

**Grand Lodge  
Free & Accepted Masons  
Of California  
Grand Oration 1920**

**Grand Orator  
W. Albert E. Boynton**

Most Worshipful Grand Master and Brethren of the Grand Lodge

In keeping with our custom, we have gathered to discuss the principles and ideals of Masonry, and to learn something of the history and achievements of our Institution.

It is, of course, impossible within the time allotted to trace the history of Masonry or even partially enumerate its achievements.

Instead of appealing to your emotions and rejoicing with you this morning over the past glories and deeds of our Order, I would rather appeal to your intellect, for this is a time when our thoughts must be true if our acts are to be right.

The world is in a state of flux; forms of government are undergoing radical changes; the habits and practices of men are being thrown, by the hurricane of mental turmoil, from their beaten paths. Our future course must, therefore, be guided by steady hands, and steered by .the compass of reason.

"Masonry is a permanent institution, and although empires and kingdoms have been overthrown, and changes and revolutions have taken place in governments and in society since their beginning, yet Masonry still lives—yea, it has today a living, vital existence, and will continue to exist as long as time shall be."

The development of Masonry is the development of humanity, for no organization can be greater than the individuals who constitute it. It was not intended that we should be separate private persons, but rather parts making up the great body of society. The wonderful achievements of Masonry in the past are the result of the cooperation and united efforts of all its members, and what Masonry achieves in the future will depend almost entirely upon the aims and deeds of individual members, acting not as single units, but collectively and with a common purpose.

Therefore, in working for the continued success of our great Order, I believe that the causes which will contribute to that success are the same causes that make possible the development of the highest order of individual achievement, the very foundation stones of which are the home, the school, industry and individual character.

As I have said, the world is in flux, and if we would. come through the heat of passion and the destroying vapors of hate and venom that have made the world a seething caldron, we must fight to maintain the fundamental principles of virtue, honesty, industry and I simplicity, which form the basis for all the real developments and achievements of man. These principles are best inculcated in the home and taught in the school, and they can best be practiced and exemplified in real and honest work, and thereby there will be developed that character of individuals that will not only sustain us through the critical period of. our country's history, but will also .sustain and maintain the truest and best ideals of Masonry.

The home is the workshop of character. If we take a tiny plant and twist or bend its stem and maintain this pressure until that plant reaches maturity, it will be dwarfed and crooked forever. So it is with children, for it is mainly in the home that the heart is opened, the habits are formed, the intellect is awakened, and character is molded for good or for evil.

The social life of a nation reflects that of the home, for it is there that the individuals who afterward form society, are dealt with in detail and fashioned one by one.

The home may be regarded as , the most. influential school of civilization, for as the respective members of society are well or badly trained in youth, so will the community which they constitute be more or less civilized. The training of a man, no matter what his natural views may be, is inevitably influenced 'by-the moral surroundings of his early years. Milton says: "'The" childhood-shows the man as morning shows the day." It is at the very beginning of growth that

the germs of good or evil, virtue or vice, are first implanted in man, and largely determine the character of his life.

The home which is the nursery of children who must grow up into men and women, will be good or bad, according to the power that governs it. Where the spirit of love and duty pervades the home, and where honesty and virtue are always present, and the government is sensible, kind and loving, there may we expect the development of healthy, useful and happy beings, capable as they grow in strength of following in the footsteps of their preceptors, walking uprightly and contributing to the welfare of those about them. ...

While the influence of the mother in the home is the strongest in the development of a child's character, yet we men are not absolved from our responsibility, too. Certain virtues are masculine in character, and they are best taught and exemplified by man. The qualities of courage and aggressiveness against all forms of deceit and evil should be exercised by the man, and the hands of the mother should be sustained and supported by his strength and endurance. The father in his home life can exert a tremendous influence upon his children, for by such influence can be taught either a love for that which is honest, true and wholesome, in all matters that make up their social and industrial life, or it can create in the mind of the watching child, ideas that dishonesty is profitable, deceit is cleverness, and falsehood is more charming than truth. Furthermore, we should study and know our own children. Silently and unconsciously their individuality develops and if we would be pals with them we must respond to their moods and show at all times a sympathy with, and understanding; of their tasks and trials. It is only when they fail to get sympathy at home that they turn to strangers.

Next to the influence of the home in the development of the child, is that of the school. There is no single remedy that will cure the many ills that afflict our economic life like education. Some men who know better, deliberately injure their fellow beings, but most of the sufferings and trials that come to us are based on ignorance, narrowness of vision and prejudice that could be dissipated by the light of understanding.

