

## Most Worshipful Brother Nelson M. Williams:

Worth the Price for Freemasonry

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*As the focus of this writing is not specifically to be an encyclopedic telling of the life of MWB Williams, most dates and events within the text are employed to illustrate the activity of this prolific Mason and do not represent an exhaustion of the positions, titles and timeline of his life. However, a chronology of MWB Williams' life is provided as an appendix that follows the text of the article if the reader is so interested and inclined.*

The Grand Lodge of Ohio's biography for MWB Williams reveals an extensive list of dates indicating a very active Masonic life.<sup>1</sup> Nelson Monroe Williams was initiated into the fraternity in 1887, presided over Washington Lodge No. 17 as the Worshipful Master in 1890 and 1891, then continued his Masonic career only seven years later by presiding over Masons in Ohio as the Grand Master in 1897-1898. He continued his Masonic endeavors long after his tenure as Grand Master and eventually presided over all of the York Rite Grand Bodies<sup>2</sup> and was coroneted as a 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree Inspector General Honorary of the Scottish Rite. The introduction he received from MWB Ike W. Robinson during his appointment as Trustee of the Ohio Masonic Home in 1902 demonstrates the Masonic activity of MWB Williams: Past Master, Past High Priest, Past Illustrious Master, Past Commander, Past Grand Orator, Past Grand Master, Grand King of Grand Chapter, Grand Captain of the Guard in Grand Council, Conductor of the Grand Council of Anointed High Priests, Sovereign Grand Inspector General, Member of the Royal Order of Scotland, and "one of Hamilton's leading lawyers and foremost citizens."<sup>3</sup> However, as impressive as the list of accomplishments may be for any man or Mason, numbers, titles, and dates rarely tell the whole story of a man's life.

In a self-published bulletin, printed near the end of his life, MWB Williams reminisced about his experiences in Masonry to answer the question, "Freemasonry: Worth the Price?" In that bulletin, he describes his initiation into the fraternity as follows:

"In the first place I knew but little as to what Freemasonry is, or what it stands for, when I petitioned for the degrees. I knew something as to its antiquity, something as to its history and something as to the personnel of its membership in my community, but I knew nothing as to its tenets and precepts and, of course, nothing about its ritualism, or its method of inculcating moral duties, but oh, how vividly do I remember how the nervousness and uncertainty left me when I learned shortly after entering the Lodge room, that faith or trust in God is the first great principle of Freemasonry. Then a little later I saw the Holy Bible open before me, and I heard lessons of wisdom read from its sacred pages, and I knew at once that I was uniting with a great moral agency whose membership must of necessity move along a high plane of human action, and I felt elevated and lifted up by the thought that I had been considered worthy to hold membership in such a splendid organization ..."<sup>4</sup>

Nelson Williams was not a young lad, nearing his 34<sup>th</sup> birthday, when he petitioned Washington Lodge for initiation and had already lived a full life, by the standards of many at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the age of 18, Williams qualified to teach and did so for two years in his home town of St. Paris, Ohio. Only a few days before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, the young Nelson Williams moved the 75 miles to Hamilton, Ohio to apprentice in the law office of his uncle, Israel Williams. Two years later he was admitted to practice law by the Butler County Bar Association.<sup>5</sup> Early in his legal career, Williams began to focus on settlement of estates and examination of titles in a probate court practice eventually becoming the attorney for Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company of Philadelphia and the Dollar Savings Company of Hamilton. In 1880, at 26 years of age, he opened his own law practice and took Susannah Mallory, the daughter of one of Hamilton's pioneering physicians, as his bride. Although he may have seemed an accomplished individual to the outside observer, he described himself at this time in his life when he first gained entry into the Lodge, as an individual who lacked social qualities and did not form friendships easily or quickly. He summarized himself as "a green country boy" who "only felt extremely comfortable on the ball field" or "in a wrestling match."<sup>6</sup> Regardless of where he may have believed his journey to have begun, the community in which he lived considered him to be a highly respected and valued member of society. We consider the words that were used to describe his 90 years of life through his obituary, "Mr. Williams enjoyed [a] place of distinction and prominence, but...was a gentleman of a rapidly fading 'old school,' ...extremely modest,...[and] possessed a rare flare in the personality of one so dignified."<sup>7</sup>

