

ROYAL MASTER.

The following interesting historical summary of the Royal Master's Degree is from a work on Cryptic Masonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, recently published:—

The events recorded in the degree of Royal Master, looking at them in a legendary point of view, must have occurred at the building of the first temple, and during that brief period of time after the death of the builder, which is embraced between the discovery of his body and its "Masonic interment." In all the initiations into the mysteries of the ancient world, there was, as it is well known to scholars, a legend of the violent death of some distinguished personage, to whose memory the particular mystery was consecrated—of the concealment of the body and of its subsequent discovery. That part of the initiation which referred to the concealment of the body was called the *aphantism*, from a Greek verb which signifies "to conceal," and that part which referred to the subsequent finding was called the "*euresis*," from another Greek verb, which signifies "to discover." It is impossible to avoid seeing the coincidences between this system of initiation and that practiced in the Masonry of the third degree.

But the ancient initiation was not terminated by the *euresis* or discovery. Up to that point the ceremonies had been funereal and lugubrious in their character. But now they were changed from wailing to rejoicing. Other ceremonies were performed by which the restoration of the personage to life, or his apotheosis, or change to immortality, was represented, and then came the *autopsy* or illumination of the neophyte, when he was invested with a full knowledge of all the religious doctrines which it was the object and design of the ancient mysteries to teach—when, in a word, he was instructed in Divine truth.

Now a similar course is pursued in Masonry. Here, also, there is an illumination, a symbolical teaching, or, as we call it, an *investiture* with that which is the representative of Divine truth. The communication to the candidate in the Master's degree of that which is admitted to be merely a representation of or a substitution for that symbol of divine truth, the search for which, under the name of the *true word*, makes so important a part of the degree, however imperfect it may be, in comparison with that more thorough knowledge which only future researches can enable the Master Mason to attain, constitutes the *autopsy* of the third degree. Now the principal event recorded in the degree of Royal Master, the interview between Adoniram and his two Royal Masters, is to be placed precisely at that juncture of time which is between the *euresis*, or discovery, in the Master Mason's degree, and the *autopsy*, or investiture with the great secret. It occurred between the discovery, by means of the sprig of acacia, and the final interment. It was at the time when Solomon and his colleague, Hiram of Tyre, were in profound consultation as to the mode of repairing the loss which they then supposed had befallen them.

We must come to this conclusion, because there is abundant reference, both in the organized form of the council and in the ritual of the degree, to the death as an event that had already occurred; and, on the other hand, while it is evident that Solomon

had been made acquainted with the failure to recover, on the person of the builder, that which had been lost, there is no reference whatever to the well known *substitution* which was made at the time of the interment.

If, therefore, as is admitted by all Masonic ritualists, the *substitution* was precedent and preliminary to the establishment of the Master Mason's Degree, it is evident that at the time when the degree of Royal Master is said to have been founded in the ancient temple by our "first Most Excellent Grand Master," all persons present, except the first and second officers, must have been merely Fellow-Craft Masons. In compliance with this tradition, therefore, a Royal Master is at this day supposed to represent a Fellow-Craft in search of and making his demand for that reward which was to elevate him to the rank of a Master Mason.

The triple triangle is one of the oldest symbols of mystical science. It is, perhaps, better known as the *Pentalpha*, from the Greek *pente*, "five," and *Alpha*, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, whose form is precisely that of the English letter A. It is so called because its peculiar configuration presents the appearance of that letter in five different positions.

In the school of Pythagoras it was adopted as the symbol of health, and each of the five salient points was represented by one of the five letters of the Greek word *ITEIA*, "health." Hence the Pythagoreans placed it at the beginning of their epistles as a form of salutation.

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It is, in Masonic symbology, sometimes called the "Shield of David," and sometimes the "Seal of Solomon," and is said to have been inscribed with the tetragrammaton in the centre, upon the celebrated Stone of Foundation.

But as a Masonic symbol it peculiarly claims attention from the fact that it forms the outlines of the *five-pointed star*, which is typical of the bond of brotherly love that unites the whole fraternity, and alludes, therefore, to the *five points of fellowship*. It is in this view that the pentalpha or triple triangle is referred to in the Royal Master's Degree, as representing the intimate union that existed between our three Ancient Grand Masters, and which is commemorated by the living pentalpha at the closing of every Royal Arch Chapter.

If, therefore, the triple triangle is peculiarly appropriate to the Royal Arch, as symbolic of the perfect union of the Illustrious Three, so is the Broken Square equally appropriate to the Royal Master, as symbolic of the unhappy dissolution of that union by death. The Broken Square is pre-eminently the symbol of this degree.

THE GREATEST.—There is one offence against Masonry which, next to a violation of the divine law, should be regarded as most heinous in practice, it is *selfishness*. To ignore the wants and suffering of brethren, when it is in our power, without injury to ourselves, to aid and assist them. Charity is the greatest of the virtues; and he who ignores that, violates all the rest, and is unworthy the name or fellowship of a Freemason. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity never faileth." It is the crowning virtue in the diadem of Masonry.