

FREEMASONRY

By EDWIN A. QUICK.

THE ORIGIN OF MASONRY: ITS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD: ITS PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES.

THE name of no fraternity or society of any kind is so universally known as that of the Free and Accepted Masons. At the same time, there is probably no other great organisation of which the outside world has so little real knowledge. It is remarkable, too, that a body whose membership mounts into the millions should have so short and scanty a recorded history, and that its origin should be a matter of controversy and uncertainty.

Early Masonry is distinguished as either operative or speculative. To the former category belong the "travelling Freemasons," who went about Europe from country to country and from city to city for the purpose of erecting religious edifices. Some of the finest of the buildings that stand to-day as monuments of the middle ages are evidences of the skill of these journeyman masons. It is not impossible that the medieval bodies had their origin and owed their



THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT,

Who holds the highest rank in Freemasonry in England—Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge.

Freemasonry is founded upon principles that are elementary and eternal. It may be set down as a self-evident proposition that a man is a duality, a compound of the physical and the spiritual. He seeks his fellows to find aid and assistance in protecting and asserting the physical side of his being. In the intuitive belief that there is something above him, something stronger and better than himself, he unites with other men the better to satisfy his spiritual nature. As the "Masonic Monitor" puts it, "a survey of Nature and the observance of her beautiful proportions first determined man to imitate the divine plan and study symmetry and order. This gave rise to societies and birth to every useful art."

"The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" is the motto which the Masonic order has emblazoned upon its banners.

THE ANCIENT ORIGIN OF MASONRY.

Some authorities on Freemasonry have ascribed the foundation of the system to the master-builders and artists engaged in the construction of the first Jewish temple, during the reign of Solomon. Others have attempted to trace it to the Elysian mysteries of classic Greece, which are said to have taught the immortality of the soul and other sublime truths of natural religion. Some, again, have attributed its establishment to the sainted heroes of the Crusades; while others have endeavoured to penetrate the almost forgotten mysteries of the Druids, and to discover its origin amongst the wise men of ancient Britain.

existence to the Roman colleges of artificers founded by Numa some seven hundred years before Christ. Freemasonry of to-day is purely speculative—that is, it has no connection with the actual work of building.

THE MOTHER LODGE OF KILWINNING.

Existing records, as has been said, date back to 1717, in which year, on the 24th of June, four lodges in London erected themselves into a grand lodge and selected a grand master. A Scottish lodge, known as the Mother Lodge of Kilwinning, claims to have been established long before that date. The early records of this body are lost, but its own historian asserts that it owes its birth to the founding of Kilwinning Abbey, near Irvine, in Ayrshire, by one Hugh Morville in the year 1140.

Not all Masonic writers agree concerning the date of the Kilwinning Lodge. Dr. Mackey, who made careful searches for evidence bearing on the subject says:—

"I look upon the legend, and the documents that contain it, with some favour as at least furnishing the evidence that there has been among the fraternity a general belief in the antiquity of the Kilwinning Lodge."

Other authorities positively assert that this and several other lodges existed in Scotland as early as the twelfth century.

THE ATHELSTAN LEGEND.

Another of the ancient traditions of Freemasonry is one that gives to the ancient city of York the honor of ranking as the birthplace of the craft in England. The York Legend, or, as it is sometimes called, the Athelstan Legend, places the date of the first assembly in the year 928. It ran thus:

"This craft came into England, as I tell you, in the time of good King Athelstan's reign; he made them both hall and also bowels and lofty temples of great honor to take his recreation in both day and night, and to worship his God with all his might."

"This good lord loved his craft full well, and purposed to strengthen it in every part on account of various defects that he discovered in the craft.

"He sent about into all the land after all the masons of the craft to come straight to him, to amend all these defects by good counsel if it might so happen. He then permitted an assembly to be made of divers lords in their rank, dukes, earls, and barons, also knights, squires, and many more, and the burghesses of that city, they were all there in their degrees; these were there each one in every way to make laws for the estate of these masons. There they sought by their wisdom how they might govern it; there they found out fifteen articles and there they made fifteen points."

The Athelstan Legend has been generally accepted by Masonic writers, and for nearly a century after the formation of a grand lodge in London, in 1717, the York Lodge disputed the authority of the metropolitan body. In 1813 the Dukes of Kent, Sussex and Atholl brought about an agreement, the supreme council being known thereafter as the United Grand Lodge of England.

During the last two hundred years Freemasonry has thriven and grown

its doors a worthy applicant for assistance. Its homes and places of refuge for the orphan, the widowed, and the aged are found in many lands, and they are amply supported by nearly every grand lodge in the world.

An objection often made to the order is its secrecy. It may be said in reply that there is no point in human life whose edges do not border on the realm of light and darkness. The ceremonies attending the conferring of degrees and the methods of recognition among Masons are of a secret character; but all other matters connected with the aims and purposes of the order are as an open book, to be seen and read by all men.

The religious aspect of the order is frequently commented upon, and the statement is made that Masonry seeks to formulate a religion of its own. This is a misrepresentation. The fraternity has no law or regulation, written or unwritten, which in any way or manner is intended to exert an influence for or against any church, creed, or sect. The ancient constitutions contain the following concerning this subject:—

"A mason is obliged by his tenure to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the art he will never be a stupid atheist nor an irreligious libertine."

In ancient times, Freemasons were charged to adhere to the religion of the country in which they lived. To-day, the case is different. Every member of the order is free to follow the dictates of his individual conscience, provided only that he must testify to his belief in two grand principles—the existence of God and the immortality of the human soul.

There are certain requisites for membership in the order. The candidate seeking admission must be a man, free born and well recommended, in full possession of his mental and physical facul-



HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, LORD PLUNKET,
Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand.

until to-day its lodges are to be found throughout the habitable globe. In many countries it has encountered unjust opposition, and even persecution, but its advance has not been halted. It has never attempted to retaliate upon its assailants; on the contrary, its consistent adhesion to the Golden Rule has sometimes turned its opponents into supporters.

In no sense is the fraternity a charitable institution, dispensing guaranteed benefits in return for fixed dues or fees; but it never turns empty-handed from

its. The bondman, the man of unsound mind, or physically deformed, and the atheist, are disqualified. Nor can a woman gain admission, though there have been three authentic cases where this last regulation has been ignored.

WOMEN AS FREEMASONS.

An Irish lady, the Hon. Mrs Aldworth, daughter of Viscount Doneraile, was famous in the latter part of the eighteenth century as "the female Mason." It seems that at a meeting of Lodge No. 44, at