

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1895**

**Grand Orator  
Eugene Nelson Deuprey**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER GRAND OFFICERS AND BRETHREN

When we unfold the leaves of history to determine what was done by our ancestors and those with whom they came in contact in the centuries that have gone, we find that there has always been an earnest desire on the part of the many and a select few to build up the mind with extended information upon all subjects which have appeared to be worthy of deep investigation. Turn, if you will, to the pages which unfold to us that Rome was not built in a day, but through many decades of constant and untiring effort, to develop the minds of those who were subjects, patrons, tribunes or monarchs.

Wise men among the Romans were numerous. For the broadening of their intellectual research, schools and colleges were in constant demand to educate the boy, the youth, the man—to educate him to be equal to the requirements of a forceful manhood in whatever direction his talents might cause him to travel.

At Athens, law-makers were ever in demand who from the daily investigation of subjects which were of the utmost importance to the advancement of the Grecian subjects and their neighbors. Among them a SOLON was found; a LYCURGUS, brought to imperishable fame; a PERICLES showed forth in the light of advanced thought to assist those around him and about them.

From that period until the present day, in all civilized nations, the highest education, upon all practical and grand topics, has been the aim and is the ambition of the citizens of several nations and the subjects of the others of civilized governments to claim the best, the largest, the most thorough enlightenment. By these efforts, ever-recurring contests in the development of the mind have occurred; so that now in science, in art, in mechanism, in literature and the many branches that are appended thereto, shining examples can be pointed to worthy of enthusiastic admiration for the great progress that has been accomplished. Education, indeed, is a necessity to the end that there should be developed a vast subject, and to make those who are the followers of the principles pertaining thereto capable, unaided, to maintain and defend them absolutely on the information that they acquire, and that they can acquire, to enter the arena to battle with the logic the reason of any opposing force.

BACON says: " Histories make men wise; poetry witty; the mathematics settled; natural philosophy deep; morals brave; logic and rhetoric able to contend."

Why, then, should those of the Masonic Order rest quietly upon their oars when their boat is launched upon the seas of life, contention and progress. Why fail to clothe their minds with strong, positive, impervious learning upon every symbolism and sentiment which pertains to the details of speculative Masonry. Are we to leave it to a few who, perchance, may by choice and on account of being blessed with time from other than business demands require, to catch a glimpse here and there of the innermost recesses of the history, the propulsion, the rise, the capabilities of the law which has commanded in the past, must command in the present, and shall rule in the future a Mason's life. A Mason's path in tracing the tree-blazing to best find the place where to discover how to "do one unto another as ye would be done by " and to be bathed in sunbeams of knowledge, and to worship the Almighty power, which causes the sun to rise in the east and set in the west, who controls the darkness and makes the light of day.

Do you, my brethren, believe that during the past year, the membership of Free and Accepted Masons in this State, whose shores border on the Pacific, have given that study which the tenets of the Craft have made, and which the impositions of the ancient forms insist upon, to obtain a knowledge of the duties of one brother to another, at all times and under all circumstances, which is positively incumbent upon us? Without giving an answer aloud to the question, without making an assertion that might cause the blush of shame for dereliction to rise

to the cheek of a brother on account of remissness, may I be permitted to make several practical suggestions?

BAYABD TAYLOB has written that " knowledge alone is the being of nature, giving a soul to her manifold features, leading through paths of primitive darkness the footsteps of truth."

Have we as members of the Craft during the past year given as much attention as the interests of our association demanded to the acquisition of permanent and valuable knowledge of the Masonic Order; that is to say, have we, in any measurable degree worthy of the consideration of others, or for our own self-congratulation, delved deeply for information which would permit us to spread the light for the interests of Freemasonry?

