ADDRESS

IN AID OF THE

WASHINGTON FEMALE ORPHAN ASYLUM,

DELIVERED AT

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, WASHINGTON CITY,

On Sunday, September 13th, A. D. 1835, A. L. 5835.

BY

JAMES LAWRENSON, W. M.

Columbia Lodge, No. 3.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GRAND LODGE, D. C.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY BLAIR AND RIVES.

1835.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Copy of a Letter from the Grand Secretary.

GRAND LODGE, D. C.
September 17, A. L. 5835.

Sir and Brother: In compliance with a request of the Grand Lodge of the D. C., I herewith transmit to you a copy of a resolution, as passed by the said Grand Lodge, on Sunday 13th instant.

Respectfully, &c.

THOS. WILLIAMS, Gd. Sec'y,

To JAMES LAWRENSON, Esq.
R. W. M. Columbia Lodge, No. 3.

Resolution of the Grand Lodge.

"*Resolved,* That the thanks of this Grand Lodge be presented to Brother James Lawrenson, for the able address delivered by him on Sunday, (13th instant,) at St. John's Church, in this city; and that he be requested to furnish to the Grand Lodge a copy for publication, the profits arising from the sale of which, are to be devoted to the benefit of the "Orphan Asylum."

Reply to the above.

WASHINGTON, September 18, 1835.

To THOMAS WILLIAMS, Esq.,
Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the D. C.

Sir and Brother: I have to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of yesterday, enclosing a resolution of the Grand Lodge of the D. C., ten-

dering me a vote of thanks for the feeble effort made on Sunday last, and requesting a copy of the "address" for publication, "the profits arising from the sale of which, are to be devoted to the benefit of the Orphan Asylum."

Whatever may have been my inclination, in regard to the publication of the address, under any other circumstances, I cannot feel myself at liberty to withhold it, when the profits (if any) are to be disposed of in the praiseworthy manner expressed in the resolution.

It is proper, however, that I should state, that the address was prepared under very unfavorable circumstances. Being a member of the Committee of Arrangements, and almost every *leisure* hour engaged in the duties thence devolving upon me, the entire preparation of it was made in the few broken shreds of time casually picked up at intervals, when not otherwise engaged.

With these remarks, and relying upon the kind feelings of a community, distinguished for their *enlightened patriotism*, *discriminating judgement*, and *generous liberality*, I respectfully submit it, in the hope that the *object* will more than counterbalance any imperfections which may appear in the *effort*.

Respectfully and fraternally yours,

J. LAWRENSON.

ADDRESS.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS:

Although I profess to have had the honor of being "regularly passed and raised" to the sublime degree of a *Master Mason*, yet, on this highly important and interesting occasion, I confess that I find myself laboring under such a sensitive distrust of my own abilities, that I fear I shall scarcely prove myself to be even an "*Entered Apprentice*" in attempting a vindication of the Order; or, in exciting your sympathies, in behalf of the interesting group of *fatherless* and *motherless* children who surround this altar.

But, in making the attempt, I rely upon your candor and kindness, well assured that you will cast the protective mantle of "*Charity*" over any errors or omissions which may be discovered, in *a first* and *hurried* effort like the present; and if,

> "Unhappily, deceived, I dream,
> Proving too weak, for so sublime a theme;
> Let Charity forgive me—a mistake,
> And spare the *speaker*, for his subject's sake."

Unfortunately for the "Ancient and Honorable Order" of Free Masons, founded as it is upon the purest principles, and most benevolent designs, it has been doomed, with many other institutions of a like character, to be subject to bitter persecutions; to encounter the aspersions of the illiterate and *uninformed* in regard to its merits; to meet a thousand unjust attacks which have been wantonly made upon it; to be liable to the fury of undue

excitements which have prevailed; and the "peace and harmony" of its members disturbed by formidable efforts made to extinguish the light of Masonry from the earth.

Indeed, sometimes have the waves of persecution arisen to such a height, together with the fury of the contending elements, that, it appeared almost inevitable, that the little bark would be dashed in pieces against the rocks of popular prejudice!!!

With what a degree of anxiety did the friends of the Institution watch the progress of the storm? Dismay filled their hearts, whilst they witnessed the furious blast which surrounded her. *Forsaken* by her old friends, and hated by her enemies, it was clearly perceived that there was scarcely a sufficient number left to bring her to land!

