

The Rite of Discalceation.

The *rite of discalceation*, or uncovering the feet on approaching holy ground, is derived from the Latin word *discalceare*, to pluck off one's shoes. The usage has the prestige of antiquity and universality in its favor.

That it not only very generally prevailed, but that its symbolic signification was well understood in the days of Moses, we learn from that passage of Exodus where the angel of the Lord, at the burning bush, exclaims to the patriarch, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." ⁸⁴ Clarke ⁸⁵ thinks it is from this command that the Eastern nations have derived the custom of performing all their acts of religious worship with bare feet. But it is much more probable that the ceremony was in use long anterior to the circumstance of the burning bush, and that the Jewish lawgiver at once recognized it as a well-known sign of reverence.

Bishop Patrick ⁸⁶ entertains this opinion, and thinks that the custom was derived from the ancient patriarchs, and was transmitted by a general tradition to succeeding times.

Abundant evidence might be furnished from ancient authors of the existence of the custom among all nations, both Jewish and Gentile. A few of them, principally collected by Dr. Mede, must be curious and interesting.

The direction of Pythagoras to his disciples was in these words: "Ἀνυπόδητος θύε καὶ πρόσχυνει;" that is, Offer sacrifice and worship with thy shoes off. ⁸⁷

Justin Martyr says that those who came to worship in the sanctuaries and temples of the Gentiles were commanded by their priests to put off their shoes.

Drusius, in his Notes on the Book of Joshua, says that among most of the Eastern nations it was a pious duty to tread the pavement of the temple with unshod feet. ⁸⁸

Maimonides, the great expounder of the Jewish law, asserts that "it was not lawful for a man to come into the mountain of God's house with his shoes on his feet, or with his staff, or in his working garments, or with dust on his feet." ⁸⁹

Rabbi Solomon, commenting on the command in Leviticus xix. 30, "Ye shall reverence my sanctuary," makes the same remark in relation to this custom. On this subject Dr. Oliver observes, "Now, the act of going with naked feet was always considered a token of humility and reverence; and the priests, in the temple worship, always officiated with feet uncovered, although it was frequently injurious to their health." ⁹⁰

Mede quotes Zago Zaba, an Ethiopian bishop, who was ambassador from David, King of Abyssinia, to John III., of Portugal, as saying, "We are not permitted to enter the church, except barefooted." [91](#)

The Mohammedans, when about to perform their devotions, always leave their slippers at the door of the mosque. The Druids practised the same custom whenever they celebrated their sacred rites; and the ancient Peruvians are said always to have left their shoes at the porch when they entered the magnificent temple consecrated to the worship of the sun.

Adam Clarke thinks that the custom of worshipping the Deity barefooted was so general among all nations of antiquity, that he assigns it as one of his thirteen proofs that the whole human race have been derived from one family. [92](#)

A theory might be advanced as follows: The shoes, or sandals, were worn on ordinary occasions as a protection from the defilement of the ground. To continue to wear them, then, in a consecrated place, would be a tacit insinuation that the ground there was equally polluted and capable of producing defilement. But, as the very character of a holy and consecrated spot precludes the idea of any sort of defilement or impurity, the acknowledgment that such was the case was conveyed, symbolically, by divesting the feet of all that protection from pollution and uncleanness which would be necessary in unconsecrated places.

So, in modern times, we uncover the head to express the sentiment of esteem and respect. Now, in former days, when there was more violence to be apprehended than now, the casque, or helmet, afforded an ample protection from any sudden blow of an unexpected adversary. But we can fear no violence from one whom we esteem and respect; and, therefore, to deprive the head of its accustomed protection, is to give an evidence of our unlimited confidence in the person to whom the gesture is made.

The rite of discalceation is, therefore, a symbol of reverence. It signifies, in the language of symbolism, that the spot which is about to be approached in this humble and reverential manner is consecrated to some holy purpose.

Now, as to all that has been said, the intelligent mason will at once see its application to the third degree. Of all the degrees of Masonry, this is by far the most important and sublime. The solemn lessons which it teaches, the sacred scene which it represents, and the impressive ceremonies with which it is conducted, are all calculated to inspire the mind with feelings of awe and reverence. Into the holy of holies of the temple, when the ark of the covenant had been deposited in its appropriate place, and the Shekinah was hovering over it, the high priest alone, and on one day only in the whole year, was permitted, after the most careful purification, to enter with bare feet, and to pronounce, with fearful veneration, the tetragrammaton or omnific word.

And into the Master Mason's lodge--this holy of holies of the masonic temple, where the solemn truths of death and immortality are inculcated--the aspirant, on entering, should purify his heart from every contamination, and remember, with a due sense of their

symbolic application, those words that once broke upon the astonished ears of the old patriarch, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

THE RITE OF INDUCTION.

WE are convinced by long and extensive observation that Masons need a truer and deeper insight into the nature of our esoteric work. We do not think our beautiful and truth-glowing ritual and our sublime symbolism are quite understood by the mass of the Brotherhood. It is true all are affected, in a certain degree, by them; it

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could not be otherwise: but many fail to discover the grand truths which are inculcated therein. Symbols are of no practical importance, if we have lost the sense they were intended to convey; and rites are puerile, if they do not immediately lead the mind to the consideration of tangible ideas and immortal verities. Our ceremonies are moral and philosophical lessons; and, earnestly studied and rightly understood, will be seen to be pregnant with mighty meanings.

Thus expressive and full of significance is the RITE or INDUCTION.

The induction of the Neophyte into the Order of Freemasonry, his first entrance into the sanctuary of the illuminated, is for him a step of momentous importance and solemnity. There are few candidates, we believe, who can approach the portals of the mystery-shrouded Lodge without much trepidation of heart, and a feeling of mingled awe and fear. Consequently, the induction is effected by the performance of certain appropriate symbolical ceremonies, all of which are remarkably and eloquently suggestive of the new life, duties, and obligations he is about to assume, and to which he is on the point of binding himself voluntarily, absolutely, and without reservation, for ever.

