A great preacher, describing the last days of Moses, says: "There is no historic figure more noble than that of the Jewish lawgiver. After so many thousand years the figure of Moses is not diminished, but stands up against the background of early days distinct and individual as if he lived but yesterday. There is scarcely another event in history more touching than his death. He had borne the great burdens of State for forty years, shaped the Jews to a nation, filled out their civil and religious polity, administered their laws, guided their steps or dealt with them in their journeyings in the wilderness, had mourned in their punishment, kept step with their march and led them into wars until evil of their labors drew nigh. The last stage was reached. Jordan only lay between them and the Promised Land. What yearnings had heaved his breast for that divinely foreshadowed place. He had dreamed of it by night and mused by day. It was holy and endeared as God's favored spot. It was to be the cradle of an illustrious history. All his long, laborious and now weary life, he had aimed at this as the consummation of every desire, the reward of every toil and pain. Then came the word of the Lord to him, "Thou mayest not go over. Get thee into the mountain, look upon it and die." From that silent summit the hoary leader gazed to the North, to the South, to the West with hungry eyes. The dim outlines rose up. The hazy recesses spoke of quiet valleys between hills. With eager longing, with sad resignation he looked upon the Promised Land. There was the seat of the coming Jerusalem; there the city of Judah's king; the sphere of the Judges and Prophets; the Mount of Sorrows and Salvation; the nest whence was to fly blessings innumerable to all mankind. He looked, and laid him down and died."

A great leader of Masonry has passed away just as his gaze rested upon the bordering horizon which marked the boundaries of those blessings that he had struggled through years to attain. For more than forty years, too, he had been a gifted and sagacious leader of this grand and wondrous Order which we call Free Masonry. Coming into its ranks nearly fifty years ago, he had found much discord and division among its members. The sounds of the conflict through which it had passed only a few years before had not all been stilled; the scars of wounds, cruel wounds, made by its relentless enemies, had not been concealed by the removing touch of time. The timid had not yet recovered the necessary courage for successful labors and the bold were yet moved by the impetuous rush of defiant thoughts and purposes. The cohorts of the Order once regular and precise of motion, had broken into scattered bands, which, while devoted to their faith, and resolute in their resistance, were yet lacking that orderly precision that must needs accompany a proper discipline. He came also to understand that from long delay of justice the thought was general that it would not come, and therefore the efforts of those who assumed to be leaders of the Craftsmen, met only a half-hearted support, and many a Mason held to his membership not so much because he desired to retain it or expected pleasure or profit therefrom, but as a cowardly soldier
continues in the line of battle for fear of ridicule, so he faced the Altar and bowed to the letter G, lest someone should charge him with apostacy or desertion. There was, moreover, a further drift from the safe moorings of the Craft. Organized to promote good works, its temples in many parts of the land had been despoiled, and money changers stood in the place of the Prophets. Intended for the advancement of the exalted virtue of charity, its coffers were empty and beggarly sounds answered the appeal for means made with all the supplications of entreaty. Built to last for man's benefit and man's happiness, until Time, fading in the Western sky of darkness, should remount from Eastern hills, bearing in its arms the glittering rays of eternal sunshine, he found many with a conviction which made it difficult, to combat, who predicted that its restoration was but temporary and its early destruction a certainty. He stood like Moses among his rebellious people, conscious of the destiny before him, competent to perfect it willing to bear the trials its accomplishment involved, with his authority disputed, his slightest act taken as an abdication of control and his absence from continual effort the signal for the erection of golden calves and the worship of strange gods. But at last he conquered. His tables of stone on which were written the eternal laws of good conduct were the songs he penned for the Craft to sing. The manna with which he fed the multitude who murmured and would not believe, were the tender sentiments clothed in sweetest verse and set to entrancing music. How many of Israel's vast host think you, comprehended whence the tables came which contained their laws or who sent the manna which sustained their lives. And so it may be declared that among this very Order thousands have followed the leadings of his direction and caught fresh strength from the restraining powers embodied in his rhythmic measures and never dreamed that he fixed the one to a standard or laid the other like a bed of violets to the breath.

