

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
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**Grand Orator
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MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER, WARDENS AND BRETHREN OF THE GRAND LODGE

I enter upon the discharge of the duty assigned to me with much diffidence, and with a vivid realization of its difficulties.

During the forty-seven years of our Grand Lodge existence, at each Annual Communication, as well; as at more frequent Special Communications, the subjects and thoughts which may be properly referred to on an occasion like this have been often treated and discussed by the most brilliant, as well as thoughtful, Intellects of the past half a century. Sentiment and logic, oftentimes adorned with wit and humor, have been presented in varied and attractive forms, until originality of conception will be as little expected, as novelty would be in the patriotic utterance of a Fourth of July orator. Without attempting the hopeless task of emulation, I shall endeavor to suggest a few practical ideas relating to the character of the institution which is so revered and loved by its members, its mission in the progress of civilization, and the obligations of its members to it, and to each other, and, in order to illustrate these ideas, I find it necessary to suggest a few facts, taken from history alone, not from Masonic tradition, tending to show the origin of the first body or society of men who combined the practice of operative with the principles of Speculative Masonry, the occasion for this combination, and when, how, and where it was accomplished. I am one of those who have an abiding faith that the original organization of this institution was controlled and directed by Divine Intelligence; that it was de-creed in the wisdom and counsels of Deity to meet the exigencies and necessities which accompanied the building of the first temple at Jerusalem.

In reaching conclusions which are satisfactory to a rational mind, it is always necessary that there should be some indisputable data, or starting point, connected with such conclusions, by historic events so reasonable and probable, as to preclude the probability of error or mistake.

For such data we have a right to rely upon the Book of the Law and Holy writings, which is ever open upon Masonic altars during the sessions of Masonic Lodges, which we are taught to regard as the great light in Masonry, and that it should ever be the great Law of the Brotherhood.

Relying upon that unerring guide, which is corroborated by the accepted history of the great empires of the earth existing at and before the work upon the first temple was commenced, we need no Masonic tradition to convince any thoughtful mind that as sure as the construction and completion of Solomon's temple was a reality, and not a fable, just so certain was the perfect organization of its builders directed by the Omnipotent Power that determined upon its erection, acting through the miraculous wisdom with which Solomon was invested. Without entering upon a tiresome review of the history and events of that most interesting period of Jewish history, a few brief suggestions will justify this conclusion. It was about four hundred and forty years from the time the Israelites took possession of the promised land, after the exodus, that Solomon ascended the throne. During all this time they were surrounded by fierce and savage tribes, whose united hosts were almost countless as the leaves of the forest, and in one thing they were united, viz., an inveterate hatred of the Israelites, who had occupied and despoiled them of their land, driven them from their cities, appropriated their property, and pushed them into less fertile and congenial localities.

The natural impulse which controls human action caused them to hurl themselves in countless hordes upon the battle axes, and impale themselves upon the spears of the Israelites, in the vain endeavor to recover what had been lost to them.

The Israelites were kept united in common defense against their savage neighbors through centuries of battle and bloodshed, and it was not until the last year of King David's reign that the forces of Israel were massed for a decisive blow, which nearly swept their hereditary enemies

from the face of the earth, and utterly destroyed their power for aggressive warfare, leaving God's chosen people to enjoy an interval of peace, which was the first permanent interval enjoyed by them since their emergence from the wilderness after their departure from Egypt. From these historic incidents flowed natural results. The character and aspirations of the children of Israel became totally changed.

They had entirely lost that subservience of character which their forefathers acquired by a long servitude under Egyptian taskmasters, and had become the most martial people on earth. Military genius, skill, and strategy became hereditary among them.

King David had in his military organization the most redoubtable captains, skilled in every device of war and military science. By conquest and the spoils of war, and by traffic in the intervals between campaigns, David had piled up enormous wealth, and intended therewith to commence the construction of the temple after the great blow was delivered which relieved him of the hostility of surrounding enemies. Indeed, during the last year of his reign he made extensive preparations for the erection of the building, until he was directed to surrender the scepter of kingly power, and deliver the same to his son Solomon, together with the vast wealth which had been hoarded for the building of the house.

