

MASONIC ODES AND POEMS

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Masonic Odes and Poems by Robert Morris

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ROBERT MORRIS

**MASONIC ODES
AND POEMS**

MASONIC
ODES AND POEMS.

BY
ROBERT MORRIS, LL.D.

FOR THIRTY-FOUR YEARS A LABORER IN THE VINEYARD OF FREEMASONRY.

REVISED EDITION.

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TO BROTHER WILLIAM P. INNES,

OF GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN,

AN OLD FRIEND WHO KEEPS HIS FRIENDSHIP EVER BRIGHT AND NEW,

GOOD SWORD—GOOD PEN,—

THIS COMPLETE COLLECTION OF MY MASONIC ODES AND
POEMS IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED.

MASONIC ODES AND POEMS.

THE LEVEL AND THE SQUARE.

[This poem, written in August, 1854, is the most popular of the series. Fifteen musical compositions have been set to it, and either as song or declamation it has gone the rounds of the Masonic world.]

We meet upon the LEVEL, and we part upon the SQUARE :
What words of precious meaning those words Masonic are !
Come, let us contemplate them ! they are worthy of a thought ;
In the very walls of Masonry the sentiment is wrought.

We meet upon the LEVEL, though from every station come,
The rich man from his palace and the poor man from his home ;
For the rich must leave his wealth and state outside the Mason's door,
And the poor man finds his best respect upon the Checkered Floor.

We act upon the PLUMB, — 'tis the orders of our Guide, —
We walk upright in virtue's way and lean to neither side ;
Th' All-Seeing Eye that reads our hearts doth bear us witness true ;
That we still try to honor God and give each man his due.

We part upon the SQUARE, for the world must have its due :
We mingle with the multitude, a faithful Band and true ;
But the influence of our gatherings in memory is green,
And we long upon the LEVEL to renew the happy scene.

There's a World where all are equal, — we are hurrying towards it fast,
We shall meet upon the LEVEL there, when the gates of Death are pass'd ;
We shall stand before the Orient, and our Master will be there,
To try the blocks we offer with His own unerring SQUARE.

We shall meet upon the LEVEL there, but never thence depart ;
There's a Mansion, — 'tis all ready for each trusting, faithful heart ; —
There's a Mansion, and a Welcome, and a multitude is there
Who have met upon the LEVEL, and been tried upon the SQUARE.

Let us meet upon the LEVEL, then, while laboring patient here ;
Let us meet and let us labor, though the labor be severe ;
Already in the Western Sky the signs bid us prepare
To gather up our Working Tools and part upon the SQUARE.

Hands round, ye faithful Brotherhood, the bright fraternal chain,
We part upon the SQUARE below, to meet in Heaven again !
What words of precious meaning those words Masonic are, —
We meet upon the LEVEL and we part upon the SQUARE.

THE EMBLEMS OF THE CRAFT.

This selection in declaiming is joined to full esoteric accompaniments.

Who wears the SQUARE upon his breast
Does in the face of God attest,—

And in the face of man,—
That all his actions will compare
With the divine, the unerring SQUARE,
That squares great Virtue's plan:
And he erects his edifice
By *this* design, and *this*, and *this*.

Who wears the LEVEL, says that pride
Does not within his soul abide,
Nor foolish vanity;—

That man has but a common doom,
And from the cradle to the tomb
An equal destiny.
And he erects his edifice
By *this* design, and *this*, and *this*.

Who wears the PLUMB, behold how true
His words and walk! and could we view
The chambers of his soul,
Each hidden thought, so pure and good,
By the stern line of rectitude

Points up to Heaven's goal:
And he erects his edifice
By *this* design, and *this*, and *this*.

Who wears the G,—that mark divine,—
Whose very sight should banish sin,
Has faith in God alone;

His Father, Maker, Friend, he knows;
He loves and pays to God his vows
Before the eternal throne:
And he erects his edifice
By *this* design, and *this*, and *this*.

This life and beauty come to view
In *each design* our fathers drew
So glorious and sublime;
Each breathes an odor from the bloom
Of gardens bright beyond the tomb,
Beyond the flight of time,
And bids us build on *this*, and *this*,
The walls of God's own edifice.

ONE HOUR WITH YOU.

One hour with you, one hour with you,
No doubt, nor care, nor strife,
Redeems a day of sin and woe,
And gives new zest to life.
One hour with you, and you, and you,
Bright links in mystic chain—

Oh may we oft these joys renew,
And often meet again!