In ancient Egypt, the Neophyte was presented with a cup of water, and addressed in these words:—"Aspirant to the honor of a divine companionship! seeker after celestial truth! this is the water of forgetfulness. Drink!—drink to the oblivion of all your vices—the forgetfulness of all your imperfections; and thus be prepared for the reception of the new revelations of Truth, with which you are soon to be honored." Although modern Freemasonry does not retain this particular ceremony, it preserves the spirit of it, by other forms, not less expressive and instructive. The candidate is directed to close his eyes on the Past—to lay aside the trappings and vestures of the outward world—the symbols of traffic and war—all that reminds one of the selfishness and discords of life—and turn his face towards the dread unknown—the mysterious Future.

The RITE OF INDUCTION, therefore, signifies the end of a profane and vicious life—the *palingenesia* (new birth) of corrupted human nature—the death of vice and all bad passions, and the introduction to a new life of purity and virtue. It also prepares the candidate, by prayer and meditation, for that mystic pilgrimage, where he must wander through night and darkness, before he can behold the golden splendors of the ORIENT, and stand in unfettered freedom among the Sons of Light.

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The Rite is intended, still further, to represent man in his primitive condition of helplessness, ignorance, and moral blindness, seeking after that mental and moral enlightenment which alone can deliver his mind from all thralldoms, and make him master of the material world. The Neophyte, in darkness and with tremblings, knocks at the portals of the Lodge, and demands admission, instruction, and light. So man, born ignorant, and helpless, and blind, yet feeling stirring within him unappeasable longings for knowledge, knocks at the doors of the temple of science. He interrogates Nature, demands her secrets, and at length becomes the proud possessor of her mysteries.

Finally, the RITE of INDUCTION refers to the supreme hour of man's worldly life, when, laying aside all earthly wealth, and pomp, and rank, and glory, and divested of his mortal vesture, he passes alone through the grim darkness of the tomb, to stand before the GRAND ORIENT of the immortal Land.

THE SYMBOLIC PILGRIMAGE.

THE institution of Freemasonry—reaching backward until it loses itself among the mythological shadows of the past, its grand ritual and eloquent language of signs and symbols, originating in those distant ages—offers a field for exploration which can never be thoroughly traversed. Transmitted to us by remote generations, it is plain that, before we can, in any degree, appreciate Freemasonry, or understand the significance of its mysteries, we must go back to the Past, and question the founders of the Order. We must learn in what necessities of human nature, and for what purpose it was created. We must discover the true genesis of our rites, and become familiar with the ideas which the Fathers intended to shadow forth through them, and impress upon the mind. It is not enough for us to accept the *letter* of the ceremonial, and perform it blindly, interpreting its meaning in whatever way fancy or imagination or convenience may dictate. We should know what the Ancients meant to say through it: what truth each rite and each symbol represented to *their* minds.

From age to age, through countless generations, these Rites have read their sublime lessons of wisdom and hope, and peace and warning, to the "Sons of Light." These same lessons, in the same language, they read to us to-day. But do we see in them what they did? Do they impress us as they impressed them? Or do they pass before our eyes like a panorama of some unknown land, which has no delineator to tell us what or where it is, or give us any intelligible notion regarding it? Accepting the symbol, have we lost its

sense? Our Rites will be of little value to us if this be the case. It is our duty, then, to make Freemasonry the object of a profound study. We must consult the Past. We must stand by the sarcophagus of the murdered, but restored Osiris, in Egypt; enter the caverns of Phrygia, and hold communion with the Cabiri; penetrate the "Collegia Fabrorum" of ancient Rome, and work in the mystic circles of Sidon. In a word, we must pursue our researches until we find the THOUGHT that lay in the minds of those who created the institution and founded our mysteries. Then we shall

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know precisely what they mean. We shall see in them a grand series of moral and philosophical dramas, most eloquent and instructive, gleaming with sublime ideas, as the heavens glow with stars. And, finally, we shall discover that our Rites embrace all the possible circumstances of man—moral, spiritual, and social—and have a meaning high as the heavens, broad as the universe, and profound as eternity,

The Rite of the Wanderer, or the Symbolic Pilgrimage, is entirely puerile and unmeaning, unless we have learned in what ideas it originated, and what its authors intended to represent by it. Happily, this is not a difficult task. In Egypt, Greece, and among other ancient nations, Freemasonry was one of the earliest agencies employed to effect the improvement and enlightenment of man. CICERO tells us that "the establishment of these Rites among the Athenians, conferred upon them a supreme benefit. *Their effect was to civilize men, reform their wild and ferocious manners, and make them comprehend the true principles of morality, which initiate man into a new order of life, more worthy of a being destined to immortality.*"—Consequently, the mystic journey primarily represented the toilsome progress of Humanity, from its primitive condition of ignorance and barbarism to a state of civilization and mental enlightenment. The Neophyte, therefore, wandering in darkness over his winding way, meeting with various obstructions and delays, was a typo of the human race, struggling onward and upward by devious stages, from the gloom and darkness of the savage state to the light, intelligence, and comforts of civilized life.

This symbolic journey is also emblematical of the pilgrimage of life, which, man soon enough discovers, is often dark and gloomy, surrounded by sorrow, and fear, and doubt. It teaches him that over this dark, perplexed, and fearful course lays the way to a glorious destiny; that through night to *light* must the earth-pilgrim work his way; that by struggle, and toil, and earnest endeavor, he must advance with courage and hope until, free of every fetter, and in the full light of virtue and knowledge, he stands face to face with the mighty secrets of the universe, and attains that lofty height, whence he can look backward over the night-shrouded and tortuous path in which he had been wandering, and forward to sublimer elevation—to more glorious ideals, which seem to say to him, "On, on for ever!"

Such, then, is the grand and inspiring lesson which this Symbolic Pilgrimage is perpetually repeating to the brethren. Let them study

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it well, and labor with faith; for it announces a progress in science and virtue, which will reach through eternity.

The Lodge, when revealed to an entering Mason, discovers to him a representation of the world; in which, from the wonders of Nature, we are led to contemplate the great Original, and worship him for his mighty works; and we are, thereby, also moved to exercise those moral and social virtues, which become mankind to observe, as the servants of the Great Architect of the world, in whose image we were formed from the beginning.

The following passage of Scripture is rehearsed during the ceremony:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment.

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

"The great teaching of this Psalm is Brotherly Love, that virtue which forms the most prominent tenet of the Masonic Order. And it teaches the lesson, too, precisely as we do, by a symbol, comparing it to the precious ointment used in the consecration of the High-Priest, whose delightful perfume filled the whole place with its odor. The ointment was poured upon the head in such quantity, that, being directed by the anointer in different ways in the form of a cross, it flowed at length down the beard, and finally dropped from the flowing skirts of the priestly garment.

