



# THE TRACING BOARD

A quarterly publication of the Educational Committee of the District Grand Lodge of the Eastern Archipelago

## Editor – Tracing Board

Heartiest greetings to all Brethren on this 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Tracing Board series.

Our recently concluded Tercentenary Celebrations in our District were indeed very exciting and eventful. The continued efforts in combining the Ashlar and The Tracing Board Publications together meant that more space had to be allocated for the highlight of our celebrations and thus working hand in glove with W Bro Louis, we have decided to scale back on the educational articles in order to make more room for the events and activities held.

However, in doing so we have chosen exciting articles to fit with the theme of our Tercentenary celebrations and focus on the historical events in our District that formed part of our journey towards the contribution of 300 years of Freemasonry Worldwide.

There are two articles in this issue, the first from **Rt. W Bro. F.S. Whelan**, a very Senior Australian Mason who survived World War 2 as a Prisoner of War incarcerated in Changi, Singapore under the Japanese invading forces! His description of Masonry practiced under incarceration is not only inspirational but very emotional as well, both as a form of hope and an incredible insight into the determination and love of practicing the craft under dire circumstances. The second article is a revisit of an historical piece on our first District Grand Master of the Eastern Archipelago Rt. W Bro William Henry Macleod Read written by **this Editor** in 2008 whilst he was a young Entered Apprentice and revised to include facts learnt along the way. The achievements of our first DGM are amicable in the founding of our District and I hope you enjoy the journey down memory lane as a celebration of our continuity.

I continue to give my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Bro. Benedict Chin Kee Seong for his brotherly support and artistic talents in this publication.

As usual, I do ask for feedback as to the topics that brethren would like to see included in the Newsletter. My contact details are provided for below.

Fraternal regards,

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## In This Issue

Excerpts From “Masonry In Changi POW Camp”  
By Rt. W.Bro F.S. Whelan,  
B.E.M..P.J.G.W.

RW Bro William Henry Macleod Read - revisited  
By W Bro Suraj Gerard (Sean Read) Sivaprasad, PM



## What is Freemasonry?

By W.Bro C M H D Gill

The question appears to be a simple one, but this brief monograph adds to the welter of articles and books which show that there is no single or simple answer. Freemasonry, or what its adherents call The Craft, has inspired numerous theories about its origins, its antiquity, its purpose, its meaning and even its content. It has exerted its power to fascinate from at least the beginning of the 18th century and even in our own supposedly sophisticated time can bring three professional men to spend hours standing in a dark, draughty car park discussing it.

The three men are a surgeon, a physicist and a psychologist. This paper was prompted by their shared desire to understand what it is about Freemasonry that engaged them on that night as it had on so many previous occasions. How could three doctors of such diverse and divergent training and experience all be inured to personal discomfort by the thrill of a discussion about something so often dismissed by others as a pointless, childish and not very secret society?

Hospitality

Freemasonry describes itself as being built upon the three great principles of brotherly love, relief and truth. There is no doubt that most masons do practice brotherly love and charity, but standing in a freezing tarmaced wasteland hardly seems likely to advance either. It seems much more likely that all three men were engaged upon a quest for the truth, and it is this same quest that calls millions of men from their own dark deserts to follow the Way of The Craft.

Freemasonry provides its own answer to our question. In one of the ceremonies a junior brother is asked: What is freemasonry ? His ritual answer is known to every English Mason: A peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. At first sight this is a simple answer, yet it continues to perplex Masonic authorities, historians and mystics. Most authors who have actually thought in any depth about the sentence, parse it and focus on the complexities and contradictions to be found in the section mentioning veiled allegories and illustrative symbols.

Countless lectures, papers and volumes, perhaps more than the stars visible with the naked eye, have sought to lift the veils, unpick the allegories, reduce the illustrations to their components and identify the actualities symbolised. However, it seems obvious that allegory and symbol are themselves only interpretable when one understands the answer to the question with which this monograph began and to provide such an answer we must return to the first half of the statement. Although those Masonic authors who mention the first clause tend to dismiss it in a few sparse words, without recognising the significance of the first part of the description any subsequent attempt at understanding The Craft's allegory and symbology will always be wanting. So let us briefly dissect the demi-sentence: A peculiar system of morality.

