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AN ADDRESS

Delivered at the laying of the Corner-Stone of the Asylum for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, in the City of Raleigh, on the 14th April, 1848, by Rev. SAM'L S. BRYANT.

The occasion which has called us together, is one of peculiar interest. We assemble to witness the ceremony of laying the corner-stone of a building designed by the State of North Carolina to be devoted to the instruction of the Deaf, the Dumb, and the Blind.

To many of you, this array of scarfs and of aprons will appear idle, perhaps, or useless, and these peculiar rites may be destitute of meaning: you will therefore permit me to make such explanation of these forms as, in the circumstances, seem to be necessary.

The ceremonies you have just witnessed, as conducted by the Grand Master of the order of Freemasons in this State, have come down to us from ancient times. They had their origin in an age when men were accustomed openly to recognize their dependence on Almighty God, for success in any important enterprise; when sovereigns and subjects together assembled, made public declaration of trust in a superintending Providence. With this intent, these forms were used at the commencement of all public buildings, whether of Church or State.

I need not stop to ask, if, with all its progression and improvement, the world has grown wise enough to dispense with a reliance on the great Creator, or to inquire if there has yet been found a better way than by solemn public declaration to make known our trust in that Arm which can aid to build or stay the builder—in that goodness and mercy that can bring to a happy and successful issue, efforts and plans which we may dare to present before God as worthy of his blessing.

The corner-stone is at once the support and the binding stone of the building. Here, then, first of all, we look to see if that be "well formed, true and trusty." Having thus used our best skill to commence right, we ask in humble confidence the blessing of God upon the labor of our hands.

These rites impressed great truths upon the mind through the medium of symbols and the power of association; and we continue their observance because we can find no better: Therefore as in ancient times, we pour upon the stone, corn and wine and oil.

The Corn is a symbol of the nourishment necessary for bodily support, imparting strength for the labors of life; that daily bread, which, in the imitable form of prayer Christ left us, we are taught to ask our Heavenly Father to give us.

The Wine represents those delights and comforts by which we are permitted to lighten toil; and, refreshed in spirit and renewed in hope, are enabled to gird our loins for the new coming struggle, and meet, in turn as they come, afflictions and cares. But as the wine is poured out sparingly, we should remember never to permit pleasure to trespass on duty; and to reflect, that as the wine may "become a mocker," so may pleasure turn to poison on the heart.

The Oil denotes dependence upon God, for the blessings of peace and prosperity, good government and religion. From the time that the dove brought back to Noah in the Ark the green leaf of the olive, has this tree and its fruits been used as the symbol of peace and prosperity. Then went the patriarch out and stood on the renewed earth; then the rainbow of promise was spread out on the bosom of the departing cloud. And from the day when the prophet of Jehovah poured the oil of anointing on the head of the first King of Israel, has it been used to signify dependence on God to direct national counsels to right and happy issues, and to control and avert national calamities. Jacob slept upon the plain of Bethel, and there was given to him the vision of the ladder connecting Earth and Heaven, upon which the angels ascended and descended, and the voice of the Lord broke the quiet of his slumbers. In the morning, he raised his head from the stone on which it had rested, and he exclaimed, "surely the Lord is in this place;" and he set up the stone for a pillar of remembrance, "and poured oil upon it, and worshipped God." So, by this act, we acknowledge our religious obligation, and say, with the patriarch, "If I will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God."

Such was the ancient meaning of these ceremonies, and such is the meaning now. They were observed in laying the foundation of our own beautiful Capitol, and of our cherished University; with these ceremonies was laid the corner-stone of the Capitol of our Union, by the illustrious Washington, bearing the gavel, and clothed with the badges of a Mason; and surely they will not be deemed inappropriate to the commencement of this Institution, the offspring of sound legislation and Christian benevolence.

But why does Freemasonry claim the peculiar guardianship of these ancient rituals? Because it is her right, and the legitimate work of the Order.

In the history of Masonry, there are three distinct eras—the first may be classed as operative, the second scientific, and the third speculative.

