

Sing no Sad Songs.

When I am dead my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree;
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt remember,
And if thou wilt, forget

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain;
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember
And haply may forget.

ABSTRACT

From Masonic address, delivered by Chas. R. Jones, W. M. Excelsior Lodge, No. 261, Charlotte, N. C., before Mt. Mourne Lodge, No. 347, on 24th day of June, 1876, at the public celebration of the anniversary of St. John the Baptist.

It is said that the good or evil that men do while living, exists after they are dead and buried. The seeds of infidelity sown by Tom Paine in his "Age of Reason," though he be long since dead, and I had almost said forgotten, will spring up and germinate, until time shall be no more; while the everlasting good inaugurated by Luther, during the Reformation in the 16th Century, is a vital reality to-day, and is bearing abundant fruit, in the harvest of souls which are annually gathered in from the Protestant denominations of our era, whose tenets have revolutionized the civilized world. The wisdom of Solomon, who has been pronounced "the wisest, and among the best of men," though he has slumbered in the sepulchre of the Kings of Israel, for three thousand years, exhibits a specimen of its fruits in this assemblage to-day.

Following up this train of thought, we are told that what is written, or spoken, stands; and passes not away. The spoken words roll through the ambient air, to the utmost verge of space. As the stone sends rippling rings to the farthest edge of the water into which it is cast, so rolls the smallest wave of sound, to the confines of the subtle ether which surrounds this grosser atmosphere; and the awful thought has come to speculative philosophers, that on some later day, and in perhaps other worlds than ours, of this great universe, every one shall see before him, as on a scroll, every syllable which he has ever uttered, shining in the Heavens, where each word, as it was breathed, sets its eternal seal and stands forth in meridian brightness, in characters of living light. Should not such a thought inspire us with a realization of our accountability to the Great I Am, and make our lives in our transitory existence here, happier, better and purer? "And whether crowned, or crownless when we fall."

It matters not so Gods' work be done."

We come to talk of Masonry, to Masons, and we should prove recreant to every trust, did we not say that by a full and fair exposition of our great leading principles, we betray no Masonic secrets. These are safely locked in the repository of faithful breasts, and can never be imparted, except in a constitutional manner. But it is no secret that our tenets are open to the criticisms of the world. It is no secret that we claim Masonry to be of divine origin. It is no secret that the system embraces, and inculcates evangelical truth. It is no secret that there is not a duty enjoined, nor a virtue required, in the volume of inspiration, which is the "Great Light" in Masonry, but what is taught by the speculative theory of our order. It is no secret that the appropriate name of Deity has been

preserved by our institution, in every country where Masonry existed, while, at least through the dark ages, the rest of the world has been sunk into the depths of heathenism. It is no secret that we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, protect the widow and orphan, as we are now doing at Oxford, and at Asheville; and in all things, according to our ability, do good to the whole human family. And above all, it is not, neither can it be a secret, that a good Mason is of necessity, truly and emphatically, a good man. This, then, is what we call speculative Free Masonry. How rightly, and solemnly, and interesting is our profession; and how far does each member of our order fulfill these responsibilities? We are led to exclaim that no period, short of boundless eternity, can fully display the moral beauties, the unsearchable riches of this system.

Man in a state of nature, is wild and barbarous. His purposes, his objects, his aims, and his ends fall far short of his destiny as intended by the Creator. It is only by the associations and restraints thrown around his being, by the ties of society and civilization, that he rises to the measure of his true greatness, and his proper duties. The association of individuals to promote the arts and sciences, to encourage agriculture and manufactures, to civilize the savage, to suppress vice and immorality, to diffuse the gospel and christianize the world. All these associations, so far as the members are actuated by proper motives, have one ultimate end in view; to meliorate the condition of man, and render his whole existence a blessing. The great aggregate of happiness produced in the moral system by the instrumentality of the various humane, benevolent, moral and religious societies of the world, is far beyond all human conception. Eternity alone, can fully manifest how much misery has been prevented, and how much relative good has been produced. In point of antiquity—and Masons always love this feature of their institution—intrinsic worth, and universal prevalence, the Masonic institution ranks first. The great antiquity and universal prevalence of this society cannot be questioned in the light of the history which has come down to us, and the oral traditions which have been transmitted, unimpaired, to the present day. The intrinsic excellency, and great utility of our institution, in the thorough and active organization of the fraternity throughout the globe, is a monument of itself, which, judging the future by the past, is a monument which will exist until the last syllable of recorded time, only to be gathered up and clasped in the bosom of the great eternity.

Be ours the task, in a brief manner, to enumerate some of the reasons why this is so. Masonry is a voluntary organization. Its members are brought together, and kept together by the silken cords of brotherly love. She admits none knowingly into her folds, but such as come of their own unbiased free will and accord. Of her votaries she requires none but willing obligations which must be cheerfully rendered. She extends her arms to none knowingly, except such as will make fit stones for the erection of the Masonic temple, which contrived in Wisdom, supported by Strength, and adorned by Beauty, will be an honor to the Craft. She throws around all such the kindly arm of her loving protection. She watches over their interests, aids them in their distresses, and sympathizes with them in their sorrows.

