



MASONIC ORPHANS' HOME

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

Dedication of the Masonic Home For Orphans

ERECTED BY THE GRAND LODGE F. & A. M.
STATE OF LOUISIANA

AT

ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA

ON

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24th, 1925

BY

LEE E. THOMAS, P. G. M.
Chairman Board of Trustees

ADDRESS

Delivered by LEE E. THOMAS, P. G. M.

Chairman Board of Trustees of the Masonic Home for Orphans, at Alexandria, Louisiana, at the dedication of the Home on June 24, 1925. A. L. 5925

Most Worshipful Grand Master and Brother Masons of the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana and Friends:

I assure you that my heart is filled to overflowing with profound satisfaction at being able to tender to the M. W. Grand Lodge of this State, this completed structure and to witness the dedication to humanity of this Masonic Home for Orphan children committed to our care.

As the hymn which was sung by mistake at the wedding of a spinster of uncertain age expressed it, "This is the day I long have sought, and mourned because I found it not," applies very forcefully to your speaker on this occasion.

Nearly twenty years ago when I had the honor of being Grand Master of Masons of this State, I zealously supported the resolution for our Grand Lodge to take some active steps, looking to the care of the orphan children and the aged Masons and widows in the State of Louisiana.

It is true, that at that time our Grand Lodge did not feel financially able to assume this obligation, but we then laid the foundation for the future by adopting a resolution to set aside, out of our revenues, \$6,000.00 per year for the purpose of creating a fund for this laudable purpose. In 1906 this fund was established, and later it was increased by setting aside \$10,000.00 a year, and when it had reached the sum of almost \$150,000.00 the proposition was again submitted during Brother Bain's administration as Grand Master in 1922, as we felt that the time had arrived for us to take up active work in the building of this home. It was my pleasure to zealously support the resolution which I presented to the Grand Lodge at that time and to see it practically unanimously adopted and the funds provided for the erection of this building as well as its maintenance.

Through the kindness of my brethren, I was made Chairman of the Board of Trustees and we have devoted our time to this work and today we present the building for your acceptance and dedication, and this "consummation devoutly to be wished" is now an accomplished fact.

It has been my privilege to deliver many addresses on various Masonic subjects, but I have never before today participated in any exercises that afforded me so much personal satisfaction, and which were so far reaching in its service to those near and dear to us.

ORIGIN OF MASONRY.

Much discussion has been participated in concerning the origin of this great institution of ours. Some of our historians trace it to the beginning of time; back to that period when the morning stars sang together and God said "let there be light" and there was light. Others trace it to the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness by Moses, Aholiab and Beze-

leel and hold that much of its philosophy comes from the Egyptian mysteries in which Moses had become proficient when he lived in Egypt as the "Son of Pharaoh's daughter." Others claim that this institution had its beginning at the building of King Solomon's Temple, while others trace it to the Roman Collegii Fabrorum and to other sources.

No man can with absolute certainty point his finger to the time or to the place when its principles were first propagated among the children of men. We care not whence it came; but we know that from the garnered truths by it let fall upon the fallow ground of ages gone have grown the mighty facts of religion, science and morality that will live through all the ages yet to be.

The Masonic Order is no artificial idol of a departed age, no ineffectual bauble born in superstitious darkness and religious dismay, no pretentious relic of despair born in the captivity and dragged forth from the ruins of the dark ages. No, my friends, it is the happy reverse of all this. It is the embodiment of all that would be perfect in the spirit and aspirings of man. It is an institution whose duty it is to stoop to the unfortunate, to hear their every cry and to help them, to rescue and relieve. Majestic from its mercy, venerable from its antiquity, uplifted without pride, and lovely even in its frown. What matters it to us here whether this Order of the Square, the Level, and the Plumb, comes from the Syrians or the Chaldeans or the Egyptian Priests, or from the Hebrew Land of Kings and Prophets or from Grecian Academy. I care not whether the mysterious pyramids still testify of its eternity for you know and I know that this our faith is a sublime and practical moral force and this force is the parent of all others.

This great Order of ours stands as one of the bulwarks for the preservation of humanity and has been recognized down the ages as having played its part in the preservation of government of the people and the exaltation of the highest ideals of citizenship.