And thus Solomon ascended the throne of Israel, finding himself commander of a vast army of veteran soldiers. Monarch of a martial kingdom, and possessor of almost fabulous wealth, and while we are taught that peace and prosperity pervaded the world, that peace had been of such limited duration, as regards the Jewish people, that no sufficient time had elapsed to enable them to perfect themselves in the knowledge of architectural design, nor the rules relating to the proportions of an edifice; and hence the reason, as we learn from sacred history, why the King of Israel was compelled to rely largely upon the services of the skilled artists of surrounding barbarian nations for the successful prosecution of the work and completion of this famous edifice.

It would appear, at first blush, to be a most inopportune time to enter upon the stupendous undertaking of construction contemplated by Solomon, but a survey of the character and history of the barbaric nations among whom the empire of the world, outside of Judea, was divided, produces satisfactory evidence that the most favorable period in the world's history for building this house had then arrived.

During all this period of nearly five hundred years after the exodus, while the chosen people were engaged in sanguinary wars with savage tribes, the barbaric nations of the earth were enjoying an era of comparative peace.

The rulers of these nations being diverted from an ambition for military glory and martial fame, each naturally turned to the aggrandizement of his own empire. Philosophers taught and established schools of learning. Statesmen studied and developed the laws of organized government, and encouraged a system of inter-national improvements which should add to the glory of the nations.

The mind of the subjects naturally followed the same direction as the ambition of the rulers. The skilled artisans of these nations each put forth his utmost energies to surpass his fellows in a knowledge of principles and skill of execution, and the utmost genius at each was exerted to discover and apply the most concealed laws of nature.

From mere artisans, they became celebrated artists, known throughout the kingdoms to which they were subject for masterly attainments in design and perfection of work.

As an illustration of their skill and perfection, I quote from a letter sent to Solomon by the King of Tyre, which is found in the Second Book of Chronicles, where one of these artists is described as, "A cunning man, skillful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him with thy cunning men and with the cunning men of my lord, David, thy father."

Little wonder is it that such dazzling splendor should pervade the works of surrounding nations; that aqueducts should be built of such vast proportions, and baths constructed of such magnificence, that the student of archaeology is astonished by the contemplation of their ruins; or that amphitheaters were erected of dimensions to accommodate the population of great cities, or palaces built rising story on story above surrounding structures, or temples constructed and dedicated to the worship of every God known to the mythology of that age. This almost

innumerable multitude of celebrated artists was untrammelled by any rules of their own adoption, and unhampered by any political restraint, which prevented them from traveling in foreign countries and accepting service wherever their skill would meet with suitable reward. No miraculous wisdom was necessary to impress Solomon that, with such wealth and treasure at his command, and with such vast resources of science and skill which could be utilized by him, the supreme moment of time in the history of the world had arrived for the building of the house of God. That he did utilize these resources is recorded in sacred history, where we learn that when King Solomon was about to commence the work, he first numbered the strangers that were in Israel, and found that there was one hundred and fifty-six thousand six hundred that had drifted into the land of Israel from other countries, under the various incentives of; human action.

Presumably many of these were artists of renown, and participated in the work of construction, but others were also called upon by Solomon.

In his letter to the Tyrian King, translated into the quaint English of King James' time, he asks him to cause cedar trees to be hewn out of Lebanon, because, adds Solomon, "there is not among m any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians."

And thus was brought together this vast army of workmen necessary to prosecute the work, and one hundred and fifty-three thousand three hundred were assigned in companies to the different tasks to be performed according to their peculiar qualifications. No miraculous power is exhibited up to this time, for the skill of the artists was the natural production of study, application, and practice; the attraction which drew them to Jerusalem was the vast wealth from which their reward was to be drawn. Human nature was the same then as it since has been, and now is, and when was there ever a time in the world's history when wealth could not command the services of genius?

We have not time to describe the sources and extent of that wealth, but I refer my Masonic Brethren to the history of the last two years of the reign of David for proof that the value of the material gathered and turned over by him to Solomon was incalculable. To impress you somewhat with the wonderful resources of Solomon, I submit a comparison of the value of the talents in gold and in silver which were given by David to his son, estimated in the lawful money of the United States. According to the lowest estimate by the best authority of modern times these values amounted, in our money, to \$155,550,000. Added to tills we also learn that as the work proceeded, Tyrian ships brought gold from Ophir, and poured it into the treasury of Solomon.

