



XI.

SUBLIME ELECT OF THE TWELVE;

OR

PRINCE AMETH.

[Elu of the Twelve.]

THE duties of a Prince Ameth are, to be earnest, true, reliable, and sincere; to protect the people against illegal impositions and exactions; to contend for their political rights, and to see, as far as he may or can, that those bear the burdens who reap the benefits of the Government.

You are to be true unto all men.

You are to be frank and sincere in all things.

You are to be earnest in doing whatever it is your duty to do.

And no man must repent that he has relied upon your resolve, your profession, or your word.

The great distinguishing characteristic of a Mason is sympathy with his kind. He recognizes in the human race one great family, all connected with himself by those invisible links, and that mighty net-work of circumstance, forged and woven by God.

Feeling that sympathy, it is his first Masonic duty to serve his fellow-man. At his first entrance into the Order, he ceases to be isolated, and becomes one of a great brotherhood, assuming new duties toward every Mason that lives, as every Mason at the same moment assumes them toward him.

Nor are those duties on his part confined to Masons alone. He assumes many in regard to his country, and especially toward the great, suffering masses of the common people; for they too are his brethren, and God hears them, inarticulate as the moanings of their misery are. By all proper means, of persuasion and influ-

ence, and otherwise, if the occasion and emergency require, he is bound to defend them against oppression, and tyrannical and illegal exactions.

He labors equally to defend and to improve the people. He does not flatter them to mislead them, nor fawn upon them to rule them, nor conceal his opinions to humor them, nor tell them that they can never err, and that their voice is the voice of God. He knows that the safety of every free government, and its continuance and perpetuity depend upon the virtue and intelligence of the common people; and that, unless their liberty is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away; unless it is the fruit of manly courage, of justice, temperance, and generous virtue—unless, being such, it has taken deep root in the minds and hearts of the people at large, there will not long be wanting those who will snatch from them by treachery what they have acquired by arms or institutions.

He knows that if, after being released from the toils of war, the people neglect the arts of peace; if their peace and liberty be a state of warfare; if war be their only virtue, and the summit of their praise, they will soon find peace the most adverse to their interests. It will be only a more distressing war; and that which they imagined liberty will be the worst of slavery. For, unless by the means of knowledge and morality, not frothy and loquacious, but genuine, unadulterated, and sincere, they clear the horizon of the mind from those mists of error and passion which arise from ignorance and vice, they will always have those who will bend their necks to the yoke as if they were brutes; who, notwithstanding all their triumphs, will put them up to the highest bidder, as if they were mere booty made in war; and find an exuberant source of wealth and power, in the people's ignorance, prejudice, and passions.

The people that does not subjugate the propensity of the wealthy to avarice, ambition, and sensuality, expel luxury from them and their families, keep down pauperism, diffuse knowledge among the poor, and labor to raise the abject from the mire of vice and low indulgence, and to keep the industrious from starving in sight of luxurious festivals, will find that it has cherished, in that avarice, ambition, sensuality, selfishness, and luxury of the one class, and that degradation, misery, drunkenness, ignorance, and brutalization of the other, more stubborn and intractable despots at home

than it ever encountered in the field ; and even its very bowels will be continually teeming with the intolerable progeny of tyrants.

These are the first enemies to be subdued ; this constitutes the campaign of Peace ; these are triumphs, difficult indeed, but bloodless ; and far more honorable than those trophies which are purchased only by slaughter and rapine ; and if not victors in this service, it is in vain to have been victorious over the despotic enemy in the field.

For if any people thinks that it is a grander ; a more beneficial, or a wiser policy, to invent subtle expedients by stamps and imposts, for increasing the revenue and draining the life-blood of an impoverished people ; to multiply its naval and military force ; to rival in craft the ambassadors of foreign states ; to plot the swallowing up of foreign territory ; to make crafty treaties and alliances ; to rule prostrate states and abject provinces by fear and force ; than to administer unpolluted justice to the people, to relieve the condition and raise the estate of the toiling masses, redress the injured and succor the distressed and conciliate the discontented, and speedily restore to every one his own ; then that people is involved in a cloud of error, and will too late perceive, when the illusion of these mighty benefits has vanished, that in neglecting these, which it thought inferior considerations, it has only been precipitating its own ruin and despair.

Unfortunately, every age presents its own special problem, most difficult and often impossible to solve ; and that which this age offers, and forces upon the consideration of all thinking men, is this—how, in a populous and wealthy country, blessed with free institutions and a constitutional government, are the great masses of the manual-labor class to be enabled to have steady work at fair wages, to be kept from starvation, and their children from vice and debauchery, and to be furnished with that degree, not of mere reading and writing, but of *knowledge*, that shall fit them intelligently to do the duties and exercise the privileges of freemen ; even to be intrusted with the dangerous right of suffrage ?

