# AN ADDRESS

# What Pythian Knighthood Means

by

## HENRY WAYLAND HILL

of

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# "What Pythian Knighthood Means"

By HON. HENRY WAYLAND HILL, LL. D.

N. Y. State Senator and Member of William McKinley Lodge No. 399, of K. of P., of Buffalo, N. Y.

[Delivered on the occasion of the public official visit of the Grand Chancellor, Max L. Holtz to the Fortieth District, in Gothic Hall, in the Masonic Temple, at Rochester, N. Y., on December 7th, 1904. Revised for this publication].

*Mr. Chairman, Grand Chancellor, Max L. Holtz, Grand Lodge officers, Brother Knights, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

The presence of this large assemblage of the citizens of Rochester and of Pythian Knights of this and other States, and the events of this evening, are a fitting compliment to you, Grand Chancellor Holtz, and will make your official visit to the 40th district memorable in the history of Pythianism. The spirit of good fellowship exhibited on this occasion is some indication of the high esteem in which you are held by your fellow-townsmen and by the members of this Order. These brothers have assembled to express to you their appreciation of the signal honor bestowed upon you in your elevation to Pythian leadership in this State. The inspiration of your enthusiasm has been felt by Pythian Knights in all parts of this grand domain. Your interest in the welfare of this Order has been manifested in many ways, and is shown here tonight in the presence of the two, Rochester companies of the Uniform Rank, which have

acted as your escort. They have well merited the distinction of being among the best drilled companies in the State and the members of the Order, belonging to these companies, are attaining for themselves accomplishments of body and mind, which military authorities assert contribute to health, intellectual vigor and long life. Military training produces the "stately bearing" of a Knight, "When Knighthood was in Flower," and is characterized by energy, alertness and discipline of high order. In times of peace, when our citizens are engaged in their ordinary vocations, they may thus undergo such discipline as will fit them for military service in time of war. This tends to make them good soldiers and patriotic citizens. Many patriotically disposed young men have joined the Knights of Pythias and become members of the Uniform Rank, in order that they might have the advantage of its military training. There are about 45,000 members of the Uniform Rank of knights of Pythias in the United States, who are drilled according to the most approved army standards. This constitutes a body of men nearly as large as the standing army of the United States. They may be made ready for active service on short notice, as was done during the recent Spanish-American war, when they went into service of the United States army, and were placed in command of some of its companies. Pythian Knighthood therefore developes patriotic citizenship, for its members are taught to revere the flag and uphold the form of government under which they reside. But Pythian Knighthood means much more than this, and its beneficent teachings will be better understood, when its principles are the better known.

# PYTHIAN KNIGHTHOOD

It had its conception in the friendship existing between Damon and Pythias, and the Order was founded on February 19th, 1864, in the City of Washington, D. C., by Justus Henry Rathbone. This was during the Rebellion, when the country was in the throes of civil war, when the Southern States were arrayed against the Northern States, and the perpetuity of the Nation was in jeopardy. Family ties had been sundered, bloodshed and carnage involved the country in general gloom. It was during this dark period, that the star of Pythianism rose in the East, shedding the light of friendship and brotherly love into the homes and across the battle fields, strewn with the bones of the valiant sons of the North and the South, who had lost their lives in deadly combat.

The proclamation of such friendship at such a time was not unlike that of the heralding of "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men," over the plains of Judea, "when the morning stars sang together." The friendship between Damon and Pythias was of so high an order that it prompted one to offer his life as a ransom for the other, and thus fulfilled the divine idea of our Saviour, who said "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." It may be of interest to inquire into the causes of such friendship at a period, when a large part of the world was ruled by Heathen Nations, engaged in frequent wars and when human life was regarded as of little value. Damon and Pythias were Pythagoreans, who lived in the fourth century B. C. They drank deeply at the wellspring of this philosophy. They imbibed its principles and were transformed into living exponents of its teachings.

They had an exalted conception of brotherhood. To them friendship was more than a temporary expendiency, It was a living principle, based on the belief that they were possessed of a kinship of spirit. The dramatist makes Pythias state it in some such language as this, that "Damon is another myself." It was a new philosophy. Whence came it? Did it eminate from a report of the friendship between David and Jonathan? There is no evidence of this. Was it taught by the early Greek philosophers? Certainly not before the age of Pythagoras. He is supposed to have been born at Sidon about 582 B. C., but passed his youth with his parents, who were natives of Samos, celebrated for its commerce, literature and art,

" . . . beside the wild encircling seas."

