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**ADDRESS GIVEN BY Rt. WOR. BRO. REV. R. D. B. WAUGH,
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A REVIEW.

Following is a digest of a lecture given by Rt. Wor. Bro. R. Waugh, Prov. G.M. at the November meeting of the Hawke's Bay Research Lodge. The subject is Alfred Dodd's new book, "Shakespeare, Creator of Freemasonry."

I believe this book will be very extensively discussed and that not every critic will agree with what Dodd claims to have proved. Some will feel that it fills a blank in our history, others will hold that the contentions are a fanciful dream. I don't say that I agree with the Author. I am going to sit on the rail for a time and I certainly do not ask you to agree with him.

"Shakespeare, Creator of Freemasonry"—this is a remarkable book and I would go further and say that it is a challenging book and the arguments are not easy to get round. The Author maintains and endeavours to prove that Shakespeare, the greatest English poet really wrote our Charges and compiled our Ritual. You will recollect that he lived from 1564 to 1616, just keep these dates in mind, also with those make a mental note that the United G.L. of England was formed in 1717, just 100 years after the death of Shakespeare. In the opening chapter he states the major problem, viz., The mystery of Modern Freemasonry. Whence it Came? Why was it born? And how came it into being? These questions have never been finally answered by the most scholarly of modern researchers.

Behind speculative Masonry there certainly are the sacred mysteries of forgotten civilisations. Ancient systems, the teachings of the Roman Collegia, the working tools of the Medieval Craft, the ceremonies of the Knight Templars, these are all apparently interwoven. These mysteries appear to have been swept away as far as it was possible to do by the attacks of Roman Catholic theologians. There is a definite break between the Roman Collegia and the early operative medieval guilds. There is a further break between the working Masons of Feudalism and the speculative freemasonry which in 1723 emerged from its hiding-place carrying with it its new book of Constitutions, edited by Dr. Anderson. This later break was the result of State legislation from 1350 onwards which smashed all guilds.

What human minds ransacked the archives of antiquity and framed a rite out of the myths and symbols of the past joining on to them our modern mysteries? Who couched our rite in modern language with its penal signs based on barbaric customs of the Elizabethan period? No one seems to know.

Page 22—in 1717 "four old lodges" (mark the word old) formed the Grand Lodge which met in various taverns. Modern scholars declare that out of a crude operative masonry there was created our modern speculative rite of three degrees on a purely trade union basis. It is said that either in a tavern or in Dr. Anderson's study there was evolved the concept of moralising on tools and spiritualising temples between 1717—1738. There are many conflicting opinions on this subject. Certainly the 1717 brethren dropped a thick curtain behind them when they stepped on to the stage in 1723. They would appear to have destroyed all records excepting the "old operative charges." An Act in 1425 definitely forbade Masons to assemble in Chapters. There is no evidence that a Single Lodge survived this Act. Certainly there were no Operative

Lodges in Britain in 1717. But there appears to have been some "gentlemen's lodges" of speculative Freemasonry. There was thus a death (1350 to 1425) and resurrection from 1717 to 1738.

Bro. Preston (a member of one of the four lodges of 1717) declares that his lodge ("Antiquity") had practised "the making," "passing" and "raising" of Masons since the middle of the previous century about 1650. Alfred Dodd then quotes authorities to prove that at least three degrees were worked prior to 1717. The English language about 1579 was just a jargon of dialects. It was William Shakespeare who coined English as a language. Our Ritual is couched in most beautiful English. Who could have written it prior to the stabilization of our language? The free use made of the Volume of S. L. points to a Protestant Origin. So Dodd narrows down the possible dates for the Compilation to 1589 or 1600.

The second Chapter concerns itself with the mystery of William Shakespeare. Students are aware that his life is veiled in mystery, practically nothing being known of him. Why if Shakespeare wrote our Ritual (as Dodd maintains) was this fact kept a secret? The author goes on to show that the works of Shakespeare were entrusted to a "Ward of Trust" known as the "Grand Possessors." Not a single manuscript of his work nor a vestige of his hand writing ever saw the light of day. He belonged to a secret fraternity. His own life was clouded by some social tragedy.