In such a dilemma, what was to be done? The few *skilful* and *well-tried* souls who remained by her, instead of setting the opinions of some of their brethren at defiance, and disregarding the popular opinions of their countrymen, wisely concluded to "*luff* to the gale," and steer under "easy sail," (to use a nautical phrase,) until the lowering clouds should have spent their fury, and tranquillity and peace once more pervade the political horizon. After a season of anxious suspense, the clouds gradually disappear! The light of *Reason* once more dawns upon our beloved countrymen, and dispels, by its brilliant rays, the gloom of prejudice and undue excitement; and, *once* more, are the friends of Masonry enabled, *like seamen saved from shipwreck and thrown upon some neighboring shore*, to greet each other with the friendly "token," and sit together in their "social retreats of virtue and friendship." Tears of gratitude commingle together upon the joyous event, and after returning thanks to the "Giver of all good," they repair again to their business, with the

"Square and the Plumb Line," rejoicing that the "Mystic Word" is yet preserved!

Whatever may have been your views, my respectable audience, in regard to this Institution, it is, indeed, far from being the hydra-headed monster which some suppose it to be.

In support of this assertion, I candidly declare to you, that all the *principles*, and all the *injunctions*, of the order of Free Masons, are founded on the *holy word of God;* and every *law*, every *regulation*, every *maxim*, every *charge*, and every *lecture*, are made compatible, in all their points, with that unerring standard of truth and righteousness.

So far from countenancing vice or immorality, no candidate *can* be received, unless he declares his belief in the existence of *a Supreme Being;* that his "trust is in God;" and, that "he is influenced by no other motive than a desire of knowledge, and a sincere wish of being serviceable to his fellow creatures." Each candidate is duly recommended and avouched for, and in *no case* received, until his character has passed the ordeal of a committee. Upon his introduction among us, he is taught of "*brotherly love,*" of "*relief,*" of "*truth.*" The four cardinal virtues, which are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice, are duly explained and enforced. In the very first *charge* delivered to every candidate upon his initiation, he is required to inculcate three great and important duties, viz: To God, his neighbor, and himself; to God, in never mentioning his name, but with that reverential awe which is due from a creature to a creator; to implore his aid in all his laudable undertakings, and to esteem him as the "CHIEF GOOD." To his *neighbor*, in acting upon the *square*, and in doing unto others, as he would

wish others to do unto him. To *himself*, in avoiding all irregularity and intemperance which may "impair his faculties, or debase the dignity of his profession."

But, is it objected that disreputable members are to be found among us? We reply, that the Institution *itself* should not be subject to prejudice, if (despite of all her precautions,) unworthy members have crept in, and if she be found exercising towards them a christian forbearance and charity, still indulging the fond hope that she will be able to rescue them from the snare of the tempter, or pluck them "as brands from the burning." How commendable is such a course! Instead of thrusting them at once out of her borders, and leaving them to pursue their course of error, *forlorn* and *friendless*, she interposes between the individual, and, perhaps, a loathsome grave; shows him that he still bears the image of the Saviour; points him to a state of reformation, and endeavors to persuade him to fly to "a place of safety." Her views in this respect, my respectable audience, are certainly justified by the example of our Divine Master, who left the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness to rescue the one poor sheep who had fallen into the ditch; and by his holy admonition, on a certain occasion, to forgive, *not only* seven times! but seventy times seven!! The history of the good Samaritan also furnishes us with another striking illustration of the *forbearance* and *loving-kindness* of the Almighty to his fallen creatures.

Nothing is more remote, however, from our purpose, than to argue that the individual who renders himself obnoxious to society by his irregularities and immoral habits, should receive that countenance or standing amongst his fellow men which he would have enjoyed under a different course of conduct. But we contend,

that whilst there remains the most *distant gleam* of hope, that he may be reclaimed, it is *wrong*, nay, it is *criminal*, to abandon him to his fate. But it may be objected further, that *few, very few*, are expelled from our Order, on account of immoral conduct; to this we aver, that a charge or complaint, against a member of the Masonic family, can be preferred as easily as before any other institution, and that, when properly authenticated, cognizance is taken of the case, and measures adopted to restore the offender. If, then, *no such complaints be made*, is it reasonable, is it just, to censure the Order for not acting upon them? One general remark here will close this part of our subject: If the Masonic Order, like all other benevolent, christian, and praiseworthy institutions, be burthened with such members, are there any just reasons for condemning the Institution *itself*, for conduct which it deprecates and discountenances? It is truly a source of congratulation, however, that, if our society has had cause to mourn over the errors and follies of *a few*, (comparatively speaking,) she *has been*, and *still is*, honored with the fellowship and esteem of *many thousands* of the *great and the good of the earth*, who have prized virtue as the "pearl of great price," and who have devoted their *talents*, their *means*, and their *influence*, towards her support. Yes, my brethren, on the records of our "Ancient and Honorable Institution," we are proud of the names of a WASHINGTON—a LAFAYETTE —a JACKSON—worthies who were truly "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of their countrymen." Eminent in council, valorous in war, they bared their bosoms in defence of their country; suffered the greatest hardships and privations in her service; exchanged the music of their own "lov'd homes and firesides" for the