And, yet, so it is that Robert Morris revived, directed, conquered, and exalted Masonry by song and verse. His shibboleth was the sweet notes of music, his war cry the tender words of Masonic love, his rebuke the supplication of measured feet and his praise the exalting rhythm of sweetest sounds. It has been confidently asserted that every Lodge in the civilized world at every convocation recognizes his labors for Masonic good by employing something he has done or suggested in connection with its ritual or its services. And yet those who do not know his name and have no knowledge of his character and his life, could not be numbered until the digits ran far into the thousands of thousands. Like Moses, he but saw the land where his labors would have been rewarded, and like him, too, he left a people, who now that he has departed, will, forgetting and regretting the deviation from loyal service during the days of their pilgrimage, remember him with gladness and mourn his loss with tears. Every new beauty of Masonic life and conduct, too, will but serve to recall his unselfish and devoted manhood, like as the sudden rush of sweet laden breezes, remind us ever of some fragrant odor which now gone is yet a blessed memory to the senses. Moses, we are told, often withdrew himself from the presence of his people to commune with Israel's God and draw fresh courage to meet the encounters of the troubling way in which the feet of the wandering hosts were led, and yet upon each seclusion, his absence accounted as desertion let down the bars of righteous restraint and tamed into forbidden fields the vacillating columns of the Jews. Returning among the camps, refreshed and invigorated, exalted and buoyed up, with heart expanded for nobler exertions, and brain skilled with added lore, he first was called to recapture the obedience and command the devotion of those he served ere they would understand or accept his service. Robert Morris, moved by an impulse quite as noble, and inspired by a love as tender and true, sought a close communion in foreign lands with Masonic traditions and Masonic birthrights, and returning with arms full of blessed
knowledge for the Craft, and heart swaying like a ceaseless pendulum, with
new and enrapturin


gations, was met by the coldness of indifference and the
neglect which so often among men quickly follows upon kindly acts.

But Moses overcame and conquered, and Robert Morris subdued and
controlled.

To deserve a tithe of what has been declared of him must successfully
argue powers as wonderful, gifts as rare and patience as enduring as are ever
vouchsafed to mortal man. He came to earth from humble and retiring parentage
seventy years ago in the State of Kentucky. He grew to manhood like his
predecessor, Robert Burns, without claim of special merit, and wanting the
environment of wealth or family influence to advance the powers which lay
hidden like the statue in the uncut marble of the quarry. His early years
passed away like those of mankind generally with nothing to arrest the
observer and no signs to halt the seeker for that well of waters, whose flow
so limpid, and whose taste so sweet in later years, made it a Mecca to all
devoted members of the Craft. Admitted into a Masonic Lodge more than forty
years ago, and profoundly impressed by the beauty of its ritual and the
splendor of its imagery, he fell quickly into the arms of the muse and clung
the closer as the years sped on. A thought which often rushed into his
presence and sought for audience was this: Why, with all the rich materials
so ready to the hand; why, with glow and color everywhere to produce it, has
Masonry failed to create a sweet singer of its praises? He found that with
the exception of Thomas Webb's "All Hail to the Morning" and David Venton's
"Solemn Strikes the Funeral Chimes," there was scarcely a rounded period to
tell of Masonic poetry. He discovered that though Scott and Prentiss Moore
and Cowper, Mackey and Percival, with many others of equal or lesser note,
were votaries of the Order their "united efforts, applied to Masonic
themes, scarcely filled a dozen pages;" and so lie resolved, under the inspiration of
his love for the institution and the consequent desire to elevate its claims
to the full admiration of mankind, to clothe its precious symbols in the
garlands of poetic speech. He adorned all the Degrees with beauty, and
standing at the door to beg entrance, as an Entered Apprentice he wrote:

"Ask and ye shall receive;
Seek, ye shall surely find;
Knock, ye shall no resistance meet,
If come with ready mind;
For all that ask, and ask aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

"Lay down the bow and spear;
Resign the sword and shield;
Forget the arts of warfare here,
The arms of peace to wield;
For all that seek, and seek aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

"Bring hither thoughts of peace;
Bring hither words of love;
Diffuse the pure and holy joy
That cometh from above;
For all that knock, and knock aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night.

