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LECTURES ON FREEMASONRY.



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The Duty of the Master
IN THE
GOVERNMENT OF A MASONIC LODGE.



A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE LODGE OF INSTRUCTION,

HELD UNDER THE WARRANT OF

THE VICTORIA LODGE, No. IV.,

DUBLIN,

ON MONDAY, THE 5TH OF JANUARY, 1857.

BY THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

THE DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF IRELAND,

JOHN FITZHENRY TOWNSEND, LL.D.



DUBLIN :

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1857.

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TO
WILLIAM ALLEN, ESQ.,

Secretary of the Victoria Lodge, No. IV.

MY DEAR BROTHER ALLEN,

IN compliance with the request of our Brethren, I send you the manuscript of my Address to them. Were I to consult only my own wishes—I may say my own vanity—I would rather suppress it, for it was not intended for publicity beyond the limits in which my delegated authority is exercised. I had hoped, indeed, that it might be useful within the circle of our metropolitan Lodges: my Brethren think it may be so throughout a wider extent, and it is not for me to question their judgment. I think their kindness, often experienced and ever gratefully remembered by me, has induced them to overrate this production; but I am confident that neither they nor I need feel ashamed of the sentiments it expresses. It is to be hoped that whoever thinks it worth attention will remember, that I am neither the champion nor the apologist of our Society; and that my opinion of its merits is the less liable to the imputation of partiality that I do not attempt to conceal or palliate the defects it is our common object to correct.

Believe me, my dear Allen,

Most sincerely yours,

J. F. TOWNSEND.

16th January, 1857.

The Duty of the Master

IN

THE GOVERNMENT OF A MASONIC LODGE.

BRETHREN—As this is the period of the year when the newly-elected officers of our several Lodges enter upon their official duties, this present meeting of your Lodge of Instruction appears to me to present a fitting occasion to offer to my less experienced brethren some observations on the nature of the duties of a Master in the government of his Lodge ; and as the consideration of his duties will necessarily involve that of his rights, which are, correlatively, the duties of the Craft, I think the subject will be found interesting to us all. I do not intend to comment upon the charges which are contained in the Book of Constitutions, and which are read to every Master at his installation : they are plain and precise, and require no elucidation : I mean rather to direct attention to those parts of the Master's duty with which the Constitutions presume that he is acquainted.

I have been induced to make this attempt at reviving the long-disused practice of giving Masonic Lectures, because I consider that a lecture is the easiest way by which those who desire information, but have not leisure for research, can obtain the benefit of the researches of others. An ordinary Lodge meeting would not be a fitting place for the experiment ; Masonic disquisitions would be inexpressibly tedious to those who find the chief

charms of Masonry in its sociality ; but as we are all met here for the express purpose of receiving and imparting information, I am induced to address you ; though I do so rather with the hope of offering an example to others more competent, than with that of saying anything peculiarly novel, entertaining, or instructive. Your fraternal kindness will, I am sure, make due allowance for the imperfection of attempts made in the short intervals of professional duties, which afford little time for the study necessary to collect materials for an address, or for the more difficult task of condensing and arranging them when collected.

It has often occurred to me that the nature of the engagements, both expressed and implied, which are entered into by the Master of a Lodge, is, in general, but indifferently understood or appreciated. It is reasonable to presume that any man of ordinary understanding who has gone through the subordinate offices will, by the time he reaches the chair, be able to perform his part in the ceremonies of the Lodge with accuracy and propriety. If not, he must be a cipher—"if he can *do* nothing, but *say* nothing, he shall *be* nothing here." But we have a right to expect more than the getting by rote a few phrases. The Master should possess, and should be able to impart, some knowledge of the meaning and origin of our ceremonies, which, unless explained, may seem frivolous or tedious formalities. They are, it is true, calculated to awaken rational curiosity, and are fraught with meaning : Masonry still bearing the impress of its Asiatic origin, teaches its moral precepts by symbolical actions. But explanation is needed to convey that meaning, and "THE MASTER" is not only supposed to be a master of *men*, but a master of *work*. The vulgar and illiterate may stand amazed at what they cannot comprehend—but Masonry is not confined to the vulgar and illiterate ; men of high intellectual acquirements are daily joining our Society, anxious not merely to share in its benefits, but to be instructed in the boasted philosophy which is "veiled in its allegories, and illustrated by its symbols." Why, then, should we tolerate that ignorance which is the result of mere apathy ?

Surely it is worth while to know somewhat of a subject which engages the attention of so many estimable and intelligent persons. And the means of that knowledge are in our reach. Masonry has now broken through the restraint which the timid jealousy of our predecessors had imposed upon it. We have shared in the irresistible progress of the age, and we now have Masonic treatises, magazines and journals, all devoted to the explanation of Masonic history, antiquities, and principles. We attract more attention than heretofore, as appears not only by the multiplicity of our authorized publications, but by the host of spurious and despicable rituals and pretended exposures, which feed the credulity of the vulgar. Here, in this city, our friends of the Victoria Lodge have entitled themselves to our lasting gratitude by reviving this Lodge of Instruction, where all who please may become practically conversant with Masonic rites and ceremonies. And, perhaps, we may look forward, at no distant period, to a regular system of lectures on different subjects connected with Masonry, by which the influences of literature, science, and taste, may be brought to aid in the diffusion of rational and intellectual improvement amongst us, and that in the easiest and pleasantest manner possible. Such, at least, is my hope. My ambition is to point out thus to others the way in which I do not pretend to follow.

To become Master of his Lodge is the legitimate object of every young brother who takes any interest in our Society. The very questionable policy of our present regulations seems to be, to open to each, in succession, the way to the Mastership—almost, if not altogether, as a matter of course. Now, my younger brethren may rest assured, that although, in deference to an usage which it is, perhaps, too late to abolish, we may place a careless or ignorant Mason in the chair, invest him with the badge of authority, and address him with the external forms of respect, we cannot command for him the deference and consideration which will be sure to follow the enlightened and expert. He will be like the figure-head of a ship—placed foremost and gaudily

decorated, but, after all, it is a mere effigy, not contributing in the least to the management of the vessel. In small as in great things, *knowledge* is power—*intellectual superiority* is real pre-eminence.

An ignorant Master may, however, find some charitable friend to prompt him—some expert craftsman to explain for him what he could not explain for himself. All that is but little creditable to the Master's ability, and cannot, one would think, be gratifying to his good opinion of himself, yet it is not necessarily injurious to the Order. But what shall we say of those who regard the office of Master of a Lodge as no more and no less than the presidency of a convivial club, which is to have no other effect upon our conduct in life, than as it may enable us to pass a pleasant evening occasionally in sociable company? This is not so uncommon a case. The prevalence of this notion of Masonry (especially among the higher classes of society) has paralyzed its powers of doing good, consigned the Institution to ridicule and contempt in the eyes of many whose good opinion we would justly prize—and made it, at best, the faint and empty image of what it ought to be, and might be, if well understood and thoroughly practised. We are often taunted with making too much of Masonry, but the truth is, we greatly underrate both its objects and capabilities, and are, therefore, too ready to admit men amongst us whom we can hardly expect to bestow a single thought upon Masonry. The avowed enemies of Masonry have striven hard—but in vain—to injure it. Our worst foes have been those of our own household, who have tarnished the brightness of Masonic purity, and lowered the standard of Masonic excellence. Let us hope, however, that juster notions are beginning to prevail; as they do, the office of Master will cease to be a mere name, and will resume its ancient utility and importance.

The Master's rights do not take effect until his installation. Once installed, his authority becomes absolute in his own Lodge, although due checks are provided by the Constitution of the Order

against the arbitrary exercise of it. It is presumed that his brethren have elected one in whom they may confide, and that his conduct will be neither capricious nor tyrannical; therefore, by the immemorial Masonic law, obedience is his right, and he must be obeyed accordingly. By electing him his brethren have given him, so far as they are concerned, an indefeasible right to preside in the Lodge during his term of office; therefore, they cannot remove, suspend, or censure him, nor vote him from the chair, nor prevent him from taking it. They cannot compel him to open, close, or adjourn the Lodge. He does all this at his own pleasure, as our ancient forms at opening and closing sufficiently prove; and here let me remark how practically useful are those ancient forms which we frequently hear hurried over as too familiar. Every Master should insist on their being strictly observed and accurately repeated in his Lodge, without abridgement or alteration. They remind each officer of his duty, and all of the due subordination which so peculiarly distinguishes the Society.

There are certain matters which the Master must decide on his own responsibility, and on which he should not put any question to the Lodge—namely, all points of order, ceremonial, Masonic law, and discipline, in which I include the arrangement of Lodge business. These he must determine according to his own conscientious notions of what is right, no matter how urgently he may be pressed to the contrary: if he does not, he is unworthy of his place. And his decision on such questions should be at once and cheerfully submitted to. There must be no altercation, protesting, disputing, or remonstrating, between the Master and the Craftsmen. Even the ordinary marks of approbation or disapprobation, are unmasonic and irregular. As in a court of justice the opinion of the judge, though not always assented to as correct, is, invariably, treated with deference, and presumed to be right until it has been set right by superior authority, so it should be with the decisions of a Master in his Lodge. And it is for the common benefit of us all to uphold this authority un-

impaired ; because the temporary inconvenience which may result from an error of the Master's judgment, or even from an occasional abuse of his powers, is of far less moment than the preservation of the harmony and order, which it is one of our chief ends to attain—which our lectures illustrate when they point to the glories of the firmament ; to the amazing structure of sun and planet, system and cluster, sweeping along in deep and solemn silence, without speech or language ; where neither obstacle, nor cessation, nor failure of design occurs in all the astounding plan.

But the Master is always amenable to the Grand Lodge, and any well-grounded complaint against him may be preferred there. Then, indeed, it becomes *his* duty to submit, with ready and cordial acquiescence, to the ultimate decision of the supreme Masonic power.

Some inexperienced brethren may think that no difficulty can ever arise in the decision of any Masonic questions, because they have never seen any such difficulty in our Society. It is true that mutual forbearance is so much inculcated, and good feeling so widely prevails amongst us, that in the hands of a judicious ruler, all goes on with easy and undeviating regularity. But I can assure them, that in a well-regulated Lodge there is a very ample scope for the exercise of intellect ; and that the Master will soon find that he requires even more than a knowledge of Masonic laws and usages, to acquit himself creditably of his responsibility. He should know his own limits, so as not to encroach upon the rights of his brethren, of which, I candidly warn every young Master, he will find us not a little jealous. If he falls short of his own bounds, or oversteps them, he will find clear heads and keen tongues to remind him—respectfully, but unmistakably—of the fact. The Lodge will soon feel what sort of hand holds the helm ; and, as they are bound to acquiesce in his opinion, as their Master, he must show equal deference to theirs, when the question is one to be settled by their votes. He may speak, and he may vote in the deliberations of the Lodge, but he must not let his conduct become liable to

the imputation of partiality ; for he is still entrusted with the duty of taking the result of a division, or of a ballot, and though a division or ballot often takes place on questions of no great moment, yet, we know it sometimes happens that the credit and character of individuals are vitally affected by the determination of a Lodge. Also the peace and harmony, as well as the dignity of his Lodge, are, to a great extent, in his keeping. Words may be spoken in the heat of debate which may provoke angry recrimination, even in the very temple of Concord and Peace, and create jealousy and temporary disunion even between close and sincere friends. The Master should be ever ready to heal dissension, and prevent the spread of disunion ; and (which is no less important) he must be ever on the watch to check debate before it becomes strife, and to preserve, even in argument, the tone of deliberation ; which he can always do, provided he never for a moment loses sight of his own position, or forgets the calmness of temper essential to command. It may be tried, occasionally ; for there will be sometimes silly, and meddling, and impracticable people in a Lodge as in every other society : men like to display themselves, even in a narrow sphere, and to take a lead, even in the wrong direction ; still, even petulance and folly in a member of the Lodge will not justify arbitrary conduct or insolence in the Master, whose real power consists only in the support of his brethren—support which he may be sure of obtaining while his motives are honourable, and his demeanour dignified and proper. Firmness and decision are perfectly compatible with good temper and courtesy. Most of us have seen an instance of this in the conduct of our Grand Master, whose amiable temper and conciliating manners place the most diffident at their ease, while his integrity of purpose commands the respect of us all ; consequently, he is no less beloved than honoured amongst us, and Irish Masons hail with honest pride and complacency the name of the Duke of Leinster.

