

On Yonder Book

Ray Soltis

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"On Yonder Book" is a short presentation to newly raised Master Masons in the Grand Jurisdictions of California, Maine, Georgia, Texas, Oklahoma, and possibly others. It has appeared under other names in various publications, such as:

- *The Canadian Charge*
- *The Candlelight Charge*
- *The General Charge*
- *The Walking Charge*
- *The Oklahoma Charge*
- *A Masons' Ties & Vows*

Mt. Wor. Benjamin L. Hadley, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maine 1942-43, is said to have authored the Poem "On Yonder Book". Used in Maine as the charge in the third degree, it is called the "Candle Light Charge". There is also evidence that there was a similar charge in the Oklahoma Cipher in 1890's. This raises a question about the authorship of the poem: If it was in the Oklahoma Cipher of the 1890s how could Mt. Wor. Hadley have written it in the 1940s?

Two books of Masonic poetry by Dr. Rob Morris were published in 1875 and 1884 respectively. In the 1884 edition of *The Odes and Poetry of Freemasonry* were two poems, "A Mason's Pledge" and "A Mason's Vow". These poems are likely are the source of inspiration of the charges and hold the final clues to the mystery. Here is the Preface to the *Fourth Edition to Masonic Odes and Poems* from 1875 in which Dr. Morris reveals some background about his work:

On Yonder Book – Ray Soltis

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 their 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*.

On Yonder Book – Ray Soltis

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

Have lesser lights arranged around the altar or dim lights and use altar spot as desired.

"On Yonder Book"

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,

On yonder book, that oath you took,
And you should break it never,
But stand by this (Step of EA), and this (D-G of EA), and this (S of EA),
Forever and forever.

On Yonder Book – Ray Soltis

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.

On yonder book, that oath you took,
And you should break it never,
But stand by this (Step of FC), and this (D-G of FC), and this (S of FC),
Forever and forever.

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.

On Yonder Book – Ray Soltis

On yonder book, that oath you took,
And you should break it never,
But stand by this (Step of MM), and this (D-G of MM), and this (S of MM),
Forever and forever.

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

On yonder book, that oath you took,
And you should break it never,
But stand by this (point to greater lights), and this (lesser lights), and this (letter G),
Forever and forever.

You swore the Chastity to keep,
Of woman true and tender,
Of Masons' widow, wife, or child,
His mother, sister, undefiled –

On Yonder Book – Ray Soltis

Those pure and innocent, whose love
Make Masons' home like that above;
You – the sworn defender.

On yonder book, that oath you took,
And you should break it never,
But stand by this (GHS1), and this (GHS2), and this (GHS3),
Forever and forever.

The Lodge is rapped up at this point

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.

For, on yonder book, that oath we took,
And we will break them never,

But stand by this (Everyone gives the D-G and S of EA), and this (Everyone gives the D-G and S of FC), and this (Everyone gives the D-G, and S of MM),

Forever and forever.

Bibliography

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Warren Lodge No. 13, GL of New Jersey. (ND) "On Yonder Book" available at

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