It might first be helpful to recognise that the line was inserted into the ritual in the early 19th century when the two competing Grand Lodges – the so called Antients and Moderns – merged to form the current United Grand Lodge of England. This suggests that the description was probably a compromise that somehow managed to incorporate two competing views about Freemasonry and that for both sides the statement was probably designed to tell us as much about what Freemasonry is not as what it is.

The fact that Freemasonry is 'peculiar' was probably not much cause for debate. Both sides could agree that The Craft is 'special' or 'unique', its ideas, symbols and practices 'exclusive' and 'exceptional'. Yet, the choice of word and its surface interpretation was itself rather peculiar, rather dated. By this period 'peculiar' had its modern sense and generally meant 'odd, so using 'peculiar' as a synonym for 'unique' was probably a little anachronistic even in 1813. This suggests that those who drafted the line were possibly having a little joke, but also that in their choice they were seeking to imply a spurious antiquity – a contention reinforced by the insertion of another glaring invention concerning the Sun at its meridian. Thus, the writers were consciously aping the usage of the 17th and early 18th centuries, something they did so successfully that few seem to have considered the line's true age.

The next portion of the line is perhaps the most interesting, particularly if one likes layered meanings. The Duke of Sussex, the Grand Master who presided over the Union, was a recognised scholar with an extensive knowledge of esoteric Greek texts. It therefore seems likely that he had a part in choosing the word 'system' to describe Freemasonry. 'System' is from the Latin 'systema' – a method – which is in turn derived from the Greek 'σύντημα' which can be reasonably translated as 'a complex whole assembled or put together'. Almost certainly the koina of the phrase would have grasped that 'system' could simultaneously denote something constructed, a complex assembly, a method, and that it would also carry the underlying connotation in the original Greek of '\*the+ self is upright'. System is a word that in Freemasonic terms is both just and perfect, if somewhat irregular in its kaleidoscopic possibilities!

'Morality' as used in this phrase was also meant to have layers of meaning. When it is viewed in its contrasting 17th and 19th century guises 'morality' is a deliciously ambiguous word that must have delighted the ritual revisers. To this day, those who seek to reconcile Freemasonry with religion(s) make great play of the idea that The Craft simply teaches the same basic morals in a different way. Undoubtedly, this usage is correct and the sentence was meant to be read in this uncontroversial way by most readers. However, it is clear that the ritual authors also wanted their work to be read with eyes from an earlier time. When originally introduced into English in the mid-17th century the terms 'moral' and 'morale' were synonyms; Fairfax, Cromwell and others use the terms interchangeably when speaking of the New Model Army's sense of its own spiritual ascendancy, heart and motivation.

Thus 'morality' in its original 17th century usage refers to what we might see as a non-material life-force, what most of us would probably call 'spirituality'. So in this phrase 'morality' has two meanings and the earlier one was cleverly veiled by Sussex diverting attention to ethics.

Although we could dissect further some of the nuances of meaning present in the original sentence, pursuing all the resonances of a statement that bears the timbre of the Duke of Sussex would be several more papers, so let us content ourselves with the simplest answer to our original question:

What is Freemasonry ?

A unique, complex assembly of spirituality.