With only this introductory information at hand, one might ask, how does an awkward, green country boy become one of the most prominent men in Ohio (and arguably in the United States and beyond)? This author would suggest the answer to be Freemasonry. In his own words, "No man ever needed friends more than I did. I found them in Freemasonry... I knew that I was as big as the biggest, even though as small as the smallest."<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>, it was common for men, particularly men of prominence, to claim membership in several fraternal organizations as well as secret societies. In fact, a large number of affiliations was so common that it was noteworthy to several authors to indicate that Mr. Williams was a member of "only one secret society", Freemasonry.<sup>9</sup> This limited membership suggests the importance Williams placed on the teachings of the Masonic organization and a level of fulfillment that he must have received from the fraternity. It suggests he was looking for more than memberships, but instead was seeking meaning in the membership he chose. That meaning may best be illustrated by the manner in which he described his fellow Masons:

Men who "exemplify in their daily walk of life, the teachings, the purity of purpose, the humbleness of heart, uprightness of character and wonderful love of humanity...Of course, most of us do not measure up to this high ideal, but it is something to have an ideal to work up to."<sup>10</sup>

These were the men he was drawn to in order to improve himself. These were the men with whom he knew he needed to associate from whom he wanted to learn. There is no evidence in his own writings or within the minutes of the Washington Lodge to indicate that Williams came from a family of Masons or that he was in a particularly close relationship with any members of the Lodge when he petitioned. In fact, other than his initiation on February 9, 1887 (in a meeting that included two other initiations, a raising and an officer's meeting), being passed on May 3 (along with two others) and being one of two brothers raised on June 9, there is virtually no mention of Nelson Williams in the minutes of the Lodge until he was elected

as Senior Warden only two years after being made a Master Mason.<sup>11</sup> The following year he was elected as the Worshipful Master for two terms and was productive at making masons. Under the leadership of Worshipful Master Nelson M. Williams, Washington Lodge initiated 14, passed 14, raised 13, affiliated 5 and reinstated 10 brothers.<sup>12</sup>

In the time between when Williams sat as Master of the Lodge in Hamilton until his election as Grand Master of Masons of Ohio, it does not appear that he ever slowed in his Masonic travels. Less than 1 year after his tenure as Worshipful Master ended, Nelson Williams was appointed to the first of two consecutive terms as the Grand Orator (appointed October 20, 1892 and October 19, 1893). However, in that same year, Williams also served as the Scribe for Hamilton Chapter 21, the Deputy Master for Hamilton Council No. 19, and Captain General for Hamilton Commandery No. 41. October of 1895, 1896 and 1897 found him in the chairs of the Senior Grand Warden, Deputy Grand Master and Grand Master, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Through his advancement and in his growth within the fraternity, it is clear that MWB Williams became a great advocate of Freemasonry and an even better communicator.

He was formally charged with the external communication of the Grand Lodge when appointed as the Foreign Correspondent of the Grand Lodge of Ohio. He continued in that capacity for eight years as well as sitting on the Finance Committee, the Committee of Jurisprudence and the Masonic Home Board of Trustees “for many years.”<sup>14</sup> His presence, opinion and communications were of such significance that his absence was noted in the Proceedings of several Grand Lodges. For example, MWB Isaac Kinsey, Grand Master of Ohio for 1918 indicated, with regret, Williams’ first absence at the Ohio Grand Lodge for the first time in 29 years and described him as follows, “He is truly a past master in the art of reviewing Proceedings, setting forth everything of importance in an interesting manner and adding wholesome Masonic counsel in a kindly spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

