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SO-CALLED HENRY VI. OR JOHN LOCKE MASONIC MANUSCRIPT.

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Among English-speaking Masons, *the age of Masonic faith* lasted until Bro Findel's history of Masonry appeared in Germany in 1860. The said history probably suggested, and encouraged Bro. Steinbrenner to write his "Origin of Masonry" in 1863. Up to that time invention of Masonic legends was the *rule* among Masonic writers, and *truth* was a rare *exception*. For, in the first place, the mass of our Masons then (and even now) did not care to read or investigate; hence, the professional Masonic writers cared not to investigate, for it was easier for them to copy all kinds of Masonic fiction, and even to invent new fictions, than it was to search for truth; and when these worthies had adopted certain notions, whether right or wrong, they declared them *infallible*, and abused every one who dared to dispute them.

Now, among other notions that the said writers promulgated were: 1st—That Masonry was communicated to Adam in Paradise; and, 2d—That the Masonic secrets consisted of knowing the future coming of Jesus Christ. Hence, Adam was not only the first man and first Freemason, but he was the first Christian. So taught the famous Rev. Dr. Oliver, and, of course, no one would contradict him; and, if one was inclined to do so, it was against, not only

the prejudice, but also the interest of an editor of a Masonic paper, to refuse giving insertion to views which contradicted such a writer as Dr. Oliver. Here in America the disciples of Dr. Oliver monopolized the Masonic press, and were ever ready to swear to Dr. Oliver's notions; hence, Bro. Findel was abused by the American Masonic writers, and his writings were disparaged in their papers. The split in 1860 among the *high degreers* divided our Masons into factions; opposition journals were started, and discussion in a manner became somewhat more free, and so Bro. Findel's history began to be defended in the opposition journals. On the other side of the Atlantic, however, the most prominent writers at once acknowledged the merit of Findel's history, among whom it is sufficient to mention the names of Bros. Woodford, Hughan and Lyon, the latter now G. S. of Scotland, and since then some Masons at least began to learn the true history of Freemasonry.*

Now, among the fictions exploded by Bro. Findel, not the least was the story of above one hundred years of age, variously called either the Henry VI. or the Locke Masonic manuscript, which story caused the Masonization of King Henry VI. and of the famous John Locke.

Briefly then an unknown Mr. Collins published in the Gentleman's Magazine, in London, in 1753, a document said to have been printed in Frankfort-on-the-Main in 1748, which contained an account of a conversation held between Henry VI. and the learned Masons of his day, and this conversation was written originally by King Henry VI himself. Nothing, however, was known about the Henry VI.

* An early orthodox editor of the Philadelphia Keystone (not MacCalla) seems to have wound up an article on Bro. Findel's History of Masonry in high orthodox style, which evidently pleased Bro. C. W. Moore of Boston, who reprinted it without comment in his magazine of 1871, page 146, which extract will show how Bro. Findel was hated by the then orthodox American Masonic luminaries. I could furnish other specimens, but this will suffice:

"We have always had great misgivings of this Findel. From what we have read by him he appears to us a gutteral, empty, self-conceited block-head. The above history of Freemasonry in America will give to all his histories a weight of an authenticity, and value, and worth, about equal to—the latest advices from the war in France. This Findel is a first-class fool, and we advise him to give up writing and plant potatoes."

I will only add that hatred of Bro. Findel is not even now quite extinct among "Masonic antiquity" and "ancient landmark" *sticklers* of our American Masonic luminaries, especially so among the *high degreers*.

manuscript until the time of Henry VIII. who, as it is well known, ordered all the monasteries to be closed about or near 1532. King Henry VIII., however, authorized Leland, an antiquary, to examine the books and manuscripts which he might find in the monasteries, and to preserve and save what was valuable, among which Leland found the said original manuscript of Henry VI.; but, as it was in a bad state of preservation, Leland copied it, and deposited his own copy in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, where it remained unknown until the famous John Locke discovered it in 1696, and took a copy thereof, and sent it to the Earl of Pembroke, accompanied with a letter containing some comments thereon. But, somehow, either Locke's own copy and letter, or a copy of Locke's written letter, and of his copy of the Henry VI. manuscript reached Frankfort in Germany, and was there printed *verbatim et literatim* in 1748. And this Frankfort printed copy somehow fell into the hands of the said unknown Collins, who caused it to be published in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1753, under the following heading :

“Certayne Questyons wyth Awnswers to the same concernynge the Mystery of Maconrye: wryttene by the Hande of Kinge Henrye the Sixthe of the Name, and faythfullye copyed by me Johan Leylande, Antiquarius, by the Commande of his Hyhnesse.”

