

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1899**

**Grand Orator
Cabkoia Cook**

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER, WARDENS AND BRETHREN

When, one year ago, I was named by the Most Worshipful Grand Master to perform the duty now about to be fulfilled by me, and honored by appointment to the office of Grand Orator of this august Body, I was happy in the belief that I might be the instrument through which some thoughts, suggested by the teachings and mysteries of our loved Order, might be disseminated—no not disseminated, rather resurrected, I looked forward with pleasure to this occasion and planned to devote the ensuing year to the task.

How often do our castles in the air bring pleasure during their construction, only to fade away before realization. The innocent child in its play-room gazes with ecstasy at the succession of brilliant bubbles which it constructs with its tiny breath, as it blows them forth from the soapy bowl; and they float upon the air, arrayed in all the brilliant hues of the rainbow, with such symmetry of form, it cannot understand why its expectations in their permanency should be doomed to disappointment. Still, it sees them burst and vanish into air.

Little did I dream, one short year ago, when installed in this office, from which I anticipated such pleasure, and when invested with this jewel, that More the realization of my hopes the affliction and great sorrow would visit me which have befallen. That blow, my brethren, must be the excuse for any shortcomings in the performance of this duty, which I know your Masonic charity will extend to me.

Occasions of this sort are not prescribed that those who listen may be taught. This audience is composed, not of pupils, but of teachers of Masonry. Nearly all here have, at some time, presided in the Oriental Chair, and must, therefore, presumed to have taught the lessons of Masonry, and consequently it is not that they may be taught anything new in Masonry that this annual address is required. Rather it is to recall to our minds and memories some of the beauties of our Order, and inspire in us and rekindle a desire and purpose to put its most excellent precepts into practice, that one is selected to perform the duty which is now called for from me.

POPE said: " Truth needs no flowers of speech." You need, therefore, expect no flowery or eloquent address from me, in the fulfillment of my duties on this occasion. Had I the pathos of an ADDISON or the eloquence of a DEMOS THENES, then you would be more interested, perhaps, in what I shall have to say. What I shall say, however, shall come from my heart. I am but human—but the instrument and mouthpiece of my Creator. I am but a machine—and as the pen which I fashion, records, by my guidance, my thoughts, so my lips give utterance but to the thoughts emanating from a higher source. How insignificant is man! How powerless to control his des-tiny, or plan for the fulfillment of his will with any certainty that his desires shall be accomplished. Every experience in life teaches us this lesson. We stand aghast, amazed, stupefied, when we contemplate ourselves and when our thoughts turn to our own existence. We know not how we came to be, nor for what end. What words so aptly express and bring home to us the utter insignificance of man as those found in that beautiful poem contained in the Great Light of Masonry, wherein is described the questions put by the Creator, as he appeared out of the whirlwind, to his servant JOB:

" Cans't thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of OBION?
Cans't thou bring forth the Mazzaroth in his season? or cans't thou guide ARCTOBUS with his sons ?
Knowest thou the ordinances of Heaven? Cans't thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?
Cans't thou lift up thy voice to the clouds that abundance of waters may cover thee?
Cans't thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, ' Here we are? '
Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? "

As I said before, I am but an instrument in the hands of my Creator, and my paramount hope is that the words which fall from my lips may so touch the hearts of those who hear them, and find response from that silent voice lodged within us all, which hears without ears and speaks without words, as to inspire resolutions to improve the remaining span of life and put in practice and revive forgotten lessons. So, shall I be of some use to my brethren of the mystic tie and fellowmen, and be enabled to feel that, through me, a greater power has done good.

It is customary, on such occasions as this, to discuss the principles and history of our Order, and such discussion is expected. Masonry! What subject could be grander or present a wider field for discourse? In contemplating, I feel awed by the majesty of the subject. I stand dumfounded in the vista which opens up before me. I find myself in a boundless field, or, as it were, in mid-ocean, with so many directions open for me to choose from that I am at a loss to determine which course to take—all lead to land. The vastness of the subject appalls me.

Masonry! Hours and days would not suffice to say all that might be said upon this subject. What might be said could hardly be compassed within the confines of a library; much easier would it be to find a limit to what could not be said. I might, in choosing a path through this great ocean of thought, talk to you of the beauties of Masonry—of its Divine lessons, as compared with those of other institutions. I might, and appropriately, too, discourse on the principles of Masonry, enlarging on those tenets of our Order contained within the points of the extended compass, or upon those virtues of which the twenty-four inch gauge, the gavel, the plumb, the square, and the trowel are emblematical. Or, were I so disposed, my allotted time could be consumed by entering upon an historical dissertation, wherein I could narrate to you the causes which led to the birth of this sovereign Order and Society which stands to-day, clothed solely in its individuality, as supremely sovereign as any monarch whom purple robes have graced or diadems proclaimed.

