

ADDRESS

OF

Right Worshipful
Charles H. Johnson

Junior Grand Warden of the
Grand Lodge of New York

BEFORE

ST. PAUL'S ROYAL ARCH
CHAPTER

Masonic Temple, Boston, Mass.

January 17, 1922.

Excellent High Priest and Companions:

As this has been a ritualistic afternoon, presume we are still in ritualistic mood. This is a very important degree we have been working for the last half hour, and it would seem advisable we should continue in the working of the fourth degree, which is, perhaps, the most popular of all the degrees in Masonry. Wherever you go, without regard to territory, and no matter what the Masonic group, you find that the particular degree which we have been working around these tables is the most popular and the best attended of all degrees in our respective bodies. Therefore, since you are all properly clothed and in possession of all the necessary inward qualifications which go with this degree, through the courtesy of your Excellent High Priest, I will present you with the working tools emblematic of this degree, which are the fork, knife, and common goblet, and are thus explained: The fork is an instrument used by Masons for the purpose of reaching out, even to the remotest parts of the table, for the pickle, sausage, chicken, or whatever it may be which the individual Mason feels necessary for his present or future happiness. By the means of this fork he may bring the article to the opening which nature has provided, where all food is reduced to one common mass.

The fork teaches us this important lesson, that whatever is worth while in the world can only be secured by reaching out after it. The man who, like Micawber, sits still and waits for something to turn up; or the man who waits for the gods to put the good things into his lap, are likely to sit around a long while, and to wait in vain. God helps those who help themselves. It teaches us that the things which are worth while must be striven after and reached after, to be brought for our comfort and our consolation.

As this fork happens to be divided into four prongs, we are taught the further lesson that in our striving after the things of this world which are worth while and which we consider necessary to our happiness, there are four things we ought to have in mind.

First, that we should "Think, without confusion, clearly." Second, that we should "Love our fellow-men sincerely," while we are doing it; third, that we should "Act from honest motives, purely," and fourth, that in this process of reaching out after the things of life that seem to us worth while, we should "Trust in God and Heaven securely."

So this common article, this fork, teaches us the important lesson of activity; of striving after the things that are

a while, in this four-fold spirit, which
the true Masonic spirit of reaching aft-
er the things which God has placed in
the world for us to get by our own ac-
cess.

The knife is an instrument used by
the Masons for eating peas, but should
be used for the more noble and glorious
purpose of dividing the article which we
propose to take into our systems into
portions that they may be readily
assimilated as a part of ourselves. As
the chief virtue of the knife is the sharp-
ness of its blade, so we learn the impor-
tant lesson that every Mason is endowed
by the Creator with an intellect which it
is expected that he will use to analyze and
divide those arguments which he receives
in intercourse in life with his fellow
Masons into such portions that he may read-
ily understand them, and may quickly de-
termine whether he shall take them into his system.

The value of the knife depends upon
its sharpness, so the value of our intellect
depends upon the degree to which we have
sharpened it, and made it keen in its an-
guish. There come to every one of us
from various walks in life and our as-
sistance with our fellow men arguments,
panaceas for all kinds of ills, so-
cial, industrial; new theories, new re-
ligions, new isms, every day of the week,
—and sometimes two or three on

much more of good or evil, of happiness or sorrow, or of mixed experiences than life ever has before; because there is no doubt that a year of the present stage of existence brings more experiences to the average individual than fifty years brought to a man who lived one hundred or two hundred years ago.

It is possible that most men, in thinking about the future, are thinking of it in terms of receiving. Most of us think if the future is good for us it will result in an accumulation of things. I suppose there are some men who have thought about this New Year that it would be a happy New Year for them if they could get a bigger job; it would be a happy New Year if they could get more money, and some fellows, that it would be a happy New Year for them if they could get married, and they are looking forward to that. But usually, as we are thinking of the future, it is in terms of receiving. "The future will be good to me if it brings me something." It would be a wonderful thing if we, as Masons, could Masonically think, "The New Year will be good to me in proportion as it gives me the opportunity to give something," rather than to get something.

There are two ways of looking on life. One idea is that life is a full cup, of which we are going to drink to the last

drop, or very often hear men say, "I am going to get out of life all that is in it." The other view of life is to look upon it as an empty cup, which is to be filled. That is the view which says, "I am going to put into life all I possibly can."

