

THE CANADIAN CHARGE

The text of the so-called Canadian Charge has a long history. It was called the “Canadian Charge” because during the mid-twentieth century a popular RCMP degree team, which travelled across Canada and the USA, had used this text, which they called the “Walking Charge.”

How they came upon it—it playing no rôle in any Canadian working—is unknown, but parts of it can be traced to Benjamin L. Hadley, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maine in 1942, who penned the poem, “On Yonder Book.” It is also found in Maine as the charge in the third degree where it is called the “Candle Light Charge.” And a similar charge can be found in the *Oklahoma Cipher* of the 1890s.

The source appears to be the poet laureate of American Freemasonry, Dr. Rob Morris. He published his second edition of *the Odes and Poetry of Freemasonry* in 1884, in which is found his poem, “A Mason’s Vow.” The similarities are striking. His work was widely published by the masonic press of the day but whether he inspired the ritualists of Maine and Oklahoma, or their ritual inspired him, is unknown. The question though has yet to be definitively settled. In England “the Walking Charge” has been given in lodges in the Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight since the late 1800s, so perhaps it originated earlier in England.

THE WALKING CHARGE

Bro. It must indeed be very gratifying to know that you are now a Master Mason and have sealed your allegiance with one of the grandest and noblest fraternities (orders) in existence, one that encircles the whole globe and whose influence for good is never ending.

Your particular reason for becoming a member of this grand and noble order is known only to yourself. It may have been the prompting of idle curiosity. That being so, your curiosity is now satisfied—in part for should you so choose Freemasonry has much more for you to discover.

It may have been for business reasons. That being so, be at once undeceived, for Freemasonry offers no pecuniary advantages to any of its initiates.

It may have been for social aspirations. This being so, you are now afforded the opportunity to meet many knowledgeable and distinguished Brethren whose acquaintance might be of some benefit to you.

It might have been that your father was a Mason and expressed a wish that you should follow in his footsteps. That being so; it is an honour to the Fraternity, to yourself, and to this Lodge.

But be the reason what it may, this question now confronts you, will you be worth anything or nothing to Freemasonry, or will Freemasonry be worth anything or nothing to you? the answer depends on you alone my Brother. But I tell you this in all truth. If you apply to your own life the teachings inculcated in the three degrees you will become a more responsible citizen, a more compassionate father, a more dutiful son, a fonder husband, and a more complete man.

For ...

In Mason’s Lodge with darkened eyes
And cable tow about you
You swore to Hele all mysteries

That Masons keep and Masons prize
The Brothers secrets 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 (1), and this (2), and this (3), forever and forever.

You swore to answer and Obey
The Summons sent you duly
By Brothers hand or Lodge array,
You swore that you would never stray
From 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 (4), and this (5), and this (6), forever and forever,

You swore in charity to care
For all with sorrow smitten,
The Brother on the darkened square,
The Widow, full of grief and care,
The sorrowing orphan doomed to stray
On life's cold path and cheerless way
While tears gush forth unbidden.

On yonder book that oath you took, and you should break it never,
But stand by this (7), and this (8), and this (9), forever and forever

You swore to deal in honesty
With each true heart around you
That honour bright should ever be
The unbroken bond, twixt him and thee'
Nor wrong, nor guile, nor cruel fraud
Should ever break or loose that holy chord
With which these vows have bound you
You swore the chastity to shield

Of women true and tender
A brother's wife, a brother's child
His Mother, Sister, Undefined
Those, pure of heart, whose love
Makes Masons' homes like heaven above
You are their sworn defender

On yonder book, three oaths you took and you should break them never
But stand by this (10), and this (11), and this (11), forever and forever.

These are our vows, be these our care,
And may such light be given
In answer to our earnest prayer
That we may ever do or dare.
All that Gods gracious laws enjoin
That, so, when shades of night decline.
We may be found in heaven.

On this fair book these vows we all took and we should break them never
But stand by this (13), and this (14), and this (15), forever and forever.

At 1 the presenter takes Step
At 2 the presenter shows E.A. sign
At 3 the presenter cuts E.A. sign
At 4 the presenter takes step
At 5 the presenter shows F.C. sign
At 6 the presenter discharges F.C.
At 7 the presenter takes step
At 8 the presenter shows M.M. sign
At 9 the presenter discharges M.M. sign and recovers
At 10 the presenter takes step, shows E.A. sign, and cuts it
At 11 the presenter takes step, shows F.C. sign and discharges
At 12 the presenter takes step, shows M.M. sign, discharges and recovers
At 13 the presenter puts right hand on the V.O.S.L.
At 14 the presenter indicates the Sq. and Cs.
At 15 the presenter kneels and seals once on the V.O.S L

Text provided by Bill Kent, Canute Lodge No. 4876, Province of Hampshire & I.O.W. U.G.L.E.,
1997/6/15/.