True education is not mere book learning, but is the development of our mental forces through association with the best intellects of the ages. Through the instrumentality of books we come in contact with the minds of the great intellectual giants of the past, and by an immediate association with living teachers and students, the growing human mind acquires that breadth of understanding and sympathy that mellows and matures the knowledge acquired from books. In earlier days, schooling was supposed to be represented by the three R's, and while reading, 'riling and 'rithmetic are still essential, the true object of education should be to enable each student to think and plan and act for himself, guided, to be sure, by the experience of others, but primarily exercising that initiative and freedom of decision that is so representative of Americanism. Our public schools provide the paraphernalia for training the mind just as gymnasium equipment makes possible the strengthening of the body, but back of it must be that spirit that teaches each boy and girl to knowingly choose between the true and the false, the good and the bad, and enables each to develop that self-assurance and self-reliance that will withstand the winds of adversity, the darkness of deception, and the downpours of bigotry.

We should unceasingly watch and zealously fight to keep our public schools true and untrammelled avenues of education. Above all, we should demand that the public school system be kept free from the contaminating influence of the professional politician. Education should always remain a part of our secular government, free from all restraints imposed by philosophical or religious beliefs and opinions.

Children should be taught an absolute adherence to the patriotic principles of our country, and a clear conception of the real rights and privileges of man. Unfortunately, too many of the wild and weird doctrines that are prevalent throughout the world today, have been taught by some of the professors in our universities, whose statements are given added force by reason of the position they hold in the community.

Let us teach loyalty and patriotism in our schools, in our lodges, and in our pulpits. Let us preserve and protect those historic spots which have become dear to the hearts of the American people, for it is by this means we shall be able to recall the past and impress upon the minds of our children the richness of their heritage.

We are members of a nation which gives its citizens the most of liberty and affords the best field for its development. Is it strange, therefore, that this nation is the one around which the

hopes of humanity cluster? Does it not follow that upon our people rest the solemn responsibilities of citizenship? Let us pledge ourselves to abide by the Constitution and the laws and to seek redress for our wrongs, real or fancied, only in the manner therein prescribed. "It is a citizen's privilege, his duty, his glory to stand firmly against all movements and efforts to weaken the force of law, to disturb social order, or to tear down the Stars and Stripes and substitute the red flag of Anarchy."

Let us, therefore, as Masons, resolve to be better citizens, to do our share in the great work of carrying on the National, State and local government for the benefit of all, and in making that resolution let us adopt the thoughts of Stevenson:

"To be honest, to be kind,  
To earn a little, to spend a little less.  
To make upon the whole a family happier for his presence,  
To renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered,  
To keep a few friends and these without capitulation,  
And above all, on the same grim condition  
To keep friends with himself;  
Here is a task for all- that a man has of fortitude and delicacy."

The corner-stone of a free government is the intelligence of its people.

It is our Masonic duty to raise the standard of our citizenship to the highest possible plane. What are some of the characteristics of a good citizen? In brief, he must not be afraid of hard work; he must be able to fight his own battles and to hoe his own row. Whether he works for money, for love, or for fame, he must do it with all his might. In whatever field he labors, he must do his best, bearing in mind that no man whose regard is worth having, will look down on him. He must work not only diligently, but intelligently. Moreover, he must be honest. No man can afford to be dishonest either with himself or his fellow man. He should follow the advice given by Polonius to his son: "To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

He must act upon the square. If he is a manufacturer, let it be said that his product is built upon honor. The attorney must be honest with his client, the engineer must not deceive his employer.

The American citizen must be honest in his dealings with his country and that country will protect him in the enjoyment of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. He should cultivate thrift, not to save money for base or avaricious purposes, but to save it for economical • purposes. The man who spends all his earnings is ever standing on the brink of destitution.

One of the great needs of the world today is work. Only through hard, honest toil can we solve many of our pressing problems.

We live in an age of rapid thought and quick action. It is an age of constant struggle. No quarter is asked, none is given. We hunger after power, riches, and glory. We live to conquer, to reach the goal in the mighty race for power and fame. This we call success. Not so! Death is the victor. Success is but the glimmer of a moment, then we, too, pass on to make room for others.

Unfortunately for humanity, our own cares chiefly occupy our minds. Our good purposes are hindered by many obstacles. We live in selfish ways, urged thereto by seeming necessity. Too often do we achieve success at the expense of others. We are compelled by needs that are our masters to lead lives little profitable even to ourselves: too often our motives are misconstrued and our tempers become soured by ingratitude and: injustice, and it is indeed rare that any human soul keeps whole its unselfishness, its generosity, its nobility, amid the struggles and contentions of a busy life. Yet what are—

"Wealth and glory, and place and power,  
What are they worth for me or you?  
For the lease of life runs in an hour  
And death stands ready to claim his due,  
Sounding honors or heaps of gold,  
What are they all when all is told?"

To those of us who have always been under the necessity of laboring for a living, leisure often appears as a priceless possession. But leisure is often like the mirage that the thirsty man sees on the desert when looking across the sun-parched plains, or like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that moves on as we approach it.

