

# The Daily Astorian.

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## Odd Fellowship.

Following is the oration delivered by Rev. J. T. Wolfe, at Metropolitan hall in this city yesterday:

*Brother Odd Fellows, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

We are assembled this morning to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the introduction of Odd Fellowship on this continent.

In the contemplation of the subject of Odd Fellowship, if we cannot be of one heart and one mind, we can at least coolly examine its claims to public confidence and favor.

The motives connected with the occasion that has brought us here and the unanimity of the friendly feeling which pervades our community in reference to equal rights and freedom of speech are reasons to us of a patient hearing and candid judgment.

Odd Fellowship on this continent was planted in the city of Baltimore April 26, 1819.

In that year two worthy brothers of the order by chance met in that city. They were foreigners by birth, and had left their native land to seek an asylum in this country.

It would appear that they were not strangers to each other in their mother country, or, if they were, that they once recognized one another as having been co-workers in the great cause of humanity in the land of their birth; and, as they were often together their conversation was naturally directed to the subject of the order. They had known and enjoyed its kindly principles at home, and it was with deep and bitter regret that an institution so kindly in its principles, and so congenial to the government and country they had adopted, had not found its way across the ocean.

Many were the schemes they devised to ascertain what number of Odd Fellows, if any, could be found on the western continent.

After many vain and fruitless efforts, they accidentally hit upon the plan of giving public notice through the newspapers of the day, calling a meeting of such of the order as should have come to this country from the Old World, and designating the time and place of meeting.

The long looked for day and hour at length arrived, and with trembling and anxious hearts they assembled at the place of meeting; and behold! there besides themselves, out of the vast population of the United States, assembled at the call of their brethren, and made themselves known.

These five humble individuals met, not as strangers to each other in a distant land, but as brothers, whose hearts and souls were united in the bonds of Odd Fellowship.

Although they were strangers to one another, yet as Odd Fellows they were brothers, and regarded and esteemed each other as old and long-tried friends, because they knew the most implicit confidence could be reposed in one another, and that it mattered not what language they spoke, or what country or clime gave them birth; they met as friends, and were bound together in the ties of friendship.

No motive but the present brotherly love had called them together; nothing but the pure spirit of benevolence, and a desire to advance and improve the condition of man, actuated them to assemble on that occasion; no motives of gain, no allurement to wealth or power, no high-sounding titles of distinction, brought them together; they were men without any particular influence; with no pecuniary means, except such as was necessary for their comfort and temporal happiness of life. They, however, firmly resolved to surmount all obstacles, and, if possible, to plant the seed of Odd Fellowship in the soil of freedom; firmly believing that if properly nurtured and watered, it would speedily take deep root, and that its branches would extend far and wide, until the inhabitants of the whole western continent would repose under its shade, and receive nourishment from its fruits.

They accordingly applied to England and after much anxiety and delay procured a charter, and this lodge they called "Washington Lodge."

They had no sooner obtained a charter and organized the institution than prejudice and superstition started up on all sides, and proclaimed the most unflattering slanders against secret societies, and that this poor Lodge of Odd Fellows was the very nucleus of all immorality and infidelity. And it no doubt appears marvelous that this small band of brothers had the courage and firmness of purpose to sustain themselves under such trials and persecutions, and with so great weight of public opinion pressing upon them.

But these persecutions were no doubt intended for wise and good purposes; for no sooner had the slanders of the day been circulated, than people were led to inquire into the objects of the order, and whoever learned its friendly precepts and benevolent purposes, solicited to become members in the cause of humanity, and, if found worthy, were received as brothers. These persecutions, no doubt, had a tendency also to chasten their conduct, and to God and man; they being conscious that, without the strictest moral conduct, the world would draw the inference, and with reason, that their purposes were evil rather than good; and the consequence was that "Washington Lodge" soon had its scores of followers, and ultimately became the centre from which emanated the purest moral precepts, cheering and dispensing their kindly influences in every direction; and from this once feeble band were soon established in the city of Baltimore a number of Lodges composed of a portion of the most wealthy and most intelligent inhabitants of that city.

Nor did the glorious work of benevolence and brotherly love confine itself to the "Monumental city," but soon its

gracious influence diffused to the remote limits of the continent, and today there are lodges established in every state and territory of our republic, and the adjacent Provinces, numbering in the aggregate 6287; with a membership of 148,000.

During last year this vast army of Philanthropists expended for the relief of suffering humanity the sum of \$1,705,254.71.

Thus, Odd Fellowship, weak in the beginning, with but few members, has crowned itself with unfading laurels by good works, gathered strength and multiplied, until now, no adequate estimate can be made of its influence on the people and institutions of this great and glorious country.

It has no marble altar, no wreathed statue, no offerings of incense; but hearts of affection built up its shrine; the widow and the orphan are its living monuments, and gratitude pours out for it a free libation.

