

ADDRESS

Delivered at the Laying of the Cornerstone

Of The

NEW MASONIC TEMPLE

ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

On

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14th, 1916

By

THE REVEREND JOHN BODEN

Rector of St. Mary's Episcopal Church

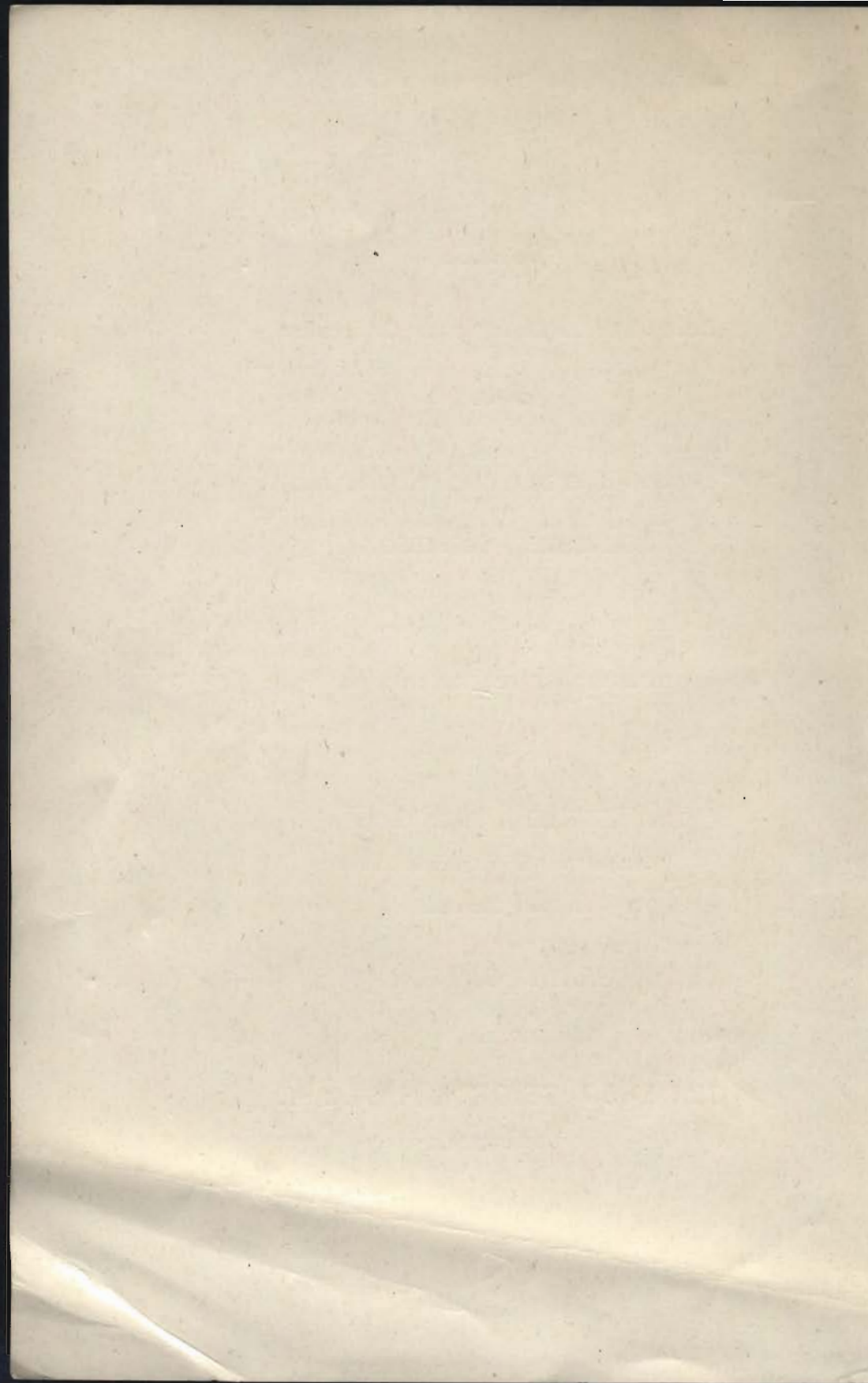
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MASONIC WITNESS AND SERVICE.

On an occasion like the present I am reminded of the following thought, in substance, from the pen of one whose name I cannot recall, viz., "Tell me what you are thinking about and I will tell you what you are." There is more truth than we appreciate in such words. A thought, seeking expression, will resolve itself into a dream, a purpose, or an action. And we cannot have a noble thought or a sublime impulse without affecting the whole of life and adding to the sum total of its achievements.

