

Masonic Matters

November 10, 2007

By Ed Halpaus

“Statesman, yet friend to truth! Of soul sincere, in action faithful, and in honor clear; who broke no promise, served no private end, who gained no title, and who lost no friend.” Alexander Pope

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“And be these juggling friends no more believ’d, that palter with us in a double sense; that keep the word of promise to our ear, and break it to our hope.” Shakespeare (Macbeth)

I bring you greetings from Most Worshipful Brother Raymond G. Christensen, Grand Master of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Minnesota, and all of the Grand Lodge officers elected and appointed of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota.

Dear Brethren and readers,

I have decided to break with tradition in the publication of *Masonic Matters* to include for the first time a paper written by someone other than me: the reason is because on October 15th I send out, in the publication *Mehr Licht*, or *More Light*, the script for the *Walking Charge*. After it was received I got a very nice email letter from Brother Fred Milliken, and he attached a paper written by our Brother, Colonel Ian M. Donald which contained a lot of good information on what is known as the *Walking Charge*. Brother Ian's paper is so good, and there were so many comments received about the *Walking Charge* I thought it would be a good idea to put Brother Ian's paper in this issue of *Masonic Matters*. What is known as the *Walking Charge* is also known as the *Canadian Charge*. After receiving worshipful Brother Ian's paper having read and enjoyed it, I wrote to Brother Ian to ask for his permission to pass it on to you. Brother Ian was gracious enough to let me publish it so you could read it. When you read his paper you will learn the source of the *Walking* or *Canadian Charge*, and I'm certain you will not only enjoy reading his paper, but you will enjoy the scholarship involved in it. -- Ed

A CHARGE BY ANY OTHER NAME IS STILL A CHARGE!

by W. Bro. Col. Ian M. Donald (Ky.)

In our Masonic lodges we are apt to see or hear a piece of work that makes a great impression on us. Each degree in our respective rituals has special pieces that stand out with unique beauty and meaning. I was intrigued while visiting a lodge some years ago when I saw a wonderful poem called "*On Yonder Book*" given as a charge after the third degree. Afterwards I asked the brother who had given it where it was from, but he had little information about it. I eventually received a copy from a friend from Ohio, who gives it to every newly raised MM in his lodge.

I had also heard of a "*Canadian Charge*", but because of the diverse nature of Masonry, (it having many different workings of the ritual) I mistook it to be the "*General Charge*", used here in Ontario in our installation ceremony. I received a copy of the "*Canadian Charge*" from a friend in Massachusetts and was surprised to see it was the "*On Yonder Book*" poem. So I seriously began to research this charge looking for its origins and why is it known as the "*Canadian Charge*". I have found that it has many names and is used as the charge in the third degree in Georgia and Maine and as an alternative charge in several other States. It is also known as; the *Candlelight Charge*, the *Walking Charge*, and the *Oklahoma Charge*, just to name a few.

When I look at the poem, I see right away that it is based on the American York Ritual not the Canadian Ritual. The Canadian ritual derives from the Union of the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges in 1813, and came to Canada in 1825. The American York Ritual is derived from the rituals used at the time of the American Revolution, 1776. So how did it get called the Canadian Charge and where did it originally come from?

I began to search for the "On Yonder Book" charge, which led me to the Grand Lodge of Maine. They state that M.W. Bro Benjamin L. Hadley (G.M. 1942-43) authored the Poem "On Yonder Book". It is used in Maine as the charge in the third degree and is called the "Candle Light Charge". I also found evidence that there was a similar charge in the Oklahoma Cipher in 1890's. This raises a question about the authorship of the charge. If it was in the Oklahoma Cipher of the 1890's how could MW Bro Hadley have written it in the forties? I believe that I can answer that question as well.

I recently acquired two books of Masonic poetry by Dr. Rob Morris published in 1875 and 1884 respectively. In the 1884 edition of "*The Odes and Poetry of Freemasonry*" I discovered two poems, "A Mason's Pledge" and "A Mason's Vow". These poems I believe are the source or inspiration of the charges and hold the final clues to the mystery.

Dr. Morris had a degree in Law, was a theologian and educator. He was also a noted Masonic Scholar and prolific writer. He was acclaimed the second Poet Laureate of Masonry in 1884, one hundred years after the death of the "Bard" Robbie Burns. Coincidentally he has a remarkable connection to the Grand Lodge of Canada. He was the Grand Master of Kentucky in 1858/59 and he was elected Past Deputy Grand Master of the newly formed Grand Lodge of Canada in 1858. He created the first degrees of the Order of the Eastern Star in 1851, which he conferred on his wife and daughters. In 1873 he traveled to the Holy Land with a group of Masonic scholars with a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Canada to form the first Masonic Lodge in the Holy City of Jerusalem. The Lodge was The Royal Solomon Lodge of Jerusalem #293 GRC and Dr. Morris was its first Master.