Was this a maxim of the cultus of the age? No, for that was the age of tyrants, one of whom, Polycrates, drove Pythagoras from Samos and another, Dionysius of Syracuse, condemned a disciple of Pythagoras to death. The inhumanity of man to man was never more prevalent. It existed everywhere and for centuries later. Neither "The Morals" of Seneca, nor "The Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius, both of whom lived several hundred years later, inculcate so pure and noble a friendship as that between Damon and Pythias. It matters little what the teachings of the Flower of Pagan Philosophy were, when it is remembered that its author, the so-called "peace loving Emperor," permitted his reign to be stained by the blood of innocent persons, who were the victims of a cruel religious persecution. We find, however, in the Pythagorean Philosophy, a more humane

code of ethics, which its founder taught and put into actual practice long before Socrates made his unsuccessful defense before the Areopagus.

A brief resume of the life of Pythagoras may be of interest to members of this Order. His father, Mnesarchus, a descendant of Ancaeus of Homeric fame, and wealthy merchant, traded at Sidon, and other Mediterranean ports and is said to have erected a temple to Apollo at Samos. His mother was Parthenis, but her name was changed to Pythias in remembrance of the Oracle of Apollo, which foretold the birth to her of a son of beauty and wisdom. Pythagoras grew in wisdom and his youthful years were characterized by "mildness, moderation and temperance." The Samians "loaded him with praises and benedictions." While still a youth at Samos he was contemplative, and we may imagine him to have been moved upon by the unseen powers of nature very much as was our American poet on the New England coast, who said:

"In youth, beside the lonely sea,
Voices and visions came to me.
In every wind, I felt the stir
Of some celestial messenger."

He was a lover of nature, and in this respect, the prototype of one of the most gifted British poets, who has said that:

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but nature more,
From these our interviews in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."

After having acquired such information as was possible at Samos, he, at eighteen years of age, visited Thales at Miletus, and afterwards went to Sidon, an important commercial port.

Thereafter he went to Egypt and later to Mt. Carmel, Babylon and other centers of learning. He was a co-temporary of the prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, and of the Egyptian King, Amasis II, through whose friendship he was introduced to the Egyptian priesthood, where he spent twenty-five years in the study of the Egyptian mysteries, and became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." It is said that he was versed in the arts of Ancient Egypt, the science of Arabia, the philosophy of Phoenicia, the lore of the Chaldean sages and the occult mysteries of the Persian Magi. He located in Crotona, in Magna Graecia, in southern Italy, and there founded a school of philosophy, the members of which were united into a brotherhood "with common religious observances and pursuits of science, especially mathematics and music." Similar organizations were formed in other cities of Magna Graecia and at Syracuse. It is said that his teachings tended "to produce a calm bearing and an elevated tone of character, through which those trained in the discipline of the Pythagorean life, exhibited in their personal and social capacities a reflection of the order and harmony of the universe."

Pythagoras was a student of nature, an explorer of the wonders of the universe and the first to take the new appellation "philosopher." He brought to his generation the wisdom of those ancient peoples, whose history runs back to Chaldean cylinders and Egyptian

obelisks. He was something of an ambassador, commissioned by the Asiatics and the Egyptians to carry the torch of truth, as they saw it, to the Europeans. Accordingly, at the very dawn of the Classic Period, he journeyed from Mesopotamia, and possibly from India, westward to Samos, thence to Sparta and later to Italy, disseminating this intelligence among Grecian communities, in some of which his followers exerted a marked influence on the thought of their own and subsequent generations. The sweep of his mental vision like that of

> "The poet's eye . . . . . .