Within the limits of the ancient kingdom of Tyre, stands Jebel, now a mere village of huts, yet still a place where broken columns and crumbling towers tell the story of former magnificence and power. This is all that remains of Gebal or Byblus, the dwelling place, in the days of Phœnician glory, of the most celebrated Architects of the age. These are the "stone-squarers" named in the Bible, I Kings, v. c. 18 v., in Hebrew called *ha-giblim*, or men of Gebal, who were employed by Solomon in the erection of the Temple. After full investigation, I have no doubt but that here, and with these men originated the order or brotherhood of Masonry.

These Lodges, when first instituted, served to unite in a common bond operative men, the real workmen. The object of the association was two-fold—to secure mutual relief and assistance in the time of distress or danger, and to preserve the mysteries of their craft from the knowledge of all but those who, by regular apprenticeship, were entitled to know them. To prevent imposition, they framed a system of words and signs known only to the craft, and so arranged that even the grade and dignity of each could at will, and with ease be made manifest.

It appears absurd to some that we should claim Solomon, King of Israel, and Hiram, King of Tyre, as members, and even masters of these Lodges; but certainly it does not require a great degree of faith to believe, that such ardent patrons of the arts as these kings are known to have been, were joined in that bond of brotherhood; when almost in our own times George IV of England and Frederick the Great of Prussia, two of the proudest of the sovereigns of Europe, were Grand Masters of the Order.

There is a circumstance connected with the association of these kings, Hiram and Solomon, with the other Hiram, the widow's son, the chief architect of the Temple, that, happening as it did in that dispensation of types and shadows and expressly stated as it is in the Bible, seems to me to be more than accidental. Solomon was an Israelite, and Hiram (the king) was a Gentile. It was a strange union for that age, having as it did for its object the erection of a house for Jehovah, the God of Israel. But there is more than this. Hiram the architect was the son of a Tyrian

father and a Hebrew mother, (I Kings 7th c. 14 v.) thus representing in his own person both Jew and Gentile. Did this shadow forth Gods purpose, in the fulness of time to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile? That the God of the Temple thus erected, designed, that through the rent veil the light of life should beam out from the mercy seat and shine to the very ends of the earth? Light! how dear is the sound of that word to the mason. For all, may it ever spring up in the time of darkness.

We are approaching the second or Scientific period of the association. The Temple was completed, the workmen scattered, but they did not forget the "mystic tie"; indeed dispersed as they were, it was of more value than before.

From an ancient manuscript discovered by the celebrated John Locke in the Bodleian Library, confirmed by another in the Syriac character, translated by Frederick the Great, we learn that Masonry was brought from the East and established in Italy by Pythagoras. This celebrated Philosopher and Geometrician was born at Samos in the year B. C. 524. He travelled much and enriched his mind with every kind of useful learning. In his hands Masonry became a science. The Fellow Craft's degree now bears the impress of his mind. Not then as now could a candidate rush through his degrees in a week or a month: then he had work to do—a trial of five years was required before he could rise from one step to another, and those years must be passed in silence.

Firmly established in Italy, the Lodges prospered greatly, and combined in their labors and instructions, both the arts and the sciences. About the close of the 8th century, "the exclusive monopoly in Christian Architecture was conceded by the Popes to the Masons of Como, then, and for ages afterwards, when the title of Magistri Comacini had long been absorbed in that of free and accepted masons, associated as a craft or brotherhood in art and friendship—a distinct and powerful body composed eventually of all nations concentrating the talent of each successive generation, with all the advantages of accumulated experience and constant mutual communication; imbued moreover in that age of faith with the deepest Christian reverence, and retaining these advantages unchallenged till their proscription in the 15th or 16th century."

