

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1893**

**Grand Orator
Eugene Nelson Deuprey 1893**

WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

The words of man are far from equal to the expression of 'the highest eulogies of the important work, glories and history of Freemasonry. As the antiquity of man is a study fraught with constant and interesting development, and opens wide fields for the examination of the scientist, chronologist and scholar, so, likewise, the investigation of the deeds of the Masonic Craft require, for the purposes of enlightenment, a delving into the wonders of the past and a research of the labors of ages unwritten. Discussions without limit by learned linguists, orthoepists and etymologists as to the definition of the term which designates our fraternal system, have entertained those within and without the Brotherhood. Historically we have been ascribed a Greek, a Druid and an Egyptian origin. By some we are attributed a prehistoric rise. We have been taught to believe, and are justified in believing, that Free and Accepted Masons constitute the sovereignty of the most ancient organized brotherhood on earth, and that the extensive range of their education extends throughout the globe. The immense membership of the Order embraces on its list those of every nation and condition, and of every land.

Worshipful Bro. GEORGE W. WARVELL, in treating of the subject of "Antiquity of Masonry," in learned and eloquent terms has stated that:

" If our claims of remote antiquity are of doubtful assertion, we are not original, are absolutely false; and this statement is fully sustained by evidence of undoubted authenticity. Society in the tenth century was just emerging from the lethargy and gloom of the barbarism of the Dark Age. In fact, liberty, so long restrained, now began to be asserted. The liberal arts, for ages preceding the sale of the property of the church confined to monastic communities, gave vain evidence of an existence when the chill wall of the cloister already contracted the hand of the workman, it knowingly held him in a tenacious grasp. In the eleventh century the spirit of progress was a little more manifest in the revival of commerce, the extension of manufactures and the cultivation of handicrafts. About this date occurred the organization of guilds. In the twelfth century these guilds had spread with marvelous rapidity over the greater part of Europe, embracing nearly every trade and occupation; and from that time until the present, freemasonry, in some form has been a living potential energy in the social life of the civilized world. In tracing our Masonic genealogy and proving our descent from the English Craftsmen, we are to rely on no doubtful theories or unsubstantial legends of people. Frequently the existence of authentic data, in the shape of contemporaneous evidence upon which we may with confidence rely, confirms all our claims to ancient and honorable lineage."

RETROSPECT.

From the HALLIWELL manuscript, dated November, 1388, we have the most positive testimony that a Masonic Guild was in full action five hundred years ago. From thence we find that the learning upon the origin of Freemasonry, as heretofore intimated, is voluminous, varied and intensely interesting. The history of the progress and acts of this ancient and honorable institution is too vast for and beyond the scope of any brief consideration. Yet the result, after all the study of the subject, remains that from a society of practical and operative builders, we have become the speculative Masons and constructors of fraternal principles, united by the bonds of brotherly love, relief and truth.

We are made to know that speculative Masons should learn to subdue the passions, "act upon the square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy and practice charity," and should view with reverence the glorious work of creation, which inspires us with most exalted ideas of the perfections of our divine Creator.

In the later years, organizations of any merit are and will be criticized for the utility and inutility of principles. Wherever endeavor, financial support and unabated action are sought, usefulness must be apparent to induce the expenditure of either. The Masonic Craft, as to its record of the past, of the present, and its great outlook for the future, has placed itself on the topmost round of the ladder in the history of splendid deeds and uninterrupted usefulness, and has demonstrated that its membership is acquired from the strongest elements of intelligence and courage ever selected from the race of man. This we learn as we cast our observations into the buried past: this we know from our examinations of the present.

We are strong in our faith, that Freemasonry lives not only in the now, but will continue to thrive in the great period to come. We are battling for more than a name, and we must base our hopes on that which is more forceful than reminiscence. Freemasonry has a right to exist. It serves a grand purpose in the world. Its influence is exerted for the advancement of man, his alleviation, to develop the views of duty and the requirements of life. Selfishness is restrained, breadth of views is inspired, and the love of fellow man inculcated to the best and noblest degree.

It is not my desire to take up the time of this Grand Body in the discussion of all that the Craft has accomplished, or to draw in any way a picture of the beauties and sublimity of the principles of our ancient Institution. Such a discussion at any length or in brief would open up a subject concerning which the ancient and modern lore is diffuse and plentiful, and to which attention can be given by members of the Fraternity in moments of leisure, when the important duties imposed by the Grand Lodge are not present. Therefore, it will be my province upon this occasion to make subjects, which appear to me worthy of your grave consideration, the theme of discourse.