“They be as followethe.”

This startling communication in the Gentleman's Magazine was received by the Masonic world as “gospel truth.” It was reprinted in the preface to an English Masonic Constitution; also in Preston's history of Masonry, and in other Masonic publications.—Preston, *in true Masonic style*, improved the story by adding that not only was Henry VI. initiated into Masonry in the year 1442, but that the King himself presided over Lodges, and, moreover, the King nominated William Waynfleet, Bishop of Winchester, for Grand Master.

Two German Masons, viz.: Bro. Krause and Bro. Fessler, respectively, copied the Henry VI. manuscript from the Gentleman's Magazine; the latter believed in its authenticity; the former hesitated. But, says Bro. Findel:

“The first who declared the document to be counterfeit,” and “dust and nothing but dust,” was G. E. Lessing. First, the manuscript itself does not exist; second, Leland's copy has been in vain sought in the Bodleian Library, and Dallaway, with great justice,

calls attention to the facts that it could scarcely be possible that there ever existed a copy in the handwriting of Henry VI. at a time [when] there were but few men of high rank who could write legibly. Again, that neither in Locke's letter nor in his works is there any mention of his initiation into Masonry. In the manuscript catalogues of Leland and Bodley, the manuscript in question is not mentioned."

The above is but a part of Bro. Findel's arguments for rejecting the authenticity of the so-called Henry VI. manuscript. The English Masonic writers supported our German brethren's reasoning, hence for a number of years no prominent Mason ventured to defend the antiquity of the Henry VI. manuscript. I was, however, informed that at a recent so-called "Council of Deliberation" of Boston *high degrées* an old Massachusetts Masonic dignitary, of unbounded faith in Masonic antiquity, whose mind (like those of a majority of American Masonic dignitaries, especially if they be *high degrées*) is so crystallized and petrified as to disable him from either learning anything that is new or to forget anything that is old; the said brother, like most of his class, has probably never read either Bro. Findel's history or any other modern Masonic history; his knowledge of Masonic history he may have picked up from some old orthodox Masonic magazine, or from our famous St. John's-day orators. Well, at the said Council of Deliberation, the said brother delighted the high degree audience with an account of the Henry VI. manuscript, and astonished at least some of his hearers with the information, that Peter Goras, who is mentioned in the said manuscript, was really and truly meant for our ancient Bro. Pythagoras. And, he said, that as the story about the Henry VI. manuscript is not impossible, it must therefore be true. The above information, however, suggested to my mind a new method of testing the alleged antiquity and authenticity of the said Henry VI. manuscript.

I must, however, premise that Richard Chenevix Trench, D. D., Archbishop of Dublin, published some years ago two courses of lectures; one is headed "On the Study of Words," and the other course was printed in 1855, and headed "English, Past and Present." Both of the said works were reprinted in New York by the Humboldt Publishing Company, and in the fourth lecture on "English, Past and Present" I found the following information, viz.:

"Within the last few years attention has been drawn to the cir-

cumstance that [the word] 'its' is of comparatively recent introduction into the [English] language. The earliest example which has yet been adduced is from Florio's *World of Words*, 1598; the next from the translation of Montaigne by the same author, 1603. You will not find it once in the English Bible. The office which it fulfils now being there fulfilled either by 'his' (Gen. i. 11; Exod. xxxvii., 17; Matt. v., 15) or 'her' in (Jon. i., 15; Rev. xxii. 2) These applied freely to inanimate things as to persons, [that is, instead of the word 'its' a masculine or feminine gender was used] or else by 'thereof' (Gen. iii., 6; Ps. xv., 10) or 'of it,' (Dan. vii. 5). . . . To Bacon, 'its' is [or was] altogether unknown; he, too, had no scruple about using "his" as a neuter, as in the following passage: Learning has *his* infancy, when *it* is but beginning and almost childish; then *his* youth when *it* is luxuriant and juvenile; then *his* strength of years, when *it* is solid and reduced; and has *his* old age, when *it* waxeth dry and exhaust. 'Its' is equally unknown to Spencer. Some rare examples have been found in Ben Jonson, who, however, knows nothing of it in his *Grammar*; in Shakespeare, too, it occurs very seldom, in the far larger number of his plays, not at all; indeed, all counted, not more than fourteen times in the whole; though singularly enough, three of these uses occur in one speech of twelve lines in the *Winter's Tale*. Milton, for the most part, avoids it, though we find it a few times in his poetry.