Masonry as now organized, is an association of men in a peculiar bond of friendship, for mutual assistance and general benevolence. In the language of Lord Durham, it is an institution "that powerfully develops all social and benevolent affections—mitigates without the Lodge and annihilates within, the virulence of political and theological controversy, and affords a neutral ground on which all ranks and classes can meet in perfect equality, and associate without degradation or mortification, whether for purposes of moral instruction or of social intercourse." It is termed speculative, because it is not now confined to operative or strictly scientific men, and only uses the implements of the mechanic arts as symbols, to illustrate and enforce great moral truths. It has its secret words and signs and forms, not differing materially from those originally used by the architects of Byblus, and the craftsmen of the Temple. While these are useful to the mason, the knowledge of them would be valueless to others; and we possess, I trust, sufficient moral courage, to remain unmoved by the carplings or sneers of any, desirous from a morbid curiosity to know what does not concern them. Further than the declaration of the object of association, and principles of action, masonry chooses to make no explanations. It must be tested by its fruits. It stands before the world to be judged, as every other institution should be, by an enlightened public opinion; and I am free to say, if it produces no good fruits, if it shall be found to have no higher object, than to exhibit gay badges and glittering jewels on some day of festival, I care not how soon its time-honored name is blotted from the earth.

Let it be distinctly understood, that masonry is not religion. It claims no power to give peace and purity to the heart of sin, but in a lower office, seeks to lighten the toil of the careworn, and administer comfort in the house of want. A single remark will establish this position. Woman has no place in our Lodges, no access to our Altars; and do we deny to her the consolations of religion? The thought is an absurdity. But why is the Lodge closed against Woman? For the reason that the work of the Lodge is not suitable to the position she holds in society. When her nature, and the views of men are so changed that woman shall have a place in our Legislatures, and officiate in our Courts of Law, when she shall wield a trowel on the builder's scaffold, take part in the sailor's stern strife with wave and tempest, or follow the war drum to the field of battle, then may it be proper to open the Lodge for her reception. It cannot be that Woman is rejected from fear for the safety of our mysteries, when we so willingly confide to her keeping our hearts, and our homes.

The principles of the order are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. When we fail to practice these virtues as well as profess them, our landmarks will be swept away and our strength palsied. It is only when these are neglected or forgotten, that the sneer of the seer can affect us, or the taunt of prejudice harm; true to ourselves, we are safe; but if faithless, what wonder if we wither, under the just rebuke, and merited contempt of the wise and good.

Brethren, let not the world judge masonry to be like the wild vine of our forests, though its clinging tendrils may aptly represent friendship, and its thick, leafy mantle and beautiful flowers, are emblems of prosperity. Its leafy may perish in an hour, and then only be remembered as a drapery covering from sight the worthless trunk of some rotten tree. Shall our cherished order of mercy, have the worm and corruption in its heart? Nor yet the Oak, monarch of the woods though it be, may stand as the symbol of our association. Deep as its roots may strike into the earth, high as its straight, strong column may rise, broad as it may cast the shadow of its graceful crown; yet with the waning year its leaves are withered, and its branches broken by the storm. Our institution should possess a beauty and a strength more enduring than this. Rather let it be a building, of which thou art the builder; lay the square foundation on the base of Fortitude, Temperance, Prudence and Justice; build up with substantial charities, and the granite of Truth, cemented by Love—build it as the time-defying pyramid is builded, which more and more as it rises higher from the earth, gathers in itself until its heaven aspiring, concentrated point, presents itself fearlessly to the encroaching storm;—a building, which shall stand a thousand years in the future, as it has stood a thousand years in the past, even though the earthquake heaves convulsive at its base. Let it stand a way-mark mid the world's desert sands, to point the weary where he may find, that despite the thousand separations in society, and the cold polish of its heartless forms, that there is yet one spot, where

"Man feels brother unto man."

And yet this is not all of duty. Go find thy brother, make provision for him in affliction, but remember, more than masonry is required of thee. There is yet a higher way-mark which God himself hath set up,—the cross—radiant with living light, beaming from the risen Sun of Righteousness! There thou mayst learn, and only there, not merely that man is thy brother, but that

the Almighty Jehovah will be thy Father, and that thou mayst become his child, and an inheritor of an eternal, and a blessed life.