At the convocation of this Grand Body in this Temple, during October of last year the Grand Orator at that time. Worshipful Brother REUBEN HEDLEY LLOYD, directed your attention to certain points, which he believed should receive careful deliberation, pertaining to a full attendance at Lodge meetings and the promotion of an eminent interest in the Lodge at large. His conclusions were that. The true basis for Masonic faith is in the building up and establishment of a close friendly relation between the members of the Lodge," and that to achieve this, "an intimate social communion," he believed, " must be established among the members " He further insisted " that none should be admitted but those whose society would be likely to be agreeable to the other members of the Lodge, and who desired membership alone because of an ambition to do their share towards humanizing and elevating the race." His views were clearly presented and ably argued, to the great gratification, pleasure and satisfaction of the Representatives who had the privilege of listening to him on that occasion.

How many subordinate Lodges, may I ask, have during the year just passed adopted the excellent thoughts which were expressed by my distinguished predecessor.

If the subject has been lost sight of during the busy days of the last twelve months, would it not be well for the Representatives of the several Lodges to again turn to the conclusions stated, as to what might be done and could be done to promote the welfare of the subordinate Lodges? If essential, have printed in card form the four reasons given, and at every meeting, if necessary, invoke the attention of the officers and members to the subject matter thereof, both for reflection and action.

The character of membership was very elaborately debated, and while this branch of consideration in the welfare of subordinate Lodges is one to which my own thoughts have been led and upon which they have dwelt in the past as well as at this time, it is not my belief that any words of mine can amplify the very thorough statements of Grand Orator LLOYD upon this topic. His argument led him to the conclusion that, "This Order can only advance by having on its rolls those alone who preach and practice its precepts in their daily lives. Men who in Lodge laud all its doctrines and outside forget them, are like the church members who on Sunday repeat the Ten Commandments with zealous joy, and week days pave their way to prosperity and pleasure by trampling them under foot. The one restricts the cause of Masonry and the other brings religion into contempt." To which my conviction is, we may all with one accord say " Amen."

AVOID SLANDER

There is, nevertheless, one other element concerning the acts and utterances of the members of the Fraternity to which I desire briefly to direct your attention. It is a very important subject for deliberation, and a question deserving of the: heed and vigilance of our membership, with an object to correct the error, if possible so to do. Are the brethren thoughtful, watchful of a brother's name in public and in private? Are not many good brothers prone to express harsh sentiments of and concerning members of the Fraternity, and more directly of those who may be members of the same subordinate body? The answer must come—they are not,

The occurrence and recurrence of this violation of the sacred obligations of the Craft is so frequent, I regret to confess, that the conduct referred to must be bright in recollection, at one time or another, to every member of this Institution. At the very threshold of the Craft, as an Entered Apprentice, the lessons are impressed that the three principal tenets of Masonry are brotherly love, relief and truth, and that brotherly love causes true friendship to exist among those who might otherwise remain at a perpetual distance. That by relief we are linked together with an indissoluble chain of sincere affection, and on this basis form our friendships and establish our connections; and that by truth, that sincerity and; plain dealing distinguish us. That with heart and being we join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoice in promoting each other's prosperity. We are charged to learn the important duties which we owe to God, our neighbor and ourselves. To God, by awe and reverence; to our neighbor, by acting on the square, by rendering him every kind office and doing unto him as we would be done by. As a citizen we are enjoined to be exemplary in the dispatch of civil duties, and never to lose sight of the allegiance due to our country. As individuals we are trusted to practice domestic and public virtues, that temperance may chasten, fortitude support, prudence direct, and justice be the guide of all our actions.

As Fellow Crafts we are advised that Masonry is a progressive moral science; that we are not to aggravate the offenses of the brethren, but judge with candor admonish with judgment, reprimand with justice. When the crowning glory of a Master Mason is arrived at and we are raised to that degree, then we are instructed that we are authorized to correct the irregularities of our individual brethren and guard them against every allurements and vicious practice, and to preserve un-sullied the reputation of the Fraternity. Finally we are apprised that we are to let no motive make us swerve from duty, violate our vows, or betray our trust.

