

## THE MASONIC RITUAL.

Dr. Oliver has been recently delivering a couple of lectures before the members of the Witham Lodge of Freemasons, Lincoln, upon Freemasonry. The three degrees of symbolical masonry (said Dr. Oliver, in his second lecture) had been classed in the category of moral, scientific, and legendary or typical; and the second, to which he was about to call attention, was at present considered merely to be a transition link between the first and third, although he was inclined to believe that it was the only ancient and legitimate degree. When Masonry was exclusively operative, no other than a scientific degree was necessary, for even the mechanical part of operative Masonry was a science as well as an art, to be acquired only by a long series of diligence and assiduity, exemplified by an apprenticeship of seven years, which every candidate was bound to perform in an exemplary manner before he could legally claim initiation into the order. Therefore, strictly speaking, the E.A.P. was not a degree, but a candidature or season of approval, and, unless passed blameless, would communicate the unfortunate aspirant from reaping the fruits of his ambition when his term of probation had expired by receiving the usual certificate of a skilled workman, or, in other words, having passed his examination and being admitted to the rank of a F.C. The third degree was not older than the beginning of the last century, although M. Ragon asserted that Elias Ashmole was its founder half a century earlier, which was evidently a mistake, since it appeared from the diary of that eminent antiquary that in his time the highest degree known was that of a F.C. After some observations on the ceremonies used in the second degree, in Continental lodges, the venerable lecturer explained in a most interesting manner the origin and meaning of the signs, &c., of the degree, and gave numerous extracts from the Prestonian sections, throwing considerable light on the traditions connected with this part of Masonry. The following curious passage is from Desaguliers' ritual (now obsolete), the allusions in which will be intelligible to proficient Masons:—

Q.—In Solomon's temple there stands a G.  
A letter for all to read and see;  
But few there be that understand  
What means the letter G.  
My friend, if you pretend to be  
Of this fraternity,  
You can forthwith and rightly tell  
What means this letter G.  
A.—By sciences are brought to light  
Bodies of various kind,  
Which do appear to perfect sight;  
Yet none but nailes shall know my mind.  
Q.—With lights and Wors'hipful I am,  
As thou, you I have full command,  
That you forthwith would me know,  
And make me understand.  
A.—By letters four and science five  
This G aright doth stand  
In art and due proportion.  
You have your answer friend.  
Q.—My friend you answer well;  
If you free principles discover,  
I'll change your name from friend,  
And henceforth call you brother.

Dr. Oliver related the following Masonic tradition of the mode in which the fellow-crafts received their wages at the building of the Temple, and the precautions used to prevent the brethren of an inferior receiving the wages of a superior degree.—On the sixth hour of the sixth day of every week, the fellow-crafts, 80,000 in number, repaired to the office of the S.G. Wardens in the M.H., and each craftsman put his hand through a lattice window, giving the token, and presenting a copy of his mark. The S.G.W., referring to the corresponding mark in his ledger, saw at once the sum due to that mark, and placed it in the hand of the craftsman, who then passed on.

If any person attempted to receive the wages of a fellow-craft without being able to give the proper tokens, the S.G.W. seized him by the hand, drew his arm through the window, exclaiming "an impostor!" on which signal an officer, stationed there for the purpose, immediately struck off the offender's arm with a sword. The following fabulous sums were stated in the lectures of the last century to have been paid to the workmen:—The lowest class received one shekel, or 2s. 6d. a day; the fellow-crafts, 4 shekels, or 10s.; the lowest class of masters (J.W.'s), 9 shekels, or £1 2s. 6d.; the S.W.'s, 16, or £2; and the masters of lodges, 25, or £3 2s. 6d. At this rate, the wages paid to the five classes of workmen in the seven years and eleven months the Temple was building would amount to the incredible sum of £96,347,250 sterling, exclusive of what was paid to the higher classes, who were distinguished by the names of architects, excellent and superexcellent masons, who were said to have received during the same period no less than £2,547,369, making a gross total of £98,894,619.

It was easy to see that these tales were concocted in that prolific source of Masonic innovation, the Continent of Europe, when the herd of frivolities was in possession of the charlatans Hund, Behmen, Peretti, Cagliostro, Mesmer, and their Masonic compeers, whose name was legion; and even our English brethren of the last century, after the introduction of the Jewish element into the order, were very proud of resorting to the Talrauds for fabulous coincidences, and introducing them into Freemasonry in the name of ancient traditions. Dr. Oliver recommended his hearers to use all diligence to become proficient in the art of Freemasonry, in order that they might know how to discharge their Masonic duties to God, their neighbours, and themselves, for many there were, as he was bound to acknowledge, with deep regret, who knew little more of real Masonry than the signs, words and tokens, and often not even that; whilst the reasons why some persons were inclined to place Freemasonry on no higher scale than the ephemeral societies of the day. It was to be feared, too, that many intelligent men forsook the Masonic institution rather than be at the trouble of investigating its merits.