

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1872**

**Grand Orator
Edward E. W. McKinstry**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

Your labors in this chamber have been seasoned by the generous delight of renewing your fraternal vows. Hand in hand, eye-to-eye, and heart to heart, you have breathed those sentiments of regard and affection, without which your Order itself would be but a mockery and a snare. Nor, in the midst of this interchange of kindly greeting, have you forgotten those who are with us in the spirit, and, through the sympathy engendered of Masonic love, made partakers of this joyous scene. The expanded vision, therefore, beholds not only those actually present, but all good and true Masons within this jurisdiction, gathered in one vast assemblage, while in tones falling far beyond the feeble words I utter, is repeated the chant of DAVID the King:

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;
As the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

It is to this unity that I would speak, for, in default of this, your pretended symbols have no archetypes, your formularies are but empty words, your very antiquity a gray ruin—picturesque indeed, but furnishing no shelter for the weary and unfit for any homely use. It is this unity which illumines the interior of the Temple and feeds the sacred flame upon the altars of your sanctuary. It is therefore no part of my purpose to enter into a dissertation upon the history of Masonry, and, before entering the portal, I shall pause but a single moment to contemplate the grand old towers whose venerable exterior excites the reverential awe of every beholder.

Among all nations has been exhibited a disposition to give credit to an individual for the creation of political or legal institutions—really the development of time and circumstances. English writers have often assumed that Alfred the Great was the founder of all useful laws known to the Saxons; and, actuated by a like feeling Roman authors have attributed their corporations of builders to their typical law-giver, Numa Pompilius. In truth the origin of the *collegia*—which, for want of a better name, we may call corporations—seems lost in the mist of ages; but, what ever their origin, it is certain that, during the latter days of the republic and the more fortunate period of the empire, they contributed powerfully in propagating the Roman customs, sciences, arts, and laws.

The societies of architects, which have left throughout Europe such gigantic memorials of mediaeval art, were directly derived from the Roman *collegia fabrorum*, for the "ancient laws" of the architects, confirmed by King Athelstan, A.D. 926, (and still preserved at York), are said to agree with what is found relating to the *collegia* in the *Corpus Juris Romani*. Now, as in the societies of architects of the middle ages, moral training was combined with professional apprenticeship, nothing was more natural than that when in progress of time, such associations of practical workmen were abandoned, others "should be substituted—with objects purely speculative—which retained the working tools of the builder's art as apt emblems for enforcing the lessons of the masters. Masons claim a still more ancient origin, but, as our accounts of the discipline of the workmen on Solomon's Temple are traditionary, this is not the occasion to do more than refer to them. Indeed, it is not very material, perhaps, whether certain of our work is based upon authentic tradition or is the embodiment of an idea—serving to illustrate the steadfast loyalty of the martyr to principle. In either case, the moral is impressively rendered and the fact remains that, at a distant period, more or less remote, societies of practical operatives glided into Lodges of theoretical Masons. In either case, too, we know that our Order may claim a venerable age; we know, too, that good and great men have rendered glorious the centuries of its existence;

and we may indulge a just pride in the long line of worthies to whom we are united by a golden chain, extending away back in the past until its glittering links faintly glimmer in the sombre darkness of antiquity. But, old as our society undoubtedly is, its beginning—at least in its present form—was not antediluvian. Without underestimating the studies which have sought an obscure origin for Masonry in musty tomes and mythical legends, we may be permitted respectfully to doubt the historical accuracy of the assertion—confidently made by the learned Doctor Oliver—that our "arts and parts" were taught in the Garden of Eden. The apron of our first parents, according to the account generally received, was not an emblem of innocence; and we may reasonably suspect that the theory of the learned Doctor, in this particular, had little better foundation than that of the native historian who supposed that the Paradise must have been located in the Emerald Isle—because ADAM and EVE first began "the wearing of the green."

Yet, in certain senses. Masonry is coeval with our race. Her song is the poetry of symbolism. When, five hundred years before CHRIST, Herodotus visited the valley of the Nile, the inhabitants believed that the Pyramids—imbedded in the earth at the base, and ascending to an apex pointing heavenward—were an emblem of human life. And ever since, as before, men have sought to clothe moral truths in physical forms. Human language itself is so limited that we can express abstract ideas only by using the names of objects that can be directly grasped by the senses; and such objects have ever been so employed to aid the perceptions, move the passions, and elevate the thoughts. All art, worthy of the name, evinces this struggle to give shape to the ideal pre-existing in mental contemplation. Of this lofty ambition was born the poetry of all ages, the statuary of Phidias, the painting of Raphael, the exquisite proportions of the Parthenon, and the solemn perspective of the Gothic Cathedral. From the same high aspiration comes the drama, in which we recognize, in action, the noblest types of our race as they existed in the mind of the creative genius who called them into life. Mingled with their pious rites will be found in most nations both symbolical and dramatic representations of events in their real or supposed religious history; and it has happened that profound teachers have sought expression in dramatic art and its spectacular accessories for double truths—received in their more subtle and mystical sense only by the wiser of the disciples. Thus among the cultivated peoples of antiquity—as in Greece—there arose a class who attained to a higher philosophy than the masses, but, in fear of the polytheistic many, there was reserved for the enlightened few only, an explanation of the ceremonies of the "mysteries" and an exposure of the popular mythology. The idealistic Greek employed emblems and dramatic ceremonies as outward signs of the invisible essence; and the intelligent mason, however he may be impressed by solemn forms, never forgets that they are but the shadows—the realities being the moral lessons they suggest and teach.