One of the ancient privileges of the Masters of Lodges, which in modern times has nearly been transferred from them to the

Secretaries, is the right to summon "meetings of emergency." I think we have fallen too much into the habit of holding these special meetings for trifling occasions, or merely to suit the convenience of an individual. Those who regularly attend them are usually the best and most conscientious of the Order: the "dining Masons" are seldom found at a Lodge of Emergency. It is unfair to call men from their occupations and pursuits without good reason; and the goodness of the reason must be left to the Master's decision; certainly the Secretary has no right to convoke the Lodge on emergency at his own pleasure. But as the Master, as well as all the members, is bound by the By-laws, which always provide for the regular meetings, the Secretary need not obtain his permission to issue summonses for them. And I think that if the Master were to die, or be expelled, the Wardens might convoke the Lodge, since there would then be no Master, and they, as well as he, are intrusted with the government of it.

This three-fold system of government, which probably is coeval with the Order itself, is one of the proofs relied on by some learned men as establishing its great antiquity. I suppose it is known to all here that among the ancient nations of the world there were certain "Mysteries," that is, rites and doctrines connected with their religious worship, which, being kept secret from the mass of the community, and communicated only to a chosen few, were regarded with great veneration. Any profanation or disclosure of them was visited with universal abhorrence and with the severest punishment. Dr. Oliver, the great expositor of Masonic antiquities, informs us of the singular fact that, in the mysteries of Persia, India, and Greece, as likewise in those of the Celtic tribes of Britain, there were *three* principal officers, one of whom was of supreme authority, and personated the rising sun. The rites were generally of a funereal character, in which the violent death and subsequent restoration to life of some celebrated personage were represented; but the ceremonies were as various as the deities in whose honor they were celebrated. The mysteries were probably intended, originally, to teach the great doctrine of

the unity of God,* and to commemorate some traditions handed down from patriarchal times†—traditions frequently connected with the deluge and the original peopling of the earth;‡ but whatever was their original intention, they became overlaid with gross and sensual idolatry, and rather fostered than overthrew the vulgar paganism they were, it is thought, intended to expose. The early Christian writers speak of the mysteries in terms of great abhorrence. These impurities were at length banished from the Roman world by the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ. They gradually fell into disrepute, and were prostituted for money to the lowest rabble. They were prohibited, with all the other rites of pagan superstition, by an edict—his last—of the Emperor Theodosius, A.D. 390,§ which was enforced by his successors with great severity, and inflicted, says Gibbon, a deadly wound on all the superstitions of the pagans, although it was some time before they were totally suppressed.

The traces of resemblance between the mysteries and modern Freemasonry could not fail to attract the attention of Masons. Dr. Oliver, and those who adopt his views, contend that a secret system of Masonry—that is, of the knowledge and worship of the true God, united to the practice of strict and pure morality—was known in the earliest ages of the world, and was the original institution from which all the mysteries were derived,|| diversified only by local and political circumstances. But a scarcely less eminent Masonic authority, Dr. Albert G. Mackay, of Charleston, U.S., whose “Lexicon of Freemasonry” is so valuable an

* Bishop Warburton's “Divine Legation,” &c., book ii. chap. 4; Dr. Oliver's “Star in the East,” &c.

† Leland's “Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation,” vol. i. part i. ch. 9; Rees's Cyclop., art. “Mystery.”

‡ See Dr. Oliver's curious work on “Initiation.”

§ Gibbon's “Decline and Fall,” chap. xxviii.; Lawrie's “History of Masonry,” 23.

|| Oliver's “Signs and Symbols,” lect. i.

acquisition to Masonic literature, while he admits that the instruction conveyed in the mysteries was an impure emanation from patriarchal theology, thinks that the connexion between them and Freemasonry, as we now understand the term, commenced at the building of the Temple. The Dionysiac artificers, an association connected with the Dionysian mysteries, which prevailed in Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria, had devoted themselves to architectural pursuits, and were established as a community of temple-builders about one thousand years before the Christian era. They had their peculiar signs and tokens—used masonic implements in their ceremonies, and were bound to relieve each other's wants.* Dr. Mackay thinks that Hiram the Builder, who was sent by the king of Tyre to Solomon to aid in the works of the Temple, was initiated by them, and that Hiram imparted the secrets and privileges of the society to the Jews, who, after the completion of the Temple, perpetuated the associations formed by him through the sects of the Kassideans and Essenes.

Without pretending to decide this question, I cannot help thinking, with reference to Dr. Oliver's theory, that all the terms and legends of Masonry point plainly to a *Jewish* origin, and have reference to the favorite object of that people—the construction or the restoration of the Temple. With the most unfeigned respect for any opinion of Dr. Mackay, it seems difficult to suppose that a system so pure as Masonry should come of a stock so vile as the abominable and polluted Syrian mysteries. Moreover, the language of modern Masonry is manifestly derived (as are its oldest constitutions) from some association of actual, operative builders, which, so far as I can discover, the Essenes do not clearly appear to have been, though Scaliger contends, as Dr. Mackay and Lawrie tell us, that they sprung from the Kassideans, a pious fraternity, who devoted themselves particularly to repairing the Temple. The Essenes were a sect which for many cen-

* Lawrie's Hist., p. 29, where many authorities are quoted.

turies existed in Judea. The account given us of them by Josephus and Philo of Alexandria—both Jewish writers—presents many features resembling those of our own Society. They did not admit women to their community. They did not concern themselves with religious disputes or political factions. They consisted of two classes, one of which devoted themselves to a life of contemplation, the other to some handicraft, but they were all, theoretically, on a level, and had their goods in common. They were distinguished by a peculiar white garment given them on their adoption into the society, to which none were admitted but after taking two probationary steps, and being solemnly sworn not to reveal the secrets of the sect. Taylor, the editor of Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible, gives many reasons for thinking that John the Baptist belonged to the Essenian sect; and it is supposed that the early Christians borrowed from them many of their opinions and customs. It is by no means improbable that the doctrinal part of Masonry was derived from them in the early ages of Christianity; but still I think it a matter of mere conjecture, although Masonic writers of great eminence treat it as indubitable. Practically, the enquiry may not be worth pursuing; but it is certainly highly interesting to trace thus, in our modern forms and legends, relics of ancient associations of a similar nature to our own, as the geologist finds in the rock the imbedded fragments, tokens there preserved of prior formations and existences, long since and for ever passed away. Thus, after the lapse of ages, some remains of primeval rites are found in our ceremonies: still, as of old, the Master sits enthroned in the East, typifying the Light of Truth irradiating the darkness of ignorance and superstition:—still his commands are formally re-echoed by his Wardens, and still his duties and privileges are proclaimed at each meeting of our assemblies, in the hearing of all his brethren.

As it is not only the Master's privilege, but also his duty to rule the Lodge, none are permitted to enter it as visitors but by his permission, since he is responsible for the conduct of the assembly. At the very last communication of the United Grand

Lodge of England, this subject was discussed, and the resolution unanimously passed, was—"That it is the opinion of this Grand Lodge, that it is in the power of the W.M. and Wardens of any private Lodge, to refuse admission to any visitor of known bad character."* But, irrespectively of character, whoever claims to be present at a Masonic meeting must, if a Mason, be perfectly well aware that he is bound to satisfy the Master and brethren as to his qualifications. The investigation into them cannot be too strict, and it should never be entrusted but to a sagacious as well as competent examiner. The Master has a right to demand *all* the evidences of a visitor's right to admission—the production of his certificate—the proof of his being what he asserts himself to be, and any other test that he can devise. I can speak confidently on this head, as the decision of our own Grand Lodge has recently settled the question, that the admission of a visitor is not a matter of right. It is, of course, disagreeable to reject any one professing to be a brother; but it is better (as Dr. Mackay well observes) that many true Masons should go away disappointed from our doors, than that one unauthorized person should gain admittance there.

It is hardly necessary, I hope, to remind any one, however inexperienced, that the Master is as much Master during the entertainments of the Lodge as at any other time; and is bound accordingly to check any irregularity, and to prevent any abuse. For this reason, I think, it is advisable that our entertainments should take place "in Lodge," as it is called; for the Master can thus exercise a salutary restraint over the meeting; and the closing of the Lodge (which should always take place at an early hour) is a signal for the members to retire. One of the charges, to the observance of which each Master solemnly pledges himself at his installation, is to guard against all manner of intemperance and excess. Now, of all the charges brought against Masonry by its opponents, none is

* *Freemason's Magazine*, January, 1857.

more frequently made than that of its leading to intemperance. That the charge has been too often made justly, I do not pretend to deny: I am not here to flatter, but to teach; I do not attempt to excuse what it would be my grave duty to reprove and reform. Yet, in justice to my brethren, I must say that I have no reason to think our Lodges in this city are degraded by that vice. I certainly have not seen, during my experience as Deputy Grand Master, any instance of such misconduct. Yet I know that some cases have occurred where individuals have brought discredit on the Masonic order, by indulging, at our social meetings, propensities which they certainly never acquired from our precepts, nor from the example of those we most look up to and respect. The world will not, however, draw these nice exculpatory distinctions: it will judge of us, not by the conduct of the many, who retire from the Lodge festival, as from a private party, early, and after temperate and harmless enjoyment, but by that of the few, who, in defiance of our principles and in spite of our example, will remain at table after the Lodge has closed, and the meeting lost its Masonic character. This is an evil, and one which we cannot always prevent. We cannot turn men's hearts—we may advise, and we may act upon our own principles—but advice is not like medicine, which will produce an effect whether taken voluntarily or forced down a man's throat. We may point to the Sacred Law, that Great Light which should be the guide of the Mason's path in life, and remind our brethren of its precepts; but, surely, we cannot expect that Masonry will effect what Christianity has not been able yet to accomplish. People say—why do you suffer such persons to disgrace your Society?—why do you not rather expel them? Simply because we cannot set up an inquisition to punish men because they want common sense or common prudence, or because we cannot get them to adopt our views of propriety. If Masons will insist on introducing amongst us persons who see no good in our Society but its occasions for eating and drinking, and if they go on thus to make

our Lodges, instead of schools of temperance and prudence, mere congregations of sots, and if they thus pervert Masonry to an evil and mischievous end—of course every man of sense will laugh in their faces at their cant of fraternity, benevolence, and morality, and will answer their vindications with the unassailable facts of neglected families, ruined business, shattered health, and impaired reputation. If we could convict any Lodge of being such a hot-bed of vice and dissipation, our first duty would be to withdraw its warrant and renounce all intercourse with its members; and all who are conversant with the business of the Grand Lodge must likewise know, that any well-founded complaint of individual misconduct is invariably punished with the only penalties in our power to inflict—suspension from the benefits of the Society, or even total expulsion from it. But though the world often unjustly imputes to Masonry the faults of individual Masons, for that very reason let each Master—each Mason be vigilant. Let each sweep before his own door—the street will soon be clean. Excess, in even allowable things, is transgression. “Moderation,” says the excellent Bishop Hall, “is the silken thread running through the pearl-chain of all virtues.”

We have seen that the brethren must, in all lawful things, obey their Master. He, on his part, should have no object but the advantage, welfare, and comfort of his brethren. We may teach him our forms, explain to him their meaning, stimulate his ambition to discharge his duties creditably, but, after all, we must leave him to look within his own heart for instruction, and to be guided by his own good sense and good feeling in his general conduct. But although particular rules will not avail to supply the want of good sense and discretion, yet there are two general maxims of which the Master should never lose sight—first, to be *serious*—secondly, to be *strict* in observing what are called the landmarks of the Craft.