However, the communications Nelson Williams became best known for were his works of reminiscence and counsel in the form of poetry. Although highly sought after as a speaker within Masonic circles, he was equally popular for his thoughts on non-Masonic topics. Publicly, one of the first records of William’s poetic prowess came when the city of Hamilton gathered to send Company E of the 1st Regiment, Ohio National Guard off to Cuba on April 25, 1898. He wrote the verse “Good Bye, Brave Boys”<sup>16</sup> for the occasion and delivered it at a public send-off following a city-wide parade. Williams also offered his rhymes for the entertainment in less public venues. In 1892, a surprise party for Mr. Frank Whitaker concluded when “Nelson Williams read an original poem which produced much merriment...”<sup>17</sup> At an occasion to mark the anniversary of his marriage, Williams wrote and recited a verse entitled “To my Sweetheart of Fifty Years.” In the newspaper article describing that event, the journalist referred to Nelson Williams as “an orator and poet of exceptional eloquence and appeal” before any mention of his profession as a lawyer.<sup>18</sup> Williams was a highly sought after public speaker for non-Masonic events, especially on the history of the city of Hamilton.<sup>19</sup> In fact, when Lida Keck-Wiggins wrote the state song for Ohio in 1931, she credited Nelson Williams as one of her influences.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, the majority of MWB Williams’ presentations and writings focused on the Masonic fraternity. He was frequently asked to speak at Masonic gatherings.<sup>21,22,23,24,25,26</sup> and upon recognition of his 50<sup>th</sup> year of service to the Grand Lodge of Ohio, he was described as “Hamilton attorney and nationally preeminent Mason,”<sup>27</sup> at an event where over 300 attended to honor him. As early as 1902, MWB Nelson Williams was referred to as the Poet Laureate of the Masonic Bodies of Ohio,<sup>28</sup> and often included poetry in his

official reports to the Grand Masonic Bodies. At the laying of the courthouse cornerstone in Marietta, OH in 1901, Williams read a verse he had written for American Union Lodge No. 1 on that occasion.<sup>29</sup> In 1904, he attended the Grand Lodge of Iowa Communication and presented the "Poetry of Masonry."<sup>30</sup> In 1905, he began the Most Illustrious Grand Masters Address with the poem "Illustrious Companions."<sup>31</sup> Additionally in that same year, his poem "My Beloved Companion" was shared at the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Mississippi of which Williams was said "to take high rank among the poets of the Craft."<sup>32</sup> Among many other travels, MWB Williams made a Grand Visitation to Oklahoma and attended the Grand Chapter of Texas Annual Convocation in December of 1916. In 1919, Williams shared "The Knights of Yesterday" following the report of necrology at the Grand Encampment at Philadelphia.<sup>33</sup>

Similar to the comment about dates and titles at the opening of this writing, the preceding lists of poetry and speaking engagements are not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, the examples are intended only to be indicative of the prolific nature of Williams' writing. Perhaps the writings and thoughts of Nelson Williams gained popularity not only for the significance of the words he chose, but for the great effort he put forth to ensure personal connection. For example, in 1913 Nelson Williams and his wife were traveling by train to Yellowstone with the Grand Officers of the Grand Lodge of Iowa. After which the following appeared in the Quarterly Bulletin, "One evening, Williams excused himself from the frivolities and presented a poem to the party the next morning" entitled "Thoughts on the Yellowstone National Park."<sup>34</sup> Even in his formal committee reports, MWB Williams often used poetry to include a personal connection such as "From Labor to Refreshment" and "The Dear Old Cronies."

It is difficult in a few pages, to present the life of a man who not only lived 90 years, but managed to fill those 90 years until his cup truly overflowed. Nonetheless, this author hopes to have illustrated, at least in a small part, the depth of the life that Nelson Williams led, the value to his life that was acquired through his involvement with Freemasonry and the value he added to Freemasonry by his involvement. It appears only one part of his life may have been more important than Freemasonry: his wife, Susannah Mallory Williams. Although there does not seem to be even a hint of regret, Williams admitted in "Freemasonry Worth the Price?" that he could have been a more successful lawyer if he had not spent so much time with Masonry. However, it may be possible that he would not have been as good a lawyer without the application of his Masonic principles to his vocation as indicated by the following:

"Perhaps one of the best known consulting attorneys at the Butler County Bar is Nelson Williams. Mr. Williams seldom seeks the court for the adjustment of the affairs of those who seek his counsel. Rather by timely suggestions, and a full consideration of the facts presented to him, he so develops the affairs of his clients that they avoid action in the courts."<sup>35</sup>

