

MARK MASONRY.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN THE

TOWN HALL, RIPON,

AT THE

Consecration of the "Prince Leopold" Mark Lodge, No. 352,
April 10th, 1885,

BY THE

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Provincial Grand Mark Master, for West Yorkshire.

ADDRESS.

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL SIR,

I feel much honoured by your kind desire that I should address the Provincial Grand Mark Lodge of West Yorkshire on the present occasion. For, though a Mark Mason of more than thirty-two years' standing, and having been re-advanced in the "Copley" Mark Lodge, Leeds, in 1873, in order to bring myself under the rule of the English Constitution, I have only of late devoted my attention to the ritual of the Order; and greatly regret that I have continued so long unacquainted with its worth and beauty.

I have always felt, with many others, that this degree ought to have had its position defined within the bosom of Craft Masonry. Although, however, the Grand Lodge of England has felt itself bound by the stringent terms of the Act of Union in 1813, to withhold its recognition of Mark Masonry, it yet has pleased TGOOTU to over-rule that circumstance for the ultimate good of our Honourable Order. It is now conferred no longer by the tolerance of Masonic authorities, but under their sanction; its own independent Grand Lodge having been founded in 1856, and holding a highly respected position, with representative officers of eminent Masonic rank and efficiency, (including as an Honorary Past Grand Master, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; though, alas!

not now, the Duke of Albany, whose honoured name is borne by the Lodge which we are met to consecrate), and its roll of lodges being constantly increased through all the countries in which it is worked. Indeed, as one has well expressed it, "all ardent students of our noble Fraternity's philosophy and history, can scarcely regard their Masonic education as being complete, without partaking of the rites exhibited in Mark Masonry;" possessing as it does, "an inherent merit and credibility in its history, to which even the Holy Royal Arch Order can scarcely lay claim."*

And here, when alluding to the history of the Craft, I will venture to digress from the special subject now before us, and to say a few words, which I hope may not be devoid of interest, regarding the origin of Freemasonry in general. Some have assigned it no earlier date than the 17th century; while others maintain that it emanated only in 1717, from the inventive genius of Dr. Desaguliers, Anderson, and others. Permit me to bring to your notice a circumstance related to me thirty years since, by a highly valued Masonic friend, long passed away, I hope, and believe, to the Grand Lodge above, (Colonel Abercrombie, of the Bengal Artillery,) and which ever since has dwelt in my mind, as tending to assign a far remoter antiquity to the secrets and mysteries of the Craft than the 17th or 18th century, or even the guilds of the middle ages. In 1853, when visiting Muttra, an ancient city 36 miles distant from Agra, the original

* "The MarkWork," by Bro. K. R. H. Mackenzie, p. 21.

capital of the Great Moguls, on driving through one of the principal streets, a Hindoo of good appearance stopped his carriage, and requested that he would accompany him to a neighbouring house. When there alone with him, he asked if my friend was not a member of a "Jadu Ghar," or "House of Enchantment," as the natives style our Masonic Lodges. Colonel Abercrombie replied in the affirmative; when to his astonishment, the man saluted him as an Entered Apprentice, and Fellow Craft Mason; informing him that his countrymen from time immemorial, had kept up the knowledge of three degrees, *but nothing beyond them.* "You," he proceeded to say, "profess to have something more, of which we are ignorant." Of course, the Colonel, with becoming caution, admitted nothing, but parted from the native in a friendly manner; and all his endeavours, at a subsequent time, to learn more on the subject, proved wholly fruitless. Now, let me refer, in connection with this, and in favour of the theory which I am about to bring before you, to an anecdote told me many years since, by an Indian Officer, (not a Mason,) regarding an intimate friend and comrade, who, when at the mercy of an Afghan Chief, in one of our battles beyond Peshawur, made a sign of Masonry, as a last resource. The Chief immediately lowered his sword, took the young officer home to his fort, treated there him with the utmost hospitality and brotherly kindness, and sent him back across the frontier, on the first opportunity. Judging from the Hebrew physiognomy of the Afghans, they

may not improbably (as wiser persons than I have conjectured,) derive their descent from the lost tribes of Israel; and my theory is, that after their dispersion in the days of Shalmanezzer, they may have conveyed to Afghanistan, and thence to India, an incomplete acquaintance with Masonry, handed down from age to age, and still preserved among the inhabitants of those distant countries. Perhaps my conjecture may not appear so very fanciful, when I quote the following words from an able and well-known pamphlet by Bro. Paton, on the origin of Freemasonry:—"If we cannot accurately trace the connection of Freemasonry with any ancient Greek or Egyptian system, we may refer with confidence to the general similarity; and hold it probable, not only that the Masonic system of the middle ages derived its origin from that of the ancient Romans,* but that the Roman system also was imported from Greece, into which country it had come from Egypt, or from some of the most anciently civilised countries of the East; as the other arts and sciences, &c., and the very alphabet itself, were derived by the Greeks from these parts of the world. Thus we are brought back to the country, in which the