These questions have come to me more impressively within the last few months, during which it, became the decree of the Architect of the Universe to remove from our midst Most Worshipful Past Grand Master WILLIAM CALDWELL BELCHER. Those who were acquainted with the extent of his erudition in Masonic law have earnestly questioned themselves as to who or how many of the Craft, in the jurisdiction of the State of California, can fill his place as an adviser, as a judge, as an arbitrator upon questions of the most vital interest, not only to the Order in this jurisdiction but throughout its length and breadth in the universe. He who must fill such a place must give the same extensive study, the same amount of thought, the same abundance of conservative wisdom to the subject of most vital importance to us all as the Past Grand Master, W. C. BELCHER, did.

It is true that there are still among us giant intellects—an N. GREEN CURTIS, an ATKINSON, a PERKINS, a JOHNSON, a PETRIE, a WAGNER, a TAYLOR—Grand Masters to advise and direct among the many of the Past Grand Masters who still survive; yet their years of life are being rapidly added to, and the great machinery performing its mental and bodily work, wearing gradually away. When they are gone, to whom shall we turn for counsel in days of trial, in days of adversity, in days of sorrow, which must come to the administration of all great institutions, no matter how strongly builded for good and humanitarian action? We must needs then ask the members of the Craft at large to give time and study and reflection upon the great principles of Freemasonry, not only that portion which is found in the Monitors for general direction, not in the words which can only pass from lip to ear by one or by several who shall be claimed to be and are fully equipped and authorized to rive the secret work to the several degrees. There is a foundation deeper and stronger laid, upon which the structure of Freemasonry is builded, which we must dig around, examine and know every portion of, and not content ourselves to a material stone or a strong column of the building.

How many, may I ask, of those who are now assembled as representatives of the several Lodges throughout the jurisdiction of the State of California, now assembled in Grand Lodge, who can tell me one of the ancient charges and ceremonies of this Masonic Order?

How many can discourse with any learning or really any information upon any canon?

Let us briefly and simply direct you to give thought for the future of these matters of serious import if you have not considered it in the past.

THE CONSTITUTION.—While there may be a select few who have taken the time and who have believed it to be a bounden duty to investigate the subject of more ancient learning of the Masonic Craft, how many, can I ask, have studied the Constitution, the organic law, upon which we are now clothed in authority and by and through which our privileges are expounded ? It is not my desire to be pessimistic or make any claim that it might be found that the number who have information upon this subject are few. I do not wish to be pessimistic in my fears upon this topic, yet I am constrained to believe that if we were convened in class and the number asked to rise who were familiar with this subject, that the number would not include every member of this great body. If it is possible that there is a lone representative to the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of California, unfamiliar with the Constitution, then let me impress upon him, if I can, the necessity for immediate consultation of the foundation law. It certainly will not bring to him serious harm and may possibly bring about an invigoration of spirit and a conviction of mind that a little more knowledge is not injurious, although it is often claimed that " a little learning is a dangerous thing."

THE LAWS AND DECISIONS.—Since the organization of a separate jurisdiction in this State many very important questions for final determination have been submitted to the many Grand Masters who have wielded the gavel in the East and to our Committees on Jurisprudence,

Appeals and Grievances, and the like, and the many sessions of the Grand Lodge in the past have, and this Grand Lodge will now finally determine the vital propositions which have been submitted for decision. These decisions have, from time to time, been passed to print and are part of the Grand Records of the Grand Secretary.

The proceedings of each Grand Lodge have, from time to time, been passed to print and circulated among the representatives and subordinate Lodges in this State Outside of the Committee on Jurisprudence, the Committee on Appeals and Grievances, the Committee on Finances, and the several Grand Masters, Past Grand Masters and Acting Grand Masters, I feel that I am justified in putting a further question:—

How many are familiar with the laws and decisions of the Craft in this jurisdiction? In giving an answer or in obtaining an answer, I would be loath to declare, "Do not all speak at once."

