

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
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**Grand Orator
Henry Huntley Haight**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

I cannot begin my address, in justice to myself and to you, without a truthful statement by way of apology. After having excused myself verbally and in writing from the fulfillment of this duty, considering it impossible, in the midst of distracting cares and engrossing business, to devote any time to its discharge, it was only yester-day morning, upon being informed by the Most Worshipful Grand Master that no excuse would be received and that a lame performance would be accepted rather than none, that I seriously contemplated making my appearance before you in this capacity. When you consider therefore that I am here under this mandate, with no such leisure as I would have desired to prepare an address, you will doubtless, in the true spirit of the fraternity, accept the will for the deed and be less disposed to criticise.

It has always been a favorite maxim of mine that no one should open his mouth in public except to say, or at least to endeavor to say, something tending in some way to the permanent good of his auditory. To communicate or recall some interesting fact of science or history,—to develop and impress some valuable principle of government, of morals, or of religion—to afford, if possible, some aid to such as are inclined to pursue the higher and nobler ends of existence,—these seem to be the legitimate purposes of public speaking. There seems to be a peculiar responsibility in this regard resting upon those who are now and here on these shores laying the foundations of what will be one of the greatest empires that ever rose under human hands, and that will exhibit, we hope and trust, one of the grandest and most beneficent developments of either Hebrew or Christian civilization. Let any man cast his eye forward a few short years—one quarter of a century—about the time that has already elapsed since the discovery of gold in this State. Consider the effect of the completion of four lines of railroad across the continent, the great increase of population in the United States, the accelerating volume of European immigration, our growing commercial relations with Eastern Asia, the resistless progress of new ideas in China and Japan, and the vast undeveloped resources of those nations for commerce and material contributions to the wealth of the world, especially in iron and coal—and who can exaggerate the future of this coast or measure accurately the changes of even one short period of twenty-five years? Who can estimate the tremendous influence upon the intellect of China and Japan which must be exerted by this close contact with the most active, free, and enterprising people of modern times?

The theme I have chosen, however, for some random observations before this august assemblage, is not the present or the future, but the past. The idea of antiquity is naturally suggested by one of the oldest of human organizations, and this idea I will briefly attempt to develop. In the principal libraries of the world are stored the chronicles of by-gone ages, the results of the experience of mankind in ancient times, the record of the world's progress in the childhood and youth of the race, and of those deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice the value of which, as a perpetual example, are above all estimation. The love of things that are old, the passion for the antique, the charm of antiquity, the fascination which the chronicles of the olden times possess, are felt by most of us, and yet there are many who, if called upon, could hardly, without reflection, account fully for the influence which these feelings exert.

If a man were to sit down in a prosaic spirit and undertake to analyze this feeling, to discuss it logically, and to inquire into the rationale of it, he might easily make out something of a case against it, and against himself for cherishing it. That there is in it much of what we term sentiment, and sometimes not a little affectation, may be conceded. A blind reverence for antiquity is not rational. The single quality of age has in it nothing specially admirable or attractive, apart from other elements. In reasoning philosophically upon the subject it might be discovered that much of our reverence for the past is mere sentimentalism, and not the sober deduction of intelligent

reflection. If we were to be perfectly frank we might find ourselves compelled to confess that many of our ideas of the past are about as true to life as the castles in the air which boarding-school girls and college boys construct and people with the heroes and heroines of fancy.

There are two classes of people,—one class conservative in morals, in religion, in politics, attached to the settled order of things, to established usage and precedent, to time-honored institutions, reverencing the works, the opinions and the memories of their fathers, venerating the wisdom of the past, and distrustful of experiment and change—and there is another class which is restless of the old order of things, radical in all things, progressive, sometimes perhaps more than is prudent, fond of experiment, and strongly inclined to pervert the apostolic injunction and try all things without holding fast to anything, good or bad. But even the latter class, while sometimes inclined to be destructive in government and to undervalue the lessons of experience, is not altogether without the universal love for antiquity.

In the genuine antiquarian this passion manifests itself in an exaggerated degree. To him the most worthless trifle that has gained a few centuries of age becomes priceless. A coin, a vessel or implement, one or two thousand years old, possesses to him a value which money could not measure. He regards with veneration the granite cliffs upon which have beaten the storms of centuries, and which have seen the birth and death of unnumbered generations. Even in this democratic country and in our modern' mushroom society, there is not lacking the same peculiarity. Indeed, it is a familiar principle that men admire "most that of which they possess least. The timid man has an intense admiration for physical courage. A lady not endowed with personal charms thinks that her felicity would be complete if she had personal beauty. The short man would like to be tall, and the tall man short. The blind man thinks nothing necessary to happiness but sight, and the poor man thinks that with wealth he would be translated at once into an earthly paradise. So, in a democratic country, where there are no hereditary distinctions of class and no privileged aristocracy, men are peculiarly proud of tracing their lineage back to some one who has been a lord, duke, or chief in the old world, or to some one who has been greatly and honorably distinguished either in arms or in literature or science. This may not be altogether without reason in some degree, but, without debating whether it has or has not an element of reason in it, there is no doubt that it exemplifies Just the feeling to which I have referred.