The first part is to again make it clear that Freemasonry does not preach a 'morality' in the modern sense. Neither does it make the grievous error of mistaking modern 'morality' for ancient 'spirituality'. Freemasonry does not possess its own fixed creed or set of moral precepts. That is not to say that The Craft is immoral because Freemasonry is actually an uniquely amoral system of spirituality. From the earliest times candidates for initiation were required to be of 'good report' and in the earliest extant ceremonies "the tongue of good report" acted as a password that enabled the prospective Mason to enter the Masonic Temple for initiation. However, the Craft has never made any fixed assumptions about what 'good' means. Therefore, the prospective freemason must be acceptable to his peers, his time and his society; whether that society be populated by saints or slave owners is irrelevant, because 'good' is used as a relative term and there is no benchmark against which candidates must be tried. That said, The Craft does inculcate some basic behavioural ideas that most would identify with the conventional 'goodness' of the axial age (that is the assumption that 'goodness' is essentially about treating other people well). However, these ideas are less about other people and are actually concerned with the individual taking responsibility for who and what he is. Candidates are required to be free men of mature age so that they are able to make and implement considered choices for which they are then responsible. In this sense Freemasonry is very peculiar because each Mason is free to make his own choices and this means that each Mason follows his own peculiar path on the Way of The Craft. Throughout The Craft ceremonies certain principles are repeated and inculcated because they are congruent with the patterns of the Universe – why that is so falls outside this brief paper. However, it seems clear that the orthodox 'goodness' of the axial age may be a by-product, not necessarily the objective of The Craft, and that Freemasonry promotes the growth of the Man not the humanistic morals of the axial age as ends in themselves.

Secondly, Freemasonry is truly a 'complex assembly'. The Craft is an initiatory system consisting of deeply mystic and esoteric rites. It is structured in such a way that private study and self-development must be accompanied by shared purpose and experience. The rites only become truly initiatory when they are shared with others because it is only when the ritual is correctly performed – not simply read alone by a neophyte – and repeated many times in different voices that it truly speaks to the individual.

However, the minutiae of the rituals, the secret signs, the precious passwords and the rich paraphernalia of the Masonic Temple do not in themselves hold the secrets. In different periods and jurisdictions Freemasonry has had, and continues to have, different forms, grades and structures, yet The Craft still retains its attraction and spiritual essence. The furnishings of the Lodge and the exact content of the ceremonies are not what give The Craft its unique character. The symbolic objects vary, ritual stories may change, the order and/or sequence of their telling alter, yet the essence is immutable because Freemasonry is made of the stuff which makes us human. Thus, it sustains and feeds the rational and the spiritual, the individual and the common, through elemental forms and sacred rituals that, though they become prosaic to the Man, are always unique to the Mason.

The Masonic rites and ceremonies are effective because they have the capacity to engage every part of the human and reverberate through all aspects of his experience. The rituals can engage and intrigue the intellect, they can seduce and subvert the emotions, and they can dim then dazzle the senses. It is this trifold capacity that engages the seeker, the mystic, the master. No matter which tendency is dominant within the individual, through the shared experience of ritual the Mason is initiated into new modes of thought, experience and existence. This initiation can never be wholly achieved alone and that is why Freemasonry requires a ‘complex assembly’ of ideas, rites and brethren. However, as with all genuine mysteries, participation is not synonymous or identical with initiation. Indeed, those who act as initiators may well initiate inadvertently whilst themselves not being initiates; those who doubt their own proficiency may appear masters to others for around any flame all is black, yet in our own apparent darkness our light can still be a lamp unto the feet of others. This is why it is only through and with their brethren that an initiate can be fully enlightened, and only in a Lodge that the ideas and ritual truly live and enliven. The power of the ‘complex assembly’ is a function of the Lodge of Masons and its power is to present different perspectives to the individual Mason, first as initiate, then as watcher, then initiator, then finally as seer. Thus as candidate, member, officer and Master, Freemasonry is done to you, you watch it done to others, you do it to others then it happens to you.

The third part of the answer is that The Craft preaches no precepts and requires no specific belief, save one, that he who seeks admission should believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. This simple requirement is not even explained or defined; thus, each candidate for Freemasonry is free to decide what for him constitutes the Supreme Being. It may be a particular deity, for others it may be an expression of the unity of all things, some may see it as the laws governing existence, for yet more it may be the overwhelming awe of being individually conscious in and of the immensity which we call the Universe. Yet, despite the fact that many candidates and brethren are indubitably religious we should not confuse The Craft with religion because Freemasonry is certainly not a religion in the way that most people use the term. Nevertheless it is true that Masons often have a tendency to interpret and express their feelings of awe and wonder in quasi-religious terms, but this does not necessarily indicate the presence of a religion within The Craft, it may simply be that the magic of Freemasonry is more visible and expressible to those who see with the eyes of faith because their eyes are conditioned to seek the divine.