Your eyes with love's own language free—
Your *hand-grip*, strong and true,
Your voice, your heart, do welcome me
To spend an hour with you.

I come when morning skies are bright,
To work my Mason's due—
To labor is my chief delight,
And spend an hour with you.

I go when evening glides the west,
I breathe the fond plea,
But hope again, by fortune blest,
To spend an hour with you.

And if perchance the page is closed
On which my life is given,
I would beseech the Mason's God
That we may meet in HEAVEN!
In HEAVEN with you, and you, and you,
To join the blissful strain;
Oh may we *thers* these joys renew
And meet in HEAVEN again!

THE LETTER G.

Referred to the emblem of Deity that marks
the Lodge-East.

Deo optimo maximo. [To God, all good, all great.]

THAT NAME! I learned it at a mother's knee,
When, looking up, the fond and tearful face
Beaming upon my eyes so tenderly,
She prayed that God her little son would
bless!

THAT NAME! I spoke it when I entered here
And bowed the knee as each Freemason
must;

From my heart's center with sincerity,
I said, "In God, in God is all my trust!"

THAT NAME! I saw it o'er the Master's chair,
"The Hieroglyphic bright," and bending low
Paid solemn homage at the emblem there,
That speaks of God, before whom all must
bow!

THAT NAME! in silence I invoked its power,
When dangers thickened and when death
was nigh;
In solemn awe I felt the death-clouds lower,
And whispered, "God be with me if I die!"

THAT NAME! the last upon our faltering
tongue.

Ever death shall still it, it shall surely be;
The PASS-WORD to the high Celestial throng,
Whose Lord is God in truth and majesty!

THAT NAME then, Brothers, always gently
speak!

Before your father's, mother's name, re-
vered

Such blessings from His gracious hand we
take!

Oh, be His honor to our souls endeared!

THE DRUNKARD'S GRAVE.

I stood beside the grave,
The last and dreamless bed;
One whom I knew in other days,
Lay there amidst the dead;
His head towards the setting sun;
For oh, his life and pilgrimage were done.

'Twas evening's pensive hour,—
The rich and palmed west
Had called earth's laborers,—weary ones,—
To home delights and rest;
Bird-songs and voices of the day
Had melted all in evening's hush away.

Then came upon my soul
A rush of memories:
I seemed to see beside that grave
My friend of other days:
His beaming eye,—his generous hand,—
The largest, brightest, readiest of our band.

I seemed to hear once more
His voice so full and free,—
*My hand,—my heart,—my purse,—my life,
I give from me to thee!*
The scalding tears my grief confessed
While night and darkness settled o'er the
west.

For oh, I thought me then
Of all his sad decline:
He fell from honor's topmost height,
The victim of one sin!
Yes, he, the generous and the brave,
Lay there dishonored in a *Drunkard's
Grave!*

Long years and hard he strove
Against the syren cup;
Wife, children, Brotherhood combined
To bear him kindly up,

And cheer him midst that mighty woe
With which the unhappy drunkard has to
do.

We plead by *this* and *this*;^{*}
We urged his pledged word;
We told him what a shameful tale.
His story would afford;
We gathered 'round him all our band
And warned and threatened with a stern
command.

In vain: too strong his chain—
Our cable-tow too weak!
That cursed thirst had burned his soul,
He would no warning take:
He broke the heart that leaned on his,
And brought himself, at last, at last, to this.

His sun went down at noon;—
His life expired in spring;—
His work undone, his column broke,—
A ruined ionian thing!
Expelled from Masonry, his grave
No emblems of the ancient Art can have.

I turned away in tears;—
The night had settled round;—
I heard, in cypress-branches nigh,
The owl's complaining sound,
Then homeward fled, amidst the gloom,
And left my Brother in the Drunkard's
tomb!

THRENODY; HYMN OF DEATH.

This hymn, in recitation, is illustrated by eight
Craft emblems.

So falls the last of the old forest trees,
Within whose shades we wandered with de-
light,
Moss-grown and hoary, yet the birds of heaven
Loved in its boughs to linger and to sing.
The summer-winds made sweetest music there,
The soft spring-showers hung their brightest
drops,
Glistening and cheerful on the mossy spray,
And to the last, that ancient vigorous oak
Teemed with ripe fruitage.

Now the Masons mourn,
Through Temple-chambers, their Grand Mas-
ter fallen!
The clear Intelligence,—the genial Soul,—
The lips, replete with wisdom,—quenched
and stifled!

^{*} The Square and Compass.