For though we do not know why God, being infinitely merciful as well as wise, has so ordered it, it seems to be unquestionably his law, that even in civilized and Christian countries, the large mass of the population shall be fortunate, if, during their whole life, from infancy to old age, in health and sickness, they have enough of the commonest and coarsest food to keep themselves and their

children from the continual gnawing of hunger—enough of the commonest and coarsest clothing to protect themselves and their little ones from indecent exposure and the bitter cold ; and if they have over their heads the rudest shelter.

And He seems to have enacted this law—which no human community has yet found the means to abrogate—that when a country becomes populous, capital shall concentrate in the hands of a limited number of persons, and labor become more and more at its mercy, until mere manual labor, that of the weaver and iron-worker, and other artisans, eventually ceases to be worth more than a bare subsistence, and often, in great cities and vast extents of country, not even that, and goes or crawls about in rags, begging, and starving for want of work.

While every ox and horse can find work, and is worth being fed, it is not always so with man. To be employed, to have a chance to work at anything like fair wages, becomes the great engrossing object of a man's life. The capitalist can live without employing the laborer, and discharges him whenever that labor ceases to be profitable. At the moment when the weather is most inclement, provisions dearest, and rents highest, he turns him off to starve. If the day-laborer is taken sick, his wages stop. When old, he has no pension to retire upon. His children cannot be sent to school ; for before their bones are hardened they must get to work lest they starve. The man, strong and able-bodied, works for a shilling or two a day, and the woman shivering over her little pan of coals, when the mercury drops far below zero, after her hungry children have wailed themselves to sleep, sews by the dim light of her lonely candle, for a bare pittance, selling her life to him who bargained only for the work of her needle.

Fathers and mothers slay their children, to have the burial-fees, that with the price of one child's life they may continue life in those that survive. Little girls with bare feet sweep the street-crossings, when the winter wind pinches them, and beg piteously for pennies of those who wear warm furs. Children grow up in squalid misery and brutal ignorance ; want compels virgin and wife to prostitute themselves ; women starve and freeze, and lean up against the walls of workhouses, like bundles of foul rags, all night long, and night after night, when the cold rain falls, and there chances to be no room for them within : and hundreds of families are crowded into a single building, rife with horrors and teeming

with foul air and pestilence; where men, women, and children huddle together in their filth; all ages and all colors sleeping indiscriminately together; while, in a great, free, Republican State, in the full vigor of its youth and strength, one person in every seventeen is a pauper receiving charity.

How to deal with this apparently inevitable evil and mortal disease is by far the most important of all social problems. What is to be done with pauperism and over-supply of labor? How is the life of any country to last, when brutality and drunken semi-barbarism vote, and hold offices in their gift, and by fit representatives of themselves control a government? How, if not wisdom and authority, but turbulence and low vice are to exalt to senatorships miscreants reeking with the odors and pollution of the hell, the prize-ring, the brothel, and the stock-exchange, where gambling is legalized and rascality is laudable?

Masonry will do all in its power, by direct exertion and co-operation, to improve and inform as well as to protect the people; to better their physical condition, relieve their miseries, supply their wants, and minister to their necessities. Let every Mason in this good work do all that may be in his power.

For it is true now, as it always was and always will be, that to be free is the same thing as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate and just, to be frugal and abstinent, and to be magnanimous and brave; and to be the opposite of all these is the same as to be a slave. And it usually happens, by the appointment, and, as it were, retributive justice of the Deity, that that people which cannot govern themselves, and moderate their passions, but crouch under the slavery of their lusts and vices, are delivered up to the sway of those whom they abhor, and made to submit to an involuntary servitude.

And it is also sanctioned by the dictates of justice and by the constitution of Nature, that he who, from the imbecility or derangement of his intellect, is incapable of governing himself, should, like a minor, be committed to the government of another.

Above all things let us never forget that mankind constitutes one great brotherhood; all born to encounter suffering and sorrow, and therefore bound to sympathize with each other.

For no tower of Pride was ever yet high enough to lift its possessor above the trials and fears and frailties of humanity. No human hand ever built the wall, nor ever shall, that will keep out

affliction, pain, and infirmity. Sickness and sorrow, trouble and death, are dispensations that level everything. They know none, high nor low. The chief wants of life, the great and grave necessities of the human soul, give exemption to none. They make all poor, all weak. They put supplication in the mouth of every human being, as truly as in that of the meanest beggar.

