

LECHMERE VOLUNTEER LODGE
MASEFIELD LODGE
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Souvenir

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of the Four Lodges

Being the Text of the
Deland-Locke Manuscript

Moseley and Balsall Heath
Institute
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The Leland-Locke Manuscript.

A Letter from the learned Mr. John Locke to the Right Hon. Thomas Earl of Pembroke, with an old Manuscript on the subject of Freemasonry.

6th May, 1696.

MY LORD,

I HAVE at length, by the help of Mr. Collins, procured a copy of that MS. in the Bodleian library, which you were so curious to see; and, in obedience to your Lordship's commands, I herewith send it to you. Most of the notes annexed to it are what I made yesterday for the reading of my Lady Masham, who is become so fond of Masonry as to say that she now more than ever wishes herself a man, that she might be capable of admission into the Fraternity.

The MS. of which this is a copy, appears to be about 160 years old; yet (as your Lordship will observe by the title) it is itself a copy of one yet more ancient by about 100 years; for the original is said to be the handwriting of K. Henry VI. Where that prince had it, is at present an uncertainty; but it seems to me to be an examination (taken perhaps before the king) of some one of the brotherhood of Masons; among whom he entered himself, as it is said, when he came out of his minority, and thenceforth put a stop to a persecution that had been raised against them: but I must not detain your Lordship longer by my preface from the thing itself.

I know not what effect the sight of this old paper may have upon your Lordship; but for my own part I cannot

deny that it has so much raised my curiosity, as to induce me to enter myself into the Fraternity, which I am determined to do (if I may be admitted) the next time I go to London, and that will be shortly.

I am, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
and most humble Servant,

JOHN LOCKE.

*Certayne Questyons, with Answers to the same, concerning the
Mystery of MAÇONRYE; writtene by the hande of kynge HENRYE
the sixthe of the name, and faithfullye copyed by ma^rk IOHAN
LEYLANDE, Antiquarius, by the commaund of his^t Highnesse.*

They be as followethe

QUEST. What mote ytt be?^m

ANSW. Ytt beeth the skylle of nature, the understandyng of the myghte that ys herevme, and its sondrye werkynges: sonderlyche, the skylle of leekenyngs, of waightes and metynges, and the true manere of façonyng al thynges for mannes use; headlye, dwellinges, and buydynges of alle kindes, and all other thynges that make gude to manne.

QUEST. Where dyd ytt begynne?

ANSW. Ytt dydd begynne with theⁿ ffyrste menne yn the este, whych were before the ffyrste menne of the weste; and comyng westlye, ytt hathe broughte herewyth alle confortes to the wyld and comfortlesse.

^k JOHN LEYLANDE was appointed by Henry VIII. at the dissolution of monasteries, to search for and save such books and records as were valuable among them. He was a man of great labour and industry.

^l HIS HIGHNESSE, meaning the said King Henry VIII. Our kings had not then the title of Majesty.

^m What mote ytt be? That is, what may this mystery of Masonry be? The answer imports, that it consists in natural, mathematical, and mechanical knowledge; some part of which (as appears by what follows) the Masons pretend to have taught the rest of mankind, and some part they still conceal.

ⁿ Ffyrste menne yn the este, &c.] It should seem by this, that Masons believe there were men in the east before Adam, who is called the "ffyrste manne of the weste;" and that arts and sciences began in the east. Some authors of great note for learning have been of the same opinion; and it is certain that Europe and Africa (which, in respect to Asia, may be called western countries) were wild and savage, long after arts and politeness of manners were in great perfection in China and the Indies.

QUEST. Who dyd brynge ytt westlye?

ANSW. The^o Venetians, whoo beyng grate merchaundes, comed ffyrste ffromme the este ynn Venetia, for the commodityte of merchaundysynge beithe este and weste bey the redde and myddlonde sees.

QUEST. Howe comed ytt yn Englonde?

ANSW. Peter Gower,^p a Grecian, journeydde ffor kunynge yn Egypte, and in Syria, and yn everyche londe, whereas the Venetians hadde plaunted maçonrye, and wynnyng entrance yn al lodges of maçonnes, he lerned muche, and retournedde, and woned yn Grecia Magna,^q wackynge and becommynge a myghtye wyseacre,^r and gratelyche renowned, and her he framed a grate lodge at Groton,^s and maked manye maçonnes, some whereoffe dyde journeye yn Fraunce and maked manye maçonnes; wherefrome, yn processe of tyme, the arte passed in Englonde.

QUEST. Dothe Maçonnes descouer here artes unto odhers?

