

FREEMASONRY BEFORE THE EXISTENCE OF GRAND LODGES

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LOCAL SECRETARY FOR. QUATUOR CORONATI LODGE,
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"That was excellently observed," say I, when I read an author, when his
opinion agrees with mine.—SWIFT.

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PREFACE

My intention in writing this little book is to present in a simple and concise form the results arrived at by the great modern students of the craft, Gould, Hughan, Rylands, Speth and others, which are, however, not readily available to the brother who wishes to know the leading facts about the origin and early history of Masonry, but is deterred by considerations of time and also expense from studying the subject really thoroughly. I have confined myself to the early period of our history; primarily because to take it beyond 1717 would so greatly extend the scope of the work as to defeat its object; and also because after that date the history of our craft may fairly be called an exact science, whereas my concern is rather with the problem of our origin, which is very far from being exactly ascertained, and as to which the most astonishing misconceptions still seem to prevail. The work lays no claim to originality; it is based primarily on Gould's History and the published transactions of Lodge Quatuor Coronati; when I have used other sources I have generally named my authorities, but I have preferred not to burden the text with footnotes and references. A short index is also added.

LIST OF AUTHORITIES

Ars Quatuor Coronatorum

GOULD: *History of Freemasonry*

A Concise History

The Four Old Lodges

HUGHAN: *The Old Charges of British Freemasons*

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CHAPTER I

The Internal Indications Of Our Antiquity

MASONRY has, in the past, been much discredited by the amazing pretensions put forward on its behalf, at first in all good faith by early writers, and the framers of the Old Charges, and later by people of more knowledge and education, who must, if not wilfully blind, have been childishly credulous.

If we are to accept the ritual as our guide we must suppose the craft to be derived in unbroken descent from three Fellow Crafts of Hiram's day. Our Old Charges date the earliest English Freemasonry at some time prior to Athelstan, and the craft itself is made coeval with Nimrod and Nineveh. But even this is not sufficient for writers such as Dr. Anderson, Preston, and Dr. Oliver. They indeed personify the three degrees [1] [2] of Masonic credulity. Dr. Anderson drafted the earliest constitutions from the Old Charges; and his fertile pen is responsible for many remarkable occurrences in the history of English Masonry, and the addition to our ranks of many great personages. Preston in his Illustrations of Masonry, not content with having the Druids as brothers, went on

to say: "From the commencement of the world we may trace the Foundations of Freemasonry," and Dr. Oliver, who wrote on our antiquities, goes one better still; for his words are "Ancient Masonic traditions say, and I think justly, that our science existed before the creation of this globe, and was diffused amidst the various systems" in space.

On the other hand, from the very nature of our mystery, there is bound to be an absence of the documentary evidence which alone will satisfy the scientific inquirer. In fact, our modern candidate is enjoined never to commit the secrets to writing: and this spirit underlies the craft. Indeed there is some ground for supposing that numerous documents were destroyed by certain scrupulous brethren in 1720; and what they did destroy may have included early rituals, which would nowadays have been of considerable interest to us.

The only documentary evidence we possess for an antiquity of more than two centuries is:

(i) References to the Gilds of masons, the London Company, and individual Freemasons which take us back to the fourteenth century.

[3] (ii) References in the Statutes beginning in 1349, in Edward III's time, and going down to Elizabeth. These have very little bearing on speculative Freemasonry however.

(iii) A series of documents, actually written for, and originally in the possession of the craft; containing a legendary history, and rules for

the guidance of the craft and of the individual masters, fellows, and apprentices. These documents are spoken of as the Old Charges; and the earliest original we have is the Lansdowne, which is of the sixteenth century. Similar documents must have existed much earlier; and they all have a common origin.

(iv) Two manuscripts actually older than any extant version of the Old Charges; but their compilers have undoubtedly used similar documents. They contain, however, a good deal of other matter. They are known as the Regius MS. or Poem, the date of which is about 1400; and the Cooke MS. which is in prose, and may be thirty or forty years later.

(v) The Schaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599, which specify four Scotch Lodges as then in existence; and which are rules for the guidance of the craft.

(vi) Minutes of Scotch Lodges going back to 1599. There are no English Minutes before 1700. (vii) A series of references made in current literature in the seventeenth century itself, by antiquaries and others.

Our document of 1400 shows the Lodge as already in existence, and gives a legendary history [4] of the craft being brought into England by St. Alban. And in fact we find the word Freemason earlier still, and Lodges are mentioned as early as 1292. The question is, how much older than this is true craft Masonry.

The argument on which most of the unscientific speculations of all ancient and too many modern writers is based is the dangerous one

of analogy or similarity. And much that is unsound that has been written about Masonry is due to enthusiastic inquirers who have hailed every occasion where they have found some similarity as evidence of Masonry, and have thought the craft's existence demonstrated by a druidical initiation, by the secret signs of Australian savages, or by the carving of our working tools in a catacomb ; they refer our ritual to the gods of the Pyramids, and see our ceremonial costume in the garden of Eden.

This danger will be best avoided if we classify all the peculiar features of the craft which serve to distinguish it from all other religions, societies, Gilds, brotherhoods, or what you will ; and steadfastly refuse to acclaim as a precursor any association of antiquity that does not possess, not one or two, but the majority of these distinguishing marks.

We shall find that they are ten in number. We are a society:

(i) belonging to a specific trade or profession : in our case we only keep up a similitude of a common profession;

(ii) having a particular constitution of Master and Wardens and other Officers;

[5] (iii) admitting candidates by special ceremonies, they having to be adult, male, and "free";

(iv) possessing a set of secret signs and passwords, intended to enable members to recognise one another, and which must not be revealed;

(v) having a traditional history;

- (vi) having a special ceremonial costume;
- (vii) having an elaborate ritual, and attaching importance to absolute accuracy in its observance;
- (viii) teaching the duty of assisting other members of the Society, who are known as brothers, and a simple morality which is illustrated by the working tools of the trade;
- (ix) using an elaborate symbolism, not merely as a vehicle for moral instruction, but bound up with all our ceremonies and signs. Lastly:
- (x) meeting periodically, not merely to transact the business of the Society, but for the purpose of imparting and learning the technical lore of the craft, which is treated as a mystery not to be communicated to outsiders.

Nowadays, in fact, we have no operative secrets to impart; and it is probable that at some period in the development of speculative masonry, when the connection with the operatives was already very weak, such technical secrets as remained were deliberately eliminated ; for they would have no meaning for speculatives who had no connection with any actual building work; and their place was taken by moral truths. Further, the decline of building, after the dissolution of the monasteries had removed the masons' chief employer, would [6] go to indicate that the actual operative secrets known to the architects who built, e.g. King's College Chapel, were very soon lost by their degenerate operative successors.

Taken separately, each of these marks occurs repeatedly in civilisation, or even in savagery; before we can safely assume we are

dealing with craft Masonry as such, we must have them all, or at all events so many as will make a cult, or society different from any other.

To take the second point first; the statement has often been made that our constitution is that of the Roman Collegia; and in consequence an assertion has also been made that Masonry has the Roman Collegia for its origin.

But, in the first place, our constitution has only a general resemblance to that of the Collegia, while it is the precise counterpart of that of the Gilds, which are Teutonic, and with which a clear historical sequence can be easily established. In the second, there is no historical sequence to be made out between the Collegia and the craft. In the third, apart from this single resemblance we have almost nothing in common with the Roman institution.

Gilds and Collegia form the subject of the next chapter; but even our legend does not bring in Rome, but prefers to link us up with ancient Egypt by Charles Martel and "Namus Gracus"; the legend is dealt with in the fourth chapter of this work.

Since it is our first point that we are a trade [7] association, or Guild, or rather nowadays the simulacrum of one; still preserving its constitution, which is our second mark; our form, therefore, our framework and skeleton can be no older than those Gilds; that is to say, than the ninth or tenth century. Unquestionably we derive much of our symbolism, and much of our science if I may use the word, from a far higher antiquity. But we cannot expect to find,

earlier than the days of the Gilds, anything which can fairly be called craft Masonry; and the mere operative secrets or symbolical teachings by themselves will not have constituted their possessors or teachers craft Masons.

Again, if, as has been asserted, our ritual shows traces of Hermetic and Kabbalistic influences, both these sources of inspiration are in fact later in date than the early Gilds, although they claimed to perpetuate a very ancient learning.

At the outset, therefore, we have a rough date; an epoch beyond which we need not trouble to go. Now we find in Germany and France three trade organisations of remarkable similarity to our own in many ways, of the same antiquity and including masons and builders among them. They are the Steinmetzen, the French Gilds and the Compagnonnage. But though they are trade associations with passwords and ceremonies and strange traditional histories oddly like ours in some ways and using special forms of greeting, they are not restricted to the calling of a Freemason, and they have not our system of Lodges with a Master and Officers.

[8] Early in the last century an attempt was made to establish the Steinmetzen as the origin of all Freemasonry. But modern research has demolished this doctrine, and indeed laid on its originator no small suspicion of falsifying his authorities; and German Freemasonry is demonstrably derived from the English speculatives, with whom the Steinmetzen perhaps have this much in common, that they both derive from Gilds or fraternities in their respective countries in the middle ages. But in our search for the beginnings of

the English craft, the Steinmetzen must be disregarded.

The French Gilds practised initiatory ceremonies comparable to ours, and the stone masons have a tradition of Charles Martel being a protector of the craft, as we have ; but they know nothing of a speculative science, and all that can be said is that the system is contemporary with our Gilds, and similar to them but independent in origin.

The Compagnonnage and ourselves have many remarkable points of similarity, but they also differ from us so much that all that can be put forward in their case also is the probability of a similar and contemporary origin ; though we have indications of an interchange of legends and ritual with them in later times.

It is true our legend says St. Alban brought Masonry from France. But for the present it is sufficient to say that the Compagnonnage cannot be our precursors, since they are essentially societies of journeymen, who are almost unknown to the English craft, and also since they are not [9] older themselves; they are dealt with in more detail in later chapters.

Our third mark is the use of an initiation ceremony. Now these are world-wide and are found not merely in the Ancient Mysteries, but in modern communities both religious and savage. Admission ceremonies of a sort are found among the mediaeval French and German trade organisations.

The idea of initiation is a commonplace of every stage of human thought. In fact, we have two distinct initiations. Our third degree

is really an initiation of a different type. Also it is obvious that if we know what was the form of any particular ceremony of antiquity, the framers of our ritual may also have known and imitated it; and that therefore no argument from similarity is possible. And where we have no knowledge of detail, the argument from similarity is thereby precluded; and the mere analogy of the existence of a ceremony is no argument at all.

The same is to be said of our next mark, secret signs and passwords; which are similarly as old as civilisation, and are found, e.g. among Australian aborigines, whom surely no one can seriously claim as brother Masons. They were well known among the early Christians, for instance.

If the signs are very simple, similarity is nothing; and in fact I am not aware of any society of antiquity having been put forward as using our System in this respect, to say nothing of the identical actions.

A traditional history is part of the necessary [10] equipment of every religious or quasi-religious body, and invariably ascribes the most remote antiquity to it. Such are the Hindu Sthala Purana ; and the mediaeval breviaries of the cathedrals are similar. The fact that we possess a traditional history shows nothing more than that the craft was in existence in times before history was treated exactly and critically, and so much we already know.

The possession of a legend does, however, distinguish us from the craft Gilds; and we resemble in this respect only the Compagnonnage and in a lesser degree the Steinmetzen among

craft institutions.

In fact our traditional history is subject to variations and amplifications, and not merely is Hiram the builder a comparatively late addition to it, but his death is not anywhere referred to.

Our ceremonial dress is merely a modification of the actual costume of the operative mason; and the further back we go from modern Masonry with its square apron and triangular flap, the nearer do we get to the actual garment you may see a carpenter wearing any day in the country.

An elaborate ceremonial both of words and actions is not a feature of any trade Gild, as such. True, certain Gilds performed mystery plays, but our ritual is part of the craft itself, and we resemble in this respect nothing in antiquity apparently, except the early Christian Church, and no doubt the still earlier cults of Rome, Greece, and Egypt.

[11] There is no trace in the early books of the Bible of a spoken ritual in the Temple. There was an elaborate ceremonial of offerings; but the only set forms of words in the Pentateuch are the blessing for the people, Numbers vi. 24, and the two sentences spoken when the ark was moved, Numbers x. 35, 36.

We do not know to what extent the early operatives possessed a ritual; and the fact seems to be that what they had was no more than a simple ceremony of admission for the apprentice, and that what we now use is in great measure a late growth under speculative influences.

Perhaps there was some further ceremony when the apprentice was made free of his indentures; and they certainly had grips and words, and also secrets, and it is only reasonable to suppose that our present ritual preserves some tradition, some fragment, from operative days. But when we are unable to say what is old and what new, the text of the ritual offers no safe basis for any deduction.

As it stands, the ritual contains but two old words, Hele, which is in Chaucer, and still in use all over the country, and Cowan, which is still used in Scotland and North England, to signify a man who works in the dry stone as opposed to a mason who uses mortar.

But Cowan was used in Scotch Masonry at a very early epoch to signify a mason without the word; and it was imported into English Masonry apparently by Dr. Anderson in 1723 or later.

The very word Freemason is a standing crux to [12] students. Mason may be German or Latin, but the ulterior etymology is obscure. At all events, when we first find it, it is purely and simply a trade name, and has no esoteric meaning of a brother, or son of anything, or any one.

Exactly what Free meant has been much discussed. That the original meaning was a mason who worked in Free stone is one explanation ; but it is not without philological difficulty. Another interpretation is that the Free mason was the workman out of his indentures, and so free of his Gild, or his borough. Another is that he was independent of the Gild; Free from it and its restrictions; Free for instance to travel and work where he liked; or he may even have been Free from certain restrictions of the borough, by reason

of his having to work outside the city as well as in it. As Dr. Chetwode Crawley says:

"The primary meaning must have been such as to give an unstrained meaning to the secondary, when regarded in the environment that attached to the word its next connotation"; and perhaps a later, but at all events a common use of Free is that indicated by Freeman of the city; and the corresponding Scotch phrase in our craft, Freeman mason, seems to mean no more. But "there is abundant evidence that in the course of time the Freemason came to be looked upon as a special class of man endowed with superior skill, executing a well-defined class of work, and that this species of work became known as Freemasonry" (Speth). And when we first meet [13] with the word it clearly means a superior work man ; and he draws higher pay.

The seventeenth-century term for the nonoperative mason was "Accepted"; and our present use of "Free and Accepted," as opposed to "operative," is perhaps due to a confusion, and to an idea which we meet with elsewhere, that the mediaeval Free mason was not a "labourer under the statutes.

The form of the ritual in the degrees is different to that used in the opening and closing, where it takes the form of a dialogue rehearsing certain facts about the order and closing with an invocation. Ceremonial dialogues are of frequent occurrence in both ancient and modern cults. But among the medieval masons there is no trace of the ceremony at all, indeed the assembly is spoken of as held in the presence of persons who were not masons.

Similarly, we find in the ritual remarkable traces of sun worship and a fondness for triads comparable only to that of the ancient Egyptians; but we are not on that account to expect craft Masonry among Druids – as Preston asserts – or a tyled lodge in the great Pyramid – as has also been alleged.

As an example of a change that is demonstrably late, we have our strict monotheism; now the Old Charges mostly begin with an invocation to the Trinity ; and the Regius Poem invokes the Virgin. It also contains a long passage in honour of the Quatuor Coronati, who were Roman martyrs.

[14] Here there has been clearly a change made in comparatively modern times, probably soon after 1717.

As with the ritual, so with our moral teachings, and symbolism ; we can base no deductions on modern usages, in the absence of any indication of what was or was not done in 1400. The actual tools are of immemorial antiquity. Isaiah xlv. 13 mentions the compass and ruler, and seems also to refer to the Skirret. But while a lesson in morality deduced from the square and compass is actually to be found in the Chinese Classics, it is entirely absent from our Old Charges. Still, the tools are among the emblems of the Quatuor Coronati as figured in early missals, and are common on the tombs of masons of all ages. Many years ago, at Baal's Bridge in Dublin, a square was found with this inscription: " I will strive to live, with love and care, Upon ye level. By ye square " and the date 1507. The existence of some sort of moral teaching in operative days, at all events, is extremely probable. But the fact that the Chinese

philosopher Mencius, who flourished in the third century B.C., used the same idea, is not a ground for asserting that there were Freemasons in the Celestial Empire two thousand years ago. The temptation to do so has not always been resisted; and a like deduction has been made from the discovery of representations of our working tools in the Catacombs; which have been taken as a proof of our Roman origin. Similarly, the teaching of brotherly love [15] is a widespread doctrine. We have it, and with it the duty to protect a fellow member of the society, among Arabs and Bedouins. Ahab was induced to spare Benhadad's life, in I Kings xx., by his claim of brotherhood being admitted. But it would be rash to argue from this circumstance that it indicated the existence of anything approaching Masonry in the days of the Kings of Israel. No doubt there was then, as it is well known there is now among the desert tribes a usage which reminds us of the craft, the Dakhiel, but that is all.

As with our morality, so with our symbolism. The tendency to symbolise is universal, and as for the actual symbols, they come from all antiquity. The Hermeticists had many of them, including the square and compass. But very little can be based on a mere community of symbols. No doubt it may suggest that one society has influenced another, or borrowed from another. But even this deduction must be consistent with the ascertained facts in the history of the societies, and the circumstance can by itself never establish the descent from the earlier of the later body.

It remains only to deal with the last point, the operative secrets, and

I may at once say that a consideration of what they may have been will not help us. We know in practice that after the tenth century buildings sprang up all over north-western Europe of increasing complexity and involving an increasing knowledge of constructural [16] problems; and that they were built by men who could not do arithmetic for the plain reason that it had not been introduced into Europe so early. They must have had a set of constructural rules of thumb, and also the knowledge of the geometrical properties of at least the square and circle. Their arches and vaultings can only have been laid out on some rule known to the Masters. It has been stated that even the ground plans and elevations were arrived at by the use of regular pentagons and hexagons, and, in any case, an examination of the actual buildings demonstrates the existence of a considerable practical knowledge of geometry among eleventh-century masons. Undoubtedly this knowledge was first evolved in Alexandria in the days of Thales and Pythagoras, before 400 B.C. say. Accordingly, the statement that our craft derived its operative secrets from Egypt originally, whether by way of Phoenician, or Roman, or Gallic workmen, is true enough ; and we can imagine how jealously they would be guarded by a mason fraternity brought hundreds of miles to build some church or castle among semi-barbarians. But this is a very different thing from saying that craft Masonry is Phoenician or Egyptian in its origin.

Accordingly, as far as we have now gone all that we can say with safety is that our origin need not be looked for before the days of the Gilds of mediaeval Europe. In subsequent chapters I shall give

reasons for still further narrowing this field of inquiry, though I am well aware that to [17] many brethren it will already appear a very serious restriction of the antiquity of the craft.

CHAPTER II

Collegia And Gilds

A CENTURY ago when Masonic writers were still untrammelled by any critical appreciation of the facts of history, and when the difficult subject of Gilds was as yet by no means well understood, it seems to have been taken for granted that the mediaeval Gilds were Roman in origin. It being further considered that our Masonic Lodges, though no doubt craft Gilds in form, had the constitution of the Roman Collegia, our Roman descent was held to be established, notwithstanding the complete silence of the Old Charges on the point. And the existence of an actual Collegium Fabrorum was all that was needed to complete the argument.

Finlayson, in his book on the legends of the craft, figures a mosaic pavement discovered at Pompeii which he has no hesitation in claiming as the floor of a Lodge, because it includes in a symbolic design a skull and a plumb line. But as it also includes a butterfly, a wheel, a roof-tree, R soldier's travelling kit, and a beggar's traveling kit, and other obvious symbolism of life, death, and fortune, the soul and so on, I am afraid this is only one more argument from similarity; and that we have no real ground for claiming [18] any existence prior to the Gilds we so closely resemble.

However, it will be more satisfactory to deal in detail with both the Collegia and the Gilds, and they accordingly form the subject of the present chapter.

Taking the Collegia first, we find that they are as old as Rome itself, and in days before the empire were found in several categories. These were:-

- (a) Public governing bodies or municipalities.
- (b) Religious bodies such as the Vestal Virgins.
- (c) Certain associations of subordinate officials.
- (d) Trade corporations. There are also a closely allied type of institutions called Societates ; these included:
 - (e) Something very much like a modern club; these were often political in later times.
 - (f) Benefit Societies; one kind was open to slaves, and a man could only belong to one; another used to call themselves after the deity of any convenient temple; but in fact their object was rather like that of a modern burial club and the children of deceased brethren were also provided for.

The rule "Three make a College" has its interest for us even if nothing but a coincidence; and the Colleges were divided – as the army was – into groups of tens and hundreds and presided over by a master and decuriones; and they also had several other officers.

The decuriones corresponded to our modern Wardens, but only in so far as they were the [19] officers next below the Master. Now deacon is Ecclesiastical Latin; and was originally Greek, and meant a

serving man. And it was also confused with decanus, or dean, who is precisely one set over ten. But our modern deacon is a junior officer, a servant in fact; and our title of Warden is uncompromisingly English ; it is the same as Guardian, and the Warden was an officer of the Gild; in fact the English Gilds usually had, as we have, a Master and Wardens. At the same time, in operative days the mason who presided over the Lodge was often called the Warden, not the Master; and we find this as late as Ashmole's day. And in the Lodge of Edinburgh the presiding officer was sometimes called Deacon. In fact the statement that our constitution is that of the Collegia is true only in so vague and general a sense that no argument can be based on it.

It is unfortunate that beyond these general rules we have no details about the Roman trade corporations, though we know a good deal about what I have called Benefit Societies ; but there was an oath administered to a candidate, each kind of College having its own ; and the members called each other brother.

The fourth class of Collegia were always local. When in Imperial times the system extended to the provinces, in each town the process was the same. The local craftsmen, or inhabitants generally, clubbed together and got the permission of the authorities to constitute themselves a College; and having done so they were on the same footing as [20] any other College, and independent. The system extended but the units were in no way co-ordinated. There was no central collegiate authority other than the Emperor or Pro-Consul; and from their very nature these Collegia had no need of

and no provision for the travelling brother. They were also frequently associations of more than one trade. The *Collegia Fabrorum*, unfortunately for those writers who uphold our Roman descent, included all the mechanic trades except the architect. There was no exclusive College of Masons. The craftsmen – as in India – were hereditary. But the point with which we are most directly concerned is that they were associations either purely social or disciplinary for the purpose of the administration of the concerns or commerce in one particular town. It is true they generally had a religious spirit, and, in some cases, banquets. But there is no ground for attributing to them any esotericism or secret ceremonies, or the possession of any legends. The very name indicates after all the scope of these associations. They consisted of persons with a common law and observance either religious or social or connected with trade.

Now the *Gilds*, though very similar no doubt to the *Collegia*, as a mere matter of history do not appear before the middle ages; whereas the *Collegia* disappear with the Empire. They are referred to in Justinian's *Pandects*, A.D. 529, which are however a product of the eastern empire, and a survival is mentioned in Naples a few years later. But the primary distinction between *Gilds* [21] and *Collegia* is really one of time and place, and it is substantially correct to say *Collegia* prior to A.D. 500, or 600 at latest, and *Gilds* after A.D. 800 and in between nothing; and whereas *Collegia* are last met with in Italy, *Gilds* are found first in – Teutonic countries, whence they spread southwards. The name may denote payment,

thus indicating the fact that members contributed to a common fund; but more probably sacrifice, or worship, indicating a community in this respect. It may even mean feasting in common. In any case it is essentially a Teutonic word.