It is doubtful whether there is anywhere a greater reverence for rank, or a stronger propensity to run after and gaze on those who hold high positions, than in this republican country of ours, where we hold every man of good character to be the political and social equal of every other man, and where we have so much to say about our rulers being the mere servants or agents of the people.

This general propensity of mankind to covet most that of which they have least may in part account for the marked reverence of the public in our new and recently organized communities for the antique and quaint civilization of the olden time. We look back at the historic characters of by-gone ages, and, through the mists of lapsed centuries, the figures which we see moving in battle on sea and land, those wielding the pen as well as those wielding the sword, swell to gigantic proportions like a human figure on the crest of a distant mountain, which assumes a superhuman size in the gathering twilight when thrown into relief against the evening sky.

Our idea of many of the old English kings is of men of giant proportions, the incarnation of physical health and strength, hewing their way through the ranks of the enemy with great two-handed swords, and lopping off heads and limbs with as little effort as the skillful mower swings the scythe. It must be admitted that there seems to be a blunt directness of purpose about the characters of feudal times, an apparent absence of artifice and disguise, which is in contrast with the small self-seeking of which we see so much in modern characters. Much of this, however, is only apparent.

History deals with great characters, with leading facts, and fundamental principles. It records the public acts of great men and the prominent features of great epochs. It has little or nothing to do with the details of private life, the foibles, weaknesses, and small vices of its characters, or the daily uninteresting routine of household life and business cares and duties. It has to do with national rather than individual concerns. If it descended to the unromantic facts of daily life, we might perhaps discover as much that is artificial, hollow, and *blas'è* in the ancients as in the painted and gilded specimens of modern fashionable society. The popular idea, however, of the

olden time, and of the men and women of that time, is that the world was then fresh and young, and that mankind partook of the unaffected youth and freshness of civilization in its early dawn. Our view of the scenes and characters of past ages is mellowed by time; the minor deformities are lost to sight; the grand features alone are visible in all the enchantment of distance; and who would have the illusion dispelled? Who would, by approaching too near to the picture, have revealed to his eye the excrescences, deformities, and coarse lines which, from a better standpoint, blend into harmony and beauty of color and by their strange fascinations afford us perpetual delight?

Man has a two-fold nature—physical and spiritual. There is a universal admiration for physical perfection, even among the most cultivated and intellectual. The criterion of excellence and the test of superiority, in feudal times, was a somewhat different one from that which is recognized in modern days. Then, bodily strength, skill in the use of weapons, and personal prowess gave a man his pre-eminence over the mass. The physical plays a much less important part in modern times. The present is an age of intellectual triumphs. The knights of the days of chivalry were often unable to write their own names. At the present day the ascendancy of mind is recognized, but we moderns may be in as great danger of neglecting the body as our ancestors were of neglecting mental culture.

If we were asked what we admire most about the men of feudal times, probably we would specify their perfection in physical exercises, their feats of arms, and their personal strength and agility. The human form was developed by severe bodily exercise and training, by a life in the open air, before the era of airtight stoves, hot-air furnaces, fancy dances at midnight, French cookery, tight lacing, tobacco and drugged liquor. It is extremely doubtful whether, in the olden time, whatever other excesses were committed, any considerable number of sane young ladies in respectable society could be found to start at ten o'clock at night to an entertainment, dance all night, eat a supper after midnight, and return home to bed about sunrise. Of all social customs, this practice of turning night into day seems most senseless and injurious.

Man has his various periods of physical development, from helpless infancy, through buoyant youth and the vigor of manhood, to the infirmities and decay of old age. In this regard there is a singular parallel between national and individual life. All great nations, like men, have their periods of infancy and youth, of maturity and decrepitude. The great empires of ancient times have furnished many striking examples of this, and in the middle ages and in modern times such instances have not been wanting. Nations and races, like individuals, have had their origin, their growth and culmination, their decline and fall. Success has commonly paralyzed their energies, wealth and luxury enfeebled and enervated, and excessive effort exhausted their strength, and the children, forgetting the virtues and losing the qualities of their ancestors, when they have fallen, have fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again. It remains to be seen whether nations at the present day, with the regenerating power of a purer religious faith, will travel the same road so often trod in by-gone ages.

