

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HON. JOHN N. CONYNGHAM,

ON THE OCCASION OF

LAYING THE CORNER STONE

OF THE

LUZERNE COUNTY PRISON.

AT

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., September 9th, 1868,

TOGETHER WITH THE

MASONIC CEREMONIES.

1868.

ROBERT BAUR, PRINTER.

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The Commissioners of Luzerne County invited Lodge No. 61, Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons, to lay the corner stone of the New County Prison, now in progress of erection near the Borough of Wilkes-Barre, and selected Hon. JOHN N. CONYNGHAM to deliver an address on the occasion—September 9th, 1868, was finally fixed for the ceremonies.

The committee of the Lodge extended invitations to all the Lodges of the County to be present, and a number responded. The day opened cloudy and threatened rain, but towards noon cleared away, and was very favorable during the whole ceremony. At 12½ o'clock P. M., Lodge No. 61 assembled in their Hall, together with many members of other Lodges, and formed procession and marched to the Public Square, where the general procession was formed by Bro. E. H. Chase, assisted by Bros. C. C. Plotz and E. S. Osborne, Marshals, in the following order:

1st—Waverly Lodge, No. 301, formed in usual Lodge order.

2d—Lodge No. 61 and members of visiting Lodges as follows:

A—Two Tylers with drawn swords.

B—Two Stewards with white rods.

C—Entered Apprentice Masons.

D—Fellow Craft Masons.

E—Master Masons.

F—Past Master Masons.

G—P. M. Lewis bearing golden vessel with corn.

H—P. M.'s Hoyt and Hillard bearing silver vessels with wine and oil.

I—Architect with jewels.

J—Secretary and Treasurer of Lodge No. 61.

[rods,

K—Bible, Square and Compass, supported by two Stewards with white

L—Chaplains Eckman and Hunt.

M—Orator.

N—Burgess of Wilkes-Barre Borough.

O—J. W. and S. W.

P—Two Deacons with black rods.

Q—W. M. E. L. Dana.

R—Two Stewards with white rods.

S—Commissioners of the County and their Clerk.

T—Members of the Bench and Bar of the County.

U—County Officers.

V—Citizens.

The Masons, numbering nearly four hundred, clothed in Masonic dress, to wit: white gloves and aprons, the officers with the emblems of their office suspended by blue ribbons around their necks.

The procession marched down Market Street, and on reaching River Street, was met by Kingston Lodge, No. 395, formed in usual lodge order, which was placed at the head of the column, and the whole procession marched the most direct route to the site of the new Prison. Arriving near the main entrance, the column halted, and the Masons reversed their order of march, and were conducted to their proper position surrounding the corner stone.

The officers and brethren having taken their positions, and order being obtained, the following prayer was offered by Rev. Brother J. G. Eckman:

"Almighty God, we acknowledge thy supremacy in all our undertakings. Thou art the creator of all intelligences, and by thee all things consist. We acknowledge thee to be the Supreme Architect of the Universe. Thou did'st create all things from nothing; at thy command light penetrated the universal darkness of nature; chaos awoke, and from her slumbers sprang into life unnumbered systems, evincing thy wonderful wisdom and power in the magnificent architectural temple of the universe.

"Thou art the Sovereign of all worlds; Justice and Judgment are the habitation of thy throne; thy law is supreme, and upon it must be founded all the principles of justice. Grant unto all the dispensers of law and justice, either legislative, judicial or administrative, in this great country, wisdom to

perform all their responsible duties; ever making thy law their highest rule of action. Especially do we pray thee to bless him, who, for so many years, has stood at the head of our Courts of Justice in Luzerne County; preserve his life of usefulness many years more; bless him in the duties of this hour; bless all who are associated with him in the administration of justice. And bless, O Lord, the Masonic Fraternity here represented. May they always exemplify the principles of the Order by doing good to all men. Assist in the erection of this building; protect the workmen against every accident; and long may it stand as a monument of justice and good order in the community; always proving a mighty barrier in the way of crime. May it speak to the erring in unmistakable language, of the fearful consequences of transgression, thus proving a preventative of crime, and may all who are punished here be also reformed.

Pardon all our sins. Guide and protect us through subsequent life by thy counsels, and in thine own good time bring us to inhabit the mansions of eternal life, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

The brethren responded "So mote it be."

2. Then followed the singing of the two following stanzas of the selected Masonic Ode.

Music—"Old Hundred"

When Earth's foundation first was laid,
By the Almighty Artist's hand,
'Twas then our perfect laws were made,
Established by his strict command.

In vain mankind protection sought,
In vain did roam from clime to clime,
Until from Heaven he was taught,
To plan, to build, to punish crime.

3. The Chief Marshal, Past Master Edward H. Chase, then proclaimed "Silence! Silence!! Silence!!!"

4. The Committee of Arrangements, through their Chairman, Past Master Sharp D. Lewis, then made the following announcement:

"Worshipful Master! The Committee charged with the duty of making arrangements for the laying of the corner-stone of the Luzerne County Prison, with appropriate Masonic ceremonies, have completed their labors. The arrangements are made, and the stone is now ready for the hands of the Craftsmen."

