

## THE LATE GRAND MASTER.

BY BRO. ROBERT MORRIS.

My prolonged absence has delayed the preparation of this tribute to friendship, but it matters the less when I know that the subject will form not only an important but melancholy theme for consideration in the coming session of Grand Lodge. The memory of William Mercer Wilson is not so ephemeral that a few months' delay blunts the sting of loss or forfeits a single reminiscence of merit.

It is a marked feature in the Masonic system—other societies have attempted to imitate us in it, but the counterfeit is thin and easily detected—to embalm the deeds of their faithful ones in evergreen. There is a happy adaptation in this to the example of certain admirers of the dead Jesus, who wrapped his remains in a great store of spices and costly fragrances. The Grecians buried their Patroilus under victims, but the Masons under perfumes. In the departure of the late Grand Master, we do no injustice to the lines of the German poet (Schiller), who says of a lost friend:

"He the more fortunate: yea, he hath finished!  
 "For him there is no longer any future,  
 "His life is bright,—bright without spot it was,  
 "And cannot cease to be. No ominous hour  
 "Knocks at his door, with tidings of mishap.  
 "Far off is he, above desire and fear,  
 "No more submitted to the chance and change  
 "Of the unsteady planets. Oh, 'tis well  
 "With him!"

My first acquaintance with Brother Wilson was at the outset of the struggle which resulted in the organization of the Grand Lodge of Canada. I was so fortunate as to secure from the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, and afterwards from other Grand Lodges, the full recognition of our Canadian sister, who had established her independence upon principles that no Masonic writer dare deny. This led to an interchange of correspondence, which continued, without a break, for twenty years. In June, 1856, Judge Wilson visited me at my home, in Kentucky, a visit often returned by me, to my ever increasing pleasure.

I was favored, I think, with the unrestricted confidence of the late Grand Master. Being nearly of the same age and somewhat similar in temperament and disposition, we could enter with cordiality into each others hopes and fears, and while I know that his counsel to me resulted in benefit, I have some assurance that my friendship for him was not without its advantages. He often consulted me in Masonic movements, and honored me, more than once, by accepting my views.

Why do I mention these things? because I am preparing the way to express my opinion of the deceased, and desire that the grounds of my judgment should be known. I am free then to say, after this long and intimate acquaintance, that I consider William Mercer Wilson as one of the most unselfish, unambitious, self-sacrificing Masons I have ever known. That he was always prompt and ready, that his judgment in Masonic matters was sound, that his decisions were consistent with each other and with Masonic law, let his Grand Lodge say, they knew him best and respected him the most; but that he was faithful, generous, clean and square, let his old friend, who will soon follow him to the abode of the departed, testify.

In the composition of the following lines, I had the reminiscences of my late friend before me:

Palm leaves to strew o'er our dead,  
 Trump-notes to grace his last way,  
 Gems to bedeck the fair head,  
 Crowd'd for death's glory to-day.