Uniting men under the influence of the social principle Odd Fellowship demands the practice of benevolence and charity; and in order to impress these duties upon the mind, and furnish incentives to action in those moments of relaxation to which all men are subject, it has instituted solemn ceremonies, ordained frequent meetings, and formed a language of signs—all designed to produce a habit of benevolence and by educating the moral faculties promote the welfare of society.

The principles enshrined upon the banners of the order, and inscribed upon its altars, are *Friendship, Love and Truth*, it is the constant and unvarying indication of these principles that causes Odd Fellowship to be strictly practical. It is an association to preserve no original truth—to ensure no occult mysteries. Its membership receive with reverence the teachings of God's Holy Word, which tells them that they are the children of one common Father—brethren of one family—fellow travelers through the same dark world of sin, alike needing the sympathy and support of their fellow-men; that they are bound, as stewards of God, to use wisely the things which have been committed to them in trust, for the advancement of the general good.

It is true that the means of the society do not enable it to relieve all the wants of all men, but they do enable it to mitigate the sufferings of many.

The relief is, in the first place, justly restricted to the members of the order and their families; but these demands answered, relief is extended to others as far as it possesses the ability.

The pecuniary contributions of the members, which consist in small weekly sums, constitute a fund for the exclusive purpose of relieving the sick, burying the dead, educating the orphans, and protecting and assisting the widow. In this respect the order is a vast *Mutual Aid Society*, differing from all others in the perfection of its organization, the universality of its extent, and the motives presented for action in high and benevolent teachings, which lead from specific and enforced duties to the voluntary performance of the noblest deeds of charity. While, therefore, the Order in its organization and development, is founded upon eternal principles, it only gives direction to the known and admitted truth, and enforces the duties it teaches by discipline.

It is formed for action, and he who will not work is not permitted to remain a drone in the busy hive.

From this very general view, we may pass to a consideration of some of the specific benefits of the institution secured to each and every member by the stipulations of covenant agreement:

It is a member of the order is unable to attend to his ordinary avocation, from sickness or providential disability, he is paid every week, during the continuance of such disability, such benefits as may be fixed by law, from the funds of the Lodge.

He is visited by the officers, and members of his Lodge, and proper attendants furnished to watch by his sick bed and attend to his wants.

In case of death, he is decently buried at the expense of the Order; his remains are followed to the house appointed for all living; and the dust is smoothed on his grave by the hand of sorrowing friendship.

The duties of Odd Fellowship end not here.

The chain of earthly fellowship may be broken, but some of its several links remain, in the person of the stricken widow and the helpless orphan.

Odd Fellowship repairs to the desolate home; refills the empty barrel; over the night of desolate widowhood it watches with sympathetic care, and comforts the stricken hearted mother with assurance that her fatherless children will be protected and educated.

Pause for one moment to examine the strong argument furnished in favor of the Order by this view of its character.

The young man in business far from home, the man of family who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, can, when in health, easily spare twelve dollars annually, and thus secure such aid and attention during sickness as could be obtained by no other pecuniary expense.

Especially does the man of family reap an advantage in a pecuniary point of view which no other investment of the same amount of funds could yield.

The merchant, the man of business visiting San Francisco or the cities east of the Rocky mountains, may be taken sick, and who that has ever been sick, a stranger in one of the large hotels, knows not the neglect with which persons under such circumstances are treated?

They may have abundant means to procure the attention of *hiredlings*, but they can not purchase kindness and sympathy.

The possession of an Odd Fellows' card will secure all this; for its presen-

tation to the Lodge is an assurance of fraternal attention.

These, we may say, are the common duties of humanity, acknowledged by all men, and needing no society to enforce them. We grant that they are the duties of common humanity, but are they performed?

We have no idea of the amount of suffering endured by the virtuous poverty, when the supplies procured by industry are cut off by sickness; when the strong man is prostrated, and lies stricken and helpless, knowing that loved ones are in want; when no friendly footstep crosses the threshold of the obscure home to which he has fled to conceal from a heartless world the bitterness of his poverty.

Oh, the agony of the first tears that blinder his parched cheeks as he mightily kisses the pinched lips and looks upon the famine pinched faces of his children, as they go supperless to their bed of straw. Who can tell the anguish of his heart, when the wife of his bosom bends over him with her pale earnest face and as she wipes the fever-drops from his brow, with the sublime energy of women's endurance, whispers resignation, hope! Alas! what has he to hope for his loved ones, if God in his providence should call him away? Nothing!

That wife will be a broken hearted widow, struggling singlehanded against poverty, exposed to the insults of a heartless world; those children will be reared in ignorance in all probability possibly for a life of shame—a death of disgrace.

But how different would be the condition of such a person, if in the days of his health and strength, he had become a member of this noble Order!

A competency would have smiled around his hearth stone; sympathizing friends would have watched around his sick bed; and he would close his eyes in death with the sweet assurance that his family was left in care of brothers, whose constant duty it is to "protect the widow and educate the orphan."

The advantages of the Order are further seen in the fact that it brings together men of the most discordant opinions, and unites them in the bonds of brotherly love—affording by its frequent meetings social intercourse, free from the contaminating influence of vice.