In reflecting, however, upon the strange parallel between national and individual existence, the question has suggested itself to my mind whether the analogy could not be carried farther, and whether, like individuals and nations, the human race might not have its youth, its maturity, and its old age. The world seems to us to have been fresh and young as we look back through the successive periods of the middle ages, the invasions of the Turks and Saracens, the commencement of the Christian era, the Roman, Grecian, Assyrian, Hebrew, and Egyptian Empires, and on back through patriarchal times to the antediluvian epoch. Then the world was indeed young. Then a man was in the vigor of youth at two hundred and fifty and took to himself wives perhaps up to four hundred or five hundred years of age, retiring from active business probably at the age of six, or seven, or eight hundred years, and at his death having several thousand lineal descendants to go to his funeral. Those were the days of the world's infancy, the childhood of the human race. There were giants in those days; mighty men and men of renown; giants not only in limb and stature, but in intellect and heart.

It can hardly be said that the human race has improved physically since the period when Tubal Cain applied his giant strength and practiced skill to working in brass and iron, and when, among a race of giants, Nimrod stands out with such conspicuous prowess as a mighty hunter and warrior; or even since the days when the great master builder, Hiram, assisted King Solomon

to rear the exquisite and majestic proportions of that peerless structure which crowned, as with a diadem of glory, the sacred summit of Mount Moriah.

Who knows but that, when the opening flower of modern civilization has received its complete development, the decadence of the human race will begin. We live in an eventful period—an age in many things unprecedented—an age of wonderful discoveries and inventions, of rapid interchange of thoughts and ideas by means of printing presses, of steam and lightning on land and sea—an age of vast accumulation " of wealth, when mother earth seems to have suddenly resolved to disburse in prodigal generosity her long hoarded treasures of silver and gold—an age of absolute freedom, when, after centuries of despotism, mankind seems to be just learning the lesson that government is needed, not to coerce opinions or to put a people in leading strings, but to secure the most unrestricted freedom of action consistent with those obligations which are reciprocally binding in civilized society.

But, shall we confess it? We also live in an age of venality when, instead of other tyranny, we seem to be subjected to a tyranny of money—when every other passion is swallowed up by a consuming thirst for gold—When a tide of corruption seems to be submerging honor and patriotism in a filthy flood—when legalized extortion visits the home of honest industry, and luxury, extravagance, and vice are sapping the foundations of public and private morality. Such influences and causes have heretofore portended the decay and downfall of nations, and to counteract them will require all the combined effort of all good men, the daily practice and exemplification of those virtues which Masonry is designed to inculcate and enforce, and the careful religious training of the young at the fireside in childhood. The lack of this last is a fatal one, for which nothing else can atone.

A contrast between the civilization of the olden time and of the present day shows wonderful progress in invention and discovery. Going back to the middle ages, what did mankind lack which they now possess? Think that photography is but little more than thirty years old—the electro-magnetic telegraph about the same. Fifty years ago we had no railroads—one hundred years ago no steamboats. The steam engine is but little more than one hundred years old. Seventy-five years ago no town was lighted with gas. The discovery of anthracite coal dates back only just before the American Revolution, and in the olden time the Parliaments of Great Britain, by repeated statutes, made it a criminal offense to burn bituminous coal, on the ground that the smoke was injurious to health. A house with glass windows, in the Middle Ages, was something very rare and exceptionally magnificent. No morning or evening newspaper gave news-intelligence simultaneously from Europe, Asia, and America. Then no printed books existed, and libraries were simply collections of manuscripts. Less than four hundred years ago the almost universal opinion was that the world was flat and included only the Eastern Hemisphere. Less than three hundred years ago the sun was supposed to revolve around the earth, and Galileo narrowly escaped being made a bonfire of by suggesting that this was a mistake. It is but a little more than a hundred years since the discovery of the substance commonly called India rubber, and guttapercha was unknown, except by the Malays, until about thirty-five years ago. The extensive petroleum and coal-oil discoveries are still more recent. Our European ancestors knew nothing of coffee until the seventeenth century, and tea, "the cup that cheers but not inebriates," was unknown to them until some years after the Mayflower made Plymouth Bock immortal.

