

learned their Craft, and acquired the mystery of Freemasonry, from the cathedral builders of the continent. We trace Masonry to the Monastic schools of the convent builders, and thence to the German stonemasons or stonecutters (*steinmetzen*). Bro. Fort, in his two masterly works, on the History of Freemasonry, and on the Mediæval Builders, is the best, and almost the only authority on this subject, but occasionally we find in Bro. Gould's history a paragraph looking in the same direction. Take for example, the following:—

"It is probable that in the twelfth century, or thereabouts, the skilled masons of the convent builders left the employ of their masters, the monks, now grown opulent, fat, lazy and vicious, and unable to provide them with further work, and amalgamated with the craft builders in the towns, and the two together formed the society, afterwards known throughout Germany as the *Steinmetzen*.

We believe the above statement of a "probability" to be in accordance with the facts, and any Masonic historian who seeks to trace the Craft's succession in any other direction, or fails to base it upon *any* succession, falls into plain Masonic error.

"There is a related matter, of primary importance. Just as some brethren do not see a Grand Lodge or a Grand Master, or indeed any Craft at all, outside of England, prior to 1717, so they say the Second and Third degrees of Freemasonry are exclusively of English origin. This appears to us to be as palpable and inexcusable an error as any to which we have adverted. Two-thirds of Masonry, these brethren would maintain, are modern! Indeed, when they admit that there were three *grades*, they in substance admit that there were three *degrees*. It is, after all, mainly a difference about names. Theory requires three degrees; reason justifies three degrees; and we feel sure that facts, yet to be discovered, will fully authenticate the antiquity of the three degrees. Initiation in the First degree

admits the applicant to the Fraternity, and gained his assent to its policy of non-communication of its Craft knowledge to the profane, but confined him, as a Mason, to the locality where he entered. Initiation in the Second degree secured his willing assent to the due observance of all the laws, regulations and customs of the Fraternity, and conferred upon him, the right to change his location, and travel as a Mason. Initiation in the Third degree broadened his Masonic horizon to its farthest verge, matching his assumption of fraternal obligations with the impartation of the largest privileges accorded to the most favored brother; among which was the right to preside as Master over a lodge of Fellow Craft Masons. This latter degree included, originally, all of the knowledge that now is conferred in the Royal Arch degree. The M. M. degree is now clearly a mutilated degree, needing the R. A. degree to supplement and perfect it. There was further (as a part of the F. C. degree) a most interesting and important Masonic usage, now represented in our Mark degree. In mediæval and ancient times writing was not an ordinary accomplishment, and if it has been it would not have answered the needs of the Freemasons of the time, the Operative Masons, or builders of important stone edifices. Hence, each brother selected his Mark, and his work was always distinguished by it. Here you have the whole of Ancient Masonry, and the whole of it is ancient, the opinion of certain modern brethren to the contrary notwithstanding. These statements can now be sufficiently authenticated, and the day will speedily arrive when they can be made plain as facts, even to the most incredulous Brother. In our opinion, whoever writes the history of Freemasonry upon any other basis of principle, or Craft legitimacy, than that indicated above, makes a record that will not bear the test of either reason or time.

—*Keystone.*