Again, the soul of Masonry is benevolence. It is not necessary to believe that we are descended from the Pythagorians, or the Dionysian Architects, or from that curious sect mentioned in the book of Maccabees. Nor need we inquire what relation Masonic Lodges bear to the mystic temples of the Druids, whose humanizing influence all acknowledge; or what kindred we may claim with the Rosicrucians, whose quest for the philosopher's stone later writers have shown was really a search after the absolute *wisdom* which should turn all the baser things of life into gold.

Freemasonry pretends to no occult science or peculiar system of morality. Its principles are few and simple—commending themselves to the well disposed of every creed and nation. It entertains no mean jealousy of more modern Orders, organized for like purposes and animated by like principles. There is a bond of union between individuals and societies, engaged in the prosecution of like designs by similar means, which does not depend upon convention or a common origin. All good men throughout the world thrill with the same emotion when the telegraph announces an act of heroism or self sacrifice. The sympathies of Masons are not limited to their own number, and Masonry, therefore, is directly connected with every humane project of the past, every benevolent scheme of the future. Its spirit has been present at every convocation of good men, assembled for mutual improvement and actuated by charitable intent. From the beginning, the genius of Masonry has walked the earth—in form Apollo-like—with free hand dispensing good gifts—upon its brow a diadem in whose effulgent sheen are reflected the three great jewels—"Faith, Hope, and Charity." And "the greatest of these 's Charity," for—"If I give my body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing." Ah! if midst the dire

calamities of war and of civil strifes scarce less distressful; if in the insane struggle of modern life, where the weak goes down with rarely a helping hand from the stronger; if, in the thick of religious contests—and none feels less for those who differ from his standard than the honest but bigoted sectary—Masonry has done ought to ameliorate the condition or widen the sympathies of our race, to encourage freedom of thought or prepare the way for a diviner charity it was not established in vain! In spite of our boasted political equality, it has been said that the social classes are as widely separated, and the relations of capital and labor as inharmonious, as in other time and countries. Nay, there are those who believe that the employment of superior mental capacity, or of what is called education, for purposes merely selfish is as unjust as the use of the brute force which among savages seeks only its own gratification. It is the fashion to speak slightly of those who have sought a path out of the destructive competition of our day. The vile imaginings of the worst enemies of reform, those who have made its cry a pretence and have proposed only robbery as a change for the economic evils which surround us, have postponed the solution of the social problem to an indefinite future. But the day will come when the question must be met and answered. Meanwhile, let the Republic of Plato and the Utopia of Sir Thomas Browne be regarded as the idle dreams of morbid enthusiasm. Let the labors of St. Simon and Fourier be ranked with the unhallowed schemes of madmen, who would destroy the rights of property and remove every motive to individual industry and self-denial. Meanwhile, too, the optimist may hope that men's eyes will be opened say by the wonderful success of the co-operative societies in Great Britain, or by an exhibition of the profitable results, moral and monetary of such establishments as the *familistere* of M. Godin in France. Let him let this optimist satisfy the laborer, if he can, that the way to fight combinations is to combine, and that to struggle with corporation's people must incorporate. Let him impress upon the masses the great lesson of co-operation.

Freemasonry does not interfere with the march of events. It entertains no ambitious aim to overthrow the existing relations of society. It is its province to allay the evil passions which those relations oftentimes arouse, and to provide an asylum where shall obtain a real equality and a kindly intercourse, untrammelled by the conventional distinctions of caste and undisturbed by the jarring contact of diverse political or religious opinions.

