

OUR AMERICAN INDIANS AS FREEMASONS.

Not only according to the views of the romantic Cooper, but also those of the matter-of-fact Heckewelder, the aborigines of America possessed and exemplified many noble qualities, and had this not been so there could have been no Indian Masons, or Masonry. There are not only numerous well-authenticated instances of Indians having been made Freemasons in the Masoric lodges of their pale-faced brethren, but there is also considerable evidence which goes to prove that there was a native Freemasonry among the aborigines, kindred to our own. In a chapter upon the "Native Priesthood," by Dr. D. G. Brinton, in his readable "Myths of the New World," this scholar says, that the American Indians had their "Mysteries," with their appropriate esoteric teaching." The priests formed societies of different grades of illumination, only to be entered by those willing to undergo trying ordeals, whose secrets were not to be revealed under the severest penalties. The Algonquins had three such grades, the *waubeno*, the *meda*, and the *jossakeed*, the last being the highest. To this no white man was ever admitted. All tribes appear to have been controlled by these secret societies." The Chippewas had a kindred fraternity, known as the "Meda Craft." A Mohawk chieftain, the Rev. J. J. Kelvy, in an address delivered in Philadelphia, in 1883, said: "Masonry had been known among the Indians long before the arrival of the whites." The late Bro. Cornelius Moore once met with a tribe of Wisconsin Indians, who, to the best of his knowledge, after a careful examination of several of their number, had what appeared to be a Masonry of their own suggestive of ours. Bro. De Witt Clinton, of New York, made a similar assertion with regard to the Iroquois. In consequence of these various tribes keep-

ing no permanent records, all knowledge on this subject must be traditional. But of this there can be no doubt, since the records are in our own custody—there are many instances of Indians having been made Masons in our own lodges. We shall refer to a few of the best authenticated of these, on account both of their interest and value.

The famous Shawnee warrior and orator, Tecumseh, on more than one occasion proved his knowledge of and faith in Masonry by his works. In the war of 1812, the mystic cry of a Mason and a brother, often saved the life of one who would otherwise have been the victim of the tomahawk. And Tecumseh is said to have been made a Mason in Philadelphia. Past Grand Master Scott, of Virginia, in an address before the Grand Lodge of that jurisdiction in 1845, related several Masonic anecdotes, he said, were "well authenticated and vouched for by several living witnesses." The "Percy Anecdotes" record several other instances of his fidelity to his Masonic obligations.

Joseph Brant, the Mohawk brave, was another example of a faithful Indian Freemason. At the battle of the Cedars, near Montreal, in 1776, he saved the life of his prisoner, Bro. Capt. McKinstry, when he was about to be burned at the stake. The Mason's mystic appeal was sufficient to move the heart and stay the hand of his Indian captor.

Bro. B. T. B. Kavanaugh, in an address delivered before the Grand Lodge of Indiana, in 1847, told of a chieftain of the Miami tribe traveling all night to put a Masonic brother on his guard, prior to a general attack that was about to be made on a settlement by the Indians. "The attack was made, and the chief's mystic shield guarded in safety the head of his brother."

Bro. Col. P. P. Pitchlynn, a chief of the Choctaws, in 1854, was present at the annual communication of the