

THE ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY

OF

FREEMASONRY.

AN ADDRESS

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FREEMASONRY.

To Freemasons imbued with the love of their order, few questions can be of greater and more absorbing interest than the antiquity of that fraternity. I suppose there is generally felt an intense yearning after definite historic testimony on this subject,—a testimony which is, from the nature of the case, impossible. There is something weird-like in the obscurity which hangs over not only the origin but the earlier ages of this remarkable institution. Almost every Mason feels satisfied that the order to which he belongs is hoary with antiquity; and yet attempts to wrest from the by-gone past some point on which to fix with historic certainty as the origin of the order, resolve themselves into mere conjectures of greater or less probability, and appearing to different minds entitled to more or less respect. It is the absence of any *authority* that led me to commence an investiga-

tion for myself, feeling confident that my conclusions would be taken for their intrinsic worth and receive a candid investigation from my Masonic brethren. There is, I suppose, little doubt that the legend which accompanies our third degree has led very many of the brethren to assume the date of the events to which that legend refers as the birth-time of the order. They believe that the gathering together of a considerable body of workmen led to an organization which should unite them after their return to their respective homes, or their dispersion over the world in quest of employment. And yet the legend distinctly recognizes the pre-existence of the order, not only in its general tone, but in the title bestowed on the three principal personages engaged at that time. Not a word is said as to the invention of this title, nor indeed of the subordinate distinctions of rank. Rather we are forced into the conclusion that these three persons, together with a vast number of their inferiors, held the same rank in their respective countries, and independently of the work which for a time drew them together.

Before, however, entering upon an examination of the legend itself, I would glance at the theory propounded by Brother Rebold.*

* General History of Freemasonry in Europe, by E. Rebold, M.D.

This theory, in brief, is that the College of Builders, at Rome, in imitation of the Grecian Mysteries, received members by initiation into their signs and pass-words; confined their instruction in architecture to these initiated members; and solemnized their ceremonies by some religious observances; and that by their frequent intercourse with each other, and their compliance with the regulations laid down for their guidance, the members of these corporations were marked by uprightness and intelligence as being in advance of their generation. Brother Rebold is particular to say that this was an *imitation*, not a continuation, of the ancient mysteries. He proceeds to conjecture that after the adoption of Christianity by Constantine, many monks united themselves with these powerful corporations, and, by reason of their sacerdotal character, soon gained ascendancy in the lodges; and that to this ascendancy is to be ascribed the legend attached to our third degree. For to this degree I confine my remarks. To the union of the Christianity of the fourth or fifth century with a heathen institution we owe a—Jewish legend! Few things seem more improbable, from our knowledge of the temper of those times, than the supposition that Christian monks would pass by Calvary and Joseph's garden to borrow a legend of Moriah and its sprig of acacia. In their eyes the events which transpired at the

commencement of the Christian era far surpassed in magnificence and importance any events connected with earlier Jewish history; as in truth to the eye of prophecy the glory of those days eclipsed all previous splendor. Had a symbolic legend been composed by such men, we should surely have had as traitors such well-known and deeply-hated names as Herod, Pilate, and Caiaphas, and not three utterly unknown, obscure names, such as the legend has preserved. Moreover, whatever their subordinate aims might have been, candor cannot fail to give these Christians credit for intense earnestness in propagating the facts of history on which their faith rested. Can we imagine that, instead of turning the Masonic lodges into schools of Christian instruction, they would employ them only to perpetuate a legend of an age whose glory had passed by, of a people whom they hated; and that too a legend which sets forth but obscurely a truth which to them and them alone had been made as plain as the noonday sun? This supposition, as every other which assigns the invention of this legend to any date subsequent to Christianity, appears absolutely incredible. That it is Jewish seems to be unquestionable. Neither Romans nor Christians could have had any floating tradition concerning the personage chiefly concerned, while such a tradition may easily have had an existence among

the Jews when the true history had become obscured.

