

THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

No 18

THOMAS EDWARD SPENCER (1845-1911)

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Consider this: " How M'Dougall Topped the Score"

A peaceful spot is Piper's Flat. The folk that live around,
They keep themselves by keeping sheep and turning up
the ground.
But the climate is erratic; and the consequences are
The struggle with the elements is everlasting war.
We plough, and sow, and harrow - then sit down and
pray for rain;
And then we all get flooded out, and have to start again.
But the folk are now rejoicing as they ne'er rejoiced
before,
For we've played Molongo cricket, and McDougall topped
the score!

Molongo had a head on it, and challenged us to play
A single-innings match for lunch - the losing team to pay.
We were not great guns at cricket, but we couldn't well
say No,
So we all began to practise, and we let the reaping go.
We scoured the flat for ten miles round to muster up our
men,
But when the list was totalled, we could only number ten.
Then up spoke big Tim Brady, he was always slow to
speak,
And he said - "What price McDougall, who lives down at
Cooper's Creek?"

So we sent for old McDougall, and he stated in reply
That "he'd never played at cricket, but he'd half a mind to
try.
He couldn't come to practice - he was getting in his hay,
But he guessed he'd show the beggars from Molongo
how to play."
Now McDougall was a Scotchman, and a canny one at
that,
So he started in to practise with a paling for a bat.
He got Mrs Mac. to bowl him, but she couldn't run at all,
So he trained his sheep dog, Pincher, how to scout and
fetch the ball.

Now, Pincher was no puppy; he was old, and worn and
grey;
But he understood McDougall, and - accustomed to obey
When McDougall cried out "Fetch it!" he would fetch it in
a trice;
But until the word was "Drop it!" he would grip it like a
vice.
And each succeeding night they played until the light
grew dim;
Sometimes McDougall struck the ball - sometimes the
ball struck him!
Each time he struck, the ball would plough a furrow in the
ground,
And when he missed, the impetus would turn him three
times round.

The fatal day at length arrived - the day that was to see
Molongo bit the dust, or Piper's Flat knocked up a tree!
Molongo's captain won the toss, and sent his men to bat,
And they gave some leather-hunting to the men of Piper's
Flat.
When the ball sped where McDougall stood, firm planted
in its track,
He shut his eyes, and turned him round, and stopped it -
with his back!

The highest score was twenty-two, the total sixty-six,
When Brady sent a yorker down that scattered Johnson's
sticks.

Then Piper's Flat went in to bat, for glory and renown,
But, like to grass before the scythe, our wickets tumbled
down.
"Nine wickets down for seventeen, with fifty more to win!"
Our captain heaved a heavy sigh - and sent McDougall
in.
"Ten pounds to one you lose it!" cried a barracker from
town;
But McDougall said "Ill tak'it, mon!" and planked the
money down.
Then he girded up his moleskins in a self-reliant style,
Threw off his hat and boots, and faced the bowler with a
smile.

He held the bat the wrong side out, and Johnson with a
grin,
Stepped lightly to the bowling crease, and sent a
"wobbler" in;
McDougall spooned it softly back, and Johnson waited
there,
But McDougall crying "Fetch it!" started running like a
hare.
Molongo shouted "Victory! He's out as sure as eggs."
When Pincher started through the crowd, and ran through
Johnson's legs.
He seized the ball like lightning; then he ran behind a log,
And McDougall kept on running, while Molongo chased
the dog.

They chased him up, they chased him down, they chased
him round, and then
He darted through a slip-rail as the scorer shouted "Ten!"
McDougall puffed; Molongo swore; excitement was
intense;
As the scorer marked down "Twenty," Pincer cleared a
barbed-wire fence.
"Let us head him!" shrieked Molongo. "Brain the mongrel
with a bat!"
"Run it out! Good old McDougall!" yelled the men of
Piper's Flat.
And McDougall kept on jogging, and then Pincher
doubled back,
And the scorer counted "Forty" as they raced across the
track.

McDougall's legs were going fast, Molongo's breath was
gone--
But while Molongo chased the dog--McDougall struggled
on.
When the scorer shouted "Fifty!" then they knew the
chase could cease;
And McDougall gasped out "Drop it!" as he dropped
within his crease.
Then Pincher dropped the ball, and, as instinctively he
knew
Discretion was the wiser plan, he disappeared from view.
And as Molongo's beaten men exhausted lay around,
We raised McDougall shoulder-high, and bore him from
the ground.