And I will here add, that having examined carefully Shakespeare's poems and sonnets, but I could not find the word *its* in either of them.

The Rev. Lecturer calls attention to the fact that a few decades after the word "its" for the first time appeared in an English book, the time of its origin was unknown to Dryden. He says:

"How soon, with all this, the actual novelty of [the word] 'its' was forgotten, is strikingly evidenced by the fact that when Dryden, in one of his moods of fault-finding with the poets of the preceding generation, is taking Ben Jonson to task for general inaccuracy in his English diction, among other counts of his indictment, he quotes this line from *Cataline* :

"Though heaven should speak with all HIS wrath at once."

After which our Rev. Lecturer goes on to say :

Curious, too, is it to note that in the earnest controversy which followed on the publication by Chatterton of the poems [Chatterton]

ascribed to the monk Rowley, who should have lived in the fifteenth century, no one appealed to the following line, viz.:

“Life and all *its* goods I scorn,”

As deciding at once that the poems were not of the age which they [or rather Chatterton] pretended. Warton, who denied, though with some hesitation, their antiquity, giving many sufficient reasons for this denial, failed to take note of this little word [*its*] which betrayed the forgery at once.

Now, the statement made by Archbishop Trench about the origin of the word *its*, has, as far as I know, never been disproved or disputed. Assuming it, therefore, to be a fact, it occurred to my mind, that perhaps the so-called Henry VI. manuscript may, like Chatterton's poem, also contain the word *its*, and if so, why should not the word *its* disprove the authenticity of the Henry VI. manuscript, as it would have disproved “at once” the antiquity and authenticity of Chatterton's poems, and on taking up that *precious* document, I found the word *its* in the very first answer the Masons are said to have given to King Henry's first question, viz.:

Question—“What mote ytt be?”

Answer—“Ytt been the skylle of nature, the understandyng of the myghte that ys hereynne and *its* werckynges.”

Briefly, then, there is not the slightest evidence that the so-called Henry VI. manuscript was printed in Frankfort in 1748; there is no evidence that Leland deposited his copy of the said manuscript in the Bodleian Library, or that John Locke ever found such a manuscript in the said Oxford Library, and last and not least, the word “its” therein proves conclusively that the so-called Henry VI. manuscript is simply a fraud. And, it is a curious fact, that while the said fraud was exposed by Lessing (who died in 1781) that no English or American Masonic writer was aware of it (as far as I know) before the appearance of Bro. Findel's History of Masonry. Halliwell, who was *not a Mason*, in his remarks on Masonic history, appended to the poem which he discovered and known as “the Halliwell manuscript,” gave very good reasons for discrediting the authenticity of the so-called “Henry VI. manuscript.” But, though the said poem was reprinted in 1843, in Moore's Magazine (in Boston) and reprinted and referred to in other Masonic publications, yet, it seems, that none of these Masonic writers knew that Halliwell ever criticised the claimed authenticity of the Henry VI.

manuscript. Mr. Halliwell says: "A few years since I was at the pains of making a long research in the Bodleian Library in hope of finding the original, but without success, and I think there is little doubt that this celebrated and well known document is a forgery.

"In the first place, why should such a document have been printed abroad? Was it likely that it should have found its way to Frankfort nearly a half century afterwards [after Locke wrote it] and been published without any explanation of the source whence it was obtained? Again, the orthography is most grotesque, and too gross ever to have been penned either by Henry VI. or Leland, or both combined. For instance, we have Peter Gowere, a Grecian, explained in a note by the fabricator—who else could have solved it?—to be Pythagoras! As a whole, it is but a very clumsy attempt at deception, and is quite parallel to the recently discovered one of the *first English Merenrie*."

And it is certainly strange, after so much has been written against the genuineness of said poem, that in 1892 a American Masonic dignitary and *thirty-third* should still believe, not only in the authenticity of the said MS., but who seems even ready to swear up and down, that Henry VI. and John Locke actually rode on *Masonic goats*!

BOSTON, MASS., July 12th, 1892.