



The Flower Talk

My brothers, you have just been permitted to take upon yourselves the name of one of the world's most heroic knightly figures. Now you can say, "I am a DeMolay." To be deemed worthy of the privilege of entering into the comradeship of that great army of youth both here and abroad who have dedicated themselves to the ideals of Jacques DeMolay, demonstrates our confidence that the fineness of your purposes will guide your development into the highest type of manhood. To be accepted as a DeMolay is, therefore, an honor of which any young man can be justly proud.

In being received into our ranks, you have been instructed in the seven cardinal virtues of this great Order. We hope you have been deeply impressed with the lessons they teach. There is no better foundation on which to build your character and future life than the practice of these virtues. The Order teaches many beautiful lessons, but none is more important than honor and true respect for womanhood, and more especially for motherhood. It is fitting, therefore, that you have been called upon to stand again before this altar in a few moments of special emphasis upon the virtue which has been given first place among the jewels adorning the Crown of Youth: Filial Love.

For my purpose now, this altar is dedicated to our mothers, whose love never fails. You may rise to positions of great influence in commercial, political, or professional life, but you can never reach the heights of your mother's secret hopes for you. You may sink into the lowest depths of infamy and degradation, but never below the reach of her love. The memory of it will always stir your heart. There is no man so entirely base, so completely vile, so utterly low, that he does not hold in his heart a shrine sacred and apart for the memory of his mother's love.

Were I to draw you a picture of love divine, it would not be that of

A stately Angel,

With a form that is full of grace.

But a tired and toilworn mother

With a grave and tender face.

It was your mother who loved you before you were born--who carried you for long months close to her heart and in the fullness of time took God's hand in hers and passed through the valley of shadows to give you life. It was she who cared for you during the helpless years of infancy and the scarcely less dependent years of childhood. As you have grown less dependent, she has done the countless, thoughtful, trouble-healing, helpful and encouraging things which somehow only mothers seem to know how to do. You may have

accepted these attentions more or less as matters of course, and perhaps without conscious gratitude or any expression of your appreciation. You are rapidly approaching the time in life when you will be entirely independent of your mother. The ties with which dependency has bound you to her may be severed as you grow older, but the tie of mother-love can never be broken.

Thinking back upon the years of your life when you have reached the threshold of manhood, your mother might well say in the words of the poet:

*My body fed your body, son,
But birth's a swift thing
Compared to one and twenty years
Of feeding you with spirit's tears.
I could not make your mind and soul,
But my glad hands have kept you whole.
Your groping hands
Bound me to life with ruthless bands.
And all my living became a prayer,
While all my days built up a stair
For your young feet that trod behind
That you an aspiring way should find.
Think you that life can give you pain
Which does not stab in me again?
Think you that life can give you shame
Which does not make my pride go lame?
And you can do no evil thing
Which sears not me with poisoned sting.
Because of all that I have done,
Remember me in life, O son.
Keep that proud body fine and fair.
My life is monumented there.
For my life make no woman weep,
For my life hold no woman cheap.*

And see you give no woman scorn

For that dark night when you were born.

These flowers which you see on our altar are symbols of that mother-love. The white, the love of the mother who is gone. And the red, the mother who still lives to bless your life.

Far in the dim recesses of her heart

Where all is hushed and still,

She keeps a shrine.

'Tis here she kneels in prayer

While from above long shafts of light upon her shine.

Her heart is flower fragrant as she prays.

Aquiver like a candle flame,

Each prayer takes wing

To bless the world she works among,

To leave the radiance of the candles there.

We want each of you to take a flower from the altar. If your mother has passed over to the other shore, you will choose a white flower and keep it always sacred to her memory. May the sight of it always quicken every tender memory of her and strengthen you anew in your efforts to be worthy of her hopes and aspirations for you. If your mother is living, you will choose a red flower. When you go home tonight, give it to your mother. Tell her it is our recognition of God's best gift to a man: his mother's love. Take her in your arms and say, "Mother, I've learned a great lesson tonight. The ceremonies have helped me realize more fully how much you really mean to me. I'm going to try to show you daily how much I appreciate the sacrifices you have made and the love and care you give me."

Someday you'll find that flower, I know not where, perhaps in her Bible or prayer book or some other sacred place, a silent witness to what this night has meant to the one whose love for you, her son, is beyond the comprehension of any son. My brothers, each of you will please take a red or white flower from the altar. (Done.)

DeMolay can ask no more of you than that you shall endeavor so to live as to be worthy of your mother's love.

