

**MASONS
ON THE SQUARE
THEME SPEECH #1**

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To me, Masonry and manliness are practically synonymous. Whenever one meets a thorough-going Mason he is usually face to face with a right-acting man. A Lodge man is very often a man's man, in the best sense of those words. Two of the well-known Masons in eighteenth century Scotland were Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott. Both were men of letters, with Burns being remembered primarily as a poet and Scott as a novelist. Robert Burns was born in a cottage at Alloway, and is a worthy representative of the working class of society. Sir Walter Scott lived in a castle at Abbotsford, and is a fine example of the true aristocrat. Scott's best loved words speak to us about the manliness of patriotism. In "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" he says, "Breathes there the man, with soul so dead, Who never to himself hath said, This is my own, my native land!" Burn's best loved words speak to us about the patriotism of manliness. In "The Cotter's Saturday Night" he says, "From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs, That makes her loved at home, revered abroad: Princes and lords are but the breath of kings, 'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'" Both men were made, in part, by Masonry.

As one looks back over the history of past centuries, he discovers many movements, the avowed purpose of which was the making of men. Such a movement was chivalry and knight errantry, which reached its finest flowering in King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Visitors to the Guild Hall at Winchester, in south of England, may still see the Round Table where King Arthur and his Knights were accustomed to sit. The purpose of this order is beautifully expressed by Tennyson in his "Idylls of the King". King Arthur is the spokesman, saying:

"I made them lay their hands in mine, and swear
To reverence the King as if he were their conscience,
And their conscience as their King;
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ.
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs.
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But to teach high thoughts, and amiable words,
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

Amongst the movements for the making of men, Masonry holds an historic and honoured place. It is a mystic tie which unites men of many types and temperaments into a closely-knit fellowship. In the words of W.N. Ponton, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ontario, "Masonry is like one of the Cathedrals which our brethren built in the olden time: Faith is its foundation, Righteousness its cornerstone, Strength and Wisdom its walls, Beauty its form and fashion, Brotherly Love its clasped arches, Reverence its roof, the Bible its altar light, Mysticism its music, Charity its incense, Fellowship its sacrament, Relief its ritual... Masonry is not a

Temple of Mysteries, nor a Repository of rituals, nor a Reformation of the Fallen, nor a Branch Office of a Benevolent Society, but the happy and restful, refined and intellectual home of men of good will and good sense; Brethren not Bondsmen, men of brain and brawn, young men and mature men, just average men in a world of motion and emotion, of aspiration and purposeful progress, men who have realized that the Brotherhood of Man begins with the Manhood of the Brother." Such manhood is four-square, like our Lodge Rooms. In some respects a Masonic Lodge is symbolic of our world. Its four comers represent the ends of the earth. At the centre is the Altar with its three Great Lights -- the Bible, the Square and the Compasses. In every Lodge there is the letter "G" -- the symbol of God, the Great Geometrician. The four sides of the Lodge represent the four basic principles of personality. They are character or what a man is, conviction or what he believes, concentration or the things on which he focuses his life, and commitment or the causes to which he dedicates his manhood.

The first important quality in a mason's life is character, or what a man really is. Character is the focal point of personality. It is more significant than all our mental powers and social privileges added together. Every thought creates character. Every act is the incarnation of character. Every decision is a revelation of character. Every habit is a pillar in the edifice of character. William Thackeray, the English novelist, expressed an eternal truth when he said, "Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap an eternal destiny." Alongside these challenging words of an Englishman, let me place the incisive thoughts of an American, Henry Thoreau. He said, "It matters not half so much what kind of a ballot you drop into the ballot-box as what kind of a man you drop out of bed into the street every morning. This means that good character is a national asset. In business, it is better than cash. In politics, it is better than statesmanship. In education, it is better than culture. In religion, it is better than all the theological arguments and religious debates that were ever held.