I am happy to be able to bear testimony that in this metropolis our ceremonies are uniformly conducted with propriety,

and that the example spread throughout the land by our P.G. Masters and P.G. Lodges has put an end to the levity and rudeness too often tolerated in some country places. Every man who intrusts himself into our hands does so confiding in our honour and our professions, and this alone should render him sacred from all disrespect and insult. And, moreover, we should never forget with what solemnity our Lodges are opened: even in the name at which the adoring Hosts of Heaven bow down in reverential awe. There is no real distinction between open profanity and the mockery of first making a solemn appeal and prayer to our Creator, and then degenerating into levity, or (what is more usual, though scarcely less reprehensible) indifference and inattention. This we must reform altogether.

Next, we must be careful to preserve uniformity, and to hand down unaltered to our successors what we have ourselves received. Masonry is universal—it knows no limit of country, or language, or time; therefore, its essential points must be strictly observed; if not, it will lose its universality, and, to the same extent, its utility. Ceremonies must indeed change from time to time, and from country to country, but the essentials of the Order, its universal language and reciprocal obligations, must be carefully preserved from all addition or diminution: we must adhere to the form in which we have learned them: we have no right to change even their antiquated phraseology to please the fastidiousness of modern taste. It was well said, “you may polish an old coin, to make it more legible; but if you go on polishing it will soon be a coin no longer.” And the Master should take care that every newly-admitted or newly-raised brother shall be fully instructed in all the essentials of the degree he has received—that he shall know to whom and to what he is bound. He has come to seek the light of knowledge, and it is his right to receive it, full and pure, from him whose duty it is to impart it—the Master in the chair.

I also strongly recommend to each Master to give or have

given, when opportunity permits, an explanation of the Masonic rites. I have seen some leave our assemblies with feelings not merely of disappointment, but of some degree of indignation, as if we had been merely jesting at their expense, at their first coming amongst us. Such feelings would naturally lead a man of sense and spirit to despise the ceremony and the Institution which sanctioned it; but I never saw anything of the sort when the ceremony was explained as it ought to be, beginning with the first lesson which teaches the aspirant to leave without the Masonic temple the tokens of worldly wealth and distinction, and the soil and stain of earthly feelings, and to seek, humbly as a brother of the earth, subject to like wants and weaknesses with ourselves, admission to a society in which personal merit alone confers a claim to distinction. At each step of the Masonic rite some grave moral truth is to be impressed—some interesting historical association elucidated: the explanation will at once enlighten those who hear and him who gives it. But, it may be said, few have capacity for lecturing on these matters. It is not so; a man who understands his subject will never want words to explain it; no set form is requisite nor even recommendable for that purpose.

But it is not by learned researches—by groping in the darkness of the past—that we can best serve the Order, and do good in our own generation. It matters little to us whether the rites of Masonry can be traced to patriarchal times; to the exploded mysteries of heathenism; to the Jewish temple-builders; or, as some suppose, merely to the artificers whose labours covered Europe during the middle ages with such wonderful monuments of skill and perseverance. It is with the *morality* of the Order, not with its history—it is with the *utility* of the Order, not with its literary curiosities, that we have essentially to do. It professes to be founded on the two simple and sublime precepts, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Masonry may be older or newer—we

know not, and shall probably never know to a certainty when it originated, or how: but these were the laws prescribed by the All-wise and All-merciful for the rational creatures of His hand, before the foundations of the world were laid. These were announced as THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS by the Divine lips of Him who spake as never man spake. Throughout all the globe we inhabit—throughout the vast immensity of creation, obedience to these commands, universal as the presence of Him who has ordained them, constitutes the moral happiness of rational beings. Mankind, evil and consequently miserable as they are, have not so utterly lost the traces of the image in which they were made, as to be altogether insensible to the glory and beauty of piety and benevolence, though they daily offend against both. Living Faith and Active Benevolence are the real foundations of our Institution. Keep that fact in the view of your brethren, all you who preside over them; your words and style may be rude and unpolished, but if your heart be in them they will awaken admiration and sympathy. The most elegant homily against those vices for which the preacher is distinguished falls dead upon the ear: the most graceful eulogy of virtue is but disgusting in the lips of a man whose conduct gives the lie direct to his words. But he who teaches good by example will ever be listened to with respect.

It is generally thought, by those who do not object to Masonry as a positive evil, that it is at best a harmless charitable association; but, in truth, the real spirit of Masonry is not confined to the relief of a brother's physical wants, or the preservation of a brother's life in peril—of which we have all heard many interesting instances. Such occasions seldom occur; but every day affords opportunity to promote our brother's temporal good by lawful and honourable means; to help him, by enabling him to help himself; to extend our sympathy to his troubles, and our charity to his failings and imperfections; to make peace between friends; to warn one of his danger, another of his errors—

to be patient, tolerant, and forgiving towards all. And it is because Masonry brings into exercise qualities, of which all acknowledge the excellence, that it has its vitality, universality, and importance—I say, *importance*; nor is it my assertion only, or that of its friends, that it is important. In a recent number of a Dublin journal, supposed to have much influence with those whose opinions it assumes to represent, an article appeared in which the writer, avowing his uncompromising hostility to our Order, asks as follows:—“Who has sanctioned this combination, that it should be thus permitted to overspread the world, and act as it listeth, at all seasons and in all places? It may exist in the government, or the seat of justice, in the jury-box, in the legislature, in the army, in the navy, and even among our dependents; it may plot or cabal against us or for us; we are powerless in its meshes; they may, in spite of us, plot together against us. How insignificant is the power of the confessional when compared to this!”

It is pleasant to think that, so far as regards the diffusion of our Society, this anxious alarmist is perfectly right. The meshes, as he calls them, of Masonry do, in truth, envelop the world. From St. Petersburg to Tasmania, from Hong Kong to Dublin, from Peru and La Plata to California and Canada, they include men of all estates and conditions; and whether you go to ask a favour from a prince, or to get a horse shod by the blacksmith, you may find a “Brother of the Mystic Tie” in him you seek. So mote it ever be! Yet, I do not see, and I do not believe, that any one is a whit the worse for Masonic plots and cabals—plans for infernal machines have never, that I know of, been submitted to the Board of General Purposes, nor does any one suspect any of “The Three Grand Masters” of having issued his mandate to some scientific brother to compound a cunningly-devised prescription of strychnine for the indignant journalist I have quoted. Indeed, I believe that most of us have the honour not to know that we had so formidable an enemy. But this vast fraternity,

powerful as it is, is so only for good. It is powerless for evil. Direct it to a good end—then every true Mason will lend his aid ; the arms of the Society will stretch over the globe to assist you, and the “ meshes ” of the network will

“ Feel in each thread, and live along the line.”

But try to turn it to evil—the strong chain of brotherhood snaps short—it ceases to infold the evil-doer, while it re-unites more firmly than ever round the rest. Other associations have died away in thousands, in all ages, because their ends were evil, and their purposes narrow ; but Masonry, though cursed and denounced, ridiculed, reviled and persecuted, and, alas ! too often perverted, abused, degraded, and prostituted, is still founded on Truth and the Immutable Laws of the Sovereign Architect of the Universe ; and, therefore, it is still the bond of a great and powerful Association, spread over the whole habitable world, honoured and protected by princes and statesmen ; and, what is of far greater importance to us, cultivated and cherished by a multitude of wise and pious, conscientious and honourable men—the approbation of a single one of whom outweighs the discredit of a whole prisonful of drunkards, swindlers, and impostors.

I hope that even from this slight and imperfect sketch, some, at least, of my brethren who are to rule the Lodges of this great city, during the coming year, may form some higher notions than they previously had of their own duties, and of the character of the Order we come here to study. If I thought Masonry to be a mere pretence for displaying childish vanity, by dressing ourselves in ribbons and tinsel and trinkets, assuredly I would not be here to recommend it to your attention. I enjoy and appreciate the social meetings, which have made me acquainted with many whose friendship I highly prize, but if I thought Masonry a mere club, I would leave the eulogy of the Institution to those respectable persons whose business it is to provide entertainments. If it were a mischievous conspiracy, I humbly hope

that those who know me will do me the honour to believe that for prudence, if not for conscience' sake, I would not meddle with it. I take part in Masonry because I have experimentally found it can do good, and because I think that if it fails to do so, the fault is in ourselves, not in it. I ask you to aid me to turn its capabilities for good to account, and to check its tendencies to evil, because both you and I are alike accountable to our Creator for the use we make of this, as of every other opportunity afforded us to serve our fellow-men. If I have too long trespassed on your attention, I trust the importance of my design will sufficiently plead my apology.

The Origin of Freemasonry.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE LODGE OF INSTRUCTION,

HELD UNDER THE WARRANT OF

THE VICTORIA LODGE, NO. IV.,

DUBLIN,

ON MONDAY, THE 2ND OF FEBRUARY, 1857.

BY

ROBERT LONGFIELD, Q.C.



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1857.

TO THE
MASTER, WARDENS, AND BRETHREN

OF

THE VICTORIA LODGE, No. IV., DUBLIN,

This Lecture,

ON THE ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY,

DELIVERED

IN THEIR LODGE OF INSTRUCTION,

AND BY THEM DEEMED WORTHY OF PUBLICATION,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL BROTHER,

ROBERT LONGFIELD.

FEBRUARY 14, 1857.

THE

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY.

THE subject which I have selected for this evening's lecture is the "Origin of Freemasonry," a theme which will at once, I should hope, invite the attention of each of my hearers—members themselves of that mysterious and widely-spread body. Every brother has indeed, on his initiation into the Craft, gained some little insight into that which, traditionally at least, has, for many ages, been handed down to us as the origin of that fraternity, of which, we must confess, we are now the scarcely recognised representatives; but few, perhaps, have considered how much truth is hid in our legends, and how realities have been converted into symbols. Few have reflected whether our pretended ancient descent is not a mere modern invention, or whether the present appearance of the Order is the transition state of a mystery corrupted from its purer source in its descent through ages. But your presence here, in this "Lodge of Instruction," convinces me that all apathy on the subject of our organization is past, and that you are anxious to increase the knowledge, the respectability, the zeal, and utility of the fraternity of Freemasons.

The subject I have chosen has been discussed by many learned and acute writers. They have endeavoured to pierce the dark gloom under which, at one time, was hid, almost impenetrably, the origin of Freemasonry, and the probable era of its commencement. Of the labours of those learned and sagacious

writers I shall largely avail myself, claiming no credit for any singularity or profundity of my views, but only for the diligence with which I have gleaned from others, and sought to extract, from their speculations, suggestive food for your reflection on this interesting topic, which might also excite the desire in your minds for deeper and more extended research. I have, in truth, but endeavoured to compress into the space of an evening's sitting, the results derived from larger and more accurate works connected with the long-debated question, the "Origin of the Order."

One of the chief objects in such an inquiry as the present is to ascertain if there exists in the secrets and ceremonies, or tenets of the Craft, any evidence of the antiquity, the wisdom, or grandeur of the founders? Are Freemasons a collection of mere convivial individuals—a club, in short, united by some secret signs, but for useless objects, and who would, therefore, in vain seek to graft some appearance of excellence on intrinsic worthlessness? Are they indeed men, but condescending to be amused with trifles fit only for children? Or are their traditions probably linked with

"The wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions old and dark?"

And have they preserved, amidst much that is new, idle, and mere modern adaptation, some traits of the almost superhuman wisdom and excellence of their foundation? Each true Mason who hears me will, I am sure, hope that the latter may prove to be the case, and will himself aid in the effort, by united energy, zeal, and honesty of purpose and action, to elevate the body into that place in the social scale which his belief, if not his rational conviction, tells him it once enjoyed. Degenerate worth may be restored; nothing can change folly to wisdom. Symptoms of that probable restoration to ancient glory I already perceive in the earnest desire for improvement and mental culture manifested by the brethren generally.

