

# EMESSAY NOTES

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## Ritual Encouragement From Unexpected Source



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Edwin T. Booth was a famous actor in the 19th Century, known throughout the United States and Europe for his Shakespearean performances, particularly recognized for his portrayals of Hamlet. He was also well-known in New York City for his theatre management.

His stage fame often takes a back seat to the knowledge that he was the brother of John Wilkes Booth, who shot President Abraham Lincoln. The brothers were not close and took far different political points of view. The assassination almost destroyed Edwin, and he later described that day as the worst of his life.

Edwin Booth was a Masonic brother. He was initiated into New York Lodge #330 on September 11, 1857, receiving his Master Mason Degree on September 23.

Because of his vast theater knowledge and experience, he understood the essence of tragedy. Here is how Brother Booth evaluated the Hiram legend:

*In all my research and study, in all my close analysis of the masterpieces of Shakespeare, in my earnest determination to make those plays appear real on the mimic stage, I have never, and nowhere, met tragedy so real, so sublime, so magnificent as the legend of Hiram. It is substance without shadow - the manifest destiny of life which requires no picture and scarcely a word to make a lasting impression upon all who understand. To be a Worshipful Master, and to throw my whole soul into that work, with the candidate for my audience and the Lodge for my stage, would be a greater personal distinction than to receive the plaudits of people in the theaters of the world.*

## The Amazing Sun

There is a cathedral in Italy built by operative masons more than 500 years ago. On the floor of that cathedral there is a brass plate upon which the sun shines for a brief moment each June 22.

The light reaches that small plate through an opening high in the vaulted towers of the building. The purpose of that rather strange arrangement is to determine whether the cathedral has shifted on its foundations.

The builders of that structure were sure of at least one thing. The movement of creation is so precise and certain that they could depend on the sun being at the appointed place at the appointed time. The building might change, but the architects knew the sun would be on schedule.

## Who Wins? High Tech or New Life?

An article in the *New York Times* some years ago reported that visitors at a high-tech exhibit in the Boston Museum of Science found impressive lasers and rocket models on display.

But it wasn't long before the small crowd of viewers clustered around a nearby incubator. "Look! That one moved!" someone said. An egg shook and a crack appeared in the shell. The chick shoved its beak and wing through the opening. The fragile creature, feathers sticking to its skin, took a few shuddering breaths, shut its eyes tightly and strained against the shell. "Come on," someone urged. "You can do it!"

Finally the chick heaved through the crack, flopped out and the audience cheered. High tech has its interest; life has more.

# Concerning My Creed

Religious beliefs and how they affect Freemasonry and the relationships between brethren have long been discussed. Here are some beautiful lines on the subject by the late Past Grand Master of Masons in Mississippi, Tom Quitman Ellis.

Ten thousand paths may lead to God; what right is mine to say  
That he who fails to walk with me has missed the only way?  
What right is mine to arrogate such grasp of finite mind  
And boast while others vainly seek the God I see and find?  
How could the God I live and trust point out to only me  
The way which travel all men must, or die eternally?  
I'm not so wise that He denies the light to all save me,  
While other souls as true as mine He loves with less degree.  
No, though the path we tread may lead where bright cathedrals rise,  
Or wayside church or rustic shrine point upward to the skies,  
The God-led traveler will arrive where lights of welcome shine,  
And myriads will be there who walked a different path than mine.

## Being Kind

Prah-hotep is hardly a household word today. It was, once, in Egypt.

This celebrity once topped the list of world's wisest men. Some scholars say he lived about 2650 years B.C. Others say earlier.

Regardless, in his "The Proverbs of Ptah-hotep," this sage laid down a rule for living. He told his contemporaries to be kind!

A man, he reminded them, may achieve power and fame and fortune but "it is the man's *kindly* acts that are remembered in the years after his life."

This respected leader, some 50 centuries ago, rated as the most important of all the arts of living "the art of being kind." Is there a more important one today?

## Words of Wisdom, Through History

Here are few quotes, reprinted by the *High Twelvian* Magazine a few years ago, which we can view through the eyes of history.

"As far as sinking a ship with a bomb is concerned, it just can't be done." Rear Admiral Clark Woodward, U.S. Navy.

"Fooling around with alternating current is just a waste of time. Nobody will ever use it. It could kill man as quick as a bolt of lightning. Direct current is safe." Thomas Alva Edison, circa 1880.

"While theoretically and technically television may be feasible, commercially and economically I consider it an impossibility, a development of which we need spend little time dreaming." Lee DeForest, physicist, 1926.

"We must not be misled, to our own detriment, to assume that the untried machine can replace the proved and tried horse." Maj. Gen. John K. Kerr, U.S. Army, 1938

"The flying machines will eventually be fast; they will be used for sport but they will not be thought of as commercial carriers." Octave Chanute, aviation pioneer, 1910

"Space travel is absolute bilge." Sir Richard Van Der Riet Wooley, Astronomer Royal, 1956

"That is the biggest fool thing we have ever done. The (atomic) bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives." Adm. William Leahy, U.S. Navy, to President Harry S. Truman, 1945.