In Canada, what we need more than anything else is an aristocracy of character. We do not really need any more mountains, no mountain ranges could surpass the Rockies or the Selkirks. We do not need any more rivers; no rivers could be more useful than the St. Lawrence, the Mackenzie and the Fraser. We do not need any more lakes; we can't imagine any lake to be more beautiful than Lake Louise or more extensive than Lake Superior. We do not need any more prairies, or forests, or mines; we have not yet exploited those we already have. What we do need is more and better people. To match the bigness of our country we need bigness of character. In Boston, the first question the visitor is asked is, Who were your parents? They believe in an aristocracy of birth. In Philadelphia, the first question is, From what schools have you graduated? They believe in an aristocracy of education. In New York, the first question is, How much are you worth? They believe in an aristocracy of wealth. By contrast, the first question we should ask about people in Canada is, What kind of people are we? What is the quality of our manhood? What is the nature of our character? That is what Rudyard Kipling, a well-known Mason of another generation, had in mind when he wrote his inspiring poem,

"If."

"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can fill the unforbearing minute
With sixty seconds worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth, and everything that's in it,
And, what is more -- You'll be a Man, my son!"

Amongst Masons, much use is made of the symbolism of colours. Each one of the various degrees has its own distinctive colours. Generally speaking, red is the colour of sacrifice, while blue indicates loyalty. Black is the colour of evil, and white the colour of good. all of this is in line with a modern psychological theory that colour emanates from individuals. Just as every bird in the forest has its own distinctive song, and every flower in the field its own distinctive perfume, and every star in the sky its own distinctive light, so every man has his own distinctive colour. The character of any man is revealed by the colour which is associated with his personality. The envious man is green, while the melancholic man is said to be in a blue mood. the proud man is purple, which the angry man is scarlet, and the cowardly man is yellow. the sad, depressed person is wrapped in a mantle of grey, while the colour emanating from a confined sensualist is muddy brown. During the Second World War, I was with the Armies of Liberation when they passed through Belgium. Throughout the German occupation the Belgians were forbidden to show their flags, the colours of which are red, black and gold. On the day of liberation, in one of the villages, a brave thing happened, the news of which flew like wildfire through the country, cheering everybody. Walking down the main street of their village, their arms twined around each other's waist, were three little Belgian girls. Each was dressed in a yellow blouse, black skirt and red stockings. The children had found a way to show their flag in spite of the German restrictions. They did not hoist their flag on a pole, nor drape it from a window. They wore it. Everyone saw in those little girls the spirit of Belgium, unbroken and unafraid, clothed in the colours of the flag of Belgium. In somewhat the same way, we show the colours of our character.

In the long run good character is made by two small words, -- "Yes" and "No". The secret of pure, fine character is the ability to say "Yes" to all that life offers which is good and right, and the strength to say "No" to all that weakens and defiles. The mind of a man is like a legislative assembly, where the representatives of our human faculties sit in session. Each faculty has a vote on every great question which may come up for discussion. Here sits Reason, the philosopher of your soul; Conscience, the judge of your soul; Imagination, the artist of your soul; Will, the executive of your soul; Hope, the poet of your soul; Faith, the prophet of your soul; and Love, the queen of your soul. On every great issue, let every voice be heard. the Spirit, which is the speaker of the house, will call for a decision. You register your vote; the answer is "Yes" or "No". so, your life is governed, so, the choices of your life are expressed; so, the character of your personality is revealed.

Character by itself, however, is not enough; in addition, a man needs conviction. If character is what a man is, then conviction is what a man believes. convictions are the stuff out of which history is made. If you would master any period of history you must discover the masterminds, the master convictions, of that period. The conviction of Columbus gave us a new world. The conviction of Galileo gave us a new astronomy. the conviction of Guttenberg gave us a new enlightenment. Shakespeare's beliefs meant new forms of drama; Michael Angelo's -- new theories of art; Faraday's -- new principles of science. There was only one John Wesley, but his convictions are believed by multitudes of Methodists. There was only one Martin Luther, but his beliefs are accepted by millions of Protestants. There is only one Christ, but twenty centuries of Christians have regarded His teachings as "The Truth". Remember the words of Victor Hugo: "What is grander than the everlasting hills, -- A storm at sea! And what is grander than a storm at sea? -- the starry night! And what is grander than the starry night? -- a conviction in the mind of a man!" to me, a Mason is not a wishy-washy, namby-pamby sort of person; he is a man with a conviction.