With those few preliminary observations, designed to awaken your attention, and not to advance any peculiar theory, I shall now attempt to throw some light upon the origin of Freemasonry. But let me first ask your indulgence if, in any remarks which I shall make, it may seem as if I spoke in depreciatory terms of our Order. Such is not my intention; and you will, I hope, kindly attribute to some other motive whatever may not appear laudatory. Even censure, however sparingly applied, may often prove as effectual an instrument of regeneration as unmerited praise. I would also ask your brotherly forbearance if I might appear too openly to touch on the secrets of the Craft. I have, indeed, diligently endeavoured to avoid this error, but if I should, notwithstanding, have fallen into it, I shall gladly receive the fraternal correction. "Sit mihi fas audita loqui," is my guiding wish.

Let each brother now, for a moment, recall to his mind the ceremony of his initiation, and reflect on his newly adopted name, and his objects. How wide the difference—nay, how wholly inconsistent with the objects is this name? There are lawyers who know but little of law, and we are assured that there are "physicians of no value;" but both those classes at least *profess* some acquaintance with the science whence their name is derived. With modern Freemasons this is not the case. The science of Masonry, if they know anything of it, has been learned, not from the traditional lore retained by the elder brethren, and thence communicated to the ignorant and blinded candidates for admission, but altogether independently of this, and rather in despite of it. Think also on the moral and religious instruction afforded after your initiation, by reference to the symbols—the object lessons, as I may term them, on the level, square and compass. Those two points dwelt on, even cursorily, will prepare the mind to believe that the name at one time really indicated the nature and objects of the Society, and that the symbolical use of the implements of the Craft was many ages posterior in date to the actual. Any other view would appear

to me rather like the tale of St. Patrick teaching the mystery of the "Trinity" by reference to the three-leaved shamrock, or the illustration of the immortality of the soul from the different stages of insect existence, as grub, chrysalis, and butterfly—admirable incidentally as arguments, but which no sane men would ever think of perpetuating by mysteries and brotherhoods. The square, level, &c., were implements in actual use, and of vast importance in the science of masonry practised in the earlier ages of the Craft. The science was lost, and they retained their importance only as symbols and emblems—just as formerly the title duke, marquis, designated an officer of trust, but are now empty titles of heraldry. This consideration has always satisfied me of the vast and undoubted antiquity of Freemasonry in *some form*. It was to me incredible that grave men, possessed of such religious culture and habit of thought, as the very initiation into our body supposes, could have been capable of organizing a fraternity of true believers, whose only distinction was, the illustration, by visible, external symbols, of those eternal truths which affect us as moral beings. This is not indeed one of those proofs, which would alone be deemed sufficient, of the indisputable antiquity and more recent modification of the mysteries of our Order. It is, however, the best preparation for a calm investigation, by those gleams of light shed by the earlier histories of the world, of the probable origin of a society, once, perhaps, as the name would import, the secret and mysterious repositories of all the valuable knowledge connected with architecture, now actually retaining nothing connected therewith save *the name*. Now, it is not a little singular that the earliest association of mankind of which we read, is one for the purpose of architecture on a gigantic and impiously-audacious scale, which resulted indeed in confusion, but which even still, according to the opinion of enlightened travellers, has left traces of its stupendous labours in the mound called the Birs-Nimroud on the plain of Babylon. We read in Genesis, chapter xi., that "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they

journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach to heaven*. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." I need not minutely dwell on the subsequent fate of this tower, the confusion of tongues, and the consequent dispersion of mankind. It is only necessary to remark, that you have here a memorable instance of the early association of masons, for building a city and tower of vast dimensions. This plainly supposes community of idea, thought, and action; arrangements made that some gangs should prepare bricks, others lay them, some skilled labourers, attendants unskilled, definite plans, precise instructions and orders, master minds to direct, and subordinates to execute the growing works, and all so united and linked, and probably marked by such distinctions of dress and emblems as were readily recognisable, that the ruling impulse, "Let us build us a city," could be acted on harmoniously by all. This boastful and profane attempt to ascend to heaven provoked the direct intervention of the Lord, and He confounded the language of the builders, which caused the general dispersion of the human race. Thus, long before the time of Abraham, and one thousand years before the building of Solomon's Temple, the oldest and most authentic record of the creation notices the confederacy of masons.

The dispersion of mankind, which was probably by families or tribes, or those identical in one language, radiated from Babel as a centre, east and west—on the east to India, on the west to Syria, Greece, Egypt, and Italy. It would be only natural to expect that the myriads dispersed by this building-folly or wickedness, would exhibit, in the countries whither they migrated, some traces of their early masonic predilections and skill. And it is, indeed, remarkable, that very shortly after this event, buildings of enormous magnitude, and evincing great skill and a scientific knowledge of masonry, were constructed in all the countries more immediately connected with the scene of the dis-

perion of man. It is only necessary to glance at a few—the remote antiquity and vastness of which will be at once remembered. The pyramids and labyrinth of Egypt, the cyclopean buildings of Tyrens in Greece, Volterra in Italy, the walls of Tyre, and pyramids of Hindostan—all attest the early prevalence of the science and ruling spirit of masonry, derived from some one great original, and spread abroad by some memorable event, which might cause it to be a common idea, pervading countries so far remote and unconnected. How, then, was this architectural skill and unity of design preserved and propagated? At a time before the use of letters was supposed to have been revealed to mankind, and indeed until writing was common, there was only one mode of perpetuating any high degree of knowledge, requiring, to make it practical, the co-operation and skill of numbers, and which was not, like painting, sculpture, or poetry, a solitary art, and that was, by the institution of certain societies or mysterious brotherhoods of those possessed of the science, and into which persons, from time to time, might be initiated; and who thus, by a sort of corporate succession, never being wholly old or entirely new, could keep alive, by authentic tradition, all the knowledge and arts of the founders. Indeed it has been well observed, that before the invention of letters mankind may be said to have been perpetually in their infancy, as the arts of one age or country generally died with their possessors. In Egypt and Hindostan the early rulers tried to prevent this tendency of the arts to perish, by forcing the son to follow the trade of the father, that the knowledge acquired by any one might be preserved by a lineal succession. The corporate succession of associated craftsmen was much more effectual to this end. We find, then, in ancient history, traces of the early existence of scientific associations, or trades' unions, as I may term them; and these associations were quickly invested with the additional grandeur and importance derived from the invention or adoption of peculiar religious and mystic ceremonies, with which they contrived to guard and connect their purely

secular knowledge. Of these societies, one of the most important were the Etruscans, a people widely celebrated for their scientific acquirements and their mysterious religious rites and ceremonies, and who, long before the building of Rome, inhabited that part of Italy now known as Tuscany. Their very name is, by Michelet and others, perhaps rather fancifully, derived from the word *turris*, or tower, and indicated that they were a nation of builders; and the remains now existing of the labours of this very ancient and ingenious people, prove how well-merited was their name, if, indeed, derived from this Latin word. But any one who considers the history of mankind, the proneness to association and to mystery, the prevalence of those ancient huge buildings to which I have referred, requiring the exertion of scientific skill, and co-operation of numbers, must at once feel disposed to admit the probability, at least, of the existence, in the earliest ages of the world—the immediate postdiluvian times—of associated bodies of architects; and also from the known jealousy of all possessing any peculiar skill or science, the probability too of those associations keeping sacred this knowledge from all but a select and privileged few. It is, however, unnecessary to rest on probability only, as we can trace from history the early existence of associations, united by secret mysteries, jealously preserved from the vulgar, using certain religious ceremonies and mystic symbols, and bearing much resemblance to the present rites of Freemasonry; and once such societies originated, the adoption by craftsmen of similar mysteries, rites, and ceremonies, would rapidly follow. And it so happens that in each ancient nation, distinguished for its early culture of architectural science, there existed mysterious brotherhoods of high consideration, requiring initiation by secret and appalling ceremonies, guarding the admission to the fraternity by a most rigid scrutiny; and some of these associations originated twelve or fourteen hundred years before the Christian era, and some centuries before the building of Solomon's Temple. A few may be mentioned. The chief were those initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, the

Etruscan, the Cabiri, the priests of Egypt, and the disciples of Zoroaster and Pythagoras.

A short account of the Eleusinian mysteries, which have generally been esteemed the most ancient and most closely resembling Freemasonry, may prove interesting. Each of you will for himself readily compare them with those of our Craft, and note the resemblance or difference. After a long ceremony of preparatory purification, continued during nine days, the candidate for initiation was admitted at night into a vast building. By a series of mechanical contrivances, he was apparently exposed to the terrors of an earthquake; and amid imitations of thunder and lightning, sudden darkness beset him, and hideous noises were heard around. After enduring much calculated to strike terror, or arrest attention, he was introduced into the sanctuary of the goddess Isis or Ceres, which was dazzlingly lit up, and he was then instructed in the meaning of the sacred symbols presented to his view. Significant passwords were then communicated to him, by which he might recognise the brethren, and a most solemn oath was administered that he never should divulge the mysteries in which he was then instructed to the uninitiated. His instruction in the mysteries was by successive stages or steps. Some have supposed that the members of this society were taught the unity of the Divine Being. This, however, is denied by others; but it is generally admitted that a morality much superior to that prevailing amongst the mass of the nation, and connected with a belief in a system of future rewards and punishments, and of the immortality of the soul, was inculcated. These mysteries were in high repute, and the greatest sages and philosophers were proud of their initiation.

We have thus, then, proof of the early existence of the two sources from which Freemasonry would naturally originate—of the general association and great skill of the eastern architects, and of organized societies, distinguished by peculiar knowledge, by signs, &c., and bound by solemn sanctions not to reveal their secrets to those not initiated. The adoption by the one body of signs,

symbols, initiations and mysteries, similar to those of the other, was so natural, as almost certain to take place at a very early period of the co-existence of the two societies—the associated craftsmen and the associated mysterymen. This tendency of all trades or professions to form separate societies, and to protect their knowledge and rights by initiation into secrets, by passwords of recognition, &c., is not of modern date, but is coeval almost with history, and indeed arises from the very nature of man. The jealousy, too, with which artistic secrets were guarded, and all unlawful rivalry checked, may be illustrated by reference to the old fable of Dædalus, which, perhaps, has been, in another light, familiar to us from our pleasant school-boy days. This Dædalus, who is supposed to have lived more than three thousand years since, and whom some seek to identify with Tubal Cain, was an artist widely famed for his great ingenuity and skill in architecture and other kindred sciences. He was banished from his native country, Athens, for the murder of his nephew, Talus, who was his pupil, and whose growing genius so excited his uncle's jealousy, that he killed him. On his banishment, he was kindly received by Minos, king of Crete, and adorned that country with many incomparable edifices and monuments of his skill. This ancient tale has been explained by the greatest of modern philosophers, Lord Bacon, "as chiefly denoting the envy which strangely prevails amongst excellent artificers; for no kind of people are observed to be more implacably and destructively envious to one another than these." But I am inclined to imagine that a deeper truth lies hid in this "tradition old and dark," and that the murder by this mason of his pupil, which was imputed to his jealousy of superior skill, was, perhaps, the indignant punishment inflicted on the youth for divulging the secrets which he had learned under the instruction of his uncle. It is curious too, as not remote from the history of the incident which is by some writers alleged to have occurred at the building of the Temple—namely, the murder of the master-builder directing the execution of the works. It is,

however, sufficient to refer to it as showing the extreme jealousy of the rivalry of other artists.

