brethren in building up a living brotherhood.

It must also be added that, acting on Grand Lodge advice, Mrs. Spencer made application for a N.A. allowance and has been awarded £1-0-6 per week as a supplement to her Widow's Pension and Family Allowances, totalling £3-14-6 per week which is her only income.



Brother Henry Marsh was initiated on the 15th November 1954 in the William K. Johnson Lodge 8696 again of Western Germany No. 2. Bro. Marsh, a Sergeant in R.E.M.E., was posted East and died on board a troopship on the 7th March 1955 leaving a widow and two young children, John aged 5 and Robert aged 2.

Mrs. Marsh was of Dutch birth and during the posting, she had been accommodated at an Army Hostel in Blackpool with her two children. Meanwhile, on receipt of the news of the extremely sudden death of Bro. Marsh, the lads of Western Germany collected the sum of £245 for the widow but when the time came for handing over the cheque, which duty was to be undertaken by the Blackpool Province, it was found that she had gone and left no forwarding address. Grand Lodge set about tracing the lady and though the O.C. REME Records was helpful, the Ministry of Pensions were not so. However, enquiries were also set afoot in Germany and finally it was ascertained that, whilst Mrs. Marsh had found a home with her husband's people in South East London, she had had to consign her children to the care of her own family in Holland.

A conscientious brother visited her and reported her circumstances for the benefit of the Brethren in Germany. He reported: Mrs. Marsh is in receipt of a widows pension of three guineas a week and pays £1-0-1 for her board and lodging with her husband's relations.

She will be able, by means of the generous gift, to fetch her children in the new year to England for she dearly hopes to have them educated here. She hopes to be able to obtain work through the kind offices of the Dutch Embassy. Although there is no actual need at the present, it would be advisable to keep an eye on the case.

The third and last case concerns a small dependent of one of our Brethren in Western Germany, Peter Howard who is only five was going blind and was examined by many specialists and at last one German Ophthalmic Surgeon was found who would operate in the hope of saving the lad's sight. Though one eye was too far gone, the operation on

the other was successful and the sight of that, at least, has been saved. But the bills had to be met and when all is said and done the lad will start life under a handicap.

So once again Western Germany lads opened a fund and “as usual” as our reporter says, the brethren rallied round in a splendid manner and £236 was quickly collected. Thirty six pounds of this was given to the boy's parents for the bills to be paid and the balance of two hundred pounds was remitted to England with the request that the money be invested in the Post Office Savings Bank with the proviso that no withdrawal can be made without the sanction of the parent. Furthermore it was requested that the actual handing over of the pass book to the parents be made on the occasion of the annual Church Service of the Province, the 18th of December.



It must not be thought that because these cases have been publicised that the thousands of cases where the effort has been as great but the result not as encouraging has been forgotten.

Only YOU can say whether the promise to “succour and defend” has been real and compelling in your lives and the small manifestations as well as the big ones go to the making of a brotherhood. These stories are told to show how the work of these men and Lodges fired the imagination of those with whom they spent their buffalo lives and resulted in security for their loved ones.

That is the foundation of all benevolence and we can all make certain that we deserve well of the Order and so have faith that when the day dawns and the promise has to be applied, in our case, we have the right to expect of those from whom action is demanded that it will be “to the extent of their power”.

