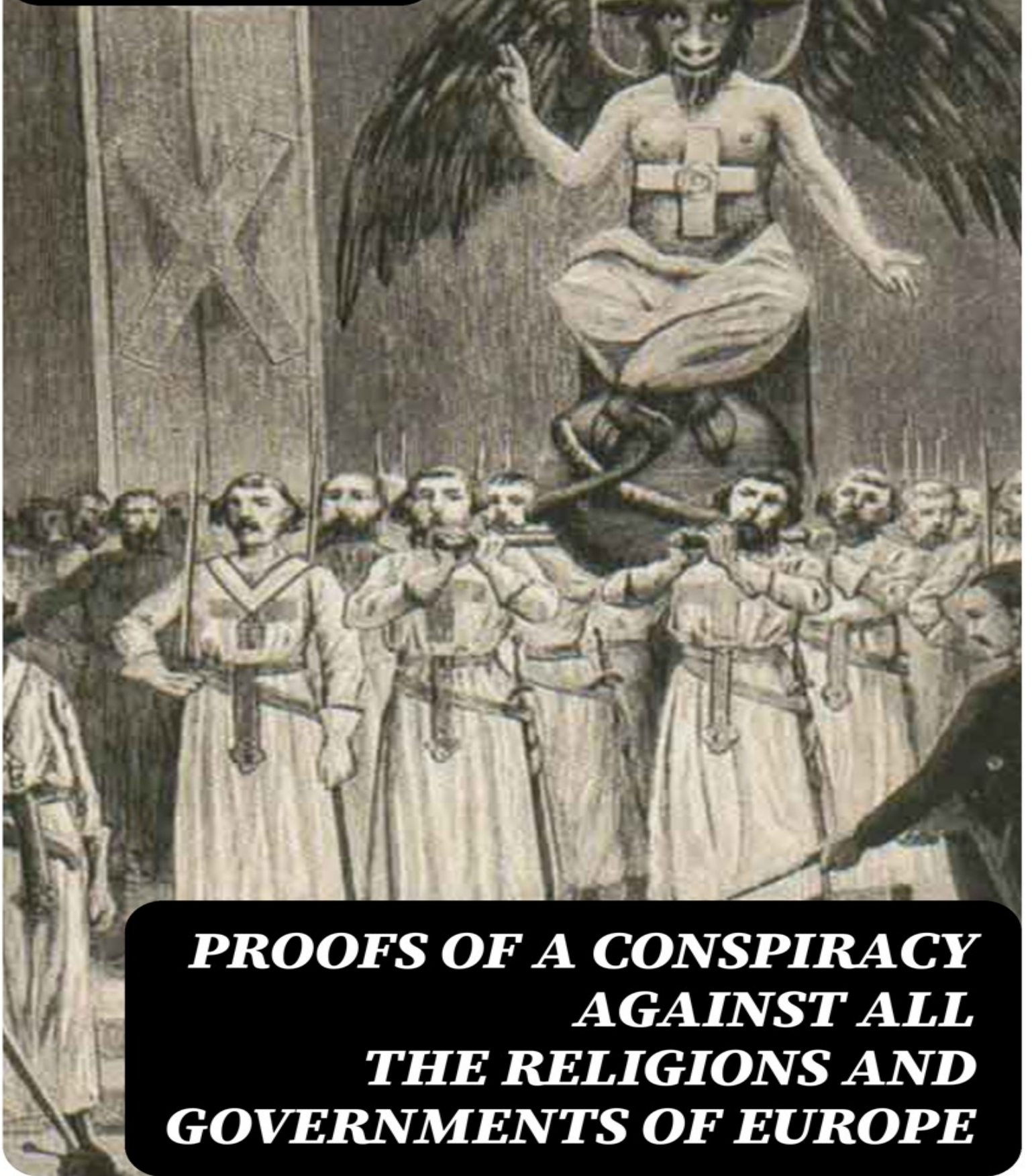


***JOHN
ROBISON***



***PROOFS OF A CONSPIRACY
AGAINST ALL
THE RELIGIONS AND
GOVERNMENTS OF EUROPE***

John Robison

Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM WYNDHAM,
SECRETARY AT WAR, &c. &c. &c.

S I R,

It was with great satisfaction that I learned from a Friend that you coincided with me in the opinion, that the information contained in this Performance would make a useful impression on the minds of my Countrymen.

I have presumed to inscribe it with your Name, that I may publicly express the pleasure which I felt, when I found that neither a separation for thirty years, nor the pressure of the most important business, had effaced your kind remembrance of a College Acquaintance, or abated that obliging and polite attention with which you favoured me in those early days of life.

The friendship of the accomplished and the worthy is the highest honour; and to him who is cut off, by want of health, from almost every other enjoyment, it is an inestimable blessing. Accept, therefore, I pray, of my grateful acknowledgments, and of my earnest wishes for your Health, Prosperity, and increasing Honour.

With sentiments of the greatest Esteem and Respect,

*I am, SIR,
Your most obedient,
and most humble Servant,*

JOHN ROBISON.

EDINBURGH,
September 5, 1797.