Deep down in the recesses of your minds and loyal hearts let these questions find a resting place where trouble will be created until proper replies can be given and until those, at least who are now present, can truthfully say that by the end of next year they can truthfully say, "I know more of the duties, of the binding principles, of the truths upon which Freemasonry has existed, does now exist and we hope shall have its existence in the great future."

I have been very much impressed with some thoughts of Most Worshipful Grand Master JOHN S. DAVIDSON of the Grand Lodge of Georgia, expressed by him October 31, 1893. He says: "In the Straits of Magellan there is said to be a post office, the most remarkable in the world. It is simply a painted cask, chained by strong cables to the rocks, so that it floats upon the waters, rising and falling with the waves of the restless sea. No appointed custodian controls it; no forms fixed by law are used for the receiving and depositing of its mail; no officer places on its contents the official stamp of government; no carriers pass to and from the land with the burdens of joy and sorrow which are bound daily through this great land from ocean to ocean; no rushing trains speeding like the very wind take for it the messages it contains, and yet, without control, without supervision, free to strain its chains in storms or to float peacefully upon the billows of a placid ocean, it never fails of its object. The rocks of the tidal shore are its guardians; the seafaring men, often rude and reckless, treat it with the tenderness of a woman; as each ship passes by its speed is slackened, its boat is lowered, and manned by rugged men, is driven to its side. Strong hands quickly seek its contents, and taking what may belong to them, deposit those they themselves would send to distant shores for loved ones who for anxious days look for some message of the absent, and bearing their own remembrances on board, bless it with more than sailor fervor. To defend it they would quickly risk limb and life, and yet it is only a floating cask in a waste of waters. Do you see any parallel between the laws of this cask, thus situated, thus protected and thus serving mankind and the institution to which you belong? Let us pause and consider what is Freemasonry? Simply an instrument for the good of others. How is it held by the human race? Only by the strong chains of brotherly love. What does it bear within it? Nothing but the messages which tell of man's plans and purposes, hopes, and striving to be better, and to be a model in all things here that he may enjoy and share a more sublime association hereafter, his experience while made up of success and failure, teaching him a belief which makes him stronger when he fails and humbler when he succeeds. How is the institution protected? By each member with the solemn obligation engraven on his soul and its important words and counsels lingering in his ear. Who guards it from destruction? The millions of brave hearts wherever beating, can be heard on every land on which the sunshine rests, and who have taken from its store of treasure the many messages which are enclosed. What is the value of Masonry? It has no splendid collection of jewels; it has no well-filled coffers; it has no mines of exhaustless wealth; it has nothing but a mission—a mission that teaches mankind the lesson of obedience, the law of submission to authority, of compassion for the fallen, for the tempted, for the erring, of devotion to God, of love for God, and at last that there is 'a bright light no darkness can exist.' It is but a floating cask, save that its chains permit its journey every-where."

In that very apt illustration, in those words of application beautifully spoken, more is presented and said than volumes of discursiveness could really accomplish in impressing the deep and telling truths of that Order founded upon the principle so forcibly written in the Scripture: "These three, but the greatest of these is charity." What are the chains which hold the cask which has placed within man's reach messages of cheer, messages of hopes, messages of consolation and messages of happiness, when he has fully performed, or has in a great measure performed,

his duties as a Freemason. They are the knowledge we have, the knowledge we must acquire, the knowledge we must possess in order to hold this depository of sweet words written by the members of our Craft in the past, recognized by the members of our Craft in the present. If we will not heed the warnings, not only of the present, but the warnings of the measureless past that, in a few words, have expressed "knowledge is power," and see to it that we follow this motto as the guiding star for our actions in adding to, protecting and building up the Order, the chains will soon be parted, the cask of messages float away soon to be battered by the waves of opposition into pieces which will soon float here and there of no use to man, of no use of any kind, lost—utterly lost. It seems to me that these are lessons of the hour, and we must not fail to grasp the opportunities which are given us to know more, and, by knowing more, be armed against opposition, no matter from what source it may come.