It promotes the morals of community, by restraining its members from all intemperance and other illegal practices, under penalty of expulsion and the publication of their names in connection with the offense for which discipline is executed, throughout the limit of the Order.

It is calculated to make men social and humane by bringing them frequently together to devise means and measures for the relief of their distressed fellow creatures; thus breaking down the barriers erected by sect and party and uniting men as citizens of one country, "the world"—members of one family, "the human race!"

Such dear friends, is a brief view of Odd Fellowship as it is to-day.

That there is opposition, is known and expected; for what that is lovely or of good report has ever escaped the sneer and the scowl of the gloomy Pharisee, who while he tilts anise, mint, and cummin, neglects the weightier matter of the law, making it void through his traditions?

But the principles of the order may be tried by their fruits; and who can rise up and say these fruits are evil, or that *associated action*, by which all the achievements of the age have been wrought is wrong? Like the "small voice," when the wind and the fire, and the earthquake, had passed, Odd Fellowship, the noiseless spirit of benevolence and love, has trained his children to follow in the path of dissection and affliction, and to stand in the golden bonds of Friendship, Love and Truth, the shrouds left standing in the fields over which death and sorrow, the great reapers, have passed.

Look over the fields of its appropriate labors, for the evidence of these words:

See you stricken widow, bowed down and sorrowing; the *hope* of her heart is quenched. But there is a change, an arm of affection is cast around her—a hand of love has wiped away her tears. That arm was the order's arm; that hand an Odd Fellow's.

See you orphan, with no earthly parents to watch over him, no mother to caress and wipe away his burning tears, no shelter for his defenceless head.

Look! an arm is cast around him, he is sheltered and cared for, his darkness is gone, his hand and his heart are cultivated, and his glistering eye tells of gratitude and love. The spirit of Odd Fellowship has been there, and it must be conceded that the present standing of Odd Fellowship is materially due to the hearty co-operation of the ladies, admitted to its temple, through the degree of *Rebecca*.

The degree was instituted twenty-seven years ago, as a pledge of the order's confidence in woman's goodness and fidelity. And it has proved one of the best and most desirable improvements. Thousands of ladies have joyfully availed themselves of its privileges, and thousands more are ready to receive them.

Their loving hearts and sympathetic natures the most potent auxiliary to the development of the principles to which the order is devoted. It is for them to cultivate the intellect, and to sustain moral and religious impressions upon the mind in the days of infancy and childhood which will endure throughout life. It is a sisters privilege to watch over a young brother, and to lead him in the paths of rectitude and duty; to enforce upon the tender mind those very principles taught in the Lodge by precept and example—namely *friendship, love and truth*.

Some so competent as our sisters of the *Rebecca* degree, to exemplify the fundamental precept of the order—"love thy neighbor as thyself." In response to the behests of this noble impulse they cheerfully leave the bowers of pleasure to visit the couch of the suffering; to leave the company of the joyous and gay to visit the abode of poverty and woe; to leave the scene of domestic peace and comfort to watch through the weary night hours; to wipe the many death sweats from the brow, or press with watery hand the bounding pulse; to give the healing medicine, or speak calmness to the delirious thoughts; to pour oil in the flickering lamp of life, to close the fading eye as the last prayer beads on its wane; the departing spirit into the presence of its God.

With such teachings written in our temple, leading to corresponding practices without, the Order will withstand all the shocks of opposition, and the charges of public opinion, and grow firmer and stronger in its moral power, until "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds" change our theatre of action to one of repose, our labor to reward."

Then let us, with Divine blessing, give new vitality and strength to those blessed instrumentalities, and while surveying the past and rejoicing in the present, exclaim with adoring gratitude:

"Brothers of the Golden Triad—Friendship, Truth and Holy Love! Join to-day in glad thanksgiving To the Infinite above.

Thank Him for his blessings showered! On our order of renown; Praise Him for the grand successes Which our faithful efforts crown.

Lo! the sound of strife's dark minions, Fainter grows, and soon shall cease. And the Brotherhood's sweet choruses Herald in the day of peace! Then press on! O brave defenders of faith, goodness, truth and love, Till Odd Fellowship shall banish sorrow wrong, and woe from earth!

Thus upon our glorious Order's Bright and joyful natal day, Let our vows all be recorded, That we'll ever hold our way Through the world of want and weeping, Trusting that our motives pure Soon will win praise universal, And our tenets ere endure."

On behalf of the committee we tender thanks to the ladies, particularly to Miss Holden, Mrs. Schmeer and Miss Daisy Case, for the part taken by them to make the occasion a success. The committee desire also to tender thanks to Brothers I. W. Case and G. Reed for particular favors duly appreciated by the fraternity present on this occasion.

At Powhar, in Austria, the petroleum well lately discovered now yields 2,000 gallons daily.

A public subscription is to be opened in Paris for the purpose of erecting a statue to Beranger. Victor Hugo is the president of the committee formed for the purpose.

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Board per day.....1.00  
Single Meal......25  
The table will be supplied at all times with the best the market affords.

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