*Quod si quis verâ vitam ratione gubernet,
Divitiæ grandes homini sunt, vivere parcè
Æquo animo: neque enim est unquam penuria
parvi.*

*At claros se homines voluêrunt atque potentes,
Ut fundamento stabili fortuna maneret,
Et placidam possent opulenti degere vitam:
Nequicquam,—quoniam ad summum succedere
honorem*

*Certantes, iter infestum fecêre viaï,
Et tamen è summo quasi fulmen dejicit ictos
Invidia interdum contemptim in Tartara tetra.*

*Ergo, Regibus occisis, subversa jacebat
Pristina majestas soliorum, et sceptrâ superba;
Et capitis summi præclarum insigne, cruentum,
Sub pedibus volgi magnum lugebat honorum:
Nam cupidè conculcatur nimis ante metutum.
Res itaque ad summam fæcem, turbasque
redibat,
Imperium sibi cum ac summatum quisque
petebat.*

LUCRETIVS, V. 1116.

INTRODUCTION.

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Being at a friend's house in the country during some part of the summer 1795, I there saw a volume of a German periodical work, called *Religions Begebenheiten, i. e.* Religious Occurrences: in which there was an account of the various schisms in the Fraternity of Free Masons, with frequent allusions to the origin and history of that celebrated association. This account interested me a good deal, because, in my early life, I had taken some part in the occupations (shall I call them) of Free Masonry; and, having chiefly frequented the Lodges on the Continent, I had learned many doctrines, and seen many ceremonials which have no place in the simple system of Free Masonry which obtains in this country. I had also remarked, that the whole was much more the object of reflection and thought than I could remember it to have been among my acquaintances at home. There, I had seen a Mason Lodge considered merely as a pretext for passing an hour or two in a sort of decent conviviality, not altogether void of some rational occupation. I had sometimes heard of differences of doctrines or of ceremonies, but in terms which marked them as mere frivolities. But, on the Continent, I found them matters of serious concern and debate. Such too is the contagion of example, that I could not hinder myself from thinking one opinion better founded, or one Ritual more apposite and significant than another; and I even felt something like an anxiety for its being adopted, and a zeal for making it a general practice. I had been initiated in a very splendid Lodge at Liege, of which the Prince Bishop, his Trefonciers, and the chief Noblesse of the State were members. I visited the French Lodges at Valenciennes, at Brussels, at Aix-la-Chapelle, at Berlin, and Koningsberg; and

I picked up some printed discourses delivered by the Brother-orators of the Lodges. At St. Petersburg I connected myself with the English Lodge, and occasionally visited the German and Russian Lodges held there. I found myself received with particular respect as a Scotch Mason, and as an Eleve of the *Lodge de la Parfait Intelligence* at Liege. I was importuned by persons of the first rank to pursue my masonic career through many degrees unknown in this country. But all the splendor and elegance that I saw could not conceal a frivolity in every part. It appeared a baseless fabric, and I could not think of engaging in an occupation which would consume much time, cost me a good deal of money, and might perhaps excite in me some of that fanaticism, or at least, enthusiasm, that I saw in others, and perceived to be void of any rational support. I therefore remained in the English Lodge, contented with the rank of Scotch Master, which was in a manner forced on me in a private Lodge of French Masons, but is not given in the English Lodge. My masonic rank admitted me to a very elegant entertainment in the female *Loge de la Fidelité*, where every ceremonial was composed in the highest degree of elegance, and every thing conducted with the most delicate respect for our fair sisters, and the old song of brotherly love was chanted in the most refined strain of sentiment. I do not suppose that the Parisian Free Masonry of forty-five degrees could give me more entertainment. I had profited so much by it, that I had the honour of being appointed the Brother-orator. In this office I gave such satisfaction, that a worthy Brother sent me at midnight a box, which he committed to my care, as a person far advanced in masonic science, zealously attached to the order, and therefore a fit depository of important writings. I learned next day that this gentleman had found it convenient to leave the empire in a hurry, but taking with him the funds of an establishment of which her Imperial Majesty had made him the manager. I was desired to keep

these writings till he should see me again. I obeyed. About ten years afterward I saw the gentleman on the street in Edinburgh, conversing with a foreigner. As I passed by him, I saluted him softly in the Russian language; but without stopping, or looking him directly in the face. He coloured, but made no return. I endeavoured, in vain, to meet with him, wishing to make a proper return for much civility and kindness which I had received from him in his own country.

I now considered the box as accessible to myself, and opened it. I found it to contain all the degrees of the *Parfait Maçon Ecossois*, with the Rituals, Catechisms, and Instructions, and also four other degrees of Free Masonry, as cultivated in the Parisian Lodges. I have kept them with all care, and mean to give them to some respectable Lodge. But as I am bound by no engagement of any kind, I hold myself at liberty to make such use of them as may be serviceable to the public, without enabling any uninitiated person to enter the Lodges of these degrees.

This acquisition might have roused my former relish for masonry, had it been merely dormant; but, after so long separation from the *Lodge de la Fidélité*, the masonic spirit had evaporated. Some curiosity however remained, and some wish to trace this plastic mystery to the pit from which the clay had been dug, which has been moulded into so many different shapes, "some to honour, and some to dishonour." But my opportunities were now gone. I have given away (when in Russia) my volumes of discourses, and some far-fetched and gratuitous histories, and nothing remained but the pitiful work of Anderson, and the *Maçonnerie Adonhiramique dévoilée*, which are in every one's hands.

My curiosity was strongly roused by the accounts given in the *Religions Begebenheiten*. There I saw quotations without number, systems and schisms of which I had never heard; but what particularly struck me was a zeal and a fanaticism about what I thought trifles, which astonished me. Men of

rank and fortune, and engaged in serious and honourable public employments, not only frequenting the Lodges of the cities where they resided, but journeying from one end of Germany or France to the other, to visit new Lodges, or to learn new secrets or new doctrines. I saw conventions held at Wisinar, at Wisbad, at Kohlo, at Brunswick, and at Willemsbad, consulting of some hundreds of persons of respectable stations. I saw adventurers coming to a city, professing some new secret, and in a few days forming new Lodges, and instructing in a troublesome and expensive manner hundreds of brethren.