From the time of Adam man has been enjoined to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and work has, therefore, through all the centuries been made a part of the price we must pay for happiness. The busy man is the contented man, and, I might add, the healthy man. More machinery, both mental and physical, as well as metal, is destroyed by rust than by work. All the great things of life have been accomplished through work. It is indolence that exhausts, not action. Nothing is so injurious as unoccupied time. As has been said, "The human heart is like a millstone; if you put wheat under it, it grinds the wheat into flour; if you put no wheat it grinds on, but then 'tis itself it wears away."

While it is true that some men die of over work, most of them die of selfishness, indulgence or idleness. The efficient worker is like a well conducted machine whose wearing surfaces are separated by a thin film of lubricant so that the power created is transmitted to the thing to be accomplished without wearing out the machine itself. We have all seen some individual who can work on day after day for a long period of time and yet maintain that calm and cheerful mien that knows no fatigue. Such individuals have learned the art of lubrication, for they interpose between themselves and the energy they create a thin but effective film of interest that prevents friction, heat and loss of power.

All great labors have been labors of love and we should love our work to do it best.

In the history of the formation of all great nations we find that when every member thereof contributed of his brawn and brain for its development that nation prospered and advanced, but when through the development of castes and the belief that labor was fit only for slaves, then that nation went into decay. The story of Athens and of Rome is the story of too much leisure for the ruling classes and the development of vices which undermined not only the character of the people but the very foundation of the State. Let us, therefore, fill our minds so full of plans for helpful service not only for ourselves and our loved ones, but also for the good of all humanity, that like a field of vigorous growing wheat there will be no room for the weeds of discontent and the thistles of idleness.

The forces of disintegration are at work in this country as well as throughout the world. The vicious elements must not be permitted to gain the upper-hand, and now as never before, my Brethren, must we develop individual character which shall save us from the threatened dangers.

Character does not mean intellect or learning, for some of the most influential characters in a community are often men lacking in literary accomplishments, but possessed of great moral and stabilizing force. In the affairs of life or business, it is not intellect that counts so much as self-control, patience, discipline and judgment. These are all moral attributes and have greater weight than scintillating cleverness.

In the light of great examples we are not only justified, but in duty bound, to aim at reaching the highest standard of character. This does not mean that we should become the richest in material things, but rather in spirit; not the greatest in worldly position, but in true honor; not the most intellectual, but the most virtuous.

One of the attributes of character is conscientiousness. The man who is conscientious puts that quality into his work and his words. He believes that whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well, and unless he has something to say, idle words are superfluous.

Reverence is another attribute of character. The real man shows reverence for the consecrated things of past generations—for the pure thoughts and noble aims of others. Without reverence there can be neither trust, faith nor confidence in man or God, nor can we have social peace or social progress.

Energy is one of the things necessary in the development of character. Without it, there is helplessness and despondency. Says the old proverb: "The strong man and the waterfall channel their own path." All great men of history were characterized by tremendous energy. Luther, Cromwell, Washington, Wellington, Napoleon and other great leaders were tireless when necessity demanded. The brave man is an inspiration to the weak, and history is full of examples of the tide of battle being turned by the heroic act of a single individual who would not recognize defeat. The same is true of ordinary life, for the good and the great draw others after them. Let a

man of energetic and upright character be appointed to a position of trust and authority, and all who serve under him become conscious of an increase of responsibility.

Washington's exploits in war placed him high upon the pedestal of fame, but the enduring qualities of the "Father of his Country" are based primarily upon an honest, pure and noble character, a model for his Masonic brethren.

Each citizen owes to the nation the duty of maintaining in himself a high, clean, moral character. His personal immorality is a detriment to the nation, yea; it is a part of the nation's immorality.

Teach the youth of our land to honor integrity, for a good character is a man's noblest possession. "It is greater than riches and more glorious than any career." Teach them to cherish pure thoughts and to live uprightly. Teach them, too, that contact with the good never fails to impart good. Therefore they should keep good company, or none at all.

"So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan, which moves  
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

The American citizen must have confidence in himself and in his country. If he has not that faith he cannot expect others to have it. Let us not look to others for support, but lean upon ourselves. Let us be optimistic, looking ever forward, never backward. Let us make our opportunity, not wait for it. Let us be courageous even when the clouds are darkest.

