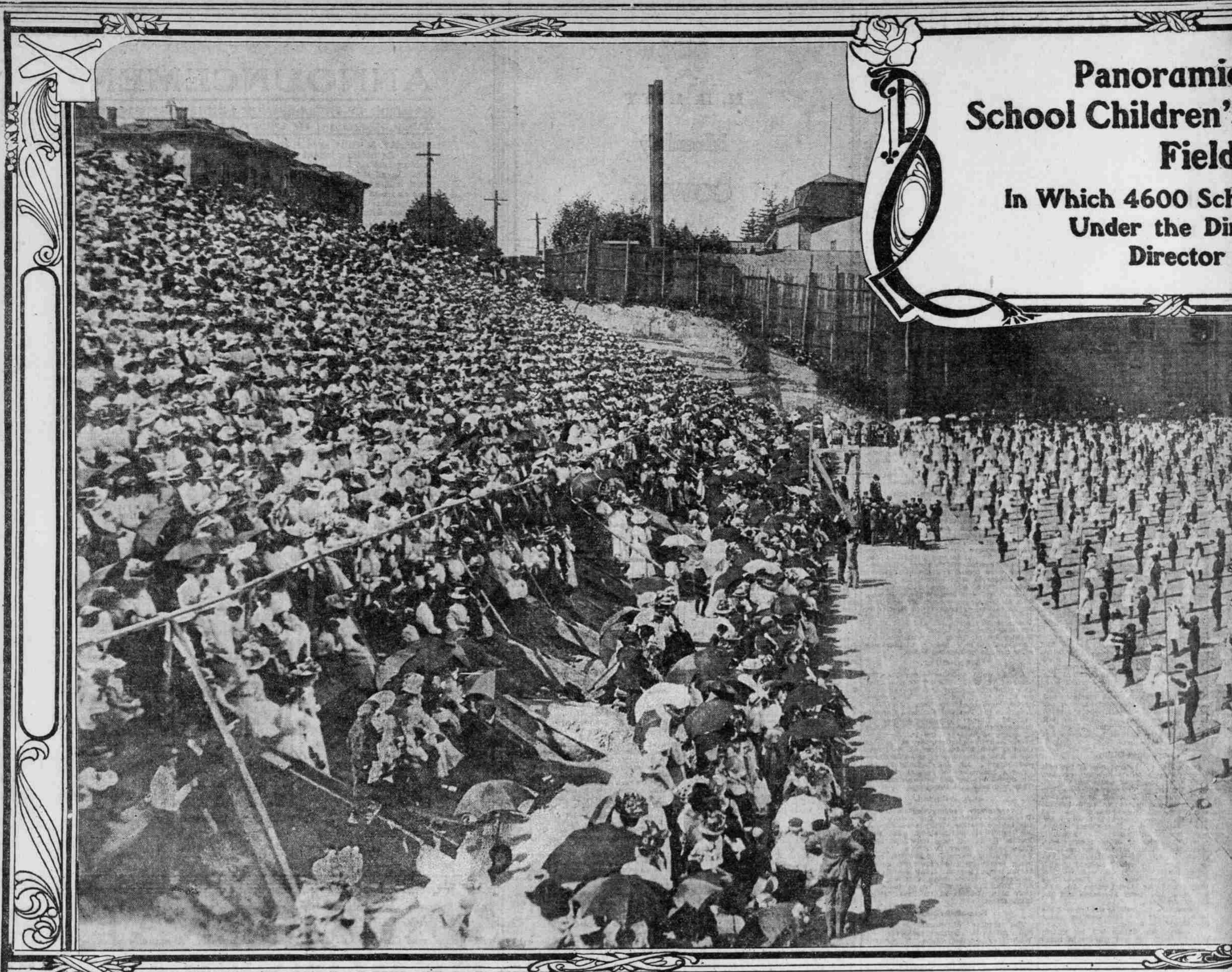


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## Address on "Freemasonry" Delivered Before the Grand Lodge of Oregon by Grand Orator, H. W. Scott

