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VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH  
650 Fisgard Street, Victoria B.C. V8W 1R6

Address presented on September 21, 1982 by  
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### **MASONIC POETRY**

1982 - 7

Tonight Brethren, I want to introduce my talk with the title of this Lodge, the Lodge of Education and Research. Education, that tonight I hope to introduce you to a part of masonry I think tends to be overshadowed. Research: - that you will be influenced enough to research further into the ideas I present. As an educator, I work through a very simple presentation of new material to my students in class. I introduce the topic, I assist students to use the topic with examples. I have the students try examples of the topic by themselves. If you find that my presentation tends towards a classroom situation, then I do apologize now, but I think that at the end of it all, you will be the better for it. After all what is the purpose of this Lodge than to educate, to teach you, something new, something in a different light, something that will make you take note and perhaps lead you to greater realms of Masonic light. I have titled my talk tonight (and here was my first problem, exactly how to word the talk so that you fully understand the message).

Title: MASONIC POETRY: A book review.  
: A poet, a performance, a participation.  
:A biographical sketch of Rob Morris, LL.D. his work, his 1882 influence.

Whatever the title, I would like to consider tonight an experience which you all will be able to remember, because you made part of it happen. I recognize that such a statement can be threatening to many and can cause some of you to slip further into your seats and try to hide behind the person in front of you. You would rather listen than be involved. But if you consider that the prime motive to your presence here is to be educated,- for it to be even better be an active listener rather than a passive receiver of information,-- you will then learn faster and sounder. So I hope that with my help, WE can make something happen here that has never before occurred.

I have three reasons for speaking to you on this subject tonight. One, I have for many years enjoyed poetry and the teaching of it. I have found that students today are far more creative than they used to be, especially in poetry writing because they have been allowed to express their thoughts in many original ways. Blank poetic form is more readily acceptable today than years ago. I do well at writing Poetry, therefore I like poetry. Two, no one in this room has read the book I am reviewing tonight for over five years, because I have had this book that long from this library. Three, I want to return the book... after five years. The book is "The Poetry of Freemasonry" by Rob Morris, published in 1884.

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(Briefly) his biography. Dr. Robert Morris was born in 1818 near Boston, Mass. His parents were teachers, when old enough he followed in their footsteps. He traveled much and finally settled in Oxford, Miss. He continued his teaching there, married and raised his family. After 37 years he moved to La Grange, Kentucky. He died in 1888. In his 70 years of life he became a most distinguished masonic lecturer on the circuit in North America, even Europe. By the end of his life he had published 73 works on Masonry, Religion, Sectarianism and Science.

His rise to fame came through his poetry. He commented once that even though there were many poets who were members of the craft collectively, they had written scarcely anything masonic. Names like Moore, Scott, Burns, Cowper and many more. Ah! But you say Burns did write masonic poetry! Yes, he did, just one poem. For that, he was crowned the Poet Laureate of Freemasonry. It took half a million masons and 200 poems before Rob Morris was also crowned Poet Laureate of Freemasonry.

This book: contains some 300 of his poems, some one and two verses long, others one to two pages long. It is said that many of them were written on stage coaches, train carriages, steamboats and many after lodge closed. No matter what subject he knew of in masonry, he wrote his feelings on that subject. For example from the section called "The Symbolism of the Lodge" we find titles like "The Square, Perfect Ashlars, The Working Tools, The Apron, Gavel Song, The Level, The Trowel, The Public Grand Honours, The Pillars of the Porch, The Five Points of Fellowship, The Sacred Cord Thrice Wound" and many more. This is the largest section in the book. In another section titled "Masonry of Christian Knighthood" thoughts are drawn from the Christian Bible, The Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. This section also includes many poems of the Civil War and finally one called "The Utterances of the Sword", a dramatic poem embodying in nineteen demonstrations, the authorized movements of the sword exercise of Knights Templar.

In his Masonic travels and from the reading of his poems, we learn he was very knowledgeable on every aspect of Craft Masonry and its concordant bodies. Raised in 1849, he was a member of the Royal Arch, Knights Templar, Scottish Rite. He received the Order of Past Grand Master in 1858 in Grand Lodge of Kentucky. He held Honourary Degrees and memberships to the tune of 150. He also composed and communicated for the order of the Eastern Star in 1850, the superior degrees. One can go on and on with what this one man did for Freemasonry. For me, there certainly is not a mason alive today who contributed as much as he did. That, my brethren is a very brief account of his life. I mentioned earlier that I became interested in this because of my interest in teaching poetic form to my students at school. I like to read poems to them and that has made me read more and more poems by the classic poets of our time.