The Bible is my glorying, my confidence, my hope; so let it be with you. The Christ it declares is the only light of the world, the religion it inculcates its only salvation. Let these lesser instrumentalities perform their office; let these human associations go on with their work of mercy, and dry the widow's and the orphan's tears, but above all this let the heart fix itself on God. Man may say to his fellow, "be thou warm'd and fed and clothed," and it shall be done, and the "blessing of him that was ready to perish" shall come upon him; but God alone can say to the aching heart "I will give thee rest;" from heaven alone comes that sweet, heart cheering word, "The poor have the Gospel preach'd unto them." Systems of philosophy rise and fall, plans of policy crowd upon each other through succeeding ages, but Christianity alone, has a Gospel for the poor. No system of false religion has ever permitted Lazarus to come nearer than the gate; none thought of providing an asylum for the unfortunate; but now, when we read the inspired and glowing page of the Prophet, we stay not in admiration of its sublimity, nor linger delighted with its beautiful imagery;—no; the thought is busy with the fulfilled prediction—figure has become fact, and astonished, we see that it is almost as literally as it is spiritually true, that "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." What heart does not beat with a quickened pulsation, to think how much is committed to our instrumentality, in the work of Christian benevolence? How like the Master's miracles it seems, to take the mind shrouded long years in darkness, its best estate a feeble twilight glimmer, gently open the locked sense, and let in upon it, like a new creation, the light of the knowledge of God and of relative duties, motives and responsibilities! Oh what a holy elevation is given to the child of misfortune! how changed his destiny!

I will not enter upon the consideration of the benefits resulting from the instruction of the deaf and dumb, especially as you will to-night have the privilege to hear an address from one who has devoted many years of his life to this work, and is familiar with the subject in all its bearings; but I cannot well refrain from a remark, in relation to a young gentleman now connected with your own Institution as a Teacher. I knew him when he was a boy; I was led to notice him more particularly because he was deprived of speech and hearing; then he exhibited marks of more than ordinary powers of mind; but he was impetuous, passionate and difficult to control. All sympathized with the sprightly but unfortunate boy; but could sympathy instruct him, prepare him for usefulness, save him? After several years' absence, I returned to the village where his parents resided, and while there, passing down the street in company with a friend, a young man of an open and intelligent countenance and quiet, gentlemanly bearing, passed by, smiled and bowed to me. Who is he? I enquired. Have you forgotten young Abigail?—It seemed to me impossible that this quiet polished young man could have so soon grown up out of that wild, impetuous boy. What a change—it was as if the wand of enchantment had passed over him. He stood before me educated, intellectually and morally, prepared for usefulness and happiness. It was the result of the instruction received in a school for the Deaf and Dumb.

I remember too—long will I remember, the simple story of an interesting little blind girl of New Jersey, related by a clergyman of the City of New York. She had never seen the blessed sun light; never looked upon the fields and flowers, father or mother. The school for the blind was opened to her; there very soon by passing her little fingers over the raised letters, the sense of feeling being thus substituted for sight, she learned to read the word of God; and so eager was she for knowledge that day and night she read on, (the darkness and the light were both alike to her) until her tender fingers were so worn that the blood followed their passage over the page. It was necessary to bind up her hands till they were healed. To be thus suddenly debarred, even for a time, from her delightful employment, was almost too much for her to bear: bitterly she wept, and clasped her loved book to her heart. In the intensity of her grief she impressed a kiss on the rough lettered page, and found she could read with her lips. It was enough, the new found happiness was complete.

This occasion and this assembly marks the triumph of Christianity over selfishness. The corner stone of an Institution has been laid, within whose walls the blind child shall be enabled to see God and walk in the light of an undying hope. Here, the Deaf shall receive the lessons of wisdom and the Dumb shall meditate on the law of the Lord. May the cap stone be laid in peace, and God's blessing rest on the Institution forever.

I will not conclude these remarks, without presenting a few thoughts bearing upon other interests of the State,—duties, which we regard not only of general but universal obligation.

Let us at least, give our people credit for the good deeds they have performed, the good works they have accomplished. I know that some beyond our borders affect to look down upon our State, from some fancied elevation,—perhaps they arrogate to themselves a superior wit and sagacity in the matters of trade and commerce; some again, may boast themselves possessors of all the chivalry known to the world since the days of Edmund Burke; while others plume themselves upon the inheritance of "all the blood of all the Howards." Be this as it may, with smiling self-satisfaction they agree to sneer at our old-time simplicity, and ridicule our dullness, our want of sense to appreciate the benefits of their plans of improvement, as often as otherwise, falsely so called. Be it so, still we have some consolation left us; wild schemes of speculation have not made us insolvent, and the comfort of our homes is not disturbed by dark visions of fearfully long and heavy tax bills in the hands of an unfortuniate Sheriff. North Carolina has never yet sought in vain among her children, for men, wise in counsel, brave in arms, and strong in moral and religious integrity. But we have moved too slow; this is an age of progress, if not of improvement;—the old road wagon cannot compete with the steam car. We have been too remiss even in the effort to develop the ample resources we possess, and consequently we have failed to reach that point of improvement, and height of prosperity, we might otherwise have attained.