Although Freemasonry is deistic in its belief that there is some underlying order in the Cosmos, the most important quality of the Masonic Supreme Being is that It has no qualities. The Supreme Being is described using many epithets, the best known being the Great Architect of the Universe (occasionally the pronoun ‘He’ is applied to the Great Architect, but that is more a function of the grammatical conventions of earlier and more enlightened times, rather than an ascription of gender), but It has no attributes, hence, crucially, there is no theology attached to It. If Masons accept the existence of something greater than the individual human consciousness, then all Masons have in common something too profound for mere words. If that acceptance is not constrained within a fixed theology it is impossible to determine whose conception of the Supreme Being is the correct view. If all Masons’ views are equally valid there is no opportunity to brand any brother a heretic for conceptualising divinity in a different way to any other. Thus, it is implicit in Freemasonry that any rigid conception of the divine is restrictive because although theology creates focus and clarity, in so doing it also narrows the vision.

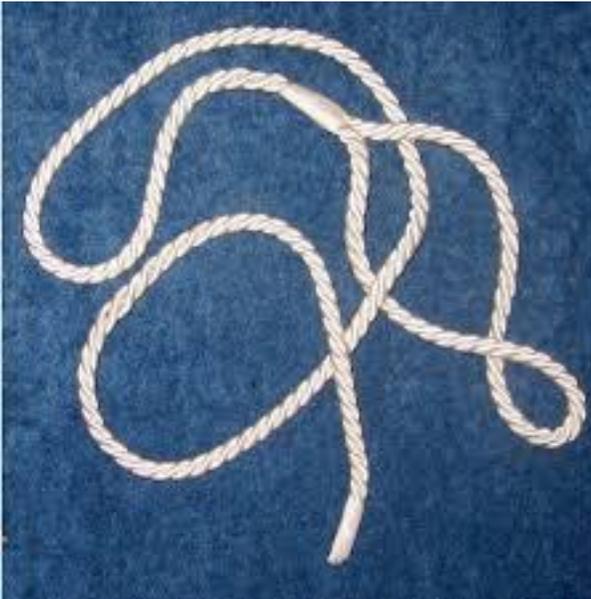
To the candidate, Freemasonry will always be compatible with any particular theology, yet to the initiate it will transcend all. Thus, the focus of a religious dogma allows the candidate to see one or two shades or colours of opinion very clearly; Masonry can show him the same colours, the colours he expects. However, Freemasonry can eliminate the polarising effects of doctrine and display the full breadth of the celestial rainbow in all its splendour .... providing that the candidate is prepared to see as an initiate.

The broadening of spiritual vision is the key aspect of The Craft for those who seek truth. Freemasonry is not a religion, but neither is it irreligious. The Craft's syncretism means that it is compatible with all religions precisely because it considers them all to be part of the same spectrum. By eliminating a single, restrictive set of tenets Freemasonry creates a space where those leaving the exile of the outer or popular World to sojourn through initiation towards the exaltation of true mastership can enter into discussion, debate, dissension, tension, interpretation, and all the other things needed to address what is in our existence and what lies beyond it. The freedom to take concepts from any source, to mix the colours of the rainbow in any way, means that candidates become initiates who can pursue their peculiar, individual Way within the complex assembly of the Lodge, but without the risks of petty personal conflicts or, even worse, the persecution of pogroms. The Craft is not a religion, it is that which enables its initiates to discover the truly religious. To the initiate Freemasonry is no religion, but all.

The allegories and symbols which exercise so much allure only exist as surface manifestations of the system, they are not themselves the Way. Yet sometimes, when those aspiring to enlightenment bring themselves into conformity with the laws of Providence, those symbols take life. That a physicist, a surgeon and a psychologist should stand together in darkness is itself profoundly allegorical. The physicist represents our knowledge of that from which we and Everything is made; the surgeon has a profound knowledge of our embodiment and our corporeal existence, the psychologist searches for that which makes the merely physical a human. It is fair to say that all three are uncertain about the answers to the great questions of existence and probably even differ over how many questions there might be. An understanding of the fundamentals of matter, the biology of the organism and the psychology of the human heightens their awareness that their ignorance of much deeper knowledge is profound. That is why the three doctors stand in darkness visible, united in their wonderment at Creation, marveling that they are part of it, contemplating the brevity of their span, straining for meaning and knowledge. Freemasonry through its unique complexity and spirituality marks out the Way which will, by means of allegory and symbol, lead all three into the hidden secrets and mysteries, and then initiate them, not as individuals but as brethren, into light invisible.

