

THE FREEMASONS.

A striking contrast between Freemasonry, as it is known in Great Britain, and Freemasonry as it is regarded in some Continental Countries, was furnished by yesterday's "Court Circular."

The installation of the Prince of Wales as Worshipful Master of the Alpha Lodge of Masons was recorded therein, and one more testimony given of the complete harmony which prevails between the constitutional government and the tenets of the craft.

It is the boast of Freemasons that their Order stands alone, and nothing offends a zealous brother more deeply than to affect to regard the Craft as an organization of similar character to the Foresters and Odd Fellows. That which is the boast, and the laudable boast, of the two latter bodies, Freemasons repudiate with disdain "We are not an insurance office. We are not self-seeking. Higher motives than mere worldly prudence govern us. No one is admitted into our ranks who does not declare himself uninfluenced by mercenary or other unworthy motives"—such is the outspoken creed of the brotherhood, of which the Prince of Wales is a ruler.

Those members of the general public which believe Freemasonry to be, in any sense, a benefit to society, might listen with advantage to the debates of the G. Lodge, which is presided over by the Marquis of Ripon as Grand Master, and attended by the leading members of the Craft.

Grand Lodge, it may be explained, is the Parliament of Freemasonry, and holds four regular meetings in each year. It is composed of Freemasons, who have attained, by services rendered, and the suffrages of their brethren, a certain defined position in private lodges to which they belong, and who meet and deliberate as representatives of the Order at home and abroad. Grand Lodge is, then, a strictly

constitutional body, with a sway which extends over the four quarters of the globe. At Simla and at New Brunswick; at Shanghai, Barbadoes, the Cape of Good Hope, Tasmania and Australia, are Freemasons' lodges, which are worked under the Grand Lodge of England, and the members of which are guided and governed by its decrees.

The debates of Grand Lodge are published in the Masonic organs of opinion, and it is certain that the doctrine that it lays down has considerable influence for good or evil on the mind and temper of the Craft.

It occasionally happens that discussions arise concerning the recommendations made by the various boards and sub-committees, and when a proposed grant of money to a distressed brother is the text, no doctrine is laid down more forcibly than that Masonic work and Masonic honours can not be held to purchase a right to relief.

The brethren are frequently warned against encouraging men to neglect their business for the acquisition of Masonic rank, and few things would astonish an outsider more than the gravity and importance with which the distinctions of Freemasonry are invested by their possessors and their aspirants.

What is termed "the purple" of the Order, in allusion to the hue of the insignia worn by those who have attained it, represents the Masonic peerages and its holders are recognized as leaders wherever Masons congregate.

The Alpha Lodge, of which the Prince of Wales has just been made Master, is composed exclusively of wearers of the purple—in other words, of a selected number of the Past and Present Grand Officers of the Order, and, unlike every other Masonic Lodge, its members are nominated, not elected. No new blood is brought into the Alpha Lodge, save by the special intervention of the Grand Master, who