

THE TRUE HISTORY OF MASONRY

All men laud broad views, but few take them. This is true in Masonry as in the outer world. While much of the Freemasonry of the continent of Europe at the present day is but a name, it must not be forgotten that it was not always so. We regret to note that several eminent English brethren cannot find, historically in the past, any Masonry outside of England. They are hide-bound. Their "tight little island" contains all they know, in the past as well as in the present, in Masonry. Now, while we will not abate one jot of our admiration for the English Masonry of to-day, and are willing to match our estimate of it with that of any English brother, we admire it, we fancy, with judgment. What would the Bartholdi statue, given to America by the French nation, be without the pedestal? And may we not ask, what is English Masonry without its continental ancestral basis? Masonry was not born in England—it was carried there. Neither was it born on the continent of Europe, but carried there, likewise. It had its origin in the Orient, in the aforetime. And yet, because Englishmen will not go across the Channel for their morals, their politics or their religion, they seem averse to going thither for their Masonry. This is false pride. They *must* go there, if they would found their Freemasonry upon any solid historic basis; if they would not boast a merely modern fraternity, only suggested by an older one, not linked to it. The work of the true Masonic historian is to assert the genuine succession of the Craft, and to find the connecting links. That they exist is certain, and their exact discovery is only a question of time and skill.

Another, and kindred error, of certain distinguished English brethren, is to assert that there were no Grand Lodges or Grand Masters prior to 1717, and at that time only in England. Here you observe the same

fundamental delusion, exposed above—a limitation of the home of Masonry to England. Before A. D. 1717, we are asked to believe, if there were Masons they were only congregated in lodges, never in a Grand Lodge; and there was only a Master (or Warden) of a lodge, never a Grand Master of a Grand Lodge. Really, such a statement seems strange to us. No Grand Lodge prior to 1717! On the contrary, the Grand Lodge of Strassburg,—of the German Stone Masons, the cathedral builders, was "maintained uninterruptedly through five centuries," until 1797, when an imperial Diet promulgated a decree interdicting the lodges of the Empire from a further recognition of its authority, theretofore acknowledged.* So far from there being *no* Grand Lodge in Germany prior to 1717, there were *four*, expressly recognized by the General Regulations of the Stonemasons in A. D. 1459, viz.: those of Strassburg, Cologne, Vienna and Zurich. Twenty-two lodges were subordinate to the Grand Lodge of Strassburg, and it became pre-eminent, and was accorded supreme authority. Why, even the mediæval tailors had a Grand Lodge, and they were not nearly as important, nor as well organized, a body as the mediæval Stonemason. In A.D. 1520, the guilds of tailors in fourteen different cities on the Rhine united in forming what they styled, *guild en gros*—in other words a Grand Lodge. Then as to a Grand Master, each of the Masonic Grand Lodges had a Grand Master, and Jost Dotzinger, as Grand Master (Bro. Gould terms him "Chief Judge") of the Grand Lodge of Strassburg, was acknowledged as Grand Master of the Fraternity in Germany. These Operative Masons were our precursors in Freemasonry, and theoretically there cannot be a doubt that the cathedral builders of England

* See Fort's *Early History and Antiquities of Freemasonry*, p. 150; and chapter xv throughout.