

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1878**

**Grand Orator
Thomas Guard**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

I am but a novice in Masonry, for "I am but of yesterday" as to my membership, compared with many of the sage and venerable brethren before me. This will plead for me should I fail in my endeavor to express a few of my convictions regarding our honorable fraternity. But, what I lack in age of membership, may be made up by fullness of youthful fervor and ardent admiration of the system into whose mysteries I have had the honor of initiation. To me it has all the fascination of novelty, and in me there burns all the enthusiasm of a first love. From the freshness of my o ns I give utterance to thoughts of the hour.

Our system has many elements of attraction, and seems to me to have incorporated not a few principles fitted to impart stability and guarantee a noble immortality.

I. It potently appeals to us by its antiquity. We are so constituted by our Creator as to be susceptible of such an appeal. Vastness of duration gratifies our sense of the sublime, inspires us with awe, lifts us into a mood of reverence, chastens and subdues the spirit. Thus the ocean touches us, for it is old. Navies have swept its waters and commerce plowed its billows; but it is older than the white-winged ships of Tarshish or the men of war that roamed amidst the Isles of Greece, at once repellers of the Persian tyrant and defenders of their own most sacred liberties. Old! Who knows when it lay in the hollow of God's hand, even as a dew-drop within a rose-bud, until He had carved for it a dwelling-place in earth's deep bosom, and there set it to be the everlasting mirror of His own infinitude? Its age overpowers and spellbinds us. But even this aged thing is as nothing compared with His age who is the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and in whom we place our trust. He is the Ancient of days. When not a billow heaved, not a wild bird sang, not an ancient hill kissed the heavens; when not a ray of light had traveled, not a planet wheeled, not a sun burned; when not a seraph had waved his pinion, or, with the wing wherewith he swept into the presence of His Maker, veiled his face—then was He, the All-Sufficient, the I Am; and, in His Nature, the very principles which form the essence and strength of our ancient Order—truth, justice, love, dwelt; having neither beginning of day, nor end of life. Our principles are as old as God.

And, going back to the distinguished persons of whom we speak as the historic found-era of our Order, through what centuries are we borne; on what ruins of empires look we down. Dynasties blotted out; seats of kingdoms transferred from oriental to western capitals, from southern to temperate zones; the Caesars no more; the Ptolemies forgotten; the teachers, artists, poets, orators, statesmen of Greece, but a name and a memory. Bat in us there glows the fire of an unwasted youth. We, after the rush of centuries, renew our youth like the eagle! We, despite the perils and trials and slanders of foes, secular and spiritual, ask our enemies to trace a wrinkle upon our brow, or pluck a gray hair from our exuberant locks. We, like Israel's great leader, after the lapse of near three thousand years, move forth, bathed in the dew of the morning, with eye undimmed, with form erect, with natural strength unabated, destined to run a race with time, and prove, in our principles, heirs of a radiant and rapturous immortality.

II. It appeals t» us by the element of the mysterious. This susceptibility of our nature is incessantly touched, from the moment of our entrance upon life. We enter at birth a universe in which wonder is excited, curiosity elicited, investigation challenged, at every step of our progress from the cradle to the tomb. Every leaf encloses a mystery, every atom is a world, and every insect an abyss of wonders. The ceaseless play of life within me, the genesis of a thought, the growth of a habit, the formation of character,—a mystery, over which a PLATO bends with fervent gaze, and in whose mazes a LOCKE may well lose his way. And this mysteriousness, investing all things, is no mean stimulant in the breast and brain of traveler and explorer,—of scholar poring over dusty scroll,—of scientist, as he follows the comet,—as he deciphers the fossilography of the

hoary hills,—as he "fixes a sunbeam," and cross questions it by his spectrum,—as he heaves the lead in the ethereal waters of his unseen spirit; or as, with BANCROFT, he explores the sepulchral ruins of the tribes that once lived and roamed, hunted, fought, and died, when our forefathers worshiped THOR, or burned incense at the shrine of WODEN.

Man is "Nature's Priest," and as he pursues his researches he is but lifting, fold after fold, the veils suspended in Nature's temple; and each parted veil at once admits him within a light of revelation more startling and enravishing, and gives his clarified eye to look upon another curtain of mystery, behind which lark secrets yet more subtle,—wonders still more entrancing. The greater the mysteries solved the profounder is the conviction that these are but transparencies compared with the thicker curtains that yet shill dare the trembling fingers to lift or part them. No one is so alive to the fact of mystery as the man most wealthy in his acquisition of the lore of physics and of metaphysics. And yet the mystery is not because of scantiness, but because of superfluity of the element. "It is dark with excess of light."