When I was raised in my mother lodge, I was even more attentive, when the S.W. concluded his lecture to me, after my raising, with these words: 'For my brother, "There is a land where all are equal, We are hastening to it fast. ...

For the first time in my masonic career, I had heard poetry read. When I asked the source of this poem, no one could give me an answer.

"It was in the ritual. Perhaps the editors made it up," was all they could tell me. Imagine my surprise, three years later, when finding this book on the shelves of our Lodge of Education and Research Library and to my astonishment, the first poem I found was "The Level and the Square." Part of that poem had the lines spoken by the S.W. in his lecture in the 3rd degree. That led me into the rest of the book and Rob Morris 'poetry. Which brings me to the second part of my talk tonight.....a performance.

My first poem of a true incident that happened on the Mississippi River in 1862 "The Grand Hailing Sign", the story of a man deserted on an island, weak, close to death

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Shipwrecked, nigh drowned, alone upon the sands,  
    Chilled with the flood and with the frosty air  
Hungry and wounded, lo a Mason stands,  
    And looks despairingly on nature there.

Her coldest frown the face of nature wears;  
    She offers to the shipwrecked but a grave!  
No fruits, sustaining life, the forest bears  
    No cheering flowers now yet a sheltering cave.

The brake impenetrable closes round;  
Thence the dense clouds of stinging insects come,  
Maddening with venom every cruel wound,  
Vexing the spirit with their ceaseless hum.

No hope, no hope! the soul within him dies;  
    He seeks a sepulcher within the sands,  
Once more unto his mother's breast he flies,  
    And scoops a self-made grave with bleeding hands.

The river moans in solemn strains his dirge;  
    The unfeeling birds upon the tree tops sing,  
Or in the distant skies their pinions urge  
    Southward to regions of perpetual spring.

He bids farewell to life; its joys so sweet;  
    Children and mother,-- happy, happy home,--  
But yesterday, ran out his steps to greet,  
    And bless his coming who no more shall come.

He bids farewell, and seals it with a prayer;  
    That lonely beach resounded with the word.  
"Keep them, All Gracious, in thy tender care,  
    Thou art the widow's, Thou the orphans' God."

Then downward lying on earth's kindly lap,  
    He draws the sand as a thick blanket o'er,  
And strives in dreamless quietude to sleep,  
    Vexed by life's fears and hungerings no more.

But hark, O joy! the voice, the voice of man!  
Springing with heart elastic from his bed,  
    Life's strong desires in him revive again,  
And hopes that seemed but now forever fled.

A gallant boat doth down the river come,  
    A hundred men upon its margin crowd;  
Surely among the many there are some  
    Who know the Mystic Sign, the Holy Word!

He makes the Signal and the Signal Cry;  
    The pitying crowds his frantic gestures see;

28.

The echoing shores his solemn words swept by,  
    "O, God, is there no help, no help for me?"

28.

Alas, no help! 'tis thus that traitors work;  
Ay, even so full many a gallant boat  
Decoyed by pirates, as they grimly lurk,  
Has met the brand, or the destructive shot.

Yearning to stop and save him, how they gaze!  
Some answering who know not what they do,  
Some weep, some turn away in sheer amaze  
And so the vessel vanishes from view.

And then is death and solitude again;  
Months pass; a wary hunter hurrying by  
Sees on the beach the sad decay of man,  
And gives a grave for kind humanity.

And in the silence of the winter night,  
A voice from that poor skeleton is heard:  
"The heart of man is smitten with a blight,  
There is no help but in the pitying God!"

On a lighter side my next reading is a fantasy composition to ridicule the tendency of the time to smarten up the Lodge Work and turn the W.M. into a disciplinarian. "Perishing on the Rise". The story is of a Master who enjoys keeping the lodge at attention and unfortunately having drilled them so well, that when he falls back off his chair and breaks his neck, the brethren stand there not daring to move because the W.M. has not ordered them to sit. See if you can follow the story.

#### PERISHING ON THE RISE

Old Jephtha Hoys had drilled his boys  
With gavel, plumb and square, sir,  
Till every craft a perfect shaft  
Stood perpendicular: sir.  
Each Friday night 'twas his delight  
To call them to the hall, sir,  
Till each could "cut and call, " sir.

