

Albanus of St. Alban, as he was subsequently called, whose life was sacrificed at the shrine of Pagan ignorance and bigotry, about the commencement of the fourth century, is said to have obtained a charter for the Masons in the year of Our Lord 287. He was a distinguished architect, and according to the authority of very ancient manuscripts, one of which I quote, "he loved Freemasons well, cherished them much, and made them pay right good, for he gave them a shilling a week, and three pence for their cheer; and he got them a charter from the king and his council for to hold a general Council, and gave it to name Assembly. Thereat he was himself, and did help to make Masons, and gave them right good charges."

Passing over a period of 500 years, during which Freemasonry continued to flourish, just in proportion to the advancement of learning and civilization; we notice the formation of the Grand Lodge of England at the ancient royal city of York. This took place about 930 years ago, king Athelstane, who was the grandson of Alfred the Great, gave to his brother Edwin a charter conferring great privileges upon the Freemasons. And, in 926, in obedience to the summons of Prince Edwin, the Masons from all parts of the nation assembled at York, bringing with them many ancient manuscripts, in Latin, Greek, French and other languages, from which the charges and constitutions, still in force among Masons, were compiled. Prince Edwin was elected Grand Master, and this Grand Lodge continued to exist, exercising supervision over the craft, until, with the one formed in London, by four private Lodges, in 1717, together with the ancients, as they were called, who had seceded from the latter body, it was finally lost in that happy union, by which the present united Grand Lodge of England was organized in A. D. 1813.

During the regency of Henry VI, in 1425, the British Parliament passed an act making it felony for masons to meet in their Lodges and chapters. This act, however, was never put in force; on the contrary, the Lodges continued to enjoy great tranquility and prosperity. King Henry himself was initiated in 1442, and was so pleased with the ceremonies and principles of Freemasonry, that he presided in person over several of the Lodges. Laws favorable to the Freemasons have frequently been enacted, but that to which I have adverted is the only one ever enacted against them in the British Empire. That remarkable Queen, Elizabeth, being jealous of secret societies, did, indeed, attempt to suppress the annual communications of the Masons, and in 1561 sent an armed force to York for that purpose. But Sir Thomas Sackville, who was then Grand Master, initiated some of her principal officers, who returned and made so favorable a report to Her Majesty, that she never subsequently attempted to disturb the communications of the Masons; though, it is said, she was never perfectly satisfied, that she who could rule an Empire, could not govern, or be permitted to enter a Masonic Lodge.

The little village of Kilwinning, near the Irish sea in Scotland, entirely unknown in the political or commercial world, is renowned among Masons, as being the cradle and for many ages the principal seat of the order in Scotland. The Abbey of Kilwinning was constructed about the commencement of the twelfth century; in 1140, by a company of travelling architects, or Free-masons, who at the same time planted here that Masonic germ, which has produced an ample lofty trunk, whose branches now overshadow the four quarters of the globe. The Abbey of Kilwinning was a noble structure, covering several acres of ground. But the hand of time, aided by other circumstances long since crumbled it to dust, and it is now difficult to determine the site on which it stood; for it was built of perishable materials. But the Lodge of Kilwinning, like the mustard seed of the parable, has lived and multiplied a thousand fold. And there is now scarcely a country upon earth into which Scottish Free-masonry has not been introduced, and in which it does not flourish; for it was the embodiment of imperishable principles.

Free-masonry was introduced into this country in the early part of the eighteenth century, and I

need scarcely observe that it has spread itself throughout the entire length and breadth of the land.

To follow Free-masonry from its ancient oriental seat, through the different countries of Europe to the British Islands, to examine its doings in their material intellectual, social and moral aspects and bearings during a long series of ages, to trace its branches eastward again as well as in every other direction over the continents of the earth, and the islands of the sea, would be a delightful employment, and could not fail to awaken sentiments of admiration, and emotions of pleasure in every heart susceptible of appreciating what is philanthropic and true, benevolent and good.

In Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and America, and on the Islands of the sea; from east to west, from north to south, in almost every city and town, and village, and hamlet, where the genial influences of civilization prevail, we should find its altars consecrated to brotherly love, relief and truth, and blazing upon and around those altars, its greater and its lesser emblematic lights shedding their benignant rays, to illumine the pathway of virtue.

We should not find it engaged in efforts to subvert the policy of nations, to disturb their tranquillity or destroy their prosperity. To prevent their progress in commerce, in arts, in science, or in whatever tends to promote a nation's advancement and happiness. On the contrary, every nation, on which the sun shines, being its dwelling place, the entire world its home, we should find it engaged in those peaceful pursuits which tend most effectually to develop the resources, to increase the intelligence and wealth, and to promote the harmony of nations, to contribute to their true honor and dignity, to their enduring grandeur and glory.

