

catastrophe, and gave evidence which vindicated the character of the horse. The day had been very windy; and the young creature being in high spirits, and, caring evidently as little for the corn question as for the bullion question, had raced about in all directions; and at length, descending too steep a part of the field, had been unable to check himself, and was projected by the impetus of his own descent like a battering ram against the wall.

Of human suicides, the most affecting I have ever seen recorded is one which I met with in a German book; this I shall repeat a little further on; the most calm and deliberate is the following, which is *said* to have occurred at Keswick, in Cumberland; but I must acknowledge, that I never had an opportunity, whilst staying at Keswick, of verifying the statement. A young man, of studious turn, who is said to have resided near Penrith, was anxious to qualify himself for entering the church, or for any other mode of life which might secure to him a reasonable portion of literary leisure. His family, however, thought that under the circumstances of his situation he would have a better chance for success in life as a tradesman; and they took the necessary steps for placing him as an apprentice at some shopkeeper's in Penrith. This he looked upon as an indignity, to which he was determined in no case to submit. And accordingly, when he had ascertained that all opposition to the choice of his friends was useless, he walked over to the mountainous district of Keswick (about sixteen miles distant)—looked about him in order to select his ground—coolly walked up Lattrig (a dependency of Skiddaw)—made a pillow of sods—laid himself down with his face looking up to the sky—and in that posture he was found dead, with the appearance of having died tranquilly.



## HISTORICO-CRITICAL INQUIRY

INTO THE ORIGIN OF THE

### ROSICRUCIANS AND THE FREEMASONS.

**T**HERE is a large body of outstanding problems in history, great and little, some relating to persons, some to things, some to usages, some to words, etc., which furnish occasion, beyond any other form of historical researches, for the display of extensive reading and critical acumen. 1. In reference to *persons*, as those which regard whole nations—*e.g.* What became of the ten tribes of Israel? Did Brennus and his Gauls penetrate into Greece? Who and what are the Gipsies?—or those, far more in number, which regard individuals; as the case of the Knights Templars—of Mary Stuart—of the Ruthvens (the Gowrie Conspiracy). Who was the man in the Iron Mask? Was the unhappy Lady of the Haystack, who in our own days slept out of doors or in barns up and down Somersetshire, a daughter of the Emperor of Germany? Was Perkin Warbeck three centuries ago the true Plantagenet?\*

\* There can be no doubt that he was. But I mention it as a question which most people suppose to be yet *sub judice*

to things; as—Who first discovered the sources of the Nile? Who built Stonehenge? Who discovered the compass? What was the Golden Fleece? Was the Siege of Troy a romance, or a grave historic fact? Was the Iliad the work of one mind, or (on the Wolfian hypothesis) of many? What is to be thought of the Thundering Legion? of the miraculous dispersion of the Emperor Julian's labourers before Jerusalem? of the burning of the Alexandrian Library, etc. Who wrote the *Eikōn Basilikē*? Who wrote the Letters of Junius? Was the Fluxional Calculus discovered simultaneously by Leibnitz and Newton? or did Leibnitz derive the first hint of it from the letter of Newton? 3. In reference to *usages*; as the May pole and May day dances—the Morris dancers—the practice (not yet extinct amongst uneducated people) of saying "God bless you!" on hearing a person sneeze, and thousands of others. 4. In reference to *words*; as whence came the mysterious *Labarum* of Constantine? etc. Among the problems of the first class, there are not many more irritating to the curiosity than that which concerns the well-known order of Freemasons. In our own language I am not aware of any work which has treated this question with much learning. I have therefore abstracted, rearranged, and in some respects I shall not scruple to say—have improved the German work on this subject, of Professor J. G. Buhle. This work is an expansion of a Latin Dissertation read by the Professor in the year 1803 to the Philosophical Society of Göttingen; and, in respect to the particular sort of merit looked for in a work of this kind, has (I believe) satisfied the most competent judges. Coming after a crowd of other learned works on the Rosicrucians, and those of Lessing and Nicolai on the Freemasons, it could not well fail to embody what was

