

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1888**

**Grand Orator
Thomas Henry Laine**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

Time's pendulum has made another swing. Our Earth with her precious freight of nations, kindred, tongues and peoples, hath made another revolution around GOD'S lamp, in the heavens swung to give light, health and life to His creatures.

We too, have taken one more step towards that Lodge "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," since last we met in solemn conclave here. Through storm and sunshine "through shadow and sheen," we have walked for another year. That year has worked change on every brow and written it upon every heart. These changes, however, have for the most part been the mellowing changes of ripening character and increasing knowledge. For, of a truth, the Supreme Grand Master has not forgotten or forsaken us, but has walked with us all in loving kindness on our several stations through the year, and has brought us once again together in peace and harmony. To Him be honor, adoration and glory, forever and ever!

And now, convened in this sacred place, surrounded by the mystic symbols and emblems of our Order, and having constantly before our eyes the whole insignia of the Craft, all vocal with lessons of wisdom and beauty, the mind, intoxicated with their perfume, is both to wander from Masonry to any other subject.

For Masonry, as a theme, like unto the Holy Writings as a book, is always new, inspiring and exhaustless; a fountain forever pouring forth the pure waters of wisdom, love and truth—the true waters of the river' of life that flows from the throne of GOD. Our loved Fraternity is hoary with age, yet full of the vigor and beauty of youth, knowing no decay.

"Revolutions sweep o'er the Earth,

Like troubled visions o'er the breast of dreaming Sorrow."

Nation rises against nation, and system rises against system, in the great work of change and destruction. The world's arena is strewn with ruins, bones and blood. But, amidst these mighty scenes of passion, war and ruin, the Lodges of our Craft have stood as beacons upon the highest hills and lights in the deepest vales, offering places of shelter and repose. In those sacred precincts there has been forever taught the lesson of all lessons, that there is one Almighty Father, the Architect of all things seen and unseen—most holy and loving—in whose sight all men are brethren, equally under His protection—a LIVING GOD, who "discerneth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth to light the shadow of death," and of whom it is said, "Hell is naked before Him, destruction hath no coming."

Whence came this puissant and venerable Order? What corner of the globe can claim to be its birthplace? At what point in the tide of time came it into being?

Geographically considered, it came not into being in the frozen and sterile North Land, nor from the parched and burning equatorial regions, but in some temperate clime where the physical needs and strength of man gave him the desire and power to use the twenty-four inch gauge, the common gavel, the setting maul, the square, the plumb-line, the compass and the trowel. Not only did it originate in the temperate regions of the Earth, but at some point north of the Equator. This is apparent to the Masonic mind without learned arguments to support it; the situation of the Lodge and the location of its lights is enough—the North being the place of Masonic darkness. To narrow further the limits, we claim that it could not have been born of atheism, barbarism or ignorance. No! She bears upon her brow and in her body and spirit the unmistakable evidences of her high birth. That only hearts and minds, pure and God-fearing, laid her foundations and wrought upon her in the beginning, is evident from her landmarks and foundation principles.

Some have inconsiderately contended for an Egyptian origin of our Craft, as that ancient people had much of learning and art. But such a contention is without foundation. Its grand moral and theocratic system could not have been the outgrowth of the brute worshipping Egyptian

people. No! Search her monuments, from Monae to disemboguing Nile; examine every inscription, statue and structure, whether it be sphinx, temple, tomb or mighty pyramid; and nowhere is there to be found the slightest trace of Israel's GOD, who in the beginning created the Heavens and the Earth. Search other lands, their records and monuments, and nowhere will you find a civilization from which such an order could spring or find nourishment in infancy, except in that land in which was erected that wondrous temple on Mount Moriah, within whose walls no graven image, no statue of man, bird or beast is found; but only the altar from whose brazen top there ascended the sweet-smelling odors of sacrifice to the invisible GOD, and where, day and night, blazed the mystic Shekinah—that fire fed by no human hand or earthly fuel.

