

These monasteries, however, were not at first seats of industry, learning and science. It was not until the wise laws and rules of St. Benedict of Nursig, in A. D. 529, that cloisters really became the seat of piety, industry, temperance, and science; the latter having, as it were, fled, in the turmoil of the times, into these secluded recesses.

Unfortunately, however, in course of time, when these cloisters grew in influence and wealth, debauchery and other vices became preponderant among those monks; and the institutions, which promised to become a lasting benefit to humanity, proved to be a curse to mankind.

During the time of Karl the Great (Charlemagne) in the eighth century, there were only few cloisters that had not fallen off from their original design; however, in the eleventh century they were again purified and resuscitated, and during the eleventh and twelfth centuries they were at the pinnacle of their usefulness. Many of the cloisters procured exemption from all control of government except that of the Vatican; and their wealth and power increased amazingly.

The Crusades which took place between 1095 and 1268 greatly aided to increase the wealth and power of the cloisters. Many of the monks joined the Crusades, and enormous amounts of valuable property were entrusted to the safe keeping of the cloisters by the crusaders, many of whom never returned, and their property was kept by the cloisters.

In 1048, the Order of Knights Hospitaller of Jerusalem was founded; in 1118, the Order of the Knights Templar came into existence; and in 1291, Palestine was cleared of all the invaders. Jerusalem is still, up to the present day, in the hands of the Musselmans.

After the Crusades, the Monk system fell into decay and lost its popularity.

That the Ecclesiastes, and particularly the Monks, were, during the

middle ages up to the thirteenth century, among the Christians, exclusively in possession of the sciences is an historical fact; and likewise, that by their united exertions the greater part if not even all religious edifices were erected under their immediate supervision and direction; but the builders and artificers who actually built the same and made the finishings thereof, were not Monks; the Monks themselves were not operative masons nor artificers; the men who possessed the skill to build and ornament, and were acquainted with all the secrets of the art of building and manufacturing, were the pupils of the old schools of the *collegia fabrorum* and *collegia artificum*, the Freemasons of those days, and this is proved by archæology. The old Phœnician and Greek marks are still found on stones in the ruins of buildings erected by them.

To assert, however, that because the Monks were at a time in possession of what is generally termed all the learning and science, that they also performed all the work required in the erection of the edifices, is certainly saying too much; and to assert that they were in possession of the ancient mysteries, that they practised them, and that they conveyed them to others, who again communicated them to the Freemasons of the last century or thereabout, is certainly an assertion without a tittle of historical evidence and exceedingly improbable.

It is well known that the Church of Rome ever was and still is strongly opposed to all kinds of secret societies; that on their index has stood for centuries a prohibition against them, that that church will not tolerate any of its members to belong to any secret society, and is ever ready to excommunicate those who venture to violate that law; how then can it be expected that that which is known as the Masonic mysteries was ever practised by the Monks; in fact they had no reason whatever to practise the same. All mysteries were practised by people