I could pass thence through the historical events which have marked its growth and development, as, step by step, its present condition has been reached, stopping a moment here and a moment there to note the progress of the ages; calling your attention to the different ideas mankind has had as the world has advanced in years, commenting on the causes which led to such advancement. I could then dilate upon the future, and picture what our children and our children's children may expect of it when they shall be upon the stage. Or, instead of taking any one of the courses which I have suggested, I could, perhaps, wax eloquent over the stability of Masonry, pointing out the causes for its having outlived all other institutions and prospered even through oppression. As I have stated, I find myself in such a broad field that I hardly know where to turn or what direction to take. It is a difficult task, in a subject so fraught with interest and presenting so countless a variety of jewels from which to choose, to select any.

The history of Masonry has been worn threadbare on such occasions as this. The principles and tenets of our Order have been talked about until there is absolutely nothing to be said that has not already been said upon the subject. We have heard of brotherly love, relief and truth, of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice, of faith, hope and charity, of architecture and geometry, and of the sublime lessons of integrity and immortality taught the Master Mason, until we can almost foretell all that a speaker will say upon the subjects before a sound falls from his lips.

It is impossible to be original. EMERSON says: "Every book is a quotation and every house is a quotation out of all forests and mines and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors." Therefore, my brethren, if in what I shall say, I say that which has been said before remember that there is nothing new under the sun, and that were it not for our ancestors we ourselves would not be here.

We of the mystic tie do not claim for our Institution anything more than that it is an institution founded by man. No claim of Divine origin for it has ever been made, as is claimed for many religious institutions. It does rest however, upon those Divine principles which constitute all that is truly noble and good in humanity.

The Masonry which is practiced to-day dates from A. D. 1717, at which time, in London, it was first reduced from a moral and religious operative and working society, or corporation, to what it now is—an exclusively morale speculative, or philosophical institution. The Freemasonry of to-day is founded upon that of 1717, which was founded upon the principles of Masonry of A. D. 52, introduced into Britain by the societies of Roman builders attached to the armies of Cesar, who at that time conquered that country; and the charter of York, dated A. D. 926. These

corporations in turn, derived their origin from the colleges of Roman constructors, founded in Rome seven hundred and fifteen years before the birth of Christ, under the patronage of the Emperor NUMA POMPILIUS. These colleges were independent civil and religious institutions, to which were granted the exclusive privilege of erecting the public temples and monuments of Rome. And in their turn, these colleges were based upon the Dionesian mysteries, about that time introduced into Rome by the learned priests and architects of Greece, The Dionesian mysteries, or Grecian Masonry, as it may be called seems to have been derived from three general sources: the Egyptian initiations and learning taught by the hierophants or sages of that country, schooled in the hieroglyphic erudition of the Egyptians; the teachings of the gymnosophists or Priest philosophers of India; and the Hebrew seers and kings and prophets. We, therefore, belong to an Order the age of which, we are told, is announced by the horologe of centuries, whose foundations have stood unmoved through the shocks of ages; whose superstructure has defied the ravages of time-an institution which has survived the ruins of empires and dynasties, monarchies and republics, and existed through ages of error, ignorance, superstition and barbarism, and the history of which is lost intends, those legends blending with the myths of antiquity.

There was a time when Masonry was properly denominated a secret society, when, proscribed by Church and State, denounced and burned as sorcerers prosecuted, persecuted and executed, and compelled to suffer the tortures of the Inquisition, offering up their lives as sacrifices to their principles and their integrity. Masons were compelled to meet in secret and their meeting places were kept concealed. That time has passed. In this enlightened age persecutions of that character are not tolerated, and to-day Masonry cannot be strictly classed as a secret society. Its meetings are advertised and published to the world. Its meeting places are situated in the most prominent parts of each community. The secrets of Masonry, to-day, are not the material of which our edifice is constructed nor the foundation stones upon which it rests. They are but signs, tokens, grips, words and methods of recognition. The principles of Masonry are not secret; they are known by the world and printed in our Monitors. Its members, as well as its objects, are known by all. It is a society of brothers, bound together for the carrying out of principles Divine. Its great strength, its past and present stability, it owes to HUMAN NATURE.