With such lessons before us for our discipline and guidance, can there be any excuse for secret revilings of one brother against another? It is the duty of the members of the Order, when they discover or hear from others that unpleasant criticism or hostile comment is being made against a fellow member, that he should warn the one so assailed. If it should be discovered that the brother assailed is in truth unworthy of association with those who hold in high esteem all the principles of Freemasonry, and who are closely bound by the pure and sacred obligations of the Order, then proper charges should be presented against the accused person, and either vindication be had or punishment visited upon the offending; brother.

Ever bear before our mental eye a banner inscribed:

" The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation; that away,
Men are but gilded loam or painted clay."

If there is one possession given by the Almighty Father to weak mankind, it is a good name, a pure reputation, the value of which is so forcibly pictured by the immortal bard in the lines:

" Good name in man and woman is the immediate jewel of their souls
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he who filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

It is my earnest belief that frequently the fault of dealing unkindly with a brother's character, or uttering some tainted word against his fair name, arises from carelessness which is as inexcusable as it is horrible. I would impress upon you that it is the bounden duty of a Mason, wherever and whenever he hears a sentiment expressed by a brother which can in any way affect the character of a member of this brotherhood, to remonstrate with the one who utters the slander, and bring unmistakably to his mind the sentiment that:

" The dark grave,'

Which knows all secrets, can alone reclaim
The fatal doubt once cast upon a person's name."^

If we are to use unwonted care in the selection of the material of which our Lodges are to be composed, it is as doubly incumbent upon us that we shall be true to the obligations we have taken, and do all in our power to protect and secure unto those who are members of the Fraternity an unblemished reputation and a perfect record.

COMPETENT OFFICERS

We can well agree with the claim made a year ago, that in order to accomplish intimate social communion among the members, the meetings of the Lodges must be made both pleasant and attractive. While lectures and gatherings around the banquet board can in a very large measure assist in bringing about that which is attractive to all the membership, there appears to me to be even a more vital measure which can be adopted to secure the need, and which we all eagerly seek to have done. It is that the men who are selected as the officers of the Lodge should have the highest qualifications to be found within the Lodge membership.

My contention is that the qualifications should be, so far as can be procured, as widely developed mind, whether gained by education or self investigation of self improvement. A man to hold official station in a Lodge should be possessed of a disposition to be just, to be determined, to be gentle, to be kind, to be patient; slow to form final opinions of a brother's worth or weakness; ready at all times to be fair and considerate. He should be a student of the Masonic law, a student of the ritual, a student of the best interests of the Lodge, Be a student of the direct welfare of those who may be brought in closest contact with the direct membership, of which he is one. He should be able to acquire and retain both the secret and the written work, and take care that when the occasion requires to so deliver the work that not only the person to whom he addresses himself gives attention, but that all who may be present to see and hear shall do the same. This is notably demanded in all of the degree work. It is not my claim that these qualifications should rest with the Worshipful Master of the Lodge alone, but that they should exist to an eminent degree in the Junior and Senior Wardens and Junior and Senior Deacons, as well as in the Master. The chairs all properly equipped with the best capability, no danger will be present upon questions of promotion.

Give to me impressive and complete work in a Lodge-room and I will assure and guarantee you filled benches and filled seats, a crowded Lodge-room with an interested, entertained and loyal membership. Present me with poor work, slack attention to duty, carelessness to the interest of those who are the members of the subordinate body, and I will point out to your gaze a decreasing membership, a disgusted circle of brothers, and a Lodge well on the way to decay and in position for the forfeiture of its charter.

You may answer that these suggestions are Utopian, too ideal, that it is not possible in all Lodges to obtain the material asked for. But pause a moment, and consider whether it is a fact that there is any Lodge in the State of California which has not able and learned men of capacity and of willingness to do their whole duty in the building up of the Craft, if the opportunity is afforded or their efforts are sought It is my belief that it is safe to declare that there is not one such Lodge throughout the length and breadth of this great State of California.

The trouble manifests itself in many of the subordinates, I fear, in this, that there are brethren who are ambitious for official position, who are entirely unfitted for the duties imposed, upon the office and the one who may hold it.

It is true, again, that there are many earnest workers, whom the members of the Lodge believe that by reason of efforts that have been put forth by them reward should follow, by advancing them through the chairs. Yet these good brethren are in some instances, we are forced to allow, unable to grapple with the necessities which constantly devolve upon and appertain to the official acts required in the chairs from Junior Deacon to Worshipful Master.