We bore him to McGinniss's, where lunch was ready laid,
And filled him up with whisky-punch, for which Molongo paid.
We drank his health in bumpers, and we cheered him three times three,
And when Molongo got its breath, Molongo joined the spree.
And the critics say they never saw a cricket match like that,
When McDougall broke the record in the game at Pipers Flat.
And the folk are jubilating as they never were before,
For we played Molongo cricket,
and *McDougall topped the score!*

Or this:

ODE AFTER PROCLAMATION IN THE EAST
SOUTH

Lord God our Master bless
With health and happiness,
So mote it be.

May he our laws defend,
Our power for good extend,
Our Master, Guide and Friend
So mote it be.

May we united stand,
And join throughout the land,
With apron, heart and hand,
So mote it be.

ODE AFTER PROCLAMATION IN THE

Great Architect, to Thee we raise,
With joy our grateful song of praise;
Crown Thou our labours with success.
And with Thy grace our Master bless.

May peace be with us evermore,
And love extend from shore to shore;
May we in harmony combine,
And let, O Lord, the praise be thine.

ODE AFTER INVESTITURE AS A MASTER MASON

Now thou art raised, invest, and complete;
Trustful and true, we on the centre meet.
Place all thy faith in Him who rules on high.
Blest shalt thou live, and peaceful shalt thou die.

T.E. Spencer, who wrote the words of that poem as well as the words for many of our well known Masonic odes, was born in Hoxton Old Town, London, on 30 December 1845, son of Daniel O'Brian (or O'Brien), a cabinet maker, and his wife, Anne. He first came to Australia in 1863 with his brother and after an unsuccessful year on the Victorian goldfields he returned to England. He then worked as a stonemason, also becoming very active in union activities and in 1869 he was elected Vice President of the Stonemasons Society of London which had a membership of over 50,000. On 21 November 1869 he married Jane Harriett Strew in Hackney after apparently dropping the O'Brian part of his name. It is uncertain whether he changed the family name or just simply dropped it, retaining Thomas Edward Spencer.

Spencer was a very successful negotiator in industrial disputes, settling one very large dispute, which led to his being suggested as a candidate for the British Parliament. However he declined the offer and instead in 1875 returned to Australia, setting up as a builder and contractor. He was involved in the construction of many large buildings in New South Wales including Goulburn Gaol, the Physics Laboratory at the University of Sydney and parts of the Sydney Sewerage system.

Spencer's wife died in 1880, leaving him with a seven year old son and on 6 April 1882 he married Sarah Ann Christie at Goulburn, this marriage producing two sons and two daughters. He continued to work as a contractor and stood for election to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in 1894 but was not successful. Spencer then entered the field of industrial relations and in 1907 was appointed as employers' representative on the Court of Arbitration under Judge Heydon. When this court was reorganised in 1907 he presided over some thirty wage boards, almost invariably being chosen unanimously by employers and unions because of his total lack of bias. Whilst continuing to work as a contractor and writer he spent the greater part of his life in the field of industrial relations, mostly in an honorary capacity.

T E Spencer wrote many light poems and stories of a humorous nature and frequently contributed to the press. Among his publications were "How M'Dougall Topped The Score", "The Adventures of Mrs M'Sweeney", "The Haunted Shanty" and many others. At the time of his death he was writing another book and was also arranging a farce "Mrs M'Sweeney" for presentation on stage. The Sydney Morning Herald of 8 May 1911 stated that "now and then his verses nearly approached true poetry." J F Archibald of The Bulletin said, "Your verses blew into the office like a whiff from the bush. It was a pleasure to read some lines which did not contain wattle and dead men." Interestingly "Budgerie Ballads", written in 1908, was reprinted in 1910 as "Why Doherty Died" the Budgerie being thought of as possibly a swear word.