And now turning to the legend itself. It struck me, as it has done many other Masons with whom I have conversed, as being untrue to history, and wanting in that consistency which gives an air of probability to an ancient tradition. 1. It is clear, from the only authentic history we possess, that the Sidonians, whose connection with the legend will appear to all who are familiar with it, were worshipers at this date, and had been long before,* not of the true God, but of Ashtaroth, or Astarte, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, and the Venus of the Romans. Indeed, the connection of Adonis, which is also the name of a river in Phœnicia, with the goddess, seems to indicate that country as the birth-place of the cultus of this deity. Again, the silence of the sacred narrative, a narrative so minute, so full of details both as to persons and performances, concerning the gloomy event of the legend, must strike every reasoning person with surprise. It could have been no secret. Messengers are said to have traversed the entire kingdom; the sea-ports were guarded; the city was thrown into the utmost confusion; the point of greatest interest to hundreds of thousands had become stationary; when moved

* Judges x. 6; 1 Kings xi. 5.

on it progressed under different circumstances; and not a passing allusion to all this in a narrative which seems to omit nothing of the slightest possible interest! But the legend is plainly contradicted by the Scripture history, which expressly declares that the matter in hand not only progressed uninterruptedly, but that it received the *same* attention until all proposed had been satisfactorily brought to a conclusion. This every Mason may certify himself of by a careful perusal of Second Chronicles. The same subject is very fully and plainly dealt with by Brother Oliver, in his "Historical Landmarks."

2. The legend is wanting in consistency. The only point it would be proper in me to refer to here is this. The legend informs us that before the black cloud which covered the locality with darkness had arisen, the principal person had spent his usual time in the accustomed place. That at the expiration of this time the cloud burst, and yet subsequent examination discovered nothing of the wonted results of his retirement. One or two other inconsistencies have suggested themselves to all the fraternity, and the conclusion I feel bound to arrive at is, that the legend is absolutely unhistoric. Its chief value is its plain recognition of the order as previously existing. It could not have become attached to the degree at a time near the event it commemorates, for the facts of the case, as recorded

in Holy Scripture, would have contradicted it; nor at a time when easy access might be had to these records, for they would have shown then, as they do now, that there was no foundation for the legend. Nor does it seem likely that it was composed in days when much attention was paid to that consistency of narration so eminently characteristic of the sacred writers among the Jews. At what period between the event it points to and the Christian era to assign the attaching of this legend to its degree, it seems useless to conjecture. But that Masonry did not originate at that point seems indisputable. The legend itself assumes its pre-existence, and makes no pretense of accounting for its origin. The tradition probably existed, and some of its circumstances may be real though not occurring as handed down, and it would be known to the uninitiated, and so useless as a groundwork for a new institution, although now it is lost otherwise than as preserved among us. And not only does the legend assume the pre-existence of Masonry, but it shows its existence at the time of the event with which it deals. Leaving its imagery and its possible date, let us examine the teaching it conveys, and see if we can find any clear trace of any communication of truth with which it may be possible to identify the Masonry which embodied this legend. It must be carefully borne in mind that Masonry is

a religious and moral institution, and that, so far as we know, it was never employed merely for the cultivation and transmission of art or science. Our legend and all our traditions point to the unity of the Deity and the consequent brotherhood of the human race as lying at the foundation of all Masonic teaching. It is therefore in the world of religious thought and not of artistic development that we must seek for any trace of Masonry in its infancy.

The most ancient book we possess is that of Job. This book gives us an account of a man living amidst idolatrous neighbors, surrounded by worshipers of the sun and moon, separated it would seem from almost all pious intercourse, yet possessing clear and accurate notions concerning the Great Architect and his benevolent superintendence of human affairs, and certainly enjoying some knowledge of the *Resurrection*, a belief in his personal recognition of God in his *discovered* body, after its destruction by worms. This man falls into great distress. Four friends (brethren), seemingly not very near neighbors, come to visit him (as in duty bound) and condole with him. These men, like Job, are well instructed in the pure doctrine concerning God, and by their knowledge are preserved from the idolatry which surrounded them. How did those five men obtain that knowledge of God which had not been communicated to their neigh-