German Masonry appeared a very serious concern, and to be implicated with other subjects with which I had never suspected it to have any connection. I saw it much connected with many occurrences and schisms in the Christian church; I saw that the Jesuits had several times interfered in it; and that most of the exceptionable innovations and dissensions had arisen about the time that the order of *Loyola* was suppressed; so that it should seem, that these intriguing brethren had attempted to maintain their influence by the help of Free Masonry. I saw it much disturbed by the mystical whims of J. Behmen and Swedenborg—by the fanatical and knavish doctrines of the modern Rosycrucians—by Magicians—Magnetisers—Exorcists, &c. And I observed that these different facts reprobated each other, as not only maintaining erroneous opinions, but even inculcating opinions which were contrary to the established religions of Germany, and contrary to the principles of the civil establishments. At the same time they charged each other with mistakes and corruptions, both in doctrine and in practice; and particularly with falsification of the first principles of Free Masonry, and with ignorance of its origin and its history; and they supported these charges by authorities from many different books which were unknown to me.

My curiosity was now greatly excited. I got from a much respected friend many of the preceding volumes of the *Religions Begebenheiten*, in hopes of much information from the patient industry of German erudition. This opened a new and very interesting scene; I was frequently sent back to England, from whence all agreed that Free Masonry had been imported into Germany. I was frequently led into France and into Italy. There, and more remarkably in France, I found that the Lodges had become the haunts of many projectors and fanatics, both in science, in religion, and in politics, who had availed themselves of the secrecy and the freedom of speech maintained in these meetings, to broach their particular whims or suspicious doctrines, which, if published to the world in the usual manner, would have exposed the authors to ridicule or to censure. These projectors had contrived to tag their peculiar nostrums to the mummery of Masonry, and were even allowed to twist the masonic emblems and ceremonies to to their purpose; so that in their hands Free Masonry became a thing totally unlike, and almost in direct opposition to the system (if it may get such a name) imported from England; and some Lodges had become schools of irreligion and licentiousness.

No nation in modern times has so particularly turned its attention to the cultivation of every thing that is refined or ornamental as France, and it has long been the resort of all who hunt after entertainment in its most refined form; the French have come to consider themselves as the instructors of the world in every thing that ornaments life, and feeling themselves received as such, they have formed their manners accordingly—full of the most condescending complaisance to *all who acknowledge* their superiority. Delighted, in a high degree, with this office, they have become zealous missionaries of refinement in every department of human pursuit, and have reduced their apostolic employment to a system, which they prosecute with ardour and delight. This is not groundless declamation,

but sober historical truth. It was the professed aim (and it was a magnificent and wise aim) of the great Colbert, to make the court of Louis XIV. the fountain of human refinement, and Paris the Athens of Europe. We need only look, in the present day, at the plunder of Italy by the French army, to be convinced that their low-born generals and statesmen have in this respect the same notions with the Colberts and the Richlieus.

I know no subject in which this aim at universal influence on the opinions of men, by holding themselves forth as the models of excellence and elegance, is more clearly seen than in the care that they have been pleased to take of Free Masonry. It seems indeed peculiarly suited to the talents and taste of that vain and ardent people. Baseless and frivolous, it admits of every form that Gallic refinement can invent, to recommend it to the young, the gay, the luxurious; that class of society which alone deserves their care, because, in one way or another, it leads all other classes of society.

It has accordingly happened, that the homely Free Masonry imported from England has been totally changed in every country of Europe either by the imposing ascendancy of French brethren, who are to be found every where, ready to instruct the world; or by the importation of the doctrines, and ceremonies, and ornaments of the Parisian Lodges. Even England, the birth-place of Masonry, has experienced the French innovations; and all the repeated injunctions, admonitions, and reproofs of the old Lodges, cannot prevent those in different parts of the kingdom from admitting the French novelties, full of tinsel and glitter, and high-sounding titles.

Were this all, the harm would not be great. But long before good opportunities had occurred for spreading the refinements on the simple Free Masonry of England, the Lodges in France had become places of very serious discussion, where opinions in morals, in religion, and in

politics, had been promulgated and maintained with a freedom and a keenness, of which we in this favoured land have no adequate notion, because we are unacquainted with the restraints which, in other countries, are laid on ordinary conversation. In consequence of this, the French innovations in Free Masonry were quickly followed in all parts of Europe, by the admission of similar discussions, although in direct opposition to a standing rule, and a declaration made to every newly received Brother, "that nothing touching the religion or government shall ever be spoken of in the Lodge." But the Lodges in other countries followed the example of France, and have frequently become the rendezvous of innovators in religion and politics, and other disturbers of the public peace. In short, I have found that the covert of a Mason Lodge had been employed in every country for venting and propagating sentiments in religion and politics, that could not have circulated in public without exposing the author to great danger. I found, that this impunity had gradually encouraged men of licentious principles to become more bold, and to teach doctrines subversive of all our notions of morality—of all our confidence in the moral government of the universe—of all our hopes of improvement in a future state of existence—and of all satisfaction and contentment with our present life, so long as we live in a state of civil subordination. I have been able to trace these attempts, made, through a course of fifty years, under the specious pretext of enlightening the world by the torch of philosophy, and of dispelling the clouds of civil and religious superstition which keep the nations of Europe in darkness and slavery. I have observed these doctrines gradually diffusing and mixing with all the different systems of Free Masonry; till, at last, AN ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN FORMED for the express purpose of ROOTING OUT ALL THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS, AND OVERTURNING ALL THE EXISTING GOVERNMENTS OF EUROPE. I have seen this Association exerting itself zealously and systematically, till it has

