

THE MYSTERIES OF FREEMASONRY.

Showing from the Origin, Nature and Object of the Rites and Ceremonies of Remote Antiquity, their Identity with the Order of Modern Free-Masonry.

COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES BY R. W. BRO. OTTO KLOTZ.

"If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where Truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre. —SHAKESPEARE.

(Continued.)

THE PHŒNICIANS.

The Phœnicians who inhabited a small maritime coast near Mount Libanus, in Asia Minor, and being a great trading people, frequently visited Egypt for the purpose of exchanging produce and other commodities, the product of Egypt, which always was and still is, the most fruitful country in the world. The harvest which is almost certain there, and by much exceeds the wants of the inhabitants, occasioned great quantities of corn to be amassed there, which in barren years were the resource of the Abians, the Canaanites, the Syrians and the Greeks. Travellers who need or curiosity had drawn thither, and the Phœnicians especially, who had no granary so certain as Egypt, were all struck with the polity that reigned in every part of that beautiful country, with the gentle temper of the inhabitants, the mysterious outside of the ceremonies and feasts which were with much pomp celebrated there, and finally with the plenty which they looked upon as miraculous in a country where it never rained. The notion which they had of that river whose source remained concealed, and whose overflowing seemed to them contrary to the common course of nature, made them say, that God himself poured these beneficial waters on Egypt.

The Egyptians represented this marvel by the figure of God, that is, by a sun out of whose mouth a river sprung, and the foreigners as well as the Egyptians everywhere gave it out, that so singular a prosperity was the reward of the piety of the inhabitants.

Nay, the Phœnicians perhaps and the Canaanites at first received from the Egyptians, and used the symbolical characters among themselves. The introduction of the common writing must have caused them to lose the sense without suppressing the figures; so that these symbols, being always part of the ceremonies, and publicly exposed at feasts everybody annexed to them the notion or history he thought carried the greater likelihood with it. Thus Egypt was the cup wherein the poison of idolatry lay, and the Phœnicians are the people who, by travelling all over the world, have presented the cup to the western nations. For the same reason it is that the names of the gods, and words made use of in the heathen feasts, have so sensible an analogy with the Phœnician language.

Travellers and merchants during their sojourn in Egypt were undoubtedly struck with the outward show of the feasts and the abundance that seemed to be the result of them. They did not carry home this multitude of symbols and practices of which they understood nothing, but they seldom failed to look with veneration upon the *three or four chief symbols* which the Egyptians honored as beneficial powers, and as the authors of all the good they enjoyed.