While up to this time no direct interposition of Divine power had • apparently been made the time had now come for Divine intelligence to control and direct the organization of the workmen, to the end that peace, tranquility, and harmony should prevail, that the work should be can-led to a successful completion. Here was a vast army of workmen, selected from different nations, speaking different languages, practicing different forms of worship, each tenacious in his own belief in Ills national religion, actuated largely by mercenary motives, dominated by the natural impulses of the human mind, such as ambition, jealousy, and envy, inclined to re-sent any real or fancied infringement upon what they interpreted as the rights belonging to their position, with no cohesive principle to bind them together, and about to commence an enterprise which would bring them, or portions of them, in daily contact with all the natural friction and antagonism arising therefrom, for a period of upwards of seven years.

Is there anyone so little acquainted with human nature as to imagine that such an enterprise could be accomplished, unless a higher power than mere human reason was brought to bear upon that multitude?

The wisdom of God was exercised, and this unorganized multitude was speedily transformed into divisions of harmonious' bands or societies, each miraculously imbued with a common aim to arrive at perfection of work, and to practice the highest type of social virtue, including mutual forbearance and the promotion of each other's welfare. In this organization was accomplished the greatest miracle recorded in the annals of sacred history.

Had this been accomplished by a miraculous conversion of every workman to the Jewish faith, a storm of indignant protest from every nation claiming the allegiance of the workmen would have swept toward Jerusalem, and possibly something more forcible than protest would have been borne upon the wings of that storm.

The sagacity of Solomon, aided by Divine wisdom, directed him along a better path, and we may go further and add, the only way to attain the desired end and object in view. A system or

code of moral philosophy, now designated as Speculative Masonry, was formulated upon principles which were entirely consistent with the attributes, of the true God, as revealed by Ills Prophets, and in the Book of the Law, and not incompatible with the attributes which the worshipers of unknown Gods believed belonged to their respective deities. The system could be indorsed and received by all, be-cause it dealt entirely with man's relations and duties to each other, without antagonizing any of his religious beliefs, and embodied the theory and moral teachings of Speculative Masonry, which united the workmen into one common band of brothers and friends by ties so strong, that no instance of discord or confusion, save one, occurred among the workmen during the long period occupied in the erection of the building. We teach the same duties to-day, by appeals to human reason and intelligence, but the necessities of that time required a, more immediate effect upon the minds and consciences of that heterogeneous host of workmen than could be produced by the slow process of education.

Divine power, exerted through the gift of miraculous wisdom, enabled Solomon to kindle instantaneously in the hearts of Ills workmen an inspiration which subordinated every passion and ambition to the purpose for which they were assembled, and so to the principles of Speculative Masonry, thus impressed upon the under-standing of the workmen, must be accredited this transformation of dissimilar classes in one harmonious band of Brothers and Fellows, each emulating the efforts of others as to who could best work and best agree.

Had this not been so, the vast multitude of operatives would have scattered to the four corners of the globe under the restless impulse for change, the ambition to engage in other great enterprises, and the hope of an increase of compensation, for while the allurements of wealth had called them together, yet the same attractions from every quarter of the earth would have its tendency to separate them. The fact is that this continuity of purpose, as maintained to the end of that work, affords the most convincing evidence of miraculous intervention of Divine power in the affairs of men that can be found in all history, either sacred or profane, because here is exhibited a subordination of natural human impulses which has no parallel from the commencement of time, and so far from being susceptible of explanation on the basis of natural laws, Is utterly at variance with the natural laws and impulses which are known to govern the human mind, and so we yield to the inexorable logic of events, and recognize an Omnipotent power which accomplished the union of Operative and Speculative Masonry.

There is, however, a large class of people who admit that a remarkable Code of Moral Philosophy was impressed upon the minds and dominated the character of Solomon's builders, and admit, also, that he must have had the assistance of Divine wisdom to accomplish such a work and produce such results; yet, they assert that we have no authentic evidence of a direct connection between the lodges of the temple and those which have the record of a continuous existence for the past eight hundred years. Without waiving our belief in Masonic traditions, we may say to such that we have no inclination to roll back the tide of years and delve among the mists of antiquity, in hopes of establishing a connection satisfactory to these critics.