Much has been done in our State to supply the means of both male and female Education, by schools so diversified as to reach the wants of all classes and eyes to harmonize with the honest prejudices of any portion of the people. The Legislature, the Churches, associations, and individuals have in turn labored in this cause, and the result is one of blessing. Will you look at what has been done for female education on just one line of road more than one hundred miles in length? Begin at Raleigh; here the Baptist has "Sedgewick" and the Protestant Episcopal "St. Mary's." Go on to Greensboro' 80 miles, there the Presbyterians patronize "Edgeworth," which a fence only separates from the ample grounds of the "Female College," (fully what its name imports) built by the Methodists; five miles further you may see the handsome College erected by the "Society of Friends"; and in twenty three miles more you reach the long established Seminary of the Moravians at Salem. These are all more than Academies, as that word is understood. I consider it one of the most admirable features of these schools that they are under the supervision and control of the Churches; thus providing a guarantee

that the morals will be protected and the mind and the heart be equally cultivated. I am not afraid of sectarianism in this application of its influence, nor am I fearful that our children will possess too much piety.

To day, we lay the corner stone of an institution for the education of the Deaf, the Dumb, and the Blind; and the Masonic Fraternity are now endeavoring to establish a school of charity for the children who are under their peculiar charge.

Last named, though not least in importance or interest, is the system of Common Schools, which the State has so well, and so wisely commenced—commenced, not completed. Much has been already accomplished, and yet there is much to be done, before that great work shall reach the point of perfection and usefulness, we all so ardently desire.

Let no man who is indeed a well wisher to his country, treat lightly this important matter. True, there is no air of grandeur about the little school house by the way-side, no array of professorships, no long list of mysterious sciences, to attract the superficial; and yet this system, humble as it may seem, lies at the very foundation of our progress and our prosperity. Common Schools—aye, let them be common, so common that they may be found in every settlement, in reach of the children of all our people; so common, that the laugh of the boy, ringing out from one playground, may meet and mingle with the glad shout from another Free Schools—yes, let them indeed be free, and untrammelled by freedom. The house you build may not be large enough for the uses of aristocracy; you will find there no young gentlemen by velvet; no young ladies by courtesy—they are boys and girls, owning no distinctions other than big boys and little boys, and the head and the foot of the class. I have looked on them, gathered at their lessons, or in the freedom of play, and thought here are the future rulers of the land; here are those who ere long will control the ballot-box, to whose keeping we must commit all we hold dear—liberty, morals, religion, all! And here must the character be moulded of the children of the people; here must be laid the foundations of knowledge and right principles. That humble cabin is a bulwark of freedom.

One of the most essential points to be secured in the prosecution of this work, is an efficient head; and I trust that I shall be excused for saying, that I thought it was much to be regretted, that a Superintendent was not appointed at the last session of the Legislature, according to the recommendation of the Governor in his message. Such an appointment, especially in the infancy of the system, may almost be considered indispensable to success. When every thing is new, all are ignorant of ways and means, and every thing is to be learned; and it certainly seems to be a wise policy, for the State to select some gentleman competent to the duty, (which would not be difficult), whose time and energies might be devoted, at least for a few years, to the special work of establishing these Schools upon the best plan known to the experience of those States and countries, who have given to this subject the thought and labor of years. If economy of time, uniformity of plan, stability, or the results of experience, are worthy of consideration, the salary required for such an officer will hardly be suffered to embarrass the question of his appointment. I would say nothing calculated to weaken your attachment to academies and colleges; but none should be more highly prized, or engage more hearty and persevering action, than the Common Schools.

