

The Past Master's Jewel

The following is a drastically abridged and paraphrased version of the 1901 article "THE 47TH PROPOSITION OF THE IST BOOK OF EUCLID AS PART OF THE JEWEL OF A PAST MASTER." by Bro. Thomas Greene, from ARS QUATUOR CORONATORUM, which is the published transactions of the Lodge Quatuor Coronati, no. 2076, London, England.

I have a link to the full version if anyone is interested: <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/aqc/1901/euclid.html>

The Jewel of the Past Master in Scotland consists of the Square, the Compasses, and an Arc of a Circle:—In Ireland, the Square and Compasses with the capital "G" in the centre:—In England it is the Square with the 47th Proposition of Euclid pendent within it. We here are obviously copying the English Jewel.

The Square is introduced to the Entered Apprentice as one of the three Great Lights of Freemasonry, for the Fellowcraft it is one of the working tools of his Degree, and for the Master of the Lodge, it is his Jewel. It is probably the most important tool of a Mason, whether Operative or Speculative, for it connects and more or less includes the Level and the Plumb Rule, and it is the only tool by which the rough Ashlar can be prepared and tested. It is used to form the rude and to prove the perfect mass, and therefore it is of the utmost importance that an implement on which so much depends should be itself perfectly correct.

It is this consideration which renders the 47th Proposition so appropriate an emblem of the Past Master. The craftsman employs the square to form the rude mass; the Master to prove the work; but whose duty is it to see that this most important tool is itself correct? The most suitable person would seem to be the Past Master, he, having passed through the stages of using it and testing with it, would be most impressed with the necessity of its being correct. By what mode can he ensure the correctness of the Square? How can he ensure that the angle between the two limbs of the Square shall be truly a right or square angle?

There are many ways known to modern science whereby this can be done, but the most ancient, and perhaps the simplest, is by means of the 47th Proposition of the first book of Euclid: and therefore the Past Master, one of whose chief duties it is to test the working tools, and who is supposed to have arrived at a complete skill in Freemasonry, wears it as part of his distinguishing Jewel.

In connection with this it may be of interest to know that as the Square is the symbol of perfection with Speculative Masons, so this right angled triangle, which is almost identical, was also for the Egyptians of several thousand years ago, the standard and symbol of perfection.

In Freemasonry the Square is the Symbol of moral perfection: it is the Master's duty to apply the perfect square of right and truth to the work of the subordinates; but the far higher and greater responsibility rests on the Past Master of setting out, pointing out, and in himself exemplifying what is Right, and what is Truth.

And now to end with my typical Masonic quote: While researching the Past Master's Jewel, I came across many interesting blogs and comments online. This is a comment from one about giving out the Past Master's Jewel, and from a Brother who may want to remain anonymous, "Being a Scottish lodge we are not keen on giving jewels to IPMs that might not appear after the installation."