

THE FREEMASONS' MAGAZINE:

OR,

GENERAL AND COMPLETE LIBRARY,

For MARCH 1794.

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A BEAUTIFUL PORTRAIT OF JOHN WATKINS, L. L. D.

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THE
FREEMASONS' MAGAZINE.

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GENERAL AND COMPLETE LIBRARY.

FOR MARCH 1794.

A CHARGE

Delivered in the UNION LODGE at EXETER, on the Feast of St. JOHN the Baptist,
A. L. 5770*.

BY BROTHER C———. R. W. M.

BRETHREN,

BEING this day, by your choice, exalted into this chair, it is the fervent wish of my heart to render myself as little undeserving as possible of the distinguished honour; many important duties has a Master of a Lodge to perform; and though I despair of performing all of them as I ought, yet I shall always endeavour to do so; and therefore hope that some indulgence will be due to the rectitude of my intentions, even when I fall into error. To give instruction is one of the duties of a master; I do not, however, presume, Brethren, to give instruction to *you*, yet I think it incumbent upon me at this festival—I think my office requires it of me, to consider the nature of our institution (the more we consider it, the more we shall admire it), and to remind you of those duties it prescribes; those duties are very serious and important, and have this day, I doubt not, been expatiated upon in many places, by Reverend Brethren in the solemn Temple.

I speak to a most respectable assembly; I speak to men of enlarged understandings, and liberal educations; but I speak to those with whom I am connected by the most affectionate ties; I speak to my brethren; they will make every allowance which can be expected from fraternal affection, and that thought will give me resolution.

* Some expressions, perhaps sentences, in this charge, belong to different writers whose names are not mentioned; it was never intended to be printed, the author, therefore, at the time of writing it, never minuted down to whom he was obliged for them, and he cannot now recollect:—He thinks it proper to say this, that it may not be thought he, in the smallest degree, assumes to himself what belongs to another.

Our Order instructs us in our duty to the great Artificer of the Universe ; directs us to behave as becomes creatures to their Creator ; to be satisfied with his dispensations, and always to rely upon *Him* whose *wisdom* cannot *mistake* our happiness, whose *goodness* cannot *contradict* it.

It directs us to be peaceable subjects, to give no umbrage to the civil powers, and never to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against the well-being of the nation ; and as political matters have sown the seeds of discord amongst the nearest relations, and most intimate friends, *we* are wisely enjoined, in our assemblies, never to speak of them.

It instructs us in our duty to our neighbour ; teaches us to injure him in none of his connections, and in all our dealings with him to act with justice and impartiality. It discourages defamation ; it bids us not to circulate any whisper of infamy, improve any hint of suspicion, or publish any failure of conduct. It orders us to be faithful to our trusts ; to deceive not him who relieth upon us ; to be above the meanness of dissimulation ; to let the words of our mouths be the thoughts of our hearts, and whatsoever we promise, religiously to perform.

It teaches inviolable secrecy ; bids us to the unenlightened never to discover our mystic rites, or betray a confidence a brother has placed in us.—It warms our hearts with true philanthropy, with that philanthropy which directs us never to permit a wretched fellow-creature to pass by *unnoticed*—never to pass by, till we have presented him with the cup of consolation, and have made him drink copious draughts of the heart-reviving milk of human kindness. It makes us lovers of order ; stifles enmity, wrath, and dissention, and nourishes love, peace, friendship, and every social virtue ; it tells us to seek our happiness in the happiness we bestow, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

It informs us that we are all children of one father ; that man is an infirm, short-lived creature, who passes away like a shadow ; that he is hastening to that place where human titles and distinctions are not considered ; where the trappings of pride will be taken away, and virtue alone have the pre-eminence ; and, *thus* instructed, *we* profess, that merit is the only proper distinction. We are not to vaunt ourselves upon our riches, or our honours, but to clothe ourselves with humility ; to condescend to men of low estate ; to be the friends of merit in whatever rank we find it. We are connected with men of the most indigent circumstances, and in a Lodge (though our Order deprives no man of the honour due to his dignity or character), we rank as Brethren on a level ; and, out of a Lodge, the most abject wretch we behold belongs to the great fraternity of mankind ; and, therefore, when it is in our power, it is our duty, to support the distressed, and patronise the neglected.

It directs us to divest ourselves of confined and bigoted notions (the source of so many cruel persecutions), and teaches us, that *humanity* is the soul of all religions. We never suffer any religious disputes in our Lodges (such disputes tend to disturb the tranquillity of the mind), and, as Masons, we only pursue the universal religion, the religion of nature. Worshipers of the God of mercy, *we* believe that, in every nation, he

that feareth *him* and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. All Masons, therefore, whether Christians, Jews, or Mahometans, who violate not the rule of right written by the Almighty upon the tablets of the heart, who *do* fear him, and *work* righteousness, *we* are to acknowledge as brethren; and though we take different roads, we are not to be angry with each other on that account; we mean all to travel to the same place; we *know* that the end of our journey is the same; and we are all affectionately to hope to meet in the Lodge of perfect happiness. How lovely is an institution fraught with sentiments like these; how agreeable must it be to *Him* who is seated on a throne of everlasting mercy; to that God who is no respecter of persons.