And in the absence of evidence to make out an unbroken continuity of existence with the Roman fraternities, that theory of their origin is no longer accepted. L. O. Pike, after dividing them into Peace, Religious, and Trade Gilds, goes on to say:

"The source of the whole system must necessarily remain doubtful. Regarded from one point of view the Gild has a strong resemblance to the family tie of the Teutonic and other barbarous tribes; regarded from another it is a species of bail, which involves a principle too universally applied to be considered characteristic of one people; regarded from a third, it is strikingly like that institution of colleges or companies which were always familiar to the Romans and which we know from inscriptions to have existed in Britain during the Roman occupation, both in the form of Religious Gilds and in the form of the Craft Gild.

"It would be possible, indeed, to elaborate a very plausible argument for the development of [22] the whole Gild system out of Roman institutions rather than out of the family tie of the Germans. This, indeed, might have come to pass by two wholly distinct processes—either through a tradition handed down by the ancient Roman townsmen, or through a new introduction at the time when Roman missionaries came to restore Christianity in that part of Britain which had become pagan England. The second process

would fully account for the existence of Gilds in parts of Germany never conquered by the Romans. Human nature, however, whether civilised or barbarous, Greek, Roman, or Teutonic, has everywhere some kind of social instinct; and the common historical blunder of attributing to a race, or a country, or a language, that which belongs to humanity shall, in this place at least, not be repeated. The truth is that the Gild system existed before and after the Norman conquest, but that there is no historical evidence of its beginning."

Although this last sentence is strictly true, yet we find indications of the Gild system a good deal earlier than the Norman conquest, and the order in which the various forms of Gild developed is well ascertained. We have, in the first place, the tribal custom of assemblies and banquets, held by the family on every occasion of a family event, and by the tribe at every religious sacrifice or anniversary. The practice naturally develops of taking personal vows, deliberating on the concerns of the community, and making alliances both offensive and defensive on such occasions; and the word [23] Gild in its meaning of sacrificial meal is appropriately given to them. When the State fails to provide the community with adequate protection, these gatherings develop into the Frith Gilds, or Peace Gilds, which were associations of the residents in one locality, the principle of which was the united liability of all members for the acts of each individual, and for his protection. Clearly no single person in the locality could remain outside such an association. As we trace the growth of Gilds further, we see the

influence of the Church at work. Dr. Gross says: "Imbued with the idea of the brotherhood of man, the Church naturally fostered the early growth of Gilds, and tried to make them displace the old heathen banquets. The work of the Church was however directive rather than creative. Gilds were a natural manifestation of the associative spirit which is inherent in mankind." Accordingly as a distinct development of the Family Tie, we have the Religious Gilds, of which it will be necessary to give a detailed account ; and we find them fully developed in Saxon England. English Gilds of the earlier form are alluded to in enactments of Ina (A.D. 688-725) and Alfred (A.D. 871-901), and in the whole development of Gilds England was greatly in advance of the continent. The Religious Gilds were not directly concerned with the police or municipal administration of the community, however; and in the cities this was attended to by a parallel development of the Frith Gild into the Gild of the whole town. The original townsmen [24] were the actual owners of the town land; and they only were the original citizens, and had to protect themselves from neighbouring nobles, or the aggressions of bishops, or from actual robbers, and barbarians; they therefore, very early, constituted themselves into a Peace Gild for the whole town; and we find instances in Saxon England in Canterbury and at Dover. We also find them in Northern France, as at Mans in 1070 and Cambrai in 1076; and in Germany also.

But since all the Gild brothers carried on trade it was a natural development of the organisation to use it to further the common trade interests; and accordingly we find throughout Teutonic

Europe the Gild Merchant developed; to which every townsman must necessarily belong, and which controlled the town's commerce as well as protecting its citizens. But in course of time we see a further change. We find the Gild itself tends to become an aristocracy of citizens, and its membership hereditary ; and at the same time there is a continually increasing number of residents in the town, handicraftsmen, who are not villeins, or bondsmen, for they have either been actually freed or have run away from their lords and lived long enough in the town to have become free as a right. These persons can gain no admittance to the Gild Merchant ; and they therefore form among themselves Craft Gilds; and just as the original Peace Gilds and Gilds Merchant were resisted, at all events on the Continent, by the nobles and even the kings, so the patrician merchants resist the [25] ever-increasing Craft Gilds. But they continue to develop until we actually find in London, in 1375, that the government of the city is transferred from the ward representatives (the old citizens) to the trading companies; and in the previous reign, no person could be admitted to the freedom of the city unless he were a member of one of the trades or mysteries.

In each town the Craft Gild was always essentially a monopoly. But, as its origin would lead us to expect, it concerned itself primarily with the affairs of the trade; and while it also took a part in the religious life of the community, had no concern with matters of police. Dr. Gross says: "In the fourteenth century in England each branch of industry in every larger town had its Gild." [This is perhaps too wide a statement.] "Ordinances were made regulating

the hours of labour and the terms of admission to the Gild, including apprenticeship. Other ordinances required members to make periodical payments to a common fund and to participate in certain common religious observances, festivities, and pageants. But the regulation of industry was always paramount to social and religious aims. The chief object of the craft was to supervise the processes of manufacture and to control the monopoly of working and dealing in a particular branch of industry."

In England we find at Coventry, Chester, York, and Newcastle a series of miracle plays performed annually by the Craft Gilds; and no doubt the Custom was widespread. We owe to the [26] preservation of these plays the earliest evidence of Mason Craft Gilds in the provinces in England. We find them at York in 1350; and at Chester in 1327. The plays performed by the Masons, however, have no reference to our own legends or ritual stories, or to anything in Freemasonry, but are merely Bible incidents.

The development of Gilds on the Continent follows the same lines as in England except in so far as the nobles and kings themselves opposed them far more. And in France we have a special form of Gild in the confrerie; which was an appendage of the Craft Gild. The Gild as a whole belonged to a religious fraternity and maintained an altar, and met periodically for worship and banquets. Our Religious or Social Gilds are independent of any trade and usually there were no restrictions on their membership.

The Religious or Social Gilds are found in Saxon England, the two earliest known being at Abbotsbury and Exeter in the first half of

the eleventh century; and they continue down to the Reformation, and are all closely similar in their constitution and objects. They had as their common features the provision of lights in the church, and prayers for the dead, attendance at funerals of Gildsmen, periodical banquets, fines for neglect of duty, refusal to take office, and improper conduct, contributions to a common purse, mutual assistance in distress, and periodical meetings in their Guildhall.

There was a solemn entrance oath, and there is [27] generally a provision that the Gildman is not to disclose the affairs of the Gild. They very often wore a special livery. Their officers consisted of an Alderman or Graceman; Stewards or Wardens; a Dean or Beadle; and a Clerk. They were chosen annually. We occasionally find a committee also. The members were known as brethren, or sisteren. They framed their own ordinances, and had every right to do so; and required no charter or permission of any authority or licence from the King. It was necessary, however, to take out a Licence in Mortmain, if they wished to possess lands, as was often the case. Returns were made in 1389 of the ordinances, usages, properties, etc., of all Gilds, both Religious and Trade, and a large number of these have survived in the Public Record Office.

The Religious Gilds had no restrictions as to membership ; and we find in Chaucer:

"An Haberdasher, and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Deyer, and a Tapiser
Were all y-clothed in o livere
Of a solempne and grete fraternite."

The "Webbe" would certainly have had a Craft Gild of his own to belong to; and these worthies were all members of a Religious Gild, and in fact, we find several Gilds assist brethren going on pilgrimage.

When we come to the Craft Gild, we find two necessary distinctions. It is restricted to persons of the trade, and its ordinances relate to the concerns of the trade, and their general tenor has been already indicated. We are also [28] introduced to another distinction which has a very important bearing on Freemasonry, and that is the division into apprentices, journeymen, and freemen, and the use of the term Master.

The title of the chief officer is Master instead of Alderman, and he has Wardens and also sometimes Assistants, or a common council, of past officers; and it is of interest to us that among the Mercers in London in Z479 this court of Assistants was called the Assembly. The term Master is also used to designate a Gild-member who takes an apprentice.

The only persons who could become Freemen of the Gild were those who had been properly apprenticed and had served their indentures. There was a penalty for taking a young man to teach him the trade without binding him an apprentice, and an apprentice was bound in a formal manner at a Gild meeting. Persons who knew the trade but had not served as apprentices were called Journeymen or Servants, and the Freemen could employ these persons, but had to enter their names in the books of the Company; further, unless they were employed by a Freeman, they could get

no work. This class of persons at Exeter were called Free sewers, in the tailors' Gild. The Freeman had to pay a fee on his admission and this was also a formal matter.

When a Freeman took an apprentice he was spoken of as that apprentice's Master ; the officer with that title being spoken of as the Master of the Trade or craft.

[29] We find still another use of the word ; to represent what we should call overseers, four Masters are chosen annually to search for defective work at Bristol; but in a case at Exeter, this duty is laid on the Wardens of the Gild.

Apprentices out of their time, spoken of as "privilege with the craft," are in some cases not allowed to become Freeman, unless they have a certain amount of property. Accordingly, we get an intermediate class of "craftsmen outside the livery," who still have to make an annual payment, however, to the Gild funds.

We find that journeymen have the right to appoint wardens to represent them in some cases. They are not on the same footing as the freeman's wardens, however. And, finally, we find restrictions as to the number of servants or apprentices a Freeman may take; generally, he cannot have more than one apprentice at a time; and sometimes he may not take any apprentice until he himself is of a certain standing. Now in Masonry we have a Craft Gild primarily, as we see by the ordinances in their earliest form. In the Cooke MS. we probably have the very earliest ordinances of our craft, and they are purely operative in character ; although not quite the same as we find in the ordinances of other Gilds that have been preserved. We

have the actual officers, and the designations of apprentice, fellow, and master in our earliest records, our fellow being the freeman of the other crafts. We also bear of journeymen. We have the entrance oath [30] of the Religious Gild, and its obligation to secrecy, which is in the Regius Poem. Our word Free may or may not be the same as Freeman, but it is most probable that it indicates some reference to Gilds and ordinances; and that it meant at one period a mason either free of a Gild or free from rules and regulations.

Now, if we consider the points in which we resemble the Collegia, we shall find that they are the following: a common law, a common fund, the system of governing, the candidate's oath, and the use of the word "brother." Every one of these points is equally available in one or other type of Gild; and accordingly a descent from the Roman institution is not necessary for us; our existence can be explained without invoking it. It also presents historical difficulties.

Our craft is English when it first comes to light in history about 1400 A.D., and if it has a Roman descent at all this can only have arisen in one of two ways: either through survivals into Saxon times of Romano-British institutions, or by an importation sufficiently early in date to permit of our adopting the English Gild system. There were of course Collegia in Britain, but no College of Masons, and as already stated, the Roman Collegia do not in fact present any remarkable analogy with our craft. Excavations at Roman villas occasionally disclose pavements with symbolical designs, into which a masonic significance can be read. But this by itself cannot constitute a proof of Masonry in Roman Britain, or

wherever [31] else these things may be found; all that can be said in such cases is that in an earlier civilisation some of our symbols, which are after all sufficiently obvious, were also employed. Mention should perhaps be made of the Chichester Stone, which has been supposed to prove the existence of Masonry in Britain in Roman times. It was found in 1720 when digging for foundations near the site of a temple, and it records the dedication of the temple to Neptune and Minerva; and recites that Pudens gave the land and various persons gave the funds, including the Collegium Fabrorum; but I have already referred to this body, which included all the mechanic trades.

Rook's Hill near Goodwood has, or had in 1730, a masonic tradition of a Lodge, constituted in the reign of Julius Caesar, that met once a year on the Tuesday in Easter week. But the tradition can only refer to a real operative Lodge, for Easter was obviously unknown in Julius Caesar's day ; and, the operative Lodge being conceded, an eighteenth-century story that it had a Roman origin has no historical value.

Pike, writing about the Gilds, suggests that the Collegia in Britain may have survived into Saxon times, but Freeman, at all events, considers that the Angles and Saxons made a clean sweep of every vestige of our Roman civilisation, and that all our institutions prior to the Conquest are Teutonic in origin. The question will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter; at all events, as we have seen, the English Gilds owe nothing [32] to Rome; and in fact, the Danish and Saxon system of hundreds and tithings depended on a

principle that underlies the Frithgild, namely, the Frank pledge, by which persons in the tithing gave mutual security for each other's good conduct. There is no trace of Roman influence in this.

Alternatively, Pike puts forward the Roman missionaries as propagators of the Roman institution as they spread Christianity. And they would in fact constitute our earliest contact with Roman or Eastern civilisation after the decline of the Roman colonies ; and this would be of the time of St. Augustine, A.D. 596. But by that time the Collegia were all but extinct, and our own legend puts the arrival of Masonry in England in the days of Charles Martel, two centuries later.

Accordingly whatever did reach us then, that has any bearing on the craft, it was not a Roman craft college; and as already stated, our origin cannot be of earlier date than the Craft Gilds of England.

But Masonry is far more than a mere Craft Gild, or than a Religious Gild. We have the officers, ordinances, and formal admissions of the one, and the pledge of secrecy and use of the word brother of the other. But we possess in addition five very important features. In the first place we have, with the restricted membership proper to a Craft Gild, a practice shown to exist at the time of the Cooke MS. of admitting as nonoperative brethren persons learned in our special [33] science of geometry. In the second we alone among Gilds possess a Legendary History, the only real parallel to which is the Legend of the Compagnonnage. The monastic breviaries had legends of their saints, but these obviously could not go back to a period anterior to Christianity. In its earliest form, our legend takes

us back to Euclid and Egypt. As later developments we have ritual and ceremonies of admission, but we obviously have from the very first true operative secrets; a third distinction. And a fourth is involved in our peculiar conditions, because alone among crafts the masons travelled from building to building, and had to establish themselves in places where no Craft Gilds or towns existed, and therefore they especially had need of a secret system of recognition that an illiterate man could use to satisfy another as illiterate, that he was free of his mystery. Finally, we also find indications from the very first, of a constitution differing from that of any Gild, for whereas each Gild was local and self-contained, we find our craft apparently organised, if not for the whole kingdom, at all events over considerable areas, and meeting in periodical congregations, or assemblies, these being general to the whole craft and a system superimposed on the local Lodges.

Our information about these assemblies, and what took place at them, is meagre, but we can well imagine how they would be utilised to spread among the craft the knowledge and experience gained as cathedral after cathedral grew under [34] the builders' hands, and the great styles were evolved from Early English to Perpendicular, by the combined labours of our operative and speculative forbears.

If, as we have seen, our close connection with the Craft Gilds enables us to assume for our mystery an antiquity going back at least to the earliest years of the fourteenth century, when we know town Craft Gilds of Masons to have been in existence, we have also a date

before which no town Gild of Masons can very well have existed, i.e. 1220 A.D., which is about when London Bridge was built of stone; and before which time in the towns the use of stone was hardly known, for it was confined to the cathedrals and castles. But, though we have the appearance of a Craft Gild, yet it does seem to be the case that the universal brotherhood which possessed the legend, and was building cathedrals all over the country from before the tenth century, was a craft lying outside the towns, and independent of the Gilds on that account. And in fact this is one explanation of the term Free, as I mentioned in the first chapter, that it means that the masons were free of restrictions; free from Gild ordinances, for the very reason that their employers were not the citizens—who, when they came to use stone, had the town Craft Gild at their service but the ecclesiastics, who lived away from the towns, and were their own masters.

In fact our Old Charges seem to have been the property of these Church Masons, and bear the [35] impress of an ecclesiastical origin; and we find a copy in the possession of the London Masons Company expressly described as "One copy of the constitutions of accepted masons"; and though this is at a much later date, yet the incident seems to indicate that the Company considered themselves as having no concern with what was nevertheless an operatives' document.

Accordingly, our craft having features in common with both kinds of Gild, but having additional characteristics which distinguish it from both, our origin, in Gild form, may perfectly well antedate by

some considerable period the earliest evidence we have of town Craft Gilds; and be, in fact, a distinct development of the Religious Gild among the Cathedral Masons. And it is not impossible that they had among themselves some sort of organisation even in Athelstan's day; while under our Norman kings, at all events, the Church Masons all over the kingdom possessed a common technical knowledge, as we know from a study of the buildings of the period that still remain ; and this fact would almost involve the existence of some such system of keeping in touch with local developments as would be furnished by a periodical assembly.

CHAPTER III

Early Conditions

THAT the Druids—that terrible sect, as Gould calls them were Freemasons was a theory [36] devoutly believed in by numerous writers not so many years ago. It need hardly be said, however, that the idea is not merely devoid of the remotest historical probability, but cannot even be justified by the usually adaptable argument of analogy; for from what we do know of them, they were mere sorcerers and rain doctors, the products of a very low civilisation. They also indulged in human sacrifices. They certainly appear to have stained themselves blue, a colour of a great significance in our craft today. But lest this argument should be assessed at more than its real value, I hasten to add that their garment was not the apron, at all events according to Valerius Maximus, but the trousers! It is true that Stonehenge was built by men who had observed the course of the sun in the heavens, and were able to move very large masses of stone. But nothing in its construction can be taken to prove that its builders had any knowledge of geometry, and by no stretch of ingenuity can it or any other Druidic temple be given a masonic significance.

It is more to our purpose to consider to what extent Roman

civilisation may have survived into later days, and especially Roman architecture; for with the development of architecture the development of our craft is bound up. And, as we know, the Church did maintain an unbroken existence through all the troublous days of Pict, Jute, and Dane.

Exactly how and when Christianity first reached [37] our shores we cannot say. One legend attributes it to St. Joseph of Arimathea, who planted the Glastonbury thorn; and it is a remarkable circumstance that his probable route, the old trade route of the Phoenicians from Marseilles up the valley of the Rhone and so across to Brittany and Cornwall, is distinguished by a series of local legends of exactly the same tenor, which in fact can be made into a consistent story. At all events when St. Augustine was confronted with the Celtic Church, he found they preserved the primitive or Greek use, a certain indication of an early and Eastern origin. And before the Saxon invasions, i.e. in the fifth century, it is tolerably certain that Britain possessed numerous churches. But the Church itself was a poor one, and there is a total lack of large buildings or monuments. The few churches that have survived are small and plain. A remark made by Bede would go to show that in his time at all events the Celts did not use stone. The Celtic Church had its hierarchy; we find three British Bishops present at the Council of Arles in 314 A.D. and Sampson is mentioned as Archbishop of York in 509 A.D. It had its saints, its missionaries, its monks and its anchorites; nay, it even had its heretic in the person of Pelagius. But in the eighth century it finally conformed to the Roman

practices as to order and ritual, and its individuality was lost. As a Church that possessed no architectural ability, it would not in the ordinary course require our attention, but the same school of writers that hailed the Druids as Masons and [38] pupils of Pythagoras claimed the Culdees as Freemasons in a further stage of development, and one more link in our chain of descent, the Culdees being the monks and clerics of the Celtic Church. The exact derivation of the name is doubtful; at all events it is not masonic, and the notion of their connection with the craft is purely fanciful, with no foundation in fact, any more than there is any ground for supposing them to have had anything to do with Roman Colleges, or Eastern esoteric fraternities. They have a connection with York and King Athelstan, however, which may have a bearing on our legendary history. We read that when King Athelstan was on his march against the Scots in 936, he halted at York, where he found the Culdees as the clergy of St. Peter's, the cathedral church. He asked for their prayers for his victory, and subsequently, on his return after a victorious campaign, he granted them a special donation or levy of corn throughout the diocese, to aid their various charitable and pious works. Our legend tells us that Athelstan gave the craft a charter at York ; or rather such is one version of it.

Athelstan, who takes so prominent a place in our legendary history, was the last really great English King, and the first as well as the last to hold undisputed sway over the whole kingdom. He defeated the Scots at Brunnaburgh ; he adopted the title of Basileus and formed

alliances with Norway and Armorica; while his sisters were thought suitable matches for Henry, Emperor of Germany, and Louis, Duke of Aquitaine. He was [39] a great law-giver; and was credited in later times with granting the charters of many a borough; and it was said that in his day one poor Englishman was scarce to be found. His successors saw the Scots and Northumbrians in revolt; the Church in arms against one king and protected by another of doubtful morals; the institution of the Danegelt, and the Danish rulers; until Edward the Confessor came, and he showed himself more Norman than English, and after his death the country passed to the Conqueror. We can imagine how fondly a later chronicler of English sympathies might trace our craft to days before any Norman duke, and to the charters of the great English King, especially if the chronicler himself happened to be a churchman.

To return to the British Church, it was Celtic and not Roman in its character. It is a remarkable fact that the numerous Roman inscriptions known in Britain are purely Pagan; we even find inscriptions to Celtic deities, but nothing Christian, with the exception of an occasional monogram, or formula, and the Christian Basilica at Silchester. Again, in regard to municipal life, the Roman form of it was rare in Britain, and only five municipalities on a Roman model are known; and what the nature of the institutions was in London and other towns not modelled on the Roman pattern we can only conjecture. Freeman considers that the Teutonic invaders left no Roman institution to survive. At all events the barbarians destroyed Roman paganism finally, and

Christianity, as the [40] sole living force left to oppose them, actually thrived in those years of chaos and misery among the Roman provincials. But as we have seen, in England it was a Celtic Christianity of an Eastern type, and not a Roman form at all.

Accordingly, the idea of any secret society surviving from Roman days into Saxon England must be abandoned. And surely we need not hope to trace any such connection with pagan Rome by means of Augustine and his missionaries. But in later days we do actually find builders brought from France and Italy to this country. Benedict Biscop at Durham, when he built at Monk Wearmouth in the seventh century, went for his masons to Roman Gaul. Similarly Offa, in A.D. 790, having discovered the relics of St. Alban at Verulam, imported Roman masons to build the cathedral there. The Saxons were no builders; and both Ferguson and Scott have no hesitation in ascribing to our Saxon architecture a continental origin. It was a poor and ignorant copy of contemporary Italian work. The Saxon Aelfric, writing about 1000 A.D., describes in his life of St. Thomas, the Indian king as asking the saint to build a palace in the Roman fashion ; and goes on to say how St. Thomas built him "twelve houses together, with good arches, but it is not customary to make such work in England, and therefore we shall not tell their names (or perhaps' give the technical terms') clearly." What these workmen certainly did bring from the Continent was a practical knowledge of geometry; and it is quite [41] probable that they had among themselves some story of how that science arose and that they preserved and venerated the names of its discoverers.

The bearing of this will be clearer when we come to deal with the legendary history in a later chapter. The possession of our operative secrets, however, will not constitute these early builders craft Freemasons; nor will their hypothetical possession of the first germ of our legend. They do but suggest the source of one distinguishing feature (or perhaps two) of an institution which can only have come into existence in the days of the Craft Gilds.

It will be convenient at this point to deal with the Vehmgerichte, which have been also claimed as masonic bodies, because they had secret meetings, passwords, death penalties, a ceremonial opening in dialogue form, the word "free," and a symbolic use of a rope and a dagger. But as is so often the case, this is merely another instance of similarity in details.