But the principle of misery is not an evil principle. We err, and the consequences teach us wisdom. All elements, all the laws of things around us, minister to this end; and through the paths of painful error and mistake, it is the design of Providence to lead us to truth and happiness. If erring only taught us to err; if mistakes confirmed us in imprudence; if the miseries caused by vicious indulgence had a natural tendency to make us more abject slaves of vice, then suffering would be wholly evil. But, on the contrary, all tends and is designed to produce amendment and improvement. Suffering is the discipline of virtue; of that which is infinitely better than happiness, and yet embraces in itself all essential happiness. It nourishes, invigorates, and perfects it. Virtue is the prize of the severely-contested race and hard-fought battle; and it is worth all the fatigue and wounds of the conflict. Man should go forth with a brave and strong heart, to battle with calamity. He is to master it, and not let it become *his* master. He is not to forsake the post of trial and of peril; but to stand firmly in his lot, until the great word of Providence shall bid him fly, or bid him sink. With resolution and courage the Mason is to do the work which it is appointed for him to do, looking through the dark cloud of human calamity, to the end that rises high and bright before him. The lot of sorrow is great and sublime. None suffer forever, nor for nought, nor without purpose. It is the ordinance of God's wisdom, and of His Infinite Love, to procure for us infinite happiness and glory.

Virtue is the truest liberty; nor is he free who stoops to passions; nor he in bondage who serves a noble master. Examples are the best and most lasting lectures; virtue the best example. He that hath done good deeds and set good precedents, in sincerity, is happy. Time shall not outlive his worth. He lives truly after death, whose good deeds are his pillars of remembrance; and no day but adds some grains to his heap of glory. Good works are seeds, that after sowing return us a continual harvest; and the memory of noble actions is more enduring than monuments of marble.

Life is a school. The world is neither prison nor penitentiary, nor a palace of ease, nor an amphitheatre for games and spectacles; but a place of instruction, and discipline. Life is given for moral and spiritual training; and the entire course of the great school of life is an education for virtue, happiness, and a future existence. The periods of Life are its terms; all human conditions, its forms; all human employments, its lessons. Families are the primary departments of this moral education; the various circles of society, its advanced stages; Kingdoms and Republics, its universities.

Riches and Poverty, Gayeties and Sorrows, Marriages and Funerals, the ties of life bound or broken, fit and fortunate, or untoward and painful, are all lessons. Events are not blindly and carelessly flung together. Providence does not school one man, and screen another from the fiery trial of its lessons. It has neither rich favorites nor poor victims. One event happeneth to all. One end and one design concern and urge all men.

The prosperous man has been at school. Perhaps he has thought that it was a great thing, and he a great personage; but he has been merely a pupil. He thought, perhaps, that he was Master, and had nothing to do, but to direct and command; but there was ever a Master above him, the Master of Life. *He* looks not at our splendid state, or our many pretensions, nor at the aids and appliances of our learning; but at our learning itself. He puts the poor and the rich upon the same form; and knows no difference between them, but their progress.

If from prosperity we have learned moderation, temperance, candor, modesty, gratitude to God, and generosity to man, then we are entitled to be honored and rewarded. If we have learned selfishness, self-indulgence, wrong-doing, and vice, to forget and overlook our less fortunate brother, and to scoff at the providence of God, then we are unworthy and dishonored, though we have been nursed in affluence, or taken our degrees from the lineage of an hundred noble descents: as truly so, in the eye of Heaven, and of all right-thinking men, as though we lay, victims of beggary and disease, in the hospital, by the hedge, or on the dung-hill. The most ordinary human equity looks not at the school, but at the scholar; and the equity of Heaven will not look beneath that mark.

The poor man also is at school. Let him take care that he

learn, rather than complain. Let him hold to his integrity, his candor, and his kindness of heart. Let him beware of envy, and of bondage, and keep his self-respect. The body's toil is nothing. Let him beware of the mind's drudgery and degradation. While he betters his condition if he can, let him be more anxious to better his soul. Let him be willing, while poor, and even if always poor, to learn poverty's great lessons, fortitude, cheerfulness, contentment, and implicit confidence in God's Providence. With these, and patience, calmness, self-command, disinterestedness, and affectionate kindness, the humble dwelling may be hallowed, and made more dear and noble than the loftiest palace. Let him, above all things, see that he lose not his independence. Let him not cast himself, a creature poorer than the poor, an indolent, helpless, despised beggar, on the kindness of others. Every man should choose to have God for his Master, rather than man; and escape not from this school, either by dishonesty or alms-taking, lest he fall into that state, worse than disgrace, where he can have no respect for himself.

