

century. Intelligent brethren, however, soon became aware that something more than the repetition of a few set phrases and routine explanations, however interesting and important they might be in themselves, was required to cement the prosperity, and perpetuate the existence of a great society, which professed to convey superior advantages, and laid claim to a higher character than any of the numerous antagonistic clubs and coteries of similar pretensions by which it was surrounded. A new arrangement was therefore pronounced necessary in the year 1732, and Martin Clare, A. M., a celebrated Mason, who ultimately attained the rank of D. G. M., was commissioned to prepare a course of lectures, adapted to the existing state of the Order, without infringing on the ancient landmarks; and he executed his task so much to the satisfaction of the Grand Lodge, that his lectures were ordered to be used by all the brethren within the limits of its jurisdiction. In accordance with this command, we find the officers of the Grand Lodge setting an example in the provinces; and in the minutes of a Lodge at Linc. In 1734, of which Sir Cecil Wray, the D. G. M. was the Master, there are a series of entries through successive Lodge nights to the following effect: "that two or more sections, as the case might be, of Martin Clare's lectures were read; when the Master gave an elegant charge; went through an examination; and the Lodge was closed with songs and decent merriment." An evident proof of the authority of Martin Clare's lectures, or the D. G. M. would not have been so careful to enforce their use amongst the brethren over whom he presided in private Lodge.

These lectures were nothing more than the amplification of the system propounded by Anderson and Desaguliers, enlightened by the addition of a few moral references and admonitions extracted from the Old and New Testaments. They also contained a simple allusion to the senses, and the theological ladder with staves or rounds innumerable.

Freemasonry was now making a rapid progress in the island, both in dignity and usefulness; and its popularity in a proportionate degree. Scientific and learned men were enrolled in its rank, and Martin Clare's lectures were obliged, in their turn, to give way before the increasing intelligence of the Order. They were revised and remodelled by Bro. Dunckerley, P. G. M., and Grand Superintendent for almost half the entire kingdom, whose opinion was considered by the Grand Lodge as decisive on all matters connected with the Craft. In these lectures, Dunckerley introduced many types of Christ, and ended the ladder with three principal steps as an approach to the supernal regions, which he called Faith, Hope, and Charity. His disquisition was founded on 1 Cor. xiii.; and he might have had in view the true Christian doctrine of three states of the soul. First in its tabernacle the body, as an illustration of Faith; then, after death, in Hades, Sheol, or Paradise, as the fruits of Hope; and lastly, when reunited to the body in glory, about the throne of God, as the sacred seat of universal Charity. The original hint at a circle and parallel lines, as important symbols of the Order, has been ascribed to him.

Thus the lectures remained until towards the latter end of the century, when Hutchinson in the north and Preston in the south of England, burst on the Masonic world like two brilliant suns, each enlightening his own hemisphere, and each engaged in the meritorious design of improving the existing lectures, without being conscious that his worthy cotemporary was pursuing the same track. There are reasons for believing that they subsequently coalesced, and produced a joint lecture, which, though regarded at first with some degree of jealousy, as an unauthorized compilation, was at length adopted, and carried into operation by the concurrent usage of the whole Fraternity. This course of the lectures was in practice till the reunion in 1813, and I believe there are still many Lodges who prefer them to the Hemming or Union lectures, and still continue their use.

With all these facts before us, it is clear that Freemasonry has undergone many changes since its revival after the death of Sir Christopher Wren. The essentials remain the same, but the

details have sustained considerable modifications, and are susceptible of still more improvement. He who ascends the Masonic ladder, must not tarry at the portal of Hope, if he wishes to attain the summit. If we are anxious to practice ourselves, or to disseminate for the benefit of others the poetry and philosophy of Masonry, it will be necessary to show that such progressive alterations may be safely made without any violation of the real ancient landmarks, or incurring the risk of weakening its hold on the purest affections.

The opinion of our late Grand Master, H. R. H. the Duke of Sussex, was favorable to the views here exhibited. He publicly declared in Grand Lodge, that, consistently with the laws of Masonry, "so long as the Master of any Lodge observed the Landmarks of the Craft, he was at liberty to give the Lectures in the language best suited to the character of the Lodge over which he presided." And as an illustration of his opinion, the Lodge of Reconciliation was authorized to revise and reconstruct the lectures which were in existence at that period. Under these circumstances, if some slight alterations and improvements were made in the working details of the Order at the present day, with the sanction of the Grand Lodge, I should anticipate the happiest results from the measure.

But the question will be asked, how is this to be accomplished? By what process is such a desirable object to be attained, without an invasion of Landmarks, which are so strictly guarded by a fundamental by-law, that their integrity cannot be violated without inflicting some serious injury on the Institution? The process is simple, and I think practicable; and even if it be attended with some trifling disadvantages, they would be amply compensated by improvements which might be effected under a judicious modification of the lectures in existence.

