

Sonnet for a Researcher

*Rebecca Coombes, the Librarian of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, recently drew our attention to the following sonnet, by George Markham Tweddell, author of A Hundred Masonic Sonnets, published in The Freemason, 21 January 1888, on the occasion of the publication of Masonic Facts and Fictions by Henry Sadler, the first Librarian and Curator of United Grand Lodge. If the work of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry is also celebrated in verse, its success will be assured.*

Sonnet: To Bro. Henry Sadler, P.M., &c., on reading his valuable volume on "Masonic Facts and Fictions", just published.

Souls of the "Ancient Masons" who did keep  
The Good Old Craft in England far more pure  
Than "Moderns" would have made it, I am sure,  
E'en now, in bliss, with gratitude must leap  
To see a worthy Brother rise to sweep  
The cobwebs of delusion from the page.  
Where they have hung, dirt-catching, black with age;  
For thy researches have been carried deep  
Into such records as do now remain.  
Thanks, Bro. SADLER, hearty thanks to thee,  
For thy wise labours in Freemasonry;  
Thou now hast made what erst was dark most plain.

"Masonic Facts and Fictions" well have shown  
How seeds which germinated were by "Ancient Masons" sown.

*The sonnet was reprinted in a flyer advertising Masonic Facts and Fictions 'just published, 250 pages, price seven shillings and sixpence', produced by the book's publisher, George Kenning.*

*The flyer goes on to give an example of a further press notice of Sadler's volume in Funny Folks, January 21st, 1888:*

*The Widgerys at Breakfast*

WIDGERY.— "I see that the Grand Tyler." —

"I'm sure it 'ud sound better if you said 'Great Hatter'" sniffed Mrs W. "I suppose you refer to one of the Lincoln and Bennett people?"

"No, no, poppet: the Grand Tyler is a Freemasonry official, and he's just published a book about the Craft called '*Masonic Facts and Fictions*.'"

"Oh, my! I *would* like to see that. Does it give *all* the *real* facts and secrets of Free" —

*The other side of the flyer gives a more sober notice of the volume:*

WHAT THE "WORLD" SAYS. JAN 18TH 1889.

The word "tiled" is almost the only purely Masonic expression which has come to form part of the everyday language of the uninitiated, and I now see that the worthy Grand Tyler, Mr. Henry Sadler, has written an instructive and interesting book, which he calls *Masonic Facts and Fictions*. All those who wish to learn something reliable about the history of the mystic tie, the power and popularity of which is increasing day by day, should certainly read Mr. Sadler's little volume, which is dedicated to my indefatigable friend Brother Thomas Fenn, whose favourable opinion as to the merits of the work and its well-executed illustrations I can heartily indorse.

*The term tiled nowadays forms a less familiar part of everyday language than in 1889. The OED describes the masonic meaning of tile as follows: To protect (a lodge or meeting) from interruption or intrusion, so as to keep its proceedings secret, by posting a tyler at the door. Also transf. to bind (a person) to secrecy; to keep (any meeting or proceeding) strictly secret. 1762. The OED cites the following example from Thackeray: 'Come, come, Snob my boy, we are all tiled, you know'. A tiler or tyler is the official who keeps the uninitiated from intruding upon the secrecy of the lodge meeting. Although tiled has dropped out of current usage, expressions such as 'on the level' or 'on the square' are frequently stated to be derived from freemasonry, although the OED offers no support for this.*

*George Markham Twedell was a printer whose premises were in Stokesley, near Hull. The Freemason, volume 10 (1877), p. 115, contains the following notice of a testimonial raised by some Hull masons for Twedell:*

It has long been the wish of the friends and admirers of this well-known author and public speaker, to present him with some substantial testimonial of esteem, for his life-long labour for the mental and moral elevation of the people. There has scarcely been a movement in the path of progress which he has not aided, publicly and privately, by his tongue and pen, from his youth up to his present time; often at great pecuniary loss to himself; so that many, who may have differed widely from him in opinion, have not hesitated to express their admiration of the enthusiastic and unflinching manner in which he has always devoted his abilities in striving to promote whatever appeared to him to be for the good of humanity, whether popular or otherwise. The present testimonial will consist of a purse of gold, to help him through heavy losses and family affliction, over which he has no control, and to aid him to complete those literary labours in which he is known to be so long engaged; while to preserve an enduring record of its presentation, the names of all the subscribers, whether of pounds or pence, will be printed in book form, and copies deposited in all the principal public libraries, as well as distributed among the subscribers. The testimonial will not be of a sectarian, party, or even local character; and subscriptions for the sum will be gladly received, and duly acknowledged by Wm. Andrews, F.R.H.S., No. 10, Colonial-street, Hull.

Charles Bell, 1 Sussex-street, Middlesborough, and High-street, Redcar.

R. Broadbridge, Wilnecote, near Tamworth.

J. Tom Burgess, F.S.A., Grassbrooke, Leamington.

W.H. Burnett, Middlesborough.

T.W. Craster M.D., Linthorpe-road, Middlesborough.

L.F. Crummey, M.R.C.S., Manor House, Great Ayton, via Northallerton.

John Dixon, Skelton, via Marske-by-the-Sea.

John Dunning, Southfield-villas, Middlesborough.

Joseph Gould, 24 South-street, Middlesborough.

George Kenning, 198, Fleet-street, 1, 2 and 3, Little Britain, and 175, Aldgersgate-street, London; 2 Monument Place, Liverpool; and 9, West Howard-street, Glasgow.

David Norminton, Stokesley.

Rev. John Oxlee, Rector of Cowesby, via Thirsk.

John Ryley Robinson, LL.D., Westgate, Dewsbury. John Sutherst, Cleveland Ironworks, Gisbrough.

George Watson, J.P., Cleveland Villas, Middlesbrough.

Persons wishing to be added to the above list are requested to send their names and addresses to William Andrews, F.R.H.S., Hon. Sec., No.10 Colonial-street, Hull. March, 1877

*On July 21 1877, The Freemason noted [vol. 10, p. 299] that William Andrews, the Secretary of the Testimonial, 'has received the following excellent letter from a gentleman well known as one of the most gifted of the Yorkshire poets, but who has for many years been resident in Devonshire':*

Elmfield House, Exeter, June 19th, 1877

DEAR SIR, — A day or two ago I received a circular announcing that it was proposed to present a Testimonial to Mr. G. M. Tweddell, of Stokesley, having had some personal knowledge of his literary labours, and the reverses he has encountered, I must ask you to add my name to the list of subscribers, to the amount of the enclosed cheque (£5). Whether from being too much a man of business, a thing not uncommon among authors; or from having 'too many irons in the fire ,' or from over sanguine temperament, Mr Tweddell has encountered these reverses, he is not the less entitled to the sympathy of those who appreciate literary industry and a perseverence in self-improvement in the face of any disadvantages.

I am Sir, yours faithfully

WILLIAM DANLEY

*On 28 July 1877, The Freemason carried a review (p. 304) of Bro. Emra Holmes' Tales, Poems and Masonic Papers, published by Tweddell's printing works. The review noticed that all profits from the volume were presented 'to a brother mason who has been unexpectedly plunged into poverty in the declining years of his life, and who, we betray no secret in saying, is Bro. G. M. Tweddell, of Stokesley.' Holmes' volume included a masonic memoir of Tweddell.*