The Worshipful Master, Edmund L. Dana, then addressed the Secretary, P. M. George Urquhart, as follows:

"Such being the case, Brother Secretary, you will now deposit the box containing the articles, records and memorials, in the corner-stone, and read the list of the same."

The Secretary thereupon placed the box in a cavity cut in the stone for that purpose, and read the following list of articles and memorials deposited therein:

- 1 copy Holy Bible.
- 1 copy of Silver Coins of U. S. for 1868.
- 1 copy Rules of Court and list of Attorneys, &c.
- 1 copy of County Papers, and New York *Herald* and Philadelphia *Age*.
- 1 copy of Specifications of Prison, &c.
- 1 copy of Masonic Ode.
- 1 copy of Judge Conyngham's address at the laying of corner-stone of the new Court House.
- 1 copy of Judge Conyngham's address at laying this corner-stone.
- 1 book containing Autographs of Judges of the Court, County Officers and Members of the Bar, Architect and Builder, and also the proceedings of the County Commissioners in relation to the new prison.
- 1 list of Corporate Officers of the Borough of Wilkes-Barre.
- 1 list of Past Masters of Lodge No. 61, Wilkes-Barre.
- 1 Ahiman Rezon.
- 1 copy of By-Laws of Lodge No. 61.
- 1 copy of Masonic State Register for 1868.
- 1 copy of Masonic Register for Luzerne county for 1868.
- 1 Masonic Apron, Lodge 61.

This being done, and the aperture closed with cement, the Worshipful Master then said:

"Brother Senior Warden, Isaiah M. Leach, it is my will and pleasure that the corner-stone of the Luzerne County Prison be now laid on this site. You will announce the same to the Junior Warden, brother Charles M. Conyngham, with directions that he proclaim the same to the Brothers, that all present may govern themselves accordingly."

The Senior Warden then said:

"Brother Junior Warden, it is the Worshipful Master's will and pleasure that the corner-stone of the Luzerne County Prison be now laid on this site; you will proclaim the same to the brethren, that all present may govern themselves accordingly."

The Junior Warden then said:

"Brethren, It is the Worshipful Master's will and pleasure that the corner-stone of the Luzerne County Prison be now laid on this site. You will govern yourselves accordingly."

The Worshipful Master, then addressing the Junior Warden, said:

"Brother Junior Warden, you will now see that the craftsmen have prepared the stone, and that it is true and trusty. Test it with the plumb, and report to me whether you are satisfied with the work of the Craftsmen."

The Junior Warden having examined the stone and tested it with the plumb, responded:

"Worshipful Master, I find the corner-stone plumb, and that the craftsmen have prepared it true and trusty."

The Worshipful Master, then addressing the Senior Warden, said:

"Brother Senior Warden, you will now examine and satisfy yourself whether the Craftsmen have worked well. Try the stone with the Level, and report to me the result of your examination."

The S. W. having tried the stone with the Level, responded,

"Worshipful Master, I find this stone level, and that the Craftsmen have worked well."

The Worshipful Master, having applied the Square to various angles of the stone, announced:

"Brethren, I find this Corner Stone tried, true, and trusty, plumb, level and square, well and duly prepared, that the Craftsmen have worked well, and that the officers have approved of the work."

The Worshipful Master, addressing the Junior Warden, then said:

"We will now attend while the laborers and bearers are placing this stone in position; again try it with plumb, level and square, and see that it is well placed, true and trusty."

The laborers then raising the stone by machinery, placed it in its proper position, during which operation the brethren sang the two remaining stanzas of the Ode, as follows:

Deep in the quarries of the stone,
Amid vast heaps of other rock,
In darkness hid, to art unknown,
We found this rude and shapeless block.

Now shaped by art, its roughness gone,
And fit this noble work to grace;
We lay it here, a Corner Stone,
Chosen and sure, in proper place.

The Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens again applied respectively the Square, Level and Plumb, and having resumed their positions, the Worshipful Master said:

"I again pronounce this Corner Stone plumb, level and square, well and duly prepared, well laid, true and trusty."

Past Masters S. D. Lewis, T. S. Hillard and H. M. Hoyt, then advanced, the former bearing a golden goblet with corn, the two latter silver goblets, containing, the one wine, and the other oil, and the Worshipful Master, taking the vessel of corn, said:

"May the All Bounteous Author of Nature, the Great Architect above, bless the inhabitants of this ancient County and Commonwealth, with all the necessities conveniences and comforts of life, assist in the erection and completion of this building, protect the workmen against every accident, and long preserve this structure from decay. And may he grant to us all a supply of."

the *Corn* of nourishment (pouring out the corn), the *Wine* of refreshment (taking and pouring out the goblet of wine), and the *Oil* of joy (pouring out the oil)

The brethren responded "So mote it be."

The Worshipful Master then said

"Acting by Dispensation of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, in the name of the Brotherhood, I, Edmund L. Dana, Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 61, now declare this Corner Stone of the Luzerne County Prison, duly laid, according to the ancient usages, customs and landmarks of Free Masonry."

Prayer by Rev. Thos. P. Hunt.