most important in their elaborate researches, and to benefit by the whole. Implicitly, therefore, it may be looked upon as containing the whole learning of the case, as accumulated by all former writers, in addition to that contributed by the Professor himself; which, to do him justice, seems to be extensive and accurate. But the Professor's *peculiar* claims to distinction in this inquiry are grounded upon the solution which he first has given in a satisfactory way to the main problem of the case—What is the *origin* of Freemasonry? For, as to the *secret* of Freemasonry, and its occult doctrines, there is a readier and more certain way of getting at those than through any Professor's book. To a hoax played off by a young man of extraordinary talents in the beginning of the seventeenth century (*i.e.*, about 1610–14), but for a more elevated purpose than most hoaxes involve, the reader will find that the whole mysteries of Freemasonry, as now existing all over the civilised world, after a lapse of more than two centuries, are here distinctly traced: such is the power of a grand and capacious aspiration of philosophic benevolence to embalm even the idlest levities, as amber enshrines straws and insects!

Any reader who should find himself satisfied with the Professor's solution and its proof, would probably be willing to overlook his other defects: his learning and his felicity of conjecture may pass as sufficient and redeeming merits in a Göttingen Professor. Else, and if these merits were set aside, I must say that I have rarely met with a more fatiguing person than Professor Buhle.\* That his essay is readable at all, if it *be* readable, the reader must

\* I believe that he is also the editor of the Bipont Aristotle: but not possessing that edition of Aristotle myself, I cannot pretend to speak of its value. His *History of Philosophy* I have: it is probably as good as such works usually are: and, alas!—no better.

understand that he owes to me. Mr. Buhle is celebrated as the historian of philosophy, and as a logic-professor at a great German University. But a more illogical work than his as to the conduct of the question, or one more confused in its arrangement, I have not often seen. It is doubtless a rare thing to meet with minds sufficiently stern in their logic to keep a question steadily and immovably before them, without ever being thrown out of their track by verbal delusions: and for my own part I must say that I never was present in my life at one of those after-dinner disputations by which social pleasure is poisoned (except in the higher and more refined classes), where the course of argument did not within ten minutes quit the question upon which it had first started—and all upon the seduction of some equivocal word, or of some theme which bore affinity to the main theme, but was not that main theme itself, or still oftener of some purely verbal transition. All this is common: but the eternal see-sawing, weaving and counter-weaving, flux and reflux, of Professor Buhle's course of argument is *not* common by any means, but very *uncommon*, and worthy of a place in any cabinet of natural curiosities. There is an everlasting confusion in the worthy man's mind between the two questions—What is the *origin* of Freemasonry? and what is the *nature* and *essence* of Freemasonry? The consequence is that one idea always exciting the other, they constantly come out shouldering and elbowing each other for precedency—every sentence is charged with a double commission—the Professor gets angry with himself, begins to splutter unintelligibly, and finds on looking round him that he has wheeled about to a point of the argument considerably in the rear of that which he had reached perhaps 150 pages before. I have done what I could to remedy these infirmities of the book;

and upon the whole it is a good deal less paralytic than it was. But, having begun my task on the assumption that the first chapter should naturally come before the second, the second before the third, and so on—I find now (when the mischief is irreparable) that I made a great mistake in that assumption, which perhaps is not applicable to Göttingen books, and that if I had read the book on the Hebrew principle—or Βουστροφηδόν—or had tacked and traversed—or done anything but sail in a straight line, I could not have failed to improve the arrangement of my materials. But, after all, I have so whitewashed the Professor, that nothing but a life of gratitude on his part, and free admission to his logic lectures for ever, can possibly repay me for my services.

The three most triumphant dissertations existing upon the class of historico-critical problems which I have described above are—1. Bentley's upon the spurious Epistles ascribed to Phalaris; 2. Malcolm Laing's upon Perkin Warbeck (published by Dr. Henry in his *Hist. of Great Britain*); 3. Mr. Taylor's upon the Letters of Junius. All three are loaded with a superfetation of evidence, and conclusive beyond what the mind altogether wishes. For it is pleasant to have the graver part of one's understanding satisfied, and yet to have its capricious part left in possession of some miserable fragment of a scruple upon which it may indulge itself with an occasional speculation in support of the old error. In fact, coercion is not pleasant in any cases; and though reasons be as plenty as blackberries, one would not either give or believe them "on compulsion." In the present work the reader will perhaps not find himself under this unpleasant sense of coercion, but left more to the free exercise of his own judgment. Yet upon the whole I think he will give his final award in behalf of Buhle's hypothesis.