It is not for one who is appointed to the position of Grand Orator that he should each year go over one beaten and hackneyed course of thought in detail, no matter how eloquent the accomplishments of the Order in the past, for it is your duty to study, to learn what has thus been accomplished. It appears to me that the duty, as I understand it, of the one who fills the position of Grand Orator of any jurisdiction, is to call the attention of the members of the Masonic Order to any evils which to him may seem to exist, and thus cause such evils to be destroyed if possible, and if the evils are not so immense as to him they may appear, still serious harm is not accomplished, but good may come. If we are to protect, if we are to entrench ourselves behind battlements that cannot be assailed when the foe approaches, we must be well armed, well clothed, well fed in knowledge, and why should we not be so armed, fed and clothed, for we only have to seek knowledge of that splendid Institution created for charity which, by another, has been beautifully and truthfully said to be "Masonry—its laws are reason and equity; its principles benevolence and love; its religion purity and truth; its intention peace on earth; and its disposition, good will toward men."

My remarks of to-day would simply exhort you, be faithful to ourselves, be faithful to each other, be faithful, be true to the tenets and sublime teachings of the Order, for the Masonry of Free and Accepted Masons must be perpetuated to the last generation of earth, until there shall be a grand and complete realization of the sublime truth—that God made mankind one mighty brotherhood. Himself their Master and the world His Lodge.

These ancient charges are necessarily brought to the mind of every Master when installed; a positive contract is made so clear, so well defined, that the person honored by selection to fill the position in the East of the subordinate Lodge can never claim that he has not understood, and if he has failed to perform his whole duty he has committed so great a crime, that while brothers may be willing to forgive that which the Omnipotent may forgive, knowing the weakness of man, how can we overlook the gravity of the offense—the awful violation of a plain and distinct promise, made solemnly in the presence of his brethren.

It will not be amiss to now direct your minds to the solemn compact that has been made by so many, and which should never be broadened in spirit, in word, or in any element of faith.

The Master first agrees to be "a good man and true, and strictly to obey the moral law." How extensive is the character of that promise to be faithful, to be inviolably kept. No religion on earth could demand a purer man, a more positive follower of the teachings of God, than he who keeps that agreement.

The Master again agrees "to be a peaceable citizen, and cheerfully to conform to the laws of the country in which he resides." Again, he must be an honor to the place of his abode, and one who strictly complies with the fullest demands of the laws of his country.

Then again, the promise is given "not to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against government, but patiently to submit to the decisions of the supreme legislation." He is advised to be a patriot in the fullest sense.

He agrees "to pay a proper respect to the civil magistrates, to work diligently, live chastely, and to act honorably unto all men." What promise of more elephantine character could be exacted than this to make a man all the law would desire, all that the law must demand.

Now comes a fifth contract. The Master agrees "to hold in veneration the original rules and patrons of Freemasonry and their regular successors, supreme and subordinate, according to their station, and submit to the awards and legislation of brethren, when convened, in every case

consistent with the Constitutions of the Fraternity " How can this covenant be safely fulfilled, if there is lack of knowledge on the part of the one who may take that charge of the rulers and patrons of Freemasonry, or their regular successors, supreme and subordinate, if he is ignorant of the awards and resolutions of his brethren, when convened, as being consistent with the Constitutions of the Fraternity. Knowledge is positively insisted upon. To these subjects, I wish most to call your earnest attention, if not for present action or immediate consideration, that there shall be no failure in the future, or at any time when any demand of an urgent character is made for the utmost learning upon these subjects.