The ties of Society teach us to love one another. That is a miserable society, where the absence of affectionate kindness is sought to be supplied by punctilious decorum, graceful urbanity, and polished insincerity; where ambition, jealousy, and distrust rule, in place of simplicity, confidence, and kindness.

So, too, the social state teaches modesty and gentleness; and from neglect, and notice unworthily bestowed on others, and injustice, and the world's failure to appreciate us, we learn patience and quietness, to be superior to society's opinion, not cynical and bitter, but gentle, candid, and affectionate still.

Death is the great Teacher, stern, cold, inexorable, irresistible; whom the collected might of the world cannot stay or ward off. The breath, that parting from the lips of King or beggar, scarcely stirs the hushed air, cannot be bought, or brought back for a moment, with the wealth of Empires. What a lesson is this, teaching our frailty and feebleness, and an Infinite Power beyond us! It is a fearful lesson, that never becomes familiar. It walks through the earth in dread mystery, and lays its hands upon all. It is a universal lesson, that is read everywhere and by all men. Its message comes every year and every day. The past years are crowded with its sad and solemn mementoes; and death's finger traces its handwriting upon the walls of every human habitation.

It teaches us Duty; to act our part well; to fulfill the work assigned us. When one is dying, and after he is dead, there is but one question: *Has he lived well?* There is no evil in death but that which life makes.

There are hard lessons in the school of God's Providence; and yet the school of life is carefully adjusted, in all its arrangements and tasks, to man's powers and passions. There is no extravagance in its teachings; nor is anything done for the sake of present effect. The whole course of human life is a conflict with difficulties; and, if rightly conducted, a progress in improvement. It is never too late for man to learn. Not part only, but the whole, of life is a school. There never comes a time, even amidst the decays of age, when it is fit to lay aside the eagerness of acquisition, or the cheerfulness of endeavor. Man walks, all through the course of life, in patience and strife, and sometimes in darkness; for, from patience is to come perfection; from strife, triumph is to issue; from the cloud of darkness the lightning is to flash that shall open the way to eternity.

Let the Mason be faithful in the school of life, and to all its lessons! Let him not learn nothing, nor care not whether he learns or not. Let not the years pass over him, witnesses of only his sloth and indifference; or see him zealous to acquire everything but virtue. Nor let him labor only for himself; nor forget that the humblest man that lives is his brother, and hath a claim on his sympathies and kind offices; and that beneath the rough garments which labor wears may beat hearts as noble as throb under the stars of princes.

God, who counts by souls, not stations,
Loves and pities you and me;
For to Him all vain distinctions
Are as pebbles on the sea.

Nor are the other duties inculcated in this Degree of less importance. Truth, a Mason is early told, is a Divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue; and frankness, reliability, sincerity, straightforwardness, plain-dealing, are but different modes in which Truth develops itself. The dead, the absent, the innocent, and those that trust him, no Mason will deceive willingly. To all these he owes a nobler justice, in that they are the most certain trials of human Equity. Only the most abandoned of men, said

Cicero, will deceive him, who would have remained uninjured if he had not trusted. All the noble deeds that have beat their marches through succeeding ages have proceeded from men of truth and genuine courage. The man who is always true is both virtuous and wise; and thus possesses the greatest guards of safety: for the law has not power to strike the virtuous; nor can fortune subvert the wise.

The bases of Masonry being morality and virtue, it is by studying one and practising the other, that the conduct of a Mason becomes irreproachable. The good of Humanity being its principal object, disinterestedness is one of the first virtues that it requires of its members; for that is the source of justice and beneficence.

To pity the misfortunes of others; to be humble, but without meanness; to be proud, but without arrogance; to abjure every sentiment of hatred and revenge; to show himself magnanimous and liberal, without ostentation and without profusion; to be the enemy of vice; to pay homage to wisdom and virtue; to respect innocence; to be constant and patient in adversity, and modest in prosperity; to avoid every irregularity that stains the soul and distempers the body—it is by following these precepts that a Mason will become a good citizen, a faithful husband, a tender father, an obedient son, and a true brother; will honor friendship, and fulfill with ardor the duties which virtue and the social relations impose upon him.

It is because Masonry imposes upon us these duties that it is properly and significantly styled *work*; and he who imagines that he becomes a Mason by merely taking the first two or three Degrees, and that he may, having leisurely stepped upon that small elevation, thenceforward worthily wear the honors of Masonry, without labor or exertion, or self-denial or sacrifice, and that there is nothing to be *done* in Masonry, is strangely deceived.