^o The Venetians, &c.] In the times of mankish ignorance it is no wonder that the Phenicians should be mistaken for the Venetians. Or, perhaps, if the people were not taken one for the other, similitude of sound might deceive the clerk who first took down the examination. The Phenicians were the greatest voyagers among the ancients, and were in Europe thought to be the inventors of letters, which perhaps they brought from the east with other arts.

^p Peter Gower.] This must be another mistake of the writer. I was puzzled at first to guess who Peter Gower should be, the name being perfectly English; or how a Greek should come by such a name. But as soon as I thought of Pythagoras, I could scarce forbear smiling, to find that philosopher had undergone a metempsychosis he never dreamt of. We need only consider the French pronunciation of his name, Pythagore, that is, Petagore, to conceive how easily such a mistake may be made by an unlearned clerk. That Pythagoras travelled for knowledge into Egypt, &c., is known to all the learned; and that he was initiated into several different orders of priests, who in those days kept all their learning secret from the vulgar, is as well known. Pythagoras also made every geometrical theorem a secret, and admitted only such to the knowledge of them as had first undergone a five years' silence. He is supposed to be the inventor of the 47th proposition of the first book of Euclid, for which, in the joy of his heart, it is said he sacrificed a hecatomb. He also knew the true system of the world, lately revived by Copernicus; and was certainly a most wonderful man. See his life by DION. HAL.

^q GRECIA MAGNA, a part of Italy formerly so called, in which the Greeks had settled a large colony.

^r Wyseacre.] This word at present signifies simpleton, but formerly had a quite contrary meaning. Wiseacre, in the old Saxon, is philosopher, wise man, or wizard; and having been frequently used ironically, at length came to have a direct meaning in the ironical sense. Thus Duns Scotus, a man famed for the subtily and acuteness of his understanding, has, by the same method of irony, given a general name to modern dunces.

^s Groton.] Groton is the name of a place in England. The place here meant is Crotona, a city of Grecia Magna, which in the time of Pythagoras was very populous.

ANSW. Peter Gower, whenne he journeyede to lerne, was ffyrste[†] made, and anonne[‡] techedde; evenne soe shulde all odhers beyn recht. Natheless[¶] maçonnes hauethe always, yn everyche tyme, from tyme to tyme, communycatedde to mannkynde soche of her secrettes as generallyche myghte be usefulle; they haueth keped back soche allein as shulde be harmfulle yff they comed yn euylle haundes, oder soche as ne myghte be holpynge wythouten the technges to be joynedde herwythe in the lodge, oder soche as do bynde the freres more stronglyche togeder, bey the proffytte and commadytye comynge to the confrerie herfromme.

QUEST. Whatte artes haueth the Maçonnes techedde mankynde?

ANSW. The artes^w agricultura, architectura, astronomia, geometria, numeres, musica, poesie, kymistrye, governmente, and relygyonne.

QUEST. Howe commethe Maçonnes more teachers than odher menne?

ANSW. The hemselve haueth allein in^x arte of ffyndynge neue artes, whyche arte the ffyrste maçonnes receaued from Godde; by the whyche they fynde the what artes hem plesethe, and the treu way of techynge the same. Whatt odher menne doethe ffynde out, vs onelyche bey chaunce, and herfore but lytel I tro.

QUEST. What dothe the Maçonnes concele and hyde?

† Ffyrste made.] The word MADE I suppose has a particular meaning among the Masons; perhaps it signifies initiated.

¶ Maçonnes hauethe communycatedde, &c.] This paragraph hath something remarkable in it. It contains a justification of the secrecy so much boasted of by Masons, and so much blamed by others; asserting that they have in all ages discovered such things as might be useful, and that they conceal such only as would be hurtful either to the world or themselves. What these secrets are we see afterwards.

w The artes agricultura, &c.] It seems a bold pretence this of the Masons, that they have taught mankind all these arts. They have their own authority for it; and I know not how we shall disprove them. But what appears most odd is that they reckon religion among the arts.

x Arte of ffyndynge neue artes.] The art of inventing arts must certainly be a most useful art. My Lord Bacon's *Novum Organum* is an attempt towards somewhat of the same kind. But I much doubt, that if ever the Masons had it, they have now lost it; since so few new arts have been lately invented, and so many are wanted. The idea I have of such an art is, that it must be something proper to be employed in all the sciences generally, as algebra is in numbers, by the help of which new rules of arithmetic are and may be found.