It has been my misfortune on several occasions to attend the conferring of the several degrees of the Craft, where the inspiring sentiments of our Order were, to use a term of simile, butchered. Expressions of disappointment, mortification and even disgust were apparent upon the faces of many of the brethren present. I have even seen the countenance of a novice express pity for the one addressing him and hopeless disappointment in the work of the Order

with which he sought to unite. Instances are many where under such circumstances the work of the Order has been badly given, haltingly presented, and hopelessly hacked at by an incompetent Master and incompetent officers; the consequence has followed that the one who has finally been raised to the degree of Master Mason has failed to return or attend to any further meetings or to take aught of interest in the advancement or condition of the Lodge or of the Order. It has been to my sense of shame, on some occasions and I have no doubt to many of those now representing the jurisdiction of this State, when the funeral service of our Fraternity has been so abominably read and so disgracefully rendered that you have been moved to, if you did not in fact leave the presence of those in grief at the loss of a dear and departed brother, and ask yourself as I have asked myself, "What in heaven's name could have prompted anyone to deliver the service of the Masonic body with an entire lack of qualification and with a manifest incompetency to do that which was actually demanded" The family of the departed, in the depth of their sorrow, are amazed that the beauties and sublimity of a service which has to them again and again been referred to should bring but little or no comfort, and only chagrin from the manner in which the Master of a Lodge, on some occasions, will and does pre-sent it. It is to the great injury of our noble brotherhood, when occasions such as I have referred to arise, and something must or should be done to avoid incompetency of service, either at the conferring of degrees or at public ceremonies. What may be the remedy?

PROPER INSTRUCTION.

A great deal may be accomplished through careful instruction. That instruction in my opinion, must come from one authority, so that all the work will be uniform in its character, without any shade of difference in any part of it or in any part of the State or jurisdiction. That there ought to be but one work, and one alone, for our guidance and for our direction. It impresses me that this can be reached through a single source, viz.: an instruction which comes from a recognized and competent member of the Order, who can and will give and devote all of his time to the study of the work itself and in the giving of instruction thereof; whose whole thought can be given to the fullest contemplation of our tenets, and to the imparting of the most thorough knowledge to the worthy and competent members of the Craft, who have been selected, by reason of their ability, to occupy the exalted official stations in the Lodge. The salary should be permanent in nature and such as to comfortably provide the brother who may be selected as equal to the task with comparative comfort, so that the mind will not be distraught; with the troubles and cares which follow the strife which provides shelter and food, and which may give happiness and maintenance to those who are nearest and dearest to him.

If the instruction is thorough, the membership well established, and caution is exercised in the selection of the brothers who shall occupy the several chairs, then you will discover that an intense interest and a fraternal enthusiasm is at once manifested by those of the Lodge. If like attention is given by the officers to the creation of congenial and brotherly concern among the members upon the nights of meeting, and they see to it that strangers are received with that hospitable, that generous sentiment which belongs to our organization, the numbers attending Lodge will be large and animated, and the ardor of the whole membership of the jurisdiction will be intensified in seeking the light and battling for the welfare of mankind.

PUBLIC INSTALLATIONS

Another subject has vividly introduced itself to my observation, which, if properly and with due caution should be developed, might, to a very material degree give push and impart interest to the membership, and at the same time permit the members of our families and those who will be desirable men to become Masons, to hear and see something pertaining to our Order, without revealing any secrets of the Craft; that is to have, as far as feasible, the installation of officers public. Wives, sisters, daughters and their best acquaintanceship would by this means, in my estimation, be attracted to the tenets of the Order and the principles and doctrines which guide us.

WILLIAM JAMES HUGHAM, the distinguished Masonic author, is accredited with the statements that:—

"Though in one sense we are a secret society, yet strictly speaking we are not really a secret society. We have no secret aims or constitutions; the objects we have in view are open to the world; our regulations may be obtained by anyone, and all our members are as free to leave as they must be to join. There has been too much mystery made over the community, for, unless it is directly or indirectly with the way we know each other in any part of the globe, by night or by day, knowing or not knowing the language, and when meeting utter strangers, we have no secrets. In fact, it might almost be said that the actual secret of our Freemasonry is that there is none.