To answer our original question, Freemasonry is the mystical journey, it is the quest, the search for truth; its destination is Us.

*Editor's Note: - WBro Hew Gill as we usually call him, is well known to most brethren in our District for his insights and knowledge into Freemasonry. Being a member of Lodges in Singapore and Malaysia, not to mention his home Country, Great Britain. He is ever available to anyone seeking "Light" and we are grateful to have his article in this issue.*



## The Cable Tow

By W Bro Joseph Fort Newton

The word Cable-tow we are told, is purely Masonic in its meaning and use. It is so defined in the dictionary, but not always accurately, which shows that we ought not to depend upon the ordinary dictionary for the truth about Masonic terms. Masonry has its own vocabulary and uses it in its won way. Nor can our words always be defined for the benefit of the profane.

Even in Masonic lore the word cable-tow varies in form and use. In an early pamphlet by Prichard, issued in 1730, and meant to be an exposure of Masonry, the cable-tow is called a “cable-rope”; and in another edition a “tow-line.” The same word “tow-line” is used in a pamphlet called *A Defense of Masonry*, written, it is believed, by Anderson as a reply to Prichard about the same time. In neither pamphlet is the word used in exactly the form and sense in which it is used today; and in a note Prichard, wishing to make everything Masonic absurd, explains it as meaning “the roof of the mouth!”

In English lodges, the cable-tow, like the hoodwink, is used only in the first degree. In American lodges it is used in all three degrees, and has almost too many meanings. Some of our American teachers – Pike among them – see no meaning in the cable-tow beyond its obvious use in leading an initiate into the Lodge, and the possible use of withdrawing him from it should he be unwilling or unworthy to advance.

To some of us this non-symbolical idea and use of the cable-tow is very strange, in view of what Masonry is in general, and particularly in its ceremonies of initiation. For Masonry is a chamber of imagery. The whole Lodge is a symbol. Every object, every act is symbolical. The whole fits together into a system of symbolism, by which Masonry veils, and yet reveals, the truth it seeks to teach such as have eyes to see and are ready to receive it.

As far back as we can go in the history of initiation, we find the cable-tow, or something like it, used very much as it is used in a Masonic Lodge today. No matter what the origin and the form of the word as we employ it may be – whether from the Hebrew “khabel,” or the Dutch “cable,” both meaning rope – the fact is the same. In India, in Egypt, in most of the Ancient Mysteries, a cord or cable was used in the same way for the same purpose.

Its meaning, so far as we can make it out, seems to have been some kind of a pledge – a vow in which a man pledged his life. Even outside initiatory rites we find it employed, as, for example, in a striking scene recorded in the Bible (1 Kings 20:31,32), the description of which is almost Masonic. The king of Syria, Ben-hadad, had been defeated in battle by the king of Israel and his servants are making a plea for his life. They approach the king of Israel “with ropes upon their heads,” and speak of his “brother, Ben-hadad.”

Why did they wear ropes, or nooses on their heads? Evidently to symbolize a pledge of some sort, given in a Lodge or otherwise, between the two kings, of which they wished to remind the king of Israel.

The king of Israel asked: "Is he yet alive? He is my brother." Then we read that the servants of the Syrian king watched to see if the king of Israel made any sign, and, catching his sign, they brought the captive king of Syria before him. Not only was the life of the king of Syria spared, but also a new pledge was made between the two men.

The cable-tow, then, is the outward and visible symbol of a vow in which man has pledged himself to save another life at the risk of his own. Its length and strength are measured by the ability of the man to fulfill his obligation and his sense of the moral sanctity of his obligation – a test, that is, both of his capacity and of his character.

