

HISTORICAL.

Short Historical Sketch of the Modern
Templar Order in the British Em-
pire, and its connection with
"Free and Accepted Mason-
ry," by the Grand Master
of the Great Priory of
Canada, 1887.

"The origin and object of the old Religious and Military Order of the Templars of the Crusades being a matter of history, it is unnecessary to refer to it. And it is well authenticated that the building Guilds or Sodalities of the middle ages sprang from the same source, viz: the Benedictine Order of Monks at the beginning of the 12th century, promulgating the same doctrines. It remains then to show why and how it has been revived in the Masonic fraternity of the present day and allied to the craft degrees after a lapse of nearly five centuries.

From the Building Guilds or trade corporations in cities, the successors of the Monastic Architects, employed in the service of the church, Modern Free and Accepted Masonry is the outcome.

Early Free and Accepted Masonry in England, its birth place, was always essentially a Christian Fraternity, but had so fallen into desuetude in modern times that it was but little known or appreciated. When at the commencement of the 18th century a revival took place and a complete revision of its ancient doctrines and usages, proclaiming a universal creed—this led to numerous innovations on the original plan of degrees by the introduction of the Royal Arch with other side degrees of Jewish Free Masonry.

The great mistake which has caused so much confusion about the true character of the modern Templar degrees as allied to Free Masonry, arises mainly from not knowing,

or not distinguishing, the great difference between the Masonry of to-day, and that from which it is derived. The Templar degrees refer to and represent the connection that is supposed to have existed between the old Templar Order and the Ecclesiastical Christian builders, who on separating from the cloisters, associated themselves with the building Guilds, from which modern Speculative Masonry is the outcome—but this revision forms no part of the present Templar system of the British Empire, excepting by alliance.

The introduction of the Templar degrees into Free Masonry originated upon the continent of Europe soon after Speculative or Symbolic Free Masonry was imported there from England, and was at first chiefly confined to the higher ranks of social life, who were ambitious that Masonry should be considered the descendants of the old Religious and Military Order of the Templars, based upon a *fiction* that at the dissolution of the Order, certain Knights joined the Guilds of Stone Masons in Scotland, which gave rise to Free and Accepted Masonry. The Templar Rite of the Strict Observance was founded on this legend and introduced into Germany in 1754, from whence it spread over Europe.

In 1782 Prince Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, Grand Master of the Rite, held a congress at "Wilhelmsbad" in Hesse Cassel by a great representative assembly of Masonic delegates throughout the world, at which it was declared that Free Masons were *not* the successors of the Templars although originally allied. This convocation opened the adoption of "Masonic" Templary, to show that a connection had existed between the old Order and the Christian Builders, but had no reference to Speculative Masonry of the 1717 revival.

After the conference of "Wilhelmsbad" the Rite of Strict Observance gradually declined and subsequently died out altogether.