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"The fifteen Psalms, from the 120th to the 134th, inclusive, of which this, of course, is one, are called by the Hebrews 'songs of degrees,' because they were sung on the fifteen steps ascending from the court of Israel to the court of the women in the Temple."

Or the following ODE may be sung:



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Behold! how pleasant and how good,
For brethren such as we,

Of the Accepted brotherhood
 To dwell in unity!
 'Tis like the oil on Aaron's head
 Which p. 60 to his feet distills;
 Like Hermon's dew so richly shed
 On Zion's sacred hills!



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For there the Lord of light and love
 A blessing sent with power;
 Oh, may we all this blessing prove,
 E'en life for evermore!
 On Friendship's altar, rising here,
 Our hands now plighted be,
 To live in love, with hearts sincere,
 In peace and unity.

It is the duty of the Master of the Lodge, as one of the precautionary measures of initiation, to explain to the candidate the nature and design of the institution; and while he informs him that it is founded on the purest principles of virtue; that it possesses great and invaluable privileges; and that, in order to secure those privileges to worthy men, and worthy men alone, voluntary pledges of fidelity are required; he will at the same time assure him that nothing will be expected of him incompatible with his civil, moral, or religious duties.

The Rite of Circumambulation.

The *rite of circumambulation* will supply us with another ritualistic symbol, in which we may again trace the identity of the origin of Freemasonry with that of the religious and mystical ceremonies of the ancients.

"Circumambulation" is the name given by sacred archaeologists to that religious rite in the ancient initiations which consisted in a formal procession around the altar, or other holy and consecrated object.

The prevalence of this rite among the ancients appears to have been universal, and it originally (as I shall have occasion to show) alluded to the apparent course of the sun in the firmament, which is from east to west by the way of the south.

In ancient Greece, when the priests were engaged in the rites of sacrifice, they and the people always walked three times around the altar while chanting a sacred hymn or ode. Sometimes, while the people stood around the altar, the rite of circumambulation was performed by the priest alone, who, turning towards the right hand, went around it, and sprinkled it with meal and holy water. In making this circumambulation, it was considered absolutely necessary that the right side should always be next to the altar, and consequently, that the procession should move from the east to the south, then to the west, next to the north, and afterwards to the east again. It was in this way that the apparent revolution was represented.

This ceremony the Greeks called moving *ἐκ δεξιά εἰς δεξιά*, *from the right to the right*, which was the direction of the motion, and the Romans applied to it the term *dextroversum*, or *dextrorsum*, which signifies the same thing. Thus Plautus makes Palinurus, a character in his comedy of "Curculio," say, "If you would do reverence to the gods, you must turn to the right hand." Gronovius, in commenting on this passage of Plautus, says, "In worshipping and praying to the gods they were accustomed to *turn to the right hand*."

A hymn of Callimachus has been preserved, which is said to have been chanted by the priests of Apollo at Delos, while performing this ceremony of circumambulation, the substance of which is, "We imitate the example of the sun, and follow his benevolent course."

It will be observed that this circumambulation around the altar was accompanied by the singing or chanting of a sacred ode. Of the three parts of the ode, the *strophe*, the *antistrophe*, and the *epode*, each was to be sung at a particular part of the procession. The analogy between this chanting of an ode by the ancients and the recitation of a passage of Scripture in the masonic circumambulation, will be at once apparent.

Among the Romans, the ceremony of circumambulation was always used in the rites of sacrifice, of expiation or purification. Thus Virgil describes Corynusus as purifying his companions, at the funeral of Misenus, by passing three times around them while aspersing them with the lustral waters; and to do so conveniently, it was necessary that he should have moved with his right hand towards them.

"Idem ter socios pura circumtulit unda,
Spargens rore levi et ramo felicis olivæ."
Æn. vi. 229.

"Thrice with pure water compassed he the crew,
Sprinkling, with olive branch, the gentle dew."

In fact, so common was it to unite the ceremony of circumambulation with that of expiation or purification, or, in other words, to make a circuitous procession, in performing the latter rite, that the term *lustrare*, whose primitive meaning is "to purify,"

came at last to be synonymous with *circuire*, to walk round anything; and hence a purification and a circumambulation were often expressed by the same word.

Among the Hindoos, the same rite of circumambulation has always been practised. As an instance, we may cite the ceremonies which are to be performed by a Brahmin upon first rising from bed in the morning, an accurate account of which has been given by Mr. Colebrooke in the "Asiatic Researches." The priest, having first adored the sun while directing his face to the east, then walks towards the west by the way of the south, saying, at the same time, "I follow the course of the sun," which he thus explains: "As the sun in his course moves round the world by the way of the south, so do I follow that luminary, to obtain the benefit arising from a journey round the earth by the way of the south." [93](#)

Lastly, I may refer to the preservation of this rite among the Druids, whose "mystical dance" around the *cairn*, or sacred stones, was nothing more nor less than the rite of circumambulation. On these occasions the priest always made three circuits, from east to west, by the right hand, around the altar or cairn, accompanied by all the worshippers. And so sacred was the rite once considered, that we learn from Toland [94](#) that in the Scottish Isles, once a principal seat of the Druidical religion, the people "never come to the ancient sacrificing and fire-hallowing *cairns*, but they walk three times around them, from east to west, according to the course of the sun." This sanctified tour, or round by the south, he observes, is called *Deiseal*, as the contrary, or unhallowed one by the north, is called *Tuapholl*. And he further remarks, that this word *Deiseal* was derived "from *Deas*, the *right* (understanding *hand*) and *soil*, one of the ancient names of the sun, the right hand in this round being ever next the heap."

