

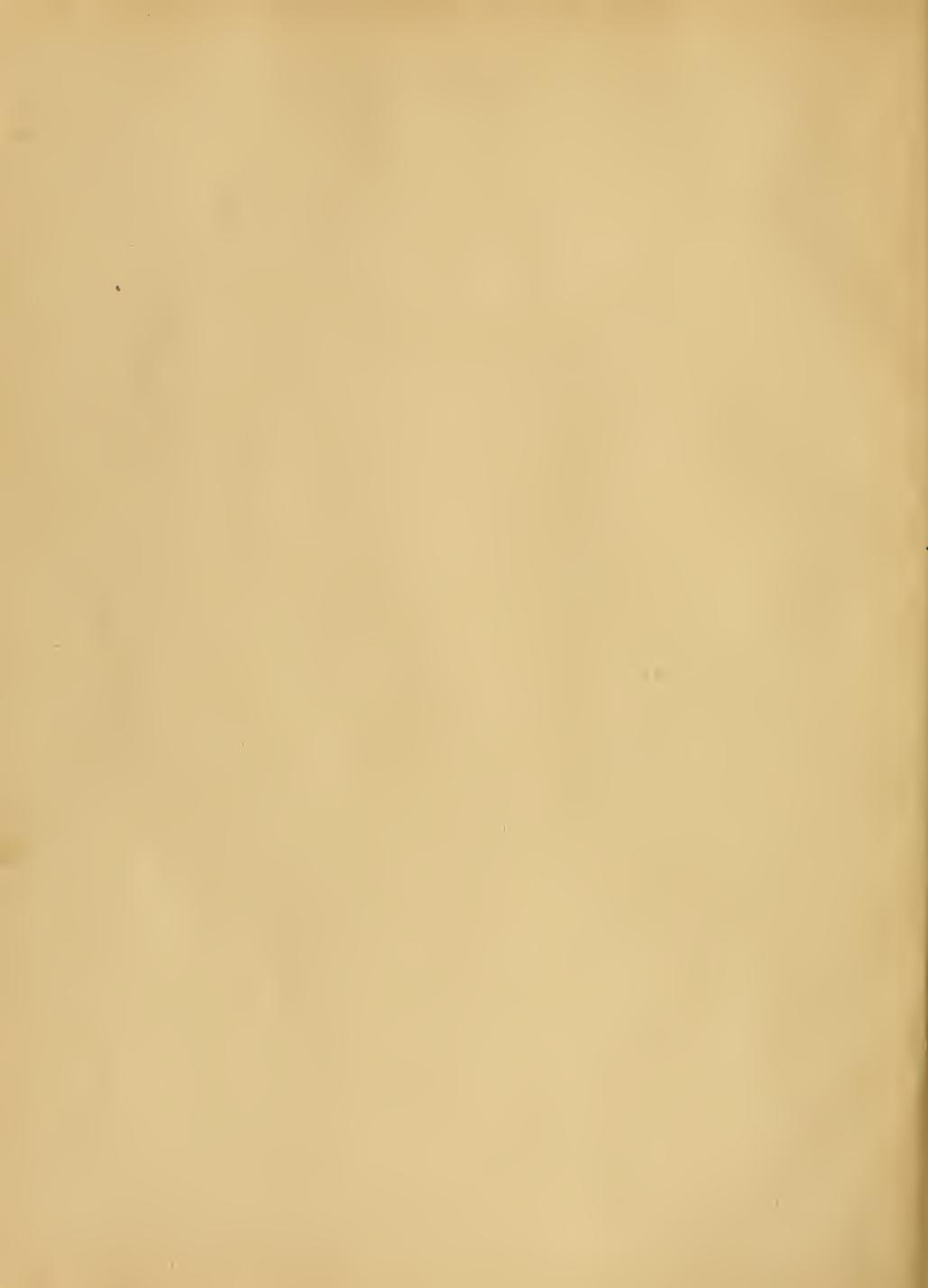
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WOMAN:

A POEM

IN RESPONSE TO THE TOAST TO WOMAN, AT THE ANNUAL FEAST OF THE
MASONIC VETERANS, NEW YORK, JUNE 6, 1883.