* "The Ancient Roman Architectural Colleges held their meetings in secluded rooms, or buildings appropriated exclusively to that purpose, and most of them had their own schools for the instruction of apprentices and the lower grades of workmen. They had also their peculiar religious ceremonies and priests; also an exchequer belonging to the corporation, an archive, and their own seals. Members took an oath mutually to assist each other, indigent members received relief, and on their demise were buried at the expense of the corporation. They kept registers of the members, similar to the lists or directory of the Lodges, some of which are still extant. They had also their records, their Masters, (*Magistri*,) Wardens, (*decuriones*,) Fellow-crafts and Apprentices, Censors, Treasurers, Keepers of Archives, (*tabularii*,) Secretaries, (*Scribes*,) and serving brethren, their tools and working implements had besides a symbolical meaning, and in religious matters they were tolerant."—*Findel's History of Freemasonry*, p. 22. "It is impossible," observes Bro. Paton, "to read this without perceiving such a strong resemblance to our modern Freemasonry, that it can hardly be conceived to be accidental."

pyramids were erected, and to the times of their creation ; and the probability seems great, that there has been a continued succession of Masonic Lodges, colleges, or whatever they may be called, from that day to this ; with many a change, no doubt, in some of their characters, but yet with an essential identity of nature and purpose." *

Passing over, (for my time is limited,) the secret societies among the Chinese at Singapore, (where I resided for the greater part of three years,) the members of which wear distinctive aprons in public and private, let me briefly allude, in returning to the subject of Mark Masonry, to the various Masonic marks on buildings, which I have observed in my many travels through Bengal and the North-Western Provinces of India. In the forts of Allahabad and Agra, and on various ruins, some of which are co-eval with the Norman Conquest of England, I have seen the pentangle, the double triangle, the square, the compasses, and other symbols too numerous to mention ; all silent witnesses to the universality, as well as antiquity, of our branch of Freemasonry. Within a few years, similar marks have been discovered in Mexico, as well as in Central America. Thus, then, Right Worshipful Sir, and Brethren, in singular confirmation of our legendary statement, that every craftsman at the Temple of Jerusalem had his special mark, we find, to quote the words of our Brother Kenneth Mackenzie, "in wide and diverse regions of

* Paton's "Origin of Freemasonry," p.p. 59, 60.

the globe, truthful marks cut in stone and alabaster, and fused in cement ; leading to the certainty that the original builders, whoever they might be, performed their work on a common plan."*

But I must not trespass very much longer on your time and attention. Suffer me, however, to finish my Address with a few reflections, which the ancient history of Masonry in general, and this Order in particular, may well suggest to him, who carefully and reverently studies it. You know that the man of that glorious temple, built by King Solomon, was divinely revealed to his father David. In this revelation, each stone, and column, and architrave and capital and beam, and rafter, had its special place ; but as yet the wood was waving its branches in the forests of Lebanon, and the stone was unquarried in the mountains of Judæa. Under the direction of appointed overseers, the Hebrew workman went up to Lebanon, and cut down the designated tree ; and there, before it was carried on a float by sea to Joppa, for transmission to Jerusalem, he trimmed and fashioned it, by hewing and carving, for its destined place. The Phœnician stone-cutter went to the mountain, and split out a mass of rock from the quarry ; and there, by many ponderous blows, he dressed and shaped it for its future position. Many an axe and sharp-edged tool passed over that tree, before it became a stately pillar ; and many a mallet and instrument of iron was used on that once unsightly block, before it was fitted, as a polished

* "The Mark Work," by Bro. K. H. R. Mackenzie, pp. 17, 18.

stone, for the wall of the Temple. Now, does not all this strikingly illustrate the way of God in building up His spiritual temple? How much do we need of trimming and dressing, of hewing and squaring, to fashion us rightly for that position, which TGOOTU intends us to occupy hereafter! There are angles of character to be rounded off, unsightly blots and excrescences of conduct to be chipped away, roughnesses of temper to be smoothed down, flaws and cracks of mind and heart to be chiselled out; and then, when the form, the general form, of the stone is prepared, how much of friction is required to give it the right polish, and so to elicit all its beauties: fitting it thus for the living Temple "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* May we all accept, with humble gratitude, that loving discipline; and strive, in accordance with the principles on which Mark Masonry was instituted, to practice the virtues of industry, skill, fidelity, and steady perseverance in well-doing. May it teach its members, in these our days, and on through all ages, the advantages of discipline, and suitable oversight; and may it impress on the mind of every candidate for its mysteries, the importance of a constant adherence to his promise, to stretch out his hand for the help of his indigent and needy brethren. May the Mark Jewel be ever regarded as invested with the properties attached to the Roman "Tessera Hospitalis," or "hospitable token." When two in-

* "The writer is indebted for several ideas, in this part of his Address, to a sermon by the Right Rev. Dr. Stevens, Bishop of Pennsylvania.

dividuals, in ancient times, desired to possess an emblem of their friendship, they selected, we are told, some piece of bone, or metal, or stone, and engraved upon it their names, their initials, or other device; this they divided into two pieces, each taking one, and giving it the name of "Tessera Hospitalis," as becoming the pledge of a friendship and attachment, which nothing whatever was permitted to destroy. So, in the words of our lamented brother, Dr. Mackey "our Jewel is not a mere ornamental appendage of the degree, but a sacred token of the rites of friendship and brotherly love." May all who are connected with Mark Masonry in general, and this Provincial Grand Lodge, and "Prince Leopold" Lodge in particular, so esteem it; and while beholding, throughout broad England, and its many dependencies, our Honourable Order lengthening its cords, and strengthening its stakes, leading its members no longer, when viewing it weak and unrecognised, as I have known it, to feel, like one of old, disconsolate, under adverse circumstances; may we, and others, on such auspicious occasions as the present, use, with thanksgiving, the well-known words of the Psalmist of Israel, in connection with our special time-honoured tradition:—"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day, which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!"*

* Psalm, cxviii, 23, 24.