If a Lodge is a symbol of the world, and initiation is our birth into the world of Masonry, the cable-tow is not unlike the cord which unites a child to its mother at birth; and so it is usually interpreted. Just as the physical cord, when cut, is replaced a tie of love and obligation between mother and child, so, in one of the most impressive moments of initiation, the cable-tow is removed, because the brother, by his oath at the Altar of Obligation, is bound by a tie stronger than any physical cable. What before was an outward physical restraint has become an inward moral constraint. That is to say, force is replaced by love-outer authority by inner obligation- and that is the secret of security and the only basis of brotherhood.

The cable-tow is the sign of the pledge of the life of a man. As in his oath he agrees to forfeit his life if his vow is violated, so, positively, he pledges his life to the service of the Craft. He agrees to go to the aid of a Brother, using all the power in his behalf, "if within the length of his cable-tow," which means, if within the reach of his power. How strange that any one should fail to see symbolical meaning in the cable-tow! It is, indeed, the great symbol of the mystic tie, which Masonry spins and weaves between men, making them Brothers and helpers one of another.

But let us remember that a cable-tow has two ends. If it binds a Mason to the Fraternity, by the same fact it binds the Fraternity to each man in it. The one obligation needs to be emphasized as much of the other. Happily, in our day we are beginning to see the other side of the obligation – to guide, instruct and train them for the effective service of the Craft and of humanity. Control, obedience, direction or guidance – these are the three meanings of the cable-tow, as it is interpreted by the best insight of the Craft.

Of course, by Control we do not mean that Masonry commands us in the sense that it uses force. Not at all. Masonry rules men as beauty rules an artist, as love rules a lover. It does not drive; it draws. It controls us, shapes us, through its human touch and its moral nobility. By the same method, by the same power it wins obedience and gives guidance and direction to our lives. At the Altar we take vows to follow and obey its high principles and ideals; and Masonic vows are not empty obligations – they are vows in which a man pledges his life and sacred honour.

The old writers define the length of the cable-tow, which they sometimes call a "cable's length," variously. Some say it is seven hundred and twenty feet, or twice the measure of a circle. Others say that the length of a cable-tow is three miles. But such figures are merely symbolical, since in one man it may be three miles and in another it may as easily be three thousand miles- or to the end of the earth. For each Mason the cable-tow reaches as far as his moral principles go and his material conditions will allow. Of that distance each must be his own judge, and indeed each does pass judgment upon himself accordingly, by his own acts in aid of others.

Recently a man of science said that if the earth were held in its own orbit by iron bars, they would have to be close together, not more than a foot apart, covering the entire surface. If, he said, these bars were twisted together into one gigantic cable, he doubted if it would be as strong as the invisible bond, or cable, by which the earth is held to its vast orbit. It was a striking way of teaching us that the cables that reach the longest and hold the strongest are invisible. And formed of forces with which men do not reckon, just because they are noiseless and unseen.

Just so, when the cable-tow of each Mason is joined with that of every other Mason, and all are united in one Cable of Kindness, it makes a bond of brotherhood the might of which no mortal can measure. It helps to hold the world together. It holds when other ties break, as it did in the Civil War in America. It is one of the holiest assets of humanity – a far-stretching Tie, mystical and unseen, yet more unbreakable than bands of steel, in which the obligation and loyalty and love of each of us is a strand.

There is an unseen cord that binds  
The whole wide world together;  
Through every human life it winds,  
This one mysterious tether.

There are no separate lives; the chain  
Too subtle for our seeing,  
Unites us all upon the plane  
Of universal being.

Such is the Divine cable-tow by which the world is held in its moral orbit. To discover that the cord running through our own lives – your life and mine – uniting us with all the seekers after truth, all lovers of right, all servants of God and man, is the mission and blessing of Masonry. What is the length of our cable-tow? Who knows how far it reaches?

