

INTRODUCTION.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

The address which I shall have the honor to deliver to you this evening, is upon the origin and history of Freemasonry ; tracing it from its earliest period up to the present century. I shall preface it by informing you that its contents lay no claim to originality ; indeed they cannot do so, for they are merely a record of what has taken place from time to time, and the information therein contained has been obtained from various works of a most reliable character. My object in presenting it to you this evening is two-fold. First, there are many points of interest in it, with which even many Masons would hardly become acquainted in the ordinary course ; secondly, because Freemasonry is not sufficiently understood outside the lodge, especially by the uninitiated. There are some who look upon Freemasonry entirely as a myth, and who think the order is MADE mysterious, only to serve certain outside ends and purposes. Others look upon it only as a social club from which no good can arise, and they regard it only as an institution for good fellowship and enjoyment. I do not for a moment wish to deny that it possesses these two latter qualifications ; it would be unnatural if it did not, but these are not the grand objects of the order. The object of the science has a much higher ground, a much more noble aim. It is intended to make all those who enter within its portals, strictly honorable and virtuous ; and whilst unfortunately some gain admittance who happen to be unworthy, hundreds, and I hope thousands are made better by its sublime and beautiful teachings.

As well might you exclaim that the whole world is bad (because some persons are found who violate the laws of God and man and render themselves unfit to be admitted into respectable society), as to condemn Freemasonry for the acts of SOME of its unworthy members. Freemasonry in itself is all that is good, sublime, and beautiful, it is the essence of religion, since it includes ALL religion ; and I unhesitatingly affirm that he who is a good Mason, CANNOT fail to be a good man. Its principles are open to all ; and at the close of my discourse I will give you from our Masonic lectures, a few illustrations of them. As to the secret signs and words which are necessary to exist amongst the fraternity, I will quote from a Masonic song the following lines :

“ The world is in pain our secrets to gain,
But still let them wonder and gaze on ;
Till they're brought to light, they'll ne'er know the right
Word or sign of an accepted Mason.”