Our Father who art in Heaven! Thou art a God working always from everlasting to everlasting, according to the counsel of thine own will, for thine own glory, and for the good of thine own dominion; always working, doing wonders, always working according to thine own nature; for thou art love working in love. We thank Thee that thou hast so constituted all our intelligent beings, that they must also work, and work always, by thine own rule; loving all, doing good to all, if they would obtain thy approbation, without which none can bless, or be blessed. Praise to Him who works in love, that, he commands his creatures thus to work and love, and has revealed this truth that every work of love is well pleasing in his sight, that whatever is done for the good of man is approved of God. We thank Thee, our Father, that whether we build a church to teach thy laws, or a prison to maintain and defend them, love to God and love to men must prompt to both, and with this prompting, the work will be blessed of Thee. Bless then, our Father, this building, founded to protect the rights of men as secured to them in Thy love. May it never be used for vengeance, nor revenge. May no innocent being be imprisoned in it. May none, whether innocent or guilty, ever suffer in it, beyond the requisitions of love and justice. However guilty, erring or unworthy its inmates may be, may we, may all, never forget that they are men of like passions with ourselves; and while safety may demand their incarceration, may love and charity never cease to make them as happy as they can be, nor hope grow weary in its expectation of seeing the wanderer returning, and the lost one recovered, and by thy blessing made a man again. Hasten the time when men shall cease to do evil, and learn to do good—when the law shall have no terrors, because there are no evil doers in the land. When the song of glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will towards men, shall be sung by every man, and every man who sings it shall rejoice in its truth, because he loves the Lord of love with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. Grant this for the sake of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Amen.

The Architect, brother John McArthur, was then introduced to the Worshipful Master by the Chief Marshal.

The Worshipful Master passed over to the Architect the plumb, level, trowel and square, together with the plan of the building, and said:

"Worthy sir, and Brother:—These various implements of Architecture, and Plans of this building, I now deliver into your hands, and entrust you with the superintendence and direction of the work of erecting this structure; and I charge you to the exercise of such skill and care that when completed, it may be found in all its parts, from corner to cope-stone, true and trusty."

The Chief Marshal then made proclamation:

"Silence! Silence! Brethren, take notice that Brother Edmund L. Dana, Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 61, Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons, has this day, in this place, laid the Corner Stone of the Luzerne County Prison. Brother John N. Conyngham, Past Master of Lodge No. 61, will now deliver the oration."

The following highly interesting address was then listened to by a large and attentive audience, a copy of which was furnished for publication by request of a committee appointed by Lodge No. 61, and of the County Commissioners:

FELLOW CITIZENS

About twelve years since, at the request of those who were especially interested in the services in which we were then engaged, I delivered a short address to a large audience, who were assembled to witness the laying of the corner stone of our present Court House. The general interests of our County then required the erection of that building, and now it must be evident to all, that the same interests equally need the construction of a Penitentiary House and County Gaol, the corner stone of which has just been placed.

The Brethren of the ancient and time honored society of Free and Accepted Masons, carrying upon the broad folds of their banner the blessed emblems of Truth, Justice and Charity, have started the work, now under your eyes progressing, by putting upon its solid foundation, this corner stone, in accordance with the rules and ancient practices of their Order. They have poured upon it *corn* and *wine* and *oil*, symbolical of the hope and prayer of every member of the fraternity, that for our whole community there may ever be the "*corn* of nourishment, the *wine* of refreshment, and the *oil* of joy." The completion of this building, under the benign laws of our land will not only be a deed of necessity and duty, but also of charity, in which the brethren here may take no shame, that they have performed a part. We may feel confident that, in the course of time, some persons confined within these walls, under the moral influences attendant upon their situation, may be led to review their past life, and upon their restoration to society at large, abandon the ways of wickedness and vice, and become upright and honest citizens.

The system of Penitentiary and reformatory punishment according to which this building has been planned and recognized by the State authorities, look to the reformation of an offender, as an incident of the sentence; and where can there be a subject, that ought more seriously to attract the attention of the virtuous and pious, the charitable and the excellent of the land. I wish the persons who have this day come forward to approve this work, to feel that they are not present merely to countenance the construction of a gaol to confine and punish, but that while formal and certain confinement is directly the punishment, it may be hoped, that to some extent, moral reform may be the result and effect to be gained by the establishment of this County House of Correction.

There is no one here who does not know that our present gaol building is not only a disgrace to the County, and a reproach to every principle of propriety and humanity, which should be found among a christian people, and therefore, for a long time a change in this respect has been needed. Grand Jury after Grand Jury have on many occasions pressed the necessity of this action upon the Courts, and through them upon the County Commissioners, but it has only been within the last two years that these public officers felt that the finances of the County would justify the commencement of the work, and they have now, as soon as arrangements could properly be made, earnestly undertaken it.

