

The Address to the Brethren

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Brethren, such is the nature of our Institution that while some must, of necessity, rule and teach, so others must, of course, learn, submit and obey. Humility in both is an essential duty. The Brethren elected and appointed to assist in the government of the lodge are too well acquainted with the principles of Freemasonry and the rules of propriety to exceed the power with which they are entrusted, and you are of too generous a disposition to envy their preferment. I, there, shall trust that we have but one aim, to please each other and unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness.ⁱ

Masonry, my brethren, according to the general acceptance of the term, is an art, founded on the principles of Geometry, and directed to the service and convenience of mankind. But Freemasonry, embracing a wider range, and having a nobler object in view, namely the cultivation and improvement of the human mind, may with more propriety be styled a science, inasmuch as availing itself of the terms of the former, it inculcates the principles of the purest morality, though its lessons are chiefly veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. To draw aside this veil, therefore, or more properly speaking, to penetrate through it, is the object of rulers in Freemasonry, and by a careful and appropriate attention to them, we may hope ultimately to become acquainted with all its mysteries.ⁱⁱ

Freemasonry, from its origin to the present time, in all its vicissitudes, has been the steady and unvarying friend of man. It has (in the language of an eloquent brother) gone forth from age to age; the constant messenger of peace and love; never weary, never forgetful of its holy mission, patiently administering to the relief of want and sorrow, and scattering with unsparing hands, blessings and benefits to all around. It comforts the mourner, it speaks peace and consolation to the troubled spirit, it carries relief and gladness to the habitations of want and destitution, it dries the tears of the widow and orphan, it opens the source of knowledge, it widens the sphere of human happiness, it even seeks to light up the darkness and gloom of the grave by pointing to the hopes and promises of a better life to come. All this Freemasonry has done and is still doing. Such is Freemasonry, and such as its mission; and we should never forget, while enjoying its benefits and appreciating its value, the duties we owe to the order; for there is no right without a parallel duty, no liberty without the supremacy of the law, no high destiny without earnest perseverance, and no real greatness without self-denial.ⁱⁱⁱ

A lodge of freemasons is the temple of peace, harmony and brotherly love; nothing is allowed to enter which has the remotest tendency to disturb the quietude of its pursuit. A calm enquiry into the beauty of wisdom and virtue, and the study of moral geometry, constitute the chief employments in the tiled recesses of the lodge. The lessons of virtue which proceed from the East, like rays of brilliant light from the rising sun, illuminate the West and South, and as the work proceeds, are carefully imbibed by the workmen. Thus, while wisdom contrives the plan, strength lends its able support to the moral fabric, and beauty adorns it with curious and cunning workmanship. All this is accomplished without any compulsory or coercive means, but on the principle of friendship and brotherly love, which guards the precincts of our temple that nothing may enter to disturb the peaceful sanctity of that holy place.

The object, however, of meeting in the lodge is of a two-fold nature, namely, moral instruction and social intercourse. Our meetings are intended to cultivate and enlighten the mind, to induce a habit of virtue, and to strengthen the fundamental principles of our Order: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. And if these meetings are blended with social mirth and a

mutual interchange of fraternal feelings, then Freemasonry will be shown in its true light, as an institution which fosters and improves the best affections of our nature, and carries into active operation the practice of the four cardinal virtues: Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice, combined with the theological virtues - Faith, Hope and Charity - thereby demonstrating to the world at large that in Freemasonry there is found the true import of the three great social treasures: Fraternity, Liberty and Equality. Therefore the utmost extension of fraternal feeling and affection which can subsist between man and man is expected to be displayed among the brethren of our order in a lodge of freemasons, and then will be attained the chief point of Freemasonry, namely, to endeavor to be happy ourselves, and to communicate that happiness to others. ^{iv}

Before I conclude, my brethren, let me endeavor to portray to you the ideal of a freemason.

If you see a man who quietly and modestly moves in the sphere of his life; who, without blemish, fulfils his duty as a man a subject, a husband and a father; who is pious without hypocrisy, benevolent without ostentation, and aids his fellowman without self-interest; whose heart beats warm for friendship. Whose serene mind is open for licensed pleasures, who in vicissitudes does not despair, nor in fortune will be presumptuous, and who will be resolute in the hour of danger?