One evening late it was his fate,  
In leaning back his chair, sir,  
The window glass right through to pass,  
And push the thing too far, sir;  
In fact, he fled, heels over head,  
Clear down unto the ground, sir;  
With mighty noise old Jephtha Hoys  
A broken neck had found, sir.

The neighbors there, with tender care,  
Prepared him for the tomb, sir,  
And on the way, a long array  
Went out with grief and gloom, sir;  
Yet many said, with whispering dread,  
29.

"No Mason here is seen sir!"  
Strange to declare, not one was there,  
To cast the mystic green, sir!

29.

I'll tell you where those Masons were,--  
    Prepare for much surprise, sir,--  
When Jephtha Hoys forsook his boys,  
    He left them on the rise, sir!  
The Brethren stood straight as they could,  
    Till he should bid them sit, sir;  
And as he's gone with no return,  
    Why, there they're standing yet, sir.

The Tyler bore, outside the door,  
    The pangs of cold and thirst, sir;  
The Wardens twain do still remain,  
    And will till they are dust, sir;  
The Deacons stand with rod in hand,  
    Not one will budge the least, sir:  
And, strange to own, each skeleton  
    Is facing to the East, sir.

Then be my task humbly to ask  
    Each Master this to read, sir,  
And beg and pray to them, that they  
    The moral well may heed, sir;  
When calling up the mystic group,  
    To stand and catechize, sir,  
Think of those boys of Jephtha Hoys,  
    Who perished on the rise, sir.

Now simply titled Gavel. Which is your favourite working tool?

GAVEL

"We meet upon the Level, " is the Senior Warden's word,  
As he lifts his mystic column in the West--  
"We act upon the Plumb"-- is the Junior's quick accord,  
And to work the brothers hasten with a zest.

But the Gavel is my fancy  
Over Level, Square and Plumb,  
For it marks the very spirit of command,  
In its ringing notes methodic  
Every dissonance is dumb,  
And a willing spirit hovers o'er the band.

"We part upon the Square" is the fiat of the East  
When the hour of ten commands us to depart,--  
And the Junior lifts his column, and the Tyler is released,  
And we hurry to the welcome of the heart.  
But the Gavel is my fancy, I shall never cease to cry--'  
Tis Celestial music dropping to the earth;  
30.

'Tis a memory of the angels As they heard it in the sky,  
When the King from chaos called creation forth.

In the weird and mystic circle, solemn silence brooding round,  
There's a something all invisible but strong,  
Maybe summoned from the Highest by the Gavel's holy sound,

And it brings the better spirit to the throng.  
Oh the Gavel, Master's Gavel, It shall ever have my praise  
While the Book of Symbol whisper "God is love";  
In His mighty Name it speaketh,  
All contention it allays, Till the Lodge below is like the Lofdge.)dg above,

Next the third part of a four part poem called "The Culling of Quarry".

#### CULLING THE CAP STONE

The Master to the Quarry came once more,  
Two Mason kings attending -- one of Tyre,  
Pillar of strength through all the seven years' toil,  
Whose fourscore thousands had the sacred Mount  
With unexampled glory crowned;  
And one, great David's greater progeny  
The wise, the matchless SOLOMON,  
The world-renowned, favorite of God and man,  
For whom these thousands and this mystic plan.  
Proudly between, the aged Master walked,  
And all who saw the Architect declared:  
"This is his triumph day, his crowning day,  
Today he seeks the cap stone!"

It was so --

Block upon block the walls had risen up,  
North, South, East, West, the roof inclosing in,  
And each in ghostly silence to its place;  
Pillars and porch colossal faced the East;  
The Checkered Pavement showed its mystic face.  
Rich curtains veiled the portals of the Fane;  
The glittering rays of diamonds displayed  
Device of cherubim and Judah's palm  
Graven on every wall; -- the work was done;  
Moriah from her deepest base to crown,  
Was hidden 'neath this monument of God.

On bended knees the Quarrymen are grouped  
Around the three Grand Masters, quick to hear  
The final order; down -- once, twice and thrice  
The Gavel falls upon the neighboring stone  
And every ear intent, they cheerful wait  
To hear the will and pleasure.

"Craftsmen, ho!

A stone of matchless worth!  
From deepest crypt bring forth the block to light,  
A Cope Stone broad and beautiful and bright;  
Ye veterans seek it, ye can best attest  
What prize of Nature crowns our Temple best!"

31.

