

THE "GUILD" ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY.

THE London *Freemason* of May 29th, ult., contained two interesting communications upon this subject, Bro. Woodford says:

"That Freemasonry existed before 1717 we have the most undoubted proofs. We have the evidence of Ashmole in 1646, and again in 1652. We have about the same time the evidence of Dr. Plot, who was a non-mason, and not very friendly to the Order. We have Robert Padgett, Clerke to the Society of Freemasons, 1685; we have a lodge at York in 1693; and we have the minute book of the Lodge of Alnwick in 1702. We also read of the Freemasons as an organized body, with signs, &c., in the "Tatler," in 1709, and which quotation is verified in the old *Freemasons' Magazine* for 1863, vol. IX., new series, page 3. I say nothing of the Scotch Lodges, as I do not wish to poach on Bro. W. J. Hughan's manor, but certainly I know that in his mind, as in mine, the evidence is irrefragible that before 1717, speculative Masonry existed both in England and in Scotland, and that we, the revived Grand Lodge of 1797, are the continuations of the operative guilds.

"Does Bro. Buchan mean to contend that our speculative system took its rise 1717?—that it was entirely distinct from the operative guilds and the quasi speculative lodges in Scotland?"

"Who then were the Freemasons at Warrington who received Ashmole? Who were the Freemasons who met in Basinghall street, in 1682? What was the Worshipful Society of Freemasons of which Robert Padgett was "Clerke," in 1685? Who were the Freemasons at York, in 1663? Who were the Freemasons in Staffordshire? It is quite clear that the Masons' Company and the Society of Freemasons were two distinct bodies, and, therefore, we are brought back to this, that toward the end of the 17th century, a society of Freemasons existed in this country, which we have every reason to believe is certainly identical with our present speculative Order."

Bro. Hughan adds:

"I am more convinced than ever of the reasonableness of what is termed the "Guild Theory," in explanation of the origin of Freemasonry, and so I am working with Bro. the Rev. A. F. A. Woodford, in unearthing all documents bearing in any way on Freemasonry, which are to be found in old Lodge chests and in muniment rooms, which have been considered heretofore of no account in our researches.

"The last few years speak of the success which has crowned our efforts, and I purpose shortly to enumerate the MSS. known by, or familiar to the Craft, a dozen years ago, and those accessible to the fraternity of to-day.

"I am quite convinced that Freemasonry, as a secret institution, operative and speculative, sometimes both, and at other times one only of these two departments, existed centuries before the Grand Lodge of England was constituted in 1717, which was the first Grand Lodge ever formed, and at which meeting the first Grand Mastet ever elected was installed; but I am not prepared to admit that our three degrees, including the Royal Arch, are so ancient."

THE LIFE OF CHARITY.

A MAN may vegetate, but not live a soul life. He may receive, as the plant, the sunshine and shower, and lift no grateful heart to the Giver of all good. He may receive from air, and cloud and light, and yet, as some odourless flowers, shed no fragrance abroad, or even as some obnoxious weeds, afford no beauteous blossom to delight the eye, or worse still, like the deadly henbane he may distil a hurtful poison. He only *lives*, in the truest sense, who has learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive—that the girdle of perfection, the bond of the universe is love, and the most shining grace that can decorate human character is charity. If there be a devil that can mock the dying agonies of a malevolent man, it is the thought that with the power and opportunity of doing good none has been performed, and that all the forces given for benevolent uses have been turned to blight, rather than to bless. There are men who pass through the world like a band of music at the head of a holiday procession. They fill the air with music, and give a glad quick tune to the march of humanity. They are like orange trees, bannered with refreshing green, and hung over with rich clusters of golden fruit, and loading the circumambient space with odours that regale the waiting sense. There are others who are like the coarse clamor of Chinese gongs, offending the ear and paining every sensitive nerve, or like the tom-tom, beat at the Pagan's funeral pyre to drown every cry of the hapless victim for mercy, or like the baneful Upas tree, of fable, dropping from every bow a deadly virus upon every tired traveller that has dropped to sleep beneath its delusive branches.

How grandly does a life aggregate into a history that daily abounds in words of cheer