Should we find free masonry engaged in plots and conspiracies against civil governments or against the political institutions of the different countries of the earth? Certainly not. Notwithstanding all that may have been said to the contrary, we unhesitatingly affirm *never*. On the contrary, we should find it engaged in teaching every man who enters its sacred portals, at the very threshold, to be exemplary in the discharge of his civil duties. Never to propose or at all countenance any act, or any scheme, which might have even a tendency to subvert the peace and good order of society. To pay implicit obedience to the laws of any state or country which might be, or become, the place of his residence. And never to forget the allegiance due to the Government of his native, or his adopted land, of what form soever that Government might be, for there is no form of Government in existence with which the spirit and genius, the principles and purposes of Free-masonry are at all incompatible.—Nor should we find Free-masonry arrayed against religion. Though prevailing among mankind in a thousand forms, it generously tolerates them all. Practically recognizing in matters between God and the soul, the supreme authority of conscience, the inviolable right of private opinion. Rejecting the "stupid atheist" and the "licentious infidel," holding the universal paternity of the Great Architect of the universe, and the unlimited fraternity of the human family, it looks beyond the narrow limits of particular sectarian organizations, and beholds in the great "I am" the living Father of all, and in every son of Adam a brother of the dust. Free-masonry, therefore, not only has no war to sustain against any system of religion in existence, but on the contrary it freely admits to its privileges, and welcomes to its fraternal embrace, just and virtuous men of all creeds and of all sects. The Pagan and the Mohammedan, the Israelite and the Christian, the Catholic and the Protestant, the Trinitarian and the Unitarian, the Armenian and the Calvinist, the Universalist and the most uncompromising believer in unmitigated endless woe, all harmoniously kneel around the same altar, offer the same prayers and invocations, and pay the same homage and adoration to the same Jehovah.

Free-masonry, therefore, whether to its credit or not, is entirely exempt from the imputation of being either a national, a political, or a religious

sectarian institution. Am I asked what it is? I cheerfully respond to the enquiry. The first masonic lesson I ever learned, taught me that it is a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols. That its great principles are brotherly love, relief and truth; that its brightest ornaments are *benevolence and charity*. That these, with prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice, together with fidelity to every public and private, every domestic and personal trust and duty; constitute a cluster of virtues which should adorn the character and secure the usefulness and happiness of every man, who calls himself an accepted Free-mason. Need I enter into an explanation of these well-known maxims, or attempt an illustration of the virtues represented by these familiar terms in order to show that masonry is not incompatible with our civil or religious, our social or our moral relations? Rather allow me the pleasure of adducing the opinions of others to show that the definition I have given is not fictitious or fanciful, but really and substantially correct and true.

Dr. Hemming says, that Masonry, according to the general acceptance of the term, is founded on the principles of geometry, and directed to the convenience and enlightenment of the world. But embracing a wider range, and having a more extensive object in view, viz., the cultivation and improvement of the human mind, it assumes the form of a noble science and availing itself of the terms used in geometrical calculations, it inculcates the principles of the purest morality, by lessons which are for the most part veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.

Culcott says, Free-masonry is an establishment, founded on the benevolent intention of extending and conferring mutual happiness upon the best and truest principles of social and moral virtue.

In an Address voted by the Grand Lodge of England, to George the III, in 1779, when the Marquis of Hastings was acting as Grand Master under the Prince of Wales, we find the following sentence:—"Sire,—We fraternize for the purpose of social improvement, of mutual assistance, of charity to the distressed, and goodwill to all; Fidelity to a trust, reverence to the magistrate, and obedience to the laws, are sculptured in capitals upon the pediment of our institution."

Washington, your own immortal Washington, says, to enlarge the sphere of social happiness is worthy the benevolent design of a Masonic institution, and it is most fervently to be wished that the conduct of every member of the fraternity, as well as those publications that show the principles which actuate them, may tend to convince mankind, that the great object of Masonry is, to promote the happiness of the human race.

Jones says, Free-masonry is a system more excellent than any, because partaking of the excellencies of all others, more practicable, more productive of effects on its professions, because free from the austerity, yet comprising the best principles of religion, it removes the thorns in the road to happiness, and substitutes a flowery path to the same goal.

Governor Clinton has been considered as pure a patriot as ever loved and served his country, and he was as bright and as true a Mason as ever honored the fraternity. He says of Free-masonry. "That although its origin is covered with darkness, and its history is to some extent obscure; yet we can say that it is the most Ancient Society in the world, and we are equally certain that its principles are based on pure morality, that its ethics are the ethics of Christianity, its doctrines the doctrines of patriotism and brotherly love, and its sentiments the sentiments of exalted benevolence; upon these points there can be no doubt, all that is good, and kind, and charitable it encourages, all that is cruel, and oppressive, and vicious, it reprobates."

And under circumstances of the most trying character to him as a mason, which many of you brethren have not forgotten, he says, "I know that Free-masonry properly understood and faithfully attended to, is friendly to religion, morality, liberty and good government, and I shall never shrink under any state of excitement, or any extent of misrepresentation from bearing testimony in