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"THE NUMBER THREE AS CONNECTED WITH FREEMASONRY."

A PAPER READ BEFORE TEMPLE LODGE, NO. 324, HAMILTON, 13TH OCT., 1885, BY
BRO. H. A. MACKELCAN.

The number three was considered among all the Pagan nations as the chief of the mystical numbers, because, as Aristotle remarks, it contains within itself a beginning, a middle and an end.

Hence we find it designating some of the attributes of almost all the gods. The thunder bolt of Jove was three-forked; the sceptre of Neptune was a trident; Cerberus, the dog of Pluto, was three-headed; there were three Fates and three Furies; the sun had three names, and the moon also three. In all incantations three was the favorite number. A triple card was used, each division being of three colors, white, red and black, and a small image of the subject of the charm was carried thrice round the altar.

In the mysteries of India, the doctrine of the Trinity was clearly expressed in the triad—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva; and the number three has been held by the inhabitants of India in the most sacred veneration through every period of their existence as a nation.

Among the Chinese the number three appears to have a mystical importance and to be used frequently in their ceremonies

The Druids paid no less respect to this sacred number. Throughout their whole system, references are constantly made to its influence and so far did their veneration for it extend that even their sacred poetry was composed in triads.

The Celts and Goths had each their triads of Deity, and, in fact, in all the "mysteries" from Egypt to Scandinavia is found a sacred regard for the number three. It was, I find, a general character of these "mysteries" to have three principal officers, and three grades of initiation.

In Freemasonry the number three is the most important and universal in its application of all the mystic numbers and it will be found to pervade the whole ritual.

If we take a deliberate view of the Lodge, and consider, with a careful and scientific eye, its fundamental construction, we shall find that almost all its principal details are ternary.

There are three degrees; three qualifications of a candidate, birth, age and morals; and his assent is required to three judicious requests. There are three traditional points, and three perfect points of entrance. The signs are commonly threefold,