

and compassion to be felt in the hearts, and relief and succor to flow from the pockets of Masons as surely and freely as the water flowed from the rock when touched by the rod of Moses."

Companion Grist was there, who charmed the Companions with the melody of his voice; also Companions Clarke, Thomas, Patton, and others; besides, speeches were made by Companions Burness, Baine, Henwood, Osborne, Rastrick, and Lee, which were replete with interesting information, and were listened to with marked attention. The festivities closed in peace and harmony, and the evening was greatly enjoyed by all present.

We have condensed the above from the *Hamilton Gazette* of the 10th instant.



The Canadian Masonic Pioneer.

MONTREAL, JUNE 2, 1856.

The duty of a pioneer, in military parlance, "is to march with or before the army, to repair the road, or clear it of obstructions, work at the intrenchments, or form mines for the destruction of an enemy, or remove obstructions, or one who prepares the way for another." For this labor sturdy, strong, robust and determined soldiers, though not the most skilful, are always chosen. Having taken our stand as a pioneer in Masonry, we shall endeavor faithfully to perform our duty to the craft with military precision, by boldly marching with them and repairing, or rather smoothing, the roads through which we must all pass before we can be tried by the unerring principles of the square and compasses; to remove all obstructions to the progress and advancement of the true principles of masonry in Canada to work at the intrenchments, until we shall have sapped and countermined the works of those who would lead masons to forget the honored principles of the Level, and to prepare the way for the advance of the Grand Lodge of Canada, to that position which we, the great mass of Canadian masons have as undoubted a right to attain in the nineteenth century, as four Lodges had in the eighteenth. As Pioneer, we have donned the spade, the pick-axe, and the crowbar (quill), and with them we will boldly work until we shall have cleared away every obstacle, which, to a certain extent, here in Canada East, conceals the beauties of our time-honored institution; and we shall not cease from our labors until we shall have brought them out shining and resplendent in their ancient glory. But in doing this our readers must bear with us and recollect our name. We are only a Pioneer, whose instruments of labor are rough tools, which can only do rough

work, but that work shall be performed with a truthfulness of purpose above suspicion; and should certain things jar upon the ear, blame the facts—not us.

Trusting that some more eminent workmen will, by our exertions, be brought out to finish the labour we have began, and if we can but succeed in this last point, we shall consider ourselves fully rewarded for our daring to open a yet untravelled road in the wilds of Canada.

The Grand Lodge of Canada

A STRICTLY LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL BODY OF MASONS.

The writer happened to be present at a Masonic Lodge, not a thousand miles from Montreal, when a distinguished member, high in office, pronounced a Grand Lodge formed in Canada, by a Convention of Delegates, consisting of Masters and Wardens of regularly warranted Lodges, "illegal and unconstitutional." When requested to state, for the information of the brethren, what would be a legal mode of forming a Grand Lodge, he was "not prepared, he said, to give an answer." "He did not know." How, then, did he know that he was not denouncing the *only* legal mode in which a Grand Lodge could be formed? That he *was* doing so, we shall have no difficulty in showing. In a series of articles, which will appear in the *Pioneer*, we hope to be able to demonstrate, to the entire satisfaction of every brother, who will take the trouble to read them, that the Grand Lodge of Canada, is, in every respect, a strictly legal and constitutional body of Masons. As an introduction to these articles, we avail ourselves of a very clear and correct "historical sketch," by Mackey, in his "Principles of Masonic Law."

"Grand Lodges under their present organization, are, in respect to the antiquity of the Order, of a comparatively modern date. We hear of no such bodies in the earlier ages of the institution. Tradition informs us, that originally it was governed by the despotic authority of a few chiefs. At the building of the temple, we have reason to believe that King Solomon exercised an unlimited and irresponsible control over the craft, although a tradition, (not, however, of undoubted authority) says that he was assisted in his government by the counsel of twelve superintendents, selected from the twelve tribes of Israel. But we know too little, from authentic materials, of the precise system adopted at that remote period, to enable us to make any historical deductions on the subject.

The first historical notice that we have of the formation of a supreme controlling body of the fraternity, is in the "Gothic Constitutions" which assert that, in the year 287, St. Alban, the proto-martyr of England, who was a zealous patron of the craft, obtained from Carausius, the British Emperor, "a charter for the Masons to hold a general council, and

* The Gothic Constitutions are that code of laws which was adopted by the General Assembly at York, in the year 926. They are no longer extant, but portions of them have been preserved by Anderson, Preston, and other writers.

gave it the name of assembly." The record further states, that St. Alban attended the meeting and assisted in making masons, giving them "good charges and regulations." We know not, however, whether this assembly ever met again; and if it did, for how many years it continued to exist. The subsequent history of Freemasonry is entirely silent on the subject.

The next general assemblage of the craft, of which the records of Freemasonry inform us, was that convened in 926, at the city of York, in England, by Prince Edwin, the brother of King Atholstane, and the grandson of Alfred the Great. This, we say, was the next general assemblage, because the Ashmole manuscript, which was destroyed at the revival of Freemasonry in 1717, is said to have stated that, at that time, the Prince obtained from his brother, the king, a permission for the craft "to hold a yearly communication and a general assembly." The fact that such a power of meeting was then granted, is conclusive that it did not before exist; and would seem to prove that the assemblies of the craft, authorised by the charter of Carausius, had long since ceased to be held. This yearly communication did not, however, constitute, at least in the sense we now understand it, a Grand Lodge. The name given to it was that of the "General Assembly of Masons." It was not restricted, as now, to the Masters and Wardens of the subordinate lodges, acting in the capacity of delegates or representatives, but was composed, as Preston has observed, of as many of the fraternity at large as, being within a convenient distance, could attend once or twice a year, under the auspices of one general head, who was elected and installed at one of these meetings, and who, for the time being, received homage as the governor of the whole body. Any Brethren who were competent to discharge the duty, were allowed, by the regulations of the Order, to open and hold lodges at their discretion, at such times and places as were most convenient to them, and without the necessity of what we now call a Warrant of Constitution, and then and there to initiate members into the Order.* To the General Assembly, however, all the craft, without distinction, were permitted to repair; each Mason present was entitled to take part in the deliberations, and the rules and regulations enacted were the result of the votes of the whole body. The General Assembly was, in fact, precisely similar to those political congregations which, in our modern phraseology, we term "mass meetings."

These annual mass meetings or General Assemblies continued to be held, for many centuries after their first establishment, at the city of York, and were, during all that period, the supreme judicatory of the fraternity.—There are frequent references to the annual assemblies of Freemasons in public documents. The preamble to an act passed in 1425, during the reign of Henry VI., just five centuries after the meeting at York, states that, "by the yearly congregations and confederacies made by the Masons in their general assemblies, the good course and effect of the statute of laborers were openly violated and broken." This act which forbade such meetings, was, however, never put in force; for an old record, quoted in the book of Constitutions, speaks of the Brotherhood having frequented this "mutual assembly," in 1434, in the reign of the same king. We have another record of the General Assembly, which

*Preston, book iv., sec. 2, p. 132, n. (U.M.L., vol. iii. p. 109.)