"din of battle, and the unearthly yell of a savage and invading foe;"—in short, *who have filled the measure of their country's glory, and won a nation's gratitude.*

Whilst our bosoms glow with an honest pride in having *their* imperishable names enrolled amongst us, we observe with pleasure on the archives of the Order, the names of a MONROE, a CLINTON, a LIVINGSTON, a POINSETT, a KENDALL, a CHIEF JUSTICE MARSHALL, and a LENOX of your own city, to mention no more, whose virtuous deeds are fresh in your recollection, and whose peaceful memories are yet embalmed in your hearts. Sacrilegeous, indeed, would be the thought, that corruption and iniquity could find a place in a society patronised and sustained by such master spirits. Shades of our beloved departed Grand Masters, forbid it!

Allow me now to address you a few words in relation to the "secrets of Free Masonry." We are informed that from the earliest periods of the Order, the keeping of secrets was considered all-important to the success of the Craft. And, to quote from an excellent discourse delivered in this city a few years ago, by our respected Past Grand Master Coote, we would observe that

"In all ages of the world, it has been considered the noblest illustration of firmness, strength, and decision of character, that a man could keep a secret. The Athenians, Egyptians, and Romans, had each their god or goddess of silence and secresy, which was usually represented with the fore-finger on the lips, as a seal of secresy. The first lesson Pythagoras taught his scholars, was, to be *silent;* therefore, he kept them for a certain time without speaking, to the end that they might the better learn and preserve the valuable secrets he had to communicate. The ancient Grand Master of Israel affirms, 'he that refraineth his tongue is wise; he which discovers secrets is a traitor; and he that conceals them is a faithful brother.' From the earliest periods, and even in the present day, diffused as knowledge has been by the art of

printing, the arts and manufactures have always had their mysteries; the inventions, both of earlier and later periods, have been applied to the advantage of the individual, or disclosed for the benefit of select associations. The superior artisan, even now, in some branches of manufacture, does not permit the proprietor of the establishment to see his method of applying his art to complete and perfect the productions of his skill. This is the case in the manufacture of the most beautiful specimens of porcelain; and in almost every branch where great ingenuity and superior judgment are required; the same rule invariably obtains, that where an art or mystery is required to be taught, the individual who is to receive the secret or mystery of the art is bound to keep it inviolate for the term of *his indenture*, and the indenture of our Order is obligatory for life."

With these brief remarks, it is believed, that this intelligent and enlightened audience (and, particularly the fair portion of it,) will be satisfied; and, whilst they excuse us from any further developements, they will indulge us with opinions which we conceive to be correct, without a liability to their censure or disesteem; and, allow me to add, that no society in the universe know better how to appreciate the *benevolence* and *general influence* extended over the face of our globe, by the fairer portion of creation, than *the Masonic Fraternity*. Time will not admit of our enlarging: we must pass on. The great *foundation* of our ancient superstructure is "*Charity;*" our corner stone "*Benevolence;*" upon *these*, rest the *principles* and *injunctions* of the Order, being derived from the sacred word of God. Although we feel ourselves in duty bound to relieve a brother *of our own family first*, yet we feel justified; inasmuch as at some period or other, he contributed to the support of the Craft; and, in so doing, we but repay him in *adversity* what he in *prosperity* deposited in the treasury of the Order. It is well known, however, that this preference is but *slightly regarded*, for whenever a case of distress is

hailed "from without," we are always ready to "fly to the rescue," and share the last cent with the unfortunate!! It is not necessary for me to relate to you the almost numberless instances in which the Fraternity have alleviated the situations of the distressed, and dried up the tear of sorrow, for masonic "charity, ever finds, in the *act* reward, and needs no trumpet in the receiver."

But, as we have assembled to day on a charity occasion, it may not be amiss for me to inform you, that the *fatherless*, the *friendless*, and the *widow*, have the peculiar regard of our Institution.

Within the short period of your speaker's experience, (twelve years,) a very considerable number of cases have come under his immediate notice; the poor *widow*, writhing under an agony of grief, and almost in despair, because the grave had just closed in upon the companion of her youth, and the solace of her riper years; the *widowed mother*, too, who had just looked, *for the last time*, upon the corpse of a beloved son, upon whom were dependant all her hopes of future support and happiness, have been rescued from the "iron grasp of poverty," and sheltered from the "rude blast of adversity," by the continued regard of the Masonic Fraternity!!

