

THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS.

No subject is wont to excite more speedy attention or inspire more legitimate curiosity among the more thoughtful of our neophytes than the oft-repeated phrase "The Ancient Landmarks of our Order." All institutions, moral or material, built up by man since the experience of the race began to be recorded have had fields of action marked off by limits, well defined in proportion to the success of the institutions. Otherwise their initial energy has been dissipated and failure foredoomed. Commonly, then, as soon as the newly admitted Brother brings intelligence to bear on the doctrines and methods of our Society, he begins by asking, "What are the Landmarks of Freemasonry?" It is little to the purpose that the question should remain unanswered. "The Ancient Landmarks" have been set before him as of the last importance. The very phrase confirms it. "Thou shalt not," says the Hebrew lawgiver, "remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance." Whatever the Landmarks are, they are meant to define our Craft for all time.

The recognised authorities and leaders of the English-speaking Craft, both in this country and in America, have tried their hands at framing a reply, but without agreement among themselves or satisfaction to their followers. In an oft-quoted passage in the "Dictionary of Symbolic Masonry," published about eighty years ago, the Rev. George Oliver, D.D., thus sums up the conflicting opinions of his predecessors: "Some restrict the Landmarks to the O.B., signs, tokens and words, others include the ceremonies of Initiation, Passing and Raising, and the form, dimensions and support, the ground, situation and covering, the ornaments, furniture and jewels of a Lodge, or their characteristic symbols. Some think that the Order has no Landmarks beyond its peculiar secrets." On another occasion Dr. Oliver resumed the discussion, taking up ground totally inconsistent with the character of Immutability usually

held essential in the case of Landmarks. He divided "the genuine Landmarks of Freemasonry," as he was careful to call them, "into no less than twelve distinct classes, which may be arranged under the following heads:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Elementary. | 7. Historical. |
| 2. Inductive. | 8. Typical. |
| 3. Ritual. | 9. Doctrinal. |
| 4. Personal. | 10. Practical. |
| 5. The Cardinal Points. | 11. Absolute. |
| 6. Scientific. | 12. Spurious. |

The odd nature of the last two categories in a list of "genuine Landmarks" needs no comment. Dr. Oliver was never conspicuous for critical acumen, and he included in his shifting Landmarks most of the details and incidents that could befall a Mason between the cradle and the grave.

Much about the same time a list of Masonic Landmarks was drawn up by an American Brother equal in learning and superior in judgment to our good Brother Oliver, Dr. Albert G. Mackey. His list, first published in 1853, comprised twenty-five heads, each of which he regarded as an unalterable characteristic of the Order. Though some of Dr. Mackey's separate items might be aggregated under a more general head, and others may be thought to have acquired undue prominence through the special circumstances of the great Masonic Jurisdiction for which he was writing, yet the list will always remain a monument of the laborious research, in which he equalled, and the same judgment, in which he surpassed, the best of his contemporaries. What constitutes a Landmark? It must be some great principle, of such a character that, if it be removed, the organisation ceases to be Freemasonry. The removal may ~~be~~ result in an organisation as good as or better than Freemasonry. But it is a different organisation. It follows that it must be a principle universally recognised as an integral part of the Order - and that, from Time Immemorial. If it has only been laid down by authority since the organisation was completed it comes under a different heading, that of Laws and Regulations. If it has only been silently adopted, or has, in a manner, grown up since the organisation was completed, it

comes under yet another heading, that of Established Usages.

When the Landmarks have been thus indentified, we must make sure that they are adequate to delimitate the entire field of Freemasonry. First, they must account for our reverent dependence on T.G.A.O.T.U., for the constant presence of the Three Great Lights and for all the Symbolism therewith connected. Secondly, they must account for the universality of our mutual good will, for the maintenance of modes of recognition above and beyond the limits of any one nationality or speech, and the complicated ritual thereby necessitated. Thirdly, they must account for the esoteric doctrine, for the high tone of morality, and for the symbols and allegories whereby we are taught to look forward, ever forward.

When tested by these modes of measurement, our Ancient Landmarks gain in simplicity and endurance what they lose in number and variety. They stand before us just three in number, by solidity and importance the most conspicuous and lasting that have marked the bounds of any human institution. They are:-

- First, the Fatherhood of God; second, the Brotherhood of Man; and third, the Life to come.