It is always well, in order to understand the true wants of a present period to review the past in like connection, and trace as time, in regular progression has moved in its annual course, the various subjects belonging to any matter of great public interest or duty, which may be thus developed. Permit me briefly to look back to the early records of this portion of our State.—Neither tradition or history tell us of any general place of confinement in this vicinity previous to the organization of the County of Luzerne, in 1786. It is probable, for we have upon our old records cases of punishment, that temporary places of confinement, under proper safe guards, intended to secure the person of an offender until he was sentenced, did exist: the sentences then of what may be called a town meeting tribunal were summary and expeditious—to suffer punishment by paying a few shillings fine, to receive a greater or smaller number "of stripes well administered upon the bare back, at the whipping post" or to be sold to a servitude of months or a year or two to be rendered to the prosecutor or person injured by the offense. By the Act of 25th of September 1786, organizing this County, Messrs. Zebulon Butler, Nathaniel Landon, Jonah Rogers, John Phillips, and Simon Spalding, or any three of them, were appointed trustees to erect a Court House and gaol.—They performed this duty by putting up a two-story log building, within the public square in Wilkes-Barre, upon the site of an old fort, and the spot, where many of us remember the Court House, taken down in 1858, was located; the upper story was used for the purposes of the Court, the lower as a

dwelling place for the jailor, and prison for criminals. This building continued to be so used until, in the year 1801, it was removed to another part of the same public ground, where it still remained as the Court House and gaol, until what was then called the new Court House and our present gaol were put up and completed. After that event, for many years, and there are still some in this audience who will recollect the old building, it was occupied as the Luzerne County Public Academy. Our County and our State annals will tell you that some of them who are remembered and known as most honored and worthy citizens of our land, acquired there, within the walls of the old log gaol, converted into a temple of science, the education, which enabled them in after life to honor the reputation of their *alma mater*, rude and ill-looking as was the outside appearance of the house.

The present stone gaol has been a useful building in its day, without doubt; but that day is so far back in the order of time, that very few here will be able to realize it. At any rate, since the population of the County has so largely increased—its manufactures, coal operations, and other pursuits of business and industry so extensively enlarged, it has been nothing, save only the abuse of the name and the calling of a prison. Of comparatively small dimensions, with a few ill-contrived and badly ventilated cells, prisoners have necessarily been confined therein in such numbers as to violate the true principles of humanity, and often caused the blush of shame to rise upon the cheek of those who thought upon the subject. Confinement in the State Penitentiary has been looked upon by many as a happy relief by removal from the Luzerne County gaol, and in my connection with our Courts, sometimes, when a few months of proper imprisonment would probably have been deemed adequate punishment for the convicted offence, the necessary period of one year to allow a change to the Penitentiary, has been allotted as a measure of kindness and mercy; there might be hope for reformation in the Penitentiary, but a few months in our County gaol, in its necessary associations, would leave strengthened and encouraged every evil propensity.

At the time when our present gaol was constructed the population of the County, including in territory what are now the counties of Susquehanna and Wyoming, and more than half of the county of Bradford, about 13,000.—now with our present dimensions it is upwards of 150 and perhaps 160,000. In those early days criminal prosecutions were few in number. I remember that at one of the sessions of our Court, even as late as the year 1821, when as a young member of the bar, I was acting as Deputy Attorney General for the District, there was no case to present for the inquiry of the Grand Jury; the only complaint returned by any Justice being a case of surety of the peace which the parties settled without troubling the Court. At this time the criminal suits besides those of Carbondale and Scranton, often considerably exceed one hundred; at one session, I am informed, numbering one hundred and seventy-five. I am not able to ascertain with entire accuracy the number of convicts, who in years past, have been sent, annually, to the Philadelphia prison or Penitentiary. Sometimes the number amounted to six and seven; in some years no prisoners were sent there, and in others the persons actually confined there were reduced in number to three, as appears by the returned accounts. In the year 1867, the persons there actually imprisoned under sentence of our Courts, exceeded forty.

I have said that my brother Masons may consider this their present doing, without any perversion of language or abuse, or strain of conscience, a work of good will and charity. The charity taught by their Order, is not exclusive, illiberal, and confined solely to themselves and their own interests, but is intended to be universal and general toward the whole human family, leading to the furtherance of all benevolent measures, which the well being of society may require. Those who are now engaged in reformatory principles of Prison Management and discipline, stand on the same platform, which some of the best men of every Christian land, have thought it their highest honor to sustain.—No subject has attracted, for several years, more attention than the proper punishment of convicted criminals and their discipline, and while there have been various methods and different opinions most earnestly advocated, with the view of ameliorating the condition of prisoners, and aiding to conduce to their moral improvement, all have agreed in the great end to be desired.

Prisons, or gaols, as we technically call them, have been known from early times; more especially as a place for the safe-keeping and custody of persons,

individually secured or bound, waiting for the adjudication of the controlling authority, and the punishment to be inflicted. In Genesis it is mentioned, that Joseph was put into the prison, "a place where the King's prisoners were bound," and Samson was "bound in the prison house with fetters of brass." In classic Greece and ancient Rome prisoners were often confined in private houses as places of temporary detention; the prisoner being chained by the arm to one or more soldiers. It is said that in Rome, the only ancient prison which has been discovered, was in the Mamertine caves—two rooms or vaults used mainly for those awaiting speedy execution, as life could have been preserved in them but a short time. Tradition asserts that Paul was confined therein for a brief period before his death. The celebrated Justinian Code makes little mention of prisons—its general inflictions were chiefly by personal injury to the offender, or the loss of station and place in society, with the liability of being adjudged to a state of servitude for a longer or shorter time. With the old English, in the days when the feudal system was in force, the usual place of confinement was in the castles of the Barons, where the *Donjon* or *Keep*, as it was called, was constructed for captives in war, or rebellious members among their own people. From this old expression came the use of our word *Dungeon*. Confinement then did not imply or mean in a technical sense, punishment, which generally was both corporal and speedy. The old law writers of the 17th and 18th centuries defined Prisons to be places of restraint for the safe custody of persons to answer any action, personal or criminal; expressly calling them places for safe-keeping and not for punishment.

