

## Devotion

ONE OF THE most beautiful stories in Greek mythology is the story of Pygmalion who was a sculptor. The story says that Pygmalion was a woman hater, but he made a statue of a woman and devoted his genius to its perfection in order that all men, by contrast, might see the deficiencies of the women they adored. He worked daily on the statue until it was so perfect in proportions and beauty that Pygmalion fell madly in love with it. In his infatuation he dressed it up in expensive garments, offered it flowers, kissed its lips and spent hours whispering tender words to its ears.

Of course, the statue was unresponsive, and Pygmalion was unhappy. Then a miracle happened. As he was gazing in rapture at his beloved statue, it blushed. He grasped its hands and they were warm. He kissed its lips and they were soft. The gods in Olympus had pitied Pygmalion. The statue was transformed into a living being, a woman of unexcelled beauty.

I read somewhere that the moral of this story is that an ideal or a dream can become real if we give to it, like Pygmalion, deep and unflagging devotion. I take up this thought and in this short article desire to emphasize that an institution acquires life and meaning only when its adherents faithfully dedicate themselves to it and to the cause for which it stands.

We have in Bible literature a good example. In the days of Zerubabel, when Jerusalem lay prostrate and desolate, ravished by its Persian conquerors, the Jews were obsessed by a desire to rebuild their City and Temple. But the difficulties they faced were disheartening. They were a captive people to the Persians. On the other side of the river were hostile tribes who prevented the progress of whatever they initiated. For seventeen long years the restoration of their City and Temple remained a wish unfulfilled — a cherished dream. However, these were not years of idle waiting. They planned, they prepared, they prayed. When ready, they threw themselves into the task under the leadership of Zerubabel and Jeshua. All they needed as help was protection from molestation by their neighbors, and Darius himself, the Persian King, could not resist the fervency of their appeal. He extended to them the desired protection. And so at long last, the City was rebuilt and the Temple was restored. And, to

crown further their efforts, Darius returned to their altar the holy vessels of which they were deprived by their conquerors.

Call this persistence or doggedness — here was a dream come true because of the zeal and devotion of those who carved its fulfillment.

Let us recall also that epoch in our history when our people made one last and concerted effort to be free from Spanish rule. Before them, like a beacon star, was that ideal of freedom. It was a stupendous undertaking for our leaders were without arms, without money and with very little moral support. Centuries of repression and despoliation made the task of leadership herculean in proportions. But they did not merely dream of their ideal. Both here and in Europe they labored arduously for its realization. Rizal typified the feeling of his contemporaries when he said in his "Last Farewell" —

"My dreams, when life first opened to me,  
My dreams, when the hopes of youth beat high,  
Were to see they lov'd face, O gem of the Orient sea,  
From gloom and grief, from care and sorrow free;  
No blush on thy brow, no tear in thine eye.

Dream of my life, my living and burning desire,  
All hail! cries the soul that is now to take flight;  
All hail! And sweet it is for thee to expire,  
To die for thy sake, that thou mayest aspire  
And sleep in thy bosom eternity's long night "

The rest is history. They gave to their ideal, in the words of Lincoln, the last full measure of devotion; and so finally, Freedom, like Pygmalion's statue, became a reality.

As members of the Grand Lodge Committee on Correspondence, I have been reading reports of widespread loss in Masonic membership for the past few years in almost every jurisdictions. Some of our leading brethren in America refuse to be alarmed by this situation. Nevertheless it is sad-denying and disturbing. Of course, it is unthinkable that Masonry will ever die. It has survived adverse, ruthless forces in its centuries of existence, because it is founded on undying principles of morality and virtue. But still, declining membership, like a leaking ship in mid-ocean, is not pleasant to contemplate. These losses indicate that something is wrong somewhere in the members' relationship with their brethren, their Lodges or perhaps with the Order itself. We are not privy to the actual causes, but whatever

they may be, their roots can be traced to an evil that afflicts many lodges today — the evil of indifference. It is time that this evil be uprooted if the Fraternity is not to lose gradually its prestige, influence and power; if its teachings of moral and ethical truths are not to suffer from enfeebled sponsorship, and if the fraternal bond with which it girdles the world is not to be weakened. Such indeed is the far reaching significance of indifference, the anti-thesis of devotion.

And so we return to the thought that inspired this article. We are all concerned with the preservation of our Institution in its pristine glory as we know it from history and as we saw it in the fullness of its splendor in our own land. Let us be assiduous in studying and remedying every little problem that threatens Masonry's position in the lives of our fellow Masons. Being brothers, we have the privilege of closest intimacy with each other, and Masonry imposes on us the obligation of giving good counsel to one another. Let us give faithfully the material support we owe to our chapters and lodges, that their efficient functioning year after year may not be hampered. Let us not only encourage our officers by our presence at every meeting but also by helping them with ideas and assisting them in the successful prosecution of every plan in the interest of the Order. Above all, let us live the Masonic way of life in and out of the Temple, thereby making our lights so shine — to borrow from an expression of the Good Teacher — that all men may see our good work and glorify our Father who is in Heaven. And in that glory our Fraternity will receive its full share.

This was how those who have gone this way before through the centuries gave life and vigor to this great Order. They proclaimed its excellence and virtues in their lives. They watered its roots with devotion, enthusiasm and sacrifice. As inheritors we can do — we should do — no less if we are to see Freemasonry blossoming into life again in our country and all over the world to the everlasting gain of humanity. — M. C. NAVIA



Masonry is an international fraternity. Its members are prepared to travel in foreign countries and work and receive the wages of a Master Mason. Each is enjoined to be loyal to his own country, without hatred of other lands — knowing that other men love their countries as he loves his. In all the teaching of Masonry there is a recognition of the human race as a family, a brotherhood — a sense of the fact that the good of humanity as a whole does actually exist — and that is the one thing needed today. The world is perishing for lack of Brotherhood, and though we have the great ideal on our lips, it has not yet found its way into our hearts and hands. —JOSEPH FORT NEWTON