Page 41—It is believed he was the scapegoat for another's sins, so his authorship of our Ritual was never divulged. Alfred Dodd maintains that the works of Shakespeare simply teem with masonic allusions and they are worked into all of his plays. Then follow hundreds of illustrations, too numerous to quote. Here are just a few of them :

"I am a brother of a gracious order," "Yon have made good work, you and your apron men," "What my old worshipful master," "Guard the door without. Let him not pass," "Lambskins to signify that Craft being richer than Innocence," etc. etc.

In Chapter 10 the author evolves a strong argument from the literary characteristics of the four great rituals and claims that these emanate from a common source of high literary attainment. Recall again the confusing and conglomerate sources of our teaching, but it does not follow that because our system draws its truths from these ancient sources that we are following a ritual that dates back to Solomon. The Mysteries were swept away by the Roman Catholics. The Medieval guilds were smashed by law. Our printed Ritual has been in existence only 109 years (1838). Even Gould believes it came from an original ritual. The 1717 brethren admit adhering to the Ancient Landmarks. There were no operative lodges in 1717, the four existing lodges were Speculative (Gentlemen's Lodges).

The Ritual is a Classic, a work of art and as such could never have been produced by a G.L. Committee. It would require a finished artist for such a task. The Ritual bears its own evidence that it never could have been made patchwork, here a little, there a little. It is a unity with one supreme thinker and writer at the back of it. The simplicity of its diction points to a supreme artist, the rhythmic beat of its language is of a Master Craftsman. Who of all those associated with the G.L. of 1717 could have compiled such a book? According to this remarkable book, "Shakespeare, Creator of Freemasonry," there was no one else on the whole stage that could have produced such a masterpiece.

At the close of the address given above, on a suggestion by Rt. Wor. Bro. Waugh, Wor. Bro. A. W. Parkinson, S. W. of the Research Lodge and Wor. Bro. E. E. Bott, Secretary, were invited to prepare a comment on the book, "Shakespeare, Creator of Freemasonry." Wor. Bro. Parkinson has very kindly responded to the request, and writes as follows:

Having been invited to comment on the literary work entitled, "Shakespeare, Creator of Freemasonry," recently published, I have naturally felt constrained carefully to read the book and to give earnest consideration to the views expressed by its author. At the outset, I may say that it has proved intensely interesting reading, and whether or not one is prepared unreservedly to accept the theories advanced by the writer, one must acknowledge that a great amount of labour and research must have been applied to its

production. References to many recognised Masonic works, not readily available to the average Mason, have been made, and many apt quotations from Shakespeare's works have been used.

At the end of his brief Preface, the author succinctly states that "William Shakespeare was not only a Freemason, he was the FATHER and FOUNDER of the FRATERNITY, the Writer of the Rituals," and seeks in the pages that follow, and to the satisfaction of his readers, to establish these propositions. In considering the subject matter of the book, one must endeavour then to keep in view the answers to two questions

Was Shakespeare a Freemason?

Was he the Founder of Freemasonry and the Writer of our Rituals?

The author, W. Bro. Alfred Dodd, tells us that he was initiated into the Craft 35 years ago, and was then a journalist. Having regard to his journalistic experience and to his long association with Freemasonry, one feels somewhat diffident in offering any comment on the fascinating theories he has so lucidly advanced and sought convincingly to prove, particularly when one has access to few, if any, of the numerous Masonic works, to which W. Bro. Dodd has made reference. Any comments of mine must therefore be regarded to some extent as superficial and made with respect and with the intention of promoting discussion, and not with the object of criticising in any way authoritatively the author's work.

