

Watson MS series 1535

These modern Charges, of which there are about 70 copies, of which no two are exactly alike, are an abridgement of the "Watson MS." series, which had become too lengthy for use in Lodge work. The version given is a fair representative of all the others and is a York MS. circa 1600. The portion in brackets [], and Charges 19-25 are found in the "Tew MS.," West Riding of Yorkshire.

(ABBREVIATED, "circa" 1535)

The might of the Father of heaven, with the wisdom of the blessed Son, through the grace of God, and the goodness of the Holy Ghost, that be three persons in one Godhead, be with us at our beginning, and give us grace so to govern us here in this life, that we may come to His blessing, that never shall have ending.

GOOD BRETHREN and Fellows, our purpose is to tell you how and in what manner this worthy science of Masonry was first founded and afterwards how it was maintained and upholden by worthy kings and princes, and many other worshipful men. And also, to them that be here, we will declare the Charges that it belongs to every Free-Mason to keep sure in good faith; and therefore take good heed hereunto, for it is a science that is worthy of being kept, for it is a worthy Craft; and is one of the seven liberal sciences. {552}

The names of the seven liberal sciences are these: The first is "Grammar" that teacheth a man to speak and write truly; the second is "Rhetoric" that teacheth a man to speak well, in subtle terms; the third is "Dialectic," or Logic, that teacheth a man to discern truth from falsehood. The fourth is "Arithmetic," that teacheth a man to reckon and count all kinds of numbers; the fifth is "Geometry" that teacheth a man to mete and measure the earth and all other things, on which science Masonry is grounded. The sixth is "Music" that teacheth the craft of song and voice, of tongue, organ, and harp. The seventh is "Astronomy" that teacheth a man to know the course of the sun, moon, and stars.

THESE be the seven liberal Sciences, the which are all grounded upon one, that is to say Geometry. And this may a man prove that the science of all work is grounded upon Geometry, for it teacheth mete, measure, ponderation, and weight of all manner of things on earth; for there are none that work any science, but he worketh by some measure or weight, and all this is Geometry. Merchants and all Craftsmen, and others who use the Sciences, and especially the plowmen and tillers of all manner of grains and seeds, planters of vineyards and setters of fruit, none can till without Geometry; for neither in Grammar, Rhetoric, or Astronomy can any man find mete or measure without geometry. Wherefore this science may well be called the most worthy science, for it foundeth all others.

HOW this science was first begun I will now tell you. Before Noah's flood there was a man called Lamech, as it is written in the Bible in the 4th chapter of

Genesis. And this Lamech had two wives, the one called Adah by whom he had two sons, one called Jabal and the other Jubal. And his other wife was called Zillah, by whom he had one son Tubal-Cain, and one daughter named Naamah; and these four children founded the beginning of all the sciences in the world. Jabal, the eldest son, found out the science of Geometry; he kept flocks of sheep and lambs in the fields, as it is noted in the chapter aforesaid. His brother Jubal founded the science of Music, in song of tongue, harp, and organ, and trumpet. And the third brother Tubal Cain found the science of smith's craft, in gold, silver, copper, and iron. And their sister Naamah found the craft of weaving. And these persons knowing right well that God would take vengeance for sin, either by fire or water, therefore they writ their several sciences that they had found in ii. pillars of stone, that they might be found after Noah's flood. The one stone was marble that would not burn with fire, and the other called "latres" (latens, laterns, lacerus, &c.) because it would not drown with water. Our intent is now to tell you, how and in what manner these stones were found in which were written these sciences. After the destruction of the world by Noah's flood, as histories affirm, a great clerk called Pythagoras found the one, and Hermes the philosopher (who was Cush's son, who was Shem's son, who was Noah's son) found the other, and was called the Father of wise men. These two found the two pillars in which the sciences were written, and taught them to other men.

