

experience equal delight and satisfaction. To exhaust the various subjects of which it teaches would be to transcend the powers of the brightest genius, and any attempt to do so by me, would fall far short of the mark. At many points, the initiated find its truths veiled in mystery, but we are taught that perseverance and application remove each difficulty as it occurs. At every step instruction of the noblest kind opens to the view, and new pleasures are presented in a new light to the enquiring mind. In the search after "Light and Truth," the intellectual faculties are employed in promoting the glory of God, and the universal good of mankind.

But I digress. Blue Lodge Masonry is composed of three degrees—Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. The symbolism of this branch of the order is eminently calculated to enforce the duties of morality, and imprint on the memory the noblest principles which can adorn the human mind. The entered apprentice symbolically represents the entrance of a man into the world, in which he is afterwards to become a living and thinking actor. Coming from an outer world as "a poor blind candidate," who has groped in ignorance and darkness, his first craving is for light—which light is symbolically represented by what Masons term the "Three Great Lights," which properly understood, are but that moral and intellectual light, which emanates from the throne of the Supreme Grand Architect of the Universe. The profane here represents one who is seeking for a light which is to guide his footsteps in the pathway which leads to duty, and to Him who gives to duty its reward. The points of the Compass are still in darkness, but in the symbolism of the great Lights, he is urged onward in search of other Masonic truths, which as a fellow craft with the points of the Compasses properly arranged, he is intended to typify the struggles of the ardent mind for the attainment of Truth, that "Divine attribute" the comprehension of which surpasseth human understanding, and to which, standing in the middle chamber, after his ascent of the winding stairs, he can only approximate, by the reception of an imperfect and yet glorious reward, in the revelation of that "hieroglyphic light which none but craftsmen ever saw." In the Master's degree the symbolism is further exemplified. Here we have the type of a man, complete in moral and intellectual culture—no longer left to acquire knowledge, except in the traditional loss of an important tribute—which will be understood by every Master Mason present—but prepared to use the knowledge he has obtained. Union, of the most unselfish nature, has always characterized our fraternity. Ambition, desire for fame, every passion which appeals to the self love of man, have been merged in the perfect union engendered by an adherence to the tenets of our order, to such a degree, that with a very few exceptions, the names even of our great architects have not come down to us, though their work still stands, to attest their excellence. All was the work of Brethren, and each was allowed his share of the glory.

In this degree we have a type of the communion of man with God. Long before the incarnation of that great Being, in the person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whom I do not hesitate to say was a Mason—was the hope entertained of seeing Him with mortal eyes, and no exertions were deemed too great to insure that consummation. With us, these ideas are but a type; for we have that realization so longed for by the

Brethren of old, and all is bright and clear, if we do but follow the teachings of our "Great light," the "inestimable gift of God to man, which is the rule and guide of our faith." In the ceremonies of this degree we are required to complete our duty to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, step by step, mounting from the lowest to the highest, our duties are marked out, and made so plain that the wayfaring man may not err therein.

Although my remarks have become somewhat extended, the myths and legends of Free Masonry claim some attention. I will remark that the history of the human race proves that the mind of man in all ages, has had a yearning after the acquirement of divinity. Our mother Eve, in the garden of Eden, was the first of our great family to overstep the bounds of prudence to grasp the Infinite. Adam promptly followed his spouse, and entailed untold evils upon their progeny.—Throughout all nature there is no law without a penalty, but at the same time there is no transgression, which does not have its corresponding pardon and absolution—whether it be inherent in the law or rests in the hands of the chief executive. In the case to which we refer, the remedy rested alone in the hands of the great Creator who sent us redemption from the penalties of the law, in the person of our Savior, so that man may ever feel grateful to our first parents, for the good received more than counterbalances the evil; but we must pass on.

The mythology of Free Masonry is one of its most valuable attributes, because, in a certain sense it fills a void which has always existed in the breast of the fallen, but redeemed man, which we suppose was implanted in the human breast for some wise purpose. Masonic myths are figurative representations of events or ideas in the garb of history; they develop themselves spontaneously and unartificially in the consciousness of the human mind, instead of being artistic products of design and invention, and they symbolize the forces and operations of nature, under whose influence they are formed, and have an essentially religious character.

In the second degree we have the beautiful myth, or legend of the winding stairs, which are passed by the candidate in gaining admission into the middle chamber, which is symbolic of this life, and where only the symbol of the word can be given—where only the truth can be reached by approximation, and yet where we are to learn that Truth, which consists in a more extended knowledge of the Grand Architect of the Universe. This is the reward of the inquiring Mason, and is the wages of a Fellow Craft. He is directed to the South, but he must travel further and ascend still higher to attain it. It is as a symbol—myth—and symbol only, that we must study this beautiful legend of the winding stairs. We cannot adopt it as a historical fact, or wise men will wonder at our credulity—as a symbol, or as an allegory, it is fertile with instruction.