## CHAPTER I.

OF THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORDERS OF  
THE ROSIKRUCIANS AND THE FREEMASONS.

I DEEM it an indispensable condition of any investigation into the origin of the Rosikrucians and Freemasons—that both orders should be surveyed comprehensively and in the whole compass of their relations and characteristic marks; not with reference to this or that mythos, symbol, usage, or form: and to the neglect of this condition, I believe, we must impute the unsuccessful issue which has hitherto attended the essays on the subject. First of all, therefore, I will assign those distinguishing features of these orders which appear to me universal and essential; and these I shall divide into *internal* and *external*—accordingly as they respect the personal relations and the purposes of their members, or simply the outward form of the institutions.

The universal and essential characteristics of the two orders, which come under the head of *internal*, are these which follow:—

I. As their fundamental maxim they assume—*Entire equality of personal rights amongst their members in relation to their final object.* All distinctions of social rank are annihilated. In the character of masons the prince and the lowest citizen behave reciprocally as free men—standing to each other in no relation of civic inequality. This is a feature of masonry in which it resembles the church: projecting itself, like *that*, from the body of the state; and in *idea* opposing itself to the state, though not in fact; for, on the contrary, the ties of social obligation are strengthened and sanctioned by the masonic doctrines. It is true that

these orders have *degrees*—many or few, according to the constitution of the several mother-lodges. These, however, express no subordination in rank or power: they imply simply a more or less intimate connection with the concerns and purposes of the institution. A gradation of this sort, corresponding to the different stages of knowledge and initiation in the mysteries of the order, was indispensable to the objects which they had in view. It could not be advisable to admit a young man, inexperienced and untried, to the full participation of their secrets: he must first be educated and moulded for the ends of the society. Even elder men it was found necessary to subject to the probation of the lower degrees before they were admitted to the higher. Without such a regulation dangerous persons might sometimes have crept into the councils of the society; which, in fact, happened occasionally, in spite of all provisions to the contrary. It may be alleged that this feature of personal equality amongst the members in relation to their private object is not exclusively the characteristic of Rosikrucians and Freemasons. True; it belongs no less to all the secret societies which have arisen in modern times. But, notwithstanding *that*, it is indisputable that to them was due the original scheme of an institution, having neither an ecclesiastic nor a political tendency, and built on the personal equality of all the individuals who composed it.

II. *Women, children, those who were not in the full possession of civic freedom, Jews, Anti-Christians generally, and (according to undoubted historic documents) in the early days of these orders—Roman Catholics were excluded from the society.* For what reason women were excluded, I suppose it can hardly be necessary to say. The absurd spirit of curiosity, talkativeness, and levity, which so

distinguish that unhappy sex, were obviously incompatible with the grave purposes of the Rosicrucians and Masons. Not to mention that the familiar intercourse, which co-membership in these societies brings along with it, would probably have led to some disorders in a promiscuous assemblage of both sexes, such as might have tainted the good fame or even threatened the existence of the order. More remarkable is the exclusion of *persons not wholly free*, of *Jews*, and of *Anti-Christians*; and, indeed, it throws an important light upon the origin and character of the institutions. By *persons not free* we are to understand not merely slaves and vassals, but also those who were in the service of others—and generally all who had not an independent livelihood. Even freeborn persons are comprehended in this designation, so long as they continued in the state of minority. Masonry presumes in all its members the devotion of their knowledge and powers to the objects of the institution. Now, what services could be rendered by vassals, menial servants, day-labourers, journeymen, with the limited means at their disposal as to wealth or knowledge, and in their state of dependency upon others? Besides, with the prejudices of birth and rank prevalent in that age, any admission of plebeian members would have immediately ruined the scheme. Indeed, we have great reason to wonder that an idea so bold for those times as the union of nobles and burghers under a law of perfect equality could ever have been realised. And, in fact, among any other people than the English, with their national habits of thinking, and other favourable circumstances, it could *not* have been realised. *Minors* were rejected unless when the consent of their guardians was obtained; for otherwise the order would have exposed itself to the suspicion of tampering with young people in