The Master agrees "to avoid private piques and quarrels, and to guard against intemperance and excesses; to be cautious in carriage and behavior, courteous to his brethren, and faithful to his Lodge; to discountenance all dissenters from the organization of Freemasonry; to promote the general good of the Fraternity; to cultivate the social virtues, and to propagate the knowledge of art." How can he complete these promises, unless he is a man among men among his fellows in Masonry, with the highest appreciation of every claim made upon him, and which he must meet—education in the Craft, education in all its principles, education in all duties must have been at his hand, and opportunities offered must have been embraced to the highest degree. A promise is then required of that homage to the Grand Master, for the time being, of his officers, when duly installed, to strictly conform to every edict of the Grand Lodge in general assembly of Masons, that is not subservient to the principles and groundwork of Freemasonry. How is he to know what every edict of the Grand Lodge in general assembly of Masons is? How is he to know what is or is not subservient to the principles and groundwork of Freemasonry, unless he has sought knowledge in these directions— not only sought, but has obtained it.

He is further required to admit that it is not in the power of any body of men to make invasion in the landmarks of Freemasonry. How many of those honored to be chosen, and who hold in their grasp the terrible power of the Master, can tell us what the landmarks of Freemasonry are, or when an invasion commences, or when it ends? The landmarks of Freemasonry are distinct but to those who have an interest; there must be a fixing of the points in their minds and in their understanding—what the landmarks are, and how many they consist of.

A promise is made of regular attendance on committees and conventions of Grand Bodies, upon receiving proper notice; to pay attention to all the duties of Freemasons in convenient cases. Again, what are those duties? If it is little reflected upon, the duties are unknown, and the inability to pay attention to them, or any of them, is too plain a fault to be commented upon.

Still more is asked of the Master to perform—that is to see that no Lodge shall be founded without permission of Grand Lodge; that no countenance shall be given to any such Lodge, or any person clandestinely initiated therein, being contrary to the ancient charges of the Craft. How many of you now here can say to me what act, what word, what deed would be, or is contrary, to the ancient charges of the Craft, unless you know those ancient charges? Do you know them? Have you studied them? Have you weighed them carefully in your mind, and sifted them as to the meaning of every word? Have you understood all that is meant, all that is demanded by those charges?

Further, we are informed that it is the duty of the Master to see that no person can be regularly made a Mason, or initiated a member of a regular Lodge, without previous notice and due inquiry into character, and that no visitor shall be admitted into the Lodge without due examination, and producing such vouchers of their having been initiated into a regular Lodge. The Master must have such education in the learning of the Craft that he can say that the examination and that the proper vouchers of initiation have been submitted.

How many of the Inspectors of the several districts of this jurisdiction can report that every Master in his district has been so fully equipped in the relation of knowledge of those subjects insisted upon by the legislation of Free and Accepted Masons, of such a character that the party who is to act as Master can enumerate the same; that he submits to the charges, and can intelligently promise to accept the legislation, and perform his duties there under, as Masters have sought to have done in all ages.

It may be unkind to call up these ghosts of shortcomings. It may not be burdened with the praise that might be desired should come from criticism in relation to good work and the full performance of every duty. We ought not to avoid the knowledge of our faults, but seek to amend them, if faults we have. If the intimations that have been made are possible as to the lack of

information upon important topics, which reach down to the foundation stones of the ancient changes and govern that which is builded above, then all we can do is to cry " All Hail " to the advancement of knowledge of every subject which is most dear and most material in our past, for our present, and so pertinent to our perpetuation in the future.

Let your Inspectors be selected from only the finest intellectual and diligent material; from men who will love to lecture on themes of the Craft, who will be ready to form schools in each district for higher education in Freemasonry, where essays, theses at the several Lodges may be heard every month of the Masonic year.

A resolution, directing Inspectors to take such action as has been now suggested, would be well.

Let the intimations announced to-day take root in your minds, my beloved brethren, and act accordingly. Then, indeed, shall we all feel proud of our legislators sent to Grand Lodge.

Then, indeed, will we proclaim as our view, and as a unit of view, " The true purpose of education is to cherish and unfold the seed of immortality already sown within us; to develop to their fullest extent the capacities of every kind with which the God who made us has endowed us."