

ABOUT FICTITIOUS AND FORGED MASONIC MSS.

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To the Masonic hankering mania for antiquity, and to zealous hankers for Christianizing the Masonic fraternity, we are mainly indebted for the stories which astonished the readers of the Hub MS., and also in the writings of Anderson, Hutchinson, Oliver, and all other English Masonic luminaries, until the appearance of Findel's history in the English language in 1866. Before 1717, Masonry was confined to believers in Christianity. The first charge in the old rituals was, "Ye shall be true men to God and Holy Church." Hence, there was then no necessity for Masonic luminaries to invent legends for the purpose of Christianizing the Masonic ritual; their sole motives for inventing Masonic fables was merely for the purpose of making Masonry appear older than it was. But after 1723 Masonry was declared in the Constitution to be *cosmopolitan* and *universal*. Since then a new school of pervertors of Masonic history arose, whose luminaries not only repeated the legends invented by the pre-1717 writers, but piled up equally ridiculous theories and legends of their own manufacture. Thus Hutchinson and other Masonic writers of the last century, not only believed in the antiquity of Masonry, but also believed that thou-

sands of years before Christ was born that in the Masonic mysteries Christian dogmas were taught. In "*The Star in the East*," Dr. Oliver says, "Freemasonry was revealed by God himself to the first man"; and in a foot note he adds, "This may appear a bold assertion, but I am persuaded it is nevertheless true." The manufacture of Masonic Templarism and other so-called Christian Masonic degrees is another proof that blind credulity was not confined exclusively to the pre-1717 Masons. The invention in this century of the legends about St. John the Baptist having been Master of a Lodge in Jerusalem, and how St. John the Evangelist was made Grand Master of Masons when upwards of ninety years of age, which formed part of the Masonic ritual when I came to Boston, proves conclusively that Masons, even in the middle of the 19th century, were not cured of blind credulity.

I will give another instance. In 1867 the new Boston Masonic Temple was dedicated, and P. G. Chaplain Bro. W. S. Studley, was the orator of the day. Bro. Studley seems to have been endowed with common-sense, and with more conscience than Masonic orators are usually troubled with, and, in the course of his oration, he said :

"It is not a pleasant task to disturb the complacency of men who are determined to enroll Nimrod, and Moses, and Solomon, and the King of Tyre, and his namesake, the widow's son, among the actual past members of the Order; but I am constrained to believe that these distinguished men were not Freemasons, except in the Pickwickian intimations of our ritual, to which intimations no man of research will insist upon giving a literal construction."—*Masonic Monthly*, Vol. VI., p. 339).

How many more hints of that kind the Rev. Brother uttered I know not, but it was no secret that the oration displeased the orthodox Masonic rulers of that time, and only within a few days Bro. W. B. Stratton, author of a history of that important day, assured me that the Rev. Orator gave him the MS. oration to insert into his book, but he was urged by those in power not to do it. So he printed a *garbled copy*; and, he added, "I am sorry to this day for not having printed the whole of it."

Again. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1753 appeared a long *yarn*, said to have been copied from a pamphlet printed in the English language at Frankfort, in Germany, in 1748, entitled "Certayne

Questions with Answers, written by the hande of Kyng Henrye the Sixth of the name, and faythfully copied by one Johan Leylande, Antiquarian, by command of his Highness."

Mr. Halliwell thinks that "his Highness" meant Henry VIII. This document was stated to have been copied by one Collins from a MS. in the Bodleian Library, and to have been enclosed in a letter from John Locke, the famous metaphysician, to Thomas, Earl of Pembroke, dated May 6th, 1698. This so-called MS. has been called the "Henry VI. MS.," the "Locke MS.," and the "Leyland MS.," and, of course, Henry VI. and John Locke were dubbed by Masonic luminaries as Brother Masons. It was reprinted in the "Pocket Companion" of 1754, and all subsequent "Pocket Companions," in the Ahiman Rezon of 1764, and all subsequent Ahiman Rezons, in Preston's "Illustrations" of 1772, and all subsequent editions of his Illustrations, in Calcott's Disquisitions, 1769; in Hutcheson's Spirit of Masonry, 1775, in the English Masonic Constitutions of 1759, 1767, and 1784, also in the *Freemasons' Magazine*, 1794, and in Dublin in 1803. Scores of St. John's Day orators, and learned Grand Masters delighted Masonic audiences with the dialogue in the said MS. between Freemasons and Bro. Henry VI. Mr. Halliwell says :

"It is singular that the circumstances attending its publication should have led no one to suspect its authenticity. A few years ago I was at the pains of making a long search in the Bodleian Library in hopes of finding the original [Henry VI. MS.], but without success, and I think there is little doubt that this celebrated and well-known document is a forgery."