AN ADDRESS on "Freemasonry," with especial reference to Masonic symbolism, was delivered last Thursday before the 58th annual session of the Grand Lodge of Oregon, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, by H. W. Scott, grand orator. Mr. Scott's remarks were as follows:

Having the honor to be the orator, and it devolving on me to make the address, at this time, I desire to present a statement of my view or interpretation of the spirit, the method and the purpose of Freemasonry, as manifested through its symbolic forms. I cannot go into detail. The subject, as every Mason knows, is too vast. But I wish to give an account, in some sort, of the ethical spirit of Freemasonry, and of my own conception of the methods of operation it employs. I trust I shall not be tedious; I know I shall not detain you long.

Man thinks; therefore, he is. Thought lives chiefly in symbols; exerts itself mainly through symbols; propagates itself through metaphors, resemblances and similitudes; for even pure science must depend on objects clear to the outward senses, through which it finds representation. Man's images of the Deity, sometimes grotesque, sometimes the product of his most refined art, are not unnatural, though all subject to change, for man himself is changeable, and the products of his mind in one age cannot fit those of another. In a high sense Masonry is symbolical. It rests chiefly on the duties and obligations of men; and these belong both to their individual and social natures. Masonry thus is a great moral force, working through methods it has elaborated during a very long period. In using metaphors and symbols it conforms to the nature of man, for man himself is a symbol—whatever opinion he may have of himself, or of the expression of the Divine mind.

It is not the purpose to exalt mysticism, which expresses itself through symbols, but to use it. It is vain to argue that it is purely subjective and does not belong to the realm of reality; for though the objection may be true, it does not alter the fact, even if it does not heighten its value. These states of being, subjective and objective, shade and pass into each other, in passages of Isaiah there may not be literal fact. But let one read a chapter of Isaiah—whatever opinion he may have of it from a purely intellectual point of view, he cannot fail, if he have any harmony of soul in him, to be stirred to higher emotional tone by its lofty strain of feeling and grandeur of conception. Besides, all things are merely symbols. Berkeley replied to Huxley, who bantered him upon his idealism, that a mathematician is also an idealist, his ultimate ratio being in reality only the ghosts of departed or missing quantities, appearing when the terms that had produced them had vanished. Thus may Masonry answer the charge that its symbolism is nothing.

Man has two sets of duties, one of them pertaining to himself, the other to the social order in which he dwells. The former are the behests of self-love or egoism; the latter of regard for one's fel-

lows, or altruism. These two sets of precepts are equally just, equally natural and equally indispensable. But it never is an easy matter to maintain right balance between them; for unless men have a care the selfish side will too much outweigh the other. The best work of Masonry, as a moral force, is done, then, on its social side. It teaches duty to others, and brings reward therefrom through reflex action on the individual spirit.

Man, both by nature and by the circumstances in which he is placed, finds it difficult to contemplate abstract, ideal truth, and when it eludes his imperfect vision he charges the difficulty upon the truth and not upon himself. But for all this the ideal is real, and man is capable of this abstract vision. Upon his ability to free himself from the disturbing influence of external sense, to be independent in some sort of the physical or external senses in the investigation of the phenomena, and feelings of his own inward nature depends much of his true knowledge of himself. The work of this confraternity may give real help herein through the solemnities of its large and various ceremonial. All human duties are correlated under a mysterious universal moral law. That which makes Burke one of the few great names in higher political science is the solemn and awful force he had of moral law as strictly supernatural in its essence, of this universal law, in his own language, "as prior to all our devices, and prior to all our contrivances, paramount to all our ideas and all our sensations, antecedent to our very existence, by which we are knit and connected in the universal frame of the universe, out of which we cannot stir." Thus, the sanctity of the sacredness, the authority, the blinding power of moral law, as the foundations of government and of political and social science, for which Burke pleaded eloquently, come from a world outside us and beyond us; exerting itself through man as the one moral creature of the universe. Recognition of this great truth runs through all the work of our order.