Although the Purple of the Fraternity lay broadly across his shoulders and Masons from around the world came to know his words, Nelson Williams appeared to remain rooted in the modest beginnings of that "green country boy." His modest, humble personality was the result of Masonic teaching in which he sat with Earls, Dukes, Men of Royal Blood, Presidents, Bishops and Physicians, but continued to touch elbows with those who walk a humbler pathway of life.<sup>36</sup> And for those reasons, when his time to pass on to the Celestial Lodge above came on February 11, 1944, his mortal remains were laid in state for two days in the Lodge Room of the Hamilton Masonic Center for hundreds of Masons and non-Masons alike to pay their respects. A Masonic funeral was performed by the Grand Lodge of Ohio with Grand Secretary and Past Grand Master, Harry S. Johnson presiding.

Perhaps the best way to close this writing is with the eloquent words that MWB Nelson Williams himself wrote in the obituary of MWB S. Stacker Williams.

“And now we close this brief memoir with the solemn thought that the way appointed for our deceased companion to the realms of the hidden mystery, is the way appointed to each one of us, and that sooner or later we must obey the dread summons of the grim messenger Death, and go to be numbered among the countless throng which ever increases on the unseen shore.”

Although, at the time of the writing, we did not have the opportunity to know Brother Nelson Williams, we have had the opportunity to learn of his character in the writings he left behind and the value he added to Freemasonry. Therefore, we can all count him among our friends because he believed “Friendship is the heart and soul of Freemasonry without which our fraternity could not long exist.”<sup>37</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.gloho.com/glo/past-grand-masters/178-1897-nelson-monroe-williams>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.gloho.com/glo/past-grand-masters/143-1882-charles-christian-kiefer>; Three men have presided over the Grand Lodge of Ohio and all of the Grand Bodies of the York Rite.
- <sup>3</sup> "The American Tyler," Vol. XVI, No. 13, Jan. 1, 1902.
- <sup>4</sup> "Freemasonry Worth the Price?, Nelson Williams, P.G.M., Hamilton, OH, pg. 6; with appreciation to the Library of the Cincinnati Masonic Center for providing a copy of this publication.
- <sup>5</sup> "Journal News," April 28, 1926, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 6.
- <sup>7</sup> *Hamilton Journal and Daily News*, Saturday, February, 12, 1944, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>8</sup> "Freemasonry Worth the Price?, Nelson Williams, P.G.M., Hamilton, OH, pg. 7.
- <sup>9</sup> "Herringshaw's American Blue Book of Biography: Prominent Americans of 1915, Chicago, pg. 1204 (1915).
- <sup>10</sup> "Freemasonry Worth the Price?, Nelson Williams, P.G.M., Hamilton, OH, pg. 11.
- <sup>11</sup> Private Minutes of Washington Lodge, No. 17, 1887 – 1888.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 1889-1890.
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.gloho.com/glo/past-grand-masters/178-1897-nelson-monroe-williams>
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> "Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of the State of New York," May, 1919.
- <sup>16</sup> All writings of Nelson Williams mentioned in this article are reproduced in Appendix B that follows.
- <sup>17</sup> "Hamilton Evening Journal," Friday, December 9, 1892, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>18</sup> "Journal News," Wednesday, October 22, 1930, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>19</sup> "Cincinnati Enquirer," Tuesday, August 6, 1901, Cincinnati, OH.
- <sup>20</sup> "Journal News," Friday, March 27, 1931, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>21</sup> "Cincinnati Enquirer," Wednesday, June 28, 1922, Cincinnati, OH.
- <sup>22</sup> "Chillicothe Gazette," Saturday, April 12, 1924, Chillicothe, OH.
- <sup>23</sup> "Chillicothe Gazette," Saturday, November 14, 1925, Chillicothe, OH.
- <sup>24</sup> "Journal News," Saturday, November 26, 1927, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>25</sup> "Journal News," Friday, November 30, 1928, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>26</sup> "Cincinnati Enquirer," Thursday, April, 23, 1936, Cincinnati, OH.
- <sup>27</sup> "Journal News," Monday, June 14, 1937, Hamilton, OH.
- <sup>28</sup> "Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of Wisconsin, 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation", Milwaukee, February 19/20, 1918.
- <sup>29</sup> "American Tyler," Volume 16, Issue 4, August 1, 1901, pg. 79
- <sup>30</sup> "Quarterly Grand Lodge Bulletin, Grand Lodge of Iowa, F&AM," Volume VII, No. 1, 1904.
- <sup>31</sup> "Proceedings of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masons of the State of Ohio," 1905.
- <sup>32</sup> "Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Mississippi, 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation, Jackson, MS, February 21, 1905.
- <sup>33</sup> "Masonic Voice-Review," Volume XXI, pg 296, 1919.
- <sup>34</sup> "Quarterly Grand Lodge Bulletin, Grand Lodge of Iowa, F&AM," Volume XIV, No. 1, January 1913.
- <sup>35</sup> "Memories of the Miami Valley – Volume Two" The Press of Butler County, Butler County Bench and Bar.
- <sup>36</sup> "Freemasonry Worth the Price?, Nelson Williams, P.G.M., Hamilton, OH, pg. 7.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid. pg. 14.