BY VENERABLE EDWIN GATES.

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WOMAN.

Awake, Oh! Muse, awake again!
My theme demands the sweetest strain;
A noble theme inspires my pen,
I sing of women, not of men.

Long ere from earth was formed a man,
Or ere primeval time began,
Enshrined in dark chaotic night,
All nature wrapped in saddest plight,
Till God, from high commanded "Light."

A radiant light sprang from the Throne—
But on no woman's face it shone.

And now the rolling seas divide,
The land beneath the light was dried;
Vast millions now enjoy their mirth—
But still no woman was on earth.

The herding beasts unnumbered came,
Rejoicing o'er the verdant plain;
The earth was good and fruitful ground—
But still no woman could be found.

Now six days' work was nearly done,
And twice three times had rolled the sun;
To finish the stupendous plan,
It was resolved to make a man.

Now in His holy image just,
God formed a man from earth and dust;

In His own image man was made,
And thus God's wisdom was displayed.

Now earth and sky and sea were stored,
And Adam was their sovereign lord;
But still no joy, or love was found,
Because no woman was around.

The beasts and birds and fishes came,
And from their lord received a name;
When Adam went to view the ground,
No help meet for the man was found.

The Maker heard his daily moan,
And knew the cause—he was alone.

Prone on the ground fair Adam lies,
And midnight darkness pressed his eyes;

Around him wept the beauteous rose,
And he was lost in sweet repose.

In his left side, and near his heart,
A hand, unseen, the flesh did part;
And, when the seam was opened wide,
It took a rib from Adam's side.

That rib, all warm and full of life,
The bounteous maker formed a wife;
And having formed a beauteous bride,
He left her there, near Adam's side.

Adam awoke with sweet surprise,
And that dear object met his eyes;
A tender glance did each impart,
Then pressed the fair one to his heart.

Now shed the sun a holier ray,
And ushered in that joyous day.
One burnished sheet of living gold
O'er Eden's garden was unrolled,
And spicy breezes sailed along,
The echo of diviner song.

Of all God's works—behold this last!
In her all others are surpassed;
Adam and beasts were made of clay—
She's more refined and pure than they.

But now a *Demon* wings the air—
As envious of the happy pair,
With dark temptation's cruel wile
This fairest creature to beguile.

Oh, stop, my muse! a scalding tear
Falls on my paper, bright and clear;
Now death holds out its darkest pall—
Oh! must this beauteous Angel fall?

Oh, joyful news! It is decreed
That God shall bless the woman's seed.
Roll swift around four thousand years,
And, lo! the promised seed appears.

By man came sin, but 'tis relieved,
For man, through woman, is retrieved;
The man is by the Devil led,
But woman bruised the serpent's head.
Oh, yes! for that stupendous deed
Was truly wrought by woman's seed.

But now we leave the days of yore,
Nor speak of what took place before;
The Vets are out in force to-night
And *woman* is their chief delight.

Oh, woman, woman! thou wast made
To point man's pathway through the shade;
Like Heaven's own pure and sacred light,
To guide his erring footsteps right.

How can I give this theme its due?
How bring to you one thought that's new,
When poet, orator and sage
Have sang her praise in every age?

Oh, woman! bright is every place
That thou dost with thy presence grace;

Without the love-light of thine eyes
It would be dark in Paradise.

No dearer names are heard in life
Than mother, sister, sweetheart, wife;
From Adam's time, until this hour,
We all have felt a woman's power.

Mother—whose gentle tender care
First taught our lips to utter prayer—
Whose circling arms and loving breast
Gave us our first heaven of rest.

Sister—who shared our youthful plays
And made more bright our childhood's days—
To us, who for protection ran,
And *roused* the feelings of a man.

An angel bright unto us seems
The maiden of our loving dreams;
Sweeter than angel doth she prove
Who wakes in us our heart's first love.

Oh, blessed hour! with rapture rife,
When first we call that dear one wife,
And feel that she is all our own,
Who, by love's conquest, has been won.

No brighter theme can poet boast
Than mine, responsive to this toast;
Our joy through life, our heart's delight—
Mine is the sweetest toast to-night.

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