The Vehmgerichte were essentially courts of justice; they exercised their jurisdiction originally in Westphalia, and are found as early as the days of Charlemagne. They were also styled Freigerichte, i.e. Free tribunals, either because only freeborn men were eligible for membership, or because they claimed certain exceptional liberties.

Their importance dates from 1180, when the Archbishop of Cologne placed himself at their head, and they soon spread all over Germany.

Individual members were known as Freischoffer; [42] they were admitted with a ceremonial in which a rope and dagger were used, which were afterwards presented to them, and they had passwords. We know one; the first speaker said Reyn, Erde, Feuer, i.e. Rain, Earth, Fire; and the second answered Lust, i.e. Air. They also had

signs. The meetings were held in the open, in the daytime, and the place of meeting was always well known. Occasionally they sat in secret, when they met to try any offence of especial gravity, such as heresy, or witchcraft, or to hear appeals. The penalty was death by hanging, and if the accused was not present to suffer it then and there, the first Freischoffer who met him was bound to carry it out. This at all events furnishes an adequate explanation of the rope's appearance in the ceremonies. He was also bound to serve the tribunal's summonses on persons they proposed to try. But he had the privilege of being himself answerable to no other tribunal; and only a Freischoffer could be an accuser before the court. Such an institution, though no doubt suited to a barbarous age, was naturally liable to abuses; and we find these courts superseded and restricted to Westphalia in the sixteenth century, while, later, their jurisdiction was more and more curtailed, until they degenerated into a mere police. In this form they survived into the nineteenth century, and the last "Frei-Graf" or President died in 1835. There is no satisfactory evidence to connect Charlemagne himself with them, still less for the assertion that their true object was to spread Christianity; and [43] they had nothing in the nature of secret teachings or mysteries; they were merely rude courts of justice, the members of which had secret modes of recognition; while at their meetings a ritual of a common type was practised.

An argument of- a different type that is put forward to make out a Roman origin for Freemasonry, or rather a descent from antiquity by a Roman channel, is connected with the theory of the origin of

modern architecture which attributes it to the Comacine Masters. Como in the days after the barbarian incursions seems to have been a town or district with certain privileges, as it were, of sanctuary; and in later times we find that the Comacine Masters were recognised as particularly skilful architects; and it is claimed that the gradual rise of architecture in northern Italy in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries was the work of these builders. Their churches were modelled on the Roman Basilica, apses, transepts, and aisles being added as the style developed; and they introduced into their ornamentation all sorts of animals possible and impossible, derived from Byzantine, Eastern or pagan sources, that they may or may not have attributed a symbolism of their own to. Particularly they used an ornament of an endless strand, plaited in complicated basket-work patterns, known as the Comacine Knot. This style of ornamentation is found in German churches before the Gothic, in French of the same period, and in Saxon and early Irish buildings and crosses also. And Hexham, [44] for instance, built by Wilfrid in 674 A.D., was a Roman Basilica in plan. As we have already seen, the Saxons were no builders, and we are told that St. Augustine brought Roman artists with him; and they may have been Comacine Masters. At all events a century later Wilfrid could find workmen to build him his Roman Basilica in Britain apparently, although his contemporary and neighbour Benedict Biscop had to send to Gaul; so that possibly Augustine's builders remained in Britain, and their art had survived to Wilfrid's day.

The subsequent development of architecture in Italy can be worked

out as a direct derivation from the classical and Lombard styles, and the mediaval architects; but the Italian or Romanesque is really a trabeate style and its arch is the semicircle. We do find windows and doors of Gothic outline, and small works such as the shrine in San Michele at Florence, or the Scala tombs at Verona, which are Gothic in treatment; but the difference between the two styles is one not of ornament or detail but of essential character, and true Gothic is always an exotic in Italy; and it is roughly correct to say that churches in a Gothic style are to be found only in Northern Italy, and are due to a Northern or foreign influence. The Comacine theory does not in fact claim for the Gothic a direct Italian origin; but merely contends that the knowledge of architecture possessed by the Romans was never lost but was preserved at Como till it could again be put into practice, when emissaries from the fraternity introduced it into [45] Germany and Northern Europe, and there modified it to suit the new conditions of climate they were confronted with. But in practice, for Comacine influence in North Europe later than Saxon times there is no evidence, and our Gothic architecture is neither Byzantine, nor Saracenic, nor Comacine, nor Eastern; but a strictly indigenous growth, arising in North-Eastern France in all probability and spreading thence all over Northern France, England, and Western Germany. It is the architecture essentially of the Germanic races; and it needs no theory of a transmitted secret whether of Roman or Eastern origin for its genesis, however that may fit in with preconceived notions of the origin of masonry, and appear to lend them support. The cathedrals of England were evolved by the craftsmen under whose guidance

they were constructed, and who were our operative forbears.

Certainly, great authorities like Sir Gilbert Scott express their views unequivocally. He says: "In the gradually increasing predominance of the vertical over the horizontal, the increase of the height of the pillars, and jambs demanding a proportionate addition to the arch, the necessities of groyne vaulting over oblong spaces, and a hundred other evidences proved the pointed arch to be the inevitable result of the already attained developments and after it had almost unconsciously appeared in intersecting arcades."

The Comacine Masters are put forward as a survival of the Collegia; and had the ordinary craft distinctions of apprentice, fellow, and master, [46] which is natural enough. But it is further asserted that they were Freemasons with a Grand Master, and were favoured by the Popes, who gave them special privileges. This idea, that the Freemasons are the descendants of a great mediaeval travelling Gild, hailing from Rome, is no new one. Aubrey writes in 1691:

"Sir William Dugdale told me many years since, that about Henry III's time, the Pope gave a Bull or diploma to a company of Italian architects (Free masons) to travel up and downe all over Europe to build churches. From those are derived the Fraternity of Free masons (Adopted Masons)."

But no such Bull can be traced; and there is no evidence whatever that the Comacine Masters were Freemasons; that is to say, that they had esoteric teachings and legends, and secret signs, or a ritual, or passwords; they were simply a confraternity of builders, which is not the same thing at all. Their symbolism of grotesque animals and

the endless knot is quite unlike anything we have. Ravenscroft carries the Comacine argument further still. He says:

- (a) Hittites built the temple at Jerusalem.
- (b) People of the same race and with the same traditions taught the Romans.
- (c) The Roman Colleges had traditions of King Solomon.
- (d) They migrated to Como;
- (e) And thence spread all over Europe, and eventually merged in the Masonic Gilds.

He therefore asks whether it is a wild inference [47] that, by traditions handed down from generation to generation, the Comacines were at any rate in some sense the successors of the Temple builders, and that the masonic stories associated with the Temple told today in connection with Freemasonry are not without foundation.

In the first place, there is absolutely no ground for attributing to any Collegia traditions of King Solomon; in the second, the exodus of a Collegium to Como is a hypothesis only, and Ravenscroft's authority is Findel, whose statements are unsupported; in the third, even assuming that the masons imported to Saxon England were in fact Comacines, this merely means that their knowledge of building was derived from ancient Rome, not that they brought us any esotericism, of the existence of which among themselves there is no evidence. Finally, the legend of our craft connects us not with Rome but with Euclid and Egypt; and the Temple only comes into it incidentally, as one of the great buildings in the Old Testament.

The Temple Legend of our Ritual, which is what Ravenscroft refers to, is a different matter altogether. Our legendary history ignores it; and there is as yet no evidence that we possessed it at all before the eighteenth-century.

While however the style of the architecture is a local development, it is, as already pointed out, true that the geometry on which it depended, and which was discovered in Egypt in the fourth and third centuries B.C., was at some time brought into England, and not rediscovered there. This may [48] have happened in Offa's day, but at all events took place earlier than the building of such Norman cathedrals as Ely, Chichester, Winchester, or Durham.

A later source of Oriental influence which was much relied on at one time for our architecture, and much else, and for Masonry too, was the Crusades. The returning warriors were supposed to bring civilisation to a barbarian Europe. An adequate examination of this theory would require an acquaintance with what was known at that date in Palestine and what was not in Western Europe. In any case, there is no evidence to connect masonry with Palestine by this channel through, e.g., the Templars, whose supposed connection with our craft in mediaeval days is not now believed in. And the extent of the influence on our architecture may be briefly stated.

The great religious orders actually took to Palestine architects and masons, and between 1140 and 1180 that country was covered with churches of Western origin. The manual labour was no doubt local; and there was a certain inevitable reaction between employers and employees that showed itself partly in the adoption of ornaments of

Eastern type and partly in the sensible lightening of the Western style; but a more important influence was the introduction to the west of the claw tool for dressing the surface of stone. The antiquity of this in Palestine and the East is very great, and it is also found in classical Greece, and at Ravenna. It appears first in England in the [49] thirteenth century, as the style known as Early English is developed. And another Eastern practice had been also for the first time introduced, presumably from Palestine, about a century earlier to England, and that is the use of Masons' Marks.

The suggestion that the returning Crusaders brought to our craftsmen a wealth of Eastern esoteric learning besides legends of the temple – is one for which no historical evidence can be adduced. And the idea that the craftsmen used their marks to inculcate any such mysteries must be dismissed as fanciful. Masons' Marks are known in Ancient Rome, and in India; they are the possession of the whole trade, independent of our craft; and other trades have a similar practice, since it arises out of the operative necessity of being able to identify the work of each craftsman, when it is to be paid for or passed by the overseer.

Many thousands of Masons' Marks have been collected; but elaborate theories based, e.g., on the number of angles in them, that their makers intended to convey some mysterious truth, are mere fantasies. Once the stone was passed by the overseer it was built into a wall, as often as not with the marks on the inner side; and there was an end of the matter. True, the marks have a character of their own, derived from the way in which they were made, and that is

that being essentially scratches on a stone with an edged tool, they are made up of simple lines, which in the large majority of cases are straight.

They are not monograms, or marks such as [50] jewellers use, or comparable to printers' monograms; and being combinations of simple lines, they naturally include triangles, squares, crosses and so on; but because some masons, in choosing a mark, selected forms that had elsewhere an esoteric meaning, it cannot be argued that the mason was concerned with the symbolism of his mark, even if he knew it; still less that he had any idea of communicating anything to posterity.

Another question which has a bearing on our early history is the degree of intercourse that subsisted between England and Scotland, France, and the Continent generally, in the days before printing; when men, or handicraftsmen at all events, could hardly impart their technical knowledge to one another, or learn each other's legends, except by personal meetings.

As reflected in our architecture, the facts can be simply stated. The English School of Gothic is always distinct from the French and independent ; the construction is English, the profiles of the mouldings the ornaments—belong to the English School (Viollet-le-Duc). With German contemporary architecture we have no visible connection. As to England and Scotland, we find the two nations absolutely parallel in development in the twelfth and early thirteenth century, and are tempted to assume that the craft's organisation extended at this time throughout the kingdom. But

with the thirteenth century we see a change. England adopts the Eastern method of tooling already alluded to, but Scotland does not; and [51] whereas in England we see a progressive development that was checked by the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century, but only stopped with the Reformation, Scotland breaks off her intercourse with us after the War of Independence, and her building art remains at a standstill. We shall expect accordingly to find craft Masonry in Scotland far behind in development when a comparison can be made in the seventeenth century, and such in fact is the case, as we shall see when we come to consider that period of our history.

Our intercourse with France in the days of the Angevin Kings was necessarily constant and close; although we developed our architecture on independent lines. And Calais remained in English hands for two centuries after its siege in 1347, at which we read that Edward III.'s army included masons, carpenters, and smiths.

We know how much English literature borrowed from the French as late as Chaucer's day, and there would be ample opportunity for an interchange between craftsmen of the two countries of trade usages and trade legends; and we shall find reason for thinking that this has actually happened when we come to deal with the *Compagnonnage*. But before we take up this question we have to discuss our oldest documents, our legend, and our connection with the craft in mediaeval times: and these subjects are accordingly dealt with in the following chapters.

CHAPTER IV

Our Legendary History

THE Legendary History, the formal rehearsal of which to the candidate was so important a part of the admission ceremony in earlier days, has now all but passed out of our ritual. The actual ceremonies have no trace of it, and have substituted for it King Solomon's Temple, and it is only to be found in bits embedded like a fossil in the Lectures, and in the Constitutions.

Nowadays we find it difficult to realise that such a tissue of anachronisms should have ever commanded the respect of any one. But it was received and repeated in all seriousness in operative days, and probably every Lodge had, as its most valued possession, a copy of the Old Charges. They were at once a constitution, a code of morals, and a history, which, in its main outlines, does not greatly vary in the different MSS. we possess; and I shall follow the Buchanan MS., which is of the seventeenth century, in the following account, with amplifications where necessary.

We begin with a proposition which every Mason must needs endorse, that Geometry is the oldest and greatest of the seven liberal arts and sciences, and we are told that Lamech had three sons and a daughter, Jabal, Jubal, Tubal, and Naamah. Jabal founded

Geometry and built the first house of stone and timber, Jubal invented music, [52] [53] Tubal invented the smith's craft, and Naamah founded weaving. Now, knowing that God's vengeance on the world was imminent, they wrote all their knowledge and concealed it in two pillars, one of marble that would not burn, and the other of "Later" that would not drown. "Later" is no doubt brick, and it is odd that marble will burn and brick will not : but I do not know that either can float. For "Later," the various versions have all sorts of readings, and the passage goes to show how uncritical our forbears were.

After the Flood one of these pillars was recovered by Hermes, to whom Noah is found to be the greatgrandfather. It was Hermes who, mastering the learning thus acquired, taught it to mankind and became the father of all wise men. In the middle ages, an extraordinary amount of mysticism collected around Hermes Trismegistus, as he was called, whose very existence at any time may be safely doubted.

When the town of Babylon was built the king, "Nemorth," was a mason; and he sent sixty masons to build Nineveh, giving them a charge; this was the first charge ever delivered to the craft.

It may be as well to observe that the Babylon of the middle ages, e.g. of the Crusade of St. Lewis, A.D. 1250, was Cairo, and without stopping now to discuss how that came about, we may be quite certain that by a fourteenth-century mason this passage would be understood as referring to Egypt.

Now although Hermes Trismegistus flourished in Egypt, the next

personage introduced is Abraham, [54] Freemasonry before the Era of Grand Lodges who came from the Euphrates and at his going into Egypt taught the Egyptians the seven sciences.

Hermes was the hero of the mediaeval mystics who were known as Hermeticists, while Abraham was the personage selected by the Kabbalists as the repository, after Adam, of all human knowledge; but the mention at this stage of these worthies does not involve Hermetic or Kabbalistic influences, which would come into our history, if at all, at a later date. Hermes was known to the Fathers, and St. Augustine quotes him; and the Kabbalist story of Abraham is as early as the fourth century and must have been well known. It is found in an English metrical version of Genesis and Exodus, of date circa 1250, which recounts that Abraham taught the clerks of Egypt Astronomy and Arithmetic.

Now the pupil of Abraham was Euclid. And it happened in those days that there were so many children born to the nobles that they were at a loss how to employ them, until with the King's permission Euclid taught them Geometry—and the science then first got its name—and set them to build temples, churches, and castles; and he also gave his masons a charge.

Here we may notice not merely the complete absence of historical sense, but also of any idea that Egypt was not just such another country as mediaeval England, whose masons were building churches and castles for its nobles up till Stuart times.

In the Cooke MS., which possesses several [55] variations of the legend peculiar to itself, the story is that Geometry was a science of

land measurement primarily, and the name itself indicates as much.

We are next introduced to David, who loved masons well and cherished them, and also gave them charges; and his son Solomon finished the Temple, gathering together for that purpose 24,000 masons, of whom 1,000 were Masters.

Hiram or Hiram gave him timber and Hiram the king had a son called Aymon, who was the chiefest Master.

Aymon is the form of the name in the Buchanan MS., but there are a very great number of variants. The name is given as Hiram Abif in only one late version, the "Inigo Jones" of 1607. It will be observed that the Temple, Solomon, and Hiram are not treated as of special importance in the legend; nor does it make any reference whatever to the death of the Master.

The legend now makes a jump of some centuries and tells us that Masonry was brought into France by "Namus Graecus," who had been at the building of Solomon's temple, and he taught it to Charles Martel, who taught it to men in France.

Preston gives us a version in which the Venetians came first from the east, being great merchants, and brought Masonry with them, and Peter Gower, a Grecian, learned all about Masonry and formed a Lodge at Groton, from which journeying masons brought the craft into France.

Preston suggests that if we read Phoenicians, [56] Pythagoras, and Crotona, this becomes a plausible story. Pythagoras flourished A.U.C. 220, or 500 B.C. say, and was contemporary with

Zerubbabel's temple, about 500 years after Solomon's. Peter Gower is after all only a French pronunciation of Pythagoras anglicized, and he, like Hermes, had attributed to him all sorts of mystical knowledge in the middle ages.

In fact Pythagoras is supposed to have found the second pillar after the Flood according to the Cooke MS. But unfortunately for Preston and his ingenious interpretations, the old manuscript in which he alleges he found this variation of the orthodox legend is nowadays condemned as a forgery, and we need not further consider it.

As to *Namus Graecus*, on whom an immense amount of ingenuity and erudition has been expended, the most satisfactory explanation of him appears to be that the original individual who linked the children of Israel to the Mayor of the Palace had a Greek name which puzzled the early copyists, so that they shirked it and put (*Namus Graecus*) to explain their difficulty; and that this piece of monkish latinity eventually superseded the original altogether, and took rank as an actual person. With regard to Charles Martel, who saved Europe from the Moors at Poitiers A.D. 732, it was the fashion later on to describe him as a heretic, because he paid his troops with church property; and it is interesting to note that although he is a necessary link in the chain, he is completely omitted from some of the [57] versions which are known to have an ecclesiastical origin. The *Quatuor Coronati* are alluded to in a long passage in the *Regius Poem*. They do not, however, carry on the sequence of events in any way, but the reason for bringing them in

is that they were, and are still, looked on as the patron saints of the craft, and have a church to this day in Rome where the Gild meets on their anniversary. They were soldiers and Christian masons, martyred by Diocletian, because they would not make a heathen god. Such is one account at all events. But their very names are uncertain, and one story makes them five in number. They were clearly adopted as our patron saints, however, much later than the date of their martyrdom.

We return to the direct sequence of events and are introduced to St. Alban, who was no doubt a real person ; and the Cooke MS. also mentions St. Amphibalus. He seems to be a historical personage also, and converted St. Alban, and the martyrdom of St. Alban is sufficiently well attested, but dates about A.D. 300. The statement which follows, that St. Alban was a mason and patron of masons, rests, however, solely on our Old Charges. By them we are told that St. Alban fixed the pay of masons at two shillings and sixpence a week, and threepence for their refreshment; whereas they had hitherto had a penny a day and their meals. He also got a charter for them and founded their assembly, [58] and, like most of his predecessors in the legend, gave the craft a charge.

But after that, Masonry suffered in the wars until King Athelstan, who loved Masons well, and his son Edwin even more so; and Edwin was made a Mason ; and got another grant of a charter and the right to hold an annual assembly ; and he collected histories and caused a book to be made thereof, and he drew up our charges at an assembly held at York. At this point the legendary history breaks off

abruptly ; and the actual charges are then given in full in the manuscripts. Our eighteenth-century romanticists had no hesitation, however, in supplying the gap and evolved a most satisfactory account of Freemasonry from the days of St. Alban to those of Sir Christopher Wren; King Alfred was our patron, and so were Edward the Confessor, Edward III, Henry VI, Henry VII, and all the Stuarts. St. Dunstan was a Grand Master, and so was every architect whose name could be ascertained down to Sir Christopher Wren, and the craft built every important structure in the country, including the Tower of London. That Masons built the cathedrals is perhaps obvious; that operative craftsmen had Lodges, passwords, ceremonies, and symbolism may fairly be said to be established—but that they had our symbolism, our ceremonies, or even our passwords is another matter altogether. Still less is there any historical ground for claiming as Masons any single non-operative in England before Elias Ashmole and his contemporaries, with [59] the possible exception of Edwin, on the authority of the Old Charges. With regard to Sir Christopher Wren, he certainly was not Grand Master, for the sufficient reason that in his day no such office existed; and it is not proved that he was a Mason at all.

It will be instructive to attempt some sort of analysis of the legend as far as it has gone, to see if we can read into it any trace of real historical events.

Now in the first place, although such versions of the Old Charges as are extant are all subsequent to 1400 in date – the Regius Poem is of that date approximately—yet the legend stops abruptly with Edwin at

York.

Both the Regius Poem and the Cooke MS, speak of Old Books of Masonry, but clearly at whatever date the legend was constructed, no one ever made any attempt to bring it up to date even so late as A.D. 1400; and at all events the compiler of the Cooke MS. was a man of erudition, and quite competent to write such a continuation of the story. Accordingly we must suppose, either that the original legend was framed soon after the last event it records i.e., about A.D. 926, and that subsequent craftsmen simply copied it without any thought of continuation, or that it was compiled at a later date by some writer who had a specific reason for stopping with Athelstan. The first supposition is untenable, because we know that between the Cooke MS. and the Lansdowne MS. there is a distinct amplification of the legend, [60] Freemasonry before the Era of Grand Lodges and that the Cooke MS. itself gives the legend in two forms, the earlier being very much shorter.

In favour of the second hypothesis we have the fact that Richard II called for returns from all Gilds, both religious and craft, who were to state how they came to be formed, what their ordinances were, and what property they possessed. We have a large number of the actual returns made; and although Religious Gilds required no charter or licence for their existence, it would be an advantage to a Craft Gild to be able to show a charter, as it would strengthen its position in the town, and perhaps determine its seniority. But not till the beginning of the seventeenth century do we find that a company had to have the licence of the city to sue for

incorporation; and at that time the city was itself the confederation of companies.

It is therefore possible that the whole legend with its repeated allusions to charges was first reduced to writing at this time, and that it took substantially the form in which we have it in the long version of the Cooke MS., but without the features peculiar to that document. Even so the legend must have been based on some oral tradition ; and the oral tradition in its simplest form we probably have in the second legend of the Cooke MS. It is at least probable that the charges themselves, the "articles and points" as they are called, existed in manuscript, and had connected with them an oral tradition.

In the previous chapter I have indicated a [61] possible reason for a compiler choosing Athelstan, rather than any later monarch, as the giver of his charter; and there is of course a further possibility, namely that a real reorganisation of the craft did take place in Edwin's day, at which the actual rules were promulgated, which were handed down, with an oral tradition, to later days.

Now in both forms of the legend as we have it, the assertion is made that our Masonry came from France and eventually from the east.

Preston claims Julius Caesar as a Mason, and suggests that the Druids were Masons, having learnt the mystery from Pythagoras. Apparently they initiated their Roman conquerors, and later on Carausius revived the craft after he had shaken off the Roman yoke ; and St. Alban was his steward. The Old Charges, however,

prefer to attribute the introduction of Masonry into England to St. Alban, as we have seen, and I am afraid Preston cannot be considered a serious authority.