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**Appendix A: Chronology of the Life of MWB Nelson M. Williams, Grand Master of Ohio, 1898**

March 23, 1853	Born to George and Margaret McKinley Williams (oldest of 6 children)
1871	Qualified to teach
1872 – 1873	Taught in St. Paris, OH
March 9, 1874	Moved to Hamilton, OH; Entered law office of uncle, Israel Williams
April 25, 1876	Admitted to law practice by Butler County Bar Association
1880	Opened his own law office
Oct 21, 1880	United in Marriage to Susannah Mallory
February 9, 1887	Entered Apprentice Degree in Washington Lodge No. 17
May 3, 1887	Fellowcraft Degree in Washington Lodge No. 17
June 6, 1887	Master Mason Degree in Washington Lodge No. 17
May 14, 1888	Received Mark Master Degree in Hamilton Chapter #21
May 25, 1888	Received Past Master Degree in Hamilton Chapter #21
May 25, 1888	Received Most Excellent Master Degree in Hamilton Chapter #21
August 20, 1888	Received Royal and Select Degrees in Hamilton Council #19
September 24, 1888	Received Order of the Red Cross in Hamilton Commandery #41
November 26, 1888	Received Order of the Temple and Order of the Knight of Malta in Hamilton Commandery #41
December 3, 1888	Elected Senior Warden of Washington Lodge No. 17
September 10, 1889	Received Super Excellent Master Degree at Findlay, OH
December 2, 1889	Elected Worshipful Master of Washington Lodge No. 17 (served two years)
December 9, 1889	Elected Master of the Third Veil in Hamilton Chapter #21
November 24, 1890	Elected Senior Warden of Hamilton Commandery #41
November 23, 1891	Elected Prelate of Hamilton Commandery #41
December 14, 1891	Elected Captain of the Host in Hamilton Chapter #21
December 21, 1891	Elected Principal Conductor of the Work in Hamilton Council #19
October 20, 1892	Appointed Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge of Ohio
November 28, 1892	Elected Captain General of Hamilton Commandery #41
December 12, 1892	Elected Scribe in Hamilton Chapter #21
December 19, 1892	Elected Deputy Master of Hamilton Council #19
October 19, 1893	Re-appointed Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge of Ohio
November 27, 1893	Elected Generalissimo of Hamilton Commandery #41
December 11, 1893	Elected High Priest in Hamilton Chapter #21
December 18, 1893	Elected Thrice Illustrious Master of Hamilton Council #19
September 19, 1894	Elected Conductor in the Order of Anointed High Priesthood (serving until 1901 except for 1897-98)
November 26, 1894	Elected Eminent Commander of Hamilton Commandery #41
October 25, 1895	Elected Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Ohio from the floor
September 18, 1896	Received the Royal Order of Scotland presented in Pittsburgh
October 22, 1896	Elected Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ohio
November 23, 1896	Elected Prelate in Hamilton Commandery #41 (and continuously until June 27, 1904)
September 1897	Elected Master of Ceremonies in the Order of Anointed High Priesthood
October 21, 1897	Elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ohio
March 22, 1899	Appointed Trustee of the Ohio Masonic Home (served until his death)