But though I am not about to discuss minutely the question of the literal or historical proof of the truth of the tradition which refers our origin to the reign of Solomon, and the events connected with the building of his famous Temple, I cannot, of course, exclude from my consideration all mention of his times, and the sacred country where our organization is supposed to have commenced. Certain it is that Tyre and Sidon, at the time of the erection of Solomon's Temple, were widely celebrated for the skill and excellence of their builders and masons. "None were also skilled to hew wood like the Sidonians;" and the buildings of those two most ancient cities were famed for their extent, beauty, and magnificence. The wisest of mankind deigned to apply for assistance, in executing the work which the Lord encouraged him to undertake, to the kindness of a neighbouring heathen king, who furnished him with builders and masons. I have before observed on the early prevalence of the separate organizations of the various crafts or trades; it was almost inevitable from the social nature of man, and the tendency of like to like. In Tyre and Sidon the craftsmen were associated by mysterious rites and ceremonies. Their merchants, you will recollect, were honourable princes and large traffickers. They carried their peculiar mysteries with their merchandize to Asia Minor and the "Isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung," "where grew the arts of war and peace," and, in return, with the spurious liberality which ever distinguished Paganism, they readily admitted the worship of all the gods of the heathen, and the gorgeous and imposing ceremonies connected with their superstitions and mysteries. Now, in the district of Asia Minor, called Ionia, there existed, it would seem, even before the building of the Temple, a very remarkable fraternity, called the "Dionysian artificers." They were an association of scientific men, who possessed the exclusive privilege of erecting temples, theatres, and other public buildings in Asia Minor. They were

a very numerous body, and existed under the same name in Syria (including Tyre and Sidon), Persia, and India. The members were particularly eminent for their scientific acquirements, and they possessed appropriate words and signs by which they could recognise their brethren. They were divided into lodges, which were called by different names. They occasionally held convivial meetings in houses erected and consecrated for the purpose, and each separate lodge was under the direction of a master, president, and warden. Once each year they held a festival of peculiar splendour and pomp. In their ceremonial observances particular utensils and implements were employed, some of which closely resembled, or were identical with those used by Freemasons. Their rules for the support of their poorer brethren, for securing general concord, and for the promotion of public and private virtues, so exactly coincide with those of our brotherhood, that writers, even the most hostile to the Craft, do not hesitate to ascribe to the Dionysian artists the origin of Freemasonry. In truth, these men were Freemasons; and scarcely any institution, pretending to antiquity, so nearly resembles its original foundation, as the body of Freemasons; their rites, rules, and orders, which have a known existence of some centuries, agree with the Dionysian builders, the parent stock from which they seem so clearly to have sprung, as even now to be almost identical with them. We may, then, be assured, that at the building of the Temple the skilful masons and architects, whose aid Solomon obtained, did belong to the fraternity I have just referred to; and this point granted or established, the traditional origin of the re-organization of our even still illustrious and certainly very ancient Order, becomes, if not certain, at least sufficiently probable to receive a willing assent to its truth. The Syrian artificers brought to Jerusalem their science and their mysteries; from Jerusalem, the more illustrious city, these mysteries were propagated as from their original source.

This supposition receives additional confirmation from there being then in Judea a very peculiar society of Jews, with

which the Dionysian artificers would readily blend and associate. This body of Jews was called Essenes. Their tenets and distinctive ceremonies bore considerable resemblance to those of Freemasons; and they, too, had traditions and duties connected with the Temple. Conflicting opinions have been entertained by sacred and profane writers as to the origin of this singular sect—the Essenes; but all concur in representing them as a very ancient association, derived too, most probably, from some still more ancient fraternity, which, at the earliest period of history, existed in the land of Judea. The learned Scaliger, whose research and acuteness are well known, identifies this body with the Assideans or Kasideans, or the most noble Knights of the Temple, who were conspicuous in the glorious times of the Maccabees, and for many ages preceding. The strictest scrutiny was made into the character of every candidate for admission into this fraternity. If he was approved and accepted, a solemn oath was then administered to him, binding him never, even at the risk of life itself, to divulge the secrets of the Order, and he was also instructed in the religious traditions, derived from the earliest founders and members of the sect. They had particular signs by which they could recognise the brethren, and these bore a strong resemblance, as we learn, to those of Freemasons. They, too, were divided into lodges; and while they were honourably distinguished by the severe observance of the moral virtues, they were not neglectful of the social and convivial ties which give zest to life, and bind mankind together by the kindly instincts of human affections. This fraternity, which was not confined to architects, though the Assideans or restorers of the Temple held chief place amongst them, continued to flourish at the coming of our Saviour, and until the fearful destruction of Jerusalem made the whole nation of Jews outcasts, and even their very name a by-word and reproach. How readily would these two fraternities—the Dionysian builders and the Essenes—blend and amalgamate, and give rise to a new society combining features common to both, or but slight modifications

of their respective peculiarities. This could scarcely fail to take place, and were history silent on all other mysterious organizations of men professing peculiar knowledge and distinctive doctrines, the origin of Freemasonry might, with some confidence, be attributed to, or perhaps more correctly be termed, a "variety" of the two fraternities of which I have thus given such a general outline. Some writers, who would seek to connect everybody of peculiar eminence in ancient or modern history with Freemasonry, either directly, or through the affinity of the Essenes, have laboured to prove that St. John and St. Paul both belonged to that sect of the Jews. They refer, for proof of the latter, to the emphatic use by the apostle of the designation "brother" (Rom. xvi. 23), describing Quartus as "a brother" (see also Coll. iv. 9), not "his brother." Other passages, too, might be adduced, particularly those in which he tells of himself that he had lived a Pharisee "after the strictest sect of his religion," which it is argued were the Essenes: to the admonition that as he had, as a wise *master-builder*, laid the foundation, others should take heed how they built on this an improper superstructure. To this may be added one other passage, which, from the metaphorical form of expression having now become habitual, is likely not to excite attention, but which, I think, was used by the apostle more literally, and as referring to the society of which both the writer and the person to whom his epistle was addressed were members. I allude to 2 Tim. ii. 15, in which the apostle says—"Study to *shew* thyself *approved* unto God, a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word* of truth."

I need not, however, dwell more particularly on these points, which are rather topics for curious argument than facts tending to the elucidation of our subject; and I shall proceed to notice one other society, philosophical or scientific in its pretensions, and, like the other two just mentioned, the Essenes and Dionysians, guarding the treasury of knowledge by secrecy and mystery. Pythagoras was a celebrated philosopher who lived in the sixth century before Christ. In the course of his extensive

travels through Ionia, Syria, and Egypt, he had been initiated into all the famed mysteries of these kingdoms. It was a desire likely to arise in the mind of such a benevolent and reflective man, to form a perfect system of philosophy, by selecting from the systems into which he had been initiated, whatever seemed peculiarly excellent, and perhaps even improving on them. He settled in Crotona, in Italy, and there, about 550 B.C., founded a fraternity of disciples, called, after him, Pythagoreans. Before any one was received into the number of his disciples, a most rigid inquiry was made into his moral character. If the result was favorable, he was then bound by a solemn engagement to conceal from the uninitiated the mysteries and knowledge in which he might be instructed. The doctrines of charity, of universal benevolence, and of peculiar regard for the brethren of the order, were inculcated on the new disciple. The members were distinguished by wearing white garments as emblems of purity and innocence, and they had also particular words and signs by which they could recognise each other and correspond at a distance. They were advanced from one degree of knowledge to another, and they were instructed in arts and sciences, united with ethics and a system of theology; and this instruction was communicated to the initiated by cyphers and symbols. They were also strictly forbidden to commit their secrets to writing, and relied on oral tradition only to preserve the knowledge of their mysteries. This philosophy, remembered now only by the familiar tenets of the transmigration of souls and avoidance of beans, exercised at one time much influence on the nations where it flourished, and was confessedly the means of greatly exalting the mind and moral character of the initiated. The noblest, wisest, and best of the nation were members, and, though suffering much persecution, they were eminently distinguished by the greatest fidelity in all their engagements, and their strict performance of all moral duties.

It will thus be observed how readily the more ancient mysteries, the Eleusinian and Essenian, furnished the germs of

another kindred system, and this is the more important, as I cannot, indeed, shew the exact date or particular person first instituting Freemasonry, but only the existence of other systems naturally suggestive of it, and with which, in remote ages, it seems to have been blended. It would be impossible to trace accurately the successive stages of the transition or development of the mysteries of the Dionysian builders, and Essenes, and disciples of Pythagoras, into Freemasonry as now known and existing for at least seven or eight centuries. Transitions are like the growth of plants, gradual, almost imperceptible in daily accretions, remarkable only in the results; or, like those pictures called "dissolving views," in which the most minute attention cannot arrest the moment of the entire fading away of one picture or the substitution of another often wholly dissimilar; but it may not be without interest briefly to advert to some at least of the probable stages of this development.

It is a mistake into which many are led from the computation of time from the coming of our Lord, to suppose that a sudden change of habits, and customs, and of religion, was produced by that great event. The existence of our world we divide into two eras—that before, and that following Christ's coming upon earth, and the latter we call confusedly Christian times. But this is, indeed, an error. The spread of the Gospel was not either immediate or rapid. It was more like the morning stealing on the night, and melting the darkness. Centuries were required to change the inveterate habits, manners, customs, and religion of the nations, even where the pure Gospel of the Lord was first preached; and during three centuries the new religion was slowly spreading amidst many trials and frequent fiery persecutions of its members. The Heathen mysteries were ordinarily celebrated in the vast dominions of the Roman empire, and Paganism was the national form of worship, until Theodosius the Great, about the commencement of the fifth century, prohibited and tried wholly to extinguish the Pagan theology. It is, however, probable that the mysteries were in many places secretly continued in spite

of the severe edicts of the Emperor ; and we are informed that even in Athens, the scene of St. Paul's great preaching, they were practised so late as the 8th century of our Christian era. The outcast Jews and recent Christian converts had also nearly the same motives for adopting some portions of the Essenian and Dionysian, or similar mysteries. Both Jews and Christians were persecuted, and it was essential to their safety to practise the rites and ceremonies of their respective religions in secret. The Christians were often obliged to resort, like the prophets of old, to holes and caves in the earth, and they had a church of the living amongst the tombs of the dead in the catacombs of Rome. How useful, then, would the adoption of secret signs and passwords of recognition be to these persecuted sects, and how probable was it that, to disarm suspicion, they outwardly adopted the ceremonies of paganism, in order to practise in security their Christian worship, without the intrusion or espial of the jealous persecuting multitude. In this way, I am inclined to think that the spirit and leading ideas of Freemasonry were adopted from the heathen mysteries by the early Christians. They were, indeed, then termed "churches," but for many centuries were more like "Lodges" of Freemasons, than we can now well believe, from the universality of the true religion in our own times; and, with the natural tendency of the human mind, they adopted whatever in the old mysteries was not incongruous, into the new, and, to the crowd, apparently inscrutable religion. But there prevailed in Western Europe two very singular secret associations, with which the Eastern might, as the intercourse between the East and West increased, readily incorporate, and form a new society or modification of the old, having many external and obvious points of resemblance, and exhibiting also many traits of a similar spirit and origin. These were, the Druidical religion prevalent in Gaul and Britain, and the Fehmgerichte, or secret tribunals of Westphalia and Germany. The Druidical religion was of great antiquity, and was a corruption most probably of a purer worship, mixed with the doctrines and practices derived from

the Eleusinian mysteries and other ancient rites. This is supposed to have been introduced into Western Europe about 600 years B.C., but continued in Britain for many centuries after the Christian era. The Fehmgerichte is said to have been instituted in the ninth century, and continued in full vigour to the middle of the fifteenth. I need not dwell particularly on either of these societies. Their existence in any country would naturally prepare the mind to receive with favour rites and ceremonies analogous to those, and with which they might be usefully combined.