If we should look upon the New Year Masonically under the last heading, and think of the year 1922 as an opportunity to put into it as much as possible, I wonder, as Masons, what we could put into it. One of the things we might do as Masons would be to determine to attend our lodge or chapter meetings just as often as possible. You know there are some men who join the lodge or chapter, and they are seen there, or at least they have relation with it only at the time they come in and the time they are buried. I heard of a Jewish gentleman in a certain town who, before he died, made some preparations for his funeral. He said to his lawyer, "I would like to have the following men be my bearers," and he mentioned four bank presidents. The lawyer said, "I do not understand why you want four bank presidents as bearers." The man answered, "Well, they have carried me most of my life. They can carry me to my grave." The relationship of a good many men to their lodge or chapter is simply that they are carried most of their

life on the books, and so they can be carried to their graves. It would be a splendid New Year's resolution, which I am sure would be most thoroughly approved by the Excellent High Priest and all the officers if every member of the chapter should determine that at least once a month (or oftener if it meets oftener) he would lend his presence to that body.

A second resolution which we ought to make, is that we will give to this world of ours, and to our fellow Masons especially, some Masonic cheer and sociability. They used to say, before the North Pole was discovered, that if it ever was discovered, it would probably be found in some church, the idea being that it was so cold in some churches that that would be the most natural place to expect to find the North Pole. I have sometimes thought if it were not found in a church, it might be found in some lodge room, because there are some lodge rooms (and even some chapter rooms) where the atmosphere is very chilly that it is almost like the North or the South Pole. Wouldn't it be a splendid thing if every lodge and every chapter should make up its mind that during the coming year the lodge or chapter room should radiate hospitality, good fellowship and good will? If there is anything more depressing than another to the young man who

s Masonry, it is when, filled with en-
-iasm, his soul stirred by his Masonic
-riences, he comes into the lodge room
-sits down, and nobody pays the least
-tion to him. Nobody gives him a
-hand; nobody says, "How do you
- He sits there alone, and he goes
- alone, and perhaps never returns.
-haps that never happens in Massachu-
-, but it does happen in New York
-. Why shouldn't we put into the
-ge or chapter room the sociability for
-ch Masonry stands; the good fellow-
-, the good will, the happy hand of
-therhood, so that every young man
-o comes to us finds the atmosphere
-iates that which he has heard about,
- which he has learned in the various
-rees?

How would it be if when we are walk-
- down the street in 1922 we should
-et a brother Mason, with perhaps a
-ton in his lapel, or perhaps a charm;
-d give him a sign of greeting. We
-m, as Masons, very much afraid of
-h other. You see a couple of men who
-ong to other organizations, and it is
-ello, "Bill," or something of that sort,
- when two Masons meet, often they
-rdly know whether they ought to notice
-t emblem or not, and if they do, they
-y do it very carefully and guardedly.
-e of the things that impresses a man

when he comes to a strange town is when somebody waves a hand to him, or gives him a look of recognition. Some of you who have travelled a great deal have had that experience.

What does the button mean; what does the charm mean; what does the recognition that a man is carrying on his person mean, other than that he wants you to know he is a Mason. He wants every one to know he is a Mason. He has his colors right out in sight. Why shouldn't we, as we meet each other, give a halting sign, and let it be known that we recognize in this man one who has travelled the same road and received the same light as we? Don't lend him any money, at least, not the first time, but it won't cost anything if in 1922 we Masons loosen up a little bit in our reserve; if in our travels on railroads, or in our walks up and down the streets of our respective towns we recognize the fellow who is anxious, evidently, that the world should know he is a Mason, and give him a glad sign of recognition.

These are simple means for making 1922 happy. What the world needs today is not new conceptions of philosophy; not new, complicated religions, or 20th century theological systems. What it needs and welcomes today is something of the old idea of brotherly love that we have

heard something about in Masonry. The application of good will and fellowship and the evidences of friendship will lubricate the wheels of life and the machinery of the world much better than a great many of the new and hard to understand theories, which are presented to us as panaceas for all the ills of the world. So 1922 does not ask of us as Royal Arch Masons anything very difficult, but only asks of us the exemplification of the things that we have learned to believe that Masonry stands for.

Then how would it be if during 1922 we should make up our minds that we would try to give to Masonry some understanding; some of our time to appreciate and understand what Masonry really is. To a great many Masons the fourth degree is about the deepest understanding they get of Masonry; in other words, that Masonry is merely a matter of good fellowship. They fail to grasp the idea that Masonry stands for that, plus something else.

Others get the idea that Masonry is purely ritualistic; that it is the performance of certain customs and rites that have come down to us for several centuries, and which we carry out to the best of our ability. Masonry is more than sociability; Masonry is more than ritualism. Ritualism is just the outer garment

of Masonry, and may be changed at any time. The ritual of Masonry has changed again and again. The very fact that you are assembled as Royal Arch Masons, members of a chapter, indicates that Masonry has changed from what it was 150 years ago, when there were no Royal Arch chapters, and when the Holy Royal Arch degree was part and parcel of the third degree. Masonry has changed, and has developed in its ritualistic work, just as the churches have changed. The simple Lord's Prayer of Jesus Christ has become the elaborate ritual of the church. The simple upper room where Paul met his friends and where Christ met His disciples has changed in the course of time to the magnificent cathedral. That little group of men who used to meet together in Masonry for the purpose of helping each other in their trade and their business has developed into this magnificent organization of Masonry, with its various bodies and its various rituals.

