

ORIGIN, OBJECTS AND AIMS

Of the Order of Knights of Pythias.

Origin.—Our Order was founded February 12th, 1864, at Washington, D. C., by Justus H. Rathbone, at a time when "war was in the heart of man and sorrow in his home," when, from ocean to ocean, from lake to gulf, our glorious land engaged in scenes of carnage and death. Brother Rathbone saw in Grecian history the germ of an order that should prove a power in dispelling the wrath of sectional strife and restoring the hearts of men to a basis of universal brotherhood.

The reign of Dionysius, the elder, marked an era of selfishness in the world's history. Following the example of a tyrant, his adherents on the Isle of Sicily vied in obliterating from the tablets of their memory every vestige of that noble principle of mankind which recognises man's fealty to his fellow.

Damon, a Senator of Syracuse, by his opposition to Dionysius in his attempted usurpation of power, was placed under sentence of immediate death.

Pythias, the time-tried friend of Damon, besought the tyrant to grant him a respite that he might bid a last farewell to those he loved. The denial of this request was followed by the most striking exemplification of pure friendship that has ever illumined the pages of history. Pythias, who well knew the honor of his friend, offered himself as a pledge for Damon's return, agreeing to pay the penalty with his own life should Damon prove false. Dionysius accepted the proffered hostage, placing Pythias in darkness and in chains, while his friend of years hastened to the home where his loved ones dwelt.

His earthly affairs are speedily arranged, the last fond embrace is given, he looks a last look upon his friends, now frantic with grief, and starts to return, but finds that his slave has

slain his steed. Syracuse is leagues away; he saw his day of respite fading into night, his friend led to the scaffold, he heard his pledge of honor, the cry of mockery without the prison walls. Crazed with the thought of honor lost, friend and friendship sacrificed, he seized a passing steed and, swifter than the winds of heaven, flew on toward Syracuse and certain death. Ay, more! To the rescue of his friend and the maintenance of his honor—to him sweeter than life and home. As the last moment is called, and the executioner's axe is lifted o'er the head of Pythias he rushes through the gates, springs upon the scaffold, redeems his honor, and saves the life of his friend.

This bright spot on the pages of the past was the corner-stone upon which Brother Rathbone "built wiser than he knew." For years the fires burned low upon the altars of the young and struggling brotherhood, but in its present high noon, when from every hilltop the shields of brave and gallant Knights make bright the day of promise, the founder of the Order may rest assured that its ascendant star will never wane.

Ranks.—The secret work consists of three divisions, called ranks, which are symbolical of principles of the Order—Friendship, Charity and Benevolence.

The three ranks—Page, Esquire and Knight—are separate, but it is necessary to be initiated into all of them to come to a just appreciation of the extent of what this Society comprehends and teaches. The intention of this body is to disseminate and teach to all mankind, who are worthy, the doctrines and precepts that are the foundation of this organization, and by so doing give to those principles their true meaning and widest application. The instructions given in the several ranks are a part of the essential elements that go to make up a secret society, and they are conferred upon all who become members, that they may come to a correct understanding of the basis upon

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