become almost irresistible: And I have seen that the most active leaders in the French Revolution were members of this Association, and conducted their first movements according to its principles, and by means of its instructions and assistance, *formally requested and obtained*: And, lastly, I have seen that this Association still exists, still works in secret, and that not only several appearances among ourselves show that its emissaries are endeavouring to propagate their detestable doctrines among us, but that the Association has Lodges in Britain corresponding with the mother Lodge at Munich ever since 1784.

If all this were a matter of mere curiosity, and susceptible of no good use, it would have been better to have kept it to myself, than to disturb my neighbours with the knowledge of a state of things which they cannot amend. But if it shall appear that the minds of my countrymen are misled in the very same manner as were those of our continental neighbours—if I can show that the reasonings which make a very strong impression on some persons in this country are the same which actually produced the dangerous association in Germany; and that they had this unhappy influence solely because they were thought to be sincere, and the expressions of the sentiments of the speakers—if I can show that this was all a cheat, and that the Leaders of this Association disbelieved *every word* that they uttered, and every doctrine that they taught; and that their real intention was to abolish *all* religion, overturn every government, and make the world a general plunder and a wreck—if I can show, that the principles which the Founder and Leaders of this Association held forth as the perfection of human virtue, and the most powerful and efficacious for forming the minds of men, and making them good and happy, had no influence on the Founder and Leaders themselves, and that they were, almost without exception, the most insignificant, worthless, and profligate of men; I cannot but think, that such information will make my

countrymen hesitate a little, and receive with caution, and even distrust, addresses and instructions which flatter our self-conceit, and which, by buoying us up with the gay prospect of what seems attainable by a change, may make us discontented with our present condition, and forget that there never was a government on earth where the people of a great and luxurious nation enjoyed so much freedom and security in the possession of every thing that is dear and valuable.

When we see that these boasted principles had not that effect on the Leaders which they assert to be their native, certain, and inevitable consequences, we shall distrust the fine descriptions of the happiness that should result from such a change. And when we see that the methods which were practised by this Association for the express purpose of breaking all the bands of society, were employed solely in order that the Leaders might rule the world with uncontrollable power, while all the rest, even of the associated, should be degraded in their own estimation, corrupted in their principles, and employed as mere tools of the ambition of their *unknown superiors*; surely a free-born Briton will not hesitate to reject at once, and without any farther examination, a plan so big with mischief, so disgraceful to its underling adherents, and so uncertain in its issue.

These hopes have induced me to lay before the public a short abstract of the information which I think I have received. It will be short, but I hope sufficient for establishing the fact, that *this detestable Association exists, and its emissaries are busy among ourselves.*

I was not contented with the quotations which I found in the Religions Begebenheiten, but procured from abroad some of the chief writings from which they are taken. This both gave me confidence in the quotations from books which I could not procure, and furnished me with more materials. Much, however, remains untold, richly deserving

the attention of all those who *feel* themselves disposed to listen to the tales of a possible happiness that may be enjoyed in a society where all the magistrates are wise and just, and all the people are honest and kind.

I hope that I am honest and candid. I have been at all pains to give the true sense of the authors. My knowledge of the German language is but scanty, but I have had the assistance of friends whenever I was in doubt. In compressing into one paragraph what I have collected from many, I have, as much as I was able, stuck to the words of the author, and have been anxious to give his precise meaning. I doubt not but that I have sometimes failed, and will receive correction with deference. I entreat the reader not to expect a piece of good literary composition. I am very sensible that it is far from it—it is written during bad health, when I am not at ease—and I wish to conceal my name—but my motive is, without the smallest mixture of another, to do some good in the only way I am able, and I think that what I say will come with better grace, and be received with more confidence, than any anonymous publication. Of these I am now most heartily sick. I throw myself on my country with a free heart, and I bow with deference to its decision.

The association of which I have been speaking is the Order of ILLUMINATI, founded, in 1775, by Dr. Adam Weishaupt, professor of Canon law in the university of Ingolstadt, and abolished in 1786 by the Elector of Bavaria, but revived immediately after, under another name, and in a different form, all over Germany. It was again detected, and seemingly broken up; but it had by this time taken so deep root that it still subsists without being detected, and has spread into all the countries of Europe. It took its first rise among the Free Masons, but is totally different from Free Masonry. It was not, however, the mere protection gained by the secrecy of the Lodges that gave occasion to it, but it arose naturally from the corruptions that had gradually crept into that fraternity, the violence of the party spirit