"Ask help of Him that's high;
Seek grace of Him that's true;
Knock patiently, the hand is nigh,
Will open unto you;
For all that ask, seek, knock aright,
Are welcome to our Lodge to-night."

When out of the Northeast corner, having duly served his time and learned upon the upright step to make his way, he declared with all the fervor of charcoal, as a Fellow Craft:

"I never have denied;
I am willing to be tried.
A call for sympathy from sorrowing man—
My own hard griefs impel
My heart for such to feel,
And I am willing to be tried again.

"The claim so often made
For shelter and for aid,
I never have refused, and never can.
And though my purse is scant,
The poor shall never want,
And I am willing to be tried again.

"My brother goes astray;
Ah! me, I know the way—
The slippery way that turns the thoughtless man.
I run to draw him back;
I point the dangerous track,
And I am willing to be tried again.

"Each night, on bended knee,
The All-seeing Eye doth see
My body suppliant at a throne divine;
And there for brother's need,
As for my own, I plead,
And I am willing to be tried again."

And when the sublime Degree of Master he approaches, with a spirit in deep accord with the lesson it imparts, and which above all its lessons makes of it the grandest of all Masonic conceptions, he thus beautifully conveyed its hidden meaning:

"Oh, Death! thy hand is weighty on the breast
Of him who lies within thy grasp;
No Power can raise the captive from his rest,
When thy strong hand doth clasp.

The tears of broken spirits fall in vain,
Their sighs are wasted o'er the grave;
Thou laugh'st to scorn the funereal strain,
For there is none to save.

"From age to age mankind hath owned thy sway,
Submissive bowed beneath thy hand;
The hoary head—the infant of a day—
The loveliest of the land.

"And thou hast struck the true and faithful now,
Our model of Masonic faith;
It was a cruel and a dastard blow,
Thou stern, unpitying Death."
"Yet boastful Monster he shall have release;
Thy weighty hand, relentless power;
Shall be withdrawn, and all thy mocking cease,
And all thy triumphs o'er.

"The Lion of the tribe of Judah comes;
See in the heavenly East the sign!
To rend the sepulchers, disclose the truth,
And strike the Monster blind."

The examples presented are but selections from many a bed of rarest flowers, whose fragrance of expression and perfection of form make a beauty never fading, and excite an admiration never dull or weary. Indeed wherever a symbol stands forth upon the tessalated pavement, wherever an emblem finds a place, on Trestle Board, or Chart, wherever a working tool comes to the Master's band, we can, in the lines of Robert Morris, read new meanings, look on purposes before unknown and comprehend a broader, higher, deeper significance in the wonderous scheme of Masonic instruction.

No man of modern times, if of any age, more fully appreciated the really marvelous system than our Poet Laureate. He drank deep and at all times of its knowledge and depicted his impressions and convictions while rushing in the busy walks of every day existence, often as he declares on strip or scrap, or what would soonest come to his hand. There is, therefore, no labor in the soft tread of his varied measures. The odor of the midnight lamp is absent, no sign of the wrinkled brow appears, no strain of words stand forth, but in their place we see the pulsing of the heart beating against the manly breast, and with the richness of its flow mantling the cheek, flashing the eye, or making tender the glance of him whose lips gave forth the utterance of the happy or the hopeful, the sad or the weary spirit. But it was not only as a writer of verse that he became prominent and revered. In all the field of prose, of essay and declamation, in lectures and in history he was easily a leader. For years he traveled and taught the brethren of this and other lands. Having filled the highest offices in the gift of the brethren he sojourned in foreign parts, and filling his mind with an exhaustless store of Masonic information, he gave of it with liberal hand to all within his reach. He has left upon Jerusalem herself the sign manuel of his labors in the Mother Solomon's Lodge which he organized and which to-day is an honor to the Craft. Deeply impressed with the iniquitous character of the charges formulated against our Order by the political assassins of Morgan's day, he spent years of laborious research in the ascertainment of all the facts connected with that monumental fraud and has given them to the world with proof so convincing that could the dead speak out, they would recant their perjury and scourge themselves with scorpions for the slanders they hissed forth from serpent's mouths—mouths viler than that which tempted our first parents to their fall. Like all men of Catholic mind, he did not fail to understand the humorous side of human nature and among a number which represent this aspect of his character, I select that one which tells of what befell the persistent and importunate woman who would, despite all warning, be a Mason.