an illegal way: to say nothing of the want of free-agency in minors. That lay-brothers were admitted for the performance of servile offices is not to be taken as any departure from the general rule; for it was matter of necessity that persons of lower rank should fill the menial offices attached to the society; and these persons, be it observed, were always chosen from amongst those who had an independent property, however small. As to the exclusion of Anti-Christians, especially of Jews, this may seem at first sight inconsistent with the cosmo-political tendency of Masonry. But had it that tendency at its first establishment? Be this as it may, we need not be surprised at such a regulation in an age so little impressed with the virtue of toleration, and indeed so little able—from political circumstances—to practise it. Besides, it was necessary for their own security; the Freemasons themselves were exposed to a suspicion of atheism and sorcery; and this suspicion would have been confirmed by the indiscriminate admission of persons hostile to Christianity. For the Jews in particular, there was a further reason for rejecting them, founded on the deep degradation of the national character. With respect to the Roman Catholics, I need not at this point anticipate the historic data which favour their exclusion. The fact is certain; but, I add, only for the earlier periods of Freemasonry. Further on, the cosmo-political constitution of the order had cleared it of all such religious tests; and at this day, I believe, that in the lodges of London and Paris there would be no hesitation in receiving as a brother any upright Mohammedan or Jew. Even in smaller cities, where lingering prejudices would still cleave with more bigotry to the old exclusions, greater stress is laid upon the natural religion of the candidate—his belief in God and his sense of moral

obligation—than upon his positive confession of faith. In saying this, however, I would not be understood to speak of certain individual sects among the Rosicrucians, whose mysticism leads them to demand special religious qualities in their proselytes which are dispensed with by common Freemasonry.

III. *The orders make pretensions to mysteries*; these relate partly to ends, and partly to means; and are derived from the East, whence they profess to derive an occult wisdom not revealed to the profane. This striving after hidden knowledge, it was, that specially distinguished these societies from others that pursued unknown objects. And because their main object was a mystery, and that it might remain such, an oath of secrecy was demanded of every member on his admission. Nothing of this mystery could ever be discovered by a visit from the police: for when such an event happens, and naturally it has happened many times, the business is at end—and the lodge *ipso facto* dissolved: besides that, all the acts of the members are symbolic, and unintelligible to all but the initiated. Meantime no government can complain of this exclusion from the mysteries: as every governor has it at his own option to make himself fully acquainted with them by procuring his own adoption into the society. This it is which in most countries has gradually reconciled the supreme authorities to Masonic Societies, hard as the persecution was which they experienced at first. Princes and prelates made themselves brothers of the order as the condition of admission to the mysteries. And, think what they would of these mysteries in other respects, they found nothing in them which could justify any hostility on the part of the state.

In an examination of Masonic and Rosicrucian Societies the weightiest question is that which regards the nature of

these mysteries. To this question we must seek for a key in the spirit of that age when the societies themselves originated. We shall thus learn first of all, whether these societies do in reality cherish any mystery as the final object of their researches; and, secondly, perhaps we shall thus come to understand the extraordinary fact that the Rosicrucian and Masonic secret should not long ago have been betrayed, in spite of the treachery which we must suppose in a certain proportion of those who were parties to that secret in every age.

IV. *These orders have a general system of signs* (e.g., that of recognition) *usages, symbols, myths, and festivals*. In this place it may be sufficient to say generally that even that part of the ritual and mythology which is already known to the public,\* will be found to confirm the conclusions drawn from other historical data as to the origin and purpose of the institution: thus, for instance, we may be assured beforehand that the original Freemasons must have had some reason for appropriating to themselves the attributes and emblems of real handicraft Masons: which part of their ritual they are so far from concealing that in London they often parade on solemn occasions attired in full costume. As little can it be imagined that the selection of the feast of St. John (Midsummer-day) as their own chief festival, was at first arbitrary and without a significant import.

Of the *external* characteristics—or those which the society itself announces to the world—the main is the

\* We must not forget, however, that the Rosicrucian and Masonic orders were not originally at all points what they now are; they have passed through many changes and modifications; and no inconsiderable part of their symbolic system, etc., has been the product of suggestive generations.