which pervaded it, and from the total uncertainty and darkness that hangs over the whole of that mysterious Association. It is necessary, therefore, to give some account of the innovations that have been introduced into Free Masonry from the time that it made its appearance on the continent of Europe as a mystical society, possessing secrets different from those of the mechanical employment whose name it assumed, and thus affording entertainment and occupation to persons of all ranks and professions. It is by no means intended to give a history of Free Masonry. This would lead to a very long discussion. The patient industry of German erudition has been very seriously employed on this subject, and many performances have been published, of which some account is given in the different volumes of the *Religions Begebenheiten*, particularly in those for 1779, 1785, and 1786. It is evident, from the nature of the thing, that they cannot be very instructive to the public; because the obligation of secrecy respecting the important matters which are the very subjects of debate, prevents the author from giving that full information that is required from an historian; and the writers have not, in general, been persons qualified for the task. Scanty erudition, credulity, and enthusiasm, appear in almost all their writings; and they have neither attempted to remove the heap of rubbish with which Anderson has disgraced his *Constitutions of Free Masonry*, (the basis of masonic history,) nor to avail themselves of informations which history really affords to a sober enquirer. Their Royal art must never forsooth appear in a state of infancy or childhood, like all other human acquirements; and therefore, when they cannot give proofs of its existence in a state of manhood, possessed of all its mysterious treasures, they suppose what they do not see, and say that they are concealed by the oath of secrecy. Of such instruction I can make no use, even if I were disposed to write a history of the Fraternity. I shall content myself with an account of such particulars as are admitted by all

the masonic parties, and which illustrate or confirm my general proposition, making such use of the accounts of the higher degrees in my possession as I can without admitting the profane into their Lodges. Being under no tie of secrecy with regard to these, I am with-held by discretion alone from putting the public in possession of all their mysteries.

CHAPTER I.

SCHISMS IN FREE MASONRY.

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There is undoubtedly a dignity in the art of building, or in architecture, which no other art possesses, and this, whether we consider it in its rudest state, occupied in raising a hut, or as practised in a cultivated nation, in the erection of a magnificent and ornamented temple. As the arts in general improve in any nation, this must always maintain its pre-eminence; for it employs them all, and no man can be eminent as an architect who does not possess a considerable knowledge of almost every science and art already cultivated in his nation. His great works are undertakings of the most serious concern, connect him with the public, or with the rulers of the state, and attach to him the practitioners of other arts, who are occupied in executing his orders: His works are the objects of public attention, and are not the transient spectacles of the day, but hand down to posterity his invention, his knowledge, and his taste. No wonder then that he thinks highly of his profession, and that the public should acquiesce in his pretensions, even when in some degree extravagant.

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the incorporated architects in all cultivated nations should arrogate to themselves a pre-eminence over the similar associations of other tradesmen. We find traces of this in the remotest antiquity. The Dionysiacs of Asia Minor were undoubtedly an association of architects and engineers, who had the exclusive privilege of building temples, stadia, and theatres, under the mysterious tutelage of Bacchus, and distinguished from the uninitiated or profane inhabitants by the science which they possessed, and by many private

signs and tokens, by which they recognised each other. This association came into Ionia from Syria, into which country it had come from Persia, along with that style of architecture that we call Grecian. We are also certain that there was a similar trading association, during the dark ages, in Christian Europe, which monopolized the building of great churches and castles, working under the patronage and protection of the Sovereigns and Princes of Europe, and possessing many privileges. Circumstances, which it would be tedious to enumerate and discuss, continued this association later in Britain than on the Continent.

But it is quite uncertain when and why persons who were not builders by profession first sought admission into this Fraternity. The first distinct and unequivocal instance that we have of this is the admission of Mr. Ashmole, the famous antiquary, in 1648, into a Lodge at Warrington, along with his father-in-law Colonel Mainwaring. It is not improbable that the covert of secrecy in those assemblies had made them courted by the Royalists, as occasions of meeting. Nay, the Ritual of the Master's degree seems to have been formed, or perhaps twisted from its original institution, so as to give an opportunity of sounding the political principles of the candidate, and of the whole Brethren present. For it bears so easy an adaption to the death of the King, to the overturning of the venerable constitution of the English government of three orders by a mean democracy, and its re-establishment by the efforts of the loyalists, that this would start into every person's mind during the ceremonial, and could hardly fail to show, by the countenances and behaviour of the Brethren, how they were affected. I recommend this hint to the consideration of the Brethren. I have met with many particular facts, which convince me that this use had been made of the meetings of Masons, and that at this time the Jesuits interfered considerably, insinuating themselves into the Lodges, and contributing to encrease that religious mysticism that is to be observed in

all the ceremonies of the order. This society is well known to have put on every shape, and to have made use of every mean that could promote the power and influence of the order. And we know that at this time they were by no means without hopes of re-establishing the dominion of the Church of Rome in England. Their services were not scrupled at by the distressed royalists, even such as were Protestants, while they were highly prized by the Sovereign. We also know that Charles II. was made a Mason, and frequented the Lodges. It is not unlikely, that besides the amusement of a vacant hour, which was always agreeable to him, he had pleasure in the meeting with his loyal friends, and in the occupations of the Lodge, which recalled to his mind their attachment and services. His brother and successor James II. was of a more serious and manly cast of mind, and had little pleasure in the frivolous ceremonies of Masonry. He did not frequent the Lodges. But, by this time, they were the resort of many persons who were not of the profession, or members of the trading corporation. This circumstance, in all probability, produced the denominations of FREE and ACCEPTED. A person who has the privilege of working at any incorporated trade, is said to be a *freeman* of that trade. Others were *accepted* as Brethren, and admitted to a kind of honorary freedom, as is the case in many other trades and incorporations, without having (as far as we can learn for certain) a legal title to earn a livelihood by the exercise of it.