that

> "Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,"

took in the world, in which he moved and also the star-bespangled firmament above. He had the atmosphere and amplitude about him, that gave him a comprehensive view of the then known world. His work was original and enduring. He was a mathematician. He discovered the 47th proposition of the first book of Euclid, "that the squares on the hypothenuse of a right angled triangle are equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides." He applied the triangle and the sexangle described within circles in the investigation of physical phenomena. He maintained that by means of the triangle may be discovered the secrets of the universe. It was at the basis of his mathematical system. In Egypt it represented the trinity of Osiris, the father, Isis, the mother, and Horus, the son. The Pythagoreans regarded it as a sacred symbol and bound themselves together by an oath taken upon it. In this Order it

represents the trinity of Friendship, Charity and Benevolence. Pythagoras taught in his system that the substance of things was abstract numbers, which were the elements of the universe, and that harmony or music consists in the recurrence of numbers. As he thus discoursed on the laws of harmony and the nature of music, which has been said to be "one of the oldest of the arts and the basis of oratory and poetry," his sensitive being responded to Nature's melodies. For him

> **"The sweet Muses in the neighbouring bowers"**

did

> **"Sweep their wild harps."**

The humming bees, the warbling birds, the singing rivulets, the lull of falling waters, the sighing of the wind through fields of waving grain and forests of redolent pines, "the artillery of heaven" reverberating from distant mountain peaks and the diapason of old ocean's ceaseless and majestic roll, are harmonious and musical

> **"To him who in the love of Nature holds**
> **Communion with her visible forms."**

Two thousand years before the Copernican system was promulgated, Pythagoras taught that the earth and heavenly bodies were spherical and moved around a central body, which he supposed was a mass of fire. In the flight of his fancy he conceived of the music of the spheres, and taught that heavenly bodies revolved around the center of the universe in rhythmic movements, producing celestial music, inaudible to our dull ears, but appreciable by intelligences of a higher order.

Our myriad-minded English poet paraphrases this thought as follows:

" Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quivering to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Permit me to read the following beautiful tribute to

# PYTHAGORAS

BY MARY AGNES TINCKER.

"He gathered by the templed Nile a store
Of varied knowledge—Egypt's subtle lore.
He learned Chaldean science—all the page
Sparkling with starry signs of many an age.
The Cretan magi taught him; earth and skies
Gave him their occult hints, sweet poesies.

Was it his joy to hear once more the breeze
Toss the acanthus leaves, twixt the blue seas
Of Greece, that brought at last the hour supreme?
When softly through the husks of life a stream
Of song divine stole on his raptured ears,
And 'round him burst the music of the spheres!

Surges ineffable went sweeping by,
A myriad-voiced, majestic symphony;
The sun flashed forth his chants, and echoed back,
The antiphon rang from the Zodiac;
Star called and answered star; and all in tune
The days and seasons set their measured rune.

He heard the silvery whisper from afar
Where timid dawn leans o'er the morning star;
The crashing orchestra of darkness, where
Memories of chaos shudder in the air;
On the black cloud sun-burst and mist unroll
In choral tones the rainbow's magic scroll.

The frolic song of rivulets that play
Round the dumb rocks in tantalizing spray;
The cataract's impassioned monotone;
The tuneful sweep of rivers, bright and lone:
The lullaby Titantic, full of dreams,
Where savage oceans rock their cradled streams!

Such music, wild and deep, thundered and hurled
And clashed beneath the dream-shapes of the world:
A cadenced passing of all passing things
Across a sea that still forever sings:
The listener felt in his expanding soul,
From chord to chord its wakening anthem roll.

Then knew he what the shape and color mean
That set the poet singing:—moonlight's sheen,
The blush of clouds, the storm, the star, the sea
Touches to set the prisoned music free
In melodies close to the dizzy verge
Where discord lurks, and love and life emerge.

Then knew he that the sculptured marble grew
Curved to a rhythmic breath blown strongly through
The sculptor's listening being as he wrought,
Freeing to harmony his struggling thought,
And how the orator's persuasive tone
Draws the whole jangled crowd to unison.

Let him who never saw nor heard the sea
Mock at the shell's attesting monody,
It was no myth the man of Samos taught:
For him whose earnest and illumined thought
Makes its own pathway through the dust of things
Creation's music, like a fount up-springs."

This harmony of the universe was one of the cardinal principles of his system of philosophy, and was produced by obeying the mathematical laws of harmony. This he announced in his teachings to the three hundred members of his select brotherhood. His disciples were many, who did

" . feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers . . . . . "

This may account for the Grecian theory that music is the foundation of all the arts, entering into perfect culture.