Now if we suppose that what is referred to is the science of building – that is to say, the properties of the square and circle – it is in all probability correct to say that the knowledge of them began in Egypt and spread along the Mediterranean. As we have seen, whatever the Romans may have brought into Britain cannot have survived the Danish and Saxon invasions; all that did survive was a Christianity of an Eastern type. The next wave of learning would actually come through [62] France. Of course there is in the Old Charges a difficulty in the historical sequence at this point. St. Alban's martyrdom is A.D. 300, and Charles Martel is 732. Some manuscripts confuse him with Charlemagne, who died in 814. No doubt Charlemagne would be a more familiar name. And in fact the name Aymon is that of one of Charlemagne's knights, who was a conspicuous figure in his ballad cycle. But as it happens, we can make a very satisfactory sequence at this point for, not craft Masonry indeed, but the science of building, if we understand the reference to be to the first building of the cathedral dedicated to St. Alban. This took place under Offa, King of Mercia, in about 790; i.e. in the days of Charlemagne, when men were singing the ballads of Charles Martel's victories over the Moors.

What is more natural to suppose than that the masons Offa had necessarily to import to rebuild Roman Verulam brought with them what became afterwards our operative secrets? Offa had

relations with the East, we know, as well as with South Europe. As I have already stated, craft Masonry can be no older than the other Gilds. But if the knowledge it was framed to perpetuate and preserve secret reached Britain when Offa built St. Albans, we may suppose that some overseer it was of his day who raised the standard of wages for the craft, and educated the English workmen to the level of their French and other visitors.

Athelstan was an illegitimate son of Edward the [63] Elder, and Edwin of York was his half brother, and a legitimate son.

It is correct to say that between the reigns of Offa and Athelstan England was torn by wars and dissensions, which is a further confirmation of the suggestions put forward above, and an indication that at this point our legend has reached the firm ground of history.

It has been suggested that the various references to wages that are introduced into the legend were intended to serve their own purposes in the fifteenth century; and with regard to the wages St. Alban obtained for the craft, the passage is an interesting specimen of a late addition to the legend.

The actual wages prescribed in 1350 by the Statute of Labourers were for carpenters and mechanic trades generally threepence a day, but the master mason of free stone was to get fourpence. And as pay was daily and not weekly, and no wages were paid for holidays, this would not represent as much as two shillings a week. The wages actually paid to artisans, as given by Merdith in his Economic History, are in 1350, 3d. a day; before 1400, 4d.; from 1400 to

1450, 5d. to 6d.; 6d. till 1530, and after that date a rise to first 7d. and then 11d.

If we suppose the Freemason's wages to have been somewhat more than the ordinary artisan's, he was getting half a crown a week before 1450; and after 1450 at least half a crown, even if there were a saint's day in the week, as well as a half [64] day. Accordingly a recital that his wages were to be half a crown a week would hardly be introduced into the legend later than 1450. On the other hand it might be introduced at any time after the Statute of Labourers first fixed wages. Again, the shilling as the equivalent of twelve pence is Norman. The actual coin does not appear till 1504 in Henry VII's third coinage. The Saxon shilling was a money of account; equivalent to four or five pennies, and in some places to as many as twenty. William I settled it at fourpence, but introduced at the same time the Norman shilling of twelve pence, which eventually superseded the Saxon denomination, and which we find as a money of account in the Statutes, e.g. in 51 Henry III 6 of A.D. 1266, the Assize of Bread and Ale; and repeatedly in later enactments. Still St. Alban or even Athelstan can never have fixed any wages in terms of Norman shillings. No doubt the early tradition merely was that the wages were raised; and in the Cooke MS. we find it said simply that St. Alban ordered that masons should be paid proper wages; and the introduction of the two shillings and sixpence which is the amount most usually given in the Old Charges will apparently have been made before the middle of the fifteenth, but after the middle of the fourteenth century.

The mention of Euclid, who is so named in all accounts except the shorter legend of the Cooke MS., gives us another means of dating the construction of the legend, as his works were [65] apparently not known in England anterior to Adelard of Bath, who introduced them in 1130 A.D. This is another argument against an early date for the legend in its extended form. It is true Boethius translated Euclid in the sixth century; and one would expect the monasteries to have preserved some knowledge of the matter. But apparently they did not.

On the other hand, it is also certain, as already pointed out, that quite apart from any possible book knowledge, the operative masons of the eleventh century and even earlier had a very definite acquaintance with geometry. Now it is remarkable that in the shorter legend the Cooke MS. speaks not of Euclid, a Greek name, but of Englet and Englat – a very Saxon – looking form. As already stated, this shorter legend is probably the story in its oldest form. Is it possible that we have preserved here an oral tradition of the masons of Saxon England? The compiler clearly had access to various sources, because he alone mentions Pythagoras, who drops out of the legend in later documents. Now, here again it is to be noticed that Pythagoras was a geometer, and Hermes was not. Each is stated by the compiler to have recovered one of the pillars after the Flood, but a tradition among craftsmen, if it existed at all, would be far more likely to mention the former worthy than the latter. Pythagoras would, however, be quite a familiar name to a monkish compiler in the eleventh century. But I may perhaps at this stage

fitly introduce a quotation from [66] Gould. He says: "The precise measure of antiquity our masonic traditions are entitled to, over and above that which is attested by documentary evidence, is so obviously a matter of conjecture that it would be a mere waste of time to attempt its definition."

It should be observed that a study of the omissions from the legend is quite as valuable as any analysis of its confused and unhistorical story. It is utterly vague and preposterous before the eighth century, as we should expect; for while the knowledge of our operative secrets was then slowly spreading from the Mediterranean, as yet no jealous Craft Guild existed to safeguard them or to reduce the traditions to writing. It can be reconstructed after that epoch very fairly, as a brief account of the spread of the knowledge of building and of the rise in status and organisation of the craft before the Guild. But the legend knows nothing of Rome, or of persecutions and martyrdoms, apart from the one reference to the Quatuor Coronati, who were not martyred as Masons, but as Christians; and nothing of the Egypt of the Pyramids; and this not merely tells against some theories of our origin once much in vogue, but tends to confirm my general argument as to our real antiquity.

As for attempts to rationalise the story, or reduce its chronology to some sort of historical coherence, they have been too numerous to specify.

The two obvious difficulties are *Namus Grcecus* and St. Alban, the latter because he is not subsequent [67] in date to Charles Martel, as I have observed above. I have already indicated possible

explanations of both these worthies. St. Alban may also be intended, not for the Protomartyr, but for Alcuin of York, whose name would if latinized become Albinus. He was a contemporary of Charlemagne ; and it has been suggested that the French king should be Charlemagne rather than his grandfather. I have already remarked on Aymon being one of Charlemagne's knights. Alcuin was a great builder and man of considerable learning.

But, in our desire to correct, we must not make the error of being wiser than the compilers themselves of our fantastic story, who would be quite indifferent to our modern canons of historic truth; and we may be sure that their unlettered auditors would have no doubts about the pillars and Hermes, and would accept without comment a longevity for Nramus Graecus they would lack the knowledge to detect.

CHAPTER V

Our Oldest Documents

THE numerous references to Freemasons and Lodges in such records as the Cathedral fabric rolls, or Gild records, or in the Statutes, will be dealt with in a later chapter. I propose in this one to give some account of the old documents that are our own property as Masons; namely, [68] the Old Charges; the Schaw Statutes; the Cooke MS.; and the Regius Poem. The actual number of versions of the Old Charges known is over sixty; but they are all so nearly alike that they are patently derived from a common source, now lost. In copying, they have often been corrupted, or amplified; and considerable additions have been made in some cases, the consideration of which is of great interest. The earliest extant version is the Lansdowne, which is of about the middle of the sixteenth century, and the latest to contain important additional matter is the version known as Harleian MS. 1942, the date of which is about the middle of the seventeenth century. The classification of the Old Charges into families by means of a critical examination of their texts has been carried out by Dr. Begemann, who devotes to them more than a third of the first volume of his recently published history ; but it is not possible, in a small book

like this, to do more than indicate the main characteristics of each family, and give a brief synopsis of a typical version.

The Legendary History occurs in all of them, but in three distinct forms. We have first of all the short legend of the second portion of the Cooke MS. that is peculiar to that document; we have secondly the very much expanded form of the legend that comes in the first part of the Cooke MS., and particularly that mentions St. Amphibalus. It also mentions Pythagoras as recovering the second Pillar, and has numerous similar details. [69] This all reappears in one other version, the William Watson of 1687, but with sufficient variation to indicate that that version was taken not from the Cooke MS. (which is itself only a transcript), but from a common original. Finally we have what may be described as the standard form of the legend, without Amphibalus, without Pythagoras, but with *Namus Graecus*.

Dr. Plot, in a history of Staffordshire published in 1686, gives an account of the Freemasons, and the Legendary History as he tells it is clearly based on a version of the Old Charges that corresponds very closely indeed with the William Watson MS. Accordingly the family that contains the legend with the additions mentioned above is known as the Plot Family, but as yet contains only four versions: the unknown version on which Dr. Plot based his account, the William Watson MS., the Heade MS., and the fragmentary Crane MS.

The second family is the "Grand Lodge," which exhibits the legend in its standard form, and contains at present ten subdivisions and

thirtynine versions.

Then comes the "Sloane Family"; one of the distinctions between it and the preceding group being a difference in the rate of wages St. Alban obtained for the craft. It includes fifteen versions arranged in four branches.

The distinctive peculiarity of the next, the "Roberts Family," is the addition of the apprentices' charge, which except for a few peculiarities of phrase might be equally well intended for an [70] Lodges apprentice in almost any craft. The family includes four versions, the Harleian MS. 1942 mentioned above being the earliest. This version also includes the so called New Articles, which are peculiar to it, and which are clearly intended for an accepted or speculative Mason.

The last family is the Spencer, of four versions, which is late, and contains additional historical matter; and there are also a few versions which do not come into any family. These numerous documents, notwithstanding their individual peculiarities, all follow the same general plan. They open with an invocation to the Trinity and then proceed more or less as follows:

"Good Brethren and Fellowes, our purpose is to tell you how this worthy craft of Masonry was begun." An account of the seven liberal sciences follows, and the Legendary History dealt with in the last chapter is then rehearsed.

Nimrod, or Nemorth, gives his Masons a charge, which is merely that they should be true to one another, and love one another; and

though he is said to also give them two charges as concerning their science, details are not vouchsafed.

Euclid is also introduced as giving a charge which is set out in some detail; and its general provisions are as follows. Masons are to be true to the king; to love one another; to call each other brother; to earn their wages; to put the wisest one in charge of the work, and to call him master; and "many other charges that are too [71] long to tell." Euclid also ordered an annual assembly to be held.

After the conclusion of the Legendary History, the actual charges that are to be binding on the brother are recited; they being stated as agreed on at divers assemblies by the Masters and Fellows. They consist of a varying number of general charges; and then a series of charges special to Masters and Fellows, and, as already stated, the Roberts family also gives a series of apprentice charges. At this point there is also an indication that before the actual charges are recited, the apprentice takes an oath; and Harleian MS. 1942 gives in full a form of oath to be administered apparently to a speculative Mason as well.

I shall refer again to these various charges after I have dealt with the Cooke MS. and the Regius Poem ; but it is apparent that while no doubt the moral teachings were observed and respected, the actual regulations under which the operatives worked in the sixteenth century, for instance, must have differed materially from those preserved in the Old Charges as an honoured tradition; and in a speculative Lodge these must have been especially meaningless. Yet we find that as late as 1766 the Bedford Lodge, London, seems to

have used its own copy of the Old Charges in its ceremonies, the MS. known as Harris No. 2, and it only then admitted the authority of Grand Lodge and conformed to the new ritual.

The Cooke MS., which may be dated early fifteenth century, is actually a transcript by a not [72] too accurate scribe of a compilation which may be half a century earlier. That compilation itself consists of, first, the Legendary History narrated in a verbose manner, with a lot of added detail peculiar to this manuscript and the William Watson version of 1687; and then the compiler has apparently copied a still older manuscript he had by him, which gives a very short legend and the two sets of charges; first nine "articles," stated to have been promulgated at a general assembly in Athelstan's time; and then nine "points" of Masonry. Versions of the Old Charges usually wind up at this point with an injunction to secrecy. In the Cooke MS. we have, however, a series of regulations about the assembly; instructions for the admission of "new men"; and a reference to the jurisdiction of the Sheriff; and in conclusion a statement that the assembly was founded so that the lowest as the highest should be well and truly served in his art throughout all the kingdom of England. And then comes the familiar phrase, which usually concludes the Old Charges: "Amen. So mote it be."

The Regius Poem is actually our oldest manuscript; although the original compilation from which the Cooke MS. was copied may be as old or older, and certainly contains older material. But in the Regius, we have a document of quite a different type. The writer

was apparently a cleric, and seems to have adapted the legend to suit his own purpose, leaving out the parts he did not care about; and he also has utilised a later set of [73] articles and points than those we find in the Cooke MS. He begins with the Lords and Ladies who could not find a profession for their children; and so had them taught geometry, as the most honest craft of all, by Euclid, a great clerk. Euclid's charges are then set out and without further detail we come to Athelstan, who called an assembly of the craft, and drew up fifteen articles, and fifteen points for their governance, which are given in full. The metre then changes, and the institution of the assembly is referred to; and we pass on to a feature which is one of the specialities of this MS., and that is the Legend of the Quatuor Coronati, which occupies thirty-seven lines; they are said to have kept the articles and points just recited.

They were, in fact, the patron saints of the building trades. Exactly when they were taken as such does not appear. As martyrs they were venerated from the earliest times, and had a church at Canterbury before St. Augustine's day. They may have had some connection with the Comacine Masters; they may, for instance, have been martyred at Milan, which is not so very far from Como; and have been adopted as patron saints by that skilful, if somewhat mysterious, Gild. Their names and the details of their legend are differently related in the various martyrologies. At all events, they were sculptors and perhaps architects, and a Craft Gild of the building trades would be hard put to it to find any more suitable saints as patrons. The carpenters have appropriated St. Joseph, and

St. Thomas seems to have [74] been chosen by architects rather than craftsmen, though his emblem is the carpenter's square. The Q.C, are given the saw, hammer, mallet, compasses, and square as their emblems; five emblems, because one account of their very confused legend makes them five in number; but in fact, their possession of these emblems is later in date than their appearance as patron saints; and of that the earliest record in Germany is 1459, while we read of the confraternity (Gild) of sculptors and masons at Rome being founded under their invocation in 1406. Now the date of the Regius Poem is circa 1400. Accordingly it probably contains the earliest reference hitherto discovered of the connection of these saints with our craft; though this does not imply that the connection must be itself of English origin.

The poem then reverts to the Legendary History and mentions the tower of Babylon, built by Nabogadonosor; and Euclid once more; and the seven sciences are then given. The writer then goes on to give advice for behaviour at church and elsewhere, which has no apparent connection with the craft, and most of which is a literal reproduction of two works of the fourteenth century, Instructions for a Parish Priest and Urbanitatis. This brings the manuscript to a close, the last lines being

"Amen! Amen! So mot hyt be
Say we so alle per charyte,"

so that here we again meet the familiar masonic [75] formula, as we did in the Old Charges. Whether the writer of this poem was a Mason or not we cannot say; but he certainly had access to masonic

documents of earlier date; and the compiler of the Cooke MS. does seem in fact to have been a Mason, as he speaks of "our" craft.

We can classify the various materials which went to make up these documents. We have—

- (a) The Euclid and Athelstan charges; and the Euclid legend.
- (b) Certain details introduced into the legend, which are peculiar to the longer legend of the Cooke MS., and one late version.
- (c) A great part of the legend which the Regius omits, but no other document.
- (d) The portions of the legend which do not appear until the Lansdowne and later copies of the Old Charges, specifically Namaus Graecus ; and from this classification we derive the following table.

UNKNOWN ORIGINAL

Containing a.

The Regius Poem; Unknown Version;
contains a and much contains a and c the
that is in fact foreign expanded legend.
to the craft (no descendant).

The Cooke MS. The general
(which also has the series of Old
second or shorter Charges; con

legend) and the Wil tains a, c, d,
liam Watson MS.
(contain a, b, c,)

[76] But as to the possible dates of the original of which the Cooke MS. is a copy, or of the version in its expanded form, we can hazard no conjecture, beyond that as pointed out in the previous chapter, Euclid can only have come into it under his proper name after A.D. 1130. Still less can we venture any estimate of the possible antiquity of the legend in its simplest form, beyond the fact that it must necessarily be later than Athelstan and Edwin. If we examine the charges, we find a similar process of expansion; but in this case the Cooke MS. gives us the shorter and therefore earlier form; and the Regius Poem gives additional articles, and points too. In the Old Charges, as we have seen, a completely new set of articles is introduced later on for apprentices; and the Harleian MS. 1942 also gives us a set of articles for speculative Masons. In the oldest of the four Scotch versions of the Old Charges we find additional rules given which differ materially from the English model, and which make a reference to a practice familiar to Scotch Lodges, but unknown in the English craft, of requiring a masterpiece before the apprentice could be promoted to be free mason ; or as the English craftsman would have said, "Fellow." The Scotch versions are in other respects manifest copies of English ones, as is shown by the fact that this particular version, which is a transcript of one of 1581 or earlier, reproduces the general charge commanding loyalty to the King of England; but in the difference in the character of the rules

we perhaps [77] have a hint that the Scotch Lodges, which we know were still operative much later than this date, were more concerned in keeping their craft rules up to date than the English Lodges, which were by the end of the sixteenth century perhaps wholly speculative in character. I do not propose to enter into a more detailed examination of the articles and points; and the question how far these old manuscripts afford evidence of the existence of degrees, signs, and ritual in operative days will be dealt with in later chapters.

It only remains to give some account of the Schaw Statutes, as the last of our old documents. They consist of an elaborate set of articles or rules, entirely divested however of any legendary history or disquisition on the seven sciences. They are essentially practical regulations, drawn up by the masters of the craft convened at Edinburgh, and their observance is enjoined on all the craft.

The first series are dated 1,598, and correspond in their general nature with the similar rules in the Craft Gilds; they relate to such matters as election of Lodge officers, restrictions as to taking apprentices, and similar purely operative affairs; and the first two articles inculcate obedience and honesty.

The next series are dated in the following year, and were obviously arranged specially for the old Lodge of Kilwinning; they speak of the Lodge of Edinburgh as the first and principal Lodge in Scotland, and describe Kilwinning as the second [78] and Stirling as the third, and in fact these would seem to have been what would nowadays be called Provincial Grand Lodges, with authority in their

respective districts. The jurisdiction of the Lodge is defined, and certain fees ordered, and the warden is empowered to test the qualifications of fellows, and to expel the unworthy; and he is also directed to appoint a secretary. Apart from their bearing on the question of the relative antiquity of Scotch Lodges, on which I have no intention of embarking, the chief interest these statutes have for us at present is in the hints they give of Scotch operative conditions, which will be dealt with in a later chapter.

CHAPTER VI

The Operative Masons

OF the sources of information as to mediaeval Masonry given in the first chapter, we have so far only dealt with our own documents and the Gild returns. A good deal of information is, however, to be gathered as to our craft in operative days from external sources, such as the Cathedral Fabric Rolls and Company records, and after 1599 in Scotland we have actual Lodge minutes; while in the seventeenth century we commence a series of references to the craft in the diaries and memoranda of antiquaries and in current literature, which bring us out, as it were, into the daylight of history. In this and the [79] next chapter I propose to collect all that we know of the craft before these last sources come to our aid.

The first use of the word Freemason as a title of a craftsman is a contract, in Latin, of date 1396, relating to the employment of twenty-four "Lathomos vocatos ffre Maceons"; this shows that the word was recognised as an English technical term without a Latin equivalent. Its use at that time was widespread, because we find it at Exeter in the very next year, and the Freemasons Company is mentioned as early as 1376 in a list of London Companies; but the designation is scored out and rewritten Masons. Still, whatever the

original meaning of the term, it had by that time already come to designate a superior craftsman, drawing higher pay, and the fact that the Company was spoken of as the Masons Company would seem to indicate that the suffix Free did not involve a distinction such as Freeman of the Gild in 1376.

From this date up till well on in the eighteenth century the word occurs repeatedly as the designation of an individual, on tombstones, in legal documents, in parish registers and elsewhere. The London Company seems to use both designations. Its grant of arms speaks of the "Hole crafte and felawship of Masons" in 1472. But in 1481 it is spoken of as the Fellowship of the Free Masons of the City of London. Later, but before 1655, the title is Company of Freemasons. But after that year, it is always known as the Company of Masons ; and in fact at this time the word as [80] the name of a trade was becoming obsolete. As used by individuals, it is apparently simply a trade designation, and does not seem to imply that the users called themselves so because they were members of the London Company; nor can we say that the individuals were members of a speculative fraternity—as well as craftsmen at all events in early days. Later we have in 1686 William Bray, who designates himself Freeman of London and Free mason; and he was not a member of the Company. But he was a speculative craftsman. Dr. Begemann sums up the matter thus:

"The name 'Mason' is the generic idea from which the designations Rough mason and Free mason were developed and adopted as special ideas, and Freemason indicated in fact the greater dexterity.

The Freemason also often appears as Master of the Work; but the 'Master mason' who is executing the work must have been very nearly his equal in skill, and in dignity. After the Reformation the Freemason declines with the decay of the building art. As long as the whole craft continued to be united, the Old Charges of the primitive fraternity knew only the 'Mason' and 'Masonry,' but as, through the progressive accession of persons of other professions, the peculiar Gild character of the fraternity passed away, the real Masons became more and more estranged, and the speculative Masons (to use the expression of the English authors) now took to themselves the distinguishing Gild name of Freemasons; that they then also introduced in [81] various places in the Old Charges. But the simple designations Mason and Masonry did not disappear, but in the new Grand Lodges were also adopted, as of old time, and of equal authority; so that between Mason and Freemason on the one hand, and Masonry and Freemasonry on the other, there is no longer any practical difference to be indicated; on the contrary the words have become identical." (In our craft, that is to say.)

In Scotland, the word first appears in the Melrose version of the Old Charges, which is a copy of a document of 1581, but its Scotch meaning seems to have been always Freeman mason, i.e. a person of the mason's trade, free of his Gild or company. In the sense of a member of our craft, the Scotch spoke of Masons before 1725, invariably, and seem only then to have adopted our speculative term. I indicated in the first chapter the difficulties as to the original interpretation of Free. The Scotch use may perhaps perpetuate a

meaning current in the craft in both kingdoms at an earlier day.

The word Lodge is Norman and Gothic philologically, and meant originally a thatched shed or lean-to. It was used specifically for the masons' workshop at any great building, and occurs as early as 1292. It is spoken of as thatched in 1321, and the phrase "properly tiled" occurs, but strictly in the building sense, in 1450. A frequent incident of a building contract is the provision of the masons' lodge. In the Regius [82] Poem we have the apprentice warned to tell no one what was done in the Lodge, but we must be chary of drawing from this circumstance a deduction that the Lodge was close tyled in 1400; because, in fact, a similar injunction of secrecy is a commonplace of Craft Guild ordinances of the period. The Scotch also had the word, and its first use among them is to be found in the burgh records of Aberdeen in 1491. The Schaw Statutes, a century later, used the word in the modern sense for the body of brethren, not the building.