I once had the pleasure of standing on Pike's Peak in the early dawn and witnessing a glorious sunrise. I looked down into the valley to the darkness below and then turned my eyes to the wondrous horizon and saw the great luminary of nature slowly ascend from behind the clouds while down the mountainside I could see the shadows of darkness flee away until the Garden of the Gods shone forth in effulgent glory and splendor and the great mount of the Holy Cross rose in majesty pointing to our home beyond the azure skies.

I thought of this great institution of ours—in the dawn of humanity this Mystic Order rose among the nations of the earth, and like the "Sun of Righteousness" with healing in its wings, has driven away the darkness of superstition, ignorance and fanaticism and flooded the earth with the enlightened knowledge of right and truth everlasting, while it points to the Cross as a symbol of sacrifice and service for love and humanity.

Let us catch the inspiration of this wonderful vision and live up to the opportunities God has given us to prove our worthiness of this great Order and that we are indeed true "Sons of the Light."

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WHAT IS MASONRY?

Masonry has been defined to be a scientific moral institution that teaches its lessons by symbolism and allegory. There is scarcely a single object in nature from which it does not draw some moral truth and apply it to our every day life. It is a moral principle working through an organization of lodges and whose teachings are "peace on earth, good will to men." It is a combination into one order of three sovereigns "of right over force, of intelligence over prejudice, of brotherhood over selfhood." It presents objects heroic in the highest sense and which can only serve to inspire Masons, true builders of the Eternal Truth, with a resolution as omnipotent as are the obstacles to the upbuilding of all things mightier than men. It is not a dogmatic religion, although it is so far interwoven with religion that it lays us under obligations to reverence and adore our Divine Creator.

"Slave to no sect, who takes no private road,
But looks through Nature up to Nature's God;
Pursues that chain which links the immense design,
Joins heaven and earth, and mortal and divine,
Sees that no being any bliss can know,
But touches some above and some below,
Learns from this union of the rising whole,
The first, last purpose of the human soul,
And knows where faith, law, morals, all began,
And end in love to God and love to man."

Masonry seeks to apply the tools of our profession so as to prepare man to become a "perfect ashler" fit for "that spiritual temple, that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

Physical man, like his physical work is ephemeral and will pass away, but the work of the eternal mind, partaking of its own indestructible essence, will live forever. We know that many of the valuable monuments of antiquity have crumbled into dust and where those beautiful spots once adorned the earth, the sand of the deserts now cover them, yet this institution has lived on because the music that Hiram, the Builder, sung still lingers on the lips of thousands; its melodious harmonies have been communicated from mouth to ear and its truths have been lodged in the repository of faithful breasts to be transmitted unimpaired to the remotest generations.

Like a beautiful stream rippling over the rocks and crags of superstition and prejudice this beneficent Order of ours has flowed down through the ages bringing gladness and hope, while it sings ever and anon the same sweet song of devotion and untiring love to humanity.

There are three or four fundamental principles contained in every branch of Masonry and you will find them in the lessons and teachings of almost every degree.

The first—"Trust in God," is the foundation stone on which every Masonic superstructure is erected. This lesson you learn in the Entered Apprentice Degree and you see it emphasized in all the others. Except the house be built upon this rock it will not stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

The next great truth that Masons teach as a guide to their footsteps is the "Immortality of the Soul."

The Master Masons Degree would be anaemic did not the glorious doctrine of the resurrection and the immortality of the soul shine forth in refulgent splendor to light man's pathway to "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler ever returns."

Immortality! What a wonderful word it is! It carries us back to the Divine Creator, because the Great Book says, "In the beginning God" and its concluding verses say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Then spake he unto Moses and said, "I am that I am," meaning which is and was and is to be.

Immortality! We bow before the very term. Immortality! Before it reasons staggers, calculation reclines her tired head, and imagination folds her weary pinions.

Immortality! It throws open the portals of the vast forever; it puts the crown of deathless destiny upon every human brow; it cries to every uncrowned man and woman "live forever, crowned for the empire of eternity!"

An angel's eye cannot measure its journey nor an angel's wing travel to its farthest boundary. It is a fountain whose source is in the infinite and whose placid waters flow on forever. Builders build only for a century, but Masons are building for eternity. Painters only paint for a generation or so, but Masons are painting for everlasting years. This great central truth of the immortality of the soul is emphasized in many of our degrees, so that it might sink into your heart and conscience and find lodgment there. Our Order holds with Addison when he said:

"It must be so—Flato, thou reasonest well!
Elsé whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis Heaven itself, that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to Man.
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years,
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds."