What is man? How many times, my brothers, have you put that question to yourselves! How many times has every human being with an intellect, in his hours of solitude and thought, propounded to himself that interrogatory! The great mystery of life perplexes us all. We cannot comprehend that which is beyond human comprehension.

That I am, I know; that I am to be, I feel. That I am to be, is no more wonderful than that I am.

We find ourselves living and breathing, but we know not whence we came. We realize that we are the inhabitants of a planet floating through space. Human imagination is powerless to picture or even to conceive the conditions prior to the creation of the Universe.

We look out into the heavens, and there we behold countless other worlds and other suns—all keeping their accustomed places, bounded by infinity. We are told by the astronomer that space has no beginning and no end, yet we find these heavenly bodies so regulated by a power beyond human comprehension that we can fix the very day and the very point upon the dial of time when they shall pass a given line.

We know that the roof which covers us and shelters us from the inclemency of the weather exists through our act in constructing it, that the raiment with which we bedeck ourselves we made. We know that the written word upon the sheet is there in consequence of our act in placing it there. We know that nought can exist until created. We know that we do exist and that there must exist a power Supreme which gave us such existence.

We cannot "bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades." We cannot "loose the bands of ORION," nor "guide ARCTURUS with his sons."

All that we see teaches us to trust the Creator for all that we have not seen. The impossibility of proving that there is no God is a demonstration of the fact that there is one. Consult ZOROASTER, and MINOS, and SOLON and the sage SOCRATES, and the great CICERO—they have all, says VOLTAIRE adored a Master, a Judge, a Father.

A greater power controls all things, ourselves included. The realization of this fact is the true cause for the existence and stability of Masonry. There is, within us all, a still small voice which

tells us that the power that could conceive and create an infinity of worlds, which in their appointed orbits move on with such precision, had in our creation a purpose greater than can be accomplished within the span of a mortal life. This inner consciousness of immortality and of a future existence, this realization of a Creator who, by every act, has demonstrated His love, has caused men to feel that as they exist through love, they should love their Creator and those whom their Creator has created.

The parent, whose every act for his child is an act of love, expects from that child a return of such love. The children of a family know that to please their parents they must love each other. Human nature craves for love and on love alone it lives.

These feelings in mankind create a demand from conscience that we so live as to deserve the love and continued favor of our Father—of the Great Architect and Creator of the Universe. For the fulfillment of this demand of con-science, Masons meet together, organize and resolve so to live as to be worthy of the love bestowed upon them by their Creator and entitled to the reward to which their souls and immortal parts look forward.

Every man must recognize the fact that the influence of others is more potent in forming character than man's individual influence on himself. In the language of a noted and revered divine, still with us: " When youth is passed, most of us can trace the making of ourselves to a few persons, some-times within the circle of our own families, sometimes outside of them—persons who gave us thoughts, emotions—told us something that awakened us—corrected our faults, encouraged our aspirations, and gave us a kind of nobility of heart. Our great experiences are by and through our fellowmen."

Do we not, each of us, remember some one who gave us a strong impulse of wisdom, virtue and love.

It is a doctrine which no science or philosophy can transcend, that in the subjugation of selfish instincts and the devotion of effort to the good of others lies the salvation of the individual and the race. If the life of the present is wisely conducted, the life of the future is always safe.

Such thoughts and feelings naturally bring men together and cause association and fellowship, each striving to help the other, realizing that in so doing he is helping himself to attain that future happiness which his conscience tells him is the sole purpose of existence. For the fulfillment of this purpose, the tenets of Masonry have been established and great lessons of morality are taught. That these lessons may be the better impressed upon the memory, they are taught symbolically and have come to be called the Mysteries of Masonry.

To the question, What is man? Masonry answers: Our bodies are casements for that which is immortal. We are the likeness of our Creator; therefore a part of Divinity itself; and it teaches that, if a part of Divinity, our lives and deeds should be shaped as our Creator and source shapes His deeds, which are all founded on love, justice, charity, truth, and unselfishness.

The lessons by which these attributes are inculcated, called—as I said before—the mysteries of Masonry, are many. They are the foundation stones upon which this grand structure is erected and which, unshaken, have sustained it in the past, and will continue to sustain it in the future. It is founded upon truths, and therefore can never die.

No dogma or creed controls us in offering our devotions to the ever living God. Every lesson taught in Masonry and which constitute the religion of the Mason may be summed up in two words—Love and UNSELFISHNESS.

Love for God and our fellowman, coupled with perfect unselfishness, form the hub of the Masonic wheel, from which radiate all of its lessons, termed in Masonry its mysteries.