*public profession of beneficence*; not to the brothers only, though of course to them more especially, but also to strangers. And it cannot be denied by those who are least favourably disposed to the order of Freemasons that many states in Europe, where lodges have formerly existed or do still exist, are indebted to them for the original establishment of many salutary institutions, having for their object the mitigation of human suffering. The other external characteristics are properly negative, and are these:—

I. *Masonry is compatible with every form of civil constitution*; which cosmo-political relation of the order to every mode and form of social arrangements has secured the possibility of its reception amongst all nations, however widely separated in policy and laws.

II. *It does not impose celibacy*: and this is the criterion that distinguishes it from the religious orders, and from many of the old knightly orders in which celibacy was an indispensable law, or still is so.

III. *It enjoins no peculiar dress* (except, indeed, in the official assemblages of the lodges, for the purpose of marking the different degrees), *no marks of distinction in the ordinary commerce of life and no abstinence from civil offices and business*. Here again is a remarkable distinction from the religious and knightly orders.

IV. *It grants to every member a full liberty to dissolve his connection with the order at any time, and without even acquainting the superiors of the lodge*; though of course he cannot release himself from the obligation of his vow of secrecy. Nay, even after many years of voluntary separation from the order, a return to it is always allowed. In the religious and knightly orders, the members have not the powers, excepting under certain circumstances, of leaving

them; and, under *no* circumstances, of returning. This last was a politic regulation: for, whilst on one hand the society was sufficiently secured by the oath of secrecy, on the other hand by the easiness of the yoke which it imposed, it could the more readily attract members. A young man might enter the order; satisfy himself as to the advantages that were to be expected from it; and leave it upon further experience or any revolution in his own way of thinking.

In thus assigning the internal and external characteristics of the Rosicrucians and Freemasons, I have purposely said nothing of the distinctions between the two orders themselves: for this would have presupposed that historical inquiry which is now to follow. That the above characteristics, however, were common to both, is not to be doubted. Rosicrucianism, it is true, is not Freemasonry: but the latter borrowed its form from the first. He that gives himself out for a Rosicrucian, without knowing the general ritual of masonry, is unquestionably an impostor. Some peculiar sects there are which adopt certain follies and chimeras of the Rosicrucians (as gold-making); and to these he may belong; but a legitimate Rosicrucian, in the original sense and spirit of the order, he cannot be.



## CHAPTER II.

UPON THE EARLIEST HISTORICAL TRACES OF THE ROSICRUCIAN  
AND MASONIC ORDERS.

THE accredited records of these orders do not ascend beyond the last two centuries. On the other hand, it is alleged by many that they have existed for eighteen hundred years. He who adopts this latter hypothesis which even as an hypothesis seems to me scarcely endurable for a moment, is bound to show, in the first place, in what respect the deduction of these orders from modern history is at all unsatisfactory; and secondly, upon his own assumption of a far elder origin, to explain how it happened that for sixteen entire centuries no writers contemporary with the different periods of these orders have made any allusion to them. If he replies by alleging the secrecy of their proceedings, I rejoin that this might have secured their doctrines and mysteries from being divulged, but not the mere fact of their existence. My view of their origin will perhaps be granted with relation to Western Europe; but I shall be referred to the East for the *incunabula* of the order. At one time Greece, at another Egypt, or different countries of Asia, are alleged as the cradle of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons. Let us take a cursory survey of the several hypotheses.

1. In the earlier records of GREECE we meet with nothing which bears any resemblance to these institutions but the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries. Here, however, the word *mysteries* implied not any occult problem or science

sought for, but simply sensuous\* and dramatic representations of religious ideas—which could not otherwise be communicated to the people in the existing state of intellectual culture, and which (as often happens), having been once established, were afterwards retained in a more advanced state of the national mind. In the Grecian mysteries there were degrees of initiation amongst the members, but with purposes wholly distinct from those of the masonic degrees. The Grecian mysteries were not to be profaned; but *that* was on religious accounts. Lastly, the Grecian mysteries were a part of the popular religion acknowledged and authorised by the state. The whole resemblance, in short, rests upon nothing, and serves only to prove an utter ignorance of Grecian antiquities in those who have alleged it.†

2. Neither in the history of EGYPT is any trace to be found of the Rosicrucian and Masonic characteristics. It is true that the meaning of the Egyptian religious symbols and usages was kept secret from the people and from strangers; and in that sense Egypt may be said to have had mysteries; but these mysteries involved nothing more than the essential points of the popular religion.‡ As to the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, they are now known to be spurious; and their pretensions could

\* The word *sensuous* is a Miltonic word; and is, moreover, a word that cannot be dispensed with.