But there are many thoughts so deeply buried, so sacred and sublime that even the choicest words are found to be incapable of giving them adequate expression. Many times, perhaps, we have found ourselves face to face with a friend whose head was bowed with grief and his heart lonely and sad because of a great bereavement. We wanted to express our sympathy but we found ourselves speechless. Yet our thoughts found expression though words failed us. The clasp of the hand, the flashing eyes, or the hand placed firmly but tenderly upon his shoulder expressed the deeper feelings and thoughts of our hearts. Words are not the only means of conveying thought. Types and symbols also provide a channel of communication.

When we look about us we behold Nature to be a vast symbolism. The "sweet Singer of Israel," in the 19th Psalm, tells us that

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

There is no speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them."

William Cullen Bryant, in "Thanatopsis," expresses the same thought:

"To him who, in the love of Nature, holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language:"

Nature tells to the attentive ear, and the understanding heart, the thoughts of the Supreme Architect of the Universe—thoughts of goodness and love, thus directing our hearts and minds "through Nature to God," by means of symbols.

In the Church we find symbolism essential and for this reason it is found in both Jewish and Christian worship. Through it God has been pleased to reveal Himself. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite, but by means of symbols the thoughts of the loving heart of God are communicated to us in terms of our own thought. Many of the great and vital truths that have to do with our eternal salvation could not be understood were it not for this simple and effective method of presentation.

Masonry is noted for its symbolic teachings, moral, philosophical and religious. By means of well chosen symbols there have been transmitted to us through a succession of ages the most excellent tenets of our Institution. Masonry can be known and appreciated only as its symbolism is carefully studied—a symbolism freighted with "great thoughts, revealing to the intelligent Mason the awful mystery of life, and the still more awful mystery of death."

We cannot get away from symbolism as a method for the presentation of truth. It remains, in this world of change and decay, a fixed quantity. The forms and meaning of words change with the passing years but symbols never change.

People generally know but very little of Masonic symbolism and still less of its significance. In your community this Temple will be a symbol bearing its own silent but effective witness through the years to come to certain great facts. To be truly Masonic it must bear witness to the fact of God. From time immemorial this Fraternity has testified to His presence and power. Silently and majestically arose

that wonderful work of genius until it stood resplendent under the canopy of heaven and became a channel for the communication of God's rich gifts to His chosen people, the Temple of Solomon, that stupendous monument of architecture which immortalized his name and proved the admiration of succeeding generations. It bore witness to the fact of God and fellowship with Him. Since that day every Masonic Temple has borne witness to that same fact. This Temple can do nothing less, without betraying its trust.

A people's conception of God and their sense of responsibility to Him acquaint us with the motive in back of a Nation's laws, literature, spirit and customs. Through all the ages the Masonic Fraternity has striven to impress upon the minds of its members the fact of a transcendent yet immanent God in Whom alone faith can find a sure and steadfast anchorage. Only from Him can we obtain inspiration and strength to perform that righteous service for God and our fellows which shall make us to shine on as the stars forever and ever.

This Temple must also bear witness to the power of truth, that divine attribute which is the very foundation of all virtues. To be good and true is the slogan that must be interpreted, not merely in terms of our common speech, but in a very specific way it must shine with undiminished lustre in our relations and transactions with all men. "Truth", according to Chaucer, "is the highest thing that man may keep." Lowell, comparing it to the new-born star fixed in its place, declares that "not all the tumult of the earth can shake" it. When truth is permitted to perform its God-given mission in us it will fall as a sweet benediction upon those with whom we come in contact in this work-a-day world of ours, which stands so sorely in need of practical demonstrations of truth and sincerity. How beautifully Shakespeare expresses this fact in a few words:

"This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Masonry emphasizes the almighty force and all-conquering power of truth, for it alone is unchangeable and

everlasting. Therefore, when all is said and done truth alone beareth away the victory.

Furthermore, this Temple must stand as a witness to the cultivation, and demonstration, of the spirit of Brotherhood in its truest and highest sense, a Brotherhood that will not be ashamed to express itself in the terms of love and comradeship. This is the very thing that this old world of ours is dying for the want of, and in a very peculiar manner the hearts of our brethren are crying out for manifestations of brotherly love. We need that sense of brotherhood that shall enable us to feel a brother's woe, appreciate his need and extend to him that fraternal sympathy, counsel and aid he so much needs in times of testing and trial. There are so many burdens being borne, struggles experienced and difficulties encountered. Many of our brethren are fainting and falling by the wayside. A word of cheer in season, a token of love and a sympathetic companionship will do much to cheer and sustain their discouraged hearts. Without love this would be a sad world indeed, and this same grace will give meaning and stamina to our professions of brotherly love. May the life and work of this Temple be sanctified by that love which delights to serve, to the end that our weary, faulty and fainting brother may find here true rest and refreshment. May its very atmosphere be such that he will know that here there are strong arms stretched forth to defend and uphold him, true hearts upon which to lean, and tender sympathies from which to draw consolation for the past, comfort for the present and hope for the future.

