

THE GOLDEN FLEECE.

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In the E. A. degree the candidate is presented with a Lamb-skin, which he is told "is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle—more honorable than the Star and Garter," &c. I have visited many Lodges in various parts of the Union, and have seen the degrees conferred several times, but never yet heard any explanation given of these so pompously oft-repeated words. Consequently the initiate is left to his own imagination or industry to find out what it all means. Having often out of curiosity asked Masters and Past Masters what the Golden Fleece was, and always with the one answer, "I don't know," I thought what little I might be able to say on the subject would stimulate other brethren who are well read in the classics to enlighten the readers of the *Voice* more fully on the subject.

From Mythology we learn that the Golden Fleece was a sacred relic. By some it was called the Golden Fleece of Jauus. There are a great many legends connected with it in ancient Mythology. One of them is related thus:

Athamas was directed by the Oracle of Delphi to sacrifice his son, which he was about to put into execution, when Nephele snatched away his son and daughter, and gave them a golden-fleeced ram, which Mercury had given her, which ram carried them through the air over sea and land. The ram was afterwards sacrificed to Jupiter Phryxus, who gave the fleece to Aestas, who nailed it to an oak in the grove of *Mans*. This is the legend as related by Apollodorus.

But the Order of the Golden Fleece is one of the most honorable of the Orders of Chivalry existing in Europe, being second only to the British Order of the Garter. It is conferred in Spain and Austria. It was instituted on the 10th of January 1429, at Bruges, in Flanders, by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy and Brabant, being the day of his marriage with his third wife, Isabella of Portugal. It was founded in honor of the Holy Virgin and Saint Andrew, for the purpose of strengthening the Catholic Church, religion, virtue, and good manners.

The cause of its institution is differently related; but it appears most probable that, having determined to establish a Order of Knighthood, Philip chose for the badge the staple material of the country, which was the Fleece. And this emblem was the more agreeable from its connection with Mythology, when the Argonautic Expedition was undertaken to obtain it under the guidance of Jason, the one-sandled adventurer. When the Order was just established, the Grand Mastership of the Order was maintainably attached to the Earl-*dom* of Flanders, that once flourishing country, the birth-place and seat of European commerce. The second festival of the Order was held on Nov. 2, 1431. The statutes then provided that if the male line of the House of Burgundy should become extinct, the husband of the daughter and heiress of the last sovereign should be the chief of the Order; and in this way it passed to the House of Austria, by the marriage of the only daughter of the Grand Master to Maximilian, Arch-duke of Austria, and afterwards Emperor of Germany. The Order was re-established by Emperor Charles, at Vienna, in 1713, and Philip the Fifth, in Spain, in 1721, both claiming the Grand Mastership of the Order, since which time the Order has been conferred in both countries upon persons distinguished for services rendered to their countries.

So honorable is the Order of the Golden Fleece, that a Knight ranks above all persons but Princes of the blood, are exempt from all taxes, and were permitted to set covered in the presence of the king, with other very great privileges.

All Knights of the Order must be Roman Catholics, and it can be conferred on a Protestant only by a dispensation from the Pope. The badge of the Order is a Golden Fleece or Lamb with a gold flint stone enameled blue, on which is engraved the motto of the Order. The collar of the Order is composed of double steels, interwoven

with flint stones, emitting sparks of fire, enameled in their proper colors, at the end of which hangs the Golden Fleece. On days of ceremony the Knights wear a splendid costume: A robe of red velvet, lined with white silk, and a long purple velvet mantle, lined with white satin, with a border embroidered with gold; a cap of purple velvet, with gold embroidering, from which drops a piece of velvet, fastened to the shoulder; a plain band is suspended from the left of the cap; the shoes and stockings are red.

The anniversary of the Order is celebrated at Vienna on St. Andrew's day. If that day falls on a week day, then it is celebrated on Sunday, when all the Knights go, in grand costume, in procession to church, hear divine service, and then return to their Chapter-room, where they dine. On the day of the Epiphany the Chapter is presided over by the Emperor. At the conclusion, the Emperor, preceded by his court and accompanied by the Knights, proceeds to the hall of the Knights, and takes his seat upon the throne, each Knight taking his stall. Then the candidates, who have been waiting in an adjoining chamber, in the dress of the Order, are led in by the oldest Knight, preceded by the King-at-arms, and enter the hall of the Knights. The candidate is invested by the Grand Master with the Order by three blows of the sword. He then takes the oath of the Order. The Emperor with his own hands then puts the collar round his neck, and embraces him, which ceremony is repeated by all the Knights; after which all the Knights turn to the Grand Chapter-room, where the newly-received Knights occupy their allotted stalls. Any business of importance is then transacted, and the Chapter is closed.

This is a condensed account of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which, so often told to the candidate at his initiation, is nothing compared to the Lamb-skin in point of antiquity. Of course, I do not pretend to say anything to the reverse, but hope, as the subject is now opened, some one else will have something to say on the subject which will interest your readers more than this short and imperfect article possibly can.—*Voice of Masonry*.