The proposition that Shakespeare was a Freemason has, I think, been satisfactorily established by W. Bro. Dodd. He has cited many scattered quotations from Shakespeare's plays which appear clearly to have a Masonic allusion and to indicate that Shakespeare was familiar with Masonic secrets and the Masonic ritual. One of these quotations, similar to numerous others, will suffice: "Love's Labour Lost," written in 1589, contains the sentence, "I will visit thee at the Lodge ; I know where it is situate . . . Come, Jaquen."

"Running down the side of the passage is spelled out in the Initial Capital letters of the lines quite straightforwardly—'Wil is a F.C.,' which means that 'Will is a Fellowcraft.' It will be noted that although the name is spelt 'Jaquen,' the phoneic sound is of course the Fellow-craft Word.

The use of secret codes, and cyphers and also numerals was, I believe, frequently resorted to in the Elizabethan era, and it is therefore quite reasonable to assume that they were fully employed by Shakespeare. To us as Freemasons, it must be of no small historic interest, and perhaps not surprising, to learn that the Immortal Bard was, as through the centuries was many another person of rank and fortune, a member of the Craft.

To assign to Shakespeare the honour and credit of establishing our ancient Institution and of writing our Ritual is a more debatable question, and for its proper appreciation requires reference to matters of a historical nature. In the first place, surprisingly little is known of Shakespeare's ordinary life. W. Bro. Dodd points out that there is not a single manuscript of the plays of Shakespeare, or of his handwriting in connection with literature, to be found anywhere. One writer states that the only examples of Shakespeare's own signature which have been preserved might be thought to indicate that, much as he wrote, he signed his own name with difficulty.

The following brief summary of Shakespeare's career will, I believe, be found to be fairly accurate. He was born at Stratford-on-Avon on the 23rd April 1564, and died at the age of 52, on the 23rd April 1616. His education extended over the short period of about 6 years at the local grammar school, where he had an excellent teacher in Master Walter Roche. Of his youth, there is as little known as about his school days. He was withdrawn from school at the age of 14, in order to get work to assist in keeping the family home. There is no existing record of the work in which he then engaged, but apparently he was none too wise a youth, for, when he was not quite 19 he married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older. He was 23 years of age, and the father of three children, when he went to London to seek his fortune. It is not known how he lived during his early years in London, but he became a member of one of the few theatrical companies that then existed. In 1589 he had commenced the writing of plays; as an actor he does not appear to have been a success because, even when his own plays were acted, he was never assigned a leading part to fill. His series of great comedies and tragedies commenced in 1589 with "Love's Labour Lost," and ended in 1611 with "The Tempest." It is somewhat remarkable that W. Bro. Dodd regards both the first and last as Masonic

plays, and devotes a separate chapter to each, quoting numerous text-extracts. Now it has been agreed by most Shakespearean writers, and is admitted by W. Bro. Dodd, that "Love's Labour Lost" was written in or about 1589. At that time Shakespeare was 25 years of age and having achieved little success as an actor had decided to try his hand at play writing as a means of livelihood.

"Love's Labour Lost" is to a large extent relied on by W. Bro. Dodd in support of his theory that Freemasonry was founded by Shakespeare. He writes -

" 'Lovers Labour Lost' clearly indicates, when stripped of the 'Comedy-verbiage,' the **Genesis of the Fraternity**. It could, only have been written round a System actually in being in 1589, the date the play was written. It could, moreover, only have been written by one who was above the 'vow' as the 'Father and Founder'—and therefore had the right to break it in order to identify himself secretly as the Creator and Founder of the Ethical Craft."

On the quotations from and Masonic allusions in that play, one finds it somewhat difficult to acquiesce in the conclusion drawn by the, author. Assuming Shakespeare to have been a Freemason, all of the veiled references to the Craft would necessarily have been within his knowledge, and as these references could be recognised only by Free-masons and convey nothing to the uninitiated the inference that 'the vow' has been broken seems based on slender grounds. From every candidate initiated into Freemasonry, vows of fidelity and secrecy are required; that Shakespeare, as the Founder of our Institution, should have considered himself free to break those vows for the sole purpose of identifying himself with the Craft, does not appear to be supported by reason.