"The funniest thing I ever heard,
The funniest thing that ever occurred,
Is the story of Mrs. Mehitable Byrde,
Who wanted to be a Mason.

"Her husband, Tom Byrde, is a Mason true,
As good a Mason as any of you;
He is Tyler of Lodge Cerulean Blue,
And tyles and delivers the summons due,
And she wanted to be a Mason, too,

This ridiculous Mrs. Byrde!

"She followed 'round, this ridiculous wife,
And nabbed him and teased him half out of his life;
So to terminate this unhallowed strife,

He consented at last to admit her.

And first, to disguise her from bonnet to shoon,
This ridiculous lady agreed to put on
His breech—ah! forgive me, I meant pantaloon,
And miraculously well did they fit her.

"The Lodge was at work on the Master's Degree,
The light was ablaze on the letter G;
High soared the pillars J and B;
The officers sat like Solomon wise;
The brimstone burned amid horrid cries;
The goat roamed wildly through the room;
The candidate begged them to let him go home;
The devil himself stood up in the East,
As bold as an alderman at a feast,
When in came Mrs. Byrde!

"0, horrible sounds! O, horrible sight!
Can it be that Masons take delight
In spending thus the hours of night?
Ah, could their wives and daughters know
The unutterable things they say and do,
Their feminine hearts would burst with woe!

But this is not all my story:

"Those Masons joined in a hideous ring,
The candidate howling like everything,
"And thus in tones of death they sing
(The candidate's name was Morey):
"Blood to drink, and bones to crack,
Skulls to smash, and lives to take,
Hearts to crush and souls to burn—
Give old Morey another turn,
And make him all grim and gory."

"Trembling with horror stood Mrs. Byrde,
Unable to utter a single word;
She staggered, and fell into the nearest chair,
On the left of the Junior Warden there;
And scarcely noticed, so loud the groans,
That the chair was made of human bones.

"Of human bones! On grinning skulls
That ghastly throne of horror rolls,
Those skulls, the skulls that Morgan bore;
Those bones, the bones that Morgan wore;
His scalp across the top was flung,
His teeth around the arms were strung;
Never in all romance was known
Such uses made of human bone.

*The brimstone gleamed in lurid flame
Just like —, the place I will not name;
Good angels, that inquiring came
From blissful courts, looked on with shame
And solemn melancholy.
Again they dance, but twice as bad,
They jump and sing like demons mad,
(To the tune of Hunkey Dorey):
"Blood to drink, and bones to crack," etc.

"There came a pause — a pair of paws
Beaching through the floor, up sliding doors,
And grabbed the unhappy candidate!
How can I without tears relate

"The lost and ruined Morey's fate?
She saw him sink in a fiery hole;
She heard him scream, " My soul! My soul!"
While rolls of fiendish laughter rolled,
And drowned the yells of Morey.

"Blood to drink and bones to crack,
Skulls to mash and lives to take;
Hearts to crush and souls to burn—
Give old Morey a final turn,
And make him all grim and gory.

"The ridiculous woman could stand no more;
She fainted, and fell on the checkered floor,
Midst all the diabolical roar.
What, then, you ask me, did befall
Mehitable Byrde? Why, nothing at all—
She dreamed she had been in a Mason's hall!