The dispersion of Solomon's builders among the various, nations of the earth in search of new fields of labor after the completion of the temple cannot be disputed, for during the generation which succeeded they were known and recognized as such. And afterward the most authentic sources of profane history teach that operative workmen have continuously, for two thousand years or upward, banded themselves together under different designations, and worked and taught the science of their craft to a limited number admitted by them for that purpose.

Whether during all these years they did or did not combine the principles of Speculative Masonry, as taught and practiced at the temple, with the teachings of the operative science, is wholly immaterial.

Of one thing we are assured, that in the ancient charges and the very earliest authentic records of the craft extant we find that, at least for eight hundred years, Operative and Speculative Masonry were combined, and it is immaterial whether the speculative portion was handed down from the time of the great work of construction, through the direct medium of lodges, or whether lodges of operatives returned to it on emerging from the moral darkness which retarded the progress of education during the medieval centuries. If, then, the attention of operatives was directed to the sublime light which illumined the way of the ancient craftsman, and they sought to be governed by it, they, and we who have received these charges, are as closely

in the footsteps of the ancient builders as we could have been by direct descent or continuous transmission.

The principles of Speculative Masonry are just as sacred to-day as they were a thousand years before the Christian era, and will be to the end of time, regardless of the question as to whether the Divine light which illumined the hearts of the ancient brethren was obscured for a time by the shadows which enveloped the human race during that period of the world's history known as the dark ages.

These suggestions of God's wisdom and direction in the formation of an organization of Speculative Masonry, for the purpose of controlling the actions of men in their conduct and relations with each other, naturally direct the mind to the close relationship which must exist between religion and Masonry, the influence which each exerts upon the human heart, and the process by which society is affected by each.

The one, in its general sense, is a system of faith and worship, which treats primarily of man's relation to his Creator; the other is a Code of Moral Philosophy, which treats primarily of the mutual obligations which exist among men.

In assemblages for the practice of religious rites, the services are usually conducted along lines of the most devout reverence for, and profound adoration of, the Supreme Being worshipped, together with expressions of faith in His omnipotence, recognition of His infinite justice, and of supplication for His Divine favor.

In the gatherings of modern craftsmen for the practice of their speculative rites, the primary lessons taught are their relations and duties, not only as between individual members, but between each and the institution of which he is a member, and to humanity in general, to the end that the order of his life shall be in harmony with the will of the Supreme Being.

Along these lines of practice, Speculative Masonry is the hand-maid of religion, for while the latter is pointing heavenward to the Great Source of wisdom, purity, and goodness, elevating the spiritual nature of mankind, the former as steadily appeals to the reason and conscience of its devotees, for the promulgation of charity and brotherly love among its members, and the performance of those acts of justice and benevolence which are in harmony with the Divine nature. Religion and the principles of Speculative Masonry being so entirely harmonious, there should be no antagonism between the orders which teach and practice either.

It is not wise for a Masonic Brother to say that a practical application of Masonic principles constitutes a religion good enough for him, because it indicates that he not only entertains a profound love for, and appreciation of, the attributes, but, unconsciously to himself, perhaps, he has a spiritual reverence for the source from which emanates that which he reveres, which constitutes religion in its true sense, and he has really gone further than to base his religion upon practice alone. It may not be necessary for the Masonic Brother to connect himself with any religious society, or that he make any public display of piety, but there should be at least a silent acquiescence of the heart and spiritual recognition of the supremacy and omnipotence of his Creator.

On the other hand, a sad spectacle is sometimes presented in the malevolence exhibited toward Masonry by men or societies professing the highest reverence and adoration for that Supreme Being from whose wisdom and justice the principles of Speculative Masonry emanated. It does not injure our institution, but is degrading to those who so ignorantly indulge in malicious misrepresentation of it.

Thus far we have considered Speculative Masonry in the light of sacred and profane history, without regard to Masonic tradition, and have suggested facts therein stated tending to show the common origin of both religion and our speculative Institution, and some striking similarities in principle.