*Editor's Note: - WBro Joseph Fort Newton was an incredible writer and lecturer of Masonry during 1923 to 1927 in Illinois and Iowa. His collections of these lectures were finally published in a book in 1928 titled "Short Talks on Masonry". This article is an extract from one of his lectures.*



## THE LODGE ROOM OVER SIMPKINS' STORE

By Bro Lawrence N. Greenleaf

The plainest lodge room in the land was over Simpkins' store,  
 Where Friendship Lodge had met each month for fifty years or more;  
 When o'er the earth the moon, full orb'd, had cast her brightest beams,  
 The brethren came from miles around on horseback and in teams;  
 And O! what hearty grasp of hand, what welcome met them there,  
 As mingling with the waiting groups, they slowly mount the stair,  
     Exchanging fragmentary news or prophesies of crop,  
     Until they reach the Tyler's room and current topics drop.  
 To turn their thoughts to nobler themes they cherish and adore,  
 And which were heard in meeting night up over Simpkins' store.

To city eyes, a cheerless room, long usage had defaced;  
 The tell-tale lines of lath and beam on wall and ceiling traced;  
 The light from oil-fed lamps was dim and yellow in its hue;  
 The carpet once could pattern boast, though now 'twas lost to view.

The altar and the pedestals that marked the stations three,  
 The gate-post pillars topped with balls, the rude-carved letter G,  
 Where the village joiners clumsy work, with many things beside,  
 Where beauty's lines were all effaced and ornament denied;  
 There could be left no lingering doubt, if doubt there was before,  
 The plainest lodge room in the land was over Simpkins' store.

While musing thus on outward form the meeting time drew near,  
 And we had glimpse of inner life through watchful eye and ear;  
 When the lodge convened at gavel's sound with officers in place,  
 We looked for strange, conglomerate work, but could no errors trace.

The more we saw, the more we heard, the greater our amaze,  
To find those country brethren there so skilled in Mason' ways;  
But greater marvels were to come before the night was through,  
Where unity was not mere name, but fell on heart like dew;  
Where tenets had the mind imbued, and truth's rich fruitage bore,  
In plainest lodge room in the land, up over Simpkins' store.  
To hear the record of their acts was music to the ear;  
We sing of deeds unwritten, which on angel's scroll appear;  
A widow's case – four helpless ones – lodge funds were running low;  
A dozen brethren sprang to feet and offers were not slow.

Food, raiment, things of needful sort, while one gave a load of wood,  
Another shoed for little ones, for each gave what he could.  
They spake the last: "I haven't things like those to give-but then  
Some ready money may help out"-and he laid down a ten.  
Were brother cast on darkest square upon life's checkered floor,  
A beacon light to reach the white-was over Simpkins' store.

Like scoffer who remained to pray, impressed by sight and sound,  
The faded carpet 'neath our feet was now like holy ground;  
The walls that had such dingy look were turned celestial blue;  
The ceiling changed to canopy where stars were shinning through;  
Bright tongues of flame from altar leaped, the G was vivid blaze;  
All common things seemed glorified by heaven's reflected rays.  
O! wondrous transformation wrought through ministry of love –  
The vision fades-the lesson lives! And taught as ne'er before,  
In plainest lodge room in the land, up over Simpkins' store!

*Editor's Note: - Sometimes, wisdom, knowledge and passion can best be expressed through poetry. Here's a wonderful rendition by a Brother.*

*By incredible luck, I managed to find the history of this poem based on true facts as the picture of the real Simpkins' store above shows. A narrowly enclosed staircase on the side of Simpkins' Store leads to a small, rustic Masonic lodge room. The room was completely replicated by the Grand Lodge of Colorado as it appeared in the late 1800's.*

*On June 6, 1959, the lodge room was dedicated as a memorial to Bro Lawrence N. Greenleaf, a Past Grand Master of Colorado and poet. The lodge room is still used for meetings and is known as "The Lodge Room over Simpkins' Store" as immortalized in his poem written in 1898.*

*Fred C. Van Meter of Las Animas, a Mason of the Royal Arch Chapter No. 49, did the restoration work. The Master's chair is an exact replica of the one used in the original organization of the Grand Lodge of Colorado in 1861. Enclosed in a glass case is a block of wood from the first Masonic Lodge in Colorado, which was established in Aurora in 1859. Fraternal organizations played an important part in the life of the early pioneers.*