We are in deed, and in truth, a Brotherhood of the purest type known on earth, if we are faithful to our obligations. There is no word that carries with

it more weight and influence than *brother*, as taught by speculative Masonry. It mocks the cold and selfish world in its obduracy, and sheds upon the sensitive fibres of our natures, the refreshing dews of tenderness, that are reflected from the mirrors of the soul, the typified purity of the Infinite. "Love thy brother as thyself," is a divine command, and in its true sense known to, and appreciated only by Masons, who have at least been raised from a level to a perpendicular, by the strong grip of the lion's paw of the tribe of Judah; who has been received into the upper chamber and welcomed as a Master Mason. These are portrayed in the beaming smile, or the clasp of the hand, that bespeaks a welcome more potent than mere words, to which reciprocal pleasure responds, and often the unspoken greeting reverberates through the vaults of a faithful breast, echoing the silvery cadences of requited affection, brotherly-love, relief and truth.

Thus we see that the mighty stream of Free Masonry, started as a little rill at the building of King Solomon's Temple, flowing down through almost countless ages, through every nation and clime, still rolls on in its outward course to the shores of eternity. As we attempt to follow its windings, over both continents, we are alternately delighted and perplexed,—delighted at the grand structure which stands out in bold relief before us and perplexed when diligently essaying to make the voyage from the source to that part of the channel, where all difficulties will be surmounted, and the gorgeous beauties of a splendid landscape, as delineated on the Masonic trestle-board may be seen on the surrounding shore. As our mighty rivers are found to have their source in some tiny spring, rippling from the green hills among some mountain fastness, so we find the origin of the river of Freemasonry, through Masonic tradition, to have been among a cluster of Hebrew hills; to have been shaped by a divine hand, and to have been perpetuated for a good purpose, and that purpose we do not hesitate to say, is the search after light and truth. We pause, and echo answers truth—divine truth, and the answer comes back to us like an inspiration, that this grand acme of human existence is only reached by that theological ladder which Jacob, in his vision saw extending from earth to heaven; the three principle rounds of which are denominated, Faith, Hope and Charity; which admonishes us to have faith in God, hope in immortality, and charity to all mankind.

Deeply impressed with these thoughts we pause to consider the future. We see opening before us, broad fields of labor to be cultivated by our hands, and paths of usefulness to be trod by the busy feet of the worker in the Masonic hive. There should be no drones among us. Masonic life is one of continued perception—of duties neglected, or of labors performed. Of necessity we must step into the arena of life, and prove that Masonry is something more than fine professions, and obsequious pretensions. Let us ignite the candle of light,—of which we are so justly proud—and put it on not under the bushel—Brother Mason, cherish your ideal existence, and all the sweet poetry of life,—but smother your growling propensities, as you would the viper that crosses your path. Circumscribe your desires and keep your passions within due bounds, or the spark of every insane desire will soon be kindled into an unquenchable flame, which ere the better judgement is aware, will swallow up all the holy attributes of existence, and add one more wreck to the degenerated throng on the downhill path of the grave.

We cannot perpetuate our creed, unless we ignore all flimsy materialisms, cut off all excrescences, and recognize a divine spirituality in the duties before us as Masons. We cannot fulfill the objects of our order, until we come up to the measure of our obligations to all mankind, but particularly toward our brethren in Masonry, proving to the world that we can practice what we preach. Our Masonic life is not a bauble to be played with, and fondled in every idle hour, but it is a something real—something that a higher power has designed, for worthier purposes than the gratification of a mere sordid selfishness. We need men—Masons—not idlers on the shore of time, who while they are working out a destiny for themselves, can pause, and if need be labor for their Brethren. Yes, we must go out into the highways and by-ways, and tell the world by our actions, that the marriage feast is spread and all good men are welcome to the table, and in language quite unmistakable, we must say that the unworthy are not only not invited, but will not be permitted to gather around our festive board.

Our passions, our aspirations, and our desires; our hopes, our fears and our longings, must necessarily be their receptacle of a thousand pure streams, down whose channels should drift the untainted breezes and beneficence. Labor is the rightful King, to whom homage is to be paid on earth by man. Inactivity is nothing, but the sightless skeleton of sin, stalking over blood stained graves.

To one man is given five talents, to another two, and to another one. Has he that received five talents made other five talents? and has he that received two talents gained other two talents? or have they both hid their talents in the earth, because they believed that the lord of the household was a hard master, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strewn?

He that labors in the Masonic vineyard will receive his reward if he is faithful unto the end, but he must not be disappointed if the reward is not what he expects. The laborers in the vineyard who were employed at the eleventh hour, were paid a penny, as were those who had borne the heat and burden of the day. These last were permitted to enjoy the reward for their labors, equally with those who had labored throughout the day, as the blessed dews come without cost, and we might go still further and say that in many cases, those who go not into the vineyard at all, are paid as much as those who labor from the dawn of day until the setting of the sun. Knowing this should we halt or hesitate in the discharge of the duties incumbent upon us? No! a thousand times no! We must be satisfied that we have done our duty to the letter, as well as the spirit of the law. Having undertaken to live up to the requirements of esoteric Free Masonry, we can only say, "let him who puts his hand to the plow, look not back until he shall have reached the end of the furrow."

These remarks have been extended far beyond my intention at the outset, but I cannot conclude a Masonic address to Masons without some reference to the symbolism of our order. Masonry is a progressive science, and includes within its circle almost every branch of polite learning. Under the veil of its mysteries, many of its illustrations may appear unimportant; but the man of more enlarged faculties will perceive them to be, in the highest sense, useful and interesting. It is wisely planned to please the accomplished scholar, so that in the investigation of its latent doctrines, the philosopher, or the mathematician, may