Thus if the Landmarks and such portions of the Lectures of each degree are indispensable to the purity and character of the Order, were drawn out carefully and judiciously in the shape of a series of moral axioms, and divided into degrees, sections, and clauses, constructed with an equal regard to brevity and perspicuity, and accompanied by a strict injunction that every brother shall be perfectly acquainted with each before he is admitted to a higher degree, it seems highly probable that the most beneficial results would be produced. It may, indeed, be imagined that, under such a regimen, many brethren would not advance beyond the first degree. I am of a different opinion. The test might discourage indolent and careless candidates, but it would invite and augment the initiations of men of higher character. The facilities afforded by our present qualifications fill our ranks with brotherhood who do us little credit; and the society would be really benefited by their absence. A Lodge, consisting of a dozen scientific members, would be more respectable, more useful, and more popular, than if it were filled with an uncounted number of sots, or even with dull prosaic brothers who are indifferent to the poetry and philosophy of the Order.

I should certainly anticipate no diminution of numbers under such a course of strict and wholesome discipline. The only perceptible effect would be to improve the character of the brethren, by creating a spirit of inquiry and discrimination, which would tend to make it their sole aim, as Masons, to increase their knowledge, purify their minds, and prepare themselves, by the morality of science, for more perfection in another and a better state of existence. In our Lodges, some brethren are always unfortunately to be found, with whom refreshment is the great attraction and the primary stimulus to their attendance at our stated meetings; but on the improved principle that I would recommend, refreshment, although by no means to be dispensed with, would constitute a secondary motive, while it contributed to give a zest to the theoretical discussions and practical enjoyment which result from the social intercourse of congenial minds with each other.

The only difficulty which appears to attend the above plan, would be in the construction and arrangement of a digest that would meet the requirements of every section of the Craft; because in a matter of such importance, the concurrence of every Grand Lodge in the universe should be obtained, that a perfect uniformity in work might prevail.

Every institution, to be perfect, should be consistent with itself. And hence the insufficiency of the present lectures may be questioned. It is therefore desirable that the attention of the Fraternity should be fairly awakened to the subject, that they may take the premises into their most serious consideration, and endeavour to place Freemasonry on so substantial a basis, as to constitute the unmixed pride of its friends and defenders; and defy the malice of its traducers and foes, if any such are still to be found amongst those who are indifferent to its progress.

It appears to me that all difficulty would vanish, and a satisfactory arrangement of the various matters at issue might be obtained, if the Grand Lodge were to appoint a committee, composed of brethren resident in London, augmented by delegates appointed from the Provinces, to inquire into all the varieties in the different systems of lecturing throughout the masonic world, and report upon them *seriatim*. And with respect to the Landmarks—as very few points of difference were included in the original system—it would remain an open question whether, by an attempt to reconcile every variety or subsequent introduction, the real Landmarks of the Order would be at all invaded. I shall decline pronouncing any positive opinion on this point, but leave it entirely to the judgment of others.

But should the adoption of any such measure be deemed expedient, the Grand Lodge would not be expected to pledge itself to the absolute sanction of an incipient report of the committee, which could be scarcely free from errors. It would be competent to receive the report; but I should doubt, in a matter of such vital importance, whether that section of it which usually meets in Freemasons' Hall, consisting chiefly of the Masters and Wardens of the metropolitan Lodges, would be willing to decide the question without a formal appeal to such members of the Grand Lodge as reside in the country, comprising a great majority of its body.

At this stage of the proceedings, the report would be naturally transmitted to the G. M. of each Province, for the consideration of local committees, consisting of the Masters and Wardens of the Lodges, with the P. G. M. at their head, and any other scientific brethren out of office whom they might think proper to associate with them. The reports from each of these minor bodies, being transmitted to the Grand Lodge, should be subjected to a new committee for collation and revision, and embodied in a general statement of the entire results. A draft of this being forwarded to all the provincial committees for their approval, should be finally submitted to the Grand Lodge who would then, after other preliminaries had been arranged, be in a condition to pass a decisive resolution on the subject. Communications should be forwarded to the Grand Lodges of Scotland, Ireland, America, the continent of Europe, and all other places where they exist, accompanied by a detail of the steps which had been taken for the purification of the Order; recommending the alterations to their notice, and soliciting their concurrence. And as there appears to be an universal desire throughout the whole Masonic world for some uniform system of working, an opposition to the measure is scarcely to be contemplated. Effectually to prevent such a result, however, it might be advisable to communicate with the foreign Grand Lodges during the progress of the proceedings, soliciting their fraternal suggestions; and a draft of the final resolution ought also to be submitted to each of them for approval, before it passed into a law which should be for ever binding on the whole Fraternity in every part of the globe, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of England, as it would be the concurrent production of the united wisdom and research of all classes interested in the triumphant progress of the Order.

Under some well-organized plan of this nature,