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September 19, 1899	Crowned an honorary member of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, 33 <sup>rd</sup> Degree in Philadelphia
September 26, 1899	Appointed Grand Sentinel in the Grand Council of Ohio (Cleveland)
October 9, 1900	Appointed Grand Conductor of Grand Council of Ohio (Columbus)
October 11, 1900	Elected Grand King in the Grand Chapter of Ohio (Columbus)
September 24, 1901	Appointed Grand Captain of the Guard in Grand Council of Ohio (Toledo)
September 25, 1901	Elected Most Excellent President Order of the Anointed High Priesthood (served 25 years until he resigned)
September 26, 1901	Elected Deputy Grand High Priest in the Grand Chapter of Ohio (Toledo)
September 23, 1902	Elected Grand Principal Conductor of the Work in Grand Council of Ohio (Lima)
September 25, 1902	Elected Grand High Priest in the Grand Chapter of Ohio (Lima)
October 13, 1903	Elected Deputy Grand Master of Grand Council of Ohio (Akron)
October 4, 1904	Elected Most Illustrious Grand Master of Grand Council of Ohio (Columbus)
October 15, 1908	Elected Grand Sword Bearer in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Cincinnati)
September 1909	Chairman of the Committee on State of the Rite and Foreign Communications (served 15 years)
October 16, 1909	Elected Grand Standard Bearer in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Marion)
October 13, 1910	Elected Grand Junior Warden in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Marietta)
October 1910	Necrologist in the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America (Served from 1910 – 1925)
October 12, 1911	Elected Grand Captain General in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Dayton)
October 17, 1912	Elected Grand Generalissimo in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Cleveland)
October 15, 1913	Elected Deputy Grand Commander in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Akron)
October 15, 1914	Elected Grand Commander in the Grand Commandery of Ohio (Columbus)
September 9, 1924	Elected General Grand Steward of the General Grand Council (Portland, ME)
September 27, 1927	General Grand Conductor of the General Grand Council (Denver, CO)
August 26, 1930	General Grand Principal Conductor of the Work of the General Grand Council (Tacoma, WA)
October 10, 1933	Elected to Deputy General Grand Master of the General Grand Council (Washington, D.C.)
May 29, 1935	Mrs. Susannah Mallory Williams passed away.
October 5, 1936	Elected General Grand Master of the General Grand Council of the US
February 11, 1944	Passed away after a year-long illness
February 14, 1944	Masonic Services at the Hamilton Masonic Center by Grand Lodge of Ohio, MWB Harry S. Johnson, PGM and Grand Secretary presiding Member of Syrian Temple, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Cincinnati



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## Appendix B: Selected Poems of MWB Nelson Williams

*(A more complete selection was self-published by Nelson Williams in a collection entitled "Thoughts Expressed in Rhyme" published in 1941 of which several copies are available in the Cincinnati Masonic Center Library, Cincinnati Public Library and Hamilton-Lane Public Library)*

### Good Bye, Brave Boys

Good-bye brave boys who wear the blue  
Our moistened eyes do follow you,  
And from each heart a prayer ascends  
To Him whose watchful care extends  
O'er all the land and all the sea,  
That he may guard and care for thee.  
'Tis not in joy our bands do play  
On this, to thee, eventful day;  
'Tis not in joy our flags do wave  
This greeting to the young and brave,  
But in each patriot heart there lives  
A hope which naught but freedom gives.

A hope that we may live to see  
The day when all the earth is free.  
And thus as you go bravely forth  
The flower and beauty of the North  
To battle for the helpless ones  
And freedom win for Cuba's sons,  
Our flags do wave, our bands do play  
To bid you God speed on your way.  
God help the ones you leave behind  
Whose eyes with bitter tears are blind,  
Whose hearts are heavy with the pain  
Which says "we may not meet again."

These mothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives,  
These loving ones, whose very lives  
From now, henceforth, at countless price,  
Must be a living sacrifice.  
Where'er you go on land or sea,  
Their hearts will ever turn to thee.  
Go bravely forth and bear in mind  
That heroes ever are the kind  
That, with an aim and purpose high,  
Do pledge themselves to do or die.  
And if on land of Southern seas  
A fatal wound or dread disease  
Should lay you low, an honored name  
Will grace at once the roll of Fame.