When we consider, however, the working details of each, then appear the striking dissimilarities in the methods by each employed, a distinction which should be borne in mind by every Mason.

The one reaches out toward the whole world, inviting all, both the good and the bad, seeking to reform the wicked and depraved, and gather all mankind under the banner of righteousness. In this Speculative Masonry offers no opposition.

The one engages in a continuous open warfare against the evil which pervades the world, seeking its extermination, or at least to limit its extent and minimize its forces. In these efforts Masonry fervently wishes it God speed.

But the ethics and practice of Speculative Masonry, while not opposing the oilier, pursues different lines in carrying out its aims.

We invite none to enter our portals, but select from such as apply.

We have no reform school attached to this institution for the purpose of developing and perfecting material with which to recruit the ranks of the order, but select from those who have been developed in the great school of life. Masonry is quick to detect the evils of society, and has a most comprehensive knowledge of the sorrow and misery, the degradation and despair which humanity suffers from its causes, but, as Speculative Masons, we consider this principle of evil from a philosophical standpoint. For myself, I consider the fact that it entered the world at the dawn of creation, when the Supreme Ruler, who was and is omnipotent in goodness, could have excluded it, if its exclusion would have been in conformity with the Divine plan. There is no mystery connected with the fact that its existence was and is permitted, nor that it is around and about all conditions of life. To my mind, it is one of the forces necessary to be exerted to develop the moral nature of man, and could not be extinguished and blotted out of the world, without a total change and rearrangement of God's economy for human development. The temporary resistance often interposed by nature to the growth of vegetable life, in order to toughen its fiber and develop its strength, is analogous to the means employed to develop strength of character in humanity.

You would hardly expect continuous vigor, strength, and duration of growth in a sprout, starting from the stump of an oak tree, recently removed, notwithstanding the enormous supply of nutriment sent to it from the roots which are no longer required to nourish the tree itself. "While the tree was standing, it had power to stimulate the action of its roots by drafts upon their natural forces, but the sprout which only remained is Incapable of stimulating or directing the action of the elaborate network of roots beneath the soil; they, through Inaction, cease to perform their former functions, the process of decay begins, and the life which was so lusty and vigorous in the first season of existence becomes a stunted and shriveled bush as the seasons go by.

On the other hand, you recognize strength and vigor in the sturdy young oak, whose life commenced with the diminutive acorn sprout, and which in the progress of its growth reached out into the earth with its roots for a hold in the soil, to resist the winds which swept down upon it from every direction, and which also delved deep into the earth for moisture when seasons of drought cut off the usual supply.

So the perfect man is developed during the years required for maturity. He is planted, so to speak, amid surroundings of good and evil. The temptations overcome by the exercise of moral strength in their resistance is the wrench which tightens the nerve and strengthens the purpose of his moral nature, so that, at maturity, he may be prepared to submit to examination, in order to determine whether the tests provided by the Supreme Ruler have produced results satisfactory to him.

Many there are who fail to pass this examination, having been unable to withstand the allurements of vice. But to that other class who illustrate the theory of "the survival of the fittest," Masonry delights to open its doors and extend a hearty Welcome.

But no Mason should ever forget that it is upon this slow process of development alone that a Lodge can rely for the quality of the new material it is proposing to take. If, after all these years of development, there does not exist in the nature of the candidate for admission a natural impulse to be just to his fellow-creatures, and a benevolent disposition in his relations to society, if charitable impulses and a regard for truth are wanting, it is useless to speculate upon the chances of his subsequent development of these qualities. That which has not been accomplished under the opportunities afforded by the Divine plan, no society of individuals need attempt.

There will be enough unworthy men who manage to gain admission in every society organized for good and noble purposes, as is evidenced by the annual reports of our Committee on Grievances. There were a few bad characters even among the workmen at the Temple.

The illustration which societies afford suggests the strongest reason why we should not attempt to prepare and perfect material which is already imperfect in quality.

If we attempt it, we shall fail oftener than the credulous maiden who marries a rake, with the hope of reforming a husband, and generally ascertains, when too late, that she has taken upon herself responsibilities and assumed liabilities which are a little greater than the matrimonial "traffic will bear."