When engaged in writing Love's Labour Lost, Shakespeare was about 25 years of age. That at that early age, when struggling to eke out a precarious living for his family, Shakespeare should have employed his time and talents in evolving a fraternal order so ethical and philosophical as Freemasonry, composed of men of mature age and sound judgment, and now having branches spread over the four quarters of the Globe, and should in addition have composed not only the Ritual, but also, up to that time, his only play containing many hidden allusions to it, presses somewhat heavily on our powers of belief. Most Masonic writers of repute appear to be satisfied that Speculative Free-masonry, perhaps not as perfect a system as we have to-day, was practised centuries before the Elizabethan era. If that is so, then it seems fairly safe to assume that Shakespeare was initiated into membership, according to the ancient usages and customs then obtaining. In this short paper it would take too long to trace the gradual evolution of Freemasonry; from details of its history which have been gathered by various writers and which, by weight of authority, may now be accepted as fairly well authenticated, it will be sufficient to mention that Freemasonry owes its origin to the old Roman Collegia that appear to have flourished long before the Christian Era, and later to the Guilds that were strongly established in England about the year 900 A.D. These Guilds consisted of two distinct classes of Masons, the Guild Mason, and the Church-building Freemason. In his book entitled "The Builders," the Revd. J. Fort Newton writes

"They may not have been actually called Freemasons as early as Leader Scott insists they were, but they were free in fact, travelling far and near where there was work to do, following the missionaries of the Church as far as England. When there was need for the name Freemason, it was easily suggested by the fact that the Cathedral Builders were quite distinct from the Guild Masons, the one being a universal Order, whereas the other was local and restricted. Older than Guild Masonry, the Order of the Cathedral Builders was more powerful, more artistic, and, it may be added, more religious ; and it is from this Order that the Masonry of to-day is descended."

It is worthy of note that the word "Freemason" appears to have been first met with in the records of the Company of Masons in London for the year 1375, about 200 years before Shakespeare was born. One writer asks how can the Freemason of to-day prove his kinship with the old working Masons of the Trade Guild, and endeavours to answer the question as follows

- "(1) There is some direct evidence afforded by the minute-hooks of some of the old Masonic Guilds or Lodges of the operative Masons, particularly in Scotland, which have survived as Lodges of Freemasons.
- (2) The Ancient Charges of the Trade Guild of Masons have an 'important bearing on the matter, and are read into the Craft working of to-day.

- (3) The Old Trade Guild had an Oath and obligation to bind their members to keep the secrets of the Society, and there is no doubt that the form used by operative Masons was similar to that used by the other Trade Guilds, and has many resemblances to the Ritual used in the early days of Modern. Free-masonry.
- (4) The Trade Guild had two formal ceremonies ; one for the Apprentices and one for the Craftsmen. And we know that it was not until about 1730 that the Third Degree, as we know it, was introduced into the Masonic ceremonial, and if you think of its working, that is the Hiram legend, *as it is called*, has little or no relationship to the Trade Guilds.
- (5) The Apprentice had to possess the freedom of the town or city where he worked, before he could be entered, and the modern system proceeds on the assurance that the Candidate is a Free man."

Some reference to the Regius or Royal Poem would, I think, prove of interest. This M.S. which is housed in the British Museum, is the oldest Masonic preserved document affording evidence of a legendary history and of a speculative origin, and is thus of great importance to Freemasons. W. Bro. Dodd suggests that Shakespeare was familiar with the Regius Poem because he wrote it. Shakespeare, he says, knew all about the grafting of the Speculative Fraternity on its operative stem and was acquainted with long-buried documents that Masonic scholars are puzzling over to-day. The preponderance of opinion is, I think, against the contention that the Regius Poem was written by Shakespeare. This Poem is generally recognised as having been written about the year 1400, nearly two centuries before Shakespeare's time. In this connection, I cannot do better than quote from an article written by Bro. Ronald H. Baxter and appearing in Vol. 1 of British Masonic Miscellany : -