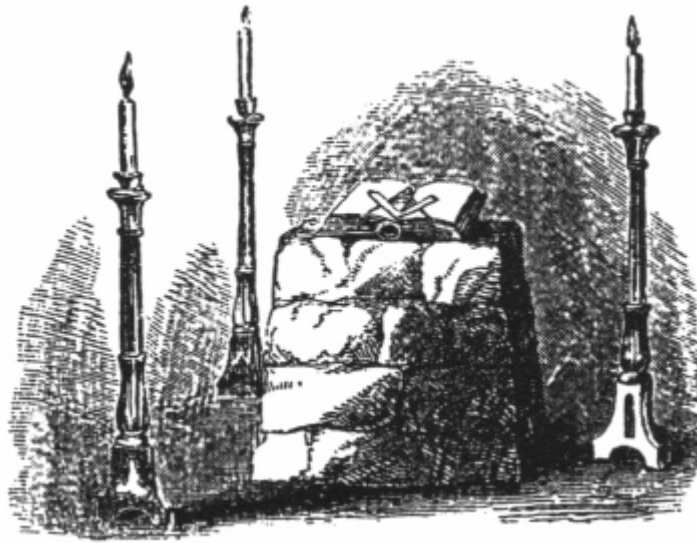
I might pursue these researches still further, and trace this rite of circumambulation to other nations of antiquity; but I conceive that enough has been said to show its universality, as well as the tenacity with which the essential ceremony of performing the motion a mystical number of times, and always by the right hand, from the east, through the south, to the west, was preserved. And I think that this singular analogy to the same rite in Freemasonry must lead us to the legitimate conclusion, that the common source of all these rites is to be found in the identical origin of the Spurious Freemasonry or pagan mysteries, and the pure, Primitive Freemasonry, from which the former seceded only to be deteriorated.

In reviewing what has been said on this subject, it will at once be perceived that the essence of the ancient rite consisted in making the circumambulation around the altar, from the east to the south, from the south to the west, thence to the north, and to the east again.

Now, in this the masonic rite of circumambulation strictly agrees with the ancient one.

But this circuit by the right hand, it is admitted, was done as a representation of the sun's motion. It was a symbol of the sun's apparent course around the earth.

And so, then, here again we have in Masonry that old and often-repeated allusion to sun-worship, which has already been seen in the officers of a lodge, and in the point within a circle. And as the circumambulation is made around the lodge, just as the sun was supposed to move around the earth, we are brought back to the original symbolism with which we commenced--that the lodge is a symbol of the world.



THE OBLIGATION OF SECRECY.

ONE of the most notable features of Freemasonry—one, certainly, which attracts, more than any thing else, the attention of the profane world—is that vail of mystery—that awful secrecy—behind which it moves and acts. From the earliest periods, this has invariably been a distinctive characteristic of the institution; and to-day, as of old, the first obligation of a Mason—his supreme duty—is that of silence and secrecy. Why is this? Why did Freemasonry, in the beginning, adopt the principle of secrecy, as a vital one? and why has it so persistently adhered to it, through all the changes that have swept over the earth, and transformed all things else?

The enemies of Freemasonry, like THOMAS PAINE and others, pretend that they have found the origin of Masonic secrecy in the fact that the esoteric doctrines of the Order were antagonistic to the prevailing opinions, and therefore could not safely be professed

before the world. Hence, according to them, the retiring into silence and secrecy was simply an act of cowardice, to escape the danger that might follow the open and honest promulgation of an unpopular doctrine! Some distinguished Masonic writers have also—strange as it may appear—professed the same theory. We must nevertheless pronounce it an exceedingly shallow and unphilosophical one. The obligation of secrecy does not owe its origin to any such cause. That origin must be found, and can only be found, in the *intrinsic value and divine excellence of the principle of secrecy itself*. Among the ancients, silence and secrecy were considered virtues of the highest order. The Egyptians worshiped Harpocrates, the

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god of secrecy, raised altars in his name, and wreathed them with garlands of flowers. Among the ancient Romans, too, these virtues were not less esteemed; and a distinguished Latin poet tells us, "*Est et fidei tuta silentio merces*:"—"for faithful silence, also, there is a sure reward."

Mystery has charms for all men, and is closely allied to the spiritual part of man's nature. The entire fabric of the universe is founded on secrecy; and the great Life-force which vivifies, moves, and beautifies the whole, is the profoundest of all mysteries. We cannot, indeed, fix our eyes on a single point in creation which does not shade off into mystery, and touch the realms of Eternal Silence. As the fathers of Freemasonry discovered that all life and beauty were elaborated in Night and Mystery, they made the Institution, in this respect, conform to the divine order of Nature. In the Pythagorean Freemasonry, silence and secrecy were religious duties, and held to be the most fruitful sources of intellectual and moral improvement. A distinguished modern writer * repeats the same idea in quaint but forcible language:—"Thoughts will not work, except in silence; neither will virtue work, except in secrecy: Like other plants, virtue will not grow, unless its roots be hidden, buried from the light of the sun. Let the sun shine on it—nay, do but look at it privily thyself—the root withers, and no flowers will glad thee."

In the grand mythology of ancient Scandinavia, there is a remarkable myth, called the Yggdrasil-Tree, or Ever-blooming Ash, whose top rose to the highest heavens, and whose roots struck down through the regions of everlasting gloom and night. From age to age, its branches, loaded with benedictions, spread out over all worlds, the delight of gods and men, diffusing life and beauty and fragrance through the universe. And all this glory, and these capabilities to bless, were the fruit of the mysterious and secret labors of the sacred Nornas, who perpetually watered its roots from the deep-hidden wells, and thus preserved its vigor and vitality.

The Yggdrasil-Tree is a beautiful symbolical representation of Freemasonry, and illustrates well the character of Masonic secrecy. Like that tree, in the youth of Humanity, the Mystic Order arose among the nations of the earth, and its ever-green branches spread over the world; and, by the vital power of its secret ministry, it diffused order, and beauty, and virtue, and civilization over all lands.

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Another reason why Freemasonry regards secrecy as a fundamental principle is, because a unity, harmony, and strength can be secured thereby, which cannot be obtained in any other way. Secrecy has a mystic, binding, almost supernatural force, and unites men more closely together than all other means combined. The common possession of a secret by a considerable number of people, produces a family-feeling. There is something profoundly mystical in this, no doubt; but it is, nevertheless, a fact. Suppose two men, strangers, traveling in a distant country, should by some accident be brought together for a few brief moments, during which they happen to be the involuntary witnesses of some terrible deed, a deed which circumstances demand shall remain a secret between them for ever. In all the wide world, only these two men, and they strangers to each other, know the secret. They separate; continents and oceans, and many eventful years, divide them; but they cannot forget each other, nor the dread mystery which binds them together as with an iron chain. Neither time nor distance can weaken that mighty bond. In that, they are *for ever one*.