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**for American Union Lodge, No. 1**

Oh, praise, Oh, praise the great Jehovah's name;  
His wondrous works let all the people e'er proclaim;  
His humble creatures now their voices raise  
In singing songs of joy, thanksgiving and of praise,  
With wisdom He has ever reigned.  
His court: above are court of love, and mercy unrestrained.  
His judgment will forever stand,  
For He dispenses justice with a righteous hand.

From sacred precincts of the Lodge we come  
To test this corner-stone with Level, Square and Plumb,  
And lay it in enduring mortar here,  
Whence in God's own good time a temple will appear,  
Our Corn, our Wine, our Oil we bring –  
Emblems of plenty, peace and joy, and of God's glories sing;  
And while around this stone we stand,  
We thank Him for all blessings from His mighty hand.

When in due time this temple is complete,  
May it for ages stand and all requirements meet;  
may all who seek redress for wrongs here find  
That Justice stern and true forever is enshrined,  
Oh, praise the Lord, His name be praised!  
May He protect the workmen while this structure shall be raised;  
And may He bless us all at last,  
And grant us mercy in His court when life is past. Amen.

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## The Poetry of Masonry

The poetry of Masonry, like some sweet-scented flower,  
Spreads fragrance over all that grows within its sacred bower.  
The lily may most perfect be, and so the blushing rose;  
The honeysuckle beautify the spot wherein it grows;  
The violet may raise its head toward a friendly sky,  
And apple blossoms may appease the cravings of the eye:  
But what would all these flowers be to either you or me,  
If they did not sweet fragrance shed to all humanity?

Our landmarks may remain unchanged through years fast coming on,  
Our lights and jewels be displayed as in the years ago;  
The emblems we delineate on Masters' carpets here  
May still remain when each of us has left this earthly sphere;  
The Symbols of our noble Craft, so beautiful to see,  
May please the eye of Brethren who shall follow you and me;  
But none will ever comprehend the lessons they impart,  
Until they learn the poetry of Masonry by heart.

The poetry of Masonry is that which beautifies  
And brings to clearer view the truths our emblems symbolize.  
It is not always found in rhyme, nor yet in metered prose,  
It sometimes happens that a word its beauty may disclose.  
Our one Great Light which shines so bright upon our altars here,  
Our lambskin Aprons, pure and white, to every Mason dear,  
Our letter "G," which all may see above the Master's chair,  
All tell in sweetest poetry of God's protecting care.

The poetry of Masonry is that true harmony  
Which should prevail amongst the Craft, where'er dispersed they be.  
It looks beyond the words and forms to something grander still;  
It fills the heart with charity and brotherly good will;  
It is that halo which surrounds a noble work well done,  
Which takes our choicest sentiments and blends them into one,  
That one the grandest, most sublime, the truest of the true –  
"Do unto others as you would that they should do to you."

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## Illustrious Companions

The wings of time grow stronger day by day,  
    And swifter is his flight as years roll on;  
His fateful course no mortal hand can stay,  
    And e'er we know it another year has gone.

Life's heavy load grows heavier day by day;  
    Our bodies bend beneath the weight of years;  
Our friends are ever falling by the way,  
    But through the mists the dawn of rest appears.

Our mortal end draws nearer day by day,  
    For in our flesh Death's deadly seed is sown;  
'Twill ripen soon, and we shall pass away  
    To realms where dread disease will be unknown.

The light of Faith grows brighter day by day;  
    Its calming influence no tongue can tell;  
A while and we shall hear the angels say  
    "We bid you welcome", and "all is well".