Now, is there, as a matter of fact, anything in our ceremony of installing officers that demands secrecy? If the opportunity is given, once in a while, to permit our families to know that we are engaged only in laudable work and for laudable ends, the interest in the home circle will be mutual, as to the calling the attention of the one who is a brother in that family to the Lodge night and a request of his attention to the Lodge duties. Are we not justified in believing that much of the objection that we hear from good wives and daughters to husbands and brothers attending Lodge assemblies arises from the fact that they have neither knowledge nor information of the noble deeds for which the Masonic Craft is banded together?

A contributor to the Masonic literature has pointedly written upon this subject

"By all means then, let our families and our dearest friends witness our ceremony of installation. There is nothing secret about the ceremony; it is printed in full, it has been performed in public before; hence there is no innovation or unfaith in allowing those who are not Masons to witness it. And finally, it would not only do no harm to have the ceremony performed in public, but it would really be advantageous to the Fraternity, in that it would help to remove the existing prejudices and enlist the sympathy and favorable cooperation of those who are nearest and dearest to us in the grand work in which we are engaged, namely: making the world better."

THE BLACKBALL.

Information has from time to time been brought to my hearing of the abuse of the black cube and sphere. Abuse in this, that the deposit of the symbol of rejection was not against the candidate, but to serve an untoward feeling to a brother or against several brethren of a subordinate body. No greater protecting shield could be afforded our Fraternity to exclude improper characters among men from association with the Craft than the use of the ball or cube of objection. It should be used with fine judgment, after full deliberation, with a deep seated affection for the Order and a sense of justice to the applicant. It is unmasonic conduct, it is a cruel blow to an innocent person, to cast the negative sphere or cube against one who is in every way worthy, simply for the reason that he is proposed by, or is on terms of friendship with, a member who has in some wise engendered the ill will of the brother using the black. Wounded feelings have resulted to an unoffending man; character has suffered a stroke; bitter prejudice against Masonry has found a resting place in a stranger's breast. The wrong thus done cannot be requited. Do not commit this crime against fraternity, against manhood, against right, against every propriety of life. Do your duty, my brother, against the unworthy^ but do not injure Masonry, or bruise the finer feelings of man, by lack of deliberation or the expression of malice against a brother or brethren.

CONCLUSION.

With respect and a fraternal regard for all, and with a fervent love for Masonry and what it teaches, your notice has been moved to subjects which seem to me of vital importance, as they may or do relate to our present and our future. If we can add to the suggestions so eloquently submitted to us at the last Communication, regarding that which may advance a deep interest in Masonic progress, the principle of bridling the tongue when disposed to wag with denunciatory sentences concerning a brother, and thereby strongly develop brotherly love, a most important step will have been taken toward, the goal of our cherished desires. If we will hold in check that sense which is given to us for the beauties and sweetness of speech, we can adopt the sublime sentiment of the unknown author who penned the lines of the " Ode to the Skull" for our meditation and conduct in the control of our words:

" The ready, swift and tuneful tongue,
Of falsehood's honey it distained,
And when it could not praise was chained.
If bold in virtue's cause it spoke,
Yet never gentle concord broke,
That silent tongue may plead for thee
When time unveils eternity."

From what has been submitted to your thought today we would beseech you to;

1. Banish slander. :
2. Adopt love of human kind.
3. Select only the most competent brothers to fill the chairs of the Lodges.
4. Provide the best of instruction.
5. Guarantee us uniformity of work throughout the jurisdiction.
6. Let our families, now and then, be present when the officers are installed Give publicity in this, with the ancient and goodly knowledge it will take with it.
7. Guard well the ballot box, and in that be discreet. Be true, and with impartiality act;

Then it my firm belief, my brethren, that certain and positive success must follow, as day the night," every endeavor the advancement and perpetuity of Freemasonry in this State as elsewhere. No more will be heard the of light attendance or lack of enthusiasm in our Lodge rooms. When we are relieved from the cares of business and are permitted by an All Wise Providence to enter into communion with nature's forests, vales, mountains and streams, we can be-hold.

" In every leaf a thing of beauty,
In every tree a pillar in nature s temple,
In every raindrop a pearl from her jewel box,
And in their plashing we hear the music of nature's voice.

So now and when we part let us of Masonic brotherhood view every tenet of the Craft as beautiful, every doctrine is commanding and a pillar of truth, in every word of fraternal love let us see a pearl of God's favor, and for our guidance listen to the sweet music of charity.