The two poems mentioned above appeared in his book "The Poetry of Freemasonry" published in 1884. Here is the Preface to the Fourth Edition to Masonic Odes and Poems 1875 in which, Dr. Morris reveals some background about his work:

"When the disastrous fire of October 1871 occurred in Chicago, destroying the plates of my Poems and other works, I thought I should never again attempt to collect them together. There is a limit to human endurance, and the fire-fiend has followed me far and fast for forty years, until I have become too old and impecunious to wrestle with him longer.

But after all, I am induced to try again. The increased demand for Masonic Literature, and the importunities of friends who have large claims upon my gratitude, and the self-conceit of authorship, unite to urge me to the present step. Other influences might be adduced, not the least of which is the fact that my pieces have been flying, anonymously, through the press for many years, and in so many instances have been accredited to other, probably, better writers, that there very authorship is being disputed. This is intolerable. For my children's sake and for old friendships sake I am resolved to prevent this, even at the expense of a new issue.

The earliest of these pieces were written in 1846. The greater number of them were elaborated while the composer was upon the journey, - on horse back, on foot, in coach and in car, - and they are thus emphatically fugitive pieces. What I might have done in the way of weaving verse could have been a leisure year, I shall never know. No leisure hour has been vouchsafed me since the muse first bade me express the voice of Masonic emblems, myths, and incidents, in poetic form, and now I am too far down the hill of life to undertake anything further. Those who honour my poor efforts by a perusal will, therefore, kindly judge them mainly as impromptus.

In collecting together these Masonic verses, and commending them to gentle treatment from those whose fathers I knew, my fondest hope is the Poet of Freemasonry whenever he will arise, may be encouraged to devote his genius in this direction, by the generous reception that my odes and poems have ever had from the Masonic craft all round the globe." - R. M. - LaGrange Kentucky, June 24, 1875

As Dr. Morris attests his poetry was spontaneous and hurriedly written down as he traveled. He

sometimes would revisit pieces he had written. His most famous piece is "On the Level and By the Square" he revised several times but his first version is considered the best.

I believe these two poems, "A Mason's Vows" and "A Mason's Pledge" are an example of just such a revision. I consider them the root of the "*On Yonder Book*" charge because in the first verse of *The Mason's Pledge* we find the words "**on yonder altar**" and in *The Mason's Vow*, he has changed the order of some of the words and after the second verse has added a chorus "**on yonder book that oath I took, and will I break it never....**". Here is a side by side comparison of the poems: [Below on the next page – Ed]

“The Mason’s Pledge”

Brother, hearken, while I tell you,

What we Masons pledged to do,
When, prepared at yonder altar,
We assumed the Mason's vow!
Foot and knee, breast, hand and cheek
Harken while I make them speak!

Foot to foot, on mercy's errand,
When we hear a brother's cry,
Hungry, thirsty, barefooted, naked,
With God's mercy let us fly.
This of all our thoughts the chief,
How to give him quick relief.

Knee to knee, in earnest praying,
None but God to hear or heed,
All our woes and sins confessing,
Let us for each other plead;
By the spirit of our call,
Let us pray for brothers all.

Hand to back, a brother's falling,
Look, his burdens are too great.
Stretch the generous hand and hold him
Up before it is too late.
The right arm's a friendly prop,
Made to hold a brother up.

Breast to breast, in sacred casket,
At life's center let us seal
Every truth to us entrusted,
Nor one holy thing reveal!
What a Mason vows to shield,
Let him die, but never yield.

Cheek to cheek, in timely whisper
When the tempter strives to win,
Urge the brother's bounden duty,
Show him the approaching sin,
Point to him the deadly snare,
Save him with a brother's care.

Brother, let us often ponder

What we Masons pledged to do,
When, prepared at yonder altar,

“The Mason’s Vow”

Hearken Brothers, while I tell you,
What we Masons pledge to do,
When prepared at yonder Altar,
We assume the Mason's Vows,
Foot and knee, breast hand and cheek,
Listen while we make them speak:

Foot to foot on mercy's errand,
When we hear a Brother's cry,
Hungry, thirsty, barefoot, naked,
In GOD'S mercy let us fly,
This, of all our thoughts the chief,
how to give him quick relief.

Chorus:

~ **On yonder book that oath I took, ~**
~ **And break it will I never, ~**
~ **But swear by this, and this, and this, ~**
~ **For ever and for ever.~**

Knee to knee while humbly praying,
None but GOD to hear and heed,
All our woe's and sin confessing,
Let us for each other plead,
By the spirit of our call,
Let us pray for Brother's all:

Repeat Chorus:

Breast to breast in sacred casket,
At lifes center let us seal,
All the truths to us entrusted,
Nor one holy thing reveal,
What a Mason vows to shield,
Let him die, but never yield.

Repeat Chorus:

Hand to back, a Brother's falling,
Look, his burdens are too great,
Stretch the generous hand and hold him
Up before it is too late,
This right arm's a friendly prop,
Just made to hold a Brother up:

Repeat Chorus:

Cheek to cheek in silent whisper,
When the Tempter tries to win,
Urge a Brother's bounden duty,
Show to him the approaching sin,
Point out to him the deadly snare,
Save him by a Brother's care:

Repeat Chorus:

Of times, Brother's, let us ponder,
What we Masons pledge to do,
When prepared at yonder Altar,
We assume the Mason's vow's,
Foot and knee, breast hand and cheek,
Of times warning, let them speak.

