

Gems from the Grand Lodge Library

by Northeasterly

The Grand Lodge Library, which is situated inside the Grand Lodge offices in Adelaide Terrace, Perth, has many books all on Masonic or vaguely Masonic topics. Some are very modern, some are very old. Amongst these are some real gems; here are three worthy of note.

“How Hindus were Admitted into the Mysteries of Freemasonry” by P C Dutt published in 1905. A fascinating true story of the admission, through adversity and prejudice, of Prosonno Coomar Dutt, a Hindu, into Freemasonry and his rise to become Deputy District Grand Master of Bengal. The story, in the main, is told through a series of letters between the author and the Masonic authorities in London and Calcutta. The District Grand Lodge of Bengal did not feel that Hindus and Muslims were “eligible for admission into the Mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry on any ground whatsoever.” Mr Dutt wanted to become a Freemason and undaunted by his rejection, wrote to the Earl of Zetland, the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England. The opinion of the Grand Master was that there was no prohibition against membership for “any one who professed a belief in the Great Architect of Heaven and Earth and who was in any other respects worthy to be admitted into the Order.” The correspondence was started in 1863 and involves also the Grand Master of Ireland. Our hero's perseverance pays off; in 1872, Bro P C Dutt was Initiated, Passed and Raised in Anchor and Hope Lodge in Calcutta.

“Masonic Emblems and Jewels: Treasures at Freemasons' Hall London” by William Hammond published in 1917. This is a brief study of Freemasonry using the many Masonic emblems and jewels held by the UGLE Museum. In spite of the time of writing, it is a very readable book, however, the history of the Craft is only cursory. The point of this book are the illustrations, some in colour. There are some interesting illustrations of Masonic Aprons together with a discussion on the development of the modern Masonic apron. Ever wondered where the tassels on an MM apron came from – it's explained in this little gem.

“World Freemasonry: an Illustrated History” by John Hamill and R A Gilbert published in 1991. Lavishly illustrated with portraits of key figures in the history of Freemasonry, this book gives a brief introduction to the history of Freemasonry without going into too much detail. An ideal gift for a candidate for initiation, or someone interested at a superficial level in the Craft. The book does concentrate on English and British Freemasonry but there are chapters on colonial, American and European Freemasonry. Alas very little on Australian Freemasonry, but in spite of that a good read on a cold, wet winter's day.

All three books are available from the Grand Lodge library, open 9:30 am – 12:30 pm, Monday – Friday.