It was indeed, at a much later period that an inquiry into the abuse of prisons in England was undertaken, and the development of the treatment not only of criminals, but of persons confined as witnesses and for debt, showed it to be so gross, as almost to surpass belief. It was in the latter part of the last century that the distinguished philanthropist John Howard, gave to the world the results of his personal visits and investigations into the various prisons of his own country and elsewhere, and called, by this means, the attention of the friends of humanity to a class of people who had theretofore been considered and treated as outcasts and outlaws. He found everywhere crowded and dirty rooms, foul and diseased air, as no attention paid to ventilation, the placing all together hardened offenders, the grossly wicked with those comparatively innocent, persons kept merely on suspicion awaiting trial, or for debt; witnesses, persons of the different sexes promiscuously confined together, with insufficient and unwholesome food, and all abused and oppressed by the exactions of gaolers and their assistants, who were allowed to compel the payment of fees, as they thought proper, by each prisoner. These were the evils which it required many years to bring under the control of public notice and attention. The idea and thought of making imprisonment for a definite period, a legal punishment, and at the same time providing for the decent and reasonably comfortable treatment of the offender, in the hope, when aided by moral instruction, of leading to reformation, had then entered into the minds of very few. The culprit, when convicted, had no period left to him for change; capital punishment, which, at the time Judge Blackstone wrote and delivered his lectures, was, as he says, inflicted upon upwards of one hundred and sixty statutory and other offences (other writers say nearly two hundred) gave but a day or two of delay before execution; whipping at the post, standing in the stocks and pillory, maiming, cropping, branding with some letter showing the character of the felony committed, transportation to penal colonies, were sentences speedily enforced and readily used as the easier means of gaol delivery. The belief that a prisoner had any rights, that he ought not to be tortured and was entitled to ask for pure air, simple but wholesome food, treatment as a man, and not as a caged brute, and control under the care of men who would be called upon to exercise towards them humane and merciful conduct, was very slow in gaining influence with the public. It was far into the present century before in England, the management and care of prisons was practically and partially placed upon improved principles. There was no very material change till after the time when Mrs. Elizabeth Fry had commenced her mission of mercy to the females of Newgate, and so late as 1818, when Sir T. F. Buxton called the notice of the rulers of the land to the prevalent abuses which were still found in the prisons of England.

A similar general rule as to the punishment of criminals was originally introduced from what was then called the old country, into these western colonies. The sanction of the death penalty waited upon the conviction of numerous crimes, modified and softened only by the legal evasion if the expression may

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be used, which the humanity of advanced ages had introduced, of "benefit of clergy"; saving the life, but marking the offender with the stamp of life-long contumely. In the Pennsylvania Colonial Act of 1717, it was provided as to persons convicted of felonies made capital, who claimed the benefit of a clergy, that they "should be taken and reputed to be, and punished, as a Clerk Convict, and burnt, if for murder with an (M) upon the brawn of the left thumb, and if for any other felony, with a (C) in the same place of the thumb, &c." By the same act the punishment of larcenies, after mentioning the restoration of the property and a fine to the Government, was "to be publicly whipped on his or their bare backs, with stripes well laid on, not exceeding twenty-one."—for second and third convictions the number was to be increased respectively "to not exceeding forty or fifty;" for the third offense also a clause authorised the judges, at their discretion, to confine them "in some house of correction or public workhouse, there to be set at work, &c." The punishment of whipping was constantly administered, without reference to the sex or circumstances of the offender. In an old record of the Philadelphia Councils of 1749 the petition of a female is referred to, praying on account of poverty to be released from certain costs and charges, incurred on a conviction of felony, as she "had received the corporal punishment adjudged to her," and a similar record in 1753 fixes "the salary of the public whipper at ten pounds per annum." I am afraid that some, at this time, overlooking a humane view of the case, oppose our present system on account of its expensiveness, will be disposed to turn back with favour to this cheaper mode of inflicting punishment. They should, however, remember that times have now greatly changed, and that a public whipper for Luzerne County to fulfil sentences under the old laws, would hold no sinecure office, but would be obliged, with divers assistants, at an enlarged salary, to exhibit great physical and enduring powers.

