

THE CANADIAN CRAFTSMAN.

AND

MASONIC RECORD.

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For the CANADIAN CRAFTSMAN.]

THE ORIGIN, FORMULATION, AND ADOPTION OF MASONIC RITUALS.

History informs us that the Arts, Geometry, and Architecture, first prevailed in eastern Asia, and spread westward through Persia, with that great tower of Babel and its walled city; thence to Nineveh and throughout Assyria and into Egypt. There we find stupendous works of art in the time of the Pharaohs, and there we find those skillful priests and magicians ("Magi") with their almost unfathomable mysteries made known by signs, and illustrated by symbols, to be initiated into which severely tested the fortitude of aspirants. Those Dionysian priests and architects had exclusive privileges in the building of temples, &c., as also their own judiciary.

The sciences returned into Palestine, and there architecture gained the summit of earthly perfection in the design and erection of Solomon's Temple, with that perfect arrangement and management of a multitude of craftsmen, 1012 years B.C.; then spreading into Greece and Italy, which alternately claimed the highest prestige in learning; until Rome having brought most of Western Asia and Southern Europe under her sway, became the superior power.

Rome had, under the Emperor Numa Pompilius, 715 years before Christ, established the Colleges of Constructors, amongst whom were large numbers of those famous Dionysian Priests, who were skilled in

the Egyptian mysteries, Syrian rituals, Grecian and Roman arts and architecture.

Pythagoras, the celebrated Grecian philosopher, lived about 580 years B. C.; he left his native country and took up his abode in Italy, and there practised his secret system, and his theory was inculcated among the Roman Colleges. This was about the time of the building of the second temple at Jerusalem by Zerubbabel, and there can be little doubt but that the learned Pythagoras had so studied the Syrian rituals that he had a thorough knowledge of the manners, forms and ceremonies used by the several degrees, or classes, of workmen employed at the building of the first temple, and has handed down to us some of the main features of our present institution, as formulated by the Royal Solomon at that ancient and august period.

Amongst those Roman Colleges of Constructors were arranged the ceremonies of initiations, modeled after the Egyptian forms. The second degree was based upon the Grecian and Roman arts and sciences; while the third or sublime degree of a Master Mason was of Hebrew origin. These were blended into one system, and have come down to us as such, more or less modified to suit the conditions of the ages through which they have passed. Some of our early Masonic writers have styled our system the