The workmen at the Temple did not attempt to make or Improve the material with which the building was constructed. They only fashioned and fitted the material already prepared by natural forces, in the slow process of nature, accepting and using that which was good, and rejecting that which was deficient in quality.

And, if we, upon examining the rough ashlar, find it so deficient in quality as to be unable to stand the pressure to which it will be subjected in its place in the building, it is useless to apply the working tools of the fellow-craft for its adjustment.

Upon this line of examination, if the candidate is otherwise worthy, and expresses belief and trust in the Supreme Being, no question ever is, or should be, asked as to how or where his worship of that Being is conducted. Religious societies being divided into sects, entertaining different opinions as to appropriate forms of religious practice and the orthodoxy of religious faith, may each very properly apply a test for the admission of a new member, that he shall entertain views similar to those indorsed by the congregation into which he seeks to enter. This is necessary to insure harmony in the practice of their religious rites. But in Speculative Masonry no unanimity of opinion upon that subject is required. It is no concern of the Fraternity whether the religious rites of a member be conducted in the temple of Buddha or in Mohammedan mosques; whether he gazes with admiration upon the cross, or contemplates with reverence and awe the smoking altars of ancient Judea. So long as he can conscientiously kneel at the Masonic altar and assume the obligations which unite him to the Brethren In relations of reciprocal kindness, he stands with them upon a common level.

This is as it should be, and as it was at the building of the Temple.

Doubtless at that time those believing in different and distinct forms of worship had their season of devotion, separate and apart from others of different religious views. This can only be presumed by an understanding of human nature. Sacred history is silent upon the subject, and our tradition only refers to the instance of one, the chief architect, who, though a Tyrian by the accident of birth and residence, had been taught by his Jewish father a knowledge of the true faith, and we learn that he entered the temple alone, after the workmen had retired for refreshment at midday, and, after an inspection of the work, entered the sanctuary to pray in secret, presumably that no offense should be given to any of his fellow-workmen of a different faith.

While indulging in these suggestions relating to the ethics of our profession, a word of reference to certain errors of conception producing more or less injury to the order may not be inappropriate.

I allude to the frequent failure to distinguish between that rational science of Speculative Masonry known among the ancient brethren as purely theoretical Code of Moral Philosophy, aiming at a development of knowledge and its application in the practical concerns of life, and that other conception which embraces an ideal, fanciful, and visionary idea of such supposed perfection as to be practically unattainable.

This latter impression is often produced upon the young novitiate from the careless method of imparting instruction by the older and better informed Brethren, aided, perhaps, by certain ritualistic terms drawn from oriental forms of expression, in which hyperbole is largely used to convey ideas which could be expressed in our ' modern phraseology by much simpler forms of speech.

By these errors of instruction the young member is often led to conclude that he is entering a domain where such harmony and concord prevails, as illustrates the poetry of perfect peace and rest from the inharmonies of nature; where every Brother is intent upon seeking the welfare of the others, and is devising ways for its accomplishment, and that he will observe them coming, on foot and out of their way from every direction to accommodate him in the business affairs of life, and he may indulge in a considerable period of injustice in his judgment of the Brethren

before he learns that the idea sought to be impressed upon him by Masonic teaching is, that a Mason should not be slow, laggard, and negligent in accommodating a Brother who comes within his reach and observation, when he can do so without serious injury to himself. Stumbling-blocks present themselves also in religious life by a literal construction of scriptural expressions, arising in the imagery of oriental forms of speech which conveyed one impression to those addressed, and an entirely different meaning to us should we attempt to apply a literal meaning to the translation. Take, for instance, the scriptural injunction, "If a man smite you on one cheek, turn the other also, which was understood by those who received it that they should not be revengeful or act upon the principle of returning evil for evil and not that they were precluded from interposing all necessary force to repel assaults upon their persons, or defending their K possessions, provided such force is used for the purpose of defense or appropriate punishment, and not in a spirit of revenge.