In the day dawn of our country's independence, in the year 1776, through the active efforts of the Friends, commonly called Quakers, in Philadelphia, a society was formed for assisting distressed prisoners. During the war of Independence, and its various trials and calamities, this body of men ceased to operate, but in 1787 a number of citizens of the same community associated themselves together, under the name of the "Philadelphia Society for alleviating the miseries of Public Prisons," and thus united together by themselves, and the succession of their humane and philanthropic brethren, have been since engaged, practically and personally in the examination and reformation of existing prisons, within the State, and in endeavoring by their publications, to diffuse true principles in reference to their management, and at the same time excite a healthy sentiment among the people and their chosen Legislators. William White, who some of us remember as the venerable Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this Diocese, was the first President of this Society, and continued to hold the office until his death, in 1836. It is, I honestly believe, due to the operations of this Society and its members, that the reformation of our Penal system has mainly been effected; not forgetting, however, that the benign influences of the principles of William Penn and his co-workers, prepared the minds of the people of Pennsylvania for a merciful penal rule. Our State Legislature at an early day set their face against cruel and personal inflictions, calculated permanently to disgrace and reprobate an offender, and in 1794 adopted that grand and noble statute, declaring that no crime, except murder in the first degree, should be punished with death.

The preamble to the Constitution of the Society to which I have referred, so beautifully and eloquently sets forth the purpose of their union, and its promised object, which they have labored so faithfully to perfect, that I may be excused for quoting it at length. "When we consider that the obligations of benevolence, which are founded on the principles and example of the great author of Christianity, are not cancelled by the follies and crimes of our fellow creatures, and when we reflect upon the miseries which penury, hunger and unnecessary severity, unwholesome apartments and guilt (the usual attendants of prisons) involve with them, it becomes us to extend our compassion to that part of mankind who are the subjects of these miseries. By the aid of humanity, there undue and illegal sufferings may be prevented; the links which should bind the whole family of mankind together, under all circumstances, be preserved, and such degree and modes of punishment discovered and suggested, as may, instead of continuing habits of vice become the means of restoring our fellow creatures to virtue and happiness."

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This Society, with kindred associations of later date in the cities of New York and Boston, has been for a long time actively engaged in endeavoring to spread abroad through our common country correct ideas upon the subject of their duties, which rest upon the citizens generally, in relation to our public prisons, and they have been very successful. While there have been different opinions as to the best mode of carrying into effect discipline and management, so as to lead most hopefully to the reformation of convicts, they have all agreed upon the necessity of introducing into the prisons careful and exact direction and management, proper classification, oversight, labor and instruction. In the detail of system and plan, these excellent Societies, engaged theoretically and practically for the common purpose by their individual members, have advanced various opinions, and have advocated different modes of proceeding—the one arguing in favour of solitary or separate labor, the other joint or united occupations. The advocates of these different views, have, though generally in a kindly spirit, been most earnest in their controversy, both in word and in deed, and have induced different portions of our Union to sustain each of the different systems.

This is not the place for me, and before this promiscuous audience of Pennsylvanians, to enter at large into this discussion, as the policy of our State has been long fixed, and the law requires that it should be carried out. The Pennsylvania system of solitary or separate confinement at labor, as the mode of suffering punishment for crime, with proper attention to moral and religious instruction, best calculated to be reformatory in its character, accompanied with due care of the bodily health and reasonable comfort of the convict, suggests the plan upon which all our County gaols must now be built.

While, during the latter part of the last and early part of the present century, the experiment of solitary confinement at labor was tried, and with various opinions as to its success, formed the subject of public consideration, as well with the religious and humane of the people generally, as also in our public councils, the entire reformation of our penal code, by the substitution of separate or solitary confinement at labor for every Penitentiary offense, was not completed until the year 1829. Among its ablest advocates in procuring the adoption of the system was the late Hon. Garritt Mallory, then one of the Representatives from this District, in our State Legislature. The use of the expression in the Act, separate or solitary, has in the course of a few years permitted some modification of the rigid practice first desired by some of its advocates. Confinement is now truly separate, being only solitary because it allows no kind of acquaintance or association with other prisoners. Under certain fixed rules, the keepers and teachers in the labor in which they are engaged, moral and religious instructors, official visitors, and occasionally relatives and other persons are permitted to see them. Opportunity, however, is not given to form the acquaintance of other prisoners, and by this means, the evil, which ever will arise from the influence of other and perhaps greater criminals, will be avoided. It may not be improper, briefly now, to notice the popular objection to this system, in its alleged want of economy, particularly through the loss of such profits or gains from the labor of convicts, which are more certainly the acquisition of joint or united work. The facts, upon which this consideration is based, seem, by the published reports of the Penitentiaries, to justify the opinion. But we may go back of these facts and enquire what is true economy? Are we to look only to the saving of expense or the gaining of money through the employment of prisoners, or is it not rather the true economy and the best policy of the country to employ the means and measures most likely to conduce to the reformation of offenders, and to aid, if possible, in restoring to society some, who, by temptation under the force of pressing circumstances, have lapsed into ways of folly and of crime. The advocates of the separate system claim, that experience has in this respect, favorably proved and tested the practical working of their theories.

The building, the foundation of which is now before us, has, under the provisions of our Act of Assembly, been so planned, as fairly to carry into effect the system to which we have just referred. By this Act of the eighth of April, 1857, it is thus provided, that: "Every County prison, which shall hereafter be erected within this Commonwealth, shall be so constructed that every person committed thereto, whether upon conviction or otherwise, may be confined separate and apart from every other person committed thereto, due regard being had in the plan of construction to the health of the persons

The duties as above required have been attended to by our Commissioners, and a copy of the plan duly approved, has been filed in the office of the Secretary of State at Harrisburg.