But Masonry has not limited its good offices to the craft. Neither can you. Masonic charity and good-will are as broad as the needs of the human race. Without ostentation you must scatter sunshine and cheer whenever and wherever the opportunity arises, thus helping to purify and sweeten the lives of all about you and making men and conditions the better for your having lived and labored in this community. All this, and much more that is worth while, may this Temple symbolize in this vicinity.

What I have said with reference to this Temple will give it an honored place in this City. But it has already earned its place of honor by virtue of its connection with a Fraternity that has occupied an exalted station in the world for many years. Its distinguished place has been merited because of the conspicuous service rendered to the world—humanity in its broadest sense. Masonry has been a true and faithful servant. Many centuries ago a man stood before a primitive forge and anvil. He didn't appreciate, perhaps, the fact that his presence there would prove to be a blessing to humanity for ages to come. The first blow he struck loosened the chains that fettered a dormant humanity. Mankind was aroused from its comatose and savage state and given the tools and implements by which its path of progress was blazed through the wilds of primeval days. Ever since then the human race has been going onward and upward. The non-masonic world does not realize the great debt that it owes to Masonry for progress, liberty, law, and many other things dear to the human heart. The Masonic Fraternity has ever taken the side of the weak against the strong. It has constantly fought oppression and tyranny of all kinds, and defended the downtrodden. A few years ago, when Cuba cried for freedom, Masonry answered the call. It interested itself in substituting the Light of Liberty for the darkness and chaos of oppression. So effective was the work of this institution in that particular that the first Cuban flag was in the form of a Masonic Apron. When the present great world war comes to an end and peace shall be a fact—may God speed the day—Masonry will have a share in the task of ushering in the Golden Age, that happy time when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," else history will have failed to repeat itself.

In its service to the mass of men Masonry has not overlooked the individual. His intellectual progress has furnished a field for Masonic operations. It has been said that knowledge is power. Without it man is but a weak thing indeed. But knowledge without the ability to rightly apply

it is of no very great force in any man's life. Just here we find the distinction between knowledge and wisdom. To know is good, but to be able to think to some specific purpose, to the end that what we know may be of some value to ourselves and humanity, is far better. "Let there be Light" is a Masonic watchword, and wherever this Fraternity has gone there has gone with it that Light of truth which makes a man free indeed. But, according to Masonic teaching, it is not enough that a man shall simply be brought to light. He must be instructed, encouraged and prompted to crave further light. Not only for his own sake but for the sake of others. Here, as elsewhere, it is true that "no man liveth unto himself." To the common stock of knowledge and understanding he must always endeavor to contribute, receiving his inspiration from that "Great Light in Masonry"—the Holy Bible—which will enable him the better to apply his knowledge to the discharge of his respective duties to God, his neighbor and himself.

Masonry has also ministered to the bodily needs of men. There has been, and still is, much of pain and suffering in the world. While many have spent their time in trying to solve the "problem of pain" and suffering, when they might have spent their time doing some positive good for humanity, this great Fraternity, true to its mission, has been occupied with the matter of alleviating much of humanity's sufferings. It is still spending and being spent in this very laudable undertaking. Its kindly mercies are known to many. I wish to give but one concrete case. In a recent issue of "The Builder," the monthly publication of The National Masonic Research Society of Anamosa, Iowa, I read of a Hospital for Crippled Children in Atlanta, Ga., established and managed by Scottish Rite Masons. It is most emphatically a Charity. When admission is sought for a child but two questions are asked, viz., "Can the child be benefited?" and, "Is the parent or guardian unable to pay?" Much good has been accomplished. Surely such a work as this should receive both material and moral support from all who love their fellowmen and especially little children. This is but one of many ways in which Masonry is making its presence felt in the world of today.

Man has a moral and spiritual nature, and to this also Masonry has made valuable contributions. Masonry has been called the "handmaid of Religion" and rightly so, for it has ever taught the worth of the highest and noblest standards of manhood. It has sought to bring out, in all of its beauty and glory, the Divine Image stamped upon the children of God's creation, to the end that, being just and upright in this life, we shall merit an abundant entrance into the Celestial Lodge above where we shall forever rejoice in the blessings of eternal fellowship with the God and Father of us all. We may well ask the purpose of such teachings. The answer is found in the fact that we are traveling, as Shakespeare tells us, and as we have often and impressively heard, to

"The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns."

