

# THE HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF FREEMASONRY.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### LODGE MINUTES—ALNWICK—SWALWELL—YORK—THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION—MASONRY IN NORTH AND SOUTH BRITAIN.

**I**T is certain that the same degree of confidence which is due to an historian who narrates events in which he was personally concerned, cannot be claimed by one who compiles the history of remote times from such materials as he is able to collect. In the former case, if the writer's veracity and competency are above suspicion, there remains no room for reasonable doubt, at least in reference to those principal facts of the story, for the truth of which his character is pledged. Whilst in the latter case, though the veracity of the writer, as well as his judgment, may be open to no censure, still the confidence afforded must necessarily be conditional, and will be measured by the opinion which is formed of the validity of his authorities.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, it has been laid down that since a modern author, who writes the history of ancient times, can have no personal knowledge of the events of which he writes; consequently he can have no title to the credit and confidence of the public, merely on his own authority. If he does not write romance instead of history, he must have received his information from tradition—from authentic monuments, original records, or the memoirs of more ancient writers—and therefore it is but just to acquaint his readers from whence he *actually* received it.<sup>2</sup>

In regard, however, to the character and probable value of their authorities, each historian, and, indeed, almost every separate portion of the words of each, must be estimated apart, and a failure to observe this precaution, will expose the reader, who, in his simplicity, peruses a Masonic work throughout with an equal faith, to the imminent risk "of having his indiscriminate confidence suddenly converted into undistinguishing scepticism, by discovering the slight authority upon which some few portions of it are founded."<sup>3</sup> But it unfortunately happens that the evidence on questions of antiquity possesses few attractions for ordinary readers, so that on this subject, as well as upon some others, there often exists at the same time too much faith and too little. "From a want of acquaintance with the details on which a rational conviction of the genuineness and validity of ancient records may be founded, many persons, even though otherwise well informed, feel that

<sup>1</sup> See Isaac Taylor, *History of the Transmission of Ancient Books to Modern Times*, 1837, p. 116, and Lewis, *Inquiry into the Credibility of the Early Roman History*, vol. I., p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. R. Henry, *History of Great Britain*.

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<sup>3</sup> Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 119.