

when were they first introduced? Excluding the Charter of Cologne, as at best doubtful, there is not a single authentic manuscript from the close of the fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century which makes any mention of either of the Saints John. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, and, perhaps, in the last years of seventeenth, honor must have been paid by the Masons to St. John the Baptist, inasmuch as the Grand Lodge, which met in 1717, selected his festival, apparently as a matter of course, for the day of its communication, and from that time, and, perhaps, from a period a little anterior to the revival, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist have been recognized as the patrons of Freemasonry. But this is a subject which would require pages for its proper investigation.

There are several other legends—once prevalent among the Craft, but now obsolete—which may, at some other time, be discussed. What has already been said is sufficient to indicate the fact that Speculative Masonry has, in its progress for the last century and a half, been subjected to both an expansion and a contraction. There has been an expansion of its symbols, old ones have been developed into a higher interpretation, and new ones have been invented. On the other hand, there has been a contraction in its legends, some of them going altogether out of sight, and others being greatly abbreviated, or otherwise modified.

This constitutes a part of the history of Freemasonry, studied as a science. In so studying it, we must look at it in all its accidences, in its origin and its progress, in its present condition and in its future prospects. And an important element in these studies is the changes which its legendary records have undergone. It is with these views, and for this reason, that the present article has been written, which, perhaps, may serve, not unsuggestively, as a contribution to the annals of the Order, which Masonic historians are now busily engaged collecting.

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY.

MANY traditions are held as to the origin of the Institution, but they are generally regarded as merely mythical and legendary. According to some writers it took its rise from a band of Craftsmen in Tyre, who went to Jerusalem to assist in the erection of Solomon's Temple; hence the great prominence given in the ritual and symbols of the Order to that memorable edifice. By others it has been traced to ancient Egypt, and again to the times of the Crusades, and the Masons of Strasburg, in 1275. Some bard has thus put the legend into verse:

"They're traced on lines in the Parthenon,

Inscribed by the subtle Greek,

And Roman legions have carved them on

Walls, roads, and arches antique:

Long ere the Goth, with a vandal hand,

Gave scope to his envy dark,

The honored Craft in many a land,

Had graven its Mason-mark.

"The obelisks old, and the pyramids,

Around which mystery clings—

The hieroglyphs on the coffin-lids

Of weird Egyptian kings:

Carthage, Syria, Pompeii—

Buried and strewn and stark,

Have marble records that will not die—

Their primitive Mason-mark.

"Upon column and frieze and capital,

In the eye of the chaste volute,

Of Scotia's curve, or on astragal,

Or in triglyph's channel acute,

Cut somewhere on the entablature,

And oft, like a sudden spark

Flashing a light on a date obscure,

Shine many a Mason-mark.

"Those Craftsmen old had a genial whim,

That nothing could ere destroy;

With a love of their art that naught could dim,

They toiled with a chronic joy,

From Tiber to Danube, from Rhine to Seine,

They need no 'Letters of marque';

Their art was their passport in France and Spain,

And in Britain, their Mason-mark."