But as Mr. Halliwell was not a Mason, Masonic writers never quote from Halliwell's Sketch of Masonic History. Findel's History of Freemasonry, published in the English language in 1866, threw some light upon the history of the so called Henry VI. MS. Soon after its appearance, says Findel, it was translated into German, and the first Freemason who denounced the Henry VI. MS. as spurious was the famous G. E. Lessing, who called it "dust, and nothing but dust." In which year Lessing pronounced that sentence I know not, but as Lessing died in 1781, it is evident that the fraud was discovered in Germany more than fifty years before Mr. Halliwell found it out in England.

The so-called "Charter of Cologne" is another imposture

which has been palmed off upon Masons. This MS. was manufactured for the purpose of Christianizing the ritual. Bro. Findel says, that, "If these documents had been proved to be genuine . . . they would completely have overthrown the aims . . . of Freemasonry, . . . for the aim and purpose of the Brotherhood would then have been the maintenance and propagation of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity." The history of the first appearance of the Cologne Charter is given by Bro. Gould, as follows :

"In the year 1816 Prince Fredrick, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands, received a packet of papers, accompanied by a letter, written in a female hand, and signed "C. née von J.," stating that the manuscripts had been found amongst her deceased father's effects, and that she believed he had received them from Mr. Van Boetzelaer. In 1818 the Grand Master caused copies to be made of the documents, and sent the Latin text, with a Dutch translation, to all the Lodges in the Netherlands. He also had all the manuscripts carefully examined by experts in writing, who at once expressed doubts as to their authenticity. Some Lodges, however, could not be divested of a belief in their genuineness, and the three hundredth anniversary of the alleged promulgation of the charter was actually celebrated by the Lodge 'La Bien Aimée' at Amsterdam in 1835.

"The *legend* runs thus: From 1519 to 1601 there was a Lodge at Amsterdam named 'Het Vredendall,' or the 'Valley of Peace,' which, having fallen into abeyance, was revived in 1637 under the title of 'Fredrick's Vredendall,' or 'Frederick's Valley of Peace.' The Lodge chest, according to a protocol, dated January 29, 1637, contained the following documents:—(1). The original warrant constitution of the Lodge, 'Het Vredendall,' *written in the English language.* (2). A roll of the members, 1519—1601; and (3). 'The Charter of Cologne,' *i. e.*, a document in cipher, signed by nineteen Master Masons in Cologne, June 24, 1535.

"These papers passed from one person to another, until 1790, when they were presented to Van Boetzelaer, the Grand Master of the Dutch Lodges.

"The so-called charter appears to have been first printed in the 'Annales Maconniques,' 1818, and many versions of, and commentaries upon, its text, have since appeared."

In 1825, Bro. Alexander Deuchar, a prominent Scotch Mason, and Grand Master of the Knights Templars, who believed in the antiquity of all the Masonic degrees in creation, as soon as he heard of the existence of the Cologne charter, he sent for it, had it translated into English, and had it inscribed into a record, and of course, believed in it. The reader, however, may find a copy of that charter in Bro. Lyon's History of Freemasonry in Scotland, and also in the Appendix to Bro. Findel's History of Freemasonry.

And here I cannot refrain from stating that I was very much astonished to read in the *Masonic Chronicle*, of February last, a kind of review of an article written by Bro. Col. Picton. Bro. Barker called it a "Remarkable Discovery." Bro. Picton found out not only that Lord Bacon was a Mason, but he also discovered the antiquity of the Rose Croix, besides many other things, and my friend Bro. Barker goes on to state :

"In prosecution of his researches, Bro. Picton has discovered a transcript in French of the minutes of a Lodge at La May, kept in Hollandish, of its proceedings from date of its constitution, January 29th, 1637, during its entire first year, terminating with an account of its celebration of St. John the Evangelist. This Lodge at La May is, moreover, declared to be a continuation of a still older Lodge at Amsterdam, a list of whose members existed, extending from 1519 to 1601."

And Bro. Barker winds up the review as follows :

"We regard Bro. Picton's researches invaluable, as demonstrating the existence of not only a Lodge of Symbolic Masonry, but of a Chapter of the Royal Arch, called *holy*, in the minutes, *eighty years* prior to the date usually assigned as that of the constitution of Freemasonry as we have it in our day."