It would be presumptuous on my part to undertake to discuss the lessons of Masonry. Time would not permit, nor can a lifetime suffice to enable one to fully comprehend them all. As I have said, we know them as the mysteries of Masonry—the hidden mysteries of Masonry—and hidden, indeed, they are, even from many members of the Craft.

Taught, as they are, symbolically, thought is required for their full comprehension, and a thorough knowledge of their meaning, by those who assume to teach them.

How many times do we enter a Lodge-room only to hear those beautiful mysteries rendered in such a way as to convey no force and no meaning. Members of the Craft are too prone to gratify the ambitions of incompetent brothers, both in admitting them into the Craft and in investing them with authority. No man should aspire to an office in a Masonic Lodge unless he understands the principles which its beautiful ceremonies are intended to symbolize and

inculcate. Yet, how many times a novice, after having received all of his degrees, is taken by the hand and congratulated on the floor of the Lodge-room, only to find himself unable to understand or appreciate anything that has been said or done.

There are no lines, there are no words, from the beginning to the end of the various degrees of Masonry, in the initiation of candidates, which do not convey a meaning and a lesson. Yet, how often are they recited without a realization of this fact. The initiate, in the very first degree, hears from the lips of the Master an explanation of a portion of the ceremonies in these words: ***** (Here followed quotation from the Work, not proper to be written.) Will this lesson, taught him at the very threshold of his Masonic career, ever fade from the memory of one who has received it from a Master who understood and felt that which he was teaching? Upon his receipt of the working tools of this degree is this lesson still further impressed upon the mind; and, when the initiate has passed through the first degree of Masonry, if initiated by a Master who understood that which he taught, he goes forth from the Lodge-room with the words "brotherly love," "relief" and "truth" ringing in his ears, and the lessons of temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice so lodged in his mind that he already feels himself to be a better man and resolves in his inner soul to lead a better life.

When, as a Fellow Craft, the candidate goes forth possessed of the lessons taught him by the Master who appreciated what he was teaching, he already feels that henceforth his walk through life shall be as upright as the plumb and that the square of virtue shall ever be the guide of his actions, that the level of time may not find him unprepared to meet his God. Here are his thoughts directed to that Giver of all Good. What more beautiful lesson was ever taught than that found in the Master's explanation of the uses of Geometry, when he says: "Geometry, the first and noblest of sciences, is the basis on which the superstructure of Freemasonry is erected. By Geometry we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her most concealed recesses. By it we discover the power, wisdom and goodness of the Great Artificer of the Universe, and view with delight the proportions which connect this vast machine. By it we discover how the planets move in their respective orbits, and demonstrate their various revolutions. By it we account for the return of seasons and the variety of scenes which each season displays to the discerning eye. Numberless worlds are around us, all framed by the same Divine Artist, which roll through the vast expanse and are all conducted by the same unerring law of nature." Could any language framed by human tongue more forcibly draw the attention to the Omnipotent?

And a Master Mason who is taken by the hand by a Master who felt that which he taught in the degree, stands upon the floor resolved that henceforth integrity shall be his watchword. Can words be found more deeply impressive than those coming from the Master when he informs the candidate what is till expected of him in these words: ***** (Here followed quotations from the Work, not proper to be written) And can the candidate ever forget the explanation he receives, feelingly explained, of those symbols by which he is taught his duty to his fellow-man and brother Mason ***** (Here followed quotations from the work, not proper to be written) And how many times my brothers, at the conferring of the Third Degree by a Master skilled in his work, have we felt a thrill pass through our frames, causing every nerve to vibrate, as the Master, at the conclusion of his lecture, explaining the emblems of our Order, pictures the beauty of integrity and directs the mind to our immortal part.

Let these lessons be imprinted on the mind of the novice in such color that they fade not, and if he has the immortal spark within him, it will flame forth never to be quenched.

To every man of original power, there comes in early youth a moment of sudden discovery of self-recognition-when his own nature is revealed to Himself, when he catches, for the first time, a strain of the immortal song to which his own spirit responds and which becomes thenceforth and forever the inspiration of his life.

Well are the lessons of Masonry, understandingly communicated, calculated to open up this portal of intuition.

Aside from the lessons taught in the degrees, and the explanations of the emblems, tools and ceremonies, there are other mysteries of Masonry which the Mason must interpret for himself; mysteries which can only be comprehended by study and by thought. One of these is, to my mind the one great mystery of Masonry, symbolical of the mystery of mysteries ---- life.