The question of the extent to which ritual or degrees existed in early days will be discussed in a later chapter; at all events with regard to Scotch Masonry, the authorities are agreed that except in two Lodges, which had a second ceremony apparently after 1700, there was no second or third degree before 1717, after which date they were introduced from England. The Scotch Mason was given the Mason word (what it was we do not know), and Lyon says that this is the only secret ever alluded to in early Lodge minutes, and seems to have been imparted by individual brethren in a ceremony extemporised" and clearly of the simplest possible character. At the

same time, the phrase "secrets of the Mason word" is used, and from certain expressions in minutes it appears that besides the word, there was also in early Scotch Masonry a grip. But this was all there was to learn, and it was imparted to apprentices under oath. In fact, as the history of the two countries would lead us to expect, [83] when Scotch Masonry and English come in contact in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Scotch is still in the stage that the English had reached perhaps in Edward III's day; it is an operative craft, devoting itself to craft matters, and possessing its simple ceremonies and secrets only incidentally as it were. The English is a speculative body, that has all but severed its connection with the operatives ; and is concerned exclusively with morality, symbolism, and ceremonial. But in both countries we find the speculative Mason in the earliest documents. Although the Schaw Statutes have no reference to the practice, non-operative Masons come into the very earliest Scotch minutes ; and the Cooke MS. uses the very word "speculaty" with regard to King Athelstan's son, who loved the science of masonry well (I am modernising the text) and knew as well as the masons themselves did that masonry was the practical application of the science of geometry; so he consulted with them, and joined the practical knowledge of the science to his theoretical (Speculatyf). For of the theory (Speculatyfe) he was a master, and loved well masonry and masons. And he became a mason himself. And gave them charges and [rules of conduct] as are now used in England. In later versions of the Old Charges, this "son" of Athelstan's is named Edwin, but the word speculative does not occur again. In fact Edwin was Athelstan's half-brother; and

Athelstan had no son. The circumstance that the framers of our ritual [84] in Grand Lodge days chose this old word speculative, which was obsolete in the sense in which it is used in the Cooke MS. and by the craft today, rather than the contemporary Scotch word "geomatic" or any other was considered by the late Brother Speth as evidence of its having survived to modern days as an oral tradition of the craft.

However that may be, it is clear that the practice of admitting to the fraternity non-operatives of such position or attainments as would justify it was in existence when the original of the Cooke MS. was compiled, i.e. in 1400 or earlier; whether or not we accept Edwin's membership of the craft in the tenth century as a historical fact. And the existence of a similar institution in Scotch Masonry presumably takes the practice still further back to the days before the close intercourse between the two countries was broken off. There is, however, a considerable distinction between Scotch and English Masonry in this respect. The Scotch non-operative brethren were admitted to what was still a practical operative Lodge, because apparently of their local importance and social position. There is no ground for attributing to the actual Scotch non-operatives of whom we have record any special knowledge of geometry, as a general rule. We have no knowledge of any English speculatives before 1646; and we then find Elias Ashmole and his contemporaries are antiquarians and mystics, who join a Lodge, itself speculative, from motives of their [85] own, and not with any idea of advancing the art of building with which the Lodges have no longer anything to

do.

Such speculative Masons as there were in earlier times we may suppose to have been ecclesiastics, either as being themselves architects or designers, or as being students of geometry ; and very possibly the patron or employer would be brought in; but in practice we know of no such instances. Professor Hayter Lewis considers that the first conception of Gothic architecture must have been the inspiration of a master mind, rather than a mere development arising from constructional necessities. But no such master architect is known to history. The persons whose names are preserved as the builders of the early cathedrals, such as William of Sens, were apparently contractors and master masons, and designers as well. The architect of the tower and spire of Salisbury is similarly a contractor actually working at the spot. Such a man would be obviously an operative mason, though no doubt far in advance in intelligence and education of most of the fellows of his Lodge. When we come to Gundulf, William of Wykeham, and Alan de Walsingham, and many others of the same period, we do seem to be in the presence of ecclesiastical architects, who are not operative masons, but designers; and in fact theoretical or speculative masons. It is difficult to suppose that men of this class would not be made free of the craft's mysteries; and, that being so, we can understand [86] how they would exercise a powerful influence on its ceremonial.

We also have a third class of speculative in operative days that is indicated in the Schaw Statutes; and that is a clerk to write

indentures and so on. But if any such existed in the English Lodges, their work is lost to us; unless we are indebted to them for our versions of the Old Charges. The Regius Poem, at all events, seems to show traces of being the work of a cleric, and it has been stated that all our Old Charges were the property of Cathedral Masons.

In the London Companies we actually find a similar practice of admitting non-operatives in King Edward III's reign. It was at this time that the Craft Gilds succeeded in getting the government of the city into their hands; and they also adopted special liveries – the companies of today still have the word – and the King himself was enrolled as a liveryman of the Linen Armourers. This example was followed by the nobles, but whether we received any accessions in this way is not known. The original, from which the Cooke MS. was copied, must have been compiled about the time of these events, or very soon after them.

The first non-operative Mason of whom we have historical record is Mr. John Boswell of Auchinleck, who signs the minutes of a meeting of the Lodge of Edinburgh held on June 8th, 1600. The first to be made on English soil was also a Scotch Mason, the Right Honourable Mr. Robert Moray, who [87] was admitted at Newcastle on May 20th, 1641, by members of this same Lodge of Edinburgh present there with the Scotch Army. The proceedings were accepted as quite in order by headquarters. The first recorded English speculative is Elias Ashmole in 1646, of whom more anon.

The terms Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason are Scotch; and were first used in English Masonry in 1723. But in

Scotland they were in use much earlier, and actually occur in the Schaw Statutes, where we read (I have modernised the spelling):

"That no master or fellow of craft be received nor admitted without the number of six masters and two entered apprentices, the warden of that Lodge being one of the said six."

And before admission, he was to have his skill and workmanship tested.

Incidentally, this extract shows that the apprentice was present at the admission of the master; and the words master and fellow of craft both imply the same as far as standing in the craft goes, that is to say, a mason who has served his apprenticeship and been admitted to full membership of the craft. The corresponding English terms are Master and Fellow.

The word accepted is found in the version of the Old Charges known as Harleian MS, 1942, in the British Museum, which is of the early seventeenth century. It occurs in what are known as the "New Articles," which are found nowhere [88] else. They relate to the admission to Masonry and give an oath of secrecy, to be administered to every person, which differs from the other oaths we have in being more elaborate; and they also prescribe a certificate of adoption to be given by the Lodge without which no person may be admitted to another Lodge.

Ashmole in 1686 speaks of new admissions as the new accepted Masons; Aubrey writes Free and corrects it to accepted in his memorandum about the craft in 1691; and certainly by that time

the speculative Lodges called themselves "Accepted" and used the word as opposed to "Operative," so that it is fairly certain that these new articles were intended to refer to speculative Masons specifically. Randle Holme's oath which we have, and which is later in date, is shorter, however. There was no "uniformity of ritual" in those times. It is probably correct to say that when at some date prior to 1600 the accepted Masons became separated from the operative, the accepted kept up the custom of reading the Old Charges, which, though essentially compiled as operative masons' documents, eventually became the peculiar property of the accepted or speculative Masons.

With regard to the Officers of the Lodge, we find in early days no hint at all of our three principal and three junior officers, or even of the Tyler, and I may observe that a mediaeval Mason who ventured to wear a sword would have been very soon the subject of attention from the justices; [89] indeed, one of the early regulations prohibited the coming armed to the Assembly. Nowadays we have a Master Mason, as a degree, and the Master in the chair, whose installation is also a degree. But the Master of the craft in old days was simply a Mason like the rest; and in fact, as often as not, the presiding officer in the English Lodges is called a Warden. The officers of the old Scotch Lodges were the Warden and Deacons; and Deacon is an officer of the English Gilds. The Schaw Statutes enjoin that Warden, who is to be chosen annually, should have the charge over every Lodge. But in 1599, we find the Deacon is the President and the Warden the Treasurer of the Lodge of Edinburgh.

The Cooke MS. speaks of "Warden under a Master." It is also to be observed that we do not in early days find two Wardens. In fact, the Lodge had the officers it needed, not for the working of a ceremonial, but for the transactions of a society's ordinary business, and they would include necessarily a President, who was variously designated, and a Box Master, or Treasurer. The existence of a special officer to hold the Lodge against cowans and intruders is nowhere definitely referred to in the old records.

To call Masons from refreshment to labour, by a knock given by a Master on the door of the Lodge, is quoted as an old custom of the trade in 1355.

CHAPTER VII

The Operative Masons (continued)

Among the sources of information as to the early days of the craft I mentioned the Statutes; but they are in actual practice of no great assistance to us. They have been in the past much misinterpreted by masonic writers and others, and given in consequence an importance that they really have not, except for the student. Our connection with them is as craftsmen, i.e. working masons, and members of a Gild. The two earliest are the Ordinance of Labourers, 1349, and the Statute of Labourers, 1350, and they fixed a maximum rate of wages for workmen of all kinds including masons. (An ordinance is a Statute that has not been formally approved by all the three estates.) The Statute, which is in French, mentions a Master Mason of freestone, and he gets higher pay than a mere mason.

Ten years later the Statute was re-enacted with enhanced penalties and a provision was inserted that all alliances and covines of masons and carpenters, and congregations, chapters, ordinances, and oaths betwixt them made, be annulled. At first sight, this would seem to be aimed at our craft's obligations and meetings; and still more is this the case when we come, after many intermediate statutes of similar tenor, to 3 Henry VI C. I, which has suffered greatly at the hands of

[90] [91] the commentators from Dr. Plot onwards. This Statute lays down that whereas by the yearly congregations of masons the law is subverted, they shall not be hereafter holden. (I have abridged it.) This in effect repeats and strengthens the earlier law as to alliances and covines and congregations. But by mistranslating the Norman French of the Statute, and introducing the word assemblies, which has of course a technical meaning in the craft, it has been made to read as though directed against and putting an end to operative Freemasonry, which is supposed to have henceforth become secret and speculative. Dr. Anderson manages to deduce the exact contrary, as he asserts that Henry VI subsequently became a Mason and greatly encouraged the craft, the Act becoming a dead letter. He also suggests that Free Masons had no concern with a Statute for Labourers.

The fact is that the Freemasons were perfectly liable to the Statute, inasmuch as they were craftsmen and operatives, but that what it did away with, or rather proposed to do away with, was not Lodge meetings or general assemblies for the proper purposes of the craft, but seditious assemblings, comparable to the incidents of a modern strike, held with the object of forcing the hands of the authorities or the masters.

The enactment of a previous reign calling on all Religious and Craft Gilds to make a return of their property and ordinances has been dealt with in an earlier chapter; and with regard to labourers [92] and craftsmen the last Statute that need be referred to is 5 Elizabeth 4, in which the whole law of Labourers was codified; and it is

remarkable that in this enactment the word Freemason does not occur. It is not very easy to explain this unless we suppose that the term was already obsolete as a designation of a trade, which is not in harmony with the recorded uses of the word not merely by individuals but by the London Company in the next century. Perhaps the explanation is that the word had come to bear other senses besides the purely operative one, and was therefore purposely omitted from a Statute which was only concerned with the trade.

The position of the craft had been profoundly modified, however, in the previous reigns by the Reformation; and two enactments arising out of that great change must be referred to, Under Henry VIII the Abbeys and Monasteries were dissolved and by I Edward VI 14, the last remains of superstitious establishments were destroyed, and all fraternities, brotherhoods, and Gilds, except those for mysteries and crafts, were given to the King.

By this law an end was put to all the Religious and Social Gilds in the kingdom, and the same thing took place in all Protestant countries. But in England the Craft Gilds too suffered. On the Continent, the property of the Religious Gilds was scrupulously devoted to the maintenance of schools and poor-houses and similar good works. Henry [93] VIII, and his courtiers preferred to retain the property of the English Gilds in their own hands, and under the statute of Edward VI the whole property of the Craft Gilds was confiscated in favour of the King's privy purse on the plea that it was charged with yearly payments for superstitious purposes. The City Companies redeemed their property by a payment of

£18,700. But the practice of bleeding the Craft Gilds continued, and in addition their own condition and the developments of trade were bringing about their inevitable downfall. Capitalists arose outside the companies, and new industrial centres like Birmingham and Manchester grew up away from the ancient cities and ancient restrictions. The Gilds died out and today nothing is left of them but the Livery Companies.

In an earlier chapter I have given some of the first mentions of Craft Gilds of Masons in England. Exactly what connection these bodies had with the cathedral builders we do not know ; nor whether the Freemasons formed at each cathedral independent bodies; nor whether they acknowledged any sort of subordination to the London Company. Lodges are spoken of in connection with buildings, but not in connection with the Gilds, of which we in fact know very little indeed. "It is clear," writes Meredith in his *Economic History of England*, " that the mason's craft (bricks came into use at a later date) must have been among the earliest specialised employments, and it is almost inconceivable that it remained [94] without organisation. But probably in consequence of the migratory character of the craft, it does not seem to have ever occupied an important place in the life of any one town." What indications there are constantly show that the masons were a relatively unimportant section of the community in early days.

For instance at Norwich, that town of churches, the masons appear to have had no Gild of their own in 1375, but to have been attached to the carpenters. In the Exeter plays the masons share a

play with the Goldsmiths ; and at York they are joined with the Hatmakers. In 1604 we find a corporation at Oxford given a charter which includes Freemasons, Carpenters, joiners, and Slaters. A charter of 1586 is known at Durham, and another of 1671 at Gateshead, which include a variety of trades; but in this case the Freemasons are given pride of place. This may, however, be due to the circumstance that Robert Trollop, a member of the craft who is named in the charter, was also an architect and apparently a prominent citizen.

The coat of arms (vide frontispiece) that is given to the Company in 1472 is described as granted to the "Hole Crafte and Felawship" of Masons. The arms appear on the tomb of a London Freemason in 1594 ; and another late instance of their use in this way is recorded, in Yorkshire in 1689. But by this date we know that the Freemasons of London had formed a separate Worshipful Society although they retained the [95] arms; as did the Company, which had abandoned the title Freemasons by 1655. The grant of arms to the "Hole Crafte" was apparently taken as authority for their adoption by Companies in other cities, such as Edinburgh, which sometimes appear to have varied the tinctures, no doubt to make a distinction from the London Company. In the original grant the chevron is engrailed, i.e. has scalloped edges; but in the course of time a straight edge was substituted and both the Company and the Freemasons used this form. Originally the arms had no supporters. Randle Holme in 1688 gives as supporters two Corinthian pillars, but figures two nondescript columns surmounted by globes. This

can hardly, however, have any reference to our ritual because when Grand Lodge adopted the arms after 1717, it took as supporters two beavers. At the Union in 1813, the old Company arms were impaled with the Atholl arms to form our present escutcheon, and the Atholl supporters were adopted ; and Randle Holme's pillars are quite as likely to be derived from the well-known design of the Spanish pieces of eight which was common in ornamental work of the period.

On the actual process of severance between the craft and the Company our records shed no light either in London or the provinces. We find in 1620 that a Lodge of accepted Masons was held in London apparently under the auspices of the Company, and seven persons who were already free of the Company, three being of the Livery, [96] were made Masons, or as the term was, accepted Masons, on payment of a special fee. But as we have seen in 1655, the Company has dropped the designation Freemason, and certainly in 1686 the two bodies were distinct. Moreover, the Company had by then fallen on evil days. Originally no person not a freeman of the Company could follow the trade in London. But the rebuilding necessitated after the Fire was fatal to monopolies; and the Company's privilege was invaded, and foreigners, and artificers who did not belong to it, were imported to work on the Cathedral, and in the City.

As regards the general severance of the operative from the speculative craft we must remember the enormous effect the Reformation had on us. The enactments as to Monasteries and

Gilds have already been alluded to; but by the dissolution of the Monasteries our craft lost its best employer. Even before this we can suppose that as the science of mason's work increased more and more, the really advanced craftsmen would separate more or less unconsciously at first from the rest of the craft, but would retain the appearance and ritual of the Craft Gild. Indeed, if they had not they could not have survived Edward VI's Statute. The old title of the superior workman would gradually become the exclusive term for the speculative Mason, who alone would treasure the Old Charges the operative had no practical use for. After the Reformation the operative craft would necessarily die out; and the operative secrets, as [97] distinct from any problems of pure geometry, would be lost, as they undoubtedly were; but the speculatives might persist, and keep up the old ceremonies; adding perhaps some simple morality, some new symbolism, something of all the mass of strange lore Europe was teeming with in the seventeenth century. At all events we know the speculative Lodges did survive, for Dr. Plot in 1686 describes them as spread over England. But in our present state of knowledge all that can be put forward is conjecture; and in the ideas outlined above there is, I think, nothing repugnant to what few facts we have to go on.

The only feature of mediaeval Masonry that I have still to mention is the Assembly, on which our oldest documents lay much stress; but we actually have no record of any specific assemblies except a statement in three versions that one was held at Windsor when Edwin was made a Mason; and the statement, common to most of

them, that an assembly was held at York, when the charges of the craft were first promulgated. The account given in the Regius Poem is that Athelstan, as he found many shortcomings in the craft, sent for all the Masons to consult how to amend them ; he had an assembly of lords, dukes, earls, and barons, and many more, and the great burgesses of "that city"; and they agreed on the articles and points that are then detailed. They also ordered that an assembly should be held every year or so, wherever convenient, of the "men of craft," and other great lords as might appear fitting, to amend [98] their shortcomings; and that at these assemblies the craftsmen should swear to keep the articles given by Athelstan, and should ask subsequent monarchs to confirm them.

The second article directs every Master to attend the general congregation, provided he has reasonable notice of it, unless he be sick, or has any other valid excuse ; and the points include a direction that a Mason who slanders another is to be presented before the assembly; and also speaks of the great lords, sheriff, and mayor as being there where the assembly is holden, and says that they shall uphold the decisions the assembly comes to against any offender, and if he resists shall imprison him. The fifteenth point lays down that these ordinances and articles have been approved by the great lords and Masters, and Masons, and that if any individual who has sworn to obey them shall be proved in open assembly to have been disobedient to them, and will not make amends, he must forsake the craft; and that if he does not do so, the sheriff shall imprison him during the King's pleasure, and seize his goods and

chattels.

The Cooke MS. says that "the King's son" ordered that the Masons should assemble whenever they thought it needful, and discuss their affairs ; and the articles and points are said to be given by him, though not specifically at an assembly. Later on it describes how Athelstan with the consent of the great men of the land, and because of the great defects of the craft, gave them a rule; and directed that congregations should be held [99] whenever it should appear necessary to the King and great lords, and all Master Masons and fellows summoned to them. They were then to be tested in their knowledge of the craft and the articles.

The direction as to the Master having to attend unless he be sick occurs in the articles. The sheriff or mayor is to be invoked if necessary to assist the Master against rebels and to maintain the law of the land. The first business of the assembly is to admit new men who have not hitherto been sworn; and the MS. gives the heads of the oath to be administered to them. The assembly is then to inquire into all infractions of the articles, and questions of discipline; and intractable offenders are to forsake the craft, and if they do not, then the sheriff can imprison them and seize their goods.

In later versions of the Old Charges Edwin's assembly is stated to have been held at York, as already mentioned; and the phrase "that city" in the Regius Poem would seem to indicate that the manuscript the compiler was following had previously mentioned some city of Athelstan's; and a story of that monarch giving the clerics at York a grant or charter, though not a rule, has been

already referred to. In fact, however, one would expect Athelstan's city to be Winchester or some Midland town rather than York. That every Master and Fellow shall come to the assembly if it is held within a certain distance, is a direction always found in the special charges for them.

The assembly was a Saxon institution, and [100] every town, hundred, and shire held their own; the assembly of the whole nation being the Titan-a-gemote. In his own town or hundred every freeman had a voice in his assembly; but naturally the personal right soon gave way to some sort of representation. The court of the shire was held twice a year, and that of the hundred monthly; but the first clear mention of the hundred assembly is not till the reign of Edgar; and in the Danish counties, e.g. York, Lincoln, Notts, etc., it was replaced by the corresponding Danish institution, the Wapentake. Accordingly Athelstan's charter would appear to have been promulgated at a Witan-a-gemote; and the other assemblies of our Old Charges would seem to have been in fact craft meetings, held for convenience at the town where the magistrates were holding their shire courts, so that the sheriff was available if his services were needed. One of that officer's duties was to inquire whether all artificers made good ware; and he would naturally, in pursuance of such a duty, summon and examine Masters. So that the assembly the Cooke MS. speaks of convened, not by the craft, but by the King's officers, at which Masters were to be tested, would appear to be the sheriff's leet. But the assembly that admitted new men on oath and dealt with questions of craft discipline was

clearly a craft meeting.

The sheriff's power to imprison and seize the goods of recalcitrants must necessarily have depended on some statute, and not on mere craft rules and ordinances. The Regius Poem says that [101] the mason who has been made to give up the craft shall then be punished in accordance with the law that was enacted in days of old. In fact there does not appear to be any law to the purpose. But Athelstan may have empowered his officers to support the assembly's authority, in some ordinance no longer preserved. The mayor of the city we would expect to find at an important meeting of a Craft Guild; and the "great lords" were perhaps the employers of the craft for the time being. One fact that has been adduced as showing that the assemblies were strictly craft meetings is that apprentices were not called on to attend. Now, at the leet, every freeman over twelve years of age had to be present; and the apprentice was a freeman in this sense, i.e. no bondman or villein. But in fact we find by 52 Henry III 24 that the attendance of every freeman was not insisted on at sheriffs' and coroners' leets, except in cases of inquiry into murders; and by this time the assemblies as a national institution were decaying, and this same monarch excused all the nobility and clergy from attendance. We cannot say when they fell into disuse as a craft institution. Annual or more frequent meetings were a regular feature of the Guilds, but our assemblies seem to have been intended for the craftsmen of a whole shire or district. But the distance within which, if a mason happens to be, his attendance is compulsory, varies so much in the different

versions of the Old Charges, that it can hardly refer to any actual contemporary institution. At [102] all events, when we first meet with speculative Lodges in the seventeenth century, there is no trace of any co-ordination between them.

CHAPTER VIII

Allied Craft Associations

"HUMAN nature," says L. O. Pike, "whether civilised or barbarous, Greek, Roman, or Teutonic, has everywhere some kind of social instinct." We see in distinct civilisations and at different periods similar institutions arise; and we are strongly tempted to work out theories of descent to bring together what are quite likely after all to be independent and indigenous growths. As a case in point, we have the Collegian, and the English, French, and German Gilds; we have a special but late organisation of the German building trade, the Steinmetzen; and we have a remarkable association of journeymen of almost all trades in France, the Compagnonnage. All these institutions offer analogies with our own, and both Collegia and Steinmetzen have been claimed as our progenitors. I have already dealt with the former, and have indicated our position as an English Craft Gild of a peculiar form possessing distinctive features. It remains now to describe the other associations that our own craft and others formed in the Teutonic countries of the middle ages.

Scotland never seems to have fully adopted the [103] Gild system, and the only analogy we find there is in the Incorporations of Wrights and Masons. That of Edinburgh was constituted in 1475; and later on it received other trades as well. It met at Mary's Chapel

on the South Bridge and the Lodge met there too ; and the name is still preserved in Scottish Masonry. The craftsmen belonged to both bodies, but the Incorporation was independent of, and often actually at variance with the Lodge. The Incorporation of Aberdeen got their charter in 1541; and at Glasgow we find the Wrights and Masons separating in 1600. The Lodge at Aberdeen dates itself from the Incorporation charter; and in fact the Scotch Lodges are all town Lodges or statant, whether or no they may owe their original inception to the building of a cathedral. The very fact that we have no trace of the existence of any of our English operative Lodges leaves one to suppose that they were not bodies with any permanent abode. But the Scotch Lodges were much more like the ordinary Craft Guild than ours were, and never contained any true speculative features; and their relations with the Incorporations and quarrels over journeymen and the admission of apprentices, for instance, are purely matters of operative interest.