When it appeared to the Commissioners, that, considering the situation of the County finances and other relative matters, the time had arrived, when this much needed improvement should be undertaken, they entered upon the necessary preparatory examinations and inquiries with zeal and earnestness, and with a determination to carry into operation the system which the law required at their hands. They sought for plans of prisons, made personal investigation of several such institutions, and made inquiry of those, who, they were led to believe, would be the best calculated to give them definite and reliable information upon the subject. They did not feel that they were absolutely bound to follow the exact model of the penitentiary buildings generally used in our State, when, from those who were especially and practically interested in the subject, and had made it their study, defects which could be remedied were pointed out, particularly in the want of a steady and constant circulation of pure, hot and cold air, such as, if possible, should be provided for. They visited, personally, the Eastern Penitentiary, and the Dauphin, Berks and Schuylkill County Prisons, and were induced to believe, from the information furnished to them, that when the back part of the cells were formed by the exterior walls of the building, it was apt to occasion great dampness, leading to uncomfortable consequences, and sometimes an unpleasant odor. They then visited the Tombs in New York, where the same difficulties are alleged to prevail, and afterwards made a thorough examination of the Albany Prison, to which their attention had been particularly called, as being free from many of the objections found in other places. This prison was constructed with cells inside of the exterior walls, corridors being between such walls and the cells, instead of passages between the different ranges of cells. Thus, being removed from the outer walls, the cells were found to be free from moisture, and from the disagreeable and noxious effluvia found in other prisons; considerations, as it seemed to them, of peculiar importance for a climate so moist as that of our valley, and for this selected location upon the banks of the canal and river. They learned, too, that when the corridors were between the ranges of cells, that if the doors were at all open, the prisoners could at such times communicate with those in the range of sight by signs, and did also constantly make themselves known to others through the heating, and water, pipes. The keepers also alleged that this latter practice could not be prevented.

The Commissioners, after much consideration, concluded to adopt a plan partially taken from the Albany Prison, where there can be no communication by signs or by the pipes under the system they have chosen for heating and ventilating the building. They found, too, that generally the partition walls of the cells were composed of brick or stone laid in mortar, and that prisoners have sometimes been able to work through such walls with secreted pieces of iron or wire, allowing a mode of communication and perhaps of escape. In this proposed building the interior walls of each cell are to be formed by a stone slab, from four to five inches thick, dressed and rubbed so as to present a smooth surface. In the present plan, also, if a prisoner can possibly make his way through the enclosure of the cell, he will still find the heavy outer walls of the building a barrier to his escape.

The heating arrangement selected is the self-regulating hot water apparatus of Morris, Jasker & Company, of Philadelphia. This has proved itself to be a convenient, safe and effectual, as well as economical means of warming many prisons, besides a number of public and private buildings.

The apparatus consists of cast iron boilers, made in sections, and the proper amount of heat regulated by three dampers, which are operated by the expansion of the water, at the different temperatures. The radiating surface

In order to ensure a more perfect ventilation, there will be used a double disc ventilating fan, eight feet in diameter, and driven by steam power.— This fan is capable of discharging from 75,000 to 100,000 cubic feet of air per minute, and the air duct from it will be connected into all the radiator chambers, so that in winter the air is heated previous to its discharge into other rooms. The foul air in the building will be forced down through flues (one to each cell and room) into a large horizontal underground duct opening into an annular space around the main boiler flue, where it is rarified and discharged.

This method, combining natural and forced ventilation is now universally adopted in the best appointed modern public buildings; more especially in hospitals and gaols, where a superabundance of fresh air must be continually furnished throughout the entire year to absorb and carry off the effluvia and vapours arising from diseased and negligent inmates, and which if confined and not removed, must necessarily affect their health.

The ventilating and heating the corridors and cells are both done by the same process. The cool, fresh air from without is brought into the building, and passed over the steam heaters, and thence into the corridors. The fan and the draft in the smoke stack are connected with flues extending into the cells, two to each, one being at the bottom and one at the top. By the operation of the fan and the draft of the smoke stack, the air in the cell is drawn out, and the warm air of the corridors passes into the cell to supply its place; thereby introducing fresh air raised to a temperature which is comfortable for the inmates.

The plan, as you can discover by the lower walls, now here on the ground, provides for a front building, in width sixty feet and in depth about forty feet, to include the offices and dwelling rooms of the keeper, and two wings extending at right angles from either extremity, of a front of two hundred and eighty feet, in depth two hundred and four feet, and in width forty-seven feet, the whole building being of two stories, and the wings each containing a double tier of cells in each story. The lot will also permit the further extension of these wings, if hereafter the prison should require enlargement. It is intended so to construct it as to make each wing fire-proof, so that if a fire should occur in the front portion, heavy iron doors can be used to cut off the communication, and prevent its access to the cells. There will be seventy-two cells, twenty-eight double and forty-four single, the double cells being so located, and the foundations so fixed, that two single ones may be formed out of each, when circumstances may require it. For the present permanent work will be mainly carried on in the larger cells.