ANSW. They concelethe the arte of ffyndyng newe artes, and thatt ys for here owne proffyte, and preise:^y they concelethe the arte of keypyng secrettes,^z that soe the worlde mayeth nothyng concele from them. They concelethe the arte of wunder-werckyng, and of foresayinge thynges to comme, that so thay same artes may not be usedde of the wyckedde to an euyell ende. They also concelethe the^a arte of chaunges, the wey of wynnyng the facultye^b of Abrac, the skylle of becommynge gude and parfyghte wythouten the holpynges of fere and hope; and the universelle^c longage of Maçonnes.

QUEST. Wylle he teche me thay same artes?

ANSW. Ye shalle be techedde yff ye be werthy, and able to lerne.

QUEST. Dothe all Maçonnes kunne more then odher menne?

ANSW. Not so. Thay onlyche haureth recht and occasyonne more then odher menne to kenne, butt manye doeth fale yn capacity, and manye more doth want industrye, that ys pernessarye for the gaynyng all runnyng.

QUEST. Are Maçonnes gudde men then odhers?

ANSW. Some Maçonnes are not so virtuous as some odher menne; but, yn the most parte, thay be more gude then they would be yf thay war not Maçonnes.

^y Preise.] It seems the Masons have great regard to the reputation as well as the profit of their Order; since they make it one reason for not divulging an art in common, that it may do honour to the possessors of it. I think in this particular they show too much regard for their own Society, and too little for the rest of mankind.

^z Art of keypyng secrettes.] What kind of an art this is I can by no means imagine. But certainly such an art the Masons must have; for though, as some people suppose, they should have no secrets at all, even that must be a secret, which, been discovered, would expose them to the highest ridicule; and therefore it requires the utmost caution to conceal it.

^a Arte of chaunges.] I know not what this means, unless it be the transmutation of metals.

^b Facultye of Abrac.] Here I am utterly in the dark.

^c Universelle longage of Maçonnes.] An universal language has been much desired by the learned of many ages. It is a thing rather to be wished than hoped for. But it seems the Masons pretend to have such a thing among them. If it be true, I guess it must be something like the language of the pantomimes among the ancient Romans, who are said to be able, by signs only, to express and deliver any oration intelligibly to men of all nations and languages. A man who has all these arts and advantages is certainly in a condition to be envied; but we are told that this is not the case with all Masons; for though these arts are among them, and all have a right and an opportunity to know them, yet some want capacity, and others industry, to acquire them. However, of all their arts and secrets, that which I most desire to know is "The Skylle of becommynge gude and parfyghte;" and I wish it were communicated to all mankind, since there is nothing more true than the beautiful sentence contained in the last answer, "That the better men are, the more they love one another:" Virtue having in itself something so amiable as to charm the hearts of all that behold it.

QUEST. Doth Maçonnes love either odher myghtlye as beeth sayde ?

ANSW. Yea verylyche, and yt may not odherwise be : for gude menne and true, kennynge either odher to be soche, doeth always love the more as thay be more gude.

(Here endethe the questyonnes and awnsweres.)

A GLOSSARY of antiquated words in the foregoing manuscript :—

<i>Albein</i> , only.	<i>Myghte</i> , power.
<i>Alweys</i> , always.	<i>Occasyonne</i> , opportunity.
<i>Beithe</i> , both.	<i>Odher</i> , other.
<i>Commoditye</i> , convenience.	<i>Onelyche</i> , only.
<i>Confrerie</i> , fraternity.	<i>Pernecessarye</i> , absolutely necessary.
<i>Faconnyng</i> , forming.	<i>Preise</i> , honour.
<i>Foresayinge</i> , prophesying.	<i>Recht</i> , right.
<i>Freres</i> , brethren.	<i>Reckenyngs</i> , numbers.
<i>Headlye</i> , chiefly.	<i>Sonderlyche</i> , particularly.
<i>Hem plesethe</i> , they please.	<i>Skylle</i> , knowledge.
<i>Hemselfe</i> , themselves.	<i>Wackysyngs</i> , growing.
<i>Her</i> , there, their.	<i>Werck</i> , operation.
<i>Hereynne</i> , therein.	<i>Wej</i> , way.
<i>Herwyth</i> , with it.	<i>Wher</i> , where.
<i>Holpyng</i> , beneficial.	<i>Woned</i> , dwelt.
<i>Kunne</i> , know.	<i>Wunderwerck</i> , working miracles.
<i>Kunnyng</i> , knowledge.	<i>Wylde</i> , savage.
<i>Make gудde</i> , are beneficial.	<i>Wynnyng</i> , gaining.
<i>Metynges</i> , measures.	<i>Ynn</i> , in.
<i>Mote</i> , may.	
<i>Myddlond</i> , Mediterranean.	