The Lodges being in this manner frequented by persons of various professions, and in various ranks of civil society, it cannot be supposed that the employment in those meetings related entirely to the ostensible profession of Masonry. We have no authentic information by which the public can form any opinion about it. It was not till some years after this period that the Lodges made open profession of the cultivation of general benevolence, and that the grand aim of the Fraternity was to enforce the exercise of all the social virtues. It is not unlikely that this was an after-thought. The

political purposes of the association being once obtained, the conversation and occupations of the members must take some particular turn, in order to be generally acceptable. The establishment of a fund for the relief of unfortunate Brethren did not take place till the very end of last century; and we may presume that it was brought about by the warm recommendations of some benevolent members, who would naturally enforce it by addresses to their assembled Brethren. This is the probable origin of those philanthropic discourses which were delivered in the Lodges by one of the Brethren as an official talk. Brotherly love was the general topic, and this, with great propriety, when we consider the object aimed at in those addresses. Nor was this object altogether a novelty. For while the manners of society were yet but rude, Brother Masons, who were frequently led by their employment far from home and from their friends, stood in need of such helps, and might be greatly benefited by such an institution, which gave them introduction and citizenship wherever they went, and a right to share in the charitable contributions of Brethren who were strangers to them. Other incorporated trades had similar provisions for their poor. But their poor were townsmen and neighbours, well known to them. There was more persuasion necessary in this Fraternity, where the objects of our immediate beneficence were not of our acquaintance. But when the Lodges consisted of many who were not Masons, and who had no particular claim to good offices from a stranger, and their number might be great, it is evident that stronger persuasions were now necessary, and that every topic of philanthropy must now be employed. When the funds became considerable, the effects naturally took the public eye, and recommended the Society to notice and respect. And now the Brethren were induced to dwell on the same topic, to join in the commendations bestowed on the Society, and to say that universal beneficence was the great aim of the Order. And this is all that could be said in

public, without infringing the obligation to secrecy. The inquisitive are always prying and teasing, and this is the only point on which a Brother is at liberty to speak. He will therefore do it with affectionate zeal, till perhaps he has heated his own fancy a little, and overlooks the inconsistency of this universal beneficence and philanthropy with the exclusive and monopolizing spirit of an Association, which not only confines its benevolence to its own Members, (like any other charitable association,) but hoards up in its bosom inestimable secrets, whose natural tendency, they say, is to form the heart to this generous and kind conduct, and inspire us with love to all mankind. The profane world cannot see the beneficence of concealing from public view a principle or a motive which so powerfully induces a Mason to be good and kind. The Brother says that publicity would rob it of its force, and we must take him at his word; and our curiosity is so much the more excited to learn what are the secrets which have so singular a quality.

Thus did the Fraternity conduct themselves, and thus were they considered by the public, when it was carried over from England to the continent; and here it is to be particularly remarked that all our Brethren abroad profess to have received the Mystery of Free Masonry from Britain. This is surely a puzzle in the history; and we must leave it to others to reconcile this with the repeated assertions in Anderson's book of Constitutions, "That the Fraternity existed all over the World," and the numberless examples which he adduces of its exertions in other countries; nay, with his repeated assertions, "that it frequently was near perishing in Britain, and that our Princes were obliged to send to France and other countries, for leading men, to restore it to its former energy among us." We shall find by and by that it is not a point of mere historical curiosity, but that much hinges on it.

In the mean time, let us just remember, that the plain tale of Brotherly love had been polished up to protestations

of universal benevolence, and had taken place of loyalty and attachment to the unfortunate Family of Stuart, which was now totally forgotten in the English Lodges. The Revolution had taken place, and King James, with many of his most zealous adherents, had taken refuge in France.

But they took Free Masonry with them to the continent, where it was immediately received by the French, and was cultivated with great zeal in a manner suited to the taste and habits of that highly polished people. The Lodges in France naturally became the rendezvous of the adherents to the exiled King, and the means of carrying on a correspondence with their friends in England. At this time also the Jesuits took a more active hand in Free Masonry than ever. They insinuated themselves into the English Lodges, where they were caressed by the Catholics, who panted after the re-establishment of their faith, and tolerated by the Protestant royalists, who thought no concession too great a compensation for their services. At this time changes were made in some of the Masonic symbols, particularly in the tracing of the Lodge, which bear evident marks of Jesuitical interference.

It was in the Lodge held at St. Germain's that the degree of *Chevalier Maçon Ecossois* was added to the three SYMBOLICAL degrees of English Masonry. The constitution, as imported, appeared too coarse for the refined taste of our neighbours, and they must make Masonry more like the occupation of a gentleman. Therefore, the English degrees of Apprentice, Fellow-craft, and Master, were called *symbolical*, and the whole contrivance was considered either as typical of something more elegant, or as a preparation for it. The degrees afterwards superadded to this leave us in doubt which of these views the French entertained of our Masonry. But at all events, this rank of Scotch Knight was called the *first* degree of the *Maçon Parfait*. There is a device belonging to this Lodge which deserves notice. A lion, wounded by an arrow, and escaped

