

PRESENTATION OF GAVEL.

Past Master Callahan: Brethren, a short while ago I was called upon to respond to a toast at one of our little banquets in Alexandria. My wife was present, and I was mighty glad she was. I had prepared a beautiful speech and thought I was going to get exceedingly eloquent. I continued to think so until I had finished my speech and was on my way home. I said: "Well, my dear, what did you think of my speech?" She said: "It was very good, but you lost a splendid opportunity." I said, "How is that?" She says, "You had three of four good chances to stop, but you didn't do it." Now, Brethren, I suppose you think that I ought to stop, but be patient with me for just a minute. I am going to give you something. It is not much, except in significance.

Just before General Washington died, he planted a little magnolia, which grew into a large tree. A

number of years ago the top of that tree blew off. It was preserved and there are still a few remnants of it at Mount Vernon. Two weeks ago I went down to Mount Vernon and procured a piece of that tree, for purposes which I will tell you later on.

When John Custis died—I may seem to be straggling from my theme, but I will get back to it—when John Custis died, the only son of Washington's wife, just after the battle of Yorktown, he left two infant children which George Washington adopted; they were Nellie and George Washington Parke Custis.

Nellie Custis was married, in 1798, to Lawrence Lewis, the favorite nephew of General Washington, and became the bride of Mount Vernon. Two years ago I procured a piece of applewood from the front yard of Woodlawn mansion, the home of Nellie Custis, which was built from an endowment left by General Washington to his adopted daughter, the granddaughter of his wife.

After the death of General Washington, and the death of his wife, the bedstead upon which he died was willed to George Washington Parke Custis, who took it to Arlington, and upon his death it became the property of his daughter, the wife of Robert E. Lee. In 1859, Robert E. Lee took that bedstead to Green's furniture factory, in Alexandria, and substituted slats for the knobs that formerly held the canvas that supported the mattress. These knobs were taken out by Mr. Green and three years ago his daughter gave me one of these knobs.

I have an extraordinary curiosity and I wanted to know if it was true that there had ever been knobs on that bedstead, so when in Mount Vernon, I got the superintendent to allow me to go in and examine, and there are the holes still there where the knobs came from.

My brethren, a year ago last 22nd of February, your versatile and accomplished Grand Chaplain,

through your Past Grand Master Roscoe Swift, placed me in the most embarrassing situation I have ever been in in my life. Without a moment's warning, he asked to be indulged for a few moments and he presented me the most beautiful trowel I have ever used. I have harbored sort of a resentment on account of the disadvantage taken of me on that occasion and I determined to retaliate if I ever had the opportunity. That opportunity has presented itself. I come to you and offer to you this gavel which was made of the woods that I have told you about. The body is from the magnolia tree planted by General Washington just before he died; the handle is from the yard of Woodlawn mansion, the home of his adopted daughter; and the little knob is from the bed upon which he breathed his last. In the name of Washington lodge, I present it to the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Grand Jurisdiction of Michigan. (Great applause.) I give it to you in the tenderest of fraternal sentiments, carrying with it the affection of your Virginia friends. And, as it is handed down from generation to generation of Grand Masters, may it ever be wielded for the weal of your Grand Jurisdiction, and never for the woe of the most humble member of the least and most insignificant subordinate lodge within its confines.

I present it to you in the name of my lodge. Thank you. (Great applause.)

M. W. Grand Master: Brother Callahan, and Most Worshipful Grand Master Andrews, of Virginia, this is certainly a signal honor that has been conferred upon the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Michigan, and I am going to ask our Right Worshipful Grand Chaplain, to whom Brother Callahan referred as presenting the trowel, to make a few remarks in receiving this signal honor this afternoon, which will always be remembered by every brother of this Grand Jurisdiction. (Applause.)

R. W. Grand Chaplain Gallagher: This is a

serious moment in my life. I had no expectation of being called upon—not the slightest. This is a dignified occasion and yet I am compelled to say to you what I said in Buffalo last December: Now that chickens have been taught to talk, by feeding them ground phonograph records, you expect your Grand Chaplain to talk at any moment he is called upon, simply because he has been traveling around with the Grand Officers for six years, feeding on ground chestnuts. (Great applause and laughter.)

I remember very well the occasion of comparatively recent date when, in the armory at Alexandria, it was my privilege to present to the lodge called Washington-Alexandria lodge, the trowel, as a token of affectionate esteem on the part of the Michigan Grand Lodge. It was a notable occasion, not only in my life, but in the life of Michigan Masonry. Not one of the members of the Grand Lodge who went to Washington and Alexandria on that occasion but came back a broader and a more loyal Mason than he went. I am glad to say that with that trowel, which was then presented, there has been spread the cement of brotherly love and affection which unites this organization into one common band of friends and of brothers, not only in the return of the brethren from Virginia here to give evidence of that friendly feeling, which they then entertained for us, but also in this manifest expression of their good will and affection in a concrete form, which will remain with us for years to come as an outward and visible sign of the inward, spiritual grace of their good feeling and fellowship toward us; this gavel, the symbol of authority, made up as it is of these different kinds of woods, a trinity of good things—three in one; the mallet made of the magnolia tree planted by Washington; the handle from the tree planted in the favorite adopted daughter's yard; and this knob from the bedstead on which our great and illustrious Statesman, General and President breathed his last.

Dear Brother, in behalf of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Michigan, I accept this token of your esteem and affection; and I know that I am but voicing the sentiments of all the officers of the Grand Lodge, and of all the Worshipful Masters and representatives here assembled this afternoon. And we wish you God speed in the undertaking which you have set about accomplishing, and hope that in the days to come we may contribute worthily to that noble purpose. (Great applause.)

WASHINGTON-ALEXANDRIA LODGE, No. 22, F. & A. M.

ALEXANDRIA, WASH., May 25th, 1912.

To Whom it May Concern:

I hereby certify, that the main portion or body of the gavel, presented by me to the Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Michigan at their Grand Annual Communication, May 29th, 1912, for Alexandria-Washington lodge, was given me by Mr. Young, assistant superintendent of Mount Vernon, and is a piece of the magnolia tree planted by George Washington just before his death. The handle is made of a piece of applewood procured by me from Woodlawn, the home of Nellie Custis, adopted daughter of General George Washington and granddaughter of his wife. The little button or knob was formerly a part of the bedstead upon which General Washington died. This piece of furniture was inherited by George Washington Parke Custis, from his grandmother, Mrs. Martha Washington. On his, Mr. Custis' death, it became the property of his daughter, Mrs. Robert E. Lee who, prior to the Civil War, sent the bedstead to Greene's furniture factory in this city for repairs. The knobs were formerly used to hold the canvas bottom upon which rested the mattress. Mr. Greene substituted slats for the canvas, and in doing so, removed the knobs and preserved them. His daughter, Miss Marjory Greene, presented me the one in the end of the gavel, and this is its history.

(Signed)

CHAS. H. CALLAHAN,

Past Master Alexandria-Washington Lodge, No. 22, A. F. & A. M., Alexandria, Va.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 27th day of May, 1912.

NEVIN S. GREENAWAY,

Clerk Corporation Court, Alexandria, Va.

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