It instructs us likewise in our duty to ourselves; it teaches us to set just bounds to our desires; to put a curb upon our sensual appetites; to walk uprightly.

Our Order excludes women; not because it is unwilling we should pay a proper regard to that lovely sex (the greatest, the most valuable gift that heaven has bestowed upon us), or because it imagines they would not implicitly obey the strictest commands of secrecy; but it knows if they were to be admitted to our assemblies, that our bosoms must often be inflamed by love; that jealousy would sometimes be the consequence; that then we should no longer be kind brethren, but detested rivals, and that our harmonious institution would by that means be annihilated: but though our Order excludes women, it does not forbid our enjoying the pleasures of love, but it bids us enjoy them in such a manner as the laws of conscience, society, and temperance, permit; it commands us for momentary gratifications not to destroy the peace of families; not to take away the happiness (a happiness with which grandeur and riches are not to be compared) which those experience whose hearts are united by love, not to profane the first and most holy institution of nature. To enjoy the blessings sent by divine beneficence, it tells us, is virtue and obedience; but it bids us avoid the allurements of intemperance, whose short hours of jollity are followed by tedious days of pain and dejection; whose joys turn to madness, and lead to diseases, and to death. Such are the duties which our Order teaches us, and Masonry (the heavenly Genius) seems now thus to address us:

The Order I have established in every part of it shews most consummate wisdom; founded on moral and social virtue it is supported by strength; it is adorned by beauty, for every thing is found in it that can make society agreeable. In the most striking manner I teach you to act with propriety in every station of life; the tools and implements of architecture, and every thing about you, I have contrived to be most expressive symbols to convey to you the strongest moral truths. Let your improvement be proportionable to your instruction. Be not contented with the name only of Free Masons; invested with my ancient and honourable badge, be Masons indeed. Think not that it is to be so to meet together, and to go through the ceremonies which I have appointed; these ceremonies in such an order as mine are necessary, but they are the most immaterial part of it, and there are weightier mat-

ters which you must not omit. To be Masons indeed, is to put in practice the lessons of wisdom which I teach you. With reverential gratitude, therefore, cheerfully worship the Eternal Providence; bow down yourselves in filial and submissive obedience to the unerring direction of the mighty Builder; work by his perfect plans, and your edifices shall be beautiful and everlasting.

I command you to love your neighbour; stretch forth the hand of relief to him if he be in necessity; if he be in danger, run to his assistance; tell him the truth if he be deceived; if he be unjustly reproached and neglected, comfort his soul, and sooth it to tranquillity; you cannot shew your gratitude to your Creator in a more amiable light, than in your mutual regard for each other.

Taught as you are by me to root out bigoted notions, have charity for the religious sentiments of all mankind; nor think the mercies of the Father of all the families of the earth, of that Being whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, are confined within the narrow limits of any particular sect or religion.

Pride not yourselves upon your birth (it is of no consequence of what parents any man is born, provided he be a man of merit), nor your honours (they are the objects of envy and impertinence, and must, ere long, be laid in the dust); nor your riches (they cannot gratify the wants they create), but be meek and lowly of heart: I reduce all conditions to a pleasing and rational equality; pride was not made for man, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

I am not gloomy and austere; I am a preacher of morality, but not a cruel and severe one; for I strive to render it lovely to you by the charms of pleasures which leave no sting behind; by moral music, rational joy, and harmless gaiety. I bid you not to abstain from the pleasures of society, or the innocent enjoyments of love or of wine: to abstain from them is to frustrate the intentions of Providence. I enjoin you not to consecrate your hours to solitude: society is the true sphere of human virtue; and no life can be pleasing to God, but what is useful to man. On this festival, in which well-pleased, my Sons, I see you assembled to honour me, be happy—let no pensive look profane the general joy; let sorrow cease; let none be wretched; and let pleasure, and her bosom friends, attend this social board. Pleasure (as one of my children has elegantly expressed it), is a stranger to every malignant and unsocial passion; and is formed to expand, to exhilarate, to humanize, the heart. But he is not to be met with at the table of turbulent festivity; he disclaims all connexions with indecency and excess, and declines the society of Riot roaring in the jollity of his heart. A sense of the dignity of human nature always accompanies him, and he admits not of any thing that degrades it. Temperance and cheerfulness are his *bosom* friends, and at the social board, where he never refuses his presence, these friends are always placed on his right hand and on his left; during the time he generally addresses himself to cheerfulness, till temperance demands his attention: on this festival, I say, be happy; but, remember *now*, and *always* remember, you are Masons, and act in such a manner, that the eyes of the censorious (ever fixed upon you) may see nothing in your conduct

