

of Mackey in America, of Lenning and Krause and Schauberg in Germany, of Clavel in France, and in which we think we see the true solution of the many acknowledged difficulties of our Masonic history.

This theory of our Masonic history shortly stated is this; our present Freemasonry is the legitimate successor, though on an enlarged basis, and with the admitted preponderance of the speculative element of the old operative guild assemblies and the sodalities of mediæval and earlier Freemasons. We have inherited to-day the legends and constitutions of those ancient and handiwork Craftsmen. That these sodalities existed in this country until their gradual decadence in the middle of the seventeenth century, in full activity and vigor, is susceptible of much and varied proof. That we can also trace them back through many generations to the Roman Sodalites, and thence to Jewish and Tyrian Masons is, though not so easy we admit of demonstration, yet still not altogether incapable of substantiation. If direct evidence perhaps be wanting, there is a great amount of circumstantial evidence, and even much more of inferential evidence which we can fairly press into our service, and which seems in itself, and as far as it goes, to be both accurate and irrefragable. But such a theory as this requires necessarily a great amount of careful consideration and connected study, the comparison of many documents, and the collection of many MSS. Thus for some time in this country these studies and researches have been carried on with much zeal and no little success by some of our Brethren, and there can be but little doubt, that before very long, we shall be able to congratulate ourselves on some appreciable results. We must especially notice that very interesting work, lately edited by Bro. J. W. Hugban, which has given the Craft for the first time, a collection and collation of many of the ancient Constitutions.

As long forgotten lodge collections are carefully overhauled; as the MSS. in the Rolls' office and other public offices are indexed or transcribed; as the fabric rolls of our Cathedrals, and the archives of our Municipalities are disinterred, so to say, from the oblivion of centuries, no doubt not only will many fresh MS. Constitutions be discovered, but we shall be able to collect together an amount of existing evidence never before thought of, much less even suspected to be extant. Take, too, one little branch of our archaeology hitherto much neglected. There are in this country, in the British Museum and elsewhere, many curious impressions of seals which seem to have belonged to the Masonic Guilds; while it is only quite recently that the history of the Guilds themselves, important as the part they played in the earliest trading and operative and municipal history of England, has been at all attended to, and even now we are only beginning to be acquainted with it.

Yet, surely all that has now been so imperfectly stated, is a sufficient proof that the present position of English Freemasonry, looked at from an historical and archaeological point of view, is one of active study and healthy criticism, and of greater intellectual vigor, probably than has characterized any previous epoch of its existence. Let us earnestly hope, that all these studies and researches may end some day ere long, in a readable and reliable and undoubtedly scientific history of our good old Order.

And then when we endeavor to ascertain what is the practical teaching or benefit of Freemasonry as now pursued in this country, we find in it much to admire and more to commend.