

To virtue, strong and beautiful, is this Hall dedicated. Never then let careless feet defile its pavement, nor unclean hands touch its vessels; never let angry disputations be heard within its walls. Conscience as a faithful Tyler must guard off the Furies of Discord. Temper must be ever tempered and feeling chastened. It is that we may become better men that we meet here, and all our labours—the charges, the rituals, the ceremonies, nay, every jewel and ornament, every article of furniture, every emblem and hieroglyphic, tend to this point.

But more, the Lodge is consecrated to the memory of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist; and it is proper that we should shortly recall to our minds their lives and labours. Right too, that their names should have been linked together, not that they were like each other, but just because they were widely different in their temperaments and teachings. They were the exponents of the two extremes in human character—the Baptist being the representative of fiery boldness, the Evangelist of shrinking love. The one was a sturdy Doric column, the other a graceful Corinthian pillar. The one was the complement of the other; united together they combine strength and beauty.

The Baptist was a truly heroic character. The last of all the prophets, he was the greatest of all. Of his life we get only a few glimpses, but these show us what sort of man he was. The first picture is that of an ardent youth among the solitudes of Israel's deserts. Saddened by the hollowness of life in Israel and perplexed with the controversies of Jerusalem—the wrangling of Sadducees with Pharisees, of formists with mystics, of the disciples of one infallible Rabbi, with the disciples of another infallible Rabbi, he fled for refuge to the wilderness, to see if God could be found by the earnest soul that sought him alone. For thirty years he lived in the desert; then came the time when the qualities nursed in solitude burst forth upon the world. The people felt that a King of Men stood before them. The desert swarmed with crowds; warriors, profligates, publicans, the heart broken—the worldly, the disappointed—all came. Even the King's attention is gained; he is taken away from the simple life of the desert and placed among the artificialities of the Royal City. And now comes the question, "Does the stern prophet degenerate into a sweet tongued courtier." Is the rough ashlar of the forest broken into pieces in the process of polishing? Verily no. He stands in Herod's court, the prophet of the desert still, preaching boldly the truth. When Herod would ally himself with his guilty mistress, he at once said, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Now is he struck down like an eagle in its flight. The last picture is that of this earnest, strong man cast into a dungeon by the guards of the King. There he wears out his restless soul, until sacrificed to a courtesan's whim.

May his name ever remind us of courage in the hour of trial and inspire us with fortitude to reprove sternly all departures from Masonic rule.