Care should be taken that the first impressions of a new member should be correctly formed upon rational conceptions of the order, instead of ideal ones. He should be made to know that while the Brethren are bound to act honorably, truthfully, and justly in their business and social relations, yet he will meet the same competition in business within as without the Lodge. That the society of which he has been newly made a Member is composed of a busy, enterprising, rustling, progressive, and industrious community, who will welcome him to the race for worldly thrift and prosperity, and must treat him in all business relations in the same honorable way which Masons should adopt toward all the business world.

He should learn at the very portals of the institution that there is no obligation in Masonry which requires the Fraternity to make up to him what he may lack in vim, enterprise, and industry, nor to wait for the laggard steps of a Brother along the road of life, resulting from either indolence or indifference.

With this conception of the nature of a Masonic institution at the outset, there will be no occasion for his subsequent awakening from an ideal and erroneous conception which might cause him to sit in judgment on the institution, and, because he may have experienced the discomforts of sharp elbows and heavy heels in business relations, fall into a second error of concluding that Masonry is not what it used to be.

My Brethren, history illustrates the fact that the emotional nature of mankind has in times past been wrought up to such a pitch of frenzy and blind fanaticism, that the most fearful crimes have been committed in the name of religion. National wars have been precipitated and continents deluged in blood through the misdirected zeal of those who believed the will of God was being accomplished.

Such, however, is the conservative nature of our institution that in our efforts to make a practical application of the virtues which Speculative Masonry inculcates, we can rarely injure the feelings or infringe upon the rights of any.

There is one voice which the Masonic heart never fails to respond. It is the cry for help emanating from the distressed, and oftentimes the need for such help is observed by the Fraternity, and swiftly acted upon before a request therefore has been made.

You will remember when, a few years ago, the City of Charleston, S. C., was partially destroyed by an earthquake. While the victims of the destructive forces of nature were contemplating with dazed looks the ruins of their homes, the trembling earth had scarcely ceased to vibrate, when there flashed across the continent on lightning wings an order for one thousand dollars out of the funds of this Grand Lodge, to aid in relieving their immediate distresses.

We are now engaged or about to engage, in a work which is inspired by the noblest impulses of the human soul, the erection of an asylum for the widow's and orphans of deceased Masons, that their necessities may be relieved, and the dispensation of Masonic charity may, in that way, be systematized. Too much honor cannot be accorded to those who have labored with unswerving purpose to bring about the active progress of this commendable work. The details for the education and management of the destitute orphans who shall thus be provided with a place of refuge will receive attention from wiser heads than mine, and any suggestions upon that point would be superfluous and impertinent.

There is one matter connected with the subject of the institution in progress of erection upon which I cannot forbear the expression of my own individual opinion, and I will preface the expression by the suggestion that the charitable zeal of the Brethren may not always be so.

directed as to produce the results which in the kindness of their hearts were aimed at. This contemplated home includes not only the orphans, but the widows, of deceased Masons as well, and this might, in occasional instances, work a hardship to some of the widows of deceased Brethren residing in rural districts, and who have been the subject of aid from the local lodges, particularly if that aid should be withdrawn and they were compelled to accept the alternative of receiving charity dispensed in the Masonic Home, or none at all. I can readily comprehend what a boon such an Institution will be to the lonely widows in great cities, where one is never so utterly alone as when surrounded by one or two hundred thousand human beings who are total strangers. But there are attachments formed and conditions existing in rural localities which are hard to sever, and which are but little understood by many of the Brethren whose lives have been spent in great cities.

There are many in this auditory, though, whose minds can travel back to their boyhood surroundings, where whole communities for miles around were acquainted with each other, and associated together in seasons of festivity and seasons of sorrow, where children were born, reared, and many of them grew old and died in the same locality. Tender remembrances of the old home and of early associations come back to you, although in early manhood you may have broken away from them, in the ambition for greater opportunities. What must be the attachment to locality which binds the heart of the aged woman, who still remains in the home of her childhood, never contemplating any change but the final change, when she hopes to be borne to her ultimate rest. Her husband, a Mason, perhaps, of forty years' standing, by some of those unforeseen accidents which occur in the exigencies, of life, may have been subjected to losses, and dying, leaves a widow with scant means to obtain the bare necessities of life, and she is helped out by timely contribution from the treasury of the Lodge, into which her deceased husband had paid dues, possibly, for nearly half a century.