And yet he comprehended with chivalrous instinct that woman was entitled to
the highest regard and reverence of the Craft; that the Order bore no malice
against her influence; that her smile was as sweet and her love as dear to
the faithful Mason as to any man; that respect for her good name, her merits,
and her virtue, stood foremost in Masonic teachings; and to enforce both his
views and admiration, he conceived, founded and organized the beautiful Order
of the Eastern Star, in which the wives and daughters of all good Masons take
special delight, and derive untold pleasures and benefits. And in many lines
of prose and verse has he exemplified this work and taught its value and
advantage. In evidence of this fact, I give to you but a brief selection from
one of his many poems:

"It is in our hearts, dear sisters,
While the Mason's chain is bright
To give our warmest welcome
To the best beloved to-night.
To the wife so fondly cherished,
To the daughter, sister, true;
To the faithful, tender hearted—
Shall I say the word—to you.
"Then, hail adoptive Masonry
That brings us here together,
May manly arms around lovely forms
Protect from stormy weather.
And when adown the hill of life,
Our tottering feet shall go,
May our weary steps be comforted—
Shall I say the word—by you."

Would that the time allotted to this task of love permitted a more extensive presentation of the causes and the labors which entitle the dead poet to all the honors that love and admiration can bestow. He who would delve into the mines of Masonic thought in any department of its many chambers, from the simple lessons of the Entered Apprentice to the highest reaches of the Scottish Rite, will find no tools so clever to employ, no light so bright to shine, no cable so safe to hold, as the words of Robert Morris. But I cannot longer detain you from the closing scenes. In 1884, before assembled thousands of Masons, distinguished public men and beautiful women, there occurred in the City of New York the most striking event ever witnessed in the world of Masonic life. An old man, trembling with the aspen touch of years, his brow furrowed by the indenting fingers of time, his hair scant and whitened from the bleaching of many frosts, and nothing of youth left to him but his heart, which beat as warmly as in days of virile youth, stood up and had placed upon his head the insignia of well won fame. That laurel wreath of Masonic endorsement was the badge and warrant which made him Poet Laureate of the Universal Craft. When the design took shape in the minds of some of the brethren who knew of his deservings, and the opinions of the Grand Masters of all the Lodges of the world were sought and the approval of leading craftsmen everywhere solicited, from far and near the roll of vigorous assent was heard. The South wind, warm and odorful, bore its message with gentle breezes to join the frozen but none the less sincere commendation of the North. The Eastern messenger, coming upon the brilliant rays of the just risen sun, and dashing through the obscuring vapors which held its path, rushed into the arms of the courier from the West who bore, though concealed in the sombre folds which told of darkness, an approval as bright as the morning's chariot contained. From everywhere that Masonry could speak, a willing voice responded from everywhere that hearts could feel a warm, deep throb, endorsed the action, and Masonry reaped added glory from its bestowal on the worthy. But he took the wreath, as he so sadly declared, as evidence that his work was done, his designs upon the Trestle Board of life complete, his daily pilgrimage to the Middle Chamber ended, for he was too old to enter the Promised Land of further effort. And in God's providence it is so to be. One hundred years ago at Edinborough, Robert Burns received the Laurel Crown of Masonic honor, and wore it for ten short seasons, when it rested upon his tomb. To him it came while life was fresh and young, and hopes of fame were bright and alluring. Until Robert Morris bore it upon his aged brow, the grave of youth contained it. And tho' it slept for a century, and its resurrection was far too brief for our happiness, its luster is not dimmed, its strength decayed nor its beauty lessened by its transfer from the tomb of the world renowned singer of old Scotland to the humble grave of the American Mason.

Among the last acts of Brother Morris was one which, above all else, spoke of his tender appreciation of the honors received from his brethren. It is a poem sent to me, as well as to others, with the simple request that it should not be published or read in public until he rested from his labors. With the acacia sprig and the broken column to tell that his sleep is eternal, I speak that poem to you now, and with the words rising from my lips and speeding in the arms of the circumambient air, may we not believe my brethren, that his
spirit, disenthralled, shall on elysian heights catch the music of their flight as from the windows of your hearts, and with your fraternal blessings on their wing, they return to bear him company in the Lodge Celestial.

ROBERT MORRIS’ MESSAGE FROM THE GRAVE.

