

It colors and chokes in the odor of flowers. It mingles with the mellow music of autumn fruits, it mingles with the hum of insects and carols in the song of birds. The innocence of infancy—the radiant loveliness of youth—the prattle of childhood and the venerableness of age, all attest the love of Heaven to man. And in the cathedral states of the forest sanctuary the divine love is celebrated in hymns of perpetual joy.

These two, Friendship and Love seek their foundation in support in Truth. An Odd Fellow should be a good man and true. The institution offers the sacred guarantee of truth to its dwellers and to the world. Professing to find its origin and aim in the truth of things, its obligations and requirements are such, that a liar cannot be an Odd Fellow but in name and appearance.

As the veracity of Heaven is the cement and security of the universe, without which the fabric of God might become an infinite monster of passion; cruelty and fraud—without which man's life and hope here as well as Heaven itself might prove a vain show—an atrocious though splendid delusion—so truth among men is the only security for human society—the guarantee of friendship and the foundation of love—the conservator and cement that gives coherence and consistency to all the valuable and cherished elements of life.

Then my brethren, here in this Hall and in our hearts, let Friendship, Love and Truth ever find an abiding place—ever utter their oracles—ever bear their beautiful fruits and exercise their sway. Here may friendship ever find a sanctuary—love an altar, and truth a temple. Here may friendship never be barren of fruits—love without effort, or Truth without toil.

When Friendship is here dishonored among the professed friends, when Love is quenched in hate—and Truth is crushed under the heel of falsehood—then will our ceremonies become a melancholy farce, our emblems a grinning mockery—our mysteries a profanity, and our beauty a desecration. Then may our Lodge become a solitude, and our name a scoff and by-words among the children of men—for then, and not till then, will come to pass the saying of its foes, and then will be justified the suspicions of its enemies.

Odd Fellowship by its constitution and ceremonies connects itself with and assures the obligations of religion to its extent; it recognizes the existence of a Supreme Being, receives his revelation as authoritative and Divine acknowledges the duty of reverence, obedience and worship, and by inference, the obligations of morality as set forth in the gospel, to such an extent that in proportion as we are wanting in the possession or practice of these virtues we are recreant to the obligations of our order, and exhibit that practical inconsistency, which we sometimes so justly condemn in the conduct of others. These duties are from correct and consistent conduct on the part of its members, the real obstructions to the progress of Odd Fellowship, and the real power and promise of an institution are not to be sought for in the number and wealth of its members, but in the correctness of its principles, the elevation of its aims and the uniform harmony which obtains between its professions and its practices.

All who are acquainted with the true knowledge the significance of our symbols and ceremonies, the highly moral tone of our charges, and the noble character of our whole mechanism of the order to effect benevolent ends. But the question still arises, do we avail ourselves of these advantages? Do we seek ourselves worthy of these privileges? Is it a living reality or a vain show to us? These are questions of the last importance to that member who feels himself unfaithful to his obligations to the professed friends of Odd Fellowship, however friendly with its symbols, however regular at its meetings, as the enemy of the order and a foe to humanity. We are symbols of no value except they represent good thoughts and good deeds. When good words cease to do this, they are but the shallow resources of dissimulation and convenient masks of hypocrisy.

When we shall be evident that in the aggregate Odd Fellowship does not make us a better, does not elevate the tone of character, does not improve the morals; when it shall appear that its mission is not a mission of mercy, but a mission of selfishness; when it shall cease to preach a gospel of benevolence, and preach a gospel of uncharitableness, then will the day of its glory darken to its doom. Its continued influence would no longer be desired by the people, and it could only minister to the gratification of the selfish and bad. I rejoice that such is not the case at present, and that we may look forward to a long and splendid career of proper usefulness; that we may hope that as the youthful efforts of our Order enjoyed the approbation and aid of the affluence of their day, so in its old age may the blessings of them be ready to perish come forth a small band, strong in the rectitude of its intentions, and craved of Providence a place and an opportunity among the benevolent enterprises of the age; and mightily has Providence answered that prayer. The small band has become an exceeding great army, and the arena of its efforts is no longer a few confined localities, has enlarged until it has embraced the world.

The destiny of the order is solely in the hands of Odd Fellows; and it will be glorious in proportion to their fidelity. If it perish by the hands of those to which it is intrusted, its own truth and its practical workings will be a laughing stock to the world, and its respectability, or position, or on the contrary, can justify and confirm the hardest sayings of its worst foes.

Our institution, my brethren, is sufficiently noble in its character and humane in its spirit to be entitled to the advantage of a virtuous and upright conduct on the part of every person who is associated with it. It is an association which is worthy of an acquaintance with its mysteries. It is an institution, therefore, who has been permitted to cross its threshold, and sit down within its sacred precincts, fail in that fidelity which he is bound to preserve by his threefold obligation as an Odd Fellow, a Citizen, and a member of the wide Brotherhood of man.

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