

earlier extant copies of the "Old Charges (some dating from the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries) of British Freemasons," is named as the great patron of the Craft in France—historically midway, as it were between the Ancient Roman Colleges of Artificers and the early Guilds of Freemasons in England! And hence why is it that many in France claim that in 1717-21, England but returned to France with "interest thereon," what she had given to Britain almost a thousand years before.

He thinks that the early erection at Quebec of so many private residences, convents, chapels and public buildings in stone indicates that their builders were the "Operative Masons" from the Mother Countries.

Many of the difficulties met in arriving at correct conclusions concerning the ancient history of Freemasonry have, without doubt, arisen from the effort made by many writers to establish a Masonic character and connection to the many Guilds of the various trades existing between the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, which, in the opinion of the writer, as stated in the Review of the District of Columbia, have no connection whatever with Freemasonry.

In the Report of your Committee of last year the attention of the Reader was directed to the proofs of the existence, even in the remote past of the dual character—Speculative and Operative—of Ancient as well as modern Freemasonry, as very plainly indicated in the Regius Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century and many other authorities since brought to light by the indefatigable labor of Masonic students.

In the same connection the inference beyond a reasonable doubt of the existence, also at a remote period of three degrees—regardless of theories to the contrary—and an existence at an earlier period than usually conceded, to at least the fourth degree, is now *as well* if not better established than any of the claims to the contrary, although for nearly a third of a century every possible effort has apparently been made to refute anything tending to prove the existence of any regular organization of the Craft prior to the year 1717, but it is very gratifying to know without attainment of the expected result. It is now also a matter of especial gratification to know that the effort and research of learned Brethren in the discovery of and reproduction of old Manuscripts and the old records of Scottish and English Lodges is now meeting with its reward in the establishment of the claims of its early speculative character, culminating in belief in One God and love to the Brotherhood, whilst the Manningham letters, edited by R. W. Bro. Robert Freke Gould, of England, the eminent historian, are in themselves sufficient to establish the fact of the existence of three degrees prior to 1717, Dr. Dassigny's Enquiry, edited by that eminent Masonic scholar, R. W. Bro. Wm. James Hughan, of England, in which reference is made to the existence of Royal Arch Masonry in the ancient City of York, previous to its publication, proves the existence of Royal Arch Masonry prior to 1743 and equally corroborative may also be considered the Ancient Brass Plates of "Sterling Antient Lodge" des-