The light of morning revealing, after a starless night of tempest, while it dissolves the mystery of the gloom, spreads before and around me new mysteries: a mystery in every pebble and in every plant; in every insect's instinct and in every wild bird's plumage; in every snow-flake and in every gem; in every laughing, leaping school-boy's spirit; and in every venerable politician who assures us that he has expended the vitality of his brain and being in self-sacrificing service for his country's weal. Mystery! mystery! It is everywhere; and when, by dying, we shall pass "within the veil," while upon much, if not all, the mystery of this life explanatory light shall fall—never as then shall the soul apprehend the Inscrutability of being. Then, as for the first time, shall the marvels of existence move the fountain of the great deep of our nature, and bear us away and away for aye in effort to solve, discover, and explore. This is one of the charms of the life that now is; it shall be no less an element in the felicity of the life that is to come.

Our Order gratifies and provides for the healthy play of our nature by its sublime mysteries. And these are not mysteries of iniquity. Slandorous libels have been uttered respecting them, I know. They are but the spiteful, the malignant fabrications of sanguinary fanatics or of a depraved priesthood. With ignoble deeds of darkness we have no sympathy. Of what we do, of what we teach, we fear not any criticism. Honor is sacred; reputation is inviolably shielded; and every brother can exclaim, "I dare do all that may become a man!"

Who can object to or oppose such a system as ours? Is he a moralist? Then here may he learn the purest ethics and practice the most manly virtues. Is he a pat-riot? Then here may he be helped in the culture of those principles which uphold government, reverence law, and promote that righteousness which exalts a nation. Is he a philanthropist? Then we can assure him that no less profoundly than he do we believe that pure Masonry, and undefiled before God the Father, is this—that we visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and keep ourselves unspotted in the world. Is he an antiquarian? Then here are hoary annals for his study and antique customs for his scrutiny. Is he a poet? Then here are symbols for his fancy, and sublimities for his imagination. Is he a presbyter or priest? Then we tell him that religion shall find in us one of her most useful auxiliaries, one of her moat fair and generous handmaidens, and that the theology which he inculcates we live to embody. We, as he, believe in one God; as he, in one great light of conduct, the Holy Bible; as he, in one great comfort and help in all seasons of trial, peril, woe,—even prayer; and as, he, anticipate another and a better world.

III. It appeals to us as made for self-government. At an early stage we are re-minded of the duty of self-rule. The Compass is the impressive symbol of this capability of our nature. This is manhood. What is manhood without self-rule? Our nature is placed in our own care, subject to our own control, at the will of our own capacity of self-disposal. What we shall make of ourselves depends upon self-government. To what extent we shall develop our being depends upon self-government. Whether our career shall be one of beauty and of blessedness, or one of meanness and of malediction, depends upon self-government. Self-government restrains, but, by restraining, conserves—by restraining, intensifies. This makes man noble. Matter, the servant of mind; instinct, the servant of reason; impulse, the servant of duty; pleasure, the servant of principle—aye, this is manhood, and this is to be a Mason. This is to be a Freemason. Free—there is melody in the word—there is divinity in the thought—free! freedom! This hath given eloquence to the tongue of the stammerer; this hath breathed inspiration through the heart of the prosaic and made him a poet; this hath studded the duskiest heavens of tyranny with most

lustrous orbs—the heroes of all ages; this hath impelled the chariot of human civilization ; this hath peopled the forest with those armies of the Invincibles of our race, who, rather than pawn away their birthright of liberty, dared the perils of tempest and of billow, of wildest savage and of fiercest clime ; gave up their all of home and country; bade farewell to the sepulchres of their holy dead and to the shrines of their holy faith ; that, beneath foreign skies and on virgin soil, they might lay broad and deep the basis of a new temple, within whose walls freemen should worship, think, and breathe, unharmed by priest, unawed by king: truth its only, but all-sufficient, strength ; purity its chief, but never-fading, ornament; and love, the light-bathed atmosphere in which it should repose, long as the sun and moon endure. And, as builders of that shrine and guardians of it, we Freemasons vow to practice the sublime craftsmanship of self-government; remembering that "he who striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things;" never forgetting that " greater is he who ruleth his own spirit than he who taketh a city."