We assumed the Mason's vow;
Foot and knee, breast, hand and cheek,
Let these oft our duties speak.

Repeat Chorus:

Now here is “*On Yonder Book*” charge to compare to the poems.

<p>“On Yonder Book”</p> <p>In Masons' Lodge with darkened eyes, And cable tow about you, You swore to keep all mysteries That Masons keep and Masons prize; The Brothers' secret whispered low; The words they speak, the things they do, In mystic manner taught you,</p> <p>On yonder book, that oath you took, And you should break it never, But stand by this___, and this___, and this___, Forever and forever.</p> <p><i>{Give DG / S / Step of EA Deg}</i> You swore to answer and obey The summons sent you duly, By Brothers' hand or Lodge away; You swore that you would never stray From ancient laws and rules that bound Freemasons in the days renowned, But would observe them truly.</p> <p>On yonder book, that oath you took, And you should break it never, But stand by this(Dg/Fc), and this (S/Fc), and this(Stp/Fc), Forever and forever.</p> <p><i>{Give DG / S / Step of FC Deg.}</i> You swore with generous gifts, to care For those in sorrow stricken, The Brother on the darkened square, The mourner with disheveled hair, The orphan doomed, alas! to stray Along life's cold and cheerless way, Whose tears gush forth unhidden.</p> <p>On yonder book, that oath you took, And you should break it never, But stand by this___, and this___, and this___, Forever and forever.</p> <p><i>{Give DG / S / Step of MM Deg.}</i></p>	<p>You swore with honesty to deal With each true heart around you; That "honor bright should ever be Unbroken bond" 'twixt him and you Nor wrong, nor guile, nor cruel fraud Shall ever break the holy cord With which that vow hath bound you</p> <p>On yonder book, that oath you took, And you should break it never, But stand by this___, and this___, and this___, Forever and forever.</p> <p><i>Point to Great Ls, Lesser Ls, & Letter</i> You swore the chastity to keep, Of woman true and tender, Of Masons' widow, wife or child, His mother, sister, undefiled -- Those pure and innocent, whose love Make Masons' home like that above; You are the sworn defender.</p> <p>On yonder book, that oath you took, And you should break it never, But stand by this (GHSD1), and this (2), and this (3), Forever and forever.</p> <p><i>{GHS Distress is given thrice}</i> (The Lodge is called up at this point)</p> <p>These are our vows, Brethren, our care, And may such light be given In answer to our earnest prayer, That we may do and dare All that God's sacred laws enjoin, So, when the evening shades pass o'er us, We may be found in Heaven.</p> <p>For, on yonder book, that oath we took, And we will break them never, But stand by this___, and this___, and this___, Forever and forever.</p> <p><i>{Everyone gives the DG / S / Step of each degree}</i></p>
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Now as we compare the poems we can see the similarities between them and I would hazard a guess that “The Masons Vow” was the charge found in the Oklahoma Cipher of the 1890’s. Dr Morris most likely had it in mind that it would make a good final charge and included the chorus for the purpose of demonstrating the due guards of the three degrees. His work was well published by the Masonic Newspapers of the time to which, he was a major contributor and this could explain how it became part of the Oklahoma Cipher.

Again you can see that Dr. Morris’s poetry was the root of the charge used in Maine. I think that MW Bro. Hadley has borrowed the chorus from “*A Mason’s Vow*” and added new verses to produce the new “*On*

Yonder Book” or “*Candlelight Charge*” to suit the times and his Grand Lodge. We are truly blessed by having three such beautiful pieces of Masonic prose. They have been given the greatest compliment by having been copied and used time and time again.

Well the last question to be answered is probably the easiest. It was called the “*Canadian Charge*” because for years the RCMP Degree team has used this charge, which they call the “*Walking Charge*” as part of their degree presentation. They visited many lodges both in Canada and the USA exemplifying the third degree in a most impressive and beautiful portrayal of the floor work. Those who were lucky enough to see one of these presentations were duly impressed and mistook the charge presented to be the “*Canadian Charge*”.

W. Bro. Col Ian M. Donald (Ky)
November 17, 2003, Burlington Ontario.

PM. Hillcrest Lodge #594 GRC / Ensor Lodge #729 GLKy

Orillia Lodge #192 GRC, Heritage Lodge #730 GRC, / Kingsland Lodge #403 GLAr

Goel Chapter #104 OES KY, Lakeview Chapter #79 OES On.

King David Chapter #262 RAM / Murton Lodge of Perfection AASR Can.

“Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.” Samuel Johnson (Rasselas, Chap 1)

From the Great light of Masonry = “We will give it back,’ they said. ‘And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.’ Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles take and oath to do what they had promised. I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, ‘in this way may God shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep this promise. So may such a man be shaken out and emptied.’ At this the whole assembly said, ‘Amen,’ and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.” Nehemiah 6:12-13 NIV