His system comprehended a wide range of scientific, ethical and moral problems, many of which for a long time were unknown, but which are now coming to light. Time will permit me to mention but few of them. He had a high regard for womanhood. He was temperate in all things. He taught that fear was the deadly foe of knowledge; that men should banish fear from their thoughts in order to acquire a mastery of nature and a preparedness for life's greatest achievements. He also taught that men should control their passions and not give way to outbursts of anger; that they should be temperate in their conduct, and should cultivate those qualities that are the outgrowth of true friendship. He died about 504 B. C., at Metapontum.

"The sun set; but set not his hope:
Stars rose; his faith was earlier up:
Fixed on the enormous galaxy,
Deeper and older seemed his eye:
And matched his sufference sublime
The taciturnity of time.
He spoke, and words more soft than rain
Brought the Age of Gold again:
His action won such reverence sweet,
As hid all measure of the feat."

Although Pythagoras did not commit his system to writing, enough of it has come down to later generations through the writings of Philolaus, Hierocles, Archytas and others, to show that he was an original thinker and a philosopher, or lover of wisdom, and that his teachings have contributed to the brotherhood of man and the civilization of the race. Some of his teachings, such as

the transmigration of souls, did not find favor with his own or later generations.

But a hundred years before Socrates taught the youth of Athens in the Agora that he was governed by a daemon, a divine sign, or supernatural voice, Pythagoras is said to have uttered this sentiment:

**"And yet be bold, O man, divine thou art,**
**And of the Gods celestial essence part;**
**Nor sacred Nature is from thee conceal'd**
**But to thy Race her Mystic Rules revealed."**

His system of philosophy is comprehensive and many of its principles are worthy of study today. It antedates the Phaedon of Plato, the Politics of Aristotle and has affected all subsequent philosophical discussion, as shown in the writings of the Greek philosophers, in Cicero's Tusculan Disputation on Friendship, entitled "De Amicitia" and in other ways.

After the death of Socrates, Plato visited Syracuse and there met Archytas, a famous Pythagorean philosopher, mathematician and statesman, from whom he is supposed to derive some of his philosophical opinions and from whom Aristotle is said to have obtained the theory of his categories. It thus appears that Plato and Aristotle were both indebted to Pythagoras. While at Syracuse, Plato is said to have incurred the displeasure of Dionysius, the younger, and to have been rescued by Archytas, as Pythias had saved Damon from the fury of Dionysius, the elder. Pythianism derives its teaching in regard to friendship from the Pythagorean system of philosophy, which inculcates peace and concord among men and whose refrain is heard in such words as

"The war drum" shall "throb no longer and the battle
flags" be "furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the federation of the world."

But it may be asked how the friendship of Damon and Pythias differed from that existing between Theseus and Pirithous, or from that between Achilles and Patroclus, or from that between Orestes and Pylades, or from that between Epaminondas and Pelopidas. These were instances of friendship, springing from motives of pleasure, or utility, whereas that existing between Damon and Pythiás sprang from disinterested love, the ideal friendship of virtue, "the friendship par excellence of Pythian Knighthood." This is not merely sentiment, but rather the deepest affection, which one soul is capable of expressing towards another. It is not transitory and fleeting, but abiding and blossoms forth in perennial beauty, exhaling its fragrance on all.

It does not yield to every breezy rumor, like "a reed shaken with the wind," but is steadfast, and when popular clamor turns against a brother, it is as resolute as the sturdy oak that defies the storm.

The poet says such friendship is the

". . . . peculiar boon of heaven,
The noble mind's delight and pride,
To men and angels only given
To all the lower world denied."

It is represented in this Order by the blue in our banner, emblematic of the azure vault of heaven.

Purity, honor and brotherly love are its chief attributes.