AND at the making of the Tower of Babylon masonry was much esteemed. And the king of Babylon that was named Nimrod was a Mason himself, and he loved well Masons and their science, as it is said by Masters of histories. And when the cities of Nineveh, and other cities of eastern Asia, were to be built this Nimrod sent thither three score masons<<Other MSS. have it, sixty, forty, thirty hundred, see also No. 3 MS.>> at the request of the {553}King of Nineveh, his cousin, and when he sent them forth he gave them a Charge in this manner. That they should each one be true to the other; that they should love well one another; that they should serve their lord truly for their pay, that the Master may have worship and all that belong to him. And other more Charges he gave them, and this was the first time that a Mason had any Charges of his Craft.

MOREOVER Abraham and Sarah his wife went into Egypt, and there he taught the seven sciences to the Egyptians; and ("he had") a worthy scholar named Euclid ("and he") learned right well and was Master of all the vii. sciences; and in his days it befell that the lords and states of the land had so many sons, some by their wives and some by their concubines, for that land is hot and plenteous of generation; and they had not a competent proportion of estates wherewith to maintain their said children, which caused them much care; and the King of that land summoned a great Council to consult how they might provide for their children to live honestly as gentlemen; and they could find no good way. And then they made proclamation throughout all the realm, that if there were any that could inform them therein he should come to them and

would be well rewarded for his labours. After this proclamation was made the worthy Clerk Euclid came and said unto the King and the nobles -- "If you will accept of me to teach, instruct, and govern your children, I will teach them the vii. liberal sciences whereby they may live honestly as gentlemen. I will do it upon condition that you will grant me and them a commission, that I may have power to rule them, after the manner the science ought to be ruled." The King and all the Council granted him this and sealed the Commission; and then this worthy doctor took to himself these lords' sons and taught them the science of Geometry, and to practise work in stones, of all manner of work that belongeth to building churches, temples, castles, towers, manors, and all other sorts of buildings, and gave them a Charge in this manner: First, that they should be true to the lord that they serve; that they should love well one another; that they should call each other Fellow or Brother, and not servant, knave, or other foul name; that they should truly deserve their pay of their lord, or the master that they served; and that they should ordain the wisest of them to be masters of the work, and neither to chose for love, nor affection, nor greatness, nor richness, to set any in the work that hath not sufficient knowledge or cunning to be master of the work, whereby the Master should be evilly served and they dishonoured; and also that they should call the governor of the work Master, during the time that they work with him, and other more Charges which is too long to tell here. And to all these Charges he made them swear a great Oath, that men used at that time; and he ordained for them reasonable pay that they might live honestly thereby; also that they should assemble themselves together once every year, and consult how they might best work for their lord's profit and their own credit; and correct within themselves him that had trespassed against the science. And thus was the science grounded in Egypt, and that worthy Master Euclid was the first that gave it the name of Geometry the which is now called Masonry.

AND, AFTER that, when the children of Israel were come into the land of Behest which is now called with us the country of Jerusalem (Jewry), King David began the temple that is now called Templum Dei, as is called with us the Temple of Jerusalem, and the said King David loved well Masons and {554}cherished them much, and he gave them good wages, and also Charges and manners, as they had learned in Egypt ("from Euclid"), and other more Charges that you shall hear afterwards. After the decease of King David, Solomon his son finished the said temple that his father had begun, and he sent for Masons out of divers countries and divers lands, and gathered them together so that he had four score thousand workers of stone who were Masons, and he chose out of them three thousand that were ordained to be Masters and governors of the work. And furthermore, there was a king of another region that men called Hiram, and he loved King Solomon well, and he gave him timber for his work. And he had a son named Aman (Aymon, Hymon, Anon, Adon, &c.) and he was a Master of Geometry, and chief Master of all his gravings, carvings, and all his masons and masonry, as appears in Scripture, in libro primo Regum and chapter 5th. And this Solomon confirmed both the Charges and manners that

his father had given to Masons, and thus was the worthy science of Masonry confirmed in the country of Jewry, and city of Jerusalem, and in many other kingdoms.