bors? In their case we see a proof of the transmission of religious truth, and the practice too of that duty so emphatically inculcated on all Masons, of going to the succor of a brother in distress. Passing down the stream of time, we next discover Terah, the father of Abraham, dwelling among the Chaldeans, yet uncontaminated with their idolatry, worshiping the true God, and bringing up his family in the knowledge of him. It does not appear that Abraham was at all amazed at the voice of God bidding him leave his dwelling-place, for the attributes of God and his government of men had been in some way communicated to him. Abraham sets forth on his long pilgrimage, and we find him in confidential intercourse with Melchizedek, a man living at no great distance from those men of Sodom, who were sinners exceedingly above all the earth, yet having received and retaining the knowledge of God. In him Abraham somehow recognizes a superior and does him homage, paying him tithes. Following the footsteps of the patriarch, we find him in the country of Abimelech, King of Gerar. Now here it is very interesting to observe the points of contrast between Pharaoh and Abimelech. The Egyptians even at that early day had lost the knowledge of God, and retained little if anything beyond the conviction that special or peculiar sufferings originated in the displeasure of the Deity, a convic-

tion which no heathen nation seems ever to have lost. Deceived by the dissimulation of Abraham, Pharaoh had taken Sarah into his house. But the plagues with which he and his household were visited, probably led him to suspect that her introduction into his family, as it preceded these unusual calamities, was the cause of them. Inquiry furnishing proof of the truth of his surmise, he sends Abraham out of his bounds. Abraham pursued a similar course of dissimulation towards Abimelech, not being aware that they were brethren. But Abimelech had been initiated into the divine truth, and to him God reveals himself by night, since plagues were not in his case needful to insure that obedience which was habitual. In Abraham Abimelech recognizes a brother, and although he had seen him erring, and had even been greatly endangered by his fault, yet as a brother he forgives him, receives him, and bids him welcome to every part of his dominions. Abraham, for his part, standing abashed in the presence of a brother as he had not done before the profane Pharaoh, offers what extenuation he may of the fault which has lowered him in his brother's eyes.

Surely in this narrative we have a manifestation of those principles which are eminently characteristic of pure Freemasonry. And again I would ask, Whence and how did Abimelech receive his

knowledge of the one true God? Following down the stream for many centuries, we come upon another link in that chain whose existence is by these links clearly revealed. Moses is driven out of Egypt, and escapes into the land of Midian. Here he finds a brother in Jethro of Midian, who had been initiated into the divine truth, and yet he lived among those who had no reverence either for Jethro's God or for his servant, as is seen by their treatment of his daughters. Indeed, these Midianites were among those nations whose cup of idolatry and iniquity was full. There had been no communion certainly between Abraham's descendants and this priest of Midian, for they had been four hundred years in Egypt, and much of the time in cruel bondage. Still, amidst the increasing darkness which brooded over the earth, the light of truth shone among the deserts of Midian. How are we to account for it? About forty years later we find another link. These same Midianites, practised in all the arts of idolatrous worship, are agonized with terror at the approach of the Jewish multitudes. But from afar off, from the banks of the Euphrates, the fame has reached them of one who knew the mighty God. Balaam, though possessed with a degree of avarice totally unworthy of the Masonic character, yet had received and conspicuously maintained a knowledge of the one true God

and even of the doctrine of redemption, and possibly of Resurrection. And here we lose sight of these isolated links. To the Jews, an express revelation being made, the obscurer light is swallowed up in the history of the brighter. In what way the mysteries which had hitherto guarded and conserved divine truth were maintained among the chosen people we have no means of ascertaining. But this feature is worth noticing, more especially in connection with what is to follow. The doctrine of the Resurrection was but obscurely taught by Moses or in the Old Testament; yet, after a lapse of ages, only the infidel sect of the Sadducees rejected it. The rest of the people, those among them who learned what could be known, had but cloudy ideas on the subject, owing probably to the loss of the ancient legend and the substitution, at some revival of the institution or attempt to popularize it, of that which has descended to us; still, they possessed the rudiments of belief, and it was not Resurrection as a doctrine, but the special instance of Resurrection taught by Christianity, which moved the Pharisees to indignation.

Thus far, then, our inquiry has led us to the certainty of some mode of communicating divine truth down to the time of Moses, yet perfectly independent of Abraham's children, and to some degree of probability that this mode, however modified, was preserved among the chosen people. This involves

the probability that the Freemasonry which we perpetuate to-day (being received from the Jews) is the self-same, in those things which are essential to it, as that by which Terah and Abraham and Abimelech and Job and Jethro and Balaam received the knowledge of those truths, the absence of which threw the gloom of spiritual darkness and death over the whole earth.

But the probability at which we have arrived will be greatly enhanced if we can find any appearance of institutions of indisputable antiquity, presenting a sufficient resemblance to Freemasonry to point to a common origin of all, and sufficient points of difference to indicate a departure from the ancient truth. Now, the antiquity of the Egyptian mythology is unquestioned. And among those myths or legends we find one which formed the basis of the higher mysteries of Osiris. These mysteries had as their avowed object the communication of religious truth, which was not to be intrusted to the mass of mankind, but secured to those who after very severe trial had proved themselves worthy of so great a trust. The legend in the main is this: Osiris, the husband, or son, of Isis, was murdered by his brother Typhon, and his body thrown into the Nile. Isis, making diligent search for it, found the remains *inclosed in a beautiful plant*, from which she rescued them. We turn to the Eleusinian mys-

teries, whose legend relates that Proserpine, the daughter of Ceres, was conveyed to *Hades* by Pluto. That after a long search for her, during which time she cursed the earth with unfruitfulness, the sun revealed to her her daughter's place of concealment, and to remove the curse, Jupiter was compelled to order that she should dwell only part of the year in Hades, and that this might have been avoided had not Proserpine eaten a *fruit* in Pluto's kingdom. Here now, by comparing these legends with that preserved among ourselves, we find in each case a body lost, in each case that body discovered. The variance of the legends is a more striking proof of unity of design than their strict uniformity would have been. If the Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians, as is generally supposed, it is clear that they had seen through the symbolism, and under a totally different legend preserved the same truth. The substitution of a descent into Hades and return to earth, for death and the discovery of the body, clearly indicates, if the latter legend be borrowed from the former, the recognition of the truth under the legend; if they are both derived from a common origin, it is certain that the original legend conveyed the truth common to both in an unmistakable manner. The Greek and Egyptian mysteries, like the legend of our third degree, are not narrations, but commemorations of some event in

the past. That event was handed down by tradition until all else but its significance, the truth taught with it, had become gradually obscured. But however its circumstances and names became changed, and the truths lost which had accompanied the original fact, the one truth which the event taught, or which was taught in consequence of it and along with it, survived all change, and was held fast amid all varying circumstances. With the Egyptians, the character of God was disfigured, and belief in the unity of the Godhead lost; but the lost body was discovered, rescued even from the vegetable creation which had taken possession of it, while everything else had disappeared of the original history. Among the Greeks, the character of the Supreme Being had been still further lowered, they had wandered more completely from the idea of his unity. This idea was undoubtedly conveyed in the original tradition, and it has been preserved to us quite independently of revelation. Yet though the Greeks had hopelessly lost the idea of one God, with them, in their mysteries, had been preserved the truth of a return from the other world. We have also lost, as *Masons*, the original history, its place has been supplied by a legend which certainly is not historical, but the legend, like the others, points to an event, symbolizes it, and conveys the teaching originally allied with it. This, then, we

may safely infer: that all the varying legends are representations of the same history, that the event it records occurred very early in the annals of the human race and made an indelible impression, and that either it was so handed down or so strikingly symbolized that its leading feature has never in any part of the world, amid diversities of race, revolutions of dynasties, and conflicts of religions, been lost sight of. What, then, is the teaching of these legends, so universal, so carefully handed down and connected with a special event? It is certainly connected with life after death, but it seems to me to be more than the immortality of the soul. The history was not preserved with the *view of teaching* the unity of the Godhead, although that would certainly be taught by it in its early days, and that idea was lost afterwards, but the truth which it *was intended* to preserve has been preserved, because it was taught in the most striking manner. The leading, the most impressive, idea of the original history was not that which man could by reason discover as the unity of God, nor that which formed part of the revelation written on his nature, as immortality. Belief in the immortality of the soul is a first principle of our nature; it never has been and never can be lost. Even those peoples among whom our mysteries or the corruptions of them have not been perpetuated hold fast this primal truth. Would

there have been any necessity to hand it down by history or by symbolic teaching so striking that it has ever retained its leading feature? But if there should be a truth not written on man's nature, but specially revealed by God, a truth therefore which if not handed down would be lost, this we may conceive to be the truth of the mysteries. Now, such a truth is the resurrection of the body. It formed no part of the revelation impressed on man's nature, for death threatened not until disobedience entered; and resurrection from the dead could only be received after the idea of death itself had been formed. But even after man had received the fearful intelligence that he must die, and had experienced that revolution in his nature which was wrought by disobedience, still he was consciously immortal. He could not conceive of himself as non-existent. He had seen the tempter, who, though he was punished for his rebellion, was yet living. And this innate perception of immortality Adam transmitted to his posterity down to the present time. But that which the mysteries taught was something needing to be ever taught afresh, something not transmitted by nature to posterity. Even revelation has added but little to our conceptions of this truth, and the manner in which, or the extent to which, our mortal bodies shall be quickened is as little understood as ever. Revelation has given us greater assurance of

it, but has said nothing of how the difficulties seemingly in the way of a bodily resurrection will be overcome. Still, with all its mysteriousness, it would seem that this bodily resurrection, and not simply immortality, was intended to be taught in the primeval history and the subsequent legends, since the former alone would be lost without being thus handed down. But whether this notion be adopted, or whether it be contended that the immortality of the soul alone is the truth of the mysteries, this is equally certain, that at some time this truth became indelibly impressed upon mankind, and that it was preserved in a symbol or a history of such a character that it was never lost, while every other truth had been forgotten. There is but one event occurring sufficiently early to account for the universality of the tradition in its main feature, and that is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. During the time of man's innocence death loomed in the extreme distance as something hideous, but indefinite, incomprehensible; and of which definite conceptions could be formed only by approaching the barrier of disobedience, which he had no desire to cross. Even after he had yielded to temptation, and so had come within the region of death, and witnessed its phenomena as exhibited in the case of the brute creation, we can understand that, instinct with life and conscious of immortality, he would

fail to realize how the danger would affect himself. And as years rolled on, and while multitudes of his inferiors had succumbed to the destroyer, he and his race were as yet untouched, his mind would be unable to conceive of the image of God as lying destitute of life and consciousness. But when at last the blow fell, and he beheld his virtuous son cold and stiff in death's embrace, we may imagine the consternation which overwhelmed the entire race, and the horror of darkness which seized upon the unhappy murderer. The calamity which had for centuries been the object of shuddering dread had happened, and gloom would fill every human breast. This first visit of death would leave an impression never to be effaced; it would be spoken of in whispers by mothers to their children, and all would speak with bated breath of death's first victim, Abel. Now, it would be quite in accordance with God's dealings for him to illuminate this gloom, and assuage the bitterness of sorrow and of terror, by revealing the truth which before this they would scarcely have been in a position thoroughly to appreciate, that the bloody work was not irreparable, that the lost body should one day be found, and that though earth must receive, and the vegetable creation disperse, the lifeless remains, at the proper time restoration would be effected, and Abel should live again.

So precious a truth as this, revealed when the human heart had not been schooled by separation and taught to look forward to it, but lay prostrate under an affliction of inconceivable magnitude, would be the raising of hope from death to life; the affections wounded fatally would begin to breathe again and raise themselves from the dust. The knowledge of this gracious design of God, what would it be but the bringing of the soul from *darkness to true light*, the unfolding of a destiny utterly different from that which they had anticipated, the reception of a truth impossible of acquisition otherwise than by express revelation, and which, being contrary to sense, must be lost if not carefully, religiously handed down? What must be the sadness, the anguish, of myriads of hearts in the future should this knowledge be lost, while death once having shown his terrible countenance would continue his irresistible inroads on hearts and homes!

Clearly some steps must be taken to secure this teaching so essential to man's welfare. For the present, the recent communication from God would suffice; but when they whose hearts had been revived by it should have left this earth, who then would pour such balm as they had received into hearts wounded as theirs had been? Hence it would be most probable that the tragic story of

Abel's death and of God's communication should be preserved and handed down in such a form and with such accompaniments as should secure its perpetuity. The *blue vault of heaven* under which the atrocious deed had been committed, *the darkness* of sorrow from ignorance which had fallen on the afflicted race, *the light* which broke in upon their minds when *God spake the word*, the certainty of the truth thus revealed because God had revealed it, being as great as it could have been had they seen him who had laid covered and buried rise and resume his place among them, all this would be carefully treasured up for future generations.

And further: the crime of Cain probably revealed the enormity of his disposition, the extent to which he had departed from God and shut his mind against truth, in a most startling degree. This may have rendered it manifest that if truths revealed to man's nature could become lost, that which could be known only by express revelation would certainly disappear, and with its decay hopelessness would brood over the human race; and the necessity of carefully preserving, embodying, and handing down this precious truth would be apparent. We find in the Book of Genesis a distinction made between the "sons of God" and the "children of men," an intimation that there existed between them differences so great that intermar-

riage between them was impious, and resulted in the nearly total alienation of the human race from God. By these "children of men" are generally, and I think correctly, understood the descendants of Cain, and it may be others of Adam's sons who had grievously fallen from their original purity. Now, in all probability this departure would make itself clear soon after the exile of Cain, and upon the supposition that there were other sons, there may have been manifested a spirit of rebellion and murmuring against the Most High for the punishment with which Cain and his family were visited. This would naturally result in their adopting the unbeliefs of Cain and sympathizing with his sins, and the overthrow of truth would threaten imminently. And if to this we add the not improbable supposition that to those only who loved to retain the knowledge of God in their hearts was the revelation of resurrection vouchsafed, it will be easy to understand that the handing down of this truth would only take place in case of such as were proved not to belong to those who, as they had disfigured and debased that truth which had been committed to them, were not worthy to receive this, which was mainly intended not for duty but for comfort. But whether or not the revelation was exclusive, it is clear that the condition of things would in all probability lead to discrimination in

imparting it; and one feature of Freemasonry will be accounted for.

The earth having become entirely corrupt at the time of the deluge, the sons of Noah would be familiar with those false conceptions of God and divine truth which had led to man's destruction. When Ham was cursed, as Cain had been before him, his rebellious spirit may have impelled him to adopt the corruptions which he had seen practiced; and while he could not forget, and probably did not dare to discard, the instruction he had received concerning the truth of the mysteries, he may have corrupted it and laid the foundations of those idolatrous legends which were in later times developed in the mysteries of Egypt and of Greece, but which, as we have seen, amidst all their disfigurements clearly, wonderfully pointed out the primeval truth of the pure mystery. But in the family of Shem the simple truth was continued. How long that truth was conveyed by means of the original history, and when a mere legend was substituted for that history, we have no means even of guessing. Probably ours is not the first legend. But nothing is more certain than that while there was the substitution of a more modern name for the most ancient, and while the circumstances were changed to suit the events connected with the times of this new name, the essence of the institution remained

untouched, and to us is conveyed to-day under somewhat the same conditions, and through an unbroken succession from Abel's time, the identical truth which this order was at first instituted to perpetuate.

Such, brethren, was the result at which I arrived from a careful study of the subject, a result which, it seemed to me, was reached by natural, easy, and unstrained inductions from all the premises and steps mentioned. But Freemasonry among the Jews might be expected to have received modifications, the result of the diversity of fortune and circumstances which had befallen them. I thought that if I could learn the character of the institution among those Eastern nations whose habits have been unchanged for ages, and whose faithfulness to traditions is of such a character as to bid defiance even to the ameliorating influences of civilization, I should, by a comparison of their ritual and legends with our own, be either confirmed in my conclusion or be instructed as to my mistake. I accordingly visited an acquaintance, Brother A. L. Rawson, who had spent many years among the Arabs and been intimately associated with them as a Freemason. Very much of what I learned from that brother it would be improper to commit to writing. The result of my interviews was confirmation the most overwhelming of those conclusions which my own

reason had reached; confirmation so complete as to make me feel that I had no credit as a discoverer. The Arab tribes not only trace back the institution to the event to which I assign it, but they have preserved, and in language of the remotest antiquity, the history of Abel's murder, while the reasons assigned for that murder exhibit the changes to which it seems all human traditions are inevitably subject. In point of ritual nothing can be clearer than the identity of the institution, while the additions made in our branch can be accounted for partly by the circumstances to which our legend refers, and partly by the impress the order has received in its sojourn among European nations. The object of the Arab work, like that of our lodges, is emphatically to teach the doctrine I have spoken of, and thereby to forge another and a mighty link in the chain of the brotherhood of man. Thus all my doubts and hesitation were set at rest. That which had seemed in the highest degree probable became an absolute certainty, and the antiquity of Freemasonry, a conviction of which had been my chief attraction, stood luminously established.

And now the figure under which our institution presents itself to my mind is that of a long vista of archway, presenting some variations of workmanship, with more or less of elaborate ornamenta-

tion here and there, but continuing unbroken back and back until it reaches the luminous triangle in which is indesciibed the sacred name of the Most High, and appended to which hangs the mystic bough of Acaeia. Other archways have been subsequently erected, of more exquisite workmanship, reaching nearer to heaven, revealing by their greater proportions more of that which is represented on the background of divine truth. But this alone takes me back through all the ages of darkness previous to the written revelation, through all the black enormity of antediluvian ignorance and wickedness, to the days when in the midst of the darkness of human sorrow and despair God spake the word, and the light of immortality and Resurrection beamed upon our forefathers' stricken souls.

Here I would fain conclude. But I fear lest an impression of this kind should be left.—If Freemasonry be indeed the primeval mode of teaching a truth which has been more authoritatively taught by the written word and committed with other truth to the care of the church, is it not simply an antiquated institution, a mere fossil which has survived its life and usefulness, and which had better be consigned to the annals of bygone days, than occupy the energies of living men? Let us remember that while an institution may be designed expressly to teach a specific truth, it will also serve

to identify and unite those who are distinguished from others by the acquisition of that truth, so that these shall form a brotherhood bound by common obligations, and deriving all the benefits which such a brotherhood implies. These benefits we have seen in the case of Abraham, Abimelech, and in that of Job, although the peculiar circumstances of his trial frustrated the design of sympathy and help. The same benefits accrue to this day. We all feel that there is something inexplicable in Freemasonry. We cannot account for it that its secrets are preserved as no other secrets are preserved: that its obligations are obeyed by those who refuse obedience to any other obligations however solemn. Nor have I ever met with a Mason who professed himself able to explain why this should be. Men with so little sense of what was due to God and society as to prey on society as thieves and burglars, have made restitution when the victim was found to have entered the sacred circle of Masonic light. The assassin's dagger has been arrested at the Masonic sign. Nay, there is a well-authenticated account, related by Brother Oliver, that one who as a pirate had given himself up to the trade of bloodshed and rapine, set free a crew and delivered their cargo when, at the instant of death, the captain made it known that he possessed Masonic knowledge. The crowded thoroughfare, the blood-

stained battle-field, the street or lane of a foreign shore, the sandy desert of Arabia, the wild prairie of the North American Indian, the malaria-stricken banks of the African river, the strange surrounding of a Japanese or a Chinese city, all these bear witness from time to time of the benefits in our day, received to-day as of yore, through the institution of Freemasonry.

THE END.