Masonry, using these lessons, thus is of excellent use in keeping up the connection of the part with the present and carrying it on to the future, and not speaking just how of any formula of Masonry, but of the spirit. There is a "knowing" in its teaching and purposes, that is making a holding ground for humanity. The union of reverence, of moderation and of enthusiasm we find in it together with the seriousness and sense of solemnity it inculcates, supplies a steady force that the world needs. History records the rise and great popularity, for a while, of many a theory or supposed philosophy which succeeding ages have consigned to oblivion, and which has left no permanent influence on human progress. There always are, among opinions and theories prevalent in any particular period, some, and perhaps many, that have not truth enough in them to preserve them. And yet these may be the very ones that seize upon the individual and local mind with most violence and most immediate effect. No so with Masonry, but the reverse. The reason is that its work is founded in principles that are permanent in human nature. It has the historic spirit, and uses it.

The guilds upon which it was founded no

longer exist. They belong to "the dark backward and the abyss of time." The work of the minority side of the house, that is, among the living; but who knows, asked Euripides, long ago, whether to live is not death, or to die is not to live?

The work of speculative Masonry, in my conception of it, is one part or phase of the effort of man to account for things, of which the problem of his own existence is deepest of all. Man does not make the mysteries. He is the mystery of mysteries himself. Yet so slender is his hold on that of which he nevertheless is so sure, that in his struggles to find himself he can use only forms and symbols. A legend is the basis of a large part of the ritualistic or ceremonial work. In the various branches of Masonry other legends and ceremonies from Hebrew sources, were added. Freemasonry, however, is derived from many sources. Considering that it is a tree, the roots of which have spread through many soils, it follows that traces thereof must be found in its fruit; that its language and ritual must retain much of the various ideas and institutions it has passed through before arriving at their present state, which even yet is not fixed nor ever can be; and herein, moreover, we see why it is that in Masonry we meet with Indian, Egyptian, Jewish and Christian ideas, terms and symbols.

The mysteries of life, as well as its duties and obligations, are sources of strength that supply the philosophy which lies behind this ceaseless effort that manifests itself through the work of Masonry, through its ceremonies and rituals, through formulae which, like all other formulae, are nothing in themselves, but point to things more real, yet but dimly discerned, further and further on. It is only as man is awakened to consciousness of himself, by perception of outward objects, that he begins to know or to try to know where and what he is. He knows the outward world as distinct from himself, and at the same time as related to and acting on himself. He thus becomes conscious of himself as a center to the universe about him. It encompasses him and from every side courts his energies upon him, while he at the center reacts in every direction on it, apprehends it, in intelligence, illuminates it with science and effects changes in it. Man knows himself only as in the midst of the universal system himself, and in reaction, precept and action and reaction. Science as knowledge is subjective within the mind of man; and as knowledge it is equally the knowledge of the universe as objective reality. The knowledge of both is given in the same act; yet it is not but a trite, sterile and empty sophistry.

In this position, between two worlds, correlated yet but little intelligible to him, man cannot account for things, yet nevertheless is continually trying to do so. Ideas and images are suggested to him; he tries to embody their spirit in words, but every effort is but tentative and at the end of every excursion he falls back in almost total defeat, finding how much the unknown exceeds that which he knows. Our life itself touches only the edges of the ocean of existence, where for a moment it comes on sounding. As Dr. Huxley puts it in Autocrat, we are entangled for the present

and sought through the use of all forms. This should be sufficient answer to the criticism that the work of the lodge resolves itself in the analysis to the rehearsal of useless and pointless ritual. It is even asserted that since the objects Masons profess to pursue are brotherly love, relief and truth, the pursuit of these objects cannot need any secret rites, traditions and ceremonies. Yet all who are imbued with the Masonic spirit realize that that it must be so. No form or rite of religion is cultivated for itself. No creed exists for itself, but everyone that has vitally exists because its use is of service to man. These things are helps, not ends. No Mason can disregard his obligations to a brother, and the lessons of the craft teach

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