from the stake to which he had been bound, with the broken rope still about his neck, is represented lying at the mouth of a cave, and occupied with mathematical instruments which are lying near him. A broken crown lies at the foot of the stake. There can be little doubt but that this emblem alludes to the dethronement, the captivity, the escape, and the asylum of James II. and his hopes of re-establishment by the help of the loyal Brethren. This emblem is worn as the gorget of the Scotch Knight. It is not very certain, however, when this degree was added, whether immediately after king James's Abdication, or about the time of the attempt to set his son on the British Throne. But it is certain, that in 1716, this and still higher degrees of Masonry were much in vogue in the Court of France. The refining genius of the French, and their love of show, made the humble denominations of the English Brethren disgusting; and their passion for military rank, the only character that connected them with the court of an absolute monarch, made them adapt Free Masonry to the same scale of public estimation, and invent ranks of *Maçons Chevaliers*, ornamented with titles, and ribands, and stars. These were highly relished by that vain people; and the price of reception, which was very high, became a rich fund, that was generally applied to relieve the wants of the banished British and Irish adherents of the unfortunate Family who had taken refuge among them. Three new degrees, of *Novice*, *Eleve*, and *Chevalier*, were soon added, and the *Parfait Maçon* had now seven receptions to go through, for each of which a handsome contribution was made. Afterwards, when the first beneficent purpose of this contribution ceased to exist, the finery that now glittered in all the Lodges made a still more craving demand for reception-money, and ingenuity was set to work to invent new baits for the *Parfait Maçon*. More degrees of chivalry were added, interspersed with degrees of *Philosophe*, *Pellerin*, *Clairvoyant*, &c. &c. till some Parisian Lodges had forty-five ranks of Masonry, having fifteen

orders of chivalry. For a Knighthood, with a Riband and a Star, was a *bonne bouche*, given at every third step. For a long while these degrees of chivalry proceeded on some faint analogies with several orders of chivalry which had been erected in Europe. All of these had some reference to some mystical doctrines of the Christian church, and were, in fact, contrivances of the Church of Rome for securing and extending her influence on the laymen of rank and fortune, whom she retained in her service by these play-things. The Knights Templars of Jerusalem, and the Knights of the Desert, whose office it was to protect pilgrims, and to defend the holy city, afforded very apt models for Masonic mimicry, because the Temple of Solomon, and the Holy Sepulchre, always shared the same fate. Many contested doctrines of the theologians had also their Chevaliers to defend them.

In all this progressive mummary we see much of the hand of the Jesuits, and it would seem that it was encouraged by the church. But a thing happened which might easily have been foreseen. The Lodges had become familiar with this kind of invention; the professed object of many *real* Orders of Knighthood was often very whimsical, or very refined and far-fetched, and it required all the finesse of the clergy to give to it some slight connection with religion or morality. The Masons, protected by their secrecy, ventured to go farther. The declamations in the lodges by the Brother orator, must naturally resemble the compositions of the ancient sophists, and consist of wire-drawn dissertations on the social duties, where every thing is amplified and strained to hyperbole, in their far-fetched and fanciful explanations of the symbols of Masonry. Thus accustomed to allegory, to fiction, to finesse, and to a sort of innocent hypocrisy by which they cajoled themselves into a notion that this child's-play had at bottom a serious and important meaning, the zealous champions of Free Masonry found no inclination to check this inventive spirit or

circumscribe its flights. Under the protection of Masonic secrecy, they planned schemes of a different kind, and instead of more Orders of Chivalry directed against the enemies of their faith, they formed associations in opposition to the ridiculous and oppressive ceremonies and superstitions of the church. There can be no doubt, that in those hidden assemblies, a free communication of sentiment was highly relished and much indulged. It was soon suspected that such use was made of the covert of a Mason Lodge; and the church dreaded the consequences, and endeavoured to suppress the Lodges. But in vain. And when it was found, that even auricular confession, and the spiritual threatenings of the church, could not make the Brethren break their oath of secrecy; a full confidence in their security made these free-thinking Brethren bring forward, with all the eagerness of a missionary, such sentiments as they were afraid to hazard in ordinary society. This was long suspected; but the rigours of the church only served to knit the Brethren more firmly together, and provoked them to a more eager exercise of their bold criticisms. The Lodges became schools of scepticism and infidelity, and the spirit of conversion or proselytism grew every day stronger. Cardinal Dubois had before this time laboured with all his might to corrupt the minds of the courtiers, by patronising, directly and indirectly, all sceptics who were otherwise men of talents. He gave the young courtiers to understand, that if he should obtain the reins of government, they should be entirely freed from the bigotry of Louis XIV. and the oppression of the church, and should have the free indulgence of their inclinations. His own plans were disappointed by his death; but the Regent Orleans was equally indulgent, and in a few years there was hardly a man in France who pretended knowledge and reflection, who did not laugh at all religion. Amidst the almost infinite number of publications from the French presses, there is hardly a dozen to be found where the author attempts to

vindicate religion from the charges of universal superstition and falsehood. And it must be acknowledged that little else was to be seen in the established religion of the kingdom. The people found nothing in Christianity but a never-ceasing round of insignificant and troublesome ceremonies, which consumed their time, and furnished a fund for supporting a set of lordly and oppressive dignitaries, who declared in the plainest manner their own disbelief of their religion, by their total disregard of common decency, by their continual residence at court, and by absolute neglect, and even the most haughty and oppressive treatment of the only part of their order that took any concern about the religious sentiments of the nation, namely the Curés or parish-priests. The monks appeared only as lazy drones; but the parish-priests instructed the people, visited the sick, reconciled the offender and the offended, and were the great mediators between the landlords and their vassals, an office which endeared them more to the people than all the other circumstances of their profession. And it is remarkable, that in all the licentious writings and bitter satirical tales of the philosophic freethinkers, such as Voltaire, who never fails to have a taunting hit at the clergy, the Curé is generally an amiable personage, a charitable man, a friend to the poor and unfortunate, a peace-maker, and a man of piety and worth. Yet these men were kept in a state of the most slavish and cruel subjection by the higher orders of the clergy, and all hopes of advancement cut off. Rarely, hardly ever, does it happen, that a Curé becomes a Bishop. The Abbés step into every line of preferment. When such procedure is observed by a whole nation, what opinion can be formed but that the whole is a vile cheat? This however was the case in France, and therefore infidelity was almost universal. Nor was this overstrained freedom or licentiousness confined to religious opinions. It was perhaps more naturally directed to the restraints arising from civil subordination. The familiar name of Brother could not but