At this point it should be noted that a conviction is something more than a whim. convictions and whims both look toward action, but there is only the remotest possibility of their travelling in the same direction or reaching the same goals. A whim is like a sailing vessel, which tacks to and fro against adverse winds; a conviction is like a stately steamship, which pushes ahead through storm and sunshine toward its chosen destination. A whim is like a weathervane, which points north with the north wind or east with an east wind; a conviction is like the magnetic needle of a compass, which points to the north no matter which way the wind is blowing. It was a mere whim on the part of many people in the United States when they began to talk about the emancipation of the slaves. It was a mere whim, I say, because they talked and did nothing about it. However, it was a conviction on the part of William Lloyd Garrison when he championed the cause of the Negro. In 1831, he was 26 years old, poor, self-taught, obscure, sleeping in his printing office with a table for a bed and a book for a pillow; in this manner he printed "The Liberator". After he died, they erected a monument to him on commonwealth Avenue, in Boston. On that memorial they carved Garrison's motto -- "My Country is the World, my countrymen are mankind (his masthead on "The Liberation"); I am in earnest. I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch; and I will be heard." With this motto to guide him; Garrison made his newspaper, "The Liberator", one of the most influential periodicals ever printed in America.

Besides character and conviction, a man needs concentration. This has to do with the things upon which a person focuses his energies. If Masons are to serve their communities adequately, they must learn to specialize. they can't do everything; but they can do something. One day I was with a group of friends who were bathing in the Great Salt Lake of Utah. We were told that the water was filled with salt. We could taste it, so we knew it was there, but we were not greatly impressed. "Looks just about the same as water from another river or lake," said one member of the party, somewhat scornfully. However, that day we put some of that Salt Lake water in a glass and left it exposed to the heat of the sun. It was some time before we thought of it again. the sun's rays had caused the rapid evaporation of the water, and there was the salt, crusty and yellow-white, covering the bottom of the glass. Everyone was surprised. "Who would have thought that all that salt could have been in that small amount of water?" The salt was there in

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water all the time, but it had made no impression on us. Just as soon as the water was gone we saw the salt and that did impress us. Concentration is really the process of elimination, and the process of elimination gives us some of our most valuable products—diamonds, gold, silver, coke, carbon, flour, as well as many other substances in every day use. In these processes, everything of secondary value is taken out, while the one thing desired is left in. That is what Masons will have to do with their plans to serve the community -- eliminate all secondary purposes and concentrate on their primary plans.

I need hardly remind you that the giants of our race have been men of concentration who have struck sledge-hammer blows in one place until they have accomplished their purpose. Edward Gibbon, the English historian, was twenty-six years writing his masterpiece, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Thomas Gray, the English poet, was seven years writing his famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." James Watt laboured thirty years on the condensing engine. George Stephenson worked fifteen years in perfecting the locomotive. Abraham Lincoln, loved today as no other American is loved, would walk sixteen miles to borrow a book; in his spare moments, while resting from rail splitting or ploughing, he would study these books.

At the entrance to one of the main buildings of Oberlin College in Ohio, you will see a life-size statue of a young man just nineteen years of age, named Charles Martin Hall. About 1884, Charles Hall was a student in the science classes at Oberlin College. His professor was a man named F.F. Jewett. That year the new students in science heard Professor Jewett say, "If any man should invent a process by which aluminum could be made on a commercial scale, not only would he be a benefactor to the world, but he would also be able to lay up for himself a great fortune." Turning to his classmates, Charles Hall said, "I'm going for that metal." and, he went for it. His own private laboratory was the woodshed behind his home equipped with batteries and simple apparatus, mostly borrowed or home made. Two years later, the twenty-one year old Hall ran in excitement to Professor Jewett, exclaiming, "I've got it!" In his hand lay a dozen aluminum buttons which he had produced electrolytically. Those buttons are referred to today as "the crown jewels" of the aluminum business. The process discovered by Charles Martin Hall is identically the same as that used by the Aluminum company of Canada in their giant processing plants at Kitimat in British Columbia. concentration is the method which produces results in all walks of life whether we are writing a book, or perfecting a formula, or serving a community. by concentration, the last battle is won, the last mountain peak is scaled, the last enemy is overcome. would you explore the unexplored atom, chart the unknown heavens, write the geological history of the universe, map the trail of life through its biological developments, then, you must say, as Paul said, "This one thing I do!"