It includes other noble virtues. It blossoms forth into acts of charity and deeds of benevolence. These virtues are the golden fruit of Pythian Friendship and

are among the principles inculcated by the Order. Its members are taught to exemplify them in their lives. Such was the purpose of its founder. Justus Henry Rathbone was a native of Utica, N. Y., a teacher, playwright and musical composer, whose mazurka was played at the Inaugural Ball of President Garfield. He wrote a play entitled "Pocahontas in Black," and the first ritual of this Order. He was educated in the schools and collegiate institutions of this State. His refined and cultured nature responded to the noble impulses of friendship and brotherly love, exemplified in the teachings and in the lives of the followers of Pythagoras. As the Aeolian Harp is played upon by the Zephyrs of Heaven, so was his sentient being affected by the soul inspiring sentiments of this philosopher. The story of Damon and Pythias awakened in him emotions akin to those of the Pythagorean votaries. He cast this story into one of the most beautiful rituals ever written. He is the most illustrious example of the teachings of the great philosopher in modern times and the Order, which he founded, has an active membership in this State of approximately 25,000 and a total active membership of 600,000. Since its inception nearly 2,000,000 persons have become members of this Order. Walter B. Richie, Past Supreme Chancellor, who revised the ritual and is one of the foremost Pythians of the Order, once said that "Justus H. Rathbone had done more to unite the friendship of more men than any other man of that century." Its growth in this and other American countries and in the isles of the sea has been phenomenal. It is one of the youngest, yet third largest fraternal organization in the world. Its influence

directly tends to promote the brotherhood of men and of Nations. The sweep of its influence will ultimately include European and other foreign peoples as its beneficent principles are, the more widely extended. It has done much to relieve the distress of the suffering in such calamities as the Johnstown flood, the Yellow Fever Plague at the South and the Galveston disaster. It always responds promptly to the appeals of its members, and to those of their families in distress. It has erected orphanages for the children of its deceased members, provided homes for its aged members and practiced various other forms of philanthropy. Its charitable and benevolent work is evidenced in many ways, and it is performing a humane and commendable mission. The golden ties of friendship, formed among its members, are those which are "touched by the better angels of our nature," and are among its priceless benefits. In this commercial age, when business and professional pursuits tend to produce social disintegration, it is fortunate that there are such counter influences at work, which bring men into social organizations. Everything done in this Order makes for the development of brotherhood and the elevation, happiness and betterment of mankind. Man's social and moral nature is thus developed, his sympathies are broadened and his love for his fellow-men becomes a guiding principle in life. All these and many other virtues are exemplified in the teachings of Pythian Knighthood, which affords many illustrious examples of as noble a friendship as ever bound man to man. This is the friendship that promotes world-wide fellowship and is beautifully expressed in the words of the poet.

"Ah, Knights! It s a glorious plan,
This changeless fellowship of man.
Not like the lover's 'wildering bliss;
Not like the first impassioned kiss;
These are life's ecstacies divine,
That blend like bubbles in the wine,
But as the river to the sea,
Steadfast and true your love must be;
Constant, undimmed, your friendship run
As planet circling 'round the sun."

This, as well as other American Fraternal Orders, inculcate in their teachings such broad principles, as toleration in religion, obedience to law and loyalty to government. They promote peace and unity among men and nations. Pythian Knighthood also developes the best traits of the individual and brings out whatever good there is in him. It fosters all the noble virtues, such as friendship, charity and benevolence in their broadest and deepest sense. It teaches that there are opportunities still for the performance of deeds of valor in the complex life of today, as there were in the age when men exhibited towards their fellow-men,

"The faith, which Knights to Knighthood bore,
And whate'er else to chivalry belongs."

As Mont Blanc is bathed in the glory of the sun's effulgency long before other Alpine peaks catch his morning light, so did Pythagoras receive the light of fraternal truth long before other Greek philosophers caught its meaning. Through his disciples, he transmitted it to subsequent ages. This and other systems of truth unite to make us better and nobler and to give us a truer conception of life, its possibilities and its destiny, until we shall take our flight to "that undis-

covered country from whose bourn no traveller returns," when the glory of the heavens, as Pythagoras saw them nearly 2,500 years ago, alone remain, so beautifully expressed in the following Sonnet entitled, "A Far Shore:"

**"On a far shore my land swam far from sight,**
**But I could see familiar native stars;**
**My home was shut from me by ocean bars,**
**Yet home hung there above me in the night;**
**Unchanged fell down on me Orion's light;**
**As always, Venus rose, and fiery Mars;**
**My own the Pleiads yet; and without jars**
**In wonted tones sang all the heavenly height.**
**So when in death, from underneath my feet**
**Rolls the round world, I then shall see the sky**
**Of God's truth burning yet familiarly;**
**My native constellations I shall greet;**
**I lose the outer, not the inner eye,**
**The landscape, not the soul's stars, when I die."**