This being the case we demand hope. Without it life would be cheerless indeed. The most important question confronting the human mind is that old yet ever present one, viz., "If a man die, shall he live again?" Masonry most emphatically answers it in the affirmative. Times almost without number we have had impressed upon our minds the fact of an immortal part within us which survives the grave, and bears the nearest affinity to that Supreme Intelligence which pervades and animates all nature, and which can never, no never die.

When we consider the yearnings of our affections we find an unmistakable craving for the same answer. Our affections, which were not given to make sport of us, demand that somewhere we shall again be with those we "have loved long since and lost awhile." Whittier, in "Snow-Bound," gives expression to this same thought:

"Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust
(Since He who knows our need is just),
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!

Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!"

I cannot bring this address to a close without, briefly at least, making some reference to the worthy service the Masonic Fraternity has rendered to the Nation of which we are all so justly proud.*

The fact that George Washington was a Master Mason is one with which we are all more or less familiar. That he decided many things of even national importance from a Masonic standpoint cannot be doubted by any one acquainted with the facts. Through him, and Masons associated with him, America became in very truth "the land of the free and the home of the brave." The life and work of this great and good man can be more fully understood and appreciated only as we understand and appreciate the combination of two mighty forces—Patriotism and Masonry—forces that have always, with the purest of motives, worked together for the best interests of our American commonwealth.

As memory carries us back to school days we are reminded of a poem which thrilled us over and over again. Its opening words were as follows: "Listen, my children, and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere." As Masons we can better appreciate its significance. "Brother" Paul Revere was ordered by Grand Master Warren to warn the minutemen at Lexington and Concord. This is but one of many instances where Masonry served our country. Memory also recalls the "Boston Tea Party," when the

*For the Masonic reference to "Paul Revere's Ride;" the fact that the "Indians" connected with the "Boston Tea Party" were members of St. Andrew's Lodge of Boston; the "notes" from the records of that Lodge; and the Fraternity's connection with the history of "Old Glory," I am indebted to "The Builder," the publication above mentioned.

"Indians" threw the cargo of tea overboard. It is nothing more than right that we should know who the "Indians" were. They were Masons, disguised as such, and members of St. Andrew's Lodge of Boston. We are informed that only seven members were present at St. Andrew's on that eventful date. The reason for so small an attendance is given by the records of the meeting in a footnote, from which we learn that "the matter of Tea took up the brethren's time." From such facts as these the interest and good work of the Masonic Fraternity in behalf of our beloved country cannot be questioned.

When we turn to a study of the history of "Old Glory" we stand amazed and thrilled at the great weight of evidence pointing unmistakably to Masonic thought and action. The name of Betsey Ross is connected, in the minds of all, with the "Stars and Stripes," and we might as well take knowledge of the further fact that she was the wife of a Master Mason. This no doubt quickened her interest in the laudable work to which she applied herself with all diligence, for she was well acquainted with the intense interest Masonry had taken in the concerns of the young Republic. Many flags were designed and prepared. And it is interesting to note that on one of these the Stars were arranged in the form of a circle; another had the same arrangement with a star, or point, within the circle; and on another the Stars were placed in the form of an oblong square. While the flags of other Nations doubtless influenced to a certain extent the minds of those designing the various American flags, yet the fact remains that Masonic signs and symbols had much to do with the creation of the glorious flag of freedom for which many have shed their blood, and in the defense of which many more are still ready and willing to suffer and die.

As the years have come and gone Masonry's vital interest in America and its flag has not lessened. Masonry has continued to nourish the spirit of patriotism in its highest and truest sense. Whenever the Nation needs men, now as before, Masons are ready and eager to defend our national rights and honor. We must stand ready to defend the flag against any and every foe no matter from what quarter he

may come. We can do nothing less without proving false to our trust! To "Old Glory" we owe our heart's best allegiance and devotion and to no other flag. The man, be he native or foreign born, who has enjoyed the rights, liberties and opportunities guaranteed him in this country and yet who, either directly or indirectly, swears allegiance to any other Power, Prince or Potentate isn't worth the space he occupies. A traitor in time of peace, even though he may move unknown and unnoticed in our midst, is just as base as he who betrays his country in time of war. I know of no better words with which to describe the "wretch" than those of Sir Walter Scott in "The Lay of The Last Minstrel", Canto 6.

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?
If such there breathe, go mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentr'd all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

In conclusion, Brethren and Friends, let me say that the highest and best life that we can live is one of service to God, our Country and the world of men at large. To such a service may we dedicate ourselves with all of our God-given faculties and powers. Let us, with Divine help, strive daily to think more clearly, to speak more kindly and to live more nobly. Then shall we be fitly prepared for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where no discordant voice shall arise, and all the soul shall experience shall be perfect bliss, and all it shall express be perfect praise, and love divine ennoble every heart, and hosannas exalted employ every tongue.