MASONIC.

We learn that the Godfrey De Bouillon Encomendment of the Royal, Exalted, Religious and Military Order of Masonic Knights Templar, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Conclave of England and Wales, has been for some time past established in this city.—On Friday last, the annual installation of officers took place, the ceremony was performed by Eminent Sir Knt., Captain Thompson Wilson of London, C. W. The following are the names of the Officers:

Eminent Sir Knt.,	Thomas B. Harris,	Eminent
	Commander.	
" "	Col. W. M. Wilson, Past	" "
" "	Col. Geo. W. Whitehead,	" "
	Prelate.	
" "	Charles Magill, 1st Captain	" "
	Commanding Columns.	
" "	Dougal McInnis, 2nd Captain	" "
	Commanding Columns.	
" "	Thomas McCracken, Regis-	" "
	trar.	
" "	Robert J. Hamilton, Treas-	" "
	urer.	
" "	M. F. Shaler, Expert.	" "
" "	Oliver Gable, Almoner.	" "
" "	Jno. W. Mutton, Captain of	" "
	Lines.	
" "	S. B. Campbell, 1st Herald.	" "
" "	William Irwin, 2nd Herald.	" "
" "	Jno. Morrison, Equerry.	" "

—Hamilton Spectator.

An Eastern editor, heads his list of births, marriages, and deaths—"Hatched, Matched, and Dispatched."

A young lady was discharged from one of the largest vinegar houses in Boston, last week, because she was so sweet that she kept the vinegar from fermenting. A sour old maid is wanted to fill her place.

A FRAGMENT OF HISTORY.

BY THE M. W. AND HON. JOHN L. LEWIS, JR.

In No. 26 of the "Tattler" for Thursday, June 9th, 1709, occurs this passage, in speaking of a class of men called Pretty Fellows:

"You see them accost each other with effeminate airs; they have their signs and tokens like Freemasons; they rail at womankind," &c.

I do not remember of ever having seen the passage quoted; but the entire paper from which it is selected bears indisputable evidences of the peculiar style of its writer, Sir Richard Steele, one of the wits of Queen Anne's time—a man about town, and a close observer of everything transpiring in London in his day.

It was a favorite position of the Anti-masonic writers thirty years ago, and it is asserted and believed at the present time, by those who agree with them in sentiment, that Freemasonry had its origin in 1717 (eight years after the date of the paper in question,) at the time of the revival of the Grand Lodge; that previous to that time its only existence was in the company or guild of operative masons, styled free, because they were freemen of London; and that the secret language of the Craft was invented in 1717 by Payne, Desaguliers, Anderson, and their associates.

The sentence, therefore, is important in its bearing upon the history of the Fraternity at the commencement of the eighteenth century, and there is something more in it than a bare allusion.

The writer is addressing a miscellaneous public, and is giving, in his usual lively style of description, mixed with good humored satire, an account of a band of London dandies and loungers, whom he terms in the quaint language of the day, Pretty Fellows. He describes their effeminacy and gossip; and to giving his readers the best idea that they were a closely allied community, represents them as having "signs and tokens like Freemasons." Of course, he would employ in this, as in every other of his essays, such language as would convey the clearest and simplest idea to the mind of his readers. It is conceivable, therefore, if Freemasonry was a novelty, that he would content himself with this simple reference.

Signs and tokens are spoken of in the same technical language which is employed at the present time, and as being something peculiarly Masonic. What other society ever had its signs except Masons and their modern imitators? In what other, even in modern societies, except the Masonic, is the grip termed "a token." When Sir Richard Steele was a Mason, I do not know, but I do know that, in the extract I have given, he speaks of these signs and tokens as matters well known and well understood by the public in his day as belonging to a particular class of men. It is left for the intelligent inquirer to ascertain how long and how widely such a custom must have existed and extended, to render such a brief and pointed reference to them intelligible to the public at large, or even to a mere London public. Certainly it must have reached back to a period prior to the commencement of the century, and at a time, too, when Masonry, as described by its own historians, as well as its enemies, had fallen into neglect and disuse under the Grand Mastership of Sir Christopher Wren, and hence claimed no particular attention from the public to attract notice to its peculiarities.

Again: they are spoken of as "Freemasons," and not merely "masons" or artificers in stone, and brick and mortar; and this, too, like the signs and tokens, is unaccompanied by a single word of explanation. If it meant operative masons only, freemen of the guild or corporation, why should the compound word be used, connectedly, as in the origin, by a hyphen? (I quote, by the way, from an edition of the *Tattler*, published in London in 1785.) Why not say Free-carpenters or Free-smiths as well?

But it is needless to urge this question further. The conclusion forces irresistibly upon the mind of every candid and intelligent person, that there existed in London in 1709, and for a long time before, a society known as the Free-masons, having certain distinct modes of recognition, and that