'Twas found, 'twas wrought, and in an after day  
(He whom they loved had passed from life away)  
The exulting thousands looked aloft and sighed  
To see his Signet on the stone; but now they sing.

Hail, favorite of the skies,  
Hail, Sovereign great and wise,  
Whose God hath answered thee in smoke and flame  
This day the Scribe hath penned

A record that shall lend  
Thee and thy works to everlasting fame!

Hail, Hiram, builder king --  
The cedars thou did'st bring  
In princely state from snowy Lebanon,  
    Shall speak thy royal bloom  
In beauty and perfume,  
While vernal leaf shall catch the kindling sun!

Hail, thou departed one,  
The loving widow's son,  
In life beloved and best beloved in death --  
This Temple, through all time, Shall speak in notes sublime  
Thy skill unequalled and unshaken faith.

Hail to the finished Fane!  
All hail, again, again  
Thy form magnificent our eye doth see,  
Midst streaming fire and cloud  
That vainly would enshroud  
Its glories from the 'Omniscient Deity!

Hail the Mark Master's Sign!  
How from those letters shine  
The mystic meaning that inspires the heart!  
They speak of laboring days,  
Of blessed rest and peace -  
They prompt us each to choose the better part!

Jerusalem, farewell!  
Fond memories shall tell  
    How we have builded, how fraternized here:  
The might of Israel's God  
Spread o'er thy hills abroad  
To crown thee with all glory, year by year!

Hail now our long-hoped home  
Land of our birth, we come;  
Ah yearned for, prayed for, long and ardently!  
Upon they children now  
A mother's gifts bestow,  
In life a blessing and death a sigh!  
32.

"High 12" Morris' footnote to this is worth quoting. "The custom of Lodge Refreshment, time-honoured and sanctioned by the example of the noblest and best of American lodges, might well be renewed. The Order with us has too much of the pulpit and too little of the table. A due intermixture of both was what the craft in olden times regarded." Even true today.

TWELVE, HIGH TWELVE

Now we hail the Junior Warden  
    Lo, his column crowns the South!  
Drop the heavy tools of labor,

Give the time to song and mirth.  
Twelve, High Twelve, the hour is sounding,  
    Noonday sun is in the sky;  
Come, the Social Lodge surrounding,  
    Filled with sympathy and joy.

Corn that feeds the soul in fatness,  
    Oil in radiant truth to shine,  
Wine that sparkles in love-promptings,--  
    Come, ye weary ones, and dine!  
Twelve, High Twelve, the hour is sounding,  
    Noonday sun is in the sky;  
Come, the Social Lodge surrounding,  
    Filled with sympathy and joy.

How the Social Fire enkindles  
    These true souls on every side!  
Could we ask for richer wages  
    Than Our Master doth provide?  
Twelve, High Twelve, the hour is sounding,  
    Noonday sun is in the sky;  
Come, the Social Lodge surrounding,  
    Filled with sympathy and joy.

Lord Jehovah, bless our meeting,  
    Thou this time of joy hath given!  
'Tis for thee we toil and labor,  
    Own our workmanship in Heaven!  
When High Twelve by death is sounded,  
    And eternal rest shall come,  
Grant us bountiful refreshment  
    In thine Upper Lodge at home!

Finally the poem that started this all for me. "The Level and The Square"

#### THE LEVEL AND THE SQUARE

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,-  
With the highest and the lowest and the rarest they are fraught.

33.

We meet upon the level, though from every station come--  
The King from out his palace and the poor man from his home;  
For the one must leave his diadem without the Mason's door,  
And the other finds his true respect upon the checkered floor.

We part upon the square, for the world must have its due;  
We mingle with its multitude, a cold, unfriendly crew;  
But the influence of our gathering 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 toward it fast, --  
We shall meet upon the level there when the gates of death are past;  
We shall stand before the Oriend and our Master will be there,  
To try the blocks we offer by His own unerring square.



We shall meet upon the level there, but never thence depart;  
There's a Mansion, --'tis all ready for each zealous, 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 labouring patient here,--  
Let us meet and let us labor, tho' the labor seem 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 Ghiblinites, the bright, fraternal chain;  
We part upon the square below to meet in Heaven again.  
O what words of precious meaning those words Masonic are,--  
We meet upon the Level, and, we part upon the Square.

Finally to part three of my talk .....a participation. Poetry falls into two categories, metered and blank verse. If you are starting out as a tender-foot poet, the latter might be easier to try. It will give you the faster return of work that reads well, is clearly understood and is most successful. Poets also fall into two categories, those who can express their feelings well and have done so and those who can express their feelings well and have not done so. Most of us are of the latter persuasion.