On further quality is needed in the making of a man; it is commitment. In every man's mind there should be some idea or ideal around which he organizes his purposes, and to which he dedicates his powers. It is the cause or conviction to which a man pledges his allegiance when he is on his knees. On his knees David Livingstone opened up the Dark Continent of Africa to the light of the Gospel of Christ. On his knees, he spent his last night in prayer for freedom for Africa, and, on his knees he struck the death-blow of slavery for Africa's peoples. On his knees William Carey received power to translate the Bible into more than twenty-six languages of India and to

become the father of modern missions in that land. On his knees Martin Luther climbed the Scala Santa or Sacred Stairway in Rome seeking peace for his soul; it was on his knees that it was revealed to him that "the just shall live by faith," and on his knees he broke the shackles of religious oppression and launched the great Reformation movement. It was on his knees that Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land of Palestine. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, but every stone was laid by men who dedicated themselves to this task on their knees. On his knees, Jesus wrought miracles, fed the multitudes, healed the sick, and received power to die for the sins of the race. And, my brother Masons, it was on your knees you took your vows as Freemasons. It was on your knees you heard the Apron Charges for the First Degree, the Second Degree, and the Third Degree of Masonry. It was on your knees you became a Master Mason, pledging yourself to Truth, Charity and Service -- the Truth by which no man is ever injured, the Charity without which no dogma is worth holding, and the Doing of Good which is the finest art known upon earth and among men.

To bring these matter to a conclusion, let me tell you how one man was made by his character, his convictions, his concentration and his commitment. It occurred in Italy during the Second World War. In December 1943, the First Canadian Division, of which I was the Senior Chaplain, had to fight one of its most difficult battles. The objective was the Town of Ortona. The struggle took place at Christmas, that time of the year which is usually dedicated to peace and good will. In one of the reinforced trenches captured from the Germans, the Canadians found a fully-decorated Christmas Tree. Before evacuating this trench, the Germans had put a note on their tree, "Merry Christmas to the Canadians. We'll make it hot for you when we reach the hills." In the battle for Ortona one of the Company commanders, in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, was Major Alexander Railton Campbell, aged 34, from Perth, Ontario. He lost his life leading his company into action. At the time of his burial there was found in his pocket, in his own handwriting, a little poem called, "Prayer Before Battle".

"When 'neath the rumble of the guns,
I lead my men against the Huns,
It's then I feel so all alone, so weak, so scared,
I often wonder how I dared
Accept the task of leading men.

I wonder, worry, fret, and then -- I pray,
Oh God, who promised oft
To humble men to lend an ear,
Now in my troubled state of mind
Draw near, Oh God, draw near.

Make me more willing to obey,
Help me to merit my command,
And if this be my fatal day,
Reach out, Oh God, Thy helping hand
And lead me to Thy Promised Land.

These men of mine must never know
How much afraid I really am;
Help me to lead them in the fight
So they will say, "He was a man!"

As his body was lowered into its last resting place, and the little white cross, bearing his name and rank, was erected at its head, everyone came to attention, and said, "He was a man!" so he, and others of his kind, are remembered as Canadians, who, by reason of their character, convictions, concentration and commitment, were made into men. In fighting for peace, as well as in fighting for war, in building society as well as in tearing it down, let us as Masons prove, by our lives, that Masonry is synonymous with manliness, and whenever we meet a true-blue Mason that we are face to face with a red-blooded man.

"So Mote It Be."

Alberta Masonic Spring Workshop
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