And what a province of self-government is that of the tongue ! We are men, for we can speak. We can engage in a commerce of thought by language. All I have of feeling, culture, motive, by speech may be yours, to thrill with ecstasy, to inflame with rage, to pollute fancy, or to purify taste. For there is the witty tongue, with its lightning-like flashes, rapid combinations, subtle and exquisite affinities of strange extremes, eliciting at once the wonder and the admiration of all who listen. There is the eloquent tongue, moving all hearts with its pathos, instructing all understanding with its condensed wisdom, and marshaling all wills into harmony of purpose and unity of action by its impassioned pleadings. There is the tongue of the talebearer, scattering seeds of strife and sowing germs of suspicion in the hearts of trusted friends and honored brethren. There is the tongue of the false, ever weaving web work of deceit wherewith to enmesh the innocent, the unwary, and the ingenious; full of all subtlety, sophistry, or innuendo ; moving but to blight reputation ; acting but to engender an universal doubt which may fittingly force itself in the exceeding bitter cry—"All men are liars." And, there is the tongue unclean, with its filthy joke, its lewd story, its obscene double meaning; and all to win a laugh —to court a smile. Good God! what a perversion of this glory of our manhood! A man unsluicing the fountain of his filthy heart, that the fetid torrent may rush forth to carry along its desolating course corruption that shall foul the memory and stain the imagination of all through whom, as hearers, the loathsome current flows. Ah! this is enough to make the angels weep. Talk of a living, moving leper, touching but to taint, breathing but to poison the physical life of man! He is health, he is beauty, compared with him whose speech is mildew and death to all that is fair in fancy and sweet in feeling in the nature of the youthful listener. Brethren, here is a most legitimate sphere for the application of self-government. Let us renew again and again our oath and obligation to repress and put down all and every tendency to inch speech as, it indulged, insults the genius of our venerable Craft. Remember that you cannot recall your words. You might as well attempt to call back the light of morning, once it hath streamed from the fountain of the Orient; yon might as well hope to arrest the lightning, once it hath leaped from the secret place of thunder; you might as well hope with a gossamer web to stem Niagara, in its fury of resist-less rush, as to recall the word let loose by your consent. It has become one of the active energies of the universe. It is destined to immortality by the law of conservation of forces. Its history henceforth shall be one of ceaseless blessing or ceaseless curse. And, once again shall the speaker hear it as it travels round the whispering gallery of space.

IV. There is the law of having mutual help. This was one of the prime movers in the breasts of those who fashioned the framework of our fraternity. This has never been lost sight of by the master-builders of our institution. This is the cement which binds, as with the law of gravitation, the edifice of Masonry into imperishable strength. Remove that principle and the structure totters, crumbles, and becomes the very "abomination of desolation." Mutual help—it is a divine law. By it the Supreme Architect orders and upholds all things. Around us and below us and above us, we meet with it in ceaseless operation. The flowers live for the insect and the insect for the flower; the hills live for the valleys and the clouds live for the hills; the ocean lives for the dry land and the rivers of the dry land live for the ocean. Every-thing leans on and helps to bear up everything beyond, below, or above itself. The heavens lean on the earth, and the earth reflects the splendor of the heavens from its laughing valleys, its snow-capped sierras, and its ever-changing seas. Earth lives for man and man lives for the earth, to develop, defend, and decorate it by his wise and generous sovereignty o'er it. And shall not man live for his fellowman? Shall not experience

instruct, artlessness, learning enlighten ignorance? Shall not gladness dispel sorrow, and youthful might give its arm to tottering age, and affluence become the almoner of heaven to homes of penury and victims of bereavement and disaster? Thus the poverty of my brother may make me rich in goodness; the feebleness of my neighbor may make me strong in sympathy; the loneliness of my companion may make me opulent in all the social affinities or affections of my being. Mine is an altogether ampler and loftier being by so much as I live beyond myself; receive but to give; acquire but to distribute; and go for it under the impelling conviction that I am debtor to every man less happy, less cultured, less honored than myself. Let sorrow wail, I weep; let laughter clap its hands with joy, I swell the glad acclaim by laughter just as loud.