CURIOUS Craftsmen walked about full wide into other countries, some to learn more craft, and some to teach others that had little skill and cunning. And it befell that there was one curious Mason named Namas Graecas (Namus Graecus, Manus Graecus, Memon Grecus, Mammungretus, Mamus Graecus, Minus Goventis, Marcus Graecus, Namus Grenaeus, etc.) that had been at the building <<Building's (query of Bro. Schnitger) -- he had a Solomon's temple ritual.>> of Solomon's temple and he came into France and there he taught the science of Masonry to men of that land. And there was one of the royal line of France called Charles Martel, and he was a man that loved well such a craft, and he drew to this abovesaid, and learned of him the craft, and took upon him Charges and manners, and afterwards by the providence of God, he was elected King of France, and when he was in his estate he took and helped to make men Masons which before were not; and he gave them both their Charge and manners, and good pay as he had learned of other Masons, and also confirmed a Charter from year to year to hold their Assembly where they would, and cherished them right well, and thus came this famous Craft into France.

ENGLAND in all this time stood void of any Charge of Masonry until St. Alban's time, and in his days the King of England <<Carausius.>> then a pagan did wall the town (that is now called) St. Albans about. And St. Alban was a worthy Knight and Steward of the King's household, and had the government of the realm, and had also the ordering of the walls of the said town, and he loved and cherished Masons right well, and made their pay right good, for he gave them (3s. a week -- 2s. 6d. and 3d. for noon, 3s. 6d. and 3d., etc.), and before that time, throughout all the land, a Mason took but a penny a day, until St. Alban amended it; and he procured them a Charter from the King and his Council, for to hold counsel together, and gave it the name of Assembly, and thereat he was himself, and helped to make men Masons, and gave them a Charge, as ye shall after hear.

BUT it happened soon after the death of St. Alban that there arose great wars in England, which came out of divers nations, so that the goodly rule of Masonry was well nigh destroyed until the days of King Athelstan, <<Query, Edwd., and Athelstan (suggested by Bro. W. H. Upton, P.G.M., of Washington). May admit of interpretation as Edwd. the elder, and his sons Athelstan and Edwin (see IV. and V.)>> who was a worthy King of England, and he brought the land into good rest and peace, and {555}buildd many great works, as abbeys, castles, towns, and other buildings, and loved well Masons; and he had a son named Edwin, <<Query, Edwd., and Athelstan (suggested by Bro. W. H. Upton, P.G.M., of Washington). May admit of interpretation as Edwd. the elder, and his sons Athelstan and Edwin (see IV. and V.)>> that loved Masons, much more than his father, and he was a great practitioner in geometry, and

delighted much to talk and commune with Masons and to learn of them skill and cunning, and afterwards for the love he bore to Masons and to their science, he was made a Mason, and he procured for them of the King his father a Charter and Commission to hold every year an Assembly, wheresoever they would within the realm of England, and to correct within themselves all defaults and trespasses that were done within the Craft, and he himself held an Assembly at York, and there he made Masons and gave them the Charges and taught them the manners and commanded that rule to be kept ever after, and also gave them the Charter to keep, and also gave orders that it should be renewed from king to king. And when the Assembly was gathered together he made proclamation, that all Masons who had any writings or understanding of the Charges and manners concerning the said science, that was made before in this land or any other, that they should bring them forth, and when they were viewed and examined, there were found some in French, some in Greek, some in English, and other languages, and the intent and meaning was found all one. [<<Added from "Tew MS." W. R. Co. York; also clauses 19 to 25.>> And these Charges have been gathered and drawn out of divers antient books and writings, as they were made and confirmed in Egypt by the King and the great Clerk Euclid; and by David and Solomon his son; and in France by Charles Martel who was King of France; and in England by St. Alban; and afterwards by Athelstan and Edward his son, <<Query, Edwd., and Athelstan (suggested by Bro. W. H. Upton, P.G.M., of Washington). May admit of interpretation as Edwd. the elder, and his sons Athelstan and Edwin (see IV. and V.)>> that was king after him.] And he had made a Book thereof, how the Craft was founded, and he himself counselled that it should be read when any Masons should be made, and the Charge given to them. And from that day to this the manners of Masons have been kept and observed in that form, as well as men might observe and govern it.

