

The Final Charge
An Address given by WBro John Glew, PDistGDC,
On his Installation as Master of the Hawke's Bay Research Lodge No 305
On 1st September 2008

Brethren,

While browsing the Internet one evening I came across a piece of verse that I found very interesting. I recognised a part as being the ritual that is sometimes said by a Junior Warden when closing the lodge in the second degree.

Happy we have met, happy we have been, happily we part and happy to meet again.

I surmise that this piece of our ritual must have been derived from the verse I found on the net. It would appear that the origin of the verse was mid nineteenth century and is used in some lodges refectories as a final toast before the tyler's toast.

Dear Brethren of the mystic tie the night is waning fast. Our duties done, our feast is o'er, this song must be the last. Goodnight, goodnight once more, once more repeat the farewell strain. Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again.

This stanza is in fact the last verse of a six verse poem, entitled **The Final Toast**, written by Brother D L Richardson in India in the mid eighteenth hundreds. It is not commonly known that there is more than one verse and very few would be able to recite the entire poem. However, I understand that the complete work is in common use in parts of Australia.

The poem has been used in various countries from time to time but it would appear that its earliest printing was in the *Masonic Vocal Manual* published at Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, in July 1852.

A number of different versions have been printed over the years, but the original reads as follows: -

*Are your glasses charged in the West and South?
The Worshipful Master cries;
They're charged in the West, They're charged in the South,
Are the Wardens' prompt replies;
Then to our final toast to-night your glasses fairly drain
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again
Oh! Happy to meet again!*

*The Masons' social brotherhood around the festive board,
Reveals a wealth more precious far than selfish miser's hoard
They freely share the priceless stores that generous hearts contain
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again!*

*We work like masons free and true, and when our task is done,
A merry song and cheering glass are not unduly won;
And only at our farewell pledge is pleasure touched with pain
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again!*

*Amidst our mirth we drink "To all poor Masons o'er all the world"
On every shore our flag of love is gloriously unfurled,
We prize each brother, fair or dark, who bears no moral stain
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again!*

*The Mason feels the noble truth the Scottish peasant told
That rank is but the guinea's stamp, the man himself's the gold*

*With us the rich and poor unite and equal rights maintain
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again!*

*Dear Brethren of the mystic tie, the night is waning fast
Our duty's done, our feast is o'er, this song must be our last.
Good night, good night, once more, once more repeat the farewell strain
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again!*

The above original wording was apparently set to music and entered by the publishers, Berking Young and Co, of Tank Square Calcutta, at Stationers Hall in London.

The author of the poem has from time to time been said to be either Rudyard Kipling or even Robbie Burns, both well-known and dedicated freemasons. Whilst there are certain lines that may be classic Burns (i.e. the reference to the Scottish peasant or the phrase, *the mystic tie*), or the fact that it was written in India where Kipling spent most of his life, the final toast was actually written by a freemason, Bro David Lester Richardson. Richardson was born in London on 22nd January 1801, the son of Lieutenant Colonel David Thomas Richardson.

The younger David also made the army his career when he became a cadet in the Bengal Army. He was promoted to the rank of Ensign in 1820 and made Captain in 1832. He apparently became a Major at some point, although Hodgson's Officers of the Bengal Army does not confirm this. There is no record of David Lester Richardson having had any active military service.

He was happier no doubt, whilst serving with the Governor General, to be in charge of the army education department in Calcutta. He must have had a reasonable amount of free time whilst in this position as he became editor of the Bengal Annual and later the Calcutta Monthly Journal, as well as publishing many works of poetry and prose.

In 1836 Richardson became a Professor of English Literature at the Hindu College in Calcutta, becoming Principal in 1845. From 1848 to 1850 he was the Principal of Hooghley College.

Bro Richardson was initiated into the Lodge of Industry and Perseverance No 126, Calcutta, (now No 109 meeting in London) and although it appears he never took office he was obviously a regular attendee and partaker of much of the spirit within Freemasonry to have written such an ode.

Whilst in Calcutta, Richardson met another Freemason, Professor William Henry Hammerton, born of Irish Parentage, in Nottingham, England in 1795. Hammerton was initiated into the Aurora Lodge of Candour and Cordiality No 816 in Calcutta, and eventually, in 1841, joined Richardson's Lodge, No 126. This meeting led to *The Final Toast* being put to music during the 1840's, with both artists complementing each others skills.

Whenever and wherever the words of *The Final Toast* were written and by whatever it was inspired, Freemasons all over the world owe a debt of gratitude to these two brethren for giving us a way of performing the first of the three great principals of Freemasonry, Brotherly Love, so as we can say today, just as sincerely as our Brethren in Calcutta said over one hundred and fifty years ago, happy to meet, sorry to part and happy to meet again.

Brethren, in presenting this paper to you, I must acknowledge the work of Bro Will Read, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon Territory, and Bro Andrew Allen, an English Freemason, whose research and material assisted me with my preparations for this presentation tonight.

Thankyou for your attention!