The German Steinmetzen provide an illustration of a Craft Guild having many similarities with our institution, due to its being a Guild, and also some usages analogous to our secrets; they had, however, an absolutely independent origin and [104] existence, and such legends as they possessed are distinct from ours. When modern Freemasonry was introduced into Germany in the eighteenth century, at a time when Steinmetzen still existed, no one recognised the two societies as having any connection. Certain German writers of last century asserted that our Freemasonry is derived from the Steinmetzen, but the theory is definitely disproved and need not be

further considered.

The actual origin of the Steinmetzen has been much disputed and is outside the scope of our present inquiry. Germany was Christianised from Britain at a time when few, if any, vestiges of the Roman occupation remained in its forests. Craft Gilds arose in Germany in the wake of Town Gilds exactly as they had done in England. As the workmen found themselves unable to gain admission to the Town Gilds, they organised among themselves at an early date, and we find a regular Fraternity of Builders with a charter in the thirteenth century. These Craft Gilds generally included more than one trade, but the masons adopted a further organisation, and became coordinated throughout Germany as one society. Among the other English Craft Gilds we find no such system; an organisation of our own craft as a whole is indicated on general grounds, and by the language of the Old Charges, as also by the fact that they are all obviously versions of some common original; but evidence beyond this we do not possess. In Germany we find the Steinmetzen system to have come into existence [105] in 1459; a much later date than is possible for anything similar to have taken place in the English craft. At the same time it was not the only trade to do so; several other German Gilds possessed an extra or super-Gild uniting them. But in one point the Steinmetzen differed essentially from us. Their superiors were appointed, not by themselves, but by their employers.

The trade throughout the German-speaking countries was divided into four districts ruled by "Chief Lodges" at Strasbourg, Cologne,

Vienna, and Berne.

The laws of the craft were similar to our own craft ordinances. They are more elaborate, however, and provide for sick pay, and for a system all but unknown in England, that of the Journeyman Fellow. This individual was warned to pay all dues before he left his mother Lodge; and he used to travel from Lodge to Lodge, the Masters at each being bound to find him work. Copies or adaptations of these laws for Lodge use have also come down to us; and one such gives a hint of a legend when it says: "All these articles have been drawn up from the letter of the ancient Lodge rights, and were instituted by the holy worthy crowned martyrs."

The Steinmetzen had the same division that we have in common with every other craft; apprentice, fellow, and master. The apprentice at the conclusion of his time was declared free of the craft; and his entry to the fraternity was effected with some sort of simple ceremony. He took an [106] oath to keep his mark and not disclose the grip or greeting or write any part thereof. They were then imparted and the business concluded with a banquet. Apparently the ordinances were also read to the apprentice like our Old Charges.

We are naturally not aware of the nature of the grip and there is no trace of any sign. The greeting is given at length in the ordinances themselves, which were, however, kept strictly secret. The newly made Steinmetz then proceeded on his travels as a fellow and elaborate rules were made as to his treatment by the Lodges. And beyond what is indicated above, we have no knowledge of any

ceremony of initiation. At the same time we have information as to ceremonial of a sort in other Gilds on similar occasions, such as the locksmiths, joiners and others. They seem to have been all on the same model. There was the formal oath, and imparting of the greeting, and grip if there was one. This was the serious part of the business. Then there was a symbolical handling of the apprentice; to turn him from rough wood to smooth wood, for a joiner; or to open his mouth with a key, for a locksmith. He then had to listen to a lecture, half humorous, which contained rules for conduct and lessons in morality ; but in no instance does it seem to have included any legendary history.

Something of all this probably took place among the Steinmetzen, but we have actually no record of it. Our ritual today may preserve survivals of similar ceremonies in our own operative days.

[107] As for their operative secrets, the Steinmetzen's special handicraft was the elaborate carving of stone. Ferguson describes their manipulation of stone as marvellous. Their art was the preparation of the designs and plans for this work, in fact geometrical and architectural drawing, and they were forbidden to communicate this except to apprentices; but they were to be instructed gratuitously.

The Steinmetzen had no speculative brethren and no speculative science can be traced among them. As for a legend, they had nothing at all comparable to our elaborate history. They dated their ordinances to the Quatuor Coronati; and a dialogue is preserved which says that the craft of masons was instituted in Germany at the

cathedral of Magdeburg in 876; and that at all events is an anachronism. We also hear of extensive privileges being obtained from the Popes, but no such documents can be traced; while as for the Quatuor Coronati of whom I have already spoken, they were adopted as the patrons of the craft in Italy, as well as in Germany and England. They had a church at Canterbury in the seventh century. The antiquity of Masonry has no connection with the antiquity of their legend; and the common possession of that legend is no evidence of a community of origin, still less of descent as between English Freemasons and German Steinmetzen.

The Steinmetzen gradually disappeared in the seventeenth and following centuries. Strasbourg [108] became French in 1681; and fraternities were finally forbidden by law in 1731. But they no doubt persisted in a clandestine form as separate Lodges, and are perhaps not even yet extinct. But with their history in modern times our craft has no concern beyond the fact which I have already stated, that they were not identified as Freemasonry on its introduction into Germany in 1733.

In France we find two distinct sets of institutions whose similarity to ourselves requires analysis.

France has never been truly homogeneous; the Provencal is Greek and Phoenician in tradition as well as ethnologically, while the Northern Frenchman is Gothic on the eastern side and Celtic on the western. The civilisation of the south was Greek before it was Roman, and was hardly affected by Frankish incursions. Even in the north the barbarians were unable to destroy the language of Latin

parentage that they found in use, and it became the French of today; and they seem indeed to have left the cities to their own devices. Accordingly the cities soon set up independent municipal constitutions on Roman lines. In fact, if there are any traces of Roman institutions at all in North-west Europe in the middle ages, they will be found, not in England, and not in Germany, but among the French cities. And in these cities, especially in the south, we soon find divisions into Craft Gilds; and by the fourteenth century the cities are everywhere in possession of the privileges of self-government [109] and self-taxation, subservient, however, to royal authority; and the Craft Gilds are given charters on agreeing to pay certain fees to the king.

The details vary in different localities; the process of growth has been different ; but the Gilds eventually are similar throughout the country, and agree in differing in some respects from the similar institutions in Germany. But we find the same system of apprentice, journeyman, and master; and rules to regulate the admission of apprentices, rules calculated to favour existing masters and their relatives. And we find all sorts of difficulties put in the way of the journeyman who wished to become a master. And, what is of interest to us, the making of a master seems to have been accompanied by a curious ceremonial, different in each trade, but generally of a simple and somewhat rough and humorous type. The peculiar feature of these Gilds, however, was their confreries. These are a close parallel to our own Religious Gilds described in a previous chapter, and also remind us of Roman institutions. The

Gild belonged as a body to a religious fraternity and maintained an altar in some church. They met periodically for worship, and also for banquets. They also provided for poor, sick, or aged members. Their membership was restricted to the masters of the Gild. We find no institution at all comparable to our Lodge, however. We find a singular connection with our legend in the circumstance that the stonemasons are exempt from watch duty in Paris in the thirteenth century; and [110] that they attribute their exemption to a privilege conferred by Charles Martel. Thus both in England and France at an early date the connection of this monarch with the craft is asserted; the reference to him in the Cooke MS. (as Charles the second) has already been mentioned. But apart from this none of the Gilds have any legendary history; and they indeed resemble in this respect our English Gilds, with the single exception of our own craft. It is not difficult to account for this point in common. The intercourse between England and France in Norman and post-Norman times was close and continuous; and we may very well suppose that the masons in both countries would know of a tradition claiming Charles Martel as a protector of the craft. And while at Paris, where his law still ran, the masons would find exemptions from a troublesome duty on it, in England the most that could be made of the tradition would be to weave it into the legendary history.

That either the legendary story or the alleged grant of privileges has any foundation in fact, we of course cannot say.

Many legal enactments were published forbidding and abolishing

fraternities and Gilds. Francis I. sought to suppress the former and regulate the latter in 1539. But it was not till the Revolution that they finally disappeared. Their interest for us, apart from the reference to Charles Martel, is purely that of their offering an instance of the close similarity of an independent [111] institution formed in a kindred civilisation under like conditions to our own; and of illustrating thereby the remarks in the opening paragraph of this chapter.

The second form of craft association in France, the Compagnonnage, is much more closely allied to us and actually possesses a Hiramic Legend. In this chapter, however, I shall only describe its chief characteristics, and the discussion of the legend will come in more appropriately at a later stage.

The Compagnonnage includes the associations formed by journeymen all over France of practically all the trades. It is essentially a journeyman's organisation. Its primary concern is with the travelling companion. It practised a proper initiation, not a burlesque in the German fashion, and kept its legends and signs secret, although its existence was well known. In fact its existence was frequently demonstrated by the serious fights, involving loss of life, that were waged between different sections who were mutually hostile purely on the strength of their legendary history. Nowadays these feuds are extinct, and the railway has done much to change the condition of the journeyman workman; but the institution exists if it does not flourish. The earliest existence as a Gild is conceded by the craftsmen to the stonemasons, and they call

themselves Sons of Solomon and have added to them the joiners and locksmiths. Another branch of stonemasons call themselves Sons of Maitre Jacques, and they also have [112] with them joiners and locksmiths and also practically all the other crafts, this division being thus the strongest of the three. The third division are the Sons of Maitre Soubise, who consist of the carpenters, plasterers, and tilers ; and only a few crafts do not belong to the Compagnonnage at all. Among these, however, we find the masons, as a trade distinct from the stonemasons. Each craft that does, has its charge, supposed to have been conferred by the traditionary chiefs originally.

Twenty French towns, mostly in the south, had a charge deposited, as the phrase was, and there the craftsman had special provision made for him and a house of call. In other towns he had claims on the members. The phrase may very well indicate actual documents similar to our own copies of our Old Charges.

The legend is not completely known, but as far as it is may be thus summarised.

Maitre Jacques was one of Solomon's masters and a colleague of Hiram; and he travelled and learnt sculpture and architecture. He was himself a stonecutter, his father's name being Jacquin. He worked at the Temple and then returned to Gaul with Maitre Soubise. But they quarrelled, and eventually he was killed traitorously by five villains of Maitre Soubise's party. His disciples received his parting words, and he was buried with special ceremonies and his clothing was divided among the trades. But while with the Compagnonnage their legend is also the [113] basis

of their ritual, with us our ritual and our legend do not harmonise.

The Sons of Jacques and of Soubise are at variance, but both practise an absolute hatred of the Sons of Solomon, and individuals fight at sight, or used to, rather. The initiations included as a ceremony the representation of the death of one of the traditional chiefs; and we find three degrees of *compagnon* in one society, while two are general. In each craft, in addition to these ceremonies, we have accounts of symbolical acts at the admission of a *compagnon*, generally closely copying some church ceremony; and alleged occasionally to involve a burlesque element. Each *compagnon*, after initiation, chose a sobriquet which was of a different form for each branch, and became part of his own name; and there were numerous differences of detail as to costume and constitution, and as to nicknames of the various callings or grades. They called each other, not "Brother," but "Coterie" or "Pays"; i.e. "society" or "country." They had peculiar ceremonies, especially a form of embrace with the whisper of a word, known as the *Guilbrette*.

As for the history of the *Compagnonnage* it has not been elucidated; and until it has, speculation as to the origin of their legend must be necessarily somewhat infructuous.

I must leave for a later chapter a more detailed examination of the legend and its bearing on our own ritual, but would observe that even if we find the *Compagnonnage* to have possessed the [114] legend from the earliest days the fact will not bear on our antiquity until we know when it came into Freemasonry. That it did so

before 1717 has still to be established beyond doubt. Still, the similarities between this French institution and our own Gould makes a list of no less than forty-one—provide us with a pretty problem and indicate most interesting possibilities in investigation. It is, however, remarkable that although our modern Freemasonry reached France in the middle of the eighteenth century no one discovered these resemblances, still less claimed any connection between the two societies, for over a century.

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTICS

BROTHER Hughan says: "It has been the rule to treat more or less fully of the influence exerted on the Fraternity by the Ancient Mysteries, the Essenes, Roman Colleges, Culdees, Hermeticism, Fehm-gerichte et hoc genus omne, especially the Steinmetzen, the Craft Gilds and the Compagnonnage of France, etc. But in view of the separate and independent character of the Freemasons it appears to be quite unnecessary. There is no evidence that any other organisation of any kind, religious, philosophical, mystical or otherwise, materially or even slightly influenced the customs of the fraternity, though they may have [115] done so." And in this passage he is speaking more particularly of the period before 1717. Of the various sources of influence indicated in the above quotation we have now dealt with everyone but the Ancient Mysteries and Hermeticism, and the Essenes. These last at all events will not detain us long. It has been asserted that their tenets were introduced into Britain, and taken up by the Culdees who carried them on into Masonry. All this is the merest invention without any pretence of historical foundation. They were a Jewish sect of unknown origin, teaching veneration for the law and personal purity, and practising celibacy. They were divided into three grades; and the highest aim

of the individual was to attain to the spirit of prophecy and power to cure miraculously. They are known two centuries before the Christian Era. After the destruction of Jerusalem they gradually fade into obscurity, and after the fourth century nothing more is heard of them. They have little or nothing in common with our craft.

When we come to deal with the Mystics, we find the argument for our antiquity presented in a different form. The underlying idea of all these schools of thought is the same, that there has existed, from all time, a Great Secret, which has been handed down in an occult manner, either by writings miraculously preserved, or by a neverbroken chain of devout philosophers passing it on by oral transmission; that it was known in Egypt, and was taught in the Ancient Mysteries; [116] and that in due time it will be developed, to bring about the regeneration of the world, the millennium, and the rule of wise men. That Freemasonry possesses the knowledge of this mystery is not asserted; and indeed it is clear we do not.

But it is said either that we are a degenerate survival of a body that did possess a knowledge we have lost and only preserve the outward shell of, or that our speculative science was deliberately imported into Masonry by the Rosicrucians, who, possessing a lore and a tradition going back to the Ancient Mysteries, and feeling a need for concealment, elected to take over craft Masonry, then in its decline, and make it the repository of their learning. The principle in fact is that followed in the domain of zoology by the hermit crab, operative Masonry being the empty whelk. Thus, while the craft is left by this school to date back to the Gilds or the beginnings of

Gothic architecture, or where it likes, the speculative Mason finds himself linked up with Egypt and Hermes, as before, but in the female line, as it were, instead of by direct descent. And in either event the modern speculative is the perpetuator of a mystery he no longer understands.

The ancestry so arrived at is made the subject of detraction by our critics. A certain Dr. Armstrong writing in 1847 says: "The Freemasons possess the relics and cast-off clothes of some deceased fraternity . . . they did not invent all the symbolism they possess. It came from others. They themselves have equipped themselves in the [117] ancient garb as they best could, but with evident ignorance of the original mode of investiture, and we cannot but smile at the many labyrinthine folds in which they have entangled themselves.

"They suggest to us the perplexity into which some simple Hottentot would fall if the fulldress regimentals and equipments of the 10th Hussars were laid at his feet, and he were to induct himself without instruction into the mystic and confusing habiliments."

Heckethorn is another prominent exponent of the "old clothes theory," as it has been called ; and in his work on Secret Societies he talks of "the mysteries as they have come down to us and are still perpetuated in a corrupt and aimless manner in Freemasonry." Elsewhere he says: "From the first appearance of man on the earth, there was a highly favoured and civilised race possessing a full knowledge of the laws and properties of nature, and which knowledge was embodied in mystical figures and schemes, such as

were deemed appropriate emblems for its preservation and propagation. These figures and schemes are preserved in Masonry, though their meaning is no longer understood by the fraternity. The aim of all secret societies, except those which were purely political, was to preserve such knowledge as still survived, or to recover what had been lost. Freemasonry, being the resume of the teachings of all those societies, possesses dogmas in accordance with some which were taught in the ancient mysteries and other [118] associations though it is impossible to attribute its origin to any specific society preceding it."

The weak link in this chain, apart from its primary assumption, lies in the word "preserved"; which involves that modern Masonry with its ceremonies and symbols is as it has been through the ages. Now we know it is not. We know that the greater part of our ritual is modern; specifically do we know this of the third degree, which is our most striking parallel to the religions, of antiquity.

And if we examine our own account of our origin we nowhere find any claim to possess any more universal secret than the knowledge of geometry, nor are we traced back to the Ancient Mysteries in any way. It is true the Old Charges mention Hermes, and the Cooke MS. also mentions Pythagoras, as recovering the pillars on which the children of Lamech had written their knowledge. But they are only mentioned in passing. It was Abraham who, coming out of Chaldea, taught the Egyptians, and it was his pupil Euclid who instructed the sons of the nobility in geometry, and now it is called Masonry. I have already suggested the possibility of the

Cooke MS. containing an earlier form of our legend, and one would in fact expect Masons of Eastern origin to preserve a recollection of Pythagoras who was a geometer rather than Hermes who was a philosopher. But in this passage the compiler seems rather to be displaying his own learning when he mentions both, and apparently it is Hermes who has always [119] figured in our legend in its expanded form. As for Pythagoras, he flourished about 550 B.C. and was the first to inculcate the teaching of geometry as an abstract and liberal science to be studied for its own sake. He also founded at Crotona an association for the reformation of society, and taught the doctrine of transmigration, but his philosophic school only survived his death a couple of centuries, and is important mainly in so far as it influenced Plato.

Pythagoras' name would be quite familiar to any monastic compiler of the eleventh or twelfth century, and would also be much venerated by any student of theoretical geometry.

Now with regard to Hermes, the name originally in Egypt was simply a title of the god Thoth. In Greece it was of course the name of a separate god, but that does not now concern us.

Thoth was the god of the sacred books and therefore, as Hermes, was credited with writing them. They were forty-two in number; some deal with religious matters and ritual; there are also medical and geographical books and a series on astronomy and astrology. None deal with geometry or architecture. Later on Hermes Trismegistus, as he came to be called, became a convenient pseudonym for the author of books which sought to combine

Neoplatonism and the other philosophies and theosophies of the third century in opposition to Christianity, then growing rapidly in importance.

Hermes soon acquired a reputation as a magician [120] and Augustine quotes him, no doubt considering him to have had a real existence, with reference to demons and power over them. His name would therefore be quite familiar to a monk, although it would not appear to be likely to interest masons and geometers particularly. Still, it is he whom the Old Charges have preferred to mention.

The Neoplatonists and their congeners did not survive the reign of Justinian; and not till much later do we meet with the Hermeticists and the idea that the old secret knowledge had been propagated through the ages by the series of wise men known as the Hermetic chain. But the idea of the two pillars in which all knowledge was preserved is found in contemporary histories and would be quite familiar to any educated man of the period. Our legend, as it stands in 1400 therefore, need not be supposed to involve anything more than the ordinary ideas current at the time; it could be framed without any assistance from mystics and without involving the existence of any secret tradition of Eastern origin.

With regard to the Ancient Mysteries in which the knowledge Hermes possessed was also supposed to be concealed, it is unfortunate that whenever we have to deal with this subject, and more especially with the difficult question of their transmission to later days, we find, coupled with much mystery and indication of

unutterable things, a lamentable vagueness and want of definition.

[121] What the mediaeval thinkers supposed the mysteries to consist in we know pretty well. They hoped to recover the three forms of the secret wisdom: (i) Philosophy of nature or occult knowledge of the works of God; (ii) Theology or the occult knowledge of God himself; (iii) Religion or God's occult intercourse with the spirit of man. God taught all this to Adam according to the Kabbalists and it was transmitted to Abraham and so to Egypt.

These three branches of knowledge were supposed to exist in the world only in a degenerate and corrupted form, and it was the function of the philosophers to preserve in secret the true learning until the time was ripe for its manifestation. The more worldly section of the philosophers, confining themselves to the study of the first branch, sought to recover what it was always asserted existed in the possession of some remote and inscrutable teacher the three universals; the universal transmuter, solvent, and panacea; otherwise the Philosopher's stone, the Alcahest, and the elixir vitae. These were the aims of the alchemists; and Astrology and Magic were also the subjects of their inquiry.

With the Ancient Mysteries as models of ritual involving initiations, ceremonies, and teachings of death and resurrection, we have an obvious and undeniable connection. So much so, that they must be our originals. But this can have arisen in various ways. The mysteries may have been perpetuated in secret and continued straight on [122] without a break into craft Freemasonry. This is at once the easiest and most flattering hypothesis. But, in the complete

absence of any hint of esotericism or elaborate ceremony in operative days; in the face of the historical evidence that the mysteries only persisted in a corrupt form till the fifth century A.D., and then perished; and in the face of the entire ignorance our Old Charges evince of Classical Rome or Greece, any hypothesis that involves a transmission through the early operatives, and the Comacines for instance, needs more to support it than is apparent to those not themselves adepts. And the other form of the theory which I mentioned above, which supposes an importation by Rosicrucians at a later date, I shall deal with when I come to speak of those philosophers. But it should be observed that our whole ceremonial is Jewish in its topography, so to speak, and Teutonic in its spirit, and has no hint in it of Classical Greece or Rome.

Alternatively, "a set of philosophers in the seventeenth century may have ransacked antiquity in order to discover a model for their newly born Freemasonry" (Gould). In that case undoubtedly the Ancient Mysteries were ready to their hand and the similarities are at once explained. But against this unflattering and uncomfortable hypothesis we should in self-defence urge that there must have been something in accepted Masonry in the seventeenth century to induce Randle Holme and Ashmole and the others to take it up as they did. Still our seventeenth and [123] eighteenth century philosophers ("Masonic Tinkers," to use a phrase of one of our great students), are undoubtedly responsible for much that has been relied on to prove a Greek or Roman descent for us. But our present concern with the mysteries is not as models for our ceremonies but

as origins for the secret learning of the mediaeval mystics.

Their true nature is sufficiently clear; all nations of antiquity concealed part of their religious worship to enhance its effect. The Jews did it. In India today, only the Brahmin and priest can penetrate to the very interior of the temple, and the Eleusinia had exactly the same system. They added however to a restriction of mere access an esotericism in teaching, confined to the selected initiates. But unfortunately what was taught we simply do not know. We know a good deal about the rites and ceremonies which often included representations of death and resurrection. But the bearing of that on our inquiry has already been shown. We have for the actual teachings nothing but theories to advance.

Gould says: "Whilst on the one hand it is essential that old and obsolete theories should be decently interred and put out of sight, on the other hand we must be especially careful lest in our haste some of the ancient beliefs are buried alive. At the outset of this history the use of metaphorical analogies from the contrasts of outward nature, such as the opposition of light to darkness, warmth to cold, life to death, was [124] pointed out as a necessary characteristic of all secret fraternities, who are obliged to express in symbolical language that relation of contrast to the uninitiated on which their constitution depends." And in fact the connection that is claimed with Hermeticism and through it with the occult knowledge of antiquity is based on our symbolism entirely. We undoubtedly possess a number of symbols the Hermeticists knew and used long ago, and that are not essentially masonic, and indeed

our interpretations of them are not those of the mystics. But historical evidence is wanting for any connection between the two bodies other than that implied in the fact that Ashmole and others in the seventeenth century and later were both Masons and Rosicrucians.