Orphans, who have been thrown upon the "world's wide waste," without a friend to take them by the hand, have been instructed to put their trust in that "God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and their little heads have been sheltered from "the peltings of the pitiless storm" by a lodge of Free Masons!! As a *husband*, and a *father*, I candidly declare, that, under *any circumstances*, however adverse, in which I might be called to leave those who are as dear to me as life itself, *one fond recollection* would cling to my heart to the latest moment of life, that they are the objects of the care of a

society, whose watchword is "*charity*," and whose highest ambition is to protect the fatherless and the widow!!!

With such objects in view, what can retard the progress of masonry? Heaven *smiles*, and *earth* approves the plan.

In the exercise, then, of this duty, we have assembled this afternoon on no ordinary occasion. The countenances of this respectable and attentive audience clearly indicate that they have not been attracted hither by the music's sound, the ornaments of a masonic lodge, or the fanciful appearance of its members.

The countenance is said to be an "unerring index of the heart," and, as such, I am constrained to believe that every one here *feels* the force of the important subject addressed to them this afternoon, and that they have come up with a hearty disposition to contribute *liberally* to one of the most *noble* and *praise-worthy* objects under the canopy of the heavens. The situation of our treasury being depressed just at this time, we have adopted this course my friends, of appealing to your sympathies, and calling upon *you* for aid.

The interesting little group of children who surround this altar, are none other than the inmates of the Female Orphan Asylum of Washington; an institution conducted by a number of highly respectable *ladies*, who are an honor to your city, and whose kind and persevering efforts to support and educate them will be long cherished in most grateful remembrance. Within a few years, two of these benevolent and accomplished ladies have been called from *labor* to *reward*. Need I point you to the consecrated spot where lie the remains of a Mrs. Van Ness? or to the funeral urn of a Mrs. Jones? names ever dear to the citizens of Washington. The light of revelation, which "sheds a halo o'er the tomb," authorizes

us to believe that their happy spirits have united, with some of the departed spirits of the parents of *these very children*, around the throne of their Redeemer. Happy meeting! There do we behold, by an "eye of faith," the *mother*, who left her babes to wander up and down, exposed to the frowns of an unfeeling world—and the *benefactress*, who found them *hungry*, and *fed* them; *thirsty*, and gave them *drink; naked*, and *clothed* them; *ignorant*, and *instructed* them. And what is the crowning blessing pronounced by the Saviour himself, upon all such? "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

The funds of the Asylum, at this time, are extremely low; indeed, nearly exhausted. The Managers have been assiduously engaged in this excellent enterprise for a number of years, through summer's heat and winter's cold, and often with all the discouragements of an empty treasury, have they wended their way through your city for the laudable purpose of preventing the institution from sinking, and exposing the interesting little inmates to a thousand hardships. Shall it be supported? Shall it be sustained? Gentlemen of Washington! I appeal to *you*, in the name of the *ladies* who manage the affairs of the Orphan Asylum, and respectfully call upon you to aid them, *this day*, in their undertaking, and second their efforts by a liberal and cheerful contribution.

Here are the *children:* look at them, my respectable audience; glance your eyes of benevolence on this interesting group; hear their plaintive voices. *Fathers!* once they enjoyed the protecting care of a father's *hand* and *heart;* but a short time since, and the playful smiles which danced sportively upon their little cheeks indicated that all was well—but ah! the Destroyer came, and ere that smile had ceased to play, they were called to take the *last look* on a *father:* on *their best earthly friend!*

God has taken their *father* from them—are you not the orphan's friend? In the name of the God of the fatherless child, I entreat you to contribute, *this day*, to their relief.

Mothers! ye whose hearts have never failed to melt at human wo, who fondly fold your tender offspring in your arms, and press them with so much solicitude to your hearts, does the tear tremble in your eye at the sight of human sorrow? Do your gentle hearts throb for those who linger o'er the tomb which contains the cold, the inanimate clay that was lately warm with the glowing vitality of a mother's love? But a short time since, these dear children were delighted with the sound of a *mother's* voice; they enjoyed a mother's love; but ah! where are they now?