worthy of reproof; that the tongue of the slanderer (always ready to revile you) may be put to silence. Be models of virtue to mankind (examples profit more than precepts), lead uncorrupt lives, do the thing which is right, and speak the truth from your hearts; slander not your neighbour and do no other evil unto him, and let your good actions convince the world of the wisdom and advantages of my institution. Oh! my Sons! the unworthiness of some of those who have been initiated into my Order, but who have not made themselves acquainted with me, and who, because I am a friend to rational gaiety, have ignorantly thought excesses might be indulged in, has been disgraceful to themselves, and discredited me.

Have I any occasion to mention charity to the UNION LODGE—to that Lodge to which no object of distress has ever applied without being relieved—to that Lodge which, catching the true spirit of my institution, has decreed that, on the festivals of St. John, there should always be a collection made for charitable purposes, and that the Master or Wardens should recommend the propriety of it. Whilst free from care you are enjoying the blessings of Providence, you forget not to raise the drooping spirits, and exhilarate the desponding hearts of indigent brethren; and whilst you know one worthy man is deprived of the necessaries of life, you cannot enjoy its superfluities. Ye have passed from death unto life, because ye love the brethren. With the chains of benevolence and social affection, my Sons, I link the welfare of every particular with that of the whole: the chief foundation of my institution is charity; I cry aloud to my children, not to pass by on the other side when they see objects of distress, but to go to them, and have compassion upon them; to bind up their wounds, pouring in oil and wine; to set them on their own beasts; to carry them to a place of safety, and take care of them. I bid them weep for those who are in trouble; never to see any perish for want of clothing, or suffer the stranger to lodge in the street, but to open the door to the traveller. Never to cause the eyes of the widow to fail, or eat the morsel by themselves alone, and the fatherless not be partakers thereof. I shew them the path which is perfumed by the breath of benediction, and which leads to the celestial Lodge where the merciful shall obtain mercy.

But some of my children might have inclination to assist the poor in their trouble, and not be able to do so without prejudicing themselves or their families: remember, my Sons, that when I direct you to be charitable, I direct you to be so as far as you can without doing injury to yourselves or your connections. But money is not the only thing the unfortunate stand in need of; compassion points out many resources to those who are not rich for the relief of the indigent; such as consolation, advice, protection, &c. The distressed often stand in need only of a tongue to make known their complaints; they often want no more than a word they cannot speak, a reason they are ashamed to give, or entrance at the door of a great man, which they cannot obtain.

Ye are connected, my Sons, by sacred ties; I warn you never to weaken, never to be forgetful of them. I have only to add, that I wish you happy. Virtue, my Sons, confers peace of mind *here*, and happiness in the regions of immortality.

MASONIC ANECDOTE.

From the Travels of ALEXANDER DRUMMOND, Esq. Consul at Aleppo; written at Smyrna in 1745, and published at London, in folio, 1754.

AT this Carnival season they have an assembly here, to which Mr. Consul Crawley did me the honour to introduce me; and, as I had formed a Lodge of Free Masons in the place, the ladies had conceived a strange notion of my character; for I had been represented to them, by some priest, as a conjurer of the first magnitude, who had the devil at my command, and raised the dead by my diabolical incantations. These terrible prepossessions, instead of frightening them, had only served to raise their curiosity; and when I entered the room they surveyed me with truly female attention: after they had satisfied their eyes with a most minute examination, they seemed to think I did not differ much from the other children of Adam, and became so familiar to my appearance, that one of the number was hardy enough to desire me to dance with her; and, as she escaped without danger, I was afterwards challenged by a pretty little blooming creature, with whom I walked seven minuets during the course of the evening.

As I have mentioned the Lodge of Free Masons, I cannot help congratulating myself upon the opportunity I had of making so many worthy Brethren in this place, and of forming the only Lodge that is in the Levant.

For ages past a savage race
O'erspread these Asian plains,
All nature wore a gloomy face,
And pensive mov'd the swains.

But now Britannia's gen'rous sons
A glorious Lodge have rais'd,
Near the fam'd banks where Meles runs,
And Homer's cattle graz'd;

The briery wilds to groves are chang'd,
With orange-trees around,
And fragrant lemons, fairly rang'd,
O'ershade the blissful ground.

Approving Phœbus shines more bright,
The flow'rs appear more gay,
New objects rise to please the sight
With each revolving day.

While safe within the sacred walls,
Where heav'nly friendship reigns,
The jovial Masons hear the calls
Of all the needy swains.

Their gen'rous aid, with cheerful soul,
They grant to those who sue;
And while the sparkling glasses roll,
Their smiling joys renew.