

a Society, by King Athelstan, has every adjunct of external probability.

The most refined principles of the art were kept concealed among the more ingenious members of the Fraternity—the Freemasons—in imitation, perhaps, of a law which, according to Vitruvius, the ancient architects had established among themselves—"non erudibent nisi suos liberos aut cognatos, et eos viros bonos instituebant, quibus tantarum rerum fidei pecuniæ sine dubitatione permitterentur." So studiously did they conceal their secrets, that it may be fairly questioned whether even some of those who were admitted into the Society of Freemasons were wholly skilled in all the mysterious portions of the art.

That industrious antiquary, John Leland, has preserved, in his collections in the Bodleian Library, "certaine questyons, with answers to the same, concernynge the mystery of maconrye, wryttene by the hand of Kyng Henrye the Sixthe." * The answer to the question, "How comede ytt yn Englonde?" is as follows:

"Peter Gover, a Greacian, journeyedde ffor cunnyng yn Egypte, and yn Syria, and yn everyche lond whereas the Venetians hadde plauntedde maconry; and wynnyng entrance yn al Lodges of Maconnes, he lernede muche, and retournedde, and woned yn Grecia Magna, wacksyng and becommynge a myghtye wyseacre, and rateliche renowned, and her he framed a grate lodge at Groton, and maked many maconnes, some whereoffe dyd journye yn Fraunce and maked many maconnes, wherefromme, yn processe of tyme, the arte passed yn Englonde."

This refers to the well-known story about Pythagoras. Groton is the name of a place in England, but the one here meant is Crotona, a city of Grecia Magna, which, in the time of Pythagoras, was in a very flourishing condition. The answers to the eighth and ninth questions are also exceedingly curious.

Henry VI. was the great patron of the societies of Masons, and shielded

them from a great deal of persecution, which had begun to assail them. The strenuous enthusiasm of Wickliffe maintained that beautiful churches savoured of hypocrisy, and, therefore, were pernicious. This opinion, directed against the very foundation and origin and upholds of the different lodges, was not likely to render their situation more safe. It is said that Henry actually joined the society, and, whether the piece copied by Leland be really in his handwriting or not, it is certain that in his will he left to his college in Cambridge the annual sum of £117 6s. 10d. for the wages of officers belonging to the works then in operation:

	£	s.	d.
For the master.....	50	0	0
For the clarke.....	13	6	8
For the chief-mason.....	16	13	4
For the chief-carpenter.....	12	18	0
For the chief-smith.....	6	13	4
For two perveours, either of them at sixpence per day.....	18	5	6
	£117 6 10		

No mean sum in those days for one of a body to inspect the works; and, it must be remembered, a Freemason.

According to Bede, Bennet abbot of Wirral first brought Masons and workers in stone into this country. The company of Freemasons had their arms granted them by William Huncleslow, Clarencieux King-at-Arms, 13 Edw. IV.; and, two years previously, a company of under Masons was formed in London. The first company was incorporated by charter, in the year 1677, by King Charles II.

In the 3 Hen. VI. an edict was passed against the societies of Masons, which has never, I believe, been repealed:

"Whereas by the yearly congregations and confederacies made by the masons in their general chapters and assemblies, the good course and effect of the statutes of labourers be openly violated and broken, in subversion of the law, and to the great damage of all the Commons: Our said Lord the King, willing in this case to provide remedy, by the advice and assent aforesaid, and at the special request of the