Brothers in June or in December,
Honoring the memory of the dear St. John,
Then let some kind participant remember
The name of him who wrote this, but is gone;
Let some kind brother rise while all are silent,
And with deep pathos and fond friendship say:
He was a Mason, gentle, true and tender,
And loved all things that do not pass away.

He loved his friends; in them his heart found anchor,
Bound in affection as with hooks of steel;
And for his foes, he gave few signs of rancor,
But bore their slanders patiently and well.
He loved to make in simple verse that rhyming
Where ancient signs and emblems smoothly lie;
Where deeds of brother-love and truth are chiming,
And Masonry is wed to poetry.

He loved the word of God; its hopes eternal
Grew sweeter as the end of life drew nigh;
A sinful man, but saved by Grace supernal,
Trusting in Christ, he dreaded not to die.
At times a cloud the promises disguising,
And deep humility obscured the scene,
But the bright Son of Righteousness uprising
Dispelled the gloom and warmed his soul again.

He gave the widows and the orphans duly,
A portion of his hard-earned scanty store,
And though the amount might seem but trifling truly,
He gave so cheerfully it seemed the more.
His heart was in his work, to build the temple,
In fervency, he toiled through many years,
To "build the temple," spiritual and mental,
He triumphs now — is freed from toils and tears.

He's gone; the problem that so long he studied,
That mystery of the "world to come" profound
Is solved; his tree of life which only budded,
Hear; now has full harvest in Celestial Ground.
In the Great Presence, with the wearied resting,
He has his wages and is well content,
Brothers, in silence stand; your love attesting —
This is the word your dying brother sent.

On July 21st, 1888, peacefully and calmly he entered alone upon that journey which sooner or later we all shall try. Peacefully and calmly he laid down the gavel of human effort and the trowel of human endeavor, and with the compass to guide him, the square to protect him and the Holy Scriptures to save, he put aside the curtains which hide the present from the future, and as their folds closed behind his step, to earthly things the Poet Laureate
was dead. Eastern travelers declare that in the Baltic Sea when the winds blow from a certain quarter of the compass, the waters for a moment move from the shore and disclose to view the remains of a beautiful city which sleeps beneath the billows. As we stand upon the borders of time and look forward with eagerness to the illimitable which covers from sight the form of Robert Morris, we will invoke, in the music of his own sweet words, the tender breezes to drive away the waves of oblivion which oft-times cover human genius, and in spirit if not in flesh, shall always behold him when with pathos we remember what he must have felt as he tenderly told his brethren of the mystic tie that,

We meet upon the Level, and we part upon the Square;
What words sublimely beautiful those words Masonic are!
They fall like strains of melody upon the listening ears,
As they've sounded hallelujahs to the world, three thousand years.

We meet upon the Level, though from every station brought,
The Monarch from his palace and the Laborer from his cot;
For the King must drop his dignity when knocking at our door
And the Laborer is his equal as he walks the checkered floor.

We act upon the Plumb,—'tis our Master's great command,
We stand upright in virtue's way and lean to neither hand;
The all-seeing eye that reads the heart will bear us witness true
That we do always honor God and give each man his due.

We part upon the square,—for the world must have its due,
We mingle in the ranks of men, but keep The Secret true,
And 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 toward it fast,
We shall meet upon the Level there, when the gates of death are past;
We shall stand before the Orient and our Master will be there,
Our works to try, our lives to prove by His unerring Square.

We shall meet upon the Level there, but never thence depart,
There's a mansion bright and glorious, set for the pure in heart;
And an everlasting welcome from the Host rejoicing there,
Who in this world of sloth and sin, did part upon the Square.

Let us meet upon the Level, then, while laboring patient here,
Let us meet and let us labor, tho' the labor be severe;
Already in the Western Sky the sign bids us prepare,
To gather up our Working Tools and, part upon the Square.

Hands round, ye royal craftsmen in the bright, paternal chain!
We part upon the Square below to meet in Heaven again;
Each tie that has been broken here shall be cemented there,
And none be lost around the Throne who parted on the Square.