That holy temple has fallen; over its ruins long since were heard the screams of the godless Roman's eagles. Yet neither the tread of armies the shock of battle, the breath of pestilence, or the tooth of all-devouring time, have been able to remove from those ruins the evidences that it was the work of Masons of civilized, God-fearing people. The foe and the elements have dug down on its foundation lasting as the eternal hill of which it forms no inconsiderable part and found the sure evidences of Masonic work that every well-instructed Mason know how to read.

'We have thus fixed the place and time of Masonry's birth. It is a Royal Order, brethren. HIRAM of Tyre and SOLOMON of Israel exalted the Widow's Son, whose royalty was labor, wisdom and fidelity.

The Craft itself has been as well built and enduring as this mighty foundation was. The ruthless hand of man, with blast, pick, crow and shovel, may remove Mount Moriah, or cast Mount Zion into the sea; it may pull up by the roots the cedars of Lebanon; but the God-planted institution of Masonry is beyond to J powers. Its roots are too deep and strong to be dug out or pulled up; they are beneath every land and clime, and the nations rest in the shade of their great tree.

But Masonry, like all sublunary things, has had and still has ifs enemies. Those enemies, in the times now past, were powerful and often cruel. But I care not to open these barbarous record, of the past, either to arraign our enemies or to vindicate our sublime Craft. Suffice it to say that Masonry, in the ages that are past, with charity for all and persecution for none, has borne with becoming fortitude its trials and perils, biding its time with patience; and that 'when her secrets were demanded by the base or the powerful, she has answered with the firmness and devotion of the Widow's Son, and the secrets remained sacred—the would be destroyer getting nothing but dust and ashes. When her principles were assailed or challenged, she answered her accusers with the royal dignity and wisdom of HIRAM of Tyre and SOLOMON of Israel, and the world listened. When her devoted leaders were placed on the burning pile, they fearlessly summoned their persecutors to meet them before the throne of the Eternal Father. When her sons, as a last insult, were denied burial in consecrated ground, she proudly answered that any ground is holy and consecrated in which is planted by Masonic hands the sprig of acacia and on which rests the eye of GOD.

But despite the war upon her, she now stands forth Sovereign of the ascendant, clothed in royal purple. For she has this day in her ranks more presidents, kings princes, governors, rulers, bishops, statesmen, generals, judges, law-givers and great ones, than any other body of men upon the earth, and none dare lay their finger "upon the hem of her garment." She has enemies' yet- but who are they? They may be set forth in two classes. First, that class of men confined to no clime, and called and best described by the word "crank" This class proudly numbers in its fold the criminal, the fool, and the idler, an unsavory trinity of political cranks, social cranks, and religious cranks—a body men who never begin or advance any good work, but are always trying to pull down something erected by others. As their cranky disposition renders them incapable of organizing for any good work, it makes them doubt the capacity others; so also it renders them almost powerless as enemies. True, they are forever jabbering about the perniciousness and uselessness of secret societies ever contending that all good things should be made public to everybody But remembering the wise and ancient injunction, "Give not thou that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," regard them as the idle wind and pass on with our work. The second class is composed of pseudo religionists from all creeds—Catholic, Greek, Protestant, Hebrew, Mohammedan, Buddhist, Mormon and Spiritualist—those who are more righteous than their brothers in the several denominations of the Earth, a zealous, fuming, frothing lot, that would light again the torch and the fagot, bring forth again the rack, the wheel,

and the instruments of torture; but the wise and good of every creed stand with us against the whole motley herd of self-righteous fanatics, and we laugh at their fury. Then—

" All hail thou Masonry divine!
A glory gilds her sacred page,
Mystic, like the Sun,
She gives a light to every age,
She gives, but borrows none."

May GOD bless our loved Fraternity, preserve our ancient landmarks, and purify the faith of our brethren wherever dispersed around the globe; that we may, in the future as in the past, "Meet upon the Level and part upon the Square."