

they might be kept from the knowledge of the vulgar, as much as the riddles of Sphinx."

Pythagoras, by travelling into Egypt, became instructed in the Mysteries of that nation, and here he laid the foundation of all his symbolical learning. The several writers that have mentioned this philosopher,† and given an account of his Sect and Institutions, have convinced me fully that Freemasonry, as published by the Dissector, is very nearly allied to the old Pythagorean discipline; from whence I am persuaded it may, in some circumstances, very justly claim its descent. To mention a few—

Upon the admission of a disciple, he was bound by a solemn oath to conceal the Mysteries from the vulgar and uninitiated.

The principal and most efficacious of their doctrines were (says Jamblichus) ever kept secret among themselves; they were continued unwritten, and preserved only by memory to their successors, to whom they delivered them as mysteries of the gods.

They conversed with one another by signs and had particular words which they received upon their admission, and which were preserved with great reverence, as the distinction of their Sect: for (it is the judicious remark of Laertius) as generals use Watch-words to distinguish their own soldiers from others, so it is proper to communicate to the initiated peculiar signs and words, as distinctive marks of a society.

The Pythagoreans professed a great regard for what the Dissector calls the four principles of Masonry, viz: a point, a line, a superficies and a solid; and particularly held that a Square was a very proper emblem of the Divine essence;‡ the gods, they say, who are the authors of every thing established in Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, are not improperly represented by the figure of a Square.

Many more instances might be produced, would the limits of my design admit. I shall only observe, that there was a false Brother, one Hipparchus,§ of this Sect, who, out of spleen and disappointment, broke through the bond of his oath and committed the secrets of the society to writing, in order to bring the doctrine into contempt. He was immediately expelled from the school, as a person most infamous and abandoned, as one dead to all sense of virtue and goodness; and the Pythagoreans, according to their custom, made a tomb for him, as if he had been actually dead. The shame and disgrace that justly attended this violation of his oath, threw the poor wretch into a fit of madness and despair, so that he cut his throat and perished by his own hands; and (which surprised me to find) his memory was so abhorred after death, that his body lay upon the shore of the island of Samos, and had no other burial than in the sands of the sea.

The Essenes among the Jews were a sort of Pythagoreans, and corresponded, in many particulars, with the practice of the Fraternity, as delivered in the Dissection. For example, when a person desired to be admitted into their society, he was to pass through two degrees of probation before he could be perfect Master of their Mysteries. When he was received into the class of Novices, he was presented with a white garment; and when he had been long enough to give some competent proofs of his secrecy and virtue, he was admitted to further knowledge; but still he went on with the trial of his integrity and good manners, and then was fully taken into the society.

† Vide Jamblichus, vit. Pythagoræ; Laertius, vit. Pythagoræ; Porphyrius, Clem. Alex. Strom.

‡ Vide Proclus in Euclid, lib. xi. def. 2 and 34.

§ Clem. Alex. Strom., v.