The young people surrounding her live in anticipation and in hopes of the future. But she has passed the pinnacle and meridian of life, and traveled far enough along the declivity to see the end.

Future hopes having passed away, the aged become reminiscent, and love to indulge in retrospective views, and to recall the joys and sorrows which filled the measure of the past. In these periods of reminiscence, visions of girlhood's happy hours pass in review before her, memories of the times when the songs of mirth were blended and the tears of sympathy were mingled; how in the bloom of maidenhood she stood at the altar, and was joined in wedlock to him now gone before; how she took up the burdens of life, discharged the duties of maternity in her own home, and lent a helping hand to her neighbors and friends, assisting in nursing their little ones in sickness, in preparing the marriage feast at their weddings and in arranging their forms for the grave at death.

Every rock and tree, every hill and dale, is connected with incidents and associated with tender recollections, and now that anticipations for the future are no longer indulged in, it is the dearest privilege of her life to sit with some old neighbor and discourse with her concerning the events of life through which they passed together, and after such interviews a feeling of contentment, peace, and of patience, until the end, pervades her mind, and thus she passes along life's journey, happy and contented in her simple surroundings, awaiting and ready for her summons to cross the river. But a change comes over this peaceful life, and a new era dawns with the completion of a home for the widows of deceased Masons. A deputation of the Brethren, with hearts full of charity and brotherly love, call to bring the glad, supposed, tidings to her, and suggest her removal to the new and more commodious surroundings.

You can imagine the ashen face and terror-stricken countenance raised to the Brethren as she answers, "Oh, I could not tear myself from these old scenes, and from the old friends which are still left, and so dear to me; they couldn't spare me to go away for the balance of my life, and I know I could not live apart from them and the surroundings where my life work has been accomplished."

The Brethren, however, not understanding the depth and scope of such feelings, and believing they will soon pass away after the change, tell her in kindest words that "her repugnance will be temporary only, that she will soon be happy in new associations, that it is their duty to see that she is comfortable, and provided with all the necessities of life, and for that purpose large sums of money have been spent, and that it is her duty now to accept these

provisions for her comfort which friendly hands have prepared"; and so, by a preponderance of moral force brought to bear, she yields a tearful assent, and, in the name of charity, the act is consummated by which the heart's sensitive tendrils which clustered around all the memories of her life are rudely broken.

The Masonic patrol-wagon is backed up to her humble home, and, torn with painful emotions and bruised and bleeding in spirit, she is, in the name of charity, carried away in her age and infirmities to new and strange surroundings.

If you think that real Masonic charity has been dispensed, follow her in a few weeks or months to her new surroundings. You will find her in a comfortable room in a stately mansion. In the name of charity she is surrounded with necessaries for physical comfort, and starved and famished for that social companionship of which she has been deprived. Mnemonic bells are ringing through the chambers of her soul, and the yesterdays of life come floating back, bringing intense longings for the companionship enjoyed by her in the old home from which she has been removed. You may observe her countenance momentarily lighted up; as in eager expectation of hearing again the tones of a voice familiar in the past, and relapsing again into habitual gloom and despondency under continued disappointment; and, finally, as time passes on and the vital forces begin to weaken and give way, the moment of dissolution arrives, when with an agony of heart surpassing the grief of Israel in the wilderness, she can only fold her weak hands upon her breast, and exclaim with her final breath, "Oh! Charity, was there no grave at home for me?"

My Brethren, if here and there among you in this jurisdiction there may be Masonic widows in need of your succor and support, remember that they are by all the rules and teachings of Masonic tradition a precious legacy left in your charge. If old and infirm, you will not long have the opportunities to discharge these Masonic duties, shield them from the fate of expatriation from their old homes, and guard them as you would a sacred trust committed to your care.

Then, when you are called to close their eyes in death, a smile of gratitude for the kindness your hands have bestowed will re-ward the benevolent action. Inspired by your appreciation of real charity.

Do this, and they will bear with them to the Throne of Grace prayers for your preservation and welfare, and when your turn comes to render an account in the Celestial Lodge, you may present these persons to the Supreme Grand Master of the Universe as the brightest jewels won by you on earth, in the discharge of Masonic duties.