It is not, then, for any vain or frivolous purpose that Masonry appeals to the principle of secrecy, but, rather, because it creates a family-feeling, insures unity, and throws the charm of mystery and poetry around the Order, making its labors easy and its obligations pleasant.

IN the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light. and there was light.

THE RITE OF ILLUMINATION.

THE RITE OF ILLUMINATION is a very ancient ceremony, and constituted an important feature in all the mysteries of the early ages. In the Egyptian, Cabirian, Sidonian, Eleusinian, Scandinavian, and Druidical Rituals, it held a prominent place, and in them all represented the same ideas. It marked the termination of the mystic pilgrimage through gloom and night, and was emblematical of that moral and intellectual light which pours its divine radiance on the mind after it has conquered prejudice, and passion, and ignorance, with which it has so long been struggling.

The prevailing notion of all those Rites was, that man, society, humanity could arrive at the Perfect only by the ministry of gloom and suffering; that the soul's exaltation and highest enlightenment could be approached only by the dark way of tears and sacrifice. The Rite of Illumination indicates the triumphant conclusion of man's conflicts, sacrifices, and trials; announces that he has found that LIGHT for which he has so persistently sought—that Truth which alone can give dignity to his life, freedom to his spirit, and repose to his soul, and which is the grand recompense for all his journeyings, labors, and combats.

The particular act which now distinguishes this illumination is, comparatively, modern, but is, nevertheless, deeply significant and instructive. It refers to that point of time when "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." The loftiest imagination is utterly powerless to paint a picture of the unspeakable glory of the scene, when the sun, for the first time, poured down his light in a golden deluge on the earth, hitherto a chaotic mass, plunged in eternal night!—when ocean, lake, and river, hill and valley, smiled and sparkled in the new-born splendor! Yet this Rite does not commemorate that event simply as an historical, material fact, but rather because it symbolizes the release of the soul from darkness, and ignorance, and sin—from the chaos and confusion of a sensual and selfish life—and its establishment in the light and glory of virtue and knowledge.

The emblems peculiar to this Rite are the Bible, Square, and Compasses, the Burning Triangle, or the three lighted Tapers illuminating the altar. These all have exclusive reference to the leading idea of the ceremony, viz: *the release, from moral, spiritual, and intellectual darkness*. Hence the first three of these emblems are called the Great Lights of Masonry, and the latter the Lesser Lights.

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"Through Night to Light! and though, to mortal eyes,
Creation's face a pall of horror wear,
Good cheer! good cheer! the *gloom of midnight flies*,
And then a sunrise follows, mild and fair."

These lines of the great German beautifully and forcibly illustrate the sublime thought which underlies and shines through this Rite. We cannot, of course, enter into any particular descriptions of it, or give any special details thereof, but the above suggestions are all that the intelligent brother will need to assist him to a thorough comprehension of the whole.

—"isasin oi ntemueménoi."—"The initiated know what is meant."



The three * * * * * are the Holy Bible, Square, and Compasses.

The Holy Bible is given us as the rule and guide of our faith and practice; the Square, to square our actions; and the Compasses, to circumscribe our desires, and keep our passions in due bounds with all mankind, especially with the brethren.

The *Holy Writings*, that great light in Masonry, will guide us to all truth; it will direct our paths to the temple of happiness, and point out to us the whole duty of man.

The *Square* teaches us to regulate our actions by rule and line, and to harmonize our conduct by the principles of morality and virtue.

The *Compasses* teach us to limit our desires in every station, that, rising to eminence by merit, we may live respected and die regretted.

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The three * * * * * are the Sun, Moon, and Master.

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The MASTER represents the sun at its rising, that he may open his Lodge, and employ and instruct the brethren in Masonry; to whom it is his duty to communicate light, forcibly impressing upon their minds the dignity and high importance of Freemasonry, and zealously admonishing them never to disgrace it.

The Senior Warden represents the sun at its setting, and his duty is not only to assist the Master, but to look after certain properties of the Lodge, to see that harmony prevails, and that the brethren have their just dues before being dismissed from their labors.

The Junior Warden represents the sun at meridian, which is the most beautiful part of the day, and his duty is to call the brethren from labor to refreshment, and see that the means thereof are not perverted by intemperance or excess, but so regulated that pleasure and profit may be shared by all.

That ancient and spotless ensign of Masonry, the LAMBSKIN, or WHITE APRON, is presented in behalf of the Lodge and the Fraternity in general.

It is an emblem of innocence, and the badge of a Mason; more ancient than the Golden Fleece is or Roman Eagle; is more honorable than

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the Star and Garter, is or any other Order that can be conferred upon the candidate at the time of his initiation, or at any future period, by king, prince, potentate, or any other person, except he be a Mason * * * * *. It is hoped you will wear it with pleasure to yourself and honor to the Fraternity.

The investiture of the candidate with the apron, among the primitive Masons, formed an essential part of the ceremony of initiation, and was attended with rites equally significant and impressive. This badge received a characteristic distinction from its peculiar color and material. With the Essenian Masons, it was accomplished by a process bearing a similar tendency, and accompanied by illustrations not less imposing and satisfactory to the newly-initiated neophyte. He was clothed in a long white robe, which reached to the ground, bordered with a fringe of blue ribbon, to incite personal holiness, and fastened tightly round the waist with a girdle, to separate the upper from the lower parts of the

body. With feet bare and head uncovered, the candidate was considered a personification of Modesty and Humility, walking in the fear of God.

In the course of this section is exhibited a beautiful and impressive illustration of one of the grand principles of the institution, and concludes with a moral application.

The Rite of Intrusting, and the Symbolism of Light.

The *rite of intrusting*, to which we are now to direct our attention, will supply us with many important and interesting symbols.

There is an important period in the ceremony of masonic initiation, when the candidate is about to receive a full communication of the mysteries through which he has passed, and to which the trials and labors which he has undergone can only entitle him. This ceremony is technically called the "*rite of intrusting*," because it is then that the aspirant begins to be intrusted with that for the possession of which he was seeking. ⁹⁵ It is equivalent to what, in the ancient Mysteries, was called the "autopsy," ⁹⁶ or the seeing of what only the initiated were permitted to behold.