Our fathers cherished in the olden time a principle of patriotism, which I fear is now considered unfashionable—I mean the love of home, of the State which our fathers loved, the soil where they lived and died. Has not the distant land a charm strongly tempting us away from the shelter of the old roof-tree? Are we not easily reconciled to sit down among strangers, careless of old associations? Oh! we are drying up one of the purest streams that ever flowed from the deep well-springs of affection; we are breaking the strongest links of friendship that bind man to his fellow. Pause!—Carolina claims her children—voices from the dead, the past, the future, all bid us pause. What though vast unbroken forests in the West give shelter and home to herds of the deer, the elk, and the buffalo; what though the flower-decked, measureless prairie stretches away beyond the vision; its tall grass waving to the wind like the waters of an inland sea; what though giant rivers sweep on their course to the ocean, swelled by a hundred tributary streams from vally & mountain; is the friend of thy boyhood there, or the grave of the mother that loved thee? Is the altar of thy baptism there, or the Church where the old neighbors gathered to worship? What avails it all to the heart? Let not Oregon or California or any other far off land tempt us away; here be our homes while we live; here our grave when we die.

I know that circumstances do frequently arise to justify and even demand a change of residence; but as a general principle, I think all will admit that the course of Carolinians should be, to build up the institutions of the State and add to them others of value, renew the face of the country by improved methods of agriculture, reclaim the lands so much worn, and above all, settle it in the heart that the Old North State is home.

The question "will it pay?" is the first that presents itself to the prudent and the calculating man. Prudence and energy will secure, under the blessing of Heaven, ample returns any where; in the east or the west, if we would reap we must sow, if we would hope for wealth, we must labor. Our State possesses lands of all varieties of value; from the mountains to the sea-board, beautiful water-falls await the occupation of the manufacturer; and even the poorest soils within our limit present ample resources to the man of energy. On the very borders of the wide reaching sand plains, forests of the long-leaved Pine, as the wind moves among their tall tops, wave continual invitations to industry, to shelter their wealth; and the cold Slate and the harder flint rock, cover the deposits of Gold or point the hiding place of the Silver, the Iron and the Coal. What is required more than the determination to develop the resources we already abundantly possess?

Emigration has been our bane; it has broken up old associations, and scattered never to be reunited many elements of our prosperity. We mistrust the permanency of any plan of improvement, and fear the foundation will be destroyed even before the superstructure is completed. And shall this continue? Will not the spirit of the fathers and the children alike forbid it? Will we not rally to the rescue of our loved land? Believe you that there is happiness only in western wilds, and that contentment builds her bowers only by the western streams? Ah! I often think that the emigrant of Carolina, who has been tempted westward by some day-dream of a Vale of Paradise, or the glittering Visions of an El-dorado, watching strange enthusiasm from the shouts pealing from the crowded altars of the Golden Calif, the world will still so fondly worship.—I think that, there even supposing him successful, as he looks out upon the broad and decey cotton-fields, while faintly falls upon his ear the sound of the negro's song as he feeds with the rich cane the busy sugar-mill, even there he who has settled his new hearthstone deeper, broader, will find his heart going back to the home of his brethren and the graves of his fathers, and he is sad to think that he shall see them in reality no more. Aye—his heart yearns for the

*Remember the question of the illustrious Washington, "Why should we quit our own to stand on foreign ground?"—Why should we?

*We might at least place our position to adopt the reply of the northern man to the stranger, who looking at the sterile land around him, asked, "What are you doing here?"—"We are building a school of piety," was the answer, "to we build School Houses and raise men."

*I am not writing the history of Masonry, but merely presenting conclusions of the truth of which there is satisfactory evidence to my own mind. In an address like this I cannot, of course, be expected to go into a detail of the subject. I will only say that I make no remarks or mention concerning the nature of this association. I will always here, that my remarks on Masonry in this address, are confined to the first three Degrees.

*See Rollin's Anc. History for a full account of this great and good man, the glory of his age and country.
*History of Christian Duty by F. J. Lindner pub London 1842.
*An article on this work may be found in the North British Review Nov. 1847.

*I. P. Fisk, Esq., President of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb.