



From the London Freemason.
Some of the Peculiarities of Ancient Craft Masonry.

WEBB JUNIOR.

It has long been conceded that Freemasonry—an institution peculiar, nay, wonderful, in many respects—is a subject worthy of the attention of the moralist, the statesman and the philosopher.

Others, too, who are not entitled to these high designations, may study this oldest and strongest of human institutions with advantage.

There are some peculiarities of this Institution which will early attract the attention and awaken the interest of the Masonic student and which we may briefly consider.

Our attention may be first directed to the universality claimed for the Order. The Monitors say:

From East to West, and between North and South, Freemasonry, extends, and in every clime are Masons to be found.

And the learned Dr. Mackey states that "Over the whole habitable globe are our lodges disseminated. Wherever the wandering steps of civilized man have left their foot-prints, there have our temples been established. The lessons of Masonic love have penetrated into the wilderness of the West, and the red man of our soil has shared with his more enlightened brother the mysteries of our science, while the arid sands of the African desert have more than once been the scene of Masonic greeting.

The claim of universality is, indeed, not an idle boast.

Reports on foreign correspondence, foreign publications, of the Order, statistics, the narrative of travelers, and other documents too numerous and elaborate to quote here, all bear testimony to the existence of Masonry in all parts of the world. And while the number of Masons in any one community, or district, may be, and unusually is, small in proportion to the whole population of such district, yet there are few localities, indeed, of any considerable size where some members of the Order are not to be found.

Freemasonry, in its organization, principles, methods of teaching, and in its objects, has, and from the facts above stated, must have the elements necessary to a cosmopolitan institution. For example, it recognizes no political systems of theories, save only the rights of man by the law of nature; knows nothing of religious creeds or sectarian dogmas as such, save a belief in God, the obligations of the moral law, and the immortality of the soul—fundamental truths about which all men may agree. An eloquent writer truthfully says:

It exists in Pagan, Jewish, Moslem and Papal countries. Some of its members worship the sun, and others the shekinah; some fall before the crescent and others before the cross; but it has

taught them to respect and tolerate each other.

Its universality is a peculiar characteristic of Freemasonry. Every man belongs to some nationality by birth or adoption, and is an alien in all other lands than his own. Other societies, religious or secular, are, in the main, confined to certain localities or countries. But Freemasonry is a universal republican Brotherhood, which knows no international boundaries, no race, no country, but has the whole earth for its territory. It is, essentially, the same institution wherever found, providing for certain wants of men, of all races, and in all conditions of life, and possessing a universal language of signs and symbols understood by its members in all countries.

For convenience there are lodges, or places of assembly, in cities, villages, and other localities, and separate general and local jurisdictions; but he who becomes a member in one lodge, or jurisdiction, is a Mason, not only there but everywhere. A Mason in one country is a Mason in all countries, and is recognized as a brother entitled to certain rights and privileges, by the mysterious language he speaks, in all lauds. Have we not just cause to be proud of this peculiar feature of our Order?

Another peculiarity of Freemasonry is its elaborate and beautiful system of teaching by symbols, allegories, types and emblems, being the oldest method of imparting instruction known to the world. By this system a large class of important truths and principles are brought within the comprehension of even the most illiterate, and are impressed upon the mind in a manner unequalled by any other method of instruction, but now preserved only in Freemasonry, as a complete system, and in the Romish church partially. It is a system the beauty and value of which becomes more and more apparent the better we study its history and philosophy.

Our attention is called also, to the system of government of our Order, by a Master and two Wardens, in Grand and subordinate Lodges, and certain fundamental and unchangeable rules, known as landmarks, all forming a system of government, original and peculiar, and found nowhere else, except by adoption. It is a perfect and absolute power, with representative democracy and the preservation of individual rights by immutable laws. And right here we meet another, and most valuable, peculiarity of Freemasonry,—that is its most permanent, unchangeable character. In its system of government, in its landmarks, in its fundamental principles and objects, no changes or innovations are necessary to adapt it to the wants and conditions of men in all countries, and in all times; nor are any changes or innovations permitted. No power exists anywhere within or without the Order to make such changes. Here, indeed is permanance. No perversion of purposes; no "shifting sands of doctrine." We know what we have. It is, indeed, gratifying to discover that amid the ever changing and ephemeral associations instituted by men, from time to time, for various pur-

poses, there is, at least, one which is steadfast. Is it too much to say that Freemasonry is the only permanent conservator among the chances and changes of time, of those fundamental laws and principles of human rights and those moral obligations which are binding on all men?

A peculiar feature of Freemasonry is its silence and unobtrusiveness. A lodge may exist in our midst for years, and we hardly recognize the fact. It interferes with no person, sect, party, or opinion, and never asks any favours or special privileges from community, church or State. It raises no disputes, argues no questions, and strives to live in quietness and peace with all men. Unlike other societies, it ever maintains its dignity and reserve. It seeks not the popular favour; it does not proselyte; it sends out no propagandists, and pays nothing to recruits; and while the worthy who knocks at its doors are seldom denied, they are never urged to seek admission.

The equality of all men before God and in natural light and in natural right in the lodge-room, as taught in Masonry, is peculiar to this institution. Other societies, secular and even religious, grant preferment and favours much according to social, pecuniary, and civil distinctions. But Masonic equality is real—not merely theoretical. The Ancient Charges declare that "all preferment among Masons is grounded upon real worth and merit only." The Order regards no man for his worldly worth or honours. Prince and peasant, plebeian and patrician meet upon the same level. The day labourer, the farmer, the mechanic, as has frequently been the fact, may be Master or Grand Master, while the rich man, the professional man or the highest civil or military functionary may be and often is, but a private member. And this is so because Masons assemble in a higher character, or upon a higher plane than that made by merely conventional distinctions,—they meet as men and brethren.

We may add, in conclusion, that, while Masonry knows nothing of political parties, yet in all countries and in all times the Order has taught its disciples the fundamental doctrine of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality, and these principles Masonry taught before modern republics had existence. Liberty, regulated by law; obedience to established authority; the fatherhood of God; the brotherhood of man, and tolerance of private religious and political opinions, are of the very essence of Freemasonry.

And the thought comes to us here—should it not have long since have come to the prejudiced and short-sighted opponents of Masonry—that other institution known among men presents, has always presented, such a powerful, such a successful bulwark to the insidious encroachments of ecclesiastical and political despotisms, which would re-instate and are labouring to re-instate the intellectual darkness, the intolerance and bigotry and the religious dogmas of the Middle Ages?

Despotic power in Church and in State to-day, as for ages past, hates Freemasonry with an undying hate. What does it mean?

May not the friends of civil and religious liberty, of morality of toleration, of fraternity, in all lands, ponder on the question how great and good a work has Freemasonry been silently, but surely, doing in the centuries gone by? What mission has this Order, so old, so strong, so peculiar in its character, to fulfil in the centuries to come?

PEN AND SCISSORS.

- The Sioux Indians number 60,000.
- Vermont employs 4000 school teachers.
- Squirrels are unusually abundant in Wisconsin.
- A Virginia farmer caught his pigs sucking his cows.
- A house built in 1686 is still standing in Nantucket.
- Large wolves roam through the streets of Greeley, Col.
- Boston has had an unusual number of drowning cases this year.
- Cork helmets are to adorn the heads of the London police.
- The sale of American patent medicines is to be stopped in Paris.
- Mr. Moody's revival sermons have been printed in the Madagascar language.
- Mrs. Bobb, of Corpus Christie, owns 25,000 acres of land and 15,000 head of cattle.
- Forty one cities of the United States have an aggregate debt of almost \$600,000,000.
- Wisconsin produces 100,000 bushels of cranberries annually. This must be Cranberry Centre.
- Near the Sandwich Islands the temperature affects the water for 200 fathoms in depth.
- A Birmingham (Conn.) man has set up for a whistling instructor, and has formed two classes.
- One effect of cutting down the trees in Canada has been to deplete the streams of speckled trout.
- Truth, courage and justice are the lion virtues that should stand around the throne of national greatness.
- There are no less than 1200 Christian congregations in the Island of Madagascar, numbering 260,000 worshippers.
- The teacher who governs well gains more by waiting than talking. Many words are an indication of weakness, not of strength.
- Benevolence is not merely a feeling, but a principle; not a dream of rapture to indulge in, but a business for the hand to execute.
- Ithaca young ladies are wearing as an ornament a little gold broom. There must be some significance to it, of course, but we can't imagine what it is.
- A Saratoga girl writes home: "There are plenty of males here—lispig, silly, hair-parted in the middle swells—but O, for the sight of one genuine man!"
- The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions was made \$10,000 richer a day or two ago by a Boston man, who said he would rather pay his legacy while he was alive.
- A creeping vine on the Church of the Ascension, in New York, has taken such leaps in growth this summer that it is now climbing the highest turret, 100 feet in air.
- Journalists fare hard in Japan. The least criticism of the Government is severely punished. Many editors have recently been condemned to imprisonment and others fined.
- The story comes from Nevada that a marauding band of grasshoppers were turned aside from a certain village by the fact that a new brass band was practicing there as they approached it.
- The city government of Buffalo has prohibited the firing of cannon in the city at political celebrations, on the ground that it is "a useless waste of money, a nuisance, and of no use to either party."
- It is a serious question in Sioux city whether the Mayor of that town looks more dignified with his pants shoved into his boots than he does going around with three hounds behind him.—*Detroit Free Press.*
- Mrs. Barber, of Ovid, Mich., was bitten by a rattlesnake Monday. Her mouth and back turned perfectly black in a few moments, but a physician packed her body in salted mud and administered antidotes in large quantities and she will recover.
- A little girl in Reading, Pa., recently saw an old drunken man lying on a doorstep, the perspiration pouring off his face, and a crowd of children preparing to make fun of him. She took her little apron and wiped his face, and then looked up so pitifully to the rest and made this remark: "Oh, say, don't hurt him. He's somebody's grandpa."