ADD furthermore at divers Assemblies there hath been added certain Charges more by the best advice of Masters and Fellows. Tunc unus ex senioribus teneat librum ut ille vel illi potiat vel potiant manus sup librum et tunc precepta deberent Legi.

EVERY man that is a Mason, take right good heed to these Charges, and if any man find himself guilty of any of them, let him amend himself before God. And in particular, ye that are to be charged, take good heed to keep them right well, for it is perilous and great danger for a man to forswear himself upon "a book" (the Holy Scriptures).

1st -- The first Charge is that you be true man to God, and the Holy Church, and that you use neither error nor heresy, according to your own understanding, and to discreet and wise-men's teaching.

2nd -- You shall be true liegemen to the King of England without any treason or falsehood, and if you know of any that you amend it privily, if you may, or else warn the King and his Council of it by declaring it to his officers.

3rd -- Ye shall be true to one another, that is to say to every Mason of the Craft of Masonry that be allowed Masons, and do unto them as you would they should do unto you.

4th -- You shall keep truly all the counsel of Lodge and Chamber, and all other counsel, that ought to be kept by way of Masonry.

5th -- Also that you use no thievery, but keep yourselves true.

6th -- Also you shall be true to the lord, or Master, that you {556}serve, and truly see that his profit and advantage be promoted and furthered.

7th -- And also you shall call Masons your Brethren, or Fellows, and no foul name.

8th -- And you shall not take in villainy your Fellow's wife, nor desire his daughter, nor servant, nor put him to any discredit.

9th -- And also that you pay truly for your meat and drink where you go to table, and that you do not anything whereby the Craft may be scandalised, or receive disgrace.

THESE be the Charges in general that belongeth to every Mason to keep both Masters and Fellows. NOW come I to rehearse certain other Charges singularly, for Masters and Fellows: --

1. That no Master take upon him any lord's work, or any other man's work, except he know himself to be of sufficient skill and cunning to perform and finish the same, that so the Craft receive no slander, but that the lord be well served, and have his work truly done.

2. Also that no Master take any work at unreasonable rates, but so that the lord, or owner, may be truly served with his own goods, and the Master live honestly thereby, and pay his Fellows truly their wages, as the manner is.

3. And also that no Master, nor Fellow, shall supplant another of his work; that is to say, if any Master or Fellow have taken any work to do, and so stands as Master of the said work, you shall not put him out of it, unless he be unable of skill and cunning to perform the same to the end.

4. Also that no Master nor Fellow, take any Apprentice under the term of seven years, and that such apprentice is sufficiently able of body and sound of limbs, also of good birth, free-born, no alien, but descended of a true and honest kindred, and no bondsman.

5. Also that no Mason take any apprentice unless he have sufficient occupation wherein to employ two or three Fellows at the least.

6. Also that no Master or Fellow take any lords' work (in task) that was wont to be journey work.

7. Also that every Master shall give wages to his Fellows according as his work doth deserve, that he be not deceived by false work.

8. Also that none shall slander another behind his back, whereby he may lose

his good name, or worldly riches.

9. Also that no Fellow, within the lodge or without it, shall misanswer or reprove another, without cause.

10. Also that every Mason shall reverence his elder brother, and put him to honour.

11. Also that no Mason shall be a common player at cards or dice, or any other unlawful game, or games, whereby the science may be slandered and disgraced.

12. Also that no Fellow at any time go from the Lodge to any town adjoining, except he have a Fellow with him to witness that he was in an honest place, and civil company.