We do not believe that He, who gives the rose bush, whose petals are scattered by the autumn breezes, the sweet assurance of another spring time, will withhold from men the blessed hope of a rejuvenated life after the frosts of winter have spent their force upon his inanimate clay. We cannot believe that He who gives to the acorn that lies buried in the earth the promise that under the fructifying influence of Mother Earth with the generating qualities of the great luminary of nature, it shall break its prison cell and grow into the stalwart oak to bless mankind, shall allow the soul of man made in His own image to suffer eternal annihilation. No, there is "A land where the rainbow never fades and where the stars are spread out before Him like islands that slumber upon the

bosom of the ocean and where the beings that pass before us like shadows here will stay in our presence forever." To such a land my brethren are we journeying and Masonry is but pointing that way.

The third great truth that permeates all our teachings is the final triumph of right over wrong, of good over evil, and of truth over error. God in His wisdom cannot make mistakes. He who feeds the sparrow and clothes the lily of the field will likewise care for his children. Pain and suffering may come, but God will at last reward virtue and punish wrong.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat.

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;

Oh be swift my soul to answer Him! Be jubilant my feet!

Our God is marching on."

Masonry is not altogether a speculative society, but real Masonry is to do the work of life. Its precepts are meant to be put into practical application in our every day life. If a Mason has received light and knowledge, it is his duty to dispense it so that "others seeing his good works may glorify our Father in heaven." Masonry must walk in the open street, appear in the crowded square, and among the throngs of earth and teach men by her deeds, her life, her example which is more potent than all the philosophy or theories that fall from the lips of men.

The goal of Free Masonry is ideal manhood. It is the star of our hope, the beacon light upon the shore to the mariner Mason tossed hither and thither upon the ocean stream of life. Who of us would not rejoice with ineffable joy if we could throw off the weaknesses and foibles that mark our sensual appetites. He who conquers here has achieved the greatest of all victories and becomes indeed the true Master Mason. Therein are the true successes to be won that entitles us to the crown of laurel and olive worn by the "Soldiers of the Light." In every human life that battle is fought, and those who win elsewhere often suffer ignominious defeat and disastrous rout and discomfiture and shameful downfall in this encounter.

Masonry teaches this sublime truth that we have a spiritual nature which is Divine and it should lead us to a truer and a better life. It should lead us to be real heroes by becoming conquerers over ourselves. Let us one and all apply this lesson.

MASONIC DUTY.

Many of our brethren are inclined to believe that they are doing Masonic work when they meet in the lodge room and confer degrees. This is a mistaken idea. The degree work is only the shell that encloses the kernel of Masonic truth and he who would become a true Mason in his heart, must study and delve into the history, the legends and philosophy of this institution and learn something of its true significance.

We are not doing work by simply conferring degrees. Masonry has a mission in the world and I am proud that in recent years our brethren are awakening to the responsibilities they owe to the human race.

Masonic Duty means sacrifice and service and the individual brother or the Lodge or the Grand Lodge or other Grand Body that is not doing this is falling far short of measuring up to its obligations in life.

Masonry stands for education and enlightenment. "Error can never long triumph when intelligent reason is left free to combat it." For this reason we advocate free schools and public education, which brings the light of free thought and free conscience to dispel the darkness of ignorance and tyranny that would becloud our footsteps in the journey of life.

Masonry has flourished and nations prospered when the minds of the people were left free. In all countries where learning and freedom have risen superior to intolerance and fanaticism, our Order has been supported by the wise and patronized by the great.

Our Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite is standing loyally for these great fundamental principles and while some opposition appears here and there, yet the great battle for human freedom of thought and development of our higher mental faculties goes forward and the ultimate goal of our hopes and aspirations will yet be fulfilled, because they are right and just and true.

Our Grand Encampment of Knights Templar has also taken up this great work of aiding the deserving boys and girls of our country to complete their education and take their rightful station in life to render service to humanity.

The Mystic Shrine is also devoting its funds to relieve the cripple children of our country and give them an equality of opportunity in the race for life.

I believe our other General Grand Bodies should also take up some great altruistic work like fighting the great white plague instead of simply meeting every three years and participating in social functions and discussing rulings and decisions and then electing officers and adjourning for three years more. We are not deserving the gracious favor of our Heavenly Father unless our activities reach further than this.

