

and in the Landsdowne Manuscript this "son of Hiram" is said to have been "Master of geometry, and chief master of all his [Solomon's] masonry, and of all his graving, carving, and all other masonry that belonged to the Temple." The story is so repeated, with but little variation, in succeeding manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A name is, however, given to him, which is sometimes Ajuon and sometimes Agnon, but he is always identified as the "son of Hiram, King of Tyre."

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, when what is called the revival of Freemasonry took place, there was a continuation of the general idea that this personage was the chief Mason at the Temple; but the name of Hiram Abif is now first found in a written or printed record. Anderson, in the first edition of the "Constitutions," published in 1723, calls him "the most accomplished Mason upon earth," and in a note "the prince of architects." This character has adhered to him in all subsequent time, and the unwritten legend of the present day represents him as the "Chief Builder of the Temple," the "Operative Grand Master," and the skillful architect, by whose elaborate designs on the trestle-board the craft were guided and the edifice constructed.

Now, it will be interesting to compare these attributes of Hiram Abif with the Scriptural account of the same person, the only authentic account that we have of him.

The first description of him with which we meet is that contained in first book of Kings, chapter vii, verses 13 and 14; it is in these words: "And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass, and he came to King Solomon and wrought all his work."

The next account is in the second book of Chronicles, chapter ii, verses 13 and 14. It is in the epistle of the King of Tyre to King Solomon, and in these words,

"And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my fathers, the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skilled to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David, thy father."

This was in reply to the application of Solomon, that Hiram would send him such a workman. The application is contained in the seventh verse of the same chapter, and is in these words:

"Send me now therefore, a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple and in crimson, and in blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide."

The words in the original, which designate the profession of Hiram Abif, are *KHoReSh NeKHoShET*, a worker in brass. Dr. Adam Clarke calls him "a very n-telligent coppersmith." The error into which the modern Masonic writers have fallen, in supposing him to have been a stonemason, has arisen from the mistranslation in the authorized version of the passage in Chronicles, where he is said to have been "skilled to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber." The words italicized are, in the original, *BaBaNiM VeBaGNeTSiM*, in stones and in woods, that is, in precious stones and in woods of various kinds. That is to say, beside being a coppersmith, he was a lapidary and a carver and gilder. The words in the original are in the plural; and therefore the translation, "in stone and in timber," is not correct. The word *eben*, Gesenius says, is used by way of excellence to designate a precious stone, and its plural *abanim* means, therefore, precious stones.

The work done by Hiram Abif in the Temple is fully recounted in the first book of Kings, chapter vii, verses 15 to 40, and is briefly recapitulated in verses 41 to 50. It is enumerated in the 3d and 4th chapters of the second book of Chronicles, and in both books care is taken to say that when this work was done, the task of Hiram Abif was completed. In the first book of Kings, (vii, 40) it is said; "So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made King Solomon for the house of the Lord." In the second book of Chronicles, (iv, 11.) the statement is repeated thus: "And Hiram finished the work that he was to make for King Solomon for the house of God."

This same authority leaves us in no doubt what that work was to which the skill of Hiram Abif was devoted. It was, says the book of Chronicles, "the two pillars, and the two pommels and the chapters which were on the top of the two pillars, and the two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapters which were on the top of the pillars; and four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapters which were upon the pillars. He made also bases and lavers made he upon the bases; one sea, and twelve oxen under it. The pots also, and the shovels, and the fleshhooks, and all their instruments, did Hiram his father make to King Solomon for the house of the Lord, of