

is not history; in many cases it turns out to be the mere essence of mythical lore, and it is surprising that any one should attempt to palm off upon the readers of a Masonic Magazine the supposition that Masonry had an existence in the time of Solomon, or that Odd Fellowship was known in the time of Moses. There is nothing easier than to conjure up a tradition to the effect that King Solomon must have been a Mason, from the fact that he was a builder. The recent work by Bro. Fort should be in the hands of all who have any doubts on the question of the origin of Masonry. He shows clearly enough that what is known as Speculative Masonry—that is the Freemasonry of to-day—sprang from Operative Masonry carried on by guilds, or societies of operatives, who, in the course of time, admitted non-operatives to their ranks; hence the origin of Speculative or Symbolic Masonry as practiced at the present day. If Odd Fellowship existed at the time spoken of, how strange that it should not have taken form sooner than it did. It is too bad of a Masonic writer to throw Masonry so far into the shade. He must have known that he was drawing upon his imagination when he penned the assertion that Solomon and Moses originated, the one Masonry, and the other Odd-Fellowship.

Mythic Masonry has had its exponents, it is true, but none of them did more than hint at the traditional origin of the Order before the dawn of Christianity. Such, however, as have ventured beyond the domain of romance, have not hesitated to frown down the apocryphal notion that Masonry existed through the ages long before the birth of Christ. The Masonry of the third and fourth centuries was of a character only similar to that of the present day in so far as it was conducted with secrecy; but it was composed of bodies of operatives banded together for self-protection in securing their just earnings, and it was not until the fifteenth century that Freemasonry really took form and shape. Bro. Fort tells us in the introduction to his admirable history that "While Masonic authors have, in many instances, carefully collected material which added to a fairer and more correct appreciation of Lodge ritualism, its general scope and purpose, a too palpable reiteration of unsubstantial and flimsy traditions, has at length impressed the minds of members and others that no other origin of the fraternity can be received than that which leads back to the Solomonian Temple at Jerusalem; and indeed, until within a few years past, it was gravely asserted that Masonry had begun in the Garden of Eden." Legendary lore may be all well enough in its way, but it will not do to substitute myths for facts, and thus mislead the world with the belief that Masonry dates back "to the good old days of Adam and Eve." It is ancient enough in its real character to dispense with the notion that it cannot be traced to its origin. History proves how it originated, and traces up its progress from the very start. What need, then, to vamp up old traditions and unlikely stories, in order to give to it a doubtful, if not altogether unreal, position? Ancient and honorable as it is, there can be no necessity for trumping up silly stories about Solomon being a Freemason, when in truth he could know nothing of the occult art for the simple reason that it had no existence in his time. We are willing to believe that the wise king encouraged building, and thereby had much to do with operative masonry; but there was no fraternization of such a character as succeeded the Christian era: hence it is impossible that Free-masonry has been handed down from