This *rite of intrusting* is, of course, divided into several parts or periods; for the *aporreta*, or secret things of Masonry, are not to be given at once, but in gradual progression. It begins, however, with the communication of LIGHT, which, although but a preparation for the development of the mysteries which are to follow, must be considered as one of the most important symbols in the whole science of masonic symbolism. So important, indeed, is it, and so much does it pervade with its influence and its relations the whole masonic system, that Freemasonry itself anciently received, among other appellations, that of Lux, or Light, to signify that it is to be regarded as that sublime doctrine of Divine Truth by which the path of him who has attained it is to be illuminated in his pilgrimage of life.

The Hebrew cosmogonist commences his description of the creation by the declaration that "God said, Let there be light, and there was light"--a phrase which, in the more emphatic form that it has received in the original language of "Be light, and light was," ⁹⁷ is said to have won the praise, for its sublimity, of the greatest of Grecian critics. "The singularly emphatic summons," says a profound modern writer, ⁹⁸ "by which light is called into existence, is probably owing to the preëminent utility and glory of that element, together with its mysterious nature, which made it seem as

'The God of this new world,'

and won for it the earliest adoration of mankind."

Light was, in accordance with this old religious sentiment, the great object of attainment in all the ancient religious Mysteries. It was there, as it is now, in Masonry, made the symbol of *truth* and *knowledge*. This was always its ancient symbolism, and we must never lose sight of this emblematic meaning, when we are considering the nature and signification of masonic light. When the candidate makes a demand for light, it is not merely for that material light which is to remove a physical darkness; that is only the outward form, which conceals the inward symbolism. He craves an intellectual illumination which will dispel the darkness of mental and moral ignorance, and bring to his view, as an eye-witness, the sublime truths of religion, philosophy, and science, which it is the great design of Freemasonry to teach.

In all the ancient systems this reverence for light, as the symbol of truth, was predominant. In the Mysteries of every nation, the candidate was made to pass, during his initiation, through scenes of utter darkness, and at length terminated his trials by an admission to the splendidly-illuminated sacellum, or sanctuary, where he was said to have attained pure and perfect light, and where he received the necessary instructions which were to invest him with that knowledge of the divine truth which it had been the object of all his labors to gain, and the design of the institution, into which he had been initiated, to bestow.

Light, therefore, became synonymous with truth and knowledge, and *darkness* with falsehood and ignorance. We shall find this symbolism pervading not only the institutions, but the very languages, of antiquity.

Thus, among the Hebrews, the word AUR, in the singular, signified *light*, but in the plural, AURIM, it denoted the revelation of the divine will; and the *aurim* and *thummim*, literally the *lights* and *truths*, constituted a part of the breastplate whence the high priest obtained oracular responses to the questions which he proposed. [99](#)

There is a peculiarity about the word "light," in the old Egyptian language, which is well worth consideration in this connection. Among the Egyptians, the *hare* was the hieroglyphic of *eyes that are open*; and it was adopted because that timid animal was supposed never to close his organs of vision, being always on the watch for his enemies. The hare was afterwards adopted by the priests as a symbol of the mental illumination or mystic light which was revealed to the neophytes, in the contemplation of divine truth, during the progress of their initiation; and hence, according to Champollion, the hare was also the symbol of Osiris, their chief god; thus showing the intimate connection which they believed to exist between the process of initiation into their sacred rites and the contemplation of the divine nature. But the Hebrew word for hare is ARNaBeT. Now, this is compounded of the two words AUR, *light*, and NaBaT, *to behold*, and therefore the word which in the Egyptian denoted *initiation*, in the Hebrew signified *to behold the light*. In two nations so intimately connected in history as the Hebrew and the Egyptian, such a coincidence could not have been accidental. It shows the prevalence of the

sentiment, at that period, that the communication of light was the prominent design of the Mysteries--so prominent that the one was made the synonyme of the other. [100](#)

The worship of light, either in its pure essence or in the forms of sun-worship and fire-worship, because the sun and the fire were causes of light, was among the earliest and most universal superstitions of the world. Light was considered as the primordial source of all that was holy and intelligent; and darkness, as its opposite, was viewed as but another name for evil and ignorance. Dr. Beard, in an article on this subject, in Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, attributes this view of the divine nature of light, which was entertained by the nations of the East, to the fact that, in that part of the world, light "has a clearness and brilliancy, is accompanied by an intensity of heat, and is followed in its influence by a largeness of good, of which the inhabitants of less genial climates have no conception. Light easily and naturally became, in consequence, with Orientals, a representative of the highest human good. All the more joyous emotions of the mind, all the pleasing sensations of the frame, all the happy hours of domestic intercourse, were described under imagery derived from light. The transition was natural--from earthly to heavenly, from corporeal to spiritual things; and so light came to typify true religion and the felicity which it imparts. But as light not only came from God, but also makes man's way clear before him, so it was employed to signify moral truth, and preëminently that divine system of truth which is set forth in the Bible, from its earliest gleamings onward to the perfect day of the Great Sun of Righteousness."

I am inclined to believe that in this passage the learned author has erred, not in the definition of the symbol, but in his deduction of its origin. Light became the object of religious veneration, not because of the brilliancy and clearness of a particular sky, nor the warmth and genial influence of a particular climate,--for the worship was universal, in Scandinavia as in India,--but because it was the natural and inevitable result of the worship of the sun, the chief deity of Sabianism--a faith which pervaded to an extraordinary extent the whole religious sentiment of antiquity. [101](#)

Light was venerated because it was an emanation from the sun, and, in the materialism of the ancient faith, *light* and *darkness* were both personified as positive existences, the one being the enemy of the other. Two principles were thus supposed to reign over the world, antagonistic to each other, and each alternately presiding over the destinies of mankind. [102](#)

The contests between the good and evil principle, symbolized by light and darkness, composed a very large part of the ancient mythology in all countries.

Among the Egyptians, Osiris was light, or the sun; and his arch-enemy, Typhon, who ultimately destroyed him, was the representative of darkness.

Zoroaster, the father of the ancient Persian religion, taught the same doctrine, and called the principle of light, or good, Ormuzd, and the principle of darkness, or evil, Ahriman. The former, born of the purest light, and the latter, sprung from utter darkness, are, in this mythology, continually making war on each other.

Manes, or Manichaeus, the founder of the sect of Manichees, in the third century, taught that there are two principles from which all things proceed; the one is a pure and subtile matter, called Light, and the other a gross and corrupt substance, called Darkness. Each of these is subject to the dominion of a superintending being, whose existence is from all eternity. The being who presides over the light is called *God*; he that rules over the darkness is called *Hyle*, or *Demon*. The ruler of the light is supremely happy, good, and benevolent, while the ruler over darkness is unhappy, evil, and malignant.