† See the German essay of Meiners upon the Mysteries of the Ancients, especially the Eleusinian mysteries, in the third part of his Miscellaneous Philosophical Works. Collate with this the work of Ste. Croix, entitled *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Religion secrète des anciens Peuples*. Paris: 1784.

‡ On the principle and meaning of the popular religion in Egypt and the hieroglyphics connected with it, consult Gatterer's essay *De Theogoniâ Aegyptiorum* in the 7th vol.—and his essay *Denketempelschasi*,



never have imposed upon any person who had examined them by the light of such knowledge as we still possess of the ancient Egyptian history and religion: indeed, the gross syncretism in these writings of Egyptian doctrines with those of the later Platonists too manifestly betrays them as a forgery from the schools of Alexandria. Forgery apart, however, the substance of the Hermetic writings disconnects them wholly from masonic objects: it consists of a romantic Theology and Theurgy; and the whole is very intelligible, and far from mysterious. What is true of these Hermetic books, is true *à fortiori* of all later writings that profess to deliver the traditional wisdom of ancient Egypt.

3. If we look to ancient CHALDEA and PERSIA for the origin of these orders, we shall be as much disappointed. The vaunted knowledge of the Chaldeans extended only to Astrology, the interpretation of dreams, and the common arts of jugglers. As to the Persian Magi, as well before as after the introduction of the doctrine of Zoroaster, they were simply the depositaries of religious ideas and traditions, and the organs of the public worship. Moreover, they composed no secret order: but rather constituted the highest *caste* or rank in the nation, and were recognised by the government as an essential part of the body politic. In succeeding ages the religion of the Magi passed over to many great nations, and has supported itself up to our days. Anquetil du Perron has collected and published the holy

*immortalitatis animorum symbolo Aegyptio* in the 9th vol. of the Göttingen Transactions. The path opened by Gatterer has been since pursued with success by Dornedden in his *Amenophis* and in his new theory for the explanation of the Grecian Mythology; 1802. Consult also Vogel's Essay on the Religion of the Ancient Egyptians and the Greeks. 4to. Nuremberg; 1793.

books in which it is contained. But no doctrine of the Zendavesta is presented as a mystery; nor could any of those doctrines, from their very nature, have been presented as such. Undoubtedly among the Rosicrucian titles of honour we find that of Magus: but with them it simply designates a man of rare knowledge in physics—*i.e.*, especially in Alchemy. That the ancient Magi in the age immediately before and after the birth of Christ, attempted the transmutation of metals, is highly improbable: that idea, there is reason to believe, first began to influence the course of chemical pursuits amongst the Arabian students of natural philosophy and medicine.

4. The pretensions of the DERVISHES and BRAHMINS of Asia, especially of Hindostan, to be the fathers of the two orders, need no examination, as they are still more groundless than those which have been just noticed.

5. A little before and after the birth of Christ there arose in Egypt and Palestine a Jewish religious sect, which split into two divisions—the ESSENES and the THERAPEUTÆ. Their history and an account of their principles may be found in Josephus, and more fully in Philo, who probably himself belonged to the Therapeutæ. The difference between the two sects consisted in this—that the Essenes looked upon practical morality and religion as the main business of life, whereas the Therapeutæ attached themselves more to philosophic speculations, and placed the essence of religion in the contemplation and reverence of the deity. They dwelt in hermitages, gardens, villages, and cottages, shunning the uproar of crowds and cities. With them arose the idea of monkish life, which has subsisted to this day, though it has received a mortal shock in our revolutionary times. To these two systems have been traced the Rosicrucians and Freemasons. Now, without