The Commissioners in exercising the duties committed to them, have sought to retain entirely the principles of separate confinement at labor for convicts and other prisoners, according to the Pennsylvania system, while they have also adopted some changes in the manner of constructing the cells, corridors, &c, proved to be beneficial elsewhere, and which, it is believed, will be made fully to answer all the desired purposes our system, and the proper practical working of it, seem to require. Bearing in mind that they were to erect a building to remain for ages, intended to meet the object of its erection in the midst of a very large and daily increasing population, they procured the services of Mr. John McArthur, a scientific, experienced and able architect to plan for them a County Gaol, such as was desired, to be placed upon the lot where we now stand; determining to do the work in as economical, not parsimonious a manner as its grand and public purpose would permit. The plans, after being made out, with the proper specifications and exhibits, was submitted to the authorities at Harrisburg, and though at first doubted, because they did not entirely agree with other models of the same kind, were finally fully endorsed, and the foundation of the building is now before you.

This present site for the new prison was selected on account of its peculiar aptitude and fitness. The old public lot at the corner of Market and Washington streets, in the Borough of Wilkes-Barre, is located so low, that it was found to be impossible to procure the necessary sewerage and drainage, re-

quired for the health of prisoners confined under process or sentence. Here, directly upon the bank of the Susquehanna, where the current is very rapid, at an altitude of about forty-five feet, there is every opportunity to discharge and carry off the refuse of the prison, and should there be need of a greater supply of water, than can be furnished by the Wilkes-Barre Water Company, from the Laurel run, at no very great additional expense, the required quantity can be readily obtained from the river. The distance of the Court House, less than three-quarters of a mile, presents but a small inconvenience, as, by fitting up a temporary place of confinement in the basement or cellar of the Court House, prisoners, who may be needed for trial during the day, can be brought down in the morning and there kept except when their presence is required in the Court Room. Such a mode of proceeding, calling for the occasional use of a wagon or van, in some times of public excitement which may occur, is much safer than the mode now used of bringing the prisoners the distance from the present gaol to the place of trial. It may be added, that the public lot, above referred to, though too small, and too badly located, for such a building as the one proposed, will hereafter bring on sale, to the County probably four times the price which was the cost of the present lot.

I have at some length entered into these details, perhaps too extensively, to show to all here, that in asking them to attend at the ceremonies connected with the fixing of this corner stone, they have not been called upon merely to aid in preparing a place for the confinement of rogues and vagabonds, as in a police station, to prevent their preying upon community, but to further an important public work, emphatically and to a great extent, a measure of public mercy and charity. It is intended to remove from among us that old, dilapidated, miserable building in the centre of our town, where too often from actual and unavoidable necessity, through want of space and room, oppressions have been exercised reproachful to our citizens, in this age of light and intelligence, and to provide, in the place of it, even to the criminal, a proper means of confinement, a safeguard, against what may be almost called some illegal penalties, which position has at times heretofore imposed upon him.

Where could there ever be moral improvement in that old gaol? It required even a degree of charity more than most of us possess to lead us to venture within its walls, so as to inquire into the situation of those confined there. I would remind this assemblage, and particularly those persons who reside in this vicinity, that the completion of this building will involve new duties upon the religious and charitable among our people. Official visitors will be appointed, whose duty it will be to see that oppressions are not exercised under the name of the law, and to investigate and oppose any abuses in the management of the institution, which time may develop, while proper opportunities too will be afforded to them for the moral instruction of the prisoners. I trust, too, there will be found among us humane and kind-hearted individuals, as in our greater cities, who, under appointed regulations, will ever be ready, at occasional periods, to become voluntary visitants of those who may hereafter be confined in this place, striving by precept and example to reform and strengthen the repentant. I may be permitted to appeal to every bretheren of the Masonic Order who profess to carry upon their ancient standard Love, Favor and Charity to all, and ask if some of their number will not desire to serve in such situations, and thus strive to aid the unfortunate, even though they may be criminal.

I have referred to that admirable Society in Philadelphia which has so long and so steadily, by the devotedness and faithfulness of its members, sought to cultivate proper principles of prison discipline, and to make them personal and practical by endeavoring to alleviate its harshness, lessen its abuses, and bring good out of evil; and I would now suggest that those who have heretofore been active among our citizens in public charities, may feel this new duties are being opened for them. When this prison shall be completed and in active operation, the residents of this county, and particularly of that vicinity, should form themselves into an association, auxiliary to the one I have mentioned, and take upon themselves to render aid in the moral duties belonging to the place; they will do well if they will endeavor to imitate the parent organization in its ways of mercy and love.

I would now ask this audience to excuse me for having detained them so long by the observations I have been making. These have been but the reiteration of thoughts and actions, which have heretofore been expressed and advocated by others. They profess no novelty, for experience has proved their truth, but in their present repetition they will aid in removing false impressions, and in communicating more correct opinions, as to the purpose and object of the building now being erected, and perhaps explain some of the new duties in connection with it, which should be assumed by the residents of our neighborhood.

May we all remember the words of *Him*, who still speaks: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." "I was in prison and ye came unto me," "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Benediction by Rev. Thos. P. Hunt.

May the blessing of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, rest upon us, and guide us in all our work, until we come to that land where all the work is love, where sin never comes, and sorrow is not known."