Pythagoras also maintained this doctrine of two antagonistic principles. He called the one, unity, *light*, the right hand, equality, stability, and a straight line; the other he named binary, *darkness*, the left hand, inequality, instability, and a curved line. Of the colors, he attributed white to the good principle, and black to the evil one.

The Cabalists gave a prominent place to light in their system of cosmogony. They taught that, before the creation of the world, all space was filled with what they called *Aur en soph*, or the *Eternal Light*, and that when the Divine Mind determined or willed the production of Nature, the Eternal Light withdrew to a central point, leaving around it an empty space, in which the process of creation went on by means of emanations from the central mass of light. It is unnecessary to enter into the Cabalistic account of creation; it is sufficient here to remark that all was done through the mediate influence of the *Aur en soph*, or eternal light, which produces coarse matter, but one degree above nonentity, only when it becomes so attenuated as to be lost in darkness.

The Brahminical doctrine was, that "light and darkness are esteemed the world's eternal ways; he who walketh in the former returneth not; that is to say, he goeth to eternal bliss; whilst he who walketh in the latter cometh back again upon earth," and is thus destined to pass through further transmigrations, until his soul is perfectly purified by light. [103](#)

In all the ancient systems of initiation the candidate was shrouded in darkness, as a preparation for the reception of light. The duration varied in the different rites. In the Celtic Mysteries of Druidism, the period in which the aspirant was immersed in darkness was nine days and nights; among the Greeks, at Eleusis, it was three times as long; and in the still severer rites of Mithras, in Persia, fifty days of darkness, solitude, and fasting were imposed upon the adventurous neophyte, who, by these excessive trials, was at length entitled to the full communication of the light of knowledge.

Thus it will be perceived that the religious sentiment of a good and an evil principle gave to darkness, in the ancient symbolism, a place equally as prominent as that of light.

The same religious sentiment of the ancients, modified, however, in its details, by our better knowledge of divine things, has supplied Freemasonry with a double symbolism--that of *Light* and *Darkness*.

Darkness is the symbol of initiation. It is intended to remind the candidate of his ignorance, which Masonry is to enlighten; of his evil nature, which Masonry is to purify;

of the world, in whose obscurity he has been wandering, and from which Masonry is to rescue him.

Light, on the other hand, is the symbol of the autopsy, the sight of the mysteries, the intrusting, the full fruition of masonic truth and knowledge.

Initiation precedes the communication of knowledge in Masonry, as darkness preceded light in the old cosmogonies. Thus, in Genesis, we see that in the beginning "the world was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep." The Chaldean cosmogony taught that in the beginning "all was darkness and water." The Phoenicians supposed that "the beginning of all things was a wind of black air, and a chaos dark as Erebus." [104](#)

But out of all this darkness sprang forth light, at the divine command, and the sublime phrase, "Let there be light," is repeated, in some substantially identical form, in all the ancient histories of creation.

So, too, out of the mysterious darkness of Masonry comes the full blaze of masonic light. One must precede the other, as the evening preceded the morning. "So the evening and the morning were the first day."

This thought is preserved in the great motto of the Order, "*Lux e tenebris*"--Light out of darkness. It is equivalent to this other sentence: Truth out of initiation. *Lux*, or light, is truth; *tenebrae*, or darkness, is initiation.

It is a beautiful and instructive portion of our symbolism, this connection of darkness and light, and well deserves a further investigation.

"Genesis and the cosmogonies," says Portal, "mention the antagonism of light and darkness. The form of this fable varies according to each nation, but the foundation is everywhere the same. Under the symbol of the creation of the world it presents the picture of regeneration and initiation." [105](#)

Plutarch says that to die is to be initiated into the greater Mysteries; and the Greek word τελευτᾶν, which signifies *to die*, means also *to be initiated*. But black, which is the symbolic color of darkness, is also the symbol of death. And hence, again, darkness, like death, is the symbol of initiation. It was for this reason that all the ancient initiations were performed at night. The celebration of the Mysteries was always nocturnal. The same custom prevails in Freemasonry, and the explanation is the same. Death and the resurrection were taught in the Mysteries, as they are in Freemasonry. The initiation was the lesson of death. The full fruition or autopsy, the reception of light, was the lesson of regeneration or resurrection.

Light is, therefore, a fundamental symbol in Freemasonry. It is, in fact, the first important symbol that is presented to the neophyte in his instructions, and contains within itself the

very essence of Speculative Masonry, which is nothing more than the contemplation of intellectual light or truth. [106](#)

The Rite of Investiture.

Another ritualistic symbolism, of still more importance and interest, is the *rite of investiture*.

The rite of investiture, called, in the colloquially technical language of the order, the *ceremony of clothing*, brings us at once to the consideration of that well-known symbol of Freemasonry, the LAMB-SKIN APRON.

This rite of investiture, or the placing upon the aspirant some garment, as an indication of his appropriate preparation for the ceremonies in which he was about to engage, prevailed in all the ancient initiations. A few of them only it will be requisite to consider.

Thus in the Levitical economy of the Israelites the priests always wore the abnet, or linen apron, or girdle, as a part of the investiture of the priesthood. This, with the other garments, was to be worn, as the text expresses it, "for glory and for beauty," or, as it has been explained by a learned commentator, "as emblematical of that holiness and purity which ever characterize the divine nature, and the worship which is worthy of him."

In the Persian Mysteries of Mithras, the candidate, having first received light, was invested with a girdle, a crown or mitre, a purple tunic, and, lastly, a white apron.

In the initiations practised in Hindostan, in the ceremony of investiture was substituted the sash, or sacred zennaar, consisting of a cord, composed of nine threads twisted into a knot at the end, and hanging from the left shoulder to the right hip. This was, perhaps, the type of the masonic scarf, which is, or ought to be, always worn in the same position.

The Jewish sect of the Essenes, who approached nearer than any other secret institution of antiquity to Freemasonry in their organization, always invested their novices with a white robe.

And, lastly, in the Scandinavian rites, where the military genius of the people had introduced a warlike species of initiation, instead of the apron we find the candidate receiving a white shield, which was, however, always presented with the accompaniment of some symbolic instruction, not very dissimilar to that which is connected with the masonic apron.