In the tragic legend of the third degree, which exemplifies the virtues and the fidelity of the Tyrian artists, we have a myth which is unquestionably the most important, impressive, and instructive portion of the ritual of Ancient Free Masonry. It has been well said that "it transcends all others in its profound philosophy, in the wide range of ideas it aims to elucidate, and the dramatic interest with which it is invested." But it is a myth. A learned writer says it is thoroughly Egyptian, and thus explains it:

"OSIRIS, ISIS, and TYPHON, are the three principal characters. TYPHON—evil, made war upon OSIRIS—Beauty, Goodness, Truth. A fierce conflict long raged between these

spiritual forces, of which all the combats, antagonisms and disorders of the outward, visible world, were only far distant echoes, or feeble reverberations. TYPHON—evil, for a period appeared to triumph. With his wiles and arts, he overcame OSIRIS—Truth, dismembered his body, and concealed the fragments in the several quarters of the earth. Then the whole universe was shrouded in gloom, and resounded with lamentation and mourning over the fall of the beautiful and good. ISIS set forth on her woful pilgrimage to find the beloved OSIRIS. After many disappointments and trials, her efforts were crowned with success. The great day of triumph came. TYPHON—evil, was destroyed by HORUS; the tomb of OSIRIS opened, and HE—Order, Truth Justice—came forth, victorious in the possession of immortal life, and harmony, peace and joy prevailed throughout the universe."

Here the Tyrian artist is the symbol of Beauty and order, Goodness and Truth, which embellishes and beautifies life, idealizes all nature, transforming dull and prosy reality into a sunny flowery dream.

"Clothing the palpable and the familiar,  
With golden exhalations of the dawn."

This beautiful myth is perpetually repeated, says the same writer in the history of human affairs. Orpheus was murdered, and his body was thrown into the Hebros, Socrates was made to drink the hemlock, and in all ages we have seen Evil temporarily triumphant, and virtue and truth calumniated, persecuted, crucified and slain. But eternal justice marches surely and swiftly through the world; the TYPHONS, the children of darkness, the plotters of crime, are swept into oblivion, and Truth and Virtue—for a time overpowered—come forth, clothed with divine majesty, and crowned with everlasting glory.

"Truth, crushed to earth, will rise again;  
The eternal years of God are hers  
While error wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers."

I have thus far alluded to only two of the mythical legends of Free Masonry—our ritual and our teachings are full of them, each shining out with no borrowed brilliancy, but with its own natural brightness in the grand panorama which the tenets of our order presents to the world.

I cannot conclude without some reference to that grand monument to Masonic charity, the Oxford Orphan, and its sister Asylum at Asheville. Here brethren we are emphatically clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, ay—we are doing more, we are storing the minds of the little children, who have been gathered into these schools with useful knowledge, in order that they may become useful members of society. Brethren, there are in Oxford two of the grand children of one of the governors of North Carolina. During his life he had wealth and honors, but his fortune was swept away, and his honors lasted only during his life. The Masonic fraternity gathers up his grand children and feeds, clothes and educates them—"inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these ye have done it unto me." Brethren, these Asylums are something to be proud of—they are monuments to the charity of North Carolina Masons, which will last until time shall be no more. But they still need your aid and your charity. Open your heart and your purse strings, and contribute something to enable North Carolina Masons to carry out the work so auspiciously begun. "He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," and how much more commendable is it in us to contribute to the relief of those little ones who cannot help themselves? God has placed them here as our wards, and we must cherish, protect and nourish them. In this great Masonic charity we can prove to the world, that we can practice as well as preach. It is already in successful operation, and needs only your favors

and your charities, to enable its historian to fill up the brightest page, in the history of the Fraternity in our State.

And now, a few words to the ladies and I am done. From the seclusion of home and the press of domestic cares, you have come here to do honor to this occasion. It is one of our peculiarities that women are not admitted within the Masonic sanctuary. It is one of the landmarks of the order, has always existed, and will probably always exist. As we teach speculative Masonry at this day and time you cannot be admitted into our order. There are many reasons why this is so. We have no power to cut loose from a principle, which is as old as the Craft itself. Such an innovation would beget others, and after a few years we would lose all but the skeleton, and in a short time even that would be buried. This much I may be allowed to say: Your admission in the Order could do you no good, and would do the order incalculable harm. You carry the key to unlock the hidden mysteries of man's nature, and you have it in your power to make his life nobler, better, purer.—Do this and he will become an ornament to the Craft, and a useful member of the great family of men. You were not intended by the Creator to become a drone in the hive of human industry, but a powerful factor, and co worker, in the activities which build up the world's best estate. You have a work to do. Your brain, and your energies must be drawn out and disciplined, and become something more than a mere honey-combed receptacle, fit only to drink of the nectar, which is distilled in the alembics of the flowers of life. You have it in your power to inspire the baser sex by precept and example; by truthfulness and virtue—and I may be allowed to pause and say that the latter is always safe among Master Masons—dry up the tear of sorrow, give religion the light of a life illustration, far transcending all the power of its apologists; make your beautiful presence a shrine at which wearied and tempted men may delight to bow, and become the guardian of those sibylline leaves on which the world shall read the prophecies of "a good time coming." A golden age of finer aspect than that sung by the classic harp; a millennium whose dawn shall bring back the lost Eden, with all its blossoms and bowers, with not a single tree whose fruit shall be "forbidden to taste," and in which "the tree of knowledge" of God, and his works shall be the central objects, and and its apples blushing on the boughs of all the regained Paradise. With such a mission, why seek graver obligations?

My task is done. My effort has been vain and useless, if it fails to excite our serious reflection, and strengthen our resolutions of amendment, and improvement in the duties of Free Masonry. Let us all resolve to maintain with sincerity, the dignified character of our profession. May our faith be evinced in a correct moral walk and deportment; may our hope be bright as the glorious mysteries, that will be revealed hereafter, and our charity as boundless as the wants of our fellow creatures. And having faithfully discharged the great duties we owe to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, may the *triple board* of our lives, at last pass an inspection which will entitle us to the welcome plaudit of "well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Pride may sometimes be a useful spring board to the aspiring soul, but it is much more frequently a destructive stumbling block.