

THE MASONIC DEGREES OF MARK & ROYAL ARK MARINER.MARK.

The consensus of opinion among those who have researched deeply into the origins and development of Mark Masonry is that it had its birthplace in Scotland. In 1865 a report, prepared by a special committee, was presented to the Grand Chapter of Scotland which stated:-

"In this country, from time immemorial and long before the institution of the Grand Lodge of Scotland (1736), what is now known as the Mark Masters' Degree was wrought by the operative Lodges of St. John's Masonry". = (5)

Br. George Draffen, Past Substitute Grand Master of Scotland, in his comments on a Paper "The Age of the Mark Ritual" by Br. Norman Rogers (A.Q.C. Vol.73, p.47) observed that "From a purely esoteric point of view it is not impossible that the Mark Degree is, in itself, a perfectly valid initiatory rite and did the first three Degrees of Craft Freemasonry as we know them not exist the Mark Degree might well have taken their place.

The oldest known records of Mark Masonry are contained in the minutes of the Royal Arch Chapter of Friendship (now) No.257 which meets in Portsmouth (Hampshire) and was constituted in 1769.<sup>=1 &2</sup> The opening minutes, dated 1st September 1769, were written in Masonic cipher and read as follows:- =4

"At a Royal Arch Chapter held at the George Tavern, Portsmouth, on first September Seventeen hundred and sixty-nine - Present

Thomas Dunckerley, Esq.,  
William Cook, - Z  
Samuel Palmer - H  
Thomas Scanville - J  
Henry Dean,  
Philip Joyes and  
Thomas Webb.

The Pro(v) M., Thomas Dunckerley, bro't the Warrant of the Chapter and having lately received the "Mark" he made the bre'n "Mark Masons" and "Mark Masters". And each chose their "Mark". He also told us of the manner of writing w<sup>ch</sup> we may give to others so they be F.C. for "Mark Masons" (this should have read "for Mark Men") and Master M. for "Mark Masters".

It has been said =4 that the importance of this short passage cannot be exaggerated. In it Dunckerley refers to the Mark Degree as having been established for some time. Br. Bernard Jones, commenting on the abovementioned Paper Said:

- =(1) - Taken from Grantham's "History of Grand Mark Lodge" p.62.
- =(2) - G.L. Year Book (1976/'77)
- =(3) - The Chapter is now attached to the Phoenix Lodge No.257.
- =(4) - Pick & Knight "Pocket History of Freemasonry" (1953, p.262
- =(5) - A.Q.C., Vol. 74, p. 284, "The Mark Degree" by Br. E. Newton.