On the other hand, in feudal times the human family had not begun to ornament the floors of public conveyances with the expectoration of tobacco juice. The seductive poison of a fragrant cigar never assailed with its temptations ambitious young men of immature years in the days of chivalry, and never planted in their physical systems the seeds of paralysis and cancer. The contrast between the criminal jurisprudence of the olden time and that of the present day would be interesting. The difference between hanging a man for larceny and allowing the most atrocious murders to go unpunished is a strong, but hardly an unfair, statement of this contrast. Among the Romans a man was beaten to death with clubs for slander, and a false witness thrown headlong from the Capitol. As late as the beginning of this century, one hundred and sixty different offenses were punished with death in England, among which we're stealing above twelve pence, breaking down dikes of fishponds, & etc,

The contrast in government and political condition is as great as in criminal law. Our admiration for antiquity is not much enhanced by the spectacle of men and women roasted at the stake for their religious opinions—their ears cropped off, their noses slit, their cheeks branded

with a hot iron, and their bodies mutilated in various ways for the crime of being faithful to their conscientious convictions upon the subject of religion. The religious tyranny of the church and the political tyranny of the monarch and nobility over the common people in past ages must forever excite the amazement and detestation of posterity.

The world has progressed and is progressing, but, notwithstanding our consciousness of this, we still look back with veneration and pride to the times of our ancestors, and our interest deepens in proportion as they recede into the twilight of antiquity. The battlegrounds of Saratoga, Bunker Hill, Monmouth, King's Mountain, and the Cowpens, possess a greater fascination to us than those of Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and Fort Donelson, and Bannockburn and Flodden are localities far more interesting than Leipsic or Waterloo.

The tendency to venerate ancient institutions is doubtless one of the chief attractions of Masonry. It is not a plant of yesterday, but a tree whose mossy trunk and giant growth speak to, us of past ages. Kings have participated in its ceremonies, and men greater than Kings have adorned its annals. If, however, its only merit was age its destiny would be decay. Age alone contains no principle of immortality, and if Masonry had nothing but its ancient origin to recommend it, there would be no sound reason to expect that it would survive, much less that it would grow. Those are talismanic words implied in its organization,—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,—terms often elsewhere grossly abused, but in the Order of Free and Accepted Masons full of real and practical significance, because one of its first lessons is resistance to despotism, both ecclesiastical and civil; and the instructive antagonism between Masonry and ecclesiasticism is the most emphatic testimony to the spirit of personal LIBERTY which is one of the distinguishing traits of the Order. EQUALITY— not by lowering, but by elevating to a common platform, where all meet on the level with equal rights and duties, and equal claims to mutual respect, if faithful to the obligations voluntarily assumed. FRATERNITY—in whose bonds the most ancient and inveterate prejudices are melted in the solvent of brotherly intercourse, and the heirs of the most ancient civilization join hands with the missionaries of the youngest, and Hebrew and Gentile, Celt and Saxon, men of the most diverse origin and nationality, meet in the interchange of kindly offices and furnish some evidence of the possibility of the attainment of a true brotherhood of man.

These are grand lessons—impressively taught by its origin and history, but they are not all. It teaches the force of associated action, the inestimable value of union in a good cause, the superiority of harmony over discord, and the power of combined benevolence. It furnishes a noble and inspiring lesson of the worth and dignity of labor, because in the toil of operative masonry which reared in the middle ages some of the grandest edifices ever conceived by human genius, and in the migration of architects and builders from place to place, where such works were to be executed, the Order of Free and Accepted Masons had its growth and development, if not its origin, and the whole spirit of its precepts and ceremonies is to exalt and dignify that intelligent labor which has adorned all civilized lands with monuments of its skill only less majestic and enduring than the granite monuments reared in the beginning by the hand of the Great Architect and Father of all— devout reverence for whose Being and filial trust in whose Providence is taught from first to last in every stage and degree of progress in the mysteries of the Craft.

Like all human institutions, while it has these and other uses it is not absolutely exempt from abuse. Its obligations do not release any man from his duties of citizenship, nor, if properly regarded, can they conflict with those duties to any extent whatever. A judge on the bench deciding causes—a juror in the jury box, sworn to look only at the law and the evidence—a witness on the witness stand, pledged to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth—a voter bound upon his honor and conscience to cast his ballot for the most worthy candidate for his suffrage—will find no embarrassment in the discharge of those high duties from any Masonic obligation; nor will any intelligent Mason of any creed find in Masonry a substitute for or aught antagonistic to religious faith. It is only in its perversion that these things could ever be found. Its true spirit is to incite to greater fidelity in the discharge of every duty, religious, political, and social, and thereby to aid in establishing upon more lasting foundations that noble edifice of civil and religious liberty, reared by the toil and sacrifices of our fathers, which it devolves upon us to preserve and transmit to our posterity.