

Provincial Grand Chapter of Worcestershire.



An Oration

DELIVERED BY

Exc. Comp. Rev. G. F. HOUSH, M.A., 1st G.Std.B.,

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

Lechmere-Hughes Volunteer Chapter,

No. 1874,

AT THE

MOSELEY MASONIC HALL,
KING'S HEATH,

On Thursday, November 28th, 1918.

The Oration.

MOST EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT COMPANIONS AND
COMPANIONS,

One of the supreme moments in the history of the world, and at the outset, I should like to congratulate the Z. Designate, his Officers, and the Companions of the Lechmere-Hughes Volunteer Chapter, on the fact that the Consecration of their Chapter coincides with this wonderful epoch in history. We are just emerging from a world-wide war which has no parallel, a war which, if not of so long a duration as some other wars in history, yet from the point of terribleness, savagery and misery has no equal. A war, not merely between nations, but between two great principles, the principle of right and justice, against the principle of might, cruelty and lust, and the victory granted to our Arms has set the seal for all time on the great undying truth—that right and justice must prevail over treachery, cruelty and vice. And to-day we stand on the threshold of the dawn of peace. A peace which we hope and believe will be "A Peace with Honour." A lasting, universal peace, when the sword shall be returned to its scabbard never, pray God, to be drawn again. The very name and composition of your Lodge and Chapter suggests to me that probably many of your brethren have, at the call of duty, taken up arms in the defence of their King and country, and consequently, perhaps, your Roll of Honour is longer

than that of many other Lodges in the Province. Companions, we bow the head in reverence to the memory of those who, counting not even their own lives dear to them, have willingly laid them down for their friends. All honour to our noble dead, the very flower of England's manhood. Requiescat in Pace, and yet, they being dead, still speak to you. Let their memory be an inspiration, and their devotion to duty be a stimulant to you in your battle against the evil powers of the world.

Companions, we rejoice with you to-day on this your birthday. May the work begun to-day in order be conducted in peace and closed in harmony, to the welfare of Masonry in general, the good of this Chapter in particular, and that all may redound to God's honour and glory. We greet you to-day in the words of Shakespeare, who if not a Mason himself, over and over again breathes the spirit of Masonry —

“ The grace of Heaven
 Before, behind thee, and on every hand
 Enwheel thee round.”—Oth. ii. 1.

There is recorded in the Volume of the Sacred Law a beautiful vision vouchsafed to the prophet Ezekiel. He is foretelling the progress of Christianity, and its effect on the world. In mystic vision (600 years before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness) he tells us that he saw a little river which flowed from beneath the altar, eastwards, at first a shallow stream, but which gradually gathered depth and strength as it flowed on until it became a mighty river, waters to swim in, waters that would not be passed over, fertilising and enriching the waste and barren land through which it flowed. I have

always liked to think of this mystic river as emblematical of Freemasonry. Issuing from the Holy of Holies. She had a small beginning among the apprentices, the clever craftsmen and expert Master Masons at the building of King Solomon's temple ; but she has flowed on, gaining breadth and depth and power, sending out branches all over the world and fertilising and enriching the known quarters of the globe, until she is to-day, with her sister Christianity by her side, a mighty river, a beacon on a hill which cannot be hid, a glorious fabric indeed, ordered by wisdom, founded on strength, and adorned with beauty.

Nor, I think, have we far to look for the cause for all this. If it had been the work of a Theudas, he, his work, and all, as many as obeyed him, would have come to naught and been scattered abroad ; but if it be the work of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found fighting against God. This I take to be the key-stone of Masonry—founded on God and the volume of the Sacred Law.

Let me not be misunderstood. I appreciate as much as any Brethren the social side of Masonry. I know it to be a great power. I recognise the satisfaction and delight which true, disinterested friendship alone can give, but I am convinced that if that were the root, middle and end of Masonry it would long ceased to have existed. No, it rests on a firmer foundation than that.

My Companions, in these days when anarchy is lifting up its head, deriding order and submission to authority, it is something to have planted in our midst an institution embracing men of various ranks in life,

and holding various religions and political creeds, which puts God in the forefront, and never meets without His name being frequently and reverently used and His assistance invoked ; and the Bible, the centre light of Masonry, open in the Lodge. In these days when revolutionary and republican doctrines are being sown broadcast, and kings and emperors swept from their thrones like chaff blown from the threshing floor, it is something to have in our midst a strong body of men, bound by an oath to be faithful to their God, their country, and their king, who set forth before the world the beauty and power of discipline, obedience and submission to the powers that be.

My Brothers, it behoves us, as members of such an institution, to be more and more circumspect in our lives and conversation, that we may hand on to future generations the legacy left us by our fathers, pure and unsullied, as we have received it.