Thomas E Spencer died on Saturday 6 May 1911, after appearing well that morning, visiting Rev Hillhouse Taylor, then going on to see his solicitor before visiting the Masonic Club in Pitt Street, Sydney where he suffered difficulty in breathing. He returned by cab to his residence, "Hillbrow" 387 Glebe Point Rd, where he was attended by Dr Burfitt but died at 1.00 pm the cause of death being given as "dilatation of the heart." His funeral took place on Monday 8 May and "The Town and Country Journal" of 10 May reported that "That the remains of the deceased gentleman were interred in the Anglican section of the Rookwood Cemetery." Also that "The cortege moved from the deceased gentleman's residence shortly after 1 o'clock."

The report goes on to say that members of the Union Secretaries' Association and the Eight-hours Committee marched in front of the hearse and many members of the Masonic Lodge followed, Mr Spencer being a Past Grand Master. The report further states that Spencer had been Deputy Grand Master for three years and was also the oldest living member of the Leinster Marine Lodge which is the oldest Lodge in Australia as well as being a member of The Leinster Marine Royal Arch Chapter which bears the distinction of being the only Chapter in New South Wales, under the Irish Constitution.

It should be noted that the newspaper report incorrectly states that the Leinster Marine Lodge is the oldest Lodge in Australia. This honour belongs to the Australian Social Lodge which was consecrated in 1820, four years before the Leinster Marine Lodge.

The burial service was conducted by the Rev Hillhouse Taylor, after which a full Masonic Service was conducted by Freemasons present, a Masonic Apron and a few sprigs of acacia being placed on the coffin and lowered with it into the grave. Also present were Rt Wor Bro Dr Carruthers, after whom the Masonic Library is named, Rt Wor Bros. Wearne and Aubrey Halloran and The Grand Supt M E C Withers.

What a pity it is that when funeral services are held for distinguished Freemasons today, we do not get such positive reporting!

The Sydney Morning Herald of 9 May 1911 also reported that Judge Heydon, delivering a eulogy, described Spencer as "The fairest of men with a kindly and sympathetic nature, a very reasonable mind, a conciliatory disposition and an ever-wakeful instinct for fair play." The S.M.H. further reports that mourners included many members of the legal profession, trade unionists including Mr J Connington of the "Trolley, Draymen and Carters Unions." Chief mourners included his sons and son-in-law and Most Wor Bro Montgomerie Hamilton a Past Grand Master and most Grand Lodge Officers, again favourable reporting.

According to a history written by T E Spencer himself, he was initiated in The Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia No. 266, Irish Constitution, on 12 March 1877 in The Freemason's Hall, York Street, Sydney, however another history written by Rt Wor Bro G W S Phillips, PJGW and Wor Bro F J G Fleming, PM and Secy., states that he was initiated on 12 April 1877. Following a move to Goulburn he called off from The Leinster Marine Lodge on 13 October 1884 and helped in the formation of Lodge Tuscan No 32, on the register of the Grand Lodge of NSW, in Goulburn and was Wor Master of that lodge for two years 1883-84-85. Spencer rejoined his mother lodge on 14 September 1885 and was installed as Wor Master on 13 June 1887 and again on 11 June 1888. He was to serve a further term as Wor Master of The Leinster Marine Lodge, No 2 UGL of NSW in 1901-02.

On 20 June 1888 Thomas Spencer was appointed as Grand Sword Bearer of the Provincial Grand Lodge of NSW, Irish Constitution, and on union he became Grand Director of Ceremonies of the UGL of NSW. Spencer gave long and distinguished service to Freemasonry following union in 1888, he being a signatory to the articles of Union which may be viewed by visitors to the Grand Lodge Library in The Masonic Centre, Sydney. He was President of The Board of Benevolence 1889-90, President of The Board of General Purposes 1891-92-93, Chairman, Freemasons Benevolent Institution 1891-92-93-94, Deputy Grand Master 1894-95-96 and the rank of Past Grand Master was conferred on him in 1901.

At a special meeting of The Leinster Marine Lodge on 20 June 1888 a unanimous vote of thanks was passed to T E Spencer for his eminent services in connection with the amalgamation of the Masonic Constitutions in NSW and at a further meeting on 14 June 1889 the lodge resolved that "The anthems written by the Wor Master, T E Spencer, and sung at the installation of Lord Carrington be inserted into the ritual book." These anthems are still sung in our lodges today! For the installation of Most Wor Bro J C Remington as Grand Master in The Sydney Town Hall on 20 July 1903, Spencer wrote the words for another anthem, "Stretch Forth Thy Hand".