The United States has ever been the land of promise to the peoples of the world. In the decades that have passed since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, our country has held open its arms to the white races of the world. Our land is broad and although we still have room for many millions, there is not a single inch for the man or woman who refuses to bear true allegiance to the American flag. Our natural resources, though not inexhaustible, are still ample to furnish food and fuel for the industries that make it possible for men to engage in productive labor. We welcome, as in the past, the men and women and little children who knock at our doors with an honest and sincere desire to make our land their home, and to become in heart and mind, as well as bodily presence, one of us. The United States has been termed "the melting pot," but just as the ingredients poured into a vessel are blended indissolubly together, so should the mixed races that constantly pour into our country be fused together by the heat of patriotism into real Americans. Liberty does not mean license, and freedom of speech does not justify treasonable propaganda. The mistaken zealots who come to our shores, not to enjoy that liberty, but to gnaw like a hidden rodent at its very foundation, are not entitled to remain among us. They are a menace to civilization itself, and like those possessed of malignant diseases should be banished where their contaminating influences cannot be felt.

I do not deny the right of any immigrant, whose family traditions penetrate like roots into the past, to bring with him in his heart remembrances of the customs and practices of his forefathers, and they are to be commended and fostered so long as they do not interfere with or supplant the real and foundational love he should hold for his adopted country. Just as a tree is taken from its nursery bed and transplanted to a distant clime, is nurtured by the warmth of the sun, fed by the soil which receives it, and watered by the rains that descend upon it, so should the immigrant who voluntarily transplants himself into this soil of opportunity, this sunshine of free initiative, and who is nursed by the waters of equal advantages, claim as his sole hearthstone, the land that sustains him.

We must recognize that the question of any foreign subject immigrating to this country is one of privilege, and not of right. The United States of America was made possible by the delegation by individual States of certain rights and privileges. Except as to those delegated powers, each individual State is sovereign within its own borders, and its people have the right,

through their elective franchise, to do or not to do what seems best to them, as affecting their inter-course with each other, or with neighboring States. We have in the past announced to the world that the citizens of other nations might, under the conditions prescribed, enter into and become part of our citizenship. That privilege can at any time, if we so choose, be curtailed or entirely terminated, and no one can justly complain of such action. It is truly said that in the sight of God all men are created equal, but many centuries of history have demonstrated that in the sight of man all races are not capable of being assimilated. In the Orient are people who in recent years have developed in the arts, sciences and commerce. We have always been glad to assist in their development, not only from the standpoint of trade, but also in the development of their minds and souls through the enlightenment of education. But God has seen fit to draw a distinction in color between these races and us, and while we look upon them as friends and associates in the business world, we may rightly reserve the privilege of restricting that association in all things that pertain to our social life, and in that we are like the man who chooses, from among numerous acquaintances, the persons to be guests in his home. The United States is our home—here we live and move and have our being. Our children are taught democracy and the things that will make them strong men and noble women when they reach that maturity which draws them into the active affairs of life. If we choose to invite to our shores only those races whose habits of thought, national traditions and social characteristics are in conformity with our own, why should those of different habits, traditions and characteristics show resentment? What we deny to others, we do not claim for ourselves, and Americans have never endeavored to force themselves, individually or collectively, upon those peoples who have not shown a cordial desire to have us go among them. I insist that we have the right and privilege to regulate the internal affairs of our own country.

And now, in conclusion, let me repeat what has been said so many times that "Masonry is always a force for good in every community where its true spirit actuates those who guide its labors. It lays hold deep down in the souls of men and lifts them from darkness to light. It comes to the sick and distressed as an angel of mercy, ministering to those entitled to our assistance. Ours is a noble order grown venerable in the practice of charity. It has made concrete the philosophy of the ages, and showered blessings upon the widow and the orphan who have our especial care."

"We believe in the great work of this grand fraternity because its principles and teachings are not limited by time, but are in harmony with the Creator's plan for the happiness and prosperity of the human race to the end that we may gain entrance into a larger sphere of usefulness and enjoyment. Every symbol, every thought, every lesson impressed, touches a responsive chord in the human heart, resulting in higher aspirations and a desire to enter the door of opportunity and accept the responsibility of using the talents wherewith the Creator has been pleased to endow us, not only to His glory, but for the welfare of humanity. Everywhere that Masonry has been taught and practiced the imprint of our Institution has been indelibly stamped upon the pages of history recording its growth and progress, its disciples ever and at all times recognized as standing for the highest type of moral development and citizenship."

Finally, my Brethren, the world is passing through an era of stress and turmoil'. The winds of radicalism are whipping the waves of thought into forces as powerful and as destructive as the waters in a stormy sea. Our own Nation is like a ship traversing the uncharted ocean of the future. We know that our craft is sturdily built, and, praise God, with a capable and loyal crew it will weather every storm.

As Longfellow has beautifully expressed it:

"Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State !  
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

We know what Master laid thy keel,  
What Workman wrought thy ribs of steel,  
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,

What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!

Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by the gale!

In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears.  
Are all with thee—are all with thee!"

A rising vote of thanks was enthusiastically given to Brother Boynton, and he was requested to furnish a copy of his oration for publication in the Proceedings, and that a sufficient number be printed, with the Message of the Grand Master, for distribution to the several Lodges of the jurisdiction.