The gushing compliments to Bro. Picton, right through Bro. Barker's comments in the said review, is very amusing, when we learn that Bro. Picton's "Remarkable Discovery" consists of his finding a French version of the spurious documents which were sent with the spurious so-called Cologne echarter to Prince Fredrick, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Netherlands, in 1816.

Again, when the Grand Lodge of Scotland was about organizing, in 1736, several Lodges disputed for priority of origin, each of these Lodges wanted to be No. 1 on the Lodge list ; the only reasons

these Lodges gave for their alleged age, was, that a church had been built in town where each was located, so many years ago. The assembly, however, decided that the Lodge which had the oldest record should be placed at the head of the Lodge list; and for that reason No. 1 was assigned to the Edinburgh Lodge, and No. 2 to Kilwinning Lodge. Kilwinning Lodge, however, afterwards rebelled, she turned herself into a Grand Lodge, and chartered Lodges, etc.; finally, for the sake of peace, Kilwinning Lodge was placed at the head of the list.

Glasgow had two Lodges in 1736, viz., St. John's Lodge and St. Mungo's Lodge: the latter joined the Grand Lodge, but the former was not satisfied with the number assigned to her on the Lodge list, and kept aloof, and so remained independent. In 1806 St. John's Lodge claimed to have discovered an old charter granted to it by King Malcolm Canmore, dated 1051, but as Malcolm did not reign in 1051, the date was afterwards changed to 1057, and later on to 1157. In 1810 the foundation stone for Nelson's monument was about to be laid in Glasgow, and a dispute arose between the two Glasgow Lodges for priority, and as St. John's Lodge flourished her Malcolm charter, she was allowed to march ahead of St. Mungo in the procession. And as King Malcolm ordained in the said charter that all Scottish Lodges to the end of time should pay tribute to the St. John's Lodge in Glasgow, St. John's Lodge, therefore, assumed the right to charter Lodges. In 1850, however, without questioning the authenticity of the Malcolm charter, the Grand Lodge of Scotland consented to place St. John's Lodge on its Lodge list as No. 3, *bis*, and St. John's Lodge was satisfied with the number assigned to it.

Later on, however, another dispute arose between the two Glasgow Lodges, when, if I recollect right, an anonymous writer attacked the genuineness of the Malcolm charter, and Bro. W. P. Buchan, a member of St. John's Lodge defended it. Bro. Buchan, however, *is no humbug*; he defended the authenticity of the charter as long as he believed that it was authentic, but when he became convinced that it was a fraud, he, though he was Senior Warden of St. John's Lodge, boldly denounced the forged charter, both in the Masonic papers as well as in the Grand Lodge, and the result was, St. Mungo Lodge got the best of it. The pride of St. John's Lodge was wounded. So, its rulers, "court-martialled" Bro. Buchan by

suspending him for five years; but the Grand Lodge of Scotland annulled the sentence of the Lodge. As an evidence of the faith of St. John's Lodge in its Malcolm charter, it celebrated, in 1870, its 813th anniversary. I doubt, however, whether the Lodge celebrated the 814th anniversary.

But the joke is, the epidemic rage for antiquity seems to have affected St. Mungo Lodge. For, in the (London) *Freemason*, Jan. 28th, 1871, a correspondent furnished the following communication, viz. :

“There has been a struggle going on for a long time among several of our Scotch Lodges for precedence in regard to their antiquity, while the wonderful discoveries that are sometimes made are often rather curious. One of the latest—which, however, requires further explanation—is in reference to the Glasgow St. Mungo Lodge, No. 27, and its new date of 1051. On looking over the list of Scottish Lodges for years back, I find the date of St. Mungo's Lodge given as ‘1729.’ Yet, shortly since, I was shown a large and gorgeously painted silk banner, with the inscription in large gold letters upon it, ‘Glasgow Lodge St. Mungo, 27, A.D. 1051.’ This date, therefore, of St. Mungo Lodge throws the St. John's Lodge with its ‘Malcolm Canmore,’ and pretended 813th anniversary completely into shade; for does not 1051 carry us back to the classical times of the immortal Macbeth. What next?”

The subject is not exhausted, and I may continue it hereafter. Sufficient, however, has been given to prove that even in the 19th century blind credulity still prevails among Masonic luminaries.