It will thus be seen that those mysterious associations to which I have more particularly invited your attention, and which existed even anterior to the building of Solomon's Temple, continued to flourish to the eighth century of our era, and that there existed contemporaneously other fraternities having a certain family likeness, with which the more ancient might readily be incorporated, and, as it were, fused; and shortly after this date the fraternity of Freemasons became a known and powerful organization. The potentates of Europe, including popes, conferred on the fraternity of Freemasons most important privileges, and allowed them to be governed by laws, customs, and ceremonies peculiar to their order. We are told that the association was composed of men of all nations remarkable for their skill and practice of architecture. It spread throughout Central Europe, and the principles of the order were introduced into Scotland about the year A.D. 1140. About the same period, the practice and doctrines of Freemasonry were introduced into England, and the brethren in 1410 received a charter of incorporation, by the name and style of "The Freemasons." That name and style we bear, and are justly proud of our historic identity with our more ancient and honored incorporated brethren.

And now I trust it may appear sufficiently plain to any brother who has attended to the cursory and necessarily imperfect notices which I have given of the ancient, scientific, and mysterious fraternities, not only that they bore some resemblance to "Freemasonry," but, in truth, that Freemasonry is the direct descen-

dant, the traditional offspring, corporate successors of those pre-Christian societies, the Essenes and Dionysian artificers. Habits, climate, race, the descent and gradual revolution through ages, the influence of a new and purer religion, would suffice to alter slightly the character, and impair somewhat the historical evidence of this identity or fusion; but sufficient yet remains to attest this most interesting fact, and to prove that we, even in the present position of the Craft, hold communion with the most glorious spirits of antiquity,

“ Who leave, where they have passed, a line of light.”

Time does not permit me to fill up this outline by the details of minute and striking coincidences between Freemasonry and the ancient mysteries to which I have adverted. My object, indeed, was rather to present you with a general sketch of these nearly-forgotten fraternities, to exhibit only those leading features and the prevailing motives acting on the human mind, from which all originated, and rapidly to trace through our Christian era the decline of the old, and the rise of the modern and more known system of Freemasonry, into which the ancient has been changed. I trust, however, that even this rapid and cursory outline of the origin of Freemasonry may have awakened an interest in the minds of some of my brethren as to the evidences of the great antiquity of our Order; that they may feel some glowing enthusiasm fire their breasts at remembering their connection with the most illustrious dead of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; that a feeling like the pride of noble lineage and untarnished ancestry may elevate their minds, and induce them to aspire to elevate the Order also, to that consideration it once deservedly enjoyed. Then, indeed, might we boast that Freemasonry was the humble handmaid of our Pure Religion, and thus prove its identity with those associations of men who, in dark ages, ere the Day-star from on high had visited this earth, endeavoured to walk uprightly, by the dim light still retained of the religious impres-

sions originally implanted and "left as a guide," and who, in centuries long gone by,

"Kept the truth so firm of old,
When our forefathers worshipped stocks and stones."

The spirit which animated them to struggle earnestly to free themselves from the corrupting influence which debased the ancient Polytheism, and which originated those mysterious societies, still exists. The associations organized by these earnest-minded men for the improvement of their fellows, as moral and intellectual beings, have fallen into oblivion, but in the system of Freemasonry, derived, as I trust has been shewn, from their noble efforts to elevate the thoughts and feelings of mankind their spirit still lives and flourishes, combines with, and even ministers to, Christianity. How wonderful is this connection of the past and of the present!

"How wonderful, that even
The passions, prejudices, interests
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of nature!"

The Ethics of Freemasonry.



A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE LODGE OF INSTRUCTION,

Held under the warrant of

THE VICTORIA LODGE, No. IV.,

DUBLIN.

ON MONDAY, THE 2ND OF MARCH, 1857.

BY

THE REV. S. G. MORRISON,

Past-Master, and Chaplain of the Commercial Lodge, 245, and Chaplain and Honorary
Member of the Duke of Clarence Lodge, 171.



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1857.

TO
J. F. TOWNSEND, ESQ., Q.C., LL.D.,

R.W. DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF IRELAND,

The following Lecture,

SUGGESTED BY HIM, PREPARED AT HIS REQUEST, AND DELIVERED
UNDER HIS PRESIDENCY,

IS DEDICATED,

AS A TRIFLING EXPRESSION OF ADMIRATION

OF HIS ABILITIES,

RESPECT FOR HIS CHARACTER,

AND AFFECTION FOR HIMSELF,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PARK VIEW, DUBLIN,

March 3, 1857.



THE
ETHICS OF FREEMASONRY.

FREEMASONRY is necessarily conservative. What it was from the beginning, it is now, and must continue to be. You may not like it, but you must not mend it. To approach it with our own imaginings of propriety would be a species of moral Vandalism. The position of a pin cannot be altered. Even the pattern of its drapery must not be changed. Its landmarks are fixtures. Its pillars are mightier than pyramids, and firmer than rocks. When men have at any time added to it their own inventions, the square has been applied, the excrescence detected, the maul put in requisition, and the addition removed. You may reform Freemasons, but not Freemasonry. Principles may apply to novelties, but it is in the nature of principles to be immutable. Freemasonry is a system of principles; and, however times and men may change, it altereth not. It is true, it admits of by-laws; and these are capable of alteration. But by-laws are but temporary expedients; they are the statute-enactments of individual Lodges, which may be amended or repealed, as prudence or necessity requires. But Freemasonry is a constitution: as such, it has its common law; and this cannot be touched without revolutionizing and destroying the system.

The morals of Masonry are as determinate as its mysteries. It is the province of no one to legislate concerning what are the maxims of the Craft. The Order has spoken with

unmistakeable plainness in respect to the duties which every brother is bound to perform. The path of Masonic life is an illumined track. Every member is put in possession of the moral map by which his steps are to be guided. The way is as old as it is plain; it is "the good old way." It is not profaning sacred things to cite the words of Inspiration as applying to every enquirer after duty—"Stand in the way and see: enquire for the old paths, and walk therein." This old and only way is presented to attention in the "Charge" which is delivered to every one at his initiation. The ethics of the Fraternity are therein comprehensively embodied, and affectionately enforced. It sets before us the portraiture of pure Masonic character. It is the mirror before which each one may ascertain how far he has succeeded in his persevering and praiseworthy efforts to become the *alter ego* of the complete Mason. It is scarcely necessary to tell you of the peculiar manner in which the Ethics of Masonry are taught. They are not only taught in plain and choice language, as in the Charge to which I have adverted, but the lessons are rendered as impressive as memorable by the significant emblems in which they are presented. The senses are summoned to the aid of intellect, and amusement is judiciously blended with labour. Few persons have a capacity to apprehend abstract truth. Mathematical study is indebted to diagrams, and philosophical pursuits are aided by apparatus. Morality avails itself of every legitimate appliance, and sees

"Books in the running brooks, sermons in stones."

This mode has a high sanction—it is divine. By means of trees Law was first impressed on the human mind. The cherubim at the east of Eden's garden were the glorious hieroglyph by which Deity exhibited a new way to immortality. The complex character of a world-Redeemer was proclaimed in the bush that burned in unscathed greenness. God was there as a "consuming fire;" man was there as a lowly bramble; yet the bush burned not, for that Humanity was "holy and harmless." And

when a new Teacher visited earth to tell of and teach a higher and holier world than this, His lessons of deepest wisdom were couched in the attractive story, or veiled in the suggestive allegory. The efficiency of this plan is universally admitted. Pictorial representations strike as readily as pleasingly upon the mind. The great Dr. Doddridge received his early religious training through the medium of the tiles of his parents' hearth. On these tiles Scripture characters and incidents were presented in odd-looking sketches. His pious mother conducted his infant intellect amidst the rude mosaics of her rustic hearth; and there "sermons in stones" went far to prepare his mind and heart for those glowing after-sermons which pointed thousands to the skies. The quaint old pictures in the family Bible made first and fadeless impressions of divine things upon the cherubic intellect and seraphic heart of Chalmers. The lesson is all the easier, and the law is all the lovelier, that they come in a pictorial dress, and in a fascinating emblem. Those who are outside the Order cannot discern the import of its symbols. Its jewels are not shining things to gratify the gaze of childhood, or ornaments to set off the person of the wearer; they are significant of corresponding verities; tangible and visible exponents of grave truths and important duties. Its signs are not the meaningless dumb show by which mental vacancy is betrayed; but the pertinent monitions of solemn obligations, and the affectionate expressions of fraternal solicitude. Its passwords are not the chance vocables by which privileges are secured, and Cowans detected; but selected words, big with bright thoughts, each a centre of wisdom from which radiates far-journeying intelligence, making in its march the great circle of all the sciences. Its badges are not playthings: they are implements of industry. Labour is suggested by them all. The brown-handed child of physical toil, the son of science or of song, find in them mementoes that it is by the sweat of the brow, or the toil of the brain, that man eats his bread during his sojourn in the land of his pilgrimage.

The uninitiated can only judge of Freemasonry by what they hear and see of it. The former manner of judging is not correct; hearsay is no evidence. Every report that has been given of the Order by those who are its avowed enemies is untrue. I have read the productions of those who have affected to be possessed of full knowledge of its mysteries, and I have been astonished at the effrontery and pained by the falsity which are so glaring. Masonic arcana are as unguessed at this day as when a far-seeing wisdom systematized an arrangement for their universal application, yet inviolable secrecy. Wondering speculation, prying curiosity, and quick-witted sagacity, are alike at fault, in their natural anxiety to penetrate the secrecy of the mystic Brotherhood. As all fail, therefore, to unravel the inexplicable, they very properly turn for some knowledge of the puzzling system to the conduct of its members. To this you can have no objection. It is a sound principle to judge of systems by their results. Masonry takes no exception to the axiom, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

It cannot be denied that some Masons are not sufficiently cautious in their manner of life. Indeed, it must be admitted that not a few have disgraced themselves, and injured the fame of that Order whose principles they belied, and whose morality they trampled upon. The uninitiated will not take the trouble to distinguish between such as are untrue to their obligations, and those who continue faithful. Did they so, they would be convinced that the true and the tried vastly preponderate, when laid in the balance of an unprejudiced scrutiny. For every one who heedlessly loses sight of his duties and dignity, there are ten whose every attribute of character, whilst it is a reflection of the Order, is an honor to themselves. Let it not be assumed that there is any peculiar inclination to laxity of morals in Masons more than in other men. Were this so, the eccentricities of individuals might be charged upon the system which they seem to represent. Take any number of the most reprehensible brethren, and

their conduct, *on the whole*, shall appear immeasurably to advantage by contrast with that of an equal number of the irreligious in any community. But just in proportion to the pretensions of any man, will be the amount of jealous attention paid to him. He that professes little, raises no envy; but men do like to mark the inconsistencies of those who have taken a high stand among the virtuous of society. The heart is naturally more full of suspicion than of charity; and, hence, he who takes a high walk among his fellows will be exposed to suspicion and to envy. Knowing this, and knowing, too, that Masonry prescribes a code of Ethics borrowed from the Statute-book of Heaven, it becomes all the brethren to take heed lest, by any departure from the path of unswerving rectitude, the ignorant or the malicious might triumph. Masonic life should be an exemplification of Masonic principles. The invisible beauties of the Craft ought to be reflected in the visible beauties of a virtuous course of action among men. From what is seen, what is unseen is generally inferred. The character of the heart is drawn from the character of the life; and hence, popular Masonry is the conduct of Freemasons. The evil of unmasonic conduct might, in great part, be remedied, were brethren more guarded in admitting candidates. It is a heartless duty to oppose a valued brother in his affectionate desire to obtain the honor of initiation for a friend in whom he has taken an interest. Knowledge of, and confidence in, the brother who proposes a gentleman as a candidate, too frequently silence those who otherwise would be indisposed to admit him. Now, we ought to consider the Order before any individual member of it. No private friendship, no respect for a brother's feelings, should for a moment influence conduct, when the interests of the Order are at issue. I can speak strongly on this subject, because I have reason to believe that reliance in my prudence, and respect for my character and feelings, caused the brethren of my Lodge to admit a candidate, who too soon proved himself unworthy, by immoral prac-

tices; and I felt it to be my duty—and I did it—to move the forwarding of a complaint against him to the Grand Lodge of Ireland, by which he was expelled the Order. It was painful to me; but the lesson has been of great importance. Better far to have no additions to our ranks than that disorderly and disobedient persons should prove occasions of sorrow to us, and scoffing to the world. Some persons entertain the idea that Masonry consists in festivity—that it is a kind of beefsteak club; its attractions lie in its viands; membership is suggested as a passport to good eating and drinking; its soups are more savoury than its sermons—turtle than traditions; its hock is preferable to its homilies; champagne sparkles brighter than the corruscations of its most heavenlit intellects. Knights of the knife have a poor conception of philosophy. Well, they make their way to initiation, fail not in a personal appearance at the summons to dine, but are rarely marked “present” in the muster to labour. They enjoy the name, and have the privileges of the Order, but of Masonry they know but the alphabet; and its A, B, C they lisp as the evidence of their proficiency. Masonry-made-easy is the only volume of their literature, and the abilities of a lodge-room their only conceptions of the grandeur of the system.