This mystery, greater than all others, so permeates all Masonry that it is seldom noticed. It is a mystery undoubtedly intended by the founders of our Order to symbolize that which gave birth to this majestic institution-LIFE and IMMORTALITY.

It is the foundation stone upon which Masonry and each of its lessons rest.

What is it? The figure 3.

In all Masonry, everything is formulated to teach a lesson; and from the time that the applicant for Masonic brotherhood seeks admission, asks the recommendation of a friend and knocks at the door of the Lodge-room--- three acts---until he is taken by the hand and congratulated as a Master Mason and urged to retain those three qualities, of which the spotless garment with which he there stands clothed is at once the emblem, the badge and the reward, everything is in threes.

The knocks at the door admit the candidate to the Lodge-room where he finds the Holy Bible, the Square and the Compass. Three, greater and three lesser lights are ever before us all. The pillars of a Lodge are three. Faith, Hope and Charity form the three principal rounds of that theological ladder which JACOB, in his vision, saw, reaching from earth to heaven, and by which all good Masons hope at last to arrive at the clouded canopy and star-decked heaven which forms the covering of a Lodge. The Mosaic pavement, the indented tessel and the blazing star, constitute the three ornaments of a Lodge. To three points of the compass only can a Mason look for light. The immovable jewels of a Lodge are three, while the movable jewels consist of a like number. Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are taught as the three principal; tenets of Masonry. Into three degrees is Masonry divided. Into three parts is the Mason taught to divide his time. The Plumb, Square and Level are the; three tools by which the Fellow Craft is admonished as to his course through life; nor while being conducted through the several ceremonies of this degree and being presented with the three precious jewels of a Fellow Craft Mason and instructed as to the wages of such, does the Fellow Craft lose sight of this emblematical figure.

Three raps of the gavel convey a meaning to all Masons; and in the Third Degree, especially, is the figure three written between all the lines. * * *
(Here followed a description of the various proceedings of the Third Degree, not proper to be written)

The emblems of mortality are three, and the sprig of acacia, which becomes a tree, passes through its three states; brought into existence on the parent tree, it is cut down and put into the earth but to live again.

These are a few instances in which the figure three permeates all Masonry.

Many more could be instanced. They cannot be accidental. There is a purpose and a meaning in the mystic figure. What is it?

Study it out for yourselves, my brothers; I can but suggest a thought or two.

The Great Architect of the Universe, when he brought us into existence wove into our lives and being and into all nature, this same mystic three.

We are born, we live, we die; birth, life and death are our three mortal states.

We eat, we drink and we breathe: three means of nourishment.

Our bodies are in three parts: head, trunk and limbs—and body, mind and soul make up the whole, composed of flesh, blood and bone.

Youth, manhood and age are the three stages of life, which in all of us is made up of joy, sorrow and pain.

The decaying germ sends up the stalk which grows the grain.

The acorn, the tree and the blossom are the three stages of the mighty oak.

Root, tree and leaf are necessary to its existence.

Through the three stages of bud, blossom and fruit must pass the products of our orchards.

The earth, air and water are necessary to our existence.

The sun, the moon and the stars light our terrestrial globe.

Fire, air and water are the elements of destruction.

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To wield his gavel the Master requires his hand, the gavel and a resisting object.

The illimitable, silent, never resting thing called time, as CARLYLE describes it, "rolling, rushing on, swift, silent, like an all-embracing ocean tide, on which we and all the universe swim like exhalations, like apparitions which are and then are not," has its three states—its past, its present and its future.

These and many other instances could be cited, all tending to show that Masonry, in its mystic three, took its model from life and nature. And can there be a greater or a better meaning given to this greatest of all Masonic mysteries than that it is intended to portray the Mason's belief in the immortality of the soul?

Symbolically, it proclaims that death is not all, but that, as in this mortal life, all things are in threes, so the immortal part, the spirit, or soul of man, which will live when time shall be no more, must pass through its three stages—life, death and immortality.

Let us take this lesson then, my brothers, to our hearts, and when we go hence and step forth from this Lodge-room let us resolve to lead better lives— to forego selfishness and hypocrisy, and walking uprightly in our several stations before God and man, square our actions by the square of virtue and—ever remembering that we are traveling on the level of time to that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns—lead lives based on LOVE and UNSELFISHNESS, as taught by our loved Order, and in all things imitate * * * in his truly exalted and exemplary character, in his unfeigned piety to God, and in his inflexible fidelity to his trust; that we may be prepared to welcome death, not as a grim tyrant, but as a kind messenger sent to translate us from this imperfect to that all-perfect, glorious and celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Grand Master of the Universe forever presides.