What is a man left to himself? Less than nothing and vanity; an embodiment of impotence and ignorance, crudeness and uncouthness; his powers palsied, his faculties torpid, his being a dwarfed and shriveled abortion. He is made incomplete because made for another to be his helpmate, or helpmeet; a hook without an eye; a ball without its socket; a mortise without its tenon.

Civilization is impossible without mutual help. United, man unlocks the treasures of his heart, lets loose the fountain of his fancy, wings the pinion of his reason, develops the potencies of his speech, educes the skill of his fingers, the ken of his vision, and the music which slumbers in his chords of hearing. United, he beats back the ocean or levels the Alps; from sand-hills calls into veritable existence the Queen City of the Golden Gate; and from the morasses of the lake bids a Chicago into splendid being, as by the fiat of an omnific necromancer.

No mutual benefit association are we; yet live we to prove that we are "our brother's keeper," and that only as we "bear one another's burdens" are we fulfilling the law of Masonry.

V. To me it seems a most beautiful thing that we should have as our first Great Masters those whose craft engaged them in the building of a temple. Others might have been selected. For builders of that age there were other than Solomon and his companions. But not by chance was it that the historic founders of our fraternity were men engaged in a work so God-like. Not from the midst of Masons engaged in piling pyramids wherein Egypt's despots might, as embalmed mummies slumber; not from the hosts of Masons engaged in building palaces wherein luxury and licentiousness might revel and rule—palaces, symbols of cruelty, of blood, and fraud; not from the circles of Masons employed in constructing triumphal arches beneath which conquerors laurelled with victory and sated with applause might pass—conquerors whose pastime was murder, whose hordes were minions of tyranny, whose career was devastation, and whose bloodletting sufficed to "incarnadine the ocean, making the green one red;" not from circles of men engaged in any, or in all of' labors such as these: but from Masons whose skill and toil were consecrated to a work so holy as that of building a temple for the worship of the one living and true God—as if to tell us that our Masonic life springs from religion, is nourished by religion, and must ever repose and flourish engirdled by religion, even as the worshipers within the sacred edifice on Zion's crest.

VI. And then, the Builders, the Master Masons, and Grand Masters. Who were they? They were of different nationalities; they were of different social standing. There was the Hebrew and the Phoenician; there was the Jew and the Gentile; there was the monarch and the subject; there was the opulent Solomon, and there was the needy artisan, the son of "the widow woman." Again, a beautiful symbol, or aeries of symbols. Within our fraternity nationality is unknown. Here, I, though an Anglo-Saxon, grasp the hand of a son of Abraham—I, one of the descendants of Japhet, he one of the descendants of Shem. Here, royalty sits side by side with the chief magistrate of a Republic. Here, opulence grasps the horny fist of him who wields the chisel or who drives the plow. And here, loneliness and want and sorrow find sure help and solace, for the widow's son may leave a widow and a son as well—the objects at once of our tenderest pity and our most generous benefactions.

VII. Immortality is ours. Yonder our system warrants us in looking. The acacia sprig speaks of a life that survives the grave—of a being that smiles at death's darts—of a manhood "born to the purple" of an immortal king-ship. For that, we are urged to live. From that, we are urged to gather inspiration for the life that now is. Our ranks are suffering loss by the removal thence of honored and trusted brothers. They are not lost. They still practice their sublime art in building up edifices of knowledge, wisdom, and joy, in some distant region of the Supreme Architect's domain, we shall meet them, if we be true and humble and faithful men. Aye, we shall meet them

in possession of highest Masonic honors, and within the enclasping shelter of the most perfect of Masonic workmanship; most perfect; for is it not the city which hath foundation?" Is it not a city, "foursquare," having gates north, south, east, and westward? Is not that Masonic? And we shall have our Great Light, even the Builder and Maker Himself; and there shall be no need of the light of the candle. And there shall be no temple; no temple, as there shall be no tomb; no tomb, for all shall be life; no temple, for the spanless city is itself the temple—"the house not made by hands eternal in the heavens." Within that foursquare city our brotherhood is gathering as the stream of time flows onward.

They come from the ends of the earth,
White with its aged snows;
From the bounding breast of the tropic tide,
Where the day-beam ever glows.
From the east, where first they dwelt,
From the north and the south and the west;
Where the sun puts on his robe of light,
And lays down his crown to rest.

God grant us all to meet there and answer to the roll call of the Grand Lodge of a glorified humanity.