

THE CRAFTSMAN, HAMILTON, 15th APRIL, 1868.

OUR INTEREST IN PALESTINE.

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From either of *three points* of view, the argument may be substantiated that Freemasonry has a personal interest in all developments of which Bible Lands are susceptible. For consider them as, 1st, Bible readers, or 2nd, Lovers of knowledge, or 3rd, Inheritors of ancient traditions, and identical conclusions will follow. Let us try it:

First.—If Freemasons are Bible readers, (surely they are, if worthy the name of Mason,) then the "Land of the Bible" possesses grandest attractions to them. We know little of Abraham until we inform ourselves of Chaldea, where he was born, and of Hebron, where he was buried. Our acquaintance with Hiram is a superficial acquaintance, unless we acquire some clear perception of Phœnicia, the land of his birth, and of Palestine, the place of his death. And, with all reverence it may be added, our knowledge of the transcendent Redeemer will be immeasurably increased when we associate with his miracles, his pilgrimages, and his teachings, the hills, valleys, fruits, flowers, climate, and other physical matters which, in *his* case, as in the case of all who "walk between the cradle and the coffin," made up so much of his life upon earth. As, then, every Christian claims his interest in the Holy Land, because it was the home and school and tomb of his blessed Master, so every Freemason possesses, and ought to claim, an interest in Palestine, because it was the birth-place and the cradle of his Institution.

Second.—Again: this ancient region, with its seas, rivers, and pools,—its hills and mountains, its plains and valleys, and all its natural phenomena, which are admittedly unequalled by any other country upon earth, is interesting to Freemasons—"the men of the square, level, and plumb"—because they are the professed "sons of light" and lovers of knowledge. Whatever adds to the stock of human wisdom is, of necessity, a part of the Masonic stock—so affirm our standards. Now in all ages, "the lands of the Bible" have been sought after, and their scientific developments studied by historians, geographers, and particularly by the lovers of mystical wisdom, as the most interesting field of thought presented in the whole world. It can perhaps be demonstrated, that in Phœnicia—a portion of Bible lands—originated the alphabet, originated architecture, ship-building, indeed all the arts and sciences known to the world for the first three thousand years of its history. This claim, then, makes it a field of *masonic research* superior to any other.

Finally.—To Freemasons, as the inheritors of ancient traditions embodying all the fundamental truths of early theology, "the lands of the Bible" must needs present themselves as subjects of profoundest interest. To the *Entered Apprentice*, for instance, who is instructed in the selection and transit of the timber and stone used in the building of King Solomon's Temple, what locality presents greater attractions than Lebanon, Joppa, the great Quarry, and Mount Moriah? To the *Fellow Craft*, instructed in the casting of the vast pillars, Jachin and Boaz, how sacred are the clay grounds which received the impress of the Grand Architect's immortal genius, and gave to the world the matchless shafts

that reared themselves so majestically on the east of the Temple porch! To the *Master Mason*, to the *Mark Master*, to the *Most Excellent Master*, this demand for topographical knowledge in Bible countries is steadily increased and intensified; while to the *Royal Arch Mason*, much of the traditional knowledge essential to his system is unmeaning, disconnected from Babylon, Palmyra, Damascus, and the *Holy City*. Extending this train of thought to include the degrees of *Royal* and *Select Master*, the *Red Cross Knights*, and the thousand and one figments of modern inventive brains,—the positive conclusions are attained that the "lands of the Bible" are genuine subjects of study, research, and general scientific interest to all lovers of masonic knowledge, "equalled by few, and excelled by none."

To amplify these thoughts, let us call up a few points in review. *First*—

MOUNT HATTIN.

One who is studying the Orders of Knighthood, as communicated under the Canadian (English) system, is instructed in "the Beatitudes" pronounced there in that unparalleled Sermon on the Mount. To him, therefore, Mount Hattin becomes a possession. To him it is a sacred place in masonic topography. Its height, extent, form, forests and surroundings, all have an interest to him,—an interest which he may not be able to explain, or even to comprehend, yet is prompt to acknowledge and to claim.

And even more sacred is Mount Hattin to a student of Masonic Knighthood when he recalls the fact that there, upon a fatal day, in July, 1186, the whole Christian powers met the Saracenic army under Saladin, and suffered a defeat so crushing that history scarcely affords a parallel! There fell the Beauseant into heathen hands. There the Templar Knights shed their blood like water in defence of all that made their Institution precious among men. There perished the Christian kingdom of Palestine, the gates of Joppa and Hebron and Jerusalem flying open when the news of that battle arrived. To us, then, Mount Hattin possesses this supreme interest; and its capabilities of defence, from a military standpoint,—its supply of water, of stone and timber, and other facts, are proper subjects of masonic inquiry. How far this train of thought may be extended will be evident to every reader.

TYRE.

One who claims to be the merest tyro in Freemasonry, must acknowledge himself interested in the city of Tyre. For here that greatest patron of Operative Science, *Hiram*, reigned; and here, in a tomb a few miles east of the city, he lies buried. From this, originally, the 153,000 craftsmen, skilled in all the handiwork, to whose development the highest efforts of human genius had been directed, journeyed with their faces set southward, intent upon the erection of a Temple for the Jewish King. Here was born, of a Phœnician father, another *Hiram*, whose transcendent skill has given him an immortality of fame, which his glorious death has but confirmed.

Although the shipmen "who had knowledge of the sea," (1 Kings, 9-27.) no longer make vocal these shores, yet history has perpetuated the glories of this place in colors too vivid ever to fade. How interesting is Tyre to a Freemason!

These thoughts may be still further extended in future articles.