Anxious to aid my brethren in their laudable desire to promote the well-being of the Order, I have undertaken the pleasing task of refreshing your minds by a consideration of the duties to which our common obligations bind us.

The Ethics of Masonry originate in the Scriptures of truth. *Its first great light is the Bible.* Let the world know that Freemasonry is in the Bible. The Bible is the indispensable furniture in every lodge-room. No one Masonic act can be done in its absence. Withdraw the Bible, and the keystone of the arch is gone; the foundation of the building is destroyed; wisdom, beauty and strength are departed; and Ichabod may be engraven on its ruins. Bereft of it, Masonry is of a truth bankrupt. Its traditions have no certainty; its

philosophy has no divinity; its precepts have no sanctions; its signs have no significancy; and its very verbiage is without a glossary. But there, and there, and there, it lies. Unclasped, unscreened, wide open, with the effulgence of its Author flooding every page with light, it invites your consideration and your confidence. The first ray of Masonic light, as it fell upon your eyes, turned them, and the intellect to which they are the inlets, to that precious basis of all your heaven-born and immortal hopes.

This fact reveals the secret of the hostility that so many evince towards the Order. Can you wonder why Carlyle and Paine, *et hoc genus omne*, opposed and stigmatized it? Atheism must ever be its deadliest foe; cold scepticism would shiver to death rather than derive heat from any luminary that shines by light reflected from that central orb, the Word of God. Every man and every scheme that would close or exclude Revelation from the common eye and the common intelligence, naturally, because necessarily, must condemn Freemasonry.

It might, not inappropriately, be asked, How is it that Masonry is found in countries and among men where the light of divine truth shines not? How is it that it is found amid the Indians in America, the Mahometans in Turkey and Syria, and the Brahmins on either side of the Ganges? Its existence proves two things—first, the truth of Masonic tradition; and, secondly, the antiquity of the Order. Not long since, some of you heard, in this very place, from an intelligent officer recently returned from the East, that he obtained admission into a Lodge of Dervishes in Constantinople, and their customs, traditions, signs, and secrets were identical with our own. Yea, they urged upon him, and through him on British Masons, the advantages this country derived from the East, and particularly from the light of Masonry, as an argument of their claims to be aided in their designs to obtain secular education through the intervention of our Order. In all countries there is mixed up with the superstitions of their religion the faint glimmerings

of truth. Before the dispersion of the human family, all had access to the Law of God; and from sire to son fragments of it passed down the stream of time. The dispersion of the Ten Tribes carried much truth to the countries where Providence conducted them. Jews have made their way to many lands: so that we have several ways to account for the diffusive character of our Order. Without assuming that the Bible was borne to all who are possessed of Masonry, we can readily understand how those portions of it which are the landmarks of the system could be communicated, and then traditionally preserved amongst them.

I am not to be interpreted as affirming that Masonry is an equivalent for Christianity, or that it is a synonym for Religion. I consider no man religious who is not the subject of gracious influence. Masonry puts forth no pretensions to a religious character, as though it were a sect. Its most enthusiastic admirers and adherents claim for it no warrant of inspiration, no possession of infallibility. The Bible sends no man to Masonry; but Masonry does send thousands to the Bible: and whilst it professes not to teach religion directly, it is indirectly the instrumentality by which many have been guided into the way of peace. It is far from being the rival of Revelation. Temperance societies are not opposed to or inconsistent with Religion, although Religion does inculcate sobriety. Benevolent societies are not opposed to or inconsistent with religion, although religion does teach "good will to men." Good men may and do unite to give prominence to some peculiar grace or virtue of religion. What harm, then, in men banding together to educate each other in intellect and heart—to assuage as much of mortal woe as they can—to pluck as many thorns as possible from the pillows on which rests the head of humanity—to strew all the flowers they can gather along the path of man's pilgrimage? What apology is necessary for uniting to soothe the widow's sorrows and dry the orphan's tears? Will men be angry that we would

see smiles on every face, and happiness in every home? Our laws place upon us the blessed and beautiful necessity to "bear each other's burdens—to weep with those who weep;"—where help is needed, to help with the liberal hand, and, when we cannot do so, to help with a loving heart, in the contribution of an honest sympathy.

This, then, Brethren, is the first great moral of Masonry. Read and study your Bible. Approach your conscience, intellect, and heart to its hallowing influences. Let no flickering taper of earth be palmed upon you for its steady light. Should men hold up the rushlight of their own conceits to illumine your journey heavenwards, say to them, as Diogenes said to Alexander, "Get out of my light!" Let down your whole soul to the depth of its mysteries. In the noble independency of thought which it breeds and fosters, journey to its farthest boundaries; examine into its sublimest speculations; expatiate amidst its most glorious revelations; dare the boldest flights; dig into its unvisited mines of golden truth; constantly read, prayerfully study, and perseveringly practise its inestimable contents.

Masonry adopts, as its text of Ethics, the Scripture's own comprehensive abridgment of its contents—Love to God and love to man. The stereotyped code of Masonic moral principles is an apposite comment on the text. That exposition reveals the fact that the true Mason is *no blasphemer*. If ever you hear dishonor done to the Sacred Name by any brother, he has been surprised into an inconsistency, or is shamefully guilty of a crime. Few things in the Order gratify me more than the reverence entertained for the Blessed Name. This is as it should be. The awful name **JEHOVAH** was never pronounced by the lips of a true Israelite. But once a year was it spoken, and that by the High Priest, when on the day of annual expiation he issued from the presence of the **SHEKINAH**, and pronounced the annual benediction upon the worshipping and waiting assembly. When the great Name

occurred in writing, the Hebrews used another name, and for the sublime *Ye-ho-wah* used the less awful *Adonai*. That amiable philosopher, Robert Boyle, never mentioned one of the designations of the Deity that he did not lift his hat, if he had been covered, or pause solemnly, if bare-headed. Masons surely will not lose sight of this precept, which is so honouring to their Maker, and so becoming to themselves:—
 “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

And, however it may sound in the ears of some, it is an indisputable fact, that the true Mason is a man of prayer. However unhappily lost sight of, prayer has its place in the morals of your system. You are taught to “implore His aid on all your lawful undertakings, and to look up to Him in every emergency, for comfort and support.” The religious ritual of Masonry is, in my humble judgment, unexceptionably orthodox, and scripturally catholic. Its liturgy is simple, brief, and beautiful. No Lodge can commence or terminate its labors without prayer for the Divine presence and blessing. All its works are hallowed to Him, and all its rewards are from Him sought. Perhaps there is no consideration that ought to exercise such a holy and wholesome influence on your conduct, as that you profess, in your circulated exposition of morality, to be actuated by the religious principle. Of all the anomalies that exist, none is more striking—painfully striking—than indecorous conduct associated with the ceremony of prayer. That it is ever so, is matter of regret; that it shall not be so, should be the purpose of every brother.

Brotherly love is, in a high sense, the beautiful precept of the Order. Selfishness, the weed that grows luxuriantly in the soil of the human heart, is sought to be eradicated from the heart of every Mason. Selfishness is a sin, love is a virtue; yea, the parent of all the virtues. The principle of selfishness is contraction; the principle of love is expansion—that, like a vortex, channels every stream to its own fulness; this, like a perennial spring, welling up, and running over,

carries refreshing and fertilizing influences along every bank its waters lave, and every field its supplies irrigate. Selfishness is the centre of its own world; the end of its own existence. Love lives but to bless, and in blessing others has its chiefest joy. Masonry is a school for the affections. Those who are worthy of regard are found within its ranks; those whose regards are of real value are numbered among its votaries. This duty is emblematically exhibited in the *Square*. The use of this instrument in operative masonry is familiar to every one. With us it is the symbol of moral rectitude. It gives visibility and impressiveness to the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the formation of character it is ever needed, and constantly to be applied. In our initiation, it is assumed that we aim at the attainment of Masonic completeness. Modestly plastic, we would be shaped after the pure Masonic model. Interstices we would have filled up; excrescences removed; and, having the life, we would seek to possess both the face and form of the Fraternity. It is a lesson to watch the builder, so careful in applying his square to every corner of the wall he raises, yea, to every stone he fixes. Improve upon it. Not only to the labours of a day, but to the acts, and words, and thoughts of every moment, lay the square of "doing to others what you would they should do unto you," and you will raise an edifice more stately, more durable, more precious than lordly hall or princely palace; for infinitely more glorious is

"The living temple of the heart of man
Than Rome's sky-mocking vault, or many-spired Milan."

Our laws detail our duties to our neighbour. We are taught to "render him every kind office in our power, which justice or mercy may require; by relieving his distresses, soothing his afflictions, and by always doing to him as we would he should do to us." Now, the phrase, "*every kind office in our power*," is a very comprehensive one.

Many men seem to forget that principle is as much involved in trifling things as in great things. Integrity is as much compromised in stealing a pin as a purse. Truth is offended, whether the falsehood is little or great. The power and wisdom of God are as much seen in the microscope as in the telescope. The latter brings distant worlds of wonderful magnificence within the grasp of finite intelligence; while the former exalts the veriest nothings of existence into objects of amazement. The principle of gravitation is as much operative in moulding a tear into a pearl of sensibility, as when restraining within their orbits the central suns of the grandest systems. The same power that is seen scooping ocean's bed into a sublime concavity, drills a human hair into a perfect tube. The same power that adorns the horizon with braids of gold, and fringes morning's clouds with orient glory, is at work in the exquisite pencilling of leaves and colouring of flowers. The power that paints in matchless hues yonder bright bow of promise which spans the vast concave of heaven, sets forth in brighter than prismatic hues the wing of the emancipated chrysalis. I wish to make this thought impressive, for it is in trifles that men fail in duty; and it is in matters seemingly trivial that service can be rendered to our fellow-men. Who would not go even out of his way to extricate a brother from an emergency? Why, common manhood would take monster strides to hasten to a brother in distress. The intelligence of a friend's calamity would open up instinctively the sluices of fraternal sympathy! Sublime morals are rarely neglected; little duties are most lost sight of. I am not the advocate of exclusive dealing. The common-sense dictate of every man is to buy in the cheapest market. No man is bound to allow himself to be imposed on. But this I do say, that the law of the Order obliges every member to give *preference* to a brother. If you can procure any necessary of life on equally advantageous terms from a Mason as from another man, you are bound to your course of action. "Every kind

office in your power," leaves you no option. The simple question is, shortly, Will he benefit by this? An answer from conscience in the affirmative obliges you to supply yourself with all you require in the marts of brethren. The commodity needed may be a trifle; but I have shown you that principle is no trifle. If stealing a pennyworth involves the principle of honesty, buying a pennyworth involves the principle of benevolence. 10

Now, this is not "mercy;" it is justice. We *owe* to our brother every kind office in our power. And if, in the light of duty, as here described, his conduct would be considered reprehensible who would pass by a brother in the every-day dealings of life, what shall be said of a professing Mason who *defrauds*? Reverses of fortune are incident to trade. In the battle of life there are many falls and fortunes. Sympathy is truly felt for one who, despite all his diligence, is constrained to yield under the pressure of misfortune. But where there is an imprudent course of action, living beyond means possessed, rash and reckless speculation, neglect of business, or a love of pleasure—where there is the betrayal of confidence, the entangling of a brother in one's perplexities—we have no language to describe the criminality; no power of words to paint the sin. Let the truth be made known—give it bold relief upon the ground of Ethical Masonry, that he who wittingly defrauds, who knowingly involves a brother in his own wreck, is no Freemason! He has forfeited the confidence, excited the disgust, and betrayed the honour of his brethren!

