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| different from another, put both together, in order to give all. There was no |
| great uniformity of catechism, I fancy, where there was little communica- |
| tion between Lodges; and, indeed, I can go now from one of our States into |
| another and find differences as great as those of the two answers, which, as |
| he could not prefer one to the other, Prichard combined into one, and so |
| solved the difficulty. It is to be noted that he was divulging and disclosing, |
| and his accuracy would be denied by some Mason, if they used one formula |
| and he gave the other, used elsewhere. He was not laying down a formula |
| to be followed. |
| Much of what was published in the Flying Post, in 1723,5 bears little mark |
| of being genuine, and it is not certain that much of the other catechism was not |
| of the authorship of the divulger of the Grand Mystery,' but it seems to me to |
| have more that is correct in it than the other. |
| There are some things in it which may be worth considering, as they seem |
| to point to something above hewing and laying stone. For example, "God and |
| the Square," in answer to the question, "How many make a Lodge? |
| The Triangle and Square Cross," in this: |
| Q. What Lodge are you of? A |
| A. The Lodge of St. John. |
| Q. How does it stand? |
| A. Perfect East and West as all Temples do. |
| And in this: |
| Q. How many angles in St. John's Lodge? |
| A. Four, bordering on Squares. |
| Also, the Cross in this: |
| Q. Who rules and governs the Lodge and is Master of it? |
| A. Irah, |
| or the Right Pillar. |
| Iachin, |
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| That the three Lights represent "the three persons, Father, Son and Holy |
| Ghost;" and the two Pillars the "strength and stability of the Church in all ages:' |
| That "odds make a Lodge,""because all odds are men's advantage:' |
| That with God and the Square five or seven right and perfect Masons make |
| a Lodge. |
| That the right word or right point of a Mason is Adieu [a Dieu]. |
| The letter to a Friend shows that in 1725, secret doctrines were taught in |
| Masonry, the word Mason was used in a figurative sense, and Masonry was |
| suspected of being Gnostic or heretical. |
| The disposition of "the laws and statutes ordained by the honourable |
| Lodge of Aberdeen, 27th December, 16707 "that no Lodge be holden within a |
| dwelling-house where there is people living it in, but in the open fields, except |
| it be ill weather, and then let a house be chosen that no person shall heir or |
| sie us" cannot be accurately said "to contains some parts of the Ritual of 1730;" |
| or, to express the thought more nearly in your own words, does not show that |
| "some parts of the Rituals of 173o can be traced to 1670." It had only this in |
| common with the later formulas,—that secrecy was to be secured for meetings |
| of a Lodge. None of the later phrases are found in it; and therefore we cannot |
| infer that because some parts of the Ritual of 173o can be traced to 167o, there- |
| fore other parts may; for none of the phrases are traceable thither. |
| I do not see, in these several sayings about the places for holding the |
| Lodge, anything connected with the symbolism of Free-Masonry, whether "the |
| essentials of the Degrees along with other things" is an accurate definition of |
| "symbolism" or not; nor any basis for a supposition "that the symbolism could |
| not have been introduced by the newcomers into Masonry;' and that "it can |
| presumably be carried back to an earlier date than 1717." |
| I am quite ready to believe, and think it can be shown, that there had been a |
| symbolism in Masonry long before 1717, but that the working-class of Masons in |
| the Lodges had no knowledge of it, it being confined to the men who, of another |
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| class, united themselves with the Lodges. If that was even so, those Lodges which |
| had no members of that class had no symbolism in their Masonry. |
| So that I do not generally think we can be warranted in assuming that, |
| among Masons generally,—in the body of Masonry,—the symbolism of Free- |
| Masonry is of earlier date than 1717; while I think you can prove, that among |
| Free-Masons of a certain class and limited number, the same symbolism, or |
| a larger part of the same, afterwards placed in the Degrees, did not exist long |
| before, perhaps some centuries before, 1717. |
| It is not easy to conceive of anything in the purposes or practices of |
| Lodges of working Masons in the 17th century, that could have induced |
| the Rosicrucians or the Hermetic and Alchemical philosophers to |
| use the mask of the common Masonry to cover and conceal their own |
| secret philosophical organization. "During the splendour of medixval |
| operative Masonry," association with it was more on a footing of equal- |
| ity, and `Gemetry' styled itself 'Masonry: It is quite true that "the Regius |
| Manuscript addresses a much higher stamp of persons than the manu- |
| script Constitutions of a later date:' |
| The art of building then stood above all other arts, and made all others |
| subservient to it. It commanded the services of the most brilliant intellects, |
| and of the greatest artists. The old symbolism was embodied in the churches |
| and cathedrals; and some of these were adorned by figures and devices which |
| would never have been tolerated there, if the Priesthood had known what they |
| meant to the Adepts. |
| I think that the Philosophers, becoming Free-Masons, introduced into |
| Masonry its symbolism,—secret, except among themselves,—in the Middle |
| Age, and not after the decline of operative Masonry began. |
| You truly say that the 'newcomers into Masonry' 'would not have intro- |
| duced anything, of which they did not understand the meaning: Nor would |
| the philosophic, Hermetic or Rosicrucian Masons have displayed their sacred |
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| symbols to rude working-Masons, who could not have been made to under- |