Is it true that nothing remains to be done in Masonry?

Does one Brother no longer proceed by law against another Brother of his Lodge, in regard to matters that could be easily settled within the Masonic family circle?

Has the duel, that hideous heritage of barbarism, interdicted among Brethren by our fundamental laws, and denounced by the municipal code, yet disappeared from the soil we inhabit? Do Masons of high rank religiously refrain from it; or do they not, bow-

ing to a corrupt public opinion, submit to its arbitrament, despite the scandal which it occasions to the Order, and in violation of the feeble restraint of their oath?

Do Masons no longer form uncharitable opinions of their Brethren, enter harsh judgments against them, and judge themselves by one rule and their Brethren by another?

Has Masonry any well-regulated system of charity? Has it done that which it should have done for the cause of education? Where are its schools, its academies, its colleges, its hospitals, and infirmaries?

Are political controversies now conducted with no violence and bitterness?

Do Masons refrain from defaming and denouncing their Brethren who differ with them in religious or political opinions?

What grand social problems or useful projects engage our attention at our communications? Where in our Lodges are lectures habitually delivered for the real instruction of the Brethren? Do not our sessions pass in the discussion of minor matters of business, the settlement of points of order and questions of mere administration, and the admission and advancement of Candidates, whom after their admission we take no pains to instruct?

In what Lodge are our ceremonies explained and elucidated; corrupted as they are by time, until their true features can scarcely be distinguished; and where are those great primitive truths of revelation taught, which Masonry has preserved to the world?

We have high dignities and sounding titles. Do their possessors qualify themselves to enlighten the world in respect to the aims and objects of Masonry? Descendants of those Initiates who governed empires, does your influence enter into practical life and operate efficiently in behalf of well-regulated and constitutional liberty?

Your debates should be but friendly conversations. You need concord, union, and peace. Why then do you retain among you men who excite rivalries and jealousies; why permit great and violent controversy and ambitious pretensions? How do your own words and acts agree? If your Masonry is a nullity, how can you exercise any influence on others?

Continually you praise each other, and utter elaborate and high-

wrought eulogies upon the Order. Everywhere you assume that you are what you should be, and nowhere do you look upon yourselves as you are. Is it true that all our actions are so many acts of homage to virtue? Explore the recesses of your hearts; let us examine ourselves with an impartial eye, and make answer to our own questioning! Can we bear to ourselves the consoling testimony that we always rigidly perform our duties; that we even *half* perform them?

Let us away with this odious self-flattery! Let us be men, if we cannot be sages! The laws of Masonry, above others excellent, cannot wholly change men's natures. They enlighten them, they point out the true way; but they can lead them in it, only by repressing the fire of their passions, and subjugating their selfishness. Alas, these conquer, and Masonry is forgotten!

After praising each other all our lives, there are always excellent Brethren, who, over our coffins, shower unlimited eulogies. Every one of us who dies, however useless his life, has been a model of all the virtues, a very child of the celestial light. In Egypt, among our old Masters, where Masonry was more cultivated than vanity, no one could gain admittance to the sacred asylum of the tomb until he had passed under the most solemn judgment. A grave tribunal sat in judgment upon all, even the kings. They said to the dead, "Whoever thou art, give account to thy country of thy actions! What hast thou done with thy time and life? The law interrogates thee, thy country hears thee, Truth sits in judgment on thee!" Princes came there to be judged, escorted only by their virtues and their vices. A public accuser recounted the history of the dead man's life, and threw the blaze of the torch of truth on all his actions. If it were adjudged that he had led an evil life, his memory was condemned in the presence of the nation, and his body was denied the honors of sepulture. What a lesson the old Masonry taught to the sons of the people!

Is it true that Masonry is effete; that the acacia, withered, affords no shade; that Masonry no longer marches in the advance-guard of Truth? No. Is freedom yet universal? Have ignorance and prejudice disappeared from the earth? Are there no longer enmities among men? Do cupidity and falsehood no longer exist? Do toleration and harmony prevail among religious and political sects? There are works yet left for Masonry to accomplish, greater than the twelve labors of Hercules; to advance ever

resolutely and steadily; to enlighten the minds of the people, to reconstruct society, to reform the laws, and to improve the public morals. The eternity in front of it is as infinite as the one behind. And Masonry cannot cease to labor in the cause of social progress, without ceasing to be true to itself, without ceasing to be Masonry.

