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AN ORATION.

BY THE REV. A. F. A. WOODFORD, P. G. C.

Delivered on the occasion of the Consecration of Chaucer Lodge, No. 1540.

Most Worshipful Consecrating Officer, Senior and Junior Wardens and Brethren, though I should personally have preferred that some brother more connected with the locality had addressed you on the present occasion, yet as during my 33 years of connection with the good old Order, I have always obeyed my superiors, I felt bound to defer at once to the wishes and command of my excellent and respected friend and brother in the chair. I shall, therefore, venture to address a few words to you to-day, relying on your wonted fraternal kindness and consideration. I congratulate you, in the first instance, on your name of the Chaucer Lodge. Chaucer is so historical a name to Englishmen, that in this locality especially the name of your Lodge suggests many pleasant memories. It is not far from here that the "Tabard" once stood from which Chaucer started in his famous pilgrimages with his goodly companions. The old original Tabard has long since given way to the "encroaching hand of time," but a successor has long existed on the same spot, which is now also doomed to pass away. Chaucer may fairly be denominated the Patriarch of English Poetry. Though not the first in that long roll of illustrious names in point of time, he may be looked upon as the eldest of that great family which has shed such grace and honor on the English language, which has charmed imagination, vindicated honor, aroused sympathy, and proclaimed the right, and which is now read by countless thousands, not only of the Anglo-Saxon race, but of all nations alike, with gratification, admiration, and enthusiasm.

Chaucer is 7th in point of time. He was preceded by Cædmon, by our great King Alfred, by Robert of Gloucester, by Robert de Brunne, by Richard Rolle, by Robert Langlande, though the last is very nearly contemporary with Chaucer.

In his "Pilgrimage" he tells us that

"An Haberdasher and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Dyer and a Tapiser,
Were all y clothed in a livere
Of a solempne and grete fraternite;"

and were amongst those who went out from the Tabard.

It is a pity that he has not said also a "Freemason" as we might have learned whether he were also, as some have surmised from stray expressions in his writings, a member of our fraternity. Of this I can say nothing certain. It may be so, but we have no evidence of it, further than this, that he was connected with the operative masons. On the 12th of July, 1389, he was appointed, by patent, Clerk of the King's Works at the Palace of Westminster, Tower of London, and elsewhere. In July, 1790, he was commanded to procure workmen for the repair of St. George's Chapel, at Windsor. Chaucer, as it is believed, married Philippa, the daughter of Sir Payne Roet, a Fleming by birth, and sister of Katherine Roet, first the wife of Hugh Swinford, and then of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. He died in a tenement leased from Westminster Abbey, in 1400, and was buried in the sacred fane.