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## **My Beloved Companions**

I greet you all as "My Beloved," for if, on earth,  
There be a place where friendship ripens into love,  
And where the human heart expands to grasp and hold,  
Within its inner chamber, love's sweet dream,  
'Tis here. Not love of country – great and glorious love  
That fills us with an impulse strong to give our all,  
E'en life itself, if need be, to our country's cause.  
Not that sweet love of which the poets sing, –  
Of true devotion born, and which in gentle breath  
By lover's lips is whispered into lover's ear,  
And whispered back again. Not that pure love  
The child doth learn as, nestling on its mother's breast,  
It listens to her lullaby – a love which ever after,  
Come weal, come woe, burns on, and is not yet consumed  
When life's dim, flickering lamp goes out. Not such as these  
The love that here is born, and grows and ripens  
With each passing year; for these by nature's wise decree  
Are inborn in the human heart as precious things,  
And only needs life's nourishment to make them grow.  
But here the love of man for fellow man prevails,  
A love perhaps not so intense, but not less pure.  
Here friendship's ties are welded by the glow of truth  
Into lasting bonds of true fraternal love.

## **Thoughts on the Yellowstone National Park**

Oh deepest mystery, still by the Centuries unsolved,  
Thy secrets linger in the corridors of Time.  
Thy freaks of Nature, from its wondrous scheme evolved,  
Are marvelous, mystifying, mighty and sublime.  
We stand in awe as all thy splendid beauties are revealed,  
And the eye doth feast upon the things before it spread;  
And yet, we know the greatest of thy wonders are concealed  
Beneath the earthy crust on which we tread.

Thy mountain peaks whose snowy summits rise to kiss the sky;  
Thy narrow valleys nestling quietly between;  
Thy crystal streams which flow through winding beds that lie  
Deep sunken in the earth, with naught of fringing green;  
Thy placid lakes which mirror in their depths thy crags and peaks;  
Thy geysers, lofty pines, and clinging vine and flower, –  
In all these many mysteries God's voice, through Nature, speaks  
To all the world, and tells it of His Majesty and Power.

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## **From Labor to Refreshment**

From Labor to Refreshment – what a happy thought it is,  
As we journey down the avenues of Time,  
To feel that sweet refreshment will reward our labors here,  
In that Lodge where every precept is sublime.

To feel that all the burdens, all the sorrows, all the woes,  
All the trials, all the aches, and all the pains,  
Will be buried as poor Hiram, when the Soul in freedom goes  
To that Lodge where our Grand Master ever reigns

From Labor to Refreshment – 'tis the Junior Warden's call  
In the Lodge Known as Symbolic here below,  
And every Brother pauses when he hears the gavel fall,  
For its potent power all the Masons know.

Our Mystic work suspended, sweet converse reigns supreme,  
And Fellowship, which is our richest gem,  
Is set in Love cemented, and its iridescent gleam,  
Lights to brilliancy our dazzling diadem.

From Labor to Refreshment – 'tis the Great Grand Master's call  
When our labors in the early Lodge are o'er,  
And he takes us through the portals of His Grand Celestial Hall,  
There to live in sweet refreshment evermore.

There we shall see completed all the Master's wise designs,  
No longer need the level and the square;  
And there will be no longer any needs of grips and signs,  
For we shall all be Brethren over there.

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## The Dear Old Cronies

Brethren, let us pause a moment  
In this consecrated hall;  
Let us bow our heads in silence,  
While we all our dead recall.  
It is needless here to name them,  
They were noble men and true;  
And if you had gone before them,  
They would say the same of you.

This is where they loved to linger,  
With the inner man supplied,  
And drink in the words of wisdom  
From their Brethren true and tried.  
But no more will they be with us  
In this world of pain and care;  
Theirs the gladness, ours the sadness  
Till we meet them over there.

Yes, we miss these dear old Cronies'  
We have known so long and well,  
And our sorrow at their absence  
Neither tongue nor pen can tell.  
We shall miss them as the seasons,  
With their changes, come and go,  
And our hearts each year will sadden  
As their vacant places show.

Dear old chums, of course we miss you,  
And your places none can fill;  
For we loved your genial faces  
And your forms, now cold and still.  
But while you have gone far from us,  
Yet are sleeping 'neath the cedars,  
But have left your image here.

Some are here who soon must follow;  
Others quickly follow them;  
Who knows but that on the morrow  
You may chant my requiem?  
Brethren, if such be God's pleasure,  
All that I can ask of thee  
Is to judge my motives kindly,  
And each year remember me.