

and approve it; did they know the fact, or were they relying on tradition, even as their brethren of to-day are doing; did they write authentic history, or did they incorporate into their narrative the myths and legends existing at that period in the imaginative Masonic mind?

Athelstan, to whom is attributed the authorship of the original of the Gothic Constitutions, succeeded to the throne of England in the year 925; he reigned sixteen years, and died without issue at the age of forty six; his power extended beyond that of any former Saxon king, and to him belongs the honor of founding the English monarchy; he was distinguished for his learning and piety, and renowned for his wisdom, justice and benevolence; such are the facts recorded in history. In this Constitution the King is reputed to say "that he has transmitted to his son Edwin (member of the Association) an edict," and "behold in the pious Prince Edwin your protector": now if this document had been prepared by Athelstan, or discussed by intelligent men at that time, such errors could not have been overlooked, for the King was but thirty-one years of age, and the only Prince Edwin known to that period was born about fourteen years afterward. Thus within this pretended Charter of York are to be found the conclusive evidences of its spurious character, nor will the substitution of the word brother for son give credit to the paper; besides, how remarkable that the very name of its reputed author in the Anglo Saxon vernacular signifies a noble stone. Its visionary composer, looking back through the long line of English sovereigns, when he found a king not only whose character, but whose very name was so well suited to his purposes, doubtless exclaimed, as did once a philosopher of old, "Eureka."

There is something in the popular history of Masonry that renders it peculiarly interesting, and there is a consistency of progress and a clearness of intelligence in the account which would make its fabrication more wonderful than its transmission by tradition. In the absence of authentic record or genuine tradition, the speculative historian, in his effort to present to the world a true narrative of Masonry, is as prone to throw himself upon pure invention for one as for the other, and an examination of his work will disclose the fact that the missing link has been supplied from that ample store-house, an imaginative mind. This faculty is well illustrated in the attempt made to harmonize the reference to "his son Edwin," in the pretended charter of York, with the facts of history. When it became evident that Athelstan had no such son, it was assumed that a brother was referred to, but as it appears that he had only two half-brothers, Edmund, then four years old, and Edred, still younger, they could not have been intended, and as a last resort, a Masonic writer of no little reputation has stated that Edwin, King of Northumbria, was referred to, but, unfortunately, he lived and died two hundred and ninety-three years before this interesting occasion. From such examples it may safely be concluded that tradition, though fleeting and transitory, when it is connected with customs, laws and institutions, is far more satisfactory than the random speculations of even those whose reputation would ordinarily entitle them to credit.

Who can contemplate the mysteries of the world of thought without being reminded of the humble beginnings which have led up, step by step, to the present vast range of man's intelligence, and whence came this power which has developed knowledge; and laid the foundation of the glorious structures of human ingenuity, those monuments which serve to mark the progress of ideas? It is accepted by every rational being as a gift from that Supreme Intelligence which pervades all Nature, and has caused the reflection that there is a Creator of all things, to whom due reverence should be given, and man, as a religious being, has conceived it to be his duty to exemplify his devout feelings by appropriate acts. His ideas of Deity and His appropriate worship are inculcated by education and example, and when fixed in the mind, are not easily eradicated. The religious rites and observances which distinguish different associations of people, serve to mark the era in which they lived, and in a great measure, the country to which they belonged. Among all of the ideals a Sovereign of the Universe, the Hebrew Deity alone stands the test of intelligence; the only living and true God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; that God who has been worshipped since He first revealed himself to man, six thousand years ago, is the God in fact of Masonry, and has been ever since its history can be traced; and this one fact may be the key to a solution of the subject under consideration, it may furnish the evidence of the real origin of Masonry.

SECRET SOCIETIES.

THE world, mankind, will never cease its interest in secret societies; the bare mention of them is a fascination; and any details of their origin, history and objects, portrayed with the self-assured presumption of a ready book compiler, are seized upon by the