13. Also that every Master and Fellow shall come to the Assembly of Masons, if it be within fifty (1, 5, 7, 10) miles about him, if he have any warning of the same.

14. And if he or they have trespassed or offended against the Craft, all such trespass shall stand there, at the award and arbitration of the Masters and Fellows there (present); they to make them accord if they can, or may, and if they cannot agree then to go to the common law. {557}

15. Also that no Master, nor Fellow, make any mould, rule, or square for any layer, nor set any layer (with) or without to hew any mould stones.

16. And that every Mason shall cherish strange Fellows, when they come out of other countries and set them on work if he can, as the manner is, viz. -- if he have no stones, nor moulds, in that place, he shall refresh him with money to supply his necessities until he come to the next Lodge.

17. Also that every Mason shall perform his work truly and not sleightly, for his pay, and serve his lord truly for his wages.

18. Also that every Master shall truly make an end of his work, whether it be by task or journey, viz., by measure or by days, and if he have his pay and all other covenants performed to him by the lord of the work according to the bargain.

19. Also that no Mason shall be a common ribald in lechery to make the Craft slandered.

20. Also that every Mason shall work truly upon the work day, that he may truly deserve his pay, and receive it so he may live honestly on the holiday.

21. And also that you and every Mason shall receive weekly (meekly) and godly (the) pay of your paymaster, and that you shall have due time of labour in the work, and of rest as is ordained by the Master's counsel.

22. And also if any Fellows be at discord you shall truly treat with them to be agreed, shewing favour to neither party, but wisely and truly for both, and that it be in such time that the lord's work be not hindered.

23. And also if you stand Warden, or have any power under the Master whom you serve, you shall be true to him, and a true mediator between the Master and your Fellows, to the uttermost of your power whilst you be in care.

24. Also if you stand Steward either of Lodge, Chambers, or common house, you shall give true accounts to your Fellows, at such time as they have accounts.

25. And also if you have more cunning than your Fellow that stands by you, and see him in danger to spoil his stone, and he asketh counsel of you, you shall inform and teach him honestly, so that the lord's work be not damaged.

THESE Charges that we have now rehearsed to you, and to all others here present, which belongeth to Masons, ye shall well and truly keep to your power. So help you God, and by ye contents of that book. Amen. (by your Haly-dome, Hali-dame, etc.).

V.

The Southern Variation of No. 5 is peculiar and found in a few MSS. The evidence of causing Edwin to be made a Mason at Windsor shews that it was compiled in the South, though Winchester is probably meant, as King Athelstan had his royal residence in that city. The version is a late 16th century view found in the "Lansdowne MS.," the "Probity MS.," and the "Antiquity MS."

V.

"A SOUTH COUNTY VARIATION."

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Afterwards, soon after the decease of St. Alban there came divers wars into England, out of divers nations, so that the good rule of Masonry was destroyed and put down, until the time of King (Knight) Athelstan.<<Query, Edwd., and Athelstan (suggested by Bro. W. H. Upton, P.G.M., of Washington). May admit of interpretation as Edwd. the elder, and his sons Athelstan and Edwin (see IV. and V.)>> In his time there was a worthy King of England that brought this land into good rest, and he builded many great works and buildings, therefore he loved well Masons, for he had a son called Edwin,<<Query, Edwd., and Athelstan (suggested by Bro. W. H. Upton, P.G.M., of Washington). May admit of interpretation as Edwd. the elder, and his sons Athelstan and Edwin (see IV. and V.)>> the which loved Masons much more than his father did, and he was so practised {558}in geometry that he delighted much to come and talk with Masons, and learn of them the Craft; and after for the love he had to Masons and to the Craft, he was made Mason at Windsor,<<Query -- Winchester.>> and got of the King his father a charter and commission, once every year to have Assembly where they would within England, and to correct within themselves, faults and trespasses that were done touching the Craft, and he held them at Assembly at York, and there he made Masons.

