

Knights are accustomed to gather, hear noises which lead them to believe that the Knights make a practice of falling over a large amount of furniture, a theory which is apparently confirmed by the fact that they issue from their meetings in a very heated and extremely thirsty state. Still, it seems intrinsically improbable that men should go to large expense in point of uniforms and horse-collars merely to meet together and fall over furniture, and we must assume that a meeting of Templars has some other and worthier object.

There was a time when many intelligent men, including John Quincy Adams and Thurlow Weed, believed that the Knights Templar Society was a dangerous thing, chiefly because it takes its members exclusively from the Masonic Fraternity. In these days no one views the Templars with alarm. A more innocuous gathering never took place than that which has just delighted the Chicago hotel-keepers. The Knights are not as picturesque as the old Templars, but they behave themselves much better, and as between the ancient Knight in the act of torturing a Jew and the modern Knight peacefully nodding through a long sermon in a Methodist meeting house, it is very easy to make a choice.

—♦— "The Meaning of Cowan."

I do not think that I can add anything new to the old arguments and statements anent "cowan," but as "every little helps," even in Masonic archæology, and "every mickle makes a muckle," I think it well to ask the favor of the appearance of these few words of mine in the pages of the *Masonic Magazine*. I begin, my kind readers will observe, by stating that my words will be few, and few they certainly shall be. Just now we seem to like nothing long, whether long leaders, long articles, long orations, or even long sermons! No,

the taste of the age is, practically, to "cut it short" in everything. And though I fear a good deal of this impatience must be set down to the irritability and ignorance of the age combined, yet, like the ladies, I think it necessary to be in the fashion, and so, "cutting my coat according to my cloth," I "cave in."

I often see learned explanations of the word "cowan," but I have for one never wavered in my opinion, expressed some years ago, that it is simply a term of Masonic technical use, and belongs really and truly and primarily to the Masonic terminology and vocabulary alone. For, as is well known, the word is not known to the older dictionaries; and even that most excellent work, "Crabbe's Technico-logical Dictionary," knows it not. I do not say that it is not to be found, but it is the exception to the rule. It is to be found, no doubt, in some of the very modern dictionaries.

Curiously enough, its Masonic use in England is very modern too. The word is not to be found in the English Guild Constitutions, though some believe that the word "lowen" in the Lansdowne MS. is synonymous with it, or rather put for it. I am myself not so sure of that, the more so as "Dowland" has it not, and the general use of the similar word in the same place in the other Constitutions is "layer" or "lyer." The Antiquity MS., indeed, uses "lowen" also, but Inigo Jones's MS. has no word at all; Wood's MS. uses "layer." I am, therefore, inclined to think that we cannot set much store by the evidence of the Lansdowne MS. The earliest Masonic use I know of it is in the Charges of 1722, where it is opposed to "true Mason," and in its purely operative sense, and curiously enough, the word "cowan" is not to be found in the "old Regulations" of 1721 or the "new Regulations" down to 1798, though the words "true brother" and "false brother" are made use of.