| stand their explanations. |
| For the same reason, when they did, to secure growth for the association, |
| frame and formulate the Degrees, and deliver into the keeping of the Lodges |
| their ancient symbols, they kept to themselves their philosophic, and religious |
| meanings, and gave to the pipe-smoking and ale-drinking toilers such trite |
| moral explanations as they could understand. |
| The Grand Khaibar expresses unbounded contempt for Masonry, calls its |
| fictions 'solemn fooleries, and declares that 'the Mystic Lodge' |
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| "May soothe the fancy, |
| words without meaning it affords, |
| And signs without significancy... |
| A mole-hill to a mount to swell |
| Is the true sign of a Free-Mason:' |
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| I do not find in it any admission that Masonry, in 1726, had any symbol- |
| ism, or any insinuation that its symbolism was not understood. |
| I agree with you, that an ignorance of the meaning of what is done in the |
| Lodge, similar to that which now prevails, prevailed in 1717. |
| Consider, for example, how the 47th Problem stands among the Lodge- |
| symbols, without any explanation at all, i.e., without being a symbol. So it was |
| in 1724. To Pythagoras it had a profound significance; and we learn from the |
| Gathas of the Zend-Avesta what that significance was. But Plutarch did not |
| know it. The meaning was lost in his day; and the explanation that he gives is |
| inane and insignificant. |
| Again, take the numbers 3 and 4 as constituting 7. The Hermetic phi- |
| losophers take 4, represented by the square, to symbolize the earth, or nature, |
| or the four elements, fire, air, earth and water. But to Zarathustra, 4 repre- |
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| sented, as the four arms of the cross do, the four male energies of the Diety, |
| i.e., the Divine Wisdom, the Divine Word, the Divine Might and the Divine |
| Sovereignty; and 3, the female Potencies of the Deity (female, as acting through |
| nature), Desire to propagate, Soundness or Virility, and Vitality.\* |
| But the fact that the meanings of the symbols were unknown to the mass |
| of Masons does not prove that they had had and lost them; but may quite as |
| reasonably be held to prove that they never had them, because they were with- |
| held from them, and when the symbols came into their keeping, as parts of the |
| Degrees, the meanings given them were only those that we have to-day. I cannot |
| see in this anything to make untenable the theory that the ceremonial of 173o |
| was introduced into Masonry after 1717. You say, "Had such been the case, the |
| meaning of what was so introduced would have been known, and, as I also |
| venture to think, preserved." Why not think it would have been known and pre- |
| served until now, no manner when introduced? In other words, why not say,"No |
| meanings have been lost. There never were other meanings than those given now. |
| If there had ever been, they would have been known and preserved:' |
| They would have been known, if the few possessors had seen fit to make |
| them known to the many. No one can assume that they did make them known. |
| How is it certain that they would have been preserved? How long were the |
| meanings which the symbols used by Pythagoras had,—to himself,—pre- |
| served among his disciples? Did the blows given by the murderers, and the |
| parts of the body struck, never symbolize anything? or the grips, by two of |
| which nought is effected, and by the third the purpose is achieved? Did the |
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| \*NOTE: The equilateral Triangle is, Hermetically, God, the Indivisible Trinity. The |
| Cross with equal arms, the Universe. God and the Square are God and the Universe, of which |
| latter every Masonic Lodge, as every one knows, is a Symbol. |
| IRAH, Hebrew, is 'reverence, veneration, piety, religion: |
| [Pike] |
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| 4 A LETTER TOUCHING MASONIC SYMBOLISM + |
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| Substitute-Word never have a meaning? Why, then, have these meaning, if |
| once known, not been preserved? If one but reflects that all false religions have |
| come from loss of the true significance of symbols, and that no religious or |
| philosophical symbol has ever escaped final misunderstanding and loss of its |
| meaning, he will see that the most perishable of all things are the true mean- |
| ings of the symbols. Do you not suppose that it was at one time known what |
| the Tau Cross meant? I have known more than one symbol in Masonry utterly |
| destroyed since I have been a Mason. |
| I hold the symbolism of Masonry to be of very ancient origin, and that its |
| meanings have been lost, as those of the figurative expressions of the Rig-Veda |
| have been, and those of the Githas of Zarathustra. |
| I can find no ground, beyond that of which I have spoken, upon |
| which to plant my foot, and I hesitate to step off of it into the void of |
| conjecture and speculation. I cannot suggest what influences could have |
| had any effect on this early development of the science:' I so not think |
| that the science of symbolism ever had any development among the |
| common class of working-Masons. |
| But it played a great part in architecture, and the medizval architects must |
| have been familiar with it. All the genius of the age was enlisted in architec- |
| ture's service, in the fashioning of churches, cathedrals, and other great public |
| and princely edifices, as well as in their carved ornamentation and their inter- |
| nal arrangements and furniture. If one were competent, it would be interesting |
| to inquire how far the deterioration of architecture and its violations of good |
| taste were owing to the dying out of the science of symbolism. |
| Fraternally and truly yours, |
| ALBERT PIKE. |
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