But, since Masons admit that their principles exist outside of the Order and ore tend to no especial discovery in morals or science-why Masonry at all» There are those who object that such organizations tend to narrow the sympathies and impede the more generous impulses. To such an one we may say-" Friend, you may join us provided you don't get blackballed; and, then, if you pay up your dues and discharge your other duties to us, there is nothing in our constitution or by-laws to prevent you from giving away, on the outside, just as much as may be demanded by the generous impulses of your noble heart." The professed philanthropist is too apt to select a distant object. Mrs. Jellaby closed her eyes to the discomforts of her own home and the sufferings of her own children, but employed her circle " in manufacturing red flannels for the inhabitants of tropical Africa. Benevolence is fine gold and like gold, may be beaten out to extreme tenuity. Charity begins-at home, and the discipline of such associations as this is an excellent school for the discharge of our duties to the community and to the world at large. We must begin with those with whom we are more intimately connected not wait to inaugurate a moral revolution, or save a whole people.

Where was public virtue found;
Where private was not? Can he love the whole
Who loves not part? He be a nation's friend
Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there '
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause, '
Who slight the charities for whose dear sake
That country, if at all, must be beloved?

Masonry does not narrow the sympathies, but it should concentrate the action of the brethren. Combination renders the action of individuals effective; combination is praiseworthy if formed for good purposes. Are the objects of Masonry praise-worthy? " By their fruits ye shall know them." Ask the prostate invalid watched and cared for by an attentive brotherhood. Ask the

friends of him whose last hours were soothed by their solicitude, and—nothing having been omitted for the living—whose remains have been interred with decent solemnity. How numberless the benefits conferred which the world can never know, because we are .taught that the poverty of a worthy brother is his secret, not ours! How much was done by Masonry to alleviate the sufferings and calm the fierce passions of the late civil war in our own beloved country! How much in the Franco-German war! How much in the long series of bloody struggles which make up human history! Will you pardon me if I descend to a personal incident—one of innumerable events that illustrate the beneficent influence of our principles! A young soldier of the Revolution, in whose veins flowed the blood which circulates through my own, was wounded in battle. Captive and bound to a tree, he was about to undergo the extremes! torture which the Indians, the allies of the British, could inflict, when, at a signal, the leader of the barbarous band rushed between the exulting savages and their victim, and, at much personal risk, saved and preserved the prisoner from further harm. William L. Stone, in his " Life of Joseph Brandt-Thayendenegen," closes his account of this transaction in these words:

Brandt never visited the North River after the Revolution without spending a few days with Colonel —— ; and, on the occasion of his last visit, about the year 1805, in company with his friend, who, like himself, was a member of the brotherhood, he visited the Freemasons' Lodge in the city of Hudson, where his presence attracted great attention."

Thus the man who is generally supposed to have retained, beneath the polish of the English gentleman, the fiendish blood-lust of the savage—of whom CAMPBELL makes one of his characters, in "Gertrude of Wyoming," say—

Accursed Brandt! he left, of all my tribe,
Nor man, nor child, no thing of living birth;
No! not the dog that watched my household hearth
Escaped that night of blood upon our plains;
All perished! I alone am left on earth.
The mammoth conies, the foe, the monster Brandt,
With all his howling, desolating band—

This Indian, in the hour of triumph, remembered his Masonic vow; restrained his followers, intent upon human sacrifice; and made his enemy his steadfast friend.

It is true that, if all men possessed the virtues which it is the object of Masonry to inspire, there would be no need of Masonry. As our society had a beginning, so it will end when its purpose is accomplished. When Religion shall have regenerated the race, her humble handmaidens will have ceased their office. The close of the grand drama, whose opening scene was in the Garden of Eden, shall be, perhaps, another Paradise. All history will culminate in the Universal Brotherhood. When men shall be governed by the Golden Rule—" Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you;" when virtue shall cement the race; when the world shall approximate to that condition—there will be as little use for Masonry as for government or many other human institutions.

Alas! when we see the fell genius of War and his dread ministers, Pain and Cruelty, ravaging the earth ; when we see gaunt Greed eating the substance of the poor, we are tempted to exclaim—" How long—how long ?"

Yet, brethren, we cling to our belief in the destinies of the race. Through the triumphs of the Mechanic Arts; through the multifarious channels of Commerce; by the rapid and continuous inter-communication of the nations; by the mutual interests of men and peoples, and even by their desire of selfish aggrandizement; through the unintentional efforts of the worst, as well as by the conscious labors of the best of men; by thousand means—the most powerful perhaps least noticed— shall fraternal love be spread abroad, and the members of a common race be elevated in their thoughts, aspirations, lives. The sword shall be beaten into a pruning hook and gentle Charity find a refuge and home among men.

All crimes shall cease, and ancient frauds shall fail,
Returning Justice lift aloft her scale,
Peace o'er the world her olive wand extend,

And white-robed Innocence from Heaven descend.

Then shall Freemasonry have ended or been merged in something better; for the whole world shall have become one Grand Lodge, presided over by Wisdom, and regulated by the twin spirits, Conciliation and Forbearance.