De Quincey wrote an essay in 1824 under the title "Historico-critical Inquiry into the Origins of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons" which is based on a previous work of Professor Buhle. In it the account of the origin of speculative Masonry is put forward that I have already referred to, that it was bodily grafted on to the craft by Mystics. But this theory falls to pieces when the true history of the Rosicrucians is examined.

The beginning of all mysticism is Alexandria, where Greek, Oriental, and Egyptian met, with centuries of thought already behind each; and where Jew and Christian were ready to add still more to the confusion of opinion thus brought into being. The net result was Neoplatonism; [125] and among the Jews, the Kabbala. Neoplatonism perished and left no trace, after the knowledge of Greek had been lost. But after the revival of learning the writings of the school were eagerly taken up, and Hermes Trismegistus, who was supposed to be the fountain of all ancient learning, became the hero of a cult, the Hermeticists, who asserted that secret philosophers had preserved an unbroken continuity of esoteric teaching, not to be found in the texts, and the true descendant of the teaching of the mysteries.

The Kabbala's first important manifestation was a book written at

some time not later than the ninth century AD., and purporting to be the work of Abraham: and their teaching as to the handing on of the secret knowledge was that since Abraham's day it had been preserved in manuscripts lost for hundreds of years and miraculously recovered periodically.

As for the doctrines of Kabbala, they do not directly concern us, since they are not found in Masonry. Their important principle was that of emanations, and they also taught a form of metempsychosis. We do, however, seem to use some of their terminology, and it will be as well therefore to describe the Potencies or Sephiroth, which were ten emanations of the Deity, and formed the basis of all creation.

They were arranged in a diagram of the human body and grouped in triads, which were supposed to proceed, the latter from the former. They were also associated with the numerals as follows:

[126] First Triad: Intellectual

1. The Head. Potency, the "Crown." Primary and uniting potency.
2. The right side of the face. Wisdom. Masculine.
3. The left side of the face. Intelligence. Feminine.

Second or Moral Triad

4. The right arm. Love. Masculine.
5. The left arm. Justice. Feminine,
6. The chest. Beauty. Uniting potency.

Third or Material Triad

7. The right leg. Firmness. Masculine.
8. The left leg. Splendour. Feminine.
9. The trunk. Foundation. Uniting Potency.
10. Enveloping all. Kingdom.

The three masculine potencies formed the column of rigour, the three feminine the column of mercy, the three uniting the column of mildness. It all may seem rather meaningless to most of us, but the doctrines had a great vogue; as had also another branch of the subject, the systems of cypher and interpretation of ancient texts, which could be rearranged to mean almost anything; and it was because in later centuries the Kabbalists claimed to be able to deduce all knowledge and especially all Christian doctrine from the Old Testament, that a great impetus was given to the study of Hebrew, with far-reaching effects on the history of European thought. However, all this is foreign to our craft; and what we are interested in is only the phraseology and names of the triads and potencies. But with regard to these, in the [127] first place the whole doctrine of the Sephiroth appears first in the thirteenth century; and in the second, as I have already stated, we cannot dissect out the old from the new in our ritual. At all events the lectures are late eighteenth century, and it is in them that the Kabbalistic terms occur most frequently. Actually between the second and the twelfth centuries Kabbala languished somewhat; and before the ninth century the doctrine of emanations had not been developed; what did exist was the tradition of the occult learning and the method of interpretation of texts.

It is possible that some of our symbolism contains a hint of Kabbalistic ideas; but the influence, such as it is, is slight and late, and appears chiefly in some peculiarities of terminology, and also perhaps in some of our many triads.

The Rosicrucians are first heard of about 1610, and to quote Hughan, "What is known as the society of Rosicrucians was really a number of isolated individuals who early in the seventeenth century held certain views in common which apparently was their only bond of union ; for of a society holding meetings and having officers there is no trace. So far as the numerous works are concerned it is evident that the writers who posed as Rosicrucians and were moral religious reformers, and utilised the technicalities of chemistry (alchemy) and the Sciences generally as media through which to make known their opinions, there being a flavour of mysticism and [128] occultism promotive of inquiry and suggestive of hidden meanings discernible and discoverable only by adepts." Clearly, the absence of any organised society is fatal to the Rosicrucian theory of our origin; or at all events reduces it to this, that we have been influenced by individual Rosicrucians in our ranks. This may very well be. At the same time the existence of a definite brotherhood was firmly believed in at the time; and the view of Buhle and De Quincey is that it took its rise on the Continent and became organised in England, adopting at the same time the new name of Freemasonry. But it is unfortunate that the whole question is so vague that we cannot in fact say what were the tenets of the fraternity, for the simple reason that no two

philosophers agreed as to them. We find in fact the Hermetic secrets, the three universals, over again, and a deal of vague and mystic philosophy, and belief in magic and the influence of demons. In fact the terms Hermeticism and Rosicrucianism become convertible, the one derived from a mythical philosopher, the other from an equally mythical fraternity. And as already stated, when it is asked where in modern Freemasonry are the traces of the mystics – they are not in our teachings, we know nothing of alchemy, or demons, or magic; they are to be found purely in the symbols we use, which the Hermeticists used also.

In fact, nowadays Freemasonry is not a body with any esoteric teaching of the sort the Rosicrucians believed in. We are not strictly a [129] secret society, we don't conceal our existence. We continue today solely by virtue of our teaching of brotherly love and equality; and the practice of our cardinal principle of relief, as evinced in the great charities. We teach nothing that is not independently available in the world at large, nothing more recondite than the simple morality illustrated by symbols every Mason is familiar with; our modern secrets are exclusively secrets of ritual except the modes of recognition; and, also with that exception, are in all probability late additions; and the only obvious trace we show of Hermeticism is the common possession of a symbolism, in our case admittedly late in date. This was very probably derived from persons acquainted with Hermetic and Rosicrucian tenets, who were also Freemasons, such as Ashmole.

But as far as Buhle's theory is concerned, it breaks down for want of

historical evidence for a fraternity either in England or anywhere else. And also there is good ground for believing that speculative Masonry existed before Rosicrucianism was heard of. That Freemasonry existed in a speculative form before the Hermetic Philosophers came on the scene, that is to say, before the days of Paracelsus, who was born in 1493, is not a fact capable of specific proof. On the other hand, that the various Hermetic philosophers were ever more than isolated thinkers, and ever formed a definite society, is also not a fact for which any proof has been adduced. Hermeticism may have preserved some trace of archaic mystical [130] knowledge; and undoubtedly we have, in some way, got hold of symbols to which they attached esoteric meanings of which we know nothing. But our possession of these symbols is late; and any more intimate connection between Speculative Masonry and the whole body of Mystic philosophy has not yet been demonstrated.

CHAPTER X

Legends, Symbols, And Ritual

THE problem of exactly when our ritual achieved its present trigradal form is one on which, as yet, the authorities are not agreed. But in any case that it did so at a period subsequent to the formation of Grand Lodge is generally admitted. That there was a definite ceremony of admission for the apprentice in operative days with an obligation and with the communication of some secret in the nature of a means of recognition is indicated by the phraseology of our Old Charges. That there were operative secrets is obvious, but they would necessarily be acquired gradually during the period of apprenticeship, just as geometry is learnt by a modern schoolboy, and could not be imparted at one time. The apprentice was under a standing obligation of secrecy with regard to all that went on in the Lodge. That there was a second ceremony of receiving the apprentice when free of his indentures as a [131] full member of the fraternity is probable, on the analogy of Gild customs, and suggested by a passage in the Cooke MS.; and two ceremonies are indicated by an entry, unfortunately incomplete, in the minute book of the now extinct Lodge of Haughfoot, of date 1702, and the minutes of the Kelso Lodge, which was mixed in character, refer to admission and passing as distinct ceremonies at the same date. But these are the

only indications we have.

In dealing with questions of ritual I have necessarily to leave much implied, that in a lecture delivered orally could be more freely developed; and I shall have very often to leave my readers to note the analogies and make the necessary deductions for themselves. With this understanding I proceed to refer to some mediaeval Talmudic and other legends that have their own bearing on our craft. I wish however first of all to express my indebtedness to Wor. Brother the Reverend Morris Rosenbaum for permission to utilise material in his published lectures and papers especially as to the two Hiram's, and to Brother E. L. Hawkins for similar permission with regard to a paper recently read by him in Lodge Quatuor Coronati on Ritual in the pre-Grand Lodge Era.

The earliest version we have of our Legendary History in its expanded form is in the Cooke MS., and there we read that when the children of Lamech knew that God purposed to destroy the world either by fire or by water they wrote all [132] their learning on two pillars; and many years after the Flood the two pillars were recovered, "as the Polycronicon says," Pythagoras finding one and Hermes the other. The Cooke MS. does not link up either of these worthies with the subsequent legend, either with Nemorth, Abraham, or Euclid; and in fact it is not stated in the Polycronicon that they found the pillars. Their names occur in another connection in that work, the date of which is about 1350; but the account there given of the pillars is that "men did write their artes upon them, and these pillars be said to be in Syria"; and the writer

quotes as his authority Josephus. What Josephus says is that the sons of Seth had learnt from Adam that the world was to be destroyed and they built two columns on which they engraved all that they had learnt; and their foresight was justified, for I am assured, says Josephus, that the column of stone is still to be seen in Syria today. He wrote in the first century A.D. The Talmudic version is again different and attributes the writing to Kenan, the father of Lamech's wives; but what he wrote was prophecies. In an English metrical version of Genesis and Exodus of date circa 1250, we have that "Jobal" taught the selecting and matching of cattle by marks, shape, age, and colour, and

On two tables of tile and brass
Wrote he that wisdom, wise he was
That it should not be undone,
If fire or water come thereon.

[133] [I have modernised the language.] Thus we see that the idea of pillars or stones of tile or marble or brass constructed by Lamech's family was a popular one at the time, existing in many variants. But the suggestion that Hermes recovered one and Pythagoras the other is not so found. Dr. Begemann considers it is an invention of the compiler of the Cooke MS. who had to do something of the kind to preserve the sequence of the legend (History, i. page 179); and as he observes, he would find the names in the Polycronicon. In fact the name of Hermes would be familiar by that time as a mystic and philosopher; and the Masons might fairly be expected to know and venerate the name of so great a geometer as Pythagoras. But, as I

have pointed out in an earlier chapter, the Old Charges have dropped the geometer, and preferred to perpetuate Hermes in their version of the legend. That the compiler of the Cooke MS., or of its original rather, had the Polycronicon before him is certain ; that the expanded legend is therefore not of earlier date than that work does not necessarily follow; it is equally likely that the compiler has added a lot of his own to an existing version. Ranulphus Higden, who wrote the Polycronicon, died in 1363.

The two pillars lead us by a natural connection to Solomon's Temple, for which Hiram cast two pillars of brass, which stood before the entrance; and as we read in the Bible, Solomon called the left-hand pillar Boaz after his ancestor presumably, [134] and the right-hand one Jachin. The Bible affords no hint of why this name was selected. But Mr. Shaw Caldecott in his work on Solomon's Temple suggests that the one was the kingly pillar and the other the priestly, by which the king and high priest stood respectively at public ceremonies; we find that Josiah stood by the pillar at his proclamation as King (2 Kings xxiii. 3). Joash stood by the pillar as the manner was (2 Kings xi. i4). And Jachin does appear as a priestly name in David's day; so that there is a possibility that a priest of that name took part in Solomon's ceremonies, perhaps as replacing the High Priest who might have been ceremonially impure or prevented by some other reason for officiating.

If we suppose the two pillars to have their names on them, they would bear a definite meaning in Hebrew. Boaz means "In him is strength," and Jachin "He will establish." So that the two might be

read, "He in whom Strength is, may he establish (this House)." The Geneva Bible, which was the Bible of England from 1560 till late in the seventeenth century, mistranslates both these words. It gives for Boaz " In strength," and for Jachin "To establish" or "Stability." Another instance of a mistranslation in this same Bible is the meaning given to Tubal Cain of "worldly possessions," but in fact it means Tubal the smith. Similarly it gives for Shibboleth the fall of waters, or an ear of corn. Shibboleth is more correctly a stream of water; and when the [135] men of Gilead put the test to the Ephraimites they were standing beside a Shibboleth, a swiftly flowing stream.

But the biblical account of the Temple as we have it is very obscure, and as Ferguson observes has generally been interpreted either by Hebraists who were not architects, or by architects who knew no Hebrew. The actual dimensions given for the pillars in I Kings vii. 15 would make their height less than five times their diameter.

Two pillars occur at Wurtzburg Cathedral, where they originally stood outside the entrance, and were given the names of their Jewish prototypes. They are of peculiar design, and for that reason have been attributed to the Comacine builders. But it has been stated that they constitute the sole specimen in all mediaeval architecture of any symbolism derived from King Solomon's Temple, and if this is indeed the case we should be chary of basing on this exceptional incident too great a weight of hypothesis. In the *Compagnonnage Legend* Maitre Jacques, whose father's name was

Jacquín, was taught sculpture in Greece, and was one of the first masters of Solomon, and a colleague of Hiram, and he constructed at the Temple two columns as his masterpiece.

But we do not know the date of the framing of this legend, and one possible hypothesis is that it dates from a real split among the building trades at Orleans in 1401; and that the account of the murder of Maitre Jacques is a symbolical account of a real incident, a person of the name of Jacques [136] Moler being in fact killed in those disturbances. One of the town gates of Orleans is called Jacquín. Again, our two wardens have each a pillar: and in this case they would seem to symbolise doorways through which the candidate passes. We might go further and suggest the J. W.'s door led to another part of the lodge used for refreshment, while the S. W.'s led to the actual work. But we do not know that the operatives had set places for these officers. In Lodge La Cesaree No. 590 (which works in French), when the warrant is to be shown to the candidate it is produced from the interior of an ornate pillar, an interesting reminiscence of the Legend. I would observe that the details of the various styles of classical architecture would hardly be familiar to mediaeval. operative masons who had evolved a complete style of their own.

The possibility of an importation of symbolism based on the Temple in the seventeenth century itself has been examined by students, and their opinion is that any such importation must be either earlier and therefore of operative times, or later and therefore due to the brethren who controlled our affairs in 1717 and after.

And in fact after 1675 we find that the Temple does occupy a considerable space in English literature and great interest is taken in models of it. But in all this literature there is nothing that has any importance for us as Masons. Brother Rylands says: "No satisfactory reason has so far been offered why the Temple of Solomon and its builders have been [137] selected to play an important part in one division of our legendary history."

We should distinguish, however, two different methods of introducing the Temple. It may be introduced solely by way of illustration and symbol, and passwords be taken from it for instance; or a definite story may be told of its building, and the incidents narrated as having happened to craftsmen, as being in fact a legend of the craft. Now the legend we possessed in operative days pays little attention to the Temple and mentions the builder Hiram merely in passing. Accordingly it would appear unlikely that the operatives should have possessed at the same time a form of the Compagnonnage Legend, or any other account of happenings to persons at the Temple. But they may very well have had some oral symbolism connected with the pillars; for instance they may have used their names as passwords, without this fact appearing in any document. And as we see at Wurtzburg, some possibly Comacine builder put King Solomon's Pillars up in the cathedral, and may have intended some symbolism thereby.

The early Christians were careful to avoid in their temples any likeness to pagan places of worship, and their first models were the Roman basilicas or law courts. And before the twelfth century, the

Church was careful to avoid any points of similarity to the Jews, who were universally detested. But from the thirteenth century onwards we do find a strong tendency to a parabolic use of the Temple, as indeed we find a [138] universal fondness for symbolism and allegory of all sorts. Accordingly, a simple symbolism of the sort would be quite a natural possession of Cathedral Masons. With regard to the Compagnonnage story, and other stories that describe the murder of Hiram—the Hiramic Legend—there is no suggestion of this story in Josephus or any Jewish writings, and it is not mentioned in the Bible. It is however remarkable that the Bible does seem to speak of two different Hiram's, both Master Builders to King Solomon. The first was the Hiram whom the King of Tyre sent, skilful in all kinds of metal work and in designing. He was the architect. The second King Solomon sent for himself after the Temple was finished, and he cast the ' huge pillars, the sea, and the lavers. The Bible text supports the idea that these two persons' names, though very similar, were in fact different, the first being Hiram and the second Hiram. The form Hiram is that used in Chronicles. But in 2 Chronicles iv. ii, which reads "And Hiram made the pots, and the shovels and the basins. And Hiram finished the work that he was to make for King Solomon for the house –of God," the second Hiram is actually Hiram in the Hebrew. And in the account in the Book of Kings the Hebrew distinguishes the two names also. Josephus tells us Hiram's father's name was Ur, and he was Israelitish by descent, and his mother was of the tribe of Naphthali. In Chronicles, after the molten pillars, etc., are enumerated, we have in verse 16: "The pots . . . did Hiram his

father [139] make to King Solomon." The Hebrew would be Hiram Abiv. Accordingly it is suggested that Hiram the brass founder was the son of Hiram the architect; the pots and so on being made of beaten work, highly polished and lacquered, a difficult class of work beyond the skill of the second Hiram, but which Hiram the son of Ur could do. The second Hiram is further described as a widow's son. It is therefore not putting an undue strain on the text if we say that Hiram the architect died while the Temple was in progress, in spite of the circumstance that no statement of the fact is known in Jewish literature.

If we suppose that the bulk of the symbolism we have of the Temple is a late importation, we have to explain how it came in the narrative portion of it to take a form unknown to history, and distinct from the Compagnonnage version; and only to be read into the Bible narrative because we know the other story already. On the other hand, if some such narrative is a true inheritance from operative days and antiquity, why is the Legend of the Old Charges so conspicuously different, and why is there no hint of it in all our early documents, particularly in the Scotch minutes? The problem of what is or what is not old in our symbolism and in our ritual is one to which at present no answer is forthcoming. The late Brother Woodford said many years ago:

"Where did the Freemasonry of 1717 come from? To accept for one moment the suggestion that so complex and curious a system, embracing so many [140] archaic remains, and such skilfully adjusted ceremonies, so much connected matter accompanied by so

many striking symbols, could have been the creation of a pious fraud or ingenious conviviality, presses heavily on our powers of belief and even passes over the normal credulity of our species. The traces of antiquity are too many to be overlooked or ignored."

The fact remains that there is no known reference to the Temple or to the Hiramic Legend as any special interest to us before 1723, and only one allusion to the pillars, in a doggerel rhyme which from internal evidence is dated 1713.

After a detailed examination of every reference in our old documents that has any bearing on our ritual in operative days, Brother Hawkins sums up the whole question thus:

"A tolerably clear idea of the proceedings at the admission of a candidate may thus be obtained from the Old Charges. The meeting was opened with prayer—the legendary history of the craft was then read—then the Candidate was led forward and instructed to place his hand on the Volume of the Sacred Law, which was held by one of the "Seniors," while the Articles binding on all Masons alike were read, at the conclusion of which a brief obligation was imposed upon the candidate, all present joining in it; then followed the special charges for an apprentice, concluding with a longer obligation by which the candidate specially bound himself to secrecy with regard to what was about to be communicated to him; [141] then the secrets, whatever they were, were entrusted to him, and the proceedings terminated." As I have indicated, these secrets were not the professional secrets of the trade, which could only be learnt slowly, but secret modes of recognition. And it is to be noted

that the apprentice in our present ceremony is told he is made a Mason, and informed of certain means to recognise a Mason, presumably indicating that in operative days there was no more to learn in that respect. At the same time we find in the Old Charges articles special to Masters and Fellows, and among Continental Gilds we found ceremonies when members were made free of the Gild; and it is at least probable that in our craft there was something of the kind, of a simple and symbolical nature; but in fact there is no indication of it in the actual Old Charges. The Bible mentions (2 Kings vi. 7) that the Temple was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building. It would hardly occur therefore to the operatives to consider their Lodge room, with all the working tools it would necessarily contain, a symbol of the Temple ; and a modern Lodge is equally ill adapted for that purpose. But the symbol-loving operatives might well use the idea as far as the candidate himself was concerned, and divest him of weapons or money; and then inculcate moral lessons deduced from his helplessness and poverty. Such a ceremony would be very consonant with [142] what we know of actual proceedings in other trade Gilds. The idea underlying the prohibition of iron in the Temple itself was that iron, as the metal of weapons, and thus emblem of bloodshed or strife, was out of place in a Temple for the worship of the God of Peace; cf. I Kings v. 3, 4. The Talmud has a legend that Solomon had magical powers by which he brought the stones, ready shaped, out of the living rock; but the Bible does not seem to treat the circumstance as of special importance and it is not

mentioned in Chronicles.

The winding stair that Solomon constructed to give access to the middle chamber is mentioned by Josephus, who says it was in the thickness of the wall; and it would seem to have been intended as a private access and very unlikely to be used by the workmen. Indeed, while the Temple was still under construction, they would necessarily receive their wages in some temporary structure outside.

CHAPTER XI

Legends, Symbols, And Ritual (continued)

As we should expect from our close and constant association with the Church, our legends have a biblical and ecclesiastical tone, and resemble monastic breviaries, being quite distinct in style and spirit from the stories of the Ballad Cycles. Aymon has crept into the Old Charges, perhaps [143] by the slip of some copyist more familiar with Roland and Charlemagne than with Abraham. But the sources of the legend, so far as they can be traced, or are given, as in the Cooke MS., are just the works a monastery library would be sure to possess. The monastic history of St. Augustine's Canterbury contains a passage of which the following is a free translation:

"Nor is it wonderful that holy men set such store by the monastic order and habit, since, as Jerome testifies, in his 68th epistle, the sons of the prophets of the Old Testament appeared as monks; and Elias and Elisha were abbots of those monks. Wherefore Dionysius thus writes of the monastic order that it is more admirable and greater than any. For, as Ralph Higden testifies, Longinus the soldier who pierced our Lord with his lance, being admitted a monk by the apostles, lived as such for twenty-eight years at Caesarea in Cappadocia, and having converted many to the faith, died a martyr. And John Cassianus writes in his book of the customs

of monks that Mark the evangelist was the first to institute monks under the New Dispensation; which indeed I take to refer to the monks of Egypt and Alexandria since, that Longinus had become a monk by the teaching of the apostles before Mark was sent to Alexandria.... Whence it comes that from the time of Christ's passion to the present day, the order of monks is approved greater than all others."

This is exactly the spirit in which our legend [144] was composed, and is almost the very manner of the compiler of the Cooke MS.

And while we may, with our modern lights, think but poorly of the operatives as critical historians, for instance, we must recollect that architecture was practically the only art and science of the day that was in anything but a rudimentary state, and so, as Professor Rogers has said, "was studied with such intensity and concentration as to bring about results which we in our wider modes of thought, study, and application find it difficult if not impossible to rival." That the extent to which symbolism did exist among the operatives will be the extent to which it is introduced in the actual structures is no doubt true, but "the class of persons who in the fourteenth century or earlier constructed the craft legend were also capable of understanding, and did understand, to a greater extent than ourselves, the meaning of a great part of the symbolism which has descended from ancient to modern Masonry" (Gould in A.Q.C.). And before we assume the work of the operatives to be deficient in symbolism, we must be certain that we will recognise it when we see it.

