

## SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

CONSIDERED IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE.

*A Lecture delivered in Oriental Lodge, No. 181, Port Burwell, by Bro. the Rev. John Shulte, D. D.*

Before the Masonic fraternity became a speculative and moral Order, it consisted of real architects and practical Masons. Architecture, whilst it is the most useful, is also the greatest and noblest of all arts. It supposes not only a profound acquaintance with many sciences, but it requires, above all, a refined and cultivated mind. The architect must be a man of a high order of talent and genius; for he must first conceive in his mind the structure he intends to erect; and the grandeur of the edifice will be in proportion to his mental culture. And after having conceived the plan in its entirety and its details, skilful workmen are required to carry it out. They must be sufficiently cultivated to understand their master's ideas, and possess a practical knowledge of their art. And as a number of men of different degrees of knowledge and skill are required in the erection of a noble structure, and as mistakes would not only destroy its beauty, but be dangerous, also, to the life of the workmen, and finally cause the fall and ruin of the building, it is evident that the greatest order and subordination must prevail among all the men who are employed in its construction. Hence it is easily understood that the Masons, by the very nature of their work, were linked together as members of an organic body. We may, therefore, safely date the origin of the Masonic fraternity from those remote times when grand edifices began to be erected. And as they were united in the acquirement, execution, and perfection of their art, we may also suppose that they assisted each other in their bodily and spiritual wants, and formed a brotherhood in which not only intellectual and practical activity, but also love and charity reigned supreme.

The lovely and sublime nature of Masonry will appear still more conspicuous, if we consider the character of the buildings which they erected. They were not common structures, nor devoted to mere utilitarian purposes, but represented high spiritual truths. The world renowned pyramids point to the idea and aspirations of immortality. The famous obelisks covered all over with hieroglyphic inscriptions are great national books in which every citizen may read the history of his country. But above all, Masonry is renowned for erecting magnificent temples in honor of the living God. In all countries, both in ancient times and afterwards, which were noted for any degree of civilization, the greatest structures are those that were built for the worship of the Deity. The Masons built them. They must, therefore, have been imbued with grand ideas of, and a deep sense of veneration for, the Great Architect of the Universe. These edifices represented spiritual thoughts, spiritual wants, spiritual aspirations. The plans of these sacred buildings could not have originated in minds that were deadened by religious indifference or blighted by the folly of infidelity, nor would they have been carried out by hands that were feeble for want of religious zeal. The great temples, therefore, throughout the world are eloquent monuments of the faith and religion of Masonry.

And in the erection of these temples they followed the example of the Great Architect of the Universe. The fundamental article of their creed seems to have been that all Nature is the Temple of Nature's God, built by Himself, in order to be worshipped therein by His rational and intelligent creatures. Hence in building material temples, they imitated Nature's Temple. Was a temple to be erected among a people that had been accustomed to a wandering life; it took the shape of the tabernacle or tent, that could be carried from place to place. Such was Solomon's Temple. Was it to be built in a country bright with the light of the sun and conspicuous for the pure azure vault of heaven; a cupola was its essential ornament. Was it to be erected among nations that were accustomed to worship the Deity in the dim light, and under the arched trees of the forest or grove; grateful arches and numerous pinnacles and dim religious light formed its attractive character.

Thus the deep religious idea was underlying the Masonic art and fraternity. And when in course of time the brotherhood of practical Masons was dissolved, for reasons which I shall not here enquire into, and speculative Masonry substituted in its stead, the spiritual and religious idea was retained and became the basis and pervading element of the revived order.

When, therefore, I lecture on Solomon's Temple, it would not serve my purpose; in addressing speculative Masons, to give you merely a dry description of its plan and architectural composition and beauty. To convey a clear idea of great edifices is a difficult task for any one, even for an expert architect. I intended to contemplate it