In all these modes of investiture, no matter what was the material or the form, the symbolic signification intended to be conveyed was that of purity.

And hence, in Freemasonry, the same symbolism is communicated by the apron, which, because it is the first gift which the aspirant receives,--the first symbol in which he is instructed,--has been called the "badge of a mason." And most appropriately has it been so called; for, whatever may be the future advancement of the candidate in the "Royal Art," into whatever deeper arcana his devotion to the mystic institution or his thirst for knowledge may carry him, with the apron--his first investiture--he never parts. Changing, perhaps, its form and its decorations, and conveying at each step some new and beautiful allusion, its substance is still there, and it continues to claim the honorable title by which it was first made known to him on the night of his initiation.

The apron derives its significance, as the symbol of purity, from two sources--from its color and from its material. In each of these points of view it is, then, to be considered, before its symbolism can be properly appreciated.

And, first, the color of the apron must be an unspotted white. This color has, in all ages, been esteemed an emblem of innocence and purity. It was with reference to this symbolism that a portion of the vestments of the Jewish priesthood was directed to be made white. And hence Aaron was commanded, when he entered into the holy of holies to make an expiation for the sins of the people, to appear clothed in white linen, with his linen apron, or girdle, about his loins. It is worthy of remark that the Hebrew word LABAN, which signifies *to make white*, denotes also *to purify*; and hence we find, throughout the Scriptures, many allusions to that color as an emblem of purity. "Though thy sins be as scarlet," says Isaiah, "they shall be *white* as snow;" and Jeremiah, in describing the once innocent condition of Zion, says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow; they were *whiter* than milk."

In the Apocalypse a *white stone* was the reward promised by the Spirit to those who overcame; and in the same mystical book the apostle is instructed to say, that fine linen, clean and *white*, is the righteousness of the saints.

In the early ages of the Christian church a *white garment* was always placed upon the catechumen who had been recently baptized, to denote that he had been cleansed from his former sins, and was thenceforth to lead a life of innocence and purity. Hence it was presented to him with this appropriate charge: "Receive the white and undefiled garment, and produce it unspotted before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may obtain immortal life."

The *white alb* still constitutes a part of the vestments of the Roman church, and its color is said by Bishop England "to excite to piety by teaching us the purity of heart and body which we should possess in being present at the holy mysteries."

The heathens paid the same attention to the symbolic signification of this color. The Egyptians, for instance, decorated the head of their principal deity, Osiris, with a white tiara, and the priests wore robes of the whitest linen.

In the school of Pythagoras, the sacred hymns were chanted by the disciples clothed in garments of white. The Druids gave white vestments to those of their initiates who had arrived at the ultimate degree, or that of perfection. And this was intended, according to their ritual, to teach the aspirant that none were admitted to that honor but such as were cleansed from all impurities, both of body and mind.

In all the Mysteries and religions rites of the other nations of antiquity the same use of white garments was observed.

Portal, in his "Treatise on Symbolic Colors," says that "white, the symbol of the divinity and of the priesthood, represents divine wisdom; applied to a young girl, it denotes virginity; to an accused person, innocence; to a judge, justice;" and he adds--what in reference to its use in Masonry will be peculiarly appropriate--that, "as a characteristic sign of purity, it exhibits a promise of hope after death." We see, therefore, the propriety of adopting this color in the masonic system as a symbol of purity. This symbolism pervades the whole of the ritual, from the lowest to the highest degree, wherever white vestments or white decorations are used.

As to the material of the apron, this is imperatively required to be of lamb-skin. No other substance, such as linen, silk, or satin, could be substituted without entirely destroying the symbolism of the vestment. Now, the lamb has, as the ritual expresses it, "been, in all ages, deemed an emblem of innocence;" but more particularly in the Jewish and Christian churches has this symbolism been observed. Instances of this need hardly be cited. They abound throughout the Old Testament, where we learn that a lamb was selected by the Israelites for their sin and burnt offerings, and in the New, where the word *lamb* is almost constantly employed as synonymous with innocence. "The paschal lamb," says Didron, "which was eaten by the Israelites on the night preceding their departure, is the type of that other divine Lamb, of whom Christians are to partake at Easter, in order thereby to free themselves from the bondage in which they are held by vice." The paschal lamb, a lamb bearing a cross, was, therefore, from an early period, depicted by the Christians as referring to Christ crucified, "that spotless Lamb of God, who was slain from the foundation of the world."

The material, then, of the apron, unites with its color to give to the investiture of a mason the symbolic signification of purity. This, then, together with the fact which I have already shown, that the ceremony of investiture was common to all the ancient religious rites, will form another proof of the identity of origin between these and the masonic institution.

This symbolism also indicates the sacred and religious character which its founders sought to impose upon Freemasonry, and to which both the moral and physical qualifications of our candidates undoubtedly have a reference, since it is with the masonic lodge as it was with the Jewish church, where it was declared that "no man that had a blemish should come nigh unto the altar;" and with the heathen priesthood, among whom we are told that it was thought to be a dishonor to the gods to be served by any one that

was maimed, lame, or in any other way imperfect; and with both, also, in requiring that no one should approach the sacred things who was not pure and uncorrupt.

The pure, unspotted lamb-skin apron is, then, in Masonry, symbolic of that perfection of body and purity of mind which are essential qualifications in all who would participate in its sacred mysteries.

THE NORTH-EAST CORNER.

IN the important ceremony which refers to the north-east corner of the Lodge, the candidate becomes as one who is to all outward appearance *a perfect and upright man and Mason*, the representative of a spiritual corner-stone on which he is to erect his future moral and Masonic edifice.

This symbolic reference of the corner-stone of a material edifice to a Mason when, at his first initiation, he commences the moral and intellectual task of erecting a spiritual temple in his heart, is beautifully sustained when we look at all the qualities that are required to constitute a "well-trying, true, and trusty" corner-stone. The squareness of its surface, emblematic of morality—its cubical form, emblematic of firmness and stability of character—and the peculiar finish and fineness of the material, emblematic of virtue and holiness—show that the ceremony of the north-east corner of the Lodge was undoubtedly intended to portray, in the consecrated language of symbolism, the necessity of integrity and stability of conduct, of truthfulness and uprightness of character, and of purity and holiness of life, which just at that time and in that place the candidate is most impressively charged to maintain.