"The writer of the poem apparently collected his materials from different sources, as an analysis reveals that it is composed of a series of parts without continuity or connection. So far as the date of the writing is concerned, Mr. David Casley, an eminent authority, ascribed it to about 1390, an approximation which was supported by both Mr. Halliwell and the late Bro. the Rev. A. F. A. Woodford, and although more recent authorities have discounted the age a little, it is hardly likely to be later than 1420. We may therefore fairly assume that the writing is of either the reign of Richard II (1377—1399), son of the Black Prince, of Henry IV (1399—1413), and possibly during the lifetime of Henry Yevley (1320—1400), who was master-mason to both of these kings, as well as to their predecessor Edward III.

"If we consider the architecture of England during the Gothic era, we find that it classifies itself very boardly into four stages, viz., Norman (which although not possessing the pointed arch had all the other essentials of the Gothic style), Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular, which may roughly be ranged under the respective dates of 1066 to end of 12th Century, 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries, so that at the time the poem was written the early phase of perpendicular work would be in vogue, before it had developed its elaborately panelled surfaces and almost fairy-like daring construction.

"So far as the location of the writing is concerned, Dr. Begemann, after a careful and minute philological enquiry into the dialects of the country, succeeded in placing it at the South of Worcestershire or Herefordshire or even the North of Gloucestershire. Assuming this conclusion to be correct—and no one, so far as I am aware, has ever tried to controvert it—we have only to examine the architectural remains in this district, to find that great activity of building was proceeding at the time of the writing. The cathedrals of Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester—to say nothing of the various abbeys and minor buildings in the neighbourhood—all exhibit remarkable traces of the architecture of the period, and although a similarity of activity could of course be traced in other parts of the country, I think this evidence may fairly be accepted as confirmity of our learned Brother's view. So far as I am personally concerned, I would like to assume that the poem was written for the benefit of the craftsmen engaged in the erection of the beautiful cathedral (and unusually placed) cloisters of Gloucester cathedral, for Mr. Wyatt Papworth tells us, that that work was completed under Abbot Floucester between 1381 and 1412, dates which very nearly coincide with the range of time during which experts have placed the writing."

The above, I think, is generally recognised as a fairly accurate historical review of the Regius Poem and clearly negatives the contention that this Masonic Poem was written by Shakespeare.

In support of his theory that Freemasonry could not have been in existence before Shakespeare's time, W. Bro. Dodd largely relies on the fact that an Act was passed in England in 1425 in the third year of the reign of Henry VI, whereby Masons were forbidden to confederate in chapters and congregations. In his Encyclopedia, Mackey tells us that this law was never executed and since that period Freemasonry has met with no permanent or important opposition in England, and states :

"As a brotherhood, composed of symbolic Masters and Fellows and Apprentices, derived from an Association of Operative Masters, Fellows and Apprentices—those building spiritual temples as these built material ones—its age may not exceed five or six hundred years, but as a secret Association, containing within itself the symbolic expression of a religious idea, it connects itself with all the Ancient Mysteries, which, with similar secrecy, gave the same symbolic expression to the same religious idea. I have no doubt that all the Ancient Mysteries had one common source, and that Freemasonry has derived its legend, its symbolic mode of instruction, and the lesson for which that instruction was intended, either directly or indirectly from the same source."

It will, I think, be conceded that practically all scholars of repute on matters of Masonic history adopt the view that Freemasonry existed long before the Shakespearean era, and that our Craft ceremonials had their origin in the Ancient charges of the Trade or Builders Guilds. Until more tangible evidence is discovered to support Bro. Dodd's theories, fascinating and unique as they are, the opinions expressed by those recognised as writers of authority on the antiquity of our Craft will no doubt be the more generally accepted.