

THE
ATTIC MISCELLANY.

NUMBER XV.

A DISSERTATION ON FREE-MASONRY,
Addressed to His Royal Highness George Prince of WALES, GRAND-
MASTER OF ENGLAND*.

FREE-MASONRY, which is justly termed the *royal art*, not only because it was originally practised by *Kings* and *Princes*, who were the first professors of it, but likewise on account of the superiority which so sublime a science gave its disciples, over the rest of mankind, is certainly coeval with society; and was carefully handed down by *Methuselah*, who died but a few days before the general deluge, and who had lived 245 years with Adam, by whom he was instructed in all its mysteries; which he faithfully communicated to his grandson NOAH, who transmitted them to posterity. And the science has ever been preserved with a veneration and prudence, suitable to its great importance, being always confined to the knowledge of the *worthy* only.

When our primitive fathers first began to erect habitations and to cultivate the ground, they were, of course, led to investigate and contemplate the nature and properties of *lines*, *figures*, *superfices*, and *solids*; and by *degrees*, to form the *sciences* of *geometry* and *architecture*, which have been of the greatest utility to the human species. Hence we were first taught the means of introducing speculation by the previous attainment of *practice*.

From the Flood to the days of King *Solomon*, the liberal arts and sciences gradually diffused themselves over different parts of the globe; every nation having had some share in their propagation; but, according to their different manners, some have cultivated them with more accuracy, perseverance, and success than others; and though the *secrets* of the *royal art* have not been *indiscriminately* revealed, they have nevertheless been communicated, in every age, to such as were *worthy* to receive them; the *diffusion* of *blessings* and *advantages* being a duty imposed on every true Mason.

But we are not at liberty to undraw the *sacred veil*—*sacred* it is, and ever will remain; those who are honoured with the trust will not *reveal* it, except to the truly qualified brother; and they who are ignorant of it, cannot *betray* it. The principles of the art ever have been, and still are, most *sacredly* preserved and *inviolably* concealed. For as all things in process of time are liable to decay and corruption, the ancient professors wisely foreseeing the great abuses which their exalted mysteries might sustain, if *generally*

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and articulated as necessary for concealing from the *unworthy*, what were qualified to learn, and still fewer to teach. This *secrecy*, though of the highest importance, has been greatly censured, in modern times; by those who are apt to decide hastily, and of course rashly, on objects beyond their comprehension.

If *secrecy* be a virtue in itself (which no one ever ventured to deny) can that be imputed to us as a *crime* which has been considered as an excellence in all ages? Does not *Solomon*, the wisest of men, tell us “he that discovers secrets is a traitor, but a man of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”

In conducting all worldly affairs, *secrecy* is not only essential, but absolutely necessary, and was ever esteemed a quality of the greatest worth.

Thus we find the great FENELON makes ULYSSES, in the System of Education which he delivers to his friends for his son TELEMACHUS, particularly enjoin them, above all, to render him just, beneficent, sincere, and faithful in *keeping secrets*.

If we turn our eyes back to antiquity, we shall find the old Egyptians had so great a regard for *silence* and *secrecy* in the mysteries of their religion, that they set up the God *Harpocrates*, to whom they paid peculiar honour and veneration, who was represented with his right hand placed near the heart, and the left down by his side, covered with a skin before, full of eyes and ears, to signify, that of many things to be seen and heard, few are to be published.

And among the same people, their great Goddess *Isis*, had always an image of a *sphinx* placed at the entrance of her temples, to denote that *secrets* were there preserved under sacred coverings, that they might be kept from the knowledge of the *vulgar*, as much as the riddles of that creature.

JAMBLICUS, in his Life of PYTHAGORAS, confirms the above opinion, by observing, that from the mysterious knowledge of the Egyptians, that philosopher drew the system of his symbolical learning and instructive tenets, seeing that the principles and wise doctrines of this nation were ever kept *secret* among themselves, and were delivered down, not in writing, but only by *oral* tradition.

Among the Greek nations, the Athenians had a statue of brass, which they awfully revered; this figure was without a tongue, by which *secrecy* was implied.

The Romans had a Goddess of Silence, named ANGERONA, represented with her fore-finger on her lips, a symbol of *prudence* and *taciturnity*.

ANNAXARCHUS, who (according to PLINY) was apprehended in order to extort his *secrets* from him, bit his tongue asunder, and afterwards spit it in the tyrant's face, rather choosing to lose the organ of speech, than to discover those things which he had promised to conceal.

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