Ritualism is a development from the simple to the complex, but ritualism is not the church, and ritualism is not Masonry, and the man who thinks of Masonry simply as a group of degrees, with highly interesting and very impressive ceremonies, has not yet got the fundamental idea of Masonry; any more than the man who thinks that Masonry is

simply having a good time with some of his friends around the dinner table. Masonry is more than these things. In order properly to benefit by Masonry, we should try to understand its fundamental principles and what it is endeavoring to do. If it is only for the purpose of having a good time; of staging elaborate degrees, with magnificent ceremonies and fine words, that is one thing, but if Masonry is a fundamental life philosophy, then that is something much different. If Masonry has something to do with the ethical side of individuals, with our relation to our fellow men, to our country and to the world at large, then we ought to give it more serious thought than is required by the mere matter of working degrees or eating meals together.

Masonry is fundamentally an educational organization. It has for its purpose at the present time the teaching to men the elements of life that are worth while and the relationship in which men should stand to each other. You probably remember that in the second degree of the blue lodge there is a section that is called the Middle Chamber lecture, which is rather long in our New York state work and possibly is rather long in your ritual, and was very much longer in the older ritual. You may have asked yourselves why it was that in a Masonic lodge there

world, and mean to its members. In these days of storm and stress we have no right to devote our organization merely to the things that are superfluous; or that are ornamental. If our organization has any right to exist, it must be practical; it must be livable; it must be workable in the main aspects of life.

Never has our country needed or deserved the support of an organization like this more than at the present time. There is one secret of our purposes or aims. We may tell the world that Masonry is not only social; is not only ritualistic; it is not only educational, but is also religious, and patriotic.

One of the most depressing statements that one can hear of a Mason is that, "So and So never goes to church since he became a Mason." Masonry has been harmed by people who have made such statements. Masonry is the hand-maid of religion. It is not a religion by any means; never was intended to be, and never will be, but it is an intensely religious organization. We should stand by the church for the realization of all that God Almighty, through His word, that Great Light of Masonry, has taught us.

Masonry is intensely patriotic. Wherever there is the sign of a Masonic temple, whether it is in a little village at some cross-roads or whether it is in a great met-

ropolis like Boston, everybody who passes by should be able to say to themselves, "There is the gathering place of men who believe in the United States of America, and who stand for the things that America has always represented." Masonry should be known for its steadfast adherence and loyalty to American principles and ideals. Such loyalty and adherence are in no sense narrow or jingoistic. We can love our country and love other countries.

On the street in which I live in Albany there are many nice houses; there are many fine people. I like to meet them. If they are sick I like to go in and greet them and perhaps sit up with them a night, if it is necessary. They are my friends. But there is one house on that street, which may not be as big or as fine as some of the other houses, but it means more to me than all the other houses. That house is my home; it is the place where my loved ones are; it belongs to me! it is my place, and therefore I love it more than I love the others; even though I respect and love the other houses in the same block.

There are many countries and nations in this world of ours. Our hats are off to the Chinese, to the Japanese, the French, the English, the Italians. They are all strong and virile and have much that we respect and which we honor. We

love them all, in a sense, as our fellow men. But there is one place; there is one flag; there is one country that we love more than all the others and are more devoted to than all the others, because it is our country, our flag, our home.

So while we are intensely loyal and intensely patriotic, it does not mean that we close our hearts to the love and appreciation of the other peoples of the world. Masonry is in no sense a jingoistic organization; it is in no sense a narrow, sectarian, bigoted organization; either religiously, nationally, or patriotically. It emphasizes in all these aspects and activities we have described, its great doctrine of the brotherhood of man—not the brotherhood of Masons, but a world wide and a humanity wide brotherhood.

Why not during 1922 let all the world know what we stand for? What have we to hide? What is the secret about our organization? Certain grips and signs; certain initiatory ceremonies, certain procedure whereby we may keep out of our lodges and chapter rooms those who ought not to be there; but that is all the secrecy we have. Our doctrines, our ideals, our hopes for the world,—all these things we can let the world know. We can proclaim them from the housetops. We can hang our banners on the outer walls. We are not ashamed of what Masonry teaches and

I think very often it has been detrimental to us because we have not proclaimed loudly and constantly to all mankind what Masonry does teach, and what Masonry tries to enforce.

So, in wishing you a Happy New Year during 1922, it is with the hope that 1922 will make for a better understanding of Free Masonry by ourselves and by the world at large; that all men may know that Masonry is not an organization that seeks to undermine; that is bigoted and narrow, but it is an organization with the finest of purposes; the most noble ideals; the best of teachings, and that no man can be a member of the Masonic fraternity without having placed before him the option of a better and a finer manhood.

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