How do you get into poetry writing?

Three simple steps: One, begin in blank verse and begin simply  
Two, develop length and intensity.  
Three, work daily.

Don't lose your jottings. You may find a simple one line expression will fit into a later poem. Use the dictionary and a thesaurus. Read plenty of poetry.

Here is a starter. Three liner poetry. Noun, Verb, Adverb  
(An exercise in stretching your vocabulary) Not everything is good.... but this is a start.

D.D.G.Ms  
Direct           1st letter is also the same  
Disinterestingly

Worshipful Masters           Tylers           Masons  
Lead Guard Mingle  
Carefully   Silently   Monthly

34.

Five line poetry. Topic  
two adjectives  
three adjectives  
a statement of the topic in four words

topic

Masons           Bible  
Friendly, honest Truthful, purposeful  
Quiet, humble, industrious   Guiding, directing, leading;  
Men who seek answers   Thus are lives fuller  
Masons           Bible.

Brethren, it has been my pleasure to talk to you tonight. I hope that through

all of this you have learned but one thing, there is yet another side to freemasonry, as yet unexplored to its fullest potential. I hope too, that you will go away and try to write something in poetic form. Who knows we may have in our midst the third Poet Laureate of Freemasonry.

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(The opinions expressed in the following paper are those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research.)

CANADIAN MASONRY IN NORTHWEST EUROPE

From the period 1951 to present.

A Synopsis of a Talk given by Brother R.E. CLARK , Mt. Shepherd Lodge #159  
B.C.R.

OCTOBER 18, 1982

1982 - 8

Worshipful Master and Brethren.

My talk tonight is about Canadian Masonry in Northwest Europe from the period 1951 to the present. But first may I give you my background. I am an officer in the Canadian Forces and I have served with our NATO Brigade in Europe for thirteen years, during the last thirty years.

My last tour ended in 1980 where I was a member of DOMINION No. 848, A.F.& A.M. in Baden Baden, West Germany under the American and Canadian Grand Lodge of Germany within the United Grand Lodges of Germany. Canadian Masonry first arrived in Europe on a permanent basis with the deployment of the Canadian Air Division to France and Germany in 1951. The members of the Air Division were posted overseas for a minimum three years. Very shortly after their arrival, members of the Craft found that to attend local Lodges presented a language barrier. This barrier in language caused the first Canadian Lodges to be founded in 1955.. Five Lodges in all were instituted during this period at Baden Baden, Zweibrucken, West Germany, Marville, Metz, and Grostenquin in France. All were instituted under the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario and used the Canadian work.

Most of these Lodges first held their meetings on the Air Stations and in later years moved into established French and German Lodge Temples in the local community.

As distance from Canada became a problem for Grand Lodge, in the late 1950's the Canadian German Lodges joined with their American Brethren in NATO in making the American and Canadian Grand Lodge of West Germany. To this day 44 American and 2 Canadian Lodges makeup this jurisdiction. In North Germany, the Canadian Army which was deployed with British Army of the Rhine, brethren traveled to local British Military Lodges which were numerous in the area.

In 1961 the policy of two year postings to Germany was changed for the Army to a minimum of three years. Naturally following the policy change "MAPLE LEAF LODGE" was formed at

36.

Soest Germany. This Lodge remained a Canadian Lodge until 1970 when it was turned over to the famous 7th Armoured Division of the Brits "The Desert Rats" on the reorganization of Canada's Military Commitment to NATO in 1970.

I believe that "Maple Leaf Lodge" which is still going today was the first

Canadian Lodge to be given to the Brits. Maybe then, this will help repay our debt to the Grand Lodge of the United Kingdom for giving Masonry to Canada many years ago.

I would also like to make note of Masonry in Germany. In 1934 Germany under Hitler banned all Masonic Lodges. As Mason's and Masonry cannot be legislated out of existence, it went underground. To assist brethren in recognizing each other during this time, German Masons adopted the blue forget-me-not flower. This emblem which I wear was adopted by German Masons officially in 1947 when the German Grand Lodge was reformed as their official emblem.

When I reflect back on my years in Europe, one cannot but be impressed with the flexibility of Masonry and Masons. This period of time demonstrated to me that our teachings which have survived throughout the ages, has the depth and flexibility to meet the challenges of the future, what ever they may be.