The man who is free from superstition and free from infidelity; who in nature sees the finger of the Eternal Master; who feels and adores the higher destination of man; to whom faith, hope and charity are not mere words without any meaning; to whom property, nay, even life, is not too dear for the protection of innocence and virtue, and for the defense of truth;

The man who towards himself is a severe judge, but who is tolerant with the debilities of his neighbor; who endeavors to oppose errors without arrogance, and to promote intelligence without impatience; who properly understands how to estimate and employ his means; who honors virtue, though it be in the most humble garment, and who does not favor vice though it be clad in purple; and who administers justice to merit whether dwelling in palaces or cottages;

The man who, without courting applause, is loved by all noble-minded men, respected by his superiors and revered by his subordinates; the man who never proclaims what he has done, can do, or will do, but where need is will lay hold with dispassionate courage, circumspect resolution, indefatigable exertion and a rare power of mind, and who will not cease until he has accomplished his work, and who then, without pretension, will retire into the multitude because he did the good act, not for himself, but for the cause of good!

If you, my brethren meet such a man, you will see the personification of brotherly love, relief and truth; and you will have found the ideal of a freemason. ^v

Finally, my brethren, as our fraternity has been formed and perfected in complete unanimity and concord, in which we all greatly rejoice, so may it continue until time shall be no more. May you long enjoy every satisfaction and delight which disinterested friendship can afford. Within your peaceful walls may your children's children celebrate with joy and gratitude the annual recurrence of this auspicious solemnity. And may the genuine tenets of our time-honored Institution be transmitted through your Lodges pure and unimpaired from generation to generation. ^{vi}

ⁱ This is referred to as being from Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry* of 1775, and deals with the immediate problem facing the Brethren about the Lodge, that is, in a pure democracy, why do you have to have leaders, and why do you give up power to leaders even on an annual basis? The answer is that you do so because this will lead you to fulfill the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness.

ⁱⁱ This comes from the *Introductory Address to the First Lecture* and can be traced back to Brown's *Mason Master Key* of 1798 wherein it was believed to have been compiled by Preston. This paragraph deals with the scope of what Freemasonry deals with on a philosophical basis, in terms of art and science.

ⁱⁱⁱ This comes from the Address by the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada, as it then was, William Mercer Wilson, on July 11, 1860. [Wilson was quoting the [Rev. Erastus Burr](#).] This was the fifth meeting of this Grand Lodge, and the history of those five years are full of problems, roadblocks and successes that are almost biblical in stature, but by the time that the Grand Master gave this Address, which was to be his last as Grand Master, he had overcome everything from only being recognized by one other Grand Lodge, to having two different Grand Lodges in his jurisdiction, to having an interminable colonial fight with the United Grand Lodge of England, until at last everything was successfully resolved. In that context, there is a certain triumphant poignancy about this paragraph, because it deals with the value the Order gives to Freemasons and the duties and obligations that Freemasons owe the Order.

^{iv} These come from an Address given originally by Otto Klotz on December 26, 1864, to a Ladies Night held at Alma Lodge No. 72 in Galt, of which he was the Master. Klotz included these two paragraphs because they are a perfect representation, to an outsider, as to what is supposed to happen inside the Lodge. Not only is that important to an outsider to know but, of course, it is important for Masons to know what standard a Lodge is to be measured against, and, of course, the ultimate value of being a member of a Lodge that works properly, which is again to be happy ourselves and to communicate that happiness to others.

^v These are quite remarkable for a number of reasons. They were written by Otto Klotz at the end of an article that was published on March 15, 1868, entitled "The History of Freemasonry" in *The Canadian Craftsman*. These paragraphs outline, at long last, the [ideal of what a Freemason is](#). This is the crucial point that goes beyond the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness, but actually indicates all of those ways you can tell a man who is doing the act of communicating happiness. The most remarkable part of this is that this was not written to be read aloud, although it works perfectly well in that format.

^{vi} This deals with the value for Freemasons now, and for those to follow, of building on and continuing with the ideals of Freemasonry. Before I get to that, I will read to you a quote from an article entitled "In Love with Chiseled Features" which appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, October 6, 1998, on page A2. The article is about a real stonemason that was an operative mason, named Joshua Johnson, who was working for Robert John Watt Stonemasons on refurbishing the Parliament buildings in Ottawa.

"Good masons have a real sense of belonging to a much larger time-space than the one they breathe in while they're living," said Robert Watt, who is Mr. Johnston's employer and a master mason. "Good masons think along that line: that they're not doing this particularly for them or for the people that surround them at the moment.... They're doing it for the

dozens of generations that are coming along behind them, and will look at the work, and marvel at it."

With this transcendent quote that deals with the reason for continuity and the reason for concern about what it is we leave behind, it is appropriate to end back at Preston from 1775.