While on the subject of the duty we owe to our brethren, it may not be out of place to say a few words upon a matter connected with it. It has forcibly pressed upon my mind that brethren interpret with too great latitude the saving provision which our laws make for their absence from lodge-meetings. Every brother is, or ought to be, a *bonâ fide* member of a Lodge. Obedience to the Master's summons is a *sine qua non* in Masonic fidelity. Very distinctly the circumstances are stated

which are regarded as sufficiently apologetic for absence. But these saving clauses, like every precept, are to be interpreted in their spirit. Distance is an apology; but if, notwithstanding distance, the summons could be obeyed without inconvenience, I submit it to conscience if mere respect for the literality of a precept ought to conceal its real spirit? It is also worth while to enquire how far any mere incidental occurrence ought to be regarded as sanctioning absence from Lodge. It will be apparent that no engagement should be made, or invitation accepted, that could interfere with the ordinary lodge-meeting. The man who prefers the festive board of private hospitality to the instructive meeting of a well-regulated Lodge has his counterpart in the tradesman who apologizes for his absence from work by saying that he was dining with a friend. *Regularity* in attending the meetings of the Lodge, and *punctuality* in observing the hour of meeting, must commend themselves to every brother, who remembers that he has appropriated the designation of a class with which these virtues are matters of necessity. Laugh not at the man who runs with his letters when the mail is closed; who bustles to the wharf as the gangway is withdrawn; who arrives at the terminus as the "whistle" announces departure. Pity the spirit that is so forgetful of punctuality, and determine that the Tyler shall have a sinecure, so far as disturbing the business of the Lodge on your account can be avoided.

"*Mercy*" has its calls and claims upon Masonic activities. This is but a modification of that love which is the soul of the Fraternity. It sympathizes with affliction, pities distress, and speeds to assist. Does a brother sorrow? We weep with him who weeps. Is he in suffering? We divide the endurance by a generous sympathy. Is he overtaken by adversity? The warm heart speaks eloquently to the ready hand; and the ready hand, as if galvanized by its electric contact with the excited heart, presses the spring of the purses; and though cold, calculating prudence may whisper her own grudgings, the donation is but restricted to ability, and generously proportioned

to the emergency. Every brother's head must rest upon a pillow softened by a God-honouring brotherly love. Deep must be the distress which the cord of love cannot fathom; intricate must be the labyrinth that love cannot thread! Her quick eye can penetrate the anguished heart, though proudly it would hide its sorrows behind a smiling brow. Masonry has not till now abstained from rearing her monuments to Mercy. Your committees of charity can testify to what extent the wants of needy brethren have been supplied; and how many widows have been made grateful for the existence of the Order. Behold yonder monument to Mercy, wherein the orphans of your brethren have an asylum and a home. What heart rejoices not in passing along its corridors, in visiting its dormitories, in glancing at its larder, in looking on the smiling faces, the lovely indices of happy hearts; in listening to the touching words uttered in accents of sweetest song, in which they are taught to tell their gratitude, and send their thanks to Heaven? "In scenes like these" may your principles be ever manifest, and your honours ever found!

But the Ethics of Masonry respect *ourselves*. Duty to one's-self is never to be neglected. The emblem of this law is the pair of *Compasses*. This is a mathematical instrument for describing circles and measuring lines. Its symbolic use is to confine the appetites within legitimate bounds. The proper radius is to be scripturally ascertained. One branch is fixed in the heart, and the other extended to sweep a circumference within which is found the area of personal gratifications. Outside that circle passions or interests must not be permitted to betray you.

Freemasonry is friendly, rather than opposed to enjoyment. In this its rules harmonize with Revelation. Hypocrisy has its own code and key of interpretation. It travesties Christianity. It sees every man and every thing in the obscurity of its own dark heart. It has no sympathy with gladness. The genial warmth of honesty it hates. Smiles frighten it; a ringing laugh,

the instinctive outbreak of a spirit brimful of joy, is as the knell of a ruined soul. But real, divine religion, makes the heart good, and then invites to present joy. "Rejoice evermore," is its oft-repeated call. "Be happy," is the golden thread inwoven with the whole texture of Christianity. Are we, then, to be precluded from social pleasures? Are we, in misanthropic churlishness, to exist as cyphers in creation? Retirement from social intercourse can never effect the purpose of existence—

"God never made a solitary man,
'Twould mar the harm'ny of His general plan."

And again—

"He who a hermit is resolved to dwell,
And bid this social life a long farewell,
Is impious."

Cultivate society as much as you can. Associate with the true and good among your fellow-men. Walk with the wise, and you shall become wiser. Be a companion of the cheerful, and you will be the happier still. But avoid excess. There is a word, often used in speaking of gratification, that is very objectionable; it is the word *passion*. Now, passion and emotion are distinguishable. The simple emotion is lawful; since, for every natural appetite our Maker has provided a corresponding gratification. But passion implies suffering, and is sinful. The emotion of pleasure is legitimate; when it is sought after, so as to become a passion, it is wrong. All passions, being intemperance, are forbidden. All around the circle within which emotions are confined, "Beware of passion," is legible to a brother's eye.

If there appear any evil tendencies in our mode of festivity, they are easily remedied and avoided. How? By respecting Masonic law. Look at that important officer, the Junior Warden. What is his business? "To call the brethren from labour to

refreshment, and from refreshment to labour." Refreshment is a department of Masonic duty. The festive board is under official supervision. The habit, if it be one, of closing the Lodge, and then retiring to refreshment, is unconstitutional. Were the rules properly observed, the brethren having discreetly partaken of the good things of life—having enjoyed "the feast of reason and the flow of soul"—the Junior Warden, at the opportune moment, would, at the command of the Worshipful Master in the chair, call from "refreshment to labour." Profit, as well as pleasure, would invariably be realized. A return to usages in keeping with the spirit and letter of the institution, will go far to remedy the only evil which exists in practical Freemasonry. Then, at an hour not too late, every brother will be where duty calls and inclination guides—at his own fireside—to reflect upon a happy home the virtues of his Craft. The affections, schooled in the Lodge, are directed to their proper objects, the family circle; for—

"With all the faults and follies of the race,
Old home-bred virtues hold their not unhonoured place."

The cultivation of the mind is presented as the proper employment of the brethren. A Lodge masonically managed is a school of philosophy. We have no sympathy with German *Illuminism*—the invention of designing men, who would have made genuine Masonry the tool of their own ends. But wisdom we profess to teach—the wisdom that fits for life, and that ensures happiness. It is impossible for a Mason to be inquiring and not intelligent. Tracing the progress, and looking to the origin of the Order, will bear us back along the stream of history, and bring the mind in contact with the principal events of the world. The origin and progress of the Order is not now before us. I only refer to it as an illustration of the ancillary relation of Masonic research to polite education. Masonic Lodges, in some foreign countries, are styled Academies. The Order was the depôt of learning in the dark or middle ages; and yet, in some countries, Masonry is synonymous with Geometry. It derives its very name

from scientific architecture. For want of some knowledge of its history, the dignity of the Order is lost sight of. The trade of a mason, though useful and honourable, is not the origin of our name. It is from our Order that a man who is engaged in building a stone wall is called a mason. It is a mistake to cite the French word *maçon* as the source of the term. Barbarous Latin has been consulted, and *machio*, a machinist, is given as its derivation; because machines were necessary in raising ponderous stones to their allotted place in the edifice. I have met with another theory. *Maceria* is the name of long fence-walls which enclose vineyards; and hence it is said, *Mason est maceriarum constructor*—a mason is a builder of fence-walls. An old word for house is *mas*; with some plausibility, therefore, it is said, a mason is one who builds *masses*, or houses. Perhaps the brethren would wish me to express my own opinion. Then it is this:—The word is derived from the secrecy and exclusiveness observed in our Lodges. Every Lodge is guarded by a Tyler. It is supposed that he is armed. Formerly his protective weapon was a *club*. The old Latin for this was *maça*; it is the word yet in Spain. The meaning of *maça* is club, or *mace*—the club borne by corporate bodies. Because, therefore, bodies of architects, including all trades necessary for effecting or carrying out their plans, preserved their secrets by deliberating within a closed and guarded Lodge—a Lodge guarded by the *maçon*—*Mason* was the designation of every brother, and *Masonry* the name of the noble system. At what time persons not masons by profession sought admission into the Order, I cannot tell; but it must have been at an early date. The records of a Lodge at Warington, so old as 1648, note the admission of Colonel Mainwaring and the great antiquary, Mr. Ashmole. Charles I., Charles II., and James II., were initiated. All such were “accepted;” hence, “accepted Masons;” and, as a mark of respect and confidence, were admitted to all the privileges of the Craft, and hence, “free.” From this, then, we have the designation, “free and accepted Masons.”

I might give you many illustrations of the facilities afforded by the Order to impart instruction, but I must not be tedious. Anxious to encourage and assist my brethren in this Lodge of Instruction—sympathizing with the purpose of our amiable and talented Deputy Grand Master, to revive the Order to all its wonted moral grandeur—I have responded to his call, and submit to your consideration these views of the Morals of Freemasonry. I wish I could have done this duty better, for your sake and the sake of the cause; but I have done my best, under all circumstances, and make no apology.

Brethren, the character of the Order is in your hands. Its principles are beautiful, as you know. Illustrate them in your whole lives. As the picture is more elegant when it is elegantly framed, and as the diamond is more beautiful when it is beautifully set, so let the principles of Masonry become attractive by the blamelessness of your lives, the consistency of your conduct, and fidelity to your obligations. Let not your resolves evaporate in sentiment. Duty is before you. Opportunity is given to you. Great is your mission! Ambition can have no holier end than yours! Oh! live not uselessly, that you may not eventually regret, with bitterness—all the more bitter that the regret is useless—that your life has been misspent:—

“Tis a mournful story,

Thus in the ear of pensive Eve to tell
Of Morning's firm resolve the vanished glory,
Hope's honey left within the withering bell,
And plants of mercy dead, that might have bloomed so well.”

We meet upon the level and we part upon the square—
What words of precious meaning those words Masonic are!
Come let us contemplate them—they are worthy of a thought—
With the highest and the lowest and the rarest they are fraught.

We meet upon the level, tho' from every station come,
The king from out his palace, and the poor man from his home—
For the one must leave his diadem outside the Mason's door,
And the other finds his true respect upon the checkered floor.

We part upon the square—for the whole world must have its due,
We mingle with its multitude, a cold, unfriendly crew;
But the influence of our gatherings in memory is green,
And we long upon the level to renew the happy scene.

There's a world where all are equal; we are hurrying toward it fast,
We shall meet upon the level there when the gates of death are past;
We shall stand before the Orient, and our Master will be there
To try the blocks we offer with His own unerring square.

We shall meet upon the level there; but never thence depart;
There's a mansion—'tis all ready for each trusting, faithful heart;
There's a mansion and a welcome, and a multitude is there,
Who have met upon the level and been tried upon the square.

Let us meet upon the level, then, while labouring patient here,
Let us meet, and let us labour, tho' the labour be severe;
Already in the western sky the signs bid us prepare
To gather up our working tools and be tried upon the square.

Hands round, ye faithful Masons all, the bright fraternal chain;
Ye part upon the square below to meet in heaven again.
Oh! what words of precious meaning those words Masonic are,
We meet upon the level and we part upon the square!

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