On 8 September 1920 The Board of General Purposes recommended that the sum of sixty pounds be given to Sydney Hospital for a "T E Spencer Bed" and this is recorded on an Honour Board in the hospital today.

Spencer also wrote the following odes: Ode for Affiliating Brother, When Candidate Receives Light, After Investiture as an EAF and FCF, Opening and Closing in Second and Third Degrees.

All this from a man whose verses "nearly approached true poetry" but perhaps it would be fitting to end with another poem "The Song Of The Mason."

THE SONG OF THE MASON

Within an Abbey's sacred pile,
'Neath fretted dome and columned aisle,
A youngster and his father stand,
Viewing its beauties, hand in hand.
And as in awe he looks, the son
Marvels to know how all is done.
"Father," he said, "I fain would know
How all these wondrous buildings grow."

The father paused, then answer made:
"I'll tell thee how they grow," he said.
"Some wealthy man must first engage
To pay the men their daily wage,
Because 'tis surely right and meet
That those who work shall also eat.
Then comes a wondrous skilful man
Who makes designs and draws a plan;
Each column, arch and frieze he draws
In strict accord with nature's laws;
Just as the Great Designer drew
His plan, symmetrical and true;
So that, when built, the whole design
Both strength and beauty shall combine.

"The quarrymen, with maul and wedge,
With swinging pick, and mighty sledge,
Then drill the holes and lay the train
That rends the towering hills in twain;
Then speaks the blast, whose voice of
thunder
Can rive the solid rocks asunder;
They split and hew the riven rocks,
And shape them into massive blocks;
Till tier on tier, rough-hewn they stand,
Waiting the expert craftsman's hand.
The skilful Master Mason, then
(Cunning to judge both stones and men),
Examines keenly every stone,
Selects the good and sound alone,
Distributes all his work with care—
A column here, an arch-stone there—
Directing so that all combine
To harmonise one grand design.

And the hammers and the mallets on the
chisels ring,
Through the blocks the ropes are creaking
as the derricks swing;

And each stone more shapely grows
'Neath the skilful craftsman's blows,
And the chips and spawls are flying as the
Mason's sing.

"The firm foundation next is made,
Each stone is well and truly laid
(The finest building could not stand
If built on mud or shifting sand).
Then stone on stone is fixed in place,
Each massive, strong, yet full of grace;
Whilst each its separate burden bears,
It helps its mates to carry theirs.
The pillars, rising from the ground,
With sculptured capitals are crowned.
Each product of the craftsman's skill
Has its allotted space to fill,
Just as, on earth, the humblest man
Is part of God's almighty plan.

And the mallets and the hammers on the
chisels ring,
And the groaning blocks are creaking as
the derricks swing;
And the Master cries 'Well done,'
For his work is well begun,
And the chips and spawls are flying as the
Masons sing.

"The arches spring from pier to pier,
The building rises, tier on tier;
The mullioned windows, seen on high,
Are filled with flowing tracery;
From groined ceilings angels weep,
And from quaint corners gargoyles peep,
So queer are some, they almost seem
To have been drawn from some mad dream.
Now, cunning men the spandrails fill
With foliage, carved with wondrous skill.

The Master's cheery accents tell
That all is orderly and well;
For, as his men he moves among,
He hums aloud the Mason's song.

Oh, the hammers and the mallets on the
chisels ring,
And the heavy stones are rising as the der-
ricks swing,
And the building slowly grows
'Neath the craftsman's skilful blows,
And the chips and spawls keep flying as the
Masons sing.

" Yet still more high the building grows,
Each tier some added beauty shows;
A flying buttress, quoin or label,
Coping stone or pointed gable;

Sculptured bosses, Gothic knees,
Or richly foliated frieze.
While within, the eye may roam
From altar step to stately dome;
Higher still, and yet more high,
Till pinnacles approach the sky.
The gilded finial stands alone,
And seems to kiss the setting sun;
Erect and plumb, it seems to say,
' From earth to heaven I point the way.'

And the mallets and the hammers now no
more will ring,
And the blocks will creak no longer as the
derricks swing,
For the victory is won,
And the Masons' work is done;
And they know that future ages will their
praises sing."

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