A use of Kabbalistic terminology has been referred to in an earlier chapter, in which I also stated that our teachings had nothing in common with that philosophy. With regard to our symbolism, the following quotation is of interest however. "The first triad of the emanations of the unseen and unknowable Ain [145] Soph Aur, the boundless one, boundless light, first is Kether the Crown; thence proceeded Chockmah and Binah, wisdom and intelligence, and then is the Crown concealed, and lost to perception in its exaltedness. The Word is lost, and replaced by other titles." Another piece of Kabbalistic symbolism is connected with the letter G, which as third in the Hebrew alphabet stands for the number 3, and so for the Trinity of Deity. There is a singular want of harmony in this with our modern monotheism; and we are told that the Tetragrammaton stood in the Temple, and was replaced in our Lodges by the English letter. In its Greek form the G would be a carpenter's square. But the English G is singularly inept, and the assertion that the sacred and unutterable name stood in the Temple is both improbable and unsupported.

"The Hermeticists and Rosicrucians are not known to have practised themselves any mystic or symbolical ceremonies which they could have passed on to the Freemasons" (Gould in A.Q.C.). But they did attach enormous importance to symbolism as being the vehicle of the hidden Learning, and the following symbols were well known to them : the square, compasses, triangle, oblong square; the three Grand Masters; the idea embodied in the substitute word; the sun, moon, and Master of the Lodge; the rule, the plumb

rule; the perfect ashlar; the two pillars; the circle within the parallel lines; the point within a circle; the sacred Delta; the five-pointed star; [146] and the Shield of David, or Solomon's Seal, or Hexalpha, which is our R.A. Jewel. This is a world-wide symbol and is of cardinal importance to Vaishnavite Brahmins, for instance.

To attempt to trace these or any other of our symbols to their earliest source would be for our purposes futile. It stands to reason that at some period of our history we have borrowed Hermeticist symbols. In no single instance can we indicate our own earliest possession of any symbol. The mere possession of symbols in common is no proof of identity of origin; it has no bearing on the question of our historical descent. It is obviously possible that the Hermeticists themselves, who no doubt collected their symbols where they could find them, got hold of a few in use by operative masons. Some students have gone so far as to say that none of our symbolism is essentially masonic in character; and at all events the moral teachings we attach to the working tools are stated in the very ritual itself to be late applications. And certainly the allegation that we do not understand our own symbols, which in less ungenerous language means that we give them different meanings to those they have had elsewhere, is a strong argument for our having borrowed.

On mediaeval tombs and elsewhere the square and compass occur repeatedly, but not so as to suggest that their relative position was in any way symbolical. Our present use of them has a very eighteenth-century look about it. It is [147] interesting to note that our symbols are not Eastern in their origin; i.e. they do not come from India or

any part of Asia, excluding Palestine. And we know this because they do not include the two great Eastern symbols: the Swastika or Gammadion, and the Trisula or Trident.

Of course we see in our modern ritual several instances of modern meanings being given for practices which suggest an ancient origin. For instance, the Lectures give quite a fantastic explanation of the necessity that the candidate should be free. But this is a clear operative survival; he had to be a freeman, i.e. not a bondman or villein, before he could be admitted an apprentice. On the other hand no apprentice would be in the least likely to be twenty-one years of age. Similarly the point occasionally made that the candidate should be perfect of limb is an operative survival. An apprentice must necessarily have the full use of his limbs; and even sickly candidates would be viewed with disfavour, as likely later on to become a burden on the charity fund.

The Ancient Mysteries had a similar prohibition, and for the same thing among the Jews, cf. Leviticus xxi. 18.

The Badge of Innocence, on the other hand, is a manifest production of the "Masonic Tinkers." For in the first place the references to modern orders of chivalry arouse our suspicions; and in the second, when was an operative apron made of lambskin?

[148] We preserve a practice that is stated to have been followed at the assemblies in that they closed with an inquiry if any master or fellow had anything else to bring forward.

I have pointed out in an earlier chapter that we have at some time deliberately modelled our ceremonies on the Ancient Mysteries, and what is known of their ritual. But in addition such a practice as perambulation, for instance, is worldwide in its occurrence, and is as well understood in the remote Highlands as it is in Southern India.

The repeated suggestions of sun worship in our ceremonies can hardly be put forward as a survival from antiquity ; because if this is argued, the question arises, what antiquity? The Phoenicians were sun worshippers, and so were the Greeks and Egyptians. But certainly our mediaeval cathedral architects were not; and we cannot imagine them preserving consciously an elaborate series of secret pagan rites in the presence of their speculative and ecclesiastical brethren and under the very scaffolding of a cathedral. And if they are not the link with antiquity, then it becomes another case of conscious adoption.

The explanation of the disrobing our ritual gives is twofold; one idea has reference to a tradition of the Temple already alluded to ; the other is that it is to verify the sex, which is surely not an operative survival. In fact the practice is probably a late improvement on the well-known semitic and Eastern practice of discalceation.

[149] Our symbolic use of lights has no known parallel in operative days; and our knocks preserve, in a modified form, an old trade custom to which I have already alluded.

As a circumstance which militates against the supposition that the greater part of our ritual was deliberately constructed after 1717, we have the fact that there must needs have been many old Masons members of the Four Old Lodges, and Anderson speaks of other old Masons as well, but that no one seems to have objected then to the innovations. It is therefore suggested that whatever changes there were, cannot have been very sweeping in character, and that the Hiramic Legend, e.g., was already known to the craft.

As a possible epoch at which we may have got hold of a legend connected with the Temple, the Crusades have been suggested. As we have seen, masons' marks were introduced from this source; and the contact of the Western architects with the Oriental builders had its effect on our style. Similarly, the returning Crusaders may have brought us a Hiramic Legend, not through the Templars, but through such bodies as the Gild of St. John of Jerusalem. To establish any such hypothesis we should require to prove (I) the existence of the legend in Palestine in the twelfth century, (II) the existence of craft Lodges there, or of some Gild that would be interested in the legend, and (III) its existence among our own operatives in England. For none of the three is proof forthcoming at present, and the [150] second would seem to be the only proposition of the three not inherently improbable.

It can hardly have been necessary for the operative craftsmen to distinguish each other by night as well as by day, and the notion that a mason should want to is possibly due to an idea, once much in fashion, that we had predecessors in the Catacombs. Our meeting

by night is not an operative practice ; in fact, we find the Lodge of Aberdeen met to admit its apprentices on a rising ground in an open field in the daytime, and there was no officer corresponding to our tyler on duty apparently.

Even in the nineteenth century we see our symbolism being modified, as in 1813 at the union of the two English Grand Lodges, that had existed side by side since the middle of the eighteenth century, many obsolete symbols that were in fact not understood were deliberately discarded, and in arguments based on our present symbols this fact should not be lost sight of.

Of our present obligations only one can be said to inculcate any moral duty apart from the duties of secrecy. The actual teaching was in operative days included in the craftsman's points; and is there found in the Regius Poem; and when we have special points added for the apprentices, they are strictly enjoined to behave themselves in the master's house; a commandment of practical bearing when we recollect that the apprentice would live in the house as one of the family for many years, The warning not to speak ill of one's [151] fellow comes into a later version of the Old Charges among the charges for a Mason. The penalty in a Scotch Lodge for any infraction of the rules was a money fine; and we see the same thing in the English Gilds; in fact a Craft Gild would not prescribe a penalty it could not inflict; and if the law had to be invoked, it had Penalties of its own in full keeping with the spirit of the age. Death was the sentence for an enormous number of offences; and in prescribing penalties for treason, the English legislators of the period

seem to have laid themselves out to add to the mere loss of life every circumstance of horror and ignominy they could think of. Their penalties were of their own framing, however, at all events in cases where for instance they allude to a burial between high and low tide mark, for tide is a conspicuous phenomenon in British seas only.

That the Scotch Lodges had definite secrets of recognition is established by their minutes. And although for the English craft we have in earlier days no such conclusive evidence, that, whatever may have been the extent of the ritual used or the number of separate ceremonies before 1717, there were signs and means of recognition among English speculatives at an earlier date is abundantly proved by the notices we have of the craft in the seventeenth century and in 1709 and 1710 in the Taller.

I have previously mentioned Dr. Plot, who in 1686 gives a long account of the craft and particularly of our Legendary History and whose name [152] has been given to one Family of the Old Charges. He says specifically that the ceremony of admission consists chiefly in the communication of certain secret signs, and that they are bound to assist any brother who makes himself known to them by these.

Aubrey, the antiquary, also speaks of signs and watchwords and says: "The manner of their adoption is very formall."

Finally, in the Taller, Sir Richard Steele refers twice to the fact that the Freemasons are known by signs and tokens as a matter of common knowledge in 1709 and 1710.

CHAPTER XII

The Seventeenth Century, And The Formation Of Grand Lodges

THE historical period of Freemasonry may be said to begin in Scotland with the minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh in 1599, and in England with Elias Ashmole, who was initiated at Warrington in 1646. English Lodge minutes begin in the eighteenth century and our first era ends with the formation in London by the Four Old Lodges of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. Its authority was not at once accepted in the provinces; and the Old Lodge at York, which can trace its history further back than any of the London Lodges, kept its independence, and blossomed out in 1725 into the Grand Lodge of [153] All England. But in course of time every masonic body in the southern kingdom gave in its adhesion to the new jurisdiction. Scotch Masonry followed the English example in 1736, thirty three lodges being represented at the preliminary meeting out of over a hundred that were in existence. And although the first Irish Grand Lodge is earlier in date than this, it does not appear that there was in fact any Masonry in Ireland before 1717. As I have already indicated, the Masonry of the north was not speculative in our sense before Grand Lodge days, although non-operative masons were members of the Lodges, and indeed actually

in the majority in many cases. Nor did the Lodges in general devote any attention to elaborate ritual until the fashion of doing so was introduced from England after 1723. The Lodges of which we have any minutes at this date, both Scotch and English, are always operative in character, whatever their individual members' professions, with the single exception of the Old Lodge at York. And our knowledge of the existence of speculative Masonry at all in the seventeenth century is derived from the diaries and memoranda of antiquaries, and from passing observations in the literature of the period. But the fact remains that the Grand Lodge formed in 1717 was an association of purely Speculative or accepted Freemasons, who had been meeting in four if not more Lodges in London for an unascertained time previously.

At the same time, the possibility of strictly [154] operative Lodges existing in England, but quite out of sympathy with the speculative Lodges, and taking therefore no part in the formation of the Grand Lodge and the development of modern Freemasonry, should not be overlooked; and if there were any such true craft Lodges, they may also have survived to modern days. But for their existence then or survival till today it can only be said at present that no documentary evidence is furnished.

Two of the oldest Scotch Lodges are Edinburgh, the minutes of which date from 1599, and Mother Kilwinning, with minutes dating from 1642; but they are not a continuous record. These two Lodges possessed in early days a right we now consider to be the peculiar privilege of Grand Lodge, namely that of constituting

Lodges; and in fact their position and that of the Lodge of Stirling, now extinct, in the Schaw Statutes, seems to be that of Provincial Grand Lodges with the powers of a Grand Lodge in their jurisdiction. Accordingly in Scotch Masonry we find a series of Lodges deriving from Mother Kilwinning and established in various places in Scotland, and even in Edinburgh itself in the jurisdiction of the other old Lodge; and these daughter Lodges add the name Kilwinning to their place name, so that we have Canongate Kilwinning, Torpichen Kilwinning, and so on.

Another Lodge of very great antiquity, which is not however referred to in the Schaw Statutes, is the Lodge of Aberdeen. In 1483 we have in [155] old records of the town a reference to the Masons of the Lodge, and the Seal of Cause of the Incorporation is dated 1541. Unfortunately the minutes only begin in 1670. At that time non-operative brethren were actually in the majority, and they paid higher fees; they also seem to have been allowed to provide non-operative substitutes for the masterpiece or essay.

Non-operative officers are found in Kilwinning Lodge as early as 1672, and they appointed deputies from among the operatives to do their duties; in the Edinburgh Lodge we find them admitted as fellows, and at once designated masters, no doubt as a compliment, since they would not be masters in the sense the word would be used, and the standing conferred, by the Incorporation. The Lodge at Glasgow did not admit non-operatives at all in early days. On the contrary the Lodge at Dunblane appears to have not merely had a majority of non-operatives, but distinct Jacobite sympathies. In the

Atcheson Haven Lodge we find a notary public made a Mason purposely to have his services as clerk to write indentures. The extinct Lodge of Haughfoot is an instance of a Lodge with a non-operative majority and indications as early as 1702 of some sort of ritual and ceremony; and the minutes of the Lodge of Kelso, a mixed Lodge, in 1702 disclose an apprentice's degree and a separate fellow's degree; while on the other hand, the operative Lodge of Melrose has never yet given in its adhesion to the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and was very late in adopting [156] the English or extended form of the degree ceremonies. But although the presence of nonoperative Masons, often in a majority, and often as office-bearers, is a common feature of Scotch Masonry before the era of Grand Lodges, there is no indication of speculative working, such as symbolism, or moral teachings, and of actual ritual we have hardly a trace, except to the extent that it may be indicated by the Haughfoot minutes and by the use of two degrees at Kelso. When Scotland adopted the Grand Lodge system it did so in consequence of English influence and the example of the English speculatives of nearly twenty years earlier.

The minutes of three English Lodges of this period are extant, namely, Alnwick, Swalwell, and the Old Lodge at York. Of Alnwick we have the rules drawn up in 1701 and they are strictly operative in character, with the following exceptions, if exceptions they be: No. 8 is to the effect that no Mason shall argue or contend with his fellow or give him any other name in the place of meeting than brother or fellow; No. 11 imposes a penalty on any fellow who

may disclose the secrets of his master or his fellows, or their counsel, whether spoken in the Lodge or without, to bring discredit on them, "Whereby the science may be ill spoken of"; and No. 12 forbids any fellow from holding an assembly to make Masons free without acquainting the Master and Wardens. This at least indicates a form of admission, or acceptance, very different from our ceremonies, [157] and in fact there is no indication in the minutes of any single non-operative member of the Lodge before 1748. The rules also show that it was the duty of the apprentice's master to give him his charge within a year, and with this possible exception there is no entry in the entire series of the Alnwick records that suggests that any secrets were communicated. The earliest minute is of the year 1703.

The Swalwell Lodge is the precursor of the modern Lodge of Industry at Gateshead, and its minutes commence in 1725, ten years before it came into the Grand Lodge establishment; but although they are actually of a date later than the formation of Grand Lodge, they may fairly be considered as typical of the working of English Operative Lodges in the period we are considering; though the late date always makes the influence of speculative innovations a possibility that cannot be ignored. We have the Swalwell rules as they were reduced to writing in 1730, and one is of particular interest. It runs: "If any be found not faithfully to keep and maintain the three fraternal signs, and all points of fellowship, and principal matters relating to the secret craft, each offence, penalty ten guineas." The penalty is different from some we are familiar with,

but the indications of a ceremonial resembling ours are obvious. At the same time we have in extenso an address to the apprentice on his admission, which is merely a brief abstract of the Legend of the Old Charges.

But not Merely was the Swalwell Lodge operative [158] at the time we first know it – and according to tradition it had been founded in 1690 by operatives from the south – but even after it came under the jurisdiction of Grand Lodge it maintained its operative character for a generation or more.

When we come to the Old Lodge at York we do seem to be dealing with a true speculative Lodge, which used to hold meetings where it thought fit in the county, not merely in York itself. One such may have been held at Scarborough in 1705; and one was held at Bradford in 1713, when seventeen gentlemen of the neighbourhood were admitted Masons. The earliest minute extant is of 1712, and clearly shows the Lodge as already established, and not then meeting for the first time; and from other sources we know it was flourishing in 1705. But the minutes are simply entries of the names of persons admitted as Masons, and of joining members, until 1725 at all events, when the Old Lodge began to call itself a Grand Lodge. The phrase used is Honourable Society and Fraternity of Freemasons; and Company is used alternatively to Fraternity, but with no difference of meaning. We must needs call this a speculative Lodge, but we know nothing of its proceedings or observances.

Accordingly for the English speculative Lodges before the Grand Lodge Era we have to fall back on the few notices of contemporary writers. There are, however, two other isolated references to Lodges of this period in the nature of Lodge records. On the version of the Old Charges known as York [159] MS. 4, there is an endorsement which demonstrates the existence of a Lodge somewhere in 1693. That the Lodge in question was the York Lodge is a probable suggestion, but no definite conclusion on the point seems possible. Dr. Anderson speaks of a Lodge that met in London in 1693, at the instance of Sir Robert Clayton, and also mentions the meeting places of six other metropolitan Lodges; but unfortunately Dr. Anderson, although for some of our history our only authority, is also a very unreliable one.

A speech made at Boston by Governor Belcher in 1741, which indicated that he had been made a Mason in 1704, presumably in London, may be mentioned in passing, and also the fact that when in 1732 a certain Edward Hall, member of the Lodge at the Swan, Chichester, applied to Grand Lodge for relief, his petition was supported by the second Duke of Richmond, who stated that Hall had been made a Mason by his father, the first Duke, in 1696.

The references in the seventeenth century to Speculative Freemasonry are five in number and bring us up to 1691. I have already made several references to them. They are:

(i) Two entries made by Elias Ashmole, an antiquary, in his diary. In 1646 he mentions his own initiation in a Lodge at Warrington. In 1682 he mentions his being the senior- Mason present at another

meeting at Masons' Hall, London, when several persons were admitted into the Fellowship.

[160] This entry has been misquoted in the most extraordinary way to read as though Ashmole himself were again initiated; and much confusion has resulted.

(ii) Randle Holme, the Chester antiquarian, was a member of a Lodge in 1665. There is a note in his writing of the form of oath, and he himself copied a version of the Old Charges, and gives some information as to the craft in his writings.

(iii) Dr. Plot in a history of Staffordshire gives an account of the Masons, and obviously had access to a version of the Old Charges. He also mentions the use of signs ; and speaks of the craft as spread more or less over the nation. The date of this is 1686.

(iv) Aubrey, an antiquarian, made in 1691 what are really rough memoranda, one mentioning an intended meeting of Freemasons, and the other repeating what Sir William Dugdale had told him many years previously about the Society. This entry has been already referred to in an earlier chapter and part quoted. The rest of it reads:

"They are known to one another by certayn signs and (Marks) and Watchwords. It continues to this day. They have severall Lodges in severall Counties, for their reception: and when any of them fall into decay, the Brotherhood is to relieve him &ct. The manner of their adoption is very formall, and with an Oath of Secresy." In the original the word Marks is written and then scored out. In these

references we have absolutely all [161] the information available as to Speculative Freemasonry in England between the admissions of the London Company in 1620 mentioned in an earlier chapter, and the account furnished by Dr. Anderson of the formation of Grand Lodge in 1717, other than what is furnished by the York Lodge minutes as already detailed, and by the two allusions in the Tatter to the Freemasons' signs and tokens, and secret intimation of each other in 1709 and 1710. The bearing of these references on our heraldry, and on the problem of our early ritual, has been already discussed. Other references occur here and there in contemporary literature, e.g. in the Dunciad, but add nothing to our knowledge ; and between Ashmole's Lodge of 1682 and 1717 the only clear notices we have of any Lodge meeting in London are Dr. Anderson's reference to a meeting in 1693 given on a previous page, and Aubrey's note, to which I shall return.

We come now to the great masonic event of the eighteenth century – the Assembly of 1717 out of which arose the Grand Lodge of England, and with Dr. Anderson's account of this, and a few comments it will be necessary to make on it, I shall complete what has, of necessity, been but a brief account of what is known of the first era in the history of our craft, and of its possible origins. Dr. Anderson writes:

"King George I entered London most magnificently on 20 September 1714. And after the Rebellion was over, A.D. 1716, the few Lodges at London, [162] finding themselves neglected by Sir

Christopher Wren, thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the Center of Union and Harmony, viz. the Lodges that met:

"(i) at the Goose and Gridiron Alehouse in St. Paul's Churchyard;
"(ii) at the Crown Alehouse in Parker's Lane, near Drury Lane;
"(iii) at the Apple Tree Tavern in Charles Street Covent Garden;
"(iv) at the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel Row, Westminster.

"They and some old Brothers met at the said Apple Tree, and having put into the Chair the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge), they constituted themselves A GRAND LODGE pro tern pore in due form, and forthwith revived the Quarterly Communication of the officers of Lodges (called the Grand Lodge), resolved to hold the annual assembly and Feast, and then to chuse a Grand Master from among themselves, till they should have the honour of a Noble Brother at their head."

Accordingly

"On St. Baptist's Day, in the third year of King George I., A.D. 1717, the ASSEMBLY and Feast of the Free and Accepted Masons was held at the aforesaid Goose and Gridiron Alehouse.

"Before dinner, the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge) in the chair, proposed a list of proper Candidates, and the Brethren, by a majority of hands, elected Mr. Anthony Sayer, gentleman, Grand Master of Masons, who being forthwith invested with the badges of office and [163] power, by the said oldest

Master, and installed, was duly congratulated by the assembly, who paid him the homage."

With regard to this, it must be observed that there was nothing to revive on this occasion; and, in fact, in 1717 there is no doubt the Fraternity adopted an organisation of which no Mason or Lodge had any previous experience, or even tradition, except in so far as the Old Charges mention the Assembly ; and even they contain no hint of a central governing body.

The history of the Four Old Lodges prior to 1717 is simply unknown. From Aubrey we learn of a Lodge meeting to be held at St. Paul's on Monday, May 18th, 1691; at which he says, "Sir Christopher Wren is to be adopted a brother, and Sir Henry Goodric, of the Tower, and divers others."

In a previous chapter I have pointed out that Anderson's assertion that Sir Christopher Wren was Grand Master is patently incorrect, since there was no such office before 1717. And Aubrey's statement that in 1691 he was going to be adopted contradicts Preston, who claims him as a Freemason at a much earlier date. In fact both Anderson and Preston seem to have conferred posthumous honours on the architect of St. Paul's on general principles, and without having any records to justify them; and we do not even know that he was adopted in 1691, or at any other date. But Aubrey's note is in a fashion confirmed by the fact that in the list of Lodges printed in [164] 1729, No, 1 is shown as meeting at St. Paul's Churchyard, and its date of constitution is given as 1691. Possibly this indicates that from about this period "the meetings of the Old Lodge of St.

Paul's began to be held statedly, and that from being what was then termed an 'occasional' it became a stated Lodge" (Gould, Four Old Lodges). In this same list the date of constitution of No. 2 is given as 1712; and this may represent a similar event in that case also. For Nos. 3 and 4 no dates can be suggested. No. 3 may even be earlier than No. 2, which it precedes in the first engraved lists. But No. 4 was probably established between 1712 and 1717. Today No. 1 is the Lodge of Antiquity; No. 2 is extinct; No. 3 is the Fortitude and Old Cumberland Lodge No. 12, having amalgamated with the Old Cumberland Lodge in 1818; and No. 4 is the Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge No. 4, on the present roll.

Channel Row has disappeared, and the old taverns no longer house the craft; but their localities can still be identified, and all lie within a very short distance of Great Queen Street, the modern home of Grand Lodge and centre of English Freemasonry.