tickle the fancy of those of inferior rank, when they found themselves side by side with persons whom they cannot approach out of doors but with cautious respect; and while these men of rank have their pride lulled a little, and perhaps their hearts a little softened by the hackneyed cant of sentimental declamation on the topic of Brotherly love and Utopian felicity, the others begin to fancy the happy days arrived, and the light of philanthropy beaming from the east and illuminating the Lodge. The Garret Pamphleteer enjoys his fancied authority as Senior Warden, and conducts with affectionate solemnity the young nobleman, who pants for the honour of Mastership, and he praises the trusty Brother who has guarded him in his perilous journies round the room. What topic of declamation can be more agreeable than the equality of the worthy Brethren? and how naturally will the Brother Orator in support of this favourite topic, slide into all the common-place pictures of human society, freed from all the anxieties attending civil distinction, and passing their days in happy simplicity and equality. From this state of the fancy, it is hardly a step to descant on the propriety, the expediency, and at last, the justice of such an arrangement of civil society; and in doing this, one cannot avoid taking notice of the great obstructions to human felicity which we see in every quarter, proceeding from the abuses of those distinctions of rank and fortune which have arisen in the world: and as the mischiefs and horrors of superstition are topics of continual declamation to those who wish to throw off the restraints of religion; so the oppression of the rulers of this world, and the sufferings of talents and worth in inferior stations, will be no less greedily listened to by all whose notions of morality are not very pure, and who would be glad to have the enjoyments of the wealthy without the trouble of labouring for them. Free Masonry may be affirmed to have a natural tendency to foster such levelling wishes; and we cannot doubt but that great liberties are taken with those subjects in the Lodges,

especially in countries where the distinctions of rank and fortune are strongly expressed and noticed.

But it is not a matter of mere probability that the Mason Lodges were the seminaries of these libertine instructions. We have distinct proof of it, even in some of the French degrees. In the degree called the *Chevalier de Soleil*, the whole instruction is aimed against the established religion of the kingdom. The professed object is the emancipation from error and the discovery of truth. The inscription in the east is *Sagesse*, that in the north is *Liberté*, that in the south is *Fermeté*, and in the west it is *Caution*; terms which are very significant. The *Tres Venerable* is Adam; the Senior Warden is Truth, and all the Brethren are Children of Truth. The process of reception is very well contrived: the whole ritual is decent and circumspect, and nothing occurs which can alarm the most timid. Brother Truth is asked, What is the hour? He informs Father Adam, that among men it is the hour of darkness, but that it is mid-day in the Lodge. The candidate is asked, Why he has knocked at the door, and what is become of his eight companions (he is one of the *Elus*)? He says, that the world is in darkness, and his companions and he have lost each other; that *Hesperus*, the star of Europe, is obscured by clouds of incense, offered up by superstition to despots, who have made themselves gods, and have retired into the inmost recesses of their palaces, that they may not be recognised to be men, while their priests are deceiving the people, and causing them to worship these divinities. This and many similar sentiments are evident allusions to the pernicious doctrine of the book called *Origine du Despotisme Oriental*, where the religion of all countries is considered as a mere engine of state; where it is declared that reason is the only light which nature has given to man: that our anxiety about futurity has made us imagine endless torments in a future world; and that princes, taking advantage of our weakness, have taken the management of our hopes and fears, and directed them so

as to suit their own purposes; and emancipation from the fear of death is declared to be the greatest of all deliverances. Questions are put to the candidate, tending to discover whether and how far he may be trusted, and what sacrifices he is willing to make in search after truth.

This shape given to the plastic mysteries of Masonry was much relished, and in a very short time this new path was completely explored, and a new series of degrees was added to the list, viz. the *Novice*, and the *Elû de la Verité*, and the *Sublime Philosophe*. In the progress through these degrees, the Brethren must forget that they have formerly been *Chevaliers de l'Orient*, *Chevaliers de l'Aigle*, when the symbols were all explained as typical of the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. Indeed they are taught to class this among the other clouds which have been dispelled by the sun of reason. Even in the *Chevalerie de l'Aigle* there is a twofold explanation given of the symbols, by which a lively imagination may conceive the whole history and peculiar doctrines of the New Testament, as being typical of the final triumph of reason and philosophy over error. And perhaps this degree is the very first step in the plan of ILLUMINATION.

We are not to suppose that this was carried to extremity at once. But it is certain, that before 1743, it had become universal, and that the Lodges of Free Masons had become the places for making proselytes to every strange and obnoxious doctrine. *Theurgy*, *Cosmogony*, *Cabala*, and many whimsical and mystical doctrines which have been grafted on the distinguishing tenets and the pure morality of the Jews and Christians, were subjects of frequent discussion in the Lodges. The celebrated Chevalier Ramsay had a great share in all this business. Affectionately attached to the family of Stuart, and to his native country, he had co-operated heartily with those who endeavoured to employ Masonry in the service of the Pretender, and, availing himself of the pre-eminence given (at first perhaps