

ADDRESS

*Delivered at the Dedication of "NEPTUNE LODGE,"
No. 152, Southfield,*

BY THE HON. M. TOMPKINS.

MAN has been gifted by nature with many excellent qualities of heart, which, rightly directed and properly cultivated, must tend to increase the happiness and diminish the misery which usually accompanies his mortal career.

Among the many such qualities, bestowed by a benignant Providence, I would particularize that kindly disposition of man's nature, that feeling of goodwill toward his fellow man, which is rarely if ever entirely absent from the human breast.

It is true, that many, through ignorance, through recklessness, or through an entire devotion to ambitious, mercenary, or other selfish pursuits, pass through life without exhibiting any evidence of the possession of this quality, as if the Creator had not made them the recipients of this boon—as if they had not been thought worthy to participate with their fellow-men in the enjoyment of a feeling so fraught with satisfaction to its possessor, and with comfort and relief to those for whose benefit it may be called into active exercise.

To enlighten mankind as to their capability of benefiting their fellow man by yielding to this warm impulse, to arouse them to a sense of the responsibility they incur by a neglect of this attribute of their nature, and to call forth their beneficial action at its prompting, is surely a laudable effort.

It is to this effort that Odd Fellowship owes its origin.

By this effort, an Order has been established, composed of associations of kindred spirits, acting in harmonious unison for the extension of the cardinal virtues inculcated by the Christian code, and exemplified in the life, character and atoning sacrifice of Him at whose advent the Heavenly Host proclaimed "Peace on earth and goodwill to all mankind."

So rapid has been the growth of the Order, that it may almost be said, like "Minerva from the brain of Jove," to have sprung into perfect existence, fully armed to contend against the adversities and afflictions common to our earthly lot.

Truly and perfectly indeed is the Order armed at all points, not with the offensive weapons of war, but with the harmless instruments of peace, supplied by Friendship and Love. Thus armed, securely resting upon Faith, buoyed up and encouraged by Hope, with Charity for itsegis, the Order, in behalf of the brotherhood, is prepared to enter the lists against the errors, the adversities and afflictions to which man, in this imperfect state, is ever subject.

To the successful issue of this struggle, and to the accomplishment of the above-mentioned objects, the votaries of Odd Fellowship, by combined and associated fraternal efforts, bend their united energies.

To the service of such a cause, and to the promotion of the virtues and charities of life, we are about, this day, to dedicate a portion of this building.

In so good a cause, am I too bold when I ask, not merely for the good wishes of the fraternity in our behalf, but also for the sympathizing encouragement of all whose virtuous emotions would prompt them to countenance and encourage any effort to ameliorate the condition of their fellow-man?

Let me not ask in vain for that sympathy—let not the virtuous impulses of your nature be suppressed. Yield to the promptings of your hearts, appealing in behalf of an Institution whose object is not merely to ameliorate the physical, but materially to elevate the moral condition of man.

Shall we, when we feel that we are entitled to your favorable regard, in its stead, find our progress viewed by the jaundiced eye of prejudice, or the dull one of cold indifference?

"What though in mailed armor drest,
Indifference may repel
The shafts of woe—in such a breast,
No joy can ever dwell.

"'Tis woven in the world's great plan,
And fix'd by Heaven's decree,
That all the true delights of man,
Should spring from sympathy."

In the name and in behalf of the Order, I solicit that sympathy. In the name and behalf of virtue, I demand it.

To gain that sympathy, I would not attempt to impose upon your good sense by decorating, at the expense of Truth, our honorable Institution with alluring vestments drawn from the wardrobe of Fancy, and which attract but to dazzle; but I would leave it in the very nakedness of that Truth, itself; exposed to the most searching scrutiny, confident that such scrutiny, looking beyond appearances to the beneficial results accomplished by the Fraternity, must secure for it the favorable regard it so well merits.

It may be proper here to give some account of the origin, growth, and present extent of our Order.

I shall not claim for it antiquity of origin, though the principles on which it has been established, are coeval with the creation, by the Grand Master of the Universe, of this earthly Lodge—principles which must continue to influence human action, until the Fiat of the Noble Grand shall go forth for

"The wreck of matter and the crush of worlds."

It will be sufficient for me, here, to notice the growth and progress of Odd Fellowship in our loved country.

The first Lodge established in this country, of which we have any positive authentic information, was that organized in Baltimore, in the year 1819, by Thomas Wilder, John Welch, John Duncan, John Cheatham, and Richard Rusworth. Of this Lodge, styled "Washington Lodge, No. 1, of Maryland, and of the United States," Thomas Wilder was chosen the principal officer, and to him the paternity of the Order, in this country, is justly attributed.

What an enviable privilege! To have been the selected medium through whom the Ruler of all destinies hath originated in our midst, an Institution vested with virtuous attributes, so admirably designed, by socializing the human race, by extending the limits of human usefulness, and by elevating the tone of human character, to carry out the wise and paternal designs of the Chief Patriarch of our race.

Though scarcely more than a quarter of a century has elapsed since the first Lodge of Odd Fellows was established in the United States, yet how important is the present position of the Order, and how extensive have been its practical, beneficial results.

I shall ask your indulgence while I briefly relate some statistical facts in reference to its rapid progress, its present prosperous condition, and the amount of pecuniary relief communicated through its channel.

On the first day of June, of this present year, there were within the United States the astonishing number of 992 Lodges, to which 90,753 members were attached by the most endearing ties. The total revenue of these Lodges during the year amounted to the sum of \$708,205. The pecuniary relief administered during the same period amounted to \$197,317; and the number of brothers relieved 11,349. The sum of \$3,674 was expended for the education of orphans, and \$22,786 for the burial of 485 brothers.

In the short space of twelve months, immediately preceding the first day of June, 1846, the increase in number of Lodges was 307, in number of members 28,900, in amount of revenue \$252,228, and in relief afforded to the Brotherhood, \$71,956.

How gratifying to the philanthropist must such a recital prove; and yet, could I but picture to his view the sick beds visited and cheered, the alleviation of