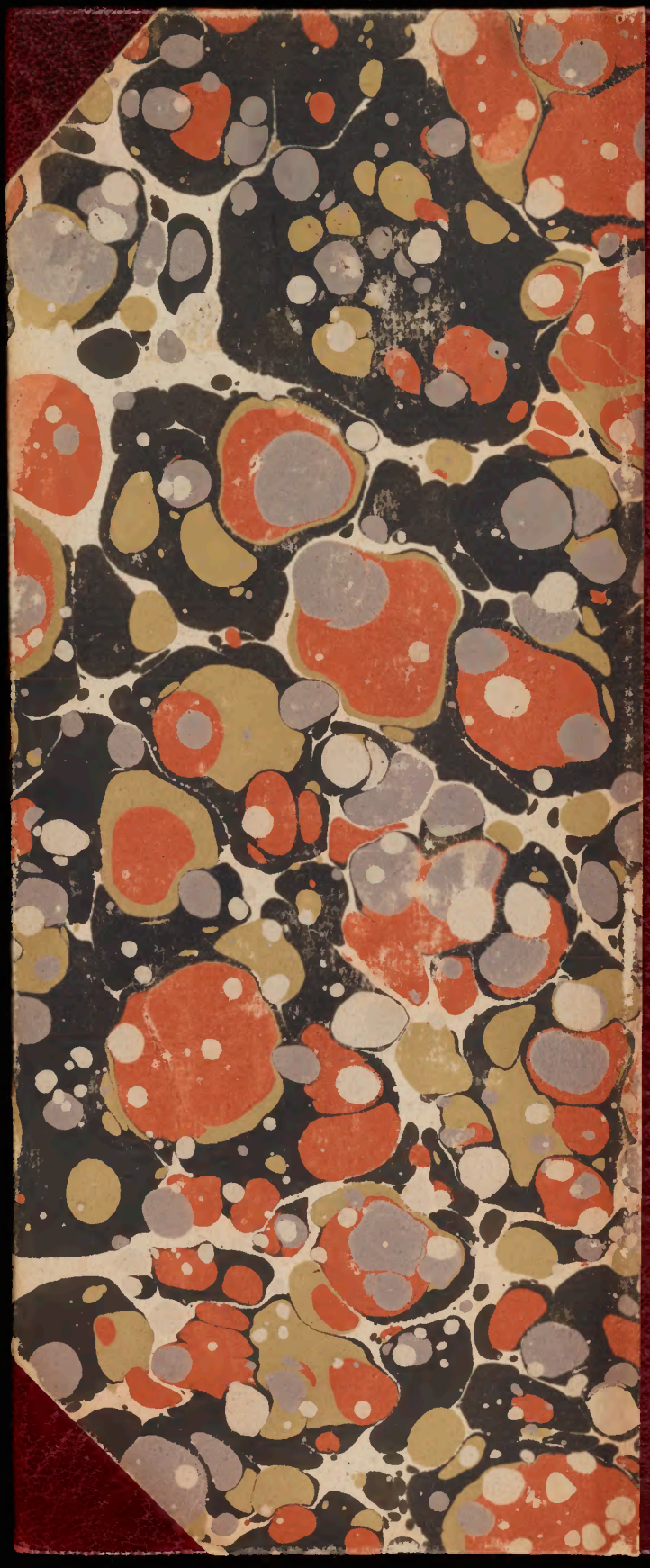
The rude stone in yonder graveyard points to the spot, and gives the melancholy information; and methinks I heard them, as they stood by the side of the newly made grave, in view of their destitute condition, reasoning thus:

> And is there a feeling more desolate still—
> More dreary and heartbreaking even than this?
> Oh, yes, there is one: 'tis the thought that *my cheek*
> Has felt, for the last time, a fond mother's kiss.

Yes, *mothers*, and these orphans are thrown upon your bounty. Can you refuse them your aid? Oh no; an appeal for the *orphan* was never made in vain to a *female* heart. Let me implore your assistance in behalf of the *Female* Orphan Asylum of Washington.

Young ladies and gentlemen, ye who are surrounded with *comforts*, even to the enjoyment of *luxuries*, God has blessed you with health, with plenty—look upon these orphans—a better opportunity will never be afforded you to contribute to the relief of the *destitute!* Let me

entreat you this afternoon to reflect seriously upon the matter; ask your own hearts, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? and then manifest your gratitude by contributing *freely* and *liberally* towards the support of these children!

Brethren of the Craft! need I inform you that there is a "sign of distress" hailed "from without;" that children, whose parents have *lived* and *died* in your city, are this day looking to you for "Relief," one of the principal virtues taught by our Craft! I am sure that you will not be outdone in bestowing your alms upon them; and that, on this occasion, you will, with the liberality which distinguished you so recently in a neighboring city, aid the cause of *the destitute orphan!!*

On this auspicious day—in this auspicious season—when our fields are crowned with plenty, and all around is *health*, and *peace*, and *smiling prosperity*, can we refuse our aid? Let every individual contribute according to his means, remembering that "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord"—"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and in that great day, Christ will say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto *them*, ye have done it unto me."