Some one has well said, "Man in no respects so nearly approaches to the Deity, as when he confers benefits upon others." The Wise Master well said "Let him that would be greatest among you be as one that serveth."

It is our duty to serve and do good to as many as possible and there is nothing greater in your fortune and nothing finer in your nature than that you should be desirous of doing this.

I am proud that our Grand Lodge has erected this quarter of a million dollar plant to care for, rear and train the orphan children of our brethren when the Grim Reaper has thrust in the sickle and garnered them into the harvest on the other shore. The small assessment we pay is but a pittance compared to the incalculable good we do and we ourselves will feel all the better for this service which we are rendering to those who have a just claim upon us.

Who can measure the results that may flow from this institution. From here may emerge girls that will grace our homes and become the mothers of the future sons and daughters that will bless our country. From here boys may go forth to become lawyers, doctors, statesmen and leaders of thought and action. We cannot tell what possibilities may be wrapped up in their little bodies.

Pharaoh's daughter little dreamed of the wonderful consequences that depended on her charitable act when she drew the little Hebrew child Moses out of the waters of the Nile.

Yet the whole history of the world has been changed by the life of the great lawgiver, poet and statesman of the children of Israel.

There is no law, thank God, that limits the returns that shall be reaped from a single good deed.

Our Heavenly Father has blessed our Order for the work it is doing for humanity. While many other fraternal orders have witnessed a decline in their membership in the past twenty-five years, yet our Masonic Fraternity has experienced a growth unparalleled in its history. In Louisiana today we have 84,000 Masons whereas in 1900 we had only 6,000 members, or an increase exceeding five hundred percent, whereas the population has increased only thirty-five percent in that same period of time. What a marvelous growth. Truly God has been with us and He will continue to guide and bless us if we so live and act as to deserve this gracious bounty at His hands.

Yes, my brethren, our Order has for us a far more noble and glorious purpose than simply hewing timbers and squaring stones, that of fitting immortal nature for its home beyond the empurpled skies. Builders are building for a century, Masons for eternity; painters are painting for a generation or so, but Masons for everlasting years.

The pyramids of Egypt occupied the work of 100,000 men for many years and yet they were only monumental piles beneath whose shadows kings might rest, only mausoleums in which the bones of the mighty dead like King "Tut" could repose in imperial magnificence. We are not building for the dead, but for the living, that they might be fitted to soar aloft to realms of ethereal bliss, while leaving here the memory of a life devoted to service and the uplifting of the human race.

I grant you this is ideal Masonry, but unless you and I catch a correct vision of this ideal, then Masonry will not fulfill her mission, but be misjudged and criticised by those who know naught of her philosophy and purpose in the world.

Yes, my brethren, this is a great day for the Masonic Fraternity in Louisiana.

Let us go forward in this noble and glorious work. Let us remember the precious jewels of the Fellowcraft and while we heed the lessons of the "Attentive Ear, the Instructive Tongue and Faithful Breast" let our footsteps be guided by the symbolic teachings of the Square, the Level and the Plumb. Remember,

"The level's a jewel when it levels men up,
But not so if it levels them down;
And the Mason, who levels his life by its gauge,
Will be laureled at last with a crown.

"But better than level is the right-angled Square,
For it teaches greater lessons of love;
By its angle men's lives are tested as true,
In this world and the Home that's above.

"We'll meet on the level and act by the square,
As Masons we know it's our duty to do;
And the world will be better and brighter and fair,
Because we've lived in it and journeyed life through."

Let us follow in the path of virtue. Let our aspirations be as grateful as its incense, our love warm as its flame and our charity diffusive as its fragrance. Let our heart be as pure as the altar and our conduct as acceptable as the offering, and thus we each will become a pillar of wisdom, strength and beauty adorning and upholding the majestic edifice of Masonry-Pillars upon which it will continue to stand until that time, when amid the universal wreck, the dazzling brightness of the day and the deep blue of the empurpled night shall fade.

"When like the baseless fabric of vision,
The cloud capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great Globe itself,
Yes, all which it inherits, shall dissolve."

